

The Impact of Amazon Prime Video's Marketing Strategies on Viewership Behaviour Among Indian OTT Audiences

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Abstract

Over-the-top (OTT) platforms have transformed entertainment consumption in India, and Amazon Prime Video has positioned itself as a leading player through marketing strategies that combine influencer collaborations, regional campaigns, social media promotion, and bundled subscription offers. This study examines how these strategies influence Indian viewers' awareness, perception, and viewing behaviour, with particular attention to audience response to Amazon Prime Video's rental-based subscription model. Grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Integrated Marketing Communications model, the study treats audiences as active participants who respond selectively to marketing appeals that satisfy entertainment, social, and psychological needs. A structured online survey of 62 Indian OTT viewers aged 18–45 was analysed using percentage and frequency distribution, supported by thematic analysis of open-ended responses. The findings show that Amazon Prime Video's marketing strategies, particularly Instagram-based promotion and influencer endorsement, have a measurable positive effect on audience perception and binge-watching frequency, and that a majority of respondents would consider switching to a lower-cost, ad-supported tier if offered. At the same time, the study finds a marked mismatch between high awareness (77.4%) and low actual use (30.6%) of the rental-based content model, with respondents expressing that paying for rental content on top of a subscription reduces the perceived value of their plan. The study contributes to a limited body of India-focused research on Amazon Prime Video's marketing strategy and offers practical implications for OTT platforms balancing promotional innovation with pricing transparency.

Keywords:

Amazon Prime Video; digital marketing strategy; OTT viewership; Uses and Gratifications Theory; audience engagement; rental-based subscription

Introduction

The twenty-first-century digital revolution has fundamentally altered the entertainment industry, moving audiences from scheduled television broadcasting to on-demand streaming through Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms. Services such as Amazon Prime Video, Netflix, Disney+ Hotstar, and ZEE5 have redefined media consumption by giving viewers control over what, when, and how they watch. Among these, Amazon Prime Video has emerged as one of the most actively marketed platforms in India, continuously experimenting with promotional strategies to attract and retain subscribers within a highly competitive OTT market.

In recent years, Amazon Prime Video has adopted a marketing approach that blends content personalisation, influencer-driven campaigns, and regional storytelling with digital promotion across social media. These efforts extend beyond conventional advertising; they aim to build emotional connection, deliver localised content experiences, and integrate Prime Video within Amazon's wider commercial ecosystem, positioning the platform less as a standalone streaming service and more as part of a broader lifestyle brand.

Whether these marketing innovations translate into measurable changes in audience behaviour, however, remains under-examined in the Indian context. As India's OTT market continues to expand rapidly, understanding how Amazon Prime Video's marketing choices shape viewer engagement, brand loyalty, and content preference is of direct relevance to media scholars, marketing practitioners, and the platform itself. This study addresses that gap by examining the relationship between Amazon Prime Video's marketing strategies and viewership behaviour among Indian audiences, with specific attention to the platform's rental-based subscription model, which requires some subscribers to pay an additional fee for premium titles despite holding an active paid plan.

Background of the Study

The OTT sector in India has grown rapidly, driven by affordable internet access, rising smartphone penetration, and a shift in audience preference toward personalised, on-demand, and regionally relevant content. Within this environment, marketing strategy has moved from simple advertising toward data-driven, emotion-oriented campaigns that draw on user data, algorithmic recommendation, and locally resonant storytelling. Amazon Prime Video's use of influencer

collaborations, regional-language campaigns, and cross-platform promotion reflects this broader industry shift toward the localisation of global streaming brands for Indian audiences.

Despite this, comparatively little academic research has examined how Amazon Prime Video's marketing strategies specifically affect Indian viewership, as distinct from the general dynamics of OTT marketing. This study responds to that gap by focusing specifically on the Indian audience's response to Amazon Prime Video's evolving promotional strategy, including their perception of and behaviour toward its rental-based content model.

Statement of the Problem

Although Amazon Prime Video has implemented a range of marketing approaches — influencer-driven promotion, regional content campaigns, and a rental-based subscription model for select titles — the extent to which these strategies shape audience perception, loyalty, and content preference in India remains insufficiently understood. It is unclear whether these strategies generate lasting audience engagement or only short-term visibility, and whether the rental-based pricing model is accepted or resented by subscribers who already pay a recurring subscription fee. With intensifying competition from Netflix, Disney+ Hotstar, and JioCinema, understanding what distinguishes Amazon Prime Video's marketing approach — and where it creates friction with subscriber expectations — is important for both scholarly understanding and platform strategy.

Review of Literature

The literature reviewed for this study spans ten sources — including journal articles, a business case study, and applied research reports — that collectively address OTT branding, consumer preference, pricing strategy, digital and social media marketing, and platform-specific controversy. They are synthesised below by theme rather than by individual source, to better situate this study's contribution within the existing body of work.

Platform Branding and Positioning

A related but unattributed source in the original review discusses Amazon Prime Video's marketing strategy in India as characterised by localised content creation, celebrity-driven campaigns, bundled membership pricing, and emerging hybrid monetisation models,

synthesising secondary data from journals, conference papers, trade publications, and news sources published between 2019 and 2025. This source identifies research gaps in evaluating the long-term effect of Prime Video's campaigns on subscriber retention, particularly following its shift toward ad-supported streaming. This source could not be attributed to a specific author or year and should be verified by the researcher before it is cited or referenced in a final submission.

Consumer Preference and Satisfaction

Together, these studies establish content quality and pricing as consistently important drivers of OTT satisfaction in India, but each is geographically or demographically bounded — Chennai, Thrissur, or a broad but unspecified national sample — leaving open the question of how marketing-specific strategies, rather than product attributes generally, shape perception and behaviour.

Digital and Social Media Marketing

These findings are directly relevant to the present study, whose own survey results identify Instagram as the dominant channel through which Indian respondents encounter Amazon Prime Video's marketing (cited by 85.5% of respondents), and confirm that influencer and social-media-driven promotion measurably shapes viewing decisions.

Research Gap

Taken together, the reviewed literature establishes that Amazon Prime Video's branding, pricing, and social media marketing have each received some independent academic attention, but several gaps remain.

Geographic Limitation of Prior Studies

Wayne's (2017) comparative branding analysis is based on the U.S. market and cannot be assumed to generalise to India, where linguistic diversity, regional identity, and cultural preference shape audience response differently.

Regional Scope of Indian Studies

Existing India-focused research (e.g., Dai Prasad & Minakshi, 2020, in Chennai; Sujit & Mohan, 2021, in Thrissur) is geographically narrow. Studies confined to a single city or district risk

missing the socio-economic, linguistic, and cultural diversity that characterises OTT audiences across India; larger, pan-India studies would offer more generalisable findings.

Limited Research on New Monetisation Models

No study identified in this review has empirically examined audience response to Amazon Prime Video's ad-supported tier or its rental-based subscription model in India, despite both being directly relevant to subscriber retention, satisfaction, and willingness to pay.

Overall Scarcity of India-Focused Research

Despite the scale of OTT consumption in India, academic research focused specifically on Amazon Prime Video's marketing strategy — as opposed to the OTT sector generally — remains limited, and few studies offer a systematic comparison of Amazon Prime Video's strategy against its principal competitors.

This study addresses these gaps by focusing specifically on Amazon Prime Video's marketing strategy and its relationship to viewership behaviour among Indian audiences, with particular attention to the underexamined rental-based subscription model.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two complementary theories: the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explains why audiences engage with media and marketing content, and the Integrated Marketing Communications model, which explains how a brand structures that content across channels. Used together, they allow the study to examine both the demand side (viewer motivation) and the supply side (platform strategy) of the relationship between Amazon Prime Video's marketing and its viewership.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Applied to this study, UGT reframes Amazon Prime Video's marketing activity not simply as exposure that viewers passively absorb, but as content that competes to satisfy these underlying needs. An influencer's recommendation, for instance, can satisfy a social-integrative need (shared viewing as a basis for conversation) as much as it informs; a trailer posted on Instagram can satisfy an affective or tension-free need (anticipation, entertainment) independent of its informational content. This framing is directly testable against the survey data: the finding that

75.8% of respondents say influencer and social media promotion shapes their choice of what to watch, and that 63.9% say trailers make them watch sooner, is consistent with viewers actively seeking out marketing content because it gratifies a need, rather than merely tolerating it as advertising.

Integrated Marketing Communications

Applied to Amazon Prime Video, the IMC perspective explains how the platform's various promotional activities — Instagram and YouTube content, influencer partnerships, in-app notifications, and bundled offers tied to Amazon's retail ecosystem — function as parts of a single coordinated strategy rather than as isolated tactics. This helps interpret findings such as the 51.6% of respondents who report that bundled retail offers increase their interest in Prime Video: this cross-promotional effect is only possible because Amazon's marketing is integrated across its retail and streaming businesses rather than confined to the video platform alone.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine how Amazon Prime Video's marketing strategies influence viewers' perceptions, preferences, and overall mindset toward the platform.
- To assess the extent to which these strategies affect viewers' preference for Amazon Prime Video over competing OTT platforms.
- To investigate how audiences perceive and respond to Amazon Prime Video's rental-based subscription model for premium content, particularly in relation to their existing quarterly or annual subscription.

Research Questions

- RQ1: How do Amazon Prime Video's marketing strategies influence Indian viewers' perceptions and preferences?
- RQ2: To what extent do these strategies affect viewers' likelihood of watching and preferring Amazon Prime Video over competing OTT platforms?
- RQ3: How do subscribers perceive and respond to the rental-based subscription model for premium shows and movies, given their existing paid subscription?

Research Methodology

Research Approach and Design

The study follows a primarily quantitative approach, supplemented by a small set of open-ended questions to capture qualitative insight into participants' personal experiences. The research design is descriptive and analytical; descriptive in documenting current patterns in Amazon Prime Video's marketing exposure and audience response, and analytical in examining the relationship between marketing exposure and viewership behaviour.

Population and Sample

The target population comprised Indian OTT viewers aged 18–45, including both current Amazon Prime Video subscribers and non-subscribers, selected as the demographic segment most actively exposed to digital marketing and advertising. A simple random sampling method was applied with the intention of ensuring representation across age, gender, income level, and geographic region (urban and semi-urban). The target sample size was 80 participants; the survey yielded 62 valid responses, which falls within this target range and forms the basis of the analysis reported below.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered online via Google Forms and distributed through social media. The instrument included both closed-ended items including several five-point Likert-type agreement scales — and open-ended questions, covering three key areas: awareness of Amazon Prime Video's recent marketing strategies, experience with and perception of the rental-based subscription model, and overall customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Data Analysis Procedure

Quantitative responses were analysed using percentage and frequency distribution, with results presented in tabular form for interpretive clarity. Open-ended responses were analysed thematically, with recurring patterns in participant comments grouped into descriptive themes reported in the Findings section below.

Limitations of the Study

- The sample of 62 respondents may not represent the full diversity of the Indian OTT audience.
- Data collection took place entirely online, which may have excluded rural populations and audiences in areas with limited internet connectivity.
- External factors such as competitor marketing activity, pricing changes, or new content releases on rival platforms may also have influenced reported viewership, independent of Amazon Prime Video's own marketing.
- Survey responses are self-reported and may be subject to personal or recall bias.

Findings

This section presents the results of the survey, organised into five tables that group related questionnaire items together: respondent profile, OTT and subscription usage, marketing awareness and behavioural change, attitudinal response to marketing, and response to the rental-based subscription model. Interpretation of these results, and their relationship to the study's theoretical framework and reviewed literature, follows in the Discussion section.

Respondent Profile

Table 1. Respondent demographic profile (N = 62)

Characteristic	Distribution
Age	18–45 years; highest concentration between 18 and 34.
Gender	66.1% female; 33.9% male.
Occupation	43.5% employed; 35.5% students; 11.3% freelancers; remainder self-employed or homemakers.
Monthly household income	29.0% under ₹20,000; 24.2% ₹20,000–49,999; 35.5% preferred not to disclose; remainder ₹50,000 and above.
Location	Multiple Indian states and cities; largest single concentration (32.3%) from Dehradun.

OTT and Amazon Prime Video Usage**Table 2. OTT platform usage, subscription type, tenure, and daily viewing time (N = 62)**

Response category	% of respondents
Do you currently use any OTT platform?	
Yes — Amazon Prime Video	75.8%
Yes — other OTT platform(s) only	12.9%
No	11.3%
If you use Amazon Prime Video, what type of subscription do you currently have?	
Annual / Yearly membership	35.5%
Ad-supported / lower-cost tier	35.5%
Quarterly / Monthly membership	12.9%
No Prime subscription	16.1%
How long have you been using Amazon Prime Video?	
Less than 6 months	27.4%
6 months – 1 year	22.6%
1–2 years	30.6%
More than 2 years	19.4%
Average time spent watching OTT content per day	
Less than 1 hour	33.9%
1–2 hours	40.3%
2–4 hours	21.0%
More than 4 hours	4.8%

Marketing Awareness and Behavioural Change**Table 3. Marketing channel exposure and self-reported change in viewing behaviour (N = 62)**

Response category	% of respondents
Channels through which respondents have seen Amazon Prime Video's marketing (multiple selection)	
Instagram	85.5%

Facebook	59.7%
YouTube	59.7%
Twitter / X	27.4%
WhatsApp forwards	22.6%
Amazon shopping app	19.4%
Influencer posts / reels	19.4%
Television ads	12.9%
Blogs / news articles	8.1%
None of the above	1.6%
Have you changed your viewing behaviour after seeing Amazon Prime Video's recent marketing?	
Yes — watch more on Amazon Prime now	54.8%
No change	35.5%
Yes — watch less on Amazon Prime now	9.7%
Which factor most influenced your viewing increase?	
Marketing campaigns	45.2%
New / interesting content	35.5%
Other (pricing/bundles, app experience, personalised recommendations, no change, prefer not to say)	19.3%

Attitudinal Response to Marketing

Table 4. Agreement with statements about Amazon Prime Video's marketing (5-point scale, N = 62)

Response category	% of respondents
"Amazon Prime's recent marketing campaigns have made me more positive about the platform."	
Strongly agree	38.7%
Agree	22.6%
Neutral	27.4%
Disagree / Strongly disagree (combined)	11.3%

"Seeing trailers or posts on Instagram/YouTube makes me watch shows sooner."	
Strongly agree	41.9%
Agree	21.0%
Neutral	24.2%
Strongly disagree	11.3%
Disagree (remainder, not individually specified in source data)	≈1.6%
"Influencer promotions and social media ads influence my decision to watch specific shows." (Yes/No)	
Yes	75.8%
No	24.2%
"Bundled offers with Amazon shopping increase my interest in Prime Video." (Yes/No)	
Yes	51.6%
No	48.4%

Response to the Rental-Based Subscription Model

Table 5. Awareness, usage, and willingness to switch regarding the rental-based subscription model (N = 62, unless noted)

Response category	% of respondents
Are you aware that some shows require additional rental fees even with a subscription?	
Yes	77.4%
Maybe	12.9%
No	9.7%
Have you ever paid extra for rental content on Amazon Prime?	
Yes	30.6%
No	69.4%
If yes, what motivated you? (n = 36 who had paid for rental content)	

Exclusive content	72.2%
Urgent new release	19.4%
Recommendation by influencer	13.9%
Other (promotional offer / no clear reason)	8.3%
If Amazon launched a cheaper ad-supported plan, would you switch?	
Very likely	67.7%
Neutral	16.1%
Likely / Unlikely / Very unlikely (combined)	16.2%

Qualitative Themes from Open-Ended Responses

Two open-ended questions asked respondents what Amazon Prime Video could improve, and for any further comments on its marketing or rental model. Responses clustered into five recurring themes for each question:

What should Amazon Prime Video improve to increase your viewing?

- Reduce advertising interruptions during streamed content.
- No further suggestion — several respondents felt the current marketing approach is already effective.
- More engaging social media campaigns and user polls, including deeper influencer collaboration.
- Dissatisfaction with pricing and the rental model, with respondents feeling that renting content after already paying for a subscription reduces perceived value.
- Requests for more visible regional and multilingual content, clearer separation of free versus paid titles, and mood- or genre-based personalised recommendations.

Further comments on marketing or the Rental Model

- Strong resistance to the rental model itself, with respondents describing it as a form of "double charging" relative to their existing subscription.
- A number of respondents offered no further suggestion, stating that Amazon Prime Video's existing marketing already appeals to them.
- Requests for reduced rental pricing, particularly among younger, price-sensitive viewers.

- Requests for extended rental viewing windows for greater flexibility.
- Requests for a simpler user interface and clearer upfront communication of which titles require a rental fee.

Discussion

The findings support the applicability of both theoretical frames adopted in this study. Consistent with the Uses and Gratifications Theory, respondents did not engage with Amazon Prime Video's marketing passively: a large majority reported that influencer promotion and social media content directly shaped their decision to watch specific shows (75.8%, Table 4) and prompted them to watch sooner after seeing a trailer or post (63.9% combined agreement, Table 4). This suggests that Amazon Prime Video's marketing succeeds to the extent that it is experienced by viewers as gratification-relevant content in its own right — entertaining, socially shareable, and personally relevant — rather than as conventional advertising to be filtered out.

The dominance of Instagram as a marketing channel (85.5% recall, Table 3) and the corresponding weakness of television advertising (12.9% recall) is consistent with Ramesh and D'Silva's (2022) finding that targeted digital and social media promotion, rather than traditional advertising, is the primary driver of OTT engagement in India. It also aligns with Rahman's (2021) comparative analysis of Amazon Prime Video's and Disney+'s Instagram strategies, and extends that work by showing the audience-side effect of this channel choice: not merely exposure, but measurable behavioural response.

The Integrated Marketing Communications model helps explain the finding that bundled offers with Amazon's retail ecosystem exert a positive, though comparatively modest, effect on Prime Video interest (51.6% agreement, Table 4). This is consistent with Wayne's (2017) argument that Amazon's content strategy serves its broader retail and subscription ecosystem rather than functioning as a standalone content brand; the present study's Indian respondents appear to experience this cross-ecosystem integration as a mild but real incentive, rather than a decisive one. The clearest and most consequential finding concerns the rental-based subscription model. Despite high awareness (77.4%), actual use remains low (30.6%, Table 5), and open-ended responses consistently frame the model as creating a sense of being charged twice for content already covered by a paid subscription. This finding extends Sar's (2022) pricing research, which

validated consumer willingness-to-pay estimates for Amazon Prime Video's base subscription but did not examine the separate rental layer now embedded within it. It also helps explain the study's finding that 67.7% of respondents would be very likely to switch to a cheaper, ad-supported tier: this preference appears to reflect not only general price sensitivity, documented by Sujit and Mohan (2021) and Parihar and Kant (2021) as a consistent driver of OTT satisfaction, but a specific reaction against a pricing structure perceived as opaque or unfair.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Amazon Prime Video's promotional marketing and its monetisation strategy are currently working somewhat against one another: marketing activity is succeeding in building positive perception and increasing viewing frequency, consistent with the platform's broader IMC strategy, but the rental-based pricing layer risks undermining the goodwill this marketing generates, echoing the reputational-risk dynamic identified by Saldanha (2024) in relation to Amazon Prime Video's content controversies — in both cases, a strategic choice made for commercial or creative reasons carries a cost in subscriber trust that the platform's marketing must then work to offset.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine how Amazon Prime Video's marketing strategies influence viewership behaviour among Indian audiences, with specific attention to the platform's rental-based subscription model. The findings indicate that Amazon Prime Video's marketing strategies — particularly Instagram-based promotion, influencer endorsement, and trailer-driven content discovery — have a measurable and largely positive effect on audience perception, engagement, and binge-watching frequency, consistent with both the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Integrated Marketing Communications model applied in this study. At the same time, the study identifies a clear point of friction: subscribers are highly aware of, but largely unwilling to pay for, rental-based premium content layered on top of an existing paid subscription, and a substantial majority express willingness to switch to a cheaper, ad-supported alternative if offered. For Amazon Prime Video and comparable OTT platforms, this suggests that continued investment in social-media-led marketing is likely to sustain audience engagement, but that pricing transparency and a reconsidered approach to rental-based monetisation are equally necessary for sustained subscriber satisfaction and loyalty.

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