

Windows from Microsoft: Turning middle class homemaker into PC evangelists

Divya Sharma and Sumeer Mathur

WARC

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This case study describes how Microsoft targeted women in India to overturn a decline in household PCs sales, by explaining how PCs could benefit women.

- Sales in household PCs had fallen, despite technological advances, as smartphones became more popular and corporate PC sales remained stable.
- Most PC advertising was targeted at men, so having identified first-time PC buyers, Microsoft focussed on homemakers in a more female-friendly narrative.
- The 'Aunty, powered with the Windows PC!' campaign showed that technology can empower the middle-class Indian housewife to take on any situation, even one where she previously did not feel competent.
- The campaign, popularised with an SMS short code and TVCs, allowed consumers to enrol in a NIIT-led computer training programme, creating significance for the role of a PC in their lives.
- The campaign managed to get consumers' attention: purchase intent reached 81%, and the value perception of PCs surpassed that of smartphones amongst the target audience.

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Campaign details

Brand owner: Microsoft

Lead agency: JWT

Brand: Windows

Country: India

Industry: Household appliances, durables

Channels used: Cinema, Internet - display, Internet - general, Internet - microsites, Internet - search, Magazines - consumer, Mobile and apps, Newspapers, Other and ambient media, Point-of-purchase, in-store, Print - general, unspecified, Product sampling, Radio, Television

Media budget: 1 - 3 million

Executive summary

Personal computers (PCs) had been ambitious India's access to the world. However, smartphones soon entered the market and were cheaper, afforded privacy, and connected with a SIM rather than the customer having to buy a separate internet connection. This had resulted in a rapid decline for PC sales in India. However, Microsoft saw this as an opportunity to speak the language of category growth.

We identified those 'first-time buyers' still untouched by the relevance of a PC in their life. Our audience was further specified to target the homemaker, who saw the PC as a gadget used in a man's world. Most PC communication associated itself with the male workforce and didn't speak a female narrative.

Thus we created: 'Aunty, powered with the Windows PC!' to show that technology can empower the middle-class Indian housewife to take on any situation, even one where she previously did not feel competent.

The campaign, popularised with an SMS short code and TVCs, allowed consumers to enrol in a NIIT-led computer training programme, and create significance for the role of a PC in their lives.

The campaign resulted in 'Aunty' managing to get the consumers' attention. Purchase intent reached 81%, and the value perception of PCs surpassed that of smartphones amongst our target audience.

Market background and cultural context

A fall in household PC sales despite technological advancement

As technology advanced, formidable computing power had moved to increasingly affordable handheld devices. By 2012, desktop usage had come down by 50% in India, and that of mobiles had risen by 50%. Initially, PCs had been a privilege and only a few households owned one. In local markets, internet cafés that could afford unlimited connections became the hubs for access. By the turn of the millennium, however, a more affordable and convenient option began to take over – smartphones. These were cheaper, afforded users some privacy, and were not inhibited by infrastructural blocks.

More importantly, mobile internet worked wonders for consumers from Tier-2 cities and towns who considered PCs to be a big investment.

While corporate PC usage showed fairly robust upgrade numbers, PC sales were stagnant or falling. The problem was at the consumer end. Further investigation revealed that the household penetration of PCs in India was inordinately low. This presented an opportunity – a significant segment of first-time buyers had not yet been reached.

	Household PC penetration
USA	75.6%
India	8%

A category problem no individual brand could solve

PC laptop brands such as Lenovo and Dell did not target this low penetration. The drastic and unpleasant fall in the sale of PCs set alarm bells ringing, all the way from the local India office to the Microsoft headquarters in Redmond. The Microsoft Windows operating system (OS) works across multiple brands of PCs. It is the dominant OS for personal computing. The problem was a category problem, and Microsoft decided to step in to address it.

Objectives

We were well aware that we had taken on a unique category communication challenge in the face of a rapidly changing market. Additionally, we did not have the previous year's data or campaign effectiveness scores. We therefore set three clear and distinct objectives that we would aim to achieve with respect to our target audience – the first-time buyer segment. How we fared on these objectives would guide all our efforts.

- **Increase purchase intent**

As we wanted to increase sales of PCs amongst first-time buyers, purchase intent was the closest metric that could help us gauge the impact that the campaign had on consumers' willingness to purchase a PC. We hoped that the campaign would lead to at least a 50% purchase intent amongst our target group, and a 50% top-box consideration.

- **Increase the value perception of PCs amongst first-time buyers vs other personal devices used for computing**

We wanted to increase PC sales in comparison to other computing devices. The consumer can meet the demand for personal computing to some extent through smartphones, tablets and feature phones. We wanted the consumer to value a PC by at least twice as much as he valued a smartphone. This would be a good surrogate measure for differentiation, too.

- **Positive rub-off on the Windows OS**

Though we were helping build the category, we wanted some rub-off on the Microsoft brand as well. The communication would feature the new Windows 8 interface and we wanted a positive rub-off on the OS, making it a more favoured OS.

Insight and strategic thinking

A further look at the way the PC category had been built in India over the previous 10 years revealed two findings:

- Firstly, the PC is positioned as a workhorse for the male of the household. Brands in the category spoke a 'male' narrative. The PC was seen as a tool for productivity, for office-based work, and for being able to accomplish more by working faster.
- Secondly, purchasing household goods was a joint decision. So the household electronic goods that were purchased needed to be seen as valuable by both husband and wife.

However, this did not stand true for the PC. The PC category had never elaborated on why it's relevant to the home – especially to the homemaker. The PC never gets a vote from the wife, as she sees it as a purchase that will only benefit her husband and is irrelevant to her life as a homemaker. Thus, we identified housewives as a unique segment to target. The potential and value of PCs had to be shown to these first-time buyers to help them into the category.

Indians clearly did not see enough value in purchasing a PC for home usage, even though a basic PC costs less than a 32-inch TV set, and there was a large segment of consumers whose needs for personal computing were not being addressed by other computing devices. It was simply not in the consideration set of the consumer.

Strategic insight

Since its inception, the PC category had never addressed the gatekeeper of household consumption – namely the homemaker. This strategic insight guided the idea-development process. We decided to convince the middle-class Indian housewife of the virtues of the PC, and how it could 'enhance her world/family life', in order to position it as a household consumer item.

The big idea: 'Aunty powered by the Windows PC – turning the homemaker into a PC evangelist'

A middle-class housewife is respected for giving pragmatic advice relating to running a household; she is far-removed from the latest developments in technology. We used this aspect of the middle-class Indian housewife to create an 'Aunty' character that mirrored the middle-class Indian homemaker. She was an archetypal woman you might typically meet as she carries her groceries, or picks her kids up at the school bus stop. She is the last person you would expect to use technology, and use it smartly.

We looked for instances where a PC could make a difference to her. Under her persevering and non-complaining demeanor, we found many situations that make her feel less than equal, where she is forced to turn to cumbersome traditional methods.

Typically, she is less educated and relies on others to help with her children's schooling. She is unable to offer suggestions pertaining to careers and jobs, as her world is limited to her home. Even in areas of traditional interest like matchmaking, she has to take the word of assorted astrologers and 'pandits'.

We turned each of these situations; ones that make a middle-class Indian housewife feel small, into areas that she could dominate if she had a personal computer – thus empowering the 'Aunty' in every home!

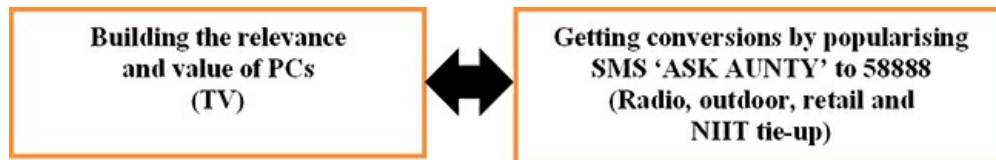
We turned her into a recent PC convert, one who is excited about PCs, and gave her a new-found ability to contribute in many areas of her life. The idea directly addressed the communication challenge of making PCs relevant to Indian middle-class households, by appealing to the key stakeholder – the woman.

Implementation, including creative and media development

Our communication focused on how to get middle-income Indians to see the PC as a valuable household item, after it had been positioned as a workhorse for the professional or man of the house for a decade. Our communication strategy aimed to bring alive the campaign idea: 'Aunty powered by the Windows PC' at all touchpoints, thus we customised it to mediums that would be relevant to the homemaker.

We created a real, relatable character, one that resonated with the middle-class Indian housewife. 'Aunty' became our key brand property, to be used across all media. She was both an ambassador and a torture test for PC adoption.

To take Aunty forward, our communication strategy rested on two pillars:



Building the relevance and value of PCs

Television was chosen as the favoured medium to reach the homemaker. Three distinct TV spots were created for GEC channels popular with homemakers. 'Aunty powered by the Windows PC' was then portrayed as offering the solutions to everyday problems, and awareness and relevance for consumers was built by depicting realistic situations faced by the middle-class Indian housewife.

Getting conversions

We created and popularised an 'ASK AUNTY' short code: '58888', and carried it across all touchpoints and media. Next, we tied up with NIIT to offer consumers a free session in which to learn the workings of the Windows 8 OS. SMS replied to those who used the short code, and helped people book a free session at NIIT seamlessly.

Microsoft



Set your child
on the path to success.
With a Windows 8 PC.



Book your free demo at an NIIT centre.
SMS 'ASK AUNTY' to 58888*

*SMS charges applicable. Free sessions are subject to first come first serve only.
Limited seats available.

 Windows 8

(Above: An education leaflet for Windows 8, as showcased at NIIT)

Radio: We leveraged the popularity of radio channels amongst the middle-class Indian housewife by creating three radio spots that complemented the three scenarios from the TVCs, and ended with the SMS short code for consumers to engage further.

The concept of 'Computer Aunty' was integrated with popular radio shows on *Big FM* as a customised programme, where RJs would ask Aunty everyday questions about life on behalf of the consumers and listeners, and reveal how a Windows PC could enhance their life and help them achieve their goals.

Demo films: We created four demo films, depicting Aunty using analogies from her everyday world to demonstrate the new Windows 8 OS. These films were broadcast in cinema theatres, at NIIT, and were also used online.

Digital: We chose digital to target the other members of the family who were already online, either at work or elsewhere:

- **Display:** Emails reached out to the target audience based on demographic information on key email portals. Fixed banner placements were created on top tech review sites, to influence consumers looking for specifications and expert reviews, before buying PCs/laptops. Videos were created and uploaded on YouTube to drive awareness and user engagement. Strategic partnerships were also established with TOI Tech and Rediffmail to ensure targeted presence on these portals.
- **Search:** Opportunities on Yahoo, Google and Bing were leveraged to drive contextual relevance, and reach out to an audience that is actively seeking relevant information on PCs.

Mobile: SMS-based services reached out to the target audience and drove traffic to retail. Mobile partnerships were established with Airtel mBazaar (a subscription-based mcommerce service where users could access offers on different brands), Latlong (an SMS-based store locator used to drive customers to their nearest Croma store) and IRCTC (where the brand message was broadcast via the Indian Railways Enquiry Service).

Performance against objectives

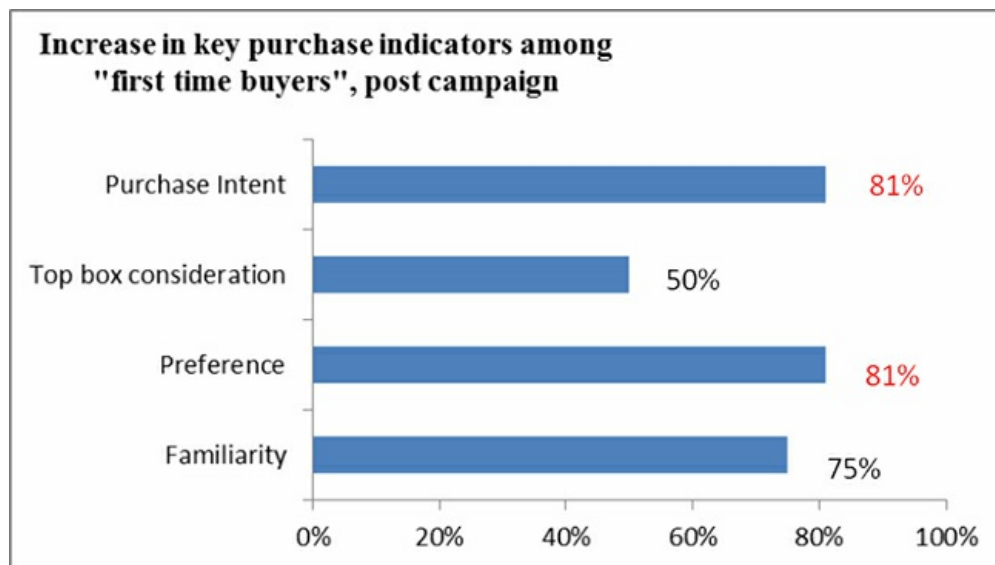
Overall the campaign recognition was at 86% amongst first-time buyers

This number was exceptional, given that the market was cluttered with communications from individual brand names such as HP, Lenovo, Apple, Dell and Indian brands such as Wipro.

It was proof that 'Aunty' had managed to get consumers' attention and break through the clutter

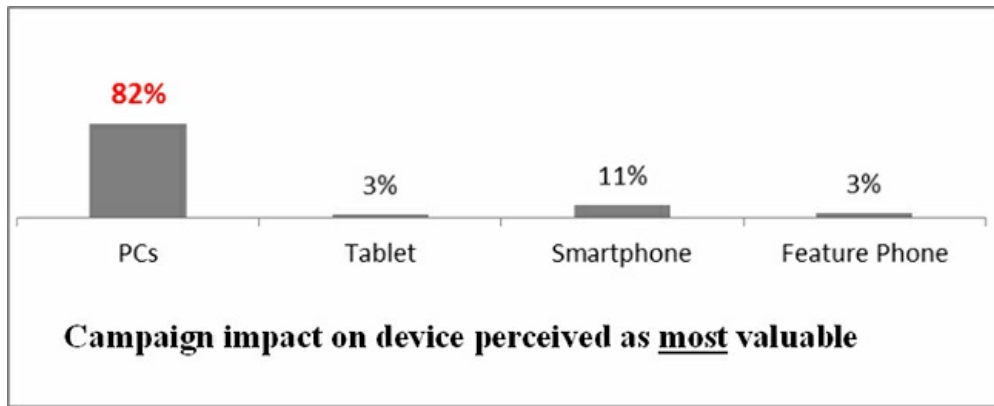
We had managed to surpass our specified objectives:

- **Increase in purchase intent:** Purchase intent had risen to 81% against a target of 50%. We also achieved our target of 50% top-box consideration. Additionally, preference grew to 81% and familiarity to as high as 75%. All of these were significant indicators, showing that the campaign had made a real impact on first-time buyers.



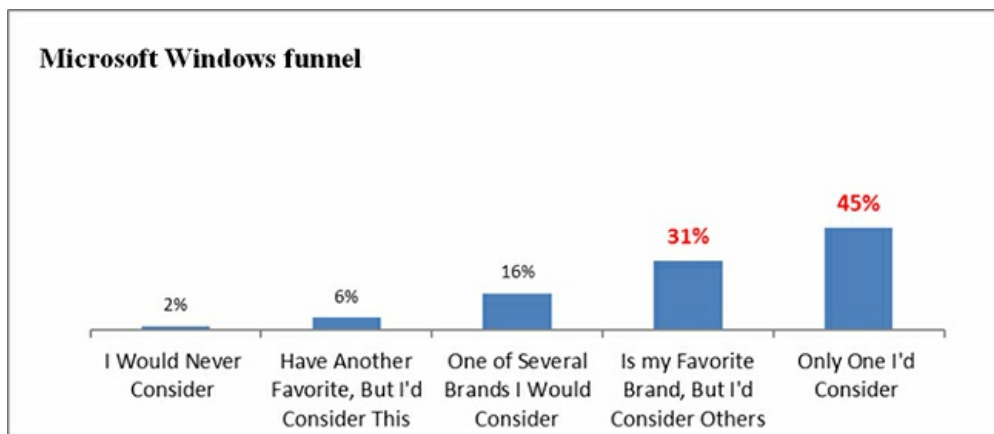
(Source: Microsoft/CMG Research and Insights Report, 2013)

- **Increase the value perception of PCs amongst first-time buyers vs other personal devices used for computing:** This was a key statistic – achieving this implied that the 'value' of the PC amongst our target audience had increased. The value of PCs rose to a heartening 82% (more than x7 the value of the smartphone).



(Source: Microsoft/CMG Research and Insights Report, 2013)

- **Positive rub-off on the Microsoft Windows OS:** The communication featured the latest OS from Windows, and for 45% of consumers it became the 'only one they would consider'. It was also in the consideration set for another 31%. So at the overall level, Microsoft was favoured by 76% of our target audience.



(Source: Microsoft/CMG Research and Insights Report, 2013)

Lessons learned

In a market that seems to have become obsolete, identifying a previously untapped consumer group within the same household can yield a fresh perspective and use for the brand.

To break the existing male narrative and belief that the PC can only be associated with work, we used the 'Aunty' icon to speak to our consumer from a relatable perspective, and make her see the relevance of the product in her world.

Brands that span multiple formats can take the lead in building and sometimes rebuilding categories.

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Americas: 2233 Wisconsin Ave NW, Suite 535, Washington, DC 20007, United States - Tel: +1 202 778 0680

APAC: 20A Teck Lim Road, 088391, Singapore - Tel: +65 3157 6200

EMEA: 85 Newman Street, London, United Kingdom, W1T 3EU - Tel: +44 (0)20 7467 8100

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