

# MILLENNIAL MOTHERS: A STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER DECISION MAKING IN AN INDIAN CONTEXT

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## Abstract

Millennial mothers is an emerging segment of consumers in India-a segment which is substantially different from the earlier generation mothers. The study intends to investigate:

- Is there really a substantial difference between the millennial moms and the erstwhile moms in their demographic, psychographic and behavioral patterns?
- Do these differences actually impact consumer decision making and thus render millennial moms as a segment amenable to a differential marketing stimuli (Marketing Mix)?
- How do millennial mothers buy products for themselves and households?

Unit of study is millennial mothers and the research design is exploratory/descriptive. The measurement instrument employed is a questionnaire on Likert Scale. Data collected from 153 millennial mothers is analyzed using SPSS. Five categories of products have been included in the study-Baby Care, Gadgets, Grooming, Apparels and Groceries. The geographical scope of the study is Jaipur City, Rajasthan.

Barring a few countries, not much literature pre-exists on millennial mothers' decision making. The paper provides practical insights and thus enable marketers to pitch themselves better to this digitally connected segment of consumers and create better engagement for their products.

**Keywords:** Generation Y, Millennial Mothers, Social Media, Consumer Decision Making.

## Introduction

Motherhood is a very challenging milestone in a woman's life. However, these challenges are very different for the mothers of today – the millennial moms. The word 'millennial' denotes the clear distinction of how the new age mothers are different from the older counterparts. It basically refers to the people born between the mid '80s and the late '90s – the mothers who grew up in the first decade of the new millennium. This distinction is important and is also studied because the people falling under the category are the ones who were introduced to the smart - technology, internet, ecommerce and social media while they were growing up. They discovered modern media as it was developing. Technology is a natural habitat for them. The millennial mothers grew up with the modern media and information technology and are very closely connected with them. They represent a segment that is unique, differentiable, substantial, and accessible and respond well to the marketing stimuli.

Mothers have always been one of the most lucrative demographic groups for the Indian marketers. They are the gateway to sales as they play a key role in the purchasing decisions in a household. The current cultural milieu is witnessing a sea change in the family roles coupled with the need for dual-income in households-this has made millennial mothers empowered decision makers in family purchase decisions. They represent a growing freight train of economic power. They do not just buy

for themselves; they buy for their entire family and across all categories.

## **Review of Literature**

As part of the study it is important to understand and recognize what this 'coming of age' or millennial mother generation is all about and why they are chosen for the purpose of study and as unit of analysis. The available literature on millennial mothers categorizes them as the mothers who are born between 1980 and 2000, Geraci & Nagy (2004), Gurau (2012); Williams et al (2012), Tanyel et al (2013). Researchers have recognized millennial mothers as diverse group who has unique shopping habits, consumption habits, and varied and high online time spending behavior Tanyel et al (2013), Gurau (2012). Millennial mothers can be segmented primarily based on their life-stage Gurau (2012). Tanyel et al (2013) propose the millennial mothers are either stay at home mothers or working mothers who are working as salaried professional or self-employed. This paper primarily focuses on their changing habits, consumption of social media, and it is assumed that this generation mothers are truly digital natives Williams et al (2012).

Digital natives mothers today are more powerful, empowered, educated, and choice driven Williams et al (2012), which takes us to the notion that they are selective, and cautious in their decisions as they have plenty of information available for conformity and verification before making a decision. Earlier marketers were finding it difficult to reach out to this segment Geraci & Nagy (2004) which can also be attributed to diversity and inaccessibility to the segment. The research studies compares the consumer behaviour of two generational cohorts- the millennial moms and the non-millennial moms. The gaps in existing literature indicate towards the originality of the research.

## **Changing Psychographics and Behaviours**

### **Technology and Social Media- A Way of Life**

Earlier, the mothers could spend a lot of their time at home with their families. The information technology has evolved drastically. The social interaction was not as easy and boundary less as it is today. The mothers are not restricted to simple linear customer journeys anymore. Now they retweet, like and share about the products/services they probably used and choose to review online to tell about their experience to the other "mommy – friends". 'Digital Natives' is a better descriptor for the millennial mothers (Nelson, Erin 2012).

Millennial mothers are having connect on 3-4 social media platforms to keep their pace with the millennial generation. This review and share pattern has literally formed a community online that is based on trust. It plays a major influential role in the purchase decisions of many. This review pattern is not restricted merely to social media. The e-commerce websites offer a wide range of customer reviews and ratings based on their usage and experience. Not only that, the advent of e-commerce has brought about a revolution in the purchasing style of every millennial mom. The degree of comfort, variety, comparison, time – efficiency – these websites have a great deal to offer over traditional buying. With the convenience of mobile apps, the millennial moms are constantly on their smart phones and practically in touch with the world around them. This makes them aware of the online opinions and brand favourability.

### **Changed Belief and Value System**

Millennial mothers are found to be realistic and more pragmatic than their elder counterparts and have shattered stereotypical beliefs and ideologies. They are more matured and experienced

because of the fact that they are older than the previous first time mothers Buttons (2014). They have a different perspective over things and would make smarter decisions for their families. Instead of simply following an advertisement, they would rather choose to go for an in-depth exploration about any product/service before buying it. Hence it has become important for the marketers to understand every aspect of the modern mother decision making in order to be able to sell their products.

### **Increased Capacity to Spend**

With changes in society towards gender equality and career driven women, family income is on the rise. According to Newton, Cara (2013) 71% of millennial mothers are working women and that has led to increased family income and capacity to spend as these working mothers and their families have deeper financial pocket.

### **Changing Lifestyles**

With the changing scenario, the lifestyles of the Indian moms are changing. They cannot limit their roles as the caretakers or nurturers. Their role has evolved and has become more dynamic. While managing the house and family forms a greater part of their motherhood, their roles have now become multi – dimensional. They have their own professional lives, targets, stress and are on a constant quest for a work-life balance. This is also accompanied by keeping themselves healthy and fit, both physically and mentally. With their own set priorities, the millennial moms are more self-dependent and self-oriented. They hit the gyms and yoga centers, follow diet and zumba routines, update and maintain their social profiles and they do it all. The marketers need to creep into this lifestyle and engage the moms in a manner that leaves an impact on their buying decisions.

Millennial moms are also conscious about their food and are emerging as healthy eaters. According to Sprankles, Julie (2014) millennial moms have strong inclination towards a healthy life and organic food in their diet for themselves and their family. They propose, that higher the income levels, more the likelihood to shop in high end shopping stores for organic food for their families. Millennial mothers with limited capacity to spend are equally health conscious for themselves and their families, and take to healthy cooking back home.

### **Emergent Personality Traits**

Literature suggests that millennial mothers are assumed to possess traits like high self-involvement, child-centric attitudes, family - centric attitudes, workplace aspirations and are high on self-esteem. Instant gratification is yet another personality trait. Personality is an important determinant of consumer behaviour and hence its impact on decision making process can never be undermined. Marketers need to unearth the personality traits in order to gain proximity of the millennial mothers. According to Krogstad, Jens Manual (2014) millennial moms are purchasing familiar brands online, primarily to connect to heritage and family value in this changing world.

### **Rise of Do-it-Yourself Moms**

There is a rise in the millennial mothers Do-it-Yourself (DIY) segment. They believe in doing things on their own. According to Wang, Wendy and Taylor, Paul (2015) a vast majority of millennial mothers like to take DIY jobs to save money and time and also to show their creativity and this culture is blossoming and spreading fast and spreading across social media channels as well. These platforms give them opportunity to curate and show their creativity. Today advertisers are also creating brand awareness using interactive and visual tools, which keeps millennial mothers hooked to them

especially with home décor brands. Home and entertainment segment is a large spending choice for millennial mothers these days.

### **Receptive to Cause Marketing**

Millennial mothers are more amenable to cause marketing, where they are inclined towards purchasing products of the brands who support big charitable causes. Millennial mothers are specially inclined towards charities for humanitarian reasons, support for children and of course charities for religious reasons.

### **Purpose of Study**

Millennial mothers is an increasing and emerging segment of consumers, which is substantially different from the earlier generation mothers in their demographic, psychographic and behavioural make-up. The authors intend to address the following research questions:

- Is there really a substantial difference between the millennial moms and the erstwhile moms in their demographic, psychographic and behavioural patterns?
- Do these differences actually impact consumer decision making and thus render millennial moms as a segment amenable to a differential marketing stimuli (Marketing Mix)?
- How do millennial mothers buy products for themselves and households?

The answers to these questions shall help the marketers to pitch themselves better to this connected segment of consumers and create better engagement for their products and services.

### **Methodology**

Authors have used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection approach to answer the research questions. Robust review of existing literature is employed to draw insights on the significant differences that exist between the new gen millennial moms and the erstwhile moms in their demographic, psychographic and behavioural constitution. These differences create a difference in the decision making process of the two generations of mothers and thus makes millennial mothers as a marketable segment to the marketers. The marketing mix to address the millennial mothers needs a change as they shall respond to a differential marketing stimuli which cannot be employed with the same efficiency on the erstwhile mothers.

More specifically the research focuses on five categories of products that have been included in the study-Baby Care, Gadgets, Grooming, Apparels and Groceries. The intent is to study consumer behaviour across these five categories. The five primary parameters used were price, quality, brand, durability, and cost. The categories are much in sync with the distinctive traits of the millennial mom-tech savviness, self-indulgence, family and child centricity.

The focus of this research is to understand perception and experiences of millennial mothers, so qualitative research method was used in consideration. Focus group discussion was conducted with a set of millennial mothers to understand and explore their perceptions towards brand and brand engagement and evaluate the same. Though it is not intended to generalize the findings as our sample size is limited and restricted to Jaipur city, but we have tried to maintain a level of homogeneity in our sample by choosing the respondents who share similar characteristics in terms of age, education level and active use of social media platforms. The sampling procedure employed was a judgement sample. We conducted 6 focus group interviews with 6 participants in each group

for the purpose of our study.

In order to discover and interpret millennial mother behavior and attitude towards chosen product categories, quantitative instrument of questionnaire on Likert scale was designed and administered to 153 randomly chosen millennial mothers of Jaipur city. Data thus obtained is analysed using SPSS.

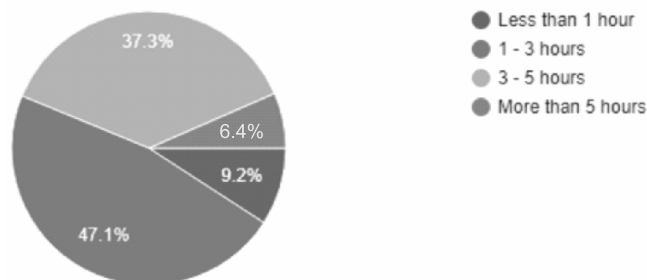
### Data Analysis

The demographic details of the sample of 153 respondents is depicted in **Table 1**

**Table 1: Respondent Demographic Details**

Particulars	Percentage	Frequency
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
Under Graduate	2.6%	4
Graduate	46.4%	71
Post Graduate	42.5%	65
Others	8.5%	13
<b>Occupation</b>		
Business	32.7%	50
Salaried	41.2%	63
Housewife	26.1%	40
<b>Personal Annual Income</b>		
Less than 2 lacs	24.2%	37
2-5 lacs	24.8%	38
5-8 lacs	30.1%	46
8 -10 lacs	13.7%	21
Above 10 lacs	7.2%	11

### Social Media Usage



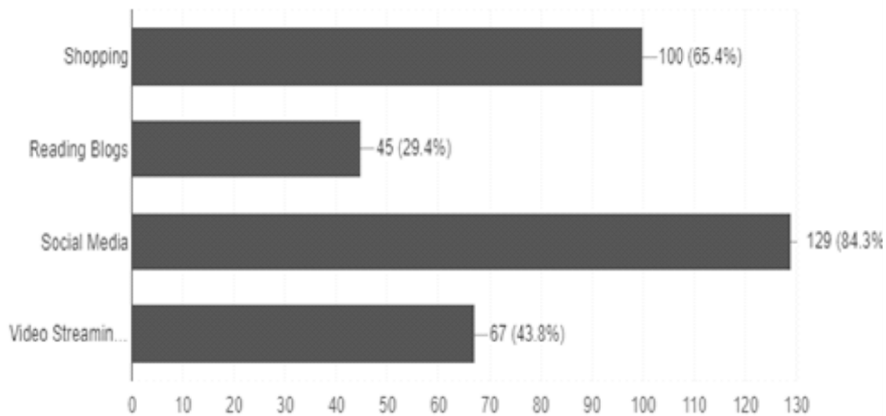
**Figure 1: Social Media Usage of Respondents**

The **Figure 1** suggests that 47.1 % of the millennial mother respondents use social media for 1-3 hours per day. They can be termed as 'moderate' users of social media. This segment is followed by a

segment of 37.3 % millennial mothers who are 'passionate' about social media and use it for 3-5 hours on an average. 6.4 % of the respondents are 'fanatic' about social media and devote more than five hours per day for the same.

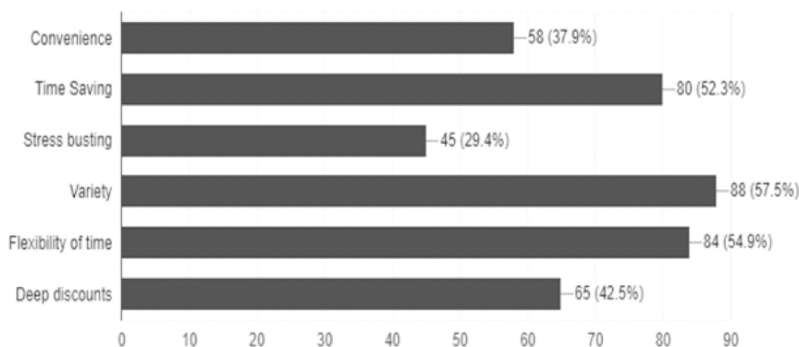
**Digital Behaviour of Millennial Mothers**

**Figure 2** suggests that the most ubiquitous use of digital media by millennial mothers is for shopping. Data suggests that 100 % of the millennial mothers use digital media for shopping. Also significant is the social media usage of these digital natives- to the extent of 84.3 % mothers visiting social media platforms. Interestingly, video streaming has also emerged to be an important trend amongst the millennial mothers.



**Figure 2: Purpose of Digital Platform Usage**

**Reasons for Being Online**

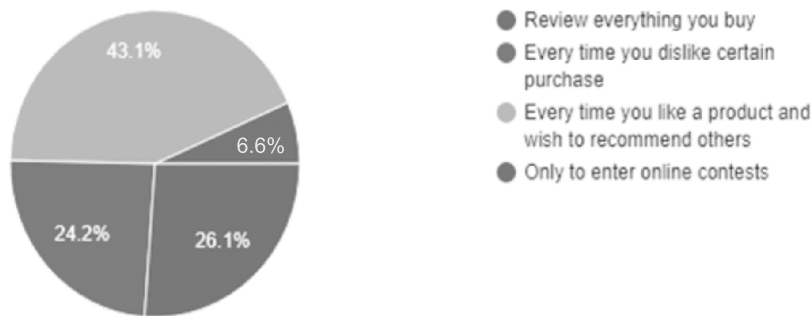


**Figure 3: Reasons for Online Presence**

**Figure 3** shows that Variety, flexibility, and time saving have emerged to be the most important reasons for being online with 57.5 %, 54.9 % and 52.3 % of millennial mothers citing it respectively. Contrary to the expected belief, deep discounts is not a major motivator for millennial women resorting to online shopping. Despite the above data, focus group studies reveal that some of the

millennial mothers still feel that they miss bargaining on online shopping and many quoted that physical touch is something which they again miss on online shopping.

### Online Experience Sharing



**Figure 4: Data on Online Experience Sharing by Respondents**

Data as depicted in Figure 4 suggests that 43.1 % of respondents tweet, retweet, share, recommend, like every time they buy and like a product. Also observed is a similar behavior of tweeting, retweeting, sharing, disliking and not recommending by 24.2 % respondents who dislike the product each time it fails to meet their expectations.

### Findings and Recommendations

100 percent of the respondents shop online. This confirms that this is a lucratively marketable segment and thus a huge business opportunity for marketers.

The sample shows a very high inclination for sharing, tweeting and recommending online products that they buy to other women in their cohort. Similarly, there is an inclination for disliking and not recommending products that fail to meet their expectations. There is thus a word of caution for the marketers. This behavior is akin to an 'echo chamber' and all feedback is echoed back to the audience active on the platform.

The avid and fanatic shoppers have expressed reservations on not buying those products online where physical touch, feel, texture and fit are important. Thus, marketers need to foray into to the realm of augmented reality to overcome this constraint.

A huge percentage of respondents have indicated that they value a shopping experience and are variety seekers as in their consumption patterns. A superlative experience and magnanimous assortment is thus an important traffic builder to online platforms.

### Conclusion

Millennial mothers are growing as an impactful segment. It is very much evident that they have grown in a digitally immersive world and have tremendous purchasing power, though they have a combination of traditionalist as well as progressive behavior. A change in their lifestyle, social media consumption behavior and emerging changing choices for family needs a marketer's attention in the design their marketing campaigns. Outcome of this research study is professionally very relevant to



marketers, as it contributes on the grey areas where they can look up, and fill the gaps. It is definitely a happy news for marketers that millennial mothers are responding to their campaigns and engaging effectively. Catching them first and catching them fast is the success mantra for the marketers!

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