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Title

**DO BECAUSE WE MUST – E MARKETING IN
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

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ABSTRACT:

The concept of e marketing is very widely accepted by the companies around the world because it has not only contributed in the efficacy of 4 P's of marketing mix in big a way but has also backed the increasing customer value and satisfaction. The huge benefits of e marketing techniques are mostly delighted by developed countries because of the availability of advanced infrastructure and established unconventional marketing setups, which are absent in developing countries. The paper has attempted to find out strategies and ways by which e marketers can get hold of customers living in under developed areas without knocking the doors of government, telecom players, educational institutions, NGOs or any other external body.

Keywords- e marketing; internet usage; developing countries; semi urban and rural areas

Introduction:

In today's world where companies are going through cut throat competition and, commerce and trade have gone to new heights, integration of digital technologies and traditional methods of marketing cannot be ignored. Therefore, e marketing i.e. marketing done through internet where digital market places are created can be considered as the most appropriate alternative to sell and serve the customers scattered all over the world. The accomplishment of e marketing is not even around the world. Our world is divided into two broad categories: developed world and developing world, the difference in the paybacks of e marketing being huge between the two [12] [15].

According to the data in World Factbook, only 10.9% and 21.5% of the population of Africa and Asia respectively comprises of internet users. Whereas in Europe, North America and Latin America 58.4% and 77.4% and 34.5% of the population respectively, embraces internet users. With the help of these figures we can deduce that developing countries lag much behind developed countries with regard to net usage. According to the statistics, Asia's and Africa's total population is 4848571902 which is 70.8% of world's population. Out of this only 19.3% of the population comprises of internet users. This depicts that companies can target only this part

of the population through e marketing techniques. Remaining 80.69% of the population, i.e. 3,912,545,806 people can be taken as a very big challenge for e marketers as they need to transform them into internet users, if they want to enjoy long term benefits attached to e marketing. In other words, a large section of the community needs to be exploited [6] [8].

If we take the example of India the challenge is not that big because 61% of the population is literate. Literate population can be easily taught the usage of internet and the advantages attached to it. Now a day's computers and mobiles are available very easily and at affordable prices. Internet coverage is spreading in rural areas also. Therefore, it does not seem to be an impossible task to aim customers living in developing countries like India through internet [6] [8].

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The race of acquiring more and more customers and retaining the old ones can only be won with the help of such techniques that can help in effective identification of prospective customers, serving their needs, addressing their queries on a common visible platform in the best and fastest possible manner. To attain these objectives a tool like e marketing is required which has a great speed, efficiency and a world wide geographic reach. E marketing includes e-mail marketing, online customer behavior analysis, banner advertising, lead generation, and campaign management [1] [2]. The following characteristics of internet marketing make it predominantly successful:

1. Highly targeted
2. Easily assessable
3. Instant
4. Tested and refined
5. Cost effective

Among the various e marketing strategy the most popular ones are Search Engine Optimization (SEO), E mail marketing, Online advertising, Online newsletters, Building suitable domain name and Use keywords. [9]Two factors which affect the success of e marketing strategies in any country are infrastructure development and marketing institution development. [15]

When we talk about e marketing in rural India, e choupal cannot be ignored. By investing in infrastructure and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), ITC has evolved the concept of e choupal. This step of including rural communities in the world of e markets has proved to be a boon for farmers living in remote areas as they get complete information about market prices of various inputs and outputs of agriculture, information related to weather, buyers of their crops, available warehouses and can also check the working of intermediaries involved at their doorsteps. Like ITC some other private organizations have put in similar efforts. But the major limitation of e choupal is, it is only meant for the farmer segment of the rural population. There are many other occupations in which rural and semi urban population in engaged and also there are many other products and services available in the markets which are meant to selling and buying [13]. Another study was done in order to improve the economic condition of the women living in remote areas of Africa. This research has proposed an e business model that might be used in rural locale and can provide economic development for the women in spite of all the drawbacks and bottlenecks. This study also suffers from some major limitations like lack of government funding and initiatives, no broad band initiatives of video images by fiber optic cables, poor economic growth and lack of financial management skills etc. [14]. Another study says that many e governance initiatives are facing problem of poor internet connectivity problem in rural areas because the key players in the telecom sector are not ready to invest here because of the fear of low average revenue per user (ARPU). Telecom Regulatory Authority of India is taking a number of measures to induce investment in rural areas by major private players of telcom sector. The limitation attached to this study is dependence on the success of policies introduced by government.

In this study an attempt is made to spread the reach of e markets in rural and semi urban areas .without changing the current infrastructure facilities and marketing intermediaries involved. E marketers are only required to put in efforts and take some precautions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research design: The study is descriptive as well as exploratory in nature. Results are derived by using both qualitative as well as quantitative techniques. Sources of data include:

1. Primary data is gathered through interviews and questionnaires filled by people living in rural and semi urban areas of the country.
2. Secondary data is collected from sources such as management books, articles from journals and research papers available on internet.

Sample size taken is 100. The respondents belong to 11 different semi urban and rural areas from various states of India. Only literate people are considered. The sampling techniques used while gathering data are convenient sampling, judgmental sampling and random sampling.

Hypothesis taken is as follows:

Ho: Rural population does not prefer to shop online.

H1: Rural population prefers to shop online.

Discussion and analysis of data:

The significance of each kind of e marketing strategy differs from situation to situation. The decision as to which e marketing strategies to be used depend on number of factors. Some of the most important ones are as follows:

1. Type of the product/service
2. Target customers
3. Market

If the target market is developed country then best suitable strategies can be figured out by keeping into consideration the product/service type. But if the target market is developing country then the marketers need to segment the customers into two broad categories:

1. Customers living in urban areas where there are developed infrastructure facilities.
2. Customers living in rural areas where there are under developed infrastructure facilities.

Note: Illiterate set of customers are completely ignored from both the segments.

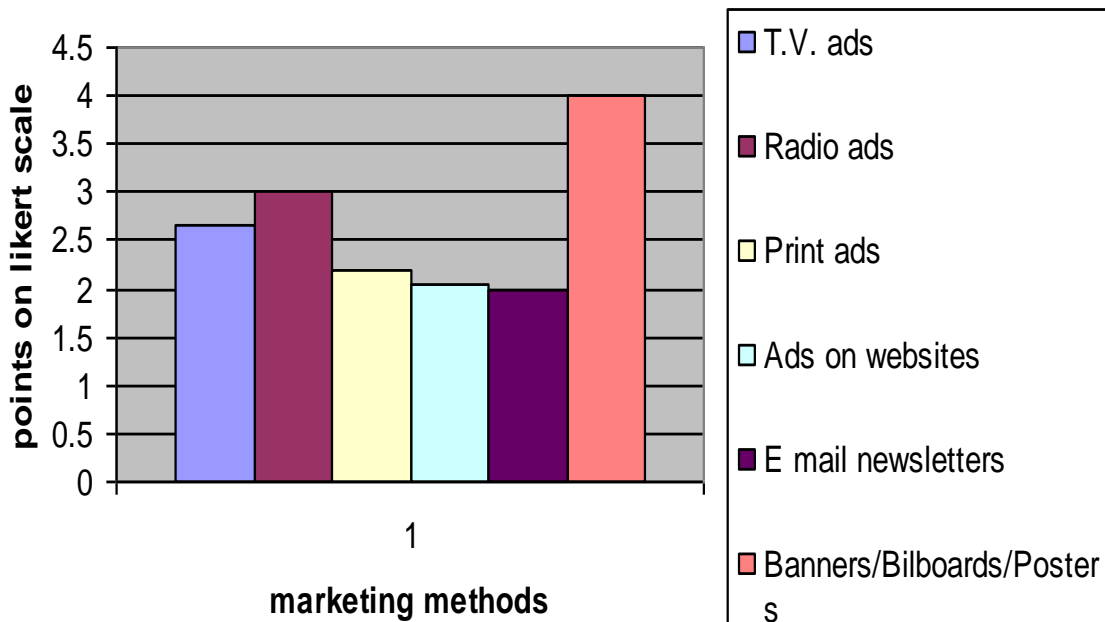
In case e marketers are targeting customers living in urban areas we assume that these customers are enjoying developed infrastructure facilities and effective marketing organizations. Therefore, the set of e marketing strategies to be followed will be decided according to the product/service that needs to be marketed. If in case e marketers are aiming rural population, existing e strategies should be modified in such a way that they turn out to be successful even in the presence of problems prevailing in rural areas. Survey through questionnaires is conducted, comprising only literate rural people in the sample. The analysis of the survey is as follows:

ANALYSIS:

1. 91% of the respondents use internet while 9% do not use internet in spite of being literate. This shows that e marketers have the opportunity to cater and capture major part of rural population.
2. On an average, every respondent uses internet for 2.23 hours on every visit. 2.23 hours is fair amount of time. 25.3% of the respondents use internet at their residence, 11% of the respondents use at neighbour's home, 50.5% of the respondents use internet at cyber café and 13.2% of the respondents use at their schools.
3. 21% of the respondents say that they use, 33% say that they sometimes use and 37% says that they never use internet to search and follow a particular brand or product/service. With this we can infer that efforts of e marketers in developing and maintaining their company's websites works for this segment also, as 54% of rural population visit products/services websites and use search engines. Therefore e marketers can use strategies like Search Engine Optimization (SEO), building suitable domain name, using keywords for their rural and semi urban prospects.
4. 21% of the respondents say that they always notice the advertisements shown on internet when they are using it while 40% of the respondents say that they sometimes notice them and 30% say that they never notice them. This shows that majority of the respondents are aware of the advertisements of products/services shown on internet which appears to be good news for e marketers. Therefore they can use strategies like online advertising, internet affiliate marketing and related strategies.

5. 39% of the respondents use internet for browsing information around 2-3 times in a week. They mostly look for information regarding educational institutes, jobs/vacancies, applying for admissions and jobs online, making rail reservations, information about products/services, data required for preparing notes and assignments, information regarding government schemes and bank loans. Most useful strategies for this group can be SEO strategy, online newsletter strategy and media newsroom strategy.
6. 38% of the respondents access their e mails daily whereas 33% access them 2-3 times in a week, therefore strategies concentrated on e mails like e mail marketing strategy and online news letters strategy can prove to be rewarding.
7. 51% of the respondents visit social networking sites everyday while 19% visit them 2-3 times in a week. Therefore, e marketers should emphasise on sites like Facebook as 48% of the respondents use it, Orkut as 25% of the respondents use it, Twitter, Yahoo and Indyarocks.
8. 20% of the respondents have the experience to make purchases on internet. Out of these, 13% of the respondents have bought books, 4% of the respondents have bought rail tickets and 3% have bought electronics online. Rest 80% seems to be a challenge for e marketers.
9. Though 91% of the respondents use internet but only 20% use it to make purchases. We can deduce that rural audience do not prefer internet as a medium to make purchases, therefore our hypothesis proved to be wrong.
10. People living in rural and semi urban areas find ads placed on banners, billboards and posters as extremely appealing while they feel that ads shown on internet slightly appeal them.

How much do the following methods of marketing appeal you?

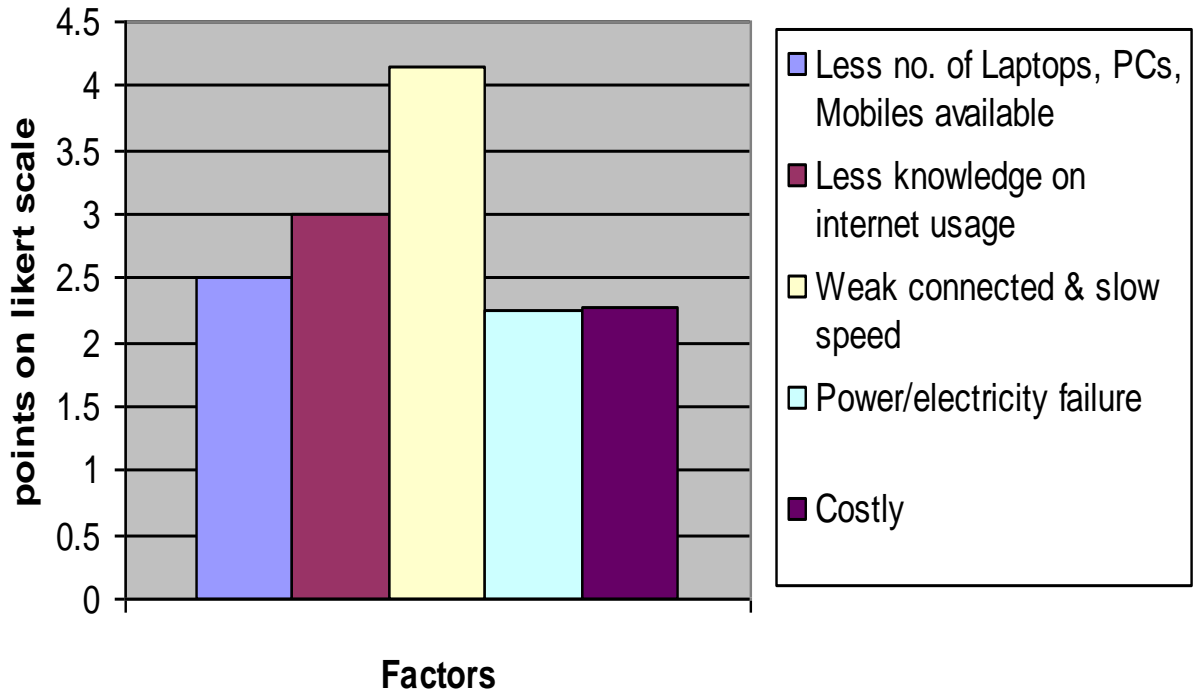


Likert scale consisting of five points is used: 1-not appealing 2- slightly appealing 3-appealing 4- extremely appealing

Some of the major difficulties which semi urban and rural population comes across in using internet are as follows:

1. Less number of PCs, Laptops, Mobiles etc. available
2. Less broadband facilities
3. Weak internet connectivity and slow speed
4. Power/electricity failure
5. Costly
6. Low penetration of marketing institutions (distribution and communication channels)

Most prominent hindrances in using internet



Likert scale consisting of five points was taken: 1- not at all 2- limited extent 3- not sure 4-certain extent 5-large extent

11. Majority of the respondents do not feel that there are insufficient number of laptops, PCs and other devices which are important for using internet in their area. Otherwise also, the prices of PCs, Mobiles etc. are going down day by day. So, it is expected that their number in remote areas will increase by the time. E marketers cannot help themselves as far as problems like less knowledge among rural people about internet usage, power failure in remote areas etc. are concerned. But they can surely deal with most prominent problem among the above i.e. weak connectivity and slow speed to a great extent. The following suggestions can prove to be helpful as far as this major problem is concerned:

SUGESSTIONS:

1. The content on the websites should be presented more concisely without sacrificing the clarity and meaning of the information to be provided. This should be done so that it can be downloaded very soon and before the internet connectivity breaks down.
2. The search engine should be able to display more results on a page by minimizing the amount of information displayed about each result. This will help the remote area internet users to view more results by downloading the same length of text. Downloading heavy amount of information (lengthy text, pictures, graphs etc.) requires more speed and good internet connectivity which is not available in rural areas.
3. There should be less number of steps involved in making transactions so that customers can complete their transaction process before they lose their connectivity. Also people who are less versed with computer and internet gets confused and irritated when they are asked to go through many steps for doing any transaction.
4. Such social networking websites should be introduced that can relate with lifestyle, interests, traditions, cultures, festivals and mind set of rural population. These sites will then become a platform for e marketers to interact and market their products to rural customers.
5. Special discounts should be introduced for the customers living in areas where internet purchase is not usual. This will induce this set of customers to make transactions through internet. They will themselves make efforts to use internet formaking transactions or purchases. The efforts of e marketers will turn to be most successful when they are able to address maximum customer.

LIMITATIONS:

1. Large portion of the sample collected consist of students.
2. People of rural or semi urban areas do not have much money at their disposal to spend on making purchases of costly items that too from internet.
3. The general hesitation of people in using internet as a medium of making secure transactions is not taken into consideration.

CONCLUSION:

Marketing through electronic mediums has proved to be a blessing in disguise not only to the business organizations but also to customers as it enables them to enjoy products and services present at any corner of the world through their fingertips at their doorstep. Making transactions within seconds, extracting complete information on any issue, getting customized product/service and many other facilities which one could never have imagined in absence of this amazing technology have become possible.

Developed countries are reaping the benefits of e marketing more as compared to developing countries as the required infrastructure is already in place and still going guns. In order to widen the spectrum of marketing companies in developing areas, e marketers can contribute their bit by making optimum use of information technology. Literate rural or semi urban population is not unaware of the usage of internet and the innumerable benefits attached to it, in fact they are not much behind the urban population in this regard. Therefore, the companies have a fairly good chance to tap the rural population for their digital markets.

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