CHAPTER - V

PROMOTION STRATEGY

"Typical rural phenomenon is that kids sent by their mothers to purchase a product without specifying brand. Kids tend to ask for products, they have seen on TV or heard on Radios"

Suresh Balakrishnan,
GM- Linterland rural Initiatives.
"Typical rural phenomenon is that kids sent by their mothers to purchase a product without specifying brand. Kids tend to ask for products, they have seen on TV or heard on Radios”

Suresh Balakrishnan, GM- Linterland rural Initiatives.

5.1 Introduction:

The competition in rural consumer market has been increasing over the years. Product promotion is the biggest challenge a marketer faces. Nowhere is innovation more imperative than in FMCG industry.

Promotion mix is very important for a low involvement product category like FMCG. The right promotion tools need to be identified and then only marketer can dream of success in a Complex rural markets of India. To communicate effectively with rural audience, it is important to understand the aspirations, fears and expectations of rural customers, in relation to each product category. National strategies for any company may not yield results in a heterogenous rural market. Hence, Promotion mix has to be designed separately for each region.

A product can be translated in to revenue, when it is purchased by the customer. A customer can purchase a product when he knows about it. In other words, company has to promote their products through communication. Through different medias, companies have to communicate about their product, features, price and benefits.
Though rural communication is so vital in rural marketing. It is given a step motherly attitude by many organizations, resulting in getting inadequate success. Even now, after so much of hype about rural marketing, reputed companies are treating rural markets as ‘appendiges’ to urban markets. Same products, same advertisements, same promotions targeted for urban markets are extended to rural markets.

When it comes to promotion in rural markets, most of the companies are doing only some short term sales oriented activities, without any emphasis on how the message of the brand has to reach the customer. Doing just a van campaign, once in a way is not rural marketing. Dubbing an advertisement from one regional language to another, with or without character relevance to the other region can have only limited effect. For sustained results, it is necessary to plan integrated campaign covering both mass media and promotional activities. If an organization wants to develop a brand in rural markets, it is very important to invest in developing right communication.

Rural environment is different from urban and therefore communicating to potential customers in a proper and effective manner is a challenge for corporate marketers. Majority of the advertisements designed by marketers are largely urban oriented and extended themselves to rural areas without any considerations to the values and sensitivities of rural audience. This has led to negative perception in the minds of villagers. One fine example is that, A well known shampoo brand when entered Rajasthan market with a creative commercial that showed, a beautiful model featuring bouncing hair. That product bombed. Post research showed that, it was considered indecent for a girl to show off her hair and audience refused to connect with brand.\textsuperscript{3}
5.2 Promotion Mix:

Companies have to distribute the total productional budget on Five Promotional Tools: namely

1. advertising
2. sales promotion
3. direct marketing
4. public relations
5. sales force

Each of these promotional tools have their own unique characteristics and involves cost. Marketers have to evaluate all these tools before selecting appropriate tool, single or in combination, to achieve the designed results.

5.3 Advertising:

Advertisement is a highly public mode of communication. Its public nature confesses a kind of legitimacy on the product and represents a standardized offering. Advertising can be used to build and enhance a long term image for a company and a product. Advertisement can be defined as “Advertising is a paid form of non personal presentation of goods & services by an identified sponsor”.

Advertisement is a very effective promotional tool. It can be done using any form of media. It helps the marketers to reach to maximum number of potential customers at a reasonable cost. As markets have become competitive, marketers try every possible tactic to attract the attention of the customers.

5.4 Promotion Media for total markets:

Rural promotion media may be classified broadly into conventional mass media non conventional mass media & personalized mass media.
Table 5.1
Promotional mass media Mix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional mass media</th>
<th>Non-conventional mass media</th>
<th>Personalised media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Television</td>
<td>Haat &amp; mela</td>
<td>Direct mailers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Radio</td>
<td>Folk media- puppet show, magic show</td>
<td>Point of sales demos, free samples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Press</td>
<td>Video van</td>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cinema</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interpersonal communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. outdoor: wall paintings &amp; hoardings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Corporates use one or combination of few of these medias to reach consumers. These are discussed in detail below:

5.5 Mass media

A medium is called mass media when it reaches million of people. But in rural conditions, due to poor exposure to mass media and the ineffectiveness of common communications aimed at heterogeneous rural audiences. It is difficult to address the communication needs in rural markets effectively. Some of the mass medias are:

5.5.1. Radio:

Irrespective of literacy levels and geographical location, radio reaches people easily. It continues to be cheapest mass media with widest reach. As radios can run on batteries too, all villagers listen to radios.
Now, with the advent of FM station, many youngsters switch on radios most of the time. Repeated advertisements on Radio can create brand awareness of the products. Some companies add benefits as well as price too, in advertisements. Though radios do not have visual effect like TV, they are more popular.

Electricity is a big problem in villages. Villages may get 12 to 14 hours of electricity. But this barrier is not there for radios. In Mysore district, more rural people listen to Radios & FM channels. But FMCG companies are not making much use of FM channels. Still they are following traditional method of advertising through regular channels.

5.5.2 Television:

Television is the fastest growing, most powerful and popular media both in rural & urban India. With the influx of cable and satellite TVS, this media is gaining more ground in rural areas. But due to power cuts, villagers have limited time viewing of TVs. Because of visual support, advertisements are more effective in creating brand awareness. Community viewing of TV in rural areas increases viewership per set.

In Mysore district, power cuts are there for 6 to 8 hours during day time. Timings may vary from taluk to taluk. But in the evening, people are relaxed and watch TV. That’s why more FMCG products are shown during primetime serials between 8 to 10:30 pm.

Caselet: Effect of advertising in prime time it is interesting to note that, ‘MUKTHA’ the most popular serial in Kannada ‘Etv’ channel telecasted between 9:30 – 10:00 pm. After ‘Santoor’ started sponsoring this
programme, its sales has increased by 32% during 2008-2009. Such is the effect of television advertisements.

5.5.3 Cinema:

It is one of the important communication media in our country. Its universal appeal cuts across the barriers of geography & language. But now cinema is experiencing a down trend in viewership with increasing popularity of TV and VCD players in rural areas.
Table 5.2
Consumer awareness of ‘brand’ through mass media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taluk</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>TV</th>
<th>Radio</th>
<th>Wall paints</th>
<th>Van publicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nos.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Nos.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Nos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. Narsipura</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>43.33</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>39.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjangud</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>41.33</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>43.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.D Kote</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>38.67</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>46.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piriyaptna</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>42.31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunsur</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>54.17</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.R. Nagar</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>38.89</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>36.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysore</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>40.83</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Talukas</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consumer opinion survey
Figure 5.1 Consumer awareness of 'brand' through mass media

Table 5.2 depicts that:

- In Mysore district, both Radio and TV seems to be effective promotion medium for FMCG products. TV with 42.4% viewership and Radio with 36.1% listeners.

- Van publicity is almost non existent, except rarely in Melas.

Wall paintings are effective but wall paintings for FMCG products are not there in many places. If wall paintings are increased in small villages, it will have effect on sales.
5.5.4 Print media:

News papers, magazines and other publications gave higher readership in urban areas. However, as literacy rate has increased, Regional language news papers are read by villagers regularly.

But in Mysore district, though there are more than 20 regional papers with readership in all Taluks, FMCG advertisements are very rarely seen. In other words, companies are not focusing News paper ads.

5.6 Non Conventional Media

5.6.1 Wall paintings:

It is the most widespread and effective form of advertising. Rural masses can view it whenever they pass by. Wall paintings constantly remind people of the brand name & logos. Wall painting along with Radio/ TV advertisements will create long term effect on the minds of the customer. Brand recall rate is high on wall paintings wall paintings can easily be customized in accordance with regional language variations. These are economical compared to other traditional media forms.

5.6.2 Folk Media:

Folk media consists of folk songs, folk dances, puppet shows and magic shows. These are intrinsic part of culture and heritage of rural India. These forms are capable of communicating messages effectively. These formats are face- to-face and personal form of communication, interactive, repetitive and narrative in nature.

Folk theatre inter spread with folk songs and dance, is a simple and entertaining form of communication. It can be informative and educational.
But FMCG companies so far have not used this non conventional media. Escorts at Meerut & Hindustan Latex at Gwalior have used this media for effective communication for their products. Results were encouraging, as awareness was created.

5.6.3 Magic shows & puppetry:

Magic shows are another entertaining form of communication. It draws large crowds, because of the curiosity factor and the use of hypnotic effects.

In FMCG sector, Britannia company used this method for introducing Tiger biscuits, with variants. Magicians were hired to perform at local melas using ribbon flowing tricks. Launch was successful. Same was done for Krackjack biscuits too.

But in Mysore district, such non conventional medias are not used so far. May be because such campaigns involve high costs.

Markets feel that Folk media is a useful channel to promote generic issues but not very apt if the company focus solely on brand promotion. Folk media is good for just “launching” the products. They are not motivators for sales.

5.6.4 Video Vans:

Usage of video vans for product promotion is in vogue since 15 years. The van can double up as a mobile exhibition vehicle to perform demonstration and carry product samples. And also these vans are used for retail merchandising. These video vans act as a point of attraction & force of attention. This is a useful media to attract crowds in large numbers.
India is a multilingual and multi cultural country with 16 main languages, about 850 dialects limits the role of mass media activities, particularly in rural areas. This gap is filled to a great extent, through micro-marketing option like video vans. These are fitted with audio-visual equipment and large screens for film shows.

In Karnataka & in particular in Mysore district, these vans are pressed into service during Melas, car festivals and big Shandis. More retail mercandising is done through these vans.

5.6.5 Haats/ Shandis:

It is the oldest marketing channel in the country. Plays a vital role in the lives of villagers. Sales peak in post harvest season. The average haat caters to customers in 15-20 villages. FMCG goods are sold in haat and moderate level sales take place here.

7 Taluks in Mysore district are like semi-urbanised because of more links with Mysore- The District HQ. In this district, haats( called as Shandy or ‘santhe’ in Kannada) are held weekly. Very few FMCG products are sold. It is interesting to note that very few villagers buy FMCG products from Haats. They prefer to buy from shops in their village or nearly shops in their village or nearby town.

When researcher asked the respondents, where do you buy? The answers were interesting. Following table depicts where villagers prefer to buy. When researcher asked 1000 respondents in about 100 villages, “what products are available in Haat near to them, they said very few FMCG goods available. These details are given in the consecutive table.
Table 5.3
Consumer’s preference from where to buy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taluks</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Weekly Haat Shandy</th>
<th>Shop in your village</th>
<th>Nearby town nos.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nos.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Nos.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. Narasipura</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>82.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjangud</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>78.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.D Kote</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>79.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piriyapatna</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>79.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunsur</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>76.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.R Nagar</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>79.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysore</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>65.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Talukas</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consumer opinion survey
Table 5.3 shows that,

- Majority of the respondents (78.2%) prefer to buy from the local shops in their villages. 10.8% of the respondents prefer to buy from weekly haats and 11.0% of the respondents are buying from nearby town.

- 78.2% of the respondents buying from shops when asked for the reason, they said,
  1. They get branded genuine products in the shop.
  2. All products not available in haats.

- Majority are purchasing from local shops. But reputed companies like HUL, Godrej are not supplying their products to these villages directly. Sub-dealers in Taluk HQ are selling the products to whoever come to their shop. Even they don’t have any transport facility to cover villages. Retailers in villages come to Taluk & buy FMCG products. Where as lesser known products viz detergent brands Arasan, Sundari, Jyothi etc., supplying to retailer’s doorstep. Hence, doing better business.
If reputed companies can think of some mode to supply to retailers directly, surely business can increase 3 or 4 fold.

### Table 5.4
**Products available in Shandi/ Haat:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taluka</th>
<th>SAMPLE SIZE</th>
<th>Bath soap</th>
<th>Detergent soap &amp; soap powder</th>
<th>Tooth paste &amp; brush</th>
<th>Shampoo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T. Narasipura</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjangud</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.D. Kote</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piriyaptna</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunsur</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.R. Nagar</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysore</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Consumer opinion survey

*Table 5.4 explains that,*

In the Taluks of KR Nagar, T. Narasipur and H. D Kote, all products are available in weekly Shandies, as these villages are little far off from Towns.

- In detergent soaps and soap powders category many little known or unknown brands are sold in weekly haats. Because of the cheaper rates, villagers buy there.

Retailers or company vans are not putting efforts to sell in shandis. If they sell, can surely increase the sales.
Table 5.5
Consumer motivation to buy products.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taluks</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Free sample</th>
<th>Discount</th>
<th>Offers</th>
<th>Advertisements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nos.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Nos.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.Narasipura</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>37.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjangud</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.D. Kote</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13.33</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>46.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piriyapatna</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.23</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>50.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunsur</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>41.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.R. Nagar</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>41.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysore</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Taluks</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consumer opinion survey
Table 5.5 tells that,

- Free samples are not distributed in rural villages. Few of them (8.8%) rarely get it through ‘Shakthi’ groups.

- Villagers seem to prefer discounts (36.9%). For example, MRP is Rs 12/= and product sold at Rs 8/=, rural consumer prefers it. He feels he is getting the product at lesser price. This is how lesser known brands are sold in rural markets.

- Because of mass media reach i.e., Radio, TV etc., 29% of the respondents say they knew the product by seeing advertisements. This helps in creating ‘Brand awareness’ but may or may not help in purchase decision. This is clearly seen in sales of detergent soap ‘ARASAN’, for which there is no advertisement.

- Offers also seem to attract rural consumers as they feel they get the second product almost free 25.2% of the respondents prefer offers as a motivating factor to purchase.
• Distributors also opined that when schemes or offers given, consumers tend to purchase more.

5.6.6 Melas:

Melas ("Jathre" in Karnataka) are an important feature of Indian rural life. These are held periodically or annually, to commemorate important events or to honour a deity. In addition to religious and social significance, these Melas have a strong commercial angle. Approximately 25,000 Melas are held annually but 90% of them last for one day. Melas are the potential platform to communicate and building Brand awareness. Atleast companies should target Melas close to larger villages, where people are more open to new thoughts, Ideas and Products. If products are kept for sale in Melas having longer duration, it will indicate the sales per day and also the market potential of surrounding villages.

Researcher asked the respondents “would you like to purchase new FMCG products at Mela” (Jathre) the response:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Willingness</th>
<th>Consumers(nos)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May purchase</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.6 indicates that 69.6% of the total consumers are willing to purchase FMCG products in Melas. 25.6% of them said, they will purchase if the product is new or some offers are given.
5.7 Personalised Media

It is easier to impress on consumer thro personalized media, as it directly relates to them. This media is effective in brand building.

5.7.1 POP Displays and Demonstrations:

POP displays in attractive colors will surely have a positive impact on buyers. As the consumer behaviour towards FMCG goods is “impulsive buying”. Companies have to produce more POP materials, distribute and see that they are placed even in rural shops. This will increase sales.

In Mysore district, POP materials displays are done in even remote villages. Wall paintings and POP displays are common here.

5.7.2 Direct marketing:

The need to establish direct contact with retailers and village consumers has become very important for the companies, because of increasing competition and growing power of retailers. Any company which totally depends on wholesaler/middle man, will surely lose the market.

In rural markets, this direct link can be established through van campaigns, awareness programme (eg: Colgate) health programmes, van sales, participation in melas, demonstration, spot sales etc., through these activities, firms can directly interact with consumers.10

In Mysore district, very less effort seems to have been made for direct marketing. Branded products with focus on personal touch will help in building brand loyalty and bring in more business.
5.7.3 Public relations:

Public relations is an inseparable part of brand building. To get more in touch with villagers, companies have to develop programmes which have direct concern with the rural people. This is necessary for FMCG products.

For example, Colgate’s Oral Health education campaigns, free testing in schools, many health related programmes in the interest of rural people, have clearly made a dent in the minds & hearts of the rural lot. Indirectly this has helped in sales and Colgate is the synonym with oral care.

So also HUL conducts ‘Health campaigns’ for skin care (soap) and hair care (shampoo). The programmes are popular and reflected in increase of sales.

5.7.4 Sales Force:

For effective marketing, sales force should be selected from rural areas, so that they know the culture, trend, wants and needs of the rural customers. In addition to business deals, personal touch can be given by this rural workforce. Special training has to be designed to prepare them for a difficult and challenging task called rural marketing.

5.8 Summary:

It is clear that, whatever national policy for communication a company has, it has to think and act locally. The need for focused communication aimed at rural market should not be under estimated. Innovative ideas in rural communication will always bring better results. The communication should have 4 R frame work, namely, Relevance, Reach and Reform and reliability.
References: