

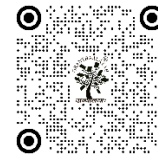
Original Article

FROM TELEVISION TO MOBILE: EXPLORING THE CHANGING AUDIENCE CONSUMPTION OF PUNJABI MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

The Punjabi music industry is undergoing a significant transformation in audience consumption patterns, marked by a gradual transition from traditional television platforms to portable audio and mobile streaming services. This shift reflects a broader reorganization of media engagement, driven by technological advancements, affordable mobile data, and the rise of on-demand viewing cultures. The study examines the underlying factors influencing this change, with particular emphasis on technology adoption, evolving cultural practices, and shifts in user behavior. Drawing upon secondary literature, media industry reports, and theories of audience behavior, the paper analyzes how the accessibility of smartphones, reduced data costs, and the increasing preference for personalized, mobile-first content are reshaping the listening habits of Punjabi music consumers. Media convergence theory and audience behaviour studies, this study examines the shift from television to mobile platforms in Punjabi music consumption. It explores how smartphone accessibility, algorithms, and interactivity have transformed audience engagement, while highlighting implications for cultural preservation, content diversity, and the strategies of regional media producers. I am intending to provide a conceptual framework in terms of how to understand cultural and economic implications of this transformation in addition to providing a foundation of research and investigation of the digital consumption patterns centering on the region.

Keywords: Punjabi Music, Audience Migration, Mobile Streaming, Media Convergence, Digital Disruption, Viewing Habits

INTRODUCTION

The Punjabi music industry has become one of the most dynamic and influential sectors of India's cultural economy. Renowned for its rhythmic energy and lyrical innovation, Punjabi music has grown beyond its regional base to achieve global visibility, particularly among diaspora communities in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Punjabi artists now appear on global charts and collaborate with international performers, reflecting the music's adaptability as both a local tradition and a global cultural product. Television historically played a pivotal role in shaping this industry. Channels such as PTC Punjabi, MH1, and 9X Tashan curated music videos, showcased talent, and introduced audiences to new trends. For nearly two decades, television acted as a cultural hub, building star power and reinforcing Punjabi identity. Its model, however, relied on fixed schedules and gatekeeping, offering limited audience control or interactivity. This traditional model has been disrupted by the rise of digital platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, Gaana, and Wynk. YouTube, in particular, has become central to Punjabi music's globalization, generating billions of annual streams and offering artists direct access to audiences without channel mediation. Streaming services not only democratize

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access but also use algorithmic recommendations and curated playlists to shape what listeners discover. Success today depends less on television airplay and more on platform visibility and audience engagement. Several factors have fueled this migration from television to mobile apps. The most critical are technological: the spread of affordable smartphones and the sharp reduction in mobile data costs, especially after the entry of Reliance Jio in 2016. These developments made high-speed streaming accessible across Punjab, including semi-urban and rural areas. Cultural factors have also played a role. Audiences increasingly prefer on-demand listening to rigid schedules, while personalization through playlists and recommendations has become integral to music consumption. Social media features—likes, comments, shares—have further transformed audiences from passive viewers into active participants who influence trends and amplify reach. This paper examines the cultural and industrial implications of this shift. Three guiding questions shape the study: (1) What technological, cultural, and economic factors are driving the migration from television to mobile platforms? (2) How are audience habits evolving within this transition? (3) What consequences does this migration hold for the Punjabi music industry locally and globally? The analysis draws on media convergence, digital disruption, and audience-behavior theories. Media convergence explains how older and newer media forms overlap, while audience studies highlight the shift from passive viewership to participatory cultures. Digital disruption provides a framework for understanding how streaming platforms transform revenue models, visibility, and audience reach. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The literature review synthesizes existing studies on media migration and globalization of regional music industries. The methodology outlines the research design and data sources. The findings explore three themes: technology adoption, audience habits, and cultural-economic implications. The discussion connects these themes to broader theoretical debates and cross-cultural comparisons, while the conclusion reflects on the future trajectory of Punjabi music in the digital era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The trajectory of Punjabi music consumption reflects a broader transformation in audience behavior across India. Regional television channels such as PTC Punjabi, MH1, and 9X Tashan once functioned as cultural hubs where music videos were premiered, artists gained visibility, and audiences encountered new trends. These channels symbolized both entertainment and identity reinforcement, particularly for Punjabi speakers across the state and diaspora communities abroad. Yet their reliance on fixed programming schedules, gatekeeping practices, and advertiser-driven economics increasingly felt restrictive in an era where audiences desired flexibility and choice. As digital technologies expanded, these traditional structures struggled to maintain relevance. The shift toward mobile platforms thus illustrates a cultural and industrial migration, with digital media offering audiences personalization and immediacy absent in television models [Schreffler \(2012\)](#). The lens of media convergence provides critical insights into this transition. [Ahmed and Hazra \(2017\)](#) define convergence as the coming together of old and new media, a process that empowers audiences by collapsing traditional boundaries and enabling flexible, multi-platform access. In the Punjabi music context, convergence explains how content once confined to broadcast schedules is now instantly available on YouTube, Spotify, and Gaana. This transition reflects not just technological innovation but also a transformation in audience agency. Viewers have become active participants in shaping what circulates, amplifying songs through likes, comments, and shares. Mobile streaming, therefore, does not merely displace television; it reconfigures the terms of cultural participation. A defining feature of this migration is the central role of algorithmic recommendation. [Afchar et al. \(2022\)](#) argue that explainability in recommender systems is essential, as algorithmic curation now determines much of what users encounter. For Punjabi music, this implies that visibility is increasingly dictated not by television programmers but by opaque algorithmic systems. Viral success often depends less on artistic innovation and more on how songs are positioned in playlists or recommended feeds. Complementing this perspective, [Deldjoo et al. \(2021\)](#) trace the evolution of content-driven recommendation, where features such as rhythm, timbre, and lyrics are used to personalize user experiences. These advances make music discovery efficient and engaging, yet they also raise concerns about narrowing exposure, as users are repeatedly directed toward similar content. The importance of infrastructural scalability also comes into play. [Sun \(2022\)](#) proposes an optimization model for recommendation based on clustering techniques that enable efficient personalization in large-scale data environments. Such methods are particularly relevant in India, where millions of users consume Punjabi music simultaneously across platforms. Without scalable systems, personalized streaming at this magnitude would not be feasible. These innovations show how technical infrastructures underpin cultural shifts, enabling entire populations to migrate from television to mobile streaming with minimal friction. Cultural context, however, shapes these transitions in profound ways. [Schedl \(2017\)](#), using the LFM-1b dataset, demonstrates that music preferences are strongly tied to national and cultural identity, highlighting the importance of regional contexts in understanding digital consumption. Punjabi music provides a clear example: audiences are drawn to sounds that reinforce linguistic and cultural identity, even as global collaborations expand the genre's reach. Yet algorithms trained on global datasets often fail to capture such nuances, raising the risk of homogenizing diverse cultural outputs. Bias in recommender systems compounds this challenge. [Schedl et al. \(2018\)](#) identify ongoing issues in music recommendation research, particularly algorithmic biases that privilege dominant artists and mainstream content. Within the Punjabi industry, this has tangible consequences: global crossover stars like Diljit Dosanjh and AP Dhillon may dominate visibility, while folk musicians and experimental performers struggle for attention. These biases reproduce inequalities within the digital ecosystem, mirroring the gatekeeping once associated with television. The dynamics of visibility are further illuminated by [Wu et al. \(2019\)](#), who examine attention flow in online video networks. Their findings suggest that visibility itself operates as a form of cultural capital, determining which songs or artists dominate public discourse. For Punjabi music, this means that viral tracks gain exponential momentum

through attention feedback loops, often independent of artistic quality. The ability to harness attention has become as important as musical innovation in determining success. At the same time, cultural and diasporic dimensions remain central. Schreffler (2012) emphasizes how Punjabi music contributes to identity formation, positioning musicians as cultural representatives within both local and global contexts. For diaspora audiences in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, Punjabi music becomes a bridge to heritage, sustaining linguistic and cultural ties across generations. Lightman (2022) extends this argument through his study of Bhangra, demonstrating how diasporic communities negotiate between tradition and innovation via technological mediation. His work illustrates that mobile platforms not only distribute content but also reshape cultural meaning, enabling diasporic users to both preserve and reinvent identity. In this environment, ethical considerations emerge as increasingly significant. Furini (2024) advocates for recommender systems that prioritize social connection and shared experiences rather than focusing exclusively on individual personalization. This perspective is especially relevant to Punjabi music, which has historically thrived on community participation, whether through festivals, weddings, or diaspora gatherings. Designing digital systems that foreground sociality could help preserve these communal elements in an era dominated by algorithmic individualization. Taken together, the literature reveals that Punjabi music's migration from television to mobile platforms is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by technology, culture, and audience behavior. Traditional television channels laid the groundwork for visibility and cultural identity, but digital platforms redefined the conditions of access, discovery, and participation. Algorithmic systems restructured visibility, diaspora audiences amplified global reach, and ethical debates highlighted the need for more inclusive recommendation design. Yet, despite the richness of scholarship on algorithms, convergence, and diaspora, there remains a distinct research gap: few studies focus specifically on Punjabi audiences' migration from TV to mobile streaming platforms. This paper seeks to address that gap by situating Punjabi music within broader debates on digital disruption, convergence, and globalization, while offering focused insights into one of India's most dynamic cultural industries.

Table 1

Table 1 Key Research on Audience Migration and Digital Media			
Author(s)	Year	Focus of Study	Key Findings and Relevance
Afchar et al.	2022	Explainability in recommender systems	Algorithms determine visibility; transparency critical for Punjabi music platforms.
Ahmed and Hazra	2017	Media convergence	Audiences empowered by multi-platform access, shaping Punjabi migration.
Deldjoo, Schedl, and Knees	2021	Content-driven recommendation	Personalization engages users but risks narrowing exposure.
Furini	2024	Ethical recommender design	Reconnecting music with communal experiences in digital listening.
Lightman	2022	Diasporic Bhangra	Technology mediates between tradition and hybridity in Punjabi music.
Schedl	2017	Country-specific preferences	Music choices tied to culture; Punjabi preferences highlight strong identity links.
Schedl et al.	2018	Challenges in recommendation	Algorithmic bias privileges mainstream, risking folk marginalization.
Schreffler	2012	Punjabi music identity	Musicians as cultural representatives linking Punjab and diaspora.
Sun	2022	Scalable recommendation models	Efficient clustering supports personalization at a massive scale.
Wu, Rizoiu, and Xie	2019	Attention flow in networks	Viral visibility demonstrates the cultural power of attention economies.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach to examine the transition of Punjabi music audiences from television to mobile platforms. A qualitative framework is appropriate because the research seeks to analyze not only technological and economic drivers but also cultural meanings, behaviors, and practices associated with media consumption. The interpretive orientation allows for contextualizing industry shifts within broader theoretical frameworks, particularly those of media convergence and digital disruption, while foregrounding how audiences negotiate and reshape their engagement with Punjabi music.

DATA SOURCES

The research relies on secondary data, drawing from three key categories. First, academic literature provides conceptual and theoretical foundations, including studies of media convergence (Jenkins, 2006), post-network television (Lotz, 2014), and platform studies (Lobato, 2019). These works guide the analysis of how audiences and industries adapt to evolving media ecosystems. Second, industry reports serve as a primary source of empirical evidence. Reports by [Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and EY. \(2023\)](#), [KPMG \(2022\)](#), [TRAI \(2022\)](#), and [IAMAI \(2023\)](#) provide insights into media consumption trends, smartphone penetration, and the impact of affordable data in India. These quantitative findings contextualize the audience shift in the Punjabi music sector. Third, trade publications such as Rolling Stone India and Music Ally offer timely accounts of artist strategies, digital platforms, and industry perspectives. Together, these sources allow for triangulation of perspectives across academic, industrial, and cultural domains. [Dutta et al. \(2025\)](#)

ANALYTICAL LENS

The analysis is informed by three interrelated theoretical perspectives. Audience-behavior theory provides insights into how consumers shift from passive viewership to active participation in digital environments. Media convergence theory highlights the coexistence and interplay of traditional television with emerging digital platforms, illustrating the hybrid nature of the current media landscape. Finally, digital disruption frameworks explain how technological innovations, algorithmic recommendation, and mobile-first platforms restructure the economic and cultural foundations of media industries.

LIMITATIONS

The study acknowledges certain limitations. Its reliance on secondary data means that findings are interpreted through existing sources rather than direct fieldwork or primary audience surveys. Furthermore, the rapidly evolving nature of the digital media landscape creates challenges for capturing long-term patterns, as technological shifts and audience preferences continue to change. Despite these constraints, the methodology provides a strong foundation for understanding the key dynamics of audience migration in the Punjabi music industry.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The migration of Punjabi music audiences from television to mobile platforms emerges from interconnected shifts in technology, audience behavior, and cultural economy. This section analyzes these dynamics across three themes: (1) technology adoption and affordability, (2) changing audience habits, and (3) cultural and economic implications.

THEME 1: TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AND AFFORDABILITY

The spread of smartphones and cheap data transformed Punjabi music consumption. Channels such as PTC Punjabi and MH1 once anchored cultural circulation but relied on fixed programming and limited audience control. With smartphones, music shifted from the living room to portable, individualized devices. The 2016 entry of Reliance Jio marked a decisive turning point. Data costs dropped by over 90%, enabling high-quality streaming even in rural Punjab. Mobile-first access allowed users to engage anytime and anywhere, whether in Chandigarh or Toronto, synchronizing audiences across borders. Unlike television's rigid scheduling, mobile platforms empowered users to access songs instantly, accelerating migration "from TV to tap." Smartphone adoption also shaped diasporic patterns. Families abroad previously depended on satellite TV for delayed access to Punjabi content. Now, YouTube and Spotify synchronize releases worldwide, allowing simultaneous participation in cultural trends. This created a unified global audience for Punjabi music, reinforcing cultural identity while expanding commercial potential.

Thus, affordability and access laid the foundation for the industry's digital turn, without which cultural and behavioral shifts would not have been as pronounced.

THEME 2: CHANGING AUDIENCE HABITS

Equally significant were shifts in audience practices. Traditional television created appointment-based viewing, while mobile streaming enabled on-demand consumption. Users began curating their own schedules, aligning music with daily moods rather than channel programming. Central to this behavioral change is algorithmic discovery. Recommender systems on YouTube and Spotify curate playlists and auto-suggest related songs, making virality a function of platform visibility. For Punjabi artists, algorithms now determine stardom as much as musical quality. The rise of short-form content has further reshaped habits. Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts amplify Punjabi tracks in bite-sized snippets, embedding them into global meme cultures. This shift reflects how audiences engage with music not only by listening but also by performing and remixing. Participation has become active rather than passive. Likes, shares, and comments allow fans to influence visibility, producing feedback loops that amplify viral tracks. A song that

might once have faded after TV rotation can now circulate endlessly through social engagement. In this sense, audiences are no longer just consumers but co-producers of cultural value, a shift that television could never facilitate.

Table 2

Table 2 Shift in Audience Behavior from TV to Mobile		
Dimension	Television Channels	Mobile Platforms
Access	Fixed schedules	On-demand, global
Discovery	VJ/curated	Algorithmic playlists
Content Format	Full-length videos	Reels, Shorts, remixes
Participation	Passive	Likes, shares, co-creation
Audience Role	Consumers	Co-creators

These behavioral changes reveal why television struggled to retain audiences: mobile aligns more closely with digital-native expectations of autonomy, interactivity, and speed.

THEME 3: CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

The migration carries profound cultural and economic effects. One of the most visible shifts is the rise of independent artists who bypass television gatekeepers. Earlier, emerging singers had to negotiate with TV executives for limited slots. Today, they can directly upload songs to YouTube or release them on Spotify, reaching global audiences without intermediaries. This disintermediation has fostered a surge of experimentation and diversity, as artists no longer need to conform to television's commercial priorities. Second, the Punjabi diaspora magnifies this shift. Communities in Canada, the UK, and the US use digital platforms to connect with heritage, amplifying Punjabi songs globally. Cross-border virality now depends as much on diaspora engagement as on domestic audiences. Artists increasingly craft hybrid aesthetics—mixing Punjabi lyrics with hip-hop beats or trap elements—to appeal to both local and global listeners. Economically, revenue streams have reorganized. Television advertising has declined, while streaming monetization—via ads, subscriptions, and royalties—has expanded. Artists also leverage digital visibility to secure brand endorsements and boost live show attendance. Festivals and concerts, once promoted through television ads, are now marketed via YouTube teasers and Instagram campaigns, showing how the digital ecosystem integrates production, promotion, and consumption. Yet, risks remain. Algorithmic curation tends to favor mainstream hits, creating homogenization and reducing exposure to folk or experimental music. Similarly, globalized aesthetics may lead to cultural dilution, as artists prioritize crossover appeal over authenticity. For a genre rooted in regional identity, these tensions raise questions about the long-term balance between cultural preservation and commercial globalization.

Table 3

Table 3 Impact of Audience Migration on Punjabi Music Industry		
Dimension	Television Era	Mobile Streaming Era
Artist Access	Limited slots	Open uploads
Diaspora Role	Satellite, delayed	Real-time, global
Revenue Model	Ads only	Ads + subscriptions + live
Cultural Identity	Regional focus	Hybrid global styles
Risks	Gatekeeping	Algorithmic bias, dilution

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Punjabi music's migration from television to mobile is driven by infrastructure, behavior, and culture. Smartphones and cheap data expanded access; audiences embraced personalized, participatory consumption; and digital platforms reshaped industry economics. Independent artists gained opportunities, diasporic networks amplified reach, and monetization shifted from TV ads to streaming. At the same time, risks of homogenization and cultural dilution remain. The dominance of algorithms means that audience visibility is often governed by opaque systems, potentially undermining diversity. Still, the opportunities outweigh the constraints: Punjabi music has become one of the most globalized regional genres, driven by diasporic circulation and digital interactivity. Ultimately, this migration is more than a shift of platforms. It represents a reorganization of media power in which cultural authority has moved from television programmers to a combination of algorithms and audiences. For Punjabi music, this has meant

unprecedented global reach and democratized production, but also the challenge of protecting authenticity in a rapidly commercializing ecosystem.

DISCUSSION

The case of Punjabi music exemplifies how media convergence reshapes regional cultural industries. Television channels like PTC Punjabi and MH1 once dominated music circulation, serving as cultural gatekeepers that shaped visibility. The rise of mobile streaming platforms, however, has disrupted this model. Audiences now favor YouTube, Spotify, and Gaana, bypassing television's rigid schedules. This shift aligns with convergence theory, where content flows across platforms, reshaped by technological infrastructures and audience practices [Singh \(2022\)](#). Punjabi music illustrates how a regional cultural economy transitions from television to digital ecosystems while engaging global circuits. Independent artists leverage these platforms to reach audiences directly, further decentralizing traditional media power. This transformation extends to audience behavior. Once passive viewers of linear television, audiences now actively participate in digital spaces. Platforms enable liking, sharing, remixing, and commenting, creating feedback loops that amplify visibility. Audiences have evolved into prosumers—both producers and consumers of cultural value. Diasporic communities, particularly in Canada, the UK, and the US, enhance this dynamic by curating playlists and creating user-generated content, embedding Punjabi music in transnational digital cultures. This interactivity reflects a shift in media power, where audiences influence promotion and circulation [Singh \(2022\)](#). Industrial structures have also adapted. Television channels, once reliant on advertising, face declining viewership, prompting pivots to streaming strategies. Many broadcasters have launched digital platforms or partnered with YouTube channels to remain relevant. Meanwhile, platformization empowers independent artists to bypass traditional intermediaries. As [Lal \(2023\)](#) observes, the Indian recorded music industry has been reshaped by platform capitalism, where success hinges on streams, likes, and algorithmic visibility rather than television ratings. This realignment underscores television's declining cultural authority and the rise of mobile-first ecosystems as the new infrastructure for Punjabi music. Punjabi music's trajectory mirrors global trends. [Verma et al. \(2025\)](#) The internationalization of K-Pop and Reggaeton highlights how digital platforms enable regional genres to transcend local boundaries through algorithmic visibility and diasporic amplification. Punjabi music follows suit, with diaspora communities driving its globalization. Industry surveys report that regional Indian genres, including Punjabi, achieved streaming growth rates above 80% in recent years (The Dialogue, 2025). These figures position Punjabi music as both a cultural tradition and a competitive global commodity in the digital economy. This transition raises questions about cultural continuity and disruption. Digital platforms democratize access, enabling independent artists and diasporic communities to sustain cultural identity. However, algorithmic recommendation systems risk homogenizing content by prioritizing commercially viable tracks. This tension reflects broader concerns in cultural globalization: how to preserve authenticity and tradition when algorithms dictate visibility. Punjabi music navigates this balance, maintaining folk and regional roots while facing pressures of global competition and digital optimization. In conclusion, Punjabi music's shift from television to mobile platforms encapsulates the interplay of convergence, audience transformation, and industrial restructuring. It highlights opportunities for democratization and global reach, alongside risks of cultural homogenization. Positioned at the intersection of tradition and digital innovation, Punjabi music thrives as a dynamic cultural form within the global digital ecosystem, reflecting both its rooted heritage and its adaptability to modern technological paradigms.

CONCLUSION

The migration from TV to tap in Punjabi music consumption represents a profound cultural and industrial turning point, reshaping how regional genres engage with global audiences. This shift, driven by the proliferation of smartphones, plummeting data costs, burgeoning diaspora demand, and algorithmic personalization, has fundamentally altered the media landscape. Affordable mobile technology, particularly post-2016 with Reliance Jio's market entry, democratized access, enabling seamless streaming across urban, rural, and international contexts. Diaspora communities in Canada, the UK, and the US have amplified this transition, using platforms like YouTube and Spotify to sustain cultural ties and propel Punjabi tracks into transnational circuits. Algorithmic recommendations have further personalized experiences, fostering discovery while embedding music in everyday digital routines. For audiences, this evolution signifies empowerment through on-demand access and participatory tools—likes, shares, remixes—that transform passive viewers into active prosumers. However, this comes with dependency on opaque algorithms, which may limit exposure to diverse content and reinforce echo chambers. Industrially, the implications are transformative: traditional television's gatekeeping has yielded to open uploads and direct artist-audience connections, spawning new monetization models. Revenue now flows from streaming royalties, subscriptions, ad shares, and data-driven endorsements, supplementing or supplanting TV advertising. This pivot has invigorated independent artists, fostering innovation and reducing barriers to entry, while legacy broadcasters adapt through digital partnerships. Culturally, the migration balances risks and rewards. On one hand, it facilitates global spread, hybridizing Punjabi sounds with international genres and enhancing visibility for diaspora-driven narratives. On the other, algorithmic biases risk homogenization, privileging commercial hits over folk traditions and potentially diluting regional authenticity amid global competition. Punjabi music thus navigates a delicate equilibrium, preserving heritage while embracing digital dynamism. Looking ahead, this study underscores the need for future research to deepen understanding. Primary audience surveys could capture nuanced consumption patterns, revealing how demographics influence platform preferences. Ethnographic

case studies might explore lived experiences in Punjabi households and diaspora communities, uncovering subtle cultural negotiations. Cross-regional comparisons—with genres like K-Pop or Reggaeton—would illuminate shared digital trajectories and unique local adaptations. By pursuing these avenues, scholars can better anticipate the evolving interplay of technology, culture, and economy in regional music industries, ensuring Punjabi music's vibrant legacy endures in the digital age.

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