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Consumer Perception and Usage Behaviour of Digital Subscription Services in Kozhikode: An Empirical Study

Written by: Dhanisha P

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Complete Address of Publisher/ Editorial Board Office

KTM College of Advanced Studies

Karuvarakundu (PO), Malappuram (Dt), Kerala-676 523



Phone

04931-280096



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The Transformative Role of Artificial Intelligence in Literature: Creation, Critique, and Analysis

Ameena. VM

(Assistant Professor of English, KTM College of Advanced Studies, Karuvarakund, Kerala)

Abstract

The rapid growth of digital technology has significantly transformed consumer purchasing patterns and media consumption habits. Subscription-based digital services, including Over-the-Top (OTT) streaming platforms, music streaming applications, cloud storage, e-learning platforms, and digital news portals, have become an integral part of consumers' daily lives. This study investigates consumer perception and usage behaviour towards digital subscription services in Kozhikode, Kerala. A descriptive research design was adopted using both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 50 respondents through a structured questionnaire using convenience sampling. The collected data were analysed using percentage analysis and simple statistical tools. The findings reveal that awareness and adoption of digital subscription services are remarkably high among young consumers. Content quality, affordability, ease of use, promotional offers, and regional content significantly influence subscription decisions and customer satisfaction. The study concludes that while consumers appreciate convenience and personalized experiences, service providers should focus on competitive pricing, localized content, and flexible subscription models to improve customer retention and long-term loyalty.

Keywords: Digital Subscription Services, Consumer Behaviour, OTT Platforms, Subscription Economy, Customer Satisfaction, Kozhikode

1. Introduction

Digital transformation has fundamentally changed the way consumers access products and services. Instead of purchasing individual products, consumers increasingly prefer subscription-based models that provide continuous access to digital content and services. The subscription economy has expanded rapidly across various sectors, including entertainment, education, software, cloud computing, health, and digital publishing.

The widespread availability of smartphones, affordable internet connectivity, digital payment systems, and technological advancements has accelerated the growth of digital subscription services in India. Popular platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, Spotify, YouTube Premium, Microsoft 365, Google One, and various e-learning applications have attracted millions of subscribers by offering convenience, personalized recommendations, and uninterrupted access to premium content.

Kozhikode, one of Kerala's most digitally connected cities, has experienced a notable increase in the adoption of digital subscription services. High literacy levels, widespread internet usage, and increased digital awareness have encouraged consumers to utilize multiple subscription platforms for entertainment, education, professional development, and cloud storage. However, consumer preferences differ based on demographic characteristics, income, perceived value, pricing, and content quality.

Understanding consumer perception and usage behaviour is therefore essential for service providers seeking to enhance customer satisfaction, improve retention rates, and maintain competitiveness in an increasingly crowded digital marketplace. This study attempts to examine the factors influencing subscription decisions, satisfaction levels, and future usage intentions among consumers in Kozhikode.

2. Review of Literature

Several researchers have examined consumer behaviour towards digital subscription services and Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms from different perspectives.

Weber (2014) explained that reducing subscription costs significantly improves consumer adoption of internet-based services. The study highlighted that pricing strategies play an important role in encouraging users to adopt digital subscription models.

Horng, Lee, and Wu (2015) investigated consumer willingness to pay for subscription-based social networking services. Their research found that previous experience, financial capability, and perceived usefulness positively influence consumers' payment intentions.

Sharma and Harsora (2023) analysed consumer preferences towards OTT platforms in India and concluded that localized content, affordable subscription charges, and uninterrupted streaming services significantly enhance customer satisfaction and subscription loyalty.

Bhati and Dubey (2023) reported that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital entertainment consumption. Their study identified convenience, ease of access, and perceived usefulness as major determinants of OTT adoption.

Karunakaran et al. (2023) observed that entertainment value, relaxation, and habit formation are the primary motivations for continued subscription. The study also emphasized that perceived value mediates the relationship between motivation and subscription renewal.

Agarwal et al. (2024) explored consumer drivers and barriers influencing OTT adoption in the post-pandemic era. Their findings highlighted the importance of usability, customer engagement, service quality, and perceived value in encouraging long-term subscriptions.

Himatsingka (2024) compared price sensitivity between subscription services and traditional purchasing methods. The research concluded that subscription users generally exhibit lower price sensitivity because of convenience and bundled benefits, although multiple subscriptions increase consumers' financial concerns.

Sharma and Purohit (2025) found that demographic variables such as age, income, and occupation significantly influence subscription behaviour. Exclusive content, convenience, and affordable pricing emerged as major determinants of platform selection.

Anjaria and Patel (2025) examined subscription-based business models in e-commerce and concluded that transparent pricing, service quality, and flexible cancellation policies improve customer trust and long-term loyalty.

Chaudhary and Kansal (2025) emphasized that culturally relevant regional content substantially influences subscription decisions, particularly among consumers residing in non-metropolitan regions. Their study suggested that localization strategies strengthen customer engagement and subscription growth.

Collectively, these studies indicate that affordability, service quality, content diversity, user experience, and regional relevance are the principal determinants of consumer satisfaction and subscription renewal behaviour.

3. Research Gap

Previous studies have extensively examined consumer behaviour towards OTT platforms and digital subscription services at national and international levels. However, limited empirical research has specifically investigated consumer perception and usage behaviour within the regional context of Kozhikode, Kerala. Moreover, earlier studies have primarily focused on entertainment platforms, while comparatively less attention has been given to other subscription services such as cloud storage, digital news, and music streaming platforms.

This study addresses these gaps by analysing consumer awareness, usage patterns, satisfaction, and factors influencing subscription decisions among consumers in Kozhikode. The findings provide valuable insights for digital service providers seeking to develop effective customer acquisition and retention strategies in regional markets.

4. Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To examine the level of awareness of digital subscription services among consumers in Kozhikode.
2. To identify the most commonly used digital subscription services.
3. To analyse consumers' perceptions regarding pricing, content quality, ease of use, and service value.

4. To study the usage behaviour and frequency of digital subscription services.
5. To assess the satisfaction level of consumers towards digital subscription services.

5. Research Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopted a descriptive research design to analyse consumer perception and usage behaviour towards digital subscription services. This design was selected because it enables the systematic collection and interpretation of data related to consumer preferences, satisfaction, and subscription behavior.

Sources of Data

The study is based on both **primary and secondary data**.

Primary Data: Primary data were collected directly from consumers residing in Kozhikode using a structured questionnaire prepared through Google Forms.

Secondary Data: Secondary information was obtained from books, peer-reviewed journals, research articles, conference proceedings, government publications, websites, and other relevant online resources.

Area of the Study

The geographical scope of the study was limited to **Kozhikode district, Kerala**.

Sampling Technique

The study employed **Convenience Sampling**, considering the accessibility and willingness of respondents to participate in the survey.

Sample Size

The study consists of **50 respondents** representing users of various digital subscription services.

Tools for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing multiple-choice, dichotomous (Yes/No), and Likert-scale questions designed to measure consumer perception and usage behaviour.

Tools for Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using:

- Percentage Analysis
- Frequency Distribution
- Tabular Presentation
- Graphical Representation
- Descriptive Interpretation

6. Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic analysis indicates that **54% of respondents were female and 46% were male**, suggesting a balanced representation of both genders. The majority (84%) belonged to the **21–30 years** age group, indicating that digital subscription services are predominantly used by young adults.

Regarding educational qualification, **56% were graduates**, while **36% were postgraduates**, reflecting a highly educated sample with good digital literacy.

A significant proportion (**94%**) of respondents were students, and **88%** reported a monthly income below ₹10,000, indicating that affordability remains an important consideration while subscribing to digital services.

Awareness and Adoption of Digital Subscription Services

The study revealed **100% awareness** of digital subscription services among respondents, demonstrating the widespread penetration of subscription-based digital platforms in Kozhikode.

Furthermore, **94%** of respondents were active subscribers to at least one digital subscription service, while only **6%** reported not subscribing to any paid digital service.

The high adoption rate indicates that digital subscriptions have become an integral part of consumers' everyday lives.

Usage Pattern of Digital Subscription Services

Entertainment-oriented services such as **OTT platforms and music streaming applications** emerged as the most frequently used subscription services.

Most respondents reported using subscription services on a daily basis, reflecting their dependence on digital platforms for entertainment, education, and information.

Many respondents also maintained multiple active subscriptions simultaneously, indicating increasing acceptance of the subscription economy.

Consumer Perception towards Digital Subscription Services

Consumers generally expressed positive opinions regarding digital subscription services.

The survey findings indicate that respondents perceive digital subscriptions as:

- Providing good value for money.
- Offering high-quality and diverse content.
- Being easy to access and navigate.
- Delivering greater convenience than traditional media.

However, affordability continues to influence purchasing decisions, especially among students and low-income consumers.

Factors Influencing Subscription Decisions

The analysis identified several important determinants influencing subscription behaviour.

The most influential factors include:

- Quality of content
- Subscription cost
- Promotional offers and discounts
- User-friendly interface
- Regional language content
- Exclusive programmes and movies

The increasing preference for Malayalam and other regional-language content suggests that localization strategies significantly enhance consumer engagement.

Subscription Cancellation Behaviour

Although customer satisfaction was generally high, some respondents reported cancelling subscriptions.

The major reasons include:

- High subscription charges
- Limited usage
- Availability of free alternatives
- Completion of preferred content
- Multiple overlapping subscriptions

These findings indicate that service providers should focus on customer retention through flexible pricing and continuous content updates.

Future Subscription Intentions

Most respondents expressed their willingness to continue or renew their subscriptions in the future.

Renewal intention was strongly associated with:

- Affordable pricing
- Quality of content
- Regular content updates
- Platform reliability
- Personalized recommendations

The findings indicate that customer loyalty depends not only on pricing but also on continuous value creation.

Discussion

The findings support previous studies highlighting that **perceived value, convenience, affordability, and content quality** are the primary determinants of digital subscription adoption. Young consumers in Kozhikode have embraced subscription-based digital services as part of their daily routines, particularly for entertainment and education. However, pricing sensitivity remains evident among students and low-income users.

The growing demand for regional-language content underscores the importance of localization strategies. Service providers that combine affordable pricing with high-quality, culturally relevant content are more likely to achieve long-term customer retention and competitive advantage.

7. Major Findings

The study provides several important insights into consumer perception and usage behaviour of digital subscription services in Kozhikode.

- The study found that **all respondents (100%) were aware** of digital subscription services, indicating a high level of digital literacy among consumers.
- A significant majority (**94%**) actively subscribed to one or more digital subscription services, demonstrating the increasing popularity of subscription-based business models.
- Young consumers aged **21–30 years** constituted the largest user group, suggesting that digital natives are the primary users of subscription platforms.
- OTT streaming platforms emerged as the most preferred subscription service, followed by music streaming, cloud storage, and digital learning platforms.
- Consumers generally perceived digital subscription services as offering **good value for money**, high-quality content, and greater convenience compared to traditional media.

- Pricing, content quality, ease of navigation, promotional offers, and regional-language content were identified as the major factors influencing subscription decisions.
- Respondents expressed high satisfaction with their subscription services; however, affordability remained a concern, particularly among students.
- Subscription cancellations were mainly attributed to high subscription costs, limited usage, and the availability of free alternatives.
- Most respondents expressed a positive intention to continue or renew their subscriptions, indicating strong future demand for digital subscription services.

8. Suggestions and Managerial Implications

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed for digital subscription service providers:

1. Offer Flexible Pricing Plans

Introducing student discounts, family packages, and low-cost subscription plans can attract price-sensitive consumers and improve customer retention.

2. Strengthen Regional Content

Consumers increasingly prefer Malayalam and other regional-language content. Investment in localized entertainment, news, and educational content can significantly enhance customer engagement.

3. Improve Customer Experience

Digital platforms should continuously improve interface design, navigation, streaming quality, and personalized recommendations to enhance user satisfaction.

4. Increase Promotional Campaigns

Free trials, referral programmes, cashback offers, and festive discounts can encourage first-time subscriptions and improve renewal rates.

5. Enhance Content Diversity

Regular addition of exclusive movies, web series, documentaries, educational content, podcasts, and live events can reduce subscription cancellations.

6. Simplify Subscription Management

Providing flexible cancellation options, transparent pricing, and easy subscription management will strengthen customer trust and loyalty.

9. Conclusion

Digital subscription services have transformed the way consumers access entertainment, education, information, and cloud-based services. The rapid adoption of digital technologies, combined with affordable internet access and widespread smartphone usage, has accelerated the growth of the subscription economy in India.

The present study demonstrates that consumers in Kozhikode exhibit high awareness and positive perceptions towards digital subscription services. Young consumers, particularly students, dominate the subscriber base and actively engage with multiple subscription platforms. Factors such as content quality, affordability, convenience, promotional offers, and regional relevance significantly influence consumer satisfaction and subscription decisions.

The findings suggest that service providers should prioritize customer-centric strategies by offering affordable subscription plans, localized content, transparent pricing, and continuous service improvements. Such initiatives will not only improve customer satisfaction but also strengthen long-term customer loyalty in an increasingly competitive digital marketplace.

Overall, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on consumer behaviour in the subscription economy and provides practical insights for digital service providers, marketers, and policymakers.

10. Limitations of the Study

The study has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings.

- The study was confined to Kozhikode district and may not represent consumers from other regions.

- The sample size of 50 respondents limits the generalizability of the findings.
- Convenience sampling may introduce sampling bias.
- Consumer opinions may change over time due to technological advancements and changing market conditions.
- The study focused primarily on consumer perception and did not examine organizational or provider perspectives.

11. Scope for Future Research

Future studies may consider the following areas:

- Comparative studies between urban and rural consumers.
- Consumer behaviour across different states of India.
- Impact of Artificial Intelligence and personalized recommendation systems on subscription decisions.
- Comparative analysis of OTT platforms, music streaming services, and e-learning subscriptions.
- Influence of social media marketing and influencer marketing on subscription behaviour.
- Longitudinal studies to examine changes in consumer behaviour over time.

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