



Changing Rule of Advertising to Woo Rural Consumers

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Abstract:

As a matter of fact, the face of Indian rural market has drastically been changed due to green revolution, white revolution & Government schemes resulting into rise in rural income and aspiring for better standard of living. Subsequently, availability of infrastructure facilities and mushrooming of rural demands have opened the doors of opportunities for rural marketing. As urban market is getting saturated and rural market has a potential to grow further, producers are now focusing more on rural marketing to access the untapped rural area. Looking at the present rural market scenario, rural consumer basket is consisted of major popular brands and hence, rural marketing is at the edge of developing. This paper widely talks effective advertising strategy for rural markets. The author has made a sincere attempt to assist in developing advertising and managing it in rural market with help of secondary data and theoretical information. Additionally, this paper suggests a rural marketer to carefully think of advertising strategy after thoroughly scanning of rural environment. Moreover, a rural marketer should emphasize on concentrated marketing, a combination of pull and push strategy, syndicate strategy, celebrity marketing & a blend of appropriate media keeping in mind rural market set up.

Keywords: Advertising, Concentrated Marketing, Syndicate strategy & Celebrity Marketing

1. Introduction

The growth of opportunities in rural markets and subsequently mushrooming of rural demand truly entice a producer to make conscious efforts to penetrate in rural market. Numerically, 3/4th of consumers of India resides in rural market and contributes significantly in National Income. In the similar context, 31.16% of the India population lives in urban areas while 68.84% dwells in villages. (Census, 2011) Therefore, a producer should move towards rural markets and formulate rural marketing strategy wisely so as to tap the entire rural market that has shown a great potential to grow in the present time. “The rural market is growing faster than urban Indian now” said by Venugopal Dhoot, Videocon Appliances. The rural market is the new driving force of the ‘Indian Consumption Story’ (Suharwardi & Hakim, 2014). Interestingly, e-Choupal launched by ITC is proved to be a landmark in rural marketing. It is a virtual market place where farmers can transact for agricultural inputs, get information on price, quality improvement and other necessary online guidance. In addition, Godrej, Dabur, Marico and Hindustan Unilever Ltd have successfully penetrated into rural market with FMCGs. Similarly, Maruti Suzuki, Mahindra and Mahindra (Scorpio), Toyota Kirloskar Motor, Hero, Honda have also tapped the rural areas. Table 1.1 indicates the estimated annual size of rural market for different categories of products.

Table 1: Estimated Annual Size of Rural Market	
FMCG	Rs. 65,000 Cr.
Durables	Rs. 5,000 Cr.
Agricultural Input (Including Tractor)	Rs. 45,000 Cr.
2 or 4 wheelers	Rs. 8,000 Cr.
Source: NCAER Report 2011	

Table 1.2 depicts the correct picture of rural market penetration for following FMCG category of products in comparison with urban market.

Table 2: Rich Potential – Market Penetration		
FMCG Category	Rural (%)	Urban (%)
Glucose	10	21
Branded Baby Oil	2	4
Hair Oil	72	84
Shampoo	56	69
Tooth Powder	22	13
Tooth Paste	63	91
Toilet Cleaner	12	45
Source: Indian Readership Survey 2012 Retrieved from: http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/fmcg-firms-brace-for-new-rural-reality-114010801871_1.html		

Talking further, the rural market set up appears to be entirely different from that of the urban market. Hence, the marketing strategy adopted by a producer to capture more market share in urban areas cannot be repeated in rural areas. As urban market is getting saturated, it has made a marketer shift his attention towards rural markets. A rural marketer is required to study three main constituents of rural market environment namely rural consumer, rural demand and drivers of rural marketing. At the same time, he has to rethink Marketing Mix elements in order to effectively cater rural consumers. This paper offers significant insights developing creative advertisement especially in rural market to fetch more number of rural consumers, to create rural demand and subsequently to acquire larger market share. For the past two decades, rural market has experienced major transformation which has massively affected rural people's lifestyle, occupation, beliefs, perception and most importantly needs. A rural marketer can achieve rural marketing objectives by adopting 6A_s strategy involving Affordability, Accessibility, Availability, Acceptability, Assurance and Awareness. This is also termed as concentrated rural marketing. So, while designing strategy for advertisement, a marketer is expected to undertake complete market research resulting into increasing the likelihood of success.

2. Advertising in Rural Market

“Promise, large promise is the soul of advertisement” – Dr. S. Johnson

“Advertising attempts to present the most persuasive possible selling message to the right prospects for the product or service at the lowest possible cost.” (Quinn, Patrick 1996) Actually, Advertising word has been derived from the Latin word ‘Adverto’ (to turn around) which means employed to draw attention to any object or purpose. Similarly, advertising has been defined as any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and service by an identified sponsor.

In developing advertising strategy for rural market, a rural marketer should have a better understanding about the profile of rural consumers, availability of necessary infrastructure supporting to easily implementation of advertising media and campaign. This exercise ensures the probability of successful advertising campaign. In addition to this, a rural marketer is required to take into account various factors which considerably influence the advertising. These factors are level of literacy, existence of infrastructure facilities (network coverage for T.V., Internet, Radio and electricity), lifestyle of rural consumers, geographical situation, time and place of advertisement, use of media and endorser.

Moreover, a producer wishing to penetrate into rural market should adopt concentrated marketing which is completely different from urban marketing in all the ways. The concentrated marketing of rural market is one in which the entire rural marketing operation revolves exclusively around the rural

consumers focusing more on satisfying their needs. As discussed in the introductory paragraph of this paper, concentrated marketing should encompass 6A_s, viz. Availability, Accessibility, Awareness, Affordability, Assurance and Acceptability. Out of, 2A_s, namely awareness and acceptability are better taken care of through advertising in rural area.

Furthermore, at the different stages of product / service and to realise variety of objectives in rural market, a marketer needs to opt for following types of advertising.

2.1 Informative Advertising

The primary objective of information advertising is to offer basic information regarding the brand to create an initial demand. In early days of product / service, informative advertising is used. Through type of advertising, efforts for brand awareness are made as product is in its pioneer stage. In rural market, information advertising should be in lucid language and attention seeking to influence the minds of rural population which places one thought in their minds.

2.2 Persuasive Advertising

Persuasive Advertising aims at changing the attitude of consumers to particular brand. In fact, through this type of advertising, rural consumers are convinced to accept a particular brand. Here, an advertiser makes an attempt to create selective demand when brand is at competitive stage in rural market. This type of advertising is also referred as comparative advertisement in which attributes of advertiser's brand is compared with those of other brands.

Apparently, majority of rural consumers are rigid, traditional bound and live primitive life which greatly resist them to change their beliefs and accept new brand. Hence, it can be said that persuasive advertising assists in altering the misconception and belief of rural consumers by supplying necessary information as suggested in the Consistency Theory of attitude change. In the similar line, the rural marketer should take a help of the Congruity and the Dissonance Theory in which there is a liking and acceptance of one brand and rejection of the brands.

2.3 Reminder Advertising

Advertising reminds people about the established products. As a matter of fact, rural people live hard life as they are mainly engaged in agriculture activities. And therefore, anything that was seen or heard long back, can easily get erased from their memory. So, it becomes imperative for a rural marketer to remind the rural consumers about his product after regular interval in a fresh way. For instance, Coca Cola, Lux and other automobile brands. Similarly, reinforcement strategy which is a part of reminder strategy, offers an assurance that their choice of product is right by featuring benefits of post purchase behaviour of satisfied rural customers. For example, Ariel Washing Powder

3. Advertising Strategy for Rural Market

Patrick Quinn has described advertising strategy, pull and push strategy in his book entitled Marketing Communication which can be adopted in rural context.

3.1 Pull Strategy

In pull strategy, a marketer spends heavily on media advertising. It is primarily adopted to motivate mass consumers in which most promotion efforts are concentrated more on media advertising. A rural marketer can adopt pull strategy because the present time witnesses the technology invasion in rural area, rise in readership (of newspaper and magazine due rise in level of literacy), increase in T.V. ownership, affordability and portability of radio, electrified villages, network coverage of internet which significantly favour media advertising in rural market. But, for the implementation of pull strategy, a marketer is required to conduct a market research to know the effectiveness of probable media.

3.2 Push Strategy

The push strategy basically emphasizes more on efforts of sales person. Generally, when the product is its infancy stage, this strategy helps the marketer penetrate into a market. In Push strategy, necessary information related to product offer is supplied to consumers through sales persons. They try to remove the misconception and change the attitude of consumers towards products. As rural consumers are narrow minded and not easily convinced, sales person can easily influence their behaviour with effective presentation and sales efforts. However, push strategy is also supported by product brochures and leaflets which are the part of media advertising.

Ideally, a rural marketer should not solely rely on one of the above discussed strategies. Instead, a combination of both pull and push strategy should be adopted along with the blend of appropriate media of advertising. When product is in pioneering stage in rural area, sales persons should be sent to rural areas and at the same time, media advertising should also be undertaken so as to supplement the efforts of sales personnel.

Furthermore, a rural marketer can also develop following advertising strategy in order to make the rural consumers aware of product and spread the selling message (Bhatt, J et al. 2013).

3.3 Celebrity Endorsement Strategy

This type of strategy greatly influences the rural population as the product offered is endorsed by the celebrity / brand ambassador who has influencing personality and is famous among rural people. 'Celebrity endorsement has been established as one of the popular tools of advertising and is perceived as a winning formula for product marketing and brand building. However, it has also been found that it is tough to establish a strong association between the product and the endorser'. (Mukherjee, 2012) A marketer should painstakingly choose a celebrity for endorsing a product/service who has positive image, is an appropriate to endorse a product so that he/she can positively hit the rural mass. To some extent, it can increase the credibility of brand endorsed by such personality. For instance, regional movie actor/ actress, sportsperson belonging to a particular region, sarpanch, and school master can be used for celebrity endorsement.

3.4 Participatory Strategy

In rural area, festivals, fairs, regional (local) sports game / competition becomes advantageous for rural marketers because during those days, rural people in huge number gather there. So, they can be easily attracted and informed about various brands. The participatory strategy is a kind of game plan in which different brand sponsors advertise their brands in such type of events. It means their advertisement campaign is coincided with fair, festival or sports competition. As for example, hoardings / banners are placed, gaming zone is set up in fair, prizes in competition are sponsored by the advertiser, cooking competition can be arranged for female rural consumers and T-shirt printed with brand logo / name can also be distributed.

3.5 Demonstrative Strategy

The efforts of sales personnel and demonstration are the part of Demonstrative Strategy in which rural consumers are well educated about the produce through demonstration and explanation regarding usage, characteristics, technical information. Sometimes, sales personnel travel door to door in rural area, exhibition cum sales can also be held at prime location, information centres can be opened at particular locations of rural area. This is known as show-n-tell strategy. For example: This type of strategy has been adopted by Airtel, BSNL, Banks, Gas Stove, Aqua guard water purifier etc.,

3.6 Syndicate Strategy

Basically, syndicate type of strategy is collaborative efforts made to advertise variety of brands by different producers in rural area. Unlike urban area, advertising in rural area is quite costly and

challenging task. So, joint efforts of various brands sponsors are advisable to sell their brands in rural area. For instance, Joint publicity committee of the nationalised bank started advertising through mobile van in early 90s in the rural market of India. Similarly, a trade fair / show can be organized collectively to showcase and promote various brands in rural area. This is somewhat cost effective advertising strategy.

4. Elements of Advertising in Rural Market

4.1 Advertising Message

Advertising message is the crux of the entire advertising. It therefore necessitates an advertiser to generate a message in a creative way to largely appeal the mass. When it comes to rural marketing, advertising message should be so generated that can impressively hit the minds of rural consumers. In generating advertising message, one of the four rewards from a product should be featured namely rational, sensory, social or eco satisfaction in advertising message with a view to catching more attention of rural consumers. Hence, a marketer should do research work to know the most desired reward among rural consumers. As it is the known fact that rural consumers are stubborn and narrow minded, the advertiser should rightly translate advertising message which should be convincing and believable in nature. Most importantly, while executing the advertising message in rural area, an advertiser should think on style, tone, words and format in order to deliver a cohesive image and executive message effectively. Following are important points to be taken care of...

- Advertising should reflect the rural life style Eg: BSNL internet service advertisement endorsed by Deepika Padukone, in one of the advertisements of Coca-Cola Aamir Khan was featured as Punjabi farmer offering Coca-Cola to ladies asking for *Thanda*
- Background music and tune should be purely local and jingle should be so composed that it can seek the greater attention of rural consumers, For example, Maro Gaav... jingle featuring Smita Patil as village woman reflecting the rural life style
- If possible, personality symbol representing or targeting rural consumers should be incorporated in advertising. Generally, it is an animated character that personifies the product Eg: Chacha Chaudhari, Chhota Bhim, Animated image of farmer or shepherd.
- Technical expertise of producer can also be exhibited in advertisement by featuring production plant to remove the misconception or wrong belief concerning to product.
- As a part of scientific evidence, comparison of brands should be shown
- Testimonial evidence should be included through celebrity endorsement, featuring the opinion of satisfied customers For example: dentist for toothpaste, actress for hair oil, satisfied farmer for agricultural inputs
- Advertising message should be conveyed in an appropriate positive tone expressing emotion and feeling. For instance, an advertisement of Tata Sky connection in hilly rural area.
- Moreover, memorable and attention seeking words should be used. Similarly, local slang can also be part of advertising and well known creative phrase can also have a great impact in the minds of rural consumers.
- Advertising message should be accompanied by interesting punch line. For Example: *Thanda Matlab* Coca-Cola, washing powder – *Safedi ki chamkar*
- Format of advertising message should carefully be thought. It means it should not be too much lengthy, bright shades of colour should be used and be featured in an illustrative manner.

4.2 Advertising Agency

Another key decision that a rural marketer makes is to choose the right advertising agency. A rural marketer should wisely select an advertising agency which can creatively design advertisement. Hence, he/she is required to ask following questions.

- Does it (advertising agency) have the experience of rural market?
- How much does it cost?

- Is it an unfamiliar market segment for an advertising agency?
- Which media will it be adopted?

4.3 Advertising Media

Advertising is a core part of marketing communication. Apparently, rural marketing communication is quite expensive as compared to urban one. Furthermore, a rural marketer should carefully decide the appropriate media mix because majority of rural consumer are predominately illiterate. Following are the probable media of advertising

- **Radio:** To the larger extent, radio plays a significant role in rural market communication. Interestingly, FM Radio has revitalised the era of radio. Besides, affordability and portability of radio make the rural consumers to possess the radio. Different brand sponsors promote their brand by the way of sponsoring gift voucher or contest prizes through the medium of radio. Advertising message in local language is broadcasted. For instance, Zandu Balm, Indigo, Dabur, Colgate, Rasana were advertised on radio.
- **Television:** The ownership of TV in rural area and wide coverage has made a rural market to opt the T.V. as a prime media of advertising. A rural marketer can advertise his products on regional channel to seek the more attention of rural consumers. For instance, advertisement on ETV Gujarati, DD Girnar, Sun TV, Asianet, Star Bangla, Star Pravah.
- **Theatre (cinema):** Seemingly, as a part of regular lifestyle, rural consumers now go for movie in theatre. In fact, big villages have now theatres / cinema and therefore, a rural marketer can take an advantage of it by employing advertisement film, short feature film and documentary with creative and disguised advertising message. For instance, Lifebuoy, Vicks, shampoos, Colgate advertisement were shown in theatre of villages, In the same way, short advertisement of LIC and other private insurance companies to spread awareness among rural consumers
- **Outdoor media:** At prime locations in rural areas viz. market place, bus depot or other places where fairs are held, hoardings, wall painting, illumination and other display can be ideally used for rural communication.
- **Print Media:** With the efforts of Government scheme and interaction with urban people, noteworthy improvement in the level of literacy has been reported in rural areas. Therefore, print media can be used to make young population aware of products / services of producers. Eg: news paper namely, Dainik Jagran, Gujarat Samachar, Sadash,
- **Puppet Shows / Ramlila / Harikatha / Haat:** Puppet shows, local dance performance, *Harikatha*, *Ramlila* are commonly arranged in rural area for an entertainment. These are the events where people gather together in huge number. So, a rural marketer can not only adopt product placement strategy in such events but also sponsor them. Similarly, puppet shows should also be designed featuring the product therein. For example, Colgate Palmolive, Titan made the best use of festivals viz. *Rathyatra*, *Kumbhmela* and *Onam*. Similarly, Parachute Oil, Nirma Washing Powder, Tiger brand biscuits were promoted in Haat.
- **Music Cassettes:** An advertising message can be recorded in local languages with catchy jingle and melodious music and be played at prime location. In addition to this, such music cassettes can also be distributed in rural areas.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the present rural marketing is at the edge of developing which has eventually shown the positive sign of growth in rural areas. The concentrated rural marketing is suggested to acquire major market share in rural area. Similarly, advertising is a significant constituent of rural marketing which should tactfully be dealt with.

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