

The Rise Of New Media And Product Promotion : Exploring The Potential Of Online Media In Advertising The Services Provided By Major Telecommunications Service Providers In India

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INTRODUCTION

E-malls, emails and e-melas are emerging as the 'new media mix' to persuade the techno-savvy consumer at home and across the globe. As the markets swell up with multiple consumer and technology products, the origin and growth of online media opens up a cornucopia of strategic branding options. Planet, Profit and People (Joep Cornillsson, 2009) has become the new promotional dictum. Post millennium, the marketing universe is a kaleidoscope of new-product innovations, re-segmenting the target mass and sharpening the emphasis on Return on Investment. The advertiser is increasingly focusing on the tangible value of the mediated messages directed at the consumer. If on the one hand, the expansion in the media landscape and technology has jettisoned a creative revolution in product promotion; steep decline in the advertising budgeting has posed severe creative challenges to the ad men worldwide. Advertising spend is experiencing its biggest decline in history (Markus Pfeiffer, Markus Zinnbaur, JAR, March, 2010). The twin turbo has led to a transition in advertising media; from mass media like television and newspapers, the thrust is now on exploring the online space. Guy Phillipson, Chief Executive of the IAB, told Reuters: Internet advertising spending overtakes TV in UK for the first time. *"This is a significant milestone. This is the first major market where online has overtaken television to become the biggest single medium."* Interactive, swift, flexible and inherently personal - online media offers interesting options to create innovative advertising plans and message execution strategies. Three biggest benefits of the Internet are: Communication, Sharing and Socializing tempts the marketers to strategically use it for both FMCGs and durables. Quick to respond to the rise of new media is the telecommunication industry in India. In the space of ten years, the telecommunication world has come up with a range of production, distribution, and marketing centric activities. Close to twenty operators are closing in on the congested market. New Media's increasing spread and efficacy has opened the new gates for the burgeoning telecommunication sector in India, with the aim to widen business spaces by making inroads in the freshly constructed audience segments. The giant players in the industry are set to reinvent their advertising plans so as to reach not just the heterogeneous mass, but also the individual end user.

LITERATURE REVIEW

After a series of exchanges with the advertising professionals, internet advertising is a multifaceted phenomenon that shares common functions with the conventional ad media, yet differs in fundamental ways. By extension, we say, internet advertising is a paid mediated form of communication from an identifiable source to persuade the receiver to take some action now or in the future through the World Wide Web (Richard and Curran, 2002). In the academic world, the development of internet advertising has led to a broad stream of studies that focus on the economic perspectives of display advertisements (Evans, 2009) and implementation-related investigation on branded websites. There is some research available on the comparative study of offline and online advertising in edible items and automobiles, but work on nature and composition of the online mediated communication is marginal. In one recent study '*Can Old Media Enhance New Media*', Marcus Pfeiffer & Markus Zinnbaur talked about a new marketing model examining the impact of various communication channels, and the role of external factors that influence usage of the website. Closer home in India, a host of articles and blogs make statements with regard to the rise of new media in advertising and promotion of products. The advertiser is spending on new media due to its targeted maximum exposure. The Cellular operators, though a late entrant, are fast including the new media in their media plans (Indian Media Agency Report, 2009). Facts and figures lend credence to the argument. The online advertising industry, driven by web banners and

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search marketing has grown from \$100 million to \$ 20 Billion in less than ten years (Will Online Advertising Become 50% of all advertising, Vivek Bhargava, 2010). A look at the typology of internet advertising (Sally J. Macmillan, 2009) presents the interrelationship between the nomenclature and the purpose of advertising:

1) Initiate Contact: Some advertisers simply want to establish communication with the consumers. It could be to build brand awareness or to remind the consumers of a product or service. Types attributed to the function are small-format ads: buttons, hyperlinks, audio only, sponsorships, online games, search engines, SEO, etc.

2) Inform And/Or Refer: Advertisers now recognize the value of the internet to provide wealth of information about the product without the fear of overload. Types include banner, expandable, Flash ads, skyscrapers, e-PR, consumer endorsements, bulletin boards, email marketing.

3) Facilitate Direct Interaction: The web can facilitate a variety of interactions between consumers and marketers. Large format ads like the pop ups, pop-unders, interstitials, supers, rich media ads and streaming videos, brand websites, chat rooms, online games, blogs, fantasy communities, webcasts are helpful in facilitating the interaction.

4) Facilitate Transaction: For many advertisers, the electronic capability of the internet is the ultimate goal of internet advertising. The tools used are E-commerce, online contests, sweepstakes, embedded content.

MEDIA AND TELECOMMUNICATION IN INDIA

Ever since the onslaught of information, communication and technology on the Indian consumer diaspora, numerous studies (both at the micro and macro level) have been conducted into the use of conventional advertising and marketing practices adopted by consumer and technology products worldwide (The Ultra Modern Approach To Advertising In The Telecom Sector For Rural Markets, 2010, Telecom Sector in India, Vision 2020, et al.). A step forward is the need to look at the new communication and promotional conduits (media vehicles) used by the telecom service providers in the convergent era. A host of reports, articles and weblogs on evolution and growth of telecommunication in India trace the trajectory of its exponential rise in the last two decades. Figures suggest that India is ranked seven in the telecommunication sector in the world spectrum (World Telecommunication Development Report 2002, ITU).

❖ **The Indian Telecom Market :** Network expansion in India has been a phenomenon to witness. In 2009, the Indian Telecom sector contributed 5.65 percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and attracted a Foreign Direct Investment of over \$2 billion. India is third in the world in terms of the number of Telecom subscribers. The Indian telecom industry had an awesome run in 2009, adding some 170 million phone connections to take the subscriber base to nearly 550 million (Indian Telecom: A Tale of Stupendous Growth, 2009). In addition to this, India has the second largest wireless network in the world, next only to China. There were 442 million wireless subscribers as of July 2009, with a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 65% during the last five years (The Viewpaper, February, 2010). Government initiatives like the announcement of the 3G policy and WiMax rollout are bold steps in serving mass communication. Sharing of the basic telecom infrastructure among the major telecom players such as Airtel and Vodafone has also resulted in a pan- India reach.

The telecom scenario can be broadly dissected into four categories:

1) Rural India Bridging The Telecom Divide: The emergence of Rural Market in India provides an extensive market place for the mobile industry. The adoption of 3G and Broadband Wireless Association (BWA) is likely to galvanize competition and expand network coverage into the hinterlands of the country. Within a short span of 3 years, the rural tele-density has jumped from 4.5% to 19%.

2) India As A Hub For Telecom Equipments' Manufacturing And Export: In order to make the latest technology available in the market, focus is on commercialization of telecom innovation and technology. This can contribute towards inclusive growth by making low cost handsets available that support affordable access in rural areas. The production of telecom equipments as of March 2009 was INR 518 billion, with a CAGR of 29% during the last five years. At the same time, INR 81 billion of telecom equipments were exported, with a CAGR of 100% during the last five years.

3) VAS, Mobile Banking, And M-Commerce: Value-Added Services (VAS) have an immense potential to grow with services like Mobile banking and Mobile -commerce. Content development, pricing and innovative strategies are the

key factors for driving the VAS demand.

4) Exploring New Frontiers: With growing competitive pressure on all fronts, and the inevitable need to keep pace with emerging technologies globally, telecom operators are re-examining their traditional business models and are making substantial investments in upcoming technologies. These include 3G Band Allocation, Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMax), and Future Generation Networks.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present paper attempts to:

- 1) To find out whether the telecommunication advertiser is making use of online media in brand communication.
- 2) To decode the nature and composition of the online messages, prevalent innovations, and novel executions in the telecommunication sector.
- 3) To examine the use and efficacy of online media in the advertising plans in the technology based service sector.
- 4) To find out the relationship between above the line advertising and cyber advertising in brand promotion.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Although numerous studies have examined the potential and efficacy of an advertising medium, most have looked at only the conventional media: print radio and television, especially in relation to the telecommunication sector in India. Exploratory research design is used, since the attempt is to find out the significance of online media as an advertising tool in the Indian telecom industry. For the purpose of the study, qualitative research was undertaken, because the basic premise of the investigation was to understand the pertinence and the probable use of advertising on the internet. For the purpose of the exploratory study, the advertising plans and media strategies of leading cellular service providers: Idea, Airtel, Aircel, Tata Docomo, and Vodafone were analyzed. The ad plans under the microscope were taken from a predefined time frame. The emphasis of the campaign analysis and interpretation were the existing use of online media and its place in the overall media mix. The online advertising and promotional activities of five leading telecommunication service providers were examined and analyzed for a period of four months - from August, 2010 - December, 2010. The research method used for the purpose of investigation was content analysis, wherein the sample units were analysed on the basis of the predetermined criteria.

❖ Limitations Of The Study

- 1) Due to time constraints, the sample size and time frame under study were limited.
- 2) Since the nature of the data is dynamic, the focus was on qualitative understanding of the data. Quantitative analysis and interpretation was not undertaken for the present study.

❖ **Sample :** The study deals with the online media content w.r.t. the telecommunication industry in India. Since the new media, both internet and mobile are transient and not stationary, it is difficult to procure data based on equal or stratified probability. Hence, convenient sampling method was used to select the sample for the study - i.e. the online ad content of top five telecommunication companies in India (Outlook Digital Survey Report, 2009).

❖ **Selection of The Source Of Content :** Airtel, Idea Cellular, Vodafone, Aircel, and Tata Docomo were the telecommunication companies that were selected for a period of four months (August, 2010 - December, 2010). Availability of the data was taken into account while choosing the sample. The source of data was online ad portals, websites, social networking sites, online surveys, and reports. The unit of analysis was online promotional tools used for advertising on the web. All the internet based promotional material were examined.

❖ **Data Collection :** Data were collected from secondary sources such as websites and search engines. Data was collected from ad specific search sites: agencyfaqs.com, campaign.in, exchange4media.com, pitchonline.net, Facebook.com.

The above mentioned web stores were searched for data based on the following parameters*. Since there existed no specific list or guide for indicators to examine the content, a fresh set of parameters were identified to carry out the study. The following parameters were used :

a) Type of internet ads placed by the source b) Online marketing campaigns c) e-CSR d) Corporate websites
e) Online sales promotion offers f) Public relations online g) Branded entertainment h) Experiential marketing
online i) Social Media Marketing j) Weblogs k) Online shops /malls

The data collected was examined carefully in conformity with the objectives of the study. Tabular presentation of the data displays the results (Tables 1- 4). The results obtained were further interpreted to arrive at significant findings. Since the nature of the medium is ever changing, the study refrains from quantifying the data and examines the results qualitatively and cohesively.

Table 1 : Analysis Of The Websites Of Five Telecommunication Service Providers As A Tool Of Two Way Communication Online						
S No	Variables	AIRTEL	VODAFONE	AIRCEL	TATA DOCOMO	IDEA CELLULAR
1	Online contests	The name game contest	--	--	Dive in contest	'Kaho What's Your Idea!' National interschool skills test
2	Online forms	Telemarketers registrations My account	I want a new connection	Tele marketers registration	Connect	For a new connection Take a new connection
3	Online problem diagnostics	Customer care	I want an enterprise solution	Customer care	Customer care	Customer care
4	Sweepstakes					Idea fresh, activate dealer
5	Search options	Search option			Search option	
6	Podcast		Audio conferencing			
7	Listings	With drop down menu SEO	Boxes with link words SEO	Visual ,image links with drop down menu SEO	Buttons top and bottom	Cool animations with external links
8	FAQs	+nt	+nt	+nt		+nt

Table 2 : Analysis Of Corporate Websites Of The Five Telecom Service Sector Providers w.r.t Active Control						
S No	Variables	AIRTEL	VODAFONE	AIRCEL	TATA DOCOMO	IDEA CELLULAR
1	Internal hyperlinks	I am interested in Airtel mobile hyperlinks more with my Airtel mobile connection careers	Visual links for my account, careers	Quick links for CSR, Sponsorships, Awards, and milestones	Create celebrations : new DOCOMO animation of celebration of New Year and Christmas	Prepaid Postpaid
2	External hyperlinks			Fun zone for online games	Dive in	Instant recharge
3	Hotlinks	close	Go and back	Take me to Aircel home page		Skip intro turn
4	Dealer location	Investor Relations For enterprise business	Separate hyperlinks for all cities at the bottom of the home page		Nodal , appellate, line extensions	Separate quick links for DND Punjab, for Karnataka Users
5	Site map	Link button for site map	Link button for site map	Link button for site map	Link button for site map	Link button for site map
6	Social Networking	Fan Club on Facebook		Connect with SNS	Become a fan Follow us on : Twitter, You tube, and Orkut	Connect with Idea on Facebook

Table 3 : Analysis Of Corporate Websites Of The Telecom Service Sector w.r.t Their Online Advertising, Promotion Strategies, And Tools						
S No	Variables	AIRTEL	VODAFONE	AIRCEL	TATA DOCOMO	IDEA CELLULAR
1	Internet advertisements	Rollover web banner on top for <i>Airtel name a symbol</i>	Montage corporate ad banner	Superstital of <i>Airtel BLYX</i>	Rich media 3-D animation ad	Expandable web banner
2	TV ads	Television spots (downloadable)	TVC archive	Videos TVC	Ad campaign of six TV spots	
3	Press release	-	-All press releases -National releases	prescel	-	Press release for recent events and social marketing initiatives
4	Blogs				-Corporate blog, blog on MNP	
5	Media	Media centre News Downloads Logo Quick facts Images Media contact	Media room Media contact Press events	Brand zone Ringtones Visual merchandising In store Media Hub	Marcom Corp comm. News CSR Sponsorships No Media Centre	News highlights On the home page with side menu
6	E -newsletter	Airtel BUZZ	Voda book-monthly newsletter	Single leaf e-letter		Idea newsletter
7	Corporate Communication	15th Bharti Airtel Annual report 2009-10				
8	Web design and layout	Conventional Layout	Mandarin Grid	Circus layout	Picture Frame layout	Block and panel layout

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The tabular analysis of the data sets the prima facie arguments in favour of the need and efficacy of using the new media for promotion of the telecommunication services to the consumers. It highlights that the websites act both as the advertisements and hub of online advertising, sales promotion, marketing communication, and public relations activities for all the brands under study.

Key findings include:

1) Social Media Marketing: Major telecom brands have been concentrating significantly on social media marketing. All the five brands under study have full-fledged or partial presence on social networking sites like Facebook, Orkut, Myspace, YouTube and Twitter. Critical examination of all major social media reveals consistent efforts by all the five telecommunication operators to engage the net savvy Indian and global Indian target audience.

a) Airtel has an exclusive community on Google groups. Secondly, it has regular wall postings on Facebook and Orkut, propelling the net mass to participate in the *Airtel iSinger* contest.

b) Vodafone has a two pronged strategy on online social promotion. It uses multiple social platforms for interface and advertising. In the chosen quarter, Vodafone entered into a global partnership with Myspace "*Myspace open platform*" to provide an open forum to discuss the merits and weaknesses of the telecom service provider in comparison to others. Official fan club brand page on Facebook is maintained by Neo@Ogilvy, the digital wing of O&M advertising agency managing Vodafone India. News posted indicate that Vodafone Zoozoo viral videos have amassed a base of 70,000 fans since its launch on SMM.

c) Airtel has adopted a "*Airtel Device Strategy*" - an integrated social application with Facebook and Twitter. It has exclusive community online space for its '*Save The Tiger*' campaign. Regular product ads feature on the right panel of Facebook to augment brand visibility. Airtel has also placed its logo as a quick link on Orkut. The Community page is

dominated by the latest product innovation “*Aircel Blyk*” streamer, with pages on Blyk on Aircel Special Page, with 117,667 Likes .

d) Idea Cellular has created its own social network - idealife.in. Idea cellular has community pages on Facebook for its corporate brand promotion , product extensions, and CSR.

e) Tata Docomo has hit the SMM in a very innovative way. First, it has an exclusive social network namely 3glife.com. Pop- ups and pop- unders mark their presence on Twitter, Facebook, and Orkut. The animation ads are uploaded on Youtube, allowing them to find presence in the global net space. Docomo advertises its tie ups on social media conduits.

2) Corporate Social Responsibility : The study highlights that the telecommunication sector is using online media for showcasing its CSR activities.

a) Aircel used a multimedia campaign for its social initiative “*Save the Tigers*” . The campaign was launched on its home website www.aircel.com . Secondly, the print and OOH advertisements lead the audiences to its web link for any active response. Another initiative “*Help during Rains*” was a online drive to collect funds from Aircel subscribers.

b) Idea Cellular decided to go online for CSR. “*Use mobile, Save Paper*”. An exclusive web portal www.UseMobileSavePaper.in was created to launch the public service advertising campaign. Even though the campaign was a cross media concept, the online version (Idea partnered with tribal DDB) was used for suggesting ideas to promote the initiative. The campaign focused around the experience of growing a virtual tree. The website tries to engage youth into the e-communication drive.

c) Vodafone uses the online promotional mix in a solvent manner. It uses the reward theory to propel its CSR. On its corporate website and on the most popular search engine www.google.co.in, Vodafone launched its CSR campaign “*Contribute to Empowering Women*” online . It asked the participants to create a mobile application for women and win \$ 10, 000. The incentives based drive resulted in trebling the number of clicks on the page.

3) Innovative Use Of Web Advertising And Online Marketing Communication: The results depict that the five telecommunication brands under the microscope make use of internet advertising and marketing innovations for product promotion.

a) Airtel started an online video contest “*It happens only in India*” for calling card service for NRI's . Hosted by website www.ithappensonlyinIndia.net, the reality show was broadcast on rediff.com as well. Secondly, Airtel launched an innovative web reality show “*Airtel iSinger*”, the first music reality show online.

b) Tata Docomo conceptualized “*Animator Ahoy*”, an online animation contest in India which calls out the net savvy target to ‘*jump on board and lets do something together you and I*’. Secondly, ‘*DO Year E-Greetings Contest*’ is currently online to ask creative communicators all over the nation to suggest the illustrations for the next display ad campaign for the New Year.

c) Idea Cellular + MTV launched an online contest “*Roadies Challenge 2.0 Through A Website*” www.ideastrikeback.com. for online auditions to participate in MTV Roadies. Secondly, Idea Cellular hosted an online contest “*Kaho what's your idea*” though rolling expandable scroll advertisements on ndtv.com.

d) Online game created by Aircel “*Kriminal Kaun*”. The game is an e -story asking people to play and unveil the strengths of the brand.

4) Online Advertising Campaigns: The results show that the telecommunication sector is ideating and executing online ad campaigns.

a) Idea cellular ran an online corporate campaign on the internet - “*What an!dea*” on news websites : ibnlive.com, timesofindia.com, ndtv.com for three months. Secondly , the television campaign *What An !dea Sirji* featuring Abhishek Bachchan was placed as unistet ads on ebay.com and baazee.com.

b) Vodafone launched a series of viral video ads for its ad campaign “*Vodafone Zoozoos*”. The campaign was based on

the theme '*Guess who has a larger fan following than Mickey Mouse*'.

c) Airtel started the Name the Logo campaign on the home page of its corporate website.

d) Tata Docomo launched an online ad campaign "*Diet Talk*" campaign on agencygaqs.com, ibibo.com, exchange4media.com.

e) Aircel did not run an exclusive online campaign, but actively used the online media for response and audience participation for its "*Save the Tiger*" campaign on print, TV, and Out of Home media vehicles.

5) Exploration of The Available Web Promotional Content suggests Airtel carried celebrity blogs for '*Its Beyond Borders*' advertising campaign. Secondly, corporate blogs were used by Airtel for its number portability intermediated campaigns.

DISCUSSION

The key findings of the content analyzed throws light onto the nature and scope of online advertising and promotion in the Indian telecommunication sector. The analysis brings into focus some salient observations:

a) The number of online advertisements (created exclusively for web or placed on the web media) by the five telecommunication operators is limited. The telecommunications sector does not use internet media as a frequent tool

**Table 4 : The Analysis Of Online Advertisement (Typology And Format)
Of The Five Telecom Service Providers**

Table 4(a) : Tabular Presentation Of Online Advertising By Airtel

SNO	Product/Model	Type of internet ad	Creative ad format
1	Airtel Hello tunes	Online rich media animation	Comic strip, rom- com "gajab rupali ki ajab prem kahani"
2	Games with Airtel	Ribbon banner	Features format, rational appeal with feature based copy
3	Airtel Music	2d flash slide	Visual based format, scrabble board concept
4	Airtel Applications	Interstitials	3 clip ad one for each target segment (student, traveller, business)

Table 4 (b) : Tabular Presentation Of Online Advertising By Vodafone

SNo	Product/Model	Type of internet ad	Creative ad format
1	Vodafone corporate ad	Embedded TV spot (unistet)	Direct response display advertising
2	Vodafone Delights	TV Spot uploaded with interactive buttons for registrations	Slice of life format
3	-do-	two frame TV clip	Situation based SOL, product feature and entertainment offers
4	Vodafone zoozooz	Expandable web banner	Special occasion announcement, ceremonial ad (zoozooz 1 million fans on facebook)
5	Blackberry+Vodafone	2-d flash ad, pop up	Cooperative advert using testimonial callouts of the users
6	Vodafone org	2d flash box ad	Sweepstakes i.e. display ad for new application 'win a ride ' with Lewis Hamilton
7	Zoozooz	Three ad pop up campaign	The zoozoo animation campaign as part of the cross media campaign
8	Vodafone online contest ad	Rich media animation	Complete the zoozoo story contest , use of action words, interactive buttons and quick links
9	Vodafone world cup soccer ad	2-d flash	Horizontal cooperative advert, ceremonial appeal

Table 4 (c) : Tabular Presentation Of Online Advertising By Idea Cellular			
SNo	Product/Model	Type of internet ad	Creative ad format
1	Idea Life	Unistet ad	Sitcom with humorous appeal
2	Idea life	Viral video	An illustrative three ad campaign on SNS, use of jingle and urban hip humour
3	Idea Life	2-D animation	Use of celebrity endorser, Qand A Format with call to action copy
4	Kickshetra	Rich media ad	Online game introduced through advert. Use of spoken work as commentary, comic strip format based on Mahabharata
5	To chalao ungli	Web banner	Online game show advertisement with celebrity speak out
6	Idea cellular Corporate ad	Rich media animation	Story based on Hindi Panchtantra , uses anecdotes.
7	CSR initiative	superstitial	Highly creative with the visual and interactive appeal. The copy says 'grow a virtual tree'
8	26/11 Corporate Ad	Skyscraper	News based format. it is coined as " Talk to India campaign"

Table 4 (d) : Tabular Presentation Of Online Advertising By Tata Docomo			
SNo	Product/Model	Type of internet ad	Creative ad format
1	3G Life	3 -D animation	Illustration strip displaying product features. Use of the creative toolkit calls for attention
2	Tata Docomo services	Streaming video	Problem solution format , comparative advantage signaled through visuals and supers
3	Product ad	2-D flash	Product feature in two clips
4	Docomo Daily Plan	superstitial	Full blown demo of product features and applications
5	Buddynet	Expandable banners	Launch of mobile community through illustrations and story telling in SOL format
6	Dietalk campaign	Pop Ups	Online Gaming ad introducing dietalk
7	Features	Pop Ups	Product features format
8	Lovenet campaign	2-D flash	3 ad series highly conceptual and animated

Table 4 (e): Tabular Presentation Of Online Advertising By Aircel			
SNO	Product/Model	Type of internet ad	Creative ad format
1	Aircel Blyk	Pop Up opening into an expandable web banner	Features based format in a picture frame layout
2	Aircel Pocket App	20D flash , buttons linked to the Aircel Brand website	Cross media campaign, direct response product display ad
3	Aircel Pocket Internet	Web banner	Features format
4	-do-	2-D flash Animation	Conventional format
5	-do-	Pop under (horizontal)	Features format
6	Aircel + Facebook	Rollover web banner	Vertical cooperative ad
7	Aircel Pocket Mart	Underline expandable banner	Display ad
8	Aircel Blyk	Unistet Interstitial Rich media text ad	Creative use of visual cues, TV uploaded online , shows applications , uses slice of life format on TV , use of personalized copy and supers , no spoken word , use of BS
9	Aircel Social networking 24X7	Static web banner	Vertical cooperative advertising b/w Aircel and INQ handsets . Display app ad
10	INQ	Roll Over horizontal Banner	Use of Celebrity testimonial ; part of cross media campaign
11	Pay per second	Unistet	10 sec TV spot uploaded on news websites
12	Aircel App	2-D Flash	3 product feature ads in two clips

of advertising and promotion. While it may be due to the relative recency of the advertising potential of the new media, it can also be because of the nature of the medium. Since it is cost effective to run a particular advertisement on the internet for several days, one ad stays online for a long period.

b) The creative advert formats used by the five brands include comic strips, testimonials, product feature based, slice of life, and situation based comedy . It reflects the strength of the medium to allow advertising to be informative and entertaining at the same time. The phenomenon of *advertainment* gets a further push by creative communication on the new media.

c) The product category advertised for each brand suggests that internet ads are created either to launch a product application, to gain direct response for the online contest, or to ensure participation in cause-related marketing.

d) What emerges from the undertaken study reinforces that 90% is 2-D flash based e-display advertising. Next on the score are web banners on various websites. Web banners: Rollover horizontal banner followed by expandable banners is the second most popular type used in the internet advertising category. Followed by rich media 3-D animation. Large format ads like the pop -ups & pop- unders and streaming video are used by the service operator only to launch a new line extension or sales promotion offers. Important to note is the use of interstitials and superstitials.

e) Analysis of the brands' websites as a tool of advertising and marketing communication gave insights into their online advertising use and functions. Websites emerge as the most comprehensive and contingent medium to promote online. A tabular analysis of the defining variables of three determined classes of evaluation: **a)** Two way communication, **b)** Active control, **c)** Promotional tools on the websites emphasize that brand websites are the primary carriers of new media advertising in the telecommunication industry. Varied use of virtual space for interaction, consumer interface, launch of product innovations, cross mediation with TV and print media, brand communication, and engagement are evident from the results. While all the five corporate websites through their home page enabled the audience to access the services with options for registration and opening an account, larger emphasis was on product display and demonstration. A lot of innovation was seen in their promotional use. The range of options for reference to the media coverage and interface were provided. Quick links to press releases, separate media rooms/centres were present to showcase the popularity of their respective brands. In fact, few chose to rename the public relations space as a brand zone actively involving brand identity, promotion, and engagement. What was evident was the attempt to create linkages between all the media used for advertising through the website. Facility to download TV ads or create TV spots (Tata Docomo) created a cross media connect trying to unify all promotional conduits despite their inherent structural and functional differences.

f) Findings suggest that even though the number of internet ads by telecommunication companies are less, there is significant innovation for promotional purposes. The inherent virtues of the online media: interactivity, consumer engagement, production quality, etc. has made it a popular tool for innovative marketing communications. Solo online contests and video online contests were being conducted by all the five brands. Other innovative web promotional formats like web reality shows, web video online, advergaming are also on the rise. Admittedly, the number of such online marketing strategies is limited; the nature of the composition and execution is novel and thematic. The branding lies in the conception of the name and the game.

g) Viral ads are the most oft used creative format by the telecom companies to carry their online campaigns. Word of mouse is fast spreading the campaign themes and stories through 20-30 second interrelated videos. The Internet is a complete medium for any creative or technological experiment in brand communication; use of viral advertising lends credence to the fact.

h) The Internet is starting to exist as an independent medium of advertising and promotion. The telecom analysis reveals that now, there is increasing use of specific online advertising campaigns for product awareness, introduction, application, action, and purchase. Organizations are not only creating direct response ad campaigns online, but online campaigns are being conceived for Corporate Social Responsibility also. That is a head start in the development of e-PR in the telecom sector.

i) It is noteworthy that even though the web is now being considered as an independent medium of advertising, it is yet not a primary driver in the media mix. Most advertising by the telecommunication industry is cross mediated with the

feedback delegated to the web.

j) The other components of marketing communication in the service sector are marginal. Use of weblogs is yet to pick up; none of the brands have tried to create a credible promotional environment on the web by providing a territory of direct contact and neutral exchange. On ground activations like events, press conferences still remain the carriers of face to face communication and promotion.

k) It is interesting to note that the brands have failed to demassify audiences uniquely as against segmenting audiences for the conventional media. The conventional advertising plans segments the audience according to the existing consumer base - the productive sector - the younger, hipper Gen X & Gen Y (13-50 years) consumers. Advertising online can work on the entrapment of a new target cluster - GenS: the retired, semi tech savvy senior citizens. The offline and online media can advertise to different target segments to penetrate deeper. There can be two campaign strategies instead of an intermediated one.

l) Social web 2.0 or the social media has become a popular choice by all the goods and services sector in their exploration of internet advertising. Social media forums began as spaces of personal relationships, finding lost friends, and went on to become a medium of sharing and networking. Now, their potential as brand builders is also being seriously explored. Brand centric social networks, community pages, SMM advertisements are the safest mode of communication. Creation of independent social network signifies the confidence SNS have been able to give to the advertiser across product classes. Wide, varied audience enables the advertiser to maximize reach and frequency of the new media. An important point to make is the use of all social networks with massive presence across the Indian diaspora. Facebook, Twitter, and Orkut are the major ad media along with Myspace and Youtube.

m) It can be seen from the tabular analysis of the internet ads by the telecom brands that cooperative advertising is being used in the cyber space. Largely, it is vertical cooperative advertising, with the telecom service provider as the main sponsor, while horizontal coop ads were seen in the case of complimentary brands. In the era of an eclectic media mix, the advent of new media is fuelling advertising partnerships to share the ad spend.

n) The present study showed that though online advertising is in its nascent stage, it is positioning itself to replace direct marketing in the IMC wagon wheel. Direct marketing based on personal communication will give way to interactive packaging and advertising one to one, albeit in the virtual world.

o) From the data collected and analyzed, it is noted that there exists no competition amongst the offline and online channels of persuasive communication. In fact, the mainstream media is instrumental in directing the consumer traffic to the new media. There exists a parent-child relationship between the two, which will bloom into a complimentary equation in the future.

p) Findings suggest that online advertising seems to drive activity, particularly in the later funnel stages, for participation in product demonstration using online advertising records higher worthiness than the ATL channels, however, for building brand strength or to convey the brand positioning to a broad audience, classic advertising media remains a necessity.

q) What was most imminent from the results was the performance of cross media campaigns instead to advertising solo. However, the advertising agencies need to match the synergies of the two or three media channels while creating a media mix for a consumer and technology brand.

CONCLUSION

In the marketing landscape of consumer saturation, the three-step success mantra is Product Innovation, Human Connection, and Targeted Communication. As in the highly competitive telecom market, it is getting increasingly difficult to develop newer product variants in short spaces, it becomes imperative for the advertisers (agencies and accounts) to adopt exclusive media mix and creative strategies to set the products apart in the clutter. Online advertising has made forays into the telecommunication bracket, albeit in a fledgling manner in India. The data shows attempts to adapt broadcast advertising for new media, or even creating telecom ads online. However, what needs attention is convergence of the new media with meaning centric approach in advertising. Reliance on imagery and

visual cues needs to be interspersed with conversation in the written word. Intriguing headlines, long body copies, and verse formats can accentuate the online social campaigns and contests. The personalized nature of the online media allows inclusive use of an advertising copy, since the audience is already captive and that in at an arm's length distance. Besides, experiments with storytelling can be done effectively on the web because of flexibility of time and composition. Embedded ads and novel executions will showcase the potential of the online media in a holistic manner. Drawing insights for the content studied, it is established that advertising plans of the service providers must be based on the 3E Model: Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness. Use of media is dictated by its ability to deliver the creative encapsulation, targeted reach, and impact. New media is becoming a serious contender for catapulting public opinion in favor of a good, service, and an idea. Since the ever expanding, dynamic telecommunication market offers a bouquet of the above three, new media is fast becoming the fulcrum of the ad media drivers. Online advertising in all its formats and manifestations is opening cost effective options in the world of competitive advertising and promotion. Besides, there is a need to adapt to I-IMC, which involves incorporating different messages within one ad vehicle. For the mobile operators especially, the online media should be a live multimedia cafeteria making available ATL, BTL, Public Relations, interactive packaging, personal selling, and direct marketing at one place. It provides the opportunity to incorporate more messages, different kinds of messages into one internet advertising vehicle than traditional media permits. For the point in time, online advertising in the telecommunication industry in India will play a supportive role through email, ads, spam mails, web banners, pop-ups, and flash ads. Online advertising is heading towards a paradigm shift: from core product advertising and online retail ads to Public Service Campaigns (PSA) for AKICA (the new media's socially responsible AIDA formula) Awareness, Knowledge, Initiation, Commitment, and Activism. From the supplementary sphere, it is bound to grow into a lead media over a period in time, not only for the FMCGs, but also for the consumer and technology sector. Even though the discussion in this paper revolved around the fulcrum of online media and the telecom sector, the significance of the outcomes will benefit not only the consumer and technology products, but also assume critical importance for branding any good, service, or idea.

NOTES

***The list of parameters was prepared with help from :**

- a) Tables 1, 2 & 3 exhibiting operationalization, reliability and coding results of the interactivity functions published in The Interactive Authority of Brand Websites, A New Tool Provided New Insights, JAR, Sep 2010.
- b) Digital Outlook 2009 ; and c) 10 Online Advertising Trends, 2010

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- 6) <http://www.digitalbuzzblog.com/survey-digital-marketing-outlook-2010/> accessed on December 13, 2010.
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