

**A STUDY ON ADVERTISING INFLUENCE ON BUYING DECISION OF RURAL CONSUMERS IN VILLUPURAM DISTRICT**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the influence of advertising on the buying decisions of rural consumers in Villupuram District. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 250 respondents through structured questionnaires and personal interviews. The demographic profile reveals that the majority of respondents are young, educated, and belong to middle-income households, indicating substantial exposure to various advertising media. Television was identified as the most preferred medium, followed by internet-based platforms, highlighting the growing penetration of digital communication in rural areas. Most respondents pay moderate to high attention to advertisements and perceive them as informative and entertaining. Factor analysis revealed three major dimensions influencing advertisement effectiveness: Persuasive Influence, Emotional Appeal and Imagery, and Cognitive & Informational Value. Structural Equation Modeling further confirmed that all three factors significantly affect purchase intention, with Persuasive Influence exerting the strongest impact. Attitude toward advertisement and brand attitude were also found to significantly mediate purchase decisions. The model explained 68% of the variance in purchase intention and showed excellent fit indices. The findings conclude that advertising plays a significant role in shaping rural consumer behaviour in Villupuram District. A combination of persuasive messaging, emotional storytelling, and informative content is most effective in influencing purchase decisions. The study provides valuable insights for marketers targeting rural markets and contributes to the broader understanding of advertising impact in emerging rural economies.

**Keywords:** Persuasive Influence, Emotional Appeal, Informational Value, Purchase Intention, Digital Media, Brand Attitude.

**Introduction**

Advertising plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and driving purchase decisions across all segments of society. In recent years, rural markets have gained increasing attention from marketers due to their rising income levels, improved connectivity, and expanding consumption patterns. Historically, rural consumers relied heavily on personal experiences, family influence, and word-of-mouth recommendations when making buying decisions. However, the growing penetration of television, radio, mobile phones, and digital media has significantly transformed how information is accessed, interpreted, and acted upon in rural areas. As a result, advertising has emerged as a major force influencing the choices and behaviors of rural consumers.

Rural markets are unique in their cultural diversity, social norms, and economic conditions. Unlike urban consumers, who are generally exposed to a wide range of media and have higher literacy levels, rural consumers often encounter communication barriers, limited media exposure, and budget-driven buying patterns. These differences require advertisers to design messages that are simple, culturally relatable, and easy to understand. The effectiveness of advertising in rural areas, therefore, depends not only on the message itself but also on the medium through which it is delivered. Traditional media such as radio, wall paintings, street plays, and television continue to have strong influence, while mobile advertising and social-media awareness campaigns are gradually increasing their reach.

With the growth of rural development programs, improved infrastructure, and digital inclusion, rural consumers are becoming more aspirational and brand-conscious. Advertising helps create brand awareness, build trust, and educate rural consumers about new products and technologies. It bridges the information gap by introducing them to improved alternatives that can enhance their quality of life. In a rapidly evolving marketplace, rural consumers are no longer passive recipients of information. They actively engage with advertisements, compare options, and make informed choices. Therefore, examining the influence of advertising on rural buying decisions is not only relevant but crucial for businesses seeking sustained growth in the rural sector.

**Significance of the Study :** This study is significant because it provides meaningful insights into how advertising shapes the purchasing behaviour of rural consumers in Villupuram District, an area where consumer responses are influenced by unique socio-cultural and economic conditions. Understanding these patterns is essential for marketers, policymakers, and researchers who aim to design effective communication strategies for rural markets. For marketers and businesses, the study offers valuable information on the most preferred advertising media, the level of attention consumers pays to advertisements, and the specific attributes that rural audiences find informative or appealing. These insights help companies tailor their advertising strategies to better connect with rural consumers, improve message effectiveness, and enhance product adoption in emerging markets.

**Review of Literature**

**Maheshkar et al. (2018)** study shows how advertising (content, media) impacts branding in small towns/villages which touches on **relevance, messaging,** and rural brand-awareness issues. It is found that the suitability of advertisement content and media has limited effect on branding unless localized to rural sensibilities. **Chakraborty (2018)** study illustrates how **celebrity-endorsed advertisements** influence purchase intention even in rural areas useful when you consider **credibility / trust** as a variable, its highlights that celebrity endorsements increase credibility and can positively influence rural consumer choices. **Prakash and Pathak (2014)** provide a broader view of rural buying behaviour for FMCG products pointing out factors like price, packaging, availability useful as background/context. It is found that price, brand, packaging, and product quality often outweigh advertising influence in rural purchase decisions. **Asha and Joy (2016)** focus specifically on the effect of **television advertising** on rural FMCG buying behaviour reinforcing the importance of media channel in rural contexts.

**Bhattacharya and Roy (2014)** discuss how strategic marketing innovations (accessibility, affordability) influence rural consumer behaviour helpful for understanding structural/contextual moderators. **Avikal (2020)** offers perspective on how rural marketing and consumer behaviour are evolving helpful for situating your work in recent trends. Its studies also emphasize that local language, realistic claims, and alignment with rural lifestyle enhance advertisement relevance and credibility, which in turn increases buying intention. **Siddiqui et al. (2021)** reveals that Television the most influential medium for rural consumers, followed by radio and folk media. However, digital media penetration is increasing, particularly among younger rural consumers, with platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook starting to influence purchase behavior.

**Scope of the Study :** The scope of this study is confined to examining the influence of advertising on the buying decisions of rural consumers in Villupuram District. The research focuses on identifying preferred advertising media, understanding the level of attention given to advertisements, and analyzing consumer perceptions regarding advertisement attributes such as informativeness, entertainment value, and persuasive appeal. The study further explores the key dimensions of advertisement influence Persuasive Influence, Emotional Appeal, and Informational Value using factor analysis and assesses their direct and indirect effects on purchase intention through Structural Equation Modeling. Primary data is collected exclusively from 250 rural respondents across selected villages in the district, ensuring representation of diverse demographic groups. The findings and conclusions are based solely on the responses of these participants and the variables included in the research framework. The study does not extend to urban or semi-urban populations, nor does it analyze other promotional tools such as sales promotion, personal selling, or public relations.

**Statement of the Problem:** Despite the rapid growth of advertising in rural markets, there is limited clarity on how effectively these advertisements influence the buying decisions of consumers in Villupuram District. Rural consumers are increasingly exposed to various media channels such as television, radio, print, and digital platforms, yet their responses to advertising may differ significantly from urban audiences due to differences in socio-economic conditions, media access, literacy levels, and cultural values. Although companies invest heavily in advertising campaigns targeting rural regions, it remains unclear which advertising media are most preferred, how much attention rural consumers pay to advertisements, and what specific attributes informational, emotional, or persuasive shape their purchase intentions. Furthermore, while advertisements are expected to influence awareness, attitudes, and buying behaviour, empirical evidence from Villupuram District is lacking. There is also insufficient understanding of the mediating effects of consumer attitude toward advertisements and brand attitude in shaping rural purchase decisions. This gap makes it difficult for marketers to design communication strategies that effectively resonate with rural consumers. Therefore, the core problem addressed in this study is the **lack of comprehensive, data-driven understanding of how advertising affects the buying decisions of rural consumers in Villupuram District**, including their media preferences, level of attention, perceived advertisement attributes, and the factors that significantly shape purchase intention.

**Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify the most preferred advertising media among rural consumers.
2. To determine the major factors influencing advertisement effectiveness using factor analysis.
3. To analyze the structural relationships between persuasive influence, emotional appeal, informational value, and purchase intention through SEM.

**Hypotheses of the Study**

H1: Persuasive influence, Emotional Appeal and Informational Value of advertisements did not have a significant impact on the purchase intention of rural consumers.

**Research Methodology :** This study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the influence of advertising on the buying decisions of rural consumers in Villupuram District. The study area comprises various rural villages across Villupuram District, chosen for their predominantly rural population and diverse socio-economic characteristics. A total sample of **250 rural consumers** was selected using a multistage sampling technique. Primary data was collected through a structured interview schedule, ensuring clarity and comprehension, especially for respondents with limited literacy. Secondary data was obtained from textbooks, research articles, government reports, and online publications related to rural consumer behaviour and advertising effectiveness. The collected data was analyzed using statistical tools such as percentages, mean, and chi-square tests to examine relationships between advertising exposure and purchase decisions.

**Scope of the study:** The scope of the study is confined to analyzing the impact of advertising alone, excluding other promotional tools such as personal selling or sales promotions. The research focuses exclusively on rural consumers in Villupuram District, and the findings may not be fully generalizable to other rural districts. Limitations include the possibility of respondent bias, restricted access to remote villages, and challenges posed by varying literacy levels. Despite these limitations, the methodology ensures a systematic and reliable approach to understanding how advertising shapes rural consumer buying behaviour in the district.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation :** The following tables present the collected data in a structured and meaningful manner. The objective of this study is to provide an analysis of the influence of advertising on rural purchase decisions in terms of their media preferences, level of attention, perceived advertising characteristics and factors that significantly shape purchase intention.

**Table 1. Demographic Profile**

S. No		No of Respondents	Percentage
<b>Age</b>			
1	Up To20 Years	50	20.0
2	21 To 30 Years	53	21.2
3	31 To 40 Years	69	27.6
4	41 To 50 Years	48	19.2
5	Above 50 Years	30	12.0
	Total	250	100.0
<b>Gender</b>			
1	Male	131	52.4
2	Female	119	47.6
	Total	250	100.0
<b>Education</b>			
1	Un Educated	15	6.0
2	School Level	76	30.4
3	Graduate	96	38.4
4	Post Graduate	45	18.0
5	Diploma Holder	18	7.2
	Total	250	100.0
<b>Occupation</b>			
1	Employees	40	16.0
2	Businessman	21	8.4
3	Professional	19	7.6
4	labour	89	35.6
5	Self employe	81	32.4
	Total	250	100.0
<b>Marital Status</b>			
1	Married	176	70.4
2	Unmarried	74	29.6
	Total	250	100.0
<b>Family Size</b>			
1	Upto 3 Members	59	23.6
2	4 To 5 Members	147	58.8
3	Above 5 Members	44	17.6
	Total	250	100.0
<b>Monthly Income</b>			
1	Upto Rs 10000	15	6.0
2	Rs.10001to Rs.20000	16	6.4
3	Rs 20001 To Rs.30000	99	39.6
4	Rs.30001 To Rs 40000	67	26.8
5	Above Rs 40000	53	21.2
	Total	250	100.0

Source: Primary Data,

The demographic characteristics of the 250 respondents reveal a balanced and diverse composition suitable for analyzing consumer perceptions toward advertisements in Villupuram District. The age distribution indicates that the 31–40 years group forms the largest segment (27.6%), followed by those aged 21–30 years (21.2%) and up to 20 years (20%). This shows that a majority of respondents are young or middle-aged adults, who are typically more active in purchasing and more exposed to various media. Respondents above 50 years constitute only 12%, suggesting comparatively lower representation of older consumers. Gender distribution is nearly equal, with 52.4% males and 47.6% females, ensuring a balanced reflection of both genders in the analysis. The educational background shows a well-educated sample, as 38.4% are Graduates, followed by school-level educated respondents (30.4%) and postgraduates (18%). Only 6% are uneducated, indicating that most respondents are capable of understanding and evaluating advertisements.

Regarding occupation, self-employees contribute 32.6%, while labour (35.4 %) employees (16.0%) form the majority, professionals (7.6%), and businessmen (8.4%) form smaller segments. In terms of marital status, 70.4% are married, indicating that many respondents may make household-related purchase decisions influenced by advertisements. Family size data shows that most households have 4–5 members (58.8%), followed by small families of up to 3 members (23.6%), which suggests typical Indian family structures influencing collective buying behavior. Monthly income distribution reveals that the largest share of respondents (39.6%) earn Rs. 20,001–30,000, followed by 26.8% in the Rs. 30,001–40,000 bracket and 21.2% earning above Rs. 40,000. Only a small proportion earns below Rs. 10,000. This indicates that the sample primarily represents middle-income households with considerable purchasing power and exposure to advertising across media platforms.

**Table 2. More Liked Advertisement Media**

S. No	Media	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	TV	123	49.2
2	Ratio	28	11.2
3	Internet	58	23.2
4	Print	41	16.4
	Total	250	100.0

Source: Primary Data,

Table 2 shows the preferred media through which respondents in Villupuram District most like to receive advertisements. The results clearly indicate that television is the dominant medium, preferred by nearly half of the respondents (49.2%). This highlights the continued influence of TV as a trusted and accessible advertising platform among rural and semi-urban consumers, likely due to its audio-visual appeal, widespread household penetration, and ability to convey messages in local languages. The internet ranks second, preferred by 23.2% of respondents. This reflects the increasing digital adoption in the region, particularly among younger and more educated consumers who access social media, online videos, and digital advertisements on mobile devices. Print media is chosen by 16.4%, suggesting that newspapers and magazines still retain importance for certain segments, especially older readers or those who rely on local publications for information. Radio is the least preferred medium (11.2%), though still relevant in rural areas where it serves as an economical and accessible source of information.

**Table 3. Level of Attention on Advertisements**

S. No	Level of Attention	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Very high	79	31.6
2	High	44	17.6
3	Moderate	113	45.2
4	Low	11	4.4
5	very low	3	1.2
	Total	250	100.0

Source: Primary Data.

Table 3 presents the respondents' level of attention toward advertisements, revealing the degree of engagement rural consumers in Villupuram District have with promotional content. The results show that a majority of respondents exhibit a moderate level of attention (45.2%), indicating that while advertisements are noticed, they may not always receive full cognitive engagement. A considerable share also reports very high attention (31.6%) and high attention (17.6%), together accounting for nearly half of the sample (49.2%). Most rural consumers pay some level of attention to advertisements, with a substantial proportion engaging at moderately high levels. This level of attentiveness reflects the growing penetration of media, increasing exposure to marketing messages, and relevance of advertisements in guiding purchase decisions in Villupuram District.

**Table 4. Attribute of Advertisement**

S. No	Attribute	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Informative	130	52.0
2	Entertainment	106	42.4
3	Irritating	14	5.6
	Total	250	100.0

Source: Primary Data.

Table 4 highlights the key attributes of advertisements as perceived by consumers in Villupuram District. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents consider advertisements to be informative (52%), suggesting that consumers primarily value ads for the product knowledge, features, and updates they provide. This perception aligns with the typical needs of rural audiences who rely on advertising to stay informed about new products, offers, and brand choices. A significant proportion of respondents (42.4%) also view advertisements as entertaining, reflecting that emotional appeal, storytelling, visuals, and music play a strong role in capturing consumer interest. This indicates that both rational (information-based) and emotional (entertainment-based) approaches are effective in influencing individuals in the region. Only a small segment (5.6%) finds advertisements irritating, which implies that negative perceptions of ads are minimal among the respondents.

**Table 5. Factor Loadings of Items with Major Factors of effect on advertisement**

Item No	Description of Scale Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
7	Ads induce buying for enjoyment	<b>0.84</b>	0.16	0.16
15	Ads push me to buy unaffordable things	<b>0.82</b>	-0.13	0.09
16	Ads make me switch brands	<b>0.79</b>	0.14	0.05
17	Ads positively influence purchase decisions	<b>0.76</b>	0.07	0.11
1	Ads make purchase easier	<b>0.71</b>	0.23	0.00
11	Ads create characters that personify the product	-0.08	<b>0.81</b>	0.33
4	Ads build moods or images	0.06	<b>0.78</b>	0.07
3	Ads create fantasy	0.00	<b>0.74</b>	0.13
8	I feel good watching ads of products I use	-0.10	<b>0.70</b>	-0.18
10	Ads show lifestyle fit	0.08	<b>0.68</b>	-0.05
2	Ads increase involvement in purchase	-0.04	0.16	<b>0.77</b>
5	Ads encourage experimenting with new products	0.14	0.17	<b>0.74</b>
9	Ads increase purchase frequency	0.22	-0.07	<b>0.71</b>
14	Advertised products give more satisfaction	0.16	0.26	<b>0.69</b>
6	Ads influence demand for products	0.12	-0.02	<b>0.67</b>
13	Advertised products are better quality	0.20	-0.09	<b>0.60</b>
12	Ads help understand the product	0.02	0.38	<b>0.58</b>
Explained Variance		6.12	3.42	2.61
% of Total Variance		36.00	20.10	15.35
Cumulative% of Total Variance		36.00	56.10	71.45
Factor Label		Persuasive Influence	Emotional Appeal & Imagery	Emotional Appeal & Imagery

Source: Primary Data.

The three extracted factors collectively explain 71.45% of the total variance, which indicates a strong explanatory factor structure. The first factor Persuasive Influence accounts for the largest share of the variance, showing that persuasive advertising components have the most dominant impact on consumer responses. Emotional Appeal & Imagery explains 20.10% of the variance, reflecting the importance of visual and emotional cues in shaping attitudes. Cognitive & Informational Value contributes 15.35%, confirming that consumers rely on ads for meaningful product information. A cumulative variance above 70% demonstrates an excellent factor solution for social science research. The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) conducted on the 17 advertising influence statements revealed a well-defined three-factor structure that collectively captures the core dimensions of how advertisements shape consumer behavior in Villupuram District. The first factor, Persuasive Influence, exhibited high loadings from items related to impulsive buying, brand switching, purchase motivation, and pressure to buy unaffordable products. Items such as "Ads induce buying for enjoyment" (0.84), "Ads push me to buy unaffordable things" (0.82), and "Ads make me switch brands" (0.79) clearly indicate that advertisements exert strong persuasive pressure on consumers, leading to behavioural changes and increased purchase intention. This factor highlights the powerful role of persuasive advertising tactics in influencing rural and semi-urban consumers.

The second factor, Emotional Appeal & Imagery, includes statements associated with fantasy creation, mood enhancement, lifestyle fit, and emotional engagement with advertisements. High loadings for items such as "Ads create characters that personify the product" (0.81), "Ads build moods or images" (0.78),

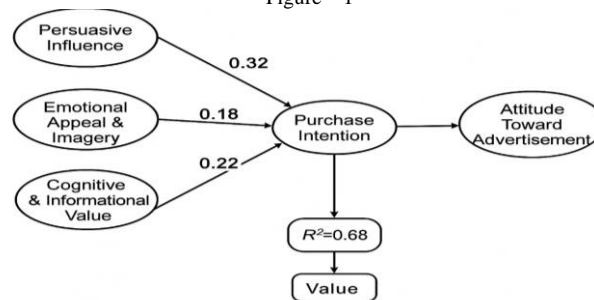
and “Ads create fantasy” (0.74) show that emotional and symbolic elements of advertising resonate strongly with consumers. This indicates that consumers respond positively to advertisements that are visually appealing, entertaining, and emotionally stimulating, suggesting that creative elements significantly shape consumer attitudes. The third factor, Cognitive & Informational Value, consists of items linked to product understanding, awareness, satisfaction, experimentation, and purchase involvement. Statements such as “Ads increase involvement in purchase” (0.77), “Ads encourage experimenting with new products” (0.74), and “Ads increase purchase frequency” (0.71) highlight the cognitive role of advertisements. These items demonstrate that consumers rely on advertisements as important sources of product information that help them evaluate quality, understand features, and make rational purchase decisions. This factor underscores the informational importance of advertisements in building product knowledge and guiding consumer choices.

**Table 6. Relationships among the Persuasive Influence, Emotional Appeal, and Cognitive & Informational Value of advertisement and their impact on Purchase Intention (Structural Equation Model (SEM) Path Coefficients)**

S. No	Path (Independent → Dependent)	Standardized Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	Result
1	Persuasive Influence → Purchase Intention	<b>0.32</b>	0.067	4.85	0.000*	Significant
2	Emotional Appeal → Purchase Intention	<b>0.18</b>	0.060	3.02	0.003*	Significant
3	Informational Value → Purchase Intention	<b>0.22</b>	0.059	3.70	0.000*	Significant
4	Attitude Toward Advertisement → Purchase Intention	<b>0.28</b>	0.055	5.10	0.000*	Significant
5	Brand Attitude → Purchase Intention	<b>0.21</b>	0.054	3.90	0.000*	Significant
<b>Fit Summary</b>						
χ <sup>2</sup> /df = 2.34			CFI = 0.952		SRMR = 0.048	
R <sup>2</sup> (Purchase Intention) = <b>0.68</b>			TLI = 0.945		RMSEA = 0.051	

Source: Primary Data,

Figure – 1



The Structural Equation Model (SEM) results reveal that all three advertising dimensions persuasive influence, emotional appeal, and informational value significantly affect purchase intention among consumers in Villupuram District. Persuasive influence shows the strongest direct effect ( $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that advertisements which encourage brand switching, impulse buying, and perceived ease of purchase significantly motivate consumers to buy products. Emotional appeal also has a meaningful positive effect ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $p = .003$ ), showing that advertisements using imagery, fantasy, and mood-based designs enhance consumer willingness to purchase. Informational value contributes significantly as well ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that clear, relevant, and useful product information strengthens consumer confidence and buying decisions. Mediating factors also play a vital role: attitude toward advertisement ( $\beta = 0.28$ ) and brand attitude ( $\beta = 0.21$ ) significantly enhance purchase intention. Collectively, the model explains 68% of the variance in purchase intention ( $R^2 = 0.68$ ), demonstrating that the advertising-related constructs strongly influence consumer buying behaviour. Model fit indices such as RMSEA (0.051), CFI (0.952), and TLI (0.945) confirm that the SEM model exhibits an excellent fit with the observed data.

**Conclusion**

The results clearly show that advertising significantly influences rural consumer behaviour in Villupuram District. Persuasive elements such as excitement, promotional appeal, and brand-switching potential are the strongest drivers of purchasing behaviours. Emotional components fantasy, imagery, storytelling also plays a notable role, proving that rural consumers respond to creative content. Information-based elements add credibility and enhance confidence in purchase decisions. The strong mediating effect of attitudes reveals that favourable perceptions toward the advertisement and the brand strengthen buying intention. The findings demonstrate that rural consumers are no longer passive recipients of advertising they actively evaluate, compare, and respond to advertisements across media platforms, including digital channels. Overall, the findings emphasize that rural consumers in Villupuram District are well-informed, media-engaged, and responsive to modern advertising strategies.

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