

## An eye on the future

With an eye on offering the ultimate experience in eyewear, American Vision is on a mission to have stores spanning the length and breadth of India

With an ambitious target of having one optician per pin code in India (there are close to 40,000 pin codes in India), American Vision is looking to provide something distinct that cannot be delivered by pure e-commerce players. Their highly scalable, low cost business model has the potential to reach every nook and cranny in India. According to Ashutosh Vaidya (Founder, American Vision), "None of the existing business models are addressing reach /affordability /awareness across India & none have brought any disruption in the sector. The reason to visit the optician has remained only one, and American Vision is exactly working on this area of increasing awareness about the category with its hyper local model."

Some unique initiatives of American vision such as Vision Entrepreneur (a roaming Optician in rural areas), Aap Ka Chashmawala - Rural Optical Shops are expected to be launched soon, and American Vision is a brand that can look forward to a bright future with genuine optimism.

### ET Edge Speak

**DEEPAK LAMBA,**  
PRESIDENT, TIMES CONFERENCES LIMITED

>> With its sheer size and the possibilities that abound, India's rural markets are to be ignored by brands at their own peril. The 4th edition of the Economic Times Rural Strategy Summit saw industry professionals brainstorm and exchange thought-provoking ideas on the state of rural marketing, and through it understand the transformational strategies required to thrive in increasingly competitive rural markets.

# REACHING OUT TO THE 'RURBAN' CONSUMER

THE ECONOMIC TIMES RURAL STRATEGY SUMMIT SAW EXPERTS SHED LIGHT ON THE PSYCHE OF THE INCREASINGLY URBAN RURAL (OR RURBAN) CONSUMER AND HOW TO BETTER CONNECT WITH INDIA'S HINTERLAND

India is witnessing a monumental change with regard to the practices, behavior and attitude that its rural populace cherishes. The wider reach of media, telecommunications and devices have catapulted rural buyers to the position of informed purchasers who are not just looking for low prices, but also do not want to compromise on the utility, features and aesthetics of the products or services they buy.

The evolution of rural markets in India has opened up innumerable

marketing opportunities, and the 4th Annual Economic Times Rural Strategy Summit sought to highlight the ways in which we can connect better with India's burgeoning and blossoming "rurban" market. The Summit brought together the leading stakeholders in a closed door initiative to discuss, deliberate and ponder upon the learnings from the rural strategies of organizations so far, and the best way forward in the myriad cities that we broadly classify as Rural.

Technological advances have transformed the nature of our marketing efforts and this digital transformation and the changing outlook of rural consumers were the central themes for this year's discussions. Through a series of interactive panel discussions, real life case studies of successful rural strategies and why they worked, round table discussions focusing on various aspects of rural strategy and keynote presentations from industry veterans, the forum created a platform that shone a spotlight on everything rural.



An Economic Times Initiative



> The industry experts engaged in an interactive discussion on Digital Disruption and its impact on rural strategies

## The role of digital in rural India

Digital has disrupted the way we have done business in so many other ways, as it has catalyzed Rural India

Digitalisation is transforming a range of industries and the way we live, but in the Indian context it is the cornerstone of the future growth we have mapped out for us. It is, for instance, the cornerstone of the government's financial inclusion plan and it will help the rural population access financial services.

In a digitally connected world, with disruptive changes becoming the norm, the line between the rural and urban consumer has been significantly marginalized. The rural consumer today aspires to purchase branded, high quality products, mirroring those used by their peers in urban metros. The rural consumer is now equipped with a multi-

tude of options to proactively seek information while making purchase decisions. The wider reach of media, telecommunications and devices have catapulted rural buyers to the position of informed purchasers who are not just looking for low prices, but also do not want to compromise on the utility, features and aesthetics of the products or services they buy.

The growth rate in rural markets have been notably higher than that in the urban markets for a considerably long time, lending further weight to the argument for focusing on rural India. The numbers are staggering; the rural market in India roughly consists of 850 million consumers in 650,000 villages,

making up 70% of the population and 50% of the country's GDP.

There is thus a pressing need to developing India's digital infrastructure as we seek to empower those residing even in the remotest regions of our nation. These technological advancements will help on multiple fronts, such as financial inclusion and digital inclusion in addition to boosting e-commerce and literacy, all of which will dovetail with the rising aspirations of rural India.

It is little wonder then to see that the Government of India has mooted multiple initiatives to boost the infrastructure in rural areas, a move that can have a two-pronged impact in terms of improving the

earning potential of rural areas and boosting consumption. Indeed, the Government has earmarked approximately Rs. 2,351 crore for the rural aspect of the National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM). The Government envisages enabling high-speed internet connectivity in rural areas as a priority area as it looks to include everyone in the wave of digital sweeping across the nation.

India's e-commerce economy is currently projected to triple in size by the year 2020 to \$200 billion. However, rural areas still have a small piece of the pie; merely 15% of consumers in rural India use the internet to either research a product, purchase a product, or submit a product review, according to industry studies. Doubtlessly, familiarity is one hurdle for marketers to over-

come as consumers stick to the tried and trusted over the unknown. A majority of rural users use the internet to access social media, but this could perhaps be looked at as a platform more than an obstacle as marketers intelligently leverage social media to reach out to the increasing number of connected users in rural India.

A larger number of businesses are beginning to wake up to the realisation that digital is increasingly becoming essential to service delivery across all business areas and processes, including rurban markets, and that it cannot be an offshoot of strategy but central to it. The plan is an ambitious, but necessary one as we look to give a greater impetus to the nation's growth through greater economic opportunities being extended to rural India.

## Mastering the rural market

Rajesh Radhakrishnan (Director-Sales & Marketing, Vritti Media) talks about how marketers can more intelligently engage rural audiences

As the size of the rural market grows exponentially larger than ever, those that embrace local sensibilities will doubtlessly prosper, and Rajesh Radhakrishnan talks about how thinking local and digital is the key to making inroads into rural markets.

"This is the beginning of Digital evolution and the mobile as a device is making the change, but the challenge today is the penetration of smart phone with internet. Vritti iMedia

has pioneered the Audiowala Bus stand in 2007 and today its largest Digital Audio network at a transit place with captive audience from rural markets and with a reach of 300 Million people across 300 State Transport Bus stations."

"In the coming years, Vritti iMedia intends to focus on communication, engagement and experience at these transit locations on a Pan-India basis as they will play a vital role in shaping the rural aspirations."