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AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON HOW DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT IS SHAPED BY INDIVIDUAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

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ABSTRACT
In today's digital age, social media has become an integral part of consumer life, influencing not only social interaction but also purchasing decisions, brand perceptions, and digital engagement patterns. This study explores the growing acceptance and adoption of social media platforms among consumers in Pollachi. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube have become central to information consumption, brand interaction, and community engagement. The research aims to identify the key factors influencing consumers' acceptance of social media, including personal motivation, peer influence, digital literacy, and accessibility. Using a structured questionnaire and convenience sampling method among consumers in the Pollachi region, the findings provide insights into how social media is reshaping consumer behaviour and digital lifestyles.
KEYWORDS: *Social Media, Consumer Behaviour, Technology Adoption, Digital Engagement, Pollachi, Digital Literacy.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of digital technologies and increasing internet penetration in India have led to the widespread use of social media platforms. These platforms have transformed from mere communication tools to powerful mediums for marketing, consumer engagement, and lifestyle influence. In towns like Pollachi, where digital awareness is steadily growing, consumers are increasingly using platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube not just for social connection, but also for gathering information about products, interacting with brands, and making purchasing decisions.

The rapid rise of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms has dramatically reshaped the media consumption landscape, offering audiences a flexible, on-demand alternative to traditional television. Services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, and regional platforms like Sun NXT and Zee5 have gained widespread popularity by catering to diverse viewing preferences and delivering content directly through the internet.

In semi-urban regions like Pollachi—a town in Tamil Nadu that blends rural charm with urban development—this shift is increasingly evident. Enhanced internet connectivity, affordable smartphones, and low-cost data plans have empowered a growing segment of Pollachi's population to embrace digital entertainment. Younger demographics, particularly those aged 18 to 35, are at the forefront of this transition, favouring the convenience and variety offered by OTT platforms, including regional language content and locally relevant narratives.

This trend marks a cultural transformation, as on-demand viewing replaces fixed broadcast schedules and regional creators find new platforms to tell stories that resonate with local audiences. As a result, OTT consumption in Pollachi reflects both a technological evolution and a shift in consumer behavior, signalling new opportunities for content producers, marketers, and educators to engage with emerging digital-first viewers in smaller towns across India.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To understand the demographic profile of consumers in Pollachi who actively use social media.
- To analyze the key factors that influence the adoption and continued usage of social media platforms among consumers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mishra and Singh (2019) studied the demographic characteristics of social media users in semi-urban India. They found that younger users (ages 18–35), particularly students and early-career professionals, showed higher engagement levels, while factors such as income, education, and mobile accessibility played key roles in determining platform usage.

Patel and Kumar (2020) analysed digital behavior across rural and semi-urban populations in Tamil Nadu, revealing that men were more likely to use social media for news and entertainment, while women primarily used it for communication and community engagement. Educational background and smartphone ownership were significant determinants of usage.

Rao and Rajan (2021) explored the psychological and social influences behind continued social media usage among Indian consumers. Their findings emphasized the importance of peer

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influence, perceived usefulness, and content relevance in sustaining user interest and platform loyalty.

Subramanian et al. (2022) investigated the adoption of social media platforms among users in southern India, including regions like Pollachi. The study highlighted the role of regional language content, user-friendly interfaces, and low data costs in increasing social media penetration. It also pointed out digital literacy gaps among older users as a major barrier to broader adoption.

INFLUENCING FACTORS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADOPTION AMONG CONSUMERS

Cultural Factors	Social Factors	Personal Factors	Psychological Factors
Traditions & Values	Peer Recommendations	Age, Education	Motivation to Stay Updated
Local digital Trends	Community Sharing Behavior	Digital Skills	Trust in Technology
Language & Content Format	Family & Social Influence	Lifestyle Preferences	Perception of Usefulness
Regional Marketing Appeal	Online Community Engagement	Device Usage Habits	Entertainment Seeking Behavior

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive research design to explore consumer behavior toward social media adoption in Pollachi. A structured questionnaire was administered to 416 respondents using convenience sampling. The questions assessed demographics, platform usage patterns, and motivational factors. Analytical tools like SPSS were used to interpret the data through descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests, allowing a clear understanding of associations between demographics and social media use.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Data analysis and interpretation involve systematically examining the collected responses to extract meaningful insights that address the research objectives. In this study, both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze consumer behavior related to social media adoption in Pollachi. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean were applied to understand the demographic profile of respondents and the general patterns of social media usage. Factor analysis was conducted to identify the underlying variables—individual, economic, social, and psychological factors—that influence adoption behavior.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Particulars		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	149	43.7%
	Female	192	56.3%
Age	Below 20	53	60.1%
	20-30	205	18.8%
	31-40	64	5.6%
	41-Above	19	15.5%
Current Employment Status	Student	153	44.9%
	Professional	119	34.9%
	Homemaker	35	10.3%
	Retired	8	2.3%
	Other	26	7.6%
Educational qualification	Below 12^{th} grade	20	5.9%
	Undergraduate	149	43.7%
	Post graduate	146	42.8%
	Doctorate	20	5.9%
	Other	6	1.8%
	Total	341	100.0%

The demographic profile of the respondents (N = 341) indicates a predominantly young and educated population, with a slightly higher proportion of females (56.3%) compared to males (43.7%). A significant majority (60.1%) of participants are below 20 years of age, and nearly half (44.9%) are students, reflecting a sample largely composed of youth. In terms of employment status, professionals make up 34.9%, followed by homemakers, retirees, and others. Educationally, the respondents are well-qualified, with 43.7% holding undergraduate degrees and 42.8% having postgraduate qualifications. This suggests that the data collected reflects the views of a relatively young, academically inclined, and student-heavy population, which may influence the overall trends and insights derived from the study.

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TABLE 2: FACTORS INFLUENCING OTT ADOPTION

Factors	Component	Initial Eigen Values	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Individual Factors	Digital skills, device usage	2.315	58.1%	58.1%
Economic Factors	Internet access, mobile data cost	1.914	47.8%	82.4%
Social factors	Peer influence, brand content sharing	1.113	27.8%	94.2%
Psychological Factors	Curiosity, trust, entertainment	0.548	13.7%	100%

Factor analysis revealed four key influences on social media adoption, explaining 100% of the variance. Individual factors like digital skills had the highest impact (58.1%), followed by economic factors such as internet access (47.8%). Social factors (27.8%) and psychological factors (13.7%) played supportive roles. This shows that digital competency and affordability are the primary drivers of adoption in Pollachi.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that individual and economic factors play a dominant role in shaping social media adoption among consumers in Pollachi. The high influence of digital skills and device usage highlights the importance of digital literacy in encouraging engagement. Affordable internet access and mobile data costs also significantly impact usage, making economic accessibility a critical enabler. Social influences, such as peer recommendations and online sharing behaviors, further reinforce adoption, especially among younger users. These insights suggest that improving digital infrastructure and promoting digital education can greatly enhance social media usage in semi-urban regions like Pollachi.

CONCLUSION

This empirical study demonstrates that digital engagement in Pollachi is primarily driven by individual competencies and economic accessibility. Digital skills, smartphone usage, and affordable internet access are the most significant factors enabling the adoption and continued use of social media platforms. The findings further indicate that social influences, particularly from peers and communities, reinforce this adoption among younger, educated users. The study highlights that digital literacy, better infrastructure, and locally relevant content are key drivers of digital behavior in semi-urban India. Although psychological motivators such as trust and entertainment play a less dominant role, they are essential for maintaining user interest and long-term engagement Policymakers, educators, and marketers aiming to enhance digital inclusion and engagement must focus on improving access, promoting digital education, and addressing the unique cultural and social dynamics of such regions. Overall, the research underscores the need for a holistic approach to fostering digital adoption by balancing technological, social, and psychological factors.

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