

The Role and Impact of Indian Youth in Purchase Decision Making Process

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Abstract

Since the Second World War over, orientation of doing business, targeting market and approaching to customers, got totally changed. This was the era where business houses had to redesign their business strategies. Supply was not the problem rather demand was the problem. It was the conversion of profit orientation to customer addition. Marketer had to come out from the office or psychological and physical fence of doing business. Understanding market and customer and accordingly designing and offering and then seeking feedback was the trend started in first half of 20th century.

To enhance understanding of consumer behaviour, this paper focused on development and implementation of consumer behaviour strategies. Today's consumers have access to any product at any time and from any place.

Keywords: youth, consumption pattern, market behaviour, black box, market of children, drivers of changes, purchasing decisions etc.

Introduction

Possibly the most challenging concept in the marketing is to understand the buying behavior. The attitude of Indian consumers has undergone a major transformation over the last few years. The Indian consumer today wants to lead a life full of luxury and comfort. Consumer wants to live in present and does not believe in savings for the future. An important and recent development in India's consumerism is the emergence of the rural market for several basic consumer goods. The Indian middle class has provided a big boost to the consumer culture in the last decade and it is expected that their buying behavior will continue to change in the coming future. Due to fast growth of the services sector per capita income of people of India is also showing amenable increase. The number of middle class is increasing due to another fact that people are fast shifting from agriculture to the services and industry sector where growth prospects are reasonably high as compared to the agriculture

sector which is showing slow growth. The consumption pattern of a country depends on liberalization of economic policies, buying habits of youths, financial independence at a young age, increase in number of nuclear families and increase in media exposure of the people. Days are gone when the behaviour and buying habits were been monitored by elders in the family. Now youths are playing important roles in family purchase. The tastes and preferences of the current generation are changing rapidly.

Changing Mindset of Indian Consumer

The current generation does not mind paying extra for better facilities and ambience. Another major factor that has led to increased consumerism is the growth of credit culture in India. The Indian consumer does not feel shy to purchase products on credit and pay tomorrow for what they use or buy today. This tendency has led to a tremendous increase in purchase of

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homes, cars, two-wheelers and consumer durables/goods. The market for luxury products in India is also climbing at an astonishing rate as compared to a decade ago when it was almost negligible. The reason behind this is that the purchasing power of people of India is rising very steeply. The Indian consumer today is highly aware about the product, price, quality and the options available with him. The purchasing is done by keeping all these factors in mind. Today, price is not the only consideration as it was a few years back when prices played a major role in purchasing. Marketers are striving hard to capture this ever increasing Indian middle class as they form the bulk of Indian consumers.

Historical aspects of marketing cannot be separated from consumer behaviour aspects. It is the strength of the marketing that it has shifted its reliance on other disciplines as well as its focus of understanding. The classical schools of marketing thoughts relied on the social science such as sociology,

economics and anthropology and focused on aggregate market behaviour. It opened the new gateway of managerial school of marketing thought which the focus of attention and understanding shifted to the individual customers while social sciences disciplines continue to dominate marketing. Moreover, marketing began to borrow more and more from behavioural sciences, but it kept its vigilance and watch on individual customers. And this gave birth to behavioural schools of marketing thoughts. More recently, marketing has begun to shift its attention away from the individual customers and concentrate on the markets. It also relying more on the traditional social sciences and less on the behavioural sciences. It seems that each marketing era has motivated specific types of consumer behavior research; thereby shape it history with respect to the theory development. Marketing strategies and tactics are required at every stage of consumer behaviour. See figure-1.

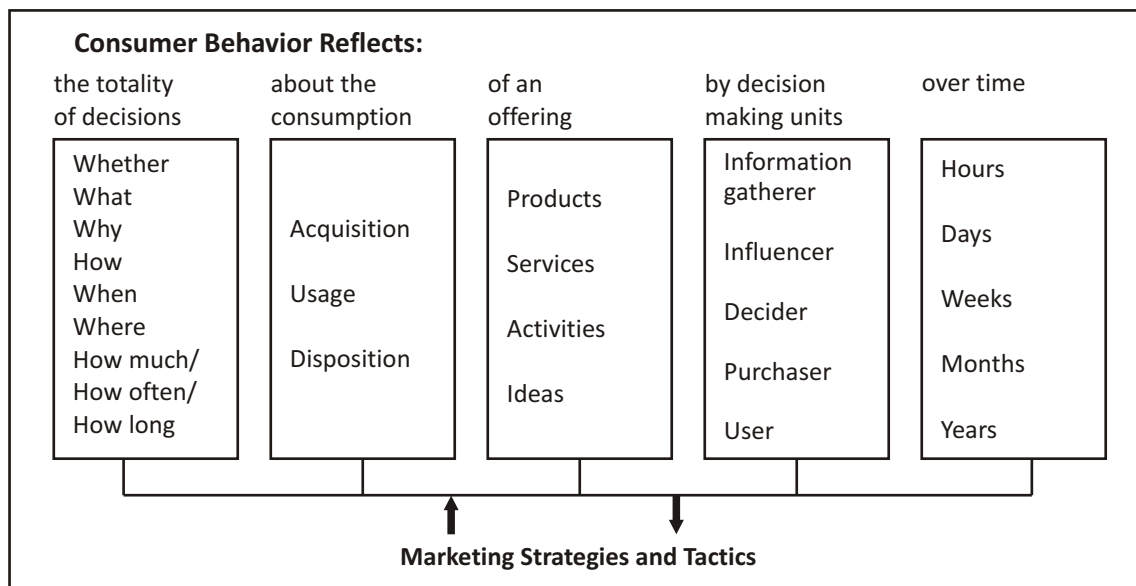


Figure 1: Consumer Behaviour

Consumer in the Center

Evolution of the marketing thought in the 19th century is documented by Bartels (1962). And these marketing thoughts were influenced by concepts of demand theory in microeconomics, spatial markets and trading areas in economic geographic, and by metro vs. non-metro market definitions provided by economic anthropology. Adweek's Marketing week (1994) has given the scene of vanishing culture of housewives and replacement by working wives. David M Potter (1954) presented the situation of consumers with diverse nature and ambitions. Cyndee Miller (1995) has described the 80 different natures of women as a purchaser in different capacities. Fitzgerald (1994) has described the role of life style in deciding

the consumer behavior factor. The advertising age (1995) has given the reasons for developing different consumer images. Maxine Wilkie (1995) has advocated that Demographic plays a vital role for deciding the culture of consumer.

Howard and Sheth (1969) explained how consumer's buying behavior influenced by internal and external factors. They explained that human mind is BLACK BOX which receives stimuli. This stimulus creates perception in the mind of consumer which implied the kind of learning - favorable or unfavorable. This will give the output in the form of acceptance or rejection. Basically this model is based on Stimulus - Response theory.

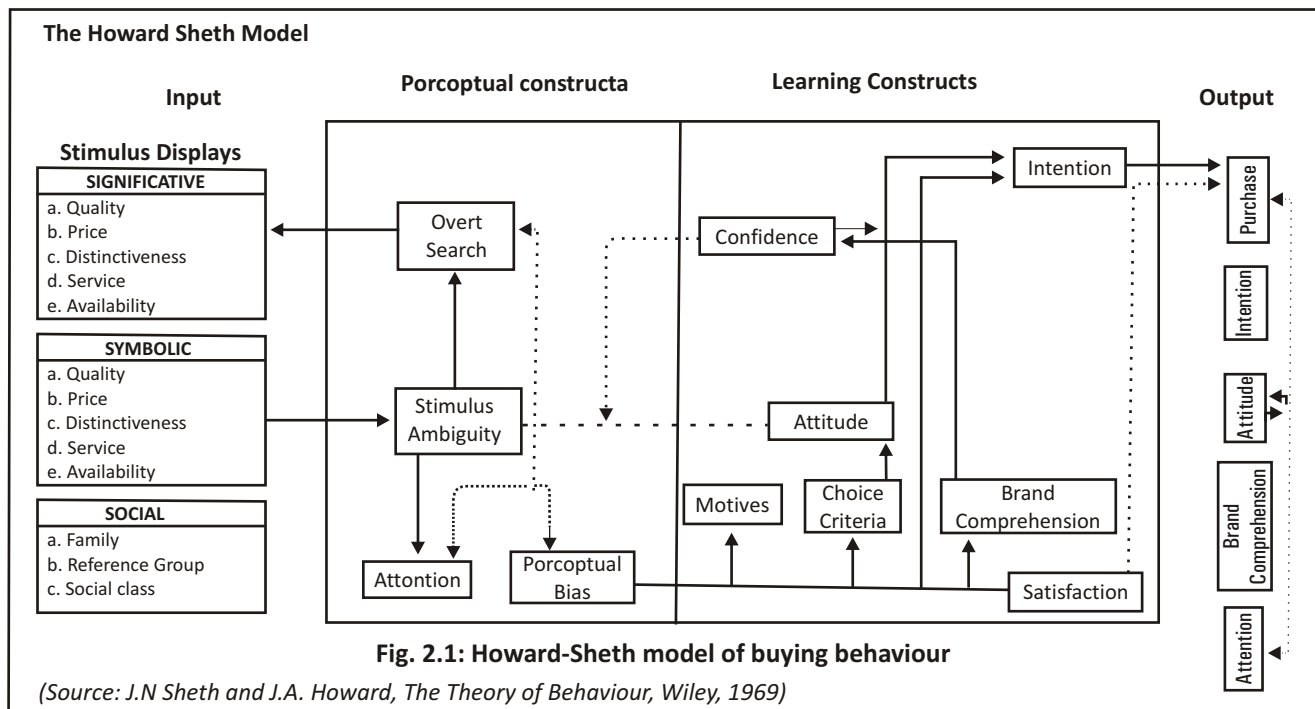


Figure 2: Consumer Behaviour-Internal and External Factor

Indian Consumer - A Black Box in the dense forest

With latest Population Census of India in 2011, the total number of people living in India has been estimated at 1,210,193,422 (1.21 billion). Growing by the current and population growth, India will cross China Population by 2030. By that time, India's population is estimated to be 1.53 billion. Population of states in India like Uttar Pradesh is more than many countries in the world. So India has witness a major growth in its population in the last 10 years.

Total Male Population in India in 2011 was estimated at 623 million as compared to female which was 567 million. The sex ratio in India is decent and improving year by year. In the last 10 years, it has improved a lot in many states and rural areas. However a long way to go for the states likes Haryana and Punjab where is quiet low. The sex ratio of India in the year 2011 is 940 females/1000 males. The Literacy Rate in India is showing major signs of improvement in the last 20 years. According to Census of India 2011, India Literacy rate stands at 74.04. Kerala is top state of India with over 90 percent of its population are literates.

More than 50% of India's population is less than 25 years of age, compared to other developed countries, where the majority of the population is ageing baby boomers. India is among the world's youngest nations with a median age of 25 years as compared to 43 in Japan and 36 in the US.

- In 2025, more than 55 per cent of the population would be of working age.
- With a large working population, India can continue to be competitive globally.

The consumerist age-bracket (ages of between 15 to 64 years) as a proportion of the Indian population is growing rapidly and will represent more than 65% of the population in 2015. In other words, the ratio of working population to non-working population, defined as the dependency ratio, will increase in the near future. This will increase the overall purchasing capacity in the country, providing further buoyancy to the retail sector. Members of the consumerist age-bracket are the most likely to prefer and adapt to modern retailing, assuming that they generate adequate incomes and reside in urban areas.

Rapid economic growth has resulted in greater incomes for the booming Indian middle class. Disposable incomes are expected to increase at an average of 8.5% per annum till 2015. Per capita income in India has been steadily rising from USD460 in 2002 to USD620 in 2005. Higher numbers of working women have also increased both consumption and purchasing power; the population of working women has increased from 22% in 1991 to 26% in 2001. With increasing disposable incomes and the highest ever consumer confidence levels, Indian consumers' ability and desire to spend is growing rapidly. Total private final consumption in India amounted to USD420 billion in 2005 compared to USD382 billion in 2003. It has been growing at almost 10% annually over the last few years.

Spending Habits and Consumption Pattern

Food, beverages and tobacco are the largest single component of private final consumption (around 40%). Its share has been steadily declining from 48% in 2000 to 43% in 2005, mainly due to changes in consumers' spending preferences towards more non-essential, lifestyle-oriented purchases. Indian consumers'

lifestyles and shopping habits are rapidly evolving. Discretionary spending witnessed a 16% increase for the urban upper and middle classes. Lifestyle habits are shifting from austerity to complete self-indulgence and Indians are now unapologetic about spending lavishly on non-essential goods such as luxury watches, cars, hi-tech products etc

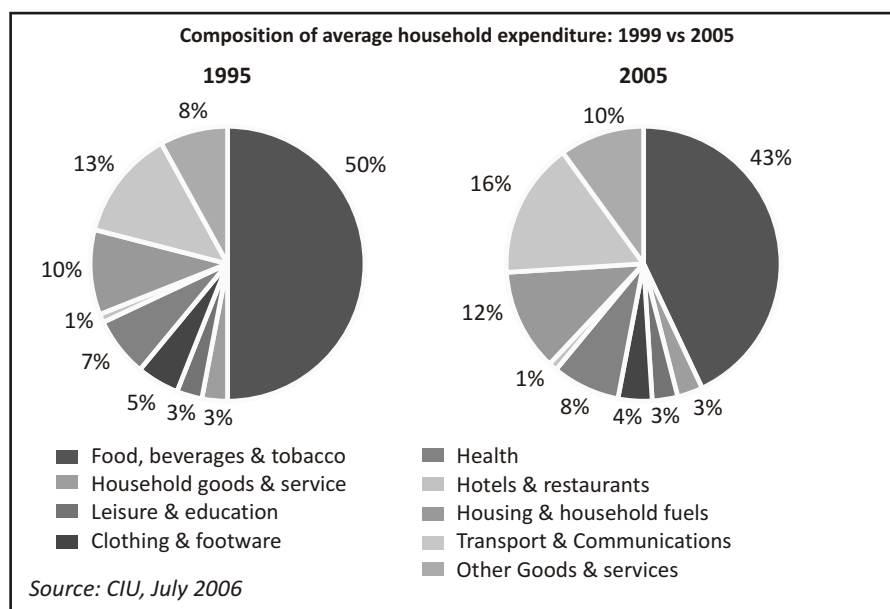


Figure 3: Average Household Expenditure

There is an easier and soft acceptance of luxury and an increased readiness to experiment with mainstream fashion. Expenditure on personal care items and clothing has increased since there is greater emphasis on "looking and feeling good". Similarly upcoming shopping malls offering multiplexes, restaurants and bars, video game centers, etc in both large and smaller cities, shopping has evolved from a need-based activity to a leisure pastime. Therefore, expenses on activities, such as watching movies and eating out, have increased considerably. With the growth of middle class families, home textiles and electronics/ consumer durables are increasingly becoming a means to demonstrate prosperity while at the same time creating a comfortable home environment. Finally, credit friendliness, drop in interest rates and easy availability of finance have changed mindsets of this segment. Capital expenditure such as jewellery, houses, electronic gadgets and cars is shifting to becoming redefined as consumer revenue expenditure. The number of credit cards issued has grown at a CAGR of 26% in the last 5 years to touch 15.5 million by March 2005.

Indian consumers' purchasing habits, style and preferences are evolving towards a strong predilection for brands. Consumers equate brands with an intangible value for which they are

willing to pay premium prices. There is a high degree of differential pricing structures between branded and unbranded goods in India. There are also differences between urban and rural consumers. Rural consumers are economically, socially and psychologically different from their urban counterparts and are definitely more price-sensitive. To address this issue, most FMCG companies have introduced products (such as tea, shampoos, biscuits) in smaller packs and sachets to make the product more affordable for rural consumers and obtain a share of wallet.

Literature Review

Research on family decision making has been largely confined to spouses, who have been considered as the relevant decision making unit in a family. However, the role of third party influences, such as young of the family, on decision making strategies and negotiations, is essential to taking a broader view of the relevant unit of analysis. Traditionally, women were seen to be the purchasing agents for the family. Nonetheless, increasing participation of women in the workforce has prompted a shift in this role as youth are increasingly the "buyers" for the entire family. Even in families where women do not work, youth are observed to share this role with their

mothers. Youth enjoy greater discretion not only in making routine consumption decisions for the family but also in pestering their parents to buy other products desired by them. Contemporary researchers express that youth constitute a major consumer market, with direct purchasing power for snacks and sweets, and indirect purchase influence while shopping for big-ticket items (Halan, 2002; Singh, 1998). In addition to this, 54% of India is estimated to be under the age of 25 (Bansal, 2010).

Children constitute three different markets

They sometimes either purchase a product themselves or select the product before it is purchased by the parents. For other products, such as ones which are used by the entire family unit, they may influence purchases made by the parents. There are some products where youth wield direct influence or pester power by overtly specifying their preferences and voicing them aloud. Figure-4 shows the roles and involvement of children.

Three Different Markets of Children

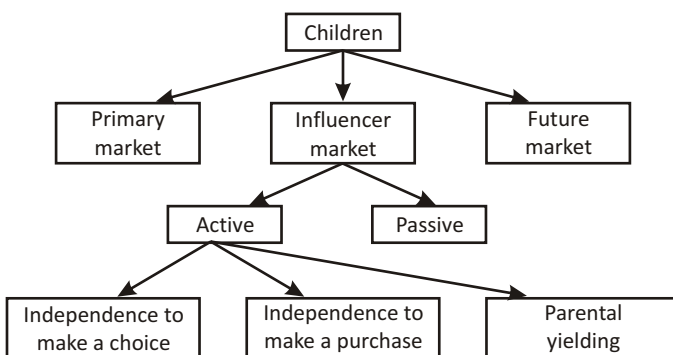


Figure 4: Role of Children

For other products, parents' buying patterns are affected by prior knowledge of the tastes and preferences of their children. This 'passive dictation' of choice is prevalent for a wide variety of daily consumed product items as well as products for household consumption. Also, decision making in households is seen to change with the mere presence of children. The nature of joint decisions in couple decision making units and family decision making units is seen to be different (Filiatrault and Ritchie, 1980). It is also observed that children are socialized by their parents to act as rational consumers. After years of direct or indirect observation of parental behavior in the marketplace, they gradually acquire relevant consumer skills from their parents.

The amount of influence exerted by children varies by product category and stage of the decision making process. For certain

products they are instrumental in initiating a purchase, while for others, they make the final selections themselves. The purchasing act is governed by how they have been socialized to act as consumers. Family, peers and media are key socializing agents for children wherein family-specific characteristics such as parental style, family's Sex Role Orientation (SRO), and patterns of communication play key roles. The structure of Indian families has been previously characterized as joint families with traditional SRO (that is, the husband predominated in all family affairs). However, owing to influences from the West, the structure of Indian families has changed to nuclear or extended families (nuclear families plus grandparents). The Indian families have become more modern in SRO, such that the decision making has become more egalitarian (Chadha, 1995; Dhobal, 1999). Compared to this, the West is experiencing an increase in the number of single parent or female-headed households (Ahuja and Stinson, 1993; Mangleburg et al., 1999). Such a shift in family composition and structure has a bearing on the strength in the role that children are expected to play as buyers in the family.

*Your children were vexation to your youth;
But mine shall be a comfort to your age*

-William Shakespeare

Youth: The Indian

Today's marketing framework and brand positioning framework are not in relation with the youth of young countries like India where the average age is 24 and the models and framework made for the western countries are not successful in India as the response to brands, products and other consumption stimulus are many a times different. There is a new emphasis in the world of businesses '*today is idea of co-creation*'. As in today's world all kinds of distinctions are blurring. The personal is merging with the professional; entertainment is merging with play and family with friends, so we can say that the *today's youth is living there lives like a large inter connected web*. As fairly quoted by Shakespeare in his famous drama King Richard-III, If consumer behaviour is black box, understanding youth and predicting their action again a herculean task.

Most of the models and framework have a western origin ,so the image of the youth made in the mind of any marketer is of a person who is "Rebellion, adventurous, music and other symbol of 'cool'", due to which the model made is always trying to find what is 'cool' amongst the youth. India has a large consumption population around 50 million in the age band of 25-45 yrs. *But most of them behave more like teenagers who are just about 15*; this is because the Indian consumers new found freedoms, avenues and affordability post liberalization

after 1991. So to fulfill their desires of being 'youthful', this has caused the brands to target 'youthful' (being a larger market) and hence the real youth as a casualty. There is nothing for the youth to call is as their own.

Key Drivers of Change

There has been a definitive and the irreversible shift that are taking place in the society at large-media, politics, the environment, entertainment, marketing and branding, consumer behavior and attitudes.

1. **Discontinuous Ways for Discontinuous Desires:** There has been a big change in the thinking and attitude of the today's youth with respect to the larger India; they want to fly without looking back at the ground, wanting to achieve discontinuous dreams, ability to experiment without a fear of consequences.
2. **Shifting Locus of Morality:** It has shifted from being socially appropriate to what's personally useful. The value system of the youth is designed by them to help them achieve what they want i.e. small shortcuts, some manipulation, a little greed is ok.
3. **Seeking Partners in Crime:** A generation seeking certain legitimization. They want brands to play as a buddy and to set their mannerisms that belong to their world and not outside. Their role model is a mish mash of various qualities that they admire in the successful heroes of the society or from their own personal life.

Social networking sites are really penetrating in India with frenetic pace. Today many smart companies are innovating big ways for Social Media Optimization for their Product or brands. The main purpose for this modern companies enhancing mass awareness, motivate potential customers, boost Sales Customer Base. Social media was widely used by various political teams in the election 2009 for their political campaigns. It has been noticed that Facebook has superseded Orkut in its coverage and mass appealing. Users joining social networking sites are generally driven towards finding likeminded people popularly termed as friends or fans. Social media is also greatly used by gennext from photo sharing or video sharing capabilities to blogging, from instant messaging to chatting.

Smart marketers have found social networking sites helping them to find talent, build brand awareness, searching new customers conducting brand intelligence and market research. Major concerns for Indian youths using social media are identity, privacy, community formation and sophistication in their style.

Research Objective

The purpose of this research paper is:

- To find the impact of the youth on their parents.
- To identify the involvement of the Indian youth in the decision making process for purchase.
- To find which all category of products and services do the youth hold the decision making power.

Research Methodology

The research design selected for this study is descriptive. This research paper explains the changes occurred in consumer behavior of India due to the impact of the youth. The work intends to cover new facts about the change in the decision making due to the easy availability of information to the youth and changes it has caused in the consumer behavior as wholes. The synthesis of this research is based on the primary data collected from questionnaire sent via e-mail to Indian college students aged between 18 and 24 the students studying in colleges. These students were residents of different states from India, who were studying in various colleges in the capital region. As the students in the capital region of India are more brand and status conscious owing to their greater exposure. In this research an effort has been put to find out which member of family has the greater influence in the purchase of particular products or services either the husband, or wife or the children or they have equal influence.

As all the students were fluent in English language, the English version of the questionnaire was prepared. The sample size was 250, and usable were 210 questionnaires for the analysis. The remaining questionnaires were illegible or incomplete and therefore could not be used for the analysis. The sample consisted of larger cross-section of male population than females. This may be attributed to the fact that in higher studies (at graduate and post-graduate levels) the ratio of females is less than the males.

Findings and Analysis

Consumer involvement is a motivational state that may be used to comprehend and predict consumer's attitudes towards products. So as to find the relation between the decision making for the purchase of the product and the involvement for youth, the respondents were asked to fill a questionnaire for the purpose. From the below graph it is found that the decision making power in half of the respondents still stayed with the parents or the head of the family and the other half of the respondents said they have the influence in the decision making for the purchase of the products. See Figure-5

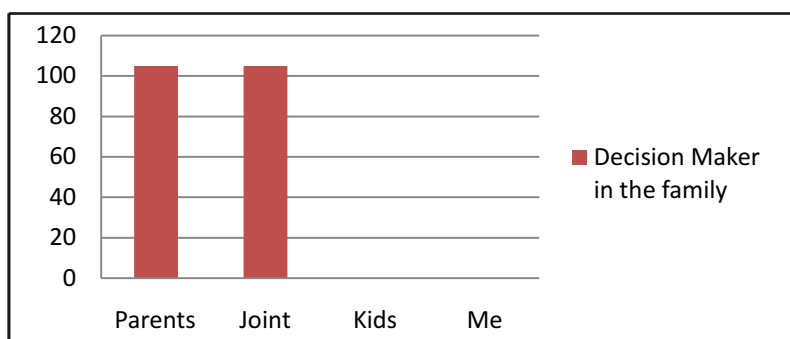


Figure 5: Decision Maker in the family

This very well shows that there is a large influence of the youth in the decision making for the purchase of products and services. As the respondents were college students, so being dependent on the parents, that might be a reason for the lack of influence in decision making process in the other half. The respondents were asked regarding their preference for the search of information on different products and services, it was found that digital advertisement have the highest share in providing the respondents with information regarding products and services, here the advertisement hold a higher share i.e. 43% and internet having a share of 36% this shows that due to higher connectivity and easy access to internet youth are preferring internet for the search of information and this also tells that different advertisement campaign done by companies for their products and services have been able to capture the attention of the youth very well, as the advertisement are able

to connect to the youth and connects with them in their daily life.

Consumer Information Search

For finding the relation between the Indian youth and changes in the consumer decision making it was important to know that the parents/the head of the family included them for the search of information, it was noticed that 64% of the respondents said yes i.e. they were involved in the search for information by their parents, this gives a clear indication that now parents/head of the family see the young of the family as a valuable source of information and use the information provided by them for making the purchasing decision for products and services.

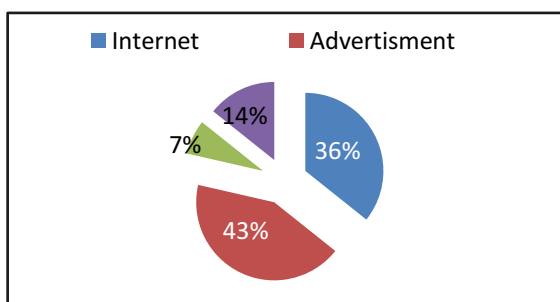


Figure 6: Respondents preference for the search of information

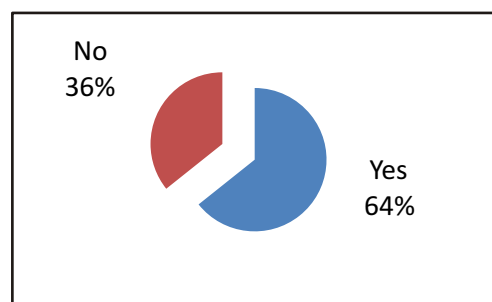


Figure 7: Preference of Parents for the search of information from Respondents

Findings also suggest that the influence of internet was there i.e. 79% of the respondents agreed and 21% strongly agreed this states that with the easy access to internet the youth have been able to connect with each other and are able to gain information easily there by influenced in one way or another. Respondents were enquired on which all different product and

services categories were they making decisions from the below graph. Majority of the respondents said that they had the ability to make the purchase decision for FMCG products, Restaurant& Hotels, Travel Products, Electronic Items and Apparels and footwear. See Figure-8

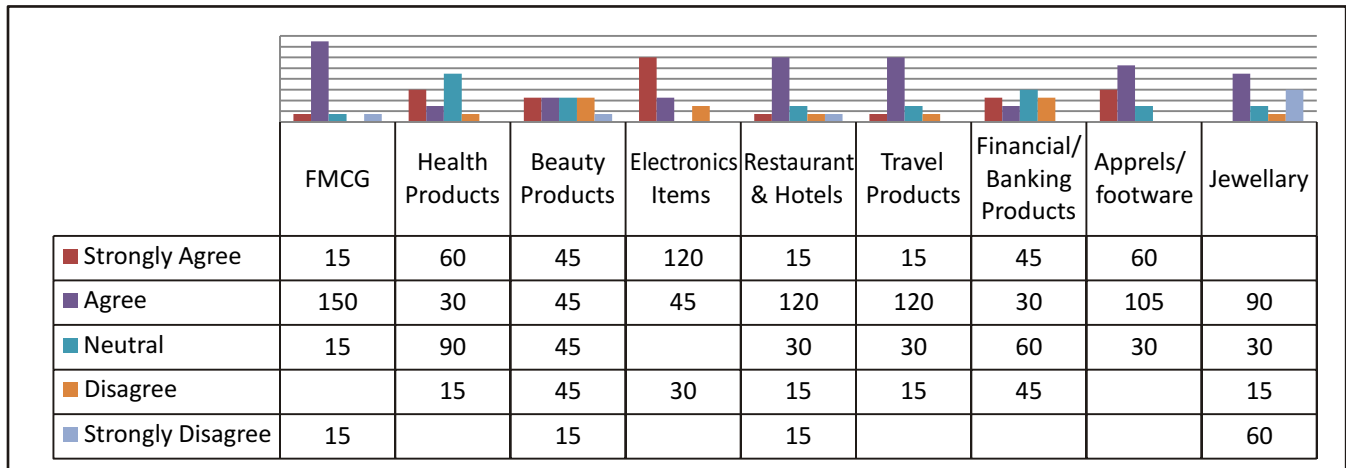
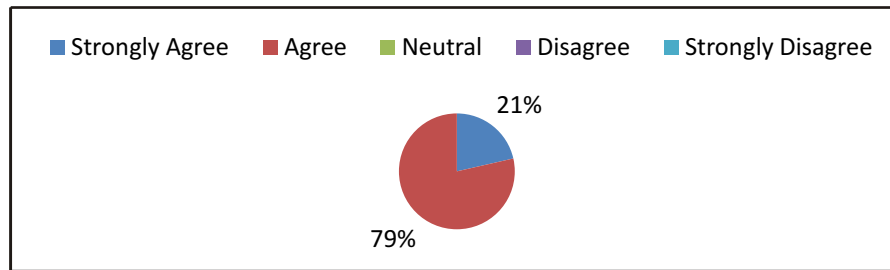


Figure 8: Change in purchasing decision due to Internet

By the above graph we are able to see that the influence in making decision on majority of products and services has increased i.e. the suggestions given by the young of the family are being considered, while making purchase decision in many products and services (Figure 9). We also found that the experiences and opinion of the young for particular product and services were given a serious thought by the parents/head of

the family, while making decision about product and services, as 64% of the respondents agreed, 29% strongly agreed where as 7%, apparently for the electronic product the parents were dependent on the young members of the family to provide them with the right suggestions on the purchase of this category products.

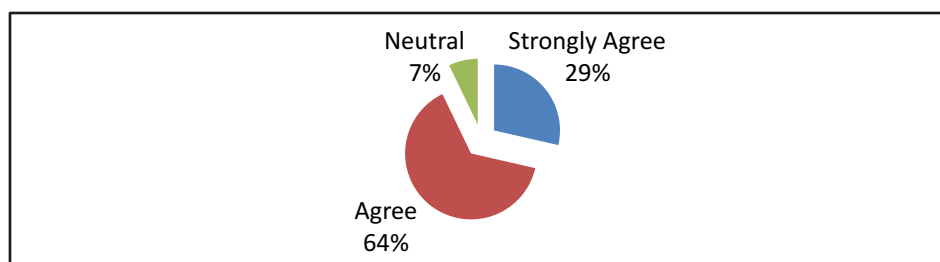


Figure 9: Respondents Opinion/Experiences effect on family Purchase Decision

Preference for branded Products

This gives us insights in to the parents thinking i.e. the parents understand as the young of the family are up to date with the resent technology advancements and are the right source of information with the electronic products purchase. With the entry of large global brands in India, brand awareness and realization about the self have gained importance among consumers. Growing consciousness about the self and the role

of brands in enhancing the consumer's image are being recognized in developing countries. In India, liberalization has not only brought western brands amongst the Indian consumers, but has also introduced more of a western wear and lifestyle. From the views of the respondents we were able to find out that that 72% of the total respondents preferred branded products, this shows brands have become a very important part in building the young generations image. As the chart below clearly shows preferences of the respondents for

branded products, the young generation trusts friends and alternative media as the major source of information before taking any decision (right from selecting the best career option

to the product purchase). Prior to purchase they considers as assets (such as bikes, car, mobile phone, laptops or PC, branded apparel, etc).

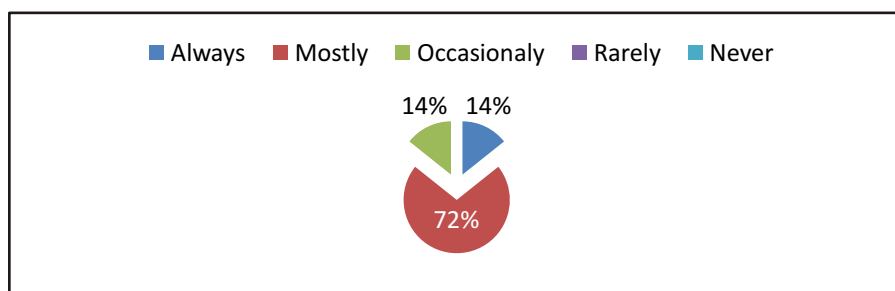


Figure 10: Respondent Preference for branded Products

They will search reliable information over internet (blogs, social media, news clips, discussion forums, consumer complaint sites, et cetera), will discuss with peer-opinion leaders among their friendship circle, listen to the experiences (with that product) of their close friends, check the credibility and coolness of that product in media (advertisements and promotions) and then convince parents to access the product, from the respondents view we found that majority of the respondents views or opinion for product were affected by the peers opinion on the particular product as seen from the below graph and the opinion of the elders had no effect on the respondents view or opinion. This gives us a fair idea as the young generation trusts the opinion of people in the same age group, as they are the one who are able to understand the need and requirement for the particular product and service much better than the elders or younger member of the family.

Purchase Decision

The generations are compromising with each-other and co-existing over the similar values, attitude and ideologies. The youth doesn't mind sharing the cool with parents or elder generation. We can see, at various social networks in India, the youth are sharing the same network as their parents and even allowing them to become friends in the friend's list. the youth has high respect for their parent for "how they have struggled and achieved success in spite of minimal career options available during their time.; Moreover, they have revealed that their aspiring icons in life is not any celebrity but their father or big brother as shown in figure 11.

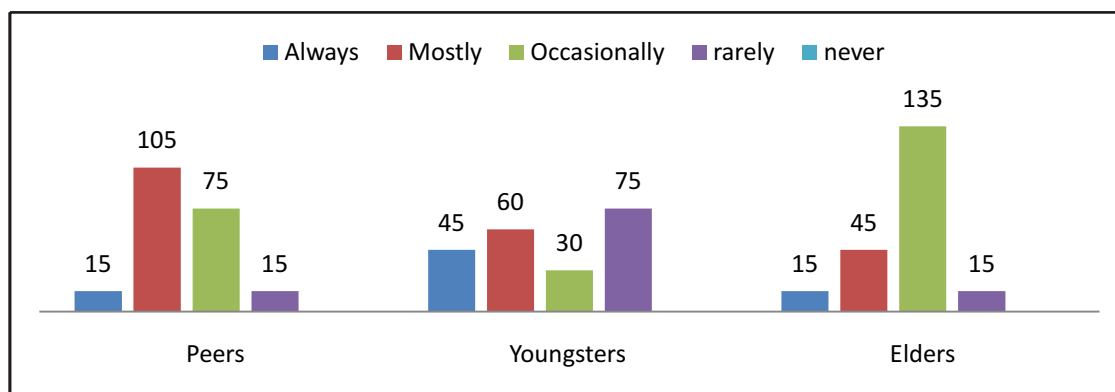


Figure 11: Effects on Respondents Purchase Decision

Respondents were asked the question as to "How do they see the brands used by their parents and do they consider those brands cool?" As from the pie chart it can be concluded that 50% of the respondents agreed to the fact that the brands used by their parents are considered cool and they will prefer to use them, this shows us youth likeness and respect they have for

their parents and how they see them, from this we also find that the view keep in the mind as the Rebellion was the key starting point for adventure, music and other symbols of 'cool'. This model of tapping youth presupposes a larger microcosm of youth versus old. Since the behavioral distance between the youth and the others in these societies is significant, it's easy to

rally youth around such points of difference, "A generation always pitted against its seniors", is in the view of the western context.

Conclusion

With increasing disposable incomes and the highest ever consumer confidence levels, Indian consumers' ability and desire to spend is growing rapidly. Total private final consumption in India amounted to USD420 billion in 2005 compared to USD382 billion in 2003. It has been growing at almost 10% annually over the last few years.

There is an easier acceptance of luxury and an increased willingness to experiment with mainstream fashion. Expenditure on personal care items and clothing has increased since there is greater emphasis on "looking and feeling good". Similarly with new shopping malls offering multiplexes, restaurants and bars, video game centers, etc in both large and smaller cities, shopping has evolved from a need-based activity to a leisure pastime. Therefore, expenses on activities, such as watching movies and eating out, have increased considerably.

From the above finding, we can clearly analyze that the young generation "Generation Y" is a very important and key part for the changes that have come in the impact on the parents purchase decisions as whole, with the new sense of freedom and by the easy access and ability to gather information by means of being connected with others, has given the youth of the nation the ability to influence decision made by the parents/head of the family. By this we can say that there has been a considerable Impact on the consumer behavior due to the youth of the nation. Now the Indian youth is considered a very important part in parent decision making process and is considered an important influencer as well as a decision maker in the family.

Limitations of the Study

The study though being done only on the colleges in the NCR, takes into account the generalizations and repeatability of processes to be considered for making of result. Lastly some obvious limitations of the study are:

- A short period for the collection of response. The youth of the rural India have not been taken in to consideration, if the rural youth are taken in to consideration there can be a considerable impact on the result and finding of this study.
- Issues related to changes in the response and perception in case of a different geography.

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