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## **MEDIA HABITS OF RURAL CONSUMERS A CASE STUDY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Media is an important link between company and the customer to communicate the marketing messages to the target audience. Reports say that the use of media is not consistent with urban and rural consumers in the same manner. Though organized mass media exposure in rural areas is relatively less compared to the urban areas, the media is spreading at a faster rate from time to time. Earlier, the exposure of print media was considered insignificant in rural areas due to low levels of literacy. But the rural scene has changed as the rural people are exposed to various newspapers and magazines. On the other hand, the reach of electronic media such as Television and Internet to the rural consumers is also significant. The rural consumers, today, are able to make purchase decisions on the basis of marketing information available through different media. The study of rural consumers' exposure to different media and their preferences helps the marketing companies to formulate appropriate marketing communication strategies. The present paper examines the media habits of rural consumers in terms of their exposure and preference to Print Media, Radio, Television and Cinema.

**Key words:** Rural Media Habits, Rural Marketing, Rural advertising, Media Exposure

### **Introduction**

The advent of liberalization brought about sea changes in Indian economy. Rural market has become the buzz word in this new era of globalization as the rural market is undergoing sea changes in terms of increase in purchasing power, changing lifestyles and consumption patterns of rural people with increase in literacy and education. This apart, the penetration mass media such as Television and Satellite channels have exposed rural India to the world. The reach of mass media in the rural India can be seen in the figure.



### Reach of Mass Media in Rural India-2012

	Urban (in percent)	Rural (in percent)	All India (in percent)
Press	35	13	20
Television	82	45	57
Satellite	77	38	51
Radio	17	13	14
Cinema	5	2	3
Internet	10	2	4
All Media*	87	53	64
Estimated Individuals(Million)	290	611	901

\*Press+TV+Satellite+Radio+Cinema

Source: IRS Q1, 2012

The rural environment is different from the urban and therefore communication to potential customers in a proper and effective manner is a major challenge for corporate marketers. The selection of media is vital to reach the rural audience. The advertisers have to use a wide variety of media to convey their messages to rural customers. The exposure of rural consumers to different media has to be studied. In this context, companies need to analyze the rural consumers closely and understand the media habits and his exposure to different types of media available in the rural areas.

### Review of Literature

**E.J. Paul (1972)** published a paper entitled 'the role of advertising in the emerging rural markets'. In this article he discussed both conventional and non-conventional media suitable for rural markets. In the conventional media, it was found that radio and cinemas are popular means of communicating messages while newspapers and TV have limited scope. In unconventional media, wall posters, shop signs, hoardings, fairs, and festivals and propaganda vans serve useful role in conveying marketing messages. But, he found that unconventional media is more expensive though it is effective in the rural context.

**Siddartha Sen and M.Deoras(1986)** in their article 'Rural marketing opportunities and challenges' argued that the information and product benefit communication would be the most critical aspects of the communication strategy for the rural areas. They suggested that for effective system to be developed in rural areas, the media habits of the rural consumers are to be studied.

**Atul dhingra & Anand sarma (1997)** in their paper entitled 'rural communication-challenges & strategies' attempted to identify some of the challenges posed in communicating with the rural masses and discussed some of the strategies which help the communicator to meet these challenges. Regarding media, they revealed that use of publicity vans, cinema halls and video parlours will be



more effective. Opinion leaders and reference groups play a prominent role in buying decision of rural people.

**Saravanan K.S., (2012)** revealed that rural people are exposed to a few advertisements in Television in case of Fast Moving Consumer Goods, Textile showrooms, Jewellery showrooms, Home appliances, Two Wheelers and Mobile phones.

**Rajiv Kaushik and Kapil dev (2013)** conducted a study on effective media for rural communication. The study revealed that Television is the most effective means of communication in rural areas. The advertisements through different television channels reach the rural people. The youngsters in the villages are attracted to sports channels while women prefer Star Plus channel in the study.

### **Objectives**

The present study tries to examine the media habits of rural consumers in terms of rural consumers' exposure to conventional media such as Print, Radio, Television and Cinema. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the rural consumers' exposure to print media viz., newspapers and magazines.
2. To study the rural consumers' exposure to Electronic Media such as Radio and Television in terms of understanding their preference to different channels.
3. To study the rural consumers' cinema viewing habits.
4. To draw conclusions and offer suggestions from the study.

### **Sample and Methodology**

The present study is exploratory in nature. It is undertaken at state level selecting 300 consumers from three selected districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana namely Krishna, Warangal and Chittoor. The selection of sample is based on multi stage random sample technique. In the first stage, three districts are selected randomly representing three regions namely Krishna, Warangal and Chittoor. In the second stage, two villages are randomly selected from each district on the basis of population (one small and one big village). In the third stage, 50 consumers are selected from each village randomly. The data is collected from each respondent pertaining to his socio economic background and media habits. The data is analyzed using weighted scores. The sample design of rural consumers is shown in the following table.



### Sample design

S.No.	Name of the District	Sample Villages		Total
		I	II	
1	Warangal	50	50	100
2	Krishna	50	50	100
3	Chittoor	50	50	100
Total				300

### Classification of Rural Consumers (Age-wise)

Age Group	Krishna	Chittoor	Warangal	Total
Below 25	22	20	21	63
25-35	34	32	32	98
35-45	24	30	28	82
Above 45	20	18	19	57
Total	100	100	100	300

### Classification of Rural Consumers (Education-wise)

Education Group	Krishna	Chittoor	Warangal	Total
Illiterate	21	26	28	75
Matriculation	53	50	46	149
Graduation	15	14	16	45
Post Graduation	11	10	10	31
Total	100	100	100	300

### Classification of Rural Consumers (Income-wise)

Age Group	Krishna	Chittoor	Warangal	Total
Lower	35	40	42	117
Lower middle	42	42	40	124
Upper middle	14	11	12	37
Higher	09	07	06	22
Total	100	100	100	300

### Tools of Data Collection

For the purpose of collecting primary data from the sample consumers in the selected villages, a structured questionnaire is designed and administered on the respondents. The data collected through questionnaire is classified and arranged through appropriate tables. In order to study the media habits of the sample respondents, the responses have been obtained under three categories namely regularly, occasionally and rarely. The weights have been assigned to these three categories as follows.

Response	Weight
Regularly	3
Occasionally	2
Rarely	1



The responses obtained for each response category have been multiplied by the weight assigned to it. The weighted scores for each category have been summed up to obtain total weighted scores. Ranks are given on the basis of these scores. The data is interpreted in terms of the ranks assigned by this method.

## **Findings and Conclusions**

Marketing Communications reach rural people through different media as well as people. Though organized mass media exposure in rural areas is relatively less compared to the urban areas, the media is spreading at a faster rate from time to time. To understand the effectiveness of marketing communications in rural areas, it is necessary to examine media habits and preferences of rural people. Keeping this in view, an attempt is made here to analyze the responses of sample consumers of the selected rural areas regarding their media exposure, media habits and the related issues with special reference to print media, Radio, Television and Cinema.

### **I. EXPOSURE TO PRINT MEDIA**

The Print media is generally exposed to literate rural consumers who are exposed to the newspapers and magazines in the villages. The exposure to print media depends upon the factors like 1) literacy rate 2) interest of people to subscribe to newspapers 3) Availability of newspapers and magazines on regular basis, availability of libraries, schools, clubs, party offices etc., where newspapers are kept available for reading to the general public. An attempt is made here to examine the habits of rural people to the print media in the selected villages of three sample districts, the issues examined here include newspaper exposure, preference to various newspapers and magazines, sources of reading newspapers and magazines, items of preferences in the newspapers and magazines. The details are presented below:

#### **1. Newspaper and Magazine Reading Habits:**

In order to understand how many people read newspapers and magazines, the respondents were asked to reveal whether they go through the newspapers and magazines or not. The analysis of their responses revealed that only 57% of the respondents have the habit of reading newspapers and magazines in the villages while remaining 43% of the respondents are not exposed to print media. The area wise analysis shows that the percentage of respondents exposed to print media is relatively higher (70 %) in Krishna district which is a developed district, where as it is low in Warangal (45%) which is relatively a backward district. On the other hand, Chittoor district accounts for a moderate exposure to print media (55 %).

#### **2. Preferences of Respondents to different Newspapers and Magazines**

Having examined the exposure to newspapers and magazines in the selected villages, an attempt is made here to find out the specific newspapers and magazines which are popular in the selected villages. For this purpose, the respondents were asked to express the newspapers and magazines read by them in order of preference. Their responses have been analyzed and shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Preferences of respondents to different Newspapers and Magazines**

S.No	Newspaper/Magazine	Multiple Responses			Total
		Krishna	Chittoor	Warangal	
1	Eenadu	52	33	23	108
2	Vaaritha	12	14	15	41
3	Sakshi	34	42	21	97
4	Andhra Jyothi	18	12	14	44
5	Praja Sakthi	02	05	09	16
6	The Hindu	15	12	08	35
7	Deccan Chronicle	17	11	07	35
8	Swathi	32	21	19	72
9	Andhra Boomi	14	10	05	29
10	India Today	17	12	09	38
	Annadata	19	17	11	47
	Total	132	189	141	562

Source: Questionnaire administered on Sample Consumers

It may be noted that among the newspapers Eenadu is found to be popular. It is followed by other newspapers Sakshi, Andhra Jyothi and Vaaritha in order of preference. Regarding the magazines, it is found that Swathi (Telugu weekly) which is followed by Annadata (Agricultural Weekly). The area-wise analysis shows that Eenadu has the highest readership in Krishna district and Warangal while Sakshi has highest readership in Chittoor district. The magazine reading habit is very low in Warangal district when compared to other two districts.

### 3. Sources of Reading Newspapers and Magazines

An attempt is also made to find the sources from which sample respondents read newspapers and magazines. The data related to it is presented in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2: Sources of Reading Newspapers and Magazines**

S.No	Newspaper/Magazine	Own Subscription	Neighbour/Friend	Library/Office	Total	
I	<i>Newspapers</i>					
	1.	Eenadu	33	64	11	108
	2.	Sakshi	20	17	04	41
	3.	Vaaritha	24	65	08	97
	4.	Andhra Jyothi	23	16	05	44
	5.	Praja Shakthi	05	03	08	16
	6.	The Hindu	19	13	03	35
	7.	Deccan Chronicle	22	07	06	35
II	<i>Magazines</i>					
	1.	Swathi		24	-	72
	2.	Andhra Boomi	48	12	-	29
	3.	India Today	17	15	-	38
	4.	Annadata	23	30	-	47
		17		-		

Source: Questionnaire administered on Sample Consumers



It may be observed from the table that Eenadu, Sakshi, Vaartha and Andhra Jyothi newspapers are read by most of the respondents through the sources of neighbors and friends. However, a considerable number of respondents subscribe to newspapers. In Magazines Category, the responses show a different trend. In this case, majority of the readers subscribe these weeklies while only few of them get it from their neighbours and friends, libraries, offices etc.

#### 4. Preference for contents in the Newspapers

Newspapers contain different items of readers' interest. In the rural context, these items are not equally preferred by the readers. The analysis of item-wise preferences helps in formulating most appropriate strategy for placing the advertisements in newspapers. The respondents were asked to indicate the items they read regularly, occasionally and rarely. In order to quantify the responses for each item, weights have been assigned for different responses and weighted scores have been calculated. The data is shown in Table 1.3

**Table 1.3: Readers Preferences to Contents in Newspapers**

S.No	Item	Weighted Scores			Total
		Krishna	Chittoor	Warangal	
1	Front Page	238	206	230	674
2	Sports	52	68	80	200
3	Business news	49	40	33	122
4	Movies	86	98	108	292
5	Serials	32	23	40	95
6	Local news/edition	223	213	226	662
7	National news	142	102	98	342
8	International news	42	31	28	101
9	Editorials	63	42	52	157
10	Women Special	11	25	19	55
11	Children Special	53	44	35	132
12	Sunday Special	85	58	77	220

Source: Questionnaire administered on Sample Consumers

The result of the analysis reveals that front page is the most popular item which has the largest readership followed by local edition. This is due to the fact that every reader usually reads the contents of front page than any other item in particular. It may be noted that rural people are more interested in local news than any other information. The other items in order of preference are National news, Movies and Sunday special. The features such as editorials, sports international news, business news, serials and women section are preferred by very few number of sample readers. The special items like sports, business news and women section are not read by all sections of readers. Usually sports feature is preferred by youth, business news is preferred by those engaged in business and those who invest in securities to know about share prices and women section is usually read by women in particular. These items gain less popularity in the rural context.



## II. RADIO

Radio has been the important medium of communication for rural people over the years. According to Indian Readership Survey 1999, Radio reaches 18% of rural households. As compared to print media, illiterate rural people are also likely to receive the messages through Radio. Here, an attempt is made to examine preferences of consumers towards Radio stations and their programmes. The details are presented below:

### 1. Preference towards Radio Stations:

With a view to understand the preferences of rural people towards various Radio stations, the sample respondents were asked to rank the stations in order of their preference. For the purpose of ranking their preferences, they were asked to rank the stations as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in order of their preferences. Weights have been assigned to these ranks and weighted scores have been calculated. The data is presented in table 3.11

From the above table, it may be observed that majority of the sample listeners preferred to tune FM Station (93.5 SFM). This is due to the reason that this FM station is the popular regional radio station and the selected villages of two districts have access to receive radio signals of this station with clarity. It may be noted that the respondents of Warangal district do not receive the FM station signals. The other stations such as Hyderabad, Vijayawada and Chittoor gained considerable importance being their local Radio stations.

### 2. Language Preferences

In order to understand language preferences of rural people for radio programmes, the respondents were asked to indicate their ranking to the different languages in order of preference. It has been observed that majority of sample listeners preferred to listen to the radio programmes in Telugu which is the mother tongue of this region. The other languages such as Hindi, English and Urdu are preferred by very few number of sample listeners. This may be due to the fact that most of the listeners do not understand the languages other than Telugu.

**Table 1.4: Preference towards Radio Stations**

S.No.	Radio Station	Weighted Scores			Total
		Krishna	Chittoor	Warangal	
1	93.5 SFM	235	384	-	619
2	Hyderabad	128	106	163	397
3	Vijayawada	165	-	138	303
4	Visakapatnam	08	-	-	08
5	Chittoor	-	212	-	212
6	Delhi	-	-	-	-
7	Sri lanka	-	-	-	-

Source; Questionnaire administered on Sample Consumers





### 3. Programme Preferences

Having examined the rural people exposure to various radio stations and their language preferences in the selected villages, an attempt is made here to find out rural people preferences towards various programmes on Radio. For this purpose, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they listen the given Programme regularly, occasionally or rarely. The different programmes chosen for the analysis are Regional news, national news, agricultural news, educational news, sports, running commentaries, and film music. For the purpose of analysis, weights have been assigned as 3,2,1 for the responses regularly, occasionally and rarely respectively. The results are shown in table 1.5.

**Table 1.5: Programme Preferences**

S.No.	Programme	No. of Responses(Weighted Scores)			Total
		Krishna	Chittoor	Warangal	
1	Regional News	212	106	126	444
2	National News	108	69	57	234
3	Agricultural News	125	136	143	404
4	Educational News	26	39	35	100
5	Sports/commentaries	23	52	45	120
6	Film Music	184	286	102	572

Source: Questionnaire administered on Sample Consumers

It may be observed from the table that Film Music is the most popular programme followed by Regional news and agricultural news. It clearly indicates that rural people are more interested to listen film songs apart from in the news programmes broadcast on radio including agricultural news. The district-wise analysis reveals distinctive observations as all the radio broadcast channels are not available to all the selected villages. The villages under Krishna district and Chittoor district have access to listen to Radio stations including FM channels while the villages under Warangal district have no or little access to Radio channels.

### III. TV EXPOSURE

The advent of communication technology especially the satellite channels brings about dramatic changes in the user of Television as a medium of communication as not only the urban people but also the rural masses are effectively exposed to this medium. As an audio-visual medium, Television has a greater impact on the rural masses. Keeping this in view, an attempt is made here to understand the extent to which rural people are exposed to Television.

#### 1. Place of Watching TV Programmes

Regarding the place habit of watching TVs, It was observed that most of the respondents watch TV in their own houses. As already mentioned, 65 % of respondents possess own TV. However, the viewer ship is high in the rural areas unlike urban areas and it is not relative in terms of TV ownership.



## 2. Channel Choice

The channel choice depends upon the interest of the individuals to watch various programmes telecast in different channels. The analysis of channel preferences helps the marketers in placing the Advertisements in different channels to reach target consumers. Keeping this in view, an attempt is made here to examine the channel choice of the sample respondents. In this connection, the sample respondents were asked to indicate the channels in which they watch TV programmes. Their responses have been analyzed and shown in Table 1.6

**Table 1.6: Channel Choice**

S.No.	Channel	Multiple Responses			Total
		Krishna	Chittoor	Warangal	
1	National	09	05	11	25
2	Regional	15	08	15	38
3	E TV	38	48	29	115
4	Gemini TV	52	37	48	137
5	Teja	41	33	29	103
6	MAA TV	33	31	29	93
7	TV 9	42	50	32	124
8	N TV	14	12	18	44
9	ZEE TV	12	10	09	31
10	Star TV	15	20	13	48

Source: Questionnaire administered on Sample Consumers

It may be observed from the above table that a number of TV channel are popular among the rural areas including the channels in languages like Telugu, English and Hindi. However, rural consumers are most exposed to Telugu channels rather than channels of other languages. The channels being popular are Gemini, TV 9, E TV, Teja, and MAA TV. It is also evident from the above analysis that the rural areas also have access to satellite channels which are popular in their urban counterparts. Area-wise analysis reveals that Gemini TV is popular in Krishna and Warangal districts while E TV is found popular in Chittoor district. The news channel TV 9 is found to be popular in all the selected districts compared to other news channels. Among the channels of other languages ZEE network and Star network is being viewed by the rural people.

## 3. Programme Preferences

Having examined the place habit and channel choice of sample viewers, here an attempt is also made to examine the programme preferences of rural respondents as it helps to understand the tastes and preferences of rural people for various programmes telecast on TV. For this purpose, the sample respondents were asked to indicate whether they watch different TV programmes regularly, occasionally and rarely. For the purpose of analysis, weights have been assigned as 3, 2, 1 for the responses regularly, occasionally and rarely respectively. The weighted scores are shown in table 1.7



It may be observed from the table that Serials are more popular. The other programmes in order of preference are Film songs, Movies and News Programmes. Among the Serials, the sample respondents revealed that they watch serials more regularly on Gemini, and E TV channels. News is mostly watched by elder people while Sports events are mostly watched by Young people during certain specific events like Cricket matches.

It may be noted that Business, Educational and Agricultural programmes are watched by few respondents only. Some of the sample respondents revealed that in order to acquire knowledge on agriculture they watch 'Annadata' programme on E TV regularly.

**Table 1.7: Programme Preferences**

S.No.	Programme	Weighted Scores(Multiple Responses)			Total
		Krishna	Chittoor	Warangal	
1	News	153	125	142	420
2	Serials	258	273	230	761
3	Educational	24	35	65	124
4	Agricultural	103	82	112	297
5	Movies	228	206	169	605
6	Film songs	232	213	184	629
7	Sports	58	50	35	143
8	Business news	28	34	41	103

Source: Questionnaire administered on Sample Consumers

#### IV. CINEMA EXPOSURE

Cinema is another popular medium liked by rural people. Rural people are exposed to cinemas in the nearby towns or big villages. It is proposed to study certain issues related to movie exposure like frequency of movies watched, preference of show timings and persons accompanying to movie etc. The details are discussed below:

##### 1. Frequency of Movies

In order to understand the rural people habits of watching movies, the sample respondents were asked to indicate the number of times they watch movies in a month. These responses are presented in Table 1.8

**Table 1.8: Frequency of Movies Watch (Monthly)**

S.No.	Frequency	No. of Respondents			Total
		Krishna	Chittoor	Warangal	
1	Never	22	18	12	52
2	Once	41	45	46	132
3	Twice	25	28	30	83
4	Thrice	07	05	07	19
5	4 times	05	04	03	12
6	More than 4 times	-	-	02	02
	Total	100	100	100	300

Source: Questionnaire administered on Sample Consumers



It may be observed from the table that 83 % of sample respondents have the habit of watching movies. Among those 53 % see the movies once in a month followed by 33% twice in a month. The respondents who see movies thrice and four times in a month are insignificant. The above analysis reveals that majority of the sample respondents watch movies once or twice in a month.

## 2. Preference of Show timings

The sample respondents were also asked to indicate the show timings they prefer to watch movies. The data is shown in table 1.9

**Table 1.9: Preference of Show timings**

S.No.	Show timings	No. of Respondents			Total
		Krishna	Chittoor	Warangal	
1	Morning Show	20(26)	19(23)	24(27)	63(25)
2	Matinee	32(41)	38(46)	46(53)	116(47)
3	First Show	19(24)	20(25)	16(18)	55(22)
4	Second Show	07(09)	05(06)	02(02)	14(06)
	Total	78(100)	82(100)	88(100)	248(100)

Source: Questionnaire administered on Sample Consumers

It may be observed that majority 47% of sample viewers expressed their desire to see Matinee show. It is followed by 25% preferred Morning show and 22 % preferred First show. It may be noted that Second show is not preferred by significant number of people. This is due to the reason that rural consumers make their visits to the towns in the early morning for the purchase of consumer goods and agricultural inputs and come back to the villages in the evening. It would be convenient for them to attend matinee or morning show.

## 3. Persons Accompanying to Movie

The sample respondents were asked as to who are the persons generally accompanying them to movie regularly, occasionally and rarely. Scores have been calculated by assigning weights to these categories. The data is shown in table 1.10

**Table 1.10: Persons Accompanying to Movie**

S.No.	Person Accompanied	No. of Respondents (Weighted scores)			Total
		Krishna	Chittoor	Warangal	
1	Alone	212	178	180	570
2	Spouse	42	58	65	165
3	Spouse & Children	75	56	42	173
4	Children	18	25	38	81
5	Friends	162	186	198	546

Source: Questionnaire administered on Sample Consumers

It may be observed from the table that majority of the movie viewers preferred to see movies alone rather than accompanied by somebody. However,



majority of those who preferred some one to accompany indicated their preference to friends than spouse and children.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations**

1. As the exposure to rural consumers to print media is significant, the preference and availability of newspapers and magazines in rural areas should be given due consideration. The marketing messages through these selected newspapers and magazines will prove out be effective.
2. The item-wise preferences of rural consumers in the above analysis reveal that local edition is the most preferred item in newspaper readership. The marketing communications in the local news edition will have greater reach in rural context.
3. The advent of new Radio satellite channels increases the scope for Radio as a means of communication. The preference and timing of programmes should be given due consideration.
4. Television as audio-visual medium has greater impact on rural masses. It is found that rural consumers are most exposed to regional language channels. The analysis of channel preferences helps the marketers to place the advertising messages in appropriate channels to reach target consumers.
5. Movie programmes and TV serials are found popular in the programme preferences. The advertisements placed in these programmes have greater exposure.
6. The cinema viewership is found significant in rural areas. The advertising messages through cinema must be properly designed and played in the theatres where rural population viewership is high.

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