
CONSUMER PREFERENCES TOWARDS A ONLINE MATRIMONY PORTALS – A STUDY ON MATRIMONY PORTALS IN HYDERABAD

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Abstract: India is a combination of different cultures and communities, so as the marriages in India. Marriage is a long standing tradition in India, where it is the sacred union of heart and soul, and also the union of two families, the bride and the groom. There are some differences among the across the country with reference to the rituals to perform, according to their religion, caste, and region. And finding a partner largely depends on the social standing of the family, the caste and sub caste, educational qualifications, profession, skin colour, physical features and appearance. In many families bride's and groom's horoscope also matters. But due to the change in the gender roles, social concepts and values now most of the families are open to caste, religion, and even age etc. As the society is becoming more and more complex in terms of technology, and changes in life style, finding a match through the traditional channels like priest or family connections is becoming difficult. This has raised the growth of matrimony business in India. Technological advancements and lack of time to spend on sending and receiving the photos and CVs, most of the younger generation are preferring online matrimony sites. A report published on statista.com reveals that by the end of 2017 more than 20,00,000 people registered on online matrimony sites like Bhrath matrimony, Shaadi.com, Jeevansaathi.com etc. Keeping in mind the statistics, this paper discusses about the preferences of younger generation while choosing a matrimonial website. A conclusive research design was adopted, and a pre-structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from the younger generation people of age group between 21 and 38. The study revealed that Privacy and trustworthiness are the major aspects that both prospect groom or bride looking in a matrimonial site.

Key words: Consumer preferences, Indian marriage, Matrimony, Online Matrimony, Online privacy

Introduction India is a combination of different cultures and communities, so as the marriages in India. Marriage is a long standing tradition in India, where it is the sacred union of heart and soul, and also the union of two families, the bride and the groom. There are some differences among the across the country with reference to the rituals to perform, according to their religion, caste, and region. And finding a partner largely depends on the social standing of the family, the caste and sub caste, educational qualifications, profession, skin colour, physical features and appearance. In many families bride's and groom's horoscope also matters. But due to the change in the gender roles, social concepts and values now most of the families are open to caste, religion, and even age etc. As the society is becoming more and more complex in terms of technology, and changes in life style, finding a match through the traditional channels like priest or family connections is becoming difficult. The introduction of new online technologies and e-commerce reflected in choosing the matrimony (Iyer et al. 2015). The rise of the internet based technology and other services have contributed to the growth of online matrimony portals instead of traditional methods like news paper advertisements, priests setting up the matches, or family driven match searching (Somasundaram, B, 2013). And these days most of the people are depending upon these matrimonial services (Iyer et al. 2015). There are many matrimonial sites available with almost similar features (Pal J K. 2010). Technological advancements and lack of time to spend on sending and receiving the photos and CVs, most of the younger generation are preferring

online matrimony sites. A report published on statista.com reveals that by the end of 2017 more than 20,00,000 people registered on online matrimony sites like Bhrath matrimony, Shaadi.com, Jeevansaathi.com etc. Keeping in mind the statistics, this paper discusses about the preferences of younger generation while choosing a matrimonial website.

Literature review: The Indian marriages till date are termed as 'arranged' and the concept of 'love marriage' is still not vividly accepted or promoted openly. However, the structure of the match making has been liberalised towards the proposed groom and bride, as the initial in the initial structure which existed decades ago, the first time the groom and bride would know each other is usually after the marriage, as it is more of a bonding of the families, rather than the couple alone. (Titzmann, 2013). As more number of people is having access to internet, the participation on matrimonial sites online is growing. (Guenther, 2007). Past studies in electronic marketing research have shown that Consumers usually don't prefer those websites where they had a bad experience (Constantinides, 2004). The usage of internet is growing with high pace among the Indian users on mobile phones and computers which is leading to the growth of matrimonial sites accessing online (Lakshman, 2006). The social networks are providing users to share their information across the boundaries (Pal J K. 2010). The same is happening these days in choosing the right partner. In the Indian culture the family of the groom or bride used to seek the opinion of their relatives, friend, marriage brokers, word of mouth or a bit modern newspaper advertisements (Sharda, B. D, 1990). These marriages were conducted based on the belief that the counter family in the marriage offers continuous support, and that is the key for the success of marriage (Mishra, Chen, Chen, & Kim, 2007). The number of people using these matrimony sites is growing enormously. Online matrimonial sites are opening up the new options for the bride or groom to look after the girl or boy outside their family or social connection but suitable to their social compatibility (Abu-Hashish and Peterson, 1999). The growth of matrimonial websites has developed cultural convergence, virtual dating, and that the stigma of arranged marriages is coming down in India (Seth, 2011). The past studies have shown that consumers of matrimonial sites prefer based on the website features, convenience and trustworthiness (Ganapathi, 2015). They also look for search time, easy to use, easy to compare, quality of information, etc. The individual factors like age, gender and personality of the users will have impact on choosing the online matrimony (Pal J. K, 2011). Consumers look for the prospective alliance according to the job profile, horoscope, location and age. In some cases the matrimony site itself is providing the users to interact through mails, chat and mobile numbers.

Research Methodology: The study was conducted with the main objective to know the preferences of the online matrimony visitors. There were many studies conducted in the area of consumer preferences towards online matrimony sites. But there were no studies conducted in the region of Telangana. This present study is to fill this gap and know the preferences of users while choosing a matrimony site. The research design chosen was conclusive research design. A pre-structured questionnaire was used to collect the primary data. The questionnaire was sent to 128 prospective users of matrimonial sites from which 100 responses were received. The respondents were chosen through convenience sampling, as it is very difficult to go for random sampling. The data was analyzed using charts and graphs.

Results and Discussion:

The demographical details of the respondents are as follows :

Demographics	Percentage
Gender	
Male	60
Female	40
Age	
18-24	18
25-30	48
31-36	28
Above 36	6
Educational qualification	
Up to Intermediate	14
Graduation	32
Post graduation	37
Above PhD	17
Occupation	
Private employees	48
Govt employee	27
Business	16
Others	9

The following are the correlations found between the consumer preferences towards the online matrimonial sites. Easy to use (0.601), Privacy (0.529), number of profiles (0.515), Convenience (0.443), Interaction (0.351), other features of website (0.289), and payment (0.289) were the important features that consumers prefer in choosing a website. The study also focused on what are interests of the consumers in searching for the partner. Majority (82%) of the respondents felt that people with same interests as their first preference. Educational qualifications (73%), Job profile (68%), Family background (63%), physical features (47%), and assets of the other family (38%) are the other considerations while choosing a partner on online matrimony.

Conclusion: Marriage in India is not an individual affair. It creates a relationship between two families along with the married couple. The growths in the internet services among Indians raise the growth of matrimony services too. The present study was an attempt to know the preferences of consumers while choosing online matrimonial sites. The study found that consumers prefer those sites that are easy to use, and maintain privacy and availability of more number of profiles. The study supported the past studies in terms of the customer preferences (Pal J. K, 2011, Ganapathi, 2015, and Krishnan et al. 2018). The study has its limitations and this was the preliminary study and needs a larger sample and analysis to generate accurate results. In the era of narrow targeting, even matrimonial websites are also targeting their customers in terms of income, religion and caste. In this regard this study suggests that future studies in this area to know the regional and religious preferences.

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