

# Over-the-Top Platforms and Covid-19: A Study on Usage and Impact among the Youth in India

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## Abstract

Over The Top service is the future of entertainment and music industry in our country. After the penetration of 4G Internet services in India, there is a sudden boom and rise of demand of OTT platforms. At the same year, Netflix, Amazon prime, Sony, Disney came to India and started commissioning content. The study aims to understand the usage and impact of OTT content among the youth. It is found during the study after the COVID-19 the youth are more into OTT platform watching contents. The amount of time spent in watching a video is on an average 1-2 hour per day. They do not prefer to share their screen with others and love to watch all the live match and online movie premiere. A slight amount of change in behaviour and a healthy routine. While it is also found that there is no change in their sleeping order.

**Keywords:** Binge Watch; New Media; OTT (Over the Top) Platforms; Piggybacking; Streaming Video.

## Introduction

Globally, Over the Top service has become a prominent platform for consumption of music and entertainment content (Samtani & Jindal, 2018). Over the Top platforms are new way of entertainment in India (Thomas, 2018). Any application, which is providing the steaming service through the internet, is called Over The Top platform (OTT). Alibaba, Amazon Prime, Netflix, Disney+ Hotstar, Zee5, Voot, MX Player, Eros now, Discovery Plus, Jio Cinema, SonyLiv are some examples of OTT service providers in India. OTT represents the future of entertainment. As long as we have access to the internet either through a dongle or LAN or using mobile network, we can enjoy the content providing by the OTT platforms. OTT revolution was started in this decade after the launching of

4G internet service. Now Indian internet service providers are providing most affordable internet data in the world and cheapest mobile sets are available in our country. We have a large upper middle class population whose paying capacity is increasing. These factors make us the perfect market for Over the Top service providers. Access to affordable data, rural mobile phone penetration, rising affluence and service adoption across demographic sections are the key drivers for OTT industry to unlock its potential (Economic Times, 2018).

Over the Top platforms were started in India in the year 2008, with Big-Flix. It was brainchild of Reliance Entertainment. Now most of the Indian media conglomerates are offering OTT services to the Indian audience. Sony (SonyLive), Disney (Hotstar), Amazon (Amazon Prime), Netflix Inc. (Netflix), Eros International (Eros Now), Discovery (Discovery Plus) are some international players who are providing global as well as domestic content in our country. Indian companies like Balaji telefilms (Altbala ji), Zee (Zee5), Reliance (Jio Cinema & Jio TV), Viacom-18 (Voot), and Times Group (MX Player) are also competing very well in this business. It is expected that OTT service business will reach to Rs 35000 crore in the FY23 (Thomas, 2018)

The evolution of OTT platform in India came in the year 2008. When Reliance Entertainment launched Movie on demand. BigFix. In the year 2013, OTT gained a rise in the platform when Ditto TV (zee) and Sony Liv were launched in the Indian Market. The platform containing various shows from all media channel including Star, Sony, Zee, etc. nexGTV was the first app to do live streaming of Indian Premier League on mobile phones. Use of OTT started increasing in the year of 2015. When Hotstar entered the Indian Market, which owned by Star India as of 2018. According to the report by Hotstar Watch hour in the year 2018, 96% Of watch time comes from a video longer than 20 minutes. In 2019, Hotstar began in creating new original content such as "Hotstar Special". The maximum viewership on Hotstar comes from drama, movies and sports. After 2016, Netflix came to India and started commissioning content. According to the Morgan Stanley Research, Netflix recorded the highest average watch time around 120minutes.

Netflix has started its intent to invest Rs 600 Crore in the production of new exclusive content for the audience only. Netflix started facing tough competition with another OTT platform in India like Amazon Prime, Hotstar, Voot and Eros Now.

In last few year, OTT service providers like Netflix, Amazon, Disney,

Sony, Balaji and Zee etc. entice the Indian audience to subscribe their services. Price has been slashed and exclusive content is providing by these service provider to cater the needs of Indian audience. (Binged, 2020).

### **Review of Literature**

India has second largest internet users market in the world. It is expected that there will be more than 907 million active internet users by 2023 (The Economic Times, 2020). After launch of Reliance Jio, there was a sudden rise in internet use and it is catalyst in the growth of OTT platforms in India. Digital content consumption is rising globally due to internet-enabled gadgets. Indians has been exploring across diverse platforms such as music, news, audio, visuals etc. It is noted that an Indian youth, on an average spend almost 17% of their monthly expenditures and 14% of their time on entertainment. An internet content user in India utilizes an average of 6.2 hours of content on daily basis out of which 21% of the time is used up on audio-visual entertainment. (Deloitte, n.d.)

India has a sound base of OTT services with 40+ Over-the-top platforms, 15+ active music streaming platforms and 40+ active podcast players and beyond. One third of the audience preferred to watch content in regional language and most preferred language are Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Bengali and Hindi. (Inc42 Media, 2020). Today domestic as well as international players providing OTT services in India. OTT market is growing at the rate of 21.8 % CAGR, from Rs. 4,464 Crore in 2018 to Rs. 11,976 Crore in 2023. FICCI-EY report 2019 proposes that market will reach to 24 million by 2023 (Lamba, 2020).

OTT platforms reduced the television watching time. Audience finds OTT platforms more convenient than traditional way of video consumption. (Dasgupta, 2019). Subscribers demand the personalized content on their gadgets, which they can watch on their convenient time. The streaming services have revolutionized to cater the demands of their subscribers (MICA, 2019). Content across the globe is available on these platforms. International and national OTT platforms providing the global content and converting the globe into a village in real sense. (Saini, 2020)

By increasing the penetration of internet, future of OTT is bright. People are spending money and time on these streaming platforms. OTT users are enjoying the content on lower cost. Globally OTT has shown the increase in Subscription. Time spent on watching streaming videos or OTT services has been drastically increased by 140% in 2018. It is indicating that customers are shifting from traditional tv sets to desktop, laptop or

smartphone. (Dasgupta, 2019, MICA, 2019).

After 2014, web series phenomenon began in India. The demand of web series in India are increasing day by day. The audience are now want to watch factual based content neither a Melodrama. The competition between various OTT platform for the good content also give rise to popularity in India. The future of web series is bright in India as audience now value content-based show. (Adlakha, 2018).

During lockdown, OTT content is most popular among the Indian urban youth. Content of OTT was used for entertainment by 70 percent of the urban youth in the country. Daily content consumption was also increased due to lockdown as 31% urban youth consumed the content for 4 to 6 hours daily while 14% youth consumed the same for 6 to 9 hours. Half of the youth used these services for 2 to 3 hours daily (Dentsu Marketing, 2020). Screen time has gone up during lockdown in India. Due to growing content availability on OTT platforms, flexibility & choice and lack of entertainment options Indian youth used these OTT platforms during lockdown. (Nijhawan & Dahiya, 2020)

OTT platforms have positive as well as negative effects on their audience (Majumdar, 2020). Violent content impacts on children for long term. There are several impacts like aggressive behaviour, aggressive thoughts, angry feelings, arousal levels and helping behaviour (Bushman, 2006). Indian youth are getting ideas for crime right from kidnapping to murder from online streaming video platforms. Several cases have the evidence where youth committed crime after getting idea from these OTT platforms. (Kumar, 2021).

Research based on online content consumers of France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States highlights that young users, between 18 to 35 years, spend 6 hours 48 minutes per week to watch online video content and 59 percent increase since 2016. Binge watching is increasing in India. Users of US spend 8.55 hours per week for online video content while Indian users spend 8.43 hours per week for the same (Market Research: The state of Online Video 2019, n.d.). Binge watch, watching many episodes in one sitting, is also increasing day by day. It has also several health issues such as obesity, blood clots in legs, illness and risk of heart diseases. (Birch, 2019). There are some other health issues due to over use of streaming media. It has negative impact on sleep and decrease the quality of sleep (Exelmans, 2017). Binge watching might hurt our health in 5 ways like physical inactivity, snacking & poor dietary intakes, social isolation, sleep



disorder or poor sleep quality and behavioural addiction (Scherer, 2020).

### **Research Questions & Hypothesis**

This study is based on Usage and Gratification Theory of Mass Communication. The main reasons behind this research is to find the purpose of uses of Over the Top platforms by the youth and how they gratify their needs with these services? The main research questions are as follows:

**RQ1-** Why Indian youth are using OTT Platforms?

**RQ2-** How OTT platforms are using by Indian youth?

**RQ3-** What are the impacts of over the top platforms on Indian youth during Covid-19?

**H1-** Young Indian users are addicted to OTT binge watching.

**H2-** OTT platforms affect young users negatively.

### **Aim and Objective of the Study**

The study intended to understand the usage and consequences of Over-the- Top platforms among youth

To study the usage of Over-the-Top platforms among youth.

To study the impacts of Over-the-Top platforms among youth during Covid-19.

### **Research Methodology**

The data used in the study was Primary data and it was collected by conducted a survey among youth. A cross-sectional survey method was used to collect the data in the study. The survey was conducted online. A questionnaire was used to collect data. Convenience Sampling method was used to conduct survey among 100 students. The random sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. A total 100 students from different universities such as Central university of Punjab, IIT Bombay, Central university of Bihar, AIIMS etc. selected to include various educated young audience. Data is interpreted through simple percentage analysis.

### **Results**

During this study mostly questions were close-ended with several op-

tions. Questions were related to usage of Over the top Platforms and its impact faced by the respondents. Results of this study are as follows:

### Watching Over the Top (OTT) Services

The online video watching habit is increasing all around the global and India is not an exception. OTT market is rising swiftly in India and all segment of the society are adopting the OTT platforms. Study shows that 93% of the respondents watch content online and the remaining seven percent of the people did not watch content online. So on the behalf of the results, it can be said that Indian youth is using Over the Top Platforms. They have already adopted OTT platforms.

### Gadgets Used

Smartphone technology has changed socio-culture and economic aspects of our life. Study reveals that the maximum number of respondents use smartphones to explore the content online. Young OTT users find smartphone most convenient gadget to watch the streaming content. Around 82.4% of the respondents use smartphones, around 9.2% of the respondents use a laptop to watch online content. 3.1% of people use desktop or PCs for watching online content. The remaining 4.1% of the respondents generally stream online content through their smart TV sets. Results shows that the smartphone is the main gadget to explore the potential of OTT platforms in India.

### Preferred OTT Applications

Preferred OTT Application	Percentage of Respondents
Netflix	50
Voot	23
Amazon Prime	56
Eros Now	4
Alt Balaji	8
Jio TV	34
Jio Cinema	23
Sony Liv	24
Other	36

Netflix is the global leader in OTT business but Amazon Prime is the pre-

ferred OTT among Indian youth. Netflix is also one of the most preferred platform. Result shows that the maximum number of the respondents had Netflix and Amazon Prime Video applications in their smartphones and gadgets. Respondents are heavy users of mainly Netflix and Prime Video, 50% have installed Netflix and 56% of the respondents have Amazon subscription with them. JioCinema and Voot were used by 23% of the people. Jio TV is preferred OTT platform of 34% respondents. There were other online applications were also there *i.e.* 36% of the people have them. A very few people 4% had Eros Now and 8% of the respondents had ALT Balaji application in their gadgets.

### **Paying Money for OTT Services**

Indian audience are paying time and money on OTT platforms. Result shows that the majority of young users pay regularly for watching online content through video streaming services. Around 58% of respondents pay for the OTT streaming services but the remaining 42% of the respondents do not pay for watching online content.

### **Objectives of Watching OTT Content**

Variety of content is very wide on OTT platform. It can be said that content is available for every section of the society. Content from sports to documentary, short film to web series, Drama tonews, every format of the video program is available. Audience watch these programs for various purposes. The present study shows that why young Indian users use these online video streaming services. Above graph depicts that majority of the respondents use such services for relaxation. Around 42% of the respondents use such online services for relaxing or refreshing their minds. Around 36% of the respondents have the objective of time pass in using OTT services. A very few percentages of respondents *i.e.* 9% use such services for imagination and emotional release of their minds.

### **Preferred Programme-Genre on OTT**

The above graph clearly shows that people like to watch rom-com genre or such type of content. With the maximum numbers, romantic comedy was preferred genre which people like to watch. 35% of the respondents watch content of this genre. People like to watch action and drama also on online platforms. 22% respondents like to watch drama and 24% respondents watch action based content on OTT platforms. Action and Drama are the two genre which were opted by respondents with a minimal difference. Romance is the least liked genre to watch by people *i.e.* only 3% people watch romantic genre content.

### **Time Spent on OTT platforms**

The study shows that people generally consume their one or two hours daily for watching over the top content. 33% of the respondents consume one or two hours. 25% of respondents consume their two to three hours while watching such content or programs. 13% audience watch OTT content for 3 to 4 hours daily. There is a new term known as binge watch. If audience watch a program for more than 4 hours in a day that comes under the binge watching. 15% Indian young users spend more than four hours watching web-based content.

### **Habit of Screen-sharing**

Sharing screen is also known as piggybacking. Present study reveals that Indian youth don't like piggybacking, means they don't want to share their screen with anybody else. The above graph clearly shows that the maximum number of people don't share their screens while watching online content. Around 60% of the respondents don't use the screen share option in their applications. 18.4% of the respondents share their login details or share screens with their families or 19.4% of them use to share it with their friends. A very few *i.e.* only 3.1% of the respondents share their screens with their virtual friends.

### **Perception on Replacement of Traditional Ways of Watching, by OTT Services**

Over the Top platforms are the new way of entertainment in our country and these services are replacing the traditional television and cinema watching. The above chart shows that the maximum number of respondents were agreeing upon it. Around 46% of the respondents believed that online platforms are replacing the traditional way of video consumption way. Around 22% of the people were strongly agreed upon the statement. Only 10% respondents believed that these services are not replacing the traditional ways of watching movies or content.

### **Perception on Censorship of Content**

Central government issued a notification in the month of November, 2020 to regulate or censor the content of online streaming services. The above graph clearly shows that the maximum number of people were agreeing upon the statement. Of 97, there were 34% of the people were in favour of the statement and 21.4% of the respondents were not favouring it. 12.4% of the respondents strongly disagreed upon the statement that there should

be censorship over OTT platforms.

### **Change in Behaviour**

The above graph shows that people don't believe that they found any behaviour, attitude, tone or accent change after watching online content. Around 52% of the people were not favouring the above statement and rest 48% of the people felt such changes after watching online favourite content.

### **Perception on Sleeping-disorder**

The above graph depicts, the maximum number of people disagreed, it means they did not feel any sleeping disorder. 31% of the respondents were disagreeing upon the above statement. Only 26% of the respondents were in the favour that they felt such sleeping disorders after watching online content.

### **Perception on Health-changes**

The above graph clearly shows that the maximum number of respondents were strongly agreed upon the above statement. Around 40% of the respondents were in the favour that health and mind are affected by watching online videos. Around 21% of the respondents were disagreeing that there is no mind or health change in watching online web content. A large number of respondents *i.e.* 27.6% were not able to decide over the above statement.

### **Impact on Day-to-Day Life**

The above graph clearly shows that the maximum number of the respondents were not able to conclude on the above statement. Around 53% of the respondents were neither felt positive nor negative effects of OTT platforms. Only 9.2% of the respondents had a negative impact on these platforms and the remaining 37.8% of the respondents had a positive impact of OTT platforms on them.

### **Perception on Covid-19 & Watching Content on OTT Platforms**

The above graph shows that the maximum number of respondents were agreeing upon the statement. Around half of the respondents were agreeing that OTT platforms are safe and easy to explore during this pandemic situation. 30% of the respondents were highly agreeing upon the above statement. A very few percent of people were disagreeing with the above

statement. Around 15% of the respondents were not able to reach on any final decision over the statement.

### **Perception on Behavioural Changes during Covid-19**

The above graph clearly shows that the number of respondents was equal who were agreeing and disagreeing upon the above statement. Around 34% of the people saw behaviour change attributes while watching online content and around 32% of the respondents were opposing it that they did not saw any behavioural change after watching online content. Around 24% of the respondents were not able to reach on any conclusion of the above statement.

### **Discussion & Conclusion**

Over the Top (OTT) platforms got hyped and popular in the year 2016. From then onwards, the media content has changed a lot. Many Entertainment Moguls launched their OTT platforms after Netflix and Amazon Prime came into the Indian market. It seems that there would be more competition between content creator and OTT service providers in the coming days. Reliance Jio's affordable price of internet connection played a booming role in the accessibility of the internet among the youth. OTT platform also started making content according to the habits and moods of young people.

The present study, however, felt that the new medium of OTT platforms is adopted by youth and after this COVID-19 pandemic, they are spending more time on it. Through this study, it was found that more than 94% watch online videos and they prefer to watch mostly on smartphones. Amazon prime and Netflix were the top OTT platform, which are mostly watched by the young audience. The main reason behind watching video on OTT platform is just for relaxation and time pass. The genre they prefer to watch is of romance+ comedy and drama. It is found that young Indian users are addicted to OTT binge watching because more than half of the respondent watch OTT for more than 2 hours daily. So it can be say that null hypothesis is valid and accepted. Even, an average youth also agreed in the censorship on OTT platforms. Piggybacking is not liked by the Indian youth. Maximum young users don't prefer to share their screen with another person. Young audience love to watch the live programs and new realised movie through these online streaming platforms. Indian youth believe that OTT platform is going to eat a traditional way of watching entertainment videos in the coming years and they too agreed OTT platforms are the substitute of all previous exist-



ing mediums. Young users are agreed that are OTT platforms are safe during this contagious pandemic situation and watching time has been increased during Covid-19. It is observed that during COVID-19, a behaviour change in their personality after spending their time on the platform. It was also observed a change in health and mind routine. It is also seen after watching OTT content, there is no change in their any sleeping order. So the second hypothesis is also valid because young Indian users face behavioural changes and some health issues after or while watching OTT content.

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