

Media Selection Criteria: An Exploration Among Advertising Professionals

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Abstract— *The success of every Visual Media firm depends up on the revenue which generated by them through selling their times slots for advertisements. But the criteria of the advertisement agencies for opting a particular Visual Media channel is an unknown fact. So, an exploration in this domain is required to identify the media spending pattern and the fund allocation criteria of these advertising agencies. There exist a scope for exploring rational behind selection of major platforms such as print media, hoardings, visual media, FM and other digital options for media expenditure. Therefore this study attempts to find out selection criteria adopted by the advertising firms among visual media channels, as well as programs of their choice. This study will utilise primary data collected from advertising professionals about the popularity of programmes in TV channels. Also, pricing policies of the channel, look and feel of the TV channel (over all appearance and visual impact) & viewer's perceptions etc. The study will also look into the appropriateness, accuracy and acceptance about Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), the only available TV program ratings system in India. This study will be conducted through direct interviews with advertising professionals. The analysis of the interview extracts will be conducted in a qualitative manner to understand the trends in media spending patterns. We believe that the findings from the study will help media professionals in designing TV contents that will attract advertising professionals and will help in increasing channel revenue. Further, the study will helps in identifying deficiencies associated with BARC methodologies if any so that advertising professionals can safeguard their interest against such issues.*

Keywords—Media and entertainment industry; Media; Media Planning; Media Spending; Media Platforms; Television ratings; Gross Rating Point (GRP); BARC; Television Audience Measurement (TAM); NCCS

I. INTRODUCTION

The media and entertainment industry [1] in India consists of many different segments under them such as television, print, films and smaller segments like radio, music, animation, gaming and visual effects (VFX) and Internet advertising [2]. Entertainment industry in India has registered an explosive growth in last two decades making it one of the fastest growing industries in India which contributes a fair percentage to the GDP of the country.

The entertainment industry continues to be dominated by the television segment which is accounting for 44.24 per cent of revenue share in 2016, is expected to grow further to 48.18 per cent by 2021. The success of every Visual Media [3] firm depends up on the revenue which generated by them through selling their times slots for advertisements. However, the criteria of the advertisement agencies for opting a particular Visual Media channel is an unknown fact.

This study focuses mainly on the the media spending [4] pattern and the fund allocation criteria of the advertising agencies. In addition, an exploration was done to identify the rational behind selection of major media platforms [5] such as print media, hoardings, visual media, FM and other digital options for media expenditure. Therefore, this study attempts to find out selection criteria adopted by the advertising firms among visual media channels, as well as programs of their choice. For this study, the primary data collected from advertising professionals [6] about the popularity of programmes in TV channels, pricing policies adopted by the channel, look and feel of the tv channel (over all appearance and visual impact) & viewer's perceptions etc. by means of direct interview using a structured interview Schedule.

The study also looked into the appropriateness, accuracy and acceptance of the Broadcast Audience Research Council [7] (BARC), the only available TV program ratings system in India. BARC is an industry body set up to design, commission, supervise and own an accurate, reliable and timely television audience measurement system for India. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) guide this body. Earlier the Television Audience Measurement [8] did this (TAM) system, which itself was a big flop due to the wrong socio-economic classification. But BARC overcome this problem by adopting New Consumer Classification System [9] (NCCS)

BARC is expected to establish a transparent, accurate and reliable data so that it will be helpful for the Advertisers to plan their media spending more efficiently. Because of this, approximately 700 Crore rupees is pumped into the market in Kerala for Media Planning [10] and it is a matter of concern.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

TV ratings [11] means that there are certain agencies who are responsible for measuring the Television Viewership. Based on the viewership, points are given accordingly by checking the most viewed TV channel/Programme. It is calculated as, in each minute how many TV audience are watching's that particular TV programme. It is done on a weekly basis. i.e., BARC reports are published on every Thursday of the week. So the ratings points will be added up by counting the individual rating points of each programme and will find the Gross Rating Point (GRP) [12] and it gets published every week. So the people who have registered with BARC will get a weekly report and it shows the performance of the channel. By reviewing this, the National Advertising agencies make their Media Planning.

Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) is the only rating system or tool available right now in the Country. Earlier before the introduction of BARC, this TV viewership [13] ratings were done by the TAM (Television Audience Measurement). Later on, due to various inconveniences BARC was forced to implement. One of the major problems associated with the TAM system was that, the socio-economic classification of TAM was not up to the mark because they classified the customers based on their education. So a person with high earning power and with low educational qualification will be classified under the lowest category and he will be having more purchasing power than any the people who were categorised under other categories. So BARC overcame this problem by adopting the New Consumer Classification System (NCCS). According to this, the customers are classified based on the households (Furniture, TV, Air conditioner and other equipments) they have at their houses. So the NCCS brought all the people under the right category. So in order to find out the TV viewership, BARC has picked samples from each category and have installed an equipment called the BAR-O meter (earlier TAM used People meter for this purpose) in each house to monitor the TV viewership. All the TV channels who are registered with the BARC will have a unique Water Marking for their channel. So each time when a programme is aired through that particular channel, the BAR-O meter identifies which channel it is and is encoded there. So BARC will decode it and will publish the weekly rating reports. There is no transparency in this process, so the authenticity of the data provided by the BARC is a doubtful thing which itself is one of the biggest problems faced by the Advertising agencies in coming in to a conclusion for their Media planning and this is well understood from the interview that I have done with them. Many controversies were there in leading newspapers regarding the reports published by the BARC due

to high chances of bias in this area as these data can be manipulated

Based on the literatures reviewed for the course of the study, it was found that the behavior of the TV audience [14] keeps on changing, i.e., today's preference will not be tomorrow's. So a TV channel should be very cautious about this and likewise they have to plan the contents in the channel wisely in order to avoid huge losses.

From the literature review, a clear idea or answer for the question which is addressed at first, i.e., the problems faced by the Advertising agencies in India to select a TV channel. So it is high time to develop an accurate media selection methodology [15] or system to make right decision in a better manner, so that the problems faced by them will be solved to certain extent.

III. METHODOLOGY

In order to finalise the research methodology, an initial discussion was done with some of the TV professionals [16] and experts in the state. A detailed discussion was done with Mr. Salim Sadiq, Assistant Vice President- Marketing, Insight Media City Pvt. Ltd. From the discussion, a brief idea regarding the current trend in the Visual Media Industry [17]. In Kerala, the Television ratings, who all are the major players in the market, what all are the sources of income for the industry, as well as the parameters which, the advertising professionals are using to identify TV channels or other mediums for their Ad positioning.

It is understood from the discussion that, the major source of income for any Visual Media channel is through selling their time slots [18] for advertisements. Viewer's Perception [19], BARC ratings of the TV channel, choice or interest of the Client (owner of a brand who wants to advertise) in choosing a particular channel etc. are the prominent criteria used by the Advertising agencies [20] for selecting a TV channel. Also, it is evolved from the discussion that the major players who operate in the Visual Media Industry in Kerala are Asianet, Mazhavil Manorama, Flowers TV, Surya etc. and Asianet channel is the top most rated channel according to the BARC reports.

Based on the discussion, a well structured Interview Schedule was prepared as the research instrument. Questions related to the media spendings [21], criteria of selection, favourite channel/ programme, look and feel of the channel, pricing of the TV channels etc. were incorporated. The interview Schedule is included in the Appendix for further clarity.

The next phase was to identify the advertising agencies for the in-depth interview. For this, the agencies who are listed in the K3A association (Kerala Advertising Agencies Association) [22] were identified. The Advertising agencies were shortlisted on the basis of volume of business they do.

30 Advertising agencies from four districts were shortlisted finally for the study depicted in figure.1. This sample size was adequately enough for the course of the study.

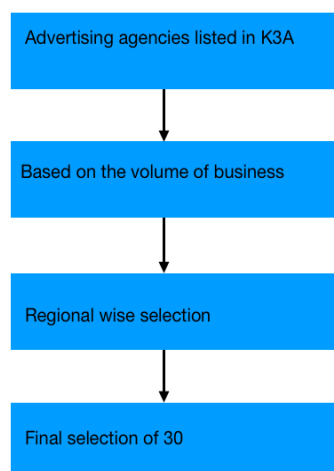


Figure.1. Sample selection process

DESIGN

The samples selected were adequately enough to understand the spending pattern, though they are the leading Advertising agencies across the country. Mr. Salim Sadiq, who is the Assistant Vice President of Insight Media City PVT Ltd. Kochi, helped me in getting the contacts of the above mentioned Advertising agencies. He gave me the contact numbers of almost all the Advertising firms across the country. From that, I took the contacts which I needed for the course of my study and started contacting the concerned people of that firm. I booked appointments with them and I met them individually.

I explained about the purpose of the study and asked questions which were there in the research instrument. When ever there were a scope of exploration or to grab extra data and information other than what is asked in the Interview Schedule, those opportunities were well utilised.

It was mainly a discussion and in that discussion, I have taken big pain to understand answers for all the questions included in the schedule as well as some extra information where to get an idea on how they creatively make their decisions as they were all related to some media terms. So in order to understand more on this, I had a discussion with Mr. Sreejith P, who is working with Insight Media City PVT, Ltd as a Marketing Analyst. He helped in understanding more about the Television Rating Points (TRP), Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), how it is done etc. This helped in getting more knowledge about the media industry and asking in depth questions to the Advertising agencies.

IV.ANALYSIS

The data that was given by the Advertising agencies were in different formats and this caused a lot of inconveniences for the analysis. So a lot of efforts were put for this to make everything in to a common platform as some of them have given their spending patterns in percentages while some have the data in the form of figures. This was an initial hurdle I had to face while doing with the analysis part.

The contents of the data were the spending patterns, amount of money spend across various platforms, money spend among various Visual media TV channels, their perception about a channel regarding the contents provided by the TV channel, look and feel of the TV channel, their pricing policies etc. and it also includes the criteria of selecting the TV channels by the Advertising firms.

From the data collected, an over all idea about which are the favourable channels or programmes in which they would like to advertise was understood. In order to understand more and for getting clarity, the data explored from the interview were converted in to the form charts, tables and graphs and have done an industry wise classification of the products which are advertising in Figure.1

TV channels were done in order to identify the spending pattern[23] of that particular industry.

Percentage analysis[24] was done to verify the data, growth rate, cross tabulation, classification and sorting, descriptives, average, visualisation etc were done to explore more.

An exploration of prevailing trends in media selection[25] was sought ideal to meet the objectives of the study. Accordingly, an exploratory study was conducted to identify the prevailing trends in media selection criteria[26] adopted by leading advertising agencies for their media spending. The scope of exploration included major platforms such as such as print media, hoardings, visual media, FM and other digital options. The study also attempted to find out among visual media channels, which are the channels in which they would like to advertise based on their preference. The data on perceptions regarding contents in the channel (programmes in tv channel), pricing policies of the channel, look and feel of the tv channel (over all appearance and visual impact) & viewer's perception from 35 leading advertising professionals in Kerala were collected using a structured interview schedule. This sample size was enough to adequately understand the general trend in the media selection practices adopted.

The data was subjected to various descriptive/trend analyses using the keynote software version 7.2 to understand the trends in behaviour.

V.FINDINGS

It was observed that among all the visual media platforms, the spending pattern was print media(35%), visual media(32%), FM & others(10% each), hoardings(8%) and digital platforms(5%) and is shown in figure2.

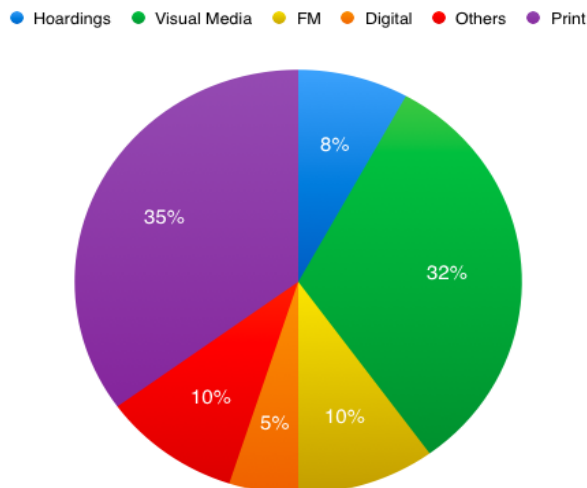


Figure.2. Contribution of advertisement agencies to various Media platforms

In the case of visual media, the major criteria of selection were the Broadcast Audience Research council(BARC) ratings, viewer's perception, client interest and other criteria. A major dependence on BARC(33%) for selection was identified. The other prominent approaches were on the basis of viewer's perception(23%), client interest(21%) and followed by other intuitive methods(23%) is shown in figure3.

Asianet is found as the 1st preferred channel followed by Mazhavil Manorama, Flowers Tv, Surya Tv, Asianet Movies, Surya Movies in the order of preference in which the

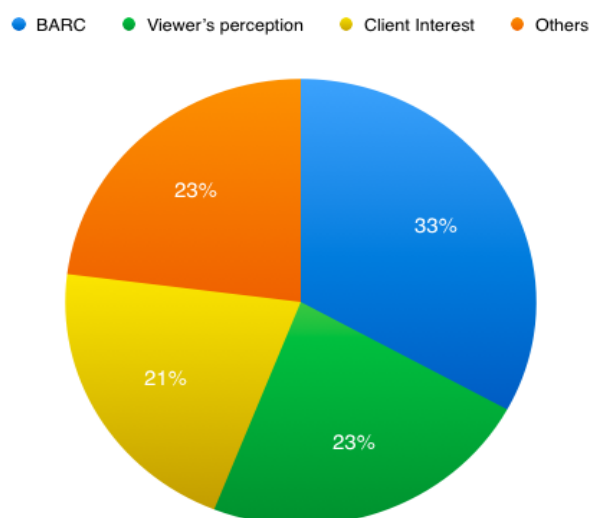


Figure.3 Media selection criteria

advertisers like to advertise. Also, among Kerala TV audiences, the most preferred programmes in the order of preference are Fictions[27], movies, game shows and news programmes. The advertising agencies spend 37% of their media spend in Asianet followed by other TV channels(news channels and other channels), Mazhavil Manorama, Surya TV and Flowers TV is depicted in figure.4.

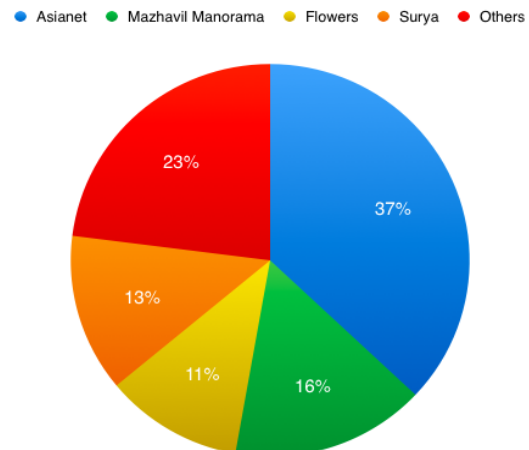


Figure.4. Contribution of Advertising agencies to various Visual Media TV channels

After sorting and filtering, it was found that the advertising agencies in Kochi and Calicut are more focused on Visual Media TV channels for their Media spendings. The agencies in Trissur and Trivandrum are continuing their Media spends on traditional means like newspaper and other BTL activities[28]. After classifying the brands, advertising agencies deal with, based on industry wise, it was found that the construction and real estate industries would not approach the National Advertising agencies for their media spendings, as BARC is the predominant criteria of selection followed by the National Agencies. According to the BARC ratings, Asianet is the top rated TV channel in Kerala and the National agencies[29] will give advertisements in Asianet only which itself is a burden for the brands in the real estate and construction industry. It is because of the fact that for giving a 10 second Advertisement in Asianet cost around 50000-60000 Rs. So the brands depend on regional level Advertising agencies for their Media planning, so that they can customise their Media planning activities.

At first, the study focused on identifying the media spending trends in the market. But, during the course of the study, it is found that the one of the media selection criteria. i.e, BARC is not performing well. This conclusion is made from the general opinions collected from the survey. The methodology proposed by the BARC is not up to the mark as the have very limited sample size for evaluating the TV viewership in

Kerala. BARC is having only 600 sample units to evaluate the 3 crore Television audience in the state. According to the opinions of the advertising agency professionals, it seems like out of the 600 sample units in Kerala, BARC is working efficiently on just 300 sample units, i.e., the informations regarding TV viewership [30] is collected from just 300 households in Kerala. This is a matter of concern as the advertisers spend around 800-1000 crores annually for their media spend. They spend this money for getting maximum reach for their products and the advertising agencies could not make right decisions for this purpose because of the lack of reliable data provided by the BARC. So, the money which is spent by the advertisers of a brand is wasting their money at the end of the day as they get poor visibility for their advertisements.

VI. CONCLUSION

From the findings, it implies that BARC is the only tool available to advertising professionals to take decisions in channel/programme selection. From the interview done with Advertising agencies, it was evolved that, in order to measure the 3 crore TV viewership households in Kerala, BARC is following only a sample size of just 600 only. The Advertising agencies were of the opinion that BARC clearly focuses only on 250 to 300 sample size only and this is again a big problem because the authenticity of the data provided by the BARC using this sample size is again a big matter of concern. A few companies who are following their own methodology for identifying popular channel/programmes are also facing difficulties. In general, it felt that more of an intuitive approach based on the experience of the advertising professionals are more prevalent in the industry. The top positions of BARC are held by the Star group of companies, so developing a new methodology is very hard because the Star group will not do anything which harms their company as Asianet comes under them and Asianet is the most rated channel in the BARC reports. BARC reports will be published on every Thursdays of the week and when the ratings are published, Asianet will be the 1st ranked channel in the list. Based on these reports, the advertising agencies are planning their media spending and they are likely to spend more on Asianet. This is a big matter of concern because all other channels are affected by this.

So, a future study in this domain can be related to developing a new methodology for assessing viewer's perception.

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