



Potentiality of digital marketing in rural areas: Target the unexplored market

Devjeet Chakraborty¹, A K Singh²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Commerce and Business Administration, L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga, Bihar, India

² Professor, Head Cum Director, Department of Commerce and Business Administration, L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga, Bihar, India

Abstract

Indian market is considerably changing with the huge use of internet and information technology. The increase in use of internet and mobile has resulted for the rise in the growth of Digital Marketing. The consumer's inclination to have access towards this new or say modern digital platform is increasing significantly. The effect of internet era is being experienced in marketing sector. There is no compulsion of channel network in digital marketing. The potential of digital marketing is bound to increase in near future.

Keywords: Buying behaviour, digital marketing, Indian market, internet penetration, rural and urban consumer

Introduction

More than 70 percent of India's population is concentrated in rural areas where there is a lack of opportunity, awareness, and resources as compared to urban areas. Rural India is completely different from the rest in every aspect – quality of life, clothing, education, housing, accessibility to services, transportation, occupation, etc. And it is the need of the hour to expand there. The rural people might have lived a traditional and conservative lifestyle, but with the rising awareness of growth in education, health, income, and the internet they will gradually overcome it.

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 rising in the purchasing power of rural civic. Lately, the introduction of various schemes and programs for promoting digitization in India by the government at reduced cost leads to a substantial rise in the number of internet users in rural parts.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a big groundbreaking change in media consumption habits, including those in the rural areas. As per a Kantar study, currently estimated at 574 million, the number of monthly active internet users in India has grown 24 percent over that of 2019. And the highlight is that India's rural areas are driving the digital revolution, with a 45 percent growth in internet penetration in 2019 as compared to urban India's 11 percent. Rural India has 264 million internet users, this was expected to reach 304 million by the end of 2020. The analysis comes from the ICUBETM Report prepared by data, insights, and consulting company Kantar. Local language, multilingual content and video drive the internet boom in rural India, with 2.5 times rise in penetration in the last four years. Mobile is the device of choice for cent percent of active users to browse the internet.

Malecki (2003) [3] 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. Erda (2008) [2] 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 and is yet to be exploited. Verma (2013) [9] 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 capitaincome, 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 exists an untapped market in this segment.

Techniques of digital marketing

A few notable techniques of digital marketing are

1. 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.

2. Social media

Social media has become pretty popular in current days as it provides a platform for a company to promote it

product freely or in an economic way. Consumers are also invigorated to share their views about the product and their experiences.

3. E-Commerce

This 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.

4. 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.

Opportunities of digital marketing

In comparison to the traditional methods of marketing, updated methods and technologies for digital marketing is more influencing and more effective. Opportunities of digital marketing include

1. Global reach

An internet site can reach anyone within the world who has internet access. This allows finding new markets and competing globally for less than a little investment.

2. Direct communication

Farmers will be able to contact the dealers or wholesalers on their own thus eliminating the need of middlemen which will result in benefits such as standard commodity prices and profits for the farmers, timely availability of crops and reduction in scarcity.

3. Lower cost

A thoughtfully planned, and effectively targeted e-marketing campaign can reach the proper customers at a way lower cost than traditional marketing methods.

4. Traceable, measurable results

Marketing by email or banner advertising makes it easier to establish how effective your campaign has been. You can obtain detailed information about customers 'responses to your advertising.

5. 24-Hour marketing

With a website the customers can find out about their company's products even if the office is closed.

6. Personalization

If the customer database is linked to the website, then whenever someone visits the site, one can greet them with targeted offers. The more they buy from you, the more you will refine your customer profile and market effectively to them.

7. Greater engagement

With digital marketing you'll encourage your prospects, clients and followers to need action, visit your website, examine your products and services, rate them, buy them and supply feedback which is visible to your market.

Digital marketing for competitive advantage

Nestle's Every day was facing threat from liquid milk in North-East. It has taken help of Facebook. Its teams created a three-second cinema graph- an image with some moving shots. It targeted women age 21 and above. The result was five percentage point increase in purchase intent and 14 point increase in ad recall.

Coca-Cola did a live video for its orange flavoured Fanta. Maybelline did a three dimensional video. Royal Enfield shot a 360 degree video for its new bike Himalayan. Lakme used a slide show format (its five times lighter than a video). And Cornetto made a three second Cinemagraph.

Pepsi Co. Beverage used Facebook during cricket World Cup in 2015 for brand building and generating the sale. Pepsi's Facebook campaign was the most recognised brands during the event. Pepsi Co. is using social media in a big way for building its brand equity.

Conclusion

Retail in India has taken a remarkable transformation over the last two decades. Rising income levels, urbanization, and changing consumer behaviour has given an optimistic outlook to the retail sector, promising an undoubted growth in the future. The digital medium has influenced retail with a powerful strike, reshaping customer behaviour and expectations. To summarize, retail business are in a constant need to retrospect their strengths, reinvent their offerings across the purchase pathway, and rewrite their approach of retail economics. Digital marketing overview reveals that Social media has been playing a supporting role to marketing. Over the years, it has been noticed that 92 percent of social media users are from the mobile devices. This enable the size of digital marketing industries. Further, it has also been observed that 60 percent of web users in India visit online retail sites. Of the total online market products, consumer durables account for 34 percent, apparel and accessories 30 percent, books 15 percent, beauty and personal care 10 percent, and home and furnishing 6 percent. Over 50 percent of sales in these product categories take place in non-metro cities.

The only variation found between traditional marketing and digital marketing is that there is no compulsion of channel network in digital marketing. Most of the respondents have judged the importance of digital marketing and hence have commented that in near future the potential of digital marketing is bound to increase and also this will generate more revenue for companies. Most of the respondent agree that digital marketing will be successful in coming days.

Now-a-days, 'Go Rural' is the mantra for almost all marketers in India. As urban market is becoming saturated for most of the products, entry towards rural market is the only sustainable strategy for them. In that context, rural market provides huge potentiality to almost all manufacturers. HUL, P&G, ITC etc., are some of the examples who created history in rural market by successfully making an entry and retaining their place till today among organised ones. Due to the advent of technology, entry into rural market has become much easier through smart phones and internet connectivity. No more villages remain remote in the era of digitalization. Virtual connectivity between manufacturers and rural customers has made entire world as a 'Global Village'. The impact of digital marketing on the growth of rural market has shown positive hopes for the marketers in almost all sectors. Since,

India is having more than 70 percent of its population in rural areas, the marketers could see a new ray of hope to grab untapped rural potential.

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