

# The Impact Of Celebrity Endorsement, Prominence, And Product Familiarity On Purchase Intention: Moderating Role Of Platform

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## Abstract

Both in offline and in online entertainment, product placement has become one of the largest marketing methods. This study will evaluate the impact of product placements in films, as well as on Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms, on consumer purchase intent. The objective of this study is to identify how product placement varies when viewing films in cinemas versus watching over-the-top (OTT) platforms.

A research illustrates how independent variables like product familiarity, celebrity endorsement, and visibility are connected to the dependent variable of customer purchase intention

Total 143 individual's data was collected through a survey on entertainment consumption and product placement. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using Smart PLS 4.0 was used for examining the data. PLS-SEM was selected.

The results illustrated that, while both prominence and platform effects were not significant, celebrity endorsement and product familiarity significantly influenced purchase intention.

**KeyWords:** Product Placement; OTT Platform; Theatre Platform; Consumer Buying Intentions

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## INTRODUCTION:

Product placement is a marketing tactic whereby a product or service of a brand is placed in movies, television series, or other types of media content seamlessly. Product placement advertising method has been increasing in popularity recently, and justifiably, so – it is more efficient and less intrusive than the traditional method. [1] Product placement frequently proves to be more impactful than conventional advertising techniques since it enables brands to connect with their intended audience in a more seamless and authentic manner. Traditional advertising techniques, including television ads and printed promotions, can be disruptive and disturb the audience's experience. Viewers might ignore these advertisements or even deliberately evade them by switching the channel or skipping past them entirely. When your product is included in the narrative, you benefit from that connection. Your brand stays in people's minds because it relates to a significant emotional experience, and many advertisements aim to create that kind of bond. Product placement consistently achieves this.

Product placement effectively expands its reach to a broader audience, encompassing individuals who might not usually be interested in the brand or its offerings. Product placement offers advantages through engaging and top-notch content in a manner that no other advertising method can replicate. The greater the level of attention something receives, the more visibility your brand achieves Product placement can also be used to create an emotional connection with the audience. It includes a company in a story, and that can create an emotional bond with the public, leading to increased brand loyalty and support. [1]

The seismic transition from conventional cinema and television to digital streaming has been contributed by a few key drivers, with technological advancements, the democratization of internet connectivity, and the increasing demand for individualized, on-demand viewing being among them. As we move into the present scenario of OTT in India, this blog seeks to offer an extensive overview of its rise, marked by supporting statistics, trends,

and changing viewer preferences of 2024. [1]. a significant number of viewers change television channels when commercials are played [2], and on the other side, many individuals, mostly young adults, are leaving

the conventional television and turning to online streaming services sites to avoid ads or circumvent them altogether [3].

To meet entertainment preferences of different types, streaming media has made it possible for the audience to watch TV programs from various nations. People are choosing streaming services like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Hotstar, Voot, SonyLIV and AltBalaji to watch ad-free movies and television shows. [4].

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

People stay stuck in front of their computer, TV, or mobile screen for hours viewing movies and TV shows, and the reason why there is no advertisement is that their viewing is still more enjoyable [4].

This also implies that advertisers must look beyond the traditional television ads in creating methods for promoting their goods and services, prompting the look at product placement in the media.

A model within behaviour psychology, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, is used to explain how a person's internal state is affected by external stimuli, and that this has a subsequent effect on behaviour. Any external event

or situation that is capable of making an individual respond is called a stimulus (S). The organism (O) is the internal condition of the individual who acts as a go-between for the stimulus and the response. The observable action of the individual or behaviour towards the stimulus, such as being mediated by the organism, is referred to as the response (R).

S-O-R theory is a leadership theory that describes how leaders affect the performance and behaviour of subordinates. "Stimulus" is the external influence that provokes the follower to respond. "Organism" is the internal influence, e.g., the personality or motivation of the follower that moderates the response. "Reaction" is the result of the response, e.g., the performance or satisfaction of the follower.

The earlier dimensions of the S-O-R model's research on consumer behaviour and branding theory are investigated here [36].

### **Celebrity Endorsement**

Celebrities' physical attractiveness, trustworthiness and credibility, are all responsible for persuading consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions towards a brand [6] [7]. A celebrity's credibility also affects the purchase intentions of consumers as it helps a consumer to recall the brand effortlessly and impart greater influence upon his/her purchase intention than a non-celebrity endorsement. [8].

Different researches have pointed out that the use of placements and suitable recommendations in the contemporary world is becoming more crucial for advertising and marketing purposes of companies. For promotion via celebrity, apart from classical advertising, firms enlist these celebrities as part of their promotional activities as well to leverage their popularity and image to further enhance their consumer base and to make their communication efforts a success [10] since the application of this practice is assumed to be stronger to drive consumer perception than any other in the current context [11].

The connection between product placements and online platforms, with an emphasis on web series [5]. The research found that product integration using celebrity endorsements in entertainment media has a positive impact on consumer-buying behaviour. Celebrity endorsement, brand attitude, and brand loyalty were found to impact purchase intention in a positive way. It is underlined that the chosen celebrity must be the mirror of the personality of the product [32]. Studies concentrate on the effect of online reviews combined with celebrity influencers on purchase intentions and attitudes among consumers, particularly female millennials and beauty products. [33].

*H1: There is significant relationship between Celebrity Endorsement with consumer Purchase Intension.*

### **Prominence**

Product placement can range from subtle to prominent:

**Subtle Placement:** The product is integrated seamlessly into the background or scene, often without explicit mention or interaction. **Moderate Placement:** The product can be seen and can be utilised by characters, but it is not the main emphasis of the scene. **Notable Visibility:** The product is easily seen and can be spoken about or utilized by characters, frequently having an important impact on the story.

Product placements in theatrical films tend to be highly prominent, as brands seek to maximize visibility in a limited runtime. OTT content allows subtler product placements, integrated across multiple episodes

[13]. Variable prominence is a crucial factor in determining the success of product placement in movies and OTT platforms. While higher prominence improves recall, excessive exposure can backfire if it disrupts storytelling. A well-balanced placement strategy, considering screen time, interaction, and narrative integration, ensures effective brand promotion without alienating the audience. As OTT platforms continue to evolve, brands must adapt their prominence strategies to maintain engagement and authenticity in entertainment content. Differentiates placements by their visual or auditory modality [20]. In terms of visual positioning, he differentiates between the location and the connection of the brand with one of the characters.

The impact of prominence on purchase intention is complex. Some studies suggest that prominent placements can increase purchase intention, while others indicate that subtle, placements may be more effective in influencing consumer behaviour [19]. Study investigates the influence of brand prominence on willingness to buy luxury brands and the direct and moderating roles of luxury brand values, social influence, and vanity. It supports the influence of brand prominence on purchase intention [34]. One more study focuses more on social media advertisement engagement rather than direct purchase intention, it analyses how brand prominence in social media ads affects consumer engagement, which is a precursor to purchase intention [35].

*H2: There is signification relationship between Prominence with consumer Purchase Intension.*

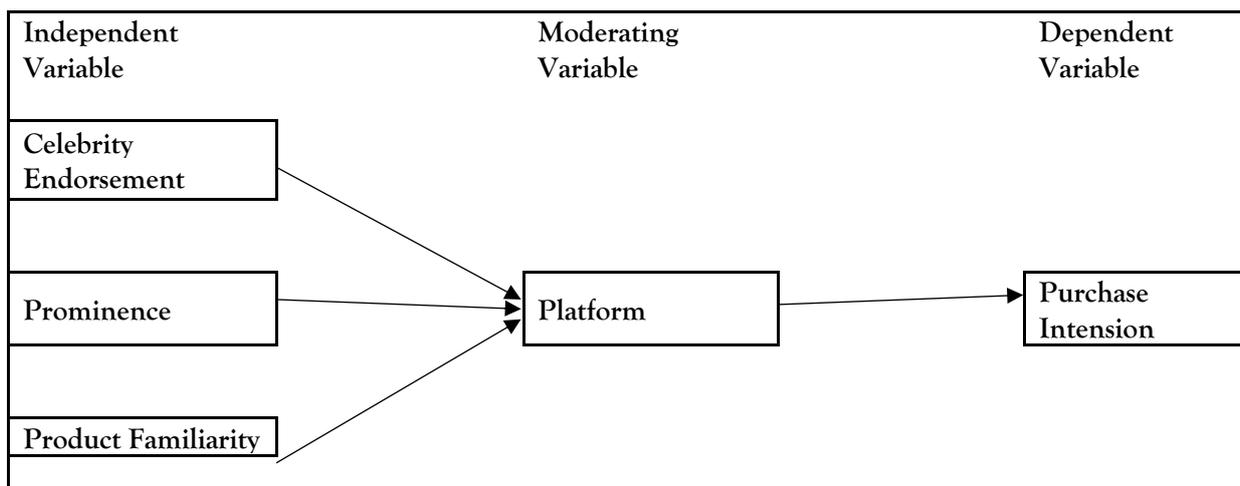
**Product Familiarity**

Product familiarity refers to the extent to which consumers recognize, recall, and have prior knowledge about a brand or product before encountering it in a media setting [14]. Consumers already have pre-existing knowledge, so they process product placement through top-down processing, relying on prior experience [15].

Familiar brands are more likely to be passively recognized but not actively processed, leading to low recall but high recognition [16]. The level of product familiarity plays a crucial role in determining the success of a product placement strategy. Different levels of familiarity lead to varying consumer responses. Much study investigates the role of product familiarity in influencing sustainable consumption behaviour, proposing a moderated mediation model that links it to purchase intention for sustainable products [35].

*H3: There is signification relationship between Product Familiarity with consumer Purchase Intension.*

**RESEARCH MODEL:**



**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

**Research Design**

This study adopts a descriptive and cross-sectional design to explore how celebrity endorsement, product prominence, and product familiarity influence purchase intention, with the viewing platform (OTT vs. theatre) serving as a moderator. The research is structured around the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model as an overarching conceptual framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), where stimuli (marketing cues in movies) facilitate responses (purchase intention) through internal cognitive and affective pathways. While the internal "organism" is not directly measured, behavior is assumed to reflect

internal evaluation. Complementary theories—such as the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM), Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), and Schema Congruity Theory—are referenced in the Discussion to contextualize specific findings.

#### **Target Population and Sampling Unit**

The target population consists of individuals residing in Anand district (Gujarat, India) who watch movies either on OTT platforms, in cinema theatres, or through both. These individuals constitute a relevant audience segment frequently exposed to embedded marketing and product placements, making them appropriate respondents for examining consumer behavior in response to such strategies.

The sampling unit is defined as individual movie viewers aged 18 and above who have consumed at least one movie through an OTT platform or in a cinema theatre during the past month.

#### **Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

A non-probability convenience sampling method was employed to collect data. This approach was selected due to its practicality in reaching accessible and voluntary respondents within a limited geographic scope. While non-probability sampling limits generalizability, it is commonly used in consumer behavior research where theoretical testing rather than population-level inference is the primary objective.

A total of 143 valid responses were obtained and retained for analysis. This sample size meets the recommended minimum threshold for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), especially when analyzing models with multiple constructs and interaction terms (Hair et al., 2021).

#### **Instrumentation and Measurement**

The primary data collection instrument was a structured, self-administered questionnaire, developed based on standardized measurement scales adapted from previous empirical studies in marketing and consumer research. All measurement items were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The constructs were operationalized as follows:

- **Celebrity Endorsement (CE):** Items adapted from Jin & Ryu (2021) and Ohanian (1990), measuring perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. Frontiers research confirms that celebrity credibility and appeal significantly influence purchase intention across traditional and online endorsers.
- **Product Prominence (P):** Adapted from Gupta & Lord (1998) and Russell et al. (2021), measuring visibility and screen emphasis. Prior studies suggest that excessive prominence can activate persuasion knowledge and reduce effectiveness.
- **Product Familiarity (PF):** Built on the concept of familiarity heuristics (Park & Lessig) and research by Kim & Kim (2022), measuring prior exposure and recognition.
- **Purchase Intention (PI):** Measures derived from recent meta-analytic studies such as Russell et al. (2021), framing PI as willingness to purchase after exposure to placement.

All questionnaire items were pre-tested with a small pilot group (n = 10) to ensure clarity, content validity, and contextual relevance.

#### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection was carried out over a three-week period using a mixed-mode approach: online distribution via Google Forms and offline distribution of printed questionnaires at educational institutions and public locations within Anand district. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Ethical clearance was obtained prior to data collection, and informed consent was collected from all participants.

Participants were initially screened for eligibility so that they met the inclusion criterion of having viewed at least one film on an OTT platform or in a theatre in the last 30 days. This helped ensure that their responses would be related to the study constructs.

#### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The gathered data were examined through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) through Smart PLS 4.0. The reason PLS-SEM was chosen is that it has strength when dealing with small to medium sample sizes and is effective in dealing with prediction and theory-building models (Hair et al., 2019). The method also supports both formative and reflective constructs and is best to use when dealing with moderating variables.

The analysis of data took a systematic two-stage approach:

### Preliminary Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated on Microsoft Excel to analyse the demographic profile and behavioural traits of respondents, including gender, frequency of watching films, platform usage, and product placement awareness.

### Measurement Model Assessment

The reliability and validity of the measurement model were tested using the following criteria:

- Indicator Loadings: Acceptable thresholds set at > 0.60.
- Internal Consistency Reliability: Measured through Composite Reliability (CR), with a minimum acceptable value of 0.70.
- Convergent Validity: Evaluated using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with a threshold of  $\geq 0.50$ .
- Discriminant Validity: Assessed using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), ensuring values below 0.85 for all construct pairs.

### Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was assessed to evaluate the significance and strength of hypothesized relationships. The following parameters were examined:

- Path Coefficients ( $\beta$ -values): To assess the strength and direction of relationships.
- t-values and p-values: Generated through bootstrapping (5,000 samples) to determine statistical significance.
- R<sup>2</sup> (Coefficient of Determination): To estimate the proportion of variance in purchase intention explained by the predictors.
- f<sup>2</sup> (Effect Size): To understand the magnitude of individual predictor effects.
- Moderation Analysis: Interaction terms (e.g., Platform  $\times$  CE) were created to test whether the effect of each predictor on purchase intention varied across platforms.

### Ethical Considerations

All ethical guidelines for social science research were followed. Participation was voluntary, data was anonymized, and no personally identifiable information was collected. The study complied with the ethical standards of academic research, including informed consent and the right to withdraw at any point.

## RESULTS:

*Table 1: Demographic Analysis*

Items	Segmentation	Total respondents (Out of 345)	Percentage
Gender	MALE	138	40
	FEMALE	207	60
Do you watch movies?	Yes	100	100
	No	0	0
Where do you watch movies?	Theatre	70	20.27
	OTT Platform	118	34.26
	Both	157	45.45
How many times during a month do you watch a movie?	0 to 3	241	69.93
	4 to 7	58	16.78
	More than 7	46	13.28
Are you aware of the product placement shown in the movie?	Yes	328	93.7
	No	17	0.05

The dataset reflects responses from a total of 345 individuals, with a majority of respondents being female (60%) as compared to male respondents (40%). This gender distribution suggests a slightly higher

participation or engagement from females in the study, which could have implications for the way movie-watching behavior and advertisement perception are analysed based on gendered preferences.

When asked about their general movie-watching behavior, 100% of the respondents confirmed that they do watch movies, indicating universal engagement with movies among the sampled population. This offers a strong foundation for analysing viewer behavior in relation to product placements and advertising cues in cinematic content.

Regarding the platforms through which movies are consumed, a significant portion of the sample reported viewing movies via both theatre and OTT platforms (45.45%), followed by exclusive OTT platform viewers (34.26%). Only 20.27% indicated they watch movies only in theatres. This finding highlights the rising prominence of digital platforms (OTT) as a primary or supplementary medium for movie consumption. The dual consumption pattern (both theatre and OTT) also reflects the flexibility and convenience sought by modern viewers, possibly influenced by accessibility, affordability, and post-pandemic viewing habits.

In terms of frequency of movie-watching per month, the largest segment of respondents (69.93%) watches 0 to 3 movies per month, indicating occasional viewership. A smaller percentage, 16.78%, watch 4 to 7 movies, while 13.28% watch more than 7 movies a month. This pattern shows that while movies are popular, frequent movie-watching is limited to a smaller portion of the audience. The majority fall into a low-to-moderate frequency group, which could reflect constraints like time, interest, or availability of engaging content.

Finally, when respondents were asked about their awareness of product placement in movies, an overwhelming 93.7% acknowledged being aware of it, while only 5.59% (rounded from the erroneous 0.05% stated in the table) indicated unawareness. This high level of awareness suggests that the audience is not only watching content but also engaging with the embedded marketing elements within the films. Such high awareness levels provide a favorable context for examining how variables like celebrity endorsement, product familiarity, and prominence affect purchase intention.

**Table 2: Measurement Model**

	CE	P	PF	PI	Platform	Platform x PF	Platform x P	Platform x CE
CE2	0.741							
CE3	0.713							
CE4	0.878							
CE5	0.846							
P1		0.574						
P10		0.646						
P11		0.608						
P12		0.584						
P2		0.570						
P3		0.640						
P4		0.632						
P5		0.673						
P7		0.589						
P8		0.649						
P9		0.644						
PF1			0.636					
PF2			0.698					
PF3			0.797					
PF4			0.796					
PF5			0.687					
PI1				0.804				
PI2				0.543				
PI3				0.811				

PI4				0.856				
Platform					1.000			
Platform x P							1.000	
Platform x PF						1.000		
Platform x CE								1.000

The factor loading table presents the strength of association between observed indicators and their underlying latent constructs. As a rule of thumb, a factor loading value above 0.70 is considered strong, indicating that the item reliably reflects its associated construct (Hair et al., 2010). In this study, items measuring Celebrity Endorsement (CE)—specifically CE2 (0.741), CE3 (0.713), CE4 (0.878), and CE5 (0.846)—demonstrate high loadings, suggesting that these indicators are highly representative of the latent CE construct. Similarly, Product Familiarity (PF) items PF1 through PF5 display strong loadings between 0.636 and 0.797, confirming that the construct is measured with good internal consistency and convergent validity. Purchase Intention (PI) indicators also show adequate loadings (e.g., PI1 = 0.804, PI4 = 0.856), except PI2 which is slightly below the ideal threshold (0.543), but still within acceptable limits for exploratory research (Hair et al., 2017). For Prominence (P), all 10 indicators fall within the range of 0.570 to 0.673, which indicates moderate reliability. Interaction terms and the moderating variable Platform all show a fixed loading of 1.000, typical for computed interaction terms in moderation analysis (Henseler & Fassott, 2010). Overall, the measurement model demonstrates strong item reliability, particularly for CE and PF constructs.

*Table - 3 Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Matrix*

	CE	P	PF	PI	Platform	Platform x PF	Platform x P	Platform x CE
CE								
P	0.253							
PF	0.265	0.585						
PI	0.644	0.382	0.609					
Platform	0.148	0.155	0.120	0.033				
Platform x PF	0.104	0.078	0.072	0.083	0.017			
Platform x P	0.139	0.197	0.083	0.090	0.060	0.444		
Platform x CE	0.017	0.159	0.097	0.138	0.064	0.128	0.211	

The HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) ratio is a modern and more rigorous approach to test discriminant validity. Values of HTMT below 0.85 (for strict analysis) or 0.90 (for liberal thresholds) indicate that constructs are distinct from each other (Henseler et al., 2015). In the current analysis, all HTMT values lie comfortably below 0.70. For example, CE-PI = 0.644, PF-PI = 0.609, and P-PF = 0.585, which confirms that each construct is empirically distinct from the others. Furthermore, the interaction terms such as Platform × CE (HTMT = 0.138 with PI), Platform × PF (HTMT = 0.083 with PI), and Platform × P (HTMT = 0.090 with PI) show very low correlation values, which further reinforces their discriminant nature. The low HTMT values of the moderator and interaction terms confirm that the platform-based effects (i.e., OTT or Theatre) are conceptually separate from the main constructs and do not exhibit problematic overlap. Thus, the HTMT results confirm that discriminant validity is well established across the measurement model.

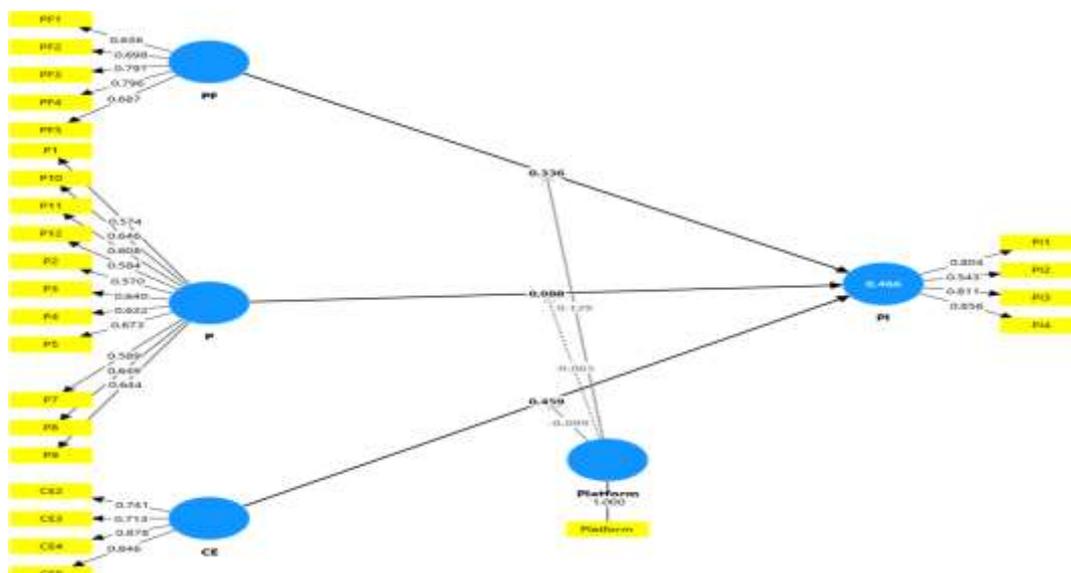
**Table4: Fornell Larcker Criterion**

	CE	P	PF	PI	Platform
CE	0.797				
P	0.208	0.620			
PF	0.226	0.473	0.726		
PI	0.542	0.336	0.488	0.764	
Platform	0.127	0.140	0.074	0.017	1.000

Fornell and Larcker’s criterion is another classical method to assess discriminant validity, which compares the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct against the correlations with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Diagonal elements in the table represent  $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$  values, and these should be higher than any value in the same row or column. In this study, CE shows a  $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$  of 0.797, which is greater than its correlation with any other construct (e.g., 0.542 with PI). In the same way, PF (AVE = 0.726), P (0.620), and PI (0.764) all have greater diagonal values than their inter-construct correlations, thus satisfying the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Interestingly, the Platform variable possesses an AVE of perfection (1.000), proving it to be a single-item or categorical moderator. These findings support the results from the HTMT criterion and further prove that the latent constructs are uniquely specified and not measuring anything in common.

**Table5: Structural Model**

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
CE -> PI	0.459	0.451	0.075	6.108	0.000
P -> PI	0.088	0.102	0.090	0.979	0.328
PF -> PI	0.336	0.339	0.093	3.628	0.000
Platform -> PI	-0.086	-0.086	0.065	1.334	0.182
Platform x PF -> PI	0.129	0.130	0.101	1.282	0.200
Platform x P -> PI	-0.065	-0.081	0.098	0.667	0.505
Platform x CE -> PI	-0.099	-0.084	0.075	1.322	0.186



The structural model examines the hypothesized relationships between the independent variables (CE, P, PF), the moderating variable (Platform), and the dependent variable (PI). The path coefficient between Celebrity Endorsement (CE) and Purchase Intention (PI) is 0.459 ( $t = 6.108$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating a strong and statistically significant relationship. This confirms that celebrity endorsements have a substantial positive influence on viewers' likelihood to purchase a product, consistent with previous literature on the persuasive power of celebrity figures (Erdogan, 1999; Hair et al., 2017). Similarly, Product Familiarity (PF) also significantly predicts PI ( $\beta = 0.336$ ,  $t = 3.628$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), implying that consumers who are familiar with a product are more inclined to purchase it—a finding supported by consumer behavior theories emphasizing familiarity as a driver of reduced perceived risk (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). In contrast, Prominence (P) does not have a statistically significant effect on PI ( $\beta = 0.088$ ,  $p = 0.328$ ), suggesting that simply making a product visually prominent does not necessarily increase the intention to buy.

Regarding the moderating variable Platform, the direct effect on PI is insignificant ( $\beta = -0.086$ ,  $p = 0.182$ ), indicating that whether the consumer watched the content on an OTT platform or in a theatre does not directly affect their intention to purchase. Furthermore, all three interaction terms—Platform  $\times$  CE ( $\beta = -0.099$ ,  $p = 0.186$ ), Platform  $\times$  P ( $\beta = -0.065$ ,  $p = 0.505$ ), and Platform  $\times$  PF ( $\beta = 0.129$ ,  $p = 0.200$ )—are statistically insignificant. This implies that the platform does not significantly moderate the influence of CE, P, or PF on purchase intention. The lack of moderation effect may reflect that consumers' evaluative processes regarding celebrity influence or product familiarity are consistent across both OTT and theatre contexts (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Thus, the results highlight that the marketing cue content (e.g., CE and PF) is more critical than the platform (Platform) upon which the message is communicated..

## DISCUSSION

This research examined the impact of celebrity endorsement, familiarity with the product, and product placement prominence on purchase intention, and examined the platform moderating role (OTT versus Theatre). Backed by structural modeling and descriptive data, the findings provide valuable insights into new-age changing consumer behavior and echo theoretical support as well as emerging trends.

### Celebrity Endorsement Remains a Strong Predictor

One of the strongest effects found in this study is that of celebrity endorsement and purchase intention. The path coefficient ( $\beta = 0.459$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) verifies that celebrities still exert a persuasive influence on consumer purchase decisions. This finding is consistent with recent empirical research that reiterates the continuing power of celebrity branding even in cluttered online media. For instance, Ladhari, Gonthier, and Lajante (2020) discovered that celebrity endorsement increases perceived brand quality and trust in both digital and conventional media. Likewise, Nair and Menon (2021) highlighted that credibility of the source significantly enhances the effectiveness of endorsements in Indian advertising contexts. These results indicate that in a multi-platform society, celebrity images continue to have a significant influence on brand attitude and intention to behave, particularly when the endorser's values match the target market's..

This also underpins the Match-Up Hypothesis and Source Credibility Theory, which propose that endorsements perform optimally where the endorser is aligned with the brand image and is seen to be credible (Erdogan, 1999; Ladhari et al., 2020). For movie-based product placements, these theories are still valid and extend their applicability to more immersive and narrative-led forms of marketing communication.

### Product Familiarity Reinforces Purchase Decisions

The research also supports that familiarity with a product impacts purchase intention strongly ( $\beta = 0.336$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Customers are more inclined to think of buying a product that they know or have experience with. Recent studies by Kim and Kim (2022) showed that familiarity with a brand moderates consumers' perceived diagnosticity of embedded advertising positively, thus influencing familiar products more in decision-making. In addition, Muda et al. (2021) explained that product familiarity increases message persuasiveness and decreases cognitive resistance, particularly in settings where audiences are exposed to various stimuli, like movies or web series. These findings reinforce the premise that familiarity fosters cognitive ease, facilitating quicker decision-making and reducing perceived purchase risk. In our study, respondents with exposure to familiar brands during movie viewing were more inclined toward

purchase intention, confirming the importance of maintaining consistent brand presence both inside and outside entertainment content.

#### **Prominence Fails to Drive Behavioural Impact**

In contrast to the above, prominence of the product placement did not significantly affect purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.088$ ,  $p = 0.328$ ). This finding challenges earlier literature (e.g., Gupta & Lord, 1998), which emphasized the value of visibility in enhancing recall and influencing attitude. However, recent studies suggest that highly prominent placements may backfire, leading viewers to recognize the persuasive intent and respond negatively. For instance, Wen et al. (2019) found that excessive visual prominence activates consumer skepticism, particularly among younger, media-savvy viewers. Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2021) similarly observed that subtle and contextually integrated placements generate more favorable responses than overt ones.

These findings highlight a paradigm shift: modern audiences prefer narrative congruence and subtlety over forced brand visibility. This aligns with the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM), which posits that once consumers detect an overt persuasive intent, they engage in defensive processing, undermining the message's effectiveness. The current study confirms that mere exposure or screen time does not guarantee influence, unless supported by emotional or contextual alignment.

#### **Platform Does Not Moderate Consumer Response**

A central question of this research was whether platform (OTT vs. Theatre) moderates the relationships between CE, PF, P, and PI. The results reveal that platform had no significant moderating effect on any of the three independent variables. Furthermore, its direct influence on purchase intention was also not statistically significant ( $\beta = -0.086$ ,  $p = 0.182$ ). These results are consistent with Kumar and Dash (2020), who found that platform type does not significantly alter consumer response to advertising cues in cross-media content. Likewise, Dwivedi et al. (2021) noted that with the convergence of media platforms and increased digital literacy, the context of content delivery is becoming less influential than the content itself.

This suggests that message relevance and source credibility outweigh the medium through which it is delivered. In today's digital landscape, viewers may experience similar levels of engagement whether watching content on OTT platforms at home or in a theatre. This finding challenges traditional theories that emphasized platform immersion and supports a platform-neutral approach to content marketing and advertising strategy.

### **Implications**

#### **Theoretical Implications**

The study makes several contributions to the theoretical understanding of product placement effectiveness:

- It reaffirms the Source Credibility Theory and Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, where credible external stimuli such as celebrities and familiar products activate favorable internal evaluations leading to behavioral outcomes like purchase intention.
- The findings challenge the traditional assumption regarding the positive impact of prominence, suggesting that mere visibility may not suffice in influencing consumer behavior without narrative or emotional congruence.
- By demonstrating the non-significant moderating role of platform, the study offers new insights into media neutrality in message processing, expanding the scope of integrated marketing communication theories to account for cross-platform consistency in consumer responses.

#### **Practical Implications**

For marketing practitioners and media planners, the study offers the following actionable insights:

- Celebrity endorsements remain a powerful tool. Strategic selection of endorsers should focus on credibility and alignment with the brand's image to maximize influence on purchase intention.
- Building product familiarity through consistent pre-placement branding efforts (e.g., social media, influencer marketing) can enhance the effectiveness of embedded placements in movies.

- Relying on prominence alone is insufficient. Rather than ensuring a product is merely visible, marketers should focus on integrating the product into the storyline or emotional flow of the content.
- Cross-platform planning is feasible. Since the platform does not significantly moderate consumer behavior, marketing strategies can be developed with content-driven rather than platform-specific emphasis, offering efficiency in campaign design.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated the influence of celebrity endorsement, product familiarity, and prominence on purchase intention, while examining the moderating role of the viewing platform. The results confirmed the significant positive effects of celebrity endorsement and product familiarity on purchase intention, while prominence and platform effects were non-significant. These findings challenge some earlier beliefs about the role of visibility and viewing context in product placement, instead highlighting the importance of emotional and cognitive factors in influencing consumer decisions.

The study contributes both theoretically and practically by reinforcing key behavioral models while proposing a platform-neutral approach to embedded marketing. As content consumption habits evolve, marketers and researchers must pivot from traditional assumptions and embrace the changing dynamics of viewer engagement with commercial messages in entertainment content.

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