

## **RECONNAISSANCE BEYOND INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION – A PANACEA FOR ADVERTISERS' QUALMS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*With the advent of computers, internet, mobile phones, iPods, portable DVRs, video game systems, et al., consumers are empowered as never before. Effective communication impact created through Mass Media advertising seem to fade into oblivion. The recent explosion in the new communication technology, ever-changing consumers, and the impelling need to seek out more productive, effective and result-oriented medium to convey the message, have made marketers seek venues beyond the horizon of mass media. Marketers across the globe have attempted to integrate multiple communication tools in such a way as to offset the weakness of one with the strength of the other, thus leading to emergence of Integrated Marketing Communication. But a stage as come where even IMC is being considered to be a mix of communication strategies lacking unified approach in delivering the required impetus at the right time and in an environment where it would be acted upon. To tide over this, marketers may resort to the novice concepts of “Below the Line (BTL) Marketing” and “Permission Marketing”, whose underlying tenet is that communication taking place with the permission of the customer is bound to be more effective and result oriented.*

*The study focuses on the fading age of mass communication and scouts beyond IMC and explores venues for generating cost-effective, customer-centric and result-oriented communication in tandem with the contemporary business realm.*

**Key words:** Integrated Marketing Communication, Below the Line (BTL) Marketing, Permission Marketing, Mass communication, Blogs, Podcasts, Out-bound interruption based marketing

### **Introduction;**

The ever changing technological advancements and fast changing social life of customers has opened new vistas for both consumers and marketers. Customers education level and awareness has shown a sharp up trend. With the galloping of technology consumers now enjoy a multiple of devices to choose from. Increase in the number of TV channels has increased the fragmentation of viewership. With the availability of other technologies like DVDs etc. viewership has also decreased. We have hundreds of channels aired across TV. In this scenario consumers can easily flip channels with a remote and shun viewing advertisements or commercials they want to avoid. Thus consumers in present milieu cannot be effectively reached via print or TV media. (Borgia, Kevin C. and Good R., 2016). The marketer with a plethora of medium available to them now faces a real challenge of choosing the appropriate and the most effective medium to communicate their message.

### **DAWN OF A NEW TREND**

**More contact points:** Today's customers come into contact with a company's brand in different ways. A customer who wants to find out good restaurant may now resort to internet to find out about the hotel and views of several people who had earlier visited the restaurant. Such opinions stretch across a variety of factors like homey atmosphere, quality of service, interior design of the dining hall, etc. Thus, in today's world marketers should consider multiple contact points and device their strategies.

**More specialized channels:** Presently we have channels that cater to specialized audiences like kids, sports lovers etc. Also a maze of magazines is available which cater to travellers, share market investments, etc. These are cluttered with lot of advertisements vying for attention of the viewers or readers. Against this back drop, it is easy to understand why customers become more choosy in the advertisement they want to view or read and shun those they are not interested in .

**Customers are now the king:** Marketers have now realized that it is preferable and much cozier to retain an existing customer than try to reclaim a customer who switched loyalty to a competitor. Consequently, vendors have started evincing keen interest in retaining the existing customers portfolio by trying to keep them satisfied on several fronts including prior, during and post-sale service.

**Wide spread internet usage:** Internet usage has spread its tentacles far and wide. Customers are now privileged to view them throughout the day. This implies that business hours extend beyond the official hours and gives the vendors marketing opportunities through all the days in a year. This has also mandated the companies to have a dynamic web site of their own. Such web sites need to be interactive to elicit customers' perception and also to pave way for innovative marketing campaign to rake in new customers. With internet becoming popular, it is imperative that marketers understand the fact internet presence can have both positive and negative influence on their business.

Against the above backdrop, the researcher has attempted to assess the contemporary scenario in Chennai and explore venues for generating cost-effective, customer-centric and result-oriented communication in tandem with the current business realm.

**Research objectives:** This study is undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To find the level of customers' awareness about the genuineness of the claims made in ads.
2. To find the advertisement viewership in mass media and non-conventional media.
3. To explore venues for generating cost-effective, customer-centric and result-oriented communication in tandem with the current business realm.

## **Review of Literature**

In the realm of marketing, the advancement of internet technology has ushered in the metamorphosis from macro to micro marketing strategies. In U.S., marketers have started realizing the traditional marketing techniques through mass print and TV not only escalates their

cost but has also become ineffective in reaching the target audience (Joachimsthaler, E and Aaker, David A., 2016).

The spending on mass media has grown around 5.5% whereas the spending on other non traditional methods of communication has shown a healthy 7.8% growth rate according to ClickZ News (Newcomb K. 2016). They also expect that this trend will continue. The changing consumers' attitude and their preference to interact directly with the marketers via communication channels they choose has necessitated the progress from ATL to BTL.

According to a publication by Stanford C. Bernstein & Co, Wall Street concern, while advertisement revenue from mass media will enhance by 4.5% , those from narrow cast will boost at 16.5% per annum from 2016 to 2022. They forecast that marketers are likely to expend a significant higher amount for advertising over cable and internet (\$27 and \$22.5 billion respectively) than on mass media route like magazines and TV (\$17.4 and \$19.1 billion respectively).

Thus, the withering trend of advertising through mass media postulates a serious warning signal to marketers following mass media advertisement route. Presently, the proportion of advertisement in mass media is declining as marketers boost spending on more targetable, narrowcast media.

With more non-traditional techniques of communication finding favour with multi-national companies, the Indian companies' league cannot be left behind. Indian companies are gradually opting for newer channels to send their message across to customers. The use of non-traditional channels of communication is yet to take off in a big way in India. The informal launch of Direct Marketing Association of India formed in collaboration with the well established Direct Marketing Association of USA is indicative of the growing importance of non-traditional marketing communication channels in the country.

In Chennai, RMKV textiles and GRT maintain data base of customers to contact them through direct mails to offer discount schemes. Marketers are also promoting their product or services through Channel Marketing. Lakme Lever is offering services to various beauty saloons as a part

of it's Below the Line activity. Lakme fashion week organized yearly is also excellent forum to reach out to customers.

The above mentioned examples are just the tip of the iceberg. It shows the gradual gaining of popularity of non-traditional communication channels in the Indian market.

### Research Methodology

The study was conducted in Chennai. The **Sample size** was 850, drawn across different age groups belonging to both the sexes. A questionnaire was administered. Our convenient sample yielded a total of 711 usable questionnaires. Thus the respondent rate was 84%. Simple statistical tools like cross tabulation, percentage analysis were employed.

### Empirical findings:

<b>Table 1 – Sex Composition</b>	
Male	376 (53%)
Female	335 (47%)
Total	711 (100%)

Of the total 700 respondents, male constituted 53%, while female is at 47%, indicating a slight tilt in favour of male respondents.

<b>Table 2 – Age wise break-up</b>	
Age Category	Numbers
15-30	189 (27%)
31-45	172 (24%)
46-60	183 (26%)
Above 60	167 (23%)
Total	711 (100%)

Thus, the respondents were more in the 15-30 age category. Least was from Above 60 category.

Age Category	Table 3 – Time Spent on	
	Non-conventional modes (in Hours)	Viewing TV and reading Newspapers (in Hours)
15-30	35	10
31-45	30	13
46-60	20	25
Above 60	10	30
Total	95	78

The above table highlights an important fact that people in toto spend comparatively more time on non-conventional modes like internet, computers, DVDs, etc. It is also interesting to note that 15-30 age category spend more time on modern modes. With the advancement in the age category, this tendency decreases. It shows the popularity of non-conventional modes among the younger generations.

Table 4 – Do you accept the claims made in advertisements?			
Sex	No	Yes	Total
Male	359	22	381
Female	319	11	330
Total	678(95%)	33(5%)	711

Table 4 highlights the level of awareness of consumers about the genuineness of the ads. It indicates that 95% don't believe in the tall claims made by companies in their ads. This may be due to their exposure of more information over the internet and social websites.

Age Category	Table 5 – Get information for purchase decision from		
	Non conventional modes	Mass Media like TV and Newspapers	Total
15-30	156	26	182
31-45	133	42	175
46-60	101	85	186
Above 60	51	117	168
Total	441 (62%)	270 (38%)	711 (100%)

It is clear from the above table that a majority (62%) get information for making their purchase decision from non-traditional channels like internet, satellite radios, mobile phones face book, etc. This shows the gaining popularity of marketing communication through non-conventional modes, a vital point to be noted by contemporary marketers. Another interesting fact is that still mass media has a significant say, particularly with the elders. The younger generations seem to rely more on non-conventional modes. The table indicates that Age and Usage of non-conventional modes are negatively correlated, i.e. as the Age increases, use of non-conventional modes decreases. With the spread of literacy regarding modus operandi of non-conventional modes, more number of elderly population may switch to non-conventional modes, a vital point for contemplation by marketers.

Table 6 – Do you flip ads in between TV programmes?					
Age	Very Often	Often	Less Often	No	Total
15-30	114	32	25	10	181
31-45	111	28	23	13	175
46-60	33	41	49	63	186

Above 60	17	19	41	92	169
Total	275 (39%)	120 (17%)	138 (19%)	178 (25%)	711 (100%)

A significant portion of the respondents (39%) very often flip the ads shown in between TV programmes to peruse other entertainment options. It is more so with 15-30 age group. It is interesting to note that those who are 46 and above show less inclination for switching over. This shows why advertisements in TVs fail to produce much results.

Thus, the current scenario seems to be in favour of non-conventional media. Therefore, the marketers should avoid shelling the consumers with seemingly limitless advertisements. Rather the focus should be audience-centric and follow the tactic of personalizing the goods and make them enjoy a positive association and experience with the product.

### **Challenges ahead for non-conventional channels of marketing communication:**

In India, use of non-traditional channels is still in its nascent stage, grappling with problems that are making firms hesitant in investing full faith in them. These communication techniques depend to a large extent on quality customer database, which still forms a miniscule part of entire Indian market.

The popularity on non-mass media channels is certainly growing at a very healthy pace in India. This certainly does not indicate as to when the corporate spending on new channels would exceed their spending on traditional mass media communication, what with the elderly population still clinging to the mass media in a significant way. Some of the major issues faced in this realm are:

1. Legalities around collecting information from other companies.
2. Difficulties surrounding the maintenance of accurate and up-to-date information.
3. Tactfulness in using customer data.

Marketers should carefully deal with the above issues in an appropriate and effective way. Companies must now look forward to capitalizing on the inherent beneficial elements in this



method of marketing, to generate cost effective, customer centric and customer interactive communication, which certainly sleuths beyond integrated marketing communication.

### **Exploring venues for generating cost-effective, customer-centric and result-oriented communication in tandem with the contemporary realm:**

**In common parlance, traditional media** refers to media like radio, newspapers and TV. When business people started exploring novel and innovative ways to advertise their services and goods, it gave birth to a broad range of so called **non-traditional** media like local store events, viral videos, face-book parties and concerts. The non-conventional **On line marketing channels** encompass podcasts, blogs, face-book, workshops, e-mailblasts etc. Direct mail campaigns, use of bill-boards, etc fall under **Off line marketing**.

Another novice concept is **Permission Marketing**. Here marketers will send will send advertisements only after getting a positive nod from prospective customers. This avenue is availed by telephone and email marketers and internet marketers. Indian Government has imposed strict norms on unsolicited advertising, and any unsolicited calls/SMS invites a fine and the telemarketer could even face disconnection of services. Companies have to come up with very smart initiatives to lure the customers to receive ads. Permission Marketing is likely to be the most important tool for managing on exactly when to deliver the stimuli to the customer (Godin, Seth, 2015). It is expected that by 2021, globally 65% of all new media revenues will based on permission marketing (Sethi, R. 2016).

In future, success of marketing communication will depend upon the choice of media, customers' time, permission and attention. Miller, J. and Horowitz, J.,(2016) predicts that marketing transformation will occur in four phases:

1. Increase in marketing that occurs with permission of consumer to present offers to customers.
2. Smarter out bound marketing or interruption based marketing will focus more on event driven campaigns.

3. Seamless customer conversations, once marketers have managed the art of managing inbound and outbound marketing.
4. In order to make each customer-contact point more valuable, marketers should upgrade all customer interaction points so as to enable the customers enjoy a positive experience.

Corporates which recognize this trend and fall in line will begin to see myriad profit making opportunities unfolding. It will benefit both consumers and companies by ensuring maximum efficiency with minimal loss or wastage.

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