

A STUDY OF THE CINEMATIC SHIFT TO OTT PLATFORMS (IN THE CONTEXT OF HARYANA)

Dr. Sewa Singh Bajwa*; Sapna**

*Professor,

Department of Journalism & Mass Communication,
Chaudhary Devi Lal University,
Sirsa, Haryana, INDIA
Email id: nachizbajwa@gmail.com

**Research Scholar,

Department of Journalism & Mass Communication,
Chaudhary Devi Lal University,
Sirsa, Haryana, INDIA
Email id: khannasapna786@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of OTT (Over-The-Top) platforms has transformed the way audiences consume visual media, bringing a major shift in entertainment patterns across India. Unlike traditional cinema and television, which bound viewers to fixed times and locations, OTT services provide the flexibility to watch content anytime and anywhere. Their appeal also lies in the vast range of options they offer—spanning big and small-budget films, web series, dramas, reality shows, sports, podcasts, animated features, children’s programming, regional productions, and even international content. This diversity has made OTT platforms far more attractive to audiences compared to conventional entertainment sources like TV and cinema halls. This research paper specifically examines the growing inclination of audiences in Haryana towards OTT platforms and the decline in their reliance on traditional media. It studies how shifting consumer behaviour is affecting the film industry, the level of satisfaction with OTT content, and the reasons behind this changing trend. The study adopts a quantitative approach, employing survey and sampling methods. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended questions, enabling statistical analysis. The findings highlight audience preferences, satisfaction levels, and the factors driving the increasing popularity of OTT platforms over traditional forms of entertainment.

KEYWORDS: OTT, Cinema theatre, cinematic shift, uses, gratification, convergence.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the entertainment industry has undergone a remarkable transformation, with audiences increasingly shifting their preference from cinema halls to digital platforms, particularly OTT (Over-The-Top) services. The rapid spread of internet connectivity, affordable data plans, rising smartphone usage, and evolving consumer expectations have significantly accelerated this transition. This phenomenon is visible not only on a global scale but also within

regional contexts. In Haryana, a state with a deeply rooted cinema culture, the expanding influence of OTT platforms has raised questions regarding the continued relevance of traditional cinema halls.

The present study focuses on understanding the behavioural shift of Haryana's youth towards OTT platforms. Its primary objectives are to examine the factors that attract young viewers to OTT, measure their level of satisfaction, and assess whether this growing popularity poses challenges to the survival of cinema halls. A quantitative research approach has been applied, using survey methods for data collection. The theoretical framework of the study draws on Uses and Gratification Theory, Convergence Theory, and Cultivation Theory, providing insights into how OTT platforms are shaping entertainment consumption while also driving cultural and social change. The findings are expected to shed light on emerging entertainment trends in Haryana and guide filmmakers, OTT providers, policymakers, and audiences in adapting to this evolving digital era.

OTT vs Cinema Hall

In the last few years, the entertainment industry has undergone a historic transformation, with audiences steadily shifting from traditional cinema halls to digital platforms, particularly OTT (Over-The-Top) services. This global trend has also made a deep impact at the regional level, and Haryana—known for its cultural richness, rural roots, and evolving socio-economic environment—is no exception. The rise of platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+ Hotstar, MX Player, and Voot has provided audiences with an entirely new experience, offering them the freedom to watch films, web series, documentaries, and other digital content at any time and from any place. This flexibility has changed not only viewing patterns but also audience expectations. The Covid-19 pandemic further accelerated this shift, as cinema halls remained closed for long periods, pushing viewers to rely on digital platforms for entertainment. Consequently, the dominance of OTT has had far-reaching effects on the traditional cinema industry.

The reasons behind the growing preference for OTT are varied, but convenience stands out as the most significant. Earlier, watching a film required travelling to a cinema hall, purchasing tickets, and adhering to fixed show timings. Now, viewers can access movies and series instantly at home, at work, or even while travelling. Additionally, OTT platforms provide a far wider range of content than cinema halls. They not only feature Bollywood and Hollywood productions but also offer regional language films, independent cinema, short films, and globally acclaimed documentaries. This variety ensures that different audience groups find something suited to their taste. By contrast, cinema halls, despite their unique charm, remain limited in terms of variety and accessibility.

Still, cinema halls continue to hold value, particularly for big-budget films that are designed for a larger-than-life experience. Action thrillers, science fiction, and high-production blockbusters attract audiences who prefer the immersive visuals and sound of a theatre setting. The collective joy of watching a film on the big screen with friends, family, or even strangers cannot be replicated on a mobile phone or laptop. Yet, the increasing affordability and practicality of OTT subscriptions are drawing many people away from theatres. Compared to the high costs of tickets, food, and travel expenses associated with theatres, OTT subscriptions allow unlimited access to countless movies and shows at a fraction of the price.

This shift has become especially visible in Haryana. In earlier decades, single-screen theatres were central to the entertainment culture of the state. Today, many of these theatres have shut down due to declining footfalls, while multiplexes in urban centres struggle to maintain steady viewership. Interestingly, several films that failed to perform well in theatres gained unexpected popularity after releasing on OTT platforms. For instance, the film *Khel Khel Mein*, starring Akshay Kumar, Vaani Kapoor, Taapsee Pannu, Amy Virk, Fardeen Khan, and Pragya Jaiswal, collected only ₹57 crore at the box office against its ₹100 crore budget. Yet, upon its release on Netflix, it became a trending success and reached a much wider audience (Tiwari, 2024). Similarly, *Laapta Ladies*, produced by Aamir Khan's production house, struggled in theatres but became globally popular on Netflix, ranking first among the 'Top 10' trending Indian films. Even Shah Rukh Khan's *Dunki*, which underperformed compared to *Pathan* and *Jawaan*, became a massive hit on Netflix, reportedly being watched for over 100 hours, surpassing even *Jawaan* in digital viewership (Sharma, 2024).

These examples highlight how OTT platforms have redefined success metrics for films. Earlier, audiences had to wait six months or more for a movie to release digitally after its theatrical run. Today, that window has narrowed to just four to six weeks, and it may reduce even further in the future. As a result, many viewers prefer to wait for the digital release instead of spending money on theatre tickets. This shift signals a new era in the entertainment industry, where OTT platforms are not just alternatives but formidable competitors to traditional cinema halls. For Haryana, as for the rest of India, this evolving trend raises important questions about the survival of theatres and the future balance between cinematic tradition and digital innovation.

Challenges facing the cinema industry

In recent years, the traditional cinema industry has been facing a serious crisis due to the rapid rise of OTT (Over-The-Top) platforms. Multiple studies and media reports highlight that changing audience preferences, affordable digital subscriptions, and the convenience of on-demand entertainment have severely affected theatre revenues. Where once the release of big-budget films guaranteed success at the box office, producers are now increasingly prioritizing OTT releases, directly impacting the income of cinema halls. This shift has created unprecedented challenges for India's film exhibition sector, with even leading multiplex chains struggling to sustain profitability.

The financial decline is evident from reports of PVR Inox, India's largest multiplex chain. In the September quarter of the 2023–24 financial year, the company reported losses of ₹118 million, compared to profits of ₹1.66 billion during the same period a year earlier. Analysts attribute this downfall primarily to the soaring popularity of OTT platforms as well as weak performances by Bollywood films. Services like Netflix and Disney+ Hotstar are offering affordable subscription packages and a wide range of content, making home viewing a more attractive option. As a direct result, cinema halls have experienced a 25% fall in ticket sales and an 18% drop in food and beverage revenues. Occupancy rates have also plummeted, falling from 32.3% to just 25%, which has further worsened the position of theatres in the entertainment economy.

In response to this crisis, multiplex operators are experimenting with strategies to win back audiences. These include reducing ticket prices, introducing discounted movie passes, and screening old blockbuster films to draw in nostalgic viewers. While such measures may bring temporary relief, their long-term effectiveness remains uncertain. PVR Inox has announced plans

to add 110–120 new screens by 2025, yet given the prevailing market dynamics, it is unclear whether expanding infrastructure alone will restore audience loyalty to theatres (Reuters, 2024).

In contrast, the OTT industry is witnessing unprecedented growth. Market projections suggest that the sector could reach a valuation of \$223.98 billion globally by 2028, with blockchain and AI technologies expected to drive further expansion (Kiruthika, 2024). In India, the outlook remains equally promising. According to Statista, the OTT video market is projected to generate \$3.7 billion in revenue by the end of 2023 and grow to \$5.51 billion by 2027, marking a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.01% (Dudhat, 2024). Similarly, a FICCI-Ernst & Young report estimates that India's overall media and entertainment sector is worth around ₹2 lakh crore, with the digital media segment alone registering an impressive 30% annual growth.

These figures collectively demonstrate that OTT platforms are no longer an alternative but a dominant force in the entertainment landscape. While theatres continue to retain relevance for certain big-budget films and the unique cinematic experience they provide, their position is increasingly being challenged. The long-term sustainability of cinema halls will depend on how effectively they adapt to these changes and coexist with the growing digital ecosystem. What remains clear is that the rise of OTT has permanently altered the dynamics of entertainment consumption, reshaping the future of both filmmakers and audiences.

Review of Literature

SR, Ms. Sarita (2023) in her research letter *Trends in the Entertainment Industry: A Shift to OTT Platforms*, the entertainment sector is experiencing a major transformation with audiences increasingly moving away from traditional cinema halls towards OTT platforms. The study highlights how the convenience, affordability, and diverse content libraries of OTT services have reshaped viewing habits, encouraging audiences to prefer on-demand digital entertainment. Sarita further points out the rising culture of binge-watching, where viewers consume multiple episodes or films in a single sitting. While this reflects growing engagement, it also exposes audiences to issues of overconsumption and media dependency.

In their 2023 research study *The Effect of OTT Platforms on Indian Film Industry*, Sardha Murty et al. critically examined how the rapid rise of OTT platforms has reshaped the traditional movie business in India. The study addresses the growing dominance of digital platforms and the reasons behind their increasing acceptance among audiences. It highlights both positive and negative consequences of this shift—while OTT has created new opportunities for filmmakers, expanded content diversity, and increased accessibility, it has also contributed to declining theatre attendance and box office revenues. The research thus evaluates the overall impact of OTT on India's film industry.

The 2023 study *OTT Platforms and Dynamics for Contemporary Indian Theater* explores how the rapid growth of OTT platforms has influenced the functioning and relevance of traditional theatre. The research investigates the extent to which digital streaming has impacted theatre's audience base, aesthetic value, and cultural role. It highlights that while OTT has provided convenience, wider access, and diverse storytelling formats, it has also challenged theatre's traditional charm and collective viewing experience. The study further examines whether OTT platforms could occupy a permanent place in the future of Indian theatre, raising questions about coexistence, adaptation, and the preservation of theatrical identity.

The 2023 research study *A Study of the Shifting Viewership of Movies from Theatres to OTT Platforms in Mumbai* by Mrs. Dipali et al. investigates the changing behaviour and attitudes of film audiences in India's entertainment capital. Through a detailed survey targeting diverse sections of Mumbai's filmgoers, the study identifies key reasons for the growing preference for OTT platforms. Factors such as affordable subscription plans, flexibility of viewing anytime and anywhere, and the availability of multilingual and global content have significantly contributed to this shift. The research also analyzes the broader effects of this trend on cinema halls and traditional film culture.

The 2024 research paper *OTT Platforms: Reshaping Viewing Pattern of Cinema in India* by Rahul Mahajan and Dr. Santosh Kumar Gautam examines the transformative influence of OTT platforms on Indian society. The study's primary objective is to analyze how the vast range of digital content impacts audience viewing habits, cultural values, and prevailing social norms. It highlights the way OTT has introduced new storytelling formats, diverse regional and international narratives, and more personalized viewing experiences. At the same time, it critically evaluates how these shifts affect traditional cinema culture, community viewing practices, and the collective identity shaped through films.

The 2024 study by Basha, Shaik Mahaboob, and Viswanatha Reddy titled *The Digital Revolution: Exploring Influential Factors in OTT Platform Adoption* focuses on identifying the key elements influencing consumer adoption of OTT platforms. Using a quantitative research methodology, the researchers collected data from a representative sample of 384 respondents, ensuring diversity in demographics and viewing habits. The study analyzed how factors such as affordability of subscriptions, ease of access, internet penetration, content variety, and personalized recommendations contribute to the growing preference for OTT. Findings provide valuable insights into changing entertainment patterns and the digital transformation of media consumption.

The 2024 research study *The Evolution of Entertainment: A Comparative Analysis of Cinema and OTT Platforms* by Esha Simlote et al. seeks to examine the transformative shift in the entertainment landscape. The central objective of the study is to identify the factors responsible for the transition from traditional cinema halls to modern OTT platforms. It focuses on understanding the nature of changes that have occurred in the cinema industry with the advent and rapid growth of digital platforms. The paper also analyzes the expanding influence of OTT on audience choices, exploring how technological advancements, social changes, and economic affordability have reshaped viewing habits. Additionally, it investigates the effects of this transition on traditional cinema culture, highlighting challenges and opportunities for the future.

Objectives:

1. To understand which reasons are influencing youth's interest towards OTT platforms.
2. To study the satisfaction level of youth using OTT platforms.
3. To know whether the relevance of cinema halls in Haryana is decreasing due to the increasing popularity of OTT platforms.

Research Method

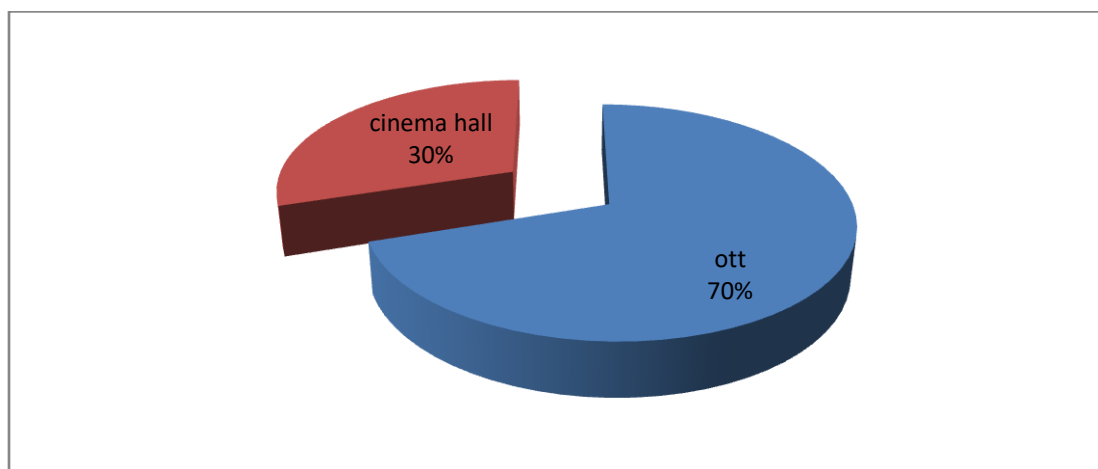
This research uses quantitative methodology, in which data is collected through survey method. A structured questionnaire was prepared for data collection, which contained closed questions.

Probability sampling method has been adopted in the research, in which data has been collected from respondents aged 18 to 25 years from Haryana. The data obtained was statistically analysed in software like Excel.

Theoretical framework –The theoretical framework of the research Uses and Gratification Theory as well as Convergence Theory which were helpful in gaining in-depth information on the use, satisfaction, and attitude of viewers towards the content of OTT platforms.

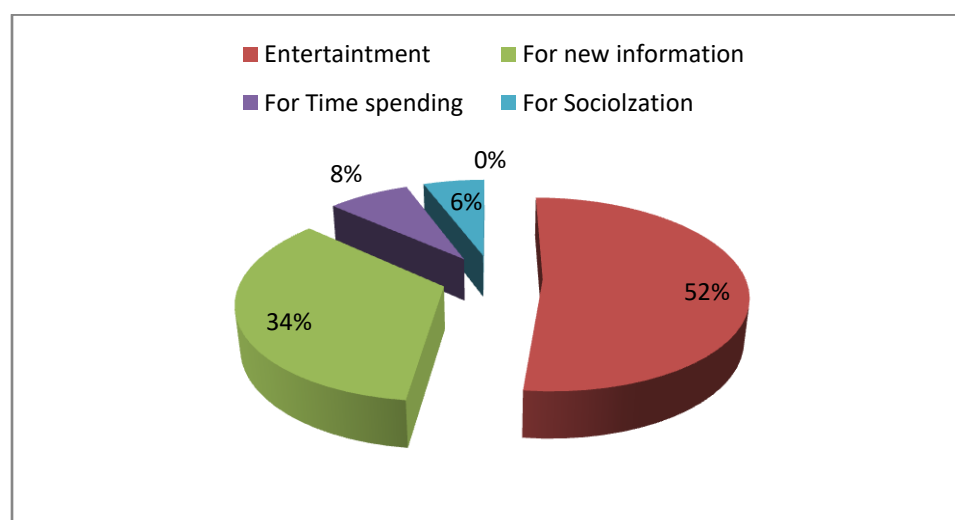
Discussion:

1. On which medium do you like to watch movies?



According to the data presented, 70% of respondents use OTT platforms to watch movies and 30% of respondents watch movies in cinema halls.

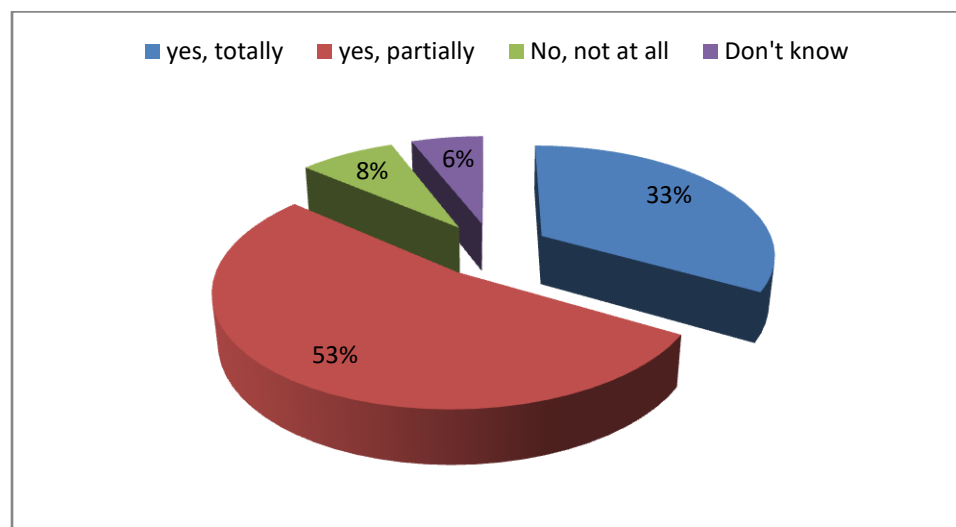
2. What is your main purpose of using OTT platforms?



Information was obtained from them about the purpose behind using OTT platforms, in which an attempt was made to ask them mainly for what purpose they use OTT platforms. 52 per cent of the respondents said that they use OTT platforms only for entertainment. 34 per cent said that

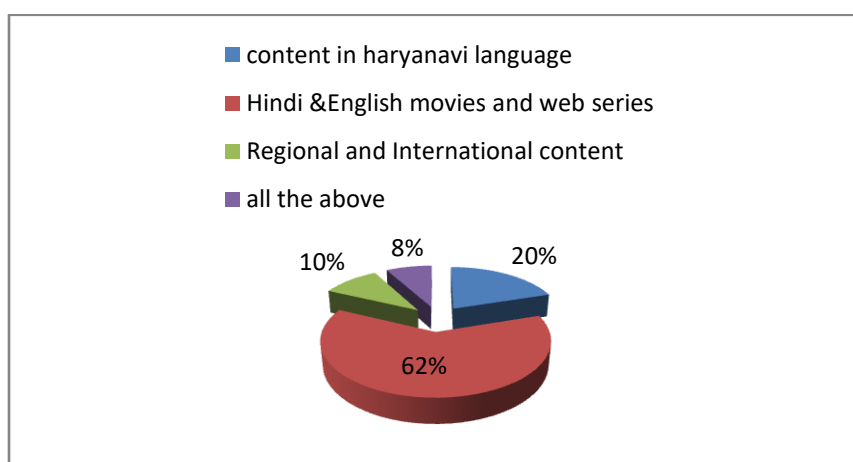
they get new information from OTT, so they use it. 6 per cent of the respondents use OTT only for the purpose of participating in social conversations.

3. Do OTT platforms cater to your personal interests?



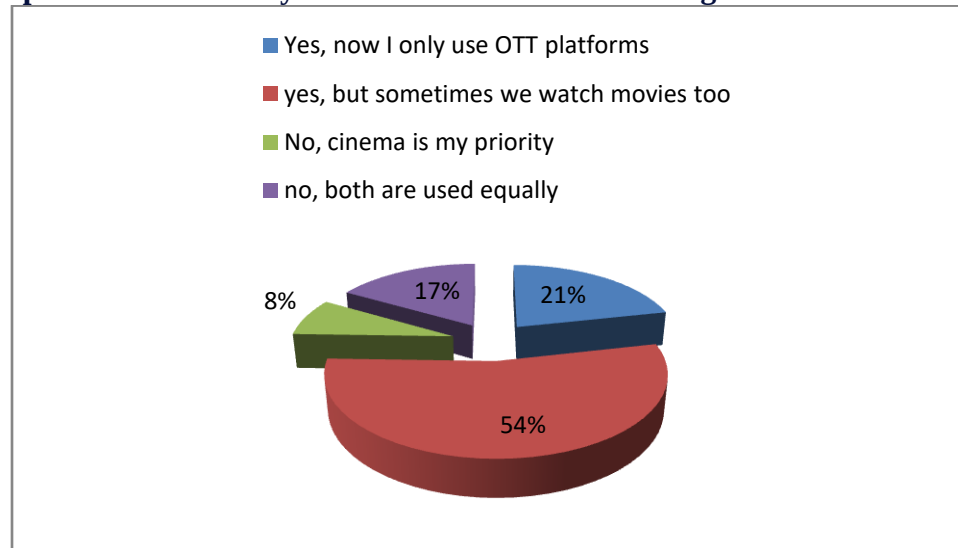
In Figure 3, Information related to the interests of the respondents was collected. In which they were asked whether OTT platforms broadcast programs related to their interests. 54 percent of the respondents believe that programs are broadcast on OTT partially according to their interests. 34 percent said that yes, programs are broadcast on OTT completely according to their interests. 6 percent said that they have no information and 8 percent believe that OTT is not useful for anything.

4. What type of content do you prefer on OTT platforms?



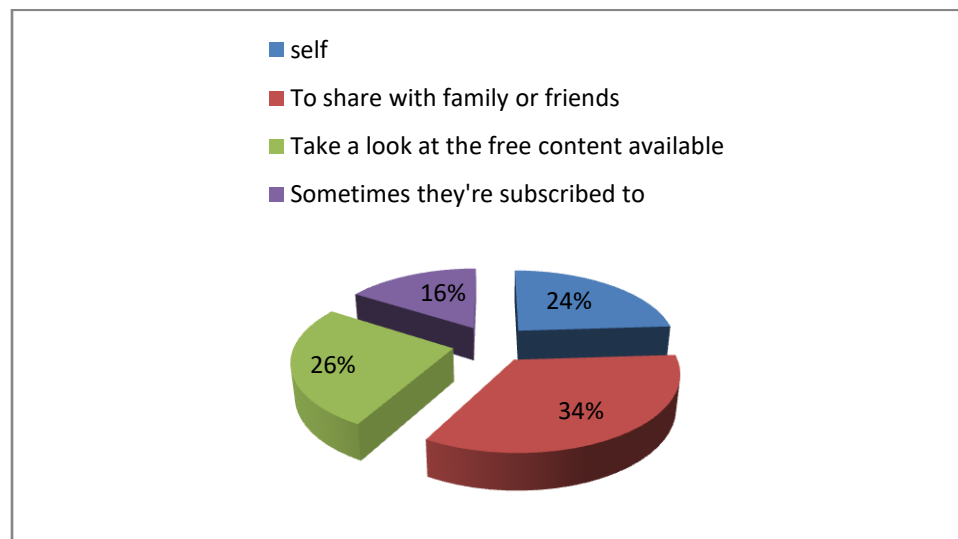
In Figure 4 information related to the preferences of the respondents regarding their content was obtained in which 62 per cent of the respondents said that they prefer Hindi/English movies and web series. 20 per cent prefer Haryanvi content. 10 per cent of the respondents prefer regional and international content and 8 per cent of the respondents prefer all types of content.

5. Have OTT platforms affected your traditional cinema viewing habits?



In Figure 5, most of the respondents have said that since the advent of OTT platforms, OTT platforms have affected their movie-watching habits, but they sometimes go to watch movies in cinema halls, but it depends on the type of movie. 21 percent of the respondents said that now they only use OTT platforms to watch movies. 17 percent of the respondents said that there has been no significant change in their movie-watching habits due to the advent of OTT as these respondents use both platforms equally. Only 8 percent of the respondents say that the advent of OTT platforms has not affected their habit of watching movies in cinema halls at all, they still prefer to go to cinema halls and cinema halls are their first priority.

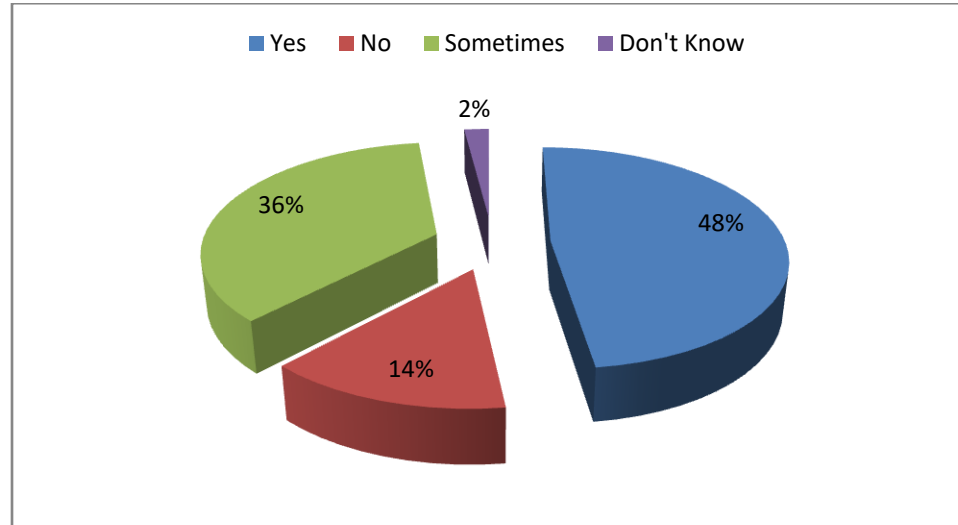
6. How do you subscribe to OTT platforms?



In Figure 6, respondents were asked how they subscribe to OTT platforms. 34% said they share subscriptions with their family or friends. 26% said they only watch free content and have never subscribed to any OTT platform. 24% of respondents said they take their own subscription and

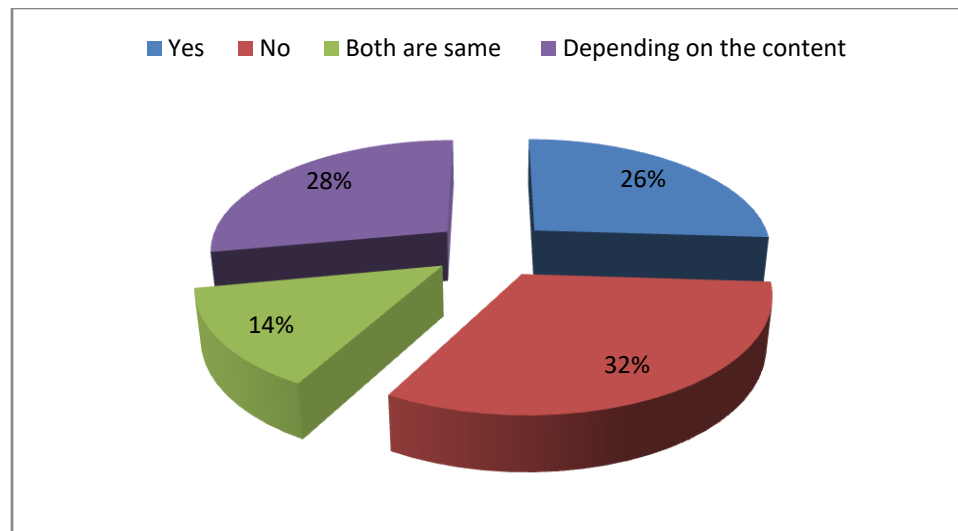
watch content. 16% of respondents said they subscribe to OTT only when a movie of their choice is released on OTT.

7. Do you prefer watching traditional cinema on OTT platforms? Do you prefer watch movies on OTT platforms rather than in cinema halls?



In Figure 7, when the respondents were asked if they prefer watching movies on OTT instead of cinema halls, 48 percent of the respondents said that they watch movies only on OTT. 14 percent said that they still go to the hall but do not use OTT and 36 percent said that they use OTT sometimes. 2 percent of the respondents are not aware of OTT platforms.

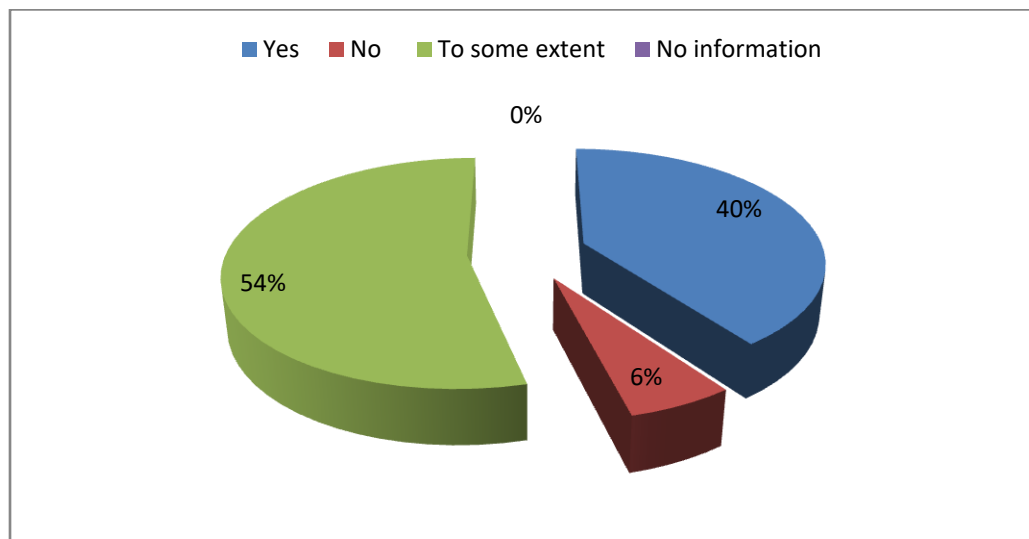
8. Do you think that watching movies on over the top (OTT) platforms is a better experience than going to the movies theatres?



In Figure 8, respondents were asked if they believe that the experience of watching movies on OTT platforms is better than cinema halls. 32 percent of respondents answered no. They feel that watching movies in cinema halls is better than OTT platforms. 28 percent said that it depends on the content. 26 percent of respondents said that watching on OTT is better. They believe that

watching a movie on OTT at home is better than in a cinema hall. 14 percent said that they like watching movies on both platforms and it also depends on their situation.

9. Do you think OTT has become a better alternative to cinema in today's time?



In Figure 9, respondents were asked whether OTT platforms are a good alternative to cinema halls at present. 54 percent of respondents said that OTT platforms are a good alternative to cinema halls to some extent. 40 percent said that OTT platforms are a good alternative to cinema halls at present because it provides a good experience of watching movies anywhere at any time. 6 percent of respondents answered no and believe that OTT platforms can never be an alternative to cinema halls.

10. Do you think that the popularity of cinema theatres is decreasing due to OTT platforms?

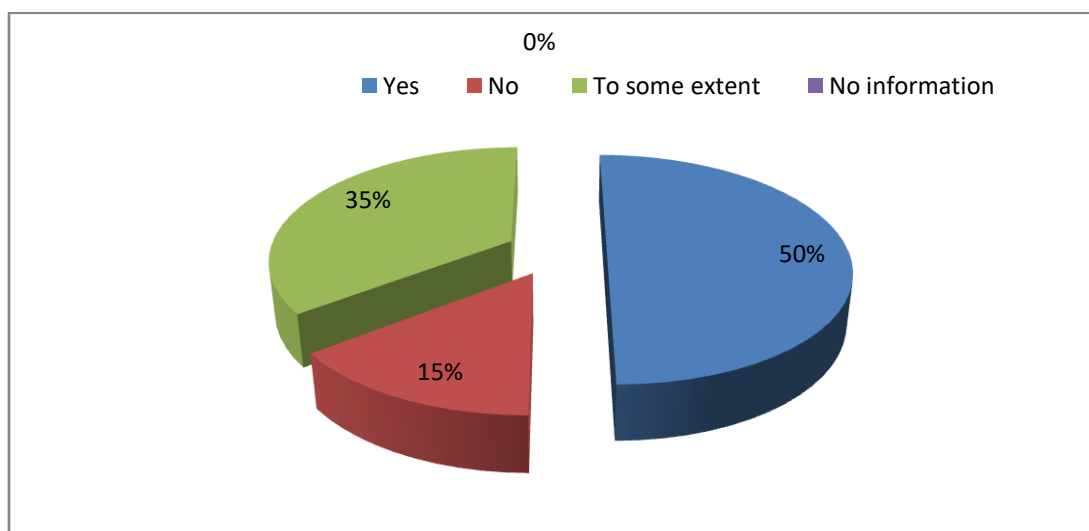
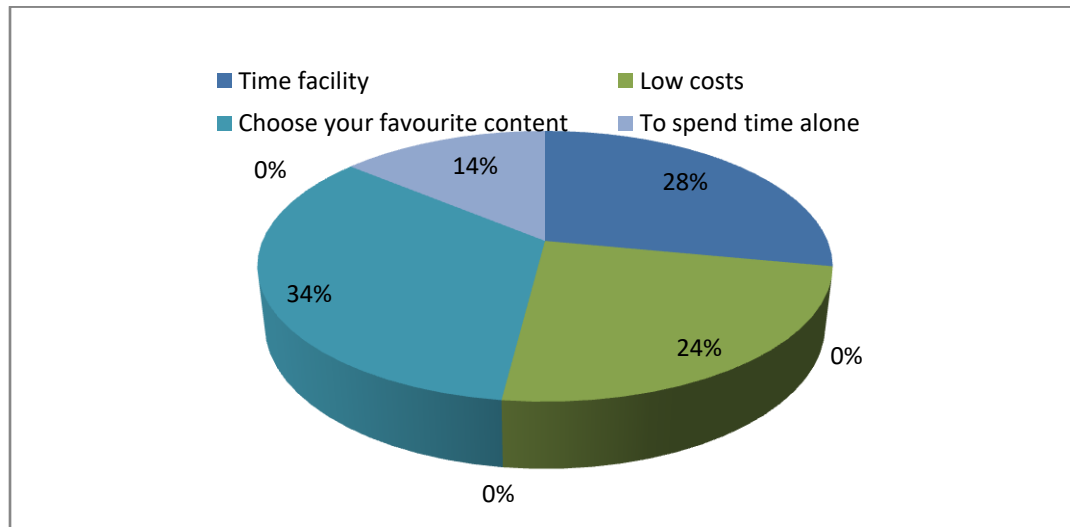


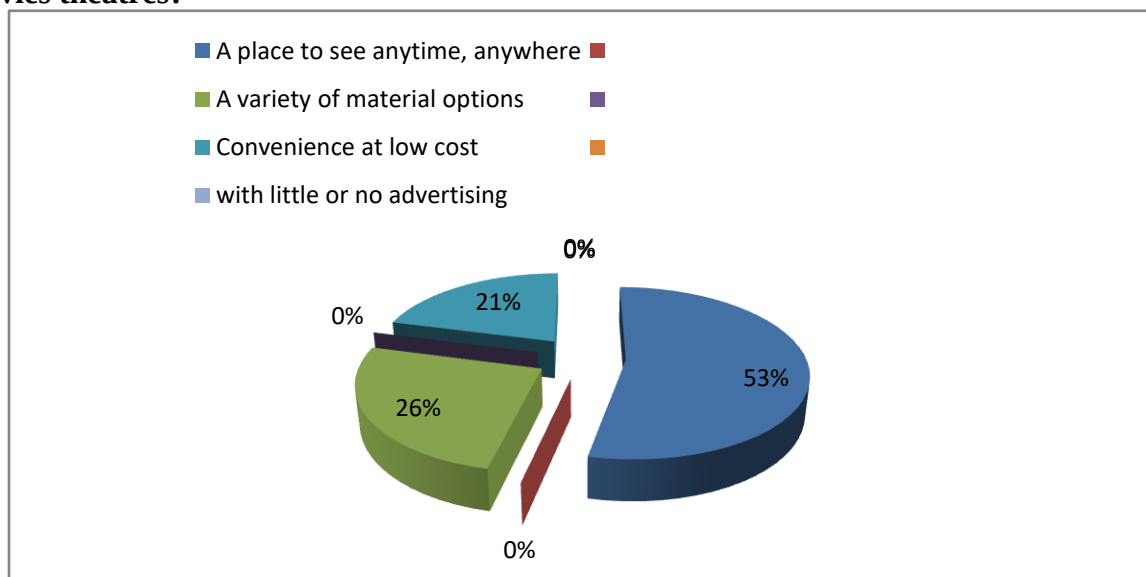
Figure 10 Respondents were asked whether the popularity of cinema halls has decreased since the advent of OTT. 50 percent of the respondents answered yes. 35 percent believe that the popularity of cinema halls has decreased to some extent. 15 percent of the respondents believe that the popularity of cinema halls has not decreased with the advent of OTT.

11. Why do you prefer watching movies on OTT platforms rather than in a cinema theatre?



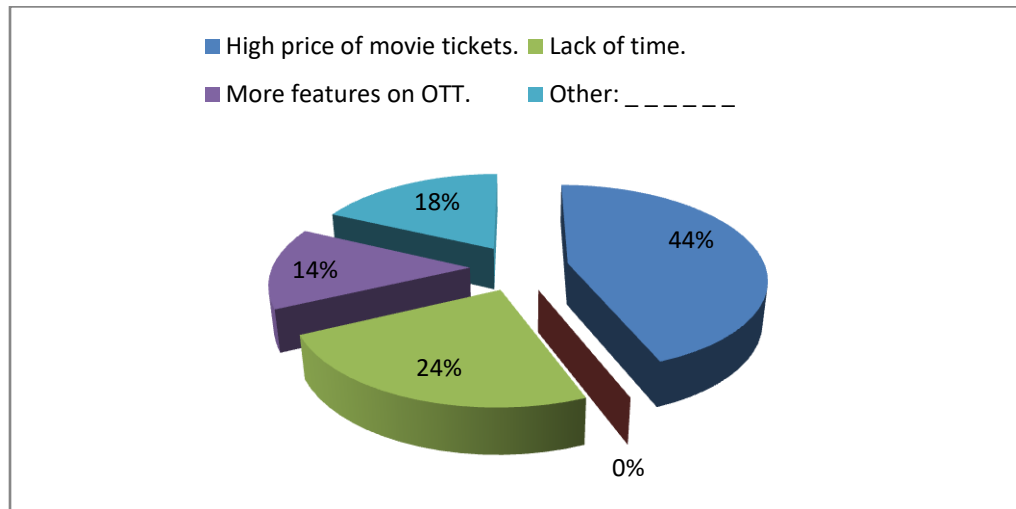
In Figure 11, respondents were asked why they prefer watching movies on OTT instead of watching movies in cinema halls. 34 percent believe that OTT has content according to their choice, so they prefer watching movies on OTT platforms instead of cinema halls. 24 percent of respondents believe that cinema halls are more expensive than OTT platforms. Therefore, they watch movies only on OTT. 28 percent of respondents said that on OTT they can watch content according to their time, so they use OTT platforms. 14 percent answered that they like watching movies alone, so they like OTT platforms.

12. What are the reasons behind your preference for over-the-top (OTT) platforms over movies theatres?



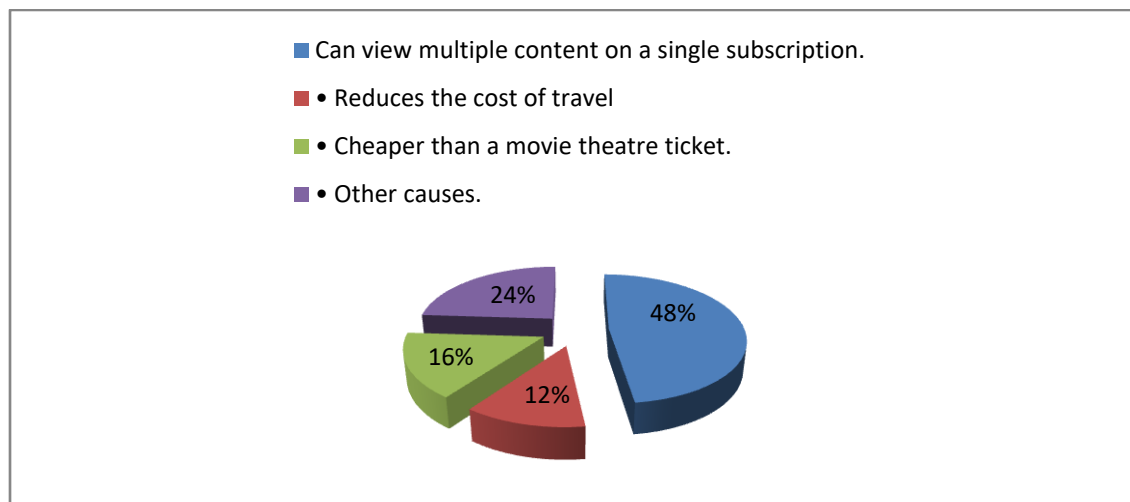
In Figure 12, the respondents were asked what the reasons that attract them towards OTT platforms are. 46 percent of the respondents said that they get the facility to watch content anywhere and anytime on OTT platforms, due to which they use OTT platforms. 22 percent of the respondents said that they are attracted towards OTT platforms due to the variety of content on OTT platforms. 18 percent are attracted to OTT because it is cheaper than cinema halls. 12 percent believe that there is instant availability of content on OTT platforms, so they find OTT platforms more attractive.

13. What do you consider to be the biggest drawback of cinema halls?



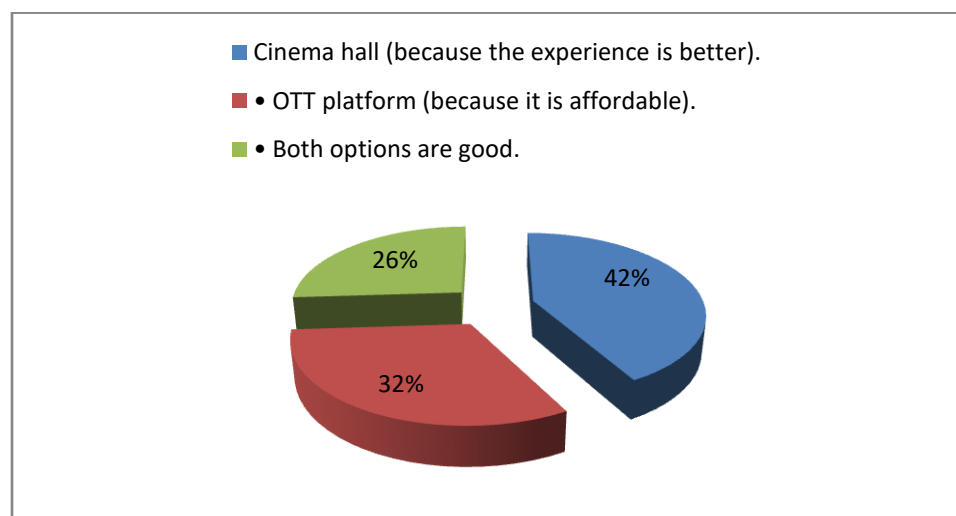
In Figure 13, the respondents were asked about the shortcomings of cinema theatres. What are the reasons due to which cinema halls are lagging behind due to the advent of OTT platforms. 44 percent of the respondents said that the ticket prices of cinema theatres are high and OTT platforms are cheaper than them. 24 percent said lack of time, consumers do not have time to go and watch movies. 14 percent said OTT is more convenient than cinema halls. 18 percent gave other reasons.

14. Why do you find OTT Platforms more affordable than cinema halls?



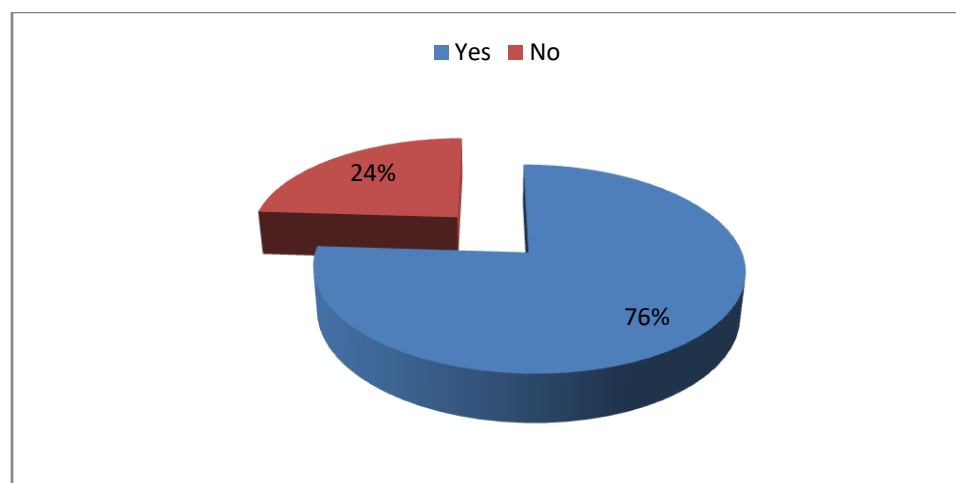
In Figure 14, respondents were asked why they find OTT platforms more economical than cinema halls. In which 48 percent of the respondents said that when they subscribe to an OTT platform, they consume multiple content on a single subscription. 24 percent believe that travelling to cinema halls is costly, so they use OTT. 16 percent believe that cinema hall tickets are expensive.

15. If the same film is available in both cinema halls and OTT platforms, which one would you prefer?



The presented figure provides information about the preferences of the respondents in which they have been asked that if a film is available on both OTT platforms and cinema halls, which one would you prefer. 42 percent of the respondents from Haryana said that they prefer cinema halls because they consider the experience of cinema halls to be better than OTT platforms. 32 percent of the respondents said that they prefer OTT platforms because they find OTT more economical than cinema halls. 26 percent of the respondents have chosen both options.

16. Have you reduced your visits to cinema theatres due to OTT platforms?



In this, the respondents were asked whether their visits to cinema halls have reduced after the advent of OTT platforms. 76 percent of the respondents said that ever since they started using OTT platforms, their visits to cinema halls have stopped. 26 answered no, saying that they still prefer to go to cinema halls and watch movies.

CONCLUSION:

This research study focuses on the growing inclination of cinema audiences in Haryana towards OTT platforms and the simultaneous decline in their reliance on traditional media. The objective of the study has been to explore the shifting viewing habits of audiences, the reasons for this transformation, and the impact of OTT platforms on entertainment preferences. Findings reveal that in recent years, audience choices have undergone a significant change. Where once traditional cinema halls served as the primary medium for collective enjoyment and social interaction, today OTT platforms have emerged as a more personal, flexible, and diverse alternative.

One of the key reasons behind the popularity of OTT is the freedom it offers from time and place restrictions. Audiences can now access films, web series, and other content at their own convenience, whether at home or while travelling. In Haryana, a majority of viewers prefer watching films on OTT platforms rather than visiting cinema halls, citing comfort, affordability, and flexibility as the main factors. However, respondents also acknowledged that the immersive experience of watching a film on the big screen cannot be fully replicated by OTT platforms. The theatre continues to hold a special place, particularly for high-budget films that rely on larger-than-life visuals and sound.

The study concludes that this transition is not merely a result of technological advancement but is deeply linked with broader social, cultural, and economic shifts. OTT platforms are redefining audience behaviour by offering variety, accessibility, and personalization, thereby influencing the future of India's entertainment landscape. At the same time, the findings underline the need for traditional cinema halls to adopt innovative strategies and new experiments to remain relevant in a rapidly evolving digital era.

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