

Internet Usage by Young Kids in India

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India is one of the countries with the highest number of kids under the age of 18 years. This paper adds value in understanding the usage in the current covid scenario. The research objectives for the current study are to examine how young kids in India use their time on internet for varied purposes, to study how young kids find the websites that are of interest to them and to examine how young kids obtain information about sensitive issues. A cross-sectional web survey was conducted to examine the various aspects of the use of the Internet and traditional media (television/radio/magazines/newspapers/billboards) among kids in India. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire. The sampling method used in the study was purposive sample (522 kids). Internet emerged as the first choice of media for kids for all the nine selected activities that include homework, shopping, restaurant/food-ordering, travel and tour, information search, health related information, weather forecast, entertainment, and news/current events. Girl respondents as compared to boys have consumed Internet at a higher rate for learning about the fashion (trends) and health related issues such as seeking preventative health care and specific information about medical issues .

Keywords: kids, communication, India, Internet, Media, Radio, TV

As of January 2021, there were 59.5 percent of the global population is active internet users. This also means that more than half of the global population is connected to the internet at any given point of time. Of this total, 92.6 percent (4.32 billion) accessed the internet via mobile devices (Statistica, 2021). There are studies that found that the use of internet globally would be fuelled by new updated information technologies trends like, blog writing, audio/video podcasts, Wi Fi connectivity and RSS feeds (Burns& Polman, 2006). It is a known fact now that communication technologies including the Internet have substantial impact on young children than all other technological innovations (Roberts & Foehr, 2004). A study of how the young kids use traditional and internet is important to understand and analyse as it enables advertisers and social marketers to develop effective and responsible marketing messages to these future consumers.

India is poised to be the youngest country in the world by 2022. As per the recent data, India in 2020 have over 560 million internet users. By 2023, there would be over 650 million internet users the country (Statista, 2020). There has been a consistent increase in internet

accessibility compared to 2015; the internet penetration rate was around 27 percent in 2015 and 50% in 2020. The introduction of the Indian government's Digital India initiative along with the increasing internet penetration resulted in the country's digital population amounting to approximately 688 million active users as of January 2020.

Kids' socialization agents are parent, friends, television, and internet (Chaudhary & Gupta, 2014; Ghouse et al., 2019). Mass media messages are considered as equally important socializing agents as parents and schools for young kids (Strasburger & Wilson, 2002; Chaudhary & Gupta, 2012). Media contents and media usage make strong influences on young kids' belief, attitudes, and behaviours (Roberts & Foehr, 2004). The amount of time spent by kids and teenagers on various media is correlated to the social and demographic variables (Roberts et al., 2003; Comstock & Scharrer, 1999). For example, young distribute spend more time on computers and video games (Gómez-Gonzalvo et al., 2020). Studies show that young kids increasingly watch television till they are 12 years of age, while they start listening to music at approximately 9 years of age and increased throughout adolescence (Psychosocial Paediatrics Committee, 2003). Mass media such as newspapers, radio, and television are deployed for the purpose of creating a more favourable climate for modern communication (Riaz & Pasha, 2012).

Studies found that young kids make active choices for the type and usage of media according to their personalities, socialization needs, and personal identification needs (Arnett, 1995). Katz and Blumler (1974) explains the same by their gratification theory. According to this theory, young kids will select and use the media to best fulfil their individual needs. With more internet availability and access in India, there is a need to update and validate the knowledge about internet usage on various media; and, how the Internet can be used to fulfil their varied communication needs. The current study is attempting to not just replicate the study by Chan and Fang (2007) but also extending this to present time of more internet access and Covid-19 environment in a developing country like India. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic felt by the community is the inner turmoil of parents who initially chose to entrust their children's education to schools (Mahmudah et al., 2021).

The research objectives for the current study are the following:

1. To examine how young kids in India use traditional media and Internet.
2. To examine how kid's choice of the media choices varies by different activities.
3. To study how young kids search for online sites that interests them.
4. To examine how young kids acquire valuable information about health-related issues such as seeking preventative health care and specific information about medical issues.

Literature Review

Communication is elementary for any society. Communication tasks in a society is about knowledge sharing, socialization, entertainment and about gaining consensus through persuasion or control (Schramm, 1977). All communication needs a medium to connect. Mass media has been an active agent for socialization at all levels. Adults get information about society from mass media channels. Kids also get influenced by mass media and their consumer socialization.

As new forms of media emerge and the convergence of media technology, the pattern s of media usage is undergoing rapid changes. Substantial attention and apprehensions related to internet are lately focused on how the young consumers make use of the Internet as these young people are the 'digital generation,' at the vanguard of new skills and technologies, yet also vulnerable and at risk (Livingstone 2003). In a study of 12 European countries and Israel

involving survey of 11,368 young people in the age group of 6 to 16 years, it was found that there are four major media user styles that are labelled as low media users, traditional media user, specialists, and screen entertainment fans (Bovill & Livingstone, 2001).

Studies on internet are still less as compared to its wider reach and exponential growth (Kim & Weaver, 2002). The study of young people's Internet use is undeveloped, although key questions of academic and policy significance have focused on the dangers of such use (Livingstone, 2003). Technologically mediated communication is being incorporated into various aspects of our daily lives (Mann & Stewart, 2000; Whitty, 2004). The distinction between online and offline worlds is therefore becoming less relevant. While there exists a huge body of research on the Internet and computer-mediated communication, hardly there are any focussing on young kids.

The digital divide

Digital divide is casually defined as the gap between people who do and do not have access to forms of information and communication technology (Van Dijk, 2017). In a plainer language, digital divide is defined as the gap between people who have and do not have access to computers and the Internet. As accessibility to internet is growing at a faster rate, both parents and kids are spending more time on internet. Parents found it difficult to mediate the use of Internet. Parents can execute mediation and control confidently and smoothly on kids while they watch television; but quite challenging to supervise the Internet usage (Chan & Fang, 2007). Low income and no internet in the homes have led children towards significantly lower scores on all dimensions of digital literacy, academic performance, aspirations, perceived efficacy, self-esteem, family, and peer relationships (Wong et al., 2015).

Uses and gratifications theory (UAGT)

According to the UAGT proposed by Katz and Blumler (1974), the media users are goal oriented. These users play an active role in selecting and using the media that best fulfils their individual needs. This way, this theory shifts the focus of media communication from an effect viewpoint to an audience viewpoint. As per this theory, users select media to fulfil their specific needs which leads to ultimate gratification (Lin, 1999). UAGT has provided valuable insight for varied media including newspaper daily, radio (Albarran et al., 2007), television (Ruggiero, 2000), cable TV (Perse & Courtright, 1993), VCRs (Lin, 1993), MP3 players (Ferguson et al., 2007), internet (Ko et al., 2005), mobile phones (Mittal et al., 2017) and also social media (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Children select electronic games and other media contents in accord with the uses and gratifications they expect; this helps in their developmental tasks (Salisch, 2006)

Despite being popular, there is some criticism for UAGT; it is being said that it relies too heavily on self-declared reports (Katz, 1987). As a fallout, this theory is unsophisticated related to the social origin of individuals meet related to media. This theory was also criticised for the possible dysfunction of self and society. Despite these limitations majority of the scholars still believe that this theory provides considerable beast to understand the media choices and the purpose is behind it. UAGT deemed appropriate for the current study as well as the study is about the use of various media by kids.

Internet Usage

The Internet is a legitimate subject of mass communication and social science research. Newhagen and Rafaeli (1996) also attempted to theoretically position the same. Contemporary

researchers also trust upon considering Internet as a subject of research based on treating Internet as a bridge between mass communication and interpersonal communication (Ruggiero, 2000).

Researchers also show the kids use Internet for variety of off objectives; for example, watching videos, playing online games, searching for some information, socialising with friends and family and doing their homework (Holloway et al., 2013). There is another research that examines the relationship between Childs media usage and motivations; kids engage with media for six different motivations, for their learning, for passing time slash habit, companionship, to escape or to forget something, for arousal and for relaxation (Hargittai & Kim, 2010).

Male respondents used the Internet more frequently for games, music, shopping while girl respondents used the Internet more frequently for fashion and information about colleges/universities. Respondents found out websites by using search engines and asking friends. Respondents considered the Internet the most preferred sources of communication about sensitive issues when they need information fast (La Ferle et al., 2000).

The youth market

The global youth market is vital to international marketers and advertisers because of its size and its homogeneity (Chan & Fang, 2007). As of 2019, More than 25% of the world population is of kids that is under the age of 18 years (World bank, 2019), The global population aged 65+ surpassed the number of kids aged 0-4 in 2019, as birth rates declined, and lifespans rise (Euromonitor-International, 2020).

India is the country with the highest number of kids under the age of 18 years. Twenty-six percent of the India's population is of kids, so this study becomes pedal vital to understand how kids use traditional media and the internet. This will help the marketers and advertisers to make effective marketing strategies to cater to these kids responsibly (Chaudhary, 2018). India as a country it is transforming from a mere third world country do a remarkably high growth developing country. The continuous increase in the GDP and the per capita income has led to improvement in the education level. In this way India along with other Asian market is becoming like western countries in terms of personal inspirations and consumption patterns (Chan & Fang, 2007). As Indian market grew, multinationals need to gain a better understanding of this market before making any advertising strategy. Also, with the changing dynamics, kids have more and better access to Internet add mobile phones. Such a scenario will make targeting kids quite challenging by using only television as the major marketing medium. Therefore, there is a need for more research to better understand the media usage behaviour of young kids to establish a connexion with them. Information about how they get information about websites and sensitive issues is also needed for commercial and non-profit marketers to reach them in a cost-effective manner.

Method

Procedure

A cross-sectional web survey was executed to examine the media usage habits of kids in India across the Internet and traditional media (television/radio/magazines/newspapers/billboards). The sampling population was kids aged 13 to 20 years. Kids of this age group were selected for the study for four reasons: (i) during Covid-19, the online classes were made compulsory in India for kids of class VII (13 years and above) onwards; (ii) kids begin to imitate and project behaviour much similar to an adult (Piaget, 1970); (iii) can contingently make use of different media options as per the requirements (Roeddar-John, 1999); (iv) most active Internet users amongst kids belong

to this age group, e.g., as per an IAMAI (2019) report, of the 451 million monthly active Internet users, 385 million were over 12 years of age.

A structured questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions was administered on a purposive sample of 522 kids from different areas of Delhi (India). Delhi being an epicentre of political activities and prime decisions, hub of business activities, adorned with historical monuments, habituated by people from every part of the country belonging to varied cultures, ethnicity, and economic background, is truly a specimen of India.

For sample selection, initially fifteen schools and five colleges were approached with the detailed survey plan via e-mail, out of which concerned authority of nine schools and three colleges sought further discussion in this regard, and finally five schools and two colleges agreed to participate in this study. Quotas were established for different age group students (class VII to undergraduates) and the questionnaire with a small introductory note was shared with the relevant students through e-mail. Response frequency was restricted to one-child-one-response, and the response gathering window was opened for one month, i.e., February 2021. Responses were received from 711 kids out of which 189 were rejected (incomplete), leading to the final sample size of 522 (response rate 73.4 percent).

Measurement

The questionnaire was inspired by Chan and Fang (2007). Questionnaire and was generated on Google Forms. A pilot study of forty respondents aged 15-18 was conducted to check the flow, language used, and continuity of the questions. The internal consistency of the four scales included in the pilot questionnaire was assured through Cronbach alpha coefficients ($\alpha_1 = .61$; $\alpha_2 = .64$; $\alpha_3 = .79$; $\alpha_4 = .84$). Pilot study results led to the incorporation of few modifications in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire comprised of three parts wherein Part I focused on the time distributed by the kids, in general, across various activities such as watching television, reading, studying (online/offline), and surfing internet. Kids were asked to identify their most preferred media choices for nine activities such as information search, homework, weather forecast, entertainment, and shopping. Questions related to the activities for which the internet can be used (twelve in total) were enlisted in part II of the questionnaire. Kids were asked to report the frequency with which they use the Internet for these purposes on a five-point scale ranging from always (5) to never (1). Further the respondents were asked to specify the ways (seven in total) they locate the useful and relevant web sites on a five-point scale (5 = always; 1 = never). The last question of this part inquired the kids about the listed sources which they may prefer the most to gather information about the sensitive issues under the conditions of confidentiality, speed, privacy, comfort, and ease. Demographic related questions were covered in Part III. The response rate was restricted to one child-one response.

Sample profile

The surveyed sample consisted of 522 kids, out of which, 234 were males and 288 were girls spread across two age groups, i.e., from 13 to 16 years ($N = 289$), and 17 to 20 years ($N = 233$). Majority of the kids (59 percent) were from nuclear families and the rest of them (41 percent) were from joint families. Sixty-three percent of the respondents had their own mobile phones.

Results

Usage of type of media

The first research objective of this study attempts to examine quantum of time allocation by Indian kids across traditional (television, books, radio, study, and mobile) and Internet. Seven such activities were identified where the kids can possibly spend their time on daily basis (Table 1). The results reveal that more than 60 per cent of the kids spend more than three hours on studies both offline (36 per cent) as well as online (32.3 per cent).

Table 1

Time spent across activities

| <i>Activity</i> | <i>0 to 1 hour</i> | <i>1 to 2 hours</i> | <i>2 to 3 hours</i> | <i>More than 3 hours</i> | <i>Mean</i> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| | <i>%</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>hours</i> |
| Studying (offline) | 11.9 | 26.6 | 25.5 | 36.0 | 2.36 |
| Studying (online) | 15.7 | 23.6 | 28.4 | 32.3 | 2.27 |
| Surfing Internet | 39.1 | 30.7 | 14.9 | 15.3 | 1.57 |
| Reading books etc. | 44.8 | 33.5 | 13.8 | 7.8 | 1.35 |
| Chatting/messaging on phone | 59.4 | 23.9 | 9.8 | 6.8 | 1.14 |
| Watching television | 65.3 | 24.7 | 6.7 | 3.3 | 0.98 |
| Listening to radio | 76.4 | 17.4 | 4.6 | 1.6 | 0.81 |

The second research objective of this study aimed to find out the possible variations in kids' media choices across selected activities. In this regard, data pertaining to kids' most preferred choice of media across nine activities were obtained and summarized in Table 2. Out of the five selected media choices, Internet is the most preferred media option by majority of the respondents for most of the activities, e.g., homework (94.6 per cent), shopping (93.5 per cent), and search for restaurant/eating joints (87.5 per cent). The usage of radio for all the listed activities is the least preferred media by the surveyed sample.

Table 2

Media choice for varied activities

| <i>Activity</i> | <i>Internet</i> | <i>Magazine</i> | <i>Newspapers</i> | <i>Radio</i> | <i>Television</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| | <i>%</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>%</i> |
| Information Search | 84.3 | 1.5 | 7.9 | 0.6 | 5.7 |
| Homework | 94.6 | 3.3 | 1.7 | 0.0 | 0.4 |
| Weather forecast | 61.9 | 1.3 | 7.3 | 1.5 | 28.0 |
| Health related information | 84.1 | 3.3 | 6.3 | 0.8 | 5.6 |
| Entertainment | 51.5 | 1.3 | 0.6 | 1.0 | 45.6 |
| Shopping | 93.5 | 4.0 | 0.8 | 0.0 | 1.7 |
| News/current events | 43.3 | 3.4 | 19.2 | 0.6 | 33.5 |
| Restaurant/eating joints | 87.5 | 6.9 | 2.7 | 0.6 | 2.3 |
| Travel and tour | 84.7 | 7.9 | 4.6 | 0.4 | 2.5 |

Internet usage

The third research objective examines the purposes for which the kids in India can most frequently use the Internet. Kids' responses were contained for twelve such purposes and summarised in Table 3. The frequency of Internet usage, as reported by kids, is found to be

highest for gathering information for further education ($M = 3.92$), weather ($M = 3.54$), health ($M = 3.51$), homework ($M = 3.47$), address of a place ($M = 3.27$), listening music ($M = 3.24$), watching movies or shows ($M = 3.00$), and least for making friends ($M = 2.09$).

Male and female children were found to be significantly different only in five out of the twelve proposes for which they use the Internet. As compared to girls, higher Internet usage was reported by distributes for homework, games, and making friends. However, the Internet usage was comparatively higher for obtaining health related information, listening to music, and fashion in case of girls.

Significant age-wise differences were observed across majority (9 out of 12) of the twelve selected purposes. Younger kids (13-16 years) used the Internet comparatively less for all the activities except for playing games and making friends. Older kids (17-20 years) used the Internet for gathering information for various listed purposes.

Table 3*Internet usage by gender and age*

| Usage | Mean ^a | Male | Girl | t-value | 13-16 | 17-20 | t-value |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|------|------|---------|-------|-------|---------|
| Further education information | 3.92 | 3.83 | 3.99 | -1.477 | 3.70 | 4.19 | -4.828* |
| Weather information | 3.54 | 3.44 | 3.61 | -1.536 | 3.33 | 3.79 | -4.153* |
| Health information | 3.51 | 3.38 | 3.61 | -1.968* | 3.23 | 3.85 | -5.592* |
| Help for homework | 3.47 | 3.50 | 3.45 | 0.491 | 3.39 | 3.56 | -1.728 |
| Search of address/place | 3.27 | 3.20 | 3.32 | -0.997 | 3.08 | 3.51 | -3.552* |
| Listening to music | 3.24 | 3.07 | 3.37 | -2.440* | 2.90 | 3.55 | -4.665* |
| Watching movies/shows | 3.00 | 2.88 | 3.08 | -1.779 | 2.79 | 3.24 | -3.918* |
| Travel and tour information | 2.86 | 2.74 | 2.96 | -1.768 | 2.67 | 3.10 | -3.507* |
| Shopping | 2.51 | 2.54 | 2.48 | 0.641 | 2.42 | 2.61 | -1.870 |
| Games | 2.50 | 2.90 | 2.18 | 5.793* | 2.65 | 2.32 | 2.562* |
| Fashion | 2.35 | 2.09 | 2.56 | -4.090* | 2.12 | 2.63 | -4.379* |
| Making friends | 2.09 | 2.24 | 1.96 | 2.411* | 2.11 | 2.06 | 0.408 |

Note: ^a5-point scale (1 = never to 5 = almost every time); * $p < .05$

The fourth research objective focuses on the ways with which the kids locate the relevant web sites. Kids' responses were obtained for seven possible options to locate the required web sites (Table 4). Analysis result indicate that majority of the kids find out about the relevant web sites through browsing the search engines ($M = 3.88$) followed by next most used option of asking friends ($M = 2.82$). Advertisements of all mediums are not an extremely popular way used by kids to know about the useful web sites. Sex-wise, no significant difference was observed in the ways kids locate the useful web sites. However, age-wise significant differences were observed across majority (4 out of seven ways) of the ways kids locate the relevant websites.

Table 4*Age-wise and sex-wise ways to locate web sites*

| Way | Mean ^a | Male | Girl | t-value | 13-16 | 17-20 | t-value |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------|------|---------|-------|-------|---------|
| Browsing search engines | 3.88 | 3.94 | 3.83 | 1.022 | 3.74 | 4.05 | -2.913* |
| Ask friends | 2.82 | 2.82 | 2.81 | 0.010 | 2.78 | 2.88 | -0.957 |
| Newspapers advertising | 2.23 | 2.24 | 2.23 | 0.052 | 2.06 | 2.45 | -3.510* |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|------|------|------|--------|------|------|---------|
| Television advertising | 2.21 | 2.26 | 2.20 | 0.552 | 2.17 | 2.30 | -1.115 |
| Billboards/posters | 2.08 | 2.04 | 2.11 | -0.638 | 1.96 | 2.23 | -2.524* |
| Magazines advertising | 1.97 | 2.03 | 1.92 | 1.025 | 1.88 | 2.08 | -1.896 |
| Radio advertising | 1.73 | 1.76 | 1.70 | 0.528 | 1.61 | 1.88 | -2.827* |

Note: * 5-point scale (1 = never to 5 = always); * $p < .05$

Communication sources for sensitive personal issues

The last objective of this study seeks to explore the sources from which the kids obtain the information under five conditions such as when the information is needed fast, or when the privacy is important. The respective results are summarized in Table 5. To make the results more readable, mean percentage was calculated for each source for the selected five conditions, and thereafter ranks were assigned to each source based on calculated mean scores. Results show that most of the surveyed kids relied on the Internet ($M = 42.0$), followed by parents ($M = 32.3$), friends ($M = 16.78$), and teachers ($M = 8.9$) for gathering information about sensitive issues. Kids perceived the speed of the Internet as the most important feature to choose this medium over other sources of information to gather information about sensitive issues. After Internet, and parents, kids preferred to consult friends rather than teachers to obtain information for the sensitive issues.

Table 5
Communication sources for sensitive personal issues

| Conditions | Parents | Teachers | Friends | Internet |
|-----------------|---------|----------|---------|----------|
| | % | % | % | % |
| Speed | 25.2 | 6.1 | 5.9 | 62.8 |
| The easiest way | 17.4 | 8.0 | 19.5 | 55.1 |
| Confidentiality | 37.8 | 17.0 | 18.2 | 27.0 |
| Comfort | 31.6 | 8.8 | 23.6 | 36.0 |
| Privacy | 49.6 | 4.6 | 16.7 | 29.1 |
| Mean (%) | 32.3 | 8.9 | 16.78 | 42.0 |
| Ranking | II | IV | III | I |

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the media usage habits of Indian kids in the age group of 13 to 20 years. The study focused on various media usage related aspects including the time spent by these kids across the traditional (television, radio, and print) and Internet, the purpose for which different media are preferred by kids, and finally the media most preferred by kids to gather information for sensitive issues. Further, the study aimed to gain deeper insight into the Internet consumption behaviour of Indian kids by examining two related dimensions, i.e., the frequency of usage of Internet for twelve listed activities (e.g., information gathering for further education, homework, shopping, watching movies), and the ways to locate the useful web sites. Aggregative results suggest that the Internet is emerging as a popular media form for the young generation in India for various activities around information gathering, studies, and entertainment.

Majority of the surveyed kids reported, in terms of an average time spent on these activities on a normal weekday, to spend their maximum time on studies (offline) followed by studies (online), surfing Internet, reading, chatting on phone, watching television, and listening

radio. The traditional media (television and radio) previously used for entertainment and information are becoming less popular amongst kids.

Internet emerged as the first choice of media for kids for all the nine selected activities that include homework, shopping, restaurant/food-ordering, travel and tour, information search (general), health related information, weather forecast, entertainment, and news/current events. Respondents reported television as the second obvious choice for entertainment, news/current events, and weather forecast. The third obvious choice of kids amongst the listed activities was newspapers for getting information for news and current events. The results suggest radio to be the least preferred media across all the activities.

The possible explanations for the phenomenal popularity of Internet amongst Indian kids could be (i) presently it is the most powerful medium of communication which connects people across different parts of the world free and fast; (ii) being a source of information, it has opened a new world for them by providing quick, inexpensive, and easy availability open access to the previously inaccessible things, facts and figures, and information worldwide; (iii) the Covid-19 induced restrictions on travelling movements outside homes, quarantines, closure of schools thereby forcing everyone including kids to work and study at home through the Internet; (iv) wide variety of study related services provided by Internet such as inter-linked hypertext documents, the World Wide Web, notifications, e-mail, e-classrooms, and file sharing networks; (v) easy access to government policies, rules, schemes through government run web sites; and (vi) source of enjoyment (online games) and entertainment (access to movies/shows/videos).

Gender-wise analysis of result indicates that as compared to girls, the usage of Internet for playing games is more prevalent amongst distributes. This finding is parallel to previous research findings (Gross, 2004). The online games, in general, are action-oriented containing too much violent and gender-role related content (Chan & Fang, 2007) that generates more rewarding feelings in men than women during video-game play, hence, male kids are two to three times more likely than girl kids to feel addicted to video games (Hoeft et al., 2008). Similarly, due to the safety concerns girls, as compared to males have used Internet less frequently to make friends online. Another probable reason for this difference may be the gender socialization of kids in a patriarchal Indian society which equates masculinity with aggression, power, authority, toughness, ambitious, and ruthless, and femininity with nurture, care, inferior and subservience, accordingly, girls are socialised as risk-aversers and distributes as risk-takers.

The Internet usage as a source to learn about fashion (trends) and health related issues is used more by girls than distributes. This finding is consistent with literature (Nam et al., 2006) in which girls are found to be more fashion and physical appearance conscious than distributes. The gender induced differences also exists in the shopping behaviour of males and girls such as compared to men, women tend to shop for leisure and enjoyment, spend more time browsing, research and evaluate more about the available options, make informed decisions, and buy more clothing (Hensen & Jensen, 2009). Girl respondents also used Internet more frequently for listening to music than male respondents. These findings are important for the advertisers to select the appropriate content and mode (web sites) to promote their products.

Age-wise analysis of results indicates the existence of significant differences in the motives for which kids use Internet across age groups. For instance, all the surveyed kids used Internet for run and entertainment, younger kids (13-16 years) did this more via playing games, but older kids (17-20 years) did this more via listening to music and watching movies and shows. Compared to younger kids, older kids are found to be more interested in the informative content

available on Internet in terms of information for further education, weather, health, address, travel and tour, fashion, and homework.

Most of the kids surveyed located relevant web sites by browsing search engines followed by asking friends, advertising in newspaper, television, billboard, magazine, and radio, irrespective of their gender and age. Amongst all the available options to locate a useful web site, advertising on radio happened to be the least used way. These results indicate that in India, for advertising, both traditional media (television/radio/magazines/newspapers) and modern media (Internet) are needed to supplement each other.

Surveyed kids' most preferred option was Internet for gathering information about sensitive issues followed by parents, friends, and teachers. This information is important for policymakers and social marketers who deal with social issues: (i) which are not openly discussed in a society such as sex-education, contraceptives, AIDS; (ii) that need proper, adequate, authentic, and timely information such as ways to mitigate Covid-19, vaccination drives, availability of options for consumer grievance redressal, government schemes for social welfare; (iii) where mass awareness is needed such as risks associated with smoking and drink driving; and (iv) that pertains to the busting of prevailing myths and superstitions. Amongst all the listed options to congregate the information about sensitive personal issues, Internet stands out because of the qualities it entails as it is place where the information on almost every topic and issues is available in volumes across the globe that can quickly be searched and used without any hassle at no cost or very less cost, and that too with full confidentiality and privacy. Searching Internet for sensitive and personal issues can also save kids from troubles and embarrassments which may occur if such issues are discussed with known ones this is the reason kids preferred Internet over parents, friends, and teachers.

Government organisations can make effective use of Internet in spreading important messages to families through targeting kids by making web sites more useful, attractive, and interactive. Marketers can also tap this huge opportunity to reach out to young consumers through Internet.

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