

# This happens only in Rural India

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**Abstract:** This paper talks about advertising of rural products in rural markets. This is about the products which are produced at village level or brought from urban areas and the customers for these products are the villagers of that village as well as nearby villages. The objective of the study is to understand about the advertising strategies used in the villages for selling the products; these products are not identified by any brand name. The customers may or may not be aware about the product. Although it is studied in various earlier researches that mouth publicity is the most used strategy but there is much more to this. The study is conducted in twenty villages of Junnar taluka and the respondents were the entrepreneurs in these villages. Entrepreneurs were selected randomly irrespective of their scale of business. Personal interviews were conducted with all the respondents. There were forty entrepreneurs in the study. The research conducted resulted in showing some advertising strategies which are used effectively in rural areas and they are quite different than the ones we read and study in advertising and management books. The study is limited in terms of not taking into its scope the turnover these entrepreneurs have.

**Key Words:** Rural, Rural Entrepreneur, Rural Customer, Village level Advertising

## Introduction

India has more than six lakh villages<sup>1</sup> therefore rural market in India is certainly more than its urban counterpart and hence there are more rural customers than the urban ones. Irony is most of the studies talk about the urban market and urban customers and advertising of these products. There are products going from urban areas to rural areas and vice versa but there are also some products which are grown in rural areas and they are sold there. Although in villages many entrepreneurs enjoy the monopoly status but this is not always the case. Therefore they do take the help of advertising. There is advertising done but without even knowing that this is advertising and still achieving the result of products and services being sold. Most of them depend on mouth publicity but there are other ways also. Some of the ways are very interesting, it is mouth publicity but with a twist.

## Rural, Rural Entrepreneur, Rural Customer, Village level Advertising

**Rural India-** The definition of rural and village as given by government of India is considered for the study. India has three criteria for defining rural areas and they are- Any habitation with a population density of less than 400 persons per sq. km., where at least 75 percent of the male working population is engaged in agriculture and where there exists no municipality or board.<sup>2</sup>

**Village** - Village means revenue village declared by govt. of India. The revenue village is a well-defined unit and has been used as a unit for data collection in all the censuses in the post independence period. The village in the administrative sense is the 'mauza' a settled area with defined boundaries, for which village records have been prepared.<sup>3</sup>

**Rural Entrepreneur** - A person living in any of the villages of Junnar Taluka of Pune District and engaged in any business activity irrespective of the scale of operation of the enterprise and irrespective of the sector is considered rural entrepreneur for the study.

**Rural Customer** - A person residing in any village in Junnar Taluka of Pune District and buying the goods and services from the rural entrepreneurs based in the village is considered rural customer for the study.

**Village level Advertising-** Advertising as told by the rural entrepreneurs, the way for other people to know about their products and purchase from them.

### Objective of the study

To study whether advertising has any role in selling rural or urban products to rural customers in selected villages of Junnar Taluka.

### Research Methodology for the study

This research falls under the category of descriptive research where the researcher reports the observed facts in the area of study.

**Geographical area of study** - Junnar Taluka in Pune district in Maharashtra state of India was the area for the study. It has 181 villages, twenty were selected randomly for the study.

**The respondents** - Two entrepreneurs were selected from each of these twenty villages. There was no restriction kept about age, scale of business, gender etc. of the entrepreneur. There were 40 respondents. None of them undertook any course for marketing or advertising.

**Data Collection** - The data was collected through personal interview with each of these forty entrepreneurs. Although there was a questionnaire but the researcher also heard and penned down any other information which had some link to the main topic. The objective was to understand the advertising strategies they use for selling their products. Case study method was used for the study.

### **Difference between Rural and Urban customer**

There is one striking difference between rural and urban customer. Urban customer is buying each and everything for fulfilling the daily requirements but rural customer still possess the power to produce major part of the daily requirements. This makes the rural customer not only producer but also seller for the extra produce at home. So every rural customer is an informed buyer, atleast for the products which are grown or manufactured in village.

### **Advertising which is not considered advertising**

One common factor with all the respondents was that they said we do not earn that much which we can spend for news paper or radio advertisement. They are aware about mouth publicity as way of advertisement and depend on that. On probing further, some of them told more about the way they advertise, these could be called the rivulets of mouth publicity. They do not call it advertising. Some small but effective strategies were noticed during the study and surprisingly they are not considered advertising.

### **The Rural Advertising found in selected villages of Junnar Taluka**

The study presents the various ways these entrepreneurs told, they use to sell their products. All of them said they have not learnt marketing; this is what they got from trial and error approach. Every one of them uses some or other advertising practice but the study wants to bring out the ones which were quite unique.

The beauty parlour in Aalephata earns its customers by saying no to the demands for beauty treatments of customers which could be harmful for them. This generated trustworthiness in the minds of customers and they recommend other customers to take suggestion from this parlour before jumping for any beauty treatment. This strategy has helped to bring in customers from nearby villages also. Sometimes they come just for consultation.

Narayangaon mobile shop runs well because the shopkeeper goes by himself to the homes of elderly people and recharges their mobile phones, also helps them to make calls and any other phone related functions. He explains to them the how to use phone, what not to do with the phone, how they should be careful about keeping phone away from heat, water etc.

The spices and stationary store owner in Udapur asks some women to come and help her while making and packing spices they get paid for it and also get spices at some discount. This in turn makes them know about the purity of spices because they made it themselves and therefore they buy and also gives guarantee to others that they can buy without any worry.

Gents salon in Otur specialises in haircuts and beards, in his salon he places a photo of some celebrity in front of the mirror, this is the advertisement, which means today's special, get your haircut in style of a particular character from movie or some TV serial. He said now a days most of the young boys are asking for beard and moustache like Chatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj after the popular serial.

General Store in Gaymukhwadi is able to sell grains, pulses and things like this so well. The reason behind this is the shopkeeper has employed some women for cleaning these food articles. These women are the selected ones who are known in the village for removing all the small stones, mud and any other impurities very well. People buy from this shop because then they can use it without spending time in cleaning which is a time taking process.

Wage Workers bring business for the mandap decorator of Khamundi village. He has employed 5 people but if it is big work he calls more workers and pay them therefore these workers keep on spreading word about the facilities available with the mandap decorator. He is famous for providing all under one roof. The worker who brings a contract gets bonus apart from the daily wage. This gives work and money to all the people engaged in this business.

Ladies tailor in Wadgaon Anand does not stop only on stitching clothes for village ladies she started conducting tailoring classes for ladies. There may be many ladies tailors in and around the village but there is only one ladies tailoring class available. After these two business initiatives she took a third one. She stitches bags for a saree shop in Junnar market. The material is provided by the shop she just has to stitch and give. She has also involved few other ladies in this and now all these ladies earn well. A stitch has stitched the fabric of their life pretty well.

A beautician in village Pimpalwandi offers some beauty services free and this is her advertising strategy. She started her parlour with few services and used to give them at low price this attracted customers then she added more services and started giving some of them free. This works good for her.

In Warulwadi the photocopy shopkeeper writes on plain paper about his shop and takes many copies of it and spreads this in village. At time of Ganpati festival he gives free the photocopies of the schedule of programmes to be conducted in the village during the 10 days of festival, this promotes his business. School and college going students are his prominent customers.

The poultry farm in Gaymukhwadi had normal business and the owner was able to earn his livelihood but when the bird flu disease spread he faced the problem, some birds died and some had to be killed. The real trouble began when he started again i.e. after the disease was gone and he bought healthy birds. People were still under the shadows of fear and they were not buying any eggs or chicken. At this time to regain the trust, for one week everyday he used to tell his neighbours, today we all family members will eat egg curry or chicken if you see all of us alive tomorrow and doing well probably you will believe my words that now the disease has eloped. This definitely generated some confidence in people. For next one week he sold eggs and chicken at lower prices and then slowly he was back in business.

These advertising practices definitely are mouth publicity but even mouth publicity needs some solid work to be done behind it. It is not so easy, these strategies adopted by village entrepreneurs are often considered to be of no importance but these are keeping them afloat in their business and region. If they do not use their brains and just depend on the customer to say good about them, they will perish very soon. The above strategies are the ones used by the respondent entrepreneurs.

### **Conclusion**

It is time to look and learn from the rural entrepreneurs and rural customers. They may not be tech savy and brand aware but they know the rules of life and how to wade through the difficult times. We need to change our glasses and then only we will be able to reach the rural customer in a better way. At present only few advertisements are able to reach to the hearts of rural population. If we want to sell products to the rural customer we need to adopt the rural advertising way.

### **References**

- 1 Number of villages, Census of India (2011), retrieved on 27 Sep 2018 from <http://censusindia.gov.in>
- 2 Definition of rural, Census of India (2011), retrieved on 27 Sep 2018 from <http://censusindia.gov.in>
- 3 Definition of village, Census of India (2011), retrieved on 27 Sep 2018 from <http://censusindia.gov.in>