

Television Survival Under the Pressure of New Media: A Survey and Content Analysis Study in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

The emergence and rapid growth of new media platforms such as Over-the-Top (OTT) streaming services and social media have profoundly transformed the media consumption landscape worldwide. Traditional television broadcasters face increasing challenges in retaining audiences, particularly among younger viewers who prefer digital platforms. This study investigates how Tamil television channels in Tamil Nadu, India, are surviving and adapting under the pressure of new media competition. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research comprises a survey of 500 respondents spanning urban and rural areas and a content analysis of 90 prime-time programs from three leading Tamil television channels. The survey reveals generational and demographic differences in media consumption preferences, with younger audiences favoring OTT and social media, while older audiences continue to rely on traditional television, especially for culturally relevant programming. The content analysis indicates television's strategic incorporation of digital interactivity and cultural localization as key survival tactics. The paper discusses the implications of these findings for broadcasters, advertisers, and policymakers and suggests avenues for future research.

Keywords

Television, New Media, OTT, Tamil Nadu, Content Analysis, Media Consumption, Digital Integration, Regional Media

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale

The last decade has witnessed a profound disruption in the media industry caused by the advent of new digital platforms. Over-the-Top (OTT) services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+ Hotstar, alongside social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram, have revolutionized how audiences consume content. These platforms offer on-demand, personalized viewing experiences that challenge the traditional broadcast television model, which is largely linear and scheduled (Jenkins, 2006; Lotz, 2014).

India, with over 1.4 billion people and an expanding internet user base, presents a fertile ground for observing this media transformation. Tamil Nadu, a culturally rich state in southern India, has historically had a vibrant television industry dominated by channels such as Sun TV, Vijay TV, and Zee Tamil. These channels have been critical in promoting Tamil language, culture, and regional news. However, the increasing penetration of smartphones and affordable high-speed internet is changing consumer habits, especially among younger demographics and urban dwellers (Iyer & Srinivasan, 2022).

1.2 Problem Statement

While television remains an important medium for many, especially in rural and older populations, the rise of new media raises existential questions about its future viability. How are Tamil television channels responding to the challenge of new media? What strategies are they employing to retain their audiences?

How do consumption patterns vary across demographic groups in Tamil Nadu? Answering these questions is vital for broadcasters, advertisers, and policymakers aiming to sustain the regional media ecosystem.

1.3 Objectives

This study aims to:

- a) Examine media consumption patterns in Tamil Nadu across age, gender, and location.
- b) Analyze the content and programming strategies of leading Tamil television channels.
- c) Investigate the extent and nature of digital integration in television programming.
- d) Assess audience engagement preferences in the context of hybrid media consumption.

1.4 Scope

The study focuses on Tamil Nadu, targeting both urban and rural respondents and prime-time television content over a continuous 30-day period. It employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative survey data with qualitative content analysis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Global Shift to New Media

The shift from traditional broadcast television to digital platforms has been well documented (Jenkins, 2006; Lotz, 2014). New media platforms emphasize user control over content consumption, facilitating time-shifted and multi-platform viewing experiences. These platforms also foster interactivity, user-generated content, and social sharing—features largely absent in traditional television (Smith, 2021).

2.2 Audience Fragmentation and Demographics

Studies show clear generational differences in media consumption. Younger viewers are more likely to adopt OTT platforms and social media, while older generations exhibit stronger loyalty to television (Rajan, 2020). Urban populations generally lead in new media adoption compared to rural counterparts (TRAI, 2023).

2.3 Regional Television Resilience

Regional television channels worldwide have attempted to survive by emphasizing cultural relevance, local language content, and community engagement (Kumar & Gupta, 2019). Tamil television's focus on culturally rooted soap operas, local news, and reality shows has helped maintain audience loyalty (Iyer & Srinivasan, 2022).

2.4 Digital Integration in Television

The integration of digital elements such as social media hashtags, live polling, and viewer interaction is emerging as a hybrid strategy to engage audiences (Kumar & Gupta, 2019). This blend attempts to combine television's mass reach with new media's interactive capabilities.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

- a) A mixed-methods design was employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of media consumption and television content strategies.

- b) Quantitative Survey: To gauge audience behaviors and preferences.
- c) Qualitative Content Analysis: To evaluate television programming and digital integration.

3.2 Survey Methodology

3.2.1 Sample and Sampling

A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 500 respondents (260 males, 240 females) aged 18 and above from urban (56%) and rural (44%) areas of Tamil Nadu.

3.2.2 Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire captured demographics, media consumption time, platform preferences, content types, devices used, and interaction levels.

3.2.3 Procedure and Ethics

Data were collected through face-to-face interviews and online surveys between January and March 2025. Ethical guidelines including informed consent and confidentiality were strictly adhered to.

3.3 Content Analysis

3.3.1 Sample Selection

Ninety prime-time television programs were selected over 30 consecutive days from three leading Tamil channels: Sun TV, Vijay TV, and Zee Tamil.

3.3.2 Coding Scheme

- a) A detailed coding manual was developed focusing on:
 - b) Program genre (soap opera, news, reality show, cultural)
 - c) Format (live or pre-recorded)
 - d) Digital integration (social media hashtags, live polls, viewer calls)
 - e) Localization intensity (use of Tamil culture, language, festivals)
 - f) Viewer interaction features
- g) Two trained coders independently coded all programs, with Cohen's Kappa reliability of 0.85.

3.4 Data Analysis

Survey data were analyzed using SPSS v26 with descriptive and inferential statistics. Chi-square tests assessed demographic differences. Content analysis results were quantified and thematically analyzed.

4. RESULTS

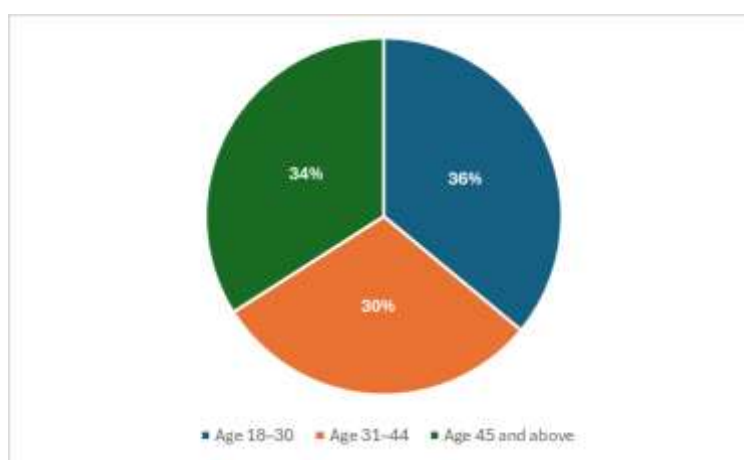
4.1 Survey Findings

4.1.1 Demographic Profile

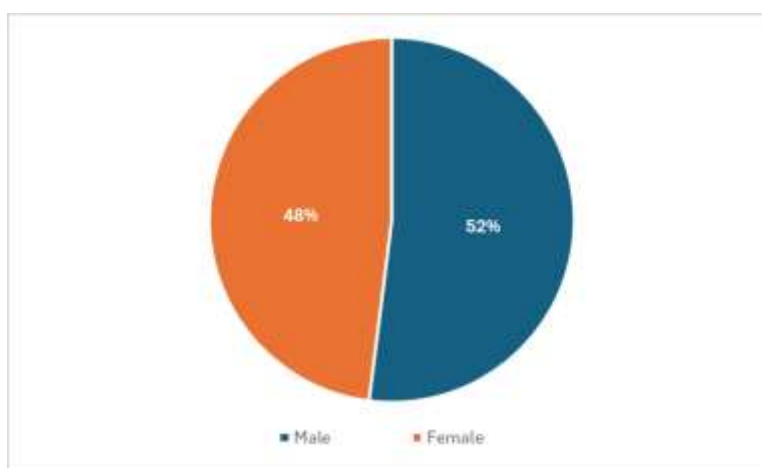
Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents (N=500)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-30	180	36
	31-44	150	30
	45 and above	170	34
Gender	Male	260	52
	Female	240	48
Location	Urban	280	56
	Rural	220	44
Education	Secondary or below	210	42
	Graduate or higher	290	58

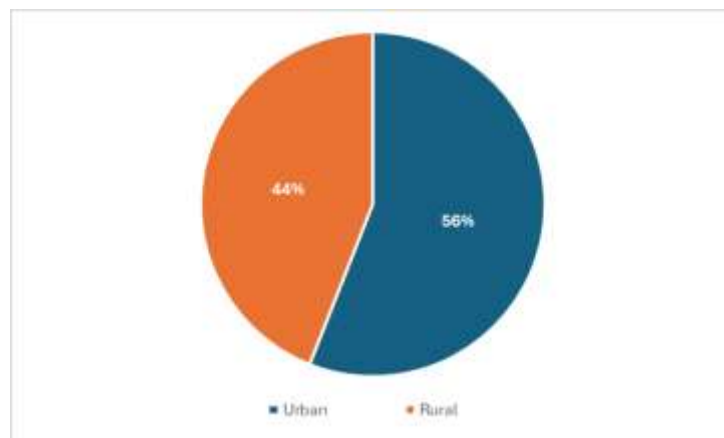
Age Group



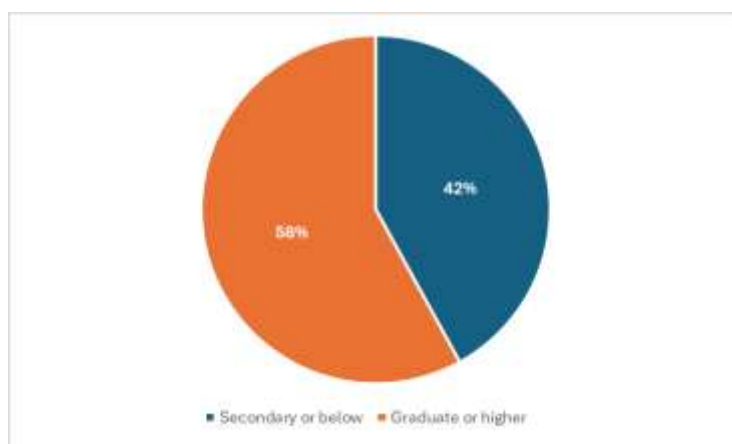
Gender



Location



Education



4.1.2 Media Consumption Time

Average daily viewing hours (Figure 1):

- i. Television: 2.3 hours (SD=1.1)
- ii. OTT Platforms: 1.2 hours (SD=1.0)
- iii. Social Media: 0.6 hours (SD=0.7)

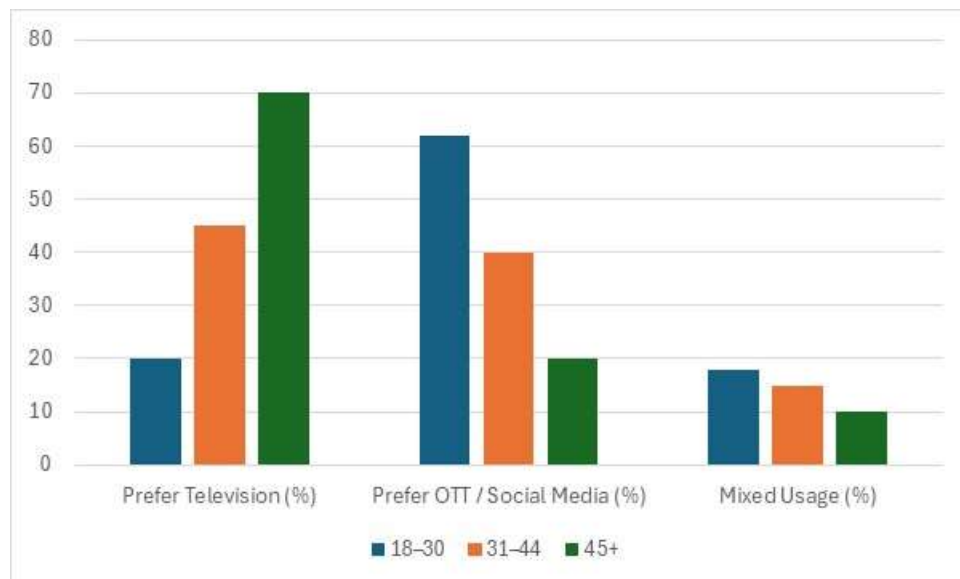
Younger respondents spent more time on OTT and social media, while older groups watched more television.

4.1.3 Platform Preference by Age Group

Table 2: Media Platform Preference by Age Group

Age Group	Prefer Television (%)	Prefer OTT / Social Media (%)	Mixed Usage (%)
18-30	20	62	18
31-44	45	40	15
45+	70	20	10

Chi-square analysis showed significant association between age and platform preference ($\chi^2 = 28.4$, $p < 0.001$).



4.1.4 Device Usage for Media Consumption

Smartphones dominated OTT and social media usage (75%), while televisions were the preferred device for traditional viewing among older demographics (80%).

4.1.5 Content Preferences

Television: Soap operas (45%), news (30%), reality shows (15%)

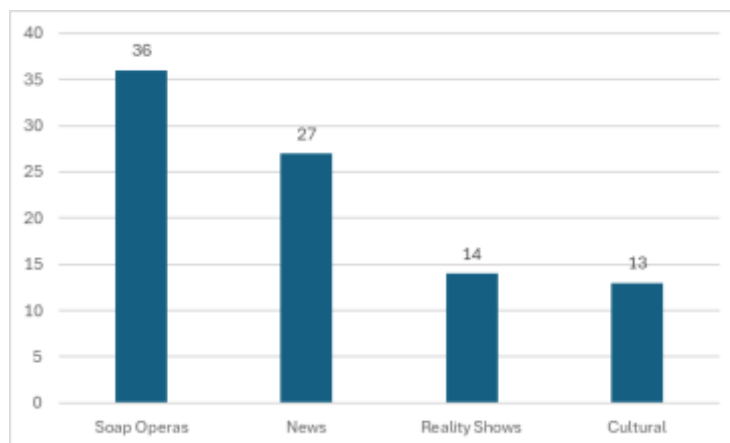
OTT/Social media: Short videos (40%), web series (35%), user-generated content (15%)

4.2 Content Analysis Results

4.2.1 Program Genre Distribution

Table 3: Distribution of Program Genres (N=90)

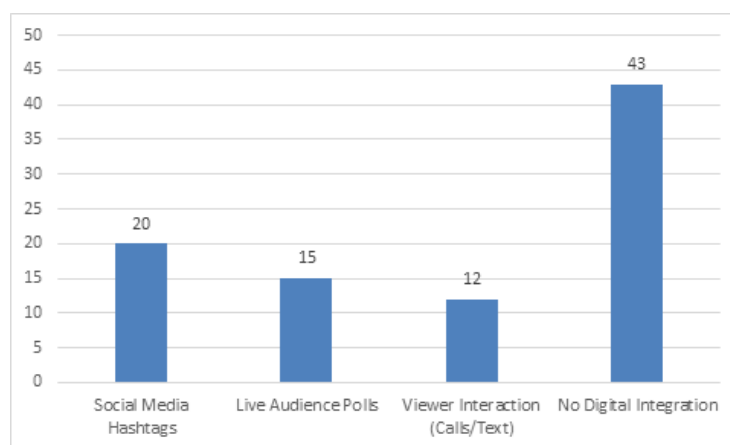
Genre	Number of Programs	Percentage (%)
Soap Operas	36	40
News	27	30
Reality Shows	14	15.5
Cultural	13	14.5



4.2.2 Digital Integration Features

Table 4: Digital Integration in Television Programs

Feature	Number of Programs	Percentage (%)
Social Media Hashtags	20	22.2
Live Audience Polls	15	16.7
Viewer Interaction (Calls/Text)	12	13.3
No Digital Integration	43	47.8



4.2.3 Localization Intensity

70% of programs emphasized Tamil cultural elements such as festivals, traditional attire, and local dialects.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings corroborate the global trend of younger demographics favoring OTT and social media platforms while older audiences remain attached to traditional television (Rajan, 2020). The strong cultural localization in Tamil television programming underlines the importance of language and tradition in audience retention. The gradual integration of digital interactive features indicates that Tamil television channels are strategically blending traditional and new media characteristics to enhance viewer engagement and sustain their market share (Kumar & Gupta, 2019). This hybrid media ecosystem presents both challenges and opportunities for broadcasters in Tamil Nadu, necessitating agile content and platform strategies that appeal across diverse demographic groups.

6. CONCLUSION

Tamil television's survival amid new media pressures hinges on culturally resonant content and incorporation of digital interactivity. While OTT platforms grow rapidly among younger urban viewers, television remains vital for older and rural populations. Policymakers and media stakeholders must recognize this duality to foster inclusive media growth.

7. Limitations and Future Research

The study's cross-sectional design limits causal inferences. Future research could employ longitudinal approaches and include qualitative interviews for deeper audience insight. Comparative studies with other Indian states would enrich understanding of regional media dynamics.

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