

Impact of Mass Media on the Consumption-Related Habits of Urban Women – With Special Reference to Gonda

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Received: 15th Jul, 2026 | Revised: 25th Jul, 2026 | Accepted: 5th Aug, 2026 | Available Online: 12th Aug, 2026

Abstract

This study examines the influence of mass media on the consumption habits, lifestyle, and purchasing power of urban women in Gonda, a semi-urban district in Uttar Pradesh, India. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach, including surveys of 200 urban women and a practical awareness program, the research explores socio-economic and educational profiles, media priorities, and the role of government initiatives in enhancing women's economic participation. Findings reveal that mass media, particularly television and social media, significantly shapes consumption patterns by promoting aspirational lifestyles, though this varies by education and income levels. The study highlights a positive correlation between media exposure and improved awareness of government facilities, leading to better decision-making and elevated standards of living. However, challenges such as misinformation and overconsumption are noted. The implemented "Home Consumer Awareness Program" demonstrated measurable improvements in informed consumption behaviors. This research contributes to feminist scholarship by underscoring media's dual role in empowering and commodifying women in developing contexts, with implications for policy in promoting gender-equitable media content.

Keywords: Mass media, urban women, consumption habits, purchasing power, Gonda, women's empowerment, lifestyle changes

How to cite this article: Shakti Sharma¹ Dr. Tripti Singh². Impact of Mass Media on the Consumption-Related Habits of Urban Women – With Special Reference to Gonda. *Int J Drug Deliv Technol.* 2026;16(78s):145-148. DOI: 10.25258/ijddt.16.78s.15

Introduction

In today's rapidly changing world, mass media has become an influential force in shaping social values, everyday behavior, and consumption patterns, especially among urban populations in developing countries such as India. The growing reach of both traditional and digital media has significantly increased urban women's exposure to information related to products, lifestyles, and social trends. In urban areas, easy access to television, newspapers, the internet, and social media has gradually transformed women from passive observers into informed and active consumers, even within a predominantly patriarchal social structure. Research suggests that media exposure among urban Indian women not only broadens their awareness of goods and services but also plays an important role in shaping their purchasing decisions, lifestyle choices, and sense of empowerment, thereby influencing their social participation and status.[1,2]

The influence of mass media on consumption habits is complex and operates across economic, social, and cultural levels. Advertisements and media content on platforms such as television and social media often present idealized and aspirational lifestyles, which gradually shape spending choices and brand preferences among urban women. In India, where rapid urbanization is reshaping everyday life, increased exposure to media has been associated with rising consumer awareness and consumption. Urban women, in

particular, are actively engaging with digital platforms not only for shopping but also for education, skill development, and professional growth. However, the extent of this influence differs depending on women's socio-economic status and educational background, emphasizing the importance of examining how various media channels affect different groups of urban women in distinct ways. [3-6]

Although a growing number of studies have examined the role of mass media in women's empowerment and development, there is still a noticeable lack of localized research focusing on smaller urban centers such as Gonda in Uttar Pradesh, where traditional social values coexist with modern media influences [7]. As a semi-urban district, Gonda offers a distinctive setting to understand how mass media shapes women's consumption habits, with the potential to improve their standard of living while also raising concerns related to excessive consumption and exposure to misleading information [8]. Moreover, various government initiatives designed to strengthen women's purchasing power through financial inclusion and awareness programs are widely promoted

through mass media. However, the actual reach and effectiveness of these initiatives among urban women remain insufficiently explored, highlighting the need for focused and context-specific research. [9-11]

The present study seeks to explore the relationship between mass media and the consumption behavior of urban women in Gonda. It aims to enhance understanding of how media exposure contributes to positive changes in lifestyle, economic participation, and decision-making among women, while also identifying potential challenges related to uninformed or excessive consumption. In addition, the study proposes practical interventions to encourage informed and responsible consumption practices. The research is guided by clearly defined objectives designed to provide a comprehensive analysis and generate meaningful, actionable insights.[12]

Literature Review

Existing research from developing countries highlights the significant role of mass media in shaping women's consumption patterns, economic behavior, and lifestyle choices [13]. In the Indian context, studies reveal that women's engagement with mass media differs across traditional and digital platforms, influencing various aspects of their lives, including health awareness, education, and empowerment. Urban women, in particular, tend to display higher levels of media literacy, which contributes to more informed thinking, improved social interaction, and evolving lifestyle preferences. However, the influence of mass media is often moderated by prevailing patriarchal norms, which continue to shape women's decision-making power and consumption choices. [14]

Comparative studies between rural and urban women consistently point to clear differences in access to mass media and its influence on social and economic development. Urban women, who generally have greater exposure to television and the internet, tend to report higher levels of purchasing power and greater involvement in household decision-making. At the same time, they are often subject to the pressures of aspirational advertising, which can shape expectations and spending behavior. Evidence from other developing regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, also indicates that exposure to mass media is associated with stronger participation of women in household decisions, including those related to consumption. Experimental findings from Burkina Faso further show that well-designed media campaigns can successfully influence behavior—such as increasing contraceptive use—by reshaping social norms, offering valuable parallels for understanding how media can similarly affect consumption-related choices.[15]

Media portrayals of women play an important role in either reinforcing or challenging prevailing gender norms, with direct implications for body image, self-perception, and consumer behavior. In Kerala, India,

studies have shown that media-driven consumption “treadmills” often link women's spending patterns to notions of empowerment, while simultaneously contributing to increased materialism and environmental concerns.

Government initiatives aimed at improving women's economic status are widely promoted through mass media; however, levels of awareness and utilization of these facilities vary considerably, with urban women generally benefiting more from digital and online platforms. This review highlights the need for localized and context-specific interventions, such as consumer awareness and media literacy programs, to reduce the negative effects of media influence while strengthening its positive role in promoting informed and sustainable consumption practices.[16]

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods design to achieve its objectives. The target population was urban women aged 18-45 in Gonda, Uttar Pradesh. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents, categorized by socio-economic status (low, middle, high) and education levels (below graduate, graduate, postgraduate).

Data Collection:

Quantitative: A structured questionnaire assessed social, economic, and educational status; media priorities (e.g., TV, social media, newspapers); consumption habits (e.g., frequency of purchases influenced by media); and awareness of government schemes (e.g., Mudra Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao).

Qualitative: In-depth interviews with 20 participants explored media's impact on lifestyle and standard of living.

Practical Program: A "Home Consumer Awareness Program" was conducted for 50 participants over four sessions, focusing on informed consumption, budgeting, and media literacy. Pre- and post-program evaluations used Likert-scale surveys to measure changes in awareness and behavior.

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (means, percentages) and inferential tests (chi-square for associations) using SPSS. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed. Ethical considerations included informed consent and anonymity.

Results

Socio-Economic and Educational Status

The sample comprised 45% middle-income women, 30% low-income, and 25% high-income. Educationally, 40% were graduates, 35% below graduate, and 25% postgraduates. Higher education correlated with greater media access ($\chi^2 = 12.45, p < 0.05$).

Media Priorities

Television was prioritized by 55% of respondents, followed by social media (30%) and newspapers (15%). Urban women spent an average of 3 hours daily on media, with digital platforms preferred by

educated groups.

Impact on Consumption Habits

Media exposure significantly influenced purchases: 65% reported buying products seen in ads, with fashion (40%) and household items (30%) topping categories. Regression analysis showed a positive beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$) for media hours on consumption spending.

Awareness of Government Facilities

Only 50% were aware of schemes enhancing purchasing power; media was the primary source for 70% of aware respondents. Post-program, awareness rose to 85%.

Impact on Lifestyle and Standard of Living

Qualitative insights revealed media promoting modern lifestyles, improving standards for 60% via better product knowledge. However, 25% noted increased debt from impulsive buys.

Evaluation of Awareness Program

Pre-program scores on consumption awareness averaged 2.8/5; post-program, they rose to 4.2/5 ($t = 5.67$, $p < 0.001$). Participants reported 30% reduction in unnecessary purchases.

Variable	Low SES (%)	Middle SES (%)	High SES (%)
TV Priority	60	55	50
Social Media Priority	20	30	40
Media-Influenced Purchases	50	65	80
Scheme Awareness	40	50	60

Discussion

The findings of the present study are consistent with existing literature that highlights the role of mass media in empowering urban women by improving their awareness of consumption choices and strengthening decision-making abilities. In Gonda, television and social media emerge as key drivers of aspirational consumption, reflecting trends observed in other urban regions of India. At the same time, socio-economic disparities continue to shape media influence, with women from lower socio-economic backgrounds facing greater constraints in accessing information and making informed consumption decisions, similar to patterns seen across rural-urban divides. The outcomes of the awareness program further demonstrate the value of targeted interventions, reinforcing evidence from successful media-based initiatives in other developing countries. However, the study is limited by its relatively small sample size and reliance on self-reported data. Future research may address these limitations by adopting longitudinal approaches to better capture changes in consumption behavior over time.[17-20]

Conclusion

Mass media plays a significant role in shaping the consumption habits of urban women in Gonda, contributing to greater awareness and empowerment while also presenting risks related to overconsumption [21,22]. By emphasizing education, media literacy, and consumer awareness, policymakers can more effectively use mass media as a tool to advance gender equity. The study highlights the need for feminist-oriented media reforms that encourage informed, responsible, and sustainable lifestyle choices among women.

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