

# A STUDY ON DIGITAL MARKETING PREFERENCES OF GENERATION Y WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE PURCHASE OF LAPTOPS

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**Abstract** Digital marketing can be defined as the method in which products and services are promoted through digital distribution channels. As more and more customers are using digital media companies are resorting to digital marketing as a source to reach target market segments. Digital strategies have blossomed due to their targeting optimization, cost-effectiveness, measurability, and huge growth in relevance.

Generation Y comprises of people born between 1980 and 1995. The Gen Y is the first generation that has grown up with the Internet and mobile phones. They are far more technology savvy than previous generations, have access and the skills to use networked digital technologies. So marketers have to resort to digital marketing and other modern marketing channels to reach out to this generation.

The Indian PC market is expected to register a double digit growth in 2013 signifying huge demand for laptops as India's "Generation Y" is using new networking models and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, instant messaging (IM) and chat.

While numerous studies have been done on preferences of Gen Y, there have been very few studies done on the marketing channels preferred by Gen Y while buying a laptop.

**Research Methodology:** A qualitative survey was done on a sample size of 366 respondents falling in the age group of 18 years to 35 years (characterized as Gen Y), to identify different types of digital and modern marketing channels which have an influence on the generation Y and are preferred by them with specific reference to the purchase of laptops.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing, Marketing Channels, Gen Y, Millennials, Laptop Market

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Why study Digital Marketing?

Digital marketing can be defined as the method in which products and services are promoted through digital distribution channels. Digital marketing is also referred to as e-marketing and includes digital or online advertising, which delivers marketing messages to customers. According to Okazaki, Katsukura, and Nishiyama (2007), reaching consumers through digital media is one of the most upcoming areas of research for marketing.

As per Edelman (2010), for the marketers, the old methods adopted for running a business are now becoming unsustainable. The latest sales and communication channels are mostly electronic in nature. Internet has provided a platform to consumers and marketers to have more interactions and has made customization of services possible. It is possible for companies to send customized messages which enhance customer engagement as their individual requirements are catered to. As a result, in the current marketing scenario, digital marketing is gradually being preferred over traditional marketing.

The advantage of using digital marketing is that it helps organisations in the promotion of products and services

in a very customized and cost effective manner. Digital marketing extends beyond Internet marketing and includes other channels such as mobile phones, SMS and MMS, display and banner ads, digital outdoor. Digital marketing also covers traditional marketing areas such as direct marketing but provides the same communication in a digital manner.

According to Internet World Stats data as on June 30, 2012, there were about 2.4 billion Internet users worldwide in the first quarter of 2012. China being the largest country with over 538 million Internet users, followed by US with 245.2 million and then India having 137.0 million users (Internet World stats, October 2012). From the stats it is clear that the digital market is growing and India has a larger potential for internet penetration.

## 1.2. Objective of the Study

### Why Generation Y and why Laptop segment?

The objective of this study was to identify different types of digital and modern marketing channels which have an influence on the generation Y and the marketing channels preferred by them with specific reference to the purchase of laptops. This study will help the laptop manufacturing companies understand which channels are most effective for the generation Y with respect to the purchase of Laptops.

In the year 2012, there was an increase in the rate of adoption of digital media adoption as a result of the increase in the usage of mobile phones, social media and content marketing channels. In 2013, it is expected that there would be a lot of integration in the channel campaigns as marketers may want to achieve lower costs by taking advantage of cross channel campaigns especially digital campaigns. This necessitates the study of digital marketing preferences of the customers.

The generation Y in India is a remarkable group. Generation Y comprises of people born between 1980 and 1995. They are also known as the 'millennial generation'. Generation Y in India (426 million) is six times as big as Gen Y in the U.S. In China, there are 218 million people born in just one decade, 1980-1990.<sup>1</sup> Therefore it forms a large chunk of prospective customer base.

In comparison to the year 2011, domestic computer market for year 2012 grew 3.5 percent to 11 million units. The main driver for the growth in consumer personal computer market was the shift in demand for portable personal computers by the end user, which grew at 20.2 percent in 2012. Personal computer market is expected to grow at a figure of double digit in 2013.<sup>2</sup> According to Jaydeep Mukherjee and Mahalingam Sundararajan, during 2009-10, the laptop market had witnessed tremendous growth. This growth was driven by powerful and sustained marketing campaigns by

the multinational companies (MNC), namely Dell and Acer. India's generation Y is using new networking models and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, instant messaging (IM) and chat. A survey conducted by Tata Consultancy Services in 2011 on Gen Y revealed that 93% of teens owning a laptop or desktop use these devices to go online. This survey also revealed that laptops are closing in on personal computers. The Internet, social networking, and inter-active technologies are empowering the generation Y and enabling them to use advanced products or brands. In order to be successful marketers need to realign their strategies to engage these consumers. These Internet-empowered consumers sometimes show extreme behaviours such as eagerly buying a product if they are impressed by the digital message, or totally shunning the product if the message is not appealing enough for them. The researcher has selected various digital and modern marketing channels that can be used to sell laptops and gathered the responses from generation Y customers to identify which of these channels have an influence on them and which marketing channels are preferred by them, with specific reference to the purchase of laptops.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As per the studies of Robinson, Wysocka, and Hand (2007), digital or online advertising has been growing in a phenomenal way since its inception in the year 1994. Ha (2008) is of the opinion that in this decade, Internet is one of the fastest growing advertising medium. Advertisers spend hundreds of millions of dollars to place their ads on high-traffic websites. According to research, when people read an online advertisement, there is more chance that they buy online. According to Smith (2009), an advertising banner on the Internet has the capacity to create a level playing field for competitors irrespective whether they are large or small in size. Okazaki, Katsukura, and Nishiyama (2007) are of the opinion that in the current as well as future decades to come, reaching consumers through digital media is one of the most promising fields of development in the field of marketing. The Internet can be referred to as a pull medium because consumers choose the content they view. In effect, the consumer is pulling from a plethora and free flow of information (Pitta and Fowler, 2005). The average American spends approximately six hours per week surfing the Internet (The Economist, 2010). A new survey conducted by Times of India has revealed that in India, internet users spend an average of 58 hours a week online (The Times of India, retrieved on March 29th 2012). The above statistics shows the reach and popularity of the digital media for the average consumer. Digital marketing has a lot of advantages. The Internet has helped in increasing consumer engagement with brands by sending personalized messages to consumers. It is

changing the economics of marketing by making marketing more cost effective. As per Edelman(2010), marketers have to come with innovative strategies as the old methods of doing business are now becoming unsustainable. The generation Y is an essential ingredient in the development of e-commerce. They have grown up socializing and purchasing online. The usage of e-commerce with this generation will grow along with the growth in their discretionary income. Computers and mobile phones are very common and almost essential gadgets for generation Y. The birth year range for generation Y varies, but generally in all studies the time span used is between 1981 and 1994. As per Jayson (2010), the numbers of generation Y in United States is approximately 50 million. In India generation Y comprises of people born between 1980 and 1995. Also known as the "Millennial Generation" they are raised by the late baby boomers. Generation Y in India (426 billion) is six times as big as Gen Y in the U.S.<sup>3</sup> In China, there are 218 million people born in just one decade, 1980-1990. The above statistics shows that the Millennials are one of the largest generational groups after the baby boomers. The large size of the generation as well as their growing buying power makes them a very attractive target segment for marketers. Statistics shows that 93% of teenagers, who have a desktop or laptop, are using them for going online.<sup>4</sup> As per Tapscott(1998) Internet has impacted the generation Y or the Millennials in many ways. According to him they possess the following characteristics. They are freely expressive in nature, they are investigative, and possess a tendency to authenticate. Alsch (2000) is of the opinion that one of the characteristics of the Millennials is the need to control their environment. The Internet helps in creating a sense of control for the generation Y by enabling them to freely express their opinions with the help of internet through various websites that potentially influence consumers and marketers. As a result of the above characteristics of the generation Y as well as the digital channels, marketers are forced to rethink their strategies of targeting the generation Y. This generation refuses to accept the same brands that were popular with their parents because they have grown up in a world which is more media-driven, and brand-conscious world than what their parents were exposed to. As a result they respond to ads in a different manner. Neuborne and Kerwin (1999) feel that the shift in brand preference may be due to a shift in values on the part of Millennials. Alsch, 2000 are of the opinion that the millennials want lives that are less structured and allow more time for themselves. They have the view that there is more to life than work. This generation is highly connected with friends and acquaintances; and can communicate at any time, from anywhere, and in various forms.

The generation Y responds to personalized messages. According to the studies made by Marketing Breakthroughs Inc. (2008) advertisements should concentrate on a major factor influencing this age group, the facts that 'they are special'. Srinivasan, Anderson, and Ponnayolu (2002) are

also of the opinion that personalization leads to increase in the loyalty of a consumer towards a retailer.

Research by Chatterjee (2008) suggests that pop-up ads can create high levels of ad perception, recall, and intent to purchase. Some of the respondents suggested that advertisers should provide rewards or value propositions in return for the privilege of pushing digital advertising upon them. Past research has shown some forms of online advertising to be effective in influencing consumer behaviour. The research by Goh and Chintagunta (2006) suggests that exposure to banner advertising was found to increase the probability of a consumer purchase. The old pushed advertising approach is not highly effective with digital media. Marketers are in the process of finding ways to pull consumers to their websites and into a relationship. One successful method is the development of a brand community. Cova, Pace, and Park (2007) are of the opinion that online brand communities are a popular venue for connecting with consumers who favour a certain brand and develop an image based upon it. According to Simmons (2008) marketers are reaching out to consumers by joining them online through social networks, search engines, and other favourite platforms.

Online recommendations are one way to personalize a relationship. Ansari, Essegai, and Kohli (2000) have defined recommender systems as information sources which provide consumers with information which is very personalized. Online reviews are increasing in popularity, with 25% of the US online population reading these types of consumer-generated feedback (Li and Bernoff, 2008). According to Senecal and Nantel (2004), people who consult online product reviews purchased the recommended products twice as many times as people who do not refer to the reviews. According to a study by Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006), a positive book review led to increase in sales of the book on the website which contained the review. As per Godeset al. (2005), in recent years, online product review forums have been having a very powerful influence on the choice of customers. According to a study by Marketing Breakthroughs Inc. (2008), 34 percent of millennials use websites as main source of news; 28 percent of millennials own a blog and forty four percent read blogs. As a result of the effectiveness of the digital media on the generation Y, marketers need to rethink their strategies of targeting the millennials.

Although there is a lot of research done on the Internet usage habits of the generation Y there is very little research has been done on the impact of the digital or the modern marketing channels on the generation Y and the digital or modern marketing channels that are preferred by the generation Y. This paper helps fill the need for further research into identifying different types of digital and modern marketing channels which have an influence on the generation Y and are preferred by them with specific reference to the purchase of laptops.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research Design

The purpose of this study was to identify different types of digital and modern marketing channels which have an influence on the generation Y and are preferred by them with specific reference to the purchase of laptops. Researcher has adopted qualitative research technique for this study and the survey method was used.

#### 3.2. Primary Research and Sample Size

Primary research was conducted on a sample size of 366 respondents falling in the age group of 18 years to 32 years (characterized as Gen Y), in the city of Pune, Maharashtra. The respondents were administered a structured questionnaire.

#### 3.3. Research Questions

1. Which of the two channels (digital marketing and modern marketing channels) are more preferred by the generation Y while purchasing laptops?
2. What is the influence of the digital and modern marketing channels on the generation Y while purchasing laptops?
3. Which digital channels are more preferred by the generation Y?
4. Which of the modern marketing channels are more preferred by the generation Y?

#### 3.4. Sample Specifications

Age group considered was from 18 years to 32 years because in India generation Y comprises of people born between the years of 1980-1995. 79 % of the respondents are male and 21 % are female; 53 % of the respondents are students and 39 % are employed.

For purpose of this study, researcher has chosen those digital marketing and modern marketing channels that are very new

and innovative and on which not much research is available. The digital marketing and modern marketing channels that were considered for this study are mentioned in Table 1.

#### 3.5. Description of the Different Marketing Channels

##### 3.5.1. Stealth Marketing / Undercover Marketing / Product Placement

Undercover marketing is a type of marketing channel where consumers are not aware that they are being marketed to. For example, organisations pay an actor or socially recognized person to use their product in a convincing manner at visible locations which are frequented by their target consumers. In product placement the product or logo in a prominently visible position in movies or any TV shows without looking as if it is kept for advertising.

##### 3.5.2. Experiential Marketing

Experiential marketing is a concept in which all elements of emotions, logic, and general thought are integrated by processes in order to create a connect between the company brand and the consumer. The objective of this type of marketing is to establish a connect with the customers in such a manner that they responds to a product at both the emotional as well as rational level.

##### 3.5.3. Cross-Promotion

Cross-promotion is a defined as a form of promotion in which a customer of a particular product is targeted with promotion of another product which is related to the product that he is buying. Two or more organisations can work together to do cross-promotion. For example, a mobile phone company can associate with a music writer for cross promotions wherein the songs can be promoted as exclusive ring tones which will help promote the songs and the popularity of song download will benefit the mobile company.

**Table 1: Marketing channels**

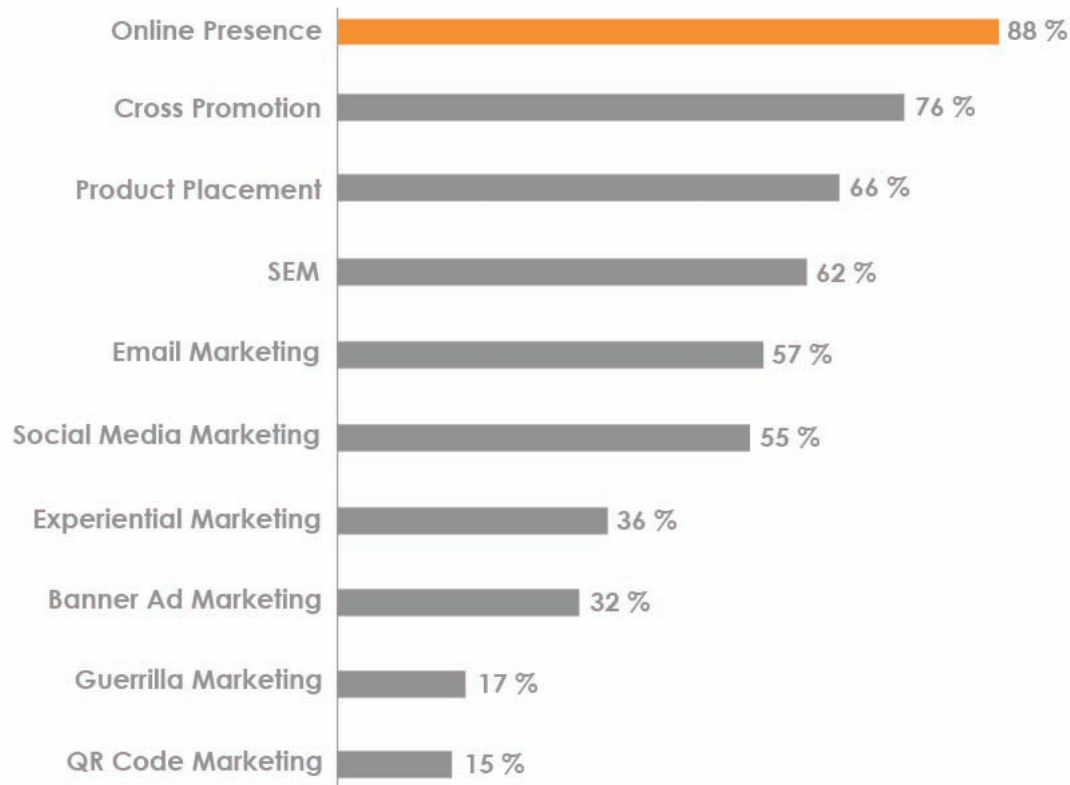
S. No	Digital marketing channels	S. No	Modern marketing channels
1	Email marketing	6	Stealth marketing/Undercover marketing/Product placement
2	Online presence (Website, Micro site, Article, Blog and Search engine marketing)	7	Experiential marketing
3	Banner ad/ Pay per click advertising	8	Cross promotion
4	Social media marketing	9	Brand ambassadors
5	Mobile marketing via QR codes	10	Guerilla marketing



**Figure 1: Preference or Importance given by the generation Y users to corresponding marketing channels for the purchase of laptops or tablets**

### ANALYSIS

**Preference or Importance given by the generation Y users to corresponding marketing channels for the purchase of laptops or tablets.**



#### 3.5.4. Brand Ambassadors

Presenting brands through brand ambassadors is a practice from good old days.

#### 3.5.5. Guerrilla Marketing

Guerrilla marketing is a concept which uses unconventional methods and imagination to promote a product. It uses very unconventional methods of promoting like giving free gifts in the streets or public relation stunts, or any unconventional means. The intention is to get maximum results at minimal cost.

#### 3.5.6. Email Marketing

Email marketing is a direct marketing channel in which electronic mail is used to communicate messages to the customers. It is in fact a broadest media. Any mail sent to a current or potential customer can be considered as email marketing.

#### 3.5.7. Online Presence: (Website, Micro site, Article, Blog and Search engine marketing)

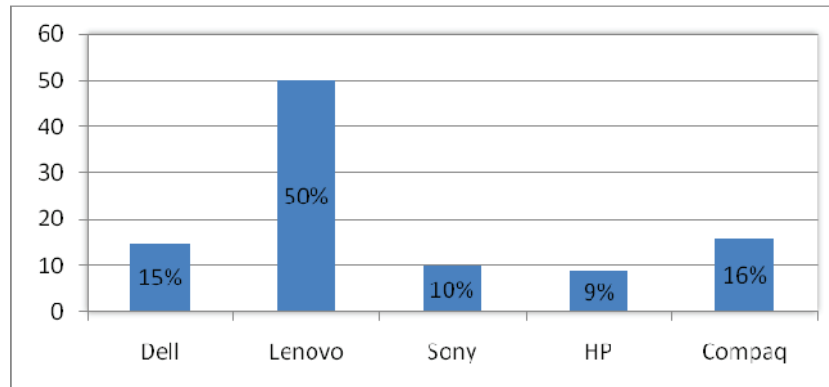
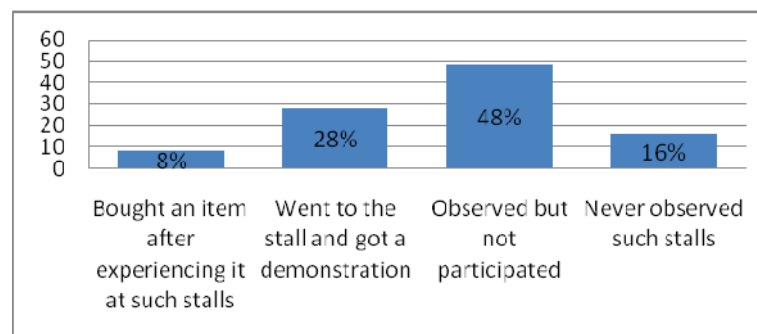
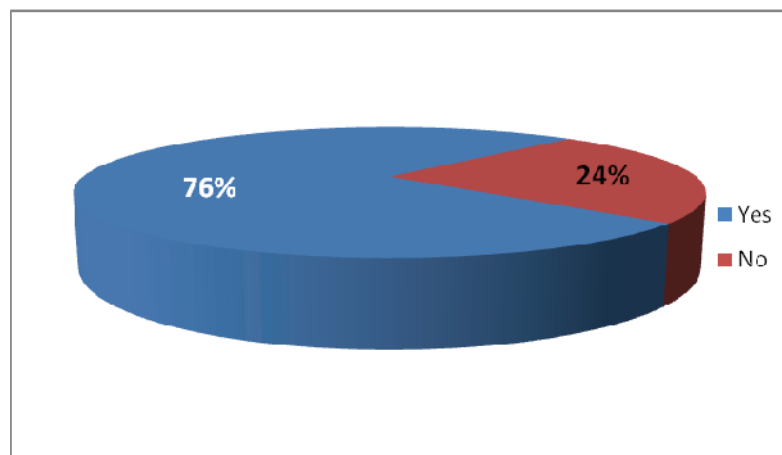
Micro site is a kind of mini website used to promote a specific product or brand from a larger corporate site. It is generally used for contests or as a landing page for a specific promotion.

#### 3.5.8. Banner Ad/Pay per Click (PPC) Marketing

Banner ads are those ads which appear when you are open a certain page on the search engine. These are generally web documents which are contextually relevant.

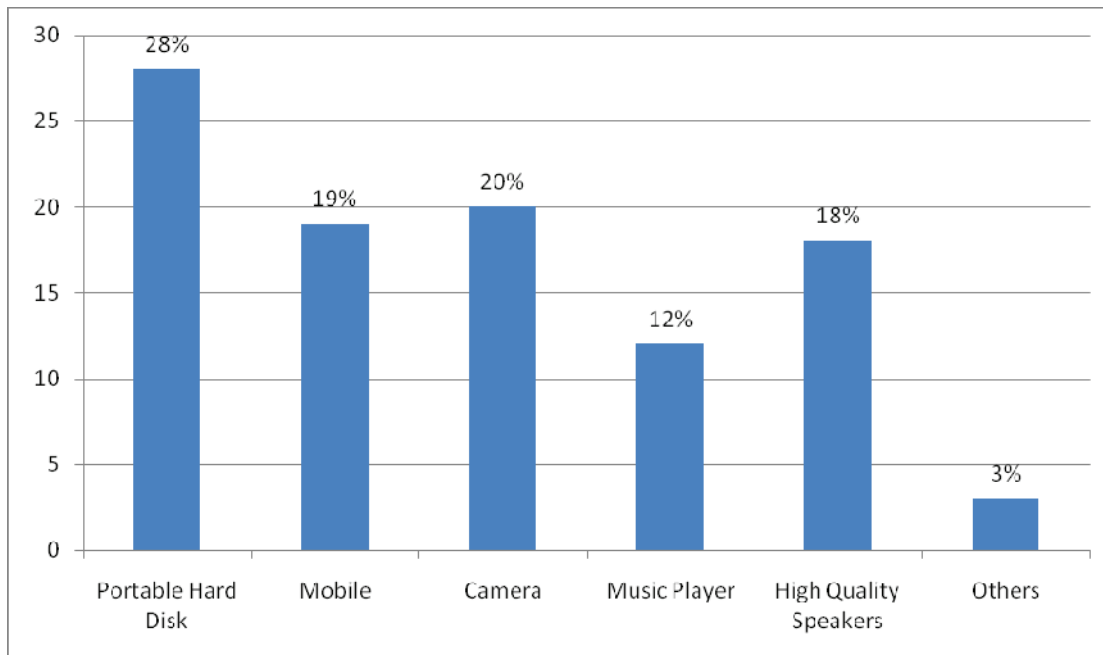
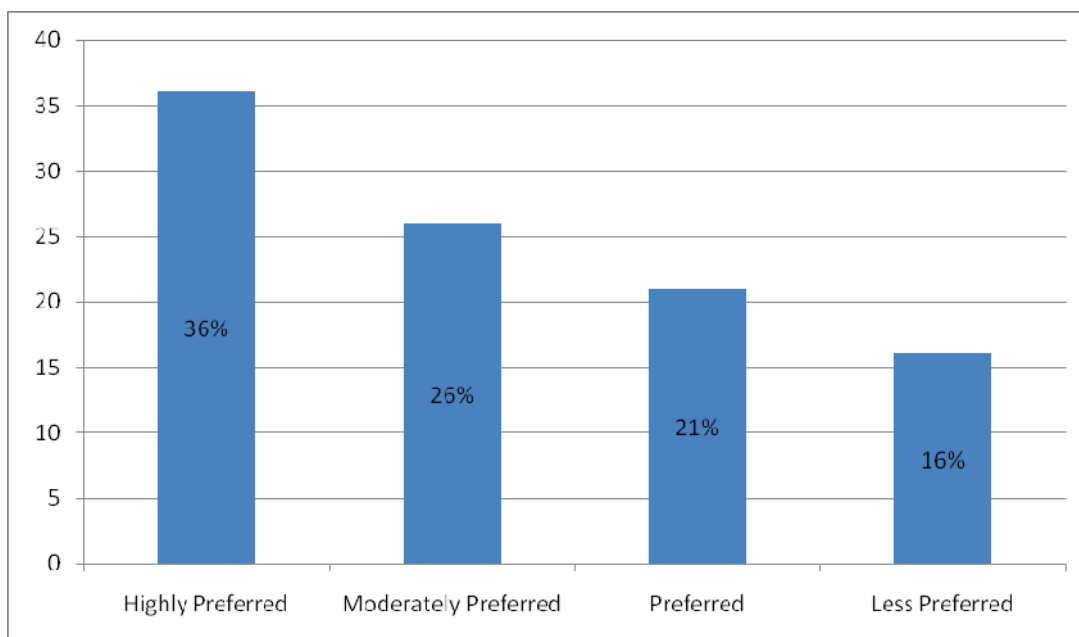
#### 3.5.9. Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is an online form of marketing in which social networking spaces and user-generated content platforms are used to promote a product or service.

**Figure 2: Brand recall of laptop used in KBC-2 and KBC-3 TV show****Stealth Marketing / Undercover Marketing / Product Placement****Figure 3: Observation and participation in Demo stalls****Experiential marketing****Figure 4: Numbers interested to go for a combinational offer****Cross-Promotion****3.5.10. Mobile Marketing via QR Codes**

QR(Quick Response) codes are codes which act as a visual hyper-link to a page. These codes make it easy to move the

customer to a mobile optimized offer page. Therefore it is very powerful tool for creating consumer engagement at such a time when a customer response is likely to get triggered.

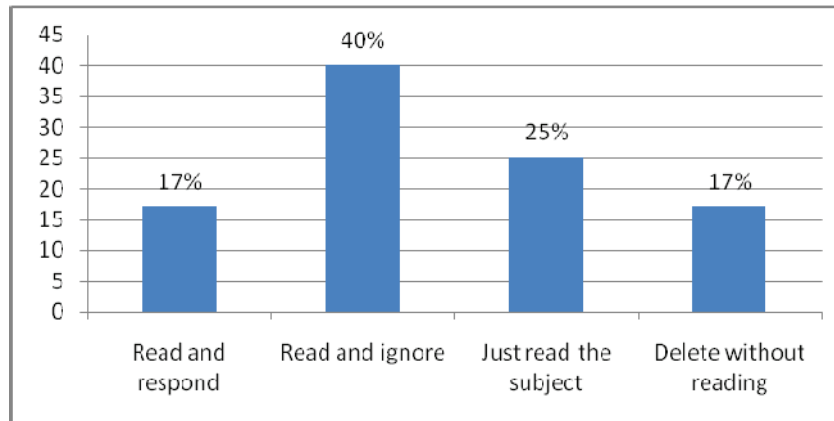
**Figure 5: Combinations preferred for cross promotional offer with laptop/tablet****Figure 6: Preference of laptop offer combined with internet package**

#### 4. KEY FINDINGS

1. Survey analysis shows that both digital marketing and modern marketing techniques suit the laptop manufacturing companies as the success rate through most of the channels is high.
2. In digital marketing channels, online presence (websites, micro sites, article writing, and search engine marketing) is most preferred form of marketing channel by the generation Y.
3. In modern marketing channels cross promotion is the most preferred channel by Gen Y users who are mostly inclined to computer accessories like storage devices, speakers. Considerable amount of Gen Y are inclined towards mobiles, cameras and music players.
4. Stealth marketing or product placement campaigns create brand awareness and brand recall and thereby

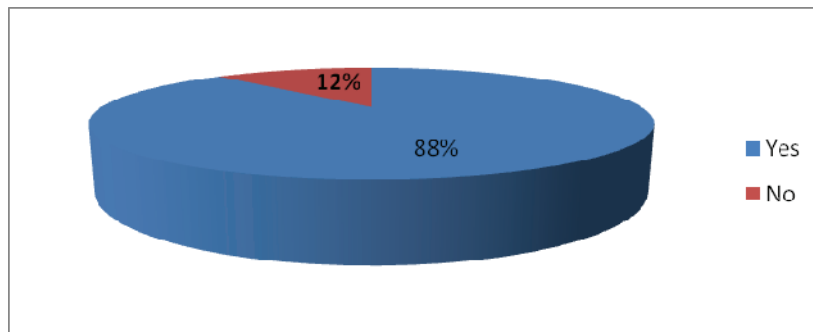
**Figure 7: Response to promotional emails**

**Email Marketing:**

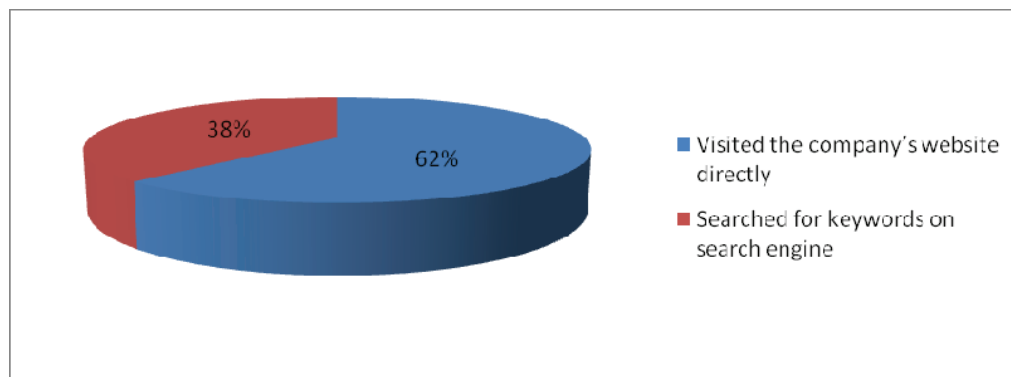


**Figure 8: Response to online search before buying laptop**

**Online Presence: (Website, Micro site, Article, Blog and Search engine marketing)**



**Figure 9: Response for search engines:**

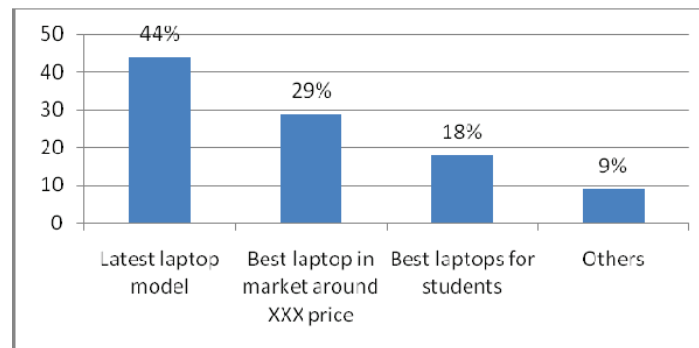
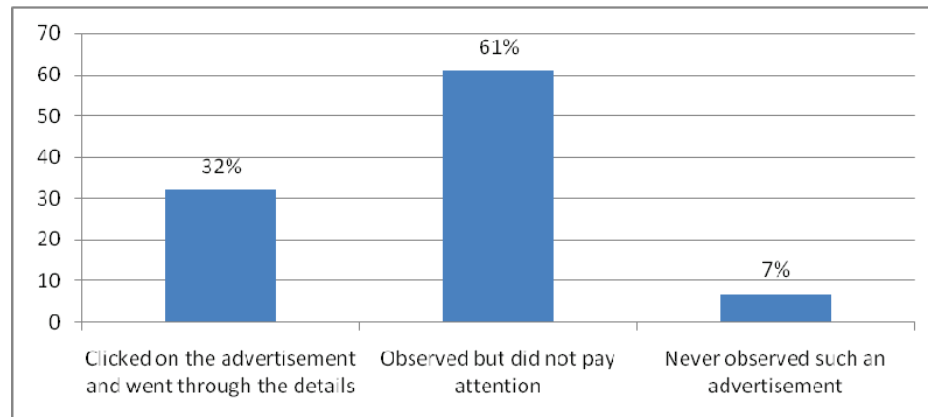
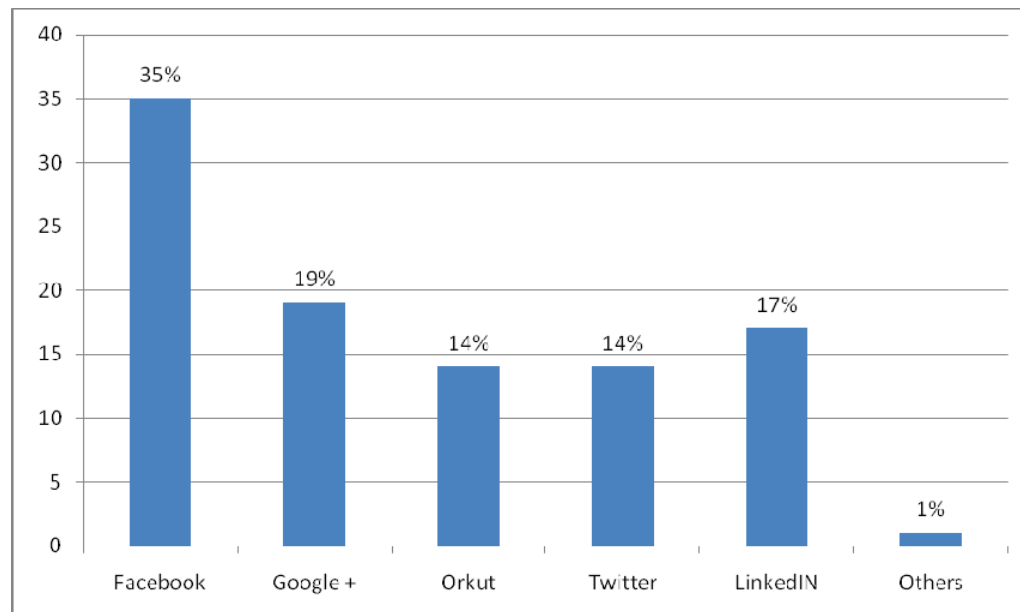


affect decision making of the Gen Y with respect to purchasing of laptops.

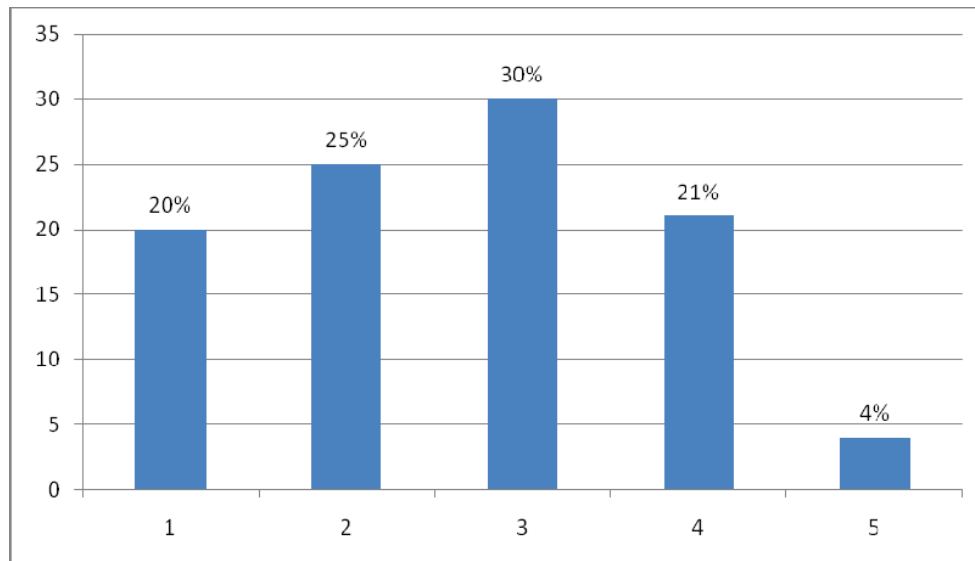
5. Email marketing strategy can be used by an organisation for creating brand awareness but not for promoting online sales of its product as the percentage of people who get impacted by this type of marketing is very less.

6. Banner ads/pay per click marketing does not have an impact on generation Y as they did observe the ad but did not pay any attention to it.
7. Gen Y are not serious about buzz in social media and it does not affect much on their decision to go for purchase of a tablet or laptop.. One third of people are

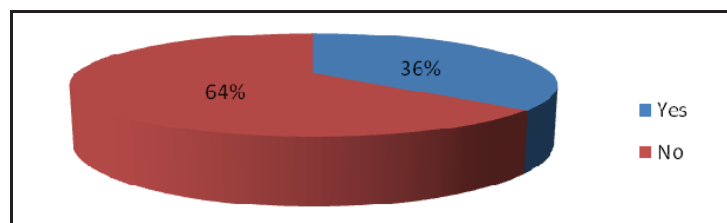


**Figure 10: Keyword used for search.****Figure 11: Response to laptop ads on websites****Banner Ad/Pay per Click (PPC) Marketing:****Figure 12: Preference of social networking sites by Gen Y****Social Media Marketing**

**Figure 13: Purchased or inclination to purchase laptop based on post/feeds/buzz in any social media**

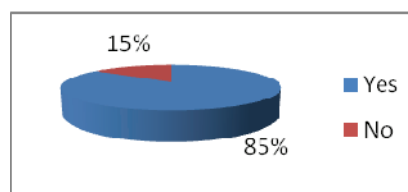


**Figure 14: Numbers who follow Laptop Company's page on any social media**



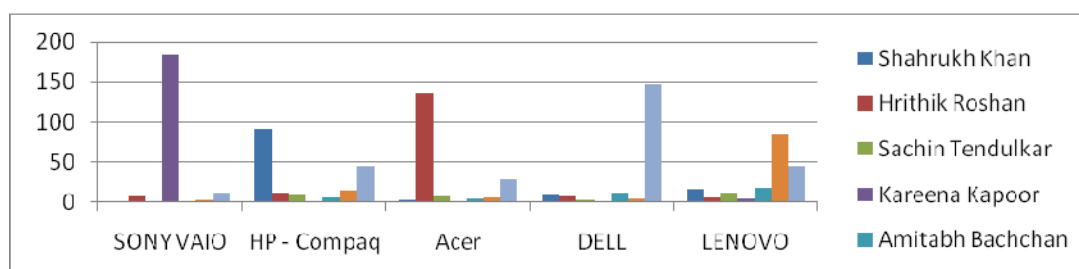
**Figure 15: Usage of QR codes**

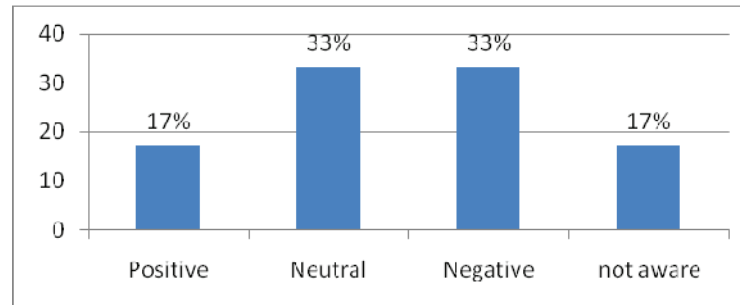
### Mobile Marketing via QR Codes:



**Figure 16: Brand recall of Gen Y with respect to Laptops and corresponding brand ambassadors**

### Brand Ambassadors



**Figure 17: Effect on Gen Y of controversial ads showing the shortcomings in other brands.****Guerrilla Marketing**

following their laptop company on social networking sites

8. Mobile marketing through QR codes is the least preferred form of digital marketing and the Gen Y awareness on this is very low.
9. Generation Y consumers recall laptop adverts although these adverts do not have an ambassador endorsing it.
10. Guerilla marketing creates negative impression about the company brand in the minds of the generation Y customer.

## 5. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This study was conducted in the city of Pune Maharashtra as there was a limitation on funding hence this becomes limitation of the study as other geographies were not involved. Secondly, for this study researcher has chosen only selective digital and modern marketing channels.

## 6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The research findings can be used by laptop or tablet manufacturing organisations in formulating their target marketing strategy for the generation Y which forms a sizeable chunk of the population in India today. From the findings of the study it is recommended by the researcher that managers must spend a sizeable amount of the marketing budget on the digital marketing channels. Modern marketing channels like cross-promotions must be adopted by managers. They must have cross-promotional tie-ups with laptop accessories companies, mobile handset manufacturers and Internet service providers to cross promote the laptops or tablets. Managers should avoid guerrilla marketing as it may leave a negative impact on their company brand. They must invest comparatively less amounts on email marketing. On the other hand, managers should employ a dedicated team for social media marketing as it is turning out to a good

channel. It should promote its page on social networking sites so that it becomes easier for generation Y customers to follow its page as it's the easiest way to communicate to consumers. Customer relationship and continuous feedback can be attained by more of the consumers interacting directly through company's pages. Managers can adopt modern marketing channels for Stealth marketing by selecting popular movies and most watched television shows.

## 7. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Similar research can be conducted in other geographies to find out if the preferences of the generation Y for the digital and modern marketing channels are any different from the observations of this study.

Secondly a study can be done to include other digital and modern marketing channels which have not been covered in this study.

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