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## Role of Young Adults in Family Vacation Decision Making: A Study across Gender

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## **Role of Young Adults in Family Vacation Decision Making: A Study across Gender**

### **1. Introduction**

Two reference groups that have a significant impact on consumer behavior are family and social class (Schiffman, 2015). Family is significant because it makes purchases for consumption as a unit and because family decisions are heavily impacted by other family members (Ashraf, 2017). Family is considered by marketers as an important decision-making unit because a bulk quantity of products and services form a part of everyday life. Family Decision Making is of massive importance as a research subject for academicians and marketers because family is the most important buying unit and its dynamics are changing vis-à-vis the demographics, lifestyle, income etc. This change in the family as a consumption unit makes it necessary to be studied in order to assist the marketers to cater to the needs of a family accurately and correctly.

In marketing, consumer behavior, and tourist literature, families are recognized as a significant decision-making and consumption unit (Lehto et al., 2012). Families are an important element of life, and the vast majority of people can identify the family to which they belong (Nanda et al., 2007). Families differ from other groups (such as a group of friends) because of the feelings they share with one another, such as love, interdependence, and responsibility, which are distinct from feelings shared by non-family members (Bokek-Cohen, 2011). Despite this, tourism research frequently focuses on the individual (whether travelling alone or within a family) rather than the family group (Lehto et al., 2013).

The decision-making process often begins when a customer identifies a desire and continues until the final evaluation stage, when travel meeting needs are assessed. A family member contemplating a vacation, for example, or an individual contemplating the purchase of a new garment, is the starting point of a decision-making process (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2007). Purchasing tourism items or services, on the other hand, is the outcome of a lengthy procedure. This process entails a number of sub-decisions, such as where to go, how to stay, how long to stay, and which operator to use (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2001). To put it another way, family vacation decision-making process encompasses a number of different decisions (Blichfeldt, 2008).

Children's effect in tourism is an under-researched issue, according to Nickerson and Jurowski (2001), despite the fact that most economies have a sizable child and adolescent population (Carr, 2006). Furthermore, Labrecque and Ricard (2001) noted a gap in the understanding of the role of parents and children in influencing the decision-making process for time-consuming service purchasing activities such as dining out with family. Furthermore, no research has been done in India on the influence of young adults in the decision-making process for family vacations. These observations led to the formulation of following objective for the present study which is to understand the role of young adults in family vacation decision making and to understand the gender differences across these stages.

There is dearth of literature in terms of foreign studies because young adults in foreign countries live independently and as such their role and influence is not that important in family vacation decision making but in case of India its vice-versa. In comparison to emerging and developed countries such as Pakistan, China, and the United States, India has a far larger proportion of

adolescent population (Ashraf & Khan, 2016). Also, in Jammu and Kashmir which the area of study for this article young adults live with their families even after getting married.

The structure of this research article is as follows. The introduction discusses the importance of family as a decision-making unit and its changing dynamics. It further describes the need for suitable research on the role of young adults in family vacation decision making. The literature review in next section identifies the previous work done on role and involvement of children and adolescents in family vacation decision making. After the review, the next sections are on research methodology, results and discussions respectively.

## **2. Literature Review**

Family as a consumer unit has been of significant importance to the researchers since the 1970's. The authors have presented a thematic literature review on family vacation decision making.

Jenkins (1978), conducted a study to identify sub-decision areas of the vacation decision process, each family member's involvement in these sub-decision areas, and criteria that they considered were essential in making these sub-decisions. The findings of this study revealed that wives believe their husbands are in charge of gathering information, deciding on the length of vacation, the actual vacation date, and the amount of money to spend. Husbands also believe that they are in charge of these same areas. The modal pattern in whether to take children, transportation, types of activities, lodging, and selection of destination spots is that the wife and husband having equal influence. In any sub-decision in vacation decision-making, neither husbands nor wives consider wife dominant as the modal influence pattern.

Cosenza and Davis (1981), examined family vacation decision making in terms of family life cycle in which six stages were identified based on the age of the couple, duration of marriage and age of the children. The first stage of family life cycle includes those couples who have been married for less than 14 years, have children less than 14 years old and they themselves are less than or equal to 34 years of age. These couples believe in syncretic dominance structure which means both partners jointly take decisions. The second stage of family life cycle includes those couples who have been married for more than 14 years but less than 20 years, have children less than or equal to 18 years and they themselves are less than or equal to 44 years of age. In this stage decision structure tends to shift towards husband dominated. The third stage of family life cycle includes those couples who have been married for more than 20 years but less than or equal to 30 years, children are beginning to leave and they themselves are less than or equal to 54 years of age. In this stage decision structure is slightly wife dominated. The fourth stage of family life cycle includes those couples who have been married for more than 30 years and are reaching the age of retirement. In this stage decision structure tends to shift completely towards wife dominated. The fifth stage of family life cycle includes those couples who have been married for more than 30 years and average age is close to 65. In this stage decision structure again loops back to syncretic structure. The last stage of family life cycle is characterized by couples who have been married for more than 40 years and aged more than 65 years. In this stage decision structure tends to shift towards wife dominated because of the improvement in lifestyle as a result of experience.

Fodness (1992), explored the influence of a family's position in family life cycle on family vacation decision making process. The author identified five family life cycle stages from the existing literature, namely Young Couple (employed with no children and aged between 18 to 34), Young Parent (employed, aged between 18 to 34 with youngest child 0 to 17 years old), Mature Parent (employed, aged more than 35 with youngest child 0 to 17 years old), Mature Couple (employed, aged more than 35 with no children) and Senior Couple (retired, aged more than 55 with no children). This study concluded that Family Vacation Decision Making is a joint decision-making process in addition to wives being the sole decision makers for families with children.

Gitelson and Kerstetter (1995), conducted an exploratory study to understand the extent of influence that friends/ relatives have on the travel decision making process in addition to being the information provider. The authors found that friends/ relatives have a more direct impact on the travel decision making process and in many cases they take up the role of the sole decision maker.

Dunne (1999), aimed to study a relatively less researched area which is the role and influence of children in family holiday decision making. The findings revealed that children play a key role in the decision-making process and their level of involvement corresponds to their age. Children falling in the age group of 6 to 11 years do not provide much input but their wishes are taken into consideration by the parents. Children in the age group of 12 to 14 years or the difficult teens group carry most risk for the parents and are difficult to please. Children above the age of 15 years are more independent and as such their activities are of lesser concern for the parents. These children are more involved in giving their opinions and suggestions.

Nickerson and Jurowski (2000), provided an insight into conducting surveys on vacationing children, why these should be considered more often, and what can be gained. Results show children have a higher response rate than adults, are slightly more satisfied about conditions at the destination than adults, and provide a perspective about planning and development to increase child satisfaction at the destination.

Decrop and Snelders (2005), presented a typology of vacationers based on decision making variables and processes. The results demonstrate that choosing a vacation is a continuous process with many contextual variables. Six categories of vacationers were identified by the authors: habitual (regular vacationers a little more engaged and usually always engage in the same activities i.e., going to the same place. Because of their personality or structural effects, they are dominated by habit), rational (vacation planning begins pretty early for rational travelers. They are distinguished by thorough preparation and take into consideration both enabling and hindering restrictions as they emerge), hedonistic (like daydreaming, conversing, and thinking about their trip since it heightens their enjoyment and emotional arousal. They use every opportunity to get tourist information because their interest in their holiday is intense), opportunistic (they don't give their vacation much thought or conversation. They might be categorized as unplanned vacationers because they don't spend much time planning and preparing for their trip. They are unplanned either as a strategy, as a result of external pressures, or as a result of a lack of involvement with vacation), confined (these vacationers are forced to make decisions about their holiday rather than doing it themselves. They are burdened by contextual hindrances, such as financial constraints or the interference of situational circumstances like health issues), and adaptive (they enjoy taking

trips and taking vacations. These vacationers adapt their plans to the situation, which means that they frequently update their decisions and alter their conduct. They wait for the best adaption of their vacation plans before making final judgments).

Carr (2006), analyzed the understudied and underappreciated holiday motives of teenagers and their parents. The findings demonstrate that there are frequent differences between the holiday experiences that parents and teenagers are likely to find satisfying. The results also revealed that while getting away from obligations and relaxing are what drives both populations to take vacations, parents express a stronger desire to take cultural, historical, or educationally focused vacations than adolescents, who are more focused on having fun and participating in physical activities. The paper's data also suggests that in order to go on a family vacation, parents and teenagers frequently have to make concessions about their preferences and ideal vacation scenarios.

Hilbrecht et. al (2008), focused on children's perspective about vacations. The findings revealed that activities played a significant role in all of the various holiday kinds and provided a backdrop from which three main themes evolved. The first was emphasizing enjoyment as a key goal of vacations. The second, newness and familiarity, emphasized the value of exploration, novel encounters, and other opportunities in a safe and supportive social setting. The importance of social connections in reinforcing and fortifying ties to family and friends was the third subject.

Chaudhary and Gupta (2012), had two goals in their study, to classify and rank products according to how much impact kids have on them, and to compare how much influence kids have at various stages of the family purchasing process. According to the child's influence on various products, three product clusters—loud goods, noisy goods, and quiet goods—were discovered. The study's findings also showed that although it differs for each product cluster, children's influence on family purchasing is not specific to any one product cluster. Children strongly affect the purchasing of "noisy commodities," or those in which they are actively engaged, such as apparel, footwear, beverages, etc. Additionally, it was discovered that children had less control over loud goods than noisy ones. Due to the financial risk involved in these decisions, parents would want to make important decisions and limit their child's involvement for things that entailed large financial spending, such as cars, TVs, mobile phones, washing machines, computers, and holidays, etc.

Arizon et. al (2013), through lifestyle characteristics and a few socio-demographic factors, seek to identify types of women who make travel decisions for the couple in their study. Depending on how much weight the women attribute to decisions made before and during the holidays, three distinct groups have been identified. These groups exhibit particular sociodemographic traits, interests, and viewpoints.

Fu et. al (2014), examined the dimensionality of family vacation functions empirically, which builds on previous theories of the family system and vacation functions. The authors identified five family vacation functions, namely, Bonding and Sharing (includes items such as making memories with the family and sharing same experiences), Communication (includes items such as increased interaction among family members), Escape and Relaxation (includes items such as need to escape from routine life, change from a busy job, and relaxation), Children's Learning (includes

items such as broadening children's knowledge), and Novelty Seeking (includes items such as experiencing a different culture).

Carrero and Aleti (2017), In families with various features in terms of household structure, parental resources, and family communication styles, the authors examined the roles of mothers, fathers, and kids in family decision-making processes. The study shows that family decision-making dynamics, as well as household division, parental traits, and communication style, are significantly influenced by product type. The study also shows that mothers may be under higher stress as a result of structural alterations. If parents encourage their kids to become autonomous consumers rather than trying to regulate their consumption, some of this pressure may be reduced. Furthermore, gender roles become more fluid when fathers' contribution to household duties increases.

Koval and Hansen (2019), looked into the complex decision-making processes and techniques used by couples while planning vacations. Four primary types of decision-making components were identified as a result of the process: a) decision-making techniques which had the dimensions as negotiation, compromise partner's approval concession, persuasion and decision avoidance b) relationship characteristics which had the dimensions togetherness, equality, commonalities, trust, shared experiences and relation history c) interpersonal communication with three conversations, talks and discussions d) process engagement had the dimensions initiative taking, role taking, meeting needs, partners support, engagement and role exchange.

Djumrianti and Oseso-Asare (2021), to further explore the familial status of Asian women, concentrated on the roles played by Indonesian spouses who work in the 21st century when it comes to making decisions on family vacations. The majority of housewives, according to the report, arrange family vacations and play crucial roles in determining leisure policies. The majority of Indonesian housewives perform both household duties and serve as the primary caretakers. According to the study, the participants feel they have a right to be included in making decisions about family vacations because they are working mothers. They can research and choose destinations and attractions from all around the world using the internet to help them make decisions. As a result, the study's findings suggest that working Indonesian women, particularly those who live in large cities, are crucial to the decision-making process for family vacations.

After having gone through the literature, the authors have concluded that family is an important unit of decision making for tourism marketers. Most of the authors have used the three stages vis-à-vis idea initiation, information collection and final decision-making stage to analyze and understand the role and influence of family members across these stages. Many authors have studied the influence of couples on these stages, the influence of women across these stages or the influence of family as a whole. Not much research has been done on the role and influence of young adults.

### 3. Research Methodology

This research was conducted in April, 2021 using the survey/questionnaire method. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed to a population that was selected using convenience sampling method. This sampling technique was used by the authors because a defined sampling frame was missing. The response rate was 72% which means out of 500 only 360 questionnaires were returned. After analyzing these questionnaires, 25 were discarded because they were incomplete. So, the authors finally had 335 usable questionnaires. The research instrument used by authors was a structured questionnaire developed from the studies of Ashraf 2017, Kozak and Karadag 2012, Ali 2013. The first part of the structured questionnaire consists of five multiple choice questions pertaining to the demographic profile of the respondents where only one option can be chosen. The last part of the research instrument consists of thirteen questions which have been used to understand the perspectives of young adults who are the respondents of this study across the various stages and sub-stages of the vacation decision making process.

#### 3.1 Respondent Profile

**Table 1: Profile**

Questions	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	108	32.24
Female	227	67.76

Source: The Authors

Out of the total 335 respondents 67.76% were females and 32.24% were males belonging to the age group of 19 to 29. 54.93% of these young adult respondents are the first child of their parents while 32.54% are the second child and only 7.46% are the third child and 5.07% are the fourth child.

### 4. Results

The analysis technique used by the authors is descriptive statistics and ANOVA. The purpose of using these techniques is to identify the importance various family members hold across the different stages of family vacation decision making according to the young adults. ANOVA helps in understanding the difference across gender in young adults. Below are the various results obtained by the authors.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics**

	Idea Initiation			Information Collection			Final Decision		
	Mean	Rank	SD	Mean	Rank	SD	Mean	Rank	SD
Myself	6.27	3	0.85	6.02	2	0.89	5.94	3	0.73
My Father	6.51	1	0.68	6.07	1	0.76	6.54	1	0.63
My Mother	6.40	2	0.73	6.02	2	0.80	6.32	2	0.84
My Friends	4.16	4	0.63	4.95	3	0.73	4.27	4	0.68
My Relatives	3.58	5	0.80	4.40	4	0.88	3.93	5	0.79

Source: The Authors

From the above table it is clear that the young adults believe that their fathers are most important across idea initiation (mean=6.51), information collection (mean=6.07) and final decision (mean=6.54) stage.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Tactics Used**

	Idea Initiation		
	Mean	Rank	SD
Requesting	5.67	1	0.60
Cracking Jokes	4.60	4	0.53
Nagging	4.48	5	0.66
Repeated Reminders	5.35	2	0.69
Acting Angrily	3.43	6	0.81
Because of Others	5.13	3	0.87

Source: The Authors

The above table clearly shows that young adults believe that the most important and useful tactic to initiate the idea of going on a vacation is by requesting their parents (mean=5.67) followed by giving repeated reminders (mean=5.35).

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Characteristics of Destination**

	Final Decision		
	Mean	Rank	SD
Price	6.35	1	0.88
Awareness	6.05	2	0.76
Celebrity Endorsement	4.12	5	0.64
Previously Visited the Place	5.10	4	0.82
Never Visited the Place	5.32	3	0.57

Source: The Authors

The above results show that for choosing a vacation destination, young adults believe that price (mean=6.35) is the most important and deciding characteristic followed by awareness or in other



words knowledge about the destination (mean=6.05). Another important characteristic they believe for choosing a destination is the fact that they have never visited the place before (mean=5.32).

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Sources of Information**

	Information Collection		
	Mean	Rank	SD
Family Members	6.05	3	0.87
Friends	6.38	1	0.78
Social Media	6.08	2	0.66
Word of Mouth	5.68	5	0.71
TV	5.25	6	0.65
Newspaper	5.22	7	0.70
Magazines	5.17	8	0.81
Radio	4.90	9	0.59
Website	5.75	4	0.82

Source: The Authors

According to these results, the prime source of collecting information about a destination for young adults are their friends (mean=6.38) followed by social media (mean=6.08). After these two sources they rely on their family members (mean=6.05) for collecting the information about a destination.

**Table 6: Idea Initiation across Gender**

Variables	Groups	Mean	Mean Difference	F-Value	Sig.
II Myself	Female	6.25	0.04	0.015	0.902
	Male	6.29			
II My Father	Female	6.65	0.37	3.870	0.056
	Male	6.28			
II My Mother	Female	6.52	0.35	2.169	0.149
	Male	6.17			
II My Friends	Female	3.66	1.53	5.577	0.023
	Male	5.19			
II My Relatives	Female	3.17	1.26	4.439	0.042
	Male	4.43			

Note: II-Idea Initiation

Source: The Authors

From the above table it is clear that there is no significant difference among young female adults and young male adults in case of their parents initiating the idea of going on a vacation but for

young male adults their friends (mean=5.19) and relatives (mean=4.43) are important in idea initiation compared to the young female adults.

**Table 7: Information Collection across Gender**

Variables	Groups	Mean	Mean Difference	F-Value	Sig.
IC Myself	Female	5.96	0.19	0.299	0.588
	Male	6.15			
IC My Father	Female	6.22	0.45	1.756	0.193
	Male	5.77			
IC My Mother	Female	6.11	0.26	0.388	0.537
	Male	5.85			
IC My Friends	Female	4.59	1.1	3.690	0.062
	Male	5.69			
IC My Relatives	Female	4.26	0.43	0.441	0.511
	Male	4.69			

Note: IC-Information Collection

Source: The Authors

In this table also there is no significant difference among young female adults and young male adults in case of their parents or their relatives collecting the information about a destination but again for young male adults their friends (mean=5.69) are important in information collection compared to the young female adults.

**Table 8: Final Decision across Gender**

Variables	Groups	Mean	Mean Difference	F-Value	Sig.
FD Myself	Female	5.78	0.5	1.736	0.196
	Male	6.28			
FD My Father	Female	6.69	0.46	5.028	0.031
	Male	6.23			
FD My Mother	Female	6.44	0.36	1.673	0.204
	Male	6.08			
FD My Friends	Female	3.99	0.86	2.536	0.120
	Male	4.85			
FD My Relatives	Female	3.69	0.72	2.166	0.149
	Male	4.41			

Note: FD- Final Decision

Source: The Authors

In the final decision stage results vary a bit where there is a significant difference between young female and male adults in relation to their father. Young female adults believe that their father (mean=6.69) is the final decision maker.

**Table 9: Tactics across Gender**

Variables	Groups	Mean	Mean Difference	F-Value	Sig.
Requesting	Female	5.85	0.54	1.331	0.256
	Male	5.31			
Cracking Jokes	Female	4.37	0.71	1.909	0.175
	Male	5.08			
Nagging	Female	4.48	0.02	0.001	0.972
	Male	4.46			
Repeated Reminders	Female	5.44	0.29	0.389	0.536
	Male	5.15			
Acting Angrily	Female	3.33	0.28	0.209	0.650
	Male	3.61			
Because of Others	Female	5.15	0.07	0.012	0.914
	Male	5.08			

Source: The Authors

As per the analysis, there is no significant difference between genders in the use of tactics for initiating the idea of going on a vacation.

**Table 10: Destination Characteristics across Gender**

Variables	Groups	Mean	Mean Difference	F-Value	Sig.
Price	Female	6.48	0.4	1.621	0.211
	Male	6.08			
Awareness	Female	6.15	0.3	0.778	0.383
	Male	5.85			
Celebrity Endorsement	Female	4.18	0.18	0.080	0.778
	Male	4.00			
Previously Visited the Place	Female	4.85	0.76	3.015	0.091
	Male	5.61			
Never Visited the Place	Female	5.15	0.55	1.048	0.312
	Male	5.70			

Source: The Authors

For both female and male young adults price is the most important characteristic for choosing a destination followed by awareness about the destination.

**Table 11: Information Sources across Gender**

Variables	Groups	Mean	Mean Difference	F-Value	Sig.
Family Members	Female	5.59	0.49	1.362	0.251
	Male	6.08			
Friends	Female	6.44	0.21	0.267	0.608
	Male	6.23			
Social Media	Female	6.18	0.33	1.072	0.307
	Male	5.85			
Word of Mouth	Female	5.89	0.66	2.094	0.156
	Male	5.23			
TV	Female	5.18	0.2	0.192	0.664
	Male	5.38			
Newspaper	Female	5.11	0.35	0.641	0.428
	Male	5.46			
Magazines	Female	5.26	0.26	0.246	0.623
	Male	5.00			
Radio	Female	4.85	0.15	0.092	0.763
	Male	5.00			
Website	Female	6.07	0.07	0.051	0.822
	Male	6.00			

Source: The Authors

For both female and male young adults their friends are the most important source of information about a destination followed by social media.

## 5. Discussion

The results of this study add to the existing body of knowledge about family vacation decision-making. Although there have been some attempts to revisit the principles of family vacation decision making process in modern families, most of studies in the topic have primarily concentrated on the opinions and roles of father/husband, mother/wife (Zalatan, 1998; Arizon et al, 2013;), couples (Koval &Hansen,2019; Li et al, 2017;) or in decisions around particular products (Ashraf,2017). This study is significant because it considered the viewpoints of young adults, as well as every step in the decision-making process.

In the first stage of family vacation decision making process which is idea initiation, young adults believe that their father is the idea initiator irrespective of gender that is both male and female

young adults have this opinion. This result is not in line with the result obtained by Robin (2010) wherein it was found that children are the idea initiators. After their fathers, the respondents believe that their mothers are next in initiating the idea of going on vacation and then the young adults themselves initiate the idea. The young adults use various tactics to initiate the idea of going on a vacation but this study has identified the most important tactic to be by requesting the parents for a vacation followed by giving them repeated reminders. Also, young male adults as compared to young female adults are of the opinion that their friends and relatives play a role in the idea initiation phase.

In the information collection stage of family vacation decision making process our respondents believe that father is the primary collector of information about a destination. In this stage young adults believe that they are equally important as their mothers when it comes to information collection. Also, for these young adults the primary source of information are their friends followed by the social media and radio is the last source of information to be used. Coming to gender differences friends are more important for male young adults as compared to female young adults.

In the last stage of family vacation decision making process, respondents believe that father is the final decision maker just like he is the idea initiator followed by the mother and then themselves. In addition to this, the young adults are of the opinion that price is the most important characteristic while choosing a vacation destination followed by awareness about the destination while celebrity endorsement is the least important characteristic for choosing a destination.

## 6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The sample of the current study is small and limited to a particular part of India as such it cannot be generalized to the whole population and there may have been a regional bias. A specific age group (16 – 29 years) has been considered for the analysis.

In future other authors can extend the study to other parts of the country with a larger sample and a different age group.

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