



## Changing Trends in Media Consumption Patterns among College-Going Female Students in the Digital Era

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In the contemporary digital era, rapid technological advancement and media convergence have significantly transformed the ways audiences access, consume, and interact with media content. The emergence of smart phones, OTT platforms, and social media applications has reshaped traditional patterns of media consumption and introduced new forms of communication and audience engagement. Contemporary audiences, particularly young people, are increasingly moving from traditional media platforms toward personalized, mobile-centric, and on-demand media environments. As a result, media consumption practices have become more interactive, participatory, and individualized in nature.

This study has explored the popularity of new consumption modes and communication modes among college going female students. Through field work, personal narratives and experiences of participants have been recorded to access their consumption pattern. The aim of the study was to explore the changing consumption pattern of media and to find out user's experiences as new pattern followers. The study has tried to understand acceptability of new consumption pattern and how the surroundings have been changed by technological and convergence emergence. The study seeks to understand everyday lives of college going female students aged between 18-22. The present study was based on qualitative approach with exploratory research design. Purposive sampling was applied while selecting the participants from the Alipurduar district of North Bengal and North 24 Parganas of South Bengal of West Bengal, India. The study has been significant as it highlights the relationship among media, technology, and society, particularly in the context of changing audience behaviour, digital media dependency, and evolving patterns of content consumption in contemporary culture.

**Keywords:** media consumption pattern, digital age, college going females, smart phones, OTT, online streaming services

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## 1. Introduction

Empirical results and discussion insinuated the five factors which affect consumers' choices concerning entertainment i.e. content and viewing behaviour, expenses incurred on services, shifts influenced by offerings/incentives, convenience and telecom. Logistic regression validated the strength of these factors which made content and viewing behaviour, expenses incurred on services and convenience the three most important factors (Sadana, M., & Sharma, D. 2021). Amidst the pervasive influence of globalisation and the meteoric advancement of information technology, mass media has taken on an indelible role, firmly entwining itself with the very fabric of human existence (Mahardhani, et al., 2023). No longer confined to mere peripheral involvement, media has asserted itself as an omnipresent force, wielding the power not only to deliver information but also to profoundly mold perspectives, instill values, and shape the intricate mosaic of cultural identity that defines a society. It is within this ever-evolving landscape that we discern the trans-formative effects of shifts in media consumption patterns over the course of recent decades, effects that reverberate deeply within the tapestry of individual and collective cultural identity (Ausat et al., 2023). Media consumption patterns encompass the intricate web of methodologies through which individuals acquire, engage with, and subsequently react to the multifaceted realm of media content (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Changes in media consumption patterns in the era of globalization have a significant impact on people's cultural identity. Easier access to different types of media content from around the world has opened up opportunities for cross-cultural interaction and information dissemination. However, this also brings challenges in maintaining a balance between the preservation of local cultural identity and the influence of global culture. A society's cultural identity is formed through a complex dynamic between traditions, values and the influence of modern media (Sutrisno, S. 2023). The media business must quickly adjust to this shift since it indicates digital media will soon dominate the media consumption landscape. In the modern era of digital media, it helps us better comprehend the complex relationship between new and old forms of communication. The study's open methodology and strong results provide a firm footing for further investigation, and they highlight

the need for the media industry to adapt to the changing interests of consumers (Alzubi, A. 2023). The digital revolution has transformed the way we consume media. Digital media platforms such as social media, streaming services, and online news outlets have become increasingly popular, leading to a decline in the consumption of conventional media such as print newspapers, radio and television. The shift towards digital media has had a significant impact on the media industry, and it has led to a changing relationship between digital and conventional media. This study aims to explore the media consumption habits of individuals in the digital era and the relationship between digital and conventional media. However, conventional media, also known as traditional media, refers to the established forms of mass communication that have been in use for many years, including print media, television, and radio. While the rise of digital media has had a significant impact on the media landscape in recent years, conventional media continues to play an important role in society (Alzubi, 2022). Existing research on consumption and engagement patterns of users in India's digital market is concentrated on the role of demography, user attitudes and the impact of Covid 19 on user adoption (Bhattacharya et. al. 2021). Another study on Audience Fragmentation and Niche Media Consumption in India reveals that the Indian media landscape is undergoing a significant transformation driven primarily by digital technologies, personalized content delivery, and diversified audience preferences. The findings show that younger, digitally active audiences are shifting away from traditional mass media and increasingly gravitating toward niche, interest specific platforms such as YouTube, OTT services, and social media (Gangwani, M. & Thakur, G. 2025).

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of the study were to understand the new pattern of content consumption and to ascertain the new consumption pattern. By exploring participant's narratives, the present study aims to shed light on the new pattern of media consumption.

## 3. Methodology

The present study has followed qualitative approach to explore the changing consumption pattern.

Only women colleges were taken for the study because the study is focused to understand college going female's consumption behavior. The study was conducted in semi-urban areas of North Bengal and South Bengal. Total five (5) colleges were under North Bengal University and six (6) colleges under West Bengal State University were approached for conducting the study. Only four (4) colleges among them have responded. Two colleges from North Bengal and two from South Bengal have taken for the study. It was not possible to mention name of the colleges as only verbal consent were received from the institution. The methodology has chosen for the study focused on the subjective usage of young female college students in their everyday lives. Primary data were collected through focus group discussion followed by participant observation. Each focus group discussion was consisted with 15-20 participants. Through participant observation, gesture, posture, facial expression along with body language of participants were observed closely and noted accordingly. MDC or multidisciplinary course (in West Bengal State University) and IDC or inter disciplinary course (in North Bengal University) students have been selected for the study as both MDC (multidisciplinary course) and IDC (inter disciplinary course) students were from different disciplines. All participated entities were unmarried girls, aged between 18-20 years). The names of the participants were changed to maintain confidentiality, and this ethical consideration was consistently upheld throughout the entire study. The participants were informed that the purpose of the present study was purely academic. All participants were free to discontinue the discussion whenever they feel uncomfortable. However, no one has discontinued. Throughout the data collection process, ethics and principles of research were maintained accurately. Bengali and English language have been used during the interview. Each discussion has taken more than one hour. Multiple focus group discussions were conducted in each institute to get the actual data.

## 4. Discussions

The first participant, Sri, was a fourth-semester student. She expressed a strong interest in manga as well as Korean, Japanese, and Chinese web series. In the case of manga, she particularly preferred crime and thriller genres. Regarding web series, she was inclined toward narratives featuring mature and realistic characters.

Although she enjoyed romantic content, she stated that unrealistic portrayals of romance often irritated her. She also watched television occasionally, primarily during dinner time. Sri explained that she had grown up in a nuclear family where both of her parents were employed. As a result, she and her sibling spent a significant amount of time alone at home, which gradually accustomed her to solitude. She mentioned that she enjoyed her own company and felt comfortable spending time alone.

*According to her, "My parents love to travel, and they travel throughout the year. I started travelling when I was two years old, and at that time I had no option to express my unwillingness. However, when I was fourteen, I refused for the first time. I cannot travel much because my body does not permit it, so I preferred staying at home. This situation of being alone at home made me dependent on media. After completing my higher secondary education, I got my first mobile phone. Since childhood, I have had a strong interest in reading novels, and I still continue this habit. Reading gives me immense happiness and entertainment. In fact, I feel more entertained through reading than through watching audio-visual content. Manga is a new addition to my entertainment routine. Although I also watch cartoons on television, manga has become another level of addiction for me. There were days when I started reading novels and manga at 7 PM and continued until 9 AM the next morning. I do not enjoy video or audio content as much as reading. However, this heavy consumption has affected my studies during examination periods and has also harmed my eyesight. Despite this, I prefer consuming my favourite content alone and in a personalized space. Therefore, I mostly prefer watching or reading content on my mobile phone and in solitude."*

Sri's narrative highlights how her family environment, early exposure to solitude, and preference for personalized media consumption shaped her consumption style. Her experiences also demonstrate the increasing role of mobile-based and individualized media consumption among young audiences.

Diti, who studied English as her major subject, shared her experiences regarding daily media consumption patterns. She expressed no interest in watching films; instead, she showed a strong preference for short-form video content.

She particularly enjoys watching reels and short videos on smart phones. However, before gaining access to smart phones, she regularly watched animated television programmes such as Roll No. 21 and Doraemon on television. According to her, television once served as a close companion and an important source of entertainment in her daily life.

*In her words, "In my childhood, I used to come back home and immediately sit in front of the television to watch my favorite shows. I spent countless hours watching television every day. However, after getting access to a smart phone, I no longer feel the same urge to watch television so extensively. Now, I can access everything through my phone, including all my favorite shows. I enjoy consuming content on my own because it gives me personal comfort and works as a stress-relief process for me. I have a great interest in crafting, so I usually watch skill-based and creative videos. I often learn new things from them. Videos related to clay craft-making and women's empowerment is among my favorites. I spend around seven to eight hours a day consuming media content whenever I get free time. I do not particularly enjoy cinema because I find it difficult to stay engaged with one long story for an extended period. Recently, under pressure from my friends, I watched HazaarChaurasi Ki Maa, but I still found long-form storytelling less engaging for me. The most important reason why I prefer consuming content on my smart phone is that it allows me to multitask. For example, I can listen to music and chat with someone at the same time, which makes the experience more convenient and enjoyable for me."*

The media consumption pattern of Diti and Anu reflects the broader transformation from traditional mass media consumption to personalized and mobile-centered digital media practices among contemporary youth. Their narratives demonstrate a clear shift from collective and scheduled television viewing to individualized, flexible, and participatory media consumption through smart phones. Earlier, television functioned as a central medium of entertainment and companionship in their everyday life. Programmes such as Roll No. 21 and Doraemon have shaped their childhood viewing habits, indicating the dominance of television during the pre-smart phone phase. However, with the arrival of smart phones, their dependence on television gradually diminished because digital platforms offered greater accessibility, portability, and content variety.

Their preference for reels and short videos over films indicates the growing dominance of short-form content culture in the digital age. This pattern reflects the decreasing attention span associated with long-form narratives and the increasing attraction toward quick, easily consumable, and instantly gratifying media forms. Both of them have agreed that their lack of interest in cinema and inability to remain engaged with a prolonged storyline further support the argument that digital media audiences increasingly favor fragmented and fast-paced content experiences. The participants' media choices also reveal a highly personalized mode of consumption. Unlike television, which often encouraged family-based or collective viewing, smart phone-based media consumption allows them to enjoy content privately and independently. She explicitly associates solitary media consumption with emotional comfort and stress relief, suggesting that digital media functions not only as entertainment but also as a psychological coping mechanism. This demonstrates how contemporary audiences actively use media to satisfy emotional and personal needs. Participant Diti has interest in craft-making videos and women's empowerment content, indicating that media consumption is not entirely passive. Instead, she selectively chooses content that contributes to learning, creativity, and self-development. Instructional and skill-based videos provide opportunities for informal learning and self-improvement, highlighting the educational role of digital platforms in everyday life. At the same time, her preference for empowerment-related content reflects the role of digital media in shaping awareness, identity, and social consciousness among young audiences. Another important aspect of her media behavior is multitasking. She values smart phones because they allow simultaneous activities such as listening to music while chatting with others. This reflects the interactive and multifunctional nature of digital media, which differs significantly from the linear and single-task nature of traditional television viewing. The smart phone, therefore, becomes not merely a communication device but an integrated media environment where entertainment, communication, and social interaction coexist. From a theoretical perspective, her experience can be analyzed through the lens of Mass Communication theories such as Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) and Technological Determinism (McLuhan, 1964).

Uses and Gratifications Theory explains that audiences are active participants who consciously select media according to their personal needs, including entertainment, relaxation, learning, and emotional satisfaction. Diti and Anu's selective preference for short videos, craft tutorials, and empowerment content clearly demonstrates this active audience behavior. Simultaneously, Technological Determinism helps explain how smart phone technology has transformed their media habits by reshaping accessibility, viewing patterns, and modes of interaction. The portability and multifunctionality of smartphones have directly influenced their transition away from television toward mobile-based consumption.

Overall, the participants' experiences highlight the ongoing evolution of media consumption patterns among young female audiences, where digital media increasingly replaces traditional forms through convenience, personalization, interactivity, and emotional engagement.

Kriti has said, *"I prefer consuming most content on my smartphone; however, when it comes to watching films, I prefer the experience of a cinema hall. Watching films in a theatre gives me the actual vibe and excitement of cinema. For example, if I watch a film starring Shah Rukh Khan, the audience's reaction during his entry scene creates a thrilling atmosphere for me. Recently, I watched both parts of Dhurandhar in the cinema hall. During the protagonist's entry scene, the entire hall shouted with excitement, and that collective reaction made the experience much more thrilling and entertaining for me. In my opinion, entertainment becomes much more enjoyable when films are watched in a cinema hall. At the same time, I understand that regularly watching films in theatres is not always possible because it involves considerable expenses. Therefore, I sometimes try to watch pirated versions of films available on the internet. However, good-quality copies are not always accessible, and at times I only find hall-print versions, which do not provide a smooth viewing experience. When I consume content on my smart phone, I usually prefer to watch alone because it helps me disconnect from surrounding noises and distractions. Watching content individually allows me to concentrate more on what I am watching and creates a more immersive experience for me."*

Participant Kriti and Nisha both have stated that they enjoyed watching television during childhood and regularly watched cartoon programmes. However, after gaining access to a smart phone, both of them have become more satisfied with consuming content through mobile devices. At present, they primarily watch Bengali cartoons and short dramas available on internet platforms. According to them, smart phones provide easier access to a wider variety of content compared to traditional television. Kriti further explained that one of the major reasons behind her declining interest in television is the unavailability of her preferred content on Indian television channels. For instance, she expressed a strong preference for Korean dramas, which are generally not broadcast on Indian television networks. As a result, internet-based platforms have become her primary source of entertainment. During the interview, they were asked whether their family owned a smart television. In response, Kriti confirmed that there is a smart television in her home. But Anu did not have. However, Kriti clarified that she does not have the freedom to connect her smart phone to the smart television because other family members are not interested in watching internet-based content, particularly Korean dramas. She also mentioned that streaming such content requires a high-speed internet connection, which is another reason why the practice has not been accepted within her family environment. The participants additionally stated that they prefer thriller and comedy genres while selecting media content. Their responses indicate a growing inclination toward personalized and internet-based media consumption, where individual preferences increasingly shape viewing habits beyond the limitations of traditional television broadcasting.

Meha stated that her smartphone functions as her closest companion, and she finds it difficult to remain away from it for a long period of time. According to her, smartphones enable the performance of multiple activities simultaneously, which increases convenience and efficiency in everyday life. She further explained that the personalized nature of smart phone usage makes her feel more emotionally connected to the device.

Meha also mentioned that she prefers consuming content that is currently trending on internet platforms. Her media choices are strongly influenced by contemporary online trends and digital culture.

In addition to being a media consumer, she actively participates in digital media production as a content creator herself. She expressed the opinion that content creation has the potential to become an important and attractive career option in the near future. However, she also acknowledged that achieving a substantial level of viewership and audience engagement requires significant patience, consistency, and long-term effort.

Her responses reflect the growing role of smart phones not only as tools of communication and entertainment but also as platforms for self-expression, digital participation, and emerging career opportunities in the contemporary media environment.

By her words, *"At present, I am still pursuing my studies, so I do not face any serious family pressure regarding earning. However, I know that after completing my education, I will have to become financially independent. Therefore, I believe that if I start building something from now, it will gradually reach a stable position in the future and help me avoid sudden financial pressure later in life. Keeping this in mind, I have already started creating digital content from now onwards."*

Meha further stated that she creates vlogs based on daily life experiences and food-related content. Being an avid user of Instagram, she expressed a strong preference for food videos and digital entertainment available on social media platforms. She also mentioned that she is highly interested in online video games and occasionally streams gameplay content online. According to her, her favorite game is Battlegrounds Mobile India.

She explained that she received her first smartphone during the 2020 lockdown period caused by COVID-19 pandemic. After obtaining her smartphone, she began watching daily vlogs on YouTube. However, over time, she found Instagram more engaging and interesting than YouTube because of its short-form and trend-oriented content. She also used internet platforms as a tool for self-improvement, particularly for learning spoken English.

Despite spending a significant amount of time on digital media platforms, she clarified that she never neglected family interactions. She stated that whenever family members, especially elders, gathered together to watch news, daily soaps,

or films on television, she willingly joined them if she was at home. According to her, family viewing time remains emotionally valuable and enjoyable.

The participant also expressed a strong interest in Korean and Pakistani dramas. When asked about Indian television dramas, she clearly stated that she finds Korean dramas more interesting and engaging in comparison. Furthermore, she explained that she spends a considerable portion of her day using her smart phone because content creation itself requires substantial time, consistency, and digital engagement. Her responses indicate how smart phones and social media platforms have become central to entertainment, self-expression, learning, and professional aspirations among young digital media users.

Nia, stated that she prefers watching her favourite shows on her smart phone rather than on television. According to her, the smart phone remains constantly accessible wherever she goes, making it a more convenient medium for media consumption. She explained that even television programmes are often watched through her phone because it provides a stronger sense of personalization and individual comfort. The participant further mentioned that sitting in front of a television set does not align with her comfort zone. Instead, she prefers consuming media content while sitting or lying on her bed, which creates a more relaxed and private viewing environment. She also emphasized that smart phone-based viewing allows her to enjoy complete control over her content choices without interference from others. According to her, while using a smart phone, no one disturbs her viewing experience, influences her selection of content, or changes the channel according to their own preferences. Nia identified reality shows from both television and OTT platforms, funny videos, stand-up comedy programmes, and short trending videos as her most preferred forms of daily media consumption. Her responses reflect the growing preference among young audiences for personalized, portable, and user-controlled media experiences offered by smart phones and digital platforms.

Jiya has said, *"I love watching my favourite shows on OTT platforms through my mobile phone. Whenever I recharge my phone, I usually choose plans that include OTT subscriptions along with the mobile recharge benefits."*

*This makes it easier and more affordable for me to access different streaming platforms. I especially enjoy watching Korean dramas because I find them unique in terms of storyline and presentation. Usually, I continuously watch content on one OTT platform for two or three days and then switch to another platform according to my interests. I prefer mysterious and paranormal content, as such genres keep me engaged and entertained. I also receive notifications and recommendations based on the algorithm that is set according to my viewing preferences. These personalized suggestions help me discover new content that matches my interests. Unlike many viewers who prefer short videos, I do not have any objection to long-form content. I regularly watch full episodes of Korean dramas without losing interest. In comparison to OTT platforms and mobile viewing, I rarely watch television because I find digital streaming services more convenient, personalized, and engaging.”*

When asked whether she had a smart television at her home, the participant responded negatively and stated that her household did not possess a smart television.

Diya has said, *“I usually spend more time on my mobile phone at night because I get more free time during that period. Mystery stories and ghost-related content are among my favourite genres. My favourite OTT platform is Netflix, and I regularly watch Netflix series on my mobile phone. I enjoy watching my favourite content on OTT platforms, social media platforms, and the MX Player application.”*

Raya stated that she has developed a strong dependence on mobile phone usage. According to her, whenever she gets access to her screen, she immediately begins consuming some form of digital content. She also openly acknowledged her deep fascination and obsession with web series, which constitute a significant part of her everyday media consumption habits.

Keya acknowledged that she does not possess a strong addiction or attachment to any particular type of media content. However, she expressed a clear preference for watching short videos, which she finds enjoyable and engaging in her everyday media consumption practices.

The responses of Nia highlight the increasing dominance of smart phones as personalized media devices among contemporary young audiences. Her preference for smart phones over television reflects a broader shift from collective and fixed-location media consumption to flexible, individualized, and mobile-based viewing practices. Unlike traditional television, which generally requires viewers to remain seated in a shared family space, smart phones allow content consumption at any time and place according to personal convenience. For Nia, portability and constant accessibility are among the primary reasons behind her preference for smart phone-based viewing. A significant aspect of her media behaviour is the importance she attaches to personal comfort and privacy. She explicitly stated that sitting in front of a television does not align with her comfort zone, whereas smart phones allow her to consume content while lying or sitting comfortably in bed. This indicates that media consumption has become deeply integrated into private and intimate personal spaces. The smart phone functions not merely as a technological device but also as a medium that creates a sense of personal ownership and emotional comfort. Her responses also reveal a strong preference for autonomy and control over media choices. Traditional television viewing often involves collective decision-making within families, where content selection may be influenced by multiple viewers. In contrast, smart phone-based viewing provides her with complete authority over what to watch, when to watch, and how long to watch. She values the absence of external interference, such as others changing channels or criticizing her content preferences. This reflects the growing trend of highly individualized media consumption patterns in the digital era. The types of content she consumes are reality shows, funny videos, stand-up comedy programmes, and short trending videos—demonstrate the popularity of light, entertaining, and instantly engaging media forms among young audiences. The preference for short and trend-oriented content suggests the increasing influence of digital attention economies, where quick entertainment and continuous engagement become central to media practices. Both television-based and OTT reality shows remain attractive because they combine emotional engagement, drama, humor, and reliability within easily consumable formats.

From a theoretical perspective, her behaviour can be understood through Mass Communication concepts such as Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). This theory suggests that audiences actively choose media according to their personal needs and satisfactions. Nia's preference for smart phone viewing satisfies several needs simultaneously, including comfort, privacy, entertainment, convenience, and control over content selection. Her responses also support the idea of media personalization in digital culture, where audiences increasingly prefer platforms and devices that provide customized experiences tailored to individual interests and lifestyles.

Overall, the participant's experiences demonstrate how smart phones have transformed media consumption from a shared household activity into a highly personalized and self-directed practice. Her case reflects the broader cultural transition toward mobile-centered entertainment, individual autonomy, and digitally mediated everyday life among contemporary youth.

The responses of Raya and Keya reveal important aspects of contemporary digital media consumption patterns among young audiences. Although both participants engage extensively with smart phone-based media, their responses demonstrate different levels of emotional attachment and engagement with digital content. Raya's statement reflects a strong dependence on mobile phones and digital entertainment. Her tendency to immediately start consuming content whenever she accesses her phone suggests the deeply habitual nature of smart phone usage in contemporary everyday life. Smart phones, in this context, function not only as communication devices but also as constant sources of entertainment and engagement. Her self-confessed obsession with web series indicates the growing popularity of long-form OTT-based storytelling among young audiences. Web series often provide continuous narratives, emotional attachment to characters, and binge-watching opportunities, which contribute to prolonged viewer engagement. Her responses demonstrate how digital platforms increasingly dominate leisure activities and occupy significant portions of users' daily routines.

On the other hand, Keya's response presents a comparatively moderate form of digital engagement.

She clearly stated that she does not possess any strong addiction toward a particular genre or type of content. However, her preference for short videos reflects the widespread popularity of short-form digital media among younger generations. Short videos are designed for quick consumption, instant gratification, and continuous scrolling behaviour, making them highly attractive in contemporary algorithm-driven digital environments. Her viewing preference suggests that entertainment consumption has become increasingly fragmented and fast-paced, where audiences often seek brief and easily consumable content experiences rather than prolonged engagement with a single narrative.

From a theoretical perspective, these responses can be interpreted through Mass Communication concepts such as Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) and Media Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) explains that audiences actively select media according to their personal needs and interests. Raya's attraction toward web series may fulfil needs related to escapism, emotional engagement, and entertainment, while Keya's preference for short videos reflects the desire for quick amusement and convenience. Media Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976) further suggests that audiences increasingly depend on digital media platforms for relaxation, entertainment, and everyday engagement, especially in a technologically mediated society.

## **5. Theoretical Framework**

The transformation of media consumption patterns can be understood through communication theories. Most relevant theory of communication for the present study is Uses and Gratification theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). Uses and Gratification theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) explains that audiences are active participants who consciously select media content according to their needs, interests, entertainment preferences and social satisfaction. In the digital era, audience's preferences have been shifted into OTT platforms, social media and mobile-based content because these platforms provide greater freedom of choice, convenience and personalized experiences.

Another most related theory of mass communication is Technological Determinism (McLuhan, 1964).

The theory emphasizes that technological advancements significantly shape social behavior, communication practices and cultural patterns. The emergence of smart phones, high-speed internet, streaming platforms and artificial intelligence driven recommendation system has shifted the way people access and consume media content. technology, therefore, acts as a driving force behind the shift from traditional media to digital and interactive media environments. In addition, according to Media Dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976), individuals increasingly depend on media for information, entertainment, education and social interaction, particularly in modern societies where digital communication has become an integral part of everyday life. The growing dependency on online platforms, social networking sites and digital news portals reflects the increasing reliance of audiences on media technologies for fulfilling daily communication needs.

These collective ideas have provided a theoretical perspective for understanding of the changing patterns of media consumption. They have highlighted the interconnected relationship between technology, audience behavior and media institutions, demonstrating how contemporary communication practices are continuously evolving in response to the social change.

## **6. Findings**

Media consumption is a significant factor in shaping human perception, attitudes, and patterns of thinking. Several studies have demonstrated that media plays a crucial role in influencing public opinion and constructing social realities through continuous exposure to media content. The changing pattern of media consumption is a broad area of study that includes audience access to media, content selection, levels of media engagement, and the influence of technological, societal, and cultural transformations on consumption behaviour. In the contemporary digital era, changing patterns of media consumption have introduced new dimensions to audience behaviour and media practices. The digital environment has transformed audiences from passive receivers of information into active participants who selectively choose, interact with, and engage with media content according to their personal preferences.

This transformation has also significantly altered audience habits and everyday media practices. A substantial digital shift in media consumption behaviour has become increasingly visible in recent years.

The present study was conducted among college-going female students who shared their personal experiences and perspectives regarding media consumption. Their responses reflect a distinct departure from traditional media consumption behaviour and indicate the emergence of new patterns of digital engagement. The findings reveal a significant shift from traditional media platforms to digital media platforms. Audiences are gradually moving away from traditional forms of media such as television, radio, and newspapers and are increasingly relying on OTT platforms, social media platforms, and online news portals for entertainment and information.

Most of the respondents expressed a preference for consuming content through smart phones rather than through cable television. Since all participants possessed smart phones, the study strongly reflects the growing dominance of mobile-centric media consumption. The findings clearly demonstrate that smart phones have become the primary device for accessing and consuming media content in contemporary digital culture. The study conducted among college-going female students revealed that short-form and quick video content emerged as the most preferred form of media consumption among the participants. One of the primary reasons behind the growing preference for smart phones as media consumption devices is the easy accessibility of content at any time and from any location. Smart phones have enabled audiences to consume media according to their convenience, thereby increasing the popularity of mobile-centric viewing practices.

The findings further indicate that the rise of digital media consumption has contributed to increasing impatience among audiences and, in some cases, has affected the quality of content engagement. Convenient viewing practices and the availability of streaming services have encouraged on-demand viewing culture, where audiences are no longer dependent on fixed broadcasting schedules. Instead, viewers can access content according to their personal preferences and time convenience through OTT platforms and social media applications.

A majority of the respondents expressed strong support for personalized content consumption. Digital platforms operate through algorithm-based systems that function according to users' interests, search histories, and viewing patterns. As a result, audiences experience highly individualized media environments where recommended content aligns closely with their personal preferences. This personalized nature of digital media has significantly transformed audience engagement and viewing behaviour.

Another important characteristic of digital media identified in the study is its participatory and interactive nature. In the contemporary digital environment, audiences are no longer limited to the role of passive consumers; rather, they actively participate as creators, producers, and distributors of content. Social media platforms encourage activities such as commenting, sharing, editing, remixing, and live interaction, thereby increasing audience participation and engagement.

Most respondents also expressed a strong preference for short videos, reels, memes, and podcasts. This trend reflects the growing influence of fast-paced digital content and the gradual reduction of audience attention spans in the digital age. Short-form media content provides quick entertainment and immediate engagement, making it highly popular among college-going female students.

The study additionally highlights the importance of multi-screen and multitasking practices in shaping contemporary media consumption patterns. Smart phones enable users to perform multiple activities simultaneously while browsing social media or consuming digital content. Audiences can listen to music, chat with others, browse social media, and stream videos at the same time, which further increases the attractiveness and convenience of smart phone-based media consumption.

## 7. Conclusion

The changing consumption patterns of media content indicate fast pace transformation including communication technologies, internet accessibility, the growing use of smart phones and audience behavior. Audiences are no longer passive receivers of information. They have become active audience by consuming as per their preferences, sharing, choosing, creating.

Based on their lifestyle, choices, audiences have played an active role in selecting and creating media contents. Traditional ways of consuming patterns have been gradually replaced by digital and mobile-centric platforms. The rise of OTT (Over – The – Top, OTT platforms are digital streaming services that provide audio, video, and other media content directly through the internet without requiring traditional cable or satellite television services.) platforms, online streaming services and social networking sites has reduced dependence on traditional media. The above mentioned digital platforms have offered personalized, interactive and on-demand contents. This shift has deeply influenced not only audience's behavior but has also compelled media industries to adopt their production, distribution and marketing strategies. These changes have significant influence on communication practices and structuring the content. The emergence of algorithms, recommended systems and most importantly user generated content has further strengthened the role of digital media in everyday life. Evolving media consumption patterns have indicated the relationship among media, technology and society.

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