



RURAL MARKET RESEARCH

A DIFFERENT BALL GAME

Rural consumers are fundamentally different from their urban counterparts. The lower levels of literacy and limited exposure to product and services are well-known, but there are also differences in occupation options, with a direct impact on income levels and income flows, and a high level of inter-dependency affecting the dynamics of rural community behavior. All contribute to make rural consumer behavior starkly distinct from the urban.

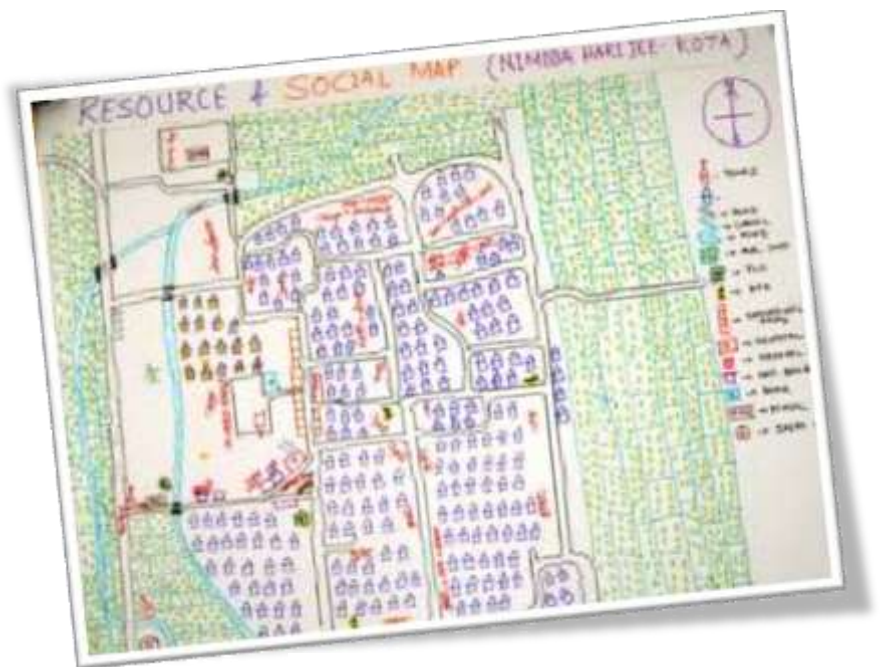
As any consumer research study must understand the consumer in the context of his environment and society, Rural Market Research must overcome the challenge of respondents with lower literacy and exposure levels, where conventional market research tools may not be easily comprehended by villagers. MART, a specialist organization in rural, has innovated tools to overcome these limitations in conducting rural consumer research.

Innovative Approaches to Research Tools

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a very successful tool for social research. This tool has been adapted to capture rural consumer insights and social behavior.

PRA is a set of approaches and methods that enable the rural community to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of their own environment and life. The process adopted is pictorial and drawn by the community themselves, hence cross check and validation of data is done automatically. Here role of moderator is very low who simply acts as facilitator. The PRA approach empowers the community in such a manner that they voluntarily participate in the research process.

Double click on icon for a clip on PRA process



PRA Resource and Social Map

Some of the major benefits of the PRA are that it allows participation of all classes of people and works very well in ice breaking and rapport building with respondents. The development process of a pictorial representation of the ecosystem facilitates in the capture of both expressed and unexpressed rural behavior.

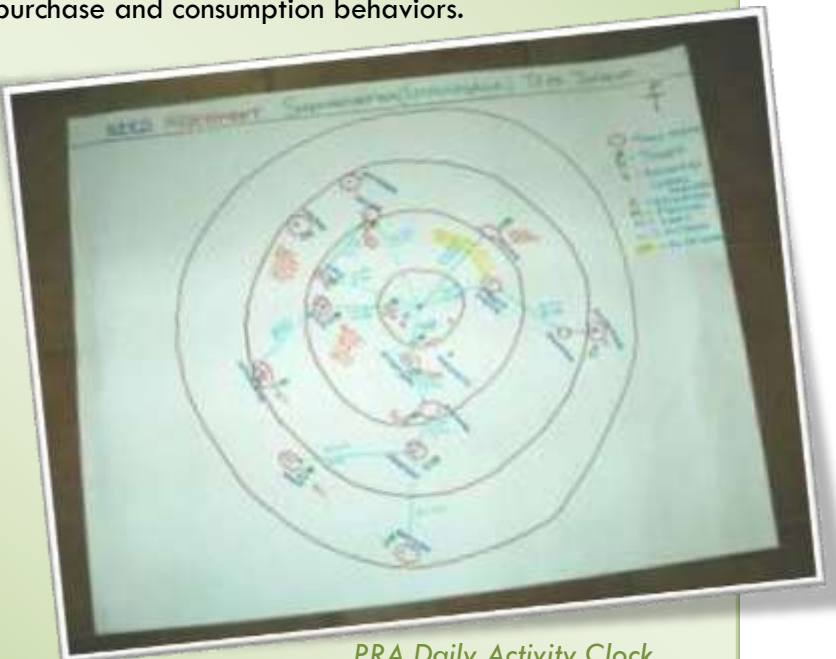


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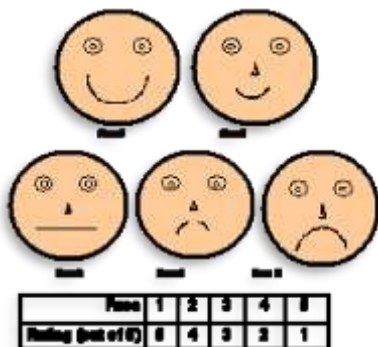
Some PRA applications:

- **Social and Resource Map** – The Social map identifies different community profiles of the village and their social behavior. The Resource Map captures various infrastructural and community resources, highlighting ownership and access. This exercise identifies the various need gaps for each community.
- A **Seasonality Diagram** is used to gather information on income flows and expenditure patterns for different communities and occupations. The objective is to gain insights into the variation in purchase and consumption behaviors.
- A **Need Assessment Map** can be developed for any introductory product and serves to identify issues associated with access, acceptability or affordability. It also brings forth need gaps and helps assess perceived need of the product amongst the community.
- A **Daily Activity Clock** captures economic and social activity in daily life. This helps identify time windows for communicating with the community and potential consumers.



PRA Daily Activity Clock

More appropriate visual tools were also developed to capture rating and ranking responses from the less literate. Traditional rural practices of measurement have largely been a matter of approximation. Therefore, less literate populations find it difficult to fully comprehend and respond to numeric measures for rating. In fact, one MART study revealed that a scale of more than 5 became almost impossible to administer amongst rural respondents.



MART has developed a simple tool to measure rating on a five point scale using human expressions. The highest scale was reflected with a very happy face and the lowest scale with a very sad face. These were developed into flashcards for the field researchers to use.



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Information & Data on Rural

A severe lack of information and data on rural markets has long been a barrier to entry. As the industry leader, MART has undertaken to shed some light through several independent studies, the results of which it is happy to share with corporates.

MART has compiled rural data which it has made available to the corporate sector via the 'Marketing White Book' and other publications.

MART strongly recommends client executives to travel with the research team to gain a better appreciation of rural life. This interaction between the teams in the field also helps in working towards better solutions for the client.

MART believes that any market research study must enable the client to arrive at marketing decisions, and, thus, gives a realistic and detailed strategy.

The Rural market has become important to many companies in the last decade, despite the fact there was little information and no standard textbook on the subject. Pradeep Kashyap, CEO of MART, and Siddhartha Raut, a leading marketing and communication consultant, have authored 'The Rural Marketing Book' which serves as a 'Kotler' for students, academicians and professionals alike.

MART prides itself as a pioneer in the observation and understanding of the great Indian rural market. While existing research techniques are being honed for use amongst rural communities, MART's search goes on for better means of understanding rural consumer behaviour.

MART Independent Studies

- An Impressionistic Study On Role Of Consumer Finance In Rural India
- Feasibility Study On Mobile Traders As A New Distribution Channel
- National Study On Haats (Weekly Bazaar) And Melas
- Role Of Rural Youth In The Buying Process
- Study On Impact Of Spurious / Counterfeit Products In Rural Markets
- Study On Potential Channels For Promotion Of Consumer Durables In Rural India
- Study On Rural Distribution Models For FMCG
- Study On Specific Market Research Tools And Techniques In Rural Markets
- Use Of Folk Media For Effective Communication And Advertising