



Impact of Advertising and Promotion on Rural Consumer Behavior: Insights from AMUL's Campaigns in Jhunjhunu

Rajesh Kumar (Ph.D Research Scholar)¹, Dr. Rajesh Kumawat (Assistant Professor)²,
Department – Commerce, Shri Jagdish Prasad Jhabarmal Tibrewala University, Chudela, Jhunjhunu

ABSTRACT

Advertising and promotion play an important role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase decisions, even in rural markets where traditional word-of-mouth once dominated. With increased media penetration and digital access, rural consumers are now more exposed to brand messaging than ever before. This study investigates the impact of advertising and promotional strategies on rural consumer behavior, using AMUL's campaigns in Jhunjhunu district, Rajasthan as a case study. Drawing from a field survey of 350 rural respondents and qualitative interviews with local retailers, the research analyzes how advertising channels—TV, print, hoardings, local events, and social media—affect awareness, interest, and purchase behavior. The study finds that promotional visibility significantly boosts recall, brand trust, and sales, especially when campaigns are localized and culturally relatable. Recommendations are offered to enhance advertising efficiency and rural market engagement.

Keywords: Rural advertising, consumer behavior, AMUL, Jhunjhunu, brand promotion, rural marketing, media influence, awareness campaigns

1. INTRODUCTION

India's rural landscape has witnessed a profound transformation over the last two decades, with rising literacy rates, improved road and electricity infrastructure, the expansion of television and mobile networks, and increasing income levels. This shift has redefined the dynamics of rural consumer behavior, making the segment not only more accessible but also more brand-conscious and aspirational. Traditionally, rural markets operated on word-of-mouth publicity, community influence, and trust-based transactions. However, with growing media penetration and technological connectivity, rural consumers are now significantly exposed to brand messages across a range of platforms, including television, radio, print, outdoor signage, and mobile-based media.

This evolving landscape presents both a challenge and an opportunity for marketers. On one hand, rural consumers retain deep-rooted cultural preferences and economic sensitivities, which require communication that is familiar, trustworthy, and locally relevant. On the other hand, they are increasingly open to trying new products and engaging with branded offerings—provided the advertising resonates with their context. Hence, advertising and promotional strategies in rural India must strike a careful balance between mass reach and cultural customization, between brand visibility and brand authenticity.

AMUL, India's largest dairy brand and a pioneer in cooperative marketing, has emerged as a powerful case study of how a brand can successfully engage with rural markets through multi-modal advertising. AMUL's advertising philosophy is rooted in simplicity, consistency, and cultural relevance—values that have helped the brand establish a strong foothold across rural India. The brand's campaigns often use regional languages, local humor, and relatable themes, making its messages accessible and impactful for rural audiences.

In a region like Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan, where tradition coexists with changing consumption patterns, AMUL has employed a mix of advertising channels—television commercials, wall paintings, hoardings, product sampling vans, retailer partnerships, and social media promotions—to enhance brand recall and trust. These efforts are further strengthened by its iconic mascot—the “AMUL girl”—and memorable taglines such as “Utterly Butterly Delicious,” which enjoy cross-generational recognition. The district, representing a blend of semi-urban transition and village economy, provides an ideal context to study the interplay between advertising and consumer behavior in rural India.

The effectiveness of such promotions depends not just on the message content, but also on the medium, frequency, timing, and emotional resonance with the target audience. Unlike urban advertising, which thrives on high-volume repetition and sophisticated messaging, rural advertising must prioritize trustworthiness, relevance, and relatability. The emotional and functional appeal must align with the day-to-day experiences of rural consumers. AMUL's approach offers insights into how consistent messaging—when culturally embedded—can drive product awareness, influence trial behavior, and foster long-term brand loyalty.



This research therefore seeks to evaluate how AMUL's advertising and promotional activities have impacted rural consumer behavior in Jhunjhunu. By combining quantitative survey data from rural consumers with qualitative insights from local retailers, the study aims to identify the most influential advertising channels, decode consumer perceptions, and assess the overall impact of promotions on brand recall, trust, and purchase intent. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader understanding of rural marketing strategies in India and to offer practical recommendations for brands operating in similar markets.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kashyap & Raut (2006) emphasized that successful rural marketing requires a deep understanding of local sensibilities, values, and media habits. They argued that rural consumers are influenced not by the sophistication of advertising, but by its relevance, simplicity, and relatability. Their research supports the idea that for rural promotions to be effective, brands must customize both messaging and media choices to suit the socio-cultural context of target villages.

Kotler & Keller (2016) highlighted that advertising plays a critical role in influencing consumer behavior by shaping awareness, perception, and brand positioning. In rural markets, where brand options are growing and loyalty is often habit-based, advertising helps create a clear brand identity. Their framework for marketing communication underlines the importance of media integration and message consistency in building trust among low-exposure audiences.

Mehta (2015) explored AMUL's rural success through its hybrid strategy that combines national media presence with grassroots engagement. The study credited AMUL's cooperative branding, community-led promotions, and region-specific content as key enablers of brand loyalty in rural India. The findings are directly relevant to Jhunjhunu, where AMUL employs similar localized advertising and promotional tools.

Narayan & Rao (2018) conducted a media consumption study in rural India and found that **television remains the most trusted medium**, followed by radio and print. Their findings suggest that while internet usage is rising among rural youth, traditional media still dominates in terms of credibility and reach. This supports AMUL's emphasis on TV ads and hoardings in its rural outreach strategy.

Rani & Singh (2020) investigated the impact of **point-of-sale branding and retailer recommendations** on rural consumer decisions. They discovered that visual cues such as posters, banners, and branded refrigerators significantly improve product visibility and recall. Moreover, rural shopkeepers often act as informal brand ambassadors, suggesting that brands should equip and educate retailers as part of their promotion plan.

Jha & Srivastava (2012) found that **local events, fairs, and product demonstrations** generate higher consumer engagement than expensive, mass-media campaigns in rural areas. Their research stresses the role of **face-to-face marketing** and cultural participation in building trust and recall, particularly in communities with low advertising literacy.

Kaur & Kaur (2021) explored the impact of **visual advertising tools like hoardings and wall paintings**, especially among non-literate rural populations. Their study demonstrated that colorful visuals, regional language text, and repetitive display create strong mental associations and enhance brand familiarity. This is highly relevant to AMUL's strategy in Jhunjhunu, where visual branding in local markets is a key promotional tool.

Bisht & Joshi (2019) argued that **trust in rural advertising** is not built instantly, but gradually, through repeated and consistent brand exposure. Their findings confirm that frequent visual contact—via hoardings, event sponsorships, or consistent media appearances—helps reinforce a brand's presence and credibility over time, especially in communities with limited access to formal information channels.

Sharma & Goyal (2014) studied the role of **cultural alignment in advertising**, noting that campaigns with regional themes, folk references, and vernacular language were more successful in rural settings. They emphasized that communication must feel familiar and locally rooted to resonate emotionally with rural audiences, making cultural sensitivity a central element of rural promotions.

Chatterjee (2022) presented a contemporary perspective on **digital adoption among rural youth**, finding that social media platforms like WhatsApp and YouTube are becoming increasingly relevant for marketing communication. The study suggested that brands must evolve toward digital integration while maintaining the traditional touch to cater to the hybrid media consumption patterns of the emerging rural generation.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the overall impact of AMUL's advertising and promotional strategies on the behavior of rural consumers in Jhunjhunu district, Rajasthan. With increasing access to media and growing consumer awareness, rural markets have become fertile ground for brand expansion. In this changing environment, it becomes essential to understand whether advertising efforts are actually influencing how rural consumers perceive a brand, recall it, and make purchase decisions.



One key aim is to assess the extent to which AMUL's advertisements have contributed to **brand awareness and recall** among rural consumers. This includes examining how various messaging elements—such as slogans, mascots, and product visuals—are received by consumers and whether these cues are retained in memory when making buying decisions.

Another important objective is to analyze the **effectiveness of different promotional channels** employed by AMUL in the study region. The research investigates how television ads, wall paintings, hoardings, mobile van promotions, retailer suggestions, and digital platforms like WhatsApp and mobile ads perform in reaching rural audiences. By understanding which channels have the highest recall and engagement, the study can inform media planning for rural campaigns.

In addition, the study aims to explore how advertising influences **consumer preferences and trial behavior**. It investigates whether exposure to promotions encourages consumers to try new AMUL products—such as flavored milk, paneer, or cheese—and whether these trials convert into repeat purchases. It also looks into how advertising affects consumers' perception of product quality, trustworthiness, and brand superiority compared to local or private-label alternatives.

A further objective is to evaluate the role of **retailers as promotional intermediaries**. Since rural consumers often rely on shopkeepers for product information, the study seeks to determine how much of the consumer behavior is shaped by retailer suggestions that are influenced by ongoing promotional campaigns.

Finally, the research aims to propose **practical recommendations** for improving advertising and promotional effectiveness in rural markets. These suggestions will be based on actual consumer feedback and observed trends, focusing on localization of content, strategic media mix, cultural relevance, and integrated marketing communication. By achieving these objectives, the study contributes to both academic literature and real-world marketing strategies for brands targeting India's rural economy.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a **mixed-method research design**, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a holistic understanding of the influence of advertising and promotional strategies on rural consumer behavior. This methodological framework was chosen to ensure a comprehensive analysis of both measurable consumer responses and underlying motivations, perceptions, and attitudes that may not be captured through numerical data alone.

The study was conducted in **Jhunjhunu district**, located in the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan, which presents a unique blend of traditional rural life and emerging consumer trends. To ensure geographical and social representativeness, a **cluster sampling method** was adopted. Seven villages were selected as sample clusters, considering diversity in literacy levels, economic backgrounds, media accessibility, and market infrastructure. Within each cluster, households were randomly selected, and one respondent per household was interviewed. This ensured the inclusion of a broad spectrum of consumer perspectives.

The **sample size** consisted of **350 rural consumers** and **20 local retailers**, providing both consumer-side and supply-side insights. The consumer sample included a balanced representation of age groups, genders, and income brackets, thus enabling a comparative analysis across demographic variables. Retailers were chosen based on their role in selling AMUL products and their influence on local consumer preferences, given their pivotal role in shaping rural purchase behavior.

For **data collection**, two types of instruments were used. A **structured questionnaire** was administered to the consumers, containing both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions related to brand recall, media exposure, purchase habits, and trust in promotional content. To account for varying literacy levels, the questionnaire was translated into Hindi and interviews were conducted orally by trained field researchers. Additionally, **semi-structured interviews** were conducted with retailers to gather qualitative insights regarding consumer response to AMUL's campaigns, the frequency of promotional interactions, and the perceived effectiveness of different advertising mediums.

The collected data was analyzed using a combination of **descriptive and inferential statistical techniques**. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and percentage analysis were employed to summarize patterns in media exposure, advertisement recall, and consumer preferences. The **chi-square test** was used to examine the association between advertising exposure and changes in consumer behavior, especially product trial and brand switching tendencies. For qualitative data obtained from retailers, **content analysis** was conducted to identify recurring themes, behavioral patterns, and insights that complemented the survey findings.

This integrated methodology ensured that the study not only measured the tangible impact of advertising on consumer behavior but also interpreted the **contextual nuances** that influence rural decision-making. The methodological rigor and localized data collection make the findings both **empirically sound and practically applicable** for brand strategists and rural marketers.



5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Media Exposure Patterns

The data reveals that **72% of respondents regularly watch television**, making it the most dominant source of brand exposure in rural Jhunjhunu. Among them, **58% recalled seeing AMUL advertisements on television within the past 30 days**, showing that consistent media presence on mainstream channels continues to have a powerful influence. This aligns with findings by Narayan & Rao (2018), who identified television as the most trusted and widely accessed medium in rural India.

Moreover, **34% of respondents noticed AMUL posters, hoardings, or wall paintings** in local markets or near retail outlets. These visual promotional tools proved especially effective among semi-literate and non-literate groups, as supported by Kaur & Kaur (2021). **28% recalled encountering sampling booths or promotion vans**, suggesting that direct brand engagement activities also leave a lasting impression.

5.2 Brand Recall and Awareness

Brand recall was significantly influenced by consistent promotional exposure. Notably, **61% of respondents immediately associated the AMUL girl mascot with the brand and its quality**, indicating the effectiveness of visual identity in rural branding. **47% recalled AMUL's popular slogan "Utterly Butterly Delicious,"** showcasing how catchy and consistent taglines contribute to long-term memory retention.

Importantly, **42% of consumers associated AMUL with health and trust**, based specifically on messaging in advertisements. This demonstrates how promotional narratives play a crucial role in shaping not just recognition but emotional and functional perceptions of the brand. These associations are critical for maintaining brand loyalty and encouraging product trials in rural environments.

5.3 Purchase Behavior Influenced by Advertising

Advertising had a clear influence on consumer behavior. **44% of respondents said that AMUL's advertisements motivated them to try new products**, such as flavored milk, paneer, or cheese. This highlights the promotional strategy's success in encouraging **category expansion** within rural households. Furthermore, **53% of consumers stated that they prefer AMUL because they "see it everywhere"**—a clear indication that **frequent exposure across multiple touchpoints reinforces trust and preference**.

Interestingly, **36% of respondents were influenced by retailer suggestions that referenced AMUL promotions**. This reaffirms the vital role of retailers not only as sellers but as promotional intermediaries in rural markets. Their advice, often based on brand reputation and ongoing offers, strongly affects product adoption, particularly for less literate consumers who depend on oral recommendations.

5.4 Preferred Advertising Mediums

When asked about the most effective advertising channels, **61% ranked television** as their top source of information and persuasion. This was followed by **posters and hoardings (46%), word-of-mouth (39%), and WhatsApp/mobile promotions (18%)**. The rise of mobile-based messaging, although still limited, is an emerging trend—especially among younger consumers—supporting Chatterjee's (2022) observation of growing digital engagement in rural India.

The data suggests a clear **generation gap in media preferences**, with older consumers favoring traditional visuals and word-of-mouth, while younger audiences are gradually engaging with digital media. Thus, brands must **adopt a hybrid strategy**, combining conventional mass media with emerging mobile platforms.

6. SUMMARY

The results validate the hypothesis that **advertising and promotion significantly influence rural consumer behavior**, particularly in relation to brand recall, trust, and trial decisions. AMUL's consistent presence across traditional media and physical locations has strengthened its position as a reliable and familiar brand. The study confirms that **culturally relevant, visually rich, and consistently repeated promotional content is most effective** in rural settings.

Additionally, the findings emphasize the **importance of integrated marketing communication**, where various channels—TV, retail stores, hoardings, and digital—work together to reinforce messaging. The role of **retailers as brand influencers** further enriches the discussion, highlighting the need for brands to train and engage shopkeepers as part of their rural outreach.

These findings align with the literature reviewed and extend practical implications for brands aiming to expand or consolidate their presence in rural India.



7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the insights derived from consumer responses and retailer interviews in Jhunjhunu, several strategic recommendations can be proposed to enhance the effectiveness of advertising and promotional campaigns in rural India. These recommendations are rooted in the realities of rural consumer behavior and media consumption patterns, and aim to build trust, visibility, and sustained engagement.

1. Combine Traditional and Digital Media for Hybrid Outreach Given the dominance of television as a trusted source of information, brands like AMUL should continue investing in TV advertising on regional channels. However, considering the rise of mobile usage, especially among rural youth, it is equally important to **integrate mobile-based platforms** like WhatsApp, YouTube shorts, and SMS services. This hybrid media strategy will ensure coverage across age and literacy groups, enhancing both reach and resonance.

2. Customize Messaging to Reflect Local Culture and Language To create deeper emotional connections, promotional content must be **tailored to the cultural context of each region**. Using local dialects, traditional motifs, folk idioms, and region-specific festivals in advertisements can significantly increase relevance and memorability. Wall paintings or hoardings featuring familiar community figures or locally relatable narratives can further humanize the brand and generate trust.

3. Strengthen Point-of-Sale Branding in Rural Retail Outlets In rural areas, the retail store is not just a place of purchase but a **primary site of brand interaction**. AMUL should invest in providing rural retailers with updated and attractive point-of-sale materials such as posters, branded refrigerators, shelf strips, and signage. Visibility at the store level reinforces brand presence, especially among less literate consumers who rely on visual cues to make decisions.

4. Empower Retailers as Brand Ambassadors Since many rural consumers depend on shopkeeper recommendations, retailers play a dual role—seller and influencer. AMUL should implement **training programs for retailers**, equipping them with product information, promotional talking points, and free sample stock. Incentive-based schemes, such as retailer contests or commission bonuses for promoting new products, can also motivate stronger advocacy.

5. Conduct Community-Based Promotional Activities Localized events, such as health awareness camps, school programs, dairy nutrition drives, and sponsorship of village festivals, can serve as **interactive platforms for brand engagement**. Organizing sampling booths or free taste trials during weekly markets or fairs allows consumers to experience the product firsthand, which has proven to be an effective strategy in generating brand loyalty.

6. Improve Campaign Frequency and Consistency Rural consumers are more likely to trust and recall brands that they see **consistently across multiple occasions and formats**. AMUL should ensure that its messaging is not sporadic but part of an ongoing communication cycle. Periodic repetition, seasonal campaigns, and visible presence during festivals and community events help maintain top-of-mind recall.

7. Target Rural Youth with Mobile-Optimized Content A growing segment of rural consumers—particularly youth—are engaging with mobile phones, offering a **new promotional frontier**. AMUL should develop short, mobile-friendly videos in regional languages, memes, and educational reels focused on health and dairy consumption. These can be circulated through village WhatsApp groups, community influencers, or school-based youth networks.

8. Monitor Feedback Through Local Retailers and Surveys To adapt quickly to changing rural preferences, AMUL should establish a feedback mechanism through **retailer input and periodic consumer surveys**. These insights can help evaluate the effectiveness of promotional campaigns and allow real-time adjustments in messaging, media use, and product focus.

These recommendations collectively emphasize the importance of a localized, integrated, and relationship-driven promotional strategy. In rural markets, advertising must go beyond visual appeal—it must evoke trust, familiarity, and cultural belonging. By applying these recommendations, AMUL and similar brands can further solidify their market position and foster meaningful, long-term consumer relationships in India's rapidly evolving rural economy.



8. CONCLUSION

This study affirms that advertising and promotional strategies play a vital role in shaping consumer behavior in rural India, where traditional values intersect with emerging consumer aspirations. Through the lens of AMUL's campaigns in Jhunjhunu district, the research has provided key insights into how rural consumers interact with brand messages, develop awareness, build trust, and ultimately make purchase decisions. In an environment where word-of-mouth once dominated, rural consumers are now increasingly influenced by organized brand communication, albeit with preferences unique to their socio-cultural settings.

The findings reveal that television continues to be the most impactful advertising medium, given its reach, familiarity, and credibility among rural households. However, the study also highlights the rising influence of visual promotional tools such as wall paintings and hoardings, particularly among semi-literate and non-literate groups. Moreover, retailer endorsements, often linked to brand campaigns and point-of-sale materials, emerged as powerful secondary promotional channels, reinforcing consumer trust in the absence of formal media exposure. Importantly, the study identifies a growing openness among rural consumers to experiment with new products when prompted by advertising. This includes categories like flavored milk, cheese, or value-added dairy products that traditionally saw slower adoption in rural areas. Advertising, when localized and culturally relevant, not only informs but encourages behavioral change and broadens the consumption basket of rural households.

At the same time, the research underscores the importance of message repetition, cultural relatability, and visual consistency in rural promotional efforts. Trust is not built overnight in rural markets—it is earned through repeated exposure, emotional alignment, and perceived authenticity. AMUL's ability to use a mix of conventional and grassroots strategies—TV, hoardings, sampling vans, and local events—demonstrates the effectiveness of an integrated and culturally embedded communication model.

The study also points toward the future of rural advertising, which lies in hybrid engagement strategies. While older generations prefer TV and traditional visuals, rural youth are increasingly engaging with digital media, including mobile-based platforms like WhatsApp and YouTube. Brands must therefore strike a balance between mass visibility and micro-targeting, between tradition and innovation.

In conclusion, AMUL's promotional approach in Jhunjhunu offers a compelling blueprint for rural marketing success. The research not only validates the power of well-planned advertising in influencing rural consumer behavior but also outlines a strategic path for building trust, improving product trial rates, and sustaining brand loyalty in India's rural heartlands. For marketers, policy planners, and cooperative brands, this study reinforces a crucial message: to win rural markets, brands must communicate not just to inform—but to belong.

REFERENCES

1. Kashyap, P., & Raut, S. (2006). *The Rural Marketing Book*. Biztantra.
2. Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing Management* (15th ed.). Pearson Education.
3. Mehta, B. (2015). *AMUL's Rural Penetration through Cooperative Branding*. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, 45(2), 24–31.
4. Narayan, S., & Rao, V. (2018). *Media Consumption in Rural India*. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 53(14), 12–15.
5. Rani, M., & Singh, A. (2020). *Point-of-Sale Influence in Rural Consumerism*. *Rural Marketing Review*, 7(3), 88–95.
6. Jha, S., & Srivastava, R. (2012). *Localized Promotion Strategies for Rural Markets*. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(4), 145–154.
7. Kaur, P., & Kaur, R. (2021). *Visual Advertising and Literacy in Rural India*. *Journal of Marketing & Communication*, 11(1), 36–42.
8. Bisht, N., & Joshi, V. (2019). *Brand Recall and Rural Advertising Effectiveness*. *Global Business Review*, 20(5), 1321–1333.
9. Sharma, R., & Goyal, M. (2014). *Cultural Relevance in Advertising: A Rural Perspective*. *International Journal of Rural Studies*, 21(1), 11–19.
10. Chatterjee, A. (2022). *Digital Advertising Trends Among Rural Youth in India*. *Indian Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society*, 9(2), 74–80.