

The OTT (Over the Top) Platforms and Movie Watching Experience of the Audience

M. Sindhu¹, Prof. C. Vani²

¹Research Scholar, Dept. of Communication and Journalism, SPMVV, Tirupati.

²Professor, Dept. of Communication and Journalism, SPMVV, Tirupati.

Abstract

Over the Top(OTT) platforms are on the race to entertain audience through online video viewing. Amazon Prime, Hotstar and Netflix are stated as the highly subscribed platforms by the audience (Shubhagata,2020). The availability of mobile phone, PC/laptop, smart television and internet services have increased the screen time of an individual. All the OTT platforms produce different content to stand in the competition and to reach the wide variety of audience, most of these have an option of television channels in their watch list. But these OTT platforms have divided their audience on the basis of financial considerations by providing different subscription charges to view the content. Some gave a chance to view the free movies but some doesn't. These OTT platforms may not replace the experience of theatre movie watching but the lockdown gave a boost to OTT platforms to watch more content. At this juncture there is a need to find the movie watching experience of the audience on over the top platforms because the device used to watch a movie is smaller, the ambience and sound system everything varies by resulting in the retention levels of audience. The study focuses on the attitude of the film audience and their movie viewing experience on OTT platforms.

Keywords: OTT platforms, Film Audience, Movie watching experience, New trend in movies, Films.

Introduction and Overview

The updating technology has been changing the movie watching experience of audience in many ways. From black and white to color, 2D to 3D movies, Mono audio to stereo and to Dolby. 21st century gave technological and user friendly advancements to watch movies on audience laps and in hands by staying at their homes or offices. The internet connectivity along with rise in standards of living and the evolution of smart devices gave a boost to the OTT platform and started changing the preferences of the audience. Content is king, so the OTT platforms started producing their own movies to attract the audience along with other Television content, shows and web series. The filmmakers have started making movies for the OTT platforms itself to gain

name and fame by reaching the targeted audience with low budget filmmaking. The OTT sector in India has risen to 29.0 million from 22.2 million between March and July in 2020.

According to book my show reports (2020), the growth of OTT platforms is directly proportional to the increase in number of Internet users. The Indian subscribers spend an average duration of 20-25 minutes on various platforms. Disney+Hotstar ranked top on the OTT platforms with over 400million active monthly users in the month of July. The platform provides content services even without subscription to the audience. The second place is occupied by Amazon Prime with 4.4 million paid subscribers in India. It has the cheapest subscription rate in India when compared to global prices. SonyLiv is the platform which provides content to paid and unpaid subscribers, even though it has 14-20 million subscribers. Netflix had over 16 Million subscribers in the Asia Pacific and those are paid. There are other OTT platforms which have been in the race Voot, ALTBalaji, MX Player, Mubi, Eros Now, Arre and many more along with the regional platforms like Aha(Telugu), Hoichoi (Bengali), Koode (Malayalam), Letsflix (Marathi) and City Shore (Gujarati).

With the language of universality, movies can engage audience in real and unreal situations without consideration of medium to some extent. This scenario has lead to increase in the subscription of OTT platforms and gave a shove to OTT vs. Movie Theatre. The box office movie releases are rescheduled to next year. But the OTT platforms are busy with the increase of subscriptions. Lock-down can be considered as one of the major reasons for increase in the number of subscriptions of OTT platforms, because people of India have never been at this situation in the 21st century. At this juncture the study exposes the attitudes and experience of OTT movie audience.

Literature Review

There is an 100% increase in the subscription of Over The Top platforms in 2019 itself. These platforms are providing web series and movies along with live entertainments to hook the audience. These platforms made movie experiences cost effective, convenient and mobile. OTT is always a platform for low budget films which can be understood easily from the report of FICCI-EY report 2020, which stated around 50 low budget films were released directly on OTT during 2019. The culture of digital release of feature films has been on the pace. The current audience are shedding extra penny to get fresh, engaging and relatable content (Apoorva Iyer, 2020).

There is a tough competition for global OTT platforms from National and regional OTT platforms. Because there can be an increase in the regional language content by 73% by the year 2021. The regional OTT platforms are also providing content to stand with national Platforms. The language specification helps the user to opt for the content they want easily (Binged, 2020).

Cinema is not just a medium of entertainment; it has played a vital role to bring social changes in India. Mother India is one of the movies which project many social issues of that time. The

cinema has shaped and reshaped from silent to sound, black and white to color and 2D to 3D, and shifted from huge theatre screens to small mobile screens. Along with commercial cinema there is a parallel cinema to project artist sincerity, social significance and real modernistic approach in opposite to the fantasy (Chaitali Wadhwa, 2014).

The OTT platforms can give a guaranteed and wider audience to the small budget movies. There is also a much scope for story in the non-commercial or experimental films (Retail Ritesh).

The movie audience prefer to watch movies on over the top platforms rather than cinema halls because of the high quality of audio- video and cost liberty. Smart phone has been considered as a convenient medium to watch movies anywhere and at any time (Gajendra Singh Awasya, 2020).

Technology has taken a center stage during the covid-19 pandemic and gave a push to OTT platforms for entertainment both on newer audience and earlier audience time spent. This is the way entertainment media has put a check to the risk factors in outdoor media. It is also expected that because of the broadband connections there could be a shift of platforms from mobile medium to large and smart television sets. The urban affected areas of COVID -19 had preferred the at-home entertainment and subscriptions, but on the other hand entertainment had become an aspiration to some of the Indians. The OTT platforms free content watching option, without paid subscription and huge content had driven the audience to more subscriptions (Satya Eswaran & Girish Menon, 2020).

The initiatives of Digital India are one of the reasons for increase in internet availability and speed increasing the usage. The lower prices and increased screen sizes of medium has resulted in the usage of mobile as medium to get information and entertainment. The usage of internet as Mobile Data constituted 15 percentage of all internet usage and is expected to be 30 % by 2021 (Scott Fitzgerald, 2019).

Aim and Objectives

The new media sources to watch movies are OTT platforms and these are accepted and being used by the audience with positive experiences.

- To assess the level of acceptance of OTT platform as a medium to watch movies
- To determine the adoption of OTT platforms to watch movies.

Research methodology

The study is based on survey method. A questionnaire is developed to collect the data and is collected using Google forms, total 109 respondents had participated in the survey. The respondents were of various age groups and from different professions, the age groups were between 15 to 39. The age group was considered because the availability of new media and flexibility to opt for new technology are a bit high in these age groups. To study the level of

acceptance and adoption of OTT platforms by the respondents Likert scale was used. The frequency and percentage tests were performed to prove the aim of the study.

Majority of the respondents are from the age groups 20-24 (48%) and 25-29 years (36.7%). From the data it was observed that the respondents of age group 15-19 years were only 0.9% and 35-39 years 6.4%. From all the age groups female respondents were active in participation and they were 53.2 percentage of total respondents and the rest 46.8 percentage were males.

Table 1.The Attitude of Subscribers towards Movies

S. No	Watch Movies	F	N
1	Enthusiast	54	49.5
2	There is nothing to do	48	44.0
3	Prefer other modes	7	6.4
	Total	109	100.0

When the respondents were asked to state their attitudes towards watching, 49.5 % of the respondents had stated that they were movie enthusiast, which means that movies are the first priority to them to get entertained. They watch movies whenever they have free time and even when there was new release and also sometime they create time to watch movies to entertain educate and motivate them. Only 6.4% of respondents stated that they prefer other modes of entertain as they hesitate to watch movies.

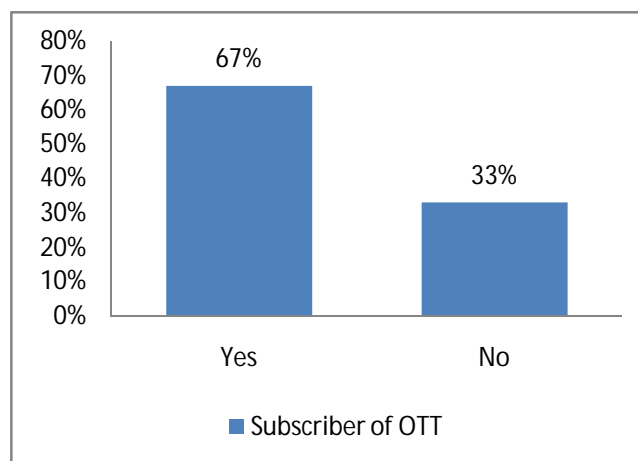


Figure 1.OTT Platforms Subscription

Out of 109 respondents 67% of respondents stated that they were paid subscribers of OTT platforms. The rest 33% of the respondents stated they were not the paid subscribers of OTT.

According to the global statistics Disney+Hotstar had occupied the first place on OTT subscriptions in the month of July. But in the current study only 22% of respondents stated that they were the subscribers of Disney+Hotstar. Majority 50.5% of the respondents stated that they

had subscribed to Amazon Prime. The rest percentages of subscribers were divided among SonyLiv, Netflix, Voot and Others.

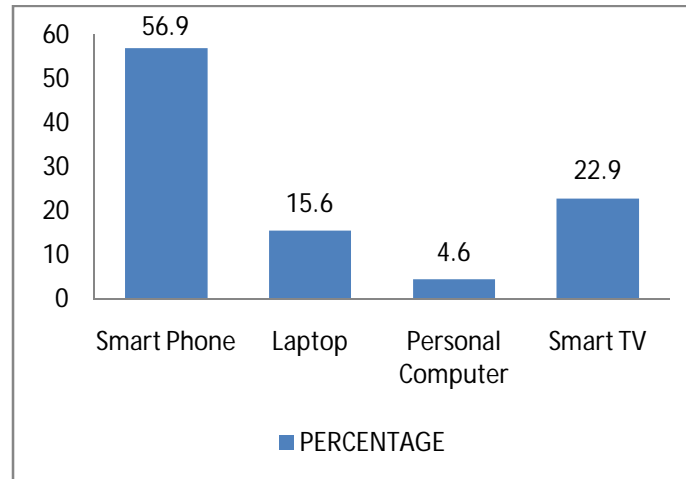


Figure 2. Medium Used to Watch Movies on OTT

The usage of Smart phone was very high, where 56.9% of respondents were using mobile to watch movies on OTT platforms. Personal Computers were the least used medium by respondents to watch movies. Out of 109 respondents only 4.6 percentage were using PC/Laptop.

When the Acceptance of OTT Platforms by respondents was questioned the results are as follows.

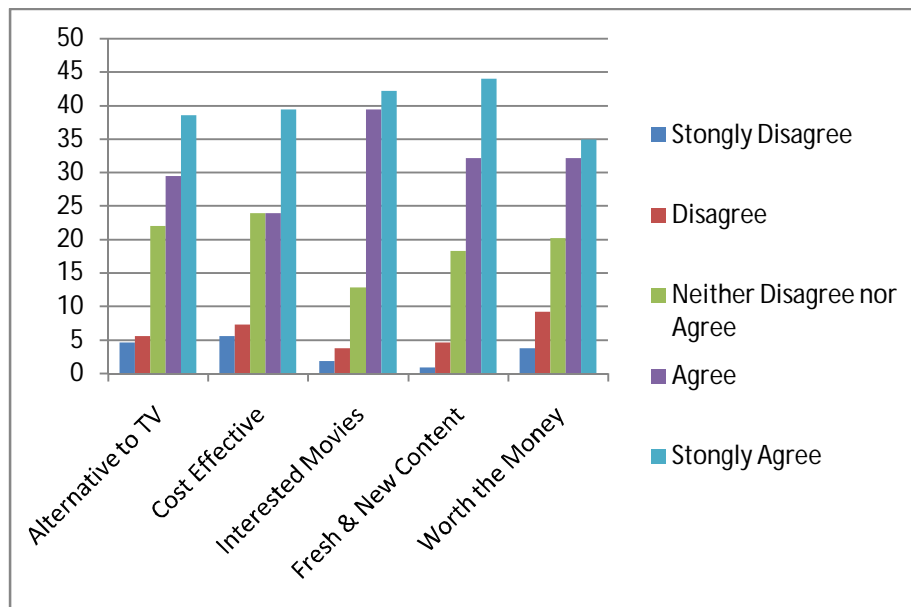


Figure 3. The Acceptance of OTT Platforms by the Respondents

The OTT platforms were strongly agreed by the majority of respondents in various aspects they were questioned. It could be observed from the above table clearly that 38.5 % accepted OTT as an alternative to Traditional Television Medium. 39.4% accepted OTT platforms were cost

effective; some of the respondents had subscribed more than one OTT Platform. 42.2% strongly agreed that customization options and recommendations from OTT allowed them to watch movies of their interest. 44% stated that by being the subscriber of OTT platforms they were able to watch fresh and new content Movies. The satisfaction level for the money paid can be observed high in majority 34.9% of the respondents. To study the acceptance of OTT platforms, 5 point Likert scale was given to mark against. The majority respondent selected on points 4 and 5 which means that there is a high level of acceptance of OTT platforms among youth.

When the Adoption of OTT Platforms by respondents were questioned the results are as follows.

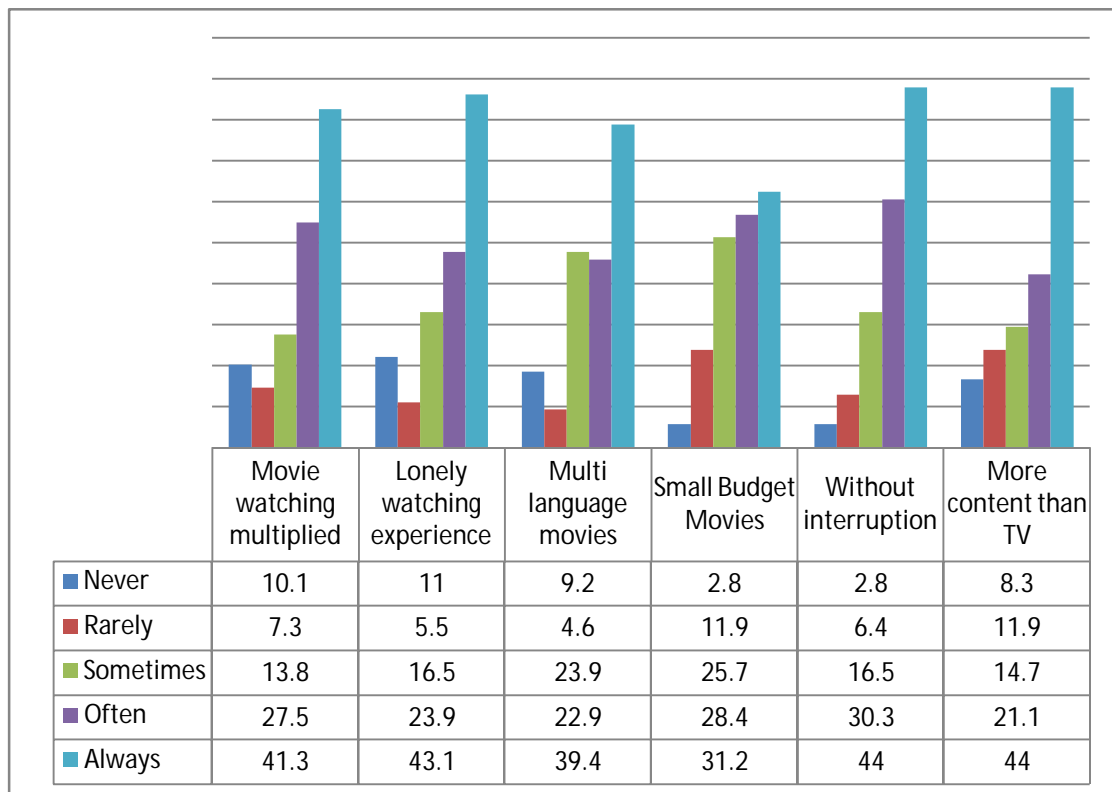


Figure 4. The adoption of OTT Platforms by the Respondents

There was high number of paid subscribers in the respondents. So, the adoption of OTT platforms to know their viewing experiences was also surveyed. The questions were framed on adoption to features of OTT platforms. To determine the OTT adoption, 5 point likert scale was given in the questionnaire. Majority of the responses were on Points 4 and 5, which could be considered was the young audience were able to adopt and use the features of OTT platforms. From the table it can be derived that 41.3 % of respondents were always using OTT to watch a movie multiple times. 43.1% stated that they were watching movies all alone even by using a smart medium with OTT subscription. Whereas 39.4% of respondents had watched multi lingual movies, from this it could be considered that the OTT platforms had broken the language barrier for OTT subscribers. 31.2% of respondents stated that they had watched low budget movies along with box office Movies. 44% of the respondents stated that they were not distracted while

watching a movie on OTT platform using a smart medium. The OTT platforms are able to grab the attention with their content by avoiding the regular disturbances and noise, which would be there outside the theatre and holding them to view the movie without any break. 44% of respondents stated that they were watching OTT platforms for different content rather than Television.

Table 2.The Features Opted on OTT

S. No		F	N
1	Television	11	10.1
2	Movies	45	41.3
3	Sports	1	.9
4	News	3	2.8
5	Shows	8	7.3
6	Web series	41	37.6
	Total	109	100.0

From the above table it can be clearly observed that the majority 41.3% of respondents were using the OTT platforms to watch movies. 37.6% of respondents were watching Web Series on OTT Platforms. The other features were watched less in number by the respondents, those were Television 10.1%, shows 7.3%, News 2.8% and the least watched were Sports 0.9%.

Results and Discussions

- Even the age groups were considered from 15-39, Majority of the respondents were from 20-29 years age.
- Female respondents were active in filling the questionnaire and are in high number, even it is a small difference of 7% from male respondents.
- Majority of the respondents were students 37.6% and employees 38.5%. To adapt to the new technology, education and financial freedom can be considered as the factors.
- The movie enthusiasts are high in respondents, which explains the need of more movies to compete with the rest OTT platforms.
- The mobility, cost effective feature and updated technology of mobile phones haven't stopped respondent's movie watching because of their small screens.
- Amazon prime was the mostly subscribed platform, the feature of consumer service and prime video services might have lead to the large subscription. But every now and then the top 3 positions have been shifting among Disney+Hotstar, Amazon Prime and Netflix.
- There is a chance of tough competition between OTT platforms and traditional Television because the OTT is able to provide traditional Television as well. But the Television has many draw backs like lag in telecasting the newly released movie. Commercial disturbances while watching a movie, TV show and news. The OTT platforms had overcome these problems.

- The OTT platform has become cost effective by providing wide variety of data along with new movie releases. And a movie can be watched by the audience or subscribers at multiple times on different platforms without paying money as of paying to watch a movie in theatres.
- The customization and recommendation algorithms lets user to watch the content of their interest unlike Traditional Television, where one has to follow the program scheduled and developed by the Channel.
- The OTT platforms are allowing and introducing the audience to fresh and new content from different genres along with regular box office genre.
- The OTT platform is allowing the audience to watch movie alone and focused without any distraction and beyond the size of the screen of the medium.
- The low budget movies are getting notified and watched by the huge number of audience, which were not even got postured earlier.
- The film makers and OTT authorities are also focusing on the low budget movies to create much content with limited budget to grab and hold the audience.
- From the study it can be clearly observed that the Traditional television audience is shifting to OTT platforms.
- Movies are the prime interest of the subscribers of OTT platforms followed by Web Series.
- Finally the movie viewing experience is taking a positive leap on OTT Platforms.

Limitations, scope and further study

The study is time bound so the sample selected was very less in number. The questionnaire is sent online, where there is a chance of mixed interests and other disturbances to respondents while filling the data which may effect on results. The statistical tests considered for the study are very basic. The study is an exploratory study because the previous studies haven't focused on the viewer experiences.

The increase in sample size and adoption of advanced research methodology can result in more accuracy of audience attitudes and movie watching experiences.

Opting the study for only one OTT platform can result in better accuracy. As the regional OTT platforms are increasing the study on business models can help start-up India and Go-Digital India.

Conclusions

According to all the reports and articles considered for the study, the OTT platforms will spread its wings in the coming years and give a tough competition to Traditional Television and Cinema Halls. The COVID-19 pandemic has also given a shove to OTT platforms as the audiences were restricted to houses. The study results also explain that the movie watching experience of the subscribers of OTT platforms is positive. So there is a need for Filmmakers of Box office, advertisers and theatre Managers to considered the OTT platforms as competitors to cope with the upcoming competition.

References

1. Chattopadhyay, A. (2020). Web Series and Web Movies and their psycho-sociological impact on netizens in India. *A Quarterly Bilingual Peer-Reviewed Journal for Social Sciences and Humanities*.
2. Dasgupta, D., & Grover, D. (2019). Understanding adoption factors of over-the-top video services among millennial consumers. *International Journal of Computer Engineering and Technology*, 10(1).
3. Fitzgerald, S. (2019). Over-the-Top Video Services in India: Media Imperialism after Globalization. *Media Industries Journal*, 6(2), 00-00.
4. Ghode, R. (2020). 'Media and Me'in the Lock-down: An Exploratory Study to Understand Media Consumption Pattern among Urban Millennial during Lock-down Period due to Covid-19. *Global Media Journal*, 18(36), 1-6.
5. Kwon, Y., Park, J., & Son, J. Y. (2020). Accurately or accidentally? Recommendation agent and search experience in over-the-top (OTT) services. *Internet Research*.
6. Menon, G., & Eswaran S. (2020) COVID -19: The Many Shades of a Crisis, A media and Entertainment sector Perspective. P(7-14).
7. Moochhala, Q. (2018). The future of online OTT entertainment services in India. *Actionesque Consulting, Pune-India*.
8. Parikh, N. (2020). The emergence of OTT platforms during the pandemic and its future scope.
9. Patel, M. K., Awasya, G., & Khadia, R. (2020). A Study: OTT Viewership in “Lockdown” and Viewer’s Dynamic Watching Experience. *International Journal on Transformations of Media, Journalism & Mass Communication (Online ISSN: 2581-3439)*, 5(2).
10. Singh, P. (2019). New Media as a Change Agent of Indian Television and Cinema: A study of over the top Platforms. *Journal of Content, Community and Communication*, 9, 131-137.
11. <https://duexpress.in/the-big-fight-ott-platforms-vs-theatres/>.
12. <https://qrius.com/cinema-medium-social-change/#>
13. <https://www.grabon.in/indulge/featured/most-popular-ott-platforms-in-india/>.
14. <https://in.bookmyshow.com/buzz/blog/streaming/top-5-most-subscribed-ott-platforms-in-india>.
15. <https://hackernoon.com/ott-continues-to-revolutionize-the-television-experience-heres-how-4u2p3wpg>.
16. <https://retailritesh.com/2020/07/21/ott-vs-theatre/>.
17. <https://www.comviva.com/blog/references/what-is-an-ott-platform/>.
18. <https://www.robosoftin.com/blog/6-factors-to-consider-while-designing-a-successful-ott-platform>.