

Preferences of Youth: Selected Attributes



Management

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ABSTRACT

India had the largest youth population in the world. Any policies or decisions made for the population at large and youth in particular, cannot ignore to understand various attributes related to youth. The current research paper is an attempt to know and understand the preferences of youth with regards to various attributes related to their day-to-day habits, beliefs, ethos, preferences and career aspirations. Various observations suggested that young people generally accessed internet; spend most of their time on mobiles; could read, write and understand English but could not speak it confidently; were dependent upon parents for financial resources; wanted to pursue a career with reputation; and felt that the time-management was the biggest challenge. They also gave their opinions regarding their beliefs about themselves and the societal norms. Analysis like these can help the policy makers and marketers in designing and implementing policies and strategies targeted at youth segment.

INTRODUCTION

The demography of India is historically placed in a way that could lead India towards becoming a superpower. According to a UN report cited in The Hindu (2014) India had the largest youth population in the world with 28% of the population belonging to the age group of 10-24 years' old. About 356 million people belonged to this age-group in India. If this segment of the population developed into a productive human resource then they would earn and spend more through contributions in production and consumption. Their participation in production and consumption would be greatly influenced by their preferences and beliefs. It is thus very important to understand the preferences of youth so that the policy efforts were put in the correct direction. Hence the objective of this paper was to understand the habits, preferences, beliefs, ethos, etc. of the youth and thereby gain a fair idea regarding selected attributes.

METHODOLOGY

A primary data collection was done for this exploratory research. Sample size was 100 youth. But 96 responses were analyzed since four response sheets were incomplete for certain responses and thus were not considered. All the respondents belonged to the age group of 18-24 years and included 54 females and 42 males. The survey was conducted through a questionnaire based on informal discussions with the targeted segment and a testing of a draft questionnaire through a preliminary survey. The questionnaire was further revised to incorporate the changes based on the observations and suggestions from the preliminary survey. Respondents were given the liberty to choose more than one options in certain questions. Frequencies have been cited for various attributes. The research area was Adipur city of Kachchh district. Attributes included were related to habits, preferences, beliefs, ethos, opinions about self and the societal norms, etc.

Limitations of the research include those related to the sample size and number of attributes that could be incorporated. It was restricted to one geographical area only. Certainly such researches are specific to a particular target segment in a particular area and cannot be used to generalize for larger or different areas.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The respondents were asked how they spent most of their leisure time. About 89 preferred enjoying on their handsets various activities like chats, playing games, browsing internet and listening to music. About 44 preferred freaking out with friends, 38 preferred watching television, 26 performed household chores, 18 preferred spending time in the offices of family businesses or shops, 34 preferred self-grooming related activities and about 19 were involved in various forms of exercises.

About 76 respondents accessed internet almost on a daily basis through phones, laptops or personal computers whereas 12 respondents accessed internet with a frequency of about once a week and about 8 accessed with a frequency of about once a month or not at all. 70 respondents used at least one social networking site or social networking application, whereas 26 did not. The purpose of accessing internet was bifurcated as: 52 for social purposes, 69 for academic purposes and 73 for entertainment. 74 students knew and used handset texting languages, about 13 students rarely used the texting language and 9 were unaware. 68 respondents said that they read a newspaper regularly out of which 44 read English newspapers and 24 read vernacular language newspaper i.e. Gujarati dailies. 37 respondents suggested that they routinely accessed knowledge resources either in the form of books, magazines, or browsing through various knowledge associated websites. 84 students said that they understood English language, but 48 were confident that they could read and write correct English and 27 were able to speak correct English. About 34 said that they feared to communicate with anyone in English and included 11 respondents who suggested that they were able to speak correct English.

About 7 respondents received a fixed pocket money from their parents, to sponsor their leisure costs whereas about 68 suggested that they got the financial support from their parents as and when required. 25 were self-dependent for most of their own financial needs except education. About 5 boys and 3 girls even supported family financially. The self-dependents largely helped in their own shops after academic hours or were employed. Others provided coaching to younger students. Financial resources were used to pay the costs associated with handset and other electronic gadgets, self-grooming inclusive of purchases of garments and cosmetics, freaking out with friends for movies or restaurants, costs related to education like fees, books, coaching classes' charges, stationery, etc. Educational expenses were incurred by parents for 74 respondents.

Respondents' discussion amongst themselves largely focused on handset features, social discussions related to family and friends, fashion and appearance, movies and soap-operas, amongst others.

With regards to their career options 38 respondents wanted to pursue a career that had reputation as the prime-most attribute, 12 wanted a career with an easy life, 32 wanted a career that was financially lucrative, and 18 respondents wanted to pursue a career that could make them powerful / influential. When respondents were inquired for the challenges that they faced in pursuing their ambitions / aspirations, time-management was a common challenge for 68 respondents, lack of focus for 48, lack of self-commitment for 39, financial constraints for 27 and geographical immobility for 42.

To understand what the youth felt about themselves and certain societal norms they were asked to give their opinions with regards to certain sentences with responses like disagree, neutral or agree. All the responses have not been quoted. Only those responses that had strong opinions have been cited.

48 students agreed that they believed in hard work. 83 agreed that they obeyed the suggestions made by the parents. 75 agreed that they wanted to learn from their own mistakes. 74 agreed that youth had the power to change the society. 20 agreed that they believed in achieving results no matter how, 29 were neutral and 47 disagreed. 42 agreed that they knew their strengths and weaknesses while 17 were neutral and 37 disagreed. 50 respondents agreed that they believed in living ethically, honestly and truthfully while 14 were neutral. Some of the respondents who were neutral also suggested that ethics were subjective and differed from person to person, place to place and situation to situation. 70 agreed that they accomplished everything for their family. 41 students agreed that for them their friend's opinions were the most influential but 29 were neutral and 26 disagreed. 77 agreed that working in a team produced best results. 43 agreed that they did not care what society thought / believed but 24 respondents were neutral and 29 disagreed and suggested that they were concerned about what society thought. 74 agreed that they took decisions only after a careful thinking while 16 were neutral. 49 agreed that they were cool, 26 were neutral and 21 did not agree that they were cool. The students who disagreed felt that it was neither important to look cool since they did not care or they felt that there were far more important things to do than putting efforts in looking cool. 53 liked bright and vibrant colors, 23 were neutral and 20 disliked. 69 respondents agreed that they liked adventurous activities, while 18 were neutral. 55 agreed that they liked to earn more and spend more, while 19 were neutral and 22 felt that it was equally important to save what was earned. 64 agreed that they respected traditions but that it was not a burden for them while 12 were neutral and 20 felt the burden of maintaining traditions. 37 agreed that they liked to show off their talent, 16 were neutral and 43 disagreed and suggested that they did not like to show off their talent.

INFERENCES, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

India is a very diverse country and so framing policies and designing strategies on the basis of 'one style fits all' could result into miscalculations. Hence such area specific studies can prove to be vital in policy framing and designing strategies specific to the geographical area under study. Along these lines the study could be used in the manner as suggested here for this specific area.

Most of the youth spent most of their time using mobile handsets. Hence marketing through mobile could be a very important media. An access to internet was also very frequent. The young population accessed internet often for the social networking sites and applications. Access of internet on mobiles has made it very convenient and frequent. One can have 24x7 internet access on the mobiles and can use it anytime anywhere with reasonable speed at most of the places where telecom services are

provided. Hence on-line communication especially on social networking sites and applications was expected to reach the larger audience if the targeted segment was youth. Amongst the respondents those pursuing higher levels of education also accessed internet for academic purposes. So such micro segment of educated youth population could also be communicated through academic websites on the internet. Newspapers had readability amongst the youth for both English dailies and vernacular dailies. For various purposes dailies can also be used for communication with the youth. Since most of the youth were familiar with texting language the message could be communicated with some use of the texting language. Since the texting language communications are briefly it may cost lesser while communicating through certain media where the costs are calculated on the basis of the length of the text or the space that it occupied. Some communications like flash advertisements on television and electronic hoardings are for a very short duration. Texting language could be used for such purposes. The respondents suggested that they struggled with time management. Hence the communication should be as brief and prompt as possible, not seeking much time of the youth. It should be designed in a manner to catch immediate attention of the youth. The respondents were dependent on their parents for most of their financial needs especially the education related expenses. They also suggested that they obeyed the suggestions by parents. Hence parents were crucial opinion leaders for various decisions taken by the youth. Hence any communication targeted at youth could be channelized by appealing to the parents. The content of the message could be designed by understanding what youth feel about themselves and certain societal norms. Findings and analysis section mentioned the opinions of youth for certain such attributes. The content would largely depend upon the suitability of the product and related attributes of the youth. The two aspects that they prioritized in job choices were reputation associated with the job and financial aspects. Hence it could be inferred that reputation and money appealed to the youth population.

As suggested such implications are largely respondents and area specific. While nation-wide studies could be used for a larger audience, area specific studies could be used to customize the marketing strategies for a particular location. If the communications were not customized for the specific audience it may not appeal to the youth of that particular area and the entire effort could result in wastage of time and resources.

REFERENCE

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