



TOURISM MARKETING IN INDIAN TRIBAL AREAS

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Abstract

Tribal Marketing practices in Economy in general with main emphases on Growth and Dispersion of Manyam Tribal Population, Characteristics of Tribal Economy, Measures for Uplift of Tribals, Marketing personnel and practices, Marketing Organization and Practices, Emerging Trends in Marketing and Indian Consumers are explained in Paper.

Key Words: Tourism, Marketing.

Introduction

The characteristics of the tribal economy are collection of minor forest produce, absolute belief in superstitions, high incidence of poverty, high rate of illiteracy, podu type agriculture, frequent ill health due to malnutrition and very poor and transport and communication facilities. The technology used by them is primitive as well as simple and is often in consonance with their ecological surroundings. They cultivate their lands on primitive lines without any irrigation facilities or scientific cropping pattern resulting in very low yields. The traders, money lenders, contractors sordidly exploit them as they are innocent and illiterate. Their perpetual indebtedness and alienation of lands aggravated their misery and inflicted their peace and happiness. Tribal revolts in the pre and post independent India have their roots in the inhuman exploitation of tribals. The isolated location of the tribal population away from the rest of the mainstream of the society and lack of organized marketing and credit facilities have led to the entry of professional money lenders and the businessmen from the plains to exploit by buying minor forest produce from them at lower prices and in turn sell them their household requirements at prohibitive prices. The above characters of the tribal economy are not favourable for creating fully developed permanent market centres. But at the same time they should not be denied of marketing facilities. One important step to help them is to provide marketing facilities through shandies. The market centres in the tribal economy are not only important for business but are also centres of social stratification as they provide occasions for social get together to discuss varied topics of mutual interest ranging from enquiries about crops, market trends, political issues and last but not the least are matrimonial affairs which are usually settled at these places. In 1956 the Government of Andhra Pradesh established "The Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation Limited" with an intention to cater to the basic needs of the tribals with respect to procurement of minor forest produce and agricultural produce of the tribals and supply of domestic requirements of the tribals at fair prices. Shandy is a market place where the buyers and sellers of the surrounding villages gather once in a week. These shandies offer a variety of goods at competitive rates by private and public agencies.

Review of the Literature

Hodder¹ in his conventional theory of market origins argued that an individual's propensity to barter creates a need for local small scale exchange, division of labour and market places. This endogenous theory stated that markets originated from local exchanges and demand. Gradually with the lapse of time, the scale of local trading activity swells and thus generates external relations and long distance

trade. In contrast to the above hypothesis, Pirenne² and Webber³ have evolved an “exogenous theory” which reversed the sequence of events. These authors argued that trade and markets cannot originate from local demand, but must be based on external relations. Local markets are seen to originate from the stimulus of outside traders and the availability of non-local goods. It is widely accepted that most of the periodic markets in Africa support the exogenous theory of market origins. Belshaw⁴ was of the opinion that markets did not originate as places for local subsistence producers to dispose of their surplus production. But they were the result of increasingly specialized division of labour and growing exploitation of regional sources. It is believed by Bromley⁵ and others that periodic markets came into existence because many of the earliest local traders were producers seeking an outlet for their goods or the means to obtain other commodities. As a result, early markets had to be adopted to the requirements of producers, trading part-time, rather than to the needs of full-time traders. Periodicity as an advantage for most market participants because their economic roles were very much diversified. The majority of traders, even in many of the modern and ultra-modern markets, are part-time and they have two or more different occupations and they are also engaged in some form of primary or secondary production. Hence, these factors contributed to the development of effective periodic markets.

Significance of the study

In terms of size, India is the largest market among non-communist countries and second largest in the world, consisting of a population of above 121 crores. The Indian economy is characterized by one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world, low level of agricultural productivity and industrialization. These factors often limit the Indian consumer from consuming many products associated with a high standard of living. Another major bottleneck for the development of Indian economy is that a major section of the rural markets are still somewhat outside the monetized system and a large proportion of the income of the rural households is obtained from agriculture. The high costs involved in catering to the rural and tribal consumer and the low income levels of these segments of population have kept away a vast majority of the Indian companies from entering into the rural and tribal areas. Marketing serves various goals of society. Its contribution to the society is unlimited. Thus marketing has social implications and contributes to human development. The present shandies in the tribal areas have been located based on socio-cultural, religious and traditional factors from times immemorial. The economic considerations which influence the functioning of the shandies have been ignored. The growth of tribal population, rehabilitation measures taken by the Government, establishment of small scale and cottage industries, development activities on the agricultural front, etc., have brought about metamorphoses in the tribal economy. These factors have generated market potential in the tribal areas. The present shandies are unable to adequately serve to the needs of the tribals under the existing conditions of economic transformation. As such, the procedure of geographical reorganization of shandies and the periodicity with which they meet need to be studied. Until a few years there was no statutory ban on the private merchants purchasing agricultural produce from the tribals in the agency area. The tribals have taken to the cultivation of plantains, pineapples in some areas and turmeric in a large scale. Quite a significant quantity of these varieties of agricultural produce is finding their way into the shandies. Hence, the time has come to give a serious thought for examining the feasibility of extending the monopoly rights of the Corporation for the procurement of certain varieties of agricultural produce from the tribals.

Objectives of the study

- a. To study the characteristics of tribal economy and its marketing practices,
- b. To know the exchange activities of tourism marketing carried by the buyers and sellers in select shandies in tribal areas, and

- c. To offer measures to be taken for strengthen the shandies in tribal areas so as to serve as an effective marketing organization to improve the socio-economic status of the select tribal area.

Methodology of the Study

The study is based on the primary as well as secondary data. The secondary data were collected from Books, Journals, periodicals, websites and bank manuals, files and records. The study depends mainly on the primary data collected through well-framed and pre-tested structured schedules to elicit the well-considered opinions of the respondents. The main tools adopted for the investigation were two printed schedules –one for the sellers and the other for the buyers visiting the shandies. In drafting the schedules, due care was taken to incorporate the various aspects which influence the individuals activities at the shandies. The sellers schedule was designed so as to elicit information regarding the number of shandies visited by them during a week, the distance traveled, the commodities sold and purchased at the shandies, the mode of transactions like cash, credit or barter, the amount spent to reach the shandy, etc. The schedule for buyers was prepared to collect information about their occupation, household composition, the average monthly income, the number of shandies attended in a week, approximate distances traveled, the reasons for attending more than one shandy in a week and the products sold and purchased by them at the shandies. The schedules were tested through a pilot survey in three shandies to examine their suitability and to eliminate the snags, if any, and to ensure their validity in the light of the objectives of the study. The sellers and buyers at the shandies interviewed separately.

Discussions: Materials and Results

Shandy is a market place where the buyers and sellers of the surrounding villages gather once in a week. These shandies offer a variety of goods at competitive rates by private and public agencies. Thus the present study of shandies in Srikakulam District has been chosen as they constitute the centre of business activity and are the pulse beat of the tribal economy. The socio-economic profile of the buyers and sellers were studied as they have both a direct and indirect impact on their buying and selling behavioural patterns. Two reasons can be attributed for low presence of youth (15 -19 years) in the shandies. First they were still in the youth stage and to a great extent depended upon their parents for their subsistence, who made the purchases on their behalf. The second reason was the people in this age group prefer to buy in local established shops rather than in weekly shandies.

The occupational pattern of the buyers visiting the six shandies under study was uneven. Agriculture and collection of minor forest produce were the main occupations to the tribals, while manual labour and business are the main activities of the non-tribal buyers. The income of the tribals in the study area was at its lowest level. Traditional form of podu cultivation, poor fertility of the soils in the tribal areas, mixed type of cropping pattern, poor quality of seeds, lack of applications of scientific fertilizers, inadequate irrigation facilities were the reasons for their pathetic plight. Due to these socio-economic characteristics of the buyers it can be said that shandies were the only economic entities in the tribal area. Shandies were economically feasible because the demand for the various products could be accumulated over a week and the tribals, could avail of the market facilities once a week.

Sales in Shandies in Tribal Areas

The shandies in the tribal economy can be categorised as shandies of higher order and shandies of lower order. If the shandy is a high order one, more people tend to travel greater distances, even for fulfilling their marginal requirements. Since the nationalized banks have made their way into the tribal villages, it

is time for them to finance the tribals to purchase mini vans or trucks and autos so that the tribal youth could be encouraged to become entrepreneurs at the shandies. Such financing schemes of the banks could go to minimize the entry of the non-tribal vehicle drivers at these shandies. The tribal economy which was known for its barter transactions a few decades ago has undergone a complete change in the recent times. The people in the tribal economy dispensed with the barter transactions and got used to monetary economy.

Purchases in Shandies in Tribal Areas

Two types of people are observed at shandies under study. The first and majority of the people were those who make the purchases for their household consumption. The second categories of the people were the petty traders who make the purchases at the shandy for resale at their native place. The distance traveled by the buyers from their native village to the shandy forms an interesting aspect of the study. This focuses attention on whether the buyers in the tribal areas are satisfied with visiting the shandies that are closely located or whether they prefer to visit the shandies located at a distant place. A study about the travel pattern of the tribal buyers would help the policy makers to decide, whether to open more number of shandies, thus bringing down the distance to be traveled by the buyers to fulfill their basic needs. The shandies located in proximity to urban places attract greater number of buyers, because of availability of consumer goods of different varieties and presence of larger number of sellers. The remote shandies which are by and large smaller attract greater number of tribals to sell farm and non-farm produce. It is, therefore, observed that the former shandies are relatively bigger than the latter ones from the standpoint of number of buyers, sellers, variety of consumer goods available, and the transactions affected on the shandy day. The shandy in the tribal area apart from playing a marketing role, was also a centre of social activities. Shandies were places for the relations of close by villages to meet and 11 persons came to the shandy for that purpose. People also came to the shandies for the purpose of setting matrimonial alliances. During the study, three people responded saying that they visited the shandy for matrimonial alliances.

Personal friendship or intimacy with private merchants was claimed to be one of the reasons for selling to private merchants. This was mainly observed in the case of producer sellers, selling vegetables and fruits. The producer-sellers preferred to sell their produce to the buying traders rather than to the needy consumers even though sale to the latter group would definitely fetch them a higher price. The reasons were firstly, the buying traders were more guaranteed purchasers for their goods. Secondly the traders visited the market more regularly than the needy consumers; and thirdly, the buying traders were the first people to appear at the shandy. The producer-sellers finished their transactions more quickly with the buying traders and ensured themselves with cash so that they could turn into buyers of various domestic requirements at an early time. Time was considered to be one of the determining factors for the producer-sellers to sell their produce to the buying traders. The time spent by the producer-sellers in negotiating with the buying traders was minimum since they had long standing intimacy and the price worth of the produce was almost known to both parties since they had regular transactions.

The tribal buyers exhibited a tendency to visit more than one shandy per week. The tribal buyers did not have enough resources at their disposal to buy all the domestic requirements once a week by visiting only one shandy per week. So a majority of them preferred to visit two to three shandies per week, so that on each occasion they had something to sell at the shandy to enable them to resort to purchases. Multiple shandy visits were common in the study area. As regards the number of shandies visited by the buyers per week a majority of 52.33 per cent of the respondents said that they visited only one shandy per week. A deep probe into this figure revealed that it was more of the non-tribal buyers that preferred

to confine themselves to the visit of only one shandy per week. The non-tribals in the tribal belt were those who were well off financially by way of business or they were the salaried people or the agriculturists. So they had substantial financial resources at their disposal to visit only one shandy per week and make all the purchases for the entire week. Another factor that usually kept away the non-tribal buyers from visiting more than one shandy was the trouble involved in the form of walk for a considerable distance to visit the shandy. Among the rest of the buyers, around 24 per cent of the buyers were visiting two shandies and 23.67 per cent three shandies per week respectively. It could be said that 53.78 per cent of the buyers visited two to three shandies in a week. Another interesting factor that came to light in the study of multiple shandy visits by the buyers was, among the non-tribal buyers who preferred to visit two to three shandies per week they were mostly petty traders who purchased goods at different shandies and offered them for sale in their native villages.

The trader visiting the shandies were free to use different types of weights and measures and even approximation in the process of selling different items to the tribals. Lack of proper check on the weights and measures being used by the private merchants at the shandies gave them full scope to deceive the tribals. During the study, the buyers were questioned regarding their opinion about the proper weighing by the private merchants. About 72 per cent of the buyers said that proper weighing by the private merchants, whereas 28 per cent expressed their dissatisfaction on the issue. During the study, a peculiar practice that was adopted by some private merchants came to light. Some private merchants had two sets of weights, namely one for the purpose of buying the produce from the tribals and the other for selling the various items to them. The tribal buyers were kept busy in some petty talk about their welfare and in the process, some private merchants made use of these two sets of weights. Further, the tobacco is sold through approximation which has always profitable to the traders. The items which were predominantly purchased by the females were edible oils, kirana, dry fish and pots. In some cases, both the tribal males and females were making the purchases. This was mostly in the case of purchase of textiles and high priced items like the aluminium utensils, etc. It was observed that there was lot of consultation between the male and female, while selecting the textiles and aluminum utensils because these involved a commitment of a significant amount of their resources.

Findings of the Study

1. It is observed that the high rate of illiteracy is one of the major reasons for making several developmental programmes of the government as they are unable to understand the malpractices of private merchants and money-lenders. The study revealed that about 39 per cent of the buyers were illiterates and only 37 per cent had primary education. Only 24 per cent of them claimed to have had secondary education.
2. It was also observed that due to the meager monthly income and the low per capita income of the tribal buyers, it was mainly the necessities that were being purchased.
3. It is observed that the study revealed that 32.50 per cent of the sellers are attending two shandies per week while 15.50 per cent were attending three shandies per week.
4. It is observed that among the sellers at the shandies adopting various means of transport 48 per cent came by bus or van or auto followed by 28 per cent who carry their items of sale on headload and carrying pole.
5. It is observed that the tribal sellers were contented by visiting only one shandy per week. This was mainly because, trade was a part time activity for the tribals during the summer season.
6. It is observed that the tribal economy which was known for its barter transactions a few decades ago has undergone a complete change in the recent times. The people in the tribal economy dispensed with the barter transactions and got used to monetary economy.

7. It is observed that the Majority of the people 73 per cent came to the shandy for the purpose of buying domestic requirements. This was followed by 26 per cent of the people who came to the shandy both to sell minor forest produce and purchase domestic requirements.

Suggestions of the Study

1. It is suggested that the Buyers would be spending more time at the shandy if they were assured of some transport facility to reach back home. Therefore it is recommended that the transport facilities may be provided to the shandy village in the tribal areas.
2. It is suggested that the Government may construct community shelters at the shandies so that the people coming to shandies could relax under the shelters and take food and also protect themselves in case of unfavourable weathers.
3. It is suggested that to prevent the usage of false weights and measures, shandy intelligence committee should prevail upon the traders at the shandies and strictly enforce the adoption of scientific weights and measurements.
4. It is suggested that the Government should encourage the tribals to sell the FMP and agriculture goods directly to the consumers instead of selling to the middlemen who pay less price for the above products.
5. It is suggested that the tribals are to be educated through the electronic media to prevent them from believing such superstitions.
6. It is suggested that the tribals are enlightened about the evil effects of alcohol consumption. The money so saved will be made use of either for consumption of nutritious food or for savings for future life.
7. To mitigate this problem, it is suggested that the Government may take steps to identify teachers from the tribal community and if possible from the same village or mandal and post them to these schools so that they could fit in well into the environment and also have a greater commitment to educate the children belonging to their own community.

Conclusion of the study

The sales volumes of products are very much directly influenced by the consumers' preference and recommendations. The finding confirms the traders' and consumers' preference. This is due to its good product appearance, normal maintenance cost, reasonable price, exchange mechanism and technically advanced features. It secures popular brand image in the market. The study also finds out that the advanced features, good appearance, less expensive maintenance, affordable price and high cost benefit attract the customers to prefer products. It is understood from the study that the products are preferred based on the product, price, place and promotion factors. Directly or indirectly these factors influence the preference of the consumers. On an overall basis, the findings of the study on the Indian consumers point out the fact that Indian Consumers are becoming more and more sophisticated in their television buying behaviour, which is predominantly reflected in the fact that they are seeking more information about the product features and benefits. They are also demanding more in terms of services, promotion, benefits and attention from the dealers.

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