



<https://doi.org/10.53032/tvcr/2025.v7n2.41>

Research Article

The Digital Divide: A Comparative Study on the Impact of Social Media and OTT Platforms Across Generations

Shubham Vijay Pol

Student, Kriti. M. Doongursee College,
Dadar, Mumbai
shubhampol3006@gmail.com

Dr. Ajay Barve

Department of Information Technology
Kirti M. Doongursee College,
Dadar, Mumbai
ajayaub@gmail.com

Abstract

This research investigates how social media and OTT (Over-the-Top) services impacts on various generations. We look into the consequences that rest, social relations, thought processes, attention spans, and the inclination to seek instant satisfaction has on people who are fundamentally immersed in these technologies and compared to others who did not have fundamental access to them. The data was obtained from the surveys and was analyzed concerning the time frame of the behavioural shift upon which the research was focused.

The results demonstrate the variances in lifestyle habits particularly in the younger generation who were found to be more disrupted in the sleeping patterns, lower in outdoor activities, and more inclined to instant gratification. This study seeks to understand emerging patterns of digital consumption and their effects in the long term.

Keywords: Social Media Consumption, OTT Platforms, Generational Digital Divide, Sleep Disruption, Attention Span Decline, Instant Gratification, Binge-Watching Effects, Digital vs. Real World Socialization, Screen Time and Mental Health, Technology and Cognitive Changes.

The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 7 & Issue 2 (April 2025)

Introduction

Social media and over the top (OTT) services have transformed how people interconnect, consume media content, and view the entire globe. These technologies allow interactions and serve as a source of entertainment which, when over utilized, brings worry in terms of social disconnection, cognitive shift, and sleep delays. To evaluate the impact of devices on society, this research examines behavioural and psychological characteristics of Pre-Digital Generation (those over 30) and Digital Generation (aged 15-30).

Literature Review

Impact on Sleep Patterns: Research has shown that too much screen time, especially at night, interferes with circadian rhythms and diminishes sleep quality. Studies have established that younger people often participate in late-night binge-watching and social media use, which results in sleep deprivation (Sleep Health Journal, 2024).

Changes in Social Activities: There has been a transition away from outdoor and community-based communications to virtual and digital interactions. Socialization has been re-engineered by digital platforms, as there is increasingly a preference for texting and computer gaming over the face-to-face (Emerald, 2020).

Fading Attention Span and Cognitive Adjustments: Short content and algorithm-driven consumption of media have resulted in lowered attention spans and diminished deep thinking capacity. Research points towards the inclination of immediate dopamine sustained satisfaction over prolonged intellectual effort (BMC Public Health, 2024).

Instant Gratification vs. Patience: The ease of access to entertainment on demand and instant feedback channels is the reason for impulsivity and low delayed reward capacity. Digital users, in contrast to previous generations, show more impatience and shorter cycles of goal-orientation (JAACAP, 2023).

Objectives

- To examine how OTT platforms and social media affect various generations.
- To evaluate attention spans, gratification tendencies, social interactions, and sleep habits among age groups.
- To determine how the Pre-Digital and Digital generations differ in terms of behaviour and cognition.
- To make suggestions for striking a balance between digital and in-person interactions.

Methodology

Research Design:

A survey-based comparative study was conducted to evaluate generational differences.

Participants:

Younger Generation (15-30 years): 250 respondents

Older Generation (30+ years): 250 respondents

Data Collection Methods

Online and offline questionnaires

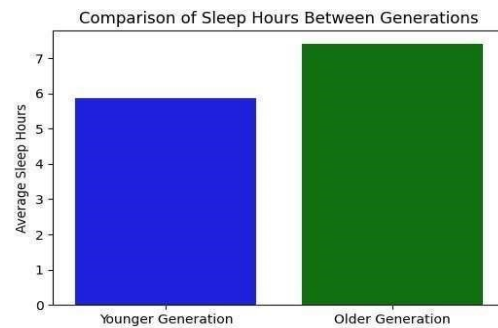
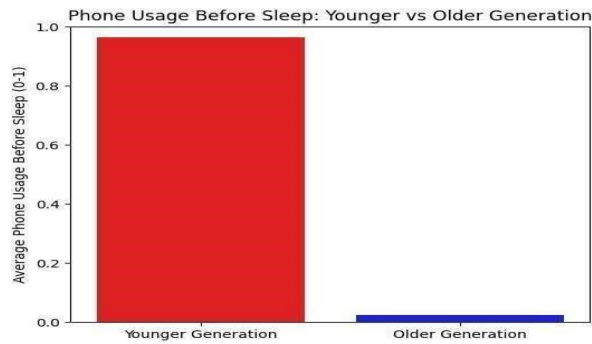
Statistical analysis of responses using Google Sheets and Python (Pandas, Matplotlib)

The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 7 & Issue 2 (April 2025)

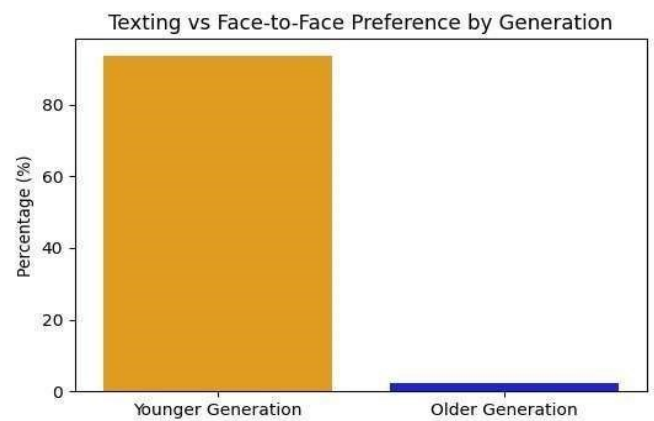
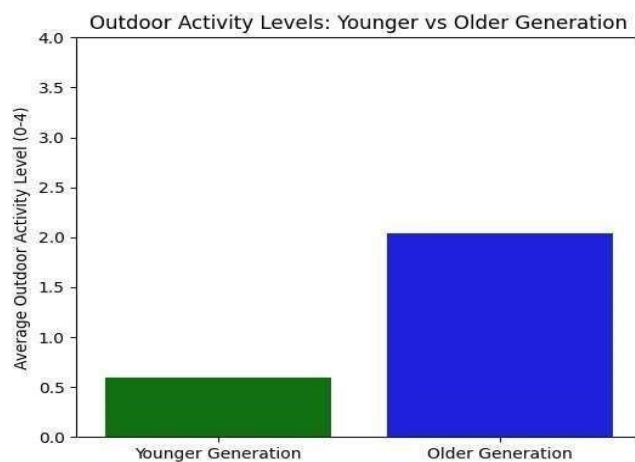
Results

Sleep Patterns:



- Younger Generation: 5.86 hours of sleep on average
- Older Generation: 7.40 hours of sleep on average
- 96.4% of younger respondents use their phones before bed, compared to 2.4% of older individuals

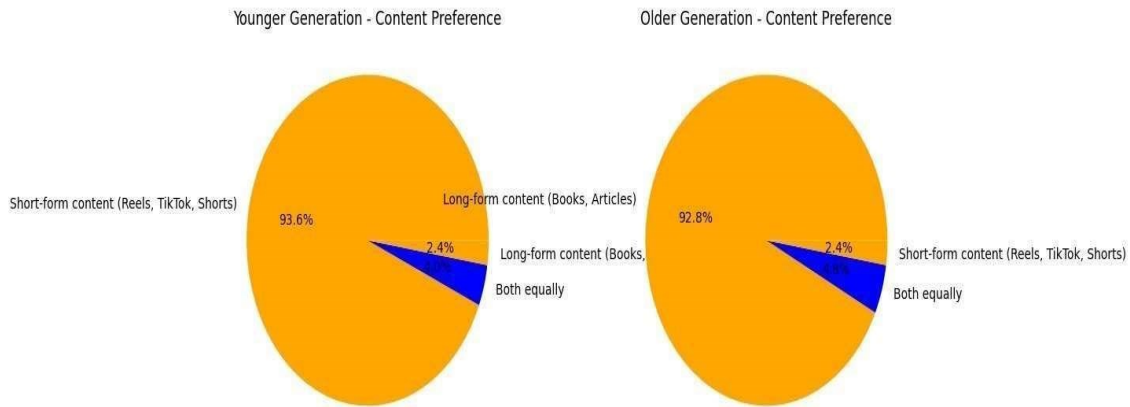
Socialization and Outdoor Activities:



- 44% of younger participants never engage in outdoor activities
- 93.6% of younger respondents prefer texting over face-to-face conversations, whereas
- 97.6% of older individuals favour in-person communication

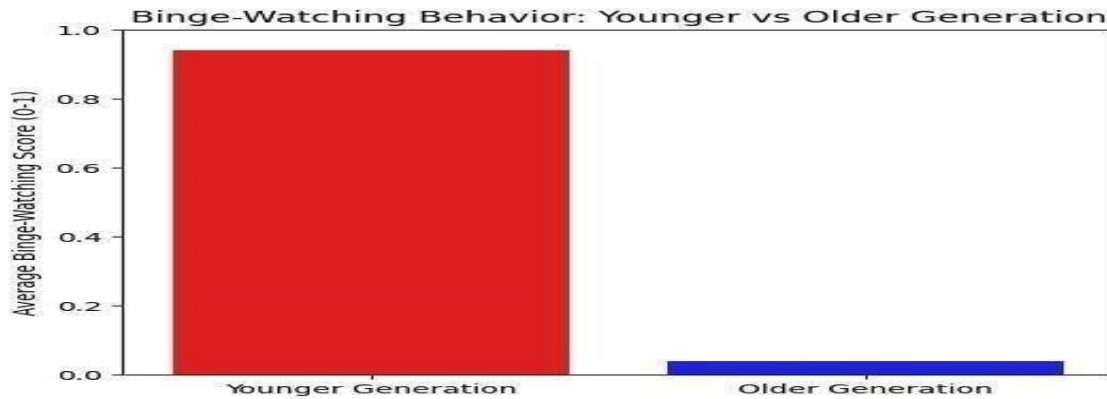
The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 7 & Issue 2 (April 2025)

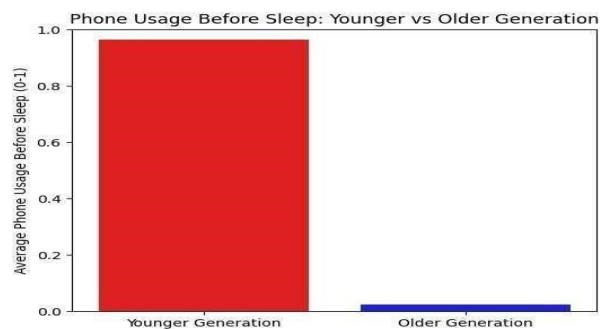
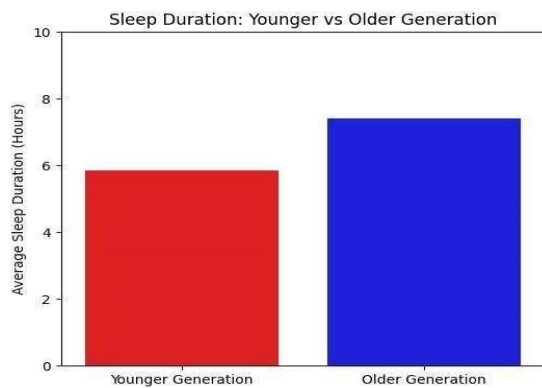


Attention Span and Digital Consumption

- 93.6% of younger individuals prefer short-form content (Reels, TikTok, Shorts)
 - Older individuals engage more with long-form content like books and articles
- Instant Gratification and Patience



- 91% of younger respondents prefer binge-watching over scheduled content consumption
- Older respondents show greater patience in consuming content gradually



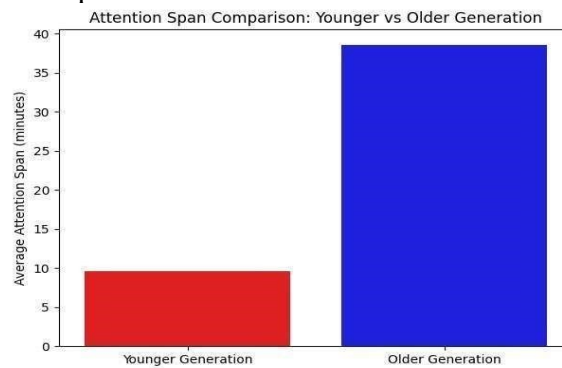
Interactions with Sleep Interventions

The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 7 & Issue 2 (April 2025)

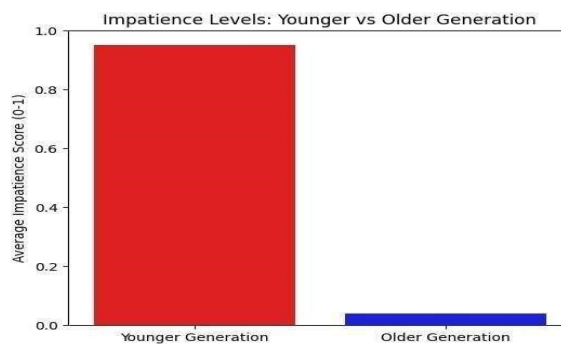
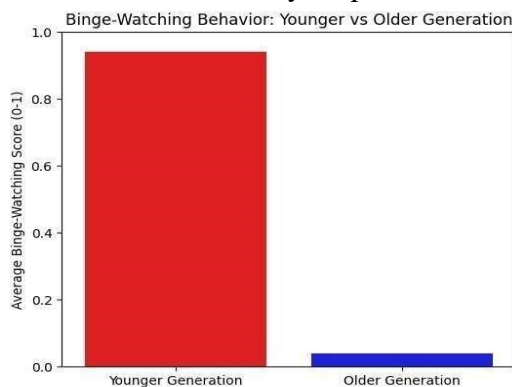
Discussion:

1. The data shows that, particularly for younger users, too much late-night internet use impairs sleep quality. This is in line with recent studies tying blue light exposure to trouble sleeping.
2. Variations in Socializing Guidelines: The inclination for online social contacts above in-person suggests a drop in traditional community participation. While older generations keep ingrained social conventions, younger ones prefer online contacts, which can lead to further social isolation.
3. Effects on the Attention Span Reduction and the Brain:



The tendency for short-form information emphasizes the decreased attention and participation in long-term cognitive activities. Unlike earlier generations that rely on in-depth reading and analysis, this points to a trend toward superficial knowledge processing.

4. Behavior Driven by Dopamine and the Decline in Patience



According to the study, individuals who use digital platforms for quick gratification get conditioned to anticipate benefits right away, which makes setting long-term goals more difficult. This change in behaviour may affect mental toughness, work ethic, and learning.

Conclusion

The results of this study exposed a notable generational variation in the way OTT platforms and social media affect cognitive engagement, gratification inclinations, social interactions and sleep patterns. The younger generation prefers digital over physical socializing and shows more screen time before bed, and sleeps shorter times. They also show a shorter attention span, a more inclination for quick gratification, and more dependence on short-

The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 7 & Issue 2 (April 2025)

form content. On the other hand, older generations keep regular sleep patterns, participate more in outdoor activities, and gives first priority to face-to-face contacts. Their degrees of patience and capacity to interact with long-form materials point to a more consistent cognitive processing capacity. The change in behaviour and cognitive involvement patterns emphasizes how significantly digital platforms shape contemporary living. Although OTT platforms and social media offer many advantages—such as worldwide connectivity and information access—their misuse can have negative impacts on mental health, output, and actual involvement. Emphasizing the requirement of a balanced approach to digital usage, with a better lifestyle choice for every age group. According to the studies, social media and OTT platforms have drastically changed cognitive engagement, patience, sleep patterns, and social conduct as well as tolerance. Although these technologies have advantages, abuse of them has brought fresh problems. Better lifestyle practices depend on finding a balance between digital and real-world encounters. Further we can suggest the following recommendation to bring a balance in lifestyle with OTT usage.

- Implement digital detox routines to reduce night time screen exposure.
- Encourage outdoor and real-world social interactions to restore community engagement.
- Promote long-form content consumption to enhance attention span and critical thinking.
- Educate users on the effects of instant gratification and emphasize long-term goalsetting skills.

References

- Sleep Health Journal (2024), "Impact of Social Media on Sleep Quality"
- Emerald (2020), "Social Media and Changing Socialization Patterns"
- BMC Public Health (2024), "Declining Attention Span in Digital Users"
- JAACAP (2023), "Dopamine and Instant Gratification in the Digital Age"