THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND STREAMING PLATFORMS ON GEN Z MUSIC CONSUMPTION

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of social media and streaming platforms on Generation Z's music consumption habits in India. With the rise of digital platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube, and social media networks like TikTok and Instagram, music discovery, engagement, and listening behaviors have significantly evolved. A mixed-method research approach, incorporating surveys and interviews, was used to analyze the role of social media engagement, streaming habits, peer influence, and content virality in shaping Gen Z's music preferences. Statistical analyses, including correlation, regression, t-tests, and ANOVA, were conducted to examine key relationships. The findings indicate that while social media is a major tool for music discovery and engagement, streaming platforms remain the dominant medium for consumption. Additionally, peer influence and viral trends play a crucial role in determining music preferences. However, no statistically significant relationship was found between social media engagement and overall music consumption frequency. The study underscores the growing influence of AI-driven music recommendations and algorithm-based personalization while also identifying challenges such as content saturation and artist compensation. These insights provide valuable recommendations for industry stakeholders to optimize digital strategies and enhance meaningful engagement with Gen Z listeners.

Keywords: Gen Z, music consumption, social media, streaming platforms, digital engagement, music discovery, peer influence, viral trends, algorithmic recommendations, AI in music, music streaming revenue, artist-fan interaction, digital marketing, influencer impact, content monetization, user-generated content, personalized playlists, behavioral analytics, emerging music trends, virtual concerts, independent artists, music industry evolution.

Introduction

The Indian music industry is a vibrant tapestry woven with diverse genres and deep cultural roots. Dominated by Bollywood's influence, which drives mainstream popularity through film soundtracks, it also boasts a flourishing independent scene where artists explore a spectrum of genres. Classical music traditions like Hindustani and Carnatic, alongside devotional music forms such as bhajans and qawwalis, underscore the industry's rich spiritual and traditional connections. Recent years have seen a transformative shift fueled by technology, with digital platforms democratizing music access and enabling global reach for independent musicians. Collaborations with international artists, fusion experiments, and music festivals further enrich the landscape, showcasing India's musical prowess on a global scale and fostering cross-cultural exchange and innovation.

The music industry is a dynamic and multifaceted sector encompassing the creation, production, distribution, and consumption of music. It is a global powerhouse that generates billions of dollars in revenue annually and plays a significant role in shaping culture, entertainment, and societal trends worldwide. At its core, the music industry revolves around artists, who are the creative driving force behind the creation of music. These artists span various genres, styles, and backgrounds, ranging from solo performers and bands to composers, producers, and songwriters. They craft music through a blend of talent, skill, and inspiration, expressing emotions, ideas, and stories that resonate with audiences. Supporting artists are a myriad of industry professionals and entities, including record labels, music

publishers, talent agencies, managers, and promoters. Record labels sign artists, provide resources for recording, marketing, and distribution, and play a crucial role in launching and managing artists' careers. Music publishers handle the licensing and distribution of compositions and ensure that songwriters receive royalties for their work.

Despite challenges like piracy and copyright issues, the Indian music industry continues to evolve dynamically. The advent of digital technology and the internet has revolutionized the music industry in recent decades. The rise of streaming platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube has transformed how music is consumed, shifting away from physical formats like CDs and vinyl records to digital downloads and streaming services. This digital revolution has democratized access to music, allowing listeners to discover, stream, and share a vast catalog of songs from around the world with ease. Social media platforms have also become instrumental in shaping the music industry landscape, providing artists with powerful tools for self-promotion, fan engagement, and viral marketing. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram have propelled songs to viral success through user-generated content and influencer endorsements, demonstrating the significant influence of social media on music consumption patterns, particularly among younger demographics.

Despite the opportunities presented by digital platforms, challenges persist within the music industry, including issues related to copyright infringement, fair compensation for artists and songwriters, and the sustainability of streaming revenue models. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted live music events and tours, impacting artists' income and forcing industry stakeholders to adapt to new virtual performance formats and revenue streams. Looking ahead, the music industry continues to evolve rapidly, driven by technological innovation, shifting consumer behaviors, and emerging market trends. Adaptability, creativity, and collaboration will remain essential for navigating the dynamic landscape of the music business and harnessing its full potential in the digital age.

Literature Review

R Pibulpanuvat (2019) – 'Generation z's attitude towards music consumption on Joox online music streaming application'. This study explores Thai Generation Z's attitudes toward music consumption on the Joox streaming app using semi-structured interviews with ten daily users aged 17-24. Applying Ajzen and Fishbein's theory of planned behavior, the study finds that strong positive attitudes, peer influence, and the platform's convenience drive high engagement. Uses and Gratification Theory and agenda-setting concepts also shape their consumption, highlighting consumer involvement in music selection.

Bandsintown (2020), According to Bandsintowm they have surveyed audience perspectives toward livestreaming concerts and music events. The results they obtained show that their respondents will continue to attend in streamed concerts even after on-site concerts return and are willing to pay to support their favourite artists if it costs to attend a streamed concert.

Podchara Rattanadilok Na Phuket (2022) – The study examines the impact of COVID- 19 on Generation Z's mental well-being and their engagement with streamed concerts as a digital alternative to live events. It suggests that streamed concerts not only provide entertainment but also address social isolation and mental health issues. The research investigates Generation Z's experience with streamed concerts, providing insights for improving their appeal as a long-term alternative to traditional concerts.

Bart J. Bronnenberg (2017) – This study analyzes how adopting music streaming changes listening behavior. Using a unique panel dataset, findings show a significant increase in both the quantity and

diversity of music consumption post-adoption, though effects decrease over time. Streaming enhances music discovery by reducing the cost of experimentation, leading to higher play rates for newly discovered favorites.

Hyun Sang An, Christina Chung, Muk Alexander (2020) – This research examines how social media influences young American consumers' engagement with foreign pop music. Using Uses and Gratification Theory and Theory of Reasoned Action, the study finds that entertainment needs and familiarity shape attitudes toward foreign music, which in turn drive social media sharing, fan page participation, and purchase intent. The study highlights the importance of sustained entertainment-focused messaging in artist-fan engagement.

Sylvia Chan-Olmsted & Rang Wang (2019) – Investigating millennials' perceptions of broadcast radio, its apps, and music streaming services, this study finds that while radio listeners view traditional and app-based radio as similar, they see streaming services as distinct. Motivators such as information, escapism, entertainment, and socialization influence engagement, emphasizing the evolving role of digital audio consumption.

Research Gap

1. **Limited Research on the Influence of Short-Form Video Platforms on Music Consumption**
   While platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts have played a pivotal role in making songs go viral, there is limited research on how these platforms specifically influence Gen Z's music discovery, engagement, and long-term consumption patterns in the Indian context.

2. **Insufficient Analysis of Independent vs. Bollywood Music Consumption Trends**
   The Indian music industry is largely dominated by Bollywood, yet the rise of independent artists has been notable. There is a gap in understanding whether Gen Z is shifting towards independent music through streaming and social media or if Bollywood continues to dominate despite the digital transformation.

3. **Lack of Studies on the Role of Social Media Algorithms in Shaping Music Preferences**
   Streaming platforms and social media use AI-driven recommendation systems to personalize music experiences. However, little research has been conducted on how these algorithms shape Gen Z's music preferences, particularly in India, where regional and cultural diversity influence consumption.

4. **Need for a Deeper Exploration of Monetization Challenges for Indian Artists**
   While digital platforms provide global reach and accessibility, there is limited research on how Indian musicians, especially independent artists, are monetizing their content. Issues such as royalty distribution, fair compensation, and revenue-sharing models on streaming platforms require further exploration.

5. **Underexplored Impact of Social Media Fan Communities on Music Engagement**
   Social media platforms enable artists to build direct relationships with their audiences through fan pages, live interactions, and exclusive content. However, there is a lack of research on how social media fan communities influence Gen Z's loyalty, engagement, and music consumption behavior in India.

6. **Limited Understanding of How Streaming and Social Media Shape Regional and Vernacular Music Growth**
   While Hindi music dominates, regional music industries (Tamil, Telugu, Punjabi, Bengali, etc.) are gaining traction through streaming platforms and social media. There is a research gap in

understanding how Gen Z audiences engage with regional music differently compared to mainstream Bollywood songs.

Conceptual Framework

This study integrates key theories and constructs that explain how digital transformation shapes music consumption patterns. Drawing from the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), the study explores how Gen Z actively engages with streaming platforms and social media for entertainment, socialization, and self-expression. The Theory of Planned

Behavior (TPB) provides insight into how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence their digital music habits. Additionally, the Diffusion of Innovations Theory helps contextualize the rapid adoption of streaming services and social media as primary music discovery tools. The framework also considers consumer involvement theory, emphasizing Gen Z's deep engagement with music trends and fandom culture. This holistic approach highlights the interplay between digital accessibility, social influence, and user behavior, offering a structured lens to analyze the evolving relationship between Gen Z, music streaming, and social media.

Objectives

- To analyze the impact of streaming platforms and social media on Generation Z's music consumption habits in India, focusing on aspects such as accessibility, music discovery, engagement, and listening preferences.
- To identify the key factors influencing music consumption among Indian Gen Z listeners, including viral trends, social media influence, streaming service features, and artist-fan interactions.
- To examine demographic variations in music consumption patterns based on factors such as age, location, cultural background, and technological adaptability within Generation Z.
- To compare the influence of Indian and international streaming platforms (such as Gaana, JioSaavn, Spotify, and Apple Music) on consumer engagement, content diversity, and artist exposure.
- To evaluate the role of technological advancements, including AI-driven recommendations, personalized playlists, virtual concerts, and emerging music formats, in shaping the future of music consumption in India.

Research Methodology

A mixed-method research design is utilized in this study for a thorough examination of the influence of streaming sites and social media on Generation Z's listening habits in the Indian music industry. In order to be comprehensive, both qualitative and quantitative approaches are combined in the research design for an integrated analysis of the phenomenon in question. Primary data is collected by using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Surveys are sent out to a sample panel of Indian Gen Z music users between the ages of 15-25 who are regular users of music streaming sites and social media. The survey has both closed-ended and open-ended questions that aim to gather information on music discovery, tastes, social media impact, artist interaction, and streaming habits. In addition, semi-structured interviews are held with independent artists, record label personnel, and digital marketing specialists to

obtain industry insights on changing music consumption patterns and promotional approaches. The sampling method adopts a purposive and stratified random sampling approach in order to capture representation from various socio-economic levels, geographical locations, and musical tastes. Secondary information is sourced from industry reports, academic journals, analytics from digital music platforms, and case studies to substantiate and corroborate primary results. Statistical measures like descriptive statistics and regression analysis are used to determine associations and patterns in data analysis, while thematic analysis is used for qualitative responses to uncover important themes. Ethical principles are closely followed, with informed participant consent, anonymization of data, and impartial interpretation of results. The study will ultimately seek to offer actionable recommendations for stakeholders within the industry, such as marketers, artists, and streaming services, regarding digital engagement strategy optimization and taking advantage of upcoming trends within the Indian music landscape.

Results and Discussion

I. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the survey data on the impact of social media and streaming platforms on Gen Z music consumption in India were analyzed to understand the demographic distribution of respondents and their general music consumption preferences. The sample size for this study was 100 respondents, and the data was categorized by age, location, educational qualification, gender, and other music-related factors.

Age Distribution (Frequency Analysis)

The survey data indicates that 3.4% of respondents are under the age of 18, 94.3% fall within the 18–25 age group, and 2.3% are between 25–35 years old. The overwhelming majority of respondents belong to the 18–25 age bracket, suggesting a strong emotional connection between this demographic and music consumption. Gaining insights into the preferences and motivations of this age group could be valuable for streaming platforms, enabling them to refine their marketing strategies and enhance platform features to better cater to the needs and expectations of this key audience.

Gender (Frequency Analysis)

Based on the research findings, a significant percentage of music consumers are female, comprising 62.5% of the total sample. This suggests that music may have a stronger appeal to female audiences. Understanding the factors driving this gender-based preference could help streaming platforms tailor their marketing strategies and product development efforts to better meet the needs and expectations of their female user base. Additionally, the findings indicate that 36.4% of respondents are male, highlighting a notable gender distribution in music consumption patterns.

II. Correlation Analysis

Correlation between Age and Social Media Influence on Music Consumption

The analysis yielded a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.143 with a p-value of 0.183, indicating a very weak positive correlation between the two variables. However, this correlation is not statistically

significant at the 0.05 significance level. These findings suggest that there is no meaningful relationship between social media influence and age among Gen Z individuals in the study sample, implying that age does not significantly impact the level of social media influence on their music consumption.

III. Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between key predictors (e.g., social media engagement, streaming platform usage, peer influence, and content virality) and the dependent variable, i.e., the likelihood of music consumption among Generation Z.

Results indicated that:

- **Social Media Engagement** had a positive and statistically significant effect on music consumption, suggesting that increased interaction with music-related content leads to higher consumption levels ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$).
- **Streaming Platform Usage** also showed a strong positive effect, with frequent users of streaming services being more likely to consume and discover new music ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.05$).
- **Peer Influence** was a crucial factor, as recommendations from friends and influencers significantly impacted music preferences and consumption patterns ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$).
- **Content Virality** played a notable role, with viral music trends contributing to increased consumption, particularly for songs that gained traction on platforms like TikTok and Instagram ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.05$).

This regression model confirms that while streaming platform usage is important, social media engagement, peer influence, and content virality are key drivers of music consumption among Generation Z.

IV. T-Test

Variables	Mean Difference	t- Value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Social Media Usage vs. Influence on Music Preferences	2.03	2.784	99	0.006	Significant relationship ($p < 0.01$). Higher social media usage leads to greater influence on music preferences.
Streaming Platform Usage vs. Music Discovery	1.67	2.315	99	0.022	Significant relationship ($p < 0.05$). Frequent streaming platform usage enhances music discovery among Gen Z.
Social Media Engagement vs. Music Consumption Frequency	-0.82	-1.765	99	0.081	No significant relationship ($p > 0.05$). Social media engagement does not directly impact how often Gen Z consumes music.

V. ANOVA: Age Group vs. Social Media Influence on Gen Z Music Consumption

ANOVA was conducted to determine whether significant differences exist in social media Influence on music consumption among different age groups within Gen Z. The results revealed:

- The F-statistic was 0.381, with a p-value of 0.684, indicating that there are no statistically significant differences in the impact of social media and streaming platforms across different age groups within Gen Z.

- Younger respondents (18-25 years) exhibited higher engagement with social media- driven music trends, frequently discovering new music through platforms like TikTok and Instagram.
- Older respondents within Gen Z (25-35 years) showed more stable listening preferences, relying on curated playlists and recommendations from streaming platforms like Spotify and Apple Music rather than viral trends.

Conclusion

This study provides an in-depth analysis of how social media and streaming platforms influence music consumption among Generation Z. Key factors examined include social media engagement, streaming habits, music preferences, and the role of digital trends in shaping listening behaviors. A survey-based approach was used to gather valuable insights into Gen Z's music consumption patterns, revealing the extent to which social media and streaming services drive their engagement with music.

Findings indicate that while social media plays a crucial role in music discovery and sharing, its direct impact on shaping music preferences is not statistically significant. However, streaming platforms remain the dominant medium for music consumption, with accessibility, curated playlists, and personalized recommendations playing a major role in user engagement. The study also highlights the increasing importance of viral content and influencer-driven promotions in determining the popularity of songs among Gen Z listeners.

Additionally, the research underscores the growing influence of emerging technologies such as AI-generated music recommendations and interactive streaming experiences.

While these innovations enhance user engagement, challenges such as content saturation and algorithm-driven listening habits also emerge as areas of concern. The study also identifies key areas for improvement, particularly in ensuring fair compensation for artists and addressing the potential for passive music consumption driven by algorithmic curation.

Future research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of Gen Z's evolving music habits by incorporating a larger and more diverse sample, along with qualitative insights into emotional and psychological factors driving music consumption. Limitations of this study, including sample size constraints and reliance on self-reported data, suggest the need for further investigation. Nevertheless, this research serves as a strong foundation for industry professionals and policymakers to develop strategies that enhance meaningful engagement with music while addressing the evolving digital landscape of Gen Z consumers.