

Going rural with kids!

Category:
Confectionary

Background

As for many in the fast moving consumer goods category, the drive into moving towards rural consumer has become the key marketing focus for the client. There was need to understand the standing of the current brands in the rural kids' mind, and the efforts that should be made to move it up in the consumption hierarchy.

The Research Objective

A threefold task: a) Understand perception and imagery of our brands in the mind of rural confectionary consumer, b) Map various confectionary brands with respect to image and preference vis a vis our set of brands, c) Communication diagnostics - understand how kids processes communication and the kind of communication that works best

The Challenge

Deep diving into a 'difficult-to-open-up' audience, kids, that too in a rural setting was the biggest challenge towards this task, and hence all the projective techniques into setting the mind free (against a caged respondent) were found useful aids.

The Research Methodology

Mini Group Discussions with kids and youngsters spanning an age band of 8 yrs to 22 yrs; regular confectionary consumers (specific brand and frequency maintained). Villages selected with population of 5,000 across the 3 large states of India: Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh.

Key Findings

- Local brands are rampant in villages across the 3 states. All of them saw kids avidly purchasing local brands and in some cases preferring it too.
Local brands have a lot to offer –

- Low price...with 25 p SKU...more numbers for less money
- Localized flavors....tanginess, coffee etc.
- Variety in taste a....keeps the excitement on
- Variety in shape, which makes consumption exciting
- Easy availability from the nearby *kirana* shop
- Besides their names are easy and self-explanatory (so orange candy is called orange *goli*) and hence no special recall of brands is needed

Branded players fall short on all of the above counts.

- All market level activities need to synergistically suggest a change, not just a façade change which is what advertising typically does --
 - Availability of brands ...hence distribution channels
 - Maybe product samples --- smaller in size/volume and hence lower priced – designed for this audience
 - Maybe even un-packaged jars of candies which sell!
 - Greater retailer margin to push brands.
 - Promotions and schemes work well amongst kids.

- Communication Learning in rural markets:
 - Simple humor works best
 - Simple storylines are best understood
 - Showing modern situations or celebrities which have a certain glam appeal, is aspirational and gets lapped up.
 - Animation is seen as kiddy, and that can alienate teenagers.
 - Any degree of insensitivity which urban consumers might take jokingly as ‘pulling the leg’ is taken literally here as ‘doing wrong to others’.
 - Direct, on the face messages are best heard in this audience.

- Unconventional media works well as any small news is a talking point and creates publicity throughout village.

- Loudspeaker ads and mobile vans that roam through the village a sure option.
- Sampling exercises of our product can generate trial and awareness
- Shop displays – PoS and banners
- Display bottles and jars for greater brand visibility – since volume off-take is low, smaller quantity jars for mono-packs is an option

The Results

Some of the communication which was working wonderfully well in urban scenario received many negative sentiments with the rural consumer, and took the researchers as well as the marketers alike, by surprise. The semiotics and associations are unambiguously different for this target audience and need to be viewed microscopically by advertisers.

Sum up

Rural marketing, an oft talked about topic in forums, may not necessarily be an area that marketers have imbibed in their strategies. While there is an increasing awareness of this topic yet every time we go rural, we discover something insightful and new which opens mind to their life and the way they think!

“In the harvest season, trucks travel leaving a few potatoes and onions on the roads, falling while the driver is driving away. Kids would run after these trucks, in the hope of picking up a few potatoes and onions, and then selling it off to buy goodies for themselves. That’s why the sale of confectionaries is high during this time”