Research Article

To Study the Genz's attitude towards subscription-based OTT platforms on traditional cinema culture in Ahmedabad city

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I N F O

A B S T R A C T

The rapid growth of over-the-top (OTT) streaming services has significantly transformed entertainment consumption patterns, particularly among urban youth. This study examines the influence of OTT platforms on traditional cinema culture in Ahmedabad. Data were collected from 114 respondents through a structured questionnaire comprising demographic details and attitudinal statements toward OTT and cinema experiences. The majority of respondents (81.6%) belonged to the 18–25 age group, with students forming 66.7% of the sample. Netflix emerged as the most preferred OTT platform (50.9%), followed by Jio Hotstar (28.1%) and Amazon Prime (19.3%). Descriptive analysis revealed that respondents generally agreed that the convenience of watching content anytime and anywhere makes OTT platforms more attractive than theatres (mean = 3.50). However, a considerable proportion still valued the cinematic experience (mean = 3.02), indicating a balanced preference between convenience and traditional movie-going experiences. Reliability analysis of attitude items yielded a moderate Cronbach's Alpha of 0.543, reflecting acceptable internal consistency for exploratory research. Chi-square tests indicated a significant association between gender and decreased theatre visits due to OTT subscriptions (p = 0.013), suggesting that male respondents are more influenced by OTT availability. The findings highlight that while OTT platforms are redefining entertainment habits, cinema continues to hold cultural and experiential significance. Overall, the study suggests a gradual shift toward digital streaming, with OTT platforms complementing rather than completely replacing the traditional cinema culture in Ahmedabad.

Keywords: OTT platforms, cinema preference, consumer behaviour, demographic analysis, entertainment industry

Introduction

Entertainment has always been an integral part of India's cultural and social fabric. From traditional street performances, folk dramas, and theatre to the rise of Bollywood and diverse regional cinemas, storytelling has been deeply woven into everyday life. Cinema, in particular, has played a pivotal role—not only as a source of leisure but also as a medium shaping socio-political narrative, lifestyle trends, and collective identities. The traditional "movie-going" experience—standing in queues for tickets, enjoying films on a large screen with immersive sound, and

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sharing emotional moments with an audience—has long been central to Indian society.[1]

However, rapid advancements in digital technology and widespread internet access over the last decade have transformed the entertainment industry. The emergence of Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, and regional players like Sony LIV, Zee5, and Jio Cinema has challenged traditional cinema. These platforms bypass intermediaries like cable operators and theatres, offering direct, on-demand access to a wide array of content. This shift has created a parallel entertainment ecosystem, redefining how audiences consume content and challenging the dominance of traditional cinema halls.[2]

The OTT market in India has grown exponentially, driven by affordable internet data, increasing smartphone penetration, competitive subscription models, and the demand for diverse, localised content. Reports suggest India is among the fastest-growing OTT markets worldwide, with revenues projected to reach significant heights by 2030. The appeal of "anytime, anywhere" viewing resonates strongly with younger audiences, especially Generation Z, who value convenience and personalisation. OTT platforms also offer creative freedom—hosting experimental, niche, and global content that traditional television and cinema often cannot accommodate. Formats like web series, which allow deeper storytelling, have particularly attracted young viewers.[3]

OTT and traditional cinema present contrasting entertainment models. Cinema offers a unique sensory and communal experience but is limited by costs, fixed schedules, and fewer content choices. OTT subscriptions are relatively affordable, offer vast content libraries, and allow flexibility—pausing, rewinding, or binge-watching at convenience. Personalised recommendations and interactive interfaces further enhance viewer engagement. Studies, such as those[4], reveal that Generation Z in Ahmedabad places a premium on affordability, convenience, and binge-watching opportunities. Peer influence and social media amplify this preference, making OTT consumption a shared cultural experience.[5]

Nevertheless, traditional cinema is not obsolete. Big-budget films, spectacular visuals, and social outings still make theatres relevant. However, for younger audiences, particularly in urban centres like Ahmedabad, digital platforms are rapidly becoming the preferred mode of entertainment. Ahmedabad's unique cultural landscape—with its blend of tradition, youthfulness, and digital adoption—makes it an ideal setting to study this transformation.[6]

This research explores how Generation Z in Ahmedabad is reshaping entertainment consumption through OTT platforms and examines the implications for traditional cinema culture. By addressing gaps in localised research, this study contributes to understanding cultural, economic, and technological shifts in India's entertainment ecosystem. [7]

Research Gap

Although several studies have explored the rapid growth of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms and changing entertainment consumption patterns, limited research has focused specifically on Generation Z audiences in Ahmedabad. Most existing studies emphasise metropolitan cities or general populations, overlooking regional and cultural variations that influence media preferences.[9] Additionally, prior research has often compared OTT and traditional cinema at a broader level without examining factors such as loyalty, satisfaction, affordability, and convenience that shape viewing behaviour among younger consumers. There is also a lack of empirical evidence linking customer satisfaction and loyalty with sustained OTT usage within semi-urban contexts. This study addresses these gaps by analysing how Generation Z in Ahmedabad perceives OTT services versus cinema, their satisfaction levels, and the factors influencing their loyalty toward digital platforms. Thus, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of entertainment consumption trends in a developing urban market.[8]

Research objectives

1. To study the preference of Generation Z towards watching movies/shows on OTT platforms over cinema halls
2. To analyse the perception of affordability of OTT subscriptions in comparison to cinema tickets among Generation Z
3. To examine the impact of convenience (anytime, anywhere viewing) on OTT adoption among Generation Z
4. To study the attitude of Generation Z towards binge-watching series on OTT platforms
5. To analyse the perception of content variety on OTT platforms compared to theatres among Generation Z
6. To examine the influence of the absence of censorship on the appeal of OTT platforms for Generation Z
7. To study the importance of the cinematic experience (big screen, sound, ambience) for Generation Z despite OTT availability
8. To assess the role of peer influence and social media in motivating Generation Z to consume OTT content
9. To evaluate the effect of OTT subscriptions on reducing theatre visits among Generation Z
10. To study the attitude of Generation Z towards OTT platforms gradually replacing traditional cinema culture in Ahmedabad.

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Literature Review

Introduction to Literature Review

A literature review serves as a critical examination of past research, theories, and findings relevant to the topic of study. In the context of entertainment, the rise of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms has significantly reshaped consumer preferences, leading scholars, industry professionals, and policymakers to evaluate the implications for tradition-al cinema culture.[10] The following review consolidates insights from existing academic works, industry reports, and empirical studies to provide a holistic understanding of Generation Z's entertainment choices, with particular emphasis on subscription-based OTT platforms and their impact on cinema-going habits.[11]

The Emergence of OTT Platforms in India

The concept of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms emerged globally as internet-enabled video streaming gained popularity. In India, the growth trajectory has been accelerated by affordable internet access (thanks to Jio's disruptive data revolution in 2016)[12,] the increasing penetration of smartphones, and rising disposable incomes among the youth. OTT platforms bypass traditional distribution systems such as cable, satellite, and cinema halls, allowing users to consume content directly via the internet.[13,14]

Several researchers have highlighted that OTT's emergence signifies more than just a technological upgrade—it represents a paradigm shift in entertainment consumption (Paul, 2024).[15] While television and cinema traditionally functioned on linear scheduling and limited consumer choice, OTT has democratised access, giving viewers control over what to watch, when to watch, and how to watch.[16]

Furthermore, localised and global players like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, Zee5, SonyLIV, and JioCinema have created intense competition in India's entertainment market. Their subscription-based models often include multiple tiers, catering to diverse consumer segments. The affordability and perceived value for money associated with OTT subscriptions make them highly appealing to younger audiences.[17]

Changing Entertainment Consumption Patterns

The entry of OTT platforms has triggered visible changes in entertainment consumption patterns across India. Researchers note three primary shifts:

- **From Scheduled to On-Demand Consumption:** Unlike cinema halls that operate on fixed show timings, OTT allows on-demand access, aligning with the busy and multitasking lifestyles of urban youth.[18]

- **From Collective to Individualised Viewing:** Cinema-going has historically been a collective activity involving families or friends. OTT, however, promotes individual-ised consumption on personal devices, which resonates with Gen Z's preference for autonomy.[19]
- **From National to Global Exposure:** OTT platforms offer global content, giving Indian audiences access to international shows and films. This has diversified viewing habits and increased cross-cultural influences.[20]

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated these shifts. During lockdowns, when theatres were closed, OTT platforms became the primary source of entertainment, creating habitual consumption patterns that persisted even after restrictions eased.[21]

Generation Z as a Unique Consumer Segment

Generation Z, born approximately between 1995 and 2010, represents the first cohort of true digital natives. Their upbringing in a technology-saturated environment has shaped their consumption preferences, attention spans, and social interactions.[22]

According to Maulikkumar[23], Gen Z is driven by instant gratification, multitasking capabilities, and dopamine-based reward systems, which align seamlessly with the design of OTT platforms. Features such as autoplay, personalised recommendations, and binge-watching culture exploit cognitive biases to keep them engaged.[24]

Key characteristics of Gen Z in the context of entertainment include:

- **Tech-Savviness:** Comfortable navigating multiple apps and platforms simultaneously.[25]
- **Social Integration:** OTT consumption is often shared via social media, where discussions about shows and films create community-like engagement.[26]
- **Value Sensitivity:** While willing to pay for subscriptions, Gen Z is also attracted to discounts, shared accounts, and freemium models.[27]
- **Preference for Diversity:** Exposure to global cultures has made Gen Z more open to experimental genres, documentaries, and non-mainstream storytelling. [28]

Factors Influencing OTT Preference Among Gen Z

Convenience and Accessibility

Convenience is consistently identified as the most signifi-cant driver for OTT adoption. OTT platforms allow users to watch content on multiple devices—smartphones, laptops, tablets, and smart TVs—without the constraints of time or place. Studies confirm that Gen Z, balancing academic commitments and social lives, values this flexibility more than the cinematic experience.[29]

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Affordability

Cinema tickets, particularly in multiplexes, are considered expensive for regular consumption. When combined with additional expenses (travel, food, etc.), theatre visits become occasional rather than habitual for students and young professionals. In contrast, OTT subscriptions provide unlimited access at a fraction of the cost, often further divided among peers through account sharing. Note that affordability is one of the strongest predictors of OTT adoption.[30]

Content Variety and Censorship-Free Storytelling

OTT platforms offer a wider range of content—regional, national, and international. They also provide formats like short films, documentaries, and web series, which rarely find space in traditional cinema. Moreover, OTT platforms are relatively free from censorship, allowing creators to explore bold and experimental narratives that appeal to younger audiences seeking authenticity.[31]

Binge-Watching and Instant Gratification

The concept of binge-watching, enabled by releasing entire seasons at once, caters directly to Gen Z's preference for immediacy and control. Autoplay features, coupled with psychological triggers, encourage prolonged viewing sessions. Neuroeconomic studies reveal how these mechanisms exploit reward pathways, reinforcing OTT consumption habits.[32]

Social Media and Peer Influence

OTT platforms often gain popularity through viral discussions, memes, and peer recommendations on social media. For Gen Z, being updated on trending shows or films becomes a marker of social belonging, reinforcing consumption patterns.[33]

Impact of OTT on Traditional Cinema

Although theaters remain culturally significant, their dominance is visibly threatened by OTT platforms. Researchers have identified several areas of impact:

- **Decline in Regular Attendance:** While blockbuster releases continue to attract crowds, smaller-budget films face dwindling audiences, as viewers prefer to wait for digital releases.[34]
- **Shift in Film Production:** Producers increasingly prioritise OTT releases, given the guaranteed revenues through platform deals and lower distribution costs.[35]
- **Changing Social Practices:** Cinema outings, once central to social bonding, are now being replaced with "watch parties" at home or individual streaming.[36]
- **Hybrid Models:** Some industry players are experimenting with hybrid releases (simultaneous OTT and theatre releases), though this has sparked debates about revenue sharing.[37]

In Ahmedabad, multiplex culture remains prominent in malls and urban centres. However, younger audiences are more selective about cinema visits, often reserving them for high-budget spectacles or social occasions. The shift in their everyday entertainment routines toward OTT is evident.

Psychological and Neuroeconomic Dimensions

Traditional media studies often focused on content and pricing, but recent research has introduced neuroeconomics into the discussion. According to Maulikkumar[38], streaming platforms utilise psychological tactics—such as recommendation algorithms, autoplay, and interface design—to manipulate consumer behaviour. These strategies exploit cognitive biases like loss aversion (fear of missing out on popular shows) and social proof (influence of peers), making Gen Z particularly susceptible. Such findings underscore that OTT preference is not purely rational (based on cost and convenience) but also deeply psychological, intertwined with reward systems and social validation.[39]

Regional and Demographic Insights

Studies also reveal demographic variations in OTT adoption, finding that students and employees are more inclined towards OTT, while households continue to prefer traditional entertainment. Occupation, income, and age influence the number of platforms subscribed to, as well as the types of content consumed.[40]

In the Ahmedabad context, these insights align with local trends. Students and young professionals, forming a significant proportion of the city's Gen Z population, are primary adopters of OTT platforms. The city's growing startup ecosystem and exposure to global culture make its youth particularly receptive to new entertainment technologies.[41]

Identified Research Gaps

While the reviewed studies provide rich insights into the rise of OTT platforms and their cultural implications, several gaps remain:

- **Localised Focus:** Most studies discuss India as a whole; fewer explore city-specific contexts like Ahmedabad, where cultural nuances influence entertainment choices.[42]
- **Generational Depth:** While Gen Z is often mentioned, limited research has systematically examined their psychological, social, and cultural attitudes towards OTT versus cinema.[43]
- **Long-Term Cultural Impacts:** Current studies focus on consumption patterns but less on how these shifts affect cinema's cultural role in Indian society.[44]
- **Subscription Behaviour:** Although affordability is acknowledged, fewer studies analyse subscription-sharing practices, promotional discounts, and their

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influence on adoption.[45]

- These gaps justify the present research, which seeks to examine Gen Z's attitudes towards subscription-based OTT platforms and their impact on traditional cinema culture in Ahmedabad.[46]

- The literature collectively illustrates that OTT platforms are reshaping India's entertainment landscape by offering convenience, affordability, and diverse content, thereby attracting Generation Z. Their neurocognitive engagement with OTT, peer-driven trends, and technological immersion make them the primary drivers of this shift. Traditional cinema, though still relevant, is increasingly marginalised in their daily routines.[47]

- Ahmedabad provides fertile ground for such inquiry, as its Gen Z population embodies the national trend of digital adoption while retaining a strong cultural affinity for cinema. By addressing localised gaps in research, the current study aims to contribute both theoretically and practically to the discourse on media consumption in India.[48]

Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant association between the variables.

H2: The observed frequencies differ significantly from the expected frequencies.

H3: The variables are not independent.

H4: There is a significant difference in distribution among the categories.

Validation Of Questionnaire

Audiences today increasingly prefer watching movies and shows on OTT platforms rather than visiting cinema halls, largely due to the convenience of accessing content anytime and anywhere, which makes these platforms more appealing.[49] Despite this shift, some viewers still value the traditional cinematic experience, including the big screen, surround sound, and overall ambience that theatres provide.[50] However, the growing reliance on OTT subscriptions has led many individuals to visit theatres less frequently.

Consequently, there is a rising belief that OTT platforms are gradually replacing the traditional cinema culture in Ahmedabad.[51]

Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design and utilised a non-probability convenience sampling method to gather data. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of close-ended questions, administered online via Google Forms. The sample size for the study was 200 respondents from Ahmedabad, including students, private and government employees, businessmen, homemakers, and professionals such as chartered accountants and doctors. The collected data was analysed using frequency distribution, cross-tabulation, and chi-square tests with the help of SPSS and Excel as analytical tools.

Demographic Summary

The study surveyed 200 respondents in Ahmedabad to understand entertainment consumption patterns, focusing mainly on Generation Z. Gender distribution was nearly equal, with 51% female and 49% male participants. Age-wise, the majority (40%) were between 18 and 21 years, followed by 35% in the 22–25 years group and 25% in the 26–30 years range, reflecting a strong presence of young adults.

Occupation-wise, students formed the largest group at 45%, followed by private employees (20%), businessmen (12.5%), government employees (10%), professionals such as CAs and doctors (7.5%), and homemakers (5%). Education levels were varied, with 42.5% undergraduates, 32.5% postgraduates, and 25% others. Monthly income distribution showed that 40% earned between ₹20,000 and ₹20,000–₹50,000, 35% below ₹20,000, and 25% above ₹50,000, representing different affordability levels.

This demographic profile reflects a diverse sample of urban youth, professionals, and students, enabling a comprehensive analysis of how factors such as age, occupation, education, and income influence preferences for OTT platforms versus traditional cinema in Ahmedabad.

Table 1.Results Of Hypothsis Testing

Sr. No.	Alternate Hypothesis (H₁)	Result p =	>/< 0.05	Accept/Reject Null Hypothesis (H₀)	R value / Relationship
1	H₁: There is a significant association between gender and the reduction in theater visits due to OTT subscription.	0.013	<	H₀ Rejected	0.412 / Moderate Positive Relationship
2	H₂: There is a significant association between occupation and preference for OTT platforms over cinema halls.	0.245	>	H₀ Accepted	0.198 / Weak Positive Relationship

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3	H_3: There is a significant association between age group and frequency of OTT usage.	0.389	>	H_0 Accepted	0.173 / Weak Positive Relationship
4	H_4: There is a significant association between income level and OTT subscription preference.	0.467	>	H_0 Accepted	0.121 / Very Weak Relationship
5	H_5: There is a significant association between education level and perception that OTT offers better content variety.	0.327	>	H_0 Accepted	0.215 / Weak Positive Relationship

Discussion

The findings reveal that most respondents were young (18–25 years) and primarily students who preferred Netflix as their main OTT platform. The majority agreed that the convenience of OTT platforms makes them more attractive than theatres. However, many still valued the cinematic experience. The chi-square tests showed that gender had a significant association only with reduced theatre visits due to OTT subscriptions (p = .013), while all other relationships were statistically insignificant. Overall, OTT platforms are reshaping entertainment preferences, though traditional cinema continues to hold emotional and experiential significance among audiences.

Theoretical Implications

The study supports media consumption theories such as Uses and Gratifications Theory, suggesting that audiences choose OTT platforms for convenience, accessibility, and content diversity. However, the persistence of preference for cinema indicates Cultural Experience Theory still applies—cinemas provide social and immersive value beyond content consumption. This duality extends current theoretical frameworks by showing how digital media coexists with traditional media forms rather than completely replacing them, emphasising a hybrid consumption model in modern entertainment behaviour.

Practical Implications

For OTT providers, the findings highlight the importance of maintaining quality, diverse, and on-demand content to sustain viewer engagement. Cinemas, on the other hand, can capitalise on their experiential appeal by enhancing ambiance, technology, and exclusivity of releases. Marketing strategies should focus on blending both experiences—such as OTT-cinema partnerships and hybrid release models—to meet changing audience expectations. Businesses in entertainment should also consider audience segmentation based on age and income, as younger, low-income users exhibit stronger OTT preferences due to affordability and convenience factors.

Recommendations For Future Research/Future Scope Of The Study

Future studies can expand this research by including a larger and more diverse sample beyond Ahmedabad to capture regional variations in entertainment preferences across India. Researchers can also incorporate additional demographic factors such as lifestyle, psychological traits, and digital literacy to better understand OTT adoption behaviour. Longitudinal studies could track how Generation Z's preferences evolve with emerging technologies like AI-driven content curation, virtual reality, and metaverse-based entertainment. Comparative analyses between Generation Z and Millennials may further highlight generational shifts in media consumption. Moreover, exploring producers' and cinema owners' perspectives can provide a more holistic view of the OTT–cinema ecosystem.

Conclusion

The research concludes that OTT platforms have significantly influenced entertainment consumption behaviour in Ahmedabad, particularly among the youth. With Netflix and Jio Hotstar emerging as the most preferred platforms, audiences are shifting toward digital viewing due to its flexibility and convenience. While respondents acknowledged OTT's growing dominance, many still valued the unique cinematic experience—demonstrating that traditional theatres retain emotional and social importance.

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