

Three things that will impact Rural Marketing in India, on road to 2010

To my mind, the improvement of Rural infrastructural facilities like Electricity, Road connectivity and Telecom services are the three things which will impact the rural marketing in India, on road to 2010.

Electricity

In order to promote a diversified economy and help the Small Scale Industry and to promote a more balanced and diversified economy Rapid Rural Electrification is necessary. As per the Tenth Five-year Plan, about 5.07 lakh villages (that is approx 80 per cent) of the villages received electricity. There has been a considerable improvement in the pace of coverage of electricity connection in rural areas but the availability still remains an issue. However there is a continuous effort from the Govt to improve the situation and by 2010 electrification should have reached 100 per cent villages. This will not only improve the general quality of life in rural areas, but will also impact the way the media reaches the rural masses. It will have a major impact on the rural Marketing Scenario.

Road Connectivity

Good road Connectivity, particularly in rural areas, between sub divisional towns and district headquarters, is often the primary means of supplementing public efforts directed at providing basic health and educational services - as well as infrastructural support for production and trade and commerce at the local village level. In many cases, particularly in sparsely populated areas and towns with large hinterlands, good road connectivity may together obviate the need for public provisioning of some these services in each and every village; and at the same time help foreign durable economic linkage between such habitations and the rest of the economy. Road connectivity is therefore, a useful

indicator of the inclusionary aspect of the development process and perhaps the reach of the market as well. It is particularly relevant in the Indian context where over 70 per cent of the population continues to live in the rural areas and where 50 per cent of villages with population of less than 1000 have yet to be connected by roads. The Pradan Mandir Garam Sadak Yojna was launched in Dec 2000 with the objective of providing connectivity through good all weather roads to all unconnected habitations with a population of more than 500 persons by 2007. About 1,60,000 habitations are expected to be covered under this programme. This would definitely make a major difference in the rural marketing efforts of corporates.

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Telecom services

Telecom services will affect rural marketing in a big way in today's age of communication explosion. By 2005, 80 per cent villages, had been connected through 5.2 lakh Village Public Telephone (VPTs). Similarly, 1.23 crore telephone connections had been given in rural areas. This figure has since considerably increased. Faced with the prospect that the growth in the mobile phone user base hitting a saturation point in big cities, Indian cellular service providers have penetrated deeper into rural areas Today the total telephone connections in the country stand at 206.8 million, of which 139.8 million come from mobile phones balance being landline connections. Of the total 139.8 million mobile phone connections, approximately 20 million are from rural areas. This has not only changed and enhanced the communication needs of the rural youth, but their aspirational levels have also increased income towards this sector. The aspirational level has also increased as they are trying to become upwardly mobile.



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