



A STUDY ON DIGITAL MARKETING AND ITS IMPACTS ON RURAL MARKETING IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

India has experienced incredible economic progress in recent years. As a result, the rural Indian market has been rapidly expanding and is now larger than the urban market. It has given that almost 70% of Indians live in rural regions so it is crucial to understand the value of marketing and advertising in rural areas. Digital marketing, social media marketing, and search engine marketing are all becoming more and more popular in rural area as technology advances. The number of Internet users is continually rising, and digital marketing has benefited. Business in rural areas has a number of barriers, which marketers are trying to address by putting more of their efforts on digital marketing, which is now becoming one of the key factors to influence the marketing tactics now a day. Digital marketing platforms have an impact on almost every industry in India as it enables for the more efficient and effective reach of potential customer. The majority of companies and marketers are now concentrating on rural markets. The need to update, enlarge, and reinvent marketing tools, channels, and strategies is critical as the market grows. The aim of the paper is to understand what digital marketing is all about and how businesses are using it in rural regions to sell their goods, educate consumers, and gain an advantage over rivals. The paper describes the present scenario of rural digital market and explores the challenges and potential opportunities businesses have with the companies going rural with digital marketing. The study comes to the conclusion that the need for and use of digital marketing will continuously grow in rural area.

KEYWORDS: Digital marketing, Rural Market, Economic growth, Challenges and Potentials.

INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing is the practise of promoting any given product through a minimum of one form of digital media. Digital marketing is made up of a number of techniques and platforms that let any business or organisation use it and research it to see what strategies are effective for them. Digital marketing consists of wide range of techniques and platforms that let any business or organisation use it and research it to see what strategies are effective for them and what does not.

‘GO RURAL’ is the mantra for almost all marketers in India nowadays. The reason to enter the rural market is the urban market is getting saturated for the majority of their items. In this regard, rural market provides huge potentiality to almost all the producers. HUL, P&G, ITC, Dabur India Ltd, Nestle and others are made history in the rural market by effectively entering and holding their place in the rural Indian market till today.

Technology has made it much simpler to enter the rural market through the advent of smart phones and internet access. No more rural communities remain remote in the era of digitalization. Virtual connectivity between

manufacturers and rural customers has made entire world as a 'Global Village'. The influence of digital marketing on the expansion of the rural market has raised positive hopes for the marketers in almost all sectors.

Since we live in a digital age, we cannot disregard the immense potential of digital marketing. Social media marketing, email marketing, affiliate marketing, on-demand video streaming, websites, SEO, SEM, and other components are all integral part of the digital marketing. The evolution of the globe has been significantly impacted by digital marketing. Technology has completely altered the experience of buying. Addition to internet shopping, stores have established a virtual presence. The shift to digital is therefore inevitable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dr Shweta Dewangan (2021) This paper focuses on the types of products that may utilise digital marketing channels to reach untapped customer segments and the digital marketing channels that can be used to reach them. Rural digital marketing is largely unexplored and has a lot of untapped opportunity, but the techniques are yet being devised to explore this area.

Mahalaxmi et Al (2016) have asserted that individuals use digital marketing channels including email marketing, social networking, mobile networking, display advertising, affiliate marketing, etc. for purchasing regardless of their education and economic level. The things that customers bought via digital channels are satisfactory in their view.

According to Parminder kaur (2016) the main objective of present scenario of Indian rural market at the different outlook for rural marketing. The researchers also consider the rural Indians and their difficulties and prospects, as well as the rural marketing mix, rural marketing methods, and rural Indians.

Pooja and Neha (2014) The scope of rural marketing in India was studied in their study. They came to the conclusion that there is still a sizable portion of the rural market that has not been fully developed.

Saroj Kumar Verma (2013) evaluated the difficulties and an opportunity in India's rural marketing. The non-homogenous and scattered nature of the market was one of the main issues noted in the study. Seasonal marketing, low income per capita, transportation, and storage were additional challenges. On the other hand, marketers view the large population and large client base in the rural segment as a chance to focus on their efforts.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore and understand how different digital platforms and marketing strategies are used in rural areas.
- To study and understand the effects of digital marketing on Indian rural market.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study attempts to explain the impact of digitization on the development of rural marketing. The journals, websites and other public sources are main bases of several data and information included in this research paper. This study is based on secondary data and information only.

TYPES OF RURAL MARKETS

1. Periodic Markets:

Periodic markets are the important characteristic feature of the rural marketing in India. In spite of urbanisation and development of retail stores, periodic markets are also playing an important role in rural economy as well as in social life of the rural masses. The periodic marketing function is performed by two institutions, viz., fairs, and weekly markets.

2. Mobile Traders:

There is another important agency known as mobile traders to fulfil the limited needs like vegetables, fruits, clothes, utensils, cosmetics, spices, toiletries etc. of rural consumers. The practice of mobile trading is not a new one, but even in ancient India this phenomenon was common. The mobile traders are those merchants who move from one place to another, from one house to another in order to sell those commodities which are often required by rural masses. As it is rightly observed by Stine, important reason for the existence of mobile trader is that when

the maximum range is smaller than the threshold requirement of the firm, the firm either ceases to function or else it becomes mobile.

3. Permanent Retail Shops:

Permanent retail shops are developed as the population of villages increased, their incomes improved, the demand for goods and that too on daily basis increased. The traditional fairs, weekly markets or peddlers were not able to meet the situation and this led to the emergence and growth of permanent shops. Permanent shops were set up as a result of the demand of the rural inhabitants primarily of the same village. The number of shops, their various forms largely depends upon the size of the population of the village, their incomes, purchasing power, their preferences, etc.

DIGITAL MARKETING PLATFORMS

- **Search Engine Optimization:** The technique of enhancing a website's exposure when users search for goods or services is known as Search Engine Optimization. Optimizing your website for SEO generally means making it appear naturally or spontaneously in search results on Google, Yahoo, Bing, or any other search engine. To ensure that only relevant results are displayed, Google continuously adjusts its algorithms. Websites, blogs, and infographics are among the things that this strategy improves the most. Your website ought to cover the technical aspects of spidering, extracting, and analysing non-text content, as well as content and query matching. Keep in mind that organic traffic to your business will be generated through the most cost-effective marketing plan.
- **Affiliate marketing:** Affiliate marketing is the practice of making money or receiving a commission by advertising the goods of others. Performance-based marketing is when one is compensated according to how much traffic they drive to a website. It includes things like YouTube Partner program and sharing affiliate links on your social media pages. You discover a product you enjoy, spread the word about it to other people (often through your webpage), and get paid a portion of the revenue from each sale you generate.
- **Pay per click:** Pay per click is a strategy that involves paying the publication each time a user clicks on your ads in order to drive traffic to your website. PPC ads are typically placed through search engines, which bill advertisers a predetermined sum each time one of their ads is clicked. With the pay-per-click (PPC) advertising model, advertisers can publish advertisements on a promotion platform and only pay the owner of the platform when their advertisement is clicked. Real time bidding (RTB), which is used by advertising platforms such as Google Ads and Microsoft Advertise, allows advertising content to be sold in a private automated auction utilizing real-time data.
- **Social media marketing:** It is the technique of advertising your company, item, or website on numerous social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, etc. With the use of these channels, you may increase website traffic, build brand recognition, and produce leads for your company. Many people have extensive knowledge of social media as end users, but their understanding of social media marketing is often less extensive. Businesses can achieve their goals of increasing brand equity, enhancing customer service, attracting new clients, and gathering client feedback by utilizing social media marketing. Businesses may communicate with their clients in a profitable way by creating social media content that benefits others.
- **Content marketing:** Content marketing is the creation and dissemination of pertinent, helpful content to both current and potential clients in the form of blogs, newsletters, white papers, social media postings, emails, videos, and the like. When executed properly, this content communicates knowledge and makes it obvious that a company values the customers it serves. Building and maintaining relationships with both current and potential clients is possible through the regular usage of content marketing. When a target audience views a business as a partner invested in their success and a reliable source of counsel and direction, they are more likely to stick with that business when the time comes to make a purchase. In essence, content marketing is a continuous process that emphasizes engaging with your audience rather than constantly pushing products.
- **E-Commerce website:** e-Commerce systems are advancing quickly. The best strategy to increase sales for any business is to develop an e-commerce website because it allows potential customers to research and comprehend the company from the comfort of their homes. On the website, the seller can present their whole catalogue of goods and services for customers to browse and purchase. To assist with the same, business owners should choose a reputable digital marketing firm that provides web building services. The website will assist the business owner in expanding their audience and building brand recognition.
- **Email marketing:** Using the email marketing strategy, one can reach out to both present and potential customers with promotional communications. It's a way to advertise to your audience things like information, deals, and events. Any company aiming to increase sales online has long relied on email marketing. It enables you to have

direct touch with customers and attract potential customers to your website. You can quickly and easily send your consumers updates, great news, notifications, etc. by following a few simple steps.

• **Viral marketing:** Viral marketing is a method of advertising a good or service where customers assist in getting the word out about the product or service to other websites or when customers create an event that can result in exponential development. Viral marketing uses fast-moving communications that pass from person to person to increase interest in a company or product (and subsequently potential sales). The concept is that content sharing is a decision made by the users themselves. Social networks are the natural environment of this type of marketing due to their speed and the ease with which they enable sharing.

ADVANTAGES OF DIGITAL MARKETING

Digital marketing has many advantage over traditional marketing such as follow:

1. It is possible to prepare strategies with the help of data and analytics to have broader and wider outreach to customers: With digital marketing, one can have knowledge of the exact number of individuals who have

statistics and information about marketing website. This will provide assistance to identify about –the number of persons visiting one’s business page - their geographic location - the sex, age and interests of the visitors - how much time they are spending on site - the source of traffic from various gadgets - website bounce rates - how the traffic has changed over time and by displaying a breakdown of all of this traffic information, the outcome of this procedure helps a businessman to prioritize the marketing channels. The real-time data analysis provides businessmen with improved and evocative understanding of the effectiveness of marketing strategies. With access to this information, one can also develop marketing budget for marketing with no barriers in terms of poor connectivity, scattered geography, or terrain. A product can be advertised in any remote locations using digital media for marketing. Thus, giving it, more number of potential consumers to target with the available pool of resources.

2. Digital Mode for creating awareness about product is more effective. If we compare that one has created a product brochure and delivered it to people as an offline content, it seems to be less expedient. This is because the brochure makers have to make necessary arrangement for its distribution in effective manner. In spite of that there will be no idea how many people have gone through it. Against this if one has created an impactful visual content and started promoting it on social media. Through digital networks, one can educate potential buyers about products and services effectively and efficiently.

3. Digital marketing can be personalized at the same time can help to reach to customer even at international level. Internet marketing activities can be done in tailor made format and offers and programs can be customized or personalized based on the profiles and other consumer conducts included in targeted audiences. This will give customers very well perception of the products and services and make possible to measure the value for price paid. This also helps to know the customers requirement in better way. The use of internet has made the world as global village. Digital marketing activities are done online, trades are not bound by brick-and-mortar boundaries when it comes to reaching out to a wider audience. The world just became smaller with Internet marketing, allowing

4. Digital marketing offers fast feedback and outcomes are quantifiable As per the traditional way, the survey method is normally used to get customers responses and feedback about the product and services offered and for further improvement. This survey and analysis is based on scattered and vague parameters and with number of assumptions. Sometimes this may not be covering the targeted audience and sometimes data collected may be less reliable due to lack of interest or knowledge of respondents. In this situation the ration between efforts and benefit remains low. On the contrary, Internet marketing results are easily measurable and available in real time. Each click or visit to a landing page or websites, sign ups, and online purchases can actually be measured very accurately allowing digital marketers to easily gauge which particular Internet marketing tool will work for them and bring the best results. On top of that, Internet marketing analytics data can also give digital marketers a better insight about their targeted customers purchasing behaviour among other things.

5. Digital Marketing helps business to be cost effective Compared to traditional mass media marketing, Internet marketing is much more cost-effective. Internet marketing also does not require ridiculously large amounts of investment as what businesses have done in the past with mass media marketing. Internet marketing channels are cheaper compare to traditional media channels, and in many cases websites can generate traffic even for free. Some businesses also need not spend huge amounts on property rentals, maintenance fees, and overhead costs for stock rooms as products can be drop shipped directly from your supplier to your end customer.

6. Digital marketing bring down transportation cost. Low cost of transportation: The features that needs to be put up at strategic locations needs to be transported from head branches to the target locations. Due to bad roads and distant placements of rural villages it results into a very high cost on transportations. In case of digital marketing this cost cuts down substantially. All the features can be projected on respective media through digital means which means no travelling is involved.

7. Digital marketing allows more lucrative options. Digital marketing methods are not limited space or time. Marketers can deploy lucrative means such as videos, audios, teasers, real time analysis, etc. to capture the attention of consumers in the segment. Compared to traditional marketing where only few options are available, these methods have significantly more number of options to expand customers. The other benefits of digital marketing includes flexibility in business, low obstruction to entry, easy to optimize and adopt change Digital marketing is not limited to identify needs only, but also is very useful tool to identify the innate needs of the customers. It can be an effective tool to implement push marketing for the market expansion of any product. At the same time, marketers must realize that the scope of the product that should be pushed into rural segment is limited. Any product which has physical form should be examined before being promoted in the rural segment. The cost of physically delivering the product must be realized prior to promotion to avoid any waste of money and effort.

DIFFICULTIES OF RURAL MARKETING

Various business divisions have been attempting to corner the rural market in various ways. Rural markets undoubtedly offer prospects and are quite appealing to marketers. However, things are not as easy as they might seem. To enter and flourish in this market in a seamless manner is not that easy. This market presents a number of difficulties; therefore, the marketer must work hard to address these difficulties properly. The difficulties related with rural markets are such as:

❖ **Inadequate Infrastructure Facilities:** The government is making every effort to give infrastructure, but still a lot more work is required to develop things to the maximum possible degree. Yet, proper banking services, power, etc. are still unavailable to rural residents. Rail transportation does not reach many remote places. Numerous roads had inferior surfaces and suffered significant damage during the monsoon. Even now, using bullock carts is unavoidable. Both the rural and urban sectors of Rajasthan and Gujarat employ camel carts.

❖ **Scattered and Dispersed market:** The rural population is dispersed over a huge land region. Dispersed market area makes it challenging for marketers to reach out to rural communities. This makes it difficult for marketers to use many of the promotional techniques to promote their goods. Additionally, guaranteeing a brand's accessibility across the nation is quite impossible. District fairs are sporadic and recurrent events. Such events are preferred by manufacturers and merchants as they provide better visibility and hold the interest of the target market for longer periods of time. Additionally, it is exceedingly expensive to advertise in a market that is so diverse.

❖ **Varying & Seasonable demand:** Demand in rural areas is described as seasonal and variable. As a result, businesses cannot focus on the rural market because planning is challenging. Similar to this, demand is influenced by rural consumers' income, which is extremely erratic because those consumers depend on agriculture, which in turn depends on the monsoon. They have a decent income if the agricultural season is favourable, but if it is not, they are unable to spend much money on many other items.

❖ **Communication barrier:** There are numerous languages and dialects, which differ from one state to another, from one region to another and likely from one district to another. Designing promotional policies for each of these regions is challenging for marketers since messages must be conveyed in the local dialect. In rural areas lack, there is lack of communication facility such as phone, telegram or fax etc. Even now, during the monsoons, most communities in the nation are inaccessible. The infrastructure for other forms of communication is also quite poor.

❖ **Lower literacy rates and per capita income:** In comparison to metropolitan areas, there is a lower degree of literacy there. This creates a communication issue in these rural communities. Due to its limited reach, print media

becomes worthless and rather irrelevant. Compared to urban individuals, rural dwellers have a lower per capita income. Furthermore, the state of agriculture, which in turn depends on the monsoons, affects demand in rural marketplaces. As a result, the demand is not steady or predictable. As a result, rural areas have lower level of incomes in comparison to urban areas.

❖ **Deprived markets and deprived individuals:** The number of people living in poverty has not diminished significantly. Rural markets are thus characterized by poor individuals and as a result, undeveloped markets. The great majority of rural residents are bound by tradition, and they struggle with issues like erratic access to electricity, limited infrastructure, poor telephone service, and political-business ties that obstruct development initiatives.

❖ **Prevalence of fake brands:** There are numerous locally produced alternatives to any branded goods that are more appealing and less expensive. The buyer can scarcely distinguish a fake brand from an authentic one due to illiteracy. Rural consumers are careful when they make purchases and take their time making decisions. They typically try a product out before buying it again if they are completely satisfied.

❖ **Lack of Advertising Strategies:** Marketers are unable to meet the expectations of all rural residents when developing advertisements, sales promotions, and promotional methods. Promotional programs are never versatile. In rural markets advertisements can be used but other techniques are very hard to incorporate for marketing, such as sales promotion and personal selling, which are effective in urban markets but that marketers cannot implement in rural markets.

❖ **Sluggish lifestyle:** The most important problem for a marketer is a lack of enthusiasm for a new lifestyle. Product modification does not have desired and beneficial effects on rural people, since they are not easily persuaded to test, utilize, and accept particular products with improved quality and new characteristics. Their attitude is constrained by traditions, established beliefs, prejudices, etc. Unfortunately, the advocates of their opinion are not scientific. It is challenging to successfully introduce advanced and innovative items in rural regions.

❖ **Distinctive style of thinking:** The lifestyles of the people vary significantly. The rural consumer, who typically has two to three options, does not have access to the variety of brands that an urban consumer enjoys. As a result, rural customers have relatively straightforward thinking, and their choices are still influenced by traditions and norms. They are resistant to change and slow to warm up to trendy goods. It is challenging to get them to adopt new behaviour.

❖ **Insufficient marketing support:** Most of the time, producers and wholesalers do not offer traders in rural areas the same level of generous credit, financial support, and other amenities that they do to dealers in urban areas. Similar to this, retailers and rural customers are not given enough consideration when establishing an entire marketing strategy.

POTENTIALS OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN RURAL MARKETS

As mentioned above there are many difficulties marketers face while promoting their products in rural market but urban market is slowly saturating and rural market is very huge and lucrative to cater. So, in spite of the difficulties marketers with the help of digital marketing try to enter and capture the untapped rural markets. The digital marketing has the potential to remove the difficulties which the marketers face while promoting their products through traditional marketing.

❖ **Direct promotion:** Most of the rural consumers are dependent on middlemen i.e., wholesalers, retailers etc. and they charged extra price for the product as their profit is also included in the price. Marketers show actual price via digital marketing so it helps to attain transparent pricing. Digital marketing helps to remove those middlemen and reach out to the rural consumers directly. Digital marketing helps marketer to directly promote their products or services. Direct promotion helps to create awareness about products or services among the rural consumer base.

❖ **Simple consumer reach:** In today's world as the literacy rate of rural people have increased, not only youth but old age people also spending their time mostly on web. So, marketers can easily use web channels to advertise their products and attract the large masses easily. Utilizing different digital medias marketers can attract their existing as potential customers without much effort.

❖ **Cost reduction:** Traditional media marketing is much costlier than digital marketing. In offline stores products transferred from one place to another so, the transportation cost increases but in digital marketing no such costs arise. Now-a-days marketers are moving towards digital marketing because of its low cost as rural consumers mostly prefer inexpensive products. If marketers invest huge amount in advertising, then the cost of the product

will also increase. So, rural consumers will not prefer such expensive products. To make a better reach in rural area, marketers should go for digital marketing as it is a better choice.

❖ **Accessibility:** For a proper reach to the consumers, marketers have to remind them consistently about their products or services. Digital marketing provides this facility to promote any product or service 24*7 & there is no time restrictions for the consumers to shop online. As rural markets are generally closed in odd timings, this is the best opportunity for marketers to reach out to their customers who are in need.

❖ **Purchaser's convenience to shop online:** As rural market is not well-developed; rural consumers sometimes don't get products according to their preferences from offline retail stores. Some of the consumers also don't want to communicate their needs to the sales assistant as they are hesitant to disclose about their needs. So, digital marketing can help to provide solution for convenient purchasing 24*7 & in online e-commerce websites there are plenty of choices or alternatives available to choose from. It also provides solution to consumers to shop without any sales assistant maintaining customer's privacy as well.

❖ **Enables quick purchase:** Before introduction of digital marketing the rural consumers are dependent on traditional media marketing. They first saw the advertisements in TV, newspaper, radio etc. then afterwards they start searching for the respective products in rural markets. But rural market is not well-developed so most of the time they didn't find the product of the same brand or their choice. So this barrier can be reduced with the help of digital marketing as the advertisement and the shopping be done in the same portal, they need not to put extra effort to search as they get the products at their doorstep.

❖ **Quick feedback:** The main drawback of traditional marketing is that consumers cannot provide feedback to marketers about their likes or dislikes so the company was unable to modify the products according the consumer's taste and preference. With the help of digital marketing consumer can easily share their response or feedback to marketers so, marketers get to know that who are interested or not interested in their products and what changes can make the product more desirable.

CONCLUSION

The Indian economy is growing rapidly. India's rural areas are equally improving by and benefiting from the nation's overall progress. This has given marketers new opportunities to grow their businesses and get an edge over rivals in the fierce rivalry. The phrase "digitalization" has begun to take over the globe, giving us access to a wide range of digital marketing technology and tools that may be utilised more effectively to enhance the traditional marketing plan. One of the finest methods to engage with and attract customers is by using digital marketing tools. Gaining market share in rural markets will be mostly dependent on digital media and efforts to sell the products/services through online media. Businesses may now access rural market in a highly effective and economical manner at cheap cost as a result of the development of new technologies and diversification.

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