

Quadrant II - Notes

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Module Name: Media mix for rural market-Formal and informal media

Module No: 07

As is evident from the discussions in the previous modules, that a large population in India lives in the rural areas and are aspiring for better living and thus better products, they have to be informed about the variety of products that are available in the market. The lack of infrastructural facilities makes it difficult for the marketers to reach to all the corners of the country. But there are multiple channels or means of communication that exist wherein spreading the message about the product has become feasible for these marketers. So here we need to understand what is media and media mix.

Appropriate media is what is required to communicate the message that the marketers want the people or their prospective customers to know about their product or service. Media, the plural of medium is a means or a channel of communication to the public at large. Media mix as expressed by Oxford US dictionary is a combination of mass media selected, especially in an advertising campaign, as most likely to achieve maximum impact on the public. Selecting appropriate media or media mix for different regional groups is a big challenge for the marketers. They have to see to it that the combination they have selected makes a huge impact on the rural people such that from just being people/viewers they turn out to be their consumers.

There are formal and informal media that is used for communication by large number of marketers in rural India discussed below:

1. **Formal media:** When an information flows through a predefined means or channels it is known as formal communication. The formal media of communication to the rural population most commonly used includes television/cable television, radio, print and cinema theatres.
 - **Television/cable television:** Television is the most cost-effective method of communication for the marketers, apart from being the most preferred by the rural consumers as reflected in many studies. This media has audio as well as video impact and is effective in imparting the required knowledge irrespective of the education status of the consumers. It covers a vast majority of rural consumers and used by most of the fast moving consumer goods(FMCG) brands. Television is no more a convenience good for the rural

consumers. Cable television also is similar to the television however has an additional feature of that of local/regional channels such as Zee Marathi channel in Marathi, Gemini TV in Telugu, India Vision in Malayalam etc. These can very well depict the message of the product or service in the local language of the people. Cable television gives a huge exposure to many channels and hence advertisements to the rural crowd.

- Radio: This is yet another cheapest means of communication and not at all dependent on electricity unlike television. As compared to television, radio has a larger reach in almost all geographic locations of the country. However, disseminating the message at the right time is very important as the rural audience are occupied with manual work during the days. The rural people depend largely on the radio for the agriculture, public health, rural developmental programmes and educational news. Information about the pesticides, fertilisers, FMCGs are mostly broadcasted via radios by the companies. These are done in the regional languages also.
- Cinema theatres: this is a form of entertainment for the villagers in the rural India, especially in the Southern states like the Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, etc. They have a wide reach and also cinema makes an impact on the minds of the people.
- Print: Print as a medium may not have been very effective in the past decades, however the level of literacy in rural India has shown a rise from 59.4% in 2001 to 68.91% in 2011 to 73.5% in 2020. The messages may be localised or they may be customised. The regional newspapers or calendars could very effectively deliver the message and cater to a wide number of people. Examples are Sunaparant in Goa, Malayala Manorama in Kerala, etc.

2. Informal media: There is a huge list of informal media that are used in the rural areas. To name a few, puppetry, opinion leaders, folk media, demonstration, haats/melas, home to home, wall paintings, group meetings of rural customers, video net/internet kiosks, etc. Though these may not be a predefined means of communication, yet they have been effective in delivering the intended message.

- Puppetry: the most indigenous form of communication and widely used as a source of entertainment during the social gatherings. It is an inexpensive channel. Examples are string puppets in Orissa, shadow puppets in Andhra Pradesh etc.
- Opinion leaders: Opinion leaders refers to a person who is knowledgeable and trusted by the people who seek his/her advise in decision making process. It could be a Sarpanch, a school teacher, primary health centre doctor, etc. E.g., Mahindra tractors uses bankers as opinion leaders.
- Folk media: Folk performances may be in the form of music, dances, theatres or scriptures. It is an informal way of educating people about the

products/services. Lavani a dance form in Maharashtra, tiatr-a theatre form in Goa, and many more are forms of folk media.

- **Demonstration:** A demonstration of a product or a service could enable better understanding of its utility and features. It creates an awareness about the product or service.
- **Haats/melas:** these are very common in rural India and attracts lakhs of visitors from different places depending upon the popularity and type of mela whether religious, cultural, sports related or yearly fair of the village. Some examples are Kumbh mela, Sonapur Mela, Carnival in Goa, Pushkar fair, etc. Thousands of people gather at the mela which has thousands of different stalls being placed. Here the marketers need to understand which platform will be more marketing friendly for their products/services. Large companies like Colgate, Vodafone, HUL, Dabur and many more channelise their products via melas.
- **Home to home:** In this approach a face-to-face interaction takes place. This approach is most suitable for bankers, insurance agents and like areas as well as promotion of seeds, pesticides etc. This channel gives a better understanding about the products/services to the rural consumers.
- **Wall paintings:** The messages are painted on the walls hence are more effective and economical and leave a long-lasting impact. However, care has to be taken to see that the messages are written in the simplest form and give clear message. The painting has to be attractive as well. Companies dealing with toothpaste, TV sets, tea/coffee, etc. make use of wall paintings as these are the most essential and daily used items.
- **Group meetings of rural customers:** This is a new and better way of communicating to the rural audience about the product/service by calling a gathering of people. These meetings are fixed at a scheduled time and for people with common interest in the product. Example MRF tyres conducts tractor owners meet to discuss repairs and maintenance of tractor. This creates a sense of motivation and responsibility as well for the marketers and customers.
- **Video net/internet kiosks:** Technology has made its way in rural India; hence this is an evolving media. There is growth in the number of mobile and internet users in the country. The report by Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Nielsen showed that 227 mn rural population used internet users in India, while it is 205 mn in Urban India. Companies like the ITC, largest exporter of agricultural products has created linkages with the rural farmers via their website e-choupal that has benefited the rural audience to a huge extent. The company has designed this initiative by involving the farmers. Use of such media has created lot of opportunities for the marketers to get support from and communicate about their products to their target groups.

Well, there has to be a right combination of formal and the informal media to have a remarkable impact on the people; which largely depends upon the type and nature of the product and geographical location. India has diverse culture, traditions and practices, designing an appropriate media is a challenge for the marketers, but many companies have managed to overcome the barrier as the motivation is the availability of large markets.