

Use of Social Media, Digital and Traditional Communication Tools for Rural Small-Scale Businesses

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Abstract –

The appearance of COVID-19 was detrimental to everyone on earth. It had an impact on both big and small firms. Due to a lack of digital technology, the research found that rural regions were most affected. Due to recent economic developments, sellers now witness latent growth in the rural areas of the nation, which raises the purchasing power of rural residents. The government has recently implemented a variety of policies and initiatives to encourage digitalization in India at a reasonable cost, which has resulted in a considerable rise in the number of rural residents using the internet.

Local factors contributing to the digital drive in rural India were the availability of inexpensive cell phones and internet data plans. This gives advertisers the chance to reach out to this untapped rural market and advertise their goods there. In this essay, we'll talk about how small enterprises in rural areas might use social media, digital technologies, and traditional forms of communication.

Introduction-

More than 72 million coronavirus illnesses and 1,615,191 fatalities worldwide have been reported in the COVID-19 pandemic. Small and large enterprises have gone bankrupt in waves as a result of the epidemic, not just in metropolitan regions but also in rural ones. Social media has a bigger influence in rural areas since there are fewer businessmen who are familiar with it. People in cities use social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp, and others for their businesses. Many people in rural regions are ignorant of the advantages of social media for business, though.

Even in this highly industrialised era, the rural market continues to be a major contributor to the Indian economy. Therefore, the vast majority of Indian marketers strive to establish connections with rural customers and the rural market. By reading this article, you can find out more about the best rural marketing strategies for interacting with rural consumers on social media.

Rural India is one of the most important and crucial markets, and it is changing swiftly over time. The rural market in India is significantly impacted by the social and behavioural forces at play. It does not exist as a separate entity. All marketing activities that support customer demand, product creation, distribution, and the whole marketing cycle are included in the rural market, with an emphasis on the contentment of the rural consumer. All the business activity required to transfer goods and services from producers to consumers in rural regions is referred to as "rural marketing." Rural marketing is now a lot easier than it was for the pioneers because of major improvements in transportation and communication over the last 10 years. Marketers can use a range of strategies to reach rural consumers and markets.

Digital communication techniques seem to be increasingly prevalent during the persuasion phase, even if traditional communication techniques are still often used in customer relationship management. The

relationship culture, location, innovation/resources, and strategic significance of clients are other important potential influences that could influence how various communication tools are employed during the sales process. There seem to be some limitations. creating sales tools for small rural enterprises and a framework for understanding the processes in the B2C sales process.

Recent Trends & Innovation in Rural Marketing

- Huge population
- Green revolution
- Smartphones
- Increased education level
- Increased employability of rural youth
- Enhanced purchasing power
- Government Incentives and policies
- Media
- IT penetration
- Brand conscious
- Objectives of Rural Marketing

Best Social Media Platforms for Rural India

India now has a growing population of internet users, both in urban and rural regions. By the end of 2020, it is anticipated that this number will surpass the 639 million milestone. Statistics show that social networking sites are India's main gateways to the internet. Social media usage increased significantly in 2019 due to a variety of content genres. In 2020, there was a noticeable increase in the consumption of rural social media material, particularly during lockdowns, as a result of the accessibility of information across devices and the decreased cost of internet services. Nowadays, among the most regular internet users are grownups, kids, stay-at-home moms, and even seniors.

The majority of Internet users in India access the web primarily through their mobile phones, both in urban and rural areas. Given the expected increase in mobile traffic, the number of rural residents using their mobile devices to access social media will only increase. The approximately 664,000 communities that make up today's world are home to around 895 million people. By 2022, this population is anticipated to grow by 1.7%. 205 million people currently reside in urban regions, whereas 227 million do so in rural areas. However, it is anticipated that this number will rise significantly in the coming years.

Periodic Markets

The regular market is one of the crucial components of rural marketing in India. Social media networks like WhatsApp may be used by buyers and sellers for sporadic marketplaces. Vendors can prepare orders before consumers arrive if buyers send sellers their shopping lists over WhatsApp from home. As a result, things will go faster for both of them.

Mobile traders

Mobile merchants are another essential facet that fills the specific needs of rural consumers, including those for vegetables, fruits, apparel, housewares, cosmetics, spices, and hygiene. Mobile trade is not a recent trend; in ancient India, it was commonplace.

On foot, by bicycle, bus, bullock cart, etc., mobile traders travel between communities. They visit the neighbourhoods once or twice a week. They occasionally pass through the villages on their way back after visiting these weekly marketplaces.

They could advertise their products on websites or through apps like Facebook, Meesho, WhatsApp, and others. It will be easy to accept orders and sell them to customers. There will be less work to do.

Permanent Retail Shops

Permanent retail businesses have expanded along with rising village populations, household incomes, and daily commodity consumption. Permanent stores started to form and grow as a result of the weekly markets, fairs, and peddlers being unable to handle the situation. Only traditional distribution channels, such as wholesalers and retailers, are active in rural areas. Chain stores, mega markets, and franchise enterprises don't exist in rural areas because of the small size of the villages and the lower income of the rural people.

Permanent stores may use social media to take customer orders and complete such purchases. Customers have access to online services, including cash on delivery and online payments. Vendors may make orders in accordance with customer orders before consumers arrive, and in the case of big villages, they can use the home delivery option. Social media may also be used to advertise products. Reaching clients will be easy and quick as a result.

ADVANTAGES

- 1 It is more effective to use digital media to promote products** - In comparison, it appears to be less efficient to design a product brochure and distribute it to customers offline. This is because individuals who design brochures need to make the right preparations for a successful distribution plan. Despite this, it will be hard to estimate the number of people who have encountered it. This should be avoided if someone has created engaging visual content and started promoting it on social media. Digital networks may be used to effectively and efficiently inform potential clients about products and services.
- 2 Digital marketing aids in the cost effectiveness of business** - Compared to traditional mass media marketing, internet marketing is far more cost-effective. Internet marketing does not require unrealistically high expenditure levels, in contrast to what businesses have done in the past with mass media marketing. Internet marketing strategies are less expensive than traditional media outlets, and occasionally websites even receive free traffic.
- 3 Digital marketing reduces the cost of transportation** –Poor roads, isolated rural areas, and high transit expenses are also contributing factors. In terms of digital marketing, this cost has significantly decreased. Since all of the qualities may be digitally projected onto the proper media, travel is not required.
- 4 Conclusion:** With over 65% of Indians residing in rural areas, there is a large market potential that requires careful consideration, an effective strategy, and a wide marketing network. Using social media will speed up business growth, make it easier to engage with clients, and allow the

establishment of new job opportunities. Additionally, it will help clients find high-quality products and services.

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