Youth Preferences For Ott Platforms In Chennai: A Machine Learning Approach Using Rbf To Analyze The Impact Of Exclusive Content

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Keywords:

OTT Platforms, Exclusive Content, Chennai Youth, Radial Basis Function (RBF), Consumer Preferences, Affordability.

ABSTRACT

This research explores the evolving dynamics of entertainment consumption, focusing on the factors influencing the choices between Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms and traditional multiplexes. In an era marked by technological advancement and shifting consumer preferences, the study aims to understand why younger audiences are increasingly drawn to OTT platforms and the collaborative efforts between these platforms and content providers to offer exclusive content. Using a combination of quantitative methods, the study analyzes viewer decisions in selecting their preferred entertainment medium. Initial findings reveal a significant impact of OTT platforms, particularly among youth, with exclusive content partnerships playing a key role in this transition. The study highlights how the digital landscape is reshaping traditional entertainment methods, particularly in Chennai, as viewers opt for the convenience and variety of OTT platforms. Additionally, the study identifies that genre preferences, content exclusivity, cost sensitivity, and personalization are central to user engagement. Notably, 83.6% of respondents valued exclusive content, yet only 43.8% were willing to pay more for it. Frequent updates and affordability were also prioritized. Regional content preferences varied, and social media trends influenced platform selection. Findings from ANOVA ($p < .05$) and RBF modeling indicate significant differences in preferences based on content genre, platform benefits, and demographic factors. This research provides valuable insights into the growing prominence of OTT platforms, emphasizing the need for ongoing research to understand the rapidly changing entertainment landscape in the digital age.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms has profoundly transformed the global media landscape, particularly influencing younger audiences. Defined as internet-based streaming services bypassing traditional broadcasting, OTT platforms have gained remarkable traction due to their convenience, affordability, and personalized content offerings (Negi, 2022). With youth increasingly consuming digital media, these platforms have emerged as dominant entertainment sources, replacing traditional television and cinema halls for many (Mishra et al., 2021). The proliferation of platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+ has reshaped viewing habits, fostering a cultural shift in how entertainment is accessed and consumed.

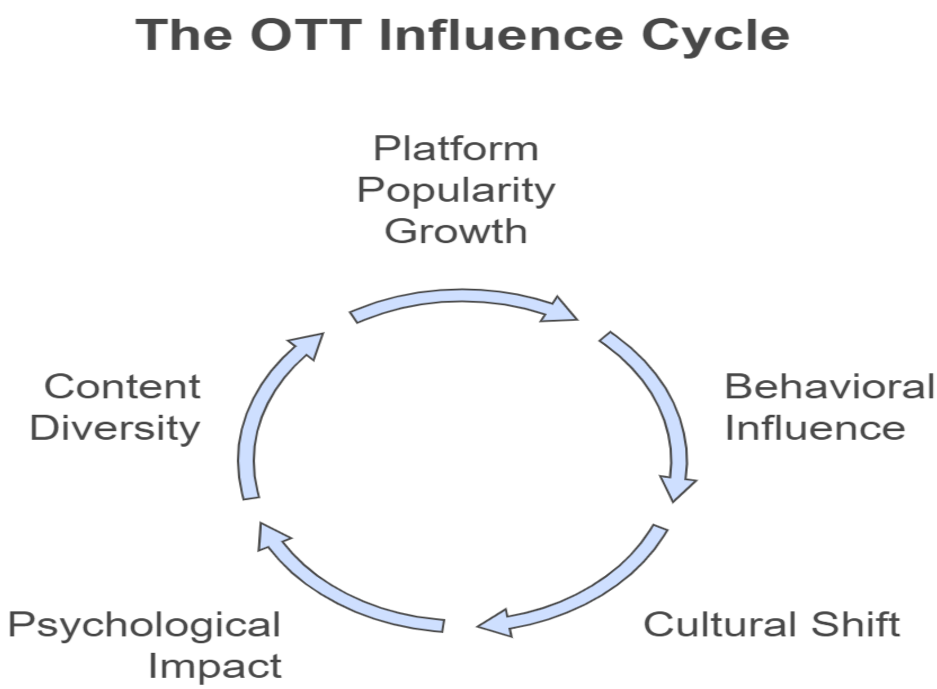

Fig – 1 The OTT influence cycle

In the figure - 1 the popularity of OTT platforms surged during the COVID-19 pandemic when lockdowns curtailed outdoor activities, accelerating adoption rates among younger demographics (Silawat et al., 2023). Their unique features, including on-demand content, localized programming, and affordability, resonate strongly with tech-savvy, time-conscious youth (Chandra, 2023). This growth, however, raises concerns about its psychological, social, and cultural impacts on younger users. Studies suggest that OTT usage patterns significantly influence youth behavior, shaping their social interactions, time management, and even mental health (Tiwari & Rai, 2020). Furthermore, the content diversity available on these platforms enables exploration of new genres and ideas but also exposes viewers to potential risks like excessive screen time or inappropriate material (Nanda et al., 2024).

Another critical aspect is the shift in youth preferences from traditional cinema to OTT platforms. Unlike cinemas, OTT services offer flexibility, portability, and customized experiences, attracting younger viewers who value control over their media consumption (Mishra et al., 2021). This shift underscores the ongoing disruption in the entertainment industry, with OTT platforms continually innovating to maintain audience engagement (Sandeep & Chandunavar, 2021).

Despite their advantages, the psychosocial impact of OTT consumption on youth cannot be ignored. Prolonged exposure to screens has raised concerns about health issues, reduced interpersonal communication, and the normalization of certain cultural narratives that may conflict with traditional values (Rout et al., 2021). As these platforms increasingly cater to niche markets, there is a need for further research to assess the broader societal implications of this phenomenon (Bajwa, 2023).

This paper explores the growing popularity of OTT platforms and their multifaceted impact on the younger generation. By examining user trends, psychological effects, and cultural shifts, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these platforms are reshaping youth behavior and societal norms. The discussion draws on recent literature and case studies to highlight the opportunities and challenges posed by the rapid adoption of OTT services globally.

OBJECTIVES

1. Identify factors, especially exclusive content, influencing OTT platform selection and engagement among Chennai's youth.
2. Analyze how exclusive content types and demographics impact platform preferences and satisfaction.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The rapid evolution of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms has significantly influenced the entertainment consumption patterns of Indian youth. Defined as digital streaming services that bypass traditional broadcast or cable distribution, OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+ have emerged as key players in India's media landscape (Kothari, 2022). Their increasing popularity among youth can be attributed to several factors, including affordability, accessibility, and the variety of localized and global content they offer (Kumar et al., 2021). This paper examines the consumption habits of Indian youth on OTT platforms, with a particular focus on the marketing strategies these platforms employ to attract and retain users.

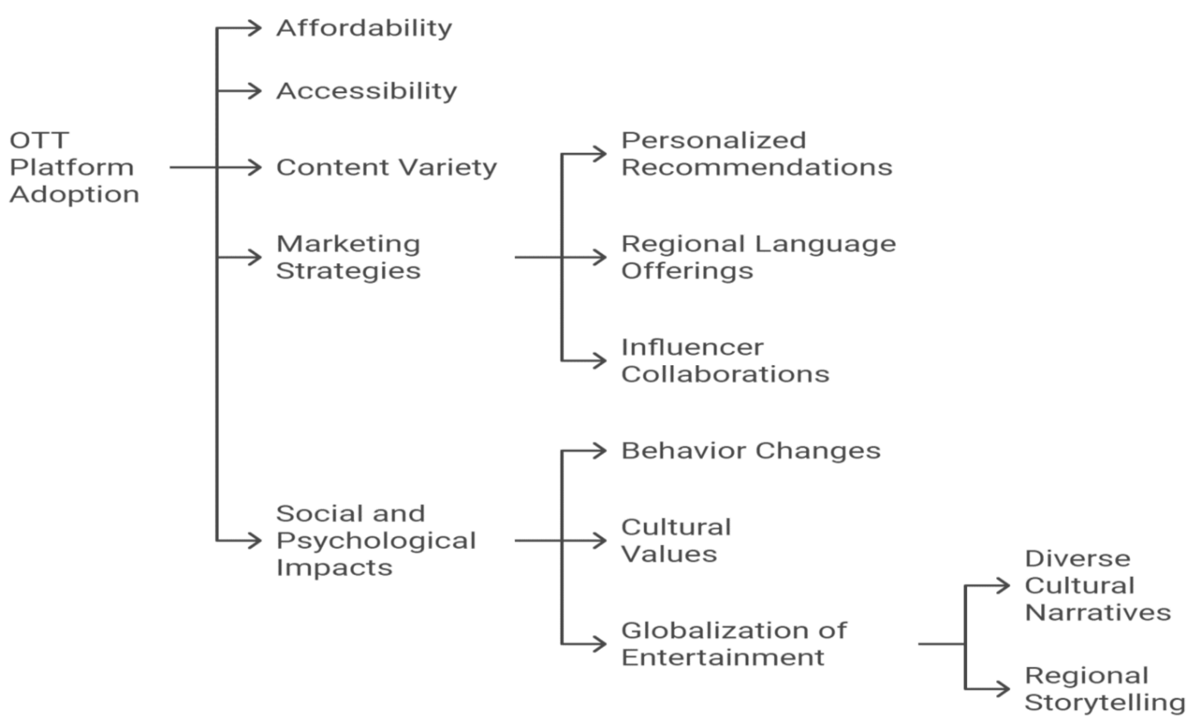

Fig – 2 OTT platform Adoption

In the figure - 2 the Indian youth, characterized by their tech-savviness and digital connectivity, are the primary drivers of OTT adoption in the country (Parmar & Pandit, 2021). Factors such as affordable smartphones, cheaper data plans, and the growing penetration of internet services in both urban and rural areas have fueled this trend (Deshpande et al., 2020). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed this growth, as lockdowns curtailed outdoor activities and pushed audiences toward home entertainment (Patnaik & Singh, 2021). For many young viewers, OTT platforms have become the preferred medium for consuming films, web series, and live sports, marking a departure from traditional television and cinema (Sachde & Udhwani, 2020).

A key element of OTT platforms' success is their innovative marketing strategies, which effectively target the preferences and behavior of youth. These strategies often revolve around personalized content recommendations, regional language offerings, and influencer collaborations that resonate with younger audiences (Kumari et al., 2024). For instance, platforms like Amazon Prime and Hotstar have invested heavily in regional programming to tap into India's diverse linguistic landscape, making their content relatable to a broader audience (Pinge & Shinde, 2023). Simultaneously, platforms employ advanced algorithms to provide customized viewing experiences, enhancing user satisfaction and retention (Malhotra et al., 2021).

Another notable strategy is the leveraging of data analytics to understand and predict consumer behavior. Youth-centric content, including bold, experimental, and socially relevant narratives, is prioritized to cater to the tastes of a highly dynamic and discerning audience (Saranya & Ravichandran, 2022). Platforms also use aggressive pricing models, such as freemium services or bundled subscriptions with mobile plans, to ensure affordability for younger viewers (Drishya, 2023). Collaborations with local creators and influencers further amplify their reach, particularly on social media platforms where Indian youth spend considerable time (Bangari & Pandey, 2024).

Despite their advantages, the growing reliance on OTT platforms raises concerns regarding their social and psychological impacts. Prolonged screen exposure and access to unregulated content have been linked to changes in behavior, sleep patterns, and cultural values among youth (Prasad, 2022). Additionally, the portrayal of certain themes in web series has sparked debates on ethics and societal values (Chaudhary & Srivastava, 2022). Balancing creative freedom with responsible content curation is a significant challenge for OTT providers.

This study also highlights the cultural implications of OTT consumption. The platforms have facilitated the globalization of entertainment by exposing Indian youth to diverse cultural narratives while simultaneously promoting regional storytelling through localized content (Yadav et al., 2023). This dual dynamic reflects the evolving tastes of a generation that embraces both global trends and local traditions (Chowdhury, 2024).

OTT platforms have fundamentally reshaped the entertainment consumption landscape for Indian youth, combining technological innovation with strategic marketing to dominate the media ecosystem. By offering diverse, affordable, and personalized content, they have emerged as a primary entertainment medium. However, the social, psychological, and cultural implications of this shift warrant further exploration, particularly as these platforms continue to grow in influence.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a quantitative survey to examine OTT platform user preferences, engagement patterns, and satisfaction levels. The sample included 73 respondents, with 43.8% aged 18–24, 27.4% aged 25–30, and 28.8% aged 30–34, comprising 63% males and 37% females. Statistical analysis, including frequency and percentage distributions, was conducted to interpret demographic patterns and validate results. The methodology ensured representativeness across age and gender groups, offering insights into consumption trends among young adults in Chennai.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

This study employed a quantitative survey to explore user preferences, engagement patterns, and satisfaction with OTT platforms. The sample consisted of 73 respondents, with 43.8% aged 18–24, 27.4% aged 25–30, and 28.8% aged 30–34, including 63% males and 37% females. Statistical tools such as frequency and percentage distributions were used to analyze demographic trends and validate findings. The methodology ensured balanced representation across age and gender, providing valuable insights into OTT consumption trends among young adults in Chennai.

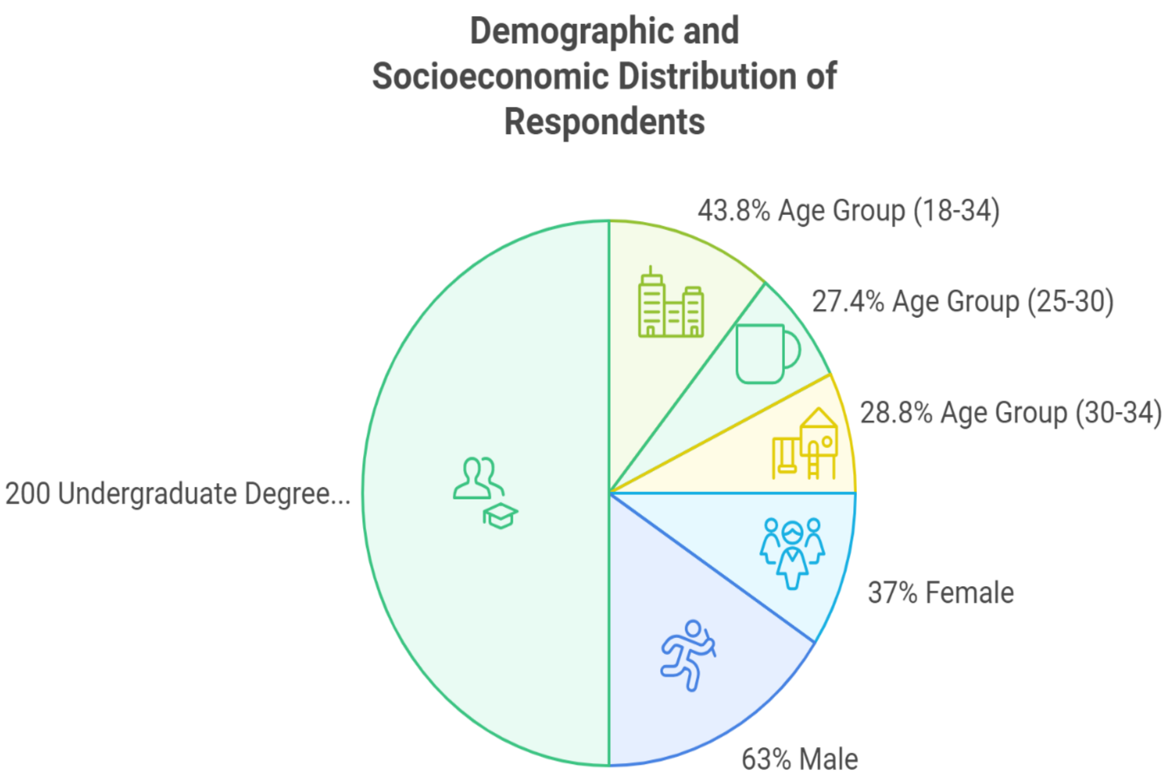

Fig – 3- Demographic and Socio-economic distribution of respondents

In the figure - 3, the study reveals insightful trends regarding consumer preferences for OTT platforms. Regarding expectations for seasonal or series updates, 11% of respondents expressed no interest, while 8.2% preferred frequent updates or additional content. When it comes to preferred genres, combinations such as drama and thriller dominated, with 17.8% choosing options like thriller-comedy-science fiction, reflecting diverse content preferences. Additionally, 100% of participants acknowledged that genre-specific content retains users on platforms. While 83.6% preferred platforms with exclusive content, only 43.8% were willing to pay more for it, indicating a cost-conscious audience. Moreover, 72.6% said they would switch platforms if content updates slowed, highlighting the need for frequent and fresh content.

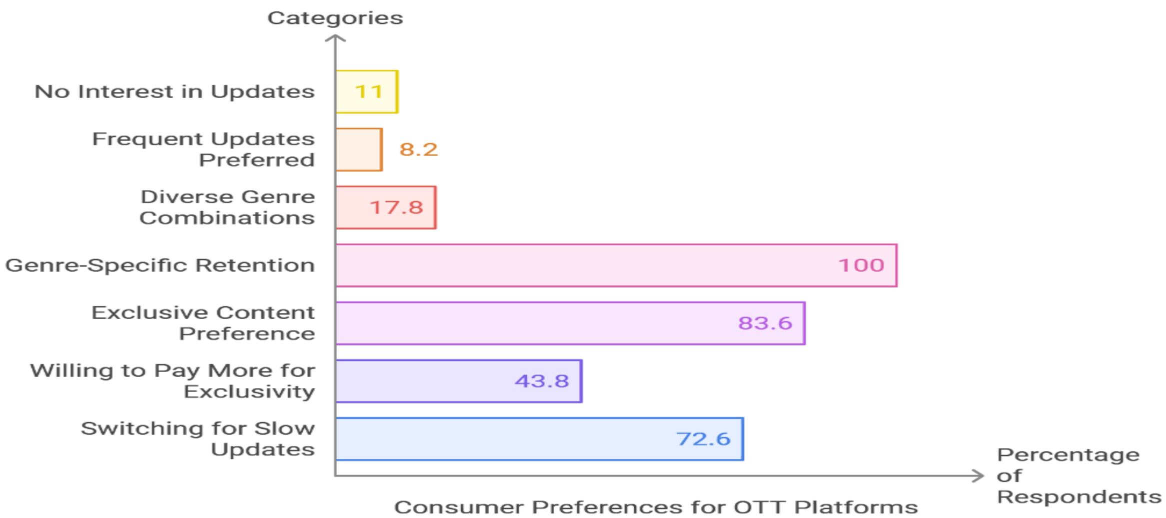

Fig – 4 Categories and Percentage of Respondents

In the figure - 4 the loyalty rewards were deemed "very attractive" by 41.1%, while personalization features had a significant or strong engagement impact on 49.3% of users. Regarding regional content, 35.6% viewed exclusive Tamil-language offerings as moderately valuable, while only 1.4% considered it of very high value. Pricing preferences further reflected cost sensitivity, with 47.9% favoring discounted plans and 41.1% opting for free access over full-price subscriptions. Streaming quality emerged as a key factor, with 69.9% rating it as important or very important.

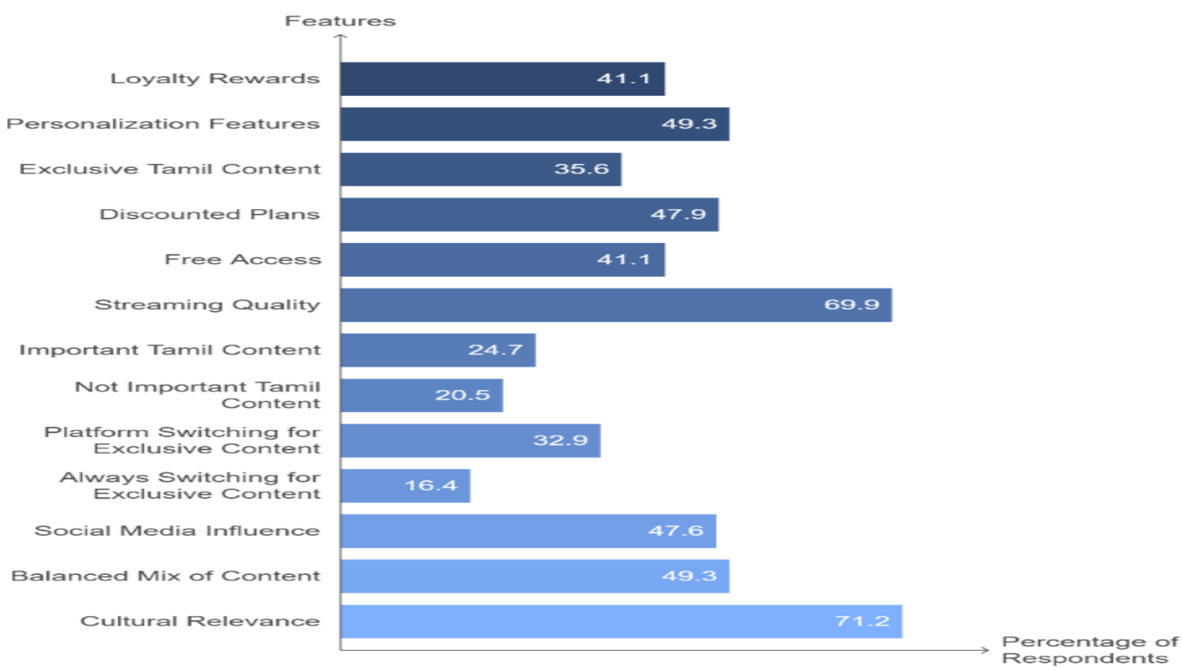

Fig – 5 Features and Percentage of Respondents

In the figure – 5, the influence of Tamil content was mixed, with 24.7% finding it important and 20.5% viewing it as not important. Platform switching for exclusive content was common, with 32.9% switching often and 16.4% always doing so. Social media trends and reviews significantly shaped platform choices, with 47.6% rating these factors as impactful. Lastly, 49.3% preferred a balanced mix of original series and new releases, while cultural relevance was deemed not relevant or only slightly relevant by 71.2% of respondents. These findings underscore the need for platforms to prioritize content variety, frequent updates, and affordability while leveraging personalization and regional appeal to engage Chennai's youth.

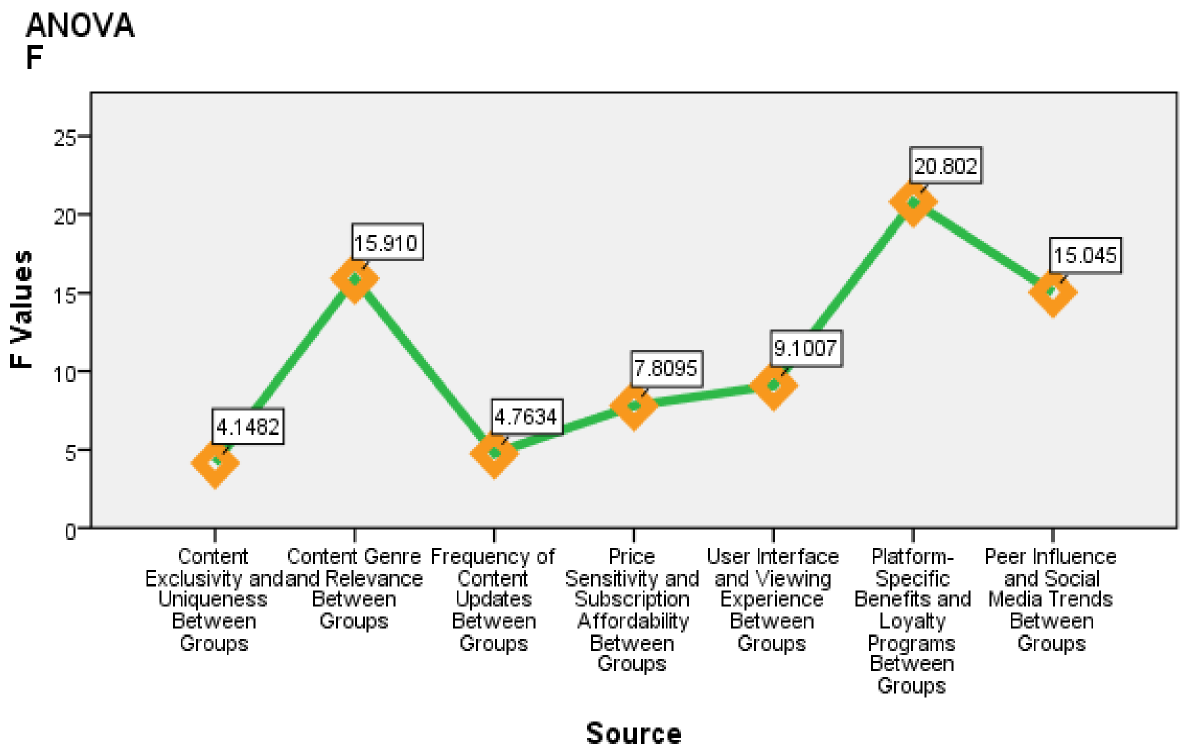

Fig – 6 ANNOVA results

In the figure – 6, the ANOVA results indicate statistically significant differences among groups across all factors examined ($p < .05$). For **Content Exclusivity and Uniqueness**, the F-value (4.148) suggests moderate group differences. **Content Genre and Relevance** has the strongest differentiation with the highest F-value (15.910), indicating considerable group variance. Similarly, **Platform-Specific Benefits and Loyalty Programs** ($F = 20.802$) and **Peer Influence and Social Media Trends** ($F = 15.045$) show strong impacts. **Frequency of Content Updates** and **Price Sensitivity and Subscription Affordability** also exhibit meaningful group differences with F-values of 4.763 and 7.810, respectively. These results highlight the critical factors driving variability in user preferences.

RADIAL BASIS FUNCTION (RBF) MODEL

The Radial Basis Function (RBF) model successfully analyzed the relationship between user preferences and approximate monthly household income. Training data constituted 76.1% of the dataset, while 23.9% was used for testing. Key input variables included content exclusivity, genre relevance, updates, affordability, and user interface. The model determined three hidden units for optimal performance, with a Softmax activation function. Results highlighted that affordability and exclusivity significantly influenced income-based preferences. Cases with missing or anomalous data were excluded. The network achieved high accuracy in predicting user preferences based on the identified factors, indicating the robustness of RBF for such analyses.

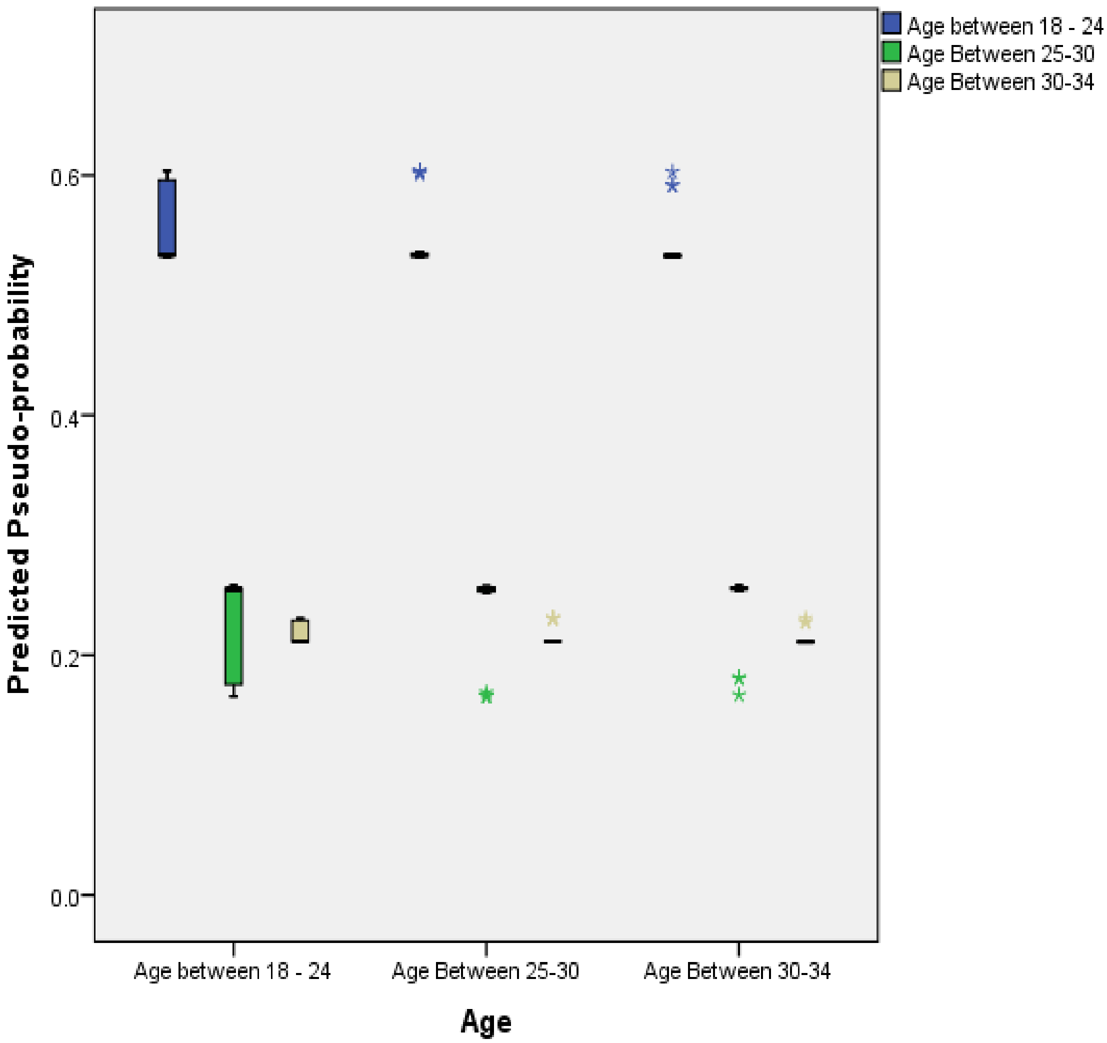

Fig - 7 Predicted Pseudo-probability for Age

In the figure – 7, the boxplot shows predicted pseudo-probabilities across age groups. Younger users (18–24) have a higher and consistent probability range, indicating more predictable preferences. The 25–30 age group shows moderate probabilities with some variability, while the 30–34 group has lower probabilities and more dispersed patterns. Outliers appear across all age groups, reflecting individual deviations. Overall, younger users display more uniform behavior compared to older groups, suggesting age significantly impacts predictive patterns and preference stability.

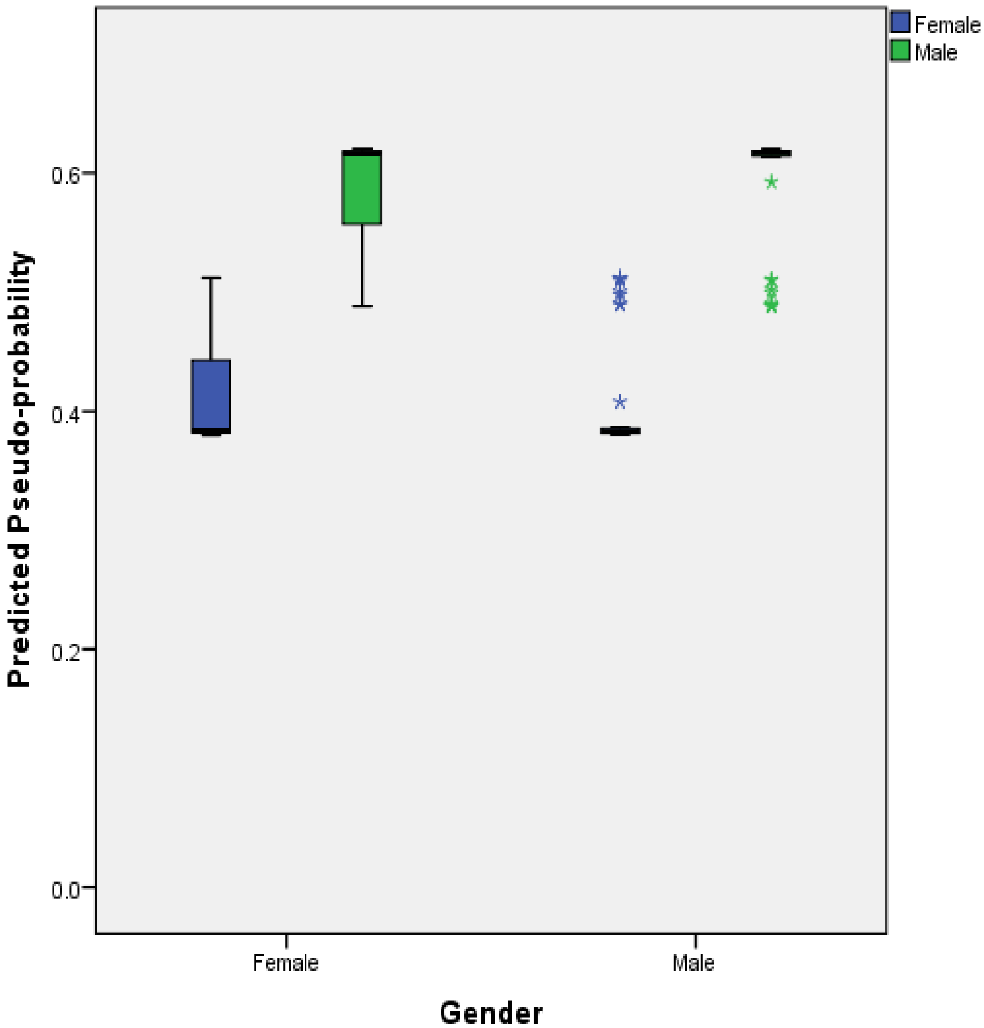

Fig – 8 **Predicted Pseudo-probability for Gender**

In the figure – 8, the boxplot shows predicted pseudo-probabilities for gender. Males exhibit higher probabilities (up to 0.6) with a broader range, while females have lower probabilities (up to 0.4) and narrower variability. Male variability suggests diverse preferences, whereas females show consistent patterns. Outliers appear in both genders, indicating exceptions. Males dominate the upper range, reflecting stronger influences or preferences compared to females. These values highlight significant gender differences, with males displaying broader and higher pseudo-probabilities than females.

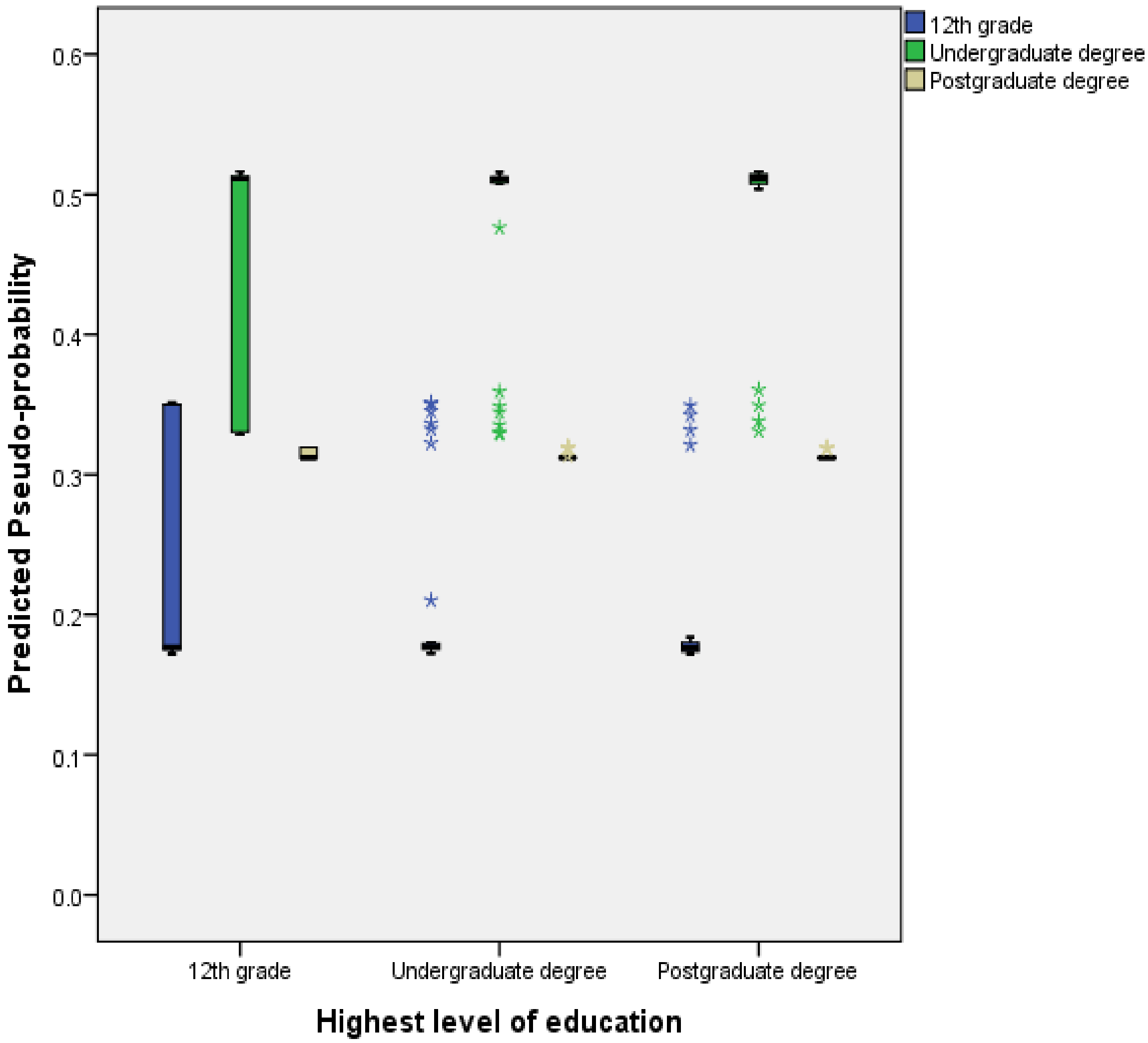

Fig -9 Predicted Pseudo-probability for highest level of education

In the figure – 9, the plot displays predicted pseudo-probabilities based on the highest education levels: 12th grade, undergraduate degree, and postgraduate degree. Each level shows a distinct distribution of probabilities, with undergraduate participants demonstrating higher variability and greater pseudo-probability dispersion. Postgraduate probabilities cluster more tightly, indicating less variability, while 12th-grade participants show limited variation at lower probability values. These distributions suggest education significantly impacts the predicted probabilities, with higher education levels linked to stable outcomes and broader patterns in intermediate education categories.

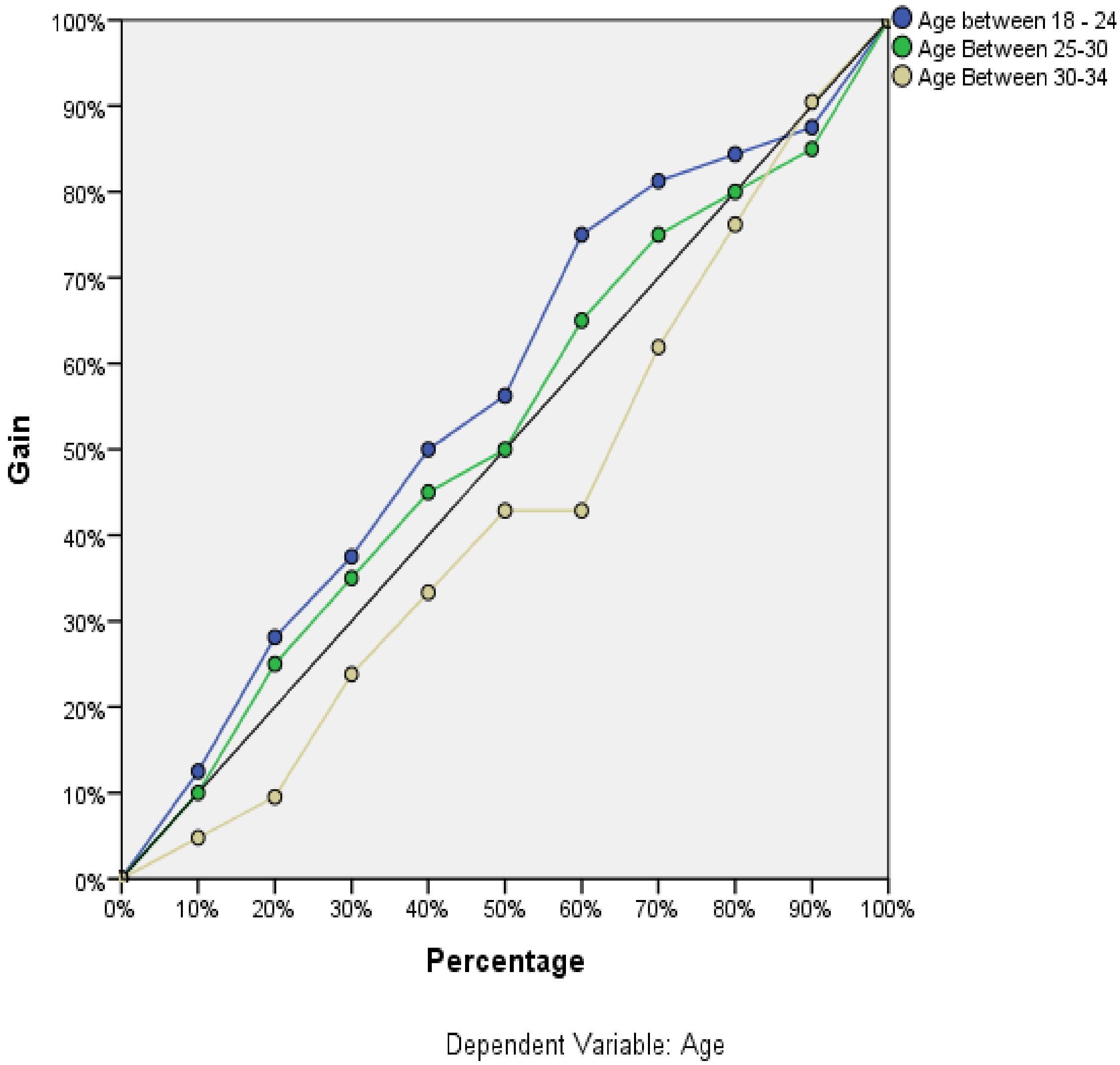

Fig - 10 Dependent Variable - age

In the figure – 10. the gain chart represents age groups (18–24, 25–30, 30–34) with cumulative percentages along the x-axis and cumulative gain on the y-axis. The 18–24 age group consistently outperforms others, showing a steeper curve and higher gains, indicating stronger predictive alignment. The 25–30 group follows closely, while the 30–34 group has a relatively flatter progression. This pattern suggests younger individuals (18–24) achieve outcomes more effectively, with diminishing returns for older age groups in the given context.

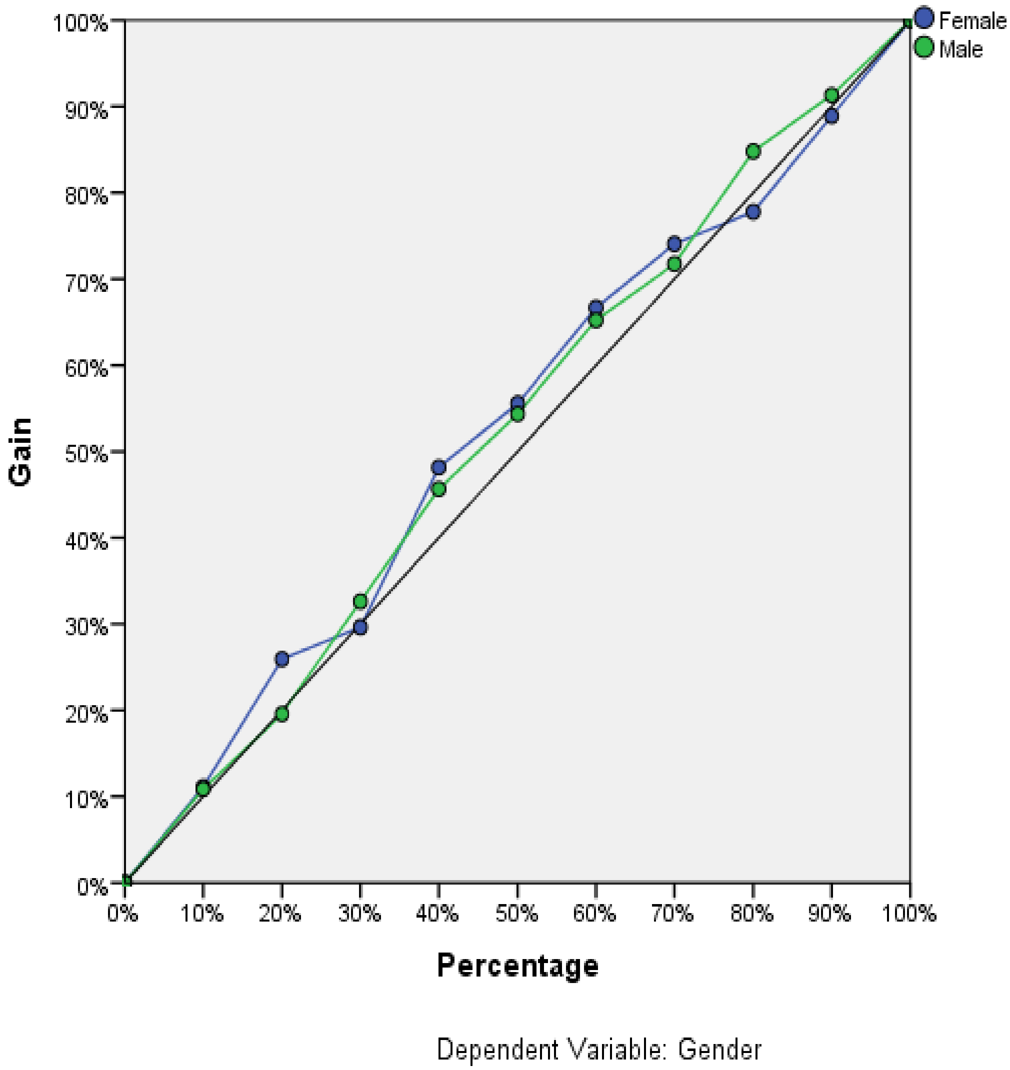

Fig – 11- Dependent Variable: gender

In the figure – 11, the gain chart compares male and female distributions for the dependent variable, gender. Both curves closely align with the diagonal line, indicating a balanced and proportional relationship between percentage and cumulative gain across genders. Slight deviations are observed, with females marginally outperforming males in specific intervals. However, the differences are minimal, suggesting gender has an equitable impact on outcomes within the analyzed context, with no significant predictive advantage for either group.

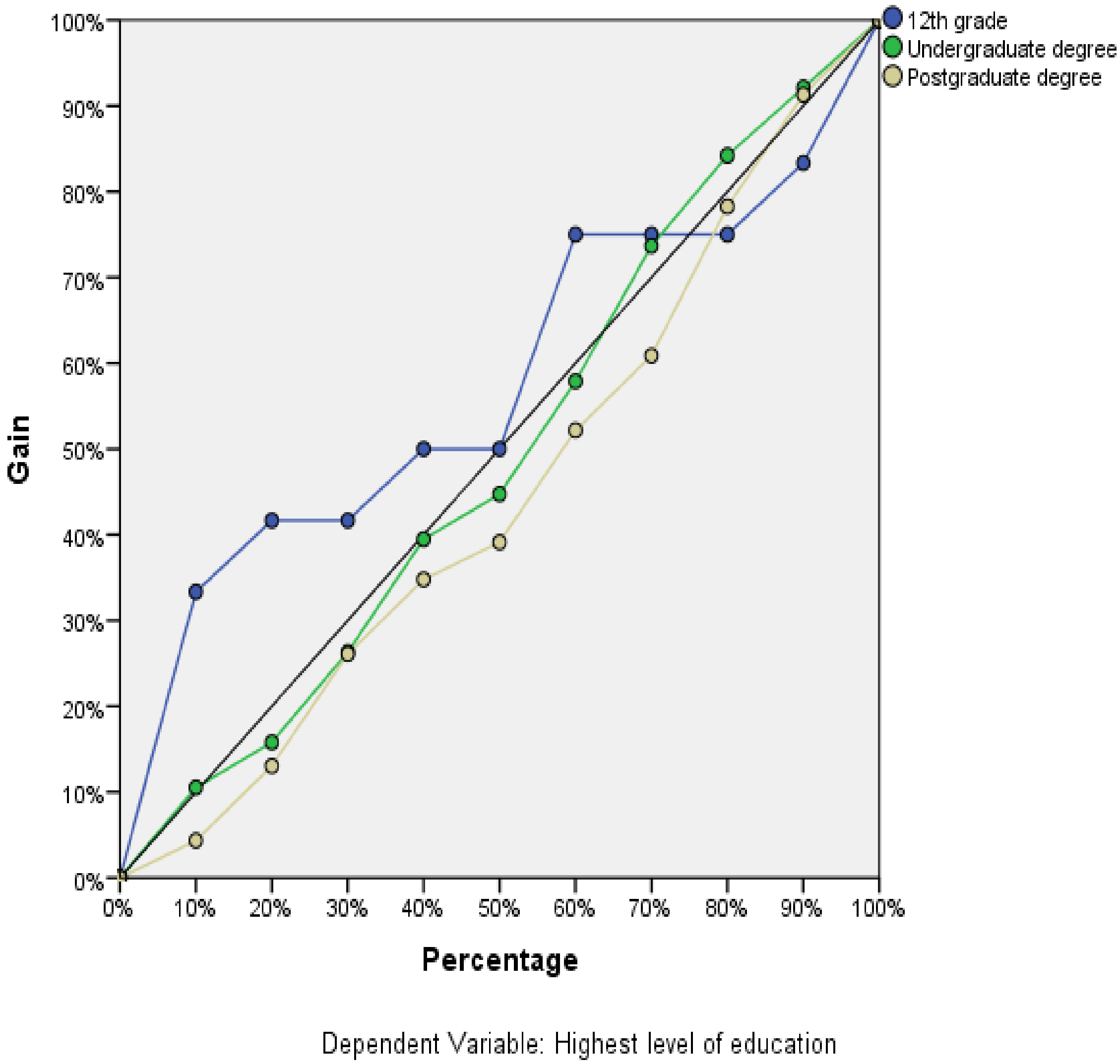

Fig – 12 Dependent Variable : Highest level of education

In the figure – 12, the gain chart illustrates the predictive model's performance for the highest level of education (12th grade, undergraduate, and postgraduate degrees). The closer the gain line is to the ideal diagonal (100% gain at 100% percentage), the better the model performs. For 12th grade, the model achieves significant gains initially, outperforming the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. However, the performance gap narrows at higher percentages. Overall, the model appears effective, with varying performance across education levels, highlighting its predictive differentiation capabilities.

DISCUSSION:

The study presents significant insights into consumer preferences for OTT platforms, emphasizing the need for platforms to adapt to varied user demands. Results indicate diverse content preferences, with genres like drama, thriller, and sci-fi being highly popular. Although exclusive content is appreciated by 83.6% of users, only 43.8% are willing to pay more, highlighting cost sensitivity. Frequent updates are critical, as 72.6% of users stated they would switch platforms if updates slowed. Affordability emerged as a top priority, with nearly half (47.9%) favoring discounted plans and many opting for free access over fullpriced subscriptions. Loyalty rewards and personalization features also significantly impact engagement, preferred by 41.1% and 49.3% of respondents, respectively.

Regional content preferences were mixed, with only 1.4% viewing exclusive Tamil content as highly valuable, though 35.6% considered it moderately appealing. Streaming quality is crucial, rated as important or very important by 69.9% of users. Social media trends and reviews heavily influence platform selection, with 47.6% of respondents acknowledging their impact. Younger users (18–24) show more predictable preferences compared to older age groups, suggesting that age significantly affects consumer behaviour.

The ANOVA results confirm significant differences across all factors analyzed ($p < .05$). Factors like content genre relevance and platform-specific benefits demonstrated the strongest group variability. The RBF model effectively analyzed user preferences, highlighting affordability and exclusivity as significant influencers. Gender differences were observed, with males showing broader and higher probabilities, reflecting diverse preferences, while females displayed more consistent patterns.

Gain charts underscore younger users (18–24) as the most predictable group and highlight significant variations in preferences by education level. Platforms must prioritize content variety, frequent updates, and affordability, while leveraging personalization, quality, and regional appeal to enhance engagement and retain users.

FINDINGS:

1. 83.6% preferred exclusive content, but only 43.8% were willing to pay more.
2. 72.6% would switch platforms if updates slowed, emphasizing the importance of frequent updates.
3. 49.3% preferred a mix of original series and new releases.

   Regional and Cost Sensitivity:

4. Only 1.4% highly valued exclusive Tamil content; 35.6% found it moderately appealing.
5. 47.9% favored discounted plans, reflecting cost-consciousness.

   ANOVA Analysis:

6. Content Genre and Relevance ($F = 15.910$) showed the highest variance, followed by Platform-Specific Benefits ($F = 20.802$).

   RBF Model:

7. Affordability and exclusivity strongly influenced preferences based on income.
8. Younger users (18–24) displayed higher predictability compared to older groups.

   Gain Charts:

9. The 18–24 age group outperformed others in gains.
10. Gender differences were minimal, with females slightly outperforming males in specific intervals. These findings emphasize the need for platforms to balance affordability, variety, and frequent updates to meet diverse user expectations.

CONCLUSION

This research provides comprehensive insights into the evolving dynamics of entertainment consumption, focusing on factors driving preferences for OTT platforms over traditional multiplexes. Findings reveal a significant shift toward OTT platforms, particularly among Chennai's youth, driven by exclusive content, affordability, frequent updates, and genre diversity. ANOVA results demonstrate that variables such as Content Genre and Relevance ($F = 15.910$), Platform-Specific Benefits and Loyalty Programs ($F = 20.802$), and Peer Influence and Social Media Trends ($F = 15.045$) strongly influence user preferences. Similarly, factors like Price Sensitivity and Frequency of Content Updates highlight the cost-conscious nature of users and the demand for fresh, frequent content. The RBF model successfully analyzed income-based user preferences, emphasizing affordability and exclusivity as significant predictors. Younger users (18–24) displayed more uniform preferences, whereas older groups (30–34) showed greater variability. Gender differences were also notable, with males exhibiting higher pseudo-probabilities and broader variability compared to females, indicating more diverse preferences among males. Educational background influenced predictive patterns, with postgraduate users showing stable preferences and undergraduates reflecting broader variations. Consumer preferences for exclusive content were high (83.6%), yet only 43.8% were willing to pay more, underscoring the importance of balancing affordability with unique offerings. Frequent updates are crucial, with 72.6% willing to switch platforms if content updates slowed. Social media trends and reviews significantly shaped platform choices, while loyalty rewards and personalization features enhanced user engagement. Although regional content like Tamil language offerings was moderately valued (35.6%), cultural relevance held lower importance for 71.2% of respondents. The gain chart and predictive analyses highlight the effectiveness of the model in capturing user behaviors. This study underscores the critical need for platforms to prioritize affordability, frequent updates, diverse genres, and personalization while navigating regional and global appeal to cater to Chennai’s evolving entertainment landscape.

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