

A Study on Use of Digital Marketing Platforms as a Tool for Rural Marketing in India

Dr. Bharatkumar P. Vankar

M.com, B.ed, Ph.D

ABSTRACT

In current years, vendors see an unexploited budding in the rural part of the country due to the economic shifts which in turn lead to rise in the purchasing power of rural civic. Lately, introduction of various schemes and programs for promoting digitization in India by government at reduced cost leads to substantial rise in number of internet users in rural parts. Also in-situ, availability of smartphones and internet data plans at affordable rates were also few of the reasons behind digital push in rural India. This opens a scope for marketers to tap this unexploited rural market and promote their products via digital media. This paper focuses on exploring how digital medium can be used for the marketing, as well as to trace out products/companies using digital media to expand their consumer base to the less emerge segment of consumers.

INTRODUCTION

Rural area means thinly settled area exterior of the limits of a city or municipality or a designated commercial, industrial, or residential center. RuralIndia is with mammoth variation from urban area in terms of various features like infrastructure, architectonic, socio economic and public administration. Rural area also differs from urban in terms of size of inhabitants, population density, area, built up ratio etc. As per the Government of India rural sector means place as per the latest census which meets following criteria.

- A population of less than 5000
- Density of population is less than 400 per square km and
- More than 25 percent of male working population is engaged in agriculture.

Marketing is a professional word that experts have defined various ways. In fact, even at enterprise level individuals may recognize the term in a different way. Basically, it is a management practise through which products and services move from concept to the customer. It includes identification of a product, determining demand, deciding on its price, and selecting distribution channels. It also includes developing and implementing an advertising and publicity strategy.

Rural marketing is —any beneficiary belongs to the rural part in exchange of goods and services comes under the rural marketing.

Prof. Mithileshwar Jha proposed a simple yet beautiful matrix to understand it

Flow of Goods and services Consumers



Rural ————— Rural
Rural ————— Urban
Urban ————— Rural
Rural marketing within the context of Indian

Economy can be classified into: (i) Selling of agricultural products in urban area (ii) Selling of manufactured products in rural area.

Digital describes electronic technology that generates stores and process data. Somebody said that digital should be seen less as a thing and more a way of doing things.

Digital Marketing means to promote the product and services offered by the use of digital technologies. Most common platform is the internet, mobile and television are also the prime platform. 10 years ago televisions were the primary source of digital advertising. Currently digital marketing is referred as online marketing because of techniques like search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), pop up advertisements, e-commerce, email marketing etc.

Techniques Of Digital Marketing

Online Tracking: - This comprises of keeping the tabs on the user conduct to collect the information about his preference and interests and provide him advertisements based on that. This supports in appealing the customers towards its requirement.

Social Media: - Social media has become pretty popular in current days as it provides a platform for a company to promote its product freely or in an economic way. Consumers are also invigorated to share their views about the product and their experiences.

E-Commerce: - These type of websites/platform performs the data driven advertising. User has to provide data on the website like the Email ids and contact numbers. The privacy of consumer is maintained and their personal information is used to communicate to create awareness about the current offers and trends. Customer receives the text or emails about the offers of particular brands.

Remarketing: - This has the pivotal role in the marketing and it helps in segregating the interested customers direct them to the website by placing the ads in front of him. In this system people search for something or visit a particular website and based on that he specified ad is placed in front of him.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Erda CV (2008) studied the comparative buying behaviour of rural and urban customers on mobile phones. The study highlighted the difference in terms of consciousness about price, quality, style, function and brand. It was concluded that rural segments pay less attention towards the quality, function, and brand and are more conscious about price and style. It was concluded that minor modification and extrapolation of urban marketing strategies might fail in rural marketing.

Pooja and Neha (2014) in their study examined the scope of rural marketing in India. They concluded their findings that there exist exits a large scope of rural market is yet to be exploited.

Saroj Kumar Verma (2013) examined the challenges and opportunities of rural marketing in India. One of the major challenges identified in the study were the non-homogenous and the scattered nature of market. Other challenges included seasonal marketing, low per capita income, transportation, and warehousing. On the other hand, huge population seen a huge customer base in rural segment is admired as an opportunity for marketers to channelize their efforts. Increase in purchasing power as reported by Rural Marketing Association of India (RMAI) is another conclusion of the study which highlights that there indeed exist an untapped market in this segment.

Edward J Malecki (2003) worked on the potential and pitfalls of digital development in rural areas. Clearly there are potential benefits of the digitalization in rural area which increases the efficiency of work but it also has downfall like it would shortage of human capital. As there is weakness in technology goods and services are available at a click away from the people and that has reduced the human interaction. Internet and mobile have become an integral part of our life, whether in case of telecommunication, entertainment of marketing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The nature of the study is qualitative and exploratory. The study attempts to explain the impact of digitization on the development of rural marketing. The journals, websites and other public sources are main bases of several data and information included in this research paper. This is exploratory type research and based on secondary data and information only.

Relationship Between Rural Marketing And Digital Marketing

The rural population of India is more than 70 % of the total population of the country. The rural market in India produces more revenues in the country as the rural regions comprise of the maximum consumers in this country. The rural market in Indian economy generates almost more than half of the country's income. Therefore, rural marketing is growing opening for vendors to exploit and invest. With its bulky buyers, a company can fruitfully generate optimum profit. Several businesses have now initiated to market their goods in rural markets. However, rural marketing is subject to number of challenges such as dispersed markets, no identical conduct of customers, choice for home-grown products and sellers, and increased cost of travel and transport. Such obstacles in doing business and marketing in rural sector can be overcome by shifting from on ground marketing to digital marketing.

Digital marketing has got an immense opportunity to exploit and invest in the rural marketing in its developing phase in India. With an increase in number of internet users and increased sign up on social networks, we are witnessing a heavy penetration of digital media into the earlier unexplored segment of population. The government of India is also marketing and promoting digital activities by offering various programmes and trying to make it most popular and cheapest mode of information swapping and communication. Therefore, Digital marketing is becoming most important tool to reach to large and right target audience residing in rural in very cost effective manner using just laptop and some skills is digital marketing. This opening is not yet grasped to its full extent but definitely in the coming years it will be one of the popular medium of marketing. This helps to increase the scale of business and to earn high rate of return on investment. Therefore, digital marketing is becoming key aspect in Indian rural marketing with the development of technology.

The urban market has already retorted very prosperous to the use of various digital techniques till used for marketing and it is likely that rural market will also respond in same manner. Further, the urban market is already flooded and therefore vendors need to move into new market for business.

Objectives Of The Study

- To study and understand usage of various digital platforms and techniques for rural marketing
- To study and understand impact of digital marketing in rural marketing in India.

Advantages Of Digital Marketing

Digital marketing has many advantage over traditional marketing such as follow:

It is possible to prepare strategies with the help of data and analytics to have broader and wider outreach to customers:

With digital marketing, one can have knowledge of the exact number of individuals who have viewed your website's homepage in real time. With Google analytics, it is possible to trail statistics and information about marketing website. This will provide assistance to identify about –the number of persons visiting ones business page - their geographic location - the sex, age and interests of the visitors - how much time they are spending on site - the source of traffic from various gadgets - website bounce rates - how the traffic has changed over time and by displaying a breakdown of all of this traffic information, the outcome of this procedure helps a businessmen to prioritize the marketing channels.

The real-time data analysis provides businessmen with improved and evocative understanding of the effectiveness of marketing strategies. With access to this information, one can also develop marketing budget for marketing with no barriers in terms of poor connectivity, scattered geography, or terrain. A product can be advertised in any remote locations using digital media for marketing. Thus, giving it, more number of potential consumers to target with the available pool of resources.

Digital Mode for creating awareness about product is more effective.

If we compare that one has created a product brochure and delivered it to people as an offline content, it seems to be less expedient. This is because the brochure makers have to make necessary arrangement for its distribution in effective manner. In spite of that there will be no idea how many people have gone through it.

Against this if one has created an impactful visual content and started promoting it on social media. Through digital networks, one can educate potential buyers about products and services effectively and efficiently.

Digital marketing can be personalized at the same time can help to reach to customer even at international level.

Internet marketing activities can be done in tailor made format and offers and programs can be customized or personalized based on the profiles and other consumer conducts included in targeted audiences. This will give customers very well perception of the products and services and make possible to measure the value for price paid. This also helps to know the customers requirement in better way.

The use of internet has made the world as global village. Digital marketing activities are done online, trades are not bound by brick-and-mortar boundaries when it comes to reaching out to a wider audience. The world just became smaller with Internet marketing, allowing businesses from one part of the world market to another as if they're just a few blocks away from each other. Geographical remoteness are now throwaway with Internet marketing, allowing businesses to reach and interact with targeted customers more than they could ever will using traditional marketing methods.

Digital marketing offers fast feedback and outcomes are quantifiable

As per the traditional way, the survey method is normally used to get customers responses and feedback about the product and services offered and for further improvement. This survey and analysis is based on scattered and vague parameters and with number of assumptions. Sometimes this may not be covering the targeted audience and sometimes data collected may be less reliable due to lack of interest or knowledge of respondents. In this situation the ration between efforts and benefit remains low. On the contrary, Internet marketing results are easily measurable and available in real time. Each click or visit to a landing page or websites, sign ups, and online purchases can actually be measured very accurately allowing digital marketers to easily gauge which particular Internet marketing tool will work for them and bring the best results. On top of that, Internet marketing analytics data can also give digital marketers a better insight about their targeted customers purchasing behaviour among other things.

Digital Marketing helps business to be cost effective

Compared to traditional mass media marketing, Internet marketing is much more cost-effective. Internet marketing also does not require ridiculously large amounts of investment as what businesses have done in the past with mass media marketing. Internet marketing channels are cheaper compare to traditional media channels, and in many cases websites can generate traffic even for free.

Some businesses also need not spend huge amounts on property rentals, maintenance fees, and overhead costs for stock rooms as products can be drop shipped directly from your supplier to your end customer.

Digital marketing bring down transportation cost.

Low cost of transportation: The features that needs to be put up at strategic locations needs to be transported from head branches to the target locations. Due to bad roads and distant placements of rural villages it results into a very high cost on transportations. In case of digital marketing this cost cuts down substantially. All the features can be projected on respective media through digital means which means no travelling is involved.

Digital marketing allows more lucrative options.

Digital marketing methods are not limited space or time. Marketers can deploy lucrative means such as videos, audios, teasers, real time analysis, etc. to capture the attention of consumers in the segment. Compared to traditional marketing where only few options are available, these methods have significantly more number of options to expand customers.

The other benefits of digital marketing includes flexibility in business, low obstruction to entry, easy to optimize and adopt change

Digital marketing is not limited to identify needs only, but also is very useful tool to identify the innate needs of the customers. It can be an effective tool to implement push marketing for the market expansion of any product. At the same time, marketers must realize that the scope of the product that should be pushed into rural segment is limited. Any product which has physical form should be examined before being promoted in the rural segment. The cost of physically delivering the product must be realized prior to promotion to avoid any waste of money and effort.

The few types of product that could find digital marketing helpful:

Social Networking: Increasing craze of connecting to friends and staying in touch 24*7 have given this network an immense market waiting for them. With digital marketing promoting these networks, they can easily penetrate into the new market and gain a lion's share.

Online Education Sources: these products have high scope of market expansion in rural segment. With the increasing literacy rate and realization towards importance of education in the youth, these apps can build a promising customer base.

Ticket Booking System: Ticket booking websites and agent dealing in booking of railway tickets, parcels, airline tickets, hotel booking etc. can find a substantial number of customers looking for easy means to get their bookings. Thus, these products can also have a positive response from digital marketing in rural areas.

E-Commerce: in low cost products: Apps and websites dealing in low cost product such as FMCG and others might find it useless to invest in the rural segments. This is because the cost of physically delivering an ordered good might compromise in their profits. Thus, these products should thoroughly examine their overall costs involved before taking a step forward.

Games: With the youth becoming more addicted to online gaming, these apps already have customers waiting for them. Many apps might find it cake walk to enter these markets and gain a share. Further, these platforms can themselves serve as media of marketing, hence improve on their earnings.

Music and Video Apps: Apps dealing in music and movies have a great untapped opportunity in the rural market. On-ground marketing techniques might be almost useless whereas digital marketing might help them reach right set of customers in the rural market.

Informatory Apps: With the technology penetrating the world at an unprecedented speed, apps providing services like news, GK, current affairs, etc. might make their physical counterparts obsolete in coming years. They have high scope of gaining existing customers who are already involved in their physical commodities.

All these means conversed above can themselves act as a carrier of marketing techniques. This is another advantage of digital marketing. The media used as channel for digital marketing can themselves be a product. Thus, companies can have mutual associations to promote products of each other, thus saving cost of marketing.

CONCLUSION

The India and Indian economy is growing with good pace. The rural parts of India are also benefited and reaping fruits of overall growth of country. Standard of living of people residing in rural India is improving day by day with increase in their wealth. Information asymmetry is declining day by day and rural consumers are well aware about wider choices of products and services available in the markets, which leads to increase in demand and expectations for quality products/services. For marketers, this has opened new door of development to expand their business and get competitive advantage in this cut- throat competition. Digital media and efforts to market the products/ services through online media will going to play a vital role in gaining market share in rural markets. The innovation of new technology with diversification has made possible for business to reach this untapped rural market in very effective and efficient manner at low cost.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Erda CV (2008), —A comparative study on Buying Behaviour of Rural and Urban
- [2]. Consumers on Mobile Phone in Jamnagar District| in conference on marketing to rural consumers undertaking and Tapping the Rural Marketing Potential, pp79-92. IIMK
- [3]. Malecki, E. (2003). Digital development in rural areas: potentials and pitfalls. Journal of Rural Studies, 19(2), pp.201-214
- [4]. Manav, K. (2015). Rural marketing in India. Anusandhanika, 7(1), 163-169. Rao
- [5]. Srinivas G (2002), Rural Marketing in India, Anmol Publisher, 1st Edition, pp. 11-14
- [6]. Marketing to Rural Consumers: Understanding and Tapping the Rural Market Potential. Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, 46.3 (2011): 538. Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources
- [7]. Parihar BBS, Yadav S and Siddiqui I (2007). Urban Rural Consumer Behaviour. A comparative Study with Special Reference to consumer Durables. | The ICAI Journal of Consumer Behaviour, vol.2 No.1, pp. 51-58 March