

# **The Role of Influencer Marketing in Shaping Consumer Choices for OTT and Cinema**

## **Abstract**

The rapid rise of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms, combined with changing cinema consumption habits, has transformed the entertainment ecosystem in India. Alongside this transformation, influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful strategy that directly impacts consumer choices. With Indian audiences—particularly youth—actively engaging with influencers on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, there is a growing need to understand the effectiveness of influencer-led promotions. This research explores how influencer credibility, exposure frequency, and content formats influence viewing decisions for OTT and cinema. Primary data was collected from 100 respondents at K.V. Pendharkar College, Dombivli, and analyzed using IBM SPSS. Findings suggest that influencer credibility strongly shapes likelihood of viewing, exposure frequency has a weaker but noticeable effect, while content format does not significantly alter viewing time. The study emphasizes credibility as the most critical factor and highlights the role of influencers in promoting Indian-made content aligned with the vision of *Vikasit Bharat*. The results provide insights for marketers, OTT platforms, and policymakers about leveraging influencer strategies effectively in India's rapidly evolving entertainment industry.

**Keywords:** Influencer Marketing, OTT, Cinema, Consumer Behavior, Credibility, Vikasit Bharat

## **Introduction**

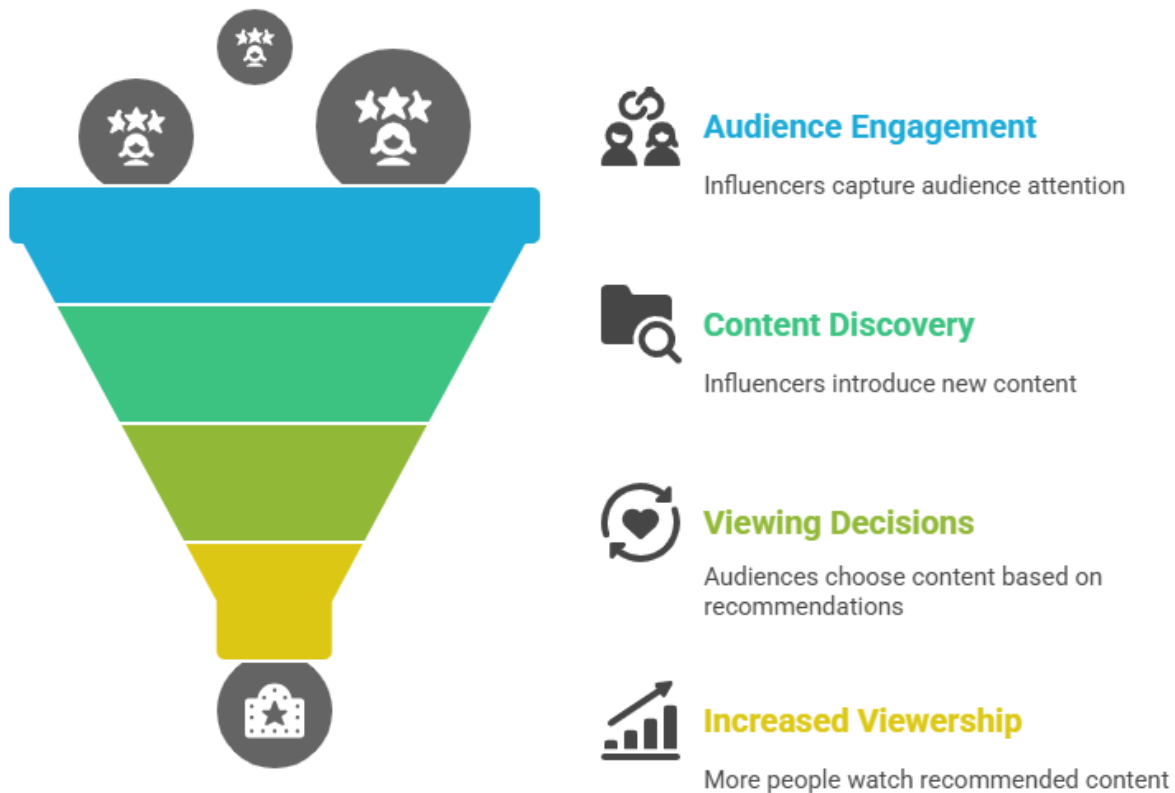
The Indian entertainment industry is undergoing a major shift with the rise of OTT platforms and changing audience patterns in cinema consumption. With increasing internet penetration and affordable data, platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, JioCinema, and Zee5 have gained prominence. Young audiences, particularly students, spend significant

amounts of time consuming digital content, making them an important consumer segment. Simultaneously, cinema remains deeply ingrained in Indian culture, providing both competition and complementarity to OTT platforms.

Traditional advertising methods such as television commercials and print advertisements are losing relevance among younger audiences who view them as less authentic. Instead, social media influencers—content creators with dedicated followings—are shaping opinions and driving consumption choices. Influencer marketing capitalizes on relatability and perceived authenticity, positioning influencers as trusted intermediaries between brands and consumers. Unlike celebrity endorsements, which may feel distant, influencers appear approachable and authentic, which makes their recommendations more impactful.

Given this backdrop, understanding how influencer marketing influences OTT and cinema consumption becomes critical. This research investigates the role of three factors: influencer credibility, exposure frequency, and content format, in shaping consumer decisions. The study also highlights how influencer campaigns can support Indian-made content, aligning with national initiatives like *Viksit Bharat*, which envisions a self-reliant and culturally strong India.

## Influencer Marketing Impact on Entertainment Consumption



### Literature Review

Influencer marketing is defined as the strategic use of individuals with large or targeted followings on social media to influence consumer behavior (Freberg et al., 2011). Unlike traditional celebrities, influencers often build niche communities where followers trust their recommendations.

### Influencer Credibility

Credibility, comprising trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, has consistently been shown to be a key driver of consumer decisions (Ohanian, 1990). Research suggests that

consumers are more likely to act on recommendations from influencers they perceive as knowledgeable and authentic (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). In the entertainment sector, credibility is particularly important because content choices are experience-based and involve personal trust. Khatri & Mathur (2022) found that Indian youth perceive influencers as more relatable than celebrity endorsers, thereby increasing their receptivity to influencer recommendations.

## Exposure Frequency

Exposure frequency is rooted in Zajonc's (1968) *mere exposure effect*, which suggests that repeated exposure enhances familiarity and liking. Studies in digital advertising highlight similar effects, though excessive repetition may lead to ad fatigue (Evans et al., 2017). Within influencer marketing, frequent exposure may keep OTT content top of mind but risks becoming overwhelming, especially when students face information overload.

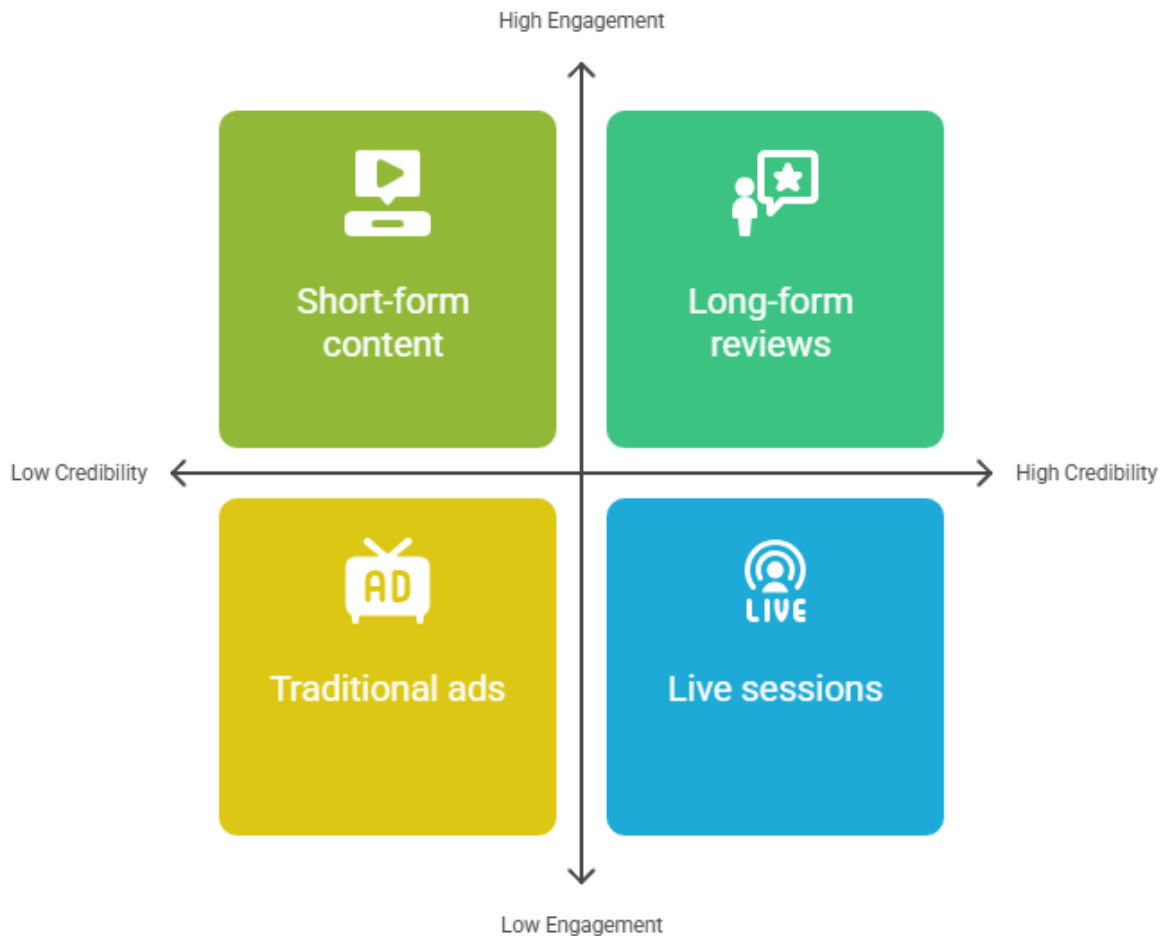
## Content Format

Content format—short clips, reels, long-form YouTube reviews, podcasts, and static posts—shapes how audiences engage with promotional material. Short-form content drives quick attention and is widely consumed, while long-form reviews allow detailed analysis. Studies have shown mixed outcomes: while De Veirman et al. (2017) highlight that visual and video-based promotions drive engagement, others suggest that format matters less than credibility. In the Indian context, most influencer promotions for OTT and cinema take the form of reels or short reviews, yet empirical evidence about format's influence on actual consumption remains limited.

## Gap in Literature

Most studies on influencer marketing in India have focused on retail and fashion (e.g., Sharma & Kumar, 2021), while limited attention has been given to the entertainment sector. The growing dominance of OTT platforms and the role of influencers in promoting Indian content warrant focused investigation. This study fills that gap by empirically examining credibility, exposure, and format in relation to OTT and cinema choices among Indian students.

# Influencer Marketing Strategies in OTT and Cinema



## Research Objectives and Hypotheses

**Objective:** To examine the association between influencer credibility, exposure, content format, and OTT/cinema viewing decisions.

**Hypotheses:** - **H1:** Higher influencer credibility is associated with a greater likelihood of watching OTT/movies recommended by influencers. - **H2:** Higher frequency of exposure to

influencer promotions is associated with a greater number of OTT/movies watched. - **H3:**  
Influencer content format significantly influences OTT/cinema viewing time.

## Research Design

The study was conducted at **K.V. Pendharkar College of Arts, Science, and Commerce, Dombivli, India**, targeting undergraduate and postgraduate students. The respondents represent a digitally active segment highly engaged with OTT and social media.

**Sample size:** 100 students, selected using **convenience sampling**.

**Data collection:** Structured questionnaire with multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and ordinal questions.

**Primary data source:** Student survey distributed via Google Forms.

**Data analysis:** Conducted using IBM SPSS.

**Variables:** Independent variables – influencer credibility, exposure frequency, and content format; Dependent variables – likelihood of watching, number of shows watched, and monthly viewing time.

## Data Analysis and Findings

### Reliability Analysis

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.786	4

Cronbach's alpha for credibility-related items = **0.786**, indicating good internal consistency. This confirms the credibility scale used in the questionnaire was reliable.

## Hypothesis 1: Credibility ↔ Likelihood

### Correlations

			Composite influencer credibility (mean of 4 items)	I am likely to watch an OTT show or movie if an influencer I follow recommends it.
Spearman's rho	Composite influencer credibility (mean of 4 items)	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.571**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001
		N	100	100
	I am likely to watch an OTT show or movie if an influencer I follow recommends it.	Correlation Coefficient	.571**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.
		N	100	100

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

- **Test used:** Spearman's rank correlation.
- **Result:**  $\rho = 0.571$ ,  $p < .001$ .
- **Interpretation:** Strong positive and statistically significant relationship. Higher influencer credibility strongly increases the likelihood of students watching recommended OTT shows or movies.

## Hypothesis 2: Exposure ↔ Number Watched

### Correlations

			How often do you see influencer posts, promotional videos, or reels about movies or OTT shows?	In the past 6 months, how many OTT shows/movies have you watched because an influencer recommended them?
Spearman's rho	How often do you see influencer posts, promotional videos, or reels about movies or OTT shows?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.205*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.041
		N	100	100
	In the past 6 months, how many OTT shows/movies have you watched because an influencer recommended them?	Correlation Coefficient	.205*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	.
		N	100	100

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

- **Test used:** Spearman's rank correlation.
- **Result:**  $\rho = 0.205$ ,  $p = .041$ .
- **Interpretation:** Weak but statistically significant positive relationship. While exposure frequency influences the number of shows watched, the effect is limited.

## Hypothesis 3: Content Format ↔ Viewing Time

### Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test Summary

Total N	100
Test Statistic	10.091 <sup>a</sup>
Degree Of Freedom	5
Asymptotic Sig.(2-sided test)	.073

a. The test statistic is adjusted for ties.



- **Test used:** Kruskal–Wallis H test.
- **Result:**  $H(5) = 10.091$ ,  $p = .073$ .
- **Interpretation:** No statistically significant difference. Content format did not significantly impact the amount of time students spent watching OTT content or movies.

## Discussion

The study's findings emphasize the centrality of influencer credibility in shaping student entertainment choices. Respondents placed high importance on influencers' knowledge, authenticity, and trustworthiness. This aligns with global literature that highlights credibility as the cornerstone of effective influencer campaigns (Ohanian, 1990; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019).

The results for exposure frequency indicate a weaker but noticeable effect. While repeated promotions increase awareness, they do not necessarily convert into viewing actions. This suggests students are more selective and may resist over-promotion, consistent with Evans et al.'s (2017) findings on digital ad fatigue.

Surprisingly, content format did not show a significant impact. Regardless of whether promotions were short reels, long-form reviews, or static posts, viewing time did not differ substantially. This suggests that substance and credibility matter more than presentation style for Indian students. In practice, a persuasive and trusted recommendation is valued more than the medium through which it is delivered.

Comparing the hypotheses, **H1 (credibility)** emerges as the strongest driver, **H2 (exposure)** plays a supporting role, and **H3 (format)** is largely irrelevant. These insights provide a richer understanding of influencer marketing dynamics in India's entertainment sector.

## Conclusion

This study explored how influencer marketing shapes OTT and cinema viewing decisions among Indian students. The results show: 1. **Influencer credibility** has the strongest and most significant influence on likelihood of watching. 2. **Exposure frequency** has a weaker but statistically significant effect. 3. **Content format** does not significantly impact viewing time.

Overall, authenticity and trust drive consumption more than repetition or stylistic choices. These findings highlight influencer marketing's potential in promoting Indian-made content, aligning with the vision of *Vikasit Bharat*. For marketers, focusing on building credibility and fostering authentic influencer relationships is essential.

## Recommendations

1. **Prioritize Credibility:** OTT platforms should collaborate with influencers known for authenticity, expertise, and consistent engagement.
2. **Balance Exposure:** Avoid overloading students with frequent promotions that may lead to fatigue.
3. **Content Variety:** Though format did not show significant effects, maintaining diversity in posts may prevent monotony.
4. **Support Indian Content:** Campaigns should highlight Indian films and shows, reinforcing cultural pride and contributing to *Vikasit Bharat*.
5. **Leverage Campus Influencers:** Student-centric influencer campaigns can create relatability and stronger resonance with youth.

## Limitations and Future Scope

This research is limited to one college and a relatively small sample size of 100 respondents. The results may not represent broader Indian demographics. Data was self-reported, which can introduce biases. The study examined only three factors—credibility, exposure, and content format—while others like peer influence, subscription costs, and social trends were excluded.

Future research can expand by: - Using larger, more diverse samples across regions. - Exploring additional variables such as pricing, peer pressure, or genre preference. - Conducting cross-industry comparisons (fashion, gaming, travel). - Incorporating behavioral analytics (clickstream or viewing logs) to complement self-reported data.

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