

The Future of Over-The-Top Platforms after Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The major boon happened in the field of film industry during covid 19 pandemic was the huge growth in subscription rate of Over the top (OTT) platforms. The film theatres and shootings are all suspended and this made people think of an alternative way to enjoy movies without going out. People started the subscription and enjoy watching movies inside the home.

In order to predict the future of OTT platforms after the pandemic gets over, a quantitative survey is conducted among 350 subscribers of these platforms and the responses are analyzed. The study also focused to find the popular OTT platform of time and to compare the experience of watching movies in theatres with that of OTT platforms. Probability sampling method is used to select the samples and the they are choosing randomly. The questionnaire is distributed through online media.

This study also suggests whether the new film directors and producers who came up with their small works have a future in industry. Many low budget art and commercial films are released through OTT platforms during nationwide lockdown in India. Many of these films are widely accepted by the audience. Therefore, it is obvious that audience are waiting for more of their pieces of artworks.

The survey analysis revealed that Amazon prime is the widely used OTT platform among the subscribers followed by Netflix and Hotstar. It also showed that 79.75% of subscribers still likes to watch the movies through online streaming devices even after theatres get open. About 90 percent subscribers are obvious that they wouldn't withdraw subscription after pandemic.

Keywords:Covid 19, OTT platforms, Pandemic, Online streaming

INTRODUCTION

The covid 19 disease and the subsequent nationwide lockdown has affected almost all industries in India, especially film industry. Shootings were stopped and theatres faced huge financial crisis since they were not allowed open till December, 2020. In contrary, the Over-the-Top platforms witnessed tremendous growth during the pandemic. The main reason for this growth was the unavailability of other entertainment sources and hence even people who belongs to middle age groups also started trying the new innovation. The subscription rate of Amazon, Netflix and other major OTT platforms have increased to more than 60% (Velocity MR study).

The OTT platforms are popular in India for about four years. But most of these were used by a small number of groups who are interested in international movies, sitcoms and web series. People always preferred theatres for watching movie. The lockdown forced them to subscribe OTT platforms since the already shot movies, experimental films shot during pandemic and many low budget films released through them. Habit of film watching has changed now and people almost adopted the innovation.

While majority of the population of the country use television, we can see a shifting of such to OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hotstar. These may charge more when compared with television, they provide various benefits which make them more attractive option (Jose, 2020).

In a research study, it found that the average time consumed by a subscriber with OTT platforms in a day has increased from 0-2 hrs.to 2-5 hrs.per day. The satisfaction is determined by analyzing the quality of product, time spent with family and economic benefits. Therefore, the chances of withdrawing the subscription of these platforms are almost nil. Still a major question is left with; The future of OTT platforms after pandemic! This study is aimed to determine the future of OTT platforms after opening of the theatres.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY-

- 1) To study the increase in subscription rate among over the top (OTT) during lockdown conducted as a part of Covid-19 resistant method.
- 2) To analyze the future of OTT platforms in India after opening of theatres post pandemic.
- 3) To study the difference in experience while watching technically enriched movies from theatres and OTT platforms.

HYPOTHESIS

Over the top platforms will be having a good future in India since people are used to experience movies through online platforms.

METHODOLOGY

The main aim of this study is to understand the future of over-the-top platforms after the pandemic. For completing the study, quantitative survey method is used. A total number of 350 subscribers of Amazon, Hotstar and Netflix are chosen randomly all over India and questionnaire was distributed through online. The online survey questionnaire is distributed to the samples using social media aids such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Gmail and messenger. The responses given by them are recorded, analyzed and checked whether the hypothesis is valid or invalid.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For doing the research, diffusion of innovation theory, proposed by Evert M Rogers and Uses and gratification theory proposed by Elihu Katz are applied.

- **Diffusion of innovation theory-**

This theory proposed by Evert M Rogers analyses how the members of the society adopt any new innovative ideas and how they made the decision to select or reject it. According to the theory, innovations have to be widely adopted in order to attain development and sustainability. This theory has been used successfully in many fields' media and communication.

- **Uses and gratification theory-**

The Uses and Gratification theory explains the effects of media on people and how people use the media for their own needs.They get satisfied when their needs get fulfilled.,The theory argues what people do with media rather than what media does to people. This theory is in contradiction to the Hypodermic needle theory, which states that the audiences are passive adopters of media messages.

By applying diffusion of innovation, how the audience developed the habit of watching movies through OTT platforms are studied. The degree of satisfaction experienced by the subscribers after using OTT platforms are analyzed by applying uses and gratification theory.

VARIABLES:

- Independent variable: Covid 19 pandemic
- Dependent variable: future of Over-the-Top platforms.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The tremendous growth of internet literacy has made huge changes in everyday lives of people, especially in India. In a developing country like India, the rate of media advancements is high. The people consume media messages and presently, it's almost impossible for them to live without depending on media messages. Many online streaming services and social networking applications already got their root in India within short time period. The increasing subscription rate of OTT platforms is one of such technological revolutions happened in India.

Many low budget and art movies initially released through OTT platforms and gradually many producers and distributors came forward with their movies through OTT platforms such as Amazon prime, Netflix and Hotstar. In the light of this sudden increase in the usage and subscription rate of OTT platforms, researchers had done many studies on increase in the subscription rate of Amazon prime, Netflix etc. through survey and in-depth interview method.

While going through the previous studies, it was found that the topic 'increase in the subscription rate of OTT platforms during lockdown' was of high significance. It was a boon to the film producers and distributors who suffered a lot by losing their income and for the audience or viewers who have no other entertainment. The movies came through OTT could make many busy people to spend their quality time with family too.

The subscription rate of Over-the-top platforms has increased more than about 60% in India. D., & A. (n.d.). The rise of OTT platforms in Covid 19 era. SME FUTURES.

The lockdown period inculcated a sense of optimism in the industry about the future of Over-the-Top (OTT platforms).

While majority of the population of the country use television, we can see a shifting of such to OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hotstar. These may charge more when compared with television, they provide various benefits which make them more attractive option (Jose, 2020).

Based on a survey by FLYX, gathered in July and August 2020, it was found that more than 50% of the respondents had purchased new subscriptions during the pandemic. According to the survey, Netflix is the most popular platform along with Amazon and Hotstar. The most modern innovation that has significantly affected the development of OTT is mobile viewing. The arrival of technological devices such as smartphones, tablets, and ultra-books has challenged the boundary between new media and conventional television, reshaping the ways in which programs are both produced and watched (Ghadialy, 2011).

The average time consumed by a subscriber with OTT platforms in a day has increased from 0-2 hrs. to 2-5 hrs. per day. This is a boon to many young filmmakers who keep film as their dream. Many experimental movies have already come through Amazon prime, Netflix, Hotstar etc. The small film makers can confidently come up with their projects and definitely that will pave a path to big screen release. Television will gradually move to the corner of the living room since anything and everything is available in the smart phones and laptops.

The satisfaction is determined by analyzing the quality of product, time spent with family and economic benefits. H. (2020, September 11). *OTT platforms witness uptick in usage, subscriptions*

during Covid-19: Report.

This trend will continue in times to come where content and cost will be the important differentiators amongst players.

M. (2020). COVID'19 Impact: Accepting the Co-existence of OTT with Theatrical Release in India.

Cinema halls never exist because there is nothing beyond the experience of watching movies on the big screen, but I don't know what will be the adverse effect when smartphones began to deliver the Visual treat as that of Cinema halls (currently smartphone manufacturers focus on camera quality and processor, in future due to the growing era of OTT may they also focus on Visual experience for their customers).

The OTT platforms are transforming the relationship between media organizations and the structure of broadcasting industry. OTT platforms in major countries are using localization strategy, content differentiation strategy, partnership strategy and revenue enhancement strategy etc. to make OTT platforms more popular among common people (Park and Kwon, 2019).

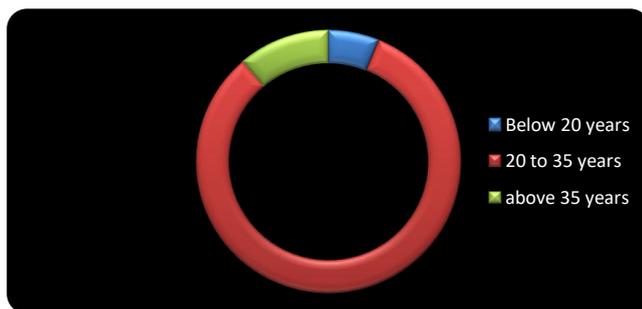
Many of such studies are completed using Uses and gratification theory, proposed by Elihu Katz and diffusion of innovation theory by Evert M Rogers wherein the impact of OTT platforms among different types of adapters is discussed. Thus, they can be well explained using this study. The main focus of this study is to understand how OTT platforms could influence the audience.

(Rogers) It is identified that people who adopt an innovation earlier have different features than people who adopt an innovation later. When promoting an innovation to a population, it is important to understand the characteristics of the population that will help adoption of the innovation.

DATA ANALYSIS

The survey conducted on 350 subscribers of OTT platforms in India and it is found that more than 80 percent of the subscribers are from the age group 20 to 35 years. Most of these subscribers are using such platforms for one to 3 years. According to the survey results, the most used OTT platform is Amazon Prime, followed by Netflix and Disney+ hotstar. People also use Zee5, Voot, Sun nxt, Sony liv, Jio tv etc. They not only watch movies, but soap operas, sitcoms and web series also.

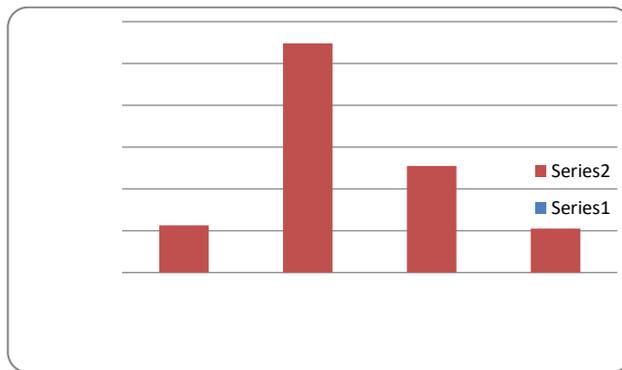
According to the diffusion of innovation theory, people who easily adopts a new innovation is called early adopters. The age group of 20 to 35 years comes under the same category of early adopters since they didn't feel any kind of discomfort of dissonance while using OTT platforms.



-Age group of subscribers-

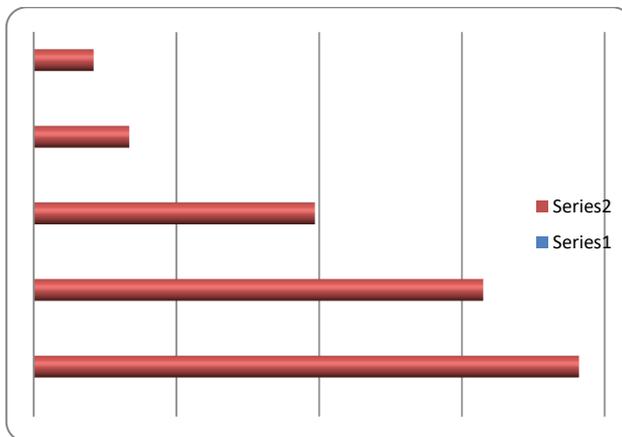
People those who started using OTT platforms during lockdown is almost 26% and these people

decided to subscribe them since they have no other options. Some others made the subscription because of the availability of uncensored contents. These people strongly disagree to the decision taken by Information and Broadcasting ministry to bring OTT platforms under their control, which is later cancelled. People think that the censoring OTT contents are clearly a violation of freedom of speech and expression. The subscribers who started using OTT platforms after the nationwide lockdown are very less in number. The reason for them to try OTT is the newly released movies through them.



From the survey results, it is found that 61.64% of the subscribers decided to do so for experiencing the innovation, 13.24% subscribers thought of its financial benefits and 25.11% of subscribers for not having other options.

While analyzing the responses given by the sample, it is noticed that 48% of the samples have the opinion that OTT platforms are more economic than watching movies in theatres. But for technically enriched movies like Bahubali, Jungle book etc., 94.40% people prefer theatres.



Graph showing results of whether OTT is more economic than Theatres.

It is found through the survey that Television has already become the least preference by the audience who use OTT platforms. In order to avoid advertisements and skip unnecessary visuals, more than 75% of people prefer mobile phones and laptops than TV.

Even though the subscribers consider OTT platforms as the cheaper way to watch movies, 82.51% of subscribers agree that theatres provide better visual and audio clarity than OTT platforms and home theatres. About 30% of the subscribers doesn't have an opinion about the role of uncensored contents in determining the future of film censorship. 29.51% strongly believe that the uncensored contents are good for freedom of film screening and 7.79% strongly disagree to this statement.

Comment [DM1]:

Comment [DM2]:

The main objective of this study was to determine whether OTT platforms have a good future in India after pandemic. The survey found an answer for this question; 79.75% of the subscribers support film distribution through OTT platforms even after pandemic. They believe that it would be really helpful for small directors and aspiring filmmakers to distribute their works through online platforms since it is less expensive. Among the 350 respondents, 89.14% say that they won't withdraw the subscription even after opening theatres.

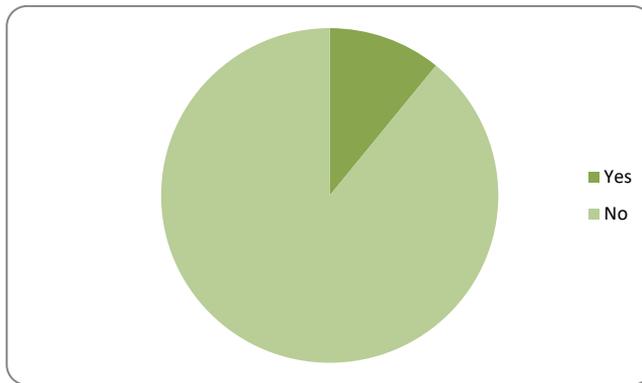


Table showing the response by subscribers regarding the withdrawal of subscription

FINDINGS

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Yes	38	10.85	10.85	10.85
No	312	89.14	89.14	89.14
Total	350	100	100	100

Table showing the decision made by subscribers whether to withdraw or not the subscription.

CONCLUSION

From the results, it is found that future of OTT platform is no more a question mark. The subscribers agreed that they like to enjoy movies through online streaming applications and OTT platforms, hence they won't withdraw the subscription. The argument here is that the rise of OTT platform is really good for aspiring film professionals since they can produce low budget feature films to the field. As far as the OTT platforms are concerned, the subscription rate has to be kept expanding. As the survey results indicates, the subscription will not be withdrawing by people. Even though OTT platforms are more economic than that of theatres, people prefer theatres for watching technologically rich movies.

The OTT platforms are going to replace all other movie watching stereotypes and Television will soon shift to the corner of the house. People obviously prefer OTTs because they can get all video contents from a particular spot. Hyperlinking of similar contents are unique feature of new

media;therefore, audience can easily access what they want.

The majority of the samples says that they would continue the subscription even after opening of theatres, hence the hypothesis is proved to be valid.

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