

# Influence of Internet & Social Media In Purchase Decisions Among Teenagers

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**Abstract** - This paper will discuss teenagers who are referred to as Gen Z (Children born after 1996) concerning purchase decisions using Internet & Social media. Teenagers are becoming media-dependent by each passing year. Initially, it was radio or television in the past, now with digitalization Internet and social media have become the first preference for the youth not only for seeking information but also for making purchase-related decisions. With 440mn millennial's and 390mn Gen Z teens and children, this massive size of India's youth has become the most sought after customer for companies across the globe. Apart from this, the new wave of digital India which has grown leaps and bounds has made internet and technology available to the youth on its fingertips. With the high penetration of smartphones and cheap data packs made available by telecom companies have become the major factor for the growth of e-commerce companies in the country. Therefore, it has become imperative for marketers to study youth and their tastes and preferences. The family and the teenager's relationship is considered of high importance in understanding the behavior of the consumer while shopping.

This paper will examine how India's GenZ teen consumers in cities like Patna and Ranchi make purchase-related decisions and how does the use of social media and the internet affect their family purchase decision.

**Keywords:** Internet, Social Media, Teenagers, GenZ, Family purchase decision, India.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indian market is growing at an exponential rate and is now dominated mostly by the youth namely teenagers or GenZ. Consumers need information before making any purchase decision, apart from the traditional socialization tools, the Internet is helping them get this information. The companies are now realizing the importance of social media which is widespread among young consumers. There is a wide coverage on social media about their products which is followed by consumers. Nowadays, consumers are in search of new products and prefer to gather information by visiting these pages. It helps them to get reviews of customers who have used those products. The companies are also aligning their strategies and combining their social media and other socialization tools i.e. T.V, Radio, newspapers, etc. to attract these young minds towards making a purchase online. The introduction of the government's Digital India initiative with the increasing internet penetration over the recent years resulted in the country's digital population amounting to approximately 560 million active users as of January 2019.(3) Children are considered to be powerful influencers of their parents' consumption as well as consumers with a considerable direct consumption of their

own (1,10). 43% of the total family buying is influenced by children. (4)

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Teenagers Consumer Socialization

The role of the teenagers in family buying decision making is changing day by day. The reason behind may be that there are fewer children in the family thereby influence of the teenagers in the purchase decision process is high. In rural India, the teenager has added influence on buying decision making of the family because of its better exposure to education and access to the latest information. Research shows that family decision making has been largely confined to spouses; they have been considered as dominant decision-making units in the family. However, the influence of family members such as children in decision making should be studied(5). Children's influence on family purchases is directly dependent on the cultural environment of the family and the individual (2). The socialization agents for children can be attributed to important attributes i.e the cognitive factors and the environmental factors (6). Cognitive factors are age and gender-related. Environmental factors: family, media and peers. Parents have been identified as a primary source of socialization (13-17). Parents' influence the consumer socialization process of their children in several ways (22).

Like parents, friends and peer group also impacts a child’s consumer socialization (9, 11) Television and the internet are other important sources of consumer socialization for kids. Socialization is more when the child’s media interaction is high (11, 17).

### III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To identify the role of internet and social media on purchase decision process of teenagers (13-19 years)
- To study the extent of influence played by internet and social media at different stages of buying.
- To study any major differences between the genders and influence of Internet / social media on purchase.

### IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

In order to achieve the desired objective the following hypotheses are framed

- **H1:** Social Media is positively related to teenager’s role in decision making in purchase related decision.
- **H2:** Extent of influence of teenagers in family purchase is high.
- **H3:** Gender effect will have varying effect on purchase decision and will depend on product category.

### V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Research Design is **Descriptive cum causal in nature.**
- **Target Population for the Study:** Teenagers belonging to the age group 13 to 19 in the cities of Patna and Ranchi.
- **Sampling Frame & Unit:**
  - a. Any male or female who has completed 13 years but not 20 years of age
  - b. Uses internet or social media for at least 1 hour per day (on average)
  - c. Has access to internet connected desktop / laptop or Smartphone.\
- **Sample Size of the study:** In each center male and females would be in equal proportion. The total size of the study was 40.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### Section 1: Demographics of respondents

Gender	Male:50% Female:50%
Family Monthly Income	Below Rs40, 000/month - 52.5%. Rs 40, 000-Rs80, 000/month – 37.5%. Above Rs 80,000/month – 10%
Pocket Money Allowance	Less than Rs1000 -67.5% Rs1000-Rs2000 -17.5% Above Rs2000 – 15%
Family Type	1.Joint Family-57.5% 2.Nuclear – 32.55 3.Single Parent – 10%
Educational Level	Class 9 - 2.5% Class 10 - 7.5% Class 11 -12.5% Class 12 – 77.5%
Place of respondent	Ranchi-50% Patna-50%

The sample used for my research is made up of 40 respondents representing the teenagers of the two cities Patna and Ranchi. 50% of my respondents are male and 50 % are female. 84.5 % of respondents are between 16 and 18years old.

### VI. FINDINGS

The following are the finding of the study conducted on the respondents

- It has been found that 100% of the respondent use the internet for performing their day to day activities among Gen Z. This justifies this nomenclature of being called as the digital generation.
- When asked with the respondents about the number of hours per week usage of the internet. It has been found that 40% of the teenagers residing in cities used the internet around 10hr and above.
- In both the cities, the most preferred medium for internet access was Smartphone. Out of Sample size 40 respondents, 37 of them preferred to use Smartphone to access the internet followed by laptops as the second choice. Approximately 50% of the respondents show their preference for the second choice. The desktop was the third choice for accessing the internet followed by ipad as the fourth and cybercafé were the least preferred mode of accessing the internet. This clearly shows that usages of smartphones have increased internet penetration among teenagers largely.
- Internet is used mostly by teenagers for social networking purposes. It has been found that 67% of the respondents used it for social networking purposes. 42% of the respondent used it for purchasing products online and 40% of respondents use it for purchasing products but with the consent of their parents. Respondents use the internet for other purposes like for mailing, surfing and chatting.

Age	14yr -2.5%
	15yr-12.5%
	16yr -25.5%
	17yr -42.5%
	18yr -17.5%

- Before buying the products, the decision influencer among the teenagers were their parents. Approx 50% of the respondents in both cities responded to their parents to be an important decision-maker. Internet with 52.5% of the respondents it has been found the internet is commonly used for purchase. On the basis of response, the 3rd preference can be given to the sibling with 37.5% and among 42.5% respondent, it has been found that the peer group was also consulted before buying any product.
- Almost all the respondents were found to be the member of social networking sites and they were having more the one and even more numbers of social networking sites.
- Social networking site used mostly for searching for information before purchase?
- Mostly 65 % of the respondents used Google to search before purchasing any products.
- A variety of brands under one roof makes online shopping the most attractive shopping factor among teenagers, followed by mode of payment i.e. COD. Price comparisons as the lowest factor.
- Flipkart is the most accessed website around 50% of the teenagers prefer to use it, hence this makes Flipkart the most popular shopping website for online shopping followed by Amazon.
- Respondents when being asked to rank their preference for the product which they would like to purchase more, 55% respondents prefer fashion wear & acc. as their first preference for online shopping followed by mobile & accessories with 37.5% respondents' 2nd choice and 3rd choice being footwear with 47.5%.
- 50% of the teenagers feel that their online purchases were mostly financed by the pocket money they received by their parents. 35% a respondent that parents directly were involved and gave money for purchasing products online. Even some teenagers mentioned that their grandparents approx. 25% also finance their purchases at times followed by working siblings 12.5%.
- 35% of the teenagers were of the view that frequent display of advertisement on internet space is among the most attention seeker for purchasing any product. Along with 25% of teenagers also considered the following product company page as the second most factor that drives the attention in social media for the purchase of the product.

## VII. DISCUSSION ON RESULTS

### Social Media influences consumers' purchasing decision-making process.

This study demonstrates that the influence of Social Media differs according to the stages the consumers go through during the purchasing decision-making process. Depending on the stages of the process, the consumers appeared to be more or less influenced by Social Media.

**Need Recognition:** At the Need Recognition stage, the study indicated that Social Media appeared to be important in influencing consumers. Mostly 65% of the respondents used Google, followed by social media to search for a product before purchasing any products. Having the possibility to access contents shared by their peers, such as comments or pictures displayed about products or services, proved to be an important factor that could trigger and make them recognize new needs for varied products of different companies (as shown in Q 12). It is important to note that the influence of Social Media depends also on the categories of products and services. Most of the needs that have been recognized by consumers through Social Media concerned a certain type of product category, 55% of respondents had fashion wear & acc. as their first preference for online shopping 2nd choice being footwear with 47.5%. Followed by mobile & acc. with 37.5% respondents' as 3rd Choice. Consumers didn't seem to be influenced when it comes to other products or services. This study also revealed that brand engagement was an important aspect of the Need Recognition stage on Social Media. Indeed, 48% of consumers follow brands on Social Media. Internet is used mostly by teenagers for Social networking purposes around 67% of them used it for the same and 42% used it for purchase products online for themselves and 40% used for purchasing products with the consent of their parents. Other purposes included mailing, surfing and chatting, keep in touch with people. In this context, the fact that almost half of the consumers are brand followers on Social Media gives opportunities to brands to make recognize new needs to their followers by engaging with them. Social Media platforms and tools provide a connection between consumers and brands that may trigger needs. Getting updates from brands on their social media feeds, for example, increases the chance for brands to make consumers recognize new needs.

Moreover, 35% of the teenagers said that frequent ads attract them to follow the product across social media apart from this 25% followed the likes and shares on social media before purchasing any

The most preferred decision influencer among the teenagers are the parents approx. 50% in both the cities, the second proffered is the internet with 52.5%, 3rd preference is the sibling with 37.5% and lastly is the peer group with 42.5% and were thus already more willing to have a good attitude toward a brand because their friends are followers.

This study proved thus that teenagers trusted internet over siblings, friends, and peers this possibility offered by Social Media for consumers to show that they are followers and can invite friends to do so increases need recognition possibilities for consumers. In this context, it is important to remember that the trust aspect represented by word-of-mouth plays an important role within communities. The study demonstrated thus that the influence of Social Media seemed to be very strong at the Recognition Need stage.

### Information Search

Concerning the influence of Social Media on consumers at their information search stage, the study highlighted that 65% of the respondents used Google to search for before purchasing any product. If a wide variety of Social Media types are available to users to find information, the study revealed that consumers are mostly intended to use certain Social Media platforms. Review sites, Social Network platforms, forums and Multimedia sharing, are among the most used by consumers unlike other types such as Blog or Microblogging that seem to be less or almost not used by consumers in their information search stage. Consequently, the influence of Social Media at the information search stage seems to have different degrees depending on the Social Media types used for this purpose.

If it is now clear that Social Media's influence at the information stage differs depending on the types. The study also pointed out that consumers used more or less Social Media according to the categories of products and services for which they are seeking information. Indeed, the study underscored that consumers tended to use Social Media primarily to find information about categories of products and services such as entertainment, travel, electronics and clothing. For other purchase categories, the study revealed that Social Media seemed to be less used at the information stage. As discussed for the Need Recognition stage above, consumers also use Social Media to follow brands. Social Media provides the possibility for consumers to search for information directly on the brands' fan page. Hoyer and MacInnis (2010, p 389) stated that the relationships between consumers and companies had greatly changed thanks to a two-way communication offered by Social Media. The study shows thus that Social Media plays an important role in influence at the Information Search but this role should be considered as more or less influential according to the Social Media types and tools used by consumers. This observation also concerns the categories of products and services for which consumers search information.

### Evaluation of Alternatives :

The study indicated that half of the respondents i.e 51% take advantage of Social Media platforms and tools that are available to them to compare products, services and brands. The research demonstrated thus that if, as seen

above, an important percentage of consumers used Social Media at their Information Search stage, only half of them used it for comparison purposes. Moreover, it is important to note that the study shows that only 6% of consumers frequently seek their friends' opinions on Social Media when they are only 13% to frequently seek the opinion of people they don't know. Moreover, the study also reported that consumers were very few to ask their peers' opinions when they hesitated between different products.

However, if it seems that consumers don't seek their peers' opinions about products, services and brands, the study revealed that consumers tended to trust their friends and people they don't know' reviews and comments on Social Media. As discussed in the literature review above, Parker (2011) quoted the notion of 'unbiased advice' that consumers are more likely to trust. The study confirms this observation by pointing out that 59% of consumers agreed or

strongly agreed that they trusted their peers' reviews and comments on Social Media. Moreover, as seen above, Brown and Hayes (2008) said that messages delivered by trusted friends telling about their own experiences were highly influential. The study indicated that 62% of consumers agreed that positive reviews and comments from friends could help them evaluate alternatives between different products, services, and brands and finally push them to make a purchase. In the same way, the study highlighted that a majority of teenagers agreed that negative reviews on Social Media would dissuade them to make a purchase.

Therefore, the study revealed that peers' reviews and comments on Social Media helped consumers to evaluate alternatives and could push or dissuade them from making a purchase. This finding confirms the observation made by the president of Online Nielsen quoted by Wheat and Dodd (2009, p3) stating that consumers' reliance on word-of-mouth in the decision-making process has increased significantly thanks to Social Media. Social Media seem to thus play an important role of influence at the Evaluation of Alternatives stage, especially on the trust aspect provided by communities on Social Media.

### Purchase Decision:

The objective of the study was to see if the increasing influence of Social Media on teenagers' purchasing decision-making process had the same impact on the various stages. To do so, the study focused on discovering whether reviews and comments from peers could push or dissuade consumers from making their final decision to purchase. Therefore, the study revealed that only 13% of consumers would frequently purchase after reading positive reviews. In contrast, half of the consumers stated that they sometimes did so. Consequently, it seems that Social Media is not as influential on the consumers at the

moment of making their final decisions to purchase compared to the important influence that Social Media exerts at the previous stages of the process. However, it is important to note that the study pointed out that consumers were 65% to agree or strongly agree that Social Media was more influential than traditional media in their final purchase decision. This observation can be explained by the fact that Social Media seems to be of a precious help for consumers at the previous stages; and more particularly at the Information Search and Evaluation Alternatives stages. Indeed, the fact that consumers have, thanks to Social Media, more possibilities to compare alternatives allows them to better decide whether they will purchase or not.

The study revealed that Social Media is, influential at the Purchase Decision stage but it seems to be of lower importance compared with the influence that it exerts on the previous stages.

#### Post-purchase Behavior :

The study showed that the influence of Social Media was the weakest at the Post-purchase Behavior stage. Jaffe (2010) stated that consumers today used Social Media to talk about their own good or bad experiences by sharing feedback and opinions with their peers. It seemed thus that consumers didn't often share their consumers' experiences and opinions about products, services, and brands on Social Media. The study pointed out that consumers shared more about some categories such as entertainment, travel and electronics. Except for the clothing category, it seems that consumers always use Social Media to share the same kind of categories of products and services. The influence of Social Media seems thus be lower and of smaller importance at the Post-purchase Behavior stage compared to the previous stages of the consumer's purchasing decision-making process.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

### Limitations and Managerial implications:

Since teenagers were found playing dominant role in buying decision making process using internet of various products in the family so it calls upon marketers to address this phenomenon in their marketing communication and marketing strategies in case of young consumers. This speaks of untapped potential of the young consumers who are main focus for E-commerce companies to design strategies.

The research findings shall help companies to develop strategies for specific product to target teenagers that use internet for most purchase and if teenagers are their future/prospective customers even then business using web base can utilize the study. It will also give valuable insight to e-commerce companies to develop their website in accordance to consumer's perception and ease of access for young consumers. The result is also useful for

marketers in suggesting that consumers with high product involvement will have different means of evaluation and hence purchase products. Thus level of product involvement can be used by market practitioner as means of target audience segmentation in online shopping environment.

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