

Masstige Marketing Strategies and their Influence on Purchase Intentions: A Comparative Study of Urban and Rural Consumers in Bareilly Division

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Citation: Sharma, S., & Yadav, P. (2025). Masstige Marketing Strategies and their Influence on Purchase Intentions: A Comparative Study of Urban and Rural Consumers in Bareilly Division. International Journal of Education, Modern Management, Applied Science & Social Science, 07(03(III)), 239–248. [https://doi.org/10.62823/ijemmasss/7.3\(iii\).8297](https://doi.org/10.62823/ijemmasss/7.3(iii).8297)

ABSTRACT

This research looks at how masstige (mass pride) marketing tactics affect people's plans to buy, comparing people in Bareilly Division, Uttar Pradesh, India who live in cities and people who live in rural areas. Masstige marketing is a mix of different strategies that aims to appeal to the middle class's desire for status while keeping prices low. This study looks at four important aspects of masstige marketing: premium positioning, affordable luxury, brand status, and value perception. It uses a quantitative research method and organized surveys sent to 384 respondents (192 from cities and 192 from rural areas). The results show that urban and rural consumers react to masstige methods in very different ways. For example, urban consumers are more likely to buy (Mean = 4.12) than rural consumers (Mean = 3.68). For urban consumers, premium placement was the best predictor of their desire to buy ($r^2 = 0.456$, $p < 0.001$), while for rural consumers, value perception ruled their decisions ($r^2 = 0.512$, $p < 0.001$). The results give marketers useful information for improving mass marketing methods for a variety of customer groups.

Keywords: *Masstige Marketing, Purchase Intentions, Urban-Rural Divide, Consumer Behavior, Premium Positioning, Bareilly Division.*

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, the Indian consumer market has changed in ways that have never been seen before. Rising spending incomes, greater brand awareness, and aspirational consumption habits are just a few of the changes that have happened. This change has made a new market place between high-end and low-cost goods, which is called "masstige," which comes from the words "mass" and "prestige" (Truong et al., 2009). Masstige goods give people access to high-end experiences without the high prices of traditional premium names.

Bareilly Division, which is made up of the districts of Bareilly, Budaun, Pilibhit, and Shahjahanpur, is a microcosm of India's diverse consumer environment, with both modern cities and traditional country towns. With more than 7 million people living there and a growing economy, the region is a great place to look at how high-end marketing tactics affect people's decisions to buy, regardless of whether they live in a city or a rural area.

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Research Objectives

- To identify key masstige marketing strategies employed in Bareilly Division
- To examine the influence of masstige marketing on purchase intentions among urban and rural consumers
- To compare the differential impact of masstige strategies between urban and rural consumer segments
- To provide strategic recommendations for marketers targeting diverse consumer groups

Research Hypotheses

H₁: Masstige marketing strategies significantly influence purchase intentions among consumers in Bareilly Division.

H₂: Urban consumers demonstrate higher purchase intentions toward masstige products compared to rural consumers.

H₃: Premium positioning significantly impacts purchase intentions differently for urban versus rural consumers.

H₄: Value perception mediates the relationship between masstige marketing strategies and purchase intentions.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Masstige Marketing

Masstige marketing grew as a way to deal with the fact that luxury goods became more accessible to everyone (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). Unlike traditional luxury items that focus on being hard to get, masstige items mix high-end features with ease of access (Paul, 2015). This idea is especially important in developing countries with a growing middle class that wants to show off their wealth through spending (Shukla, 2012).

Truong et al. (2009) say that masstige brands are in a good spot between the mass and prestige markets because they offer "affordable luxuries" that make people feel good about themselves and boost their social standing. This approach needs careful adjustment of marketing mix elements to keep the brand's image of status while making it more accessible to a wider audience.

Dimensions of High-End Marketing

Studies have found a few important aspects of high-end marketing plans:

- **Premium Positioning:** Making people think something is of higher quality, is hard to get, or has worth that people want (Keller, 2009). Strategic brand communication, selective distribution, and quality cues that show status are all parts of premium branding.
- **Accessible Luxury:** Finding a balance between high-end features and low cost so that middle-class customers can buy high-end goods (Kumar et al., 2013). Pricing tactics, adding new products to an existing line, and value engineering are all part of this dimension.
- **Brand Prestige:** Creating value for a brand through stories of history and craftsmanship, famous endorsements, and links to ideal lives (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004).
- **Worth Perception:** Creating the idea of worth through connections between quality and price, practical benefits, and emotional fulfillment (Zeithaml, 1988).

Expectations to Buy

A consumer's buying purpose is their conscious decision to buy a certain product or brand (Spears & Singh, 2004). Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior says that views, subjective rules, and the sense of being able to control one's behavior affect how people plan to act. When it comes to high-end goods, buying intentions show how likely people are to buy high-end products that are within their budget.

Differences in Consumers Between Cities and Rural Areas

The difference between urban and country areas has a big effect on how people in India buy things (Gupta & Sahu, 2012). People who live in cities tend to be more aware of brands, receive more marketing messages, and have better optimistic buying habits (Mishra & Mishra, 2019). Rural customers

are becoming more aware of brands, but they still put practical value, community impact, and price awareness at the top of their list of priorities (Kashyap & Raut, 2006).

New study, on the other hand, shows that digital connection, better infrastructure in rural areas, and rising rural incomes are all leading to similar patterns of consumption (Nielsen, 2018). This merger makes it possible for high-end brands to reach rural areas that they hadn't been able to reach before.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design using structured questionnaires to collect primary data from consumers in Bareilly Division. A comparative approach enables systematic analysis of differences between urban and rural consumer segments.

Sampling

- **Population:** The target population comprises adult consumers (aged 18-60 years) residing in Bareilly Division with purchasing power for semi-premium products.
- **Sample Size:** Using Cochran's formula for unknown populations with 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error:

$$n = (Z^2 \times p \times q) / e^2 \quad n = (1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5) / 0.05^2 = 384 \text{ respondents}$$

The sample was equally divided: 192 urban respondents (from Bareilly and Shahjahanpur cities) and 192 rural respondents (from villages in Budaun and Pilibhit districts).

- **Sampling Technique:** Stratified random sampling ensured proportionate representation across demographic variables including age, gender, income, and education.

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire comprising three sections was developed:

- **Demographic Profile:** Age, gender, education, occupation, monthly income, and residence type
- **Masstige Marketing Strategies:** 20 items measuring four dimensions (5 items each):
 - Premium Positioning (PP)
 - Accessible Luxury (AL)
 - Brand Prestige (BP)
 - Value Perception (VP)
- **Purchase Intentions:** 5 items measuring likelihood to purchase masstige products

All items utilized 5-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The instrument was pilot-tested with 40 respondents and refined based on feedback.

Reliability and Validity

- **Reliability:** Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeded 0.70 for all constructs:
 - Premium Positioning: $\alpha = 0.847$
 - Accessible Luxury: $\alpha = 0.823$
 - Brand Prestige: $\alpha = 0.865$
 - Value Perception: $\alpha = 0.831$
 - Purchase Intentions: $\alpha = 0.879$

Validity: Content validity was established through expert reviews. Construct validity was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), showing acceptable fit indices (CFI = 0.931, TLI = 0.918, RMSEA = 0.062).

Data Analysis

Data analysis employed SPSS 26.0 and included:

- Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies)
- Independent samples t-tests (comparing urban-rural differences)
- Multiple regression analysis (examining predictors of purchase intentions)
- Mediation analysis (testing value perception as mediator)

Results and Analysis

Demographic Profile

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Urban (n=192)	%	Rural (n=192)	%	Total (n=384)	%
Gender						
Male	98	51.0	112	58.3	210	54.7
Female	94	49.0	80	41.7	174	45.3
Age Group						
18-25 years	56	29.2	48	25.0	104	27.1
26-35 years	74	38.5	62	32.3	136	35.4
36-45 years	42	21.9	52	27.1	94	24.5
46-60 years	20	10.4	30	15.6	50	13.0
Education						
Up to 12th	28	14.6	82	42.7	110	28.6
Graduate	96	50.0	78	40.6	174	45.3
Postgraduate	68	35.4	32	16.7	100	26.0
Monthly Income						
₹15,000-30,000	46	24.0	98	51.0	144	37.5
₹30,001-50,000	88	45.8	72	37.5	160	41.7
₹50,001-75,000	42	21.9	18	9.4	60	15.6
Above ₹75,000	16	8.3	4	2.1	20	5.2

The demographic profile reveals distinct characteristics between urban and rural respondents. Urban consumers demonstrate higher educational attainment (85.4% graduates or above vs. 57.3% rural) and income levels, with 30.2% earning above ₹50,000 monthly compared to 11.5% of rural respondents.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Mean Scores of Masstige Marketing Dimensions and Purchase Intentions

Variable	Urban (n=192)		Rural (n=192)		Total (n=384)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Premium Positioning	4.18	0.62	3.54	0.78	3.86	0.74
Accessible Luxury	4.06	0.68	3.72	0.82	3.89	0.76
Brand Prestige	3.94	0.71	3.48	0.86	3.71	0.81
Value Perception	4.24	0.58	4.02	0.72	4.13	0.66
Purchase Intentions	4.12	0.64	3.68	0.79	3.90	0.74

Urban consumers consistently rated all masstige dimensions higher than rural consumers. Value perception received the highest ratings from both groups, suggesting its universal importance. The purchase intentions gap (0.44 points) between urban and rural consumers indicates differential responsiveness to masstige strategies.

Comparative Analysis: Urban vs. Rural Consumers

Table 3: Independent Samples t-test Results

Variable	Mean Difference	t-value	df	p-value	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Premium Positioning	0.64	7.342	382	< 0.001***	0.748
Accessible Luxury	0.34	3.698	382	< 0.001***	0.377
Brand Prestige	0.46	4.821	382	< 0.001***	0.491
Value Perception	0.22	2.682	382	0.008**	0.273
Purchase Intentions	0.44	4.928	382	< 0.001***	0.502

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01

All masstige dimensions showed statistically significant differences between urban and rural consumers. Premium positioning exhibited the largest effect size ($d = 0.748$), indicating substantial divergence in how urban and rural consumers perceive premium positioning strategies. These results

support **H2**, confirming that urban consumers demonstrate significantly higher purchase intentions toward masstige products.

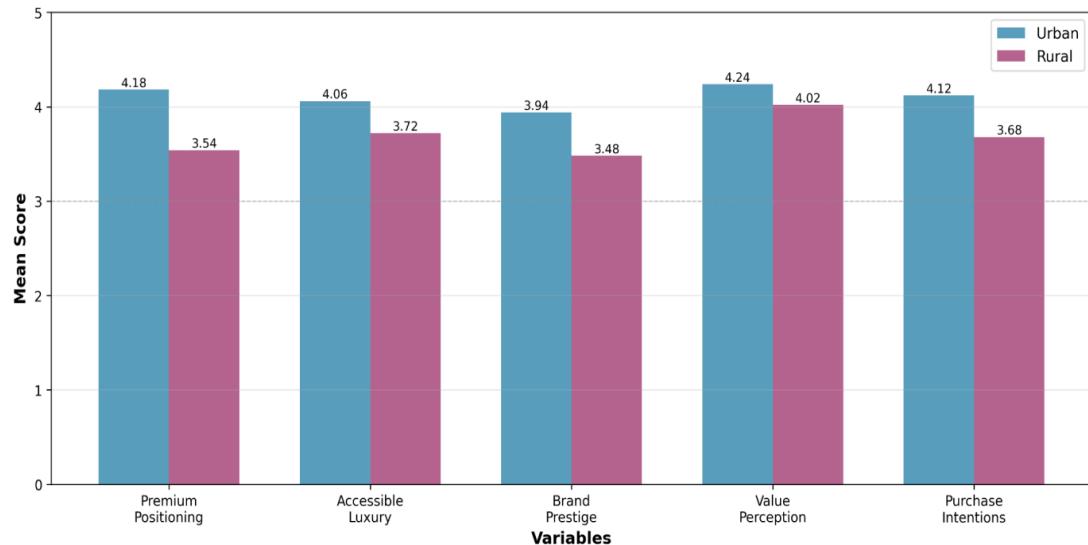


Figure 1: Comparison of Masstige Dimensions Between Urban and Rural Consumers

Figure 1 illustrates the comparative performance of masstige dimensions between urban and rural consumers. The consistent elevation of urban scores across all dimensions highlights the differential market readiness for masstige strategies.

Regression Analysis: Predictors of Purchase Intentions

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis - Urban Consumers (n=192)

Predictor	B	SE	B	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	0.342	0.218	-	1.569	0.118	-
Premium Positioning	0.468	0.067	0.456***	6.985	< 0.001	1.842
Accessible Luxury	0.187	0.061	0.198**	3.066	0.003	1.764
Brand Prestige	0.156	0.058	0.173**	2.690	0.008	1.691
Value Perception	0.241	0.071	0.219**	3.394	0.001	1.523

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.687$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.680$, $F(4,187) = 102.647$, $p < 0.001$ *** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.01$

For urban consumers, premium positioning emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.456$), followed by value perception ($\beta = 0.219$), accessible luxury ($\beta = 0.198$), and brand prestige ($\beta = 0.173$). The model explains 68.7% of variance in purchase intentions, indicating robust predictive power.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis - Rural Consumers (n=192)

Predictor	B	SE	B	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	0.526	0.274	-	1.920	0.056	-
Premium Positioning	0.182	0.082	0.179*	2.220	0.028	1.956
Accessible Luxury	0.243	0.077	0.252**	3.156	0.002	1.823
Brand Prestige	0.138	0.073	0.150*	1.890	0.060	1.782
Value Perception	0.562	0.088	0.512***	6.386	< 0.001	1.647

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.641$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.633$, $F(4,187) = 83.419$, $p < 0.001$ *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

For rural consumers, value perception dominated as the primary predictor ($\beta = 0.512$), with accessible luxury second ($\beta = 0.252$). Premium positioning showed weaker influence ($\beta = 0.179$), suggesting rural consumers prioritize tangible value over prestige signals. These findings support **H3**, confirming differential impacts of premium positioning across consumer segments.

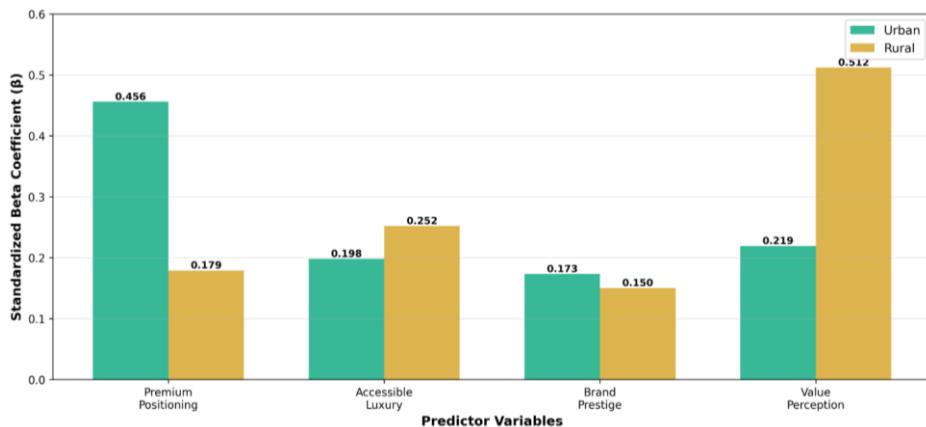


Figure 2: Beta Coefficients Comparison - Urban vs Rural

Figure 2 visualizes the differential predictive power of masstige dimensions across urban and rural segments, clearly demonstrating the contrasting priorities: urban consumers' preference for premium positioning versus rural consumers' emphasis on value perception.

Mediation Analysis

To test **H4**, mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro to examine whether value perception mediates the relationship between masstige marketing strategies (combined independent variable) and purchase intentions.

Table 6: Mediation Analysis Results

Path	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Result
Total Sample (n=384)					
Total Effect (c)	0.612***	0.048	0.517	0.707	Significant
Direct Effect (c')	0.384***	0.052	0.282	0.486	Significant
Indirect Effect (ab)	0.228	0.036	0.162	0.304	Significant
Urban Consumers (n=192)					
Indirect Effect (ab)	0.186	0.041	0.109	0.272	Significant
Rural Consumers (n=192)					
Indirect Effect (ab)	0.294	0.048	0.203	0.395	Significant

** $p < 0.001$; LLCI/ULCI = Lower/Upper Level Confidence Interval (95%)

Results indicate partial mediation, as both direct and indirect effects remain significant. Value perception mediates 37.3% of the total effect (0.228/0.612). Notably, the mediation effect is stronger for rural consumers (48.0% of total effect) compared to urban consumers (30.4%), supporting **H4** and highlighting the critical role of value perception in rural purchase decisions.

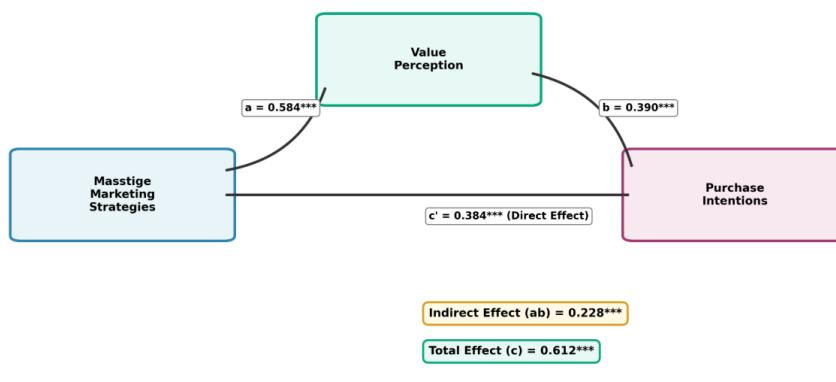


Figure 3: Mediation Model

Figure 3 presents the mediation model, illustrating how value perception serves as a crucial psychological mechanism through which masstige marketing strategies influence purchase intentions.

Product Category Analysis

Analysis of specific product categories revealed differential preferences between urban and rural consumers.

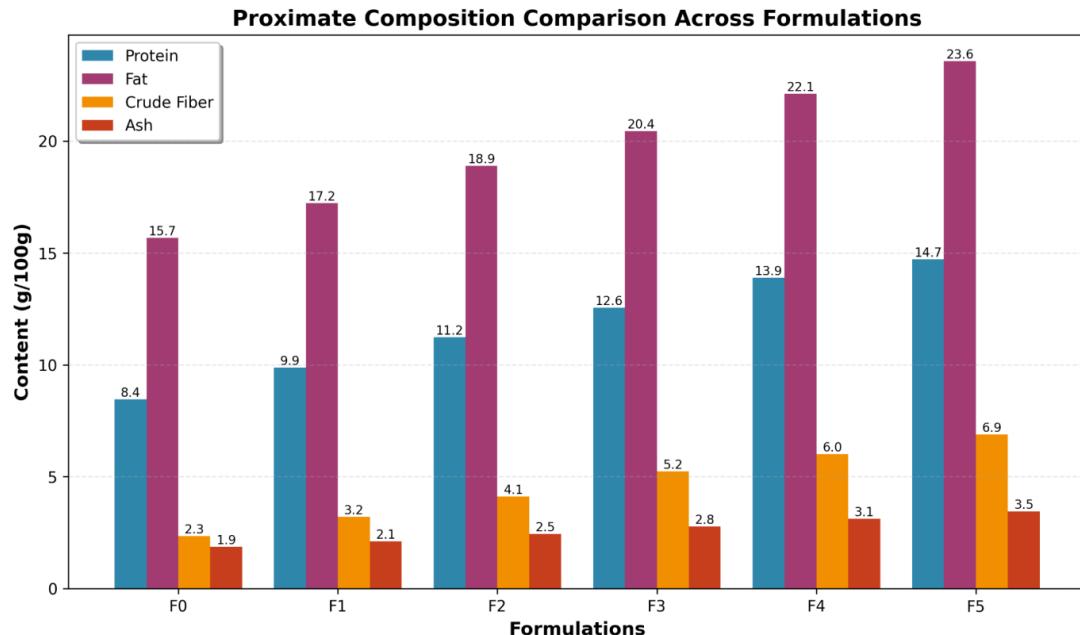


Figure 4: Purchase Intentions Across Product Categories

Figure 4 demonstrates that apparel and cosmetics generate highest purchase intentions among urban consumers, while electronics show relatively convergent appeal across both segments, suggesting universal perceived value in technology products.

Discussion

Key Findings

This study gives real-world proof that high-end marketing tactics do work to change people's plans to buy, and it shows big differences between cities and rural areas. The support for H1 is in line with earlier study that showed prestige as a good way to place a product in the market (Paul, 2015; Truong et al., 2009).

The big difference in buy plans between cities and rural areas (which supports H2) shows that Bareilly Division has bigger social gaps. Higher scores across all masstige dimensions for urban consumers show that they are more likely to be exposed to premium brands, have more money to spend, and follow better aspirational consumption habits. This result backs up what Mishra and Mishra (2019) found about differences in spending between cities and rural areas in India.

The different patterns of prediction that regression analysis shows (which supports H3) are especially helpful. The fact that urban consumers put a high value on premium positioning ($\beta = 0.456$) shows that prestige signs, brand images, and aspirational links affect their buying decisions. This fits with Veblen's (1899) theory of conspicuous spending and new studies on how people seek status (Shukla, 2012).

On the other hand, country customers put more weight on how they see value ($\beta = 0.512$), which shows that they make decisions using more utilitarian models. Even though brand awareness is rising, rural customers still care about price and use functional evaluation factors. This result adds to Kumar and Steenkamp's (2013) research on buyer behavior in emerging markets by showing that value-driven choices still exist in places that aren't very urbanized.

The mediation study (which supports H4) shows that value perception is a key psychological process, especially for consumers in rural areas (with a 48.0% mediation effect compared to 30.4% in urban areas). This means that for masstige marketing to work in rural areas, it needs to focus on sharing real value propositions that go beyond just prestige connections. Emotional and practical calls must be balanced by marketers, who should focus on quality-price links and useful benefits.

Contributions to Theory

This study adds to the body of research on customer behavior in a number of ways:

- This paper applies the theory of luxury marketing to the Indian tier-2 and tier-3 markets, which haven't been studied much before. This shows that the theory can be used in places other than cities.
- Comparative Framework: It lets you compare urban and rural customers in a structured way using a single theoretical framework, going beyond study models that focus on cities.
- Mediating Mechanisms: Finds and confirms value perception as a key mediating mechanism, which helps us learn more about the psychological processes that make luxury goods work.
- The Differential Impact Model shows that different types of prestige have different effects on different groups of customers, which makes it hard to use one-size-fits-all marketing strategies.

Practical Implications

The findings offer actionable insights for marketing practitioners:

- **For Urban Markets**
 - Emphasize premium positioning through sophisticated brand communications
 - Leverage celebrity endorsements and aspirational lifestyle associations
 - Focus on exclusive distribution channels and experiential retail
 - Price products at premium tiers while maintaining accessibility relative to pure luxury brands
- **For Rural Markets**
 - Prioritize value communication emphasizing quality-price ratios
 - Highlight functional benefits and product durability
 - Utilize demonstrations and trial programs to build confidence
 - Implement tiered pricing strategies with entry-level masstige options
 - Leverage local influencers and community endorsements
- **Cross-Segment Strategies**
 - Develop flexible product portfolios catering to differential preferences
 - Create segment-specific marketing communications while maintaining brand consistency
 - Implement digital strategies to bridge urban-rural information gaps
 - Design distribution networks balancing exclusivity (urban) with accessibility (rural)

Limitations

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment:

- **Geographic Scope:** Focus on Bareilly Division limits generalizability to other Indian regions with different socioeconomic profiles.
- **Cross-Sectional Design:** Snapshot data cannot capture evolving consumer preferences or seasonal variations.
- **Self-Reported Measures:** Purchase intentions may not perfectly predict actual behavior, though TPB research supports their predictive validity.
- **Product Specificity:** General masstige orientation was measured rather than category-specific attitudes, potentially masking product-level variations.
- **Digital Influence:** The study did not specifically examine digital marketing's role, increasingly relevant in contemporary contexts.

Conclusion and Future Research Directions

This study successfully shows that high-end marketing techniques have a big effect on people's plans to buy in Bareilly Division, and these effects are very different for people who live in cities versus

those who live in rural areas. Premium positioning and prestige signs are most important to people in cities, while real value views are more important to people in rural areas. Value impression turns out to be an important way to mediate, especially in rural areas.

The results show that masstige is a good way to place a product for India's growing middle class of optimistic people, but they also show how important it is to make changes based on the target audience. As India's rural markets continue to grow, marketers need to make sure that their masstige plans strike a balance between ambition and accessibility, and between status and practicality.

Directions for Future Research

Track changes in your desire to buy as rural markets grow and incomes rise with longitudinal studies.

- **Behavioral Validation:** To improve the accuracy of predictions, combine measures of purpose with data on real purchases.
- **Digital Integration:** Look into how social media, e-commerce, and digital influences affect how people in cities and rural areas think about masstige.
- **Category-Specific Analysis:** To find differences at the category level, do in-depth studies of certain product groups like fashion, tech, and cosmetics.
- **Cross-Regional Comparison:** Do the study again in more than one Indian division to get a full picture of how things are different in different areas.
- **Psychological Moderators:** Look into how differences between people (such as the need to be unique, importance of status consumption, and price awareness) affect the success of masstige.
- **Cultural Dimensions:** Look at how cultural values like unity, power distance, and avoiding confusion affect how people respond to masstige.
- **Sustainability Integration:** Look into how ethical and environmentally friendly concerns affect high-end marketing strategies.

The rise of masstige is a big change in consumer markets, especially in economies that are still growing. As India's consumers continue to change, it becomes more and more important for marketers to understand how different markets react. This study gives basic information that can help both students and professionals understand how to make luxury products more available in a variety of market settings.

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