

Circular Economy Business Models: Marketing, Financial Viability, and Accounting Implications



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YOUNG ADULTS IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL ADDICTION AND LIFESTYLE CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

Young Adults' Digital Addiction (YAD) is impacting their daily lives, shopping habits and engagement with friends/peers by profoundly changing how they communicate, buy things and hang out with one another. The increase of young adult's use of smartphones, social networking sites, streaming services and e-commerce platforms in the last decade has changed the way young adults operate in society. Young adults use these digital technologies because they give them increased efficiency, communication and range of access to information. However, over-usage and lack of control over these digital technologies have led to concerns about a growing phenomenon called digital addiction (DA). From a consumer perspective, DA is a psychological issue, but it is also a behavioural result of marketing strategies, design of platforms, and social influencers. This paper investigates the impact of DA on young adults, including how DA has transformed their lifestyles, behaviours towards each other, and consumption behaviours. The research identifies several factors that contribute to DA, such as engagement with social media, engagement with online entertainment, exposure to digital marketing stimuli, and influence from peers. In addition to identifying contributing factors to DA, this research identifies the negative impacts of excessive digital consumption on young adults' physical and mental health, academic success, and relationships with others. This paper provides recommendations to combat the negative effects of DA by promoting consumer awareness, promoting responsible marketing, and promoting digital wellness initiatives.

Keywords: *Digital addiction, young adults, consumer behaviour, lifestyle transformation, social media, digital consumption*

1. Introduction

Digital technology has grown into one of the greatest influences on developing society during the last few decades. Because of the availability of smartphones, high-speed internet, and digital platforms worldwide, the ways in which people communicate, work, consume goods, acquire knowledge, and enjoy leisure activities have changed significantly. Younger adults currently lead a digital revolution; they are more likely than anyone else to use social media, play online games, watch streaming video services, and purchase products from an e-commerce site. While there are many advantages to using digital technologies, excessive usage creates a phenomenon called digital addiction. Digital addictions involve excessive and compulsive use of electronic devices and/or online services that disrupt daily function, disrupt social networks, and hinder academics and employment, as well as physical and emotional health. Young adults are vulnerable to digital addiction due to their developmental stage, social needs, and lifestyle patterns. Online shopping platforms influence purchasing behaviour through personalized advertisements, discounts, and instant gratification. Streaming services and gaming platforms promote continuous consumption through autoplay features and reward systems. These factors collectively contribute to lifestyle transformation, where digital engagement increasingly replaces physical activities, face-to-face interactions, and traditional consumption habits. This paper aims to examine digital addiction among young adults from a consumer behaviour perspective, focusing on its social and lifestyle implications. The study seeks to understand how digital consumption patterns shape attitudes, preferences, and daily routines, and how excessive digital usage affects the overall quality of life. By analysing digital addiction through the lens of consumer behaviour, the paper contributes to a broader understanding of responsible digital consumption and sustainable lifestyle practices.

Objectives of the Paper

1. To examine the digital Usage patterns of young adults.
2. To identify the key factors contributing to digital addiction among young adults.
3. To analyze the impact of digital addiction on the lifestyle of young adults.
4. To study the influence of digital addiction on the social behaviour of young adults.
5. To suggest measures for promoting responsible digital consumption and balanced lifestyles.

2. Concept of Digital Addiction

Digital addiction is a form of behavioural addiction characterized by excessive, compulsive, and uncontrolled use of digital devices and online platforms. It includes addiction to smartphones, social media, online gaming, streaming services, and internet browsing. It involves psychological dependence and habitual behaviour.

Individuals experiencing digital addiction often feel anxious or restless when they are unable to access their devices, constantly check notifications, and spend excessive time online at the expense of offline responsibilities. Common symptoms include reduced attention span, sleep disturbances, social withdrawal, and decreased productivity.

From a consumer behaviour perspective, digital addiction is closely linked to consumption patterns. Digital platforms are designed to maximize user engagement through features such as personalized content, instant feedback, and social validation mechanisms. These features create a cycle of anticipation and reward, reinforcing repetitive usage behaviour. Over time, this habitual consumption becomes ingrained in daily routines, leading to addiction-like behaviour.

Digital addiction is not limited to entertainment or social networking. It also extends to online shopping, where impulsive buying behaviour is encouraged through targeted advertisements, flash sales, and one-click purchasing options. As a result, digital addiction influences not only lifestyle choices but also financial behaviour and consumption decisions.

Table : 1 - Types of Digital Addiction Based on Purpose of Use

Type	Purpose of Use	Behavioural Outcome
Communication-Based Addiction	Messaging and calling	Constant phone checking (Joseph et al., 2022)
Entertainment-Based Addiction	Videos, music, memes	Prolonged screen time(Shiferaw, 2025)
Information-Based Addiction	News, blogs, browsing	Information overload (Dave et al., 2014; Joseph et al., 2022)
Validation-Based Addiction	Likes, comments, shares	Low self-esteem without

		feedback (Times of India, 2025)
Transaction-Based Addiction	Shopping, payments	Impulsive buying behaviour(Kundapur et al., 2020)

3. Young Adults as Digital Consumers

Young adults represent one of the most significant segments of digital consumers. They are early adopters of new technologies and are highly responsive to digital marketing strategies. This demographic group relies heavily on digital platforms for communication, education, entertainment, and shopping. Their lifestyle is deeply intertwined with digital consumption, making them more susceptible to digital addiction.

As consumers, young adults are exposed to a continuous flow of digital stimuli, including advertisements, influencer endorsements, notifications, and social media trends. These stimuli shape their preferences, attitudes, and purchasing decisions. The desire for social acceptance and peer validation further intensifies digital engagement, particularly on social media platforms.

Young adults often perceive digital consumption as an essential part of modern life rather than a potential risk. This perception normalizes excessive usage and makes it difficult to distinguish between healthy engagement and addictive behaviour. The integration of digital technologies into academic and professional environments further blurs this distinction, as online presence is often required for productivity and networking.

Understanding young adults as digital consumers is crucial for analysing digital addiction. Their consumption behaviour reflects broader societal trends, including the shift toward digital lifestyles, convenience-oriented consumption, and experience-based marketing. However, without adequate awareness and self-regulation, these trends can lead to negative lifestyle outcomes.

4. Factors Influencing Digital Addiction among Young Adults

Several factors contribute to the development of digital addiction among young adults.

4.1 Social media engagement: Social networking platforms are designed to encourage continuous interaction through likes, comments, shares, and notifications. These features create a sense of social validation and belonging, which reinforces frequent usage.

4.2 Digital marketing and platform design: Algorithms that personalize content based on user behaviour increase the relevance and appeal of digital content, making it difficult for users to disengage. Features such as infinite scrolling, autoplay videos, and reward systems promote prolonged engagement and habitual usage.

4.3 Peer influence: Peer Influence also plays a crucial role in digital addiction. Young adults often feel social pressure to remain active online to maintain relationships and stay updated with trends. Fear of missing out (FOMO) drives frequent checking of social media and messaging platforms, contributing to addictive behaviour.

4.4 Lifestyle Factors: Lifestyle factors such as academic stress, lack of recreational opportunities, and urban living conditions further increase reliance on digital platforms for relaxation and entertainment. Digital devices offer an easily accessible escape from stress, reinforcing their usage as a coping mechanism.

5. Lifestyle Transformation Due to Digital Addiction

Digital addiction has significantly transformed the lifestyle of young adults. One of the most noticeable changes is the shift in daily routines. Excessive screen time reduces participation in physical activities, outdoor recreation, and face-to-face social interactions. This sedentary lifestyle increases the risk of physical health issues such as eye strain, poor posture, and sleep disturbances.

Social relationships are also affected by digital addiction. While digital platforms facilitate online connectivity, excessive usage often leads to superficial interactions and reduced quality of offline relationships. Young adults may prioritize virtual communication over real-world interactions, leading to social isolation and weakened interpersonal skills.

Digital addiction influences time management and productivity. Prolonged engagement with social media, gaming, or streaming services distracts individuals from academic and

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professional responsibilities. Multitasking with digital devices reduces concentration and efficiency, affecting performance and goal achievement.

From a consumer behaviour perspective, lifestyle transformation is reflected in changing consumption patterns. Young adults increasingly prefer digital services over physical experiences, such as online shopping instead of in-store purchases and digital entertainment instead of outdoor activities. These changes reshape market demand and influence business strategies.

Table 2 - Types of Lifestyle Changes Caused by Digital Addiction

Lifestyle	Type of Change	Impact
Physical Health	Reduced activity	Fatigue, eye strain
Mental Health	Increased anxiety	Stress and mood swings
Social Life	Virtual preference	Reduced real-life bonding
Academic Life	Attention issues	Lower performance
Financial Behaviour	Impulsive spending	Poor savings habit

6. Impact of Digital Addiction on Social Behaviour

Digital dependence has an extensive effect on the social behaviour of young adults. The social media influences self perception and social comparison because people are in a permanent comparison with social media portraying other people. This comparison may cause dissatisfaction, anxiety, and decreased self-esteem.

Over-digitization also has an impact on communication patterns. Instant messaging and social media can improve the speed of communication, but can also decrease the richness and emotional nature of communication. The offline communication skills, like empathy and active listening, can decrease as a result of less offline communication.

Family relationships can be also modified by digital addiction. Young adults can spend more time on electronic devices than spend time with family members, which results in lack of communication and emotional bonding. This change impact social support and cohesion.

Although these issues exist, digital platforms can also be used to connect socially, be activated, and build communities. The most important aspect is the balance between virtual and face-to-face communication so that social behaviour could be healthy.

7. Consumer Behaviour Perspective on Digital Addiction

From a consumer behaviour perspective, digital addiction can be viewed as an outcome of repeated consumption reinforced by external stimuli. Digital platforms employ behavioural economics principles, such as variable rewards and instant gratification, to influence user behaviour. These strategies increase engagement and consumption, often without the user's conscious awareness.

Marketing strategies play a significant role in shaping digital addiction. Influencer marketing, targeted advertising, and personalized content create a sense of relevance and emotional connection, encouraging frequent interaction. Young adults, as impressionable consumers, are particularly responsive to these strategies.

Understanding digital addiction as a consumer behaviour issue highlights the ethical responsibility of marketers and platform designers. Responsible marketing practices should prioritize user well-being and promote balanced digital consumption rather than exploit addictive tendencies.

7.1 Screen Addiction: Key Statistics in India

New Indian Express (Jul 27, 2025) reported that India has over 70 crore internet users and 60 crore smartphones, and studies show that 22% of children aged 9–17 in Maharashtra spend more than 6 hours daily on screens, while over 60% nationwide spend at least 3 hours on mobile gaming or social media. Children under five average 2.2 hours of screen time per day, more than double pediatric recommendations. Among youth, 25% of Delhi university students show smartphone addiction, rising to 33% among males, and 27% of young adults (18–24) exhibit Problematic Internet Use. Gender-based impacts are evident, with 35% of young women reporting anxiety from social comparison and 15% of urban young men showing compulsive gaming behaviour, clearly demonstrating that excessive digital exposure is a measurable and escalating mental health concern.

8. Role of Education and Awareness

Education and awareness are essential in addressing digital addiction among young adults. Digital literacy programs can help individuals understand the psychological and behavioural mechanisms underlying digital addiction. Awareness of screen time management, mindful usage, and digital well-being tools empowers young adults to regulate their digital consumption. Educational institutions play a crucial role in promoting healthy digital habits. Incorporating digital well-being topics into curricula and encouraging offline activities can reduce excessive reliance on digital platforms. Parents and guardians also influence digital behaviour through guidance and role modeling.

Public awareness campaigns and policy interventions can further support responsible digital consumption. Collaboration between educators, policymakers, and technology companies is necessary to create a digital environment that promotes well-being and sustainable lifestyles.

9. Suggestions for Reducing Digital Addiction

Several strategies can help reduce digital addiction among young adults. Setting screen time limits and using digital well-being applications can promote self-regulation. Encouraging offline hobbies, physical activities, and social interactions provides healthy alternatives to digital engagement. Mindful consumption practices, such as intentional usage and periodic digital detox, can help individuals regain control over their digital habits. Marketers and platform designers should adopt ethical practices that prioritize user well-being, such as reducing intrusive notifications and promoting meaningful engagement.

10. Conclusion

Digital addiction is a growing concern in the digital age, particularly among young adults whose lifestyles are deeply intertwined with technology. From a consumer behaviour perspective, digital addiction is shaped by marketing strategies, platform design, social influence, and consumption patterns. While digital technologies offer significant benefits, excessive and uncontrolled usage leads to lifestyle transformation, social challenges, and reduced well-being. This paper highlights the need for a balanced approach to digital consumption that promotes responsible usage and sustainable lifestyles. By fostering awareness, ethical marketing practices,

International Conference on Green Capitalism Reimagined: Evolving Ecosystems of Commerce and Sustainability and supportive educational initiatives, it is possible to harness the benefits of digital technologies while minimizing their negative impact. Addressing digital addiction is essential for ensuring the holistic development and well-being of young adults in an increasingly digital world.

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