

OTT as an Emerging Platform: The Changing Ecology of Entertainment

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Abstract

Online video streaming platforms, also known as OTT (Over the Top) platforms are prevailing in the world entertainment market from over last one decade, but the entry of Netflix and Amazon Prime video has provided this platform an identity in the Indian market. Success of international OTT platforms has also inspired Indian players to come-up its own OTT platforms such as MX player, Voot, Hotstar, etc. Last five years has witnessed augmented growth of OTT platforms both in terms of subscription and content production and is expected to grow drastically in coming future very soon. Onset of COVID-19 pandemic also added to the increase in the subscription and viewership of the OTTs not just in India but also all over the world. According to a recent report, OTT platforms have seen 60 percent increase in the number of subscriptions in India. Same report states that past two years has witnessed the increase of 14.5 percent in the number of hours spend per day on the OTT. Over-the-top platforms have palpably changed the ecosystem of entertainment for viewers as well as producers in terms of variety of content and ways/devices to access it.

Keywords: Amazon Prime Video; Emerging platform; Entertainment; Hotstar; Netflix; Online video streaming; OTT (Over-the-Top) platforms.

Introduction

With the entry of Netflix in India (in 2016), the Indian viewer experienced a wide range of content without any censorship, which immediately led to the popularity of Netflix. With the availability of foreign as well as Indian content, Netflix gradually became the first choice of Indian urban youth as a source of entertainment. Though high subscription charges still was a drawback for the platforms in achieving high number of subscriptions. To break that, Netflix had launched competitive subscription plan for the

mobile use only. The high rate of subscription charges of Netflix opened market for other international and national OTT players. Subsequently Amazon and Hotstar penetrated the Indian OTT market with their competitive prices.

According to ITU Secretary General's Report for the Fifth WTPF- 2013, "The term over-the-top (OTT) refers to applications and services which are accessible over the internet and ride on operators' networks offering internet access services e.g. social networks, search engines, amateur video aggregation sites etc."

Netflix entered into Indian online streaming media market in 2016. Other than providing the bouquet of national and international content, it also produces its own content under the flagship of "Netflix Original". Netflix got into the business of OTT by purchasing two seasons of *House of Cards* for \$100 million. Today Netflix is making more content than any other network in the history .

Amazon started its business with selling books online, and then turned into an e-commerce platform. Amazon launched its Video on Demand service on September 7, 2006 under the name of Amazon Unbox in the United States. Later, it was renamed as Amazon Prime Video which can be subscribed with Amazon Prime membership. Prime Video launched worldwide on December 14, 2016. Meanwhile, Amazon also started producing shows and movies under the banner of 'Amazon Original' and Amazon Studios.

Hotstar (Disney+Hotstar) of Star India was launched on February 11, 2015. The app has a library of more than 35000 hours of content for its viewers including web series, movies documentaries, and live streaming of various sports events. After the merger with Disney+ in 2019, the platform offers more 100,000 hours of TV content and movies currently, across various languages. In 2019, it started investing ₹120 crores in making unique content, such as, "Hotstar Specials." According to a recent study conducted by a firm named Media Partners Asia, Disney+ Hotstar could become the second-highest revenue-earning video platform in India by 2025, after YouTube.

In a study conducted by Counterpoint Research, titled as 'India OTT Video Content Market Consumer Survey', it is found that young Indians, under 35 years of age, accounts for 89% of the total Indian OTT video content platform users. Among young users, the age groups of 16-24 and

25-35 contributed equally to the overall market. India's OTT video market is steadily emerging into a standard entertainment medium as a result of the rapid increase in the availability of Internet and affordable smart phones. Especially in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, TV and Film Production came to a halt for a long period. The nationwide lockdown and stringent restrictions on gathering for shoots of TV programmes and movies stopped any kind of production for very long period. In such situation, OTT provided an easily accessible alternative to the audience and gave a push to the shift from TV to OTT platforms as a major source of entertainment. While TV was showing repeated episodes of various shows, OTT provided a plethora of new content including Hindi and English web series and movies.

According to another recent report, the online video streaming (OTT) platforms had the market of approximately Rs. 500 crore at the end of March, 2019 and is estimated to achieve a revenue market of Rs. 4000 crore by the end of 2025. Onset of COVID-19 pandemic also added to the increase in the subscription and viewership of the OTTs not just in India but also all over the world. Due to the world wide lockdowns imposed as a result of pandemic, no new tv show or film were produced for almost an year. When TV channels only telecasted repeated episodes, OTTs offered plethora of visual content choices for the audiences. As per Zuora's Subscription Economy Index Report, the global subscription rate for OTT Video Streaming platforms grew 7 times in March 2020, as compared to previous 12 months.

Objectives:

1. To find out OTT's growth as emerging platform in past one decade.
2. To find out the reasons of increase in viewership and subscription of OTT.
3. To find out the reasons of shift from TV to OTT platforms as a source of entertainment.

Hypothesis:

1. OTT platforms have grown exponentially in past one decade.
2. Ad and Censor free content, Binge-Watching, privacy of viewing, Device choices, etc are the main reasons for opting for the OTT

platforms over TV as a choice of entertainment.

3. Lockdown imposed as a result of Covid-19 pandemic has also led to a drastic increase in the subscribers of OTTs in last one and a half year.
4. Competitive/Inexpensive subscription charges are another reason of the increase in the subscribers of the OTT platforms.

Data Analysis:

A survey was conducted through questionnaire with urban youth for this research paper. Data Analysis of the same is following:

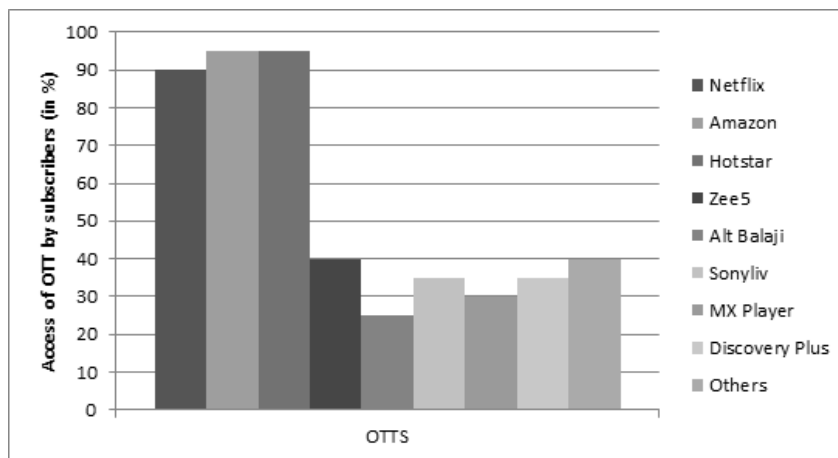


Figure 1: Percentage of respondents accessing various OTT platforms

The above figure shows that 90 %`respondents access Netflix as a source of entertainment, 95 % Amazon Prime Video, 80 % watch Disney+ Hotstar. Other OTTs such as ZEE5, Alt Balaji, SonyLiv, MX Player, Discovery Plus, etc are accessed by less than 50% of the respondents.

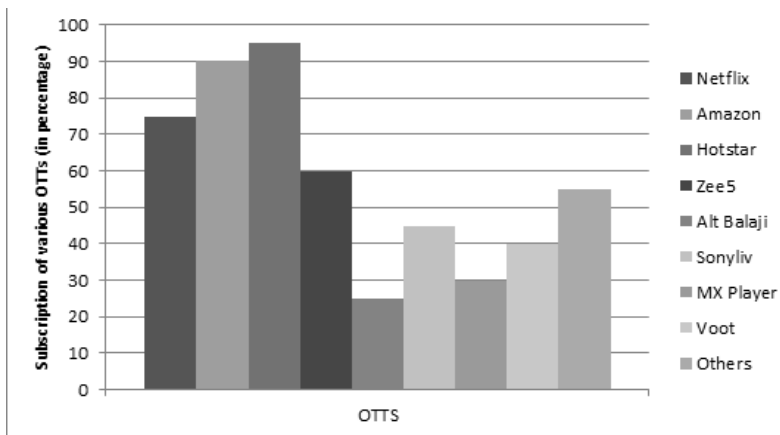


Figure 2: Percentage of respondents subscribing various OTT platforms

Above figure represent that 75% of total respondents have subscribed to Netflix, others share subscription of friends or family. 90% subscribe Amazon Prime Video, 95 % Disney+Hotstar, 60% Zee5. While other platforms such as SonyLiv, Alt BALaji, MX Player, Voot, etc are subscribed by less than 50% of respondents.

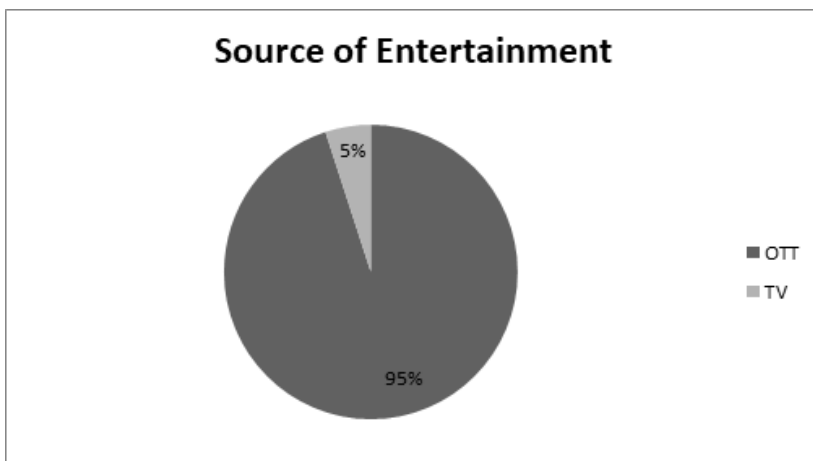


Figure 3: Percentage of respondents accessing various OTT platforms as a major source of entertainment

Above figure represent that 95 % of the total respondents access OTT platforms as the major source of entertainment to watch TV shows, Web series and Movies rather than TV.

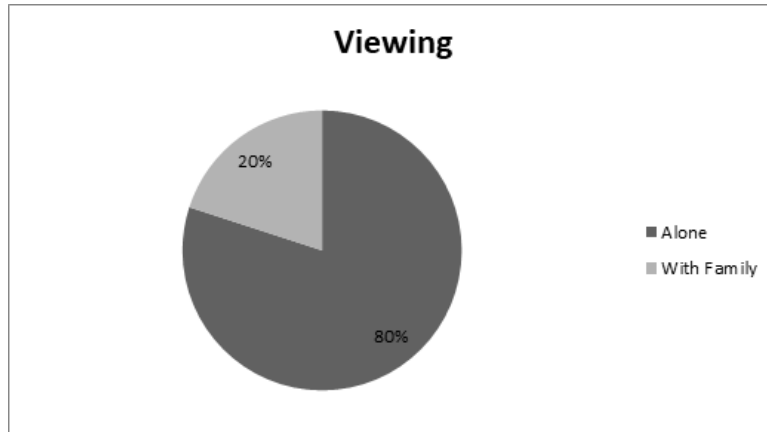


Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who access OTT platforms alone (without family)

The above figure represents that 80% of the respondents access OTT alone without their family. Only 20 % of the respondents view OTT content with their Family.

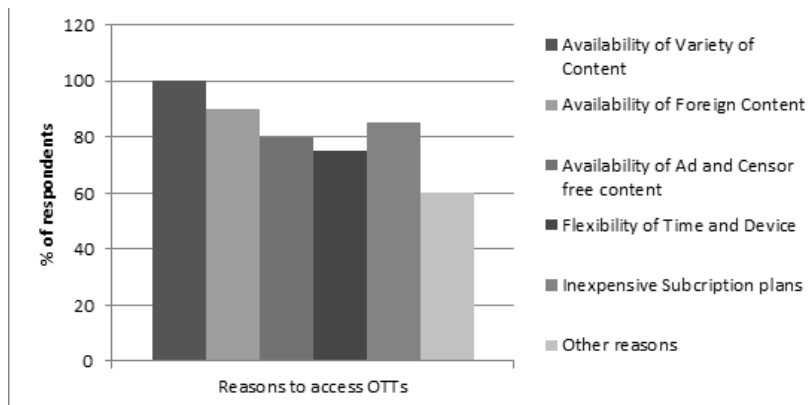


Figure 5: Various reasons to access OTT platforms by respondents (in percentage)

The above figure represent that all the respondents choose to access OTT

platforms over TV because of the availability of variety of content, 90% because of the availability of foreign content, 80 % of the respondents access the OTTs because of the availability of Ad and censor free content, 85 % because of inexpensive subscription plans, 75% because of the flexibility of time and device to watch content on OTTs and 60% of the respondents have other reasons too to access OTTs.

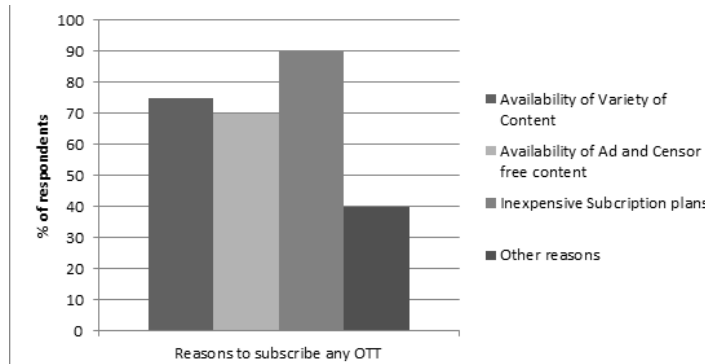


Figure 6: Various reasons to subscribe an OTT platform by respondents (in percentage)

The above figure represent that the 90% of the respondents subscribe any OTT because of the inexpensive subscription charges, 75 % because of availability of variety of content, 70% because of AD and Censor free content. 40% of the respondents have other reasons too to subscribe any OTT platform.

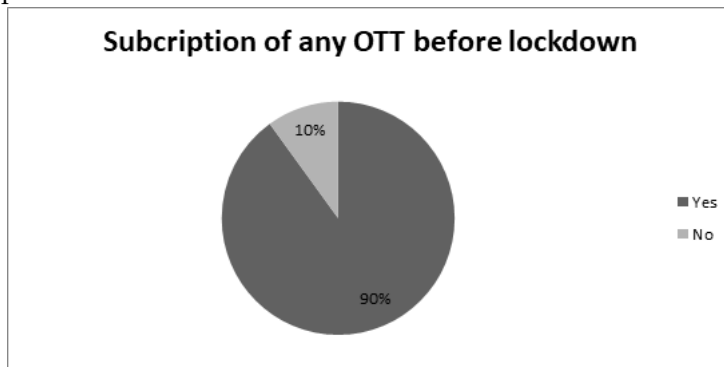


Figure 7: Percentage of respondents already subscribing an OTT even before pandemic (lockdown)

The above figure represents that 90 % the respondents were subscribing one or the other OTTs even before the lockdown.

Subscription of one or more OTT platforms during lockdown

While asking about new subscription during the lockdown, all of the respondents (100%) shared that they started subscribing one or more OTTs during and after the lockdown.

Increased number of Subscribers of OTT platforms during the lockdown

All the respondents (100%) believe that lockdown imposed as a result of Covid-19 pandemic has also led to a drastic increase in the number of subscribers of OTTs in last two years.

Findings

The researcher has found that OTT platforms have grown exponentially in past one decade. Especially for urban youth online streaming video platforms has become first choice to view web series, tv shows and movies. Rather than getting subscription of various OTTs, viewers are sharing the subscription with their friends and family.

There are various reasons of adoption of OTTs but the availability of Ad and Censor free content, variety of content, Binge-Watching, privacy of viewing, flexibility of time and device, etc are the main reasons. Majority of the audience prefer to access alone without family.

Competitive/Inexpensive subscription plans is the major reason of the increase in the subscribers of the OTT platforms. Lockdown imposed as a result of Covid-19 pandemic has also led to a drastic increase in the subscribers of OTTs in last one and a half year. Availability of Ad and Censor free content, variety of content, Binge-Watching, privacy of viewing, flexibility of time and device, etc are other reasons for the increase in the subscribers of the OTT platforms.

Conclusion

When we talk about the emerging platforms, popularity and adoption acts as the most important factors. Various reports conducted in the recent past suggest that OTT platforms have grown exponentially both in terms

of number of viewers and subscribers as well as market share. Reports also suggest that the platform has high potential in near future in terms of drastic increase in revenue. In conclusion, Over the Top/ online streaming video platforms are the emerging platforms (popular media) with high potential for future.

Along with various other reasons such as availability of ad and censor free content, variety of content, binge-watching, privacy of viewing, flexibility of time and device, etc.; onset of Covid-19 pandemic and imposition lock-down is also a major reason of adoption and subscription of OTTs.

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