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**THE ROLE OF DISTRIBUTION INTENSITY IN BUILDING FOUNDATIONS OF
STRONG CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS: INSIGHTS FROM RURAL
INDIA**

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ABSTRACT

Distribution intensity of brands assumes importance in the rural markets of emerging economies such as India. These markets are often plagued by problems like extensive geographic dispersion and inadequate marketing infrastructure. Taking these problems into account, this paper seeks to explore whether distribution intensity is correlated to brand attitudinal correlates in the rural markets of India. This paper uses the lens of the theory of double jeopardy and has its basis in literature related to brand equity and consumer brand relationships. It looks at the relationship between brand distribution intensity, brand trust and brand satisfaction in a rural market. Brand trust and brand satisfaction have been shown to be important dimensions of strong consumer-brand relationships. Data has been collected using a consumer survey questionnaire from the consumers in a village in the western part of India. The survey items were adapted from reliable and valid scales in literature and then translated into the local language. The survey questions relate mostly to the products of day-to-day use namely, toilet soap, shampoo and hair oil. The products were chosen because of the high frequency of usage and therefore a higher need for replenishment and purchase. Data has been analysed using general linear modeling. The paper adds to the literature by bringing in the context of rural markets of an emerging economy and also serves to highlight the importance of marketing mix elements in building the foundations of strong consumer-brand relationships.

Keywords: Rural India, Distribution Intensity, Brand Trust, Brand Satisfaction, Consumer-Brand Relationships