MATCHMAKING PLATFORMS IN INDIA: INFLUENCE OF COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The paper follows a comprehensive research of matrimonial services prevailing in the country. The Indian wedding industry is estimated to be around $50 billion in size[*]. The industry is filled with many unorganized as well as traditionally established businesses, a lot of corporates have been trying to tap the industry with online match-making websites. Through this study, the preference of people towards the various options was examined by running inferential tests to perceive the penetration of online as well as traditional services in the Industry. Analysis

[*] Hindu Business Line: (Pandit 2018)

was conducted for both, pre as well as post covid-19 period to assess the change in people's perception of the online matrimonial sites.

KEYWORDS: *Matrimony, Matchmaking, Marriage Bureaus, Online Matrimony sites, Covid-19.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriages in India are viewed as long standing social contracts which not only signify the creation of a new relationship but also a union of two families. Marriages are arranged by families and the process of matchmaking has always been an intricate and well thought out one, with not just the prospective bride and groom but the entire family unit playing an important role in selecting the 'perfect match'. Traditionally matches were made either through relatives or matchmakers who would connect eligible candidates for arranged marriages. This was a very personal method and allowed the matchmakers to find suitable matches belonging to the same community and matching other specifications of both the parties. These exist even now, and the latter have also taken the shape of marriage bureaus. This matchmaking method was followed by platforms like newspaper advertisements wherein classified ads were posted in daily newspapers to find suitable matches.

Today, as the world moves towards online dating and younger generations want to exercise their choice in deciding their match, online marriage portals provide a new age alternative. The matrimonial space in the last 2 decades has been revolutionized by the entry of these online marriage portals. One of the first online matrimony portal, Shaadi.com, was launched in India in 1996 and now there are several players in the market and have millions of users.

The introduction of technology in the form of matrimonial websites in an otherwise socially enabled process provided the setting for a fascinating exploration of changing social norms and the interaction of technology and society.

As the number of active internet users in India has gone up to 504 million[†], the prospect of online marriage portals is becoming more accessible to many people, acting as a medium to assist and simplify the search for finding one's life partner. India has over 1250[‡] online marriage portals which co-exist with matchmaking through newspaper advertisements, marriage bureaus, and family networks which have a long history. Basis this, the terminology provided to online matrimonial portals is 'modern' and the other listed matchmaking platforms is 'traditional' platforms of matchmaking.

The aim of this study is to know how people belonging to different segments of society interact the different matchmaking platforms and how their preference towards them is shaped. Further, with the COVID-19 pandemic, there was unprecedented digital disruption as the world adapted to the 'new normal'. This study also observes whether a shift has occurred in the preference of individuals in their choice of matchmaking platforms owing to the occurrence of this tail event.

[†] Digital in India Report (IAMAI 2019)
[‡] Matchmaking 2.0 (Titzmann 2011)

2. Review of Literature

This research aims to understand the preference of Indian users towards different matchmaking platforms and whether the COVID 19 pandemic has caused a shift in these preferences, and if yes then to what extent.

The Internet and the trend of online services that it ushered in are ever changing. The study conducted by JJ Gibson, 1966[4] talks about affordance which discusses the quality or property of an object that defines its possible uses or makes clear how it can or should be used. The affordance offered by online marriage portals is dynamic and adapts to the changes in tastes and preferences as well as general attitudes of the people who are interacting with such portals.

The study by H.C. Upreti & N. Upreti, 1982[5] concluded that in India, parental authority is regarded as an important criterion for marriage related decisions and includes the consent of the extended family. However, with the passage of time the education level and youth's adoption of western culture is challenging this authority. In such a time, a move to online marriage portals provides the younger generation the flexibility and choice that they desire while also enabling the parents to retain their say on the match. This concept has also allowed smoother communication between the parties involved which has been a long-standing taboo, since communication between opposite genders is frowned upon. It has also given more ownership to women to be active participants in the process of match making which they earlier felt was out of their control.

Nainika Seth & Ravi Patnayakuni in 2008[6], by the means of their study, potray that the advent of these portals has paved the way for family disintermediation. It allows cultural convergence, continuous information flows, ease of disengagement, virtual dating, and reduced stigma in arranged marriages in India.

The study by Krishnan Neethu, K Hemamala, A.V. HariKrishnan, 2018[7] indicates that as the users started interacting with these portals, the portals specialized their services to meet their needs. There are portals for specific communities, for different states and even alumnus of some institutions. Online marriage portals have increased the convenience and ease of usage and have provided interfaces which are able to adapt to the new trend of digitization while keeping traditional values of match-making alive.

Shraddha A Kamble & Ritu Bhatia, 2019[8] in their study suggested that opponents, however, are also of the opinion that the perception of users varies greatly, with more educated and working users find it difficult to trust the privacy settings of these portals and are generally very conscious about using these portals.

3. Rationale for Study

Earlier studies have analysed the behaviour of individuals towards matrimony and their perception towards different matchmaking platforms. They talk about the ushering in of the digital era in the matchmaking business through online marriage portals.

However, these studies do not track the perception of individuals with respect to different factors affecting choice of matchmaking platforms. The above studies also do not have a demographic segmentation based on of preference for factors.

This paper aims to study the growing prominence of online marriage portals, their different user groups and the change in usage due to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic by conducting a pre and post COVID survey. This research study apart is how it tries to study the influence of COVID-19 on the choice of marriage platforms. It also aims to identify the distinctive factors of the platforms which drive consumers' preference for different demographic categories for pre and post covid periods.

4. Objectives of the Study

o To identify different demographic segments which form the consumer base for the various matchmaking platforms in both the periods

o To undertake a cross-sectional study to gauge the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the choice of matchmaking platforms

o To identify the different factors of the matchmaking platforms which drive consumer demand

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study uses a descriptive design to gauge consumer behavior and their perception of the marriage and matchmaking business. This helps in describing and defining the trend in choices of different matchmaking platforms.

The research is a cross-sectional one, which means it studies a different set of respondents over a period. To maintain efficiency respondents have been chosen from a similar heterogeneous population.

5.2 Data Collection Methods

This study was conducted using a structured questionnaire to collect primary using Ranking and Likert scale.

It aimed to study the relative preference of consumers for different matchmaking platforms, distinguish between the demographic user group for each platform and gain insight into factors guiding consumer demand.

It was pre-tested on 15 people and relevant changes were made based of the pre-testing. The final questionnaire was circulated using online platforms which include WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook.

5.3 Sampling

The target population consists of people above the age of 18 years (legal age for marriage) and who have:

1.   Previously used these platforms

2.   Currently using these platforms

3.   Intend to use these platforms in the future

The data was collected from our sample of respondents through convenience sampling technique. 160+ responses were received in each phase of the research out of which

questionnaires with incomplete or missing data were removed and the analysis was run on 150 responses during each year.

5.3.1 Sample Profile

TABLE 1: SAMPLE PROFILE			
		2020 (Percentage)	**2021 (Percentage)**
Age	18-25	16.6	36.7
	25-30	26.1	15.3
	30-35	22.3	14.0
	35-40	14.6	11.3
	40-50	11.5	12.7
	Above 50	8.9	10.0
	Total	100.0	100.0
Gender	Male	49.0	47.3
	Female	51.0	52.7
	Total	100.0	100.0
Marital Status	Married	53.5	48.0
	Unmarried	46.5	52.0
	Total	100.0	100.0
Religion	Hinduism	58.6	62.7
	Islam	8.9	6.7
	Buddhism	5.7	6.0
	Jainism	13.4	6.0
	Christianity	10.8	6.0
	Others	2.5	12.7
	Total	100.0	100.0
Educational Qualification	10th Pass or below	1.3	0.0
	12th Passed	8.3	22.0
	Diploma	12.7	5.3
	Graduate	55.4	46.7
	Post-Graduation or above	22.3	26.0
	Total	100.0	100.0
Profession	Employed	38.9	28.0
	Home Maker	9.6	14.0
	Currently unemployed	12.7	7.3
	Business owner	22.9	17.3
	Student	15.9	33.3
	Total	100.0	100.0

5.4 Time of Study

To conduct this cross-sectional research study, a survey was floated during two distinct periods, February to March 2020 and February to March 2021, to understand the influence

of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perception and preference of users towards different match-making mediums.

5.5 Data Analysis

For statistical analysis, the research study uses SPSS software and Microsoft Excel.

For descriptive analysis Excel was used to identify which platforms are most popular for factors like accessibility, effectiveness, value for money, privacy and range of choice. Further, descriptive analysis was used to find out any movement in the preferences of individuals given the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Custer analysis was done using IBM's SPSS to help understand the main clusters of respondents through our study.

6. Analysis

6.1 Descriptive Analysis

TABLE 2: RANKING OF 2020				
2020				
	Mean Value			
Factors/Platforms	Online Marriage Platforms	Classifieds/ Magazines	Marriage bureaus	Referrals from Friends and Family
Accessibility	**1.96**	2.54	2.50	2.74
Value for money	**2.24**	2.28	2.42	2.66
Effectiveness	2.56	**2.20**	2.63	2.34
Range in Choice of Partner	**2.04**	2.31	2.64	2.62
Privacy	**2.24**	2.56	2.55	2.51

TABLE 3: RANKING OF 2021				
2021				
	Mean Value			
Factors/Platforms	Online Marriage Platforms	Classifieds/ Magazines	Marriage bureaus	Referrals from Friends and Family
Accessibility	**1.92**	2.79	2.66	2.64
Value for money	2.61	2.68	2.66	**2.05**
Effectiveness	**2.32**	2.79	2.44	2.45
Range in Choice of Partner	**2.19**	2.79	2.39	2.64
Privacy	**2.29**	2.45	2.64	2.62

Note: The lowest value has been highlighted for each factor and it indicates the highest ranked portal for that factor. For example: Online marriage portals have the lowest average of rank, i.e. 1.96, for the factor of 'Accessibility' in 2020. This means most people

had ranked it higher than the other matchmaking platforms. (As 1 represents the highest and 4 the lowest rank)

Interpretation

From Table 2, it can be observed that online marriage platforms are the most preferred medium in 2020 across 4 of the 5 factors: Accessibility with average of 1.96, value for money with average of 2.24, Range in choice of partner and privacy with averages of 2.04 and 2.24 respectively. For the factor of effectiveness, Classifieds in newspaper or magazines are most preferred with an average of 2.20, beating online marriage portals on this factor.

In 2021 (refer Table 3) it can be seen that there has been a shift from online marriage portals to referrals from family and friends, which has an average 2.05, under value for money factor. This is 0.19 lesser than the average online marriage portals had in 2020 and a major improvement over its over the 2.66 average referrals from family and friends got in 2020. There is also a shift from classifieds (average now rising to 2.79 making it the least preferred in 2021) to online marriage portals, which have an average of 2.32, for effectiveness. Online marriage portals still dominate the accessibility, range of choice, and privacy factors with averages of 1.92, 2.19, and 2.29, respectively. Accessibility has a lower average as compared to 2020 for online marriage portals (1.96 to 1.92) whereas the others have seen an increase in the average but relative to other matchmaking platforms are still the highest ranked platform.

It can be concluded from the above findings that online marriage portals were and continue to be preferred on factors Accessibility, Range of Choice and Privacy, however it can be said that their popularity on range of choice and privacy has declined a bit, seeing the increase in averages over 2020 in 2021. They are considered more effective in the 2021 study, as they have a lower average for the factor of effectiveness, whereas in 2020 this was awarded to classifieds. This shows that online marriage portals are now considered more effective than 2020, this can be due to the shift to online marriage portals due to the pandemic. However, it should be noted that online marriage portals are no longer preferred for value of money which implies that users are not finding the services as worth their money as they did in 2020. One such reason for such a shift can be the movement restrictions due to COVID-19.

6.2 *Preferences Towards Factors: Demographic Preference*

		Accessibility		Value for money		Effectiveness		Range of choice		Privacy	
TABLE 4: YOY PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE PREFERRING ONLINE MARRIAGE PORTALS											
		2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021
Age	18-25	38%	37%	19%	28%	8%	28%	42%	54%	46%	26%
	25-30	46%	70%	39%	35%	44%	39%	56%	61%	34%	48%
	30-35	51	65	23%	35%	17	50	26	65	26	40

		%	%			%	%	%	%	%	%
	35-40	48%	88%	39%	41%	17%	35%	39%	59%	52%	71%
	40-50	39%	50%	22%	25%	11%	31%	56%	38%	44%	56%
	Above 50	21%	46%	14%	31%	14%	38%	29%	23%	7%	54%
Gender	Male	41%	63%	28%	27%	25%	39%	33%	56%	37%	46%
	Female	46%	50%	28%	36%	19%	33%	51%	50%	35%	42%
Marital Status	Married	42%	50%	27%	39%	14%	36%	36%	46%	36%	48%
	Unmarried	45%	59%	29%	27%	30%	35%	49%	57%	45%	41%
Education	12th Passed	15%	39%	31%	39%	15%	16%	15%	74%	77%	23%
	Diploma	25%	88%	15%	0%	45%	63%	25%	13%	30%	38%
	Graduate	49%	63%	31%	41%	21%	39%	51%	51%	33%	59%
	Post-Graduation or above	51%	51%	23%	19%	14%	41%	43%	46%	31%	38%
Profession	Employed	56%	59%	39%	39%	23%	46%	52%	49%	36%	59%
	Home Maker	27%	53%	20%	26%	33%	26%	40%	53%	33%	26%
	Currently unemployed	60%	91%	40%	55%	20%	27%	50%	55%	35%	64%
	Business owner	28%	80%	17%	25%	19%	55%	31%	55%	36%	60%
	Student	32%	34%	12%	25%	16%	23%	28%	55%	36%	25%
Religion	Hinduism	42%	42%	28%	35%	17%	27%	49%	59%	34%	40%
	Islam	7%	60%	29%	20%	29%	40%	21%	40%	14%	30%
	Buddhism	89%	78%	0%	56%	22%	44%	22%	56%	0%	89%
	Jainism	38%	57%	24%	14%	33%	57%	43%	29%	52%	57%

	Christianity	59%	100%	41%	11%	29%	56%	29%	56%	47%	44%
	Other	50%	68%	50%	32%	0%	47%	50%	37%	100%	42%

Note: The highlighted cells show a decrease in percentage in 2021 as opposed to 2020

Interpretation

Table 4shows the percentage of people in the different demographic groups who prefer modern platform of matchmaking i.e online marriage portals. The two columns, 2020 and 2021, under each factor show the percentage of people preferring online marriage portals for both the periods respectively.The highlighted cells are the ones which show a decrease in percentage in 2021 as opposed to 2020.

Inferences drawn for the various factor are as follows:

a) *Accessibility:* Under accessibility only one group consisting individuals practicing Buddhism has seen a drop in percentage of people preferring online marriage portals with a drop from 89% to 78%. This means in the times of the pandemic; online marriage portals are the most accessible to almost all user groups and are gaining popularity.

b) *Value for Money:* Under value for money, the percentage of people in the age group 25-30 (from 39% to 35%), males (from 28% to 27%), individuals who have a diploma (from 15% to 0%) and people with post-graduation or higher qualifications (from 23% to 19%) have seen a decline in popularity of online marriage portals. The same trend can be observed for all religious groups except Hinduism and Buddhism with Islam, Jainism, Christianity, and Others seeing a fall of 9, 10, 30 and 18 percentage points respectively. This can be linked to the fall in rank given to online marriage portals on the same factor.

c) *Effectiveness:* For effectiveness too, online marriage portals have retained their popularity with only people belonging to the age group 25-30 showing a decline from 44% to 39% and homemakers showing a decline in the percentage from 33% to 26%, towards preferring online marriage portals.

d) *Range of Choice:* There are some groups who are showing declining preference towards online marriage portals, these include people who are above 40, with a decline 56% to 38%, females with a minor decline of 1%-point, diploma holders which is down from 25% to 13%, Jainism followers and those following other religions with declines of 14 and 13 percentage points respectively. Whereas other groups have shown a great increase in preference of online marriage portals, like the group of 12th passed individuals which shows a 59 percentage point increase. This shows a mixed reaction towards the choice provided by online marriage portals.

e) *Privacy:* Under privacy, there is some decline in percentage from 46% to 26% for people in the age group 18-25, 77% to 23% for 12th pass individuals, 33% to 26% for homemakers, 26% to 25% for students, for those following 'other' religions it is from 100% to 42% and for Christianity from 47% to 44%. Whereas the other groups have seen a healthy increase in % of people in the group preferring online over traditional

matchmaking platforms. Individuals following Buddhism have seen an increase from 0% to 89% preferring online for privacy, becoming the largest gainer.

Table 4 depicts that for the factors accessibility and effectiveness, online marriage portals have retained their popularity and have seen a strong growth for most of the demographic segments.

The factors value for money, range of choice and privacy show that the percentage of people in each group who prefer online marriage portals has fallen for a substantial number of demographic groups. Therefore, it can be concluded that users feel that the pandemic has rendered online marriage portals less impactful for these 3 factors.

6.4 Cluster Analysis

Table 5 and 6 give us the clusters broadly divided on the basis of age for 2020 and 2021 based on SPSS output.

TABLE 5: CLUSTERS 2020								
	Clusters - 2020							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Age	25-30	25-30	25-30	30-35	30-35	35-40	40-50	40-50
Marital Status	Unmarried	Unmarried	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried	Married	Married	Married
Religion	Christianity	Hinduism	Hinduism	Jainism	Jainism	Hinduism	Hinduism	Jainism
Education	Diploma	Graduate	Diploma	PG	Graduate	Graduate	Graduate	Diploma
Profession	Business owner	Student	Currently unemployed	Student	Home Maker	Student	Currently unemployed	Currently unemployed
Which portal do you prefer?	Marriage Bureaus	Online Marriage Portals	Marriage Bureaus	Online Marriage Portals	Referrals from friends and family	Marriage Bureaus	Marriage Bureaus	Marriage Bureaus

Table 6: Clusters 2021								
	Clusters - 2021							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Age	18-25	18-25	25-30	25-30	30-35	35-40	40-50	40-50
Marital Status	Unmarried	Unmarried	Unmarried	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married
Religion	Hinduism	Christianity	Other	Hinduism	Hinduism	Christianity	Islam	Other
Education	Diploma	Diploma	PG	Graduate	Graduate	Graduate	PG	Graduate
Profession	Business owner	Business owner	Employed	Student	Employed	Employed	Employed	Home Maker
Which portal do you prefer?	Classifieds/Magazines	Marriage Bureaus	Marriage Bureaus	Referrals from friends and family	Online Marriage Portals	Referrals from friends and family	Referrals from friends and family	Marriage Bureaus

Interpretation

The clusters are classified into three main groups based on age, however within the age wise categories too, there exist other demographic characteristics which impact the preference of marriage portal namely Education, religion, profession and marital status. It is important to note that only those groups which are statistically significant form clusters, therefore the age and other demographic features for the clusters in 2020 and 2021 are not identical.:

• *Young Individuals (Age 18-30)*

In 2020, the following clusters were made for the 18-30 age category:

a) **Demographic Features:** 25-30, Unmarried, Christianity, Diploma Holders, Business owners: They prefer Marriage Bureaus

b) **Demographic Features:** 25-30, Unmarried, Hinduism, Graduates, Students; They prefer Online Marriage Portals

c) **Demographic Features:** 25-30, Unmarried, Hinduism, Diploma Holders, Currently Unemployed; They prefer Marriage Bureaus

The interpretation that can be drawn from the cluster analysis shows that a majority of young individuals are inclined towards the marriage bureaus in 2020 (refer to Table 5), these individuals are business owners and are majorly diploma holders, but there is an inclination towards the online marriage portals by a part of this population, these are employed graduates who practice Hinduism, this can also be accounted for by the fact that there is a lot of modernization in the corporate sector and such individuals are more like to be internet users.

Meanwhile, in 2021 the following clusters exist for the 18-30 age category:

a) **Demographic Features:** 18-25, Unmarried, Hinduism, Diploma Holders, Business owners; They prefer Classifieds/Magazines

b) **Demographic Features:** 18-25, Unmarried, Christianity, Diploma Holders, Business owners; They prefer Marriage Bureaus

c) **Demographic Features:** 18-25, Unmarried, Other religions, Post-graduates or above, Employed/Salaried; They prefer Marriage Bureaus

d) **Demographic Features:** 25-30, Married, Hindu, Graduates, Students; They prefer Referrals from friends and family

All the individuals in the 18-30 age bracket prefer traditional matchmaking platforms (refer Table 6), there is continuance to see an in inclination towards marriage bureaus as was the case in 2020. It can also be seen that one part of this group in the 18-25 age range prefer classifieds and magazines and they are Hindu, diploma holders and primarily business owners.

It can also be seen that a group in the age range, 25-30, prefer referrals and these individuals are pursuing postgraduation or above and practice Hinduism as a religion. This group has seen a shift towards traditional platforms, whereas in 2020 it had a mixed preference of modern and traditional platforms.

•*Middle-Aged Individuals (Age 30-40)*

In 2020, the following clusters were made for the 30-40 years age category:

a) *Demographic Features:* 30-35, Married, Jainism, Post-Graduates or above, Students; They prefer Online Marriage Portals

b) *Demographic Features:* 30-35, Married, Jainism, Graduates, Homemakers; They prefer Referrals from friends and family

c) *Demographic Features:* 35-40, Married, Hinduism, Graduates, Students; They prefer Marriage Bureaus

The results from the cluster analysis point towards the fact that some of the individuals in this category in 2020, prefer means such as marriage bureaus and referrals from their friends and family for matchmaking. (Refer to Table 5)The people belonging to this category are graduates, are salaried and some are unemployed individuals. The results also show that a part of this demographic is also showing an interest towards the modern means such as online matrimony platforms, this population constitutes people who follow Jainism and are graduated business owners.

In 2021, the following clusters were made for the 30-40 years age category:

a) *Demographic Features:* 30-35, Married, Hinduism, Graduate, Students; They prefer Online Marriage Portals

b) *Demographic Features:* 35-40, Married, Christianity, Graduates, Employed; They prefer Referrals from friends and family

In 2021 it can be noticed one group which is 30-35 years of age continues to prefer online marriage portals. (Refer to Table 6) This group consists of graduate salaried individuals. The group from 35-40 prefers referrals from family and friends and consist of salaried graduates who practice Christianity.

This group continues to have preference of a mix of modern and traditional platforms which is the same as the results in 2020.

• *Older Individuals (Age 40 and above)*

In 2020, there are the following clusters for the above 40 age category:

a) *Demographic Features:* 40-50, Married, Hinduism, Graduates, Currently Unemployed; They prefer Marriage Bureaus

b) *Demographic Features:* 40-50, Married, Jainism, Diploma Holders, Currently Unemployed; They prefer Marriage Bureaus

As seen in Table 5, this section of the population is completely inclined towards marriage bureaus for matchmaking purposes. Both the clusters consist of individuals who are currently unemployed. What differentiates the two groups is their religion and educational qualification, one group follows Hinduism and consists of graduates, and the other group following Jainism and consisting of diploma holders. The inclination of this age group towards traditional means can be due to the fact that the exposure of such individuals towards the modern means and technology is lesser than the younger demographic and hence, they are not very well acquainted with such means. Also, they are married and since the online marriage portals weren't present at the time their matches were

formed, they do not prefer it over traditional means and stick to the means that worked for them (Traditional ones; mainly marriage bureaus).

In 2021, the following clusters were made for the above 40 age category:

a) ***Demographic Features:*** 40-50, Married, Islam, Post-Graduates or above, Employed; They prefer Referrals from friends and family

b) ***Demographic Features:*** 40-50, Married, Other religions, Graduates, Homemakers; They prefer Marriage Bureaus

When the results in Table 6 and Table 5 are compared, it is observed that in 2020 this age group was completely swayed towards marriage bureaus. But in 2021 it can be seen that one segment of this group prefers referrals from family and friends, and they are followers of Islam, hold post-graduate degrees and are salaried. The group which still prefers marriage bureaus consists of graduate homemakers. However, the overall preference for the older population still points towards completely traditional platforms.

Results

TABLE 7: GENERATION WISE PREFERENCE		
	Preference	
Generation	**2020**	**2021**
Young	M&T	T
Middle	M&T	M&T
Old	T	T

M	Modern Platform: Online Marriage Portals
T	Traditional Platform: Classifieds / Marriage Bureaus / Friends & Family References
M&T	Both

Interpretation

The results for cluster analysis (Table 5 and 6) can be linked to the results of descriptive analysis (Table 4), and their findings can be read in tandem to draw better conclusions.

This study shows that the younger generation, comprising individuals in the age group 18 to 30, have switched to prefer traditional matchmaking platforms after a year of living in the new normal created by the pandemic. They earlier preferred a mix of online marriage portals and marriage bureaus This can mean that factors like value for money and privacy which have seen a shift in preference from modern to traditional for people in this age group play the most important role for this age segment in their preference of matchmaking platforms.

The middle age segment of respondents, from 30-40 years, continue to prefer a mixture of modern and traditional platforms which can be seen from the fact that the percentages of individuals preferring online marriage portals did not decline for the different factors being studied.

Lastly the older population continues to prefer traditional matchmaking platforms whereas there is some shift towards modern matchmaking platforms when it comes to the factor of range of choice, implying that this factor is not an important determinant of preference for this group.

7. CONCLUSION

According to the inferences drawn from the study, the respondents on whom the analysis was conducted preferred the modern platform, i.e., Online Marriage portals for factors including but not limited to accessibility, range in choice of partners and privacy for both the years 2020 and 2021. It was also concluded that for both the years 2020 and 2021, there is a variegated response between modern and traditional platforms for factors such as value for money and effectiveness. For the year 2021, in terms of the effective of the matchmaking method, there was an increased inclination towards the modern platform, while there is a preference shift seen towards traditional platform in terms of value for money for successful match of partners.

The study also deduced that for the younger generation, i.e., people belonging to age bracket of 18-30, a shift towards the traditional platform was seen from the earlier mixed preference of modern and traditional means in 2020.

However, there was no apparent difference between the preferences of people belonging to the age segments like the middle generation (30-40 years) and older generation (40 years and above).

It can also be inferred the population belonging to the middle generation is trying to shift to online marriage portals and are not rigid with traditional practices only.

For the older generation (age 40 and above) preference was particularly skewed towards the traditional platforms including references from friends and family, marriage bureaus and classifieds for matchmaking. This can, however, be attributed to the long-established ways in which alliances were fixed and were based on family relations and trust.

8. LIMITATIONS

- Marriage related issues in India are considered private and there is an inherent hesitance and inertia in discussing these. Therefore, the number of respondents willing to discuss matrimony related issue was limited.

- Since the technique of convenience sampling was used, the results should be extrapolated carefully.

- The study assigns equal weights to all factors while studying preference of respondents, which may not be followed by the responses of each respondent.

9. Scope for further Research

Further research can be done for:

- An in-depth study to look into the major causes of the shift from modern to traditional platforms post the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is especially interesting because while everything is moving towards online modes owning to the

movement restrictions imposed due to corona virus, the study shows a movement towards traditional matchmaking platforms.

- The research study can be expanded to allow for specific weights to be assigned to different factors. This would help understand the specific factors which are the most important for individuals to decide their preferred marriage platforms.

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