

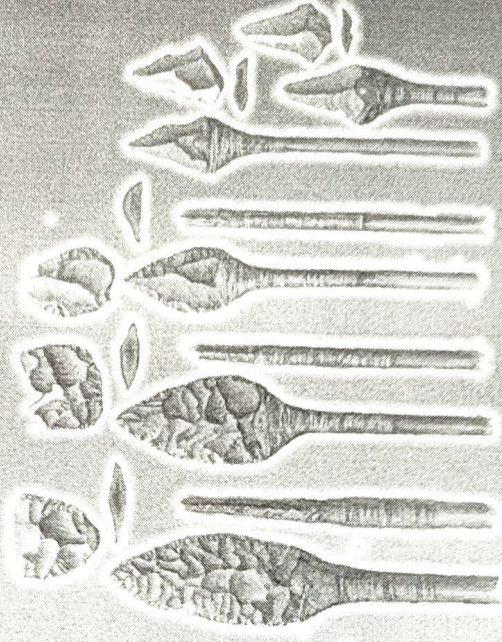
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13. मानव विकास व राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति-2020 में शिक्षा
मनोविज्ञान की उपयोगिता-हेमंत सालवी 93
14. मराठा साम्राज्य: एक अध्ययन-डॉ. हरिप्रसाद पाटीदार 100
15. The plunging into madness: similarity in myth and
schizophrenia-JuhiBairwa 105
16. Importance and role of Communication in Mental Health-
A study-Dr. Kunjan Acharya and Rajawat Manisha 109
17. Effect of Covid-19 Pandemic on ott services in India :
A Review-Dr. Kunjan Acharya and Gazal Singal 123
18. Greene's Existential Concerns : A Positive Approach to a
Seemingly Negative Philosophy with Special Reference to
His Novel The Heart of the Matter-Shive Narayan Joshi 134

**EFFECT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON
OTT SERVICES IN INDIA: A REVIEW**

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ABSTRACT

In the present scenario, the world economy is shattered and major industries face downwards due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Entertainment is also a leading industry which includes many sub-fields of Cinema, and television. Besides all the traditional mediums of entertainment OTT platform is one of the rapidly increasing phenomena. Over-the-top is an online VoD service that provides programs and film. Examples of OTT platforms are Disney+ Hotstar, Netflix, Zee5, SonyLiv and Amazon Prime. When cinema and other industries are facing losses and shutdown during this pandemic, the research tries to study the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on OTT services in India. This research also looks into what might have caused the increase in OTT services throughout the pandemic. In India, COVID-19 led to possibly lockdown situations when people were locked in their homes; entertainment parks were closed since the first quarter of 2020, and OTT platforms gained popularity. This study is based on Report analysis to find out the data and reason behind the rising in viewership numbers. Present research includes the research reports and news articles for getting the data on OTT viewership and insight of subscription. The finding of the study indicates that strict lockdown boosted media consumption. The OTT platform exploded in popularity, and it quickly became a major source of entertainment as users increased. Viewership on overtheTop platforms increased in 2020, according to industry and internet

search data. The increasing penetration of affordable broadband and smartphone customised OTT apps with groundbreaking pricing models, as well as the sheer convenience, affordable subscription charges, minimal personal data sharing, and availability of internet services are all factors that contribute to the popularity of OTT platforms.

Keywords—entertainment, OTT, viewership, subscription, covid-19

Introduction

COVID-19 lockdown first created a situation similar to a house lockup, slowing the economy for never before. It is taking its toll in the form of business closures, widespread unemployment, isolation, and an overall slowing of the economy. As of the present, people avoid visiting malls and movie theatres and consequently entertainment methods have changed a lot worldwide including in India. The demand for OTT services has already been surging but when the pandemic shut down the box office and no new content could be telecasted by Indian TV Shows, then the OTT platforms filled this vacuum by releasing web series and new movies on the platform.

OTT is a VoD service that can be accessed online through the smartphone and laptop at any time. Over-the-top is a shorthand phrase for the new way of delivering film and television programs. According to **adjust.com** “OTT stands for ‘Over-The-Top’ and refers to any streaming service that delivers content over the internet. The service is delivered ‘over the top’ of another platform, hence the moniker.”

OTT services including Netflix, AltBalaji, Voot, Amazon Prime, MxPlayer, Zee5, Sony liv, Hotstar and others have seen exponential growth in their subscriber bases, with India emerging as the Asia Pacific’s second-largest subscription television market. OTTs were previously assumed to be a medium only for metro cities with a considered amount of audience, after the pandemic OTT spiked in tier-1 and tier-2 cities, especially in women audiences. The lockdown caused by the pandemic gave everyone free time which increased the speed of adopting OTT platforms. According to **IMDb’s Top 10 Indian Web Series of 2020** web series such as Scam 1992, Aarya, Panchayat, Special Ops, PatalLok, Mirzapur and Asur on OTT platforms are attracting a large number of viewers.

According to Parikh, N. (2020) it is clear that OTT services were already popular, but their popularity increased throughout the pandemic. It is because people's preferences for various forms of entertainment have changed. 59.1% of individuals began to use a different OTT at the time of lockdown. This demonstrates that OTT benefited from Covid-19.

OTTs provide a diverse range of binge-watching, time-shifting, and location-shifting options. OTT streaming provides entertainment for Smartphone users who want to access media. However, like the television set gains in popularity and acceptance, it will be capable of playing a vast array of content, including cable TV, videos, the internet, and over-the-top (OTT) services.

"EY-FICCI Indian Media & Entertainment Report" stated that the advent of video services has heralded OTT as the future of the media business. Due to their broad material and rising audience, online channels are expected to become the latest trend for the audience. VoD channels overtook the movie industry in 2019 and came in the third position in the media business in India.

"Media and Entertainment Outlook 2020" report stated that India is anticipated to come in the sixth position in the world's OTT industry by 2024. the industry is expected to grow with a 28.6% CAGR up to 2024, attaining revenues of US\$ 2.9 billion.

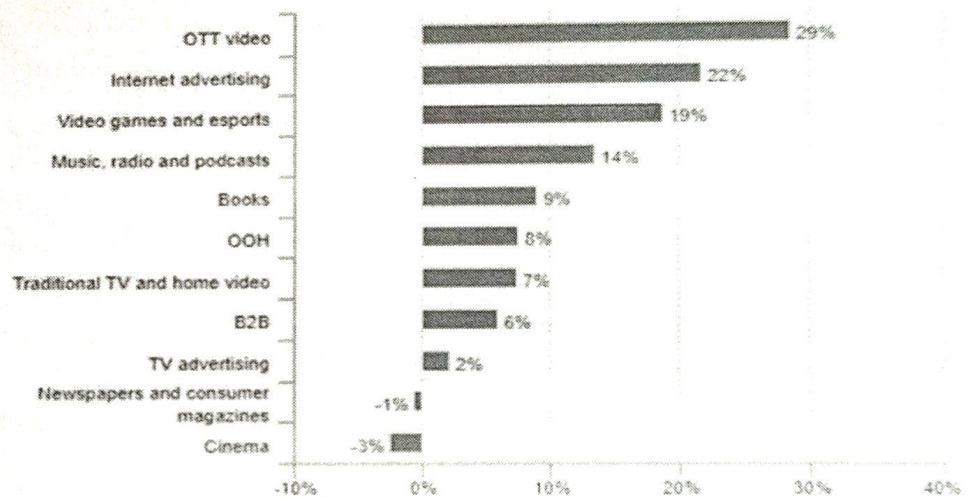
After the theatres shutdown, OTT came to rescue Bollywood. During the COVID-19 lockdown, many Bollywood films were released on different OTT platforms. Late Sushant Singh Rajput's 'DilBechara', Sidharth Malhotra's film Shershaah, Ajay Devgan's Bhuj and many other films premiered on the OTT platform. According to trade analysts, more than 7.5 crore people watched the film 'DilBechara' in three days. This is the second major film released on an OTT platform in the lockdown. The purpose of the study is to investigate the evolution of OTT services at the time of the pandemic. To comprehend the future potential of OTT services, it is necessary to comprehend their popularity developed throughout the epidemic.

Review of Literature

An article by **India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF)** (2020) stated that According to the reports OTT services will see an annual growth of 29%

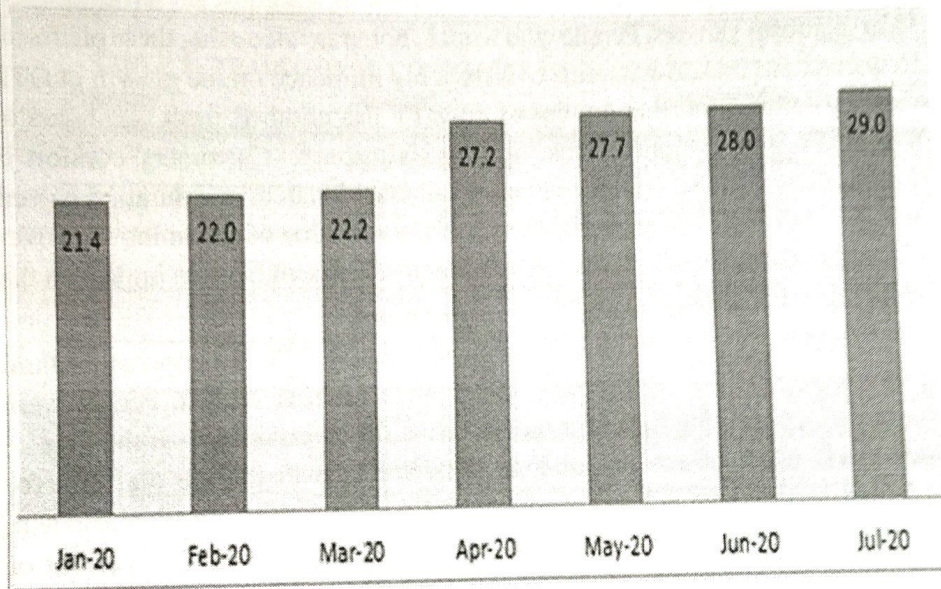
for the next five years, Internet advertising is estimated to develop at a 22 per cent rate, video games and e-sports predict to grow with 19%, and music, radio, and podcasts will increase by 14%. The film and newspaper industry can be negatively influenced by the shifting audience preferences as they show a decrease in rate with 3% and 1% respectively. "Digital E&M" expenditure on OTT memberships and internet charges is considered a necessity. India's overall M&E income is predicted to rise by 10.1 per cent per year to attain US\$ 55 billion by 2024. Further, Huge expenditure on the self-made and purchased program by OTT channels will enable premium VoD to account for 93 percent of overall OTT income. Between 2019 and 2024, its income will grow at a CAGR of 30.7 percent

*Segment compound annual growth rate for next five years
CAGR 2019-2024*



Ravindra, B (2020) in her news article mentioned that In March 2020, there was 2.2 crore paying customers, which increased to 2.9 crores four months later in July. According to a survey by Redseer Consulting, the OTT industry had a thirty percent gain in paying subscribers from March to July 2020 in India. According to the IBEF, 90 percent of Indian customers prefer to watch programs in regional languages. Just 7% of the time spent went to English

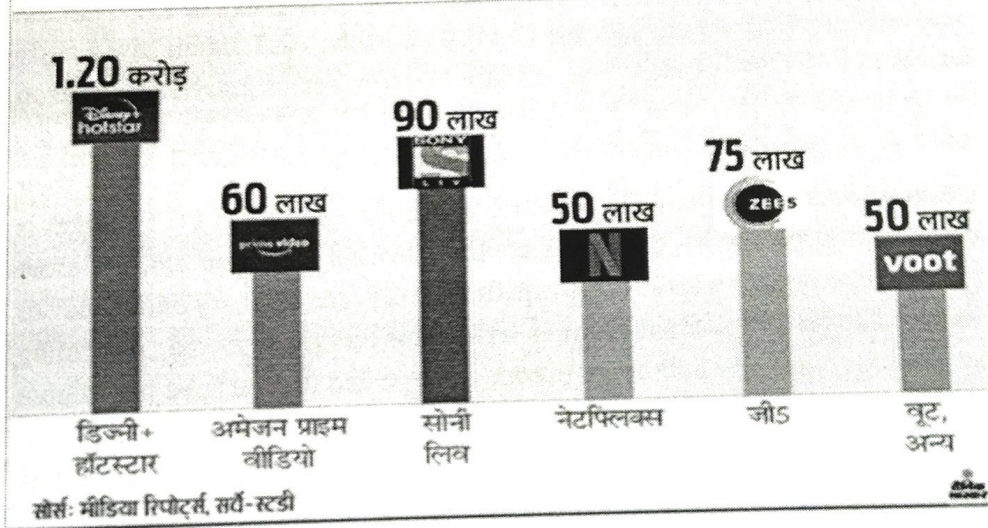
2. No. of Subscriptions, OTT Video Sector (In million)



content.

According to media reports, Disney plus have the maximum number of paid subscriber with a number of 1.20 crore while Sony liv is in the second

किसके पास कितने पेड सबस्क्राइबर्स



step with 90 lac paid subscribers and Netflix have 50 lac paid subscriber.

Madnani, D., Fernandes, S., &Madnani, N(2020) in their research paper stated that The spread of COVID-19 resulted in a significant surge in OTT video platform viewers. People who work at home are also using these platforms frequently, so lockdown seems to have a big influence on the growth in OTT viewing. The mean time employed on OTT has climbed from two hours to five hours, with a monthly cost of 100–300 rupees. Customers' comfort is directly linked to the quantity of area available to watch, the duration passed on OTT platforms, the topic richness, and the selection of streaming sites over TV. Age, profession, location, and economic classes all have an impact on the adoption of OTT Apps.

Parikh, N (2020) in her research shows that OTT is a popular medium as more than 91.7% of the participants were familiar with it. People were constantly consuming different media forms for entertainment at the time of lockdown. Most of the respondents 72.7% use over-the-top platform for entertainment second is YouTube with 17.3% and the third is a television with 9.1 percent.OTT platforms are very familiar with users as 42.7 percent of consumers spend 2 to 4 hours on them. Only 28.2 percent watch it for less than 2 hours, while 29.1 percent spends more than 4 hours on it. In light of this, the average time is 3 hours spent by the viewers on OTT.

An article by India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) (2020) stated that the number of viewers on Indian OTT platforms increased dramatically in April 2020. From March to April 2020, ZEE5 had a viewership of 437.4 million people. Following the news of the country's curfew, ALT Balaji saw a daily increase of 17,000+ subscribers. In India, the number of functional Amazon Prime accounts has surged by over 83 per cent.

Kapur, S., Tikoo, V. T., Agarwal, A., &Sharan, V.(2020), in their research paper states that between 2018 and 2023, the Indian OTT market is expected to increase by 21.8 percent. In 2018 this is valued at 4,464 crore rupees and will reach 11,976 crore rupees by 2023. The ordinary online viewer has access to far more content than can be found in traditional media. According to this study, in 2019, 500 hours of video are posted to YouTube per minute and about 1,600 hours of original over-the-top material were created in India. It represents a 33 percent increase over the preceding year, these platforms

grew by a 26 percent rate. Second, internet video games have surpassed existing media forms. OTT apps and multimedia services are being developed by telecom providers and broadcasters.

TABLE 3 : TRADITIONAL COMPANIES WITH INVESTMENTS IN OTT

COMPANY	PRIMARY	OTHER PLATFORMS
Airtel	Telecom, TV distribution	Airtel XStream, Wynk
Idea	Telecom	Idea Movies and TV
Reliance	Telecom	Jio Saavn, Jio TV, Jio Cinema, Voot
Sony	TV entertainment	Sony Liv
Star India	TV entertainment	Disney+ Hotstar
Sun TV	TV entertainment	Sun Nxt
Tata Sky	TV distribution	Tata Sky App
Vodafone	Telecom	Vodafone Play

SOURCE: AUTHORS' COMPILATION

DainikBhaskar (2020) publish an article "OTT platform subscriptions during the lockdown in India" According to Invest India, individuals are spending 83 percent more time on OTT platforms, during Corona, user time durations on OTT services surged by 82.63 percent. Indians, on the other hand, spent 20.5 percent more time on freely available services such as YouTube. ZEE-5 gained 80% more members between March 25 and June 8 while Amazon Prime, on the other hand, saw a 67 percent increase in new subscribers. During this time, Netflix subscribers increased by 65 percent and Alt Balaji also had a 60% increase in new subscribers.

Patel, M. K., Awasya, G., & Khadia, R. (2020) in their research mentioned that "63.5% viewers state they spend 0-2 hours watching the OTT applications and 24.7% viewer spending 2 to 4 hours and 9% respondents say they spending more than 4 hours on OTT applications in a day." According to the findings, 65.2 percent of viewers are content with a subscription to 0 to 2 over the top platform, 20.2 percent with 2 to 4 channels, and 14.6 percent with more than 4 OTT channels. This clearly shows that the audience wants a range

of content. The cost and comfort of utilizing and consuming video content are major considerations and the graphics show that users considered OTT applications to be less expensive and more convenient than traditional media such as DTH and the cinema hall. Many OTT distributors, particularly during the Lockdown period, provide various attractive offers that surely look very good at the time, and one can also access the content on a smartphone, which is convenient to view at any time and from anywhere. The OTT-based video material was found to be less expensive and more convenient by 79.8% of viewers.

Reason for the popularity of OTT platforms

The shutdown of movie theatres has resulted in the growth of the over-the-top apps which are the modern big screen. Many factors have contributed to the enormous popularity of OTT among audiences. After analyzing the data many variables are accountable for the popularity of OTT platforms. Low internet data prices, varied pricing structures to accommodate diverse user budgets, premium-grade content and, most recently, the epidemic that has swept the globe.

Cost-effectiveness : Over-the-top platforms provide free access to certain content and charge a small monthly price for premium content.

NominalData prices : OTT platforms' success is also due to the high-speed data provided by Indian telecom operators. People can simply connect to the internet at a very low cost.

Private viewing : Another reason is that OTT viewing is more individualized, giving viewers more control over what they watch and when they watch it. This control is further enhanced by the availability of content on smart TVs, tablets, laptops and mobile phones.

Convenience : Streaming service providers such as Netflix and Hotstar give video-on-demand, which allows you to choose from a database of videos and view them whenever, wherever, and as frequently as you want.

Content : OTT provides access to a wide range of national and international online entertainment and gives access to thousands of movies and shows, including news, sports, classic TV, whole TV series, and films. The type of material that digital mediums source and create is the most crucial

factor in the rise of their appeal in our country.

Budget: OTT platforms are crucial for the makers as Digitization has lowered the cost of content distribution to near zero in the case of user-generated platforms. The low cost of online distribution removes a significant entry barrier in the entertainment market, permitting the creation and distribution of content at an unprecedented pace. So makers are more interested in making web shows for the web.

Discussion

The study shows that the OTT platforms have brought a revolution in India's cinema and the overall entertainment industry. All the reports and articles that have been gone through indicate the direction of the massive increase in viewers, as there is a tremendous rise noticed in the number of subscribers during the period of the lockdown and after the lockdown due to COVID-19. Further, it is predicted that the OTT apps will keep expanding in the existing Indian market. Therefore it is going to impact a lot of the traditional mediums like DTH services on television and Cinema halls.

Smartphones also played a vital role in the expansion and growth of the OTT markets in India. During the lockdown period of COVID-19, students' classes were going on through online media which raised the usage of laptops and more importantly mobile phones. This led to an increase in internet and Wi-Fi subscriptions and thus users also subscribed to these OTT platforms.

Although OTT platforms gained popularity due to various reasons mentioned above the free or the idle time of the people plays a pivotal role in the same. Adding to this OTT platforms are easy to access, anywhere and anytime.

Conclusion

OTT was the most preferred medium for entertainment at the time of lockdown. Most people spent a longer duration on OTT apps than on other media. With the advent of India's OTT services, audiences may now not only watch different material from all over the globe, and experiment with a variety of categories. Not only have consumers boosted their use of OTT platforms during the lockdown, but they have also increased their time spent on them. The majority of time is spent viewing movies. The most significant growth

has been in the number of people watching original series on various platforms.

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