

DIGITAL MARKETING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ULTRATECH CEMENT IN RURAL AREAS: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO SHREE JEENMATA ENTERPRISES, CHANDRAPUR

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the digital marketing challenges and opportunities for UltraTech Cement in rural areas with special reference to Shree Jeenmata Enterprises. The research focuses on how digital marketing tools such as social media, mobile marketing, WhatsApp communication, online promotions, and dealer-based digital engagement influence customer awareness, lead generation, dealer communication, and rural market penetration. Rural markets present significant growth potential for cement companies due to increasing infrastructure development, housing demand, and expanding digital adoption. However, challenges such as limited internet connectivity, low digital literacy, resistance to technology adoption, and lack of localized digital content continue to restrict the effective implementation of digital marketing strategies in rural regions.

Keywords: Digital marketing, rural markets, UltraTech Cement, dealer network, SPSS analysis

INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing has become a major force in modern business communication, helping organizations reach customers through mobile platforms, social media, email, search engines, and online content. In rural and semi-urban markets, digital adoption is expanding, but the level of trust, digital literacy, and infrastructure support remains uneven. For the cement industry, and especially for UltraTech Cement, digital marketing is not only a branding tool but also a channel for dealer communication, customer awareness, and lead generation. In India, the growth of affordable internet access and smartphone usage has widened the scope of digital marketing beyond urban consumers. At the same time, rural markets continue to depend strongly on dealer advice, word-of-mouth, and local relationships. This creates a practical challenge: digital promotion must be made relevant to local construction needs, regional language preferences, and the trust patterns of rural buyers.

This paper is based on the thesis study conducted with reference to Shree Jeenmata Enterprises, Chandrapur, and focuses on the rural market context of UltraTech Cement. The study aims to identify the main digital marketing challenges, assess the opportunities available in rural markets, and analyze respondent perceptions using SPSS-based statistical analysis.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kotler and Keller (2016) explain marketing management as a value-creation process and provide the conceptual base for understanding customer orientation, communication, and brand positioning.

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) highlight digital marketing as an integrated system of strategy, implementation, and measurement across online channels.

Ryan (2016) discusses how digital channels influence consumer behavior and improve targeting efficiency while reducing promotional cost.

Järvinen et al. (2012) show that content-driven digital marketing can strengthen brand awareness and trust.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2014) emphasize the growing role of social media in marketing communication and stakeholder engagement.

Kannan (2017) argues that digital marketing works best when integrated with traditional marketing, especially for market penetration.

Tiago and Veríssimo (2014) note that adoption of digital tools can improve operational efficiency and customer interaction.

Singh and Sinha (2017) identify low digital literacy, poor connectivity, and limited awareness as core rural digital marketing barriers.

Sharma and Verma (2018) emphasize the role of distributors in rural marketing and the importance of channel coordination.

Gupta and Arora (2019) discuss the potential of mobile-based marketing and WhatsApp promotion in rural outreach.

Patil and Deshmukh (2020) show that digital engagement with dealers can improve coordination and sales performance in the cement industry.

Mishra and Pandey (2020) report increasing rural acceptance of digital platforms despite infrastructural constraints.

Kumar and Reddy (2021) identify online branding and dealer networks as important for rural market expansion in construction materials.

Agrawal and Jain (2022) underline the need for localized strategies and digital education in rural and semi-urban settings.

Joshi and Kulkarni (2023) find that WhatsApp marketing, digital promotion, and online support improve opportunities for rural cement dealers.

Garg et al. (2024) point out that digital literacy, infrastructure gaps, and return-on-investment concerns remain important challenges in rural digital marketing.

Chandan and Veershetty (2025) discuss the combined opportunities and challenges of digital marketing in rural markets.

J. Swopna and K. Uma (2024) study rural customer attitudes and show that adoption depends strongly on trust and accessibility.

Ali and Akhtar (2024) examine the influence of digital media on consumer behavior in rural India.

Mehra (2024) and Kakka (2019) both stress that rural marketing in India requires local adaptation and careful channel management.

Taken together, the literature suggests that digital marketing in rural markets is effective.

HYPOTHESIS FRAMING

H1: Occupation is significantly associated with the perceived relevance of UltraTech Cement's digital marketing messages to local construction needs.

H2: Perceived impact of digital marketing messages differs significantly across age groups.

H3: A majority of respondents believe that digital marketing reduces dependency on dealers in rural areas.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study follows a descriptive and analytical research design. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire, and secondary data were drawn from the thesis document, published literature, and company-related materials.

The valid sample size for analysis is 185 respondents. The sampling frame included rural customers, dealers, retailers, contractors, and channel partners connected with UltraTech Cement through Shree Jeemata Enterprises, Chandrapur. The sampling method used was non-probability sampling, specifically convenience sampling and purposive sampling.

The questionnaire included demographic questions and closed-ended items on awareness, trust factors, digital marketing dependency, and message relevance. For statistical analysis, frequency tables, percentage analysis, cross-tabulation, chi-square test, one-way ANOVA, Tukey HSD post hoc test, and effect size estimation were used in SPSS.

A combined reliability test on the five items shown in the SPSS output produced a negative Cronbach’s alpha, indicating that these items should not be treated as a single internally consistent scale. Accordingly, the items are interpreted separately in the analysis rather than as one composite construct.

Results

Statistical Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Profile of respondents by age group, occupation, and awareness of UltraTech Cement.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age group	25–35	94	50.8
Age group	36–45	72	38.9
Age group	46–55	14	7.6
Age group	Above 55	5	2.7
Occupation	Contractor	30	16.2
Occupation	Dealer	21	11.4
Occupation	Farmer	35	18.9
Occupation	Working	99	53.5
Awareness of UltraTech	Yes	183	98.9
Awareness of UltraTech	Maybe	1	0.5

Awareness of UltraTech	No	1	0.5
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Interpretation: The sample is dominated by respondents aged 25–45 years, and more than half of the respondents belong to the working category. Awareness of UltraTech Cement is extremely high, with 98.9% answering ‘Yes.’

Table 2: Trust factors influencing confidence in digital marketing content.

Trust factor	Frequency	Percent
Testimonials from local customers	80	43.2
Endorsement by local dealers	71	38.4
Government or quality certifications shown	20	10.8
Demonstration videos in local language	10	5.4
I will never trust digital ads	4	2.2

Interpretation: Trust is built mainly through local testimonials and dealer endorsement. Purely digital cues such as demonstration videos are helpful, but they are not the primary trust driver in this rural sample.

Table 3: Perception of whether digital marketing reduces dependency on dealers.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Agree	94	50.8
No change	80	43.2
Disagree	11	5.9

Interpretation: A slight majority of respondents agree that digital marketing reduces dependency on dealers, but a large proportion report no change. This suggests that digital promotion complements the dealer channel rather than replacing it outright.

Table 4: Cross-tabulation of occupation and perceived message impact.

Occupation	Completely match	Do not match at all	Mostly match	Rarely match	Total
Contractor	11	0	14	5	30
Dealer	17	0	2	2	21
Farmer	8	4	12	11	35
Working	21	4	35	39	99
Total	57	8	63	57	185

Interpretation: Dealers reported the strongest fit between digital messages and local needs, while the working group showed the highest proportion of ‘rarely match.’ This pattern indicates that occupation shapes how respondents evaluate the relevance of digital content.

Table 5: Chi-square test of association between occupation and message impact.

Test	Value	df	Sig.
Pearson Chi-Square	40.027	9	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	38.722	9	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.199	1	<.001

Interpretation: The association between occupation and message impact is statistically significant. However, the chi-square output also shows that some expected counts are below 5, so the result should be interpreted with caution and reported alongside this limitation.

Table 6: One-way ANOVA of DM_message_impact across age groups.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
Between Groups	16.218	3	3.853	.011
Within Groups	253.945	181		
Total	270.162	184		

Interpretation:Age group has a statistically significant effect on the perceived impact of digital marketing messages. The effect size is modest, so the difference is meaningful but not large.

Table 7: Post hoc comparison for age group differences in DM_message_impact.

Comparison	Mean Difference	Sig.	Decision	Note
36–45 vs Above 55	1.689	.013	Significant	Highest observed gap
25–35 vs Above 55	1.385	.056	Not significant	Borderline
46–55 vs Above 55	1.157	.242	Not significant	Not significant

Interpretation:The only clearly significant Tukey HSD difference is between the 36–45 age group and the Above 55 group, showing weaker message impact among the oldest respondents.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypotheses	Statement	Result
H1	Occupation is significantly associated with the perceived relevance of digital marketing messages.	Supported ($\chi^2 = 40.027$, $df = 9$, $p < .001$)
H2	Perceived impact of digital marketing messages differs significantly across age groups.	Supported ($F = 3.853$, $p = .011$)
H3	A majority of respondents believe digital marketing reduces dependency on dealers.	Descriptively supported (50.8% agree; 43.2% no change; 5.9% disagree)

DISCUSSION

The results show that digital marketing can play an important role in rural cement markets, but its effectiveness depends on local trust structures. Respondents trust digital content most when it is reinforced by local dealers and testimonials from local customers. This means that digital marketing should not be designed as a purely online communication strategy; instead, it should work with the dealer network and local credibility systems. The significant association between occupation and message impact suggests that different stakeholder groups

respond differently to the same digital message. Dealers were the most positive, while working respondents were more likely to say that the message rarely matches local needs. This indicates that content should be tailored by audience segment rather than delivered uniformly.

The ANOVA result also shows that age influences perceived message impact. Younger and middle-age respondents reported stronger relevance than the oldest group, which is consistent with the idea that digital adoption and comprehension vary with age. Because the oldest group is very small, this result should be reported carefully, but the pattern is still useful for strategy design.

FINDING AND CONCLUSION

UltraTech Cement is already highly recognized in the sample area, with awareness close to universal. Local customer testimonials and dealer endorsements are the strongest trust drivers for digital content.

Digital marketing is seen as reducing dealer dependency by a slight majority, but it does not replace dealer influence completely. Occupation and age both influence how respondents perceive the relevance of digital marketing messages.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

The study is limited to the Chandrapur context and to respondents connected with the UltraTech Cement dealer network. The sample is non-probability based, which limits broad generalization. Some age categories are small, particularly the Above 55 group, and this affects the stability of inferential results.

Future research can expand the sample across multiple districts, compare UltraTech Cement with other brands, and develop multi-item validated scales for trust, digital adoption, and dealer dependence. Further studies can also examine the impact of WhatsApp marketing, regional-language content, and advanced digital tools such as automation and AI-based customer engagement.

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