

INVOLVING YOUNG CYBERNAUTS IN VACATIONS DECISIONS

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Table of Contents

- Abstract
- Keywords
- Introduction
- Review of Literature
- Objectives
- Research Methodology
- Results & Analysis
- Conclusion
- References

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the influence of internet savvy adolescents, in case of products which fall in category of high involvement and also co-consumption, like family vacation. For this study, researcher aims to study the internet usage pattern of adolescents and its association with the influence in family decision making. Due to absence of integrated data for parent's perception on internet usage and family vacations, researcher focused the study in this area. Parents were asked to judge their children on a adapted scale (The market-maven scale of Feick & Price, 1987) regarding their knowledge about places and influence in decision making. A convenient sample of 64 parents, having adolescent children in between the age of 10-16 yrs. was considered for the study. The result of study also reveals a strong relationship between the net expertise of adolescent child and degree to which he influences his family decisions

KEYWORDS: Family Decision making, Adolescent, Tourism

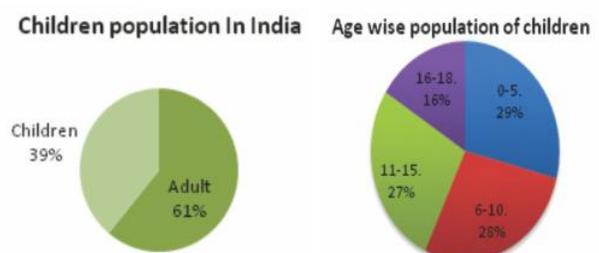
INTRODUCTION

The concept of holiday has very lately gained importance in India. Because of the amount of money involved, it is considered as luxurious commodity. However in the last decade, tourism industry has seen phenomenal growth because of the remarkable changes in the lifestyle of people. Few of the game changing factors are increase in per capita income, family structure & size (nuclear family), urbanization,

increase in education level and increase in dual earning families. In India, the disposable income has gone up by 10.11% annually from 2001 to 2006. Thus India's rising middle class and increasing disposable income, has continued to support the growth of domestic and outbound tourism.

Tourism in India, accounts for approx. 7.5 per cent of the GDP. India is expected to move up five spots to be ranked among the top five business travel market globally by 2030. Even the domestic tourist visits (DTVs), to the States and Union Territories have grown up 15.5 per cent y-o-y to 1.65 billion (provisional) during

Fig. 1: Population of India, 2011



Source: censusindia.gov.in

The word 'children' refer to a person below age of 18 yrs. In India, as per 2010-11 censuses, children constitute 39% population out of 1.21 billion people. Out of these 39% children, 55% fall in the age of 6-15 yrs. (Fig 1).

IT boom, in last 2 decades has completely changed the working style of all individuals. It has made our life easy, interesting and exciting by providing us an easily accessible tool of sharing information. Abundance of information available has significant influencing on shaping our decisions and perceptions either directly or indirectly. Children are no exception. Role of children in family decision making has been identified long back. They being quick adapter to technological change are thus acting as an agent of socialization for parents.

On close analysis of the 2010-11 census data, it can be observed that approximately 40% of the children reside in urban areas. And these children are exposed to the different aids of information and technology. Marketers thus have started using technology to educate, promote and sell their products to this

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segment. The use of technology is giving an edge to marketers through speedy, convenient and abundant flow of information.

In India the number of internet users have crossed approx 420 million. India is ranked second largest online market, after China. Out of this, approx 250 million user are from urban India. As per 2016 statistics, the penetration of internet users in India is estimated to be 34.8%. A study conducted by Turner international on 'Plurals' (those born between 1997 and 2015) in 2016, states that the pace of internet usage is gearing up in smaller town. Internet penetration among children in smaller town is close to 57% against 81% in metros and 71% in towns, having population of 5-10 lakh. An eye opening trend was identified by McAfee, in 2014, that approximately half (52%) of India's youth access their social media accounts while at school; 57% being 8-12 years old v/s 47% 13-17 year old.

A similar survey by ASSOCHAM also stated that 73% kids between the age of 8 - 13 years use social media in India. A steep growth has also been observed in the usage of various social sites by children of various age groups. A study by Telenor India shows that 98.8% of school-going children in urban India, have access to internet. Out of this 49.5 percent access internet from home after school hours.

According to Kaiser Family Foundation (2010), adolescents in today's world are approx. 3 times more dependent on digital mode compared to previous years. They use BIG DATA themselves but also assist their parent. Even parents are encouraging this child behaviour and are happy to perceive children as net experts (Thomson, E.S., & Laing, A.W., 2003). This helps adolescent child to gain a power position in family by virtue of his/her internet knowledge. According to Lenhart et al., (2001), adolescents are more open to adopt Internet and technology and are much more attached to it, in comparison to parents. In 2011, he said that 95% of teens between age of 12- 17 yrs access internet regularly, while 70% of them do so daily. The same was also supported by studies of Belch et al., (2005).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In consumer behavior, family is considered as an important unit of consumption. For years, researchers have tried to identify & segregate the role of different members in family decision making. Studies by Foxman and Tansuhaj (1988); Mangleburg (1990); Labrecque and Ricard (2001) have proved that children do directly or indirectly influence parents, during purchase of different types of products. And even the degree of their influence varies depending on the type

of product, their familial & demographic factors and also their power position in the family (Gram, M., 2007). Szybillo and Sosanie, (1977) through their studies suggested that children have more influence in early decision stages, while least in sub decision.

Jenkins, (1979) said that children have little influence for all products, except vacations, however their influence is minimal regarding how much to spend, where to stay and transportation modes.

Ward, (1974) first introduced the theory of consumer socialization and highlighted that every individual, be it a child or adult throughout his life keeps on acquiring skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant for their effective functioning as consumers in marketplace. However John (1999) pointed out that social surroundings and experiences also contribute to the socialization process. Several studies have also confirmed the role of media in influencing young consumers (Moschis et al., 1978). The concept of market mavens was first introduced by Feick and Price, (1987) as "individuals who have information about products, places to shop, and other facets of markets, and initiate discussions with consumers for market information". Belch et al., (2005) defined Internet mavens as individuals who enjoy using internet to acquire more generalized knowledge. Increasingly, children and adolescents are using Internet as a primary source of information and entertainment (Rose, Rose, & Blodgett, 2009), hence it can be understood that there is an increase in impact of internet on the knowledge and thought process of children especially adolescents.

According to Lee et al., (2003), internet is forming a new learning culture among children, which allows them to share, discuss, get influenced and learn interactively. Mishra, (2011) explored four intentions of children behind the usage of internet and social networking sites namely for building association, spending time, self-image formation and acquiring information. All these are thus resulting in creation of an influential role of children specially adolescents, between the age group of 10 to 16 with regard to products of high involvement (Martensen and Gronholdt, 2008).

Research indicates that adolescents exert a greater influence in product categories about which they are highly knowledgeable. Even the influence of adolescents increase in almost all family decisions where there is an elongated and discrete stage of idea design, the search for information, evaluation and even final decision (Beatty & Talpade, 1994) or highly involved (Shoham & Dalakas, 2003). According to Cankaya et al., (2016) a generation gap exists between parents and children in terms of knowledge and internet usage

in particular, which leads to children being more internet savvy.

Furthur Kaur and Medury, (2011) justified that comparative Internet usage is a predictor of children's influence in family's purchase decisions. Even the study of Broilo et.al explores that children's use of information acquired via internet in order to influence family decisions is perceived positively by parents as such behavior helps parents to fulfill their parental duties.

Moreover most of the studies done in past, on children as consumers focus on product and services that are consumed either by children themselves or are co-consumed and fall in category of low involvement products. However few studies in west also elucidate the role of children in vacation decisions but hardly any study has been conducted in Indian context. Hence researcher tries to reduce this gap by conducting this study.

OBJECTIVES

This study aims to explore the influence of internet savvy adolescents, in case of products which fall in category of high involvement and also co-consumption, like family vacation.

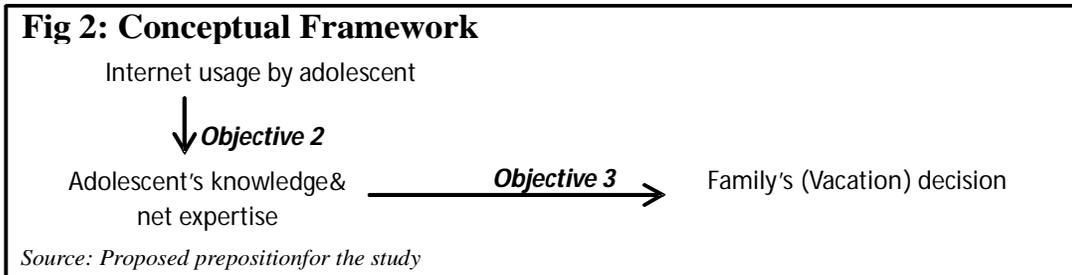
Objectives framed for this study are: i) To find out engagement of adolescents with internet. ii) To understand if engagement with internet aids to

adolescent's influence (I.V.) on their family's vacation decision making (D.V.), with internet usage of adolescents as moderating factor (M.F). For this author has adopted a six-item, market-maven scale of Feick and Price (1987). This scale measures the parent's perception regarding Internet-maven traits of their adolescent children. Convenient sample of 64 parents, having adolescent children in between the age of 10 yr to 16 yrs were considered for the study. Out of which 14 parents said did not considered the opinion of their children, hence their responses were not counted. Thus the analysis is based on 50 responses from parents, who agreed to have little to high influence of children.

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

The study is based on 6 items of market-maven scale by Feick and Price described below: *Item 1: Child likes using information collected from internet to introduce new places. Item 2: Child helps my family by using the internet. Item 3: My family often asks my child to search the internet. Item 4: Child could tell which internet site has the best bargain on various types of vacation products. Item 5: My family thinks of my child as a good source of information from internet. Item 6: Parent's perceive their child as an internet expert.*

Engagement of adolescents with internet



knowledge of adolescents. iii) To find out if adolescents having more knowledge (net expertise) have more influence in family's vacation decision.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study intends to understand the influence of cybernauts (internet savvy adolescents) on family's vacation decision. In this descriptive study, author has tried to establish a relationship between the

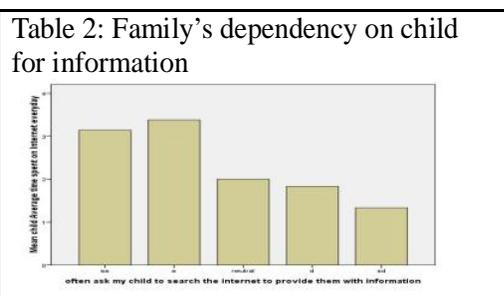
On the basis of responses collected from 50 parents, an initial analysis was conducted to examine the average time spent by children on internet.

The analysis based on demographics details depicts that most of the children spend 2-3 hours on internet every day and their usage increases with age (Table 1).

If engagement of adolescent with internet, aids to their knowledge

Table 1: Adolescent's internet usage
 Age of Child 1 * child Average time spent on Internet everyday Crosstabulation

Count	Age of Child 1	child Average time spent on Internet everyday					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
	10	3	0	0	2	0	5
	11	0	0	2	0	0	2
	12	4	0	0	5	0	9
	13	0	4	5	0	0	9
	14	0	8	3	0	1	12
	15	1	1	3	0	0	5
	16	0	2	4	2	0	8
	Total	8	15	17	9	1	50



A close analysis of relationship, between different items of questionnaire and average time spent by child on internet was done. It was found that families in which child was using more internet, parents were more likely to depend on their child for information search (item 3). That means the higher is the internet usage, higher is the parent's dependency because of perceived increase

Association of netexpertise with influence in family vacation decision

In the third stage of study, researcher has tried to find out if increase in knowledge attained through net expertise leads to more influence in family's vacation decision. For this two variables are extracted from the study namely net expertise and influence on decision.

Table 3: Perception regarding child as source of information

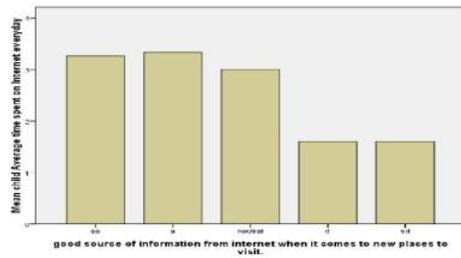
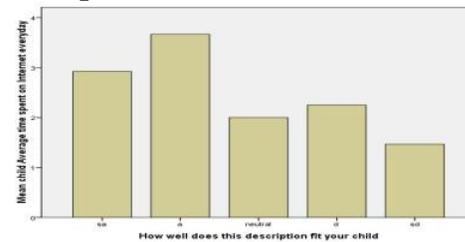


Table 4: Perception regarding child as net expert



in knowledge (Table 2).

Analysis of relationship between item 5 & 6 with average time spent on internet also emerged to be positive (Table 3 & 4 respectively), which means parents perceive children to possess more information and net expertise, when they are using more internet. Researcher has also tried to calculate net expertise of child, by combining item 3, 5 and 6. After which, correlation between net expertise and internet

The variable net expertise has been calculated by combining item 3, 5 & 6 (as described in section 4.2). The variable "influence on decision" has been derived by calculating the combined score of item 2 and 4, since both them are related to sub stages of decision making. Item 2 relates to information search, while item 4 relates to evaluation of alternatives. The low chi-square value of .310 shows, that there is high dependency of the two variables. Even the result obtained in table 6 exhibits that p-value is smaller than

Table 5: Correlation between net engagement & net expertise

		child Average time spent on Internet everyday	expertise
child Average time spent on Internet everyday	Pearson Correlation	1	-.778 ^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
expertise	Pearson Correlation	-.778 ^{**}	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6: Chi Square test for independence

	expertise	Influencedecision
Chi-Square	40.720 ^a	7.120 ^a
df	11	6
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.310

engagement (Table 5) has been calculated. The table depicts a close correlation of 77% (-.778; as weight of strong agree was taken as 1 and strongly disagree as 5). This clearly indicated that parents perceive their children to be having more knowledge or expertise because of engagement with internet. This analysis validates the concept given by Belch, (2005) and Rose & Blodgett, (2009), that "internet has become an important source of information for children".

our chosen significance level ($\alpha = 0.000$), thus rejecting the null hypothesis. Thus alternate hypothesis (H_{a1} : More is the knowledge and net expertise of adolescent's, more is their influence in family's vacation decision) gets accepted.

CONCLUSION

The execution and results of this study, confirm that children are now becoming more knowledgeable as

they have increased access to information. They are truly the internet generation. Even parents perceive such children as net experts and are willing to get assisted by the expertise of their children. The study shows a clear relationship between internet usage of child and the perception of their parents towards them as net experts. Moreover, the study also reveals a relationship between the net expertise of adolescent child and the degree to which they influence family's decision making.

However in this study the researcher could collect data from a small number of respondents having similar socio-economic backgrounds. This limitation provides huge scope for future studies to be conducted on bigger samples from heterogeneous backgrounds.

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