

Dissertation Synopsis submitted to



The IIHMR UNIVERSITY, JAIPUR

For the partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of

Master of Business Administration

In

Development Management

By

Sarthak Sharma

Enrolment Number: IIHMRU/10/2023-25/0050

Under the Supervision and Guidance of

Mrs. Kajal Sitlani

Assistance Professor

IIHMR UNIVERSITY, JAIPUR

**1, Prabhu Dayal Marg, Near Sanganer Airport, Jaipur-302029,
Rajasthan, India**

Email: iihmr@iihmr.edu.in, URL: www.iihmr.edu.in

MBA in Human Development
IIHMR University

Title:

From Water to Wi-Fi: What Rural India Really Wants – A Case Study on Aspirations and Access

Author Name:

Sarthak Sharma

Advisor Name:

Mrs. Kajal Sitlani

Assistant Professor, IIHMR University

Keywords:

Human Development, Rural Aspirations, Basic Services, Digital Inclusion, Community Voices, Field-Based Research

Background and Context

Rural development in India has traditionally followed a blueprint that prioritizes survival over aspiration. For decades, development programs have focused almost exclusively on delivering basic infrastructure—constructing roads that connect isolated villages, ensuring clean drinking water reaches every household, establishing electricity connections, and building sanitation facilities. This approach has been both necessary and logical, given that millions of rural Indians have historically lacked these fundamental services that urban populations take for granted.

However, something interesting is happening in India's villages today. During my recent fieldwork in [Village Name], Rajasthan, I witnessed a fascinating transformation in how rural communities think about their future. The conversations I had with farmers, students, housewives, and elderly residents painted a picture that challenges our conventional understanding of rural needs and desires.

While sitting in a small tea shop one evening, I overheard a teenage girl explaining to her grandfather how she needed internet access to complete her school assignments. In another conversation, a young mother told me she wanted to learn about government health schemes online but couldn't access reliable information. These moments made me realize that rural aspirations have evolved far beyond the traditional development paradigm.

The people I met still value basic amenities—they absolutely need clean water, stable electricity, and accessible healthcare. But they're also thinking about opportunities that seemed unimaginable to previous generations. They want their children to compete on equal terms with urban students through online education. They're interested in digital payment

systems, online banking, and e-commerce opportunities. They see technology not as a luxury, but as a bridge to a better future.

This shift represents more than just changing preferences; it reflects a fundamental evolution in how rural communities perceive development itself. They're moving from a mindset focused purely on meeting immediate survival needs to one that embraces growth, opportunity, and connectivity with the broader world.

Research Objectives

This study was designed with four key objectives that would help us understand this changing landscape of rural aspirations:

First, I wanted to map out what rural households actually need in their daily lives versus what they hope to achieve in the long term. This distinction between immediate necessities and future aspirations seemed crucial for understanding how development priorities might need to shift.

Second, I aimed to examine how effectively government services reach rural communities. Despite numerous schemes and programs designed for rural welfare, there seemed to be a gap between policy intentions and ground-level implementation that needed investigation.

Third, I was curious about digital readiness in rural areas. How prepared are villagers to embrace technology? What barriers prevent them from accessing digital services, and what motivates them to seek these connections?

Finally, I wanted to develop practical recommendations that could help policymakers and development practitioners align their efforts with what rural communities actually want, rather than what we assume they need.

Research Methodology

Understanding rural aspirations required a research approach that could capture both statistical realities and personal stories. I employed a mixed-method strategy that combined quantitative data with qualitative insights to build a comprehensive picture of village life and expectations.

The cornerstone of my data collection was a household survey covering 63 families in the village. This survey helped me understand living conditions, service access, income patterns, and future aspirations across different demographic groups. I made sure to include families from various economic backgrounds and social categories to ensure representative coverage.

Beyond the numbers, I conducted in-depth interviews with villagers from different walks of life. I spoke with enthusiastic young people who dreamed of online careers, women who wanted better access to health information, elderly residents who wished to stay connected

with children working in distant cities, and local leaders who understood community priorities from years of experience.

I also spent considerable time simply observing village life—noting the quality of infrastructure, watching how people accessed services, and understanding the daily rhythms that shape rural existence. This observational component helped me see beyond what people said to understand what they actually experienced.

Additionally, I reviewed secondary data from NGO reports, government statistics, and academic studies to contextualize my findings within broader patterns of rural development in Rajasthan and India.

Key Findings

The research revealed a complex picture of rural aspirations that defies simple categorization. Most significantly, I found that rural development needs can no longer be viewed through a single lens of basic service delivery.

Basic infrastructure remains critically important. Villagers still struggle with irregular water supply, power outages, and limited healthcare access. However, their definition of "basic needs" has expanded significantly. Reliable internet connectivity is increasingly viewed as essential infrastructure, comparable to electricity or roads.

The demand for digital access was perhaps the most striking finding. Parents see internet connectivity as crucial for their children's educational success. Students want to access online courses, competitive exam preparation materials, and career guidance that could help them compete with urban peers. Women expressed interest in online health consultations, information about government schemes, and even small business opportunities through digital platforms.

Employment aspirations have also diversified beyond traditional agriculture. Many villagers, particularly younger ones, are interested in skill development programs that could prepare them for jobs in nearby towns or even remote work opportunities. They understand that economic opportunities are changing and want to be prepared for new possibilities.

However, I also discovered significant gaps in government service utilization. Many beneficial schemes remain underused due to poor communication, complex application processes, and limited awareness. Villagers often learn about programs months or years after they're launched, missing crucial enrollment periods.

Conclusion and Implications

This research demonstrates that rural India is experiencing an aspirational revolution. Development planning must evolve to recognize that today's rural communities want more than survival—they want opportunities to thrive.

The implications are profound for policymakers, development practitioners, and anyone involved in rural welfare. We need integrated approaches that address both traditional infrastructure gaps and emerging digital needs. We need communication strategies that effectively inform rural communities about available services. Most importantly, we need to listen more carefully to rural voices and build development programs around their expressed priorities rather than our assumptions about their needs.

The journey from water to Wi-Fi isn't about choosing one over the other—it's about recognizing that both are essential for comprehensive human development in modern India. Only by embracing this expanded vision of rural needs can we create truly inclusive development that serves the aspirations of all Indians, regardless of where they live.