
UNIT 8 UNDERSTANDING RURAL MEDIA AND CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

Objectives

After reading the unit you should be able to:

- describe the existing patterns of advertising in the rural context.
- discuss the imperatives in advertising for the rural markets.
- explain the relationship of segmentation and advertising practices
- discuss the variations in advertising across the life cycle stages.
- elaborate upon the various forms of advertising in the rural context
- develop an appreciation of new ways of communicating to rural consumer
- develop appropriate promotional inputs for rural markets

Structure

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Advertising Strategies for Rural Markets
- 8.3 Advertising through Conventional Media
- 8.4 Promotion and Demonstration
- 8.5 Exploration of New Opportunities
- 8.6 Some innovative Methods in Rural Promotion
- 8.7 Summary
- 8.8 Self Assessment Questions
- 8.9 Further Readings

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The demand for consumer products and agricultural products is consistently growing in the villages, necessitating the development of rural advertising. The principles of advertising are universally applicable, cutting across national and cultural boundaries. But the actual advertising varies from market to market. The issue of focus with respect to advertising content and practice is the target audience. Most manufacturers have aimed exclusively at the urban market without giving adequate importance to exclusive advertising for rural markets. As the rural consumer has acquired the means to spend on consumer and agricultural products, companies need to focus on exclusive advertising for rural markets.

It is important to inform rural customers regarding products and services that could upgrade their living standards and also improve productivity of their enterprises. Advertising could also help in changing their attitudes, habits and lifestyles regarding literacy, family planning, hygiene, education etc. Villagers, like all customers do not buy products. They wish to buy solution to problems. Like the urbanites, they are also buying benefits, satisfactions and fulfillment of needs. Hence a successful advertisement will be one that shows problems resolution.



8.2 ADVERTISING STRATEGIES FOR RURAL MARKETS

Irrespective of the media used the following directions have been seen to work well for rural markets. You would need to back up your promotional efforts in the rural markets very strongly with an understanding of the behavioral dimensions of rural consumers. This unit is strongly dependant upon your understanding of blocks 1 and 2 of this course.

8.2.1 Positioning and Segmentation

Advertising in the rural areas is expensive as the villages are far flung, mostly inaccessible and the target audience is mostly illiterate. Hence advertising strategy, message and media differ with respect of positioning of the product and the segment targeted.

In India if the segmentation of population is done based on income, the very rich constitute nearly 6 million people, the consuming class about 150 million, the new market segment of climbers 275 million and the aspirants another 275 million. The trend here is an increase in population of the consuming class, and climbers. At the same time there will be a decrease in aspirants and destitutes.

The ORG population breakdown indicates there are 3 different classes in the rural , market as follows :

Class I Population over 5,000

Class II Population between 1000 and 5000 and

Class III Population below 1000

Mainly the consumer goods and durable product marketers today are targeting class I villages for their products. The changes that the rural market has undergone are to be kept in mind while taking decisions regarding the communication strategy for rural markets. For example, in segmentation based on age, let us consider the rural youth in the villages. They no longer wear traditional Indian attire. Their dress code is made up of trousers, shirts and T-shirts. Jeans is another upcoming favorite. They prefer sober shades of colours. The youth do not play marbles, gilli danda or Kho-kho. Cricket is the craze of every age group. A large number of them consume cold drinks and chew gum (big babool and center fresh). Pepsi, Thumbs-up, coke and Mirinda have replaced lassi and nimboo pani. Tooth paste is purchased by the youth from local stationery store. The traditional datun and toothpower are replaced fast by pepsodent and Colgate pastes. Brand choice for motorcycles and scooters depend on durability, speed, style and fuel efficiency. The purchase is a major decision however, involving the father. Youngsters get to suggest the briind and colour. The youth know about all the dream machines such as Suzuki, Yamaha, Hero Honda, Bajaj, Enfield, Rajdoot, etc. The bullet represents tough, rough machines for them. Youngsters in rural areas know about leading TV brands such as BPL, Philips, Onida, Akai, etc. Hence if the marketers is to target this segment of rural youth, his positioning of the product has to satisfy this brand savvy young consumer who is very much like his urban counterpart.

The behavioural insights of the rural population could be the backbone of many a rural marketing strategy that is hampered by myths and lack of incisive information. Hence the need for a very clear appreciation of the positioning of the product and the present profile of the potential consumers.



Activity 1

You are aware of the demographic basis of segmentation of markets. Identify the products that would be most suitable for launch, looking at the demographic segmentation of the rural market in India. You may refer back to Unit I for attempting this activity.

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8.2.2 Product Life Cycle

The advertisers must be clear about the precise stage of the product, in its life-cycle. Advertising can be pioneering, competitive or retentive, depending on stage of product-life cycle in the rural context.

The pioneering advertising for LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas) should explain to the rural dwellers the availability of clean and convenient cooking fuel (LPG) who have hitherto remained largely dependent on traditional fuel for cooking. Public sector oil companies have chalked out new marketing plans for LPG to reach smaller towns and villages with a population of about 10,000. The pioneering stage of advertising aimed at building up primary demand is expensive, as it has to be build a market, generate primary demand, overcome psychological barriers, explain usage of product, increase coverage etc. The key advantage however, is that the company is the first to enter the market and has better chances of establishing market leadership and consumer confidence. Public sector oil companies have also developed an innovative rural LPG marketing vehicle to fill domestic cylinders on the spot for customers, emphasizing convenience of usage.

In the competitive stage of advertising in the village, a number of brands are in the race for consumer's attention and money. Products like batteries, refrigerators, motor bikes, televisions, tooth paste, skin cream, washing powders etc. are in a competitive stage in rural market. Exide Industries Ltd., the country's largest battery manufacturer, has launched an ad blitz in the remote interiors of Punjab and Haryana under the slogan "Exide ki Kasam" as part of its Easan project. The aim is to sell batteries to owners of tractors and heavy commercial vehicles in the farm sector. The marketing drive is expected to stonewall foreign competition in this sector. The promotional efforts include sponsoring "kisan melas", adopting dhabas and putting up hoardings, giving discounts and operating groups or nodes of 10-12 villages under one or two officials. Here the marketer has to emphasize specific and strong reasons for purchasing a brand in order to build consumer franchise.

In the retentive or reminder stage advertising, a manufacture tries to maintain his market leadership or share. lie has to retain current customers base and also increase his total market size. Very few brands can hope to hold their leadership position for long. The rural audience tendency to recall brands based on their colours, numbers, etc. has helped brands like Lifebuoy (Lal-sabun), 501 detergent soap et cetra to retain their leadership for long, on the basis of clear colour based and number based differentiation. Of course, the fact that these were the first ones to get into the market, and enjoy a long history of usage has also helped.



8.2.3 Social Value System

The typical rural value systems are marked by conservatism, respect for elders, belief in social hierarchy, hard work, frugality etc. Hence for an advertisement to be successful the social value systems and lifestyles of villagers have to be clearly understood and analysed. Any promotional inputs disruptive of the social mores are likely to be rejected.

Carrying out promotions in rural areas is no mean task. As technology is not used extensively here, knowledge base is more critical. Traveling to distant rural locations and overcoming language barriers are other constraints. Researchers of O & M have found that strategies effective in urban areas are not accepted in rural areas. *“Rural People associate a brand image with what they think of themselves. Therefore, using pictures of sexy, underdressed women would amount to asking them, not to use the product at all.”* - Jha.

8.2.4 Benefits of the Product

It is imperative to highlight the beneficial results of using a particular product. An advertisement which shows problem-resolution, will have better receptivity. As per a HILL survey, India is set to witness these consumer mega trends - self-denial to affordable; indulgence resulting from changing values and higher income ; desire for quality time which will result in need for convenience increased awareness about personal health and vitality, including in rural India. Besides the three mega trends, socio economic driver will have influence on "inflexion point in rural consumption" in the next decade.

The use of quality engine oil for trucks and tractors to reduce wear and tear of mechanical parts, use of sturdy two-wheelers to keep up and save time in traveling: All the above refer to product benefits which need to be emphasized. For a tooth paste advertisement, in urban areas shiny white teeth as a factor in impressing friends or being close may be shown to be attractive but for the rural areas, a tooth paste ad should emphasize the derived strength for the teeth rather than it's potential in enabling proximity, or impressing girl friends.

Activity 2

Based on the above inputs, what appeals would you like to focus on , while developing advertising messages for the rural markets for the following products and services.

1. Life Insurance
2. Tea
3. Cold drinks
4. Automobile lubricant
5. Hair Oil

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8.3 ADVERTISING THROUGH CONVENTIONAL MEDIA

The product purpose and benefit should be stated as directly as possible, in rural advertisements. Sophisticated or symbolic advertising on account on loss in



translation to the given context may not seem relevant to rural dwellers. Hence communication has to be direct and straight forward. The ad should clearly state what the product is, its benefits, directions for use, purpose served, etc. If it is a face cream, visuals must show a girl/woman applying it on her face in upward gentle motions. The recent advertisements of Fairever cream shows a man being boxed in the eye by two ladies for giving the purchased cream to one lady and the free gift, a pair of earrings to the other. Here product details are omitted. The ad may be humorous, but as you can imagine in rural markets, it may not sell the product, as nothing about the product benefits, real or perceived is mentioned in the message content.

8.3.1 Limited Reach of Media

The limited reach of other traditional media like T.V., radio, press and cinema in the rural areas, impedes the rapid growth of the rural markets. Studies conducted by the National Readership Survey and ORG MARG reveal that only 9 per cent of the rural adult population reads any newspaper or magazine, 31 per cent watch TV regularly, 36 per cent watch cinema and 32 per cent listen to radio. As the literacy level in rural areas is very low, the reach of the print media is relatively limited. The maximum reach of cinema, TV and radio is about 30-36 per cent of the rural adult population thereby making the task of creating awareness regarding consumer products an arduous one. You must appreciate that all mass media options that one takes for granted in, the urban context have limitations in the rural context. Let us discuss these choices, and understand the implication for an appropriate rural media mix.

8.3.2 Print Media

The reach of the print medium is very low in rural India due to the high percentage of illiteracy. Kerala is the only exception with over half the rural population (64 per cent) exposed to press. In rural Kerala, press reach is higher than TV reach. Punjab, Maharashtra, Goa, Tamil nadu and Pondichery are the other states with press reach above the all India average. As the reach of press in Kerala is high, the top publications in rural India are Malyalam publications. Less than 10 per cent rural households are exposed to press in states of UP, MP, Bihar and Rajasthan. Press readership is around 18 per cent in Orissa, W'B, Karnataka and AP.

Secondary readership is the common scene with household press subscription virtually non-existent. Newspaper subscribers are the banks, grocers or tea shops or guests. Tea shops and other small retail outlets have the headlines printed in bold black letters on old newspapers and hang them in their stalls. A total of 25 copies of the popular newspapers, usually in the regional language, reaches the villages by 8 a.m. on weekdays and Sunday newspapers is delivered with the Monday edition. The onset of monsoons effectively stems this tide of newsprint. A pattern of group readership is seen in banks, tea stalls, and grocery shops. Usually one person - the literate, reads while the rest listen and discuss. Magazines are not read. There are several newspapers published from district towns, such as Hira Times, Meerut Samachar in Merrut, Hina Thanthi edition of Madurai, Dhina Mani from Trichy. These editions reach the urban readers in the district town and readers in satellite rural settlements But the interior penetration levels are negligible and circulation are not controllable in rural markets. The urban press advertisement persuade prospective buyers to write for literature or call up for information or rush and buy. Lack of telecom facilities, intended lead time of postal services and remote reader locations render this form of advertising redundant in the rural context, unless the company contact point is within reach. The advertisements that most frequently appear in regional



language dailies are that of lottery tickets with the results, locally manufactured soaps, local readymade garment shops, cement, fertilizers, chappals etc, and announcement of local sale or promotional events.

Activity 3

- A. Try to get copies of local dailies which also have a circulation in the rural area surrounding your city/district town. Analyse the marketing communication that you think are attempting to reach the rural customers. Briefly comment upon the same.

- B. Study the Hoardings and Banners used by retailers and advertisers in the rural areas surrounding your town. How do these differ from the same in an urban setting?

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8.3.3 Radio

In spite of the fast changing media scene in rural India, All India Radio (AIR) still appeals to a large population of about 32 per cent. It could serve as an effective, low cost reminder medium.

In rural Assam, North East Karnataka, Kerala and Bihar, more people listen to radio than watch TV. Film song programmes are the most popular. Small transistors follow the farmer wherever he goes, hanging on the handlebar of his cycle. Whether he is cycling or working in the fields, the transistor continues to play. It is a common sight to see labourers working in the fields with music in the background. Previously they themselves used to sing folk songs while working. The farmer also drifts off to sleep listening to music from the transistor. If at all he owns a B and W 14 inch TV, he views it before and during dinner. Across all states compared to viewer ship of TV, secondary listenership of radio is higher in smaller villages.

8.3.4 Television

Rapid expansion of television in the last decade has significantly increased the awareness levels regarding availability of convenience products to the rural dwellers. The population per TV set ratio in India is very high compared to other developing and developed countries. About 20 per cent of the rural population is not yet exposed to TV and radio, hence making these items households products is still a long way ahead. Only then advertising for other products can be successfully launched in the audio/visual media to reach rural areas.

An ORG/MARG study reveals that readership/viewership of various communication media is as follows:

Medium	Percentage of Rural Adult population
Press	9
Radio	32
TV	31
Cinema	36

The above figures show that the traditional media is limited in its use for advertising various products. Television reaches a fairly large numbers of



viewers (1414.6 lakhs) in rural India. Next comes radio at the all India level. Statewise differences occur, for example in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Pondichery, cinema is preferred to radio.

Since television as a medium has great reach in parts of rural India, -advertising on TV gives maximum exposure to product/brand. This is made use of by manufactures of fertilizers, cement, engine oils, tractors, light vehicles etc with the visuals and filmed in rural locations. Analysis indicates that rural Punjab, Himachal pradesh, Maharashtra and Goa have over 50 per cent TV viewership, while rural Bihar has the lowest of only 1.0 per cent.

Cable and Satellite (C & S) reaches only 9 per cent of TV viewers in rural India. In rural Gujrat and Madhya Pradesh, the viewership of Cable and Satellite channels is much higher. Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Goa are the other states with good C & S reach. Films and Film based programmes are the most preferred programmes in rural India. Serials come next. The rural Kerala viewers are more news and current affairs conscious than his counterparts in the rest of India. Some of the most popular programmes are chitrahaar, and the Hindi feature film in the northern India. In the others states the regional language films and film song sequences are the favorites. The above data allows the planner to gauge viewer ship patterns and hence time their product advertisements. There seems to be relatively less differences in viewership patterns between the rural and urban population.

Some TV manufacturers have made sure that their TV is bought even in village with no electricity by adapting them such that they run on batteries. Companies that create advertisements specifically for rural markets turn off the urban consumer, hence it is sensible to use different media vehicles for rural campaigns. One such option is the regional TV channel. They could be the regional Doordarshan channel or other private channels. E.g. Sun TV, Raj TV for TN Asianet for Kerala, Udaya TV for Karnataka etc. Nowadays it is felt that TV is flooded with commercials, hence some of the newer entrants in the rural markets are designing their rural promotion strategy without the TV option altogether.

8.3.5 Timing of Rural Advertising

You Would have noted the seasonality of demand as a pattern in rural buying from your exposure to Block 2 of this course. Purchases of consumer non-durables and durable peak in the rural markets during the post-harvest, festival, marriage and pre-sowing periods. In the post-harvest period the farmers have received their earnings and their mind indulges in new purchases. Festival time results in increase of sales for clothes and cosmetics. Fairs and melas sell more of snacks and toys. The marriage season sees sales of consumer durables like scooters, fans, cookers, utensils, and other gifts for grooms increasing.

Also sales of hybrid seeds, fertilizers, growth nutrients increase during post-sowing period. Hence it is better to focus advertising in the rural areas during these specific seasons. Advertising before festivals, advertisements of urea and other fertilizers during crop planting season, advertisement by wall paints during Pongal in south India and Diwali in North India are examples correctly timed advertisement campaigns.

Announcer advertisement and repeat advertising - When a new product is launched, announcement advertisement is undertaken. The brand name, key promise, usage benefits etc, are informed to the customers. In urban areas announcer advertisement is undertaken for 2-3 months. But as the media exposure in rural areas are limited, the period has been found to as long as six months, to generate adequate awareness.



The various uses of Vicco Cream as a cosmetic, medicine, after shave applicant etc. may be easily understood by urbanities. But the ad campaign has been created made with explicit visuals, and slow audio track for the benefit of villagers and is televised frequently for the first few months, of the product launch in a given area.

Later the commercial is cut short showing may be one usage at a time and they are also spaced. Repeat advertising reinforces the product message especially when they are new concepts. Product recalls have been shown to be reasonably good.

Activity 4

Scan through the regional channel and identify the advertisements directed at rural consumers. Comment upon the following aspect of these advertisements.

- i Timing of advertising.
- ii Appeals used
- iii Message execution

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8.4 PROMOTION AND DEMONSTRATION

As in the urban marker, companies in the rural context run consumer promotions in the form of a free gift or a price-off to increase the consumption of the product. The most common promotion are of the following types - buy one, take one free'(Emami talcum powder), 20%-40% discounts, extra quantity at the same price, (Babool toothpaste) cost free gifts (Soap box with Rin soap) usually of plastic or steel.

It is not enough just to promote a product, adequate stocks have to be maintained during the promotion cycle. Consumers may visit a retailer to buy a particular product on seeing it's attractive advertisement or promotion, , if that item is not available, they end up buying the next best alternative available. Here a customer is lost as they are being exposed to a competition product at the expense of your promotion and there is a chance that they being satisfied with the other product may become loyal to that brand. According to Rajiv Mongro, MD of Rural Communications and Marketing - (RC&M)- Promotion in rural areas need to be carried out very carefully, as. the people are very brand loyal. It has been observed that often only one brand is dominant in one village. This is not due to lack of supply of the other competing brands, but simply because that brand entered the market first and got endorsed through good word of mouth. But if that brand is not available or turns out faulty for one customer, the whole village would get to know if it and develop suspicion about the brand inhibiting repeat purchase.

Demonstrations of products like pressure cookers, mixer grinders, etc. is a must as the majority of the villagers have low literacy levels and following the written instructions in the booklets is not possible. The latest items gaining popularity in the rural markets which need demonstrations are washing machines, cellular phones, frost-free refrigerators and credit cards. Demonstration have been shown to be more effective in group situations. It has been observed that gathering groups of potential customer through a prior announcement in a common place

like a chaupal or a school or community development office and then holding the demonstration is a very effective approach.



8.4.1 Publicity and Word of Mouth Communication

The advertisement campaign should lead to some discussion among the villagers. This gives word of mouth publicity. Rural dwellers depend substantially on the recommendations and views of their friends neighbors relatives and retailers in deciding which product or brand to buy. An ideal advertisement should generate positive word of mouth publicity among the villagers. The authentic and credible recommendations come from the actual users. An "appeal advertisement" aimed at the rural consumers, can generate a lot of positive discussion about the product which increases the chances of a trial. The advertisement for TD'S 50 mopeds shows the vehicle, bouncing over rough roads moving easily through shallow. water bodies, carrying large, heavy loads, by educated village youth and above all resulting in saving time. The visuals are, shot in villages with folk music in the background. The ad has been found to generate good viewer interest in rural segments. A farmer or village teacher who sees the commercial must be motivated to discuss it with his friends. If there is one satisfied customer, more are sure to follow. Other ways of generating good word of mouth are through contacting opinion leaders in the village and gating their exposed to the product samples. HLL plans to conduct promotional campaigns to promote its ALM tooth paste in village schools, primary health centers and other rural bodies to spread its brands especially to make the villagers move from the use of tooth powder to tooth paste.

8.5 EXPLORATION OF NEW OPPORTUNITIFS

While approaching rural segments, you would realize that classical advertising as taught in text-books may not apply to the rural market. The layout and format principles teach that an ad should have headline, a visual, copy of the names of the brand, manufactures etc. in a fixed layout. Most villagers cannot read, hence lengthy ads with too many words are useless in the rural context. A colourful picture of the product, it's key benefit., the brand name in m attractive colour and font, a short, apt slogan are enough in the rural advertisement campaign whether it is billboard, wall posters, banners, hand outs, or point-of-sales danglers.

The rural dwellers may not know English may not wear designer clothes, but they are as bright and intelligent as their city counterparts. The only draw back is inadequate access to information and lack of knowledge. Even that is fast diminishing as villagers in number of states are entering the cyber arena. In Rajasthan, this came to light during former U.S president Bill Clinton's visit to India. Rura^l, women were found using the Internet for health queries and dairy farming. The basic guiding principle in any advertising is the target consumer and his/her characteristics. The end result must be to convince the vill^agers to purchase the product and maintain his brand loyalty.

Rural India offers a formidable challenge to marketers for two crucial reasons. First, the lack of retail infrastructure to reach the interior villages and secondly the absence of enough knowledge about tint; buying patterns of rural consumers make the decision making for effective marketing communication a difficult process. To get a better understanding of the above factors the country's oldest tradition of haats and melas should be observed. On certain days of the week, buyers and sellers meet to trade and barter, buy and, sell at make shift markets that appear overnight and disappear the next night. Although infrastructure and investment are minimum, the accessibility of products and services offered to



villagers is very high. The Haats are generally for a day. If the haats are linked to an important event it continues for several days or even weeks, acquiring the status of a mela. The major melas include Sonepur Cattle Bazar in Bihar, Pushkar mela in Rajasthan, and Adipeunklu in Tamil Nadu. The Maha Kumbh Mela at Allahabad which occurs only once in 12 years was held during 2000-2001 for 3 months. Every consumer product and consumer durable products company was fighting for space there. Several companies gave away discount coupons and a large number of people did indeed make purchases using these coupons. Some marketers made use of huge TV screens that flashed in addition to promotional advertisements, the precautions the devotees ought to make.

District fairs also are preferred by marketers as they allow greater visibility and capture the attention of target audience for longer span of time. The fairs at Pushkar, Ujjaain, Gwalior, Kota, Meerut and Bulandshahar are some examples. Over 47,000 haats and 25,000 melas are held annually. The average daily sale at a haat is about Rs.2.25 lakhs. Annual sales at melas amount to Rs 3,500 crores. Over half the shoppers at haats have shopping lists. More than 10,000 melas draw visitors from all over India. Nearly half the outlets at melas are for manufactured goods. You would read more about the statistical profile of these haats and melas in Block 5 of this course.

8.5.1 Melas

Melas are a prominent feature of Indian rural life, held periodically or annually to commemorate important events or to honour a deity. Melas can be classified on the basis of their nature into commodity fairs, cattle fairs, combinations of the both, exhibition and religious fairs and on the basis of their periodicity into one day fairs, short (between 2 to 7 days) fairs, and long (over a week) fairs, or depending on region their importance, their area of influence stretches over a locality, a region or the entire country. Melas work best for fast moving consumer goods, as buyers are more favourably disposed towards new brands of non durables, specially since more women and children are present.

The advantages of selling through melas are the large visitor turnout, high sale of factory-made products, high sales volumes as melas are held during festive seasons, favourable response from visitors, as they intend to buy specific products which are not available in their own villages.

These melas serve as major sources of information about new products to villagers, as manufacturers put up stalls at vantage points. Almost 25 per cent of the space in any fair is occupied by stalls selling local snacks, 25 per cent of the space is devoted to amusement part for children. The remaining 50 per cent of the space consists of stalls selling consumer products. The factors taken into consideration by marketers to use the mela as a marketing tool are as follows:

A list of melas, is made at the beginning of the year in which the company wishes to participate. The mela selected depends on its location with respect to brand presence. The duration of the fairs, target audience for the product and number of expected visitors all ply a key role in selection. As for the precise location of the stall in the fair, the layout is studied and the stall is placed near food stalls or the centre of the fair. Care should be taken to avoid proximity to other stall selling similar products.

An important aspect of a mela is that it gives the opportunity for the company to demonstrate its products which gives great confidence to villagers to buy the product. The advantages of mixer-grinder, pressure cooker etc. can be demonstrated. The stalls are required to be richly, brightly, colourfully decorated with banners, posters, dummies, danglers, mannequins etc, and attractive enough

to pull maximum crowd especially women and children. Discounts or a free gift have often been shown to help in clinching a sale.



8.5.2 Haats

Haats are periodic markets and offer a major rural marketing infrastructure in India. In spite of the development of permanent shops, these temporary markets play a vital role in the rural economy. It is the oldest trading institution in existence. These markets provide an opportunity not only to sell consumer goods, but also to sell surplus agricultural and allied product. They play a vital role in the lives of villagers, as they provide a first contact point for villagers with market, a means for distributing local products and exchanging rural surplus, an opportunity for buying daily necessities, supplies and equipment and a place for socio-political-cultural contact.

Since most agricultural labourers get their wages once a week, haats are also held on a weekly basis. Sunday markets are most popular. On an average a haat caters to customers in 16 villages, nearly two thirds of all haats are held at a distances of at least 15 kms from the nearest town. Another 27 per cent are held at distances between 6 km and 15 km while only 5 percent are held within 5 km of a town. The average number of outlets at a haat is 314. The importance of haats for villagers is quite high, as 81 percent of buyers are regular visitors. The reasons for buying from haats are quality and lower price. The villagers reach the haats on foot, by cycle, tractor or bus.

The haat is a better opportunity for promotion than for brand building. Visiting rural buyers are more likely to remember the products for the price off than for the image or positioning. Demonstrations are essential to convert consumers at haats since their attitudes are far more utilitarian than that of visitors to melas. Haats also offer opportunity for sampling, thus enabling the product to make inroads into a new buyer's home.

Let us briefly look at a comparative picture of haats and melas. At haats, the percentage of agricultural product outlets is large, upto 39.5 per cent. It is only 56 per cent in melas. Hence we see haats satisfy essential needs of people. Manufactured goods forms only 24.3 per cent in haats while they were found to occupy 42 per cent of the goods put up for sale in melas. This is because melas cater to a much larger population including rural and urban. Processed foods, tea and snacks, restaurants etc. are available both in haats and melas, but more so in melas as melas provide good entertainment. Forest products sell well at haats.

As rural customers use melas and haats for many of their daily necessities in terms of both products and services, these markets offer a perfect platform for promoting new product concepts. Smart marketers can use the occasion not just to sell their products, but also to listen closely to the problems of rural consumers in order to build relationships by offering solutions, and develop customized products, Both haats and melas provide the rural marketers an opportunity to get a good insight in rural buyer behavior and observe the purchase process first hand.

8.5.3 Cinema

Cinema is most popular among the rural masses of South India. It does not seem to dominate life in the rest of rural India. In rural Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Pondichery, cinema seems to be an integral part of their life and is next only to TV. Rural Karnataka has higher cinema reach than TV reach.

The frequency of cinema viewing is also high, 60 per cent of the cinema going population do so atleast once a month. In states with low cinema reach, only 35 per cent of cinema viewers go once a month or more.



Cinema halls and video parlors present an exciting audio visual media option for the rural market. Advertisement screened before the movie starts and those during the intervals are enjoyed more than the actual movie itself. But monitoring is not so cost effective. To check proper screening of a cinema advertisement takes a disproportionate amount of time. Absence of control allows cinema operators intent on conserving power bills. to override the screening of advertisement sequences completely.

8.5.4 Wall Painting

Traveling by train or bus through sub urban and rural areas, one is sure to come across colourful paintings on walls of buildings, compound walls, railway staircases, tank, wall, fly-overs, public walls etc. They advertise a whole lot of products from detergents, soft drinks, biscuits to electronic goods like TV, washing machine, fridge etc. Geoffrey Manners painted 1,50,000 sq. ft. of walls in UP. It also used tin posters and glow signs at bus stops.

Wall paintings, while limited to visual impact, present a viable reminder medium for rural coverage, Rates of Rs. 3 to Rs. 4 per square foot give the user high visibility at low cost. Dabur India has exploited this medium resulting in high coverage through wall paintings. This along with strong distribution network has establishing its rural presence. As with cinema, monitoring is a problem here. Field sales force can be used to conduct checks, with limitations. Wall paintings have a wide geographical spread. In case of consumer durables the size of the sales team limits monitoring even in small towns. Wall paintings are often used in smaller villages which are visited by the sales force once in a fortnight or month. Sometimes these villages are not visited at all. Unchecked messages are often over painted. This outdoor medium has to be used with care as even the field sales force report to the higher ups by sending different photos of the same wall taken from various angles, trying to impress that many walls have been used and maintained well. The person, who is benefited however, is the villager who owns the site, and gets his wall painted and an additional income.

HLL is promoting its new tooth paste AIM in rural areas. Apart from TV commercials it is using posters, wall and bus paintings on a large, scale. This slams that even the big marketers use this medium which is generally used by local midi manufactures, local garments shops, and the like. The general characteristic of wall paintings is that they are loud and colourful increasing recall levels.

The rural consumer is less affluent and less discerning than his urban counterpart. Although he needs the same products used by the urbanities he may not be able to afford them or his life style may not allow him to use them. Hence marketers have come up with small packages which makes them affordable, as has been the ease for shampoos, tooth pastes etc. Electronic goods like TV, Mixer-grinders may be needed but the problem of electricity dissuades their purchase. Power supply if available is too erratic leading to breakdown of the electronic goods. After creating rural specific products developing rural specific messages becomes an important issue, As the regional languages are many, the words have to be selected with great care, as the meaning may be hilarious or ridiculous or even rude in one language while quite apt in another, The visuals should also depict rural life. Women and children may not be the decision makers in villages. Men are often the major decision makers hence it is a waste to target only women and, children in the advertisements. If the advertisements are not designed with the rural consumer in mind, the advertisement could do more damage to the product than good.



8.5.5 Mobile Vans

Reckitt and Coleman India Ltd. For instance had decided to use TV exclusively as urban advertising medium. In villages the company used video vans to reach its new commercials to rural audiences. Hindustan Lever Ltd. had early success with video vans, which also doubled as video van and mobile retail outlets. However, these are good for short term promotion campaign but too expensive. A crucial prerequisite is the need of a network of roads to connect the villages to towns. The absence of adequate all weather roads makes it impossible for vans to cover the interior villages either for advertising or replenishing the stock in retail outlets. Rural market is a mass market which has to be constantly probed, developed and encouraged with the help of support systems which are novel, unique, and radically unlike what is used in urban agglomerates.

Hence we see that non-conventional media is a better bet. GIC's Suraksha policy was promoted by sending vans and mobiles into the hinterland to the taluka level. Mobile vans have proved to be a key strategic tool to spread the message, combining both flexibility and focuses access.

The promotion vans help in deeper penetration of the area, interaction with the audience through games and audio-video exposure. These trucks also act as a branded sales counter. Video vans have also used. As promotional vehicles Information booths in melas and haats are effective. HLL used STD booths, which are hubs of activity. Visuals, symbols, pictures and music are often used. HLL used the strategy of sampling and simultaneously selling a range of personal products like Fair and Lovely, Clinic and Pepsodent by penetration through education.

Saanskruti Entertainment, started by the ex-executives of Amitabh Bachhan Corporation Ltd. made use of Ramanand Sagar's mega mythological Ramayana. It was screened for 45 days during the Maha Kumbh Mela (which comes only once in 12 years) in 1998 in Haridwar and Rishikesh. The big screen attracted nearly 65 lakhs and people. Advertisers followed, they included Colgate Palmolive, Godraj soaps, Coca cola. Mobile shows on vans pulls in men and women in large numbers. The festival gathering that could be targeted are Pushkar, Ayodhya, Dussehra Nauchandi and Deepawali melas of Rajasthan, UP, and the Ambaji Mela in Gujarat.

During the Maha Kumbh Mela, O & M appointed several sales people within an area of 52 km. Announcements offering discounts that kept increasing as the main bathing area approached. Several purchases were made using the discount coupons. O & M in addition to other promotional methods, used 4 huge TV screens which flashed promotional advertisements alongwith the precautions the devotees had to take. A sample survey of the target audience indicated 100 per cent brand recall. Titan adopted the entire railway station during the mela for communication, which generated a higher brand recall.

Activity 5

You have just read above the interesting mix of media options that is available for the rural markets. YOU are planning to launch following new products in small villages. What are the media vehicles just studied by you would you like to use and why?

- A A bicycle
- B. Sturdy, economy range motorcycle

8.6 SOME INNOVATIVE METHODS IN RURAL PROMOTION

On the creative front, it is necessary that a campaign is grounded in local reality, so that issue of comprehensive identification and memorability can be effectively addressed. The rural campaign costs can be minimized by developing special tools for planning and implementation. Point-of-contact should be successfully converted into point-of sale by using attractive danglers, small posters, attractive arrangement of products by renting glass show cases open to the road, appointing enthusiastic sales persons to introduce product etc.

Companies can also use popular form of entertainment such as puppetry, nautanki, ragini, bhangra, quawali and other dance shows to increase the brand experience. A story line can be developed relating to the brand and the characters shown using the brands to their advantage. The dresses could be in colours of the brand's packaging. Corporations and advertising agencies have started working in this area. The puppet shows in Punjab and Ragini in Haryana used for communicating qualities of Virat cement, Pala and Daskathia in Orissa for promoting safe electricity consumption and Colgate Palmolive toothpaste - Bail songs of West Bengal to advertise insecticide are some examples.

Even the extensive network of postal and medical workers throughout the country can be used as an alternative vehicle for brand promotion in the rural areas. The post box, post office walls and the post man's uniform will carry the logo and the brand names of companies like the sports costumes of sportsmen.

Haats, Melas and other festivals, fairs etc. are no doubt suitable platforms for promotional activities, but they do not occur every day. Hence one has to coordinate his communication with the "Conveyance points" of a village, for day-to-day contact with the potential consumers. For instance, a well would be the point of convergence for the women folk in Maharashtra, while a pond is where the village belles of Bengal meet. To involve men, tea-stalls act as an effective sound board. Here the well walls, trees near ponds, bill-boards near the stalls can be used to advertise a product. Based on the social behaviour of different states in India, the communication strategy needs to vary. Television viewing is a family affair in Punjab, while in Bihar it becomes a community affair where neighbors get together to watch a favourite programme. Accordingly a company can decide if it's- direct marketing effort is to be a door-to-door programme or of a community kind (like fairs and festivals gatherings).

The task of educating the rural consumers and creating a want for a particular product is the first step in promotion of the product. Here the assistance of some important persons of the village such as the village Patel or Sarpanch, the village Hakim, the local Munshi and the village teacher (on whom the villages have confidence and towards whom they looked for guidance, advice and leadership) are very useful in creating awareness to the consumers. Even the village shopkeepers are guided in their buying decision by them. This is true especially for health and hygiene related products. The above mentioned opinion leaders could be selected and given exposure to the usefulness of a product through



video shows or demonstrations and given samples of the product. They in turn could pass on the message to their friends, families, relatives or to those interested. Opinion leader could also be ordinary, uneducated housewives who could influence her neighbors, friends etc. Her house could be used as the site for the demonstration, as it is difficult to draw women away from their homes to the community halls or such other place.

In rural areas billboards, hoardings and posters are used in advertising, as in urban areas. The differences are, however, many. Generally cars, sleek mobiles, beauty products, movies, hotels designer furniture and garments are advertised through hoardings which is supportive to other forms of advertising to create recall in urbanities. In rural areas, the products would be tractors, cement, fertilizers, pesticides hygiene products and social awareness message. 3-D effects and illumination which are common in cities are not necessary for the rural hoardings. As the network of roads is good in cities there are several vantage points like flyovers bus stops, main roads, road turnings, near traffic light, on top of buildings etc. The locations are very few in rural areas and are seen by the people only during day time. Market areas, near cinema halls, bus stops, railway stations, near the fields are some of the locations that could be used. To have a longer life span and to protect them from rain, outdoor boards are generally paintings on metal boards.

8.7 SUMMARY

It is important and necessary to communicate with rural consumers for increasing their consumption levels and making it possible for companies to generate sales. Though the fundamentals of marketing communication do not differ for urban and rural markets, there is a need to implement the strategies differently to meet the realities. Some of the distinguishing factors of rural markets from that of urban markets are geographical spread, conservative consumer, lower literacy rates, poor distribution infrastructure, higher seasonal demand patterns etc. Traditional media channels do have a reach in the rural markets but the effectiveness may not be comparable with that of urban markets. There are number of opportunities available like melas, haats, cinema halls and so on. Many companies are experimenting with innovative usage of mobile vans, wall painting, point of purchase promotion etc. Lack of accurate data and understanding about the rural markets continue to pose tremendous challenge to the marketing managers.

8.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What in your view are the important challenges for effective marketing communication for the rural markets? How can these challenges be overcome?
2. Critically assess the effectiveness of mass media in rural markets. What are the limitations of using
 - a. print
 - b. televisionas media for promotion for FMCG products in the rural markets?
3. What are the important considerations to be borne in mind while undertaking the message design activity for rural consumers? Respond with respect to the following products and services.
 - a. wrist watches



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- b. detergents
- c. healthcare services

4 Suggest suitable media strategy for

- a. Mopeds
- b. Motorcycle
- c. Generator sets

Give reasons for your choice

8.9 FURTHER READINGS

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