
Integrated Marketing Communication: A Strategic Model for Bottom of the Pyramid Markets

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Abstract

The rural market is an area of darkness to Indian entrepreneurs, an area, where communication is poor and the population poorer because their operations are small scale and inadequate. The Indian rural population has an estimated number of 120 million households, which is more than 70 percent of the total households of country. Even a fraction of the rural consumer is a big market to generate enough revenues and profits for organizations. In India the bottom of the pyramid is the largest, but poorest socio-economic group. In global terms, this is the four billion people who live on less than \$2 per day, typically in developing countries (C.K. Prahalad 2006). Bottom of the pyramid includes parties like Private enterprise, civil society organizations and Local government, Development and aid agencies, BOP consumers, BOP entrepreneurs. This paper concentrates on IMC Bottom of the pyramid markets, i.e. Indian rural Markets.

A lot of thrust is being given to marketing strategies for rural markets, especially distribution aspects; little is being talked about the communication strategies required there. Because of regional disparities, there is a need of customized communication strategies for each region. With a specific communication tool, it is very difficult to create awareness or knowledge in the minds of rural consumers. There is a need of Integrating Marketing Communications (IMC) to provide clarity, consistency and maximum gives insights on a strategic IMC model which is

developed by using response hierarchy model. This model depicts the stages a consumer may pass through in moving from a state of not being aware of a company, product or brand, to actual purchase behaviour. The rural marketer has to select different Medias in the different stages to carry integrated marketing communication of the organization. The challenge in rural markets is to create communication that would help the rural consumer in recognizing brands, logos, visuals and colours. IMC model in rural marketing calls for a centralized messaging function so that everything a company says and does communicates in rural markets have a common theme and position.

Keywords: - *Integrated Marketing communication (IMC), Bottom of the Pyramid Markets (BOP Markets), Rural consumer, Rural markets, Rural marketers, Communication, Rural communication, Rural communication, communication strategies.*

INTRODUCTION

The Indian rural market is highly untapped and has a huge potential for marketers. Corporates have realized the potentiality of the rural market and have entered into the hinterland in order to overcome market saturation and competition from urban market. With the far-reaching changes in rural India by means of education, improved infrastructure, better banking facilities etc., significant changes have been noticed in the buying and consumption patterns of rural consumers. All these factors initiated a consumption drive among the rural population. As a result, a dominant theme emerging in Indian market is rural marketing.

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Rural markets are gaining importance in the marketing planning exercise of all leading and social marketers. This is not just because of 72.2 percent (Census-2001) India's population still lives in rural India; but because of the converging changes that are occurring here. Although the practical constraints in terms of lack of transportation and communication facilities along with limited rural understanding acted as constraints in comprehending the rural scenario lack of which resulted in low penetration of communication in rural markets. There is need of integrated and long-term outlook for rural communication is necessary in rural markets to overcome the above constraints.

Need of IMC Model in Bottom of the Pyramid Markets

The challenge in the rural market is to create communication that will help the rural consumer in recognizing brands, visuals, and colours. Independent marketing communication tools do not have the same or equal effect on creating awareness about the product in the minds of the rural consumers or at every stage of the consumer purchase process. To provide clarity and consistency in communication and to create maximum communication impact, there is a need of integrated marketing communication in the rural market.

Integrated marketing communication needs in rural market may gathered from the following facts.

- In rural India there are only 59.4 percent of Literate people (Census 2001). The Literacy rate has its implication in communication with the rural population. The marketing communication must be in a language that rural people understand and it should not be a hurdle for rural consumers.

- Rural India is characterized by half a dozen religions, 33 languages, 1650 dialects, and diversity in casts, sub castes, tribes, culture and subculture. The communication has to vary from region to region, using diverse languages.

- Rural markets have also been found to be flooded with fake or look-like brands. Often these spurious brands are identical to some well known brands in terms of colour, packaging, size, etc. which can harm the brand image of the well known

brand. Rural marketers must create integrated communication messages to guard against look-alike, fake and spurious brands.

- Rural market is a highly heterogeneous market. To cater the needs of highly heterogeneous market, marketer should introduce wide range of brands in rural market. To build the strong brand equity and brand recognition there is need of integrated marketing communication.

- The number of villages in India is more than 5 lakhs. Nearly 67 percent of the villages have on ly a population of less than 500 people, which account for 26 percent of the rural population. The vastness and uneven spread of population calls for integrated communication to increase the extent of coverage of rural market.

Hypothetical Model for the Rural Integrated Marketing Communication

A hypothetical model for the rural integrated marketing communication is described in the table.1 in the previous page. Integrated marketing communication is a creative and harmonious mix of various communication tools to provide consistency in communication messages. Rural marketer should select different Medias in the different stages of rural consumer decision making process. The above model is developed by using response hierarchy model. This model depicts the stages a consumer may pass through in moving from a state of not being aware of a company, product or brand, to actual purchase behavior. The rural marketer has to select different Medias in the different stages to carry integrated marketing communication of the organization.

Cognitive Stage

In this stage, consumer is in the state of not being aware of the company, product, and brands. In this stage rural marketer has to select those Medias which are attracting the attention, and creating awareness, knowledge and exposure of the company, product and brands in the minds of the rural consumers. Some of the Medias like- wall paintings, handouts, local newspapers and puppet shows are very effective in capturing attention and creating awareness, awareness and exposure about the product in the minds of rural consumers. Direct mail also can be used to capture the attention of the rural consumer through the opinion leaders.

Affective Stage

In this stage, consumer is having enough of information about the company, product, and brands. In this stage rural consumer is in the stage of decision making. There will be several factors influencing the decision making process of rural consumer. Family is playing very important role in rural consumer decision making process.

Table.1 Hypothetical model for the Rural Integrated Marketing Communication

IMCs Tools*	Models Stages	AIDA Model	Hierarchy of effects Model	Innovation Adoption Model	Communications Model	Focus	Target Market		
- Advertising	Cognitive Stage	Attention	Awareness	Awareness	Exposure	-Puppet Shows	R U R A L C O N S U M E R		
-Direct Marketing			↓		↓	↓		- Hand Bills	
-Personal selling			↓		↓	↓		Reception	- Bus stand
- Sales Promotion			↓		↓	↓		Cognitive Response	- Messages on Moving object
-Publicity/ Public Relation			↓		↓	↓		↓	-Local newspaper
- Interactive marketing			↓		↓	↓		↓	↓

Since there is less impulse purchase behaviour in rural market, communication messages should be targeted to different audience those who have major influence on decision making.

Some of the Medias like hoarding, wall paintings, radio, TV, are very effective in arose interest and create desire about the product. All these Medias reach family which plays very important role in rural consumer behavior.

Behavioral Stage

In this stage consumer is moving to the actual purchase behaviour. Rural consumers usually purchase their requirements in haats, melas, public distribution system, and in co-operative society. In this stage all integrated marketing communication programmes should generate the action from rural consumer and should be targeted towards above mentioned places. Even these Medias also can be used for spot selling or to attract the impulse purchase behaviour of the few rural consumers.

IMC Tools in Bottom of the Pyramid Markets

Integrated marketing communication involves coordinating the various promotional elements and other marketing activities that communicate with firm’s customers. A creative and integrated mix of communication is required in rural market to maximize the communication impact. Different communication tools available for rural marketers are described in table – 2

Table. 2. Integrated Marketing Communication Tools in Rural Market

Communication Tools	Focus
ADVERTISING	
TV	TV Door Darshan and Regional channels
Radio	AIR, Vividha Bharathi and other Regional channels
Cinema	Cinema Tent cinema and Temporary cinema houses
Newspaper	Local newspapers

Packaging	Local language communication
Outdoor Print	Stones, trees, moving objects and other prominent places
Point of purchase displays	PDS, local retail outlets
DIRECT MARKETING	
Catalogues, mailing	Rural literates
E-commerce	ITC- e- choupal
PERSONAL SELLING	
Sales force	Door to door, At village fairs, village market days
SALES PROMOTION	
Exhibition and Demonstration	Fairs, sandis, mandis, and melas
Sampling	Retail outlets, sandis, melas, jatras, folk events, puppet shows
Exchange offer	Consumer durables(October to May)
Price offs	Mansoon season
PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC RELATION	
Event sponsoring	Puppet shows, folk events, magic shows, village sports activity
Free Magazine	Agricultural
Meetings	Cooperative meetings
Community Relationship	Free medical camps, participation in village festivals
Infrastructure	Construction of rural roads, dams, bridges
INTERACTIVE MARKETING	
E- commerce	ITC-E- Choupal

IMC Challenges in Bottom of the Pyramid Markets

Integrated marketing communication challenge for rural marketer is to create communication that will help the rural consumer in recognizing brands, logos, visuals, and colours. Because of different problems, rural market poses different challenges for rural marketers especially in communication. The integrated marketing communication challenges for rural marketers are described bellow-

Rural consumer's perception of a company and its various brands are a synthesis of the bundle of messages they receive from media advertisements, package design, direct marketing efforts, publicity and etc. Integrated marketing communication seeks to have a company's entire marketing and promotional activities, project a consistent and unified image to the market place. It calls for a centralized messaging function so that everything a company says and does communicates a common theme and positioning in rural market.

A rural consumer moves from a state of not being aware of a company, product, and brand to actual purchase behaviour. Integrated marketing communication messages must flow through the different Medias in different stages.

Rural markets have also been found to be flooded with fake or look-alike poor quality brands. This can cause heavy damage to the brand image of the well known brands. Marketers must guard themselves against various fake and deceptive brands through integrated marketing communication.

-Integrated marketing communication must be in a language that rural people understand and relate to. Integrated marketing communication strategies that work well for urban consumers, generally do not work for rural consumers. Integrated marketing communication has to vary from region to region, using diverse languages.

- Integrated marketing communication always has to be backed by the effective distribution system in rural markets.

- Integrated marketing communication needs and purposes to be communicated to the right people at the right time.

- Marketer must first consider rural communication as an investment, instead of expecting high returns in a short term; building brand, brand loyalty and brand recognition through integrated marketing communication should be given more importance.

CONCLUSION

The success of the any firm in the rural market depends on the awareness about the product, acceptance of the product idea, affordability in terms of price and availability of the product. Communication plays very crucial role in creating awareness and generating acceptance in the minds of rural consumer. An effective communication is one that leads to purchase decision, brand registration in consumers mind, brand recall and right association. Strategic integration of communication makes synergy among the various promotional tools and leads to purchase decision, brand registration in consumers mind, brand recall and right association. A successful integrated marketing communication programme in rural market requires the right combination of promotional tools and techniques. Rural marketers should define their role and the extent, to which they can or should be used, coordinate their use in rural market. However, the importance of the integrated marketing communication in rural market is realized by Indian Corporates and they adopted this approach to gain competitive advantage in the rapidly changing environment of Bottom of the pyramid markets.

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