Visual influence and consumer intent: A literature review on Instagram post dynamics in OTT marketing

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Abstract

In the rapidly evolving landscape of digital entertainment, Instagram has emerged as a dominant platform for Over-the-Top (OTT) content marketing, leveraging its visual affordances, influencer culture, and algorithmic amplification to shape consumer behavior. The review article systematically synthesizes recent literature (2020–2025) to explore the role of Instagram post dynamics in influencing consumer engagement and subscription intent within OTT contexts. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), parasocial interaction, FOMO, and source-product congruence, the study examines how content format (e.g., reels, carousels), influencer attributes, aesthetic strategies, and psychological drivers converge to affect user behavior. Findings emphasize how visually engaging formats and real influencer partnerships greatly improve consumer trust, emotional connection, and call-to-action performance. Platform-specific tactics employed by established OTT leaders like Netflix, Disney+, and Amazon Prime demonstrate the strategic benefits of localized content, micro-influencer collaborations, and in-time user interaction. New trends like AI-powered post creation, AR/VR immersive campaigns, and cross-platform behavioral segmentation portend a new paradigm in OTT content marketing and consumption. The review distills a number of gaps in the research that these trends imply, including longitudinal consumer behavior studies, ethical assessment of influencer marketing, and experimental investigation of visual persuasion. Such gaps imply stringent future scholarship directions. Generally, the review adds an in-depth conceptual framework for grasping Instagram's contribution to OTT promotion and provides practical recommendations for marketers looking to maximize content strategy in an increasingly competitive and visually dominated digital environment.

1. Introduction

The online revolution of media viewing has been behind the meteoric rise of Over-the-Top (OTT) video platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, and local streaming services. They have transformed the entertainment sector by cutting across the usual broadcasting systems and reaching the consumer directly through the internet [1, 2]. As the competitive forces get stronger, OTT platforms are more and more dependent on digital marketing practices for viewer acquisition and retention. Among these, social media marketing, especially on Instagram, has become a central tool because of its engaging visual content, heterogeneity of the audience, and efficient algorithmic engagement tools [3, 4].

Instagram's transformation from a photo-sharing app to an inclusive visual content platform with reels, stories, carousels, and influencer collaborations has greatly impacted brand communication paradigms [5, 6]. In entertainment marketing, Instagram enables OTT brands to market future releases, create buzz through teasers and trailers, and create parasocial relationships between influencers and potential consumers [7, 8]. The interactive and visual nature of the platform makes it particularly well-positioned to deliver time-sensitive, emotionally driven content like movies and web series.

The influencer phenomenon has transformed how brands convey authenticity and salience. In the context of modern cultural studies, both celebrities and micro-influencers are regularly described as cultural intermediaries that mediate the flow of communicative content between brands and their destination audiences [9, 10]. The ability to make corporate messages more human, create narrative-based suggestions, and build user interaction has made the influencer an irreplaceable asset to online marketing, especially in the entertainment sector where word-of-mouth communication and trust are essential [11, 12]. The recent changes in the Instagram algorithm, where the emphasis is placed on engagement and shareability rather than the number of followers, have made marketers and brands reorganize their strategies, with visual influence becoming one of the key factors influencing consumer intent. At the same time, media consumption has been technologically transformed, leading to the fast growth of Over-the-Top (OTT) services like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, and other domestic streaming services. These platforms have restructured the entertainment industry by bypassing the conventional broadcasting platforms and supplying the content directly to consumers through the internet.

While the OTT universe grows at lightning speed in terms of size and sophistication, these platforms increasingly depend on digital platforms such as Instagram for driving discoverability and audience engagement [13].

Instagram's transformation from a mere photo-sharing app to a total immersive, algorithm-based visual environment has made it a necessity for contemporary marketing campaigns. Its ability to blend visual storytelling, influencer culture, and real-time social interaction places it at the forefront of consumer-facing digital communication. Instagram's centrality in shaping visual communication is well-documented in contemporary art and technology discourse, reinforcing its role as a vital promotional medium in digital entertainment [14].

Despite Instagram's critical role in modern marketing ecosystems, there exists a significant gap in the literature regarding how specific visual and engagement features of Instagram posts influence consumer behavior in the OTT sector. While numerous studies have addressed influencer marketing and social media branding in general, few have specifically focused on how Instagram post dynamics such as visual style, post format (static vs. video), influencer attributes, and caption strategies affect viewer intent to engage with OTT content [3, 15]. Much of the current research tends to generalize digital marketing across industries, overlooking the nuanced needs and consumption patterns of entertainment audiences, particularly younger, mobile-first demographics such as Gen Z [16, 17].

While there is growing interest in the persuasive power of short-form video content and the psychological mechanisms behind social media engagement, there is limited theoretical integration to explain how these mechanisms work in concert within the OTT marketing framework [18, 19]. Existing frameworks such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), parasocial interaction theory, and social presence theory have been referenced sporadically but lack a unified application in this context [7, 20]. This fragmentation impedes comprehensive comprehension of Instagram's influence on consumer intent related to entertainment.

The aim of the review is to systematically review current research at the nexus of Instagram post dynamics and consumer behavior within the context of OTT (Over-the-Top) content marketing. Based on a carefully selected set of empirical research studies, theoretical works, and systematic reviews of literature available from 2020 to 2025, the review

traces the conceptual landscape of visual influence and its effects on consumer intent [3, 9, 21]. It aims to synthesize several streams of literature, such as influencer marketing, visual beauty, algorithmic boost, and parasocial interaction, to create an integrated understanding of how Instagram works as a principal promotional channel in the entertainment industry.

The review particularly centers on four central dimensions. It begins by looking at the visual modalities presented by Instagram, including reels, static image posts, and carousels, and their potential for persuasion in reaching audiences and shaping one's perception of OTT content [6, 22]. Second, it examines the strategic role of social media influencers based on characteristics like credibility, congruence of content, and the psychological connections they create with users, which have been found to exert a substantial influence on marketing performance [7, 10]. Third, the review accounts for engagement metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and saves not just as measures of audience reaction but also as algorithmic signals that boost content visibility and consumer confidence [23, 24]. Finally, the review applies conceptual frameworks like fear of missing out (FOMO), social comparison, and source-product congruence to explain the psychological processes involved in transmitting the relation between Instagram posts and OTT subscription intention [15, 19, 25].

By synthesizing findings along these dimensions, the review hopes to offer an academic basis for subsequent empirical studies and also present strategic implications for digital marketers, content producers, and OTT platforms with the goal to upgrade their Instagram marketing strategies. Although scholarly interest in influencer marketing and digital content strategies has intensified in recent years, several critical gaps persist in understanding Instagram's specific role in shaping consumer intent within the OTT marketing context. A prominent shortcoming is the lack of platform-specific analysis; much of the existing literature does not isolate Instagram as a distinct social media environment with its own visual affordances, content structures, and algorithmic behavior. As a result, insights into how unique Instagram features such as reels, carousels, and story highlights interact with user psychology and decision-making remain underdeveloped [3, 15]. There is an insufficient empirical focus on the granular content dynamics of Instagram posts. Elements such as caption tone, visual composition, engagement metrics, and narrative storytelling have yet to be systematically studied in the context of how they influence consumer behaviors like interest generation, subscription intent, or content sharing within OTT campaigns [22, 26].

Another underexplored area concerns the psychographic evolution of digital consumers. Psychological constructs such as fear of missing out (FOMO), parasocial interaction, and identity signaling play increasingly influential roles in shaping how users respond to entertainment marketing on social media. These dimensions remain under-theorized within the OTT framework, particularly when considering Gen Z a cohort that exhibits high responsiveness to ephemeral, influencer-driven content [16, 17, 19]. Compounding this issue is the fragmented application of theoretical frameworks. Although models such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model, source credibility theory, and social comparison theory are individually employed, there is a lack of integrative studies that holistically connect these models across the spectrum of visual media, influencer dynamics, and entertainment consumption behaviors [7, 18, 20].

Current research is predominantly cross-sectional, providing only static snapshots of user behavior rather than longitudinal analyses that capture evolving trends. There is a lack of comparative studies evaluating Instagram's effectiveness relative to other visual-first platforms like TikTok and YouTube, which limits the ability of marketers to strategically forecast or optimize multi-platform campaigns [4, 27]. Finally, limited attention has been paid to the cultural and regional contextualization of Instagram-based OTT marketing. While platform use and content preferences vary widely across global markets, most existing studies do not account for these socio-cultural nuances particularly in non-Western contexts where vernacular language content and hyper-local influencers exert significant influence [16, 21].

2. Theoretical Frameworks and Conceptual Underpinnings

It is imperative to have a strong theoretical background to explain the complex processes by which the dynamics of Instagram posts generate consumer behaviours in the realm of Over-the-Top (OTT) marketing. Five important theoretical lenses that are collectively used to explain how visual content, influencer figures, and psychological triggers interact to trigger consumer intent are discussed as follows. Table 1 presents these theoretical constructs, that is, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Parasocial Interaction (PSI) and Social Presence theories, Source Credibility and Source-Product Congruence theories, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and materialism in digital consumption, and Visual Semiotics and Aesthetic Appeal, in a convenient manner. ELM provides a two-path model of persuasion, where the difference between central route (or deep processing) and peripheral route (or cue-mediated) message apprehension is made. This model can easily be applied in the Instagram-OTT scenario, where the difference in the engagement patterns between the users who carefully examine the narrative of a post and the users who react mostly to the visual appeal of the post or to the celebrity endorsement can be easily explained [18].

PSI and Social Presence theories also explain the processes of how influencers develop consumer trust. Perceived intimacy is created by emotional closeness created by narrative and live interaction, which leads to preferences, particularly the selection of streaming services or content suggestions [7, 8]. Both the Source Credibility model, which focuses on expertise and trustworthiness, and the Source-Product Congruence model, which focuses on congruence between informant and promoted product, provide explanatory power over observable influence effects. Credible influencers whose spheres of influence are aligned with the promoted commodity are more likely to have a more persuasive effect than less congruent people [10, 15]. In behavioural psychology, FOMO and materialistic orientations are even more driving OTT consumption. Social cues delivered by influencers combined with countdowns increase the fear of missing out by users, triggering impulsive viewing choices, especially in Gen Z [19, 25]. Visual Semiotics and Aesthetic

Appeal emphasize the degree to which design decisions, such as the selection of hues, typographical choices, and emotive imagery, may be seen as unconscious persuasive messages, which affect perception, interest, and the subsequent memory formation [22, 26]. All these theoretical constructs, when combined, provide a unified approach to examining the various contributions of Instagram to OTT consumer behaviour.

Table 1. Theoretical Frameworks Applied in Instagram-Based OTT Marketing.

Framework	Core Concept	Application in OTT Marketing	Key Sources
ELM (Elaboration Likelihood Model)	Dual-route persuasion: central (logic) vs. peripheral (cues)	Explains how visuals and influencer cues impact consumer processing, especially via reels and short-form posts	Pan and Zhang [18]
Parasocial Interaction & Social Presence	Emotional bonding and perceived intimacy with media figures	Enhances trust and engagement with OTT content via influencers' personal narratives and reactions	Jin, et al. [7] and Mardon, et al. [8]
Source Credibility & Source-Product Congruence	Trustworthiness, expertise, and fit between endorser and product	Influencers aligned with OTT themes improve persuasiveness; incongruence weakens message impact	Zhao, et al. [10]; Jin, et al. [7] and Lim and Zhang [15]
FOMO & Materialism	Fear of exclusion and desire for trending experiences	Drives urgency and engagement with exclusive content, first-look reels, and influencer teasers	Dinh and Lee [19] and Agarwal [25]
Visual Semiotics & Aesthetic Appeal	Symbolic meaning and design-driven engagement	High-quality visuals, cohesive branding, and emotionally resonant imagery boost recall and intent.	Mayer [26] and Wirajaya and Astuti [22]

3. Instagram Post Dynamics

This section discusses the fundamental visual and strategic factors that underlie the performance of Instagram postings in Over-the-Top (OTT) content marketing. It is composed of four sub-themes: format-based impact, features of content, influencer properties, and visual storytelling practices. These factors combined identify how customers perceive, interact with, and respond to OTT-related posts on Instagram.

3.1. Format-Based Influence

Content format is a critical factor that determines visibility, potential for engagement, and the psychological effect on Instagram users. The three prevailing formats, static images, video reels, and carousels, each afford different opportunities for storytelling and persuasion. Static images, once the core of Instagram, are now supplemented (and often outperformed) by video reels, which capitalize on short attention spans and algorithmic favouritism. Reels, introduced to compete with TikTok, provide a more dynamic and immersive experience. Kauffman, et al. [6] compared educational content delivered via reels versus image posts and found that reels produced significantly higher retention and engagement rates. Though their study focused on radiology, the findings are transferable to OTT marketing, where visual storytelling is central to capturing interest in content trailers and promotional clips.

Carousel posts with multiple images or videos encourage prolonged user interaction, enabling layered storytelling. Consumers swipe through cards, essentially boosting time spent on an ad and promoting recall. This structure is ideal for episodic OTT teasers, where every card can unveil cast, plot details, or backstage visuals to form a cohesive narrative thread. The other key weapons are Instagram Stories, Highlights, and Live. Stories, fleeting in nature, promote urgency with time-limited visibility, a strategy that works well for teaser drops and reminders at the eleventh hour [5]. When archived into Highlights, tales reach further, allowing brands to collect episodic campaign themes like "Now Streaming," "Cast Q&A," or "Fan Reactions." Live sessions with influencers or actors generate live interactivity and strengthen parasocial connections crucial drivers of consumer trust and anticipation [7, 8]. These genres combined enhance the OTT marketing toolkit, providing levels of immediacy, privilege, and interactivity.

3.2. Content Features

Post-formatting characteristics, especially caption design, hashtags, calls-to-action (CTAs), and visual aesthetics, play a crucial role in defining consumer engagement and interpretive practices. The design principles like the length of the caption and the language tone adjust the user perceptions of the intent and the affect. Captions with more text allow the narrative to be expanded, personal stories to be told or critical remarks made, all of which involve the central route of persuasion [18]. Meanwhile, brief, humorous captions paired with emoji-laden or meme-style imagery tend to attract peripheral processing and faster reactions.

Hashtags serve both discoverability and thematic anchoring purposes. By using niche hashtags such as #NowStreaming, #BingeWorthy, or show-specific tags, marketers enhance visibility in targeted feeds and facilitate organic engagement. CTAs like "Tap to Watch," "Swipe Up," or "Comment Your Favorite Scene" introduce interaction points that nudge users toward behavioral action, whether it's viewing content or engaging in discussions [24]. Aesthetic consistency through cohesive color palettes, stylized overlays, and professional-grade visuals further strengthens brand identity. According to Wirajaya and Astuti [22] aesthetically curated feeds increase brand recall and trust, crucial for emerging OTT platforms seeking to establish legitimacy.

OTT brands also deploy content derivatives such as trailers, behind-the-scenes videos, and memes, tailored for Instagram's informal visual culture. Trailer snippets delivered through reels often act as the primary "hook" for new shows. Meanwhile, behind-the-scenes content offers viewers a backstage pass, enhancing the authenticity and emotional connection to the content [20]. Meme-style promotions, especially those that are comedy- or thriller-oriented, use humor and virality to create social buzz and peer-to-peer sharing [23]. Moreover, visual styling and message framing of a post can trigger different self-construal processes: individualistic consumers will prefer personalized, expressive messages, whereas collectivist people will show a clear preference for group-oriented or fan-centered messages [28]. These results highlight the importance of content customization to platform aesthetics as well as psychological orientation of the audience.

3.3. Influencer Attributes

Instagram OTT marketing is highly dependent on the messenger as opposed to the message itself. Influencers serve as a bridge between OTT platforms and their viewers, and their credibility, relatability, expertise, and trustworthiness are the key factors that define the success of the campaign [7, 10]. The source credibility theory assumes that expertise and trustworthiness of the communicator increase the persuasiveness; Zhao, et al. [10] demonstrate that these two qualities directly increase the purchase intentions, with the mediation of positive brand attitudes. In OTT marketing, influencers who are often rated as experts in the field, e.g. film critics or members of fan communities, have an increased impact on consumer behavior. These effects are also enhanced by relatability and authenticity: parasocial interactions tend to lead to emotional attachment, imagined friendships, and, as a result, increased trust and intent to act [7, 8]. Individual responses to programs and expectations of future releases significantly enhance identification and emotional connection of the audience. The type of influencer also plays a strategic role. Micro-influencers (fewer than 100K followers) tend to have higher engagement rates and stronger trust-based communities. Macro-influencers and celebrities offer reach and visibility, albeit sometimes with lower engagement. As Vrontis, et al. [9] suggest, effective campaigns often combine both, leveraging the intimacy of micro-influencers with the visibility of macro-personalities to optimize reach and depth.

Influencer content styles, whether casual reviews, humor-laden skits, or dramatized reaction reels, also affect engagement. Congruence between the influencer's persona and the OTT content promoted enhances credibility and reduces perceived incongruity [15].

3.4. Visual Storytelling Strategies

Instagram thrives on visual narratives that are both emotionally compelling and structurally coherent. Within the context of OTT (Over-the-Top) marketing, visual storytelling plays a pivotal role in capturing user attention, enhancing content recall, and fostering emotional investment in shows and platforms.
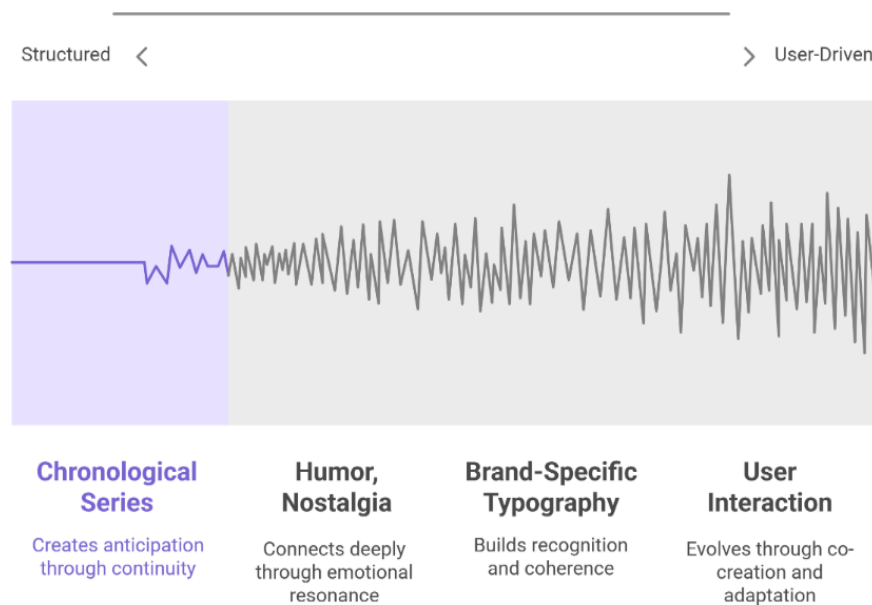

Figure 1.
Visual Storytelling strategies range from structured to user-driven.

As depicted in Figure 1, storytelling strategies on Instagram span a continuum from highly structured formats to user-driven co-creative experiences. At the structured end, formats such as chronological series of posts, teaser countdowns, and plot-revealing carousels are used to build continuity and anticipation. These are particularly effective for episodic content and new releases, where each post builds upon the previous to guide the audience through a curated narrative arc [26]. Mayer highlights how data-informed storytelling using structured visuals and sequencing can strengthen brand distinction in a competitive OTT market.

Moving along the continuum, emotional elements such as humor, nostalgia, suspense, and excitement are employed to forge deeper viewer connections. Nostalgic filters and references to cultural memory (e.g., 90s cartoons, iconic film tropes)

are often used to evoke sentimentality and drive engagement, especially among millennial and Gen Z viewers. These forms of storytelling appeal more to emotion than logic and play into the psychological mechanisms of memory and identity [22]. The middle of the spectrum emphasizes brand-specific typography and framing techniques. Strategic use of visual identity elements such as mood lighting, color palettes, logos, and typefaces helps maintain coherence across campaigns. Platform-specific hashtags, tiered visual labels like "Originals" or "Now Streaming," and consistent title treatments reinforce branding and improve content recognizability [26]. Given the complexity of Instagram's visual language and the strategic demands of content differentiation, platform-specific marketing strategies benefit from operational documentation and contextual branding handbooks that guide consistent execution [29].

At the user-driven end of the storytelling spectrum, content becomes more adaptive and participatory. User interaction, co-creation, and content remixing, such as memes, fan art, and duets, allow for greater community involvement and message virality. Triono, et al. [21] stress that enabling users and influencers to participate in content generation not only boosts engagement but also fosters sustainability in digital storytelling practices. OTT brands that facilitate such collaborative storytelling evolve from mere broadcasters to conversation enablers, increasing the depth and longevity of audience relationships. As illustrated in Figure 1 Instagram's storytelling capabilities offer a dynamic and flexible framework for OTT marketing. Throughout the modern marketing literature, visual storytelling is always cited as the key tool of connecting with the consumer. Be it in the form of coordinated release campaigns or interactive content networks, these narratives operationalize emotional engagement and, at the same time, allow prosumers to co-create meaning, contribute to the brand narrative, and symbolically engage by means of memes and other visual artifacts [30].

4. Consumer Intent and Engagement Behavior

Industrially, the success of Instagram-enabled Over-the-Top (OTT) marketing is dependent on two main variables, consumer intent and engagement, where the latter is operationalized by likes, shares, and comments. Since the visually immersive nature of Instagram draws attention, the conversion of the immersive experience into tangible behavior, whether episodic exploration or complete subscription, marks the boundaries of the campaign goals' attainment. Thus, the current chapter outlines three dimensions that are interconnected and determine consumer response together: (1) purchase and subscription intent; (2) engagement metrics as behavioral indicators; and (3) the psychological and social factors that drive participation.

These are synthesized in Table 2 providing an organized overview of the most important variables that drive consumer behavior in the Instagram-OTT ecosystem. The purchase and subscription intent is the first dimension, and it represents the transition of the consumer from awareness to action. Instagram is an environment that operates as a very curated promotional space where OTT platforms and influencers strategically place content using rich visual assets like teasers, trailers, and branded reels to drive viewer conversion. As Rahayuningrat, et al. [3] and Kauffman, et al. [6] advise, the posts act as influential gateway entry points that promote users from passive browsing to active subscription. Social proof, in the form of reviews and user-generated content, further supports user choice, affirming authenticity and trust [12, 23]. Influencers, by virtue of parasocial connections, contribute an extra layer of trustworthiness, serving as informal endorsers whose opinions and advice propel intent [7].

Instagram facilitates the sharing of OTT content in a multidimensional process that entails user intention, engagement measures, and psychological motives that cumulatively affect consumer behavior. The first dimension is user intent, which is deduced based on explicit behaviors, such as watching a trailer, adding a show to a list, or following an account associated with a series, which indicates interest in a title. These actions do not only precondition the future content suggestions to the user, but they also act as direct cues to the algorithm, which, in turn, will prioritize the relevant content in the feeds of the users (alpha). The second dimension is engagement signals and acts as a predictor of conversion. The likes, comments, shares, saves, and click-throughs are metrics that communicate both reflective and instrumental value: they do not only indicate interest in a post but also enter into algorithmic amplification processes that further increase the virality of content (alpha). Story-based or profile-based click-throughs provide more direct indications of consumer movement through the marketing funnel (2). The third dimension is psychological and social motivation- FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), peer influence and parasocial interaction. These aspects exploit the anxious reactions to social exclusion and strengthen adherence to the popular content and socially approved decisions. The exclusivity signals and the messages of urgency, which Dinh and Lee [19] and Agarwal [25] discovered, are specifically effective in increasing conversions among Gen Z audiences. Conformity is enhanced by peer discussion, popular hashtags, and social conformity [17]. Perception is further shaped by celebrity endorsements and consumer reviews, particularly with young female OTT consumers, who are highly responsive to socially validated content and emotional appeals [31]. Parasocial relationships introduce an individual element, and the emotional displays of the influencers serve as behavioral models to the followers [7]. Lastly, the social comparison processes promote consumption because users adopt the desired lifestyles and tastes portrayed on Instagram [15]. Taken together, these three dimensions of intent, engagement signals and psychological drivers create a complete behavioral model that can be used by marketers and researchers to maximize the platform design and user dynamics of Instagram to promote OTT content and convert consumers.

Table 2.
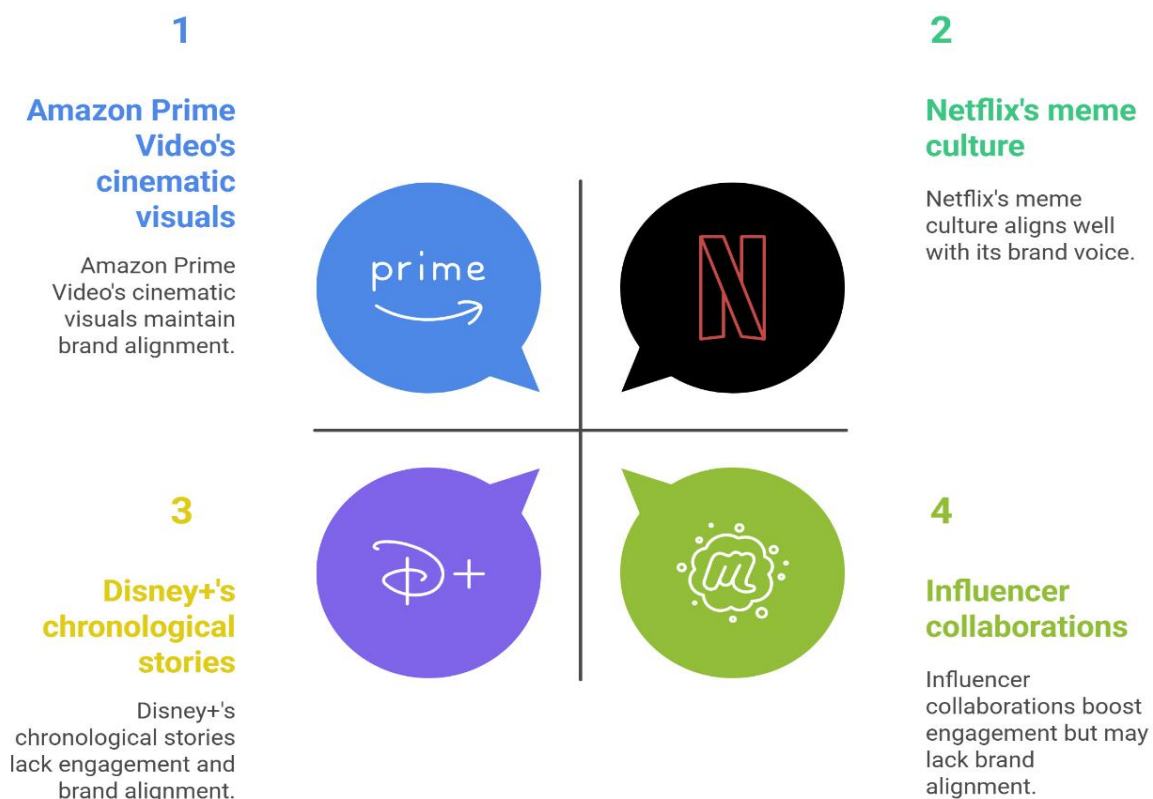Dimensions of Consumer Intent and Engagement Behavior in Instagram-Based OTT Marketing.

Dimension	Key Factors	Behavioral Implications	Key Sources
Purchase & Subscription Intent	Visual storytelling, influencer endorsements, fan testimonials, user-generated content	Drives brand recall, trust, and subscription intent through repeated exposure and social proof	Rahayuningrat, et al. [3]; Kauffman, et al. [6]; Ilieva, et al. [12]; Onofrei, et al. [23] and Jin, et al. [7]
Engagement Metrics as Behavioral Indicators	Likes, shares, comments, saves, click-throughs; algorithmic amplification	Reflect and predict consumer interest; influence content visibility and viral potential	Wirajaya and Astuti [22]; Malaireu [24] and Pan and Zhang [18]
Psychological and Social Drivers	FOMO, peer influence, parasocial interaction, identity signaling, social comparison	Stimulate urgency, emotional alignment, and social conformity in content engagement and subscription behavior.	Dinh and Lee [19]; Agarwal [25]; Casabayó and Blázquez [17]; Jin, et al. [7]; Lim and Zhang [15] and Macheka, et al. [31]

5. Instagram Marketing in OTT Context

Instagram is the most important part of the digital marketing infrastructure of OTT (Over-the-Top) platforms. The platform is visually oriented, interactive, which makes it an efficient tool of narrative construction, fan interaction, and brand articulation. In order to achieve and maintain visibility in a highly competitive entertainment landscape, OTT providers have developed their Instagram efforts into complex, data-informed campaigns that combine influencer partnerships, geographically-specific content formats, and post experimentation. The discussion below evaluates platform-specific tactics launched by the major OTT firms, reviews the cultural and regional overtones that are inherent in these tactics, and outlines the empirical successes and issues that define Instagram marketing in the OTT arena.

5.1. Platform-Specific Strategies by OTT Players

The major OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, and upcoming competitors like Hulu and SonyLIV have developed very different Instagram playbooks to strengthen brand presence and expand the reach of their audience. Such strategies are based on visual narration, the involvement of influencers, and stylistic norms of the platforms, as shown in Figure 2 which diagrammatically traces the main branding strategies of the most popular OTT operators.

1

Amazon Prime Video's cinematic visuals

Amazon Prime Video's cinematic visuals maintain brand alignment.

2

Netflix's meme culture

Netflix's meme culture aligns well with its brand voice.

3

Disney+'s chronological stories

Disney+'s chronological stories lack engagement and brand alignment.

4

Influencer collaborations

Influencer collaborations boost engagement but may lack brand alignment.

Figure 2.
OTT Platform Instagram Strategies.

Netflix, as shown in the upper-right quadrant, heavily depends on meme culture and short-form content to create an informal, relatable, and highly shareable brand voice. Viral sequences, release-date countdowns and audience-response mechanisms are common on reels, and are intended to maximize algorithmic circulation. By matching the current internet jokes and relevant cultural environments, Netflix maintains the interest and retains the brand identity. Amazon Prime Video, located in the top-left quadrant, prioritizes cinematic aesthetics and narrative architecture. The content is regularly distributed in the form of high-definition trailers, slick behind-the-scenes footage and interactive programs, including cast Q&As, which all reinforce its high-quality content stance. This kind of consistency strengthens the aesthetic consistency and makes the brand alignment tight. Disney+, which is in the lower-left quadrant, uses carousel formatting and linear chronological storytelling to show character arcs and episodic narration. Although this format enables continuity and immersive watching, it may fail to capture the virality and trending patterns of influencer- or meme-heavy content in real-time. All four platforms are filled with influencer engagement. Collaborators are involved in exclusive premieres, share programmatic suggestions in the form of personal narratives or co-create marketing materials. Vrontis, et al. [9] note that these collaborations make branded communications more human and expand the campaign to micro-communities. However, Figure 1 (lower-right quadrant) shows that such partnerships can sometimes go off-platform aesthetics when the stylistic choices of the influencers do not reflect the fundamental brand values. All these strategies show that OTT providers use Instagram not only to gain visibility, but also to gain voice, intimacy with audiences, and to increase the lifecycles of content.

5.2. Regional and Cultural Nuances

OTT platforms increasingly tailor their Instagram strategies to accommodate regional and cultural diversity. With audiences spanning continents, localization has become critical not only for linguistic accessibility but also for cultural relevance. Regional accounts managed in vernacular languages (Hindi, Spanish, Korean) allow for direct engagement with local communities and help reflect local humor, social dynamics, and storytelling traditions [16, 21]. This strategy parallels findings from other digitally mediated contexts such as Uganda, where localized digital evangelization efforts have underscored Instagram's potential as a cultural bridge across language and identity groups [32]. The use of language-specific materials such as subtitled reels, dubbed trailers, and location-specific hashtags increases discoverability and relatability [4]. As an example, Netflix India often posts memes in Hindi or Hinglish, which are more likely to be popular among the younger population, whereas Disney+ Hotstar successfully combines the elements of Bollywood iconography with the aesthetics of the modern, Western world [4]. The other important aspect is the choice of global or local influencers. Global celebrities have a massive audience, but local influencers tend to drive higher engagement due to perceived authenticity and situational relevance. Zhao, et al. [10] state that credibility of the influencers is strongly connected with the cultural alignment, and working with the local content creators leads to improved message resonance. A global campaign may not be able to create an emotional connection in multilingual and multicultural settings unless it is contextualised using local voices. Local stories are often used as innovation sandboxes, where platforms can experiment with interactivity or storytelling formats [21].

5.3. Success Cases and Failures

Instagram marketing in the OTT sector has seen both viral successes and instructive failures. Successful campaigns typically leverage timely, visually engaging, and community-driven content. One standout example is the promotional campaign for Netflix's "Stranger Things," which used a combination of teaser reels, behind-the-scenes story drops, influencer reactions, and meme takeovers. The campaign achieved massive organic reach and high follower conversion, demonstrating how a multi-format, cross-influencer strategy can amplify excitement and drive subscriptions [5, 22]. Another notable success includes Disney+'s rollout of *WandaVision*, which used themed Instagram filters, story-based countdowns, and fan theory engagement posts to generate virality. These strategies aligned with Mayer [26] observation that data-informed aesthetic storytelling strengthens digital brand communication and fosters emotional affinity.

Not all campaigns succeed. Common pitfalls include the use of fake followers, inauthentic influencer endorsements, and content saturation. Authenticity crises are also a major threat; viewers are quick to notice inauthenticity or over-the-top advertising, which may result in a backlash or loss of interest. Engagement that is bought or generated by bots compromises credibility and skews campaign metrics, which affect strategic decisions. The issue of content fatigue is a relevant topic in modern OTT marketing campaigns on Instagram and is mainly caused by the excessive number of similar or excessive publications that threaten to weaken key promotion messages [8]. Table 3 explains the current strategic trends, regional differences, and performance indicators related to such campaigns, and at the same time summarises the most important lessons and best practices identified throughout the content design, influencer usage, localisation approaches, and general effectiveness of such campaigns.

Table 3.
Summary of Instagram Marketing Strategies and Outcomes in the OTT Context.

Dimension	Focus Area	Key Practices	Insights	Key Sources
Platform-Specific Strategies	Visual Content Approach	Reels, carousels, memes, cinematic aesthetics	Netflix uses teaser reels and memes; Amazon Prime emphasizes behind-the-scenes; Disney+ creates mini-narratives via carousels.	Ford [5]; Kauffman, et al. [6]; Rahayuningrat, et al. [3] and Mayer [26]
	Influencer Collaborations	Co-created content, launch event invites	Influencers act as authentic brand narrators across micro and macro tiers	Vrontis, et al. [9]
Regional & Cultural Nuances	Localization	Language-specific posts, dubbed trailers, vernacular hashtags	Netflix India's Hinglish memes; Disney+ Hotstar's hybrid content	Triono, et al. [21]; Nafi'ah, et al. [16] and Salunke and Jain [4]
	Regional Influencer Strategy	Local influencer alignment with culture	Local creators yield higher engagement and relatability	Zhao, et al. [10] and Triono, et al. [21]
Successes & Failures	Successful Campaigns	Multi-format engagement, community interaction	"Stranger Things" reels + memes; *WandaVision* filters and countdowns	Ford [5]; Mayer [26] and [22] and Wirajaya and Astuti [22]
	Common Pitfalls	Fake engagement, overposting, poor influencer fit	Content fatigue, audience backlash, message ineffectiveness	Ilieva, et al. [12]; Mardon, et al. [8] and Lim and Zhang [15]

5.4. AI and Predictive Analytics in Visual Post Design

1. Artificial Intelligence and Predictive Analytics: The usage of AI and predictive models in Instagram practice is an important shift in the design and optimization of content. These systems analyze the past engagement rates, predict the virality, and suggest the best times, formats, and color schemes to post according to the preferences of the audience [24, 26]. Marketers, therefore, pre-edit visual resources to meet consumer anticipation and algorithmic forces. 2. Popularity of Instagram Posts: The predictive modeling has also been applied in the forecasting of the popularity of Instagram posts based on early indicators of engagement [24]. In the case of OTT platforms, this approach will provide useful information on what types of content, such as teaser reels, character reveals, and behind-the-scenes images, will have high visibility. Mayer [26] shows how data-driven visual storytelling can be used to improve brand communication, as real-time analytics allow adjusting Instagram aesthetics to be consistent and emotionally appealing. The research also shows that vlog-type content, which is a narratively structured and emotionally appealing format, affects the purchase intent of consumers, which reflects the conversational nature of Instagram Stories and Reels in driving engagement and conversion [33]. Research Gaps: Although these technologies have been developed, the current body of literature lacks the analysis of the influence of AI-based design tools on consumer perceptions of authenticity and brand integrity. The excessive use of algorithmic content can lead to homogenization of brand voices or ignorance of subtle cultural aesthetics. The balance between automation and creativity in AI-assisted visual marketing should thus be explored by future studies, especially in the OTT industry where emotive storytelling is central. Sustainability and Influencer Marketing: More and more, the idea of sustainability is finding its way into the influencer marketing strategy on Instagram. It has been reported by researchers that lifestyle influencers tend to share content regarding eco-conscious consumption, which encourages more users to engage in sustainable behaviors [34]. In the OTT scenario, this tendency concerns series and film productions with sustainable plotlines. There is still a dearth of academic research in terms of the reception of sustainability messages on Instagram and their effectiveness in influencing behavioral change. It is recommended that future research examine how the discourse of sustainability can be applied to the design of content, aesthetics, and professionalism of influencers, especially in the OTT-related sphere, where the narrative structure is the key.

5.5. Detecting and Preventing Fake Influencer Campaigns

The emergence of false influencers, i.e., people who artificially increase the number of their followers or engagement rates through bots or paid interactions, has become an urgent issue in the context of Instagram marketing based on influencers, since this practice can significantly reduce the effectiveness of the campaign and erode brand authority Ilieva, et al. [12]. Ilieva, et al. [12] also highlight the danger of spending marketing funds on influencers who do not have real audience interaction. In the OTT industry, where influencers are often provided with early access to content or special partnerships, fake metrics can skew strategic planning and undermine trust. Mardon, et al. [8] observe that viewers are becoming more skilled at recognizing unnatural promotional activity, and such situations tend to generate a backlash against the influencer and the OTT brand in question. Even though the current tools are capable of detecting suspicious patterns like a sudden increase in followers or inconsistencies in engagement, there is an urgent necessity to develop more effective, AI-based detection tools that assess the credibility of influencers in various platforms. Artificial intelligence methods, such as Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), are being used more frequently to identify fake influencer

accounts and bot-like engagement behaviours, and this is a promising avenue of scalable fraud detection [35]. The academic research should therefore be aimed at coming up with standardized validation models that can help brands to differentiate between real influencers and those who are out to exploit the situation. Moreover, research may focus on the psychological effects of influencer fraud on consumer confidence and brand loyalty in the long-term in the digital entertainment industry.

5.5.1. Measurement Challenges: Attribution and ROI

The evaluation of the Instagram campaign effectiveness in the over-the-top (OTT) industry is a complex and multidimensional task. In as much as the surface-level indicators like the likes, shares, comments, and click-through rates give immediate information about the responsiveness of the audience, they rarely capture the entire consumer journey path, beginning with the initial exposure to the end subscription. This weakness is especially relevant to streaming services, which rely mostly on subscription incomes and long viewer engagement periods.

Figure 3.
Challenges in Measuring Instagram Campaign Effectiveness.

Figure 3 outlines four key measurement areas that make campaign measurement difficult: immediate feedback measures, multi-touch attribution models, simple engagement measures and influencer campaign ROI. The figure shows the scale between the analytic efficiency and evaluative precision. Among these areas, Onofrei, et al. [23] argue that the behavioral engagement can be influenced not only by direct contact with a post but also by intermediate variables like the credibility of the source, message quality, and emotional appeal. Even though users might react to the branded content, their final conversion is probably dependent on several touchpoints such as peer suggestions, secondary exposures, and platform recommendations. In this regard, multi-touch attribution models are essential to the precise ROI estimation, but their application is usually resource- and analytically demanding. This is compounded in influencer-based campaigns, where payment models often incentivize reach and engagement, as opposed to direct conversions. As Lim and Zhang [15] reveal, despite the fact that influencer-product congruence enhances the effectiveness of the campaign, the congruence fails to bring a corresponding financial payoff, which makes it difficult to calculate ROI accurately. With the field still developing, one of the first needs is to create hybrid attribution models that combine quantitative performance data with qualitative measures of user intent, satisfaction and long-term brand loyalty. These frameworks would include the measures of saves, direct messages, and shared posts with the psychographic profiling to better capture the effectiveness of Instagram-based OTT promotions. Future studies should thus fill these gaps by building flexible, comprehensive, and ethically acceptable measurement models that strike a balance between immediacy and complexity in the modern digital world.

5.5.2. Understudied Populations and Niche OTT Segments

Much of the existing literature on Instagram marketing and OTT consumption focuses on mainstream audiences in urban, tech-savvy demographics. There is growing recognition that understudied populations and niche OTT segments are shaping the next wave of content engagement.

Nafi'ah, et al. [16] investigate the digital preferences of Generation Z in the context of sharia-compliant tourism, highlighting how younger consumers value authenticity, inclusivity, and digital innovation. Similarly, Triono, et al. [21] emphasize the importance of e-commerce and social media in supporting sustainable businesses in localized markets. These insights suggest that regional, religious, or genre-specific OTT platforms (faith-based streaming services, indie film networks, or LGBTQ+ platforms) may respond differently to Instagram marketing strategies.

Yet, these user cohorts remain largely unexplored in academic studies, leading to a one-size-fits-all approach in campaign design. Future research should disaggregate data by age, region, language, and content preference to uncover patterns of engagement that vary across niche audience segments. Such studies would not only improve campaign targeting but also support more inclusive and equitable media representation on social platforms.

5.5.3. Sustainability and Ethics in Influencer Marketing

Mainstream use of influencer marketing brings to the fore ethical tensions in regards to sustainability, transparency and consumer manipulation. Many influencers promote binge-watching, demonstrate ostentatious lifestyles related to OTT content, and, in this way, encourage unsustainable consumption models and even unrealistic social norms [8, 17]. There is still an issue of disclosure: Lim and Zhang [15] prove that the disclosure of sponsorship affects the communicative efficiency of the posts made by influencers, but most promotions have vague labels that obscure the difference between organic and paid advertising. Such obscurity damages consumer confidence and raises suspicions of deceptive persuasion strategies, especially those to be used on vulnerable populations, like teenagers or first-time digital users. Digital pollution, such as content proliferation, reposting, and server load caused by high-resolution media, also have ecological implications and are considered a part of sustainability in marketing. Not many studies, however, explore the environmental consequences of Instagram-based marketing or carbon footprint of OTT promotions spread by social media. An urgent research agenda is created: to question the ethical aspects of influencer marketing and create frameworks of responsible content creation, transparent sponsorship disclosure, and social responsibility in messaging. Ethics must be an inherent part of campaign strategy in order to uphold long-term brand equity and keep audiences confident.

6. Future Research Agenda

As Instagram continues to evolve as a central platform in the digital marketing landscape for OTT (Over-the-Top) content, the academic literature must expand in both depth and scope to remain relevant. While current research has addressed foundational themes such as influencer credibility, content formats, and engagement metrics, emerging questions about platform comparison, long-term user behavior, experimental design, and immersive technology remain insufficiently explored. This section outlines four promising areas for future research that can significantly advance understanding of Instagram's role in OTT marketing while integrating cross-platform, longitudinal, and technologically innovative perspectives.

6.1. Cross-platform Behavioral Comparisons (Instagram vs. TikTok vs. YouTube)

One key area for future inquiry involves conducting comparative analyses of consumer behavior across social platforms, particularly between Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. While Instagram has become a hub for visually curated OTT promotions, platforms like TikTok offer algorithmically driven virality and casual content discovery, while YouTube hosts longer-form trailers and reaction content that caters to detailed reviews and deep fandom.

Salunke and Jain [4] emphasize the need to explore digital marketing beyond the confines of a single platform. Their review of Instagram marketing from 2015–2021 notes a rapid evolution in format effectiveness, but stops short of comparing Instagram's unique mechanics with its competitors. As content increasingly travels across platforms, understanding how platform-specific design, algorithms, and community norms influence consumer intent becomes essential.

Behavioral responses such as scrolling speed, video completion rate, commenting patterns, and peer sharing differ markedly across platforms. A comparative study could evaluate whether Instagram's reels foster different patterns of consumer awareness and OTT trial compared to TikTok's "For You" page or YouTube's recommendation engine. Such comparative insights would offer valuable guidance for multi-platform OTT campaigns.

6.2. Longitudinal Analysis of Consumer Loyalty via Social Media Campaigns

Another underexplored research direction involves longitudinal studies that track consumer behavior and loyalty following sustained Instagram marketing exposure. Most existing studies rely on short-term indicators such as likes, shares, and comments [23, 24] but these metrics do not adequately capture long-term consumer-brand relationships, including repeat subscriptions, brand advocacy, or loyalty to particular OTT series or platforms.

Ford [5] underscores the growing importance of continuous engagement in professional education marketing through social media, a model that can inform OTT loyalty tracking. Future research could investigate how repeated exposure to influencer campaigns, episodic Instagram Stories, or platform-specific series branding contributes to consumer retention over time, rather than just initial conversion.

There is also room to explore how loyalty manifests behaviorally on Instagram, through continued tagging, content saving, or participation in fan challenges. By employing longitudinal tracking tools and mixed-method designs, scholars can build a nuanced picture of how Instagram campaigns foster brand affinity and community belonging.

6.3. Experimental Studies on Visual Manipulations in OTT Ads

Despite the heavy emphasis on visual content in both practice and theory, few empirical studies have tested how specific visual manipulations affect consumer intent in OTT marketing. While Pan and Zhang [18] draw upon the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to explore persuasion in social media advertising, most current studies are observational rather than experimental.

Experimental research can offer causal insights by manipulating visual variables such as color schemes, framing, CTA placement, or influencer presence and measuring their effects on user engagement, recall, and intent. Do aesthetically branded reels yield higher subscription intent than spontaneous influencer recommendations? How does the presence of subtitles or native language elements influence trust in a multicultural market?

Mayer [26] advocates for data-informed creativity, suggesting that visual storytelling can be both systematic and emotionally resonant. Controlled experiments testing user reactions to different visual strategies, such as meme-style

content versus cinematic trailers, would help marketers refine their creative decisions using evidence-based methods. These studies can also explore the cognitive and emotional pathways activated by different styles of visual storytelling in OTT contexts.

6.4. The Role of AR/VR and Immersive Instagram Ads in OTT Promotion

The future research on augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) should explore how both of them can be used to facilitate immersive promotion through Instagram-based over-the-top (OTT) streaming platforms. To increase its focus on AR, the platform has increased its focus on interactive filters, branded lenses, and integrated experiences in Stories and Reels. These tools allow OTT services to develop fan interaction, reproduce show environments, and encourage users to enter a scene through their mobile devices. This field has not been studied in detail yet. Casabayó and Blázquez [17] note the growing importance of identification and immersion in digital consumerism and show how these technologies promote identity performance and increase emotional involvement, which are the main functions of OTT narratives based on character attachment and narrative complexity Immersive tools may significantly change trailers, advertising materials and partnerships with influencers; an example would be an AR filter that would enable users to adopt the clothing of a character, or a 360-degree teaser that could be explored in VR. These possibilities should be the subject of strict academic study to determine effectiveness, usability, and related ethical implications. The next studies must thus investigate the user experience (UX), accessibility, and the impact of immersive tools on the attention span, message recall, and consumer trust. Such studies will become even more significant as Meta and other organizations continue to push the use of AR and VR in mainstream social media**.**

7. Conclusion

The review has synthesized a diverse body of literature to explore the dynamics of Instagram marketing within the context of Over-the-Top (OTT) content promotion. The findings reveal that Instagram's visual-centric formats, particularly reels, carousels, and stories, significantly influence consumer engagement and subscription intent, especially when coupled with authentic influencer partnerships, emotionally resonant storytelling, and strategic content design. Key content elements such as captioning, call-to-action placement, and aesthetic consistency play critical roles in maximizing viewer attention and behavioral responses. Psychological constructs like parasocial interaction, FOMO, and social comparison act as powerful mediators of consumer intent, reinforcing the need for campaigns that resonate on both emotional and social levels. For OTT marketers and content strategists, the review underscores the importance of platform-specific strategies that are culturally localized, visually compelling, and algorithmically optimized. Embracing AI-driven design, leveraging credible micro-influencers, and continuously adapting to emerging content trends can help brands cultivate viewer loyalty and enhance discoverability in a crowded digital marketplace. Simultaneously, challenges such as influencer fraud, ethical transparency, and measurement limitations call for more rigorous strategic planning and technological oversight. From a scholarly standpoint, the review contributes to the growing body of literature on digital marketing by integrating visual, psychological, and engagement-based perspectives within a unified OTT framework. It also identifies critical research gaps, such as the need for longitudinal studies, cross-platform comparisons, and immersive media analysis, that future scholars must address to deepen theoretical understanding. Ultimately, the convergence of visual media, algorithmic curation, and socially driven consumption represents a transformative shift in how entertainment is marketed and experienced. Instagram stands at the heart of this shift, functioning as both a cultural stage and a strategic tool for shaping consumer behavior in the digital entertainment era.

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