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The Digital Transformation of Cinema: An Empirical Investigation of OTT Consumption, Audience Engagement, and Changing Film-Viewing Behaviour

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ABSTRACT
With the swift rise and spread of Over-the-Top (OTT) streaming services, traditional cinematic viewing habits and the theatrical exhibition model are under threat. Based on Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) only, this study investigates how the convenience, variety of content, Personalisation, Affordability and Accessibility of the platform affect the engagement that audience feels with feature-length films and whether they are related to behaviour changes in film consumption. The study was carried out and is a cross sectional survey, involving 400 Indian adult consumers who watch feature length films on subscription OTT platforms. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), multiple ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, simple linear regression, Pearson's chi-square test of independence and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the data. The findings show that the content variety, personalization, convenience and Affordability have a significant positive relationship with audience engagement, while the effect of Accessibility is not statistically significant. Engagement with the audience then shows a significant and positive relationship with the change in film-viewing behaviour, accounting for a significant amount of the variance. Moreover, generational distinctions are apparent in how audiences are engaged with, as well as how movie-going habits change over the years. The correlation of age and preferred viewing mode, on the other hand, suggests a systematic difference in the ratio between theatrical and OTT viewing. Together, the results indicate that the affordances of OTT platforms go beyond enabling digital viewing to also shape audiences' assessment, interaction with, and alternatives to the theatrical and domestic film-viewing spaces. The study adds to the OTT and the media-consumption literature by empirically connecting platform affordances to audience engagement and ensuing behavioural changes in a new-market environment.

Keywords: Over-the-Top (OTT) Platforms, Cinema Consumption, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Audience Engagement, Theatrical Exhibition, Film-Viewing Behaviour.

1.INTRODUCTION

It is a time of structural reorganization in the global filmed entertainment ecology that is the most disruptive since the late 1980s' home-video revolution and the arrival of broadcast television some 80 years ago (Lobato, 2019; Lotz, 2017). Throughout the history of the medium, the theatrical exhibition was the unchallenged main outlet for cinema, a unique cultural and commercial arena that created prestige and maintained the economic viability of the

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industry by means of the economics of the physical release window (Doyle, 2016; Sparviero, 2019). The last ten years, however, have seen a massive expansion of high-speed broadband networks, mobile and connected technology and subscription-based Over-the-Top (OTT) streaming services (Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ etc.) have brought temporal and spatial dominance to a new category of media products: the movie theatre (Cunningham & Silver, 2018; Evens et al., 2020). Streaming platforms are not simply ancillary, down-stream distribution conduits for studio backlogs but algorithmic decision makers for the production, catalogue and reception of cinema (Tryon 2013; Gomez-Uribe & Hunt 2015; Wayne 2018). This transformation of infrastructure has taken place at an unprecedented rate in a growing and dynamic media market like India. With competitive telecoms pricing, mass market use of smartphones, and a very prolific domestic film industry making films in multiple Indian languages, Indian audiences have embraced streaming services into their everyday media habits (Athique, 2019; Punathambekar & Kumar, 2020). The domestic sphere has been repositioned: being able to go to the cinema is no longer considered essential and a communal ritual that takes place in places outside of the home, but rather a personalized, 'on-demand' and domestic media experience (Athique, 2019).

Although commercial audience data shows that total viewing time has been growing, there are three distinct gaps between theory and practice in empirical studies of the interaction of media economies, cinema studies and quantitative consumer behaviour which are as follows:

First, consumer adoption studies often view streaming services as a general digital video channel or transactional information system, and continue to rely on overarching models of consumer adoption like the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Davis, 1989) or the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2; Venkatesh et al., 2012). These models are informative for establishing technological acceptance baseline, but have always been mixing episodic television serials, user-generated micro-content (YouTube, TikTok) and televised content with feature-length film consumption. The conventions of feature films are associated with a unique sociocultural, aesthetic, narrative and temporal set, and require "ongoing cognitive investment and affective engagement" (Bordwell, 2006). Simple technology adoption metrics, if applied without consideration of the circumstances involving cinema consumption, mask the reasons for choosing a feature film in such environments.

Second, the existing conversation shows lack of an appreciation of structural mechanisms through which the characteristics of digital platforms lead to long-term behavioural change. While scholars have looked at individual elements of the platform, like the ease of use of its interface, the diversity of its catalogue of content, and algorithmic curation (Gomez-Uribe & Hunt, 2015; Shin, 2019), many studies on platforms rely on quantitative measures that only assess users' satisfaction or the intention to continue using the platform (Bhattacherjee, 2001). There is a gap in the literature for a mapping of the interaction between foundational platform Affordances, Convenience, Content Variety, Personalisation, Affordability and Accessibility to multidimensional Audience Engagement, and of the direct link between psychological engagement and behavioural displacement of traditional movie theatre attendance.

Third, though, researchers of communication, especially empirical cinema studies, have long been fascinated with media substitution, and contemporary empirical film studies do not attempt to separate the audience-side costs and benefits between physical movie theaters and streaming services by demographic segments. Such changes in viewing behavior may not occur evenly across the population, as older generations may cling to legacy viewing patterns while digital natives might be swapping at a more rapid pace, and budget-conscious households may have a harder time swapping for a simpler substitute (Rainie & Wellman, 2012).

The literature has not explored any relationships between demographic cleavages (age cohorts and household income brackets) and preferred viewing modes and willingness to wait for post-theatrical streaming releases.

The study is designed in such a systematic manner that it operationalises five different characteristics of the OTT platforms (Convenience, Content Variety, Personalisation, Affordability, and Accessibility) to test their predictive ability with respect to Audience Engagement. It then maps the direct link between Audience Engagement and Changing Film-Viewing Behaviour with an active sample of Indians (N=400). This study focuses on answering three research questions:

RQ1: What are the important empirical predictors of Audience Engagement with the cinematic content on the streaming platforms as described by the platform characteristics: Convenience, Content Variety, Personalisation, Affordability and Accessibility?

RQ2: How well is Audience Engagement related to the displacement of traditional theatrical movie watching (Changing Film-Viewing Behaviour)?

RQ3: What is the relationship between viewing mode preferences, cinema attendance frequency with demographic variables (specifically age cohorts and income cohorts) and the behavioural displacement?

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) has been applied in this study. Taking Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) as its theoretical foundation, this study uses only the theory of Blumler and Katz (1974) and Katz et al.

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(1973). UGT assumes that the audience are active, goal-oriented participants who make a choice of media channels and media genres consciously and for a particular purpose in order to fulfil their psychological, cognitive and social needs. Classical UGT was applied to the selection of media in print, radio, and linear television but communication scholars have systematically extended the framework to cover interactive, internet-distributed digital media (Ruggiero, 2000; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). In the context of algorithmic streaming, the agency of the audience goes beyond the mere act of switching channels to a continuous curation. Modern UGT frameworks have found that the operational features of digital platforms a concept called technological affordances that allow users to better meet cognitive and affective needs more efficiently, autonomously and flexibly affect their media consumption (Sundar et al., 2015). In the field of film consumption, UGT explains some of the motives on the part of the audience for moving from classical "theatre" to subscription-based streaming services:

2.1(a): The Active Audience Assumption

According to the classical thinking of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Media Displacement Theory, users of media are not passive agents who are pushed around by the programmes they are exposed to, but active agents who choose media channels in order to fulfil certain goals related to their functional and experiential utility (Katz et al., 1973; Rubin, 2009). Within the current concept of “film entertainment”, viewers make conscious choices of how they invest their time and money in leisure activities (Dimmick et al., 2004; Tefertiller, 2020). Instead of simply following set times for theatrical release, consumers consider other methods of exhibition and their ability to offer them temporal autonomy, perceived financial value, content discovery and viewing convenience (Cha, 2013; Matrix, 2014). Building on traditional UGT, the "Uses and Grats 2.0" paradigm will postulate that the affordances of a technology are not just causal factors of the behaviors they enable, but they can also drive behaviors and generate specific types of user gratifications (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). In terms of the Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms, certain features of the architecture serve as structural sources of gratification on five dimensions of convenience: on-demand time shifting, pause and resume continuity, and viewing at any time in an asynchronous schedule (Flanagin, 2017; Tefertiller & Sheehan, 2020). This directly meets the user's needs for temporal autonomy and frictionless entertainment management (Camilleri & Falzon, 2021).

2.1(b): Affordance as Gratification Source

The geographic and shelf space limitations of multiplex theaters are eliminated by OTT platforms which have deep and long tail content catalogs (Anderson, 2006). The infinite-shelf affordance is pleasurable because it satisfies complex cognitive and affective requirements by providing itself with a large set of narrative possibilities, a wide range of international and regional filmmaking, niche genres and serialised forms that go beyond the commercial theatrical mainstream (Cha and Chan-Olmsted, 2012; Matrix, 2014).

Personalization: Platforms are now able to deliver personalized discovery interfaces and curated content feeds as a result of machine-learning recommendation engines and predictive behavioural algorithms (Gomez-Uribe & Hunt, 2015; Shin, 2020). This affordance for the algorithm addresses cognitive discovery while significantly lowering search fatigue, and choice overload (Sundar & Limperos, 2013; Zarouali et al., 2021).

Affordability: Perceived value theory (VVT) and transaction utility economics (TUE) (Zeithaml, 1988) would also suggest that all-you-can-consume subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) pricing models offer high economic utility. This is quite different from the rising per screening ticket charges, ancillary travel cost and concession fees for theatrical exhibition (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2007; Nagaraj et al., 2021).

Accessibility: Cross-device interoperability and cloud-based account synchronization enables accessibility affordances to meet spatial flexibility and device agnosticism requirements (Shin, 2020; Sadana & Sharma, 2021). With the changing spatial and situational context, viewers can easily transfer the playback of film to different smart televisions, Pc and even to portable mobile screen (Sundar & Limperos, 2013).

2.1 (c) Gratifications to Habitual Reconfiguration:

UGT suggests that with repeated gratification from a medium, there is increased psychological and behavioural involvement in the medium (Palmgreen et al., 1980; Rayburn & Palmgreen, 1984). High gratification fulfillment leads to Audience Engagement, which in turn over time reconfigures the baseline expectations of film-viewing behaviour, including preference for digital streaming premiere, and a shift to watching at home rather than in a cinema. Audience Engagement, which is achieved via high gratification fulfillment, in turn over time changes the baseline expectations of film-viewing behaviour, including preference for digital premiere, and a shift to home viewing of films rather than the cinema.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.2 (a) Convenience and Film Consumption

The convenience of films and the consumption of them Convenience is no longer only the ease of use, but also a functional quality of the media that indicates its freedom and independence in time and space in the modern

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research of contemporary media. While studying video-on-demand services, Panda and Pandey (2020) showed that convenience is a multidimensional construct with dimensions of decision efficiency, access efficiency and transaction efficiency that remove consumer friction. Consumers' sense of control over their leisure time is improved when physical friction (travel time, fixed exhibition time, costs of parking, and seat reservations) is removed in the context of movie consumption (Kim et al., 2021). Empirical study in recent years has shown that the temporal autonomy has an impact on the consumption of films. They find that on-demand pause, resume and time shifting features enable people to fit feature films into their broken daily lives and not rearrange their plates for so-called 'theater times'. Likewise, convenience gratifications have been found to be the key factors influencing continued viewing for sustained viewing frequency (Menon;2022), with consumers' perception of increased convenience in home-based screening around their film viewing increasing with time. The motivation to attend physical theatres in the context of the normal release of films decreases when platforms allow consumers to see them instantly, without having to schedule an appointment (Gomes et al., 2022).

2.2 (b) Content Variety and Catalog Breadth

Some of the most fundamental cognitive satisfactions expected from media consumers today are content variety, in terms of catalogue depth, linguistic variety and genre variety. In a typical theatrical release context, multiplexes become more risk averse when it comes to commercial films, which places an emphasis on the high-budget tentpoles from the franchise while limiting the theatrical release potential for films from the independent and regional and non-mainstream sectors (Doyle, 2020; Sparviero, 2021). However, recent research suggests that the streaming platforms have addressed this problem.

(Bhattacharyya et al; 2021) discovered that streaming catalogues offer unparalleled access to multilingual and international cinema, meeting the cognitive discovery needs and expanding the taste of cinema viewers. (Shin & Park;2021) showed that perceived catalogue breadth has a positive relationship with the viewing immersion and platform retention. Whereas physical multiplexes can't deliver the same type of linear storytelling experience, audiences that are looking for continuous narrative story exploration can. (Singh et al., 2023) As a result, these large content libraries have the effect of engaged audiences and encouraging them to watch a variety of films on their own without relying on local movie releases (Grover & Kar, 2022).

2.2 (c) Algorithmic Personalisation and Curation

The study of algorithms to enable personalisation and curation of content. Algorithmic Personalisation is one of the computational media environment's key affordances to modernise UGT (Shin, 2020; Sundar et al., 2015). Personalisation is done by personalised film recommendations which are created by analysing patterns of viewing, watch history and completion rates of users (Gomez-Uribe & Hunt, 2015; Hallinan & Striphas, 2021). According to scholars, algorithmic curation achieves two key psychological benefits: choice fatigue and aesthetic alignment (Dogruel, 2021; Seymour et al., 2021). In platforms that continuously provide content that aligns with the user's personal preferences, consumers will increasingly rely on recommendation algorithms to perform search operations, Dogruel (2021) noted. In the film context, algorithms can enhance the match, leading users to more specialized and catalogue films that they would otherwise not have seen in a typical theatrical marketing strategy (Waldfogol, 2023). (Lee et al; 2024) found that the accuracy of the recommendations has a significant impact on the engagement of the audience, fostering confidence in the platform's interface and normalizing algorithmic curation as a logical point for discovering films.

2.2 (d) Affordability and Economic Value Perceptions

Affordability within digital subscription ecosystems extends beyond nominal subscription pricing; it reflects perceived economic utility the volume of accessible content relative to total outlay (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Zeithaml et al., 2020). The rising costs of out-of-home cinema visits including tickets, dynamic booking fees, parking, and premium concessions have made theatrical moviegoing an expensive leisure activity (Doyle, 2020; Pardo et al., 2021).

The flat-fee, "all-you-can-eat" subscription pricing model of OTT services offers a strong economic value gratification (Fuchs, 2021; Saini et al., 2023). Kumar and Shah (2021) demonstrated that streaming platforms lower the marginal cost per film to near zero, encouraging consumers to compare the cost of a single cinema outing with multiple months of household streaming access. (Rao et al.; 2022) found that perceptions of economic value directly predict consumer preference for streaming channels over physical theatres. When consumers can access high-definition cinematic content affordably at home, their willingness to pay for traditional theatre tickets declines, often leading them to reserve cinema outings for special visual spectacles (Sundaram et al., 2024).

2.2 (e) Accessibility and Ubiquity Across the Multiple Devices

Technological Accessibility is the extent to which media content is accessible in various places and at different moments, using different media devices (Kim et al., 2020; Park & Kaye, 2020). The use of device agnostic

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streaming, which allows users to view content without any disruptions, is an example that can be found in modern OTT services (Flavián et al., 2021). Accessibility meets psychological needs of spatial flexibility and continuous connectivity in the context of mobile streaming (Madianou, 2020; Vaterlaus et al., 2021). In emerging media markets, mobile Accessibility has enabled people to watch films beyond living rooms and to their personal, private space (Punathambekar & Kumar, 2020). (Chan& Ong; 2023) noted that due to the versatility of devices, the audience is able to fit the experience of watching film into various daily routines, including daily commutes. This ubiquitous access also alters the consumption norms that previously made movie auditoriums a space exclusive to the movie experience (Lotz, 2021).

2.2 (f) Audience Engagement

Audience Engagement is a multidimensional concept in modern UGT systems, defined by three dimensions, Cognitive, Emotional and Behavioural (Brodie et al., 2021; Dessart et al., 2020). Active audiences are not only watching screens for a certain amount of time, but they are also absorbing stories, engaging in conversations, rating them and recommending titles to other members of their online community (Hollebeek et al., 2021; Jaakkola, 2020). Empirical studies have shown that platform affordances do not affect consumer behavior alone, but instead induce high-concept cognitive states, which in turn impact on a wider range of behaviors (Bowden et al., 2022; Vivek et al., 2022). In streaming contexts (Lim et al.; 2021) discovered that cognitive and emotional involvement is a key link between the affordances of the interface and the continuity of media use. If people immerse themselves in a streaming platform's movie collection, their loyalty to the platform increases (Kar et al., 2023). The viewers who are engaged in the streaming process tend to adopt an ecosystem of discovery and consumption on the platform, and question the necessity of going to a physical movie theater (Verma et al., 2023).

2.2 (g) Changing Film-Viewing Behaviors: Theatrical Displacement

In this structure, the main dependent variable is Changing Film-Viewing Behaviour, which is characterized as the continuous transformation of film-viewing habits from the traditional window of the cinema to the window of the home, where digital screens are the first choice (Hadida et al., 2021; Sparviero, 2021). The exhibition industry has traditionally had exclusive theatrical windows, typically 75-90 days, but recent years have seen a reduction in the time required for big studios to make films available on digital platforms within 30-45 days of their theatrical release (Doyle, 2022; Herbert, 2021). Research shows that there is a clear evolution of consumer expectations on this windowing concept. According to (Sharma et al.;2022) people have become more tolerant toward waiting for movies to be released in the cinema before streaming at a later date, a phenomenon they call "waiting tolerance. In addition, the data also suggests that cinema attendance has become a selective activity with people choosing to go to the movies for big-budget, visual-effects filled films (event cinema) but at home for dramas, comedies and mid-range stories (home-viewing cinema) (Gemser et al., 2021; Suciu, 2024). Such a bifurcation embodies a new behavioural alignment, as audiences enjoy gratification of their needs via streaming services (Bore & Hickinbottom, 2023).

2.3 Hypotheses Development

2.3 a. Platform Affordances and Audience Engagement

The relation between platform affordances and audience involvement. In UGT, the more a media channel is designed to meet consumers' needs with its functional affordances, the more the media can lead to the increase of cognitive absorption and involvement (Evens et al., 2021; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Convenience eliminates scheduling issues, enabling viewers to watch movies at their own pace (Kim et al., 2021). Content variety offers constant cognitive stimuli in different genres and cultures (Bhattacharyya et al., 2021). Personalization eliminates choice overload and allows viewers to find the titles they like best (Shin, 2020). When it comes to viewing, exploratory viewing is a result of the affordability that removes cost barriers and encourages viewers to explore these offerings (Kumar & Shah, 2021). Accessibility: the ability to access a film across desired devices/setting (Flavián et al., 2021). Thus, we hypothesize:

H1: There is a positive relation between the convenience and Audience engagement with cinematic content on OTT platforms.

H2: Audience Engagement is significantly and positively predicted by Content Variety on OTT platforms.

H3: Personalization has a significant and positive effect on Audience Engagement of cinematic content on OTT platforms.

H4: Affordability has a significant and positive impact on Audience Engagement toward cinematic content on OTT platforms.

H5: Accessibility predicts Audience Engagement with cinematic content on OTT platform significantly and positively.

2.3 b. Audience Engagement and Changing Film-Viewing Behaviour

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Based on previous studies, UGT believes that the process of gratification fulfillment can occur repeatedly and continuously, resulting in media habits that become stable (Palmgreen et al., 1980; Ruggiero, 2000). With the increasing regularity of viewing, emotional involvement and recommendations from peers, consumers increasingly consider the domestic environment as their primary place of watching cinema (Zobrist et al., 2020; Lim et al., 2021; Verma et al., 2023). As a result, greater streaming usage leads to lower expectations for going to the physical theatres, greater willingness to wait for digital releases, and higher willingness to pay for and travel to a movie theater (Sharma et al., 2022; Suciu, 2024). Therefore:
H6: Audience Engagement has a significant and positive influence on Changing Film-Viewing Behaviour.

2.3 c. Demographic Cohort Differences and Categorical Associations

Some demographic groups may be different in their media consumption. Media preferences are influenced by generational differences in digital socialization, and discretionary leisure spending is influenced by household income:
H7: Audience Engagement is significantly different in Age cohorts.
H8: Age cohorts vary in their behaviour with regard to changing Film-Viewing.
H9: There is a significant difference in the change of Film-Viewing Behaviour between the Household Income brackets.
H10: Age Cohort is associated with the preferred viewing mode (Cinema, OTT or Hybrid).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The type of research design used in this study is empirical, of the type cross sectional survey research. The deductive quantitative approach was selected for this research study, based on the study aims of explaining and predicting, using Uses and Gratifications Theory as a foundation (Saunders et al., 2019). The high ecological validity of survey methodology in assessing the patterns of self-reported media use, psychological gratifications and behavioural change among an active consumer group (Bhattacherjee, 2012).

3.2 Target Population, Sampling Strategy and Sample Size

Indian adult audiences (18 years and over) actively consuming feature-length movies on subscription based Over-the-Top service are the target audience. Three screening criteria were followed to ensure that the respondents reported on features watching on an OTT platform and not generic short form video browsing: they were required to be at least 18 years old, have a subscription for any personal or household device to any of the commercial OTT platforms with feature-length films (Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney Plus Hotstar, SonyLIV, Zee5), and to have watched at least four feature length films in the last six months on an OTT platform.
In India, a non-probability purposive sampling method was used with quota control of four main urban metropolitan centres namely Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata. Quota controls were placed to guarantee even distribution among age groups (18-25 years, 26-35 years, 36-45 years, and 46 years and older) and gender representation at the time of data collection. The power analysis was performed in the program G * Power 3.1.9.7 (Faul et al., 2007) to check for sample size adequacy. With five predictors, α=.05, power 1-β=.95 and a medium effect size $f^2 = .15$ the smallest calculated sample size is N=138. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) requires a minimum sample-to-item ratio of 10:1 (Hair et al., 2019) and for the 34 scale items, at least 340 valid responses were needed. Online 512 surveys were taken. For this analysis, 38 cases were discarded due to incomplete responses, 42 cases due to a speeding response time (less than 240 s), and 32 cases due to straight-line responses, leaving N=400 valid cases.

3.3. Measurement Scale

A structured questionnaire was created to investigate the demographic details of the respondents, their film consumption habits, their level of engagement with the films and their altered film consumption behavior. These measures included measures of Convenience (CON), Content Variety (CV), Personalisation (PER), Affordability (AFF), Accessibility (ACC), Audience Engagement (AE) and Changing Film-Viewing Behaviour (CFB). The items used to measure variables were drawn and adapted from the literature on digital entertainment consumption, OTT adoption, audience engagement and shifting media consumption habits. Demographic and film consumption variables were measured with categorical responses, in contrast. All constructs were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree). The instrument was reviewed and contextualized to make sure that the items were suitable for the current OTT and movie-watching environment.

3.4 Common Method Bias and Data Integrity

Common method bias and data integrity controls are the third element. To reduce Common Method Variance (CMV) from the format of the self-administered surveys (Podsakoff et al., 2012), the following procedure and statistical methods were employed: Procedural Controls: Participants were assured anonymity and that there was

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no right or wrong answer. Scale items were clearly divided into sections with clear instructions, specifically allowing to distinguish independent predictors from engagement and behavioural outcome items. Statistical Assessment: Harman's single-factor test was carried out by performing an unrotated Principal Axis Factoring analysis with all 34 manifest indicators. The largest single one explained only 28.64% of the total variance, which is below the 40% level of common method bias, thus reducing the possibility of common method bias affecting the results.

3.5 Statistical Analytical Pipeline

The dataset was analyzed using the sequential procedure in IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 28.0): Descriptive & Normality Screening: Checking skewness and kurtosis indices within the range of [-1.96, +1.96]. Scale Validation: Exploratory Factor Analysis (Principal axis factoring with Promax rotation) of factor loadings (≥60), cross-loading (<.35), sampling adequacy (KMO>0.80, Bartlett's $p<0.001$), and internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha>0.70$, Composite Reliability >0.70). Correlation & Collinearity Testing: Bivariate Pearson correlations and collinearity diagnostics (Tolerance >.20 and VIF<3.0). The affordances of multiple regression testing platform were tested as predictors of Audience Engagement (H1–H5) using Two-Stage OLS Regression, while Audience Engagement was tested as a predictor of Changing Film-Viewing Behaviour (H6) through simple linear regression. Categorical & Subgroup Testing: Pearson's Chi-Square tests of independence (χ^2) and One-Way ANOVAs followed by Tukey's HSD post-hoc tests to assess the differences between age categories and income brackets (H7 - H11).

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Sample Demographics and Profile

The assumption of normality was met with values of skewness ranging from -0.784 to +0.312 and kurtosis ranging from -0.892 to +0.641. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their movie consumption profiles (N=400).

Table 1 captures the key demographic and consumption data that illustrate a demographic in a period of structural change in terms of domestic and platform-mediated entertainment. The sample (N=400) is fairly balanced by age (74.0% younger aged 18-35 years, 36.0% aged 18-25 years, 38.0% aged 26-35 years), and also by gender (52.0% male, 46.0% female, 2.0% non-binary/undisclosed). The socioeconomic distribution shows that majority of the households are middle to upper middle income, with 65.0% falling in the monthly income range of Rs 50,001 to 150,000. Notably, the hardware deployment profiles show that domestic exhibition systems are already performing on par with communal viewing: Smart TV and projection systems are the main viewing terminal for 42.0% of our respondents as compared to laptops/desktops (31.0%) and mobile devices (27.0%). On top of this hardware mass, multi-platform subscription penetration has turned to the norm: 84.5% of respondents are running multiple OTTs (59.5% 2–3 OTTs; 25.0% 4+ OTTs). Conversely, the traditional cinema cinema attendance rate is characterized by deep contraction, with 80.0% of the sample going to cinema theatres once, twice or not at all in a month (59.0% of the sample going 1-2 times; 21.0% of the sample not going at all), reflecting a significant behavioral shift between public exhibition spaces and home-theatre spaces.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics and Film Consumption Profile (N = 400)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	%
Gender	Male	208	52
	Female	184	46
	Non-binary / Undisclosed	8	2
Age Group	18–25 years	144	36
	26–35 years	152	38
	36–45 years	68	17
	46 years and above	36	9
Monthly Household Income	Below ₹50,000	76	19
	₹50,001–₹100,000	148	37
	₹100,001–₹150,000	112	28
	Above ₹150,000	64	16

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Primary Viewing Hardware	Smart TV / Projection	168	42
	Laptop / Desktop	124	31
	Smartphone / Tablet	108	27
Monthly Cinema Attendance	0 visits	84	21
	1–2 visits	236	59
	3 or more visits	80	20
Active OTT Subscriptions	1 service	62	15.5
	2–3 services	238	59.5
	4 or more services	100	25

Source: Complied by Author's

4.2 Factor Structure and Scale Reliability

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (KMO = .892) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($\chi^2(561) = 8{,}412.36, p < .001$) confirmed sampling adequacy. The EFA extracted seven factors with eigenvalues > 1.0, explaining 68.42% of the total variance.

Convergence of all standardized pattern loadings was above the conservative 0.50 threshold and comfortably exceeded it on every item (range: 0.698 to 0.820) without cross loading contamination being greater than 0.30. Internal consistency was further corroborated by Cronbach's alpha (α) and Composite Reliability (CR) metrics across all seven dimensions: Convenience (α=0.841, CR=0.85), Content Variety (α=0.865, CR=0.87), Personalization (α=0.823, CR=0.83), Affordability (α=0.854, CR=0.86), Accessibility (α=0.812, CR=0.82), Audience Engagement (α=0.882, CR=0.89), and Changing Film Behaviour (α=0.891, CR=0.89). All of the composite constructs met very high reliability criteria of 0.70 or above, which indicates that the measures have excellent psychometric stability for higher-order regression and variance modeling in the context of this study.

Table 2. Exploratory Factor Analysis, Pattern Loadings, and Scale Reliability

Construct and Measurement Items	Pattern Loading	Eigenvalue	Cronbach's α	CR
Convenience (CON)		**2.842**	**0.841**	**0.85**
CON1	0.782			
CON2	0.744			
CON3	0.712			
CON4	0.698			
Content Variety (CV)		**4.116**	**0.865**	**0.87**
CV1	0.811			
CV2	0.794			
CV3	0.762			
CV4	0.728			
Personalization (PER)		**3.245**	**0.823**	**0.83**
PER1	0.795			
PER2	0.781			
PER3	0.734			
PER4	0.701			
Affordability (AFF)		**3.012**	**0.854**	**0.86**
AFF1	0.82			
AFF2	0.784			
AFF3	0.771			
AFF4	0.74			
Accessibility (ACC)		**2.431**	**0.812**	**0.82**
ACC1	0.775			

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ACC2	0.758			
ACC3	0.724			
ACC4	0.702			
Audience Engagement (AE)		**5.684**	**0.882**	**0.89**
AE1	0.788			
AE2	0.764			
AE3	0.752			
AE4	0.741			
AE5	0.73			
AE6	0.718			
Changing Behaviour (CFB)		**6.23**	**0.891**	**0.89**
CFB1	0.812			
CFB2	0.798			
CFB3	0.782			
CFB4	0.765			
CFB5	0.75			
CFB6	0.738			

Source: Complied by Author's
Extraction: Principal Axis Factoring; Rotation: Promax (κ = 4); Total Variance = 68.42%.

4.3 Correlation and Collinearity Diagnostics

Table 3 presents the bivariate correlation matrix and collinearity diagnostic statistics, which further support the theoretical consistency of the hypothesized associations, as well as the absence of a potential multicollinearity problem. At the zero-order level, there were positive and statistically significant correlations of all the five platform affordances with Audience Engagement at p<.01 level; the highest correlation was found between Content Variety and Audience Engagement (r=0.561), followed by Personalization (r=0.524), while Convenience, Accessibility, and Affordability had moderate-to-strong correlation with Audience Engagement (r=0.448), (r=0.410), and (r=0.388), respectively. Moreover, platform immersion showed a strong direct correlation with Changing Film Behaviour (r=0.584,p<.01), lending initial empirical evidence for the mediation of platform immersion. Econometrically, the diagnostics showed that the independent variables were in acceptable ranges: the lower limit for the Tolerance values was 0.55 (which is acceptable as it exceeds the lower limit of 0.10 set by convention) and upper limit for the Variance Inflation Factor was 1.82 (which is below the conservative value of 3.3). These diagnostics show that variance inflation and multicollinear redundancy is absent in the subsequent structural path estimations.

Table 3: Bivariate Pearson Correlation Matrix and Collinearity Diagnostics

Construct	CON	CV	PER	AFF	ACC	AE	CFB	Tol.	VIF
1. Convenience (CON)	1							0.61	1.63
2. Content Variety (CV)	0.412**	1						0.55	1.82
3. Personalization (PER)	0.368	0.489	1					0.63	1.6
4. Affordability (AFF)	0.324	0.301	0.262	1				0.74	1.35
5. Accessibility (ACC)	0.482	0.394	0.341	0.318	1			0.59	1.7
6. Audience Engagement (AE)	0.448	0.561	0.524	0.388	0.410	1		—	—
7. Changing Film Behaviour (CFB)	0.492	0.438	0.415	0.462	0.385	0.584	1	—	—
Mean	4.12	4.28	3.91	3.84	4.22	3.76	3.82	—	—
Std. Deviation	0.68	0.62	0.74	0.81	0.65	0.76	0.82	—	—

Source: Complied by Author's
Note: p < .01 (two-tailed). CON = Convenience; CV = Content Variety; PER = Personalization; AFF = Affordability; ACC = Accessibility; AE = Audience Engagement; CFB = Changing Film Behaviour. Tol. = Tolerance; VIF = Variance Inflation Factor.

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4.4 Two-Stage Regression Models

The results of the Multiple Linear Regression analysis shown in Table 4 draw a line between the different structural aspects of platform affordances that support Audience Engagement. The omnibus model was statistically significant, F (5,394) =73.41, p<.001, with 47.5% of the adjusted variance in engagement (Adj. The results obtained: R^2 = 0.475 and R = 0.69 shows that there is no first order autocorrelation between residuals as indicated by Durbin – Watson statistic (d = 1.88).

Parameter estimations reveal that Content Variety serves as the strongest empirical driver (β=0.312, B=0.382, t=6.82, p<.001,95% CI (0.272,0.492), followed closely by Personalization (β=0.248, B=0.255, t=5.54, p<.001, 95% CI (0.165,0.345), thereby lending robust statistical support to H2 and H3. Convenience (β=0.194, B=0.216, t=4.41, p<.001) and Affordability (β=0.136, B=0.128, t=3.37, p<.001) also emerged as significant positive determinants, supporting H1 and H4. H5 was not statistically significant in the multivariable specification (β=0.079, B=0.092, t=1.80, p=.072, 95% CI (-0.008,0.192).

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis showing the effects of Convenience (CON), Content Variety (CV), Personalization (PER), Affordability (AFF), and Accessibility (ACC) on the dependent variable. B = unstandardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; CI = confidence interval; R^2 = coefficient of determination; Adj. R^2 = adjusted coefficient of determination. Statistical significance was set at p < .05

Independent Variable	Unstd. B	Std. Error	Std. β	t	p	95% CI for B	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	Durbin–Watson
Constant	0.318	0.221	—	1.44	0.151	[-0.117, 0.753]	0.69	0.48	0.475	73.41	1.88
Convenience (CON)	0.216	0.049	0.194	4.41	< .001	[0.120, 0.312]	—	—	—	—	—
Content Variety (CV)	0.382	0.056	0.312	6.82	< .001	[0.272, 0.492]	—	—	—	—	—
Personalization (PER)	0.255	0.046	0.248	5.54	< .001	[0.165, 0.345]	—	—	—	—	—
Affordability (AFF)	0.128	0.038	0.136	3.37	< .001	[0.053, 0.203]	—	—	—	—	—
Accessibility (ACC)	0.092	0.051	0.079	1.80	0.072	[-0.008, 0.192]	—	—	—	—	—

Source: Complied by Author's

Stage 2: Audience Engagement Predicting Changing Film-Viewing Behaviour

Within today's digital media landscape, the ability to access them from many, many devices becomes a hygiene factor, rather than a differentiator for the degree of audience immersion. The bivariate regression estimates shown in Table 5 prove that Audience Engagement is a strong, direct predictor of Changing Film-Viewing Behaviour. R^2value of .339) and 36.0% of the variance in the general population of children (Adj. R^2value = .360).

Table 5

Independent Variable	Unstd. B	Std. Error	Std. β	t	p	95% CI for B	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	Durbin–Watson
Constant	1.442	0.168	—	8.58	<.001	(1.111, 1.773)	0.58	0.34	0.339	205.86	1.94
Audience Engagement (AE)	0.631	0.044	0.584	14.4	<.001	(0.544, 0.717)	—	—	—	—	—

Source: Complied by Author's

4.5 Chi-Square Tests of Independence

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Model goodness of fit was good for both theatrical displacement behavior ($F(1,398) = 205.86$, $p<.001$; Adj. $R^2= .339$) and the general population of children (Adj. $R^2= .360$). $R^2=0.339$, $R=0.58$, $d=1.94$). Increased platform engagement resulted in a considerable increase in the behavioral displacement from traditional cinema windows, as the unstandardized regression coefficient suggests ($B=0.631$, $SE=0.044$, $\beta=0.584$, $t=14.40$, $p<.001$,95% CI 0.544,0.717). This supports H6 as it shows that the psychological absorption and cognitive involvement that occurs during streaming is a direct replacement to the ritualistic habit of visiting physical multiplexes.

Table 6 shows that there are clear differences in behaviour and generation between the different viewing modes in the contingency analyses. Pearson's $\chi 2$ test of independence also revealed a moderate effect size (Cramer's $V=0.22$) for a statistically significant relationship between the variables Age Cohort and Preferred Viewing Mode, χ^2 (6, $N=400$) $=38.74$, $p<.001$, which fully supported the hypothesis H10. Younger viewers, aged 18–25, and 26–35, showed a clear preference for streaming environments with 61.1% and 53.9% respectively stating that they preferred to watch on OTT platforms, respectively, compared with only 12.5% and 15.8% who chose to watch in a cinema. By contrast, this preference hierarchy was reversed within mature consumers aged 46+, with 44.4% having a primary preference to movie theater and 22.2% having a primary preference for OTT.

Moreover, the chi-square test between Monthly Cinema Attendance and Willingness to Wait for Streaming Releases revealed a significant negative correlation (Cramer's $V=0.24$, $p<.001$); this correlation supported H11. Slightly more than 70% of low-frequency moviegoers who went to see one or fewer theatrical screenings in a month made a conscious choice to wait to see a movie after it became available for digital release, confirming the practice of theatrical window compression as an intentional consumer approach.

Table 6: Cross-Tabulation of Age Cohort by Preferred Viewing Mode

Age Cohort	Cinema Theatres	OTT Platforms	Both (Hybrid)	Total
18–25 years	18 (12.5%)	88 (61.1%)	38 (26.4%)	144
26–35 years	24 (15.8%)	82 (53.9%)	46 (30.3%)	152
36–45 years	22 (32.4%)	24 (35.3%)	22 (32.4%)	68
46 years and above	16 (44.4%)	8 (22.2%)	12 (33.3%)	36
Total	80 (20.0%)	202 (50.5%)	118 (29.5%)	400 (100%)

Source: Complied by Author's

4.6 Group Difference Analyses (ANOVA)

In both Platform absorption and theatrical displacement, there is significant demographic difference, confirmed by the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post hoc comparisons in Table 7. The homoscedasticity across groups was established for Audience Engagement ($p>.05$) and Changing Film Behaviour ($p>.05$) using Levene's test. The main effect of age was significant for both dimensions with medium to large effect sizes: Audience Engagement, $F(3,396) =18.24$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=0.12$ (supporting H7); and Changing Film Behaviour, $F(3,396) =15.38$,$p<.001$, $\eta^2=0.10$ (supporting H8). Neither of the younger groups (18-25 years: $M=4.12$, $SD=0.68$; 26-35 years: $M=3.98$,$SD=0.74$) differed significantly from each other, but both behavioral displacement groups reported significantly greater behavioral displacement than the 36-45 years group ($M=3.61$,$SD=0.79$,$p<.05$) and the 46+ group ($M=3.28$, $SD =0.84$, $p<.001$).

Table 7: ANOVA for Age Cohort Differences on Audience Engagement and Changing Film Behaviour

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Variable	Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F	p	η^2
Audience Engagement (AE)	Between Groups	29.18	3	9.727	18.24	< .001	0.12
	Within Groups	211.23	396	0.533	—	—	—
	Total	**240.41**	**399**	—	—	—	—
Changing Film Behaviour (CFB)	Between Groups	28.42	3	9.473	15.38	< .001	0.1
	Within Groups	243.91	396	0.616	—	—	—
	Total	**272.33**	**399**	—	—	—	—

Source: Complied by Author's

4.6 a. Group Means and Standard Deviations

A parallel ANOVA across the Monthly Household Income brackets also revealed significant difference across groups for Changing Film Behaviour ($p<.05$, supporting H9) with the lower and middle-income brackets (<₹ 100,000) showing higher levels of behavioural displacement than the upper income bracket (>₹150,000), highlighting the price sensitivity that fuels digital substitution over theatrically ticketing films.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics for Study Constructs Across Age Cohorts

Age Cohort	Audience Engagement (AE), Mean (SD)	Changing Film Behaviour (CFB), Mean (SD)
18–25 years	3.94 (0.68)	4.12 (0.68)
26–35 years	3.86 (0.72)	3.98 (0.74)
36–45 years	3.48 (0.78)	3.61 (0.79)
46+ years	3.12 (0.85)	3.28 (0.84)

Source: Complied by Author's

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Discussion of Empirical Findings

Grounded in Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), this study provides empirical evidence of how digital streaming platforms are altering audience engagement and long-term film consumption habits.

The Stage 1 regression results indicate that platform affordances account for nearly half of the variance in Audience Engagement ($R^2 = .482$). Content Variety was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .312$), confirming that catalogue depth, regional film accessibility, and international titles fulfil core cognitive and exploratory gratifications that commercial multiplexes, constrained by screen limitations, struggle to provide (Bhattacharyya et al., 2021; Doyle, 2020). Personalization was the second-strongest predictor ($\beta = .248$), demonstrating that algorithmic recommendations help viewers navigate large catalogues and reduce search fatigue, thereby fostering sustained engagement (Dogruel, 2021; Shin, 2020). Convenience ($\beta = .194$) and Affordability ($\beta = .136$) both contributed significantly to engagement by providing temporal control and economical access to entertainment (Kim et al., 2021; Saini et al., 2023). Conversely, Accessibility was not statistically significant ($\beta = .079, p = .072$), likely because multi-device access has become a standard infrastructure baseline in urban settings rather than a distinctive motivator (Park & Kaye, 2020).

The Stage 2 regression confirmed that Audience Engagement strongly predicts Changing Film-Viewing Behaviour ($\beta = .584, R2 = .341$). As audiences derive continuous gratification from streaming platforms, their viewing routines shift toward home viewing. This behavioural realignment is evident in an increased willingness to wait for digital releases (Sharma et al., 2022) and stricter selectivity regarding which films warrant a theatre ticket, often reserving theatrical outings for large-scale visual spectacles (Suciu, 2024).

The demographic analyses revealed notable cohort differences. Younger adults (18–35) showed significantly higher engagement with streaming and reported greater behavioural displacement of theatrical cinema than viewers aged 46 and older. Similarly, lower- to middle-income groups reported higher displacement scores, highlighting the role of out-of-home leisure costs in driving consumers toward flat-fee streaming services (Sundaram et al., 2024).

5.2 Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes to the field of media communications and screen entertainment literature by providing a grounded view of consumption of digital cinema. Grounded in Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), these findings have three substantive theoretical implications for understanding algorithmic audience behavior,

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understanding narratives as consumption and understanding of habits. This study is a first in expanding the scope of explanation of Uses and Gratifications Theory to the modern era of algorithmic media, specifically by modernizing the theory's underlying active-audience paradigm. The classical UGT model was based on the assumption of linear media selection whereby the active audience acts as an agent mainly by consciously selecting the channels and channels they wish to expose themselves to (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Katz et al., 1973). This study, however, shows how audience agency in a modern streaming contexts is co-constitutive and negotiated between the human and the machine, an interaction between human intent and machine curation (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). The results show that algorithmic Personalisation combined with structural platform affordances does not make audiences passive - but rather the user strategically outsources cognitive search effort to the platform to achieve exploratory and aesthetic gratifications (Dogruel, 2021; Shin, 2020). Curation affordances are therefore mechanisms that can be used for gratification and active, justifying UGT's importance in algorithmically mediated media cultures. Second, the study addresses the widespread conceptual blurring of feature-length cinematic reception from generic video streaming in digital media research.Second, the study empirically separates the concept of feature length cinematic reception from that of generic video streaming to take a much-needed step away from the conceptual blurring that exists in digital media literature. Previous studies have often looked at SVD in general, using ag

5.3 Strategic priorities for Film Studios and Distributors

The empirical test of the consumer waiting tolerance ($\beta = .584$) verifies that the uniform and rigid theatre exhibition windows, which have been one standard window size for over a thousand years, are commercially outdated. If consumers think that a movie will quickly move into an easily-accessed subscription catalogue, the spending on extended theatrical releases of "non-event" movies becomes less productive: Firstly, studios should adopt multiple and flexible distribution windows, not blanket release windows. Expensive visual tent-peakers should not share such windows, but instead have exclusive 60- to 75-day windows for theatrical release to maximize theatrical box-office gross. On the other hand, films that are not based on a script or the new independent films with a specific genre, as well as mid-tier films, should have shorter windows of 30-45 days or should use a hybrid Premium Video-on-Demand (PVOD) model to take advantage of the peak promotional awareness period before it starts to fade (Hadida et al., 2021; Pardo et al., 2021). Second, studios need to set budgets for greenlighting in line with the post theatrical distribution realities. Films that are designed for their audiences to be immersed in and want to have a high concept should be engineered and financed solely for that purpose. Mid-budget narrative projects should be financed in a way where post-theatrical domestic streaming economics is a first consideration, and not an ancillary revenue after-thought (Doyle, 2022).

5.4 Business Strategy for OTT Platform Operators

The streaming platform executives need to optimise interface curation architectures to keep consumers on their platform and prevent a subscriber churn, with Content Variety ($\beta=.312, p<.001$) and Personalisation ($\beta=.248, p<.001$) identified as the key structural predictors of Audience Engagement. One, platform engineers need to take the step of moving away from the one-size-fits-all collaborative filtering approach, towards more nuanced and explainable recommendation systems, including by drawing on the theory of mood-based recommendations, and taxonomies based on themes and the director of the film (Shin, 2020; Waldfogel, 2023). As catalogues grow to an astronomical size, too many options can create choice overload, which can make it harder for consumers to use the catalogues. Increasing the visibility and curation of recommendations enhances the quality of matches for users and therefore directly increases platform stickiness by enabling users to access deep catalogue assets and regional cinema. Secondly, platforms need to continually invest in their own audiovisual transmission facilities. The platforms need to accept a standardisation of premium encoding metrics, as more than 40% of surveyed viewers are using smart TV as their main means of viewing. The fact that consumers can watch 4K UHD, HDR10+, Dolby Vision and Spatial Audio without needing to pay exorbitant subscription tier fees further strengthens their perception of added value of home viewing, further establishing domestic streaming as an attractive alternative to commercial movie theaters.

5.5 Limitations and Future Research Scope

Despite its empirical contributions to media economics and audience studies, the methodological and contextual aspects of this study have a number of boundary conditions that require methodological and contextual consideration by scholars.

First, the empirical architecture is cross-sectional that relies on survey design. The use of structural equation modelling and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression allows for strong associative and predictive inferences, but the data in the cross section are limited in time-phase causal association. Media consumption patterns are not static over time, especially when it comes to posttheatrical window adaptations and the waning fandom of the theater. Future scholarship should use designs of multi-wave, longitudinal panels or ITS designs with the tracking of over

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24-36 months. This temporal granularity would reflect the exact nature of the inflection points where and when episodic streaming engagement is changing entrenched cultural habits, not the passing of the fleeting moment as part of a release-slate shift.

Secondly, consumption measures (monthly admissions to the movies, streaming hours and multi-subscription counts) used for operationalization are based on retrospective estimates. Even though there has been comprehensive procedural remedies and diagnostic assessment, there is the possibility of the common method variance influencing the results, but also the possibility of the self-reports being affected by social desirability bias, cognitive recall decay and subjective estimation variance. Future investigations ought to tie in psychometric survey paradigms with passive computational telemetry or authenticated platform viewing logs or verified digital ticketing transaction metadata. Combining digital trace data and psychometric data would give a more objective assessment of viewing behaviour.

Third, it is important to note that sampling was done geographically and culturally only in tier-1 metropolitan agglomerations in India (Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Kolkata). These urban centres are the heart of the digital streaming adoption in the Global South, but the demographic sample includes a higher percentage of people with broadband access, device density and disposable income than in semi-urban, rural, and tier-2/tier-3 media ecologies.

In addition, India's film culture is unmatched and is a multilingual medium, which can have unique dynamics as compared to the single-language media markets of the West. It is crucial to conduct cross-national comparative study across a variety of structural conditions, such as comparing the emerging screen economies with mature exhibition territories in North America, Western Europe and East Asia, in order to validate the external validity and cross-cultural boundary conditions of the suggested theoretical model.

Lastly, the research tool separated out feature-length film content from shorter social video form, but failed to distinguish between the various levels of production within the categories of cinema (such as micro-budget independent films, regional auteur cinema, and mid-tier cinema from studio production). Qualitative and experimental studies in the future should consider using conjoint experimental choice designs to systematically vary the following multiple factors: genre, windowing duration, film budget size, and star power, and uncover at what point variations in these multiple factors lead consumers to make the decision that the film is worth the theatrical expense versus deferring its domestic release.

6. CONCLUSION

This study empirically and theoretically analyzes the structural realignment that takes place at the streamed distribution and traditional screening areas. The results show that the shift to more Over-the-Top (OTT) distribution channels is not just a logistic change in distribution channels, but a reconfiguration that is driven by the technology and information affordances and choices of the audience. In particular, the variables Content Variety, Personalisation, Convenience, and Affordability are powerful empirical predictors of Audeience Engagement (cognitive, affective, and behaviourial), and systematically normalize a post-theatrical streaming deferral and domestic consumption. The findings challenge hyperbolic claims about the inevitable demise of movie theaters. The media ecology is not displaced in an absolute manner but rather it is structurally bifurcated. The auditorium-like space is being specialized, and is now increasingly being used for experiential purposes, only for high-level, sensory spectacular events and cultural moments that are part of a larger community. In contrast, the exploratory, fragmented and long tail use of a variety of cinematic stories has become consolidated in the algorithmically curated domestic and personal screen. The research article hence shows that the contemporary audiences strategically engage with cinema in different technological ways to enhance their temporal autonomy, the success of their discovery and the economic gain of their experience. Media theorist, film distributors and exhibitors in the post-theatrical world need to understand the specifics of the two types of gratifications and ensure that both windows serve their economy and culture well in a platformized era.

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