

**THE CHANGING MEDIA CONSUMPTION HABITS AND ITS RELEVANCE
TO MARKETING FAST MOVING CONSUMER GOODS:
A STUDY OF THE WESTERN PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA**

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(V) Abstract

Global experts on the subject of marketing communication have indicated a major shift in consumer media consumption habits. Although it is visibly evident in Sri Lanka as well with different schools of thought having debated the issue with no clear outcome, nor has the initiative been taken to study this area extensively to understand the effects of media consumption habits of Sri Lankan consumers and the level of influence of each of the methods available to marketers.

Marketing organisations on the other hand are facing the dilemma of no reliable information to base their marketing communication investment decisions on. Hence they rely heavily on the recommendations of the advertising agency and the media buying company. This is not without knowing that the advertising agency and media buying agency are both paid commissions on media space they sell to their clients. This situation is extremely difficult to deal with as the agencies' recommendations are biased by the conflicting interest of trying to earn the commissions offered by media companies. Despite this, marketers turn a blind eye due to the lack of credible information for decision making in this area which consumes the highest portion (75 percent to 80 percent) of the company's marketing budget.

This gave rise to the following research problem.

Given the significant shift in the world of consumer media habits, should consumer brand marketing organisations, targeting urban and suburban consumer groups, shift emphasis of their marketing budget from "above-the-line" marketing activities to "below-the-line" marketing activities in order to be more successful in achieving their sales and revenue objectives more effectively and efficiently?

The objective of this study is to examine if the current investment in marketing activity by consumer brand marketing organisations should change from the present heavy

reliance on Above The Line (ATL) marketing activity to be more Below The Line (BTL) marketing activity oriented.

In order to achieve the above objective a conceptual framework was developed following an extensive survey of literature and a proposed theory was formed. The study involved the acquisition of primary data through a quantitative survey questionnaire that was administered across a sample population of the 3 districts in the Western Province. Considering the resource limitations this survey was carried out through a combination of telephone interviews and face to face interviews.

Results of the survey revealed the magnitude of change in consumer media habits over the last 3 years and the majority of respondents revealed that advertisements on mass media are usually avoided and that below the line communication activities had a higher influence on their purchase decisions related to fast moving consumer brands. The detailed findings of this study are discussed in chapters 5 and 6 of this report which establishes the potential role of BTL communication activities compared to increasing the intensity of ATL advertising. This report concludes with important recommendations to readers of this report with the view of enhancing the probability of success of reaching consumers with the brand marketing message in relation to marketing fast moving consumer goods in the Western Province of Sri Lanka.