

Chapter 7

Rural Communication Media: Its Impact on the Rural Markets

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ABSTRACT

The chapter aims at analyzing the impact of rural media of communication, which is a blend of conventional rural-centric media and modern mass media, on the rural markets of Uttar Pradesh, India. An interview schedule as a survey instrument was conducted administered for a sample of 1200 respondents in central Uttar Pradesh from February to June 2021. The data analysis of the study was carried out in IBM SPSS Statistics 27.0. The study concluded that buyers respond maturely to the various promotional sources investigated. Hindi dailies, both national and local, play an important role in raising awareness about various items. The most successful media vehicles for connecting with clients in rural areas are posters, handbills, hoardings, banners, and television programs. Mobile vans, newspapers, and e-displays and advertisements plastered on public transportation are all very successful advertising tools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Rural media (Gupta, 2012) are now no more conventionally rural-centric media, but, are a good blend of modern mass media (Othman, 2020; Gangwani, 2022) and traditional rural media or traditional media of communication (Gajanad, Ashok and Karthik, 2017) which are reaching millions of people across rural India, but creating a significant positive impact on the rural market is still an uphill task (Thalladi, 2022). The enormous potential of the rural markets of India provides businesses with considerable prospects, and it is now even larger than the urban equivalent for most categories. (Gujrati, 2016)".

But, varying media reach, habits and comprehension abilities, low literacy, language and cultural diversity, the vast geographical spread of the market and feudalism pose major challenges to the market's communication (Kashyap, 2012). There are 22 scheduled "Languages Included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution" and 1800 (Census of India, 2011) vernacular languages in India which are dialect-specific in different regions of the country, e.g., Awadhi in central Uttar Pradesh and Bhojpuri in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Modern mass media, which reaches millions of people in rural markets, includes mobile internet, e-Suvidha Kendra, television, radio, print, electronic hoardings, and direct mailers, whereas traditional rural media, which is old and deeply rooted, includes paintings on walls, video vans, folk drama, video raths, folklore, folk song, village market (Jain & Rathod 2005), and dance, among other things (Kediehor & Odiepiye, Chimezie, 2019). Radio reaches people regardless of their geographic location or area of residence, literacy levels, or geography (Kashyap, 2012).

The proliferation of FM radio stations has effectively transformed radio into a rural communication medium ("Proliferation of radio stations: Social impacts and need for rededication" 2021). In rural India, television is the fastest-growing, most popular, and most powerful mass medium. In recent years, rural India has seen a tremendous increase in DTH connections ("Money life Foundation Report" 2010)

In rural areas, however, newspapers constitute an important part of the print media (Julie, 2019).

With low literacy levels in rural areas, the print media continues to struggle in terms of reach and accessibility in rural markets. Another form of mass communication that allows for the dissemination of product information through brief advertisements, films, and cinema is cinema (Kashyap, 2012).

According to research by "the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) Kantar ICUBE 2020", India's active internet users (AIU) are expected to increase by 45 per cent by 2025 compared to 2020. From roughly 622 million in 2020, the number of AIU in the country is expected to rise to 900 million by 2025. The poll also reveals that even while urban areas have more than twice as many internet users as rural ones, in 2020, rural users are anticipated to grow at a faster rate year over year due to a higher adoption rate ("Internet Adoption in India ICUBE 2020", June 2021). Rural marketers face huge problems in expressing their message to rural consumers because their customers are dispersed across a broad geographic area across the country (Pande, 2022).

The bulk of India's villages is still out of the reach of traditional media because of their broad geographic dispersion (Census of India, 2011, Uttar Pradesh). There are approximately 650000 villages in India (Rural Energy Access/ Reach the World, 2021). Even using nontraditional media makes it nearly impossible for a marketer to reach out to a geographically dispersed rural population. The challenge is exacerbated by the fact that the consumers are diverse in terms of the languages they speak. The country's 22 scheduled languages plus 19500 dialect-specific vernacular languages, such as Awadhi in central Uttar Pradesh and Bhojpuri in eastern Uttar Pradesh, make interacting with rural consumers extremely difficult ((Bhatnagar et al., 2022a, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b; Dangwal et al., 2022a, 2022b; Kumar et al.,

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