

Marketing of Greeting Cards — An Exploratory Study

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Greeting cards are becoming popular day-by-day. The authors, on the basis of a survey conducted by them in Pondicherry region, conclude that there is a tremendous market for greeting cards in our country. They suggest that by emphasising Indian culture in an attractive way, Indian manufacturers of greeting cards can compete successfully with the MNCs in this field.

I. INTRODUCTION

Greeting cards are cards bearing a message suitable for both general and special personal occasion. To cite a few examples, it can be a holiday, birthday, graduation, marriage, promotions, illness etc.

Although origin of the Greeting cards are obscure, it is known that in the 2nd century AD, commemorative medals bearing the inscription "The senate and people of Rome wish a Happy and Prosperous New Year to Madrianus Augustus, the father of the country" appear as an early forerunner of Greeting Cards.

During the Middle Ages, Greeting Cards of various types made their

appearance in many countries. Woodcuts and engravings were popular in Central Europe and some artisans added color by hand to enhance the beauty of their efforts. The earliest known holiday Greeting card from this period was a crude woodcut printed about 1450 AD in the Rhine Valley of Germany.

Among the most venerable of Greeting Card is the Valentine. According to legend, its origin was in the ancient Roman feast of Hypercalia. Valentine's cards were first produced commercially in the United States in the 1840's; their creator Ester A. Howland, realised sales of \$5,000 in the first year.

The modern era of Greeting Cards traces its origins directly to the

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publication of the first known Christmas cards, John Callcot Horsley, painter and illustrator signed this in 1843, for Henry Cole, the inaugurator and first director of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England.

In addition to Valentine Cards and Christmas Cards, Greeting Cards are available to mark most important holiday or occasions. Picture Postcards became popular as a cheap and rapid means of communication soon after 1890. The first plain postcard was issued in Austria in 1869, but no firm date can be given for the picture postcard.

A popular type of card from 1890's bore greetings and scenes from a holiday resort. Cards became more and more attractive. Collecting cards developed into a craze around 1900, and publishers soon illustrated their cards with any design that may encourage sales.

In the early 1900's, changes in postal regulations resulted in a new look for postcards with the advent of the "divided back". A line divided one side of the card into message and address areas, so a picture could now occupy all of the other side.

Cards for Mother's day and St. Patrick's day appeared about 1912 in United States and Father's day cards were popular by 1920's. Thanksgiving, Halloween, Rosh Harsnanan are among the holiday occasions for which special Greeting Cards are available.

Another important aspect of the Greeting Card Industry is known to its publishers as the "Every day card" i.e. Greeting cards for non-seasonal use. Other, "Year Round" Greeting card occasions include weddings and wedding Anniversaries and Birth Related cards. The most popular year round greetings, however, are Friendship cards, which often take the form of little more than a "Hello" a printed wish in lieu of a face to face visit.

At present there are over 250 publishers of Greeting cards for all occasions located in the United States, with estimated sales of approximately 6,000,000,000 Greeting cards a year. Moreover, with the growth of Information Technology many websites help us to send Greeting cards through internet.

Even in our country the habit of sending greeting cards has been prevalent for important festivals like Deepawali, Pongal, Christmas and Occasions like Birthday, Wedding day etc. and with the introduction of many new occasions (for e.g. Friendship Day, Boss Day, Forgiveness Day, etc.) the practice of card sending has developed to a greater extent.

In order to know how the young people of Pondicherry region (A Cosmopolitan area) react to these new card sending occasions and celebrations, a study was undertaken with the following objectives.

- * To find out the marketing activities carried out by the retailers of Greeting Cards.
- * To know the customers purchase behavior towards the Greeting Cards.
- * To make a few suggestions based on the study.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through printed questionnaires. Questionnaires were given to the Retailers of Greeting Cards and to the buyers of Greeting Cards. The Survey was carried out between July — September 2000.

Almost all the Retailers who have set up their shops within the boulevard of Pondicherry region were taken as the sample of this study. Consumers who fall in the age group of 15 - 25 years were taken as the target population for this study. Convenient sampling technique was used to collect the data from the respondents.

To collect the data from the Retailers of Greeting Cards, 40 questionnaires were distributed. All the questionnaires were received back. But only 32 were found complete in all respects and they were considered to be the size of the sample.

Although 350 questionnaires were distributed to the buyers of Greeting Cards, 325 questionnaires were received. Out of these only 315 questionnaires were found to be complete in all respects and hence they have been taken as sample for this study.

III. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The findings are based on the responses of the retailers and customers.

Retailers Survey Findings

- * Birthday cards, New Year cards are the Greeting cards preferred by the young persons.
- * Friendship day, Valentine day are the important days for which Greeting Cards are bought by the young customers.
- * Young persons buy Greeting Cards in large numbers only during festivals like Christmas and Diwali and are willing to pay for them in the range of Rs. 16-20.
- * The surveyed retailers appear to be equally divided in their responses regarding the facility of marketing Greeting Cards through Internet.

Summary - 1 : Retailers' Response

Particulars	Percentage	Particulars	Percentage
<i>General Occasions</i>		<i>Festivals</i>	
Birthday	44.90	Christmas	33.33
New Year	28.57	Diwali	30.77
Others	26.53	Bakrid	17.95
<i>Important Days</i>		Others	
Friendship day	41.93		17.95
Valentine's Day	48.38	<i>Preferred Price</i>	
Others	9.69	Rs. 10 to 15	25.00
		Rs. 16 to 20	50.00
		Others	25.00

Customers Survey Findings

- * Birthday appears to be the most Important Occasion and Friendship day seems to be the most Important Day when young persons buy Greeting Cards.
- * Majority of the young respondents report that they purchased Greeting Cards for Diwali, Christmas and Pongal and prefer to buy them only from exclusive outlets selling Greeting Cards.
- * Majority of the young persons buying Greeting Cards have opined that they do prefer a particular shop for buying Greeting Cards. Availability of more varieties nearness to the respondents' place, courteous treatment in that order appear to be the reasons for their preference of a particular shop.
- * About one-third of the surveyed respondents appear to prefer branded Greeting cards. And out of them nearly Half-of-the young persons prefer Archies Brand.
- * Pocket money, Parents generosity and Personal Earnings are the sources used by the surveyed young respondents to buy Greeting Cards.
- * Majority of the respondents reported that they spent upto Rs.100 in a year for buying Greeting Cards.
- * Majority of the surveyed respondents are willing to spend Rs. 16 – 20 on a Greeting Card.
- * Majority of the surveyed young persons reported that they spend 5 – 10 minutes in selecting Greeting Cards.
- * Friends, classmates influence majority of the surveyed respondents in the selection of Greeting Cards.

- * The surveyed young persons attach importance to the verse/wording contained in the Greeting Cards.
- * One-third of the surveyed respondents have replied that they possess the knowledge regarding Custom-made cards and are willing to pay 25 per cent more for these cards than what they would pay for regular Greeting Cards.
- * More than Two-fifths of the young respondent seem to be aware of the e-cards/e-greetings and a majority among them reported that they have used e-cards/e-greetings in place of regular Greeting Cards.
- * Majority of the surveyed young respondents report that they got positive feedback on the Greeting Cards sent by them.

Summary - 2 : Customers' Response

Particulars	Percentage	Particulars	Percent
<i>General Occasions</i>		<i>Preferred Brand</i>	
Birthday	69.33	Archies	51.75
New Year	11.96	Hallmark	37.73
All the best	5.52	Others	10.52
Others	13.19	<i>Amount Spent in A Year</i>	
<i>Important Days</i>		Rs. 50 to Rs. 100	28.77
Friendship day	51.39	Rs. 100 to Rs. 150	25.26
Valentine's day	17.93	Others	45.97
Others	30.68	<i>Amount Willing to Spend</i>	
<i>Festivals</i>		Rs. 5 to Rs. 10	18.95
Diwali	42.35	Rs. 11 to Rs. 15	28.77
Pongal	23.72	Rs. 16 to Rs. 20	30.88
Christmas	21.94	Others	21.40
Others	11.99	<i>Time Spent on Selection</i>	
<i>Preferred Shop</i>		5 to 10 min.	48.77
Exclusive Greeting card Shop	72.87	11 to 20 min	36.49
Others	27.13	Above 20 min	14.74
<i>Reason-Particular Shop</i>		<i>Influencer</i>	
Availability of Varieties	47.31	Friends	45.01

(Summary-2 contd.)

Nearer	29.03	Brother/Sister	17.65
Others	23.66	Classmates	11.00
<i>Source of Money</i>		Others	26.34
Pocket money	28.53	<i>Factors Considered</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Parents money	48.90	Verses/wordings	1
Self earning	15.36	Design/Picture	2
Others	7.21	Quality	3*
		Price	4
		Brand	5

Based on the study, following suggestions are made :

- * The Retailers can introduce Customs-made cards with additional features like music, animation and scented effects etc., and at reasonable rates.
- * Greeting Cards with quotation from Bhagavat Gita, Buddha's teachings, Thirukkural, Swami Vivekananda's preachings, Sri Aurobindo and Divine mother's quotation can be introduced.
- * When day like Valentine Day, Boss Day, Father's Day, Mother's Day etc., are celebrated a day for young persons may be celebrated which may be called as YOUTH DAY. This day may be celebrated to reinforce friendship and communal harmony amongst the young persons of this country.

In Conclusion, it must be stated that there is a tremendous market for Greeting Cards in our country. Efforts have to be taken by our Indian manufacturers of Greeting Cards to emphasise our Indian culture and at the same time present it in an attractive manner so that the young persons may buy them. No doubt it is difficult to compete with renowned manufacturers who have entered our shores since liberalisation in the early 90's. But Indian manufacturers of Greeting cards can compete with the Multinational Corporations in this field and can achieve the desired results by offering quality products with sustained marketing efforts.

References

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