Generation Y as a Digital Consumer: A Conceptual Framework for Mobile Marketing in India

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Among the emerging economies, India is the most promising market for Generation Y, because majority of Indian's population belongs to this segment (those born between 1980 and 2000). These individuals are tech-savvy and extensively use mobile phones. This study aims to uncover the role of mobile phone that has emerged along with the evolution of Generation Y. The digitized consumers of this generation need to be understood in light of the importance of family, friends and peers. This will help us determine the purchase of products and brands via mobile phones while understanding the characteristics of these individuals. A total of 10 focus group discussions (FGDs) with 72 respondents were conducted in three Indian leading cities: Mumbai, Bangalore, and Ahmedabad. The study found that Generation Y widely use mobile phone, get influenced by the peers, family and friends and get involved with the brands via phone. Generation Y also focus on personalization, security and sharing; while they emerge as digital consumers.

Keywords: Generation Y, mobile marketing, India

Globally, there are 5.3 billion mobile subscribers which represent a digital penetration rate of 77 per cent. It is forecasted that three billion individuals (50 per cent of world's population) will be Internet users by end of 2016. This will add new dynamism to the social relationship (Huet & Barrios, 2013). The majority of the users are based in emerging countries as there are 3.8 billion users and have 73 per cent of market share. Users are widely exploring Internet on their mobile phones as 10 per cent of individuals use the Internet through their devices. Emerging countries have the highest Internet traffic on the mobile phone and not personal computers. This shift clearly indicates that it is very crucial for marketers to reach the consumers via mobile phones (Swinton & Kaliouby, 2012). There are primarily four major shifts; in the global Internet economy, developed nations to emerging countries, fixed to mobile phones, individual to social and from basic content to exploration of data and information (Huet & Barrios, 2013). There is a dramatic increase in the mobile phone usage in the emerging economies (Euromonitor International, 2011) such as India (Jain & Pant, 2012). India is the leading mobile market (Jain, Pant & Daswani, 2011) as the subscriber base increases extensively on a monthly basis (Sheth, 2008). India has occupied the second position after China in the Asian mobile market as it has a market share of 21.4 per cent (Euromonitor International, 2010a). It was observed that around seven million users were added in the total subscriber base in India in 2007 (Sheth, 2008). India has also surpassed other nations in mobile internet usage on desktops

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(Swinton & Kaliouby, 2012; Stat Counter Global Stats, 2011; Meeker, 2012). The disposable incomes of Indian consumers have increased and it affects mobile consumption (Euromonitor International, 2010a).

Currently, mobile marketing is a virtual blank palette begging for the next ingénue to emerge as its darling. This presents an incredibly ripe opportunity to display enviable levels of business acumen and foresight. However, with every new marketing channel, there is a very delicate balance to be weighed when considering the opportunity to embrace an emerging technology while also evaluating the associated risks (Camden, 2011). Users across different cultural and economic situations appear to share similarities in terms of behaviours while exhibiting differences in their attitudes and values (Kamal, Chu & Pedram, 2013). Post-globalization, digital technology may have blurred the cultural differences among the consumers (Ger, 1999). However, the local culture significantly influences consumer behaviour (de Mooij, 2004).

Marketers feel comfortable when the consumers are targeted at the early stage of consumption as the positioning of the brands and products sustains for a longer period of time. Young adults are ready to explore brands and products experiment with them and this segment can be reached easily via mobile phones (Butcher, 2011). These consumers are adventurous and have high purchasing power. They decide about brands and products on the basis of creative messages and innovative media platforms used by the companies. Mobile phones help marketers to access the consumers and their demographics virtually; learn about their social patterns and their communication styles; increase interactivity with users; understand lifestyle and emotions leading to transactions via e-commerce applications (Friedrich et al., 2009). Therefore, it is important for marketers to understand the nuances of Generation Y (Geraci et al., 2000) for effective campaigns. In India, Generation Y is an important segment as they extensively use mobile phones with latest technology and value added services. Generation Y also believes that a mobile phone personifies their personality and symbolises their individuality (Ling, 2001). There are several opportunities for companies and brands to cater to this market (Jain & Pant, 2012).

According to Pant & Jain (2013), Generation Y is tech savvy and open for experimentation and thus is targeted heavily by the Indian marketers. There are many studies on Generation Y in the Indian context, but we could not find any research that positions this segment as digital consumers. This new positioning will help the marketers, as they would have a better strategy to target this segment. This novel issue will be dealt in this research paper. The purpose of this research is to frame Generation Y as emerging digital consumers that use mobile phones for engaging with brands and products in India. The study has worked extensively on positioning Generation Y as tech-oriented and gadget-savvy individuals.

Since India is a leading mobile market, it becomes imperative for marketers to understand how to communicate with the emerging consumer who is constantly on digital platforms. To do so, The researchers propose a conceptual framework that positions the mobile user, the Generation Y, as a digital consumer. The digital consumer is influenced by friends, peers and family via digital platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter). This influence is crucial to understand the role of reference groups in determining the consumer behaviour. The researchers continue to characterize and understand how digital consumers engage with brands and offer the insights that may be useful for the marketers in establishing relationship with the digital consumers.

Literature Review

Framing Generation Y

Generation Y are those individuals who were born between 1980 to 2000 (Weingarten, 2009) and are primarily called as Millennials (Howe & Strauss, 2003). They were brought up under the safe protection of their parents with a constant pressure to accomplish the objectives (Howe & Strauss, 2003). Generation Y usually have a few siblings (Alsop, 2008) and therefore rivalry and competitive environment is experienced less by these individuals (Strutton et al., 2011). This segment is also known as the "Trophy Kids" as they have always received everything without any loss (Alsop, 2008). Generation Y believes in life time learning (Alch, 2000) and extensively uses the latest technology (Rowh, 2007). They are brought up in the globalized world that widely uses internet for various activities such as entertainment and information (Oblinger, 2003). Generation Y hates reading (Gioia, 2004) and dislikes textual messages (Nielsen, 2005) as they are mundane (Perez, 2008). However, they prefer to read information on the digital platform (Melenhorst et al., 2006). Additionally they also prefer pictorial information as it is more vibrant than written texts that are boring (Carr & Ly, 2009).

Generation Y prefers pleasure, jovialness and fun (Arsenault & Patrick, 2008). They like to undertake activities in a team (Borges et al., 2006). They prefer to do the same in an integrated format for professional tasks (Jerrard, 2002). They think that objectives can be achieved easily when the work is undertaken by a team rather than by individuals (Berkowitz & Schewe, 2011). Generation Y also likes a positive work environment where they can get opportunities to further excel (Eisner, 2005). However, they are highly impatient and would like to achieve the objectives in a short time period. Furthermore, they prefer quick and instant communication (Berkowitz & Schewe, 2011).

Generation Y prefers to experiment and are thus flexible in using new products. They are quick to spend money on brands and products primarily personal services and consumers goods (Xu, 2007). Eventually, their spending and purchasing power is dramatically increasing and this is an excellent platform for marketers (Jurisic & Azevedo, 2011). They are usually aware about brands (Noble et al., 2009) but have exclusive attitude regarding products and companies and are thus known as "brand switchers" (Olivier & Tanguy, 2008).

Generation Y and India

There are more than 240 million young mobile subscribers in India. Every fifth young adult and owner of the mobile phone will be from India (Mobile Youth, n.d.). This platform provides excellent opportunities for the global marketers as it has the largest number of mobile subscribers form Generation Y (Jain et al., 2011). The researchers found that the potential for mobile phone to be used for effective marketing is very high. But very few brands have used this medium effectively in India. Companies can use this platform for personalized communication (Amin et al., 2011) but underestimate its efficacy in the Indian market. Generation Y prefers innovative, customized and involved communication through mobile phone in India. According to their needs and desires, they prefer to decide on the content and frequency of communication. Generation Y have developed the usage of mobile phones along the traditional media platforms (Pant & Jain, 2012). Eventually, the messages will become more media centric (Euromonitor International, 2006). Generation Y also likes the latest technology and perceives that mobile phones are the mark of distinctiveness (Taylor & Harper, 2001).

Additionally, mobile platform can be integrated with the other media platforms (Pant & Jain, 2012). In India, consumers are looking for interactive communication (Aggarwal, 2004) from various media platforms such as emails, advertising and discount schemes. Marketers have to create personalized communication approaches to be connected with the consumers (Strutton et al., 2011). This segment is flexible in using the latest technology and believes that mobile phones are icons signifying exclusivity (Taylor & Harper, 2001). They are also referred as i-generation and marketers can easily connect with them via mobile phones (Morton, 2002) and can create viral campaigns to capitalize the networks thus created (Strutton et al., 2011). Hence, it is important for the marketers to understand the nuances of this segment and how they use this media platform to create effective campaigns.

Generation Y also sets the trend in the mobile industry for the consumer behaviour (Antoine, 2004). India has high number of individuals that belong to Generation Y as 50 per cent of population is less than 25 years of age (Indiaonlinepages.com, 2011). However, in order to reach out to this segment, marketers have to strategically develop the content of the messages and media platforms (Jain & Pant, 2012).

Positioning Mobile Phone and Generation Y

Technology has influenced the life of Generation Y as they use Internet, mobile phones and text-based communication. It must be noted here that the latter is less preferred and greater preference is given to visual communication. They use social networking sites to socialize and connect with their peer groups (Noble et al., 2009). Generation Y uses the internet so that they can multi-task and respond easily to the messages (Felthousen, 2008). This segment has a low attention span, high sense of urgency and enhanced susceptibility to boredom occurring due to mundane work (Olsen, 2005). In the United States, the mobile phone is used for socializing; retrieving the results of search in a few seconds, focusing on answers not results, quick and desired action and sophisticated methods to access the data (Camden, 2011).

A meta analysis of mobile marketing has also stated that the research is primarily carried out in developed nations. Mobile phones are primarily used for interpersonal connectivity and self identification and this media platform needs to be integrated with other forums such as newspapers, magazines and posters to develop multi-channel communication. However, privacy and security is important while creating these communication approaches (Okazaki & Barwise, 2011). The launch of the i-pad has also altered the boundaries between the mobile phones, Personal Computers and tablets with mobiles showing increased demand as they have high resolution and multi-function touch screen (Okazaki & Barwise, 2011).

Mobile phones provide "on the go access" and people spend more time on the Internet via phones as they browse, shop and compare prices that help in navigation. This medium is used along with other media platforms such as television, newspapers and others. The multiple usages of media platforms has increased the value of consumption for the consumers. Simultaneously, this has also enhanced the complexity of strategies that needs to be developed by marketers. It is difficult to deliver propositions across various formats, contexts, needs and expectations. Therefore, multiple research studies need to be undertaken to understand the nuances of the consumers and their usage pattern that would help the marketers develop effective strategies (Huet & Barrios, 2013).

Emergence of Generation Y as Digital Consumer

Generation Y grew in the media centric world (Bush et al., 2004). Their multiple media usage is high and they prefer to be online (Eisner, 2005). Pew Internet Survey in the US found that 75 per cent of Generation Y widely use social networking sites and are always online and 83 per cent of the individuals are intimate with their mobile phone. Their life revolves around new technology that includes surfing, emails, information and messages via smart phones. They like messages that have pictures and provide easy access (Weiler, 2005). They engage in online discussions with their friends and peers (Tulgan, 2009). They are interested in developing relationships on these forums (Lowe, Levitt & Wilson, 2008). The researchers studied Generation Y in the United States of America on several parameters such as kind of communication, purchase readiness, values, media habits, brand related information and consciousness about the brands and products. The researchers found that Generation Y had dynamic communication patterns via online and mobile phones and high spending capacity with low savings. Generation Y in the USA is independent and focuses on enjoyment and pleasure. They extensively use new media such as Internet, mobile phones and social networking forums. Additionally, they re-create the information, share the information and co-create messages related to brands and products. They are brand conscious as they know the global products via online forums and mobile phones (Jain & Pant, 2012).

In the United States, 44 per cent of smart phone users shop online or gather information about the brands and products while they might be in a store; 37 per cent users compare the online rates with the stores prices via mobile; 12 per cent carry out research about the products and brands for purchases at least on a weekly basis and finally share their views and opinions with their friends and peers (Friedrich et al., 2009).

Therefore, it is important to study the users from Generation Y who have emerged as digital consumers. This needs to be done through the lenses of theoretical frameworks that help in understanding the user, the gratifications that the user may get from this experience and brand related activities that the users carry out through digital platforms.

Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical frameworks the study use are COBRA, i.e., consumers' online brand related activities (Muntinga et al., 2011) and the theory of uses and gratification (U&G) (Katz et al., 1974). COBRA is associated with the individuals activities on digital platforms related to brands and products and U&G explains the process and reasons of media consumption by the people. Social media is extensively used by users to converse, express, share and develop content. This content may be related to brands, products or companies. The consumers' online brand related activities have a significant effect on companies. Firms can direct activities after comprehending the consumer motives and drivers for conducting this process. COBRA is primarily related to consuming, contributing and creating, therefore, this framework is helpful primarily for consumer behaviour in the digitally oriented environment (Muntinga et al., 2011). Social media has also influenced the online consumer behaviour (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Therefore it is important for the brands to develop interactive strategies (Cova & Dalli, 2009).

COBRA ascribes motives for individuals: information, entertainment and remuneration and three sub-motives: social interaction, social identity and helping (Muntinga et al., 2011). Additionally, these engagements are of greater importance for brands than the traditional marketing (Villanueva et al., 2008) because this is a 'new form

of customer empowerment' (Cova & Pace, 2006). COBRA framework encapsulates consumer-to-consumer and consumer-to-brand behaviours. In earlier studies, (Hoffman & Novak, 1996) behavioural aspects were investigated independently (Muntinga et al., 2011). Thus, it is important to understand consumers motives that facilitates the brand content on digital media (Rodgers et al., 2007) and subsequently influences purchase behaviour (Ko et al., 2005) in a supplementary and joint manner.

Uses and gratification theory helps in understanding how and why individuals consume media (Katz et al., 1974) and what satisfaction they derive from the usage (Choi et al., 2009). U&G is a highly relevant and appropriate theory as it helps investigate those studies related to social media and Internet (Ruggiero, 2000) becomes more robust. It must be noted here that there are antecedents of individual behavioural patterns: 'gratification sought' and consequences as 'gratifications obtained' (Rubin, 2002). The different gratifications achieved by using social media are entertainment, empowerment, social interaction, personal identity and remuneration (Muntinga et al., 2011).

In order to define a digital consumer, the researchers borrow the principles of U&G theory to articulate the motivations behind the users' consumption using digital media such as the mobile phone. Of late, U&G has offered insights into the role played by social media and internet in defining the media consumer (Choi et al., 2009). This has helped identifying how the consumer uses the digital content via mobile phones to gratify his/her needs. In this study, digital consumer uses multiple digital screens (especially mobile phone) to satisfy his/her need, to be informed, entertained and engage with different services provided on these platforms. Also, the researchers realized in India that references groups such as friends have a deep influence on their mobile usage and brand related activities via digital platforms (Viswanathan & Jain, 2013). Therefore, it is very essential to understand the role of reference group while Generation Y emerges as digital consumers.

Influence of Reference

The concept of reference groups was developed by Hyman (1942) and associated it with group members who psychologically influence a person's attitude and behaviour (Turner, 1991). From the survey of literature on reference group, the researchers identified that these individuals have a positive influence on a person's intention, attitude and behaviour (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Childers & Rao, 1992; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Whittler & Spira, 2002). These reference groups could influence the assessment of products (Whittler & Spira, 2002), selection of brands (Bearden & Etzel, 1982) and purchase-decision (Moschis, 1976). Additionally, the group members use the same brands (Childers & Rao, 1992) as they thoroughly discuss choices before the purchase. There could be different types of reference groups namely: membership, inspirational and dissociative. Membership groups are the set of individuals to which the person belongs such as family, peer and friends. The individual is able to identify with the group as the individual is psychologically involved with this group (Turner, 1991). The impact of membership groups may also depend on the consumption of products in private or public spaces (Childers & Rao, 1992). The influence of this group is observed to be higher while there is conspicuous consumption of products (Bourne, 1957). Aspiration groups comprise of those individuals like celebrities to whom the individual is attracted to and would like to become members of their community (Englis & Solomon, 1995). Dissociative reference groups are comprised of those individuals with whom the person would like to avoid the relationship (Englis & Solomon, 1995; Turner, 1991). To summarize, historical research has widely focused on consumer social influence through membership and inspirational groups (White & Dahl, 2006).

The current marketing landscape where Generation Y interacts is integrated and complex. It is important to understand the latest application of mobile phones (Okazaki & Barwise, 2011) and comprehend the dynamic nature of consumers. Therefore, the nuances of Indian Generation Y need to be understood as they would provide cogent understanding about the mobile phone consumption pattern and help marketers strategically develop appropriate strategies.

To summarize, Generation Y widely uses mobile phones and other digital platforms and undertakes several activities. They regularly undertake daily activities via their phones. Additionally, they are primarily influenced by reference groups. More importantly, they think that customization, sharing and privacy are important elements. Therefore, based on this summary developed from the robust and comprehensive literature, the following propositions were developed:

Proposition 1:Generation Y are digital consumers as they undertake several activities pertaining to exploring and consuming brands and products via mobile.

Proposition 2:Generation Y is highly engaged with the mobile as they carry out all the daily activities through their phone.

Proposition 3:Generation Y is strongly influenced by their reference group via digital platform such as mobile phones.

Proposition 4:Brand engagement of Generation Y is compelling when the focus is on personalization, security and sharing.

Research Questions

After analysing the literature on Generation Y and mobile marketing, the following questions were formulated:

· How does Generation Y use mobile phone to emerge as a digital consumer?
· How is Generation Y influenced by family, friends and peers in determining the purchase of products and brands via mobile phones?
· Which brand characteristics are preferred by Generation Y while using mobile phones?

Methodology

This study uses a grounded theory approach to explore the Indian digital self. This is because the former is inductive in nature and enables the researchers to develop the theory while working on empirical data. This approach allows the interplay between data collection and data analysis (Martin & Turner, 1986).

Sampling and Protocol

This research explored the digital self of Generation Y (18-30 years) as they are heavy users of digital media. The research was conducted by using the frameworks of communication, marketing and gender. Thus, a total of 10 focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted in the three leading state capitals of India: Mumbai, Bangalore, and Ahmedabad. These cities were chosen for this study as they had a very high number of mobile subscribers. Mumbai had 5.12 crore users, while Ahmedabad had 4.17 crore and 3.80 crore in Bangalore (Indiastat.com, 2012). Mumbai was selected as this city has tech

savvy people who used advanced, modern and contemporary forms of digital media platforms. They use various digital platforms as their lives are fast paced (Mumbai.org.uk, 2014). Bangalore is the information technology hub of India. It is home to the tech geeks of India who are versatile and dynamic in nature (Bangaloreindia.org.uk, 2014). Ahmedabad is a lively city where people use technology to maximize their own vibrancy and energy. However, there are other cities in India that might also have had digital savvy people. But, this research cannot include them as India is heterogonous. The researchers wanted to study these cities in depth and comprehensively rather than doing a dipstick study of large geographical areas. As the research decided on the same, it was also decided to use focus group discussions.

Yin (2003) states that FGD is used primarily when the theory and core concepts have not been formulated and there is a need to develop insights and understanding of the individual's behaviour in the group setting (Morgan & Kreuger, 1993). According to Malhotra & Dash (2011), eight to twelve individuals are necessary to conduct a healthy FGD. In the current study, the researchers recruited 72 respondents for nine FGDs.

Table1 illustrates the mean age of the respondents in all the cities to ensure that they are young adults. Additionally, the respondents had had masters' level education, which enhanced the depth of insights and understanding and sharing of the digital media. The research also included both the genders in the study to reduce the bias in opinions as can be observed in Table 1. The study found that India has 78.5 million individuals (9.3 per cent of population) who are above the age of 15 years. It is forecasted that this figure would increase further to 90.2 million by the year 2020. These figures signify that India has a high number of young adults (Euromonitor International, 2012). Therefore, this study was conducted in India on young adults who were in the age group of 18-30 years and owned smart phones. The researchers also captured the respondents' lifestyle and media consumption to help in our analysis (Table 2 and 3). Table 2 illustrates the lifestyles of the respondents reflected through their international holidays, dining at five star hotels, and visit to luxury spa, premier credit cards and exclusive cars. The respondents primarily took international holidays but only a few of them owned exclusive cars. Subsequently, Table 3 demonstrates the media consumption habits of the respondents. They primarily use mobile phone, laptop, tablet and LCDs. Internet is accessed on the mobile by many respondents. The researchers found that a lesser proportion of the respondents used game box, smart TV and mobile TV.

Table 1. Respondents' demographic

City-wise mean age		Gender (%)		Education (%)		Mean work experience (Years)
		Female	Male	Masters	Bachelors	
Mumbai	26.25	30	70	90	10	3
Bangalore	28.9	54	46	75	25	4
Ahmedabad	27.24	45	55	80	20	3.5

Table 2. Respondents' lifestyle

City	International holiday	Dinning at five star hotel	Luxury spa	Premier credit card	Exclusive and Premier car
Mumbai	90	38	38	35	25
Bangalore	98	52	52	38	34
Ahmedabad	95	45	31	31	28

Table 3. Consumption of different media by respondents (%)

City	Use of Internet on mobile	Tablet	Mobile TV	Laptop	Smart TV	LCD	Game box
Mumbai	98	45	21	98	22	55	5
Bangalore	97	48	25	98	25	70	15
Ahmedabad	83	32	18	97	18	50	4

After the extensive literature search on Generation Y and mobile marketing, the focus group discussions were conducted in three phases to cover three areas of investigations: characteristics of Generation Y, mobile consumption and brands and product related activities on mobile phone. The characteristics of Generation Y focused on aspiration, independence, role of friends, peers and friends, influence of religion, willingness to save, purchasing and spending power (Jain & Pant, 2012). The second phase emphasized on the usage and features of mobile phone along with other media platforms. The third phase focused on brand related activities carried out on the mobile phones and were related to exploration, discussion, evaluation, purchase and post purchase. These topics were discussed in each FGD, which lasted for approximately 90 minutes each.

Conducting FGDs

Focus group discussions were conducted in pleasant environments which were convenient and conducive to discussions. A simple questionnaire was given to the respondents at the beginning of the discussion. This questionnaire covered the aspects of occupation, age, gender, education and e-mail address of the respondents. The FGDs were video recorded to capture the facial expression, body language, and key insights from the respondents. At the end of the FGD, The researchers addressed the queries of the respondents and showed our appreciation for their participation by offering gifts and snacks. After the FGDs were concluded, verbatim transcripts were developed.

Data Analysis and Results

The study developed codes and themes after comparing and classifying the data through content analysis and word-by-word analysis (open coding) (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Upon completing this process, the researchers realised that the digital consumer uses mobile phones for multiple needs. Thus emerged as a crucial target for marketers. The digital consumers are influenced by their friends, peers and family members in making choices about brands and products that they may want to buy. This influence is unique as it is mediated through virtual platform and crystallizes the 'digital' relationship among the emerging 'digital consumer'. The last component of this framework points out to the digital consumers' engagement with the brands through mobile phones. The digital consumer engages favourably with those brands that can be customized, personalized and shared via virtual platform. This framework helps marketers to understand and operate in a new market space which is embedded in dynamic digital networks. This framework will be further elucidated in the following sections.

Generation Y as Digital Consumers

Generation Y focuses on digital media as they are tech savvy and prefer to spend more time on online platforms. They undertake many activities such as buying and selling of product

on their mobile phones. Vineet (a respondent) stated, "I like to use mobile phone to buy and sell the products as it is easy and convenient" (Male, 28 years, Mumbai,). Abhinav had a similar opinion when he stated that, "I explore, compare and buy my gadgets via mobile as it saves time" (Male, 25 years, Bangalore). The Researchers found that respondents also invest time in exploring brands as they switch brands quickly and are impatient and fickle minded. Ash stated, "I change my brands very quickly as I get bored with the same product and would like to experiment something new in the market and mobile phone helps me to do so" (Female, 26 years, Ahmedabad). To summarize, Generation Y widely use digital media (such as mobile phone) to explore consumer brands and products.

Engagement of Generation Y with Mobile Phone

Generation Y is highly engaged with their mobile phones as this device is considered to be their companion. Ruchi stated, "Mobile phone is so close to me that I do not allow my spouse to scan it" (Female, 27 years, Bangalore). They share their personal information on digital platform via their phones as respondents feel that virtual conversation is easier than face to face communication. They maintain their relationships through mobile phones. Respondents believe more in texting as this process is considered to be easy and effective. Respondents use mobile phones along with other media such as television and radio. Abhishek stated, "I always use my mobile phone when the TV is on as we need something in the background" (Male, 28 years, Mumbai). Respondents also use other social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and apps on their mobile. Surbhi states, "My emails, Facebook and Twitter are always logged in on my mobile phone as it is easy to use" (Female, 23 years, Mumbai). Therefore, Generation Y has strong involvements with the mobile phone as this device is considered to be their friend and other media platforms can also be accessed on this medium.

Influence of Reference Group

Generation Y is strongly influenced by reference groups. They discuss information about brands and products with their friends, family and peers via mobile phones. Friends have the strongest influence on Generation Y. Akshay states, "I buy only those products that are recommended by my friends" (Male, 24 years, Ahmedabad). This indicates that Generation Y have product experts within their friend-circle. Prachi adds, "If I want to buy a mobile, I discuss the brands and product with tech-oriented friends." She continues, "I purchase only that phone which is suggested by them" (Female, 22 years, Bangalore).

Additionally, respondents mentioned that they were always interested in retrieving the information related to their peers. Respondents feel that they are not credible as these individuals are not selected by them. Paridhi stated, "I just get the information from the peers as I do not trust them as we do not select them like friends but they are imposed on us by the organization" (Female, 24 years, Mumbai). Family is very important for the respondents and Generation Y often suggests brands and products to their family members. Abhi says, "We suggest brands and product to our family as our brand awareness is more than our parents" (Male, 23 years, Bangalore). Siddharth mentions, "I recommended mobile phone to my father and he purchased it!" (Male, 25 years, Ahmedabad). Hence, it can be inferred that there is a strong influence of reference group on Generation Y and a significant proportion of discussion and conversation happens on the mobile platform.

Engagement with Brand

Generation Y has strong brand engagement via their mobile phones. They explore, compare, evaluate and buy products and brands via mobile. Varun stated, "It is so easy to explore and evaluate products on mobile phone that I even buy them via phone" (Male, 25 years, Bangalore). Abhiruchi mentioned, "I bought my new phone through old mobile" (Female, 21 years, Mumbai). They like personalized, safe, subtle, innovative and visually appealing communication from brands on their mobile phones. Respondents also like to have opt-in and out facilities so that they can make the changes according to their requirements. If they like the information, they even believe in sharing it with their friends. Gaurav said, "I like communication from those brands that have good pictures, appealing creative and are customized for me" (Male, 27 years, Mumbai). Sweety said, "I prefer that communication that can be shared, is secure and provides opt-in and out facility" (Female, 20 years, Ahmedabad). To summarize, brands can develop strong engagement with Generation Y through mobile phones by developing communication that is subtle, personalized, secure, dynamic and visually appealing.

Discussion

Uses and Gratification facilitates our understanding of how and why the individuals consume media (Katz et al., 1974). This theory has been further used in the social media to understand 'gratification sought' and 'gratification obtained' (Rubin, 2002). The present study extends U&G theory as it has identified that digital media can be used with the traditional platforms with multiple screens including mobiles.

Additionally, COBRA is associated with the consuming, contributing and creating in the online space by the consumers. There are primarily three motives namely, information, entertainment and remuneration for these consumers to undertake the activities in the digital platforms (Muntinga et al., 2011). The present study extends this framework further after identifying the dimensions related to brand such as customization, opt in and out, security and sharing. It also identifies other user related elements such as subtlety, dynamism, innovation, co-construction and visual appeal. The research also found that these dimension help Generation Y become digital consumers. The study is new and innovative as it integrates both the frameworks to understand the usage of media influence and engagement with brands in a marketing environment.

Earlier studies have identified that Indian Generation Y prefer personalized and involved mobile communication (Pant & Jain, 2012). The present studies reinforces this and extends it further by proposing that Generation Y uses digital media with traditional platforms and focuses on entertainment and information. They have a high degree of dependency on mobile communication. Further, their work is carried out on multiple screens. They have a high degree of engagement with the gadgets. Studies have stated that adolescents' social process is more important than the structure constraints with mobile phones enabling the consumers' development and strengthening of social ties (Okazaki, 2009). However, this study extends the literature further and identifies that social ties also vary among friends, peers and family. It further adds that this segment has the strongest ties with friends as the communication flow is from both the sides. However ties with peers are moderate as they only retrieve information from their peers and do not like to share the information back. Additionally, they have moderate tie with their family but the flow of communication differs as they share information with their family as and when they feel comfortable and secure.

It can be noted that mobile-based word of mouth may be persuasive and effective when the participants receive detailed information and are motivated towards the brands (Okazaki, 2009) as a group. The findings of the present study identified that consumers like brands that provide customization, security, opt in and out facility and option of sharing information as and when they wish to. They also want brand engagement to be subtle, dynamic, co-constructed and visually appealing. These traits eventually make them a digital consumer for the Indian market.

Implications

The study found that Generation Y in India is a digital consumer as it uses multiple media platforms and highly dependent on mobiles, gadgets and friends. Marketers can develop strategies that are contingent on digital media and mobile phone and provide important information   on these digital. Marketers can also focus on investing their money on providing a digitized experience to Generation Y. This study found that friends have strong influence on Generation Y. Marketers can understand the communication and association of Generation Y with their friends and develop strategies accordingly. The influence of reference groups is high on the consumers. Referral based mobile campaigns would reinforce the consumers' proclivity for action since these messages would be originating from the peers and friends. Generation Y have 'product experts' within their circle. These experts are important for the marketers as they are opinion leaders. Marketers need to identify these product experts and understand the networks around these individuals to develop better relationships with Generation Y. This study found that Generation Y suggests and recommends products to their family. Marketers could develop strategies to understand Generation Y even as they expand their scope to include the family. Additionally, the present study identified that Generation Y prefer customized, hedonic and pictorial interactions from companies through mobile phone. These elements can be considered by the marketers while they engage with Generation Y via mobile phones. Generation Y prefers opt in and out facility and options of security and sharing. The marketers can develop mobile communication strategies accordingly. These dimensions are essential for the brands as they help the companies develop the strategies accordingly. Marketers would need to understand Generation Y's networks and nuances in a comprehensive way as they are complex and intricate.

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