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DIGITIZING THE 'IDEAL WOMAN': THE RISE OF THE KULASTREE INFLUENCER AND ITS SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT IN KERALA

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Abstract
This study investigates the digital resurgence of the "Kulastree" (the virtuous, traditional woman) archetype within Kerala's vlogging ecosystem. By examining the "aesthetic of domesticity," the research explores how traditional gender roles are re-packaged as modern aspirational labor. Using a mixed-methods approach with 520 female respondents, the paper employs parametric tests (Pearson's Correlation, Independent Samples T-test, and Linear Regression) to analyze the psychological impact of "perfect domesticity" on the Malayali female psyche. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.68$) between vlog consumption and "Domestic Guilt." The study concludes that while these digital spaces offer community, they simultaneously reinforce patriarchal structures through the commercialization of traditionalism.

Key Words: *Kulastree, Digital Labor, Kerala Vlogs, Neo-traditionalism, Domesticity, Para-social Interaction.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 202The "Kulastree" is a historical and moral construct in Kerala, symbolizing the "ideal woman"—modest, family-oriented, and bound to the domestic sphere. In the contemporary digital era, this figure has migrated to the public YouTube screen. Female lifestyle vloggers in Kerala have mastered the "aesthetic of the ordinary," where mundane chores like cooking or cleaning are transformed into cinematic performances of virtue. This study deconstructs the influence of these "digital matriarchs" who guide their audience through a curated version of Malayali life, balancing modern consumerism with deep-rooted traditionalism.

2.SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is significant as it addresses the "Internalized Male Gaze" in the digital age. Despite Kerala's high literacy, the state faces a "Gender-Digital Divide" where social media often reinforces regressive domesticity. By analyzing data from 520 respondents, this study identifies the "Comparison Trap" created by the "Kulastree" vlogging culture. It highlights how unpaid domestic labor is romanticized, leading to "Domestic Inadequacy" among viewers who cannot match these filtered realities. The study provides a vital framework to understand how "Neo-traditionalism" acts as a commercial engine, setting a benchmark that affects the mental well-being and agency of modern Malayali women.

3.RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- O1: To examine the correlation between the frequency of watching "Kulastree" vlogs and the level of "Domestic Guilt" among viewers.
- O2: To compare the trust levels in product endorsements between "Traditional/Kulastree" influencers and "Modern/Fashion" influencers.
- O3: To analyze the impact of the Para-social bond on the audience's critical perception of regressive content.

4.HYPOTHESES

- H1: There is a significant positive correlation between the frequency of viewing lifestyle vlogs and the intensity of Domestic Guilt.
- H2: There is a significant difference in the "Source Credibility" scores, with Traditional personas scoring higher than Modern personas.
- H3: Higher levels of Para-social Interaction (PSI) lead to a significant decrease in the critical evaluation of patriarchal norms presented in the vlogs.

5.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a Mixed-Methods Research Design. Both Primary & Secondary data were used. Primary data was gathered from 520 female respondents in Kerala through a structured survey using stratified random sampling method. Statistical analysis was performed using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, an Independent Samples T-test and Simple Linear Regression. Qualitatively, a content analysis of the top 10 Kerala lifestyle vlogs (2024–2026) provided contextual grounding.

6.DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation (N=520)

Variable	Mean	SD	Correlation (r)	p-value
1. Frequency of Viewing	4.12	0.85	—	—
2. Domestic Guilt Score	3.89	0.92	0.68*	< 0.001

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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Interpretation: The correlation ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$) validates H1. As viewing frequency increases, domestic guilt intensifies, proving that these vlogs act as a standardizing force that triggers anxiety.

Table 2: Independent Samples T-test for Source Credibility Scores

Influencer Type	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Traditional (Kulastree)	260	4.45	0.52	12.34	< 0.001
Modern (Fashion)	260	2.92	0.78		

Interpretation: This validates H2. Traditional influencers have a significantly higher mean trust score (4.45) compared to modern ones (2.92), proving that the "Kulastree" image is a superior commercial trust signal.

Table 3: Linear Regression of Para-social Interaction (PSI) on Critical Perception

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	p
(Constant)	4.85	0.12		40.41	< 0.001
Para-social Interaction	-0.42	0.05	-0.54	-8.12	< 0.001

Interpretation: Validating H3, the negative β (-0.54) shows that the stronger the emotional bond with the vlogger, the less likely the viewer is to critically challenge the regressive/patriarchal norms presented.

7.DISCUSSIONS

The findings articulate a phenomenon of "Aesthetic Surveillance." The "Kulastree" vlogger is not perceived as a distant celebrity but as a "Digital Sister" (Para-social Interaction). This emotional proximity bypasses the audience's critical defenses. From a humanized perspective, the 520 respondents reflect a widespread "Domestic Performance Anxiety." Many women expressed that while the vlogs provide a momentary escape, they leave behind a residue of inadequacy. The "Sanitized Kitchen Reality" excludes the physical exhaustion of labor, creating a narrative where a woman's happiness is tied solely to her domestic "perfection." This monetized traditionalism effectively turns the home into a studio, where the vlogger's financial independence is ironically built on the audience's domestic confinement.

8.CONCLUSION

The digital "Kulastree" represents the apex of Neo-traditionalism in Kerala. This study concludes that female lifestyle vlogging offers a lucrative entrepreneurial path for creators, yet it exerts a regressive influence on the psychological self-perception of the female audience. 21st-century technology is being utilized to sustain 19th-

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century gender archetypes. To mitigate this, there is a dire need for Critical Media Literacy among Malayali women to distinguish between a "scripted digital performance" and their own authentic, unedited lives.

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