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ROLE OF MEDIA: A STUDY ON IMPACT OF ATYPICAL MEDIA IN RURAL AREAS OF UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

MOHD. SHUAIB SIDDIQUI
RESEARCH SCHOLAR
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
INTEGRAL UNIVERSITY
LUCKNOW

DR. AFTAB ALAM
PROFESSOR & DEAN
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
INTEGRAL UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the impact of atypical media on the buying behaviour of consumers belonging to rural areas. It also studies the problems and challenges faced by the rural communication in rural Uttar Pradesh and focuses on the relevance of atypical media in rural markets. Atypical media are effective tools for raising promotion of new products or for re-launching existing products. This is particularly true in the case of FMCG products, where the promoted products can propel sales volumes, provided the advertising campaign is appealing and is backed by a good distribution system. The paper elucidates the fall outs of atypical media by highlighting some national advertisement campaigns carried out by corporate giants to communicate with the target audience in rural markets. The authors take up the empirical views in highlighting the relevance of atypical media by analysing the national campaigns from secondary data sources.

KEYWORDS

Atypical Media Vehicle and Rural Consumer Buying Behaviour, FMCG Products, Rural Communication.

INTRODUCTION

Communicating the message to rural consumers has posed enormous challenges to rural marketers because of the large numbers of consumers scattered across the country. Rural communication meant for understanding the key challenges at hand- rural heterogeneity and spread, low literacy and varying comprehension abilities of rural folks, and differences in media reach and the habits of people. This problem is further compounded by the heterogeneous nature of consumers, in terms of their languages. Around two-fifths of the rural population is illiterate and literacy levels vary hugely among different states. To communicate effectively with the less educated, it becomes necessary that the focus be on creating a simple communication message. The limited reach of huge media in rural areas and its regional and state variations also pose limitations on a universal approach to communication for rural consumers. In the light of these challenges, a rural marketer should identify the most suitable medium to ensure the maximum spatial reach across the country, develop region specific consumer profiles to understand the characteristics of the target market, and design the most effective and persuasive communication and promotional strategies to induce the target audiences buy his product or service.

FEATURES OF RURAL MARKETS

As per the features, the existing rural markets are large and scattered, low standard of living, traditional outlook, diverse socio-economic backwardness and poor infrastructure facilities. The major problems faced in the rural areas of the state are underdeveloped people and under developed markets, ethnic problems facing people, many dialects, dispersed markets, low per capita income, low levels of literacy, prevalence of spurious brands and seasonal demand and a different way of thinking. These pose great challenge to rural markets.

FOCUS POINTS OF THE PROBLEMS IN RURAL COMMUNICATION

Low Literacy rate and Varying Comprehension Abilities: There are vast variations in the levels of literacy among rural citizens. Around two-fifths of the rural population is illiterate and only one fifth holds a matriculate and higher degree. To communicate effectively with the less educated, it becomes necessary to focus on creating a simple communication message using self-explanatory visuals comprising storyboards, role plays and flip charts, rather than text.

Different Media Reach and Habits: The limited reach of mass media in rural areas and its regional and state variations pose limitations on a universal approach to communication for rural consumers. As per the readership survey 2011, television has the maximum reach in rural India with 45.4%, cable and satellite with 32.6%, radio with 15.9%, press with 13.2%, cinema with 2% and internet with 8%.

Cultural and Linguistic Heterogeneity: Communicating the message to rural consumers has posed enormous challenges to the rural marketer because of the large numbers of consumers scattered across the country. Even the use of atypical media makes it almost enviable for the marketer to touch base with the widely scattered rural audience.

RURAL COMMUNICATION MEDIA

Rural media can be classified broadly into conventional mass media and atypical rural centric media. Conventional media consist of radio, television, print, cinema, outdoor media, wall painting, hoarding and personalized media, point of purchase and direct mailers etc. on the other hand atypical media includes rural centric media like video vans video raths, haats, melas, mandies, as the platforms for communication as well as the folk media Indias multilingual and multi-cultural identity limits the role of mass media activities, particularly in rural areas. This gap is filled to a great extent through atypical, rural centric media like video vans, haat / mela / mandi campaigns, folk media, puppet shows, folk theatre, contests, trolleys, hoardings, leaflets, animal parade and mobile display.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

J. Thomas Russell and W Rolland Lane (1996) [1] have defined advertising in the following words Advertising is a message paid for by an identified sponsor and delivered through some medium of mass communication. Advertising is persuasive communication. It is not natural; it is not unbiased; it says; I am going to sell you a product or an idea.

Cooke (1997) [2] stated the concept of media synergy has been suggested as an effective means to improving communication and building brand equity (share, awareness, intention, etc.). In more simplistic terms, brands that utilize integrated marketing communication strategies may perform better in the marketplace. Research has shown that "when print and TV are used synergistically, print can lead people to see the TV commercial in new ways, encourage more response, reinforce the TV message, and create a more positive feeling towards the brand" .

Speetzen (2001) [3] examined many practitioners call this "the multiplier effect," where mixed TV and magazine exposure opportunities can transfer credibility and can improve the learning effect.

Deepti Srivastava (2010) [4] evaluated that rural markets are rapidly growing in India but have often been ignored by marketers. 53% percent of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) and 59 % of consumer durables have market in the rural belts.

Cindy J. Price, Michael R.Brown (2010) [5] examined that Most research about the economy and the effect of new media on business has focused on big companies.

KC Behura and JK Panda (2012) [6] have defined that an important tool to reach out to the rural audience is through effective communication. A rural consumer is brand loyal and understands symbols better. This also makes it easy to sell look - alike", says Mr. R.V Rajan,CMD, Anugrah Madison Advertising. The rural audience has matured enough to understand the communication developed for the urban markets, especially with reference to FMCG products. Television has been a major effective communication system for rural mass and, as a result, companies should identify themselves with their advertisements. Advertisements touching the emotions of the rural folks, it is argued, could drive a quantum jump in sales.

Rajiv Kaushik in Effective Media for Rural Communication: A Studyof Panipat, (September 2013) [7] Majority of the respondents (60%) preferred television rather than newspaper, radio and other means of communication. Most of the respondents, who were in favor of T.V. lie in younger age group and elder one preferred the radio. Among the print media, newspapers are the most preferred medium and few respondents (10 %) did not respond to the question due to their illiteracy.

Dr. Surinder Singh Kundu, (September 2013) [8] stated in Customers Perception towards the Fast Moving Consumer Goods in Rural Market, Rural buyers perceived that TV commercials followed by print advertisements and word of mouth plays a significant role for taking the decision to purchase FMCGs.

Pardeep Kumar(2013) [9] stated in Challenges and Opportunities of Indian Rural Market , The Indian growth story is now spreading itself to Indias hinterland, not just witnessing an increase in its income but also in consumption and production. The economy is vibrant, income is rising, and the habits, tastes, preferences, and attitudes are changing rapidly.

Avinash Pareek & Dr. Satyam Pincha (Jan. - Feb. 2013) [10] stated that the effective communication is an important tool to reach the rural audience. Among the mass media at some point of time in the late 50's and 60's radio was considered to be a potential medium for communication to the rural people. Another mass media is television and cinemas. But now a day the scenario has changed. Television, telephone, mobile, internet etc. reached to every house in the rural India.

Ultimately the winner would be the one with the required resources like time and money and also with the much needed innovative ideas to tap the rural markets. Thus looking at the opportunities which rural markets offer to the marketers it can be said that the future is very promising for those who can understand the dynamics of rural markets and exploit them to their best advantage.

Swati priya & Pooja Bhatia (Feb 2014) [10] examined that, it may be recommended that the producers or marketers should frame ethical advertising strategies keeping in mind that rural people are fond of electronic and print media advertisements. For communication and promotion to be effective, it is important that marketers understand the socio cultural, demographic, and economic make up of the rural sector, because majority of problems arise out of these element.

RESEARCH STATEMENT

The main aim of this research work is to study the impact of atypical media on the rural masses in rural Uttar Pradesh and highlight the relevance of atypical media in rural markets.

SAMPLE SIZE

The respondents for the study are the mixture of villagers and town dwellers as customers and shopkeepers in the town markets. 100 respondents in all were contacted from the four major markets.

FINDINGS BASED ON PRIMARY DATA SOURCES

TABLE 1: PROMOTIONAL SOURCE ATTRACTING THE CUSTOMERS

Factors/ Responses	Mobile Van Promotion		Painting on the walls		Commercial in Halls		Road Shows		Newspaper & Periodicals		Commercial Pasted on Public Transport	
	Responses	% Age	Responses	% Age	Responses	% Age	Responses	% Age	Responses	% Age	Responses	% Age
Not at all effective	5	5	8	8	35	35	48	48	15	15	13	13
Not very Effective	8	8	12	12	25	25	22	22	18	18	15	15
Somewhat Effective	20	20	15	15	20	20	15	15	17	17	17	17
Very Effective	27	27	20	20	7	7	12	12	37	37	18	18
Extremely Effective	40	40	45	45	13	13	3	3	13	13	37	37
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

From the Table 1 of promotional sources attracting the customers, it is evident that mobile van promotion with 40. % response, paintings on the walls with a response of 45%, commercials pasted on public transport with a response of .13% and Newspapers and periodicals with 13% are the most effective promotional sources. The responses in these four categories are much higher than the mean score 25.16 of all the six factors in the category of extremely effective. Mobile van promotion, paintings on the walls, commercials pasted on public transport and Newspapers and periodicals are also high with their response score of 27%, 20%, 7% and 37% respectively in very effective category. These figures are much higher than the mean score 20.16 of all the six factors in the category of very effective. Commercials in the halls with a score of 35% and road shows with a score of 48% fall in the category of not at all effective. These figures are much higher than the mean score 20.16 of all the six factors in the category of not at all effective. This infers that mobile van promotion; paintings on the walls, commercials pasted on public transport and Newspapers and periodicals are most appropriate tools to attract the customers in rural markets of the state.

TABLE 2: EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT MEDIA SOURCES

Factors/ Responses	Periodicals		TV		Radio		News Paper		Cinema		Hoardings	
	Responses	% Age	Responses	% Age	Responses	% Age	Responses	% Age	Responses	% Age	Responses	% Age
Not at all effective	24	24	6	6	3	3	15	15	57	57	2	2
Not very Effective	34	34	11	11	9	9	24	24	25	25	7	7
Somewhat Effective	32	32	19	19	13	13	13	13	9	9	19	19
Very Effective	6	6	25	25	39	39	33	33	7	7	45	45
Extremely Effective	4	4	39	39	36	36	15	15	2	2	27	27
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

From the Table 2 of effectiveness of different media sources, it is clear that TV with 39% response, radio with a response of 36%, and hoardings with a response of 27% are extremely effective media sources. The responses in TV, Radio and Hoardings are much higher than the mean response of 102 in the category of extremely effective. The responses of TV with 25%, Radio with 39%, Newspaper with 33% and Hoarding with 45% are much higher than their mean response of 129 in very effective category. As for as Periodicals and Cinema are concerned, they are not effective at all or not very effective with a combined response of 57% and 82% respectively. These values are higher than their mean responses.. This interprets that all the media sources under consideration as per table 2 are effective with respect to their responses. This infers that TV, Radio, News Paper and Hoardings are highly effective media sources in order to communicate with customers in the rural markets. From the analysis, it is also advised that companies should not rely on periodicals and cinema, as they are not effective at all.

CONCLUSIONS

This study helped to understand that if the goal of media is to provide more eco-friendly and healthy FMCG products in the rural markets, then it has to focus more on consumer's perspective in order to expand its operations. Communicating with the customers in rural areas is quite a challenging task. Marketers should carefully identify such challenges; devise appropriate strategies to counter them. For communication and promotion to be effective, it is important that marketers understand the socio cultural, demographic, and economic make up of the rural sector, because majority of problems arise out of these element. With a focused approach and commitment towards understanding the rural markets, marketers can devise appropriate strategies best suiting to the rural markets for meeting their unmet needs profitably.

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