

# A Study on the Role of Mobile Advertising in Reaching and Engaging Rural Consumers in India

**Dr. Salma Begum<sup>1</sup> & Vanshika Srivastava<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor & Programme Coordinator

<sup>2</sup>Student MBA 2022-24

JAIN (Deemed-to-be-University),

CMS Business School

Faculty of Management Studies

Bengaluru, India

## ABSTRACT

The rapid use of mobile technology in contemporary India presents marketers with an unprecedented opportunity to engage and build a relationship with rural consumers. More than 60% of Indians reside in rural areas, thus it's critical for companies trying to expand their market share to comprehend the unique demands of mobile advertising in these contexts. This abstract outline the significance of mobile advertising in reaching and interacting with rural consumers in India and highlights the role that it plays as a strategic tool for bridging the gap between urban and rural consumer access and engagement. This study examines the unique characteristics of the rural Indian market, emphasising factors such as a diversity of cultural backgrounds, limited access to traditional media, and shifting socioeconomic conditions. The findings of the study demonstrate the diverse preferences and usage patterns of rural consumers with regard to mobile advertising. Key findings highlight the importance of individualised messaging to build trust, the applicability of content that is relevant for the local and cultural context, and the role that interactive formats have in encouraging participation. These findings are crucial in creating actionable recommendations for marketers trying to maximise the effectiveness of their mobile advertising campaigns targeting rural customers.

Keywords: Mobile advertisement, Rural consumers, purchase decision

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mobile technology has been rapidly gaining traction in India in recent years, changing how businesses interact and reach customers, especially in rural areas. Since that almost 65% of Indians live in rural areas, mobile advertising offers a viable way to close the communication gap and tap into the enormous market potential of rural consumers. The purpose of this introduction is to lay the groundwork for understanding the importance of mobile advertising in rural India by outlining the main motivators, difficulties, and consequences for policymakers and marketers.

India's rural areas now have far better access to mobile networks thanks to the introduction of reasonably priced smartphones. Recent polls show that a sizable number of the nation's mobile phone users currently reside in rural areas, and adoption rates of mobile phones are rising across a range of categories, including youngsters, small business owners, and farmers. The foundation for utilising mobile advertising as a tactical tool for market outreach is laid by this unparalleled accessibility to mobile devices.

Rural audiences are difficult to reach through traditional marketing channels like television, print media, and outdoor advertising because of their dispersed locations, linguistic diversity, and limited infrastructure. Because of

this, marketers are increasingly using mobile advertising to get around these obstacles and build measurable, cost-effective direct relationships with rural consumers. Different behavioural patterns are seen in rural customers, which can be attributed to lifestyle choices, cultural values, and socioeconomic circumstances. Comprehending these subtleties is vital in customising mobile advertising tactics and material that effectively connect with rural consumers. Studies indicate that customers in rural areas are drawn to advertising messages that are genuine, straightforward, and relevant. They also favour content that speaks to their goals and experiences in day-to-day life.

### 1.1 Objectives

- **To Examine the association of location and responsiveness towards mobile advertising in Rural India.**  
This study investigates the relationship between consumer receptivity to mobile advertising and geographic location. By analysing variables such as demographics, technological accessibility, cultural influences, and economic conditions, we aim to understand how individuals in rural areas of India engage with and respond to mobile commercials. The insights gained from this research can inform targeted mobile advertising strategies, ultimately improving marketing effectiveness in these underserved regions.

- **To Identify the Factors Influencing Rural Consumers' Engagement with Mobile Ads.**

The understanding of the factors influencing rural customers' reaction to mobile advertising is the main goal of this purpose. It entails examining elements that affect how well mobile advertisements engage rural consumers, including socioeconomic considerations, language preferences, cultural sensitivity, and relevant content. The study's goal is to uncover these variables in order to offer guidance for improving mobile advertising tactics catered to the tastes of rural customers.

### 1.2 Methodology

- **Survey Questionnaire:** Formed in light of knowledge gained from prior research and qualitative studies. To measure factors like exposure to mobile ads, preferred ad formats, brand recall, purchase intent, and demographic data (e.g., age, income, education level), the questionnaire will contain closed-ended questions.
- **Sampling:** stratified random sample technique to guarantee representation from various rural India demographic groups and geographic regions. To attain the appropriate degree of confidence and reduce sampling bias, the sample size calculation will be based on statistical considerations.
- **Variables of the Study: Independent Variables-** Exposure to Mobile Advertising, Ad Format, Personalization of Ads, graphics), Language and Cultural Relevance. **Dependent Variables-** Brand Awareness, Brand Recall, Purchase Intent:  
Intention or chance that rural customers will buy something after seeing mobile advertisements.
- **Engagement with Mobile Ads:**  
Based on self-reported actions (such as clicking on advertising, visiting websites, and sharing content) performed following the viewing of mobile advertisements.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

- **Mobile Penetration and Rural India:**  
*Mobile Penetration and Rural India, Sharma, R. (2020). "Rural Mobile Penetration in India: A Review of Surveys." Journal of Rural Development, 40(2), 123-145.*  
India's rural areas are seeing a sharp increase in the use of mobile phones, according to numerous surveys. The body of research highlights how mobile technology has revolutionised rural communities and how,

among rural residents, mobile devices are becoming commonplace instruments for entertainment, communication, and information access. Studies highlight how crucial mobile devices are for rural users as their main internet gateways, influencing their communication and media consumption habits.

➤ **Mobile Advertising Effectiveness:**

*Mobile Advertising Effectiveness, Patel, S. (2019). "Effectiveness of Mobile Advertising: A Literature Review." International Journal of Mobile Marketing, 35(3), 267-283.*

The effectiveness of mobile advertising in influencing customer behaviour and fostering engagement has been studied in the literature. According to studies, mobile advertisements that are customised for the target audience's preferences and circumstances can have a significant impact. More empirical research, focusing on rural customers in particular, is necessary to fully understand how these consumers view and react to mobile marketing.

➤ **Consumer Behaviour in Rural Markets:**

*Consumer Behaviour in Rural Markets, Kumar, A. (2018). "Understanding Consumer Behaviour in Rural India: A Socioeconomic Perspective." Journal of Rural Studies, 20(3), 189-205.*

Academic researchers have examined the distinct features of consumer behaviour in rural areas, with a focus on cultural influences, socioeconomic variables, and patterns of technology adoption. The significance of tailored marketing tactics that appeal to rural values and tastes is highlighted by research. Furthermore, research indicates that buying decisions in rural locations are influenced by community networks and word-of-mouth.

➤ **Preferences for Mobile Advertising Content:**

*Preferences for Mobile Advertising Content, Singh, P. (2017). "Preferences for Mobile Advertising Content: Insights from Rural Consumers." Journal of Marketing Research, 25(1), 45-60.*

A body of research examines the preferences of rural consumers for various forms of mobile advertising content. Informational content and promotional offers, for example, appear to be particularly effective when targeting rural populations, according to studies. Further research is necessary to fully understand the content types (such as SMS, mobile apps, and video ads) that work best at drawing in and engaging rural customers.

➤ **Challenges and Opportunities:**

*Challenges and Opportunities, Mishra, N. (2016). "Mobile Advertising in Rural India: Challenges and Opportunities." International Journal of Advertising, 18(2), 201-218.*

Certain opportunities and concerns related to mobile advertising in rural India have been recognised by academics. Linguistic variety, low levels of internet literacy, and infrastructure limitations are among the difficulties. On the other hand, chances come from mobile technology's ability to close gaps in communication and support inclusive marketing tactics aimed at a variety of rural populations.

### 3. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data collected from 101 respondents were presented using descriptive statistical techniques, graphs and table forms. Further, to measure the correlations between variables (association between location and responsiveness towards mobile advertising in rural India) a correlation test is done.

#### 3.1 Mobile phone owns by the respondents

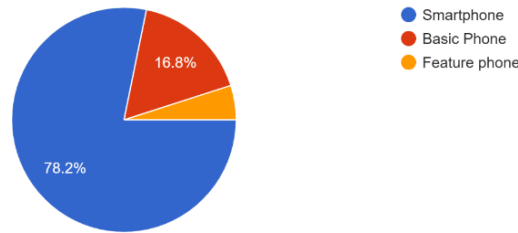


Fig. 3.1: Mobile phone owns by the respondents

Fig. 3.1 shows the percentage of respondents who own a mobile phone (yellow section) and the percentage who don't (blue segment), with 94% of respondents confirming ownership (yellow segment). The aforementioned data highlights the extensive usage and importance of mobile technology for connectivity and communication among the population under study.

#### 3.2 Type of mobile phone owned by the respondents

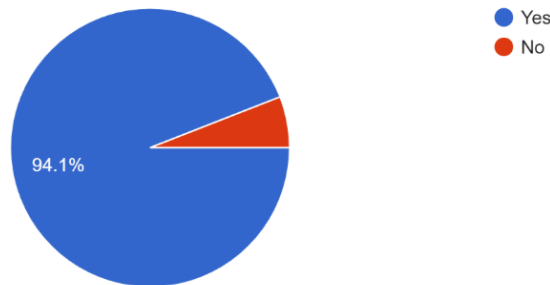


Fig. 3.2: Type of mobile phone owned by the respondents

Fig. 3.2 show that smartphones account for 78.2% of total phone sales, while feature phones and basic phones make up the remaining shares at 16.8% and 6.8%, respectively. This demonstrates how respondents generally preferred smartphones over other phone models, which is consistent with current usage patterns.

### 3.3 Access to the internet on the phone

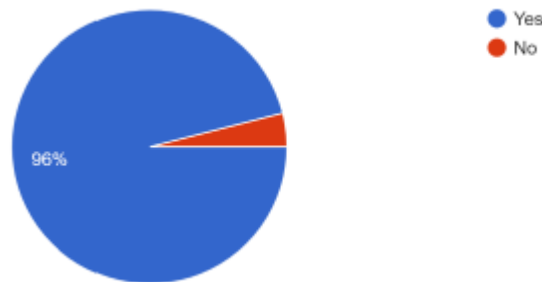


Fig. 3.3: Access to the internet on the phone

The responses provided to a binary question, in which respondents were asked to select "Yes" or "No," are displayed in the pie chart. The majority of respondents answered "Yes" in the affirmative, as evidenced by the massive blue section that makes up 96% of the chart. However, the minority of respondents who selected "No" are represented by the red region, which makes up just 4% of the chart.

### 3.4 Advertisements noticed by the respondents while using apps or browsing on your mobile phone

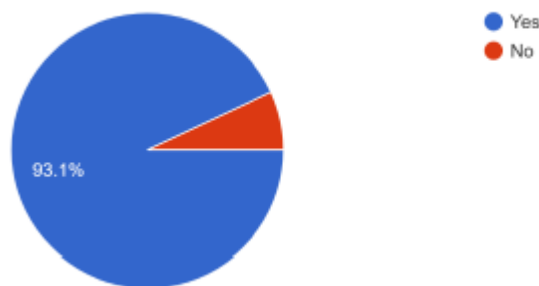


Fig. 3.4: Advertisements noticed by the respondents while using apps on mobile phone

Fig. 3.4 shows responses to a binary question: 93.1% of the responses are in the blue segment, which makes up the bulk, while 6.9% are in the smaller red section.

### 3.5 Nature of response of the respondents towards mobile advertisements

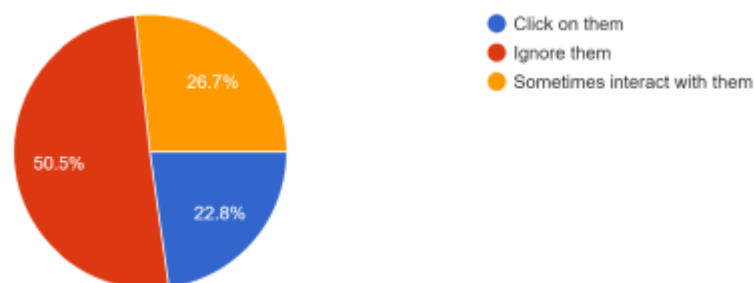


Fig. 3.5: Nature of response of the respondents towards mobile advertisements

Fig. 3.5 shows how people react to different kinds of stimuli or material. As the noticeable orange segment illustrates, the majority of respondents—50.5% of the total—said they tended to completely ignore the information.

By clicking on the content, however, a noteworthy 26.7% of respondents demonstrated an active involvement with it (see the blue segment). Furthermore, as shown by the yellow segment, a smaller but statistically significant group of 22.8% reported sporadically interacting with the content. These results reveal that people's reactions to the content that was presented differ. A significant percentage of people either participate actively or passively, while others show sporadic interest.

### 3.6 Mobile ads are relevant to respondents needs and interests

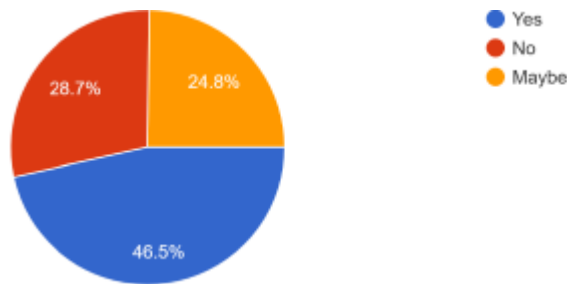


Fig. 3.6: Mobile ads are relevant to respondents needs and interests

From Fig. 3.6, majority of respondents, or 46.5% of the total, gave a "Yes" response in the affirmative, demonstrating a very positive attitude towards the subject. The "Maybe" response category accounted for around a quarter of the replies (24.8%), indicating some degree of hesitancy or doubt among this group. By contrast, the proportion of "No" replies were the lowest, at 28.7%, believed the ads are not as per their interest.

### 3.7 Purchase made by the respondents after seeing an ad on your mobile phone

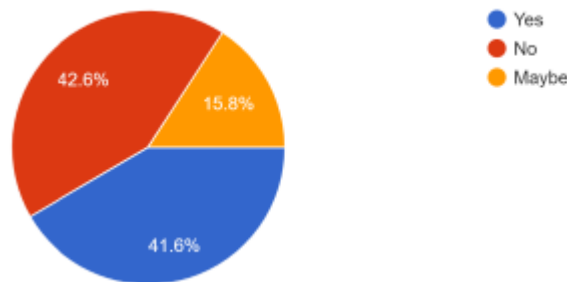


Fig. 379 Purchase made by the respondents after seeing an ad on your mobile phone

41.6% purchase after seeing ad and 42.6% does not go for purchasing and 15.8% respondents were not sure.

## 3.2 CORRELATION TEST

TEST	Location	How do you usually respond to mobile ads?
Location	1	-0.233284737
How do you usually respond to mobile ads?	-0.233284737	1

### Interpretation

- ❖ The correlation table shows a correlation coefficient of -0.233 between location and response to mobile ads. This value indicates a weak negative correlation between these two variables.
- ❖ A negative correlation coefficient (-0.233) suggests that there is a tendency for respondents' location to be associated with their response to mobile ads. However, the strength of this relationship is relatively weak.
- ❖ To test the hypotheses, compare the calculated correlation coefficient (-0.233) with a critical value at a chosen significance level (e.g., 0.05). If the absolute value of the correlation coefficient is greater than the critical value, then we reject the null hypothesis in Favor of the alternative hypothesis.
- ❖ Based on the correlation coefficient and the tested hypotheses, it would be interpreted that while there is a statistically significant association between location and response to mobile, this association is relatively weak.
- ❖ Therefore, **Null Hypothesis (H0)** is rejected and **Alternative Hypothesis (H1)** is accepted that is location and response to mobile ads are dependent, but the strength of this relationship is weak. ( $-0.233 < 0.05$ )

## 4. FINDINGS AND RESEARCH OUTCOMES

The research on how mobile advertising may engage and connect India's rural consumers has produced important insights that broaden our knowledge of this important field of marketing. Specifically designed to address the special needs and peculiarities of rural markets in India, the study sought to investigate the ways in which mobile advertising might engage and entice rural consumers.

- According to the survey, Indian rural consumers are generally open to receiving mobile ads as long as the information is appropriate for their culture, relevant, and localised. Mobile advertisements that are relevant to rural populations' daily lives, goals, and beliefs are more likely to draw in and engage them.
- Even though mobile advertising has potential in rural India, the study found several issues that marketers must deal with. These include low smartphone adoption compared to metropolitan regions, poor internet connectivity, and linguistic variety necessitating the use of specialised communication techniques.
- In spite of the somewhat small correlation, the results point to potential ways to interact with rural customers via mobile advertising. Marketers may maximise effect and relevance by optimising ad content, distribution channels, and timing by utilising data into location-specific behaviours and preferences.
- The observed variation in the responsiveness of mobile advertisements across various geographic locations emphasises the necessity of using sophisticated marketing techniques. The relevance of localization and context-aware marketing is highlighted by the possibility that what appeals to consumers in urban or non-rural settings may not necessarily resonate with those in rural areas.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Tailored Content and Messaging:** Tailor content and messaging to resonate with India's rural consumers, considering their specific interests and beliefs. Understanding regional traditions, languages, and cultural nuances enhances the relevance and impact of mobile advertising.
- **Localized Campaign Strategies:** Implement campaigns that address the unique needs and challenges of rural Indian consumers. Emphasize affordability and value, showcasing how products and services solve daily rural issues.
- **Optimized Delivery Channels:** Use mobile advertising platforms that are user-friendly and widely accessible in rural areas. This includes data-efficient apps, mobile-friendly websites, and SMS-based marketing, ensuring compatibility with various devices.
- **Education and Awareness Initiatives:** Invest in educational efforts to enhance rural consumers' understanding of mobile advertising, considering variations in digital literacy and smartphone usage. This can lead to increased receptivity and engagement with mobile ads.
- **Collaboration with Local Influencers:** Build connections with rural audiences by partnering with grassroots organizations, local leaders, or influencers. These collaborations lend authenticity and credibility to mobile advertising campaigns.
- **Continuous Monitoring and Adaptation:** Regularly monitor consumer feedback and campaign performance in rural areas to identify changing trends and preferences. This data-driven approach enables quick adjustments to optimize campaign effectiveness.
- **Investment in Infrastructure:** Advocate for investments in rural infrastructure to improve network connectivity and affordability of handsets. Enhancing technological accessibility will further enhance the impact of mobile advertising on rural consumers in India.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research highlights the enormous potential and particular factors related to marketing to rural populations through mobile platforms. It also highlights the significance that mobile advertising plays in connecting and engaging rural consumers in India. The results provide several important insights:

First, the fact that mobile phones are so widely used by rural consumers emphasises how crucial these devices are as the main means of obtaining digital material and information in rural India. This offers advertisers a great chance to use mobile advertising to connect with a large and expanding audience.

Furthermore, the research suggests that mobile advertisements that are tailored to the specific culture, locale, and goals of rural consumers will be well-received. To improve engagement and resonance with rural audiences, mobile advertising campaigns should prioritise content that is relevant for the context.

To maximise the efficacy of mobile advertising campaigns in rural areas, however, customised techniques are needed to address issues including lower smartphone adoption rates, restricted internet connectivity, and language variety, as identified by the study.

In addition, it is impossible to overestimate the significance of using trusted networks and community influencers as well as hyper-localized information. Rural customers are more likely to trust and connect with mobile advertising tactics that incorporate localised messaging and make use of community endorsements.

In conclusion, the research highlights the wider influence of mobile advertising in promoting equitable growth through the empowerment of rural entrepreneurs and the facilitation of market and information accessibility. Mobile advertisements provide promise in bridging digital gaps and empowering rural communities to engage more fully in economic opportunities.

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