

Catalyst Role of Covid 19 Pandemic in Increasing Adoption of Over-the-Top (OTT) Platforms- A Study Conducted amongst Gen Z of Guwahati City, Assam

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ABSTRACT

The outbreak of Covid 19 has drastically increased the use of viewership in multiple OTT platforms. OTT platforms are media service providers, providing users with direct access to the different forms of content over the internet doing away with the need for connection to a dedicated carrier. Different age grouped people with diverse requirement of media need has been provided with the option to subscribe to OTT services. The present study has been conducted with the purpose to assess the factors affecting on-demand content popularity among users of the selected study area i.e. Guwahati city in contrast to pre-established platforms; with special reference to the pandemic. The results have shown a positive trend on the use of OTT services during the covid pandemic and it can be said that Covid 19 pandemic has definitely acted as a catalyst in increasing adoption of OTT services amongst Generation Z of Guwahati city with almost 60% respondents stating that they have started using OTT after the pandemic.

Keywords-- OTT Services, Customer Preference, Gen Z, Viewership, Content, Covid 19

Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, Zee5, ALTBalaji, Sony Liv, Voot, Jio Cinema.

The acronym OTT stands for Over-the-Top, which means streaming across different devices whenever an individual wants, a convenient term that explains the new delivery method of film and TV content over the internet without the need for traditional broadcast, cable or satellite pay-TV providers. (<https://www.endavomedia.com/what-is-ott/#ott>)

India with mostly 40 players representing all types of content providers is growing at an unprecedented rate and expected to reach 5 billion dollar market by 2023 (Kanchan Samtani, 2018). The Indian OTT streaming industry is expected to grow to USD 13-15 billion over the next decade at a CAGR of 22-25 per cent.

OTT bypasses cable, satellite television, broadcast, etc. which acts as a controller and distributor of media services. With OTT, the content developers can interact easily with the target audience directly through a webpage or an app. Over all, OTTs are providing the comfort of availing media and entertainment from any place, as per their own convenience.

I. INTRODUCTION

Once considered a luxury for many, OTT has now become the necessity for almost all. Traditionally, the consumption of media has always in the form of mediums like small screen like TV and big screen like theatres, movie hall, etc. With the rise of Covid 19, the use of internet has increased exponentially, not only people have started working from home using internet but reliance on mobile internet has increased even for entertainment purposes as well. Along the rise of internet usage, the popularity of OTT platforms has also grown. Keeping pace with the whole world, India has shown no exception in OTT usage. With an increase in supply and affordability of data India is witnessing an ever-increasing popularity of OTT platforms. Initially OTTs were vaults of old cable shows and movies. Over time the content structure of these platforms has undergone a sea change with production of in-house original content creating a new form of content "web-series." Common names amongst the consumer base include Netflix,

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

OTTs have set the Indian entertainment not only limited to the bounds of home, but accessible anywhere and everywhere. Covid 19 pandemic has changed the way people were consuming media. Moochhala Quresh (2018) has conducted a study on "The future of online OTT entertainment services in India" with the objectives to pin down the factors responsible for ushering a want within people to use OTT platforms over cable tv and to find out the most preferred OTT service provider and if gender has any impact on entertainment content shown by OTT. There is a wide gap between the prices of OTT and cable tv, so viewership on both is expected to grow hand in hand in a price conscious country like India

The results highlight the fact that the key to unlocking the digital market in India is by focusing on regional content since viewers of programs in English are lower. The Indian market is massive and by the year 2024, the country is expected to have OTT revenue

video revenue overtake and be the sixth largest market (PWC, 2019-2024). There has been a consistent growth over the past couple of years which is indicating the fact that OTT platforms hold a strong future providing Indians with the choice of accessing media from other than the conventional sources .

While the study of Saina Navsangeet on "Usage of OTT platforms during COVID 19 lockdown: trends rationale and implications" which has been conducted with the objectives to study the popularity of OTT media platforms in comparison to films/ TV channels amid lockdown and to determine the reasons responsible for the surge in popularity of on-demand media among the youth and to inspect its effects on production, distribution and consumption of content. The study reflects the rise of OTT as a preferred medium, a preference that has been quadrupled by the unanticipated lockdown imposed for months. In addition availability of smartphones and access to high speed data connectivity became a catalyst to people availing subscription of such platforms providing unlimited multi genre, cross-culture content web series emerged as the most liked program format. Veer P Gangwar, Phagwara Vinay Sai, Natraj Adepu, Sai Teja Bellamkonda (2020) has conducted a study on "Profiles And Preferences of OTT Users in Indian Perspective" with the objective to explore the consumer preferences of OTT Platforms and to analyse the link between demographic factors and consumer wants towards OTT media services and to study the major shift from traditional content to on-demand content. The study has been able to find out that OTT is replacing the old setup box TV and only TV very fast due to its countless advantages. It is one of the fastest growing businesses in the whole world, and has got a very bright future with more video consumption and increasing mobile and internet penetration.

Nandani Parikh (2020) has conducted a study on the emergence of OTT platforms during the pandemic and its future scope with the objectives determine and analyse the growth in viewership of OTT service providers during the pandemic and to study the extent of growth of the OTT platforms. The study has been able to find out that there has been an exponential rise in viewership of OTT platforms. Consumption of content in OTT platforms saw a rise particularly because of the lockdown, thus it is proved that OTT platforms have witnessed inorganic growth in terms of acquiring market share

The study conducted by Parnami Shaurya and Jain Tushar (2021) on increase in usage of OTT streaming with the objective to ascertain whether the usage of the OTT platforms has increased during the COVID 19 pandemic and by which degree using a sample populaton. The study has shown positive response as it reflected that the users have added to their consumption of content on OTT platforms amid the pandemic stating a plethora of reasons such as

monotony, free time and OTT platforms being pocket friendly.

Dr. S. Anbumalar, Brina Antony, Aiswarya.S, Mithun P.M and Ajeeth Kumar. R.(2020) have conducted a study on Adoption Of OTT Platform In India During Covid-19 with the objectives to study the key trends around OTT adaption due to Covid-19 in India and to study and analyses comparative audience preference towards OTT and TV and to determine the factors influencing the users to opt OTT Platforms and to analyses the future perception of customer towards OTT Platform. The study has been able to find out that the indian youth is restricted with specified number of stations in a conventional family. Amid the pandemic, the inventive mind was explored by OTT Platform and it is versatile for the extention of content on close to home gadget, for example, cell phones and tablets which made youthful India the opportunity to watch as per their wishes.

Coronavirus has assumed a huge part of medium in metropolitan districts than in semi-metropolitan and country areas. OTT acquired ubiquity in view of the fear of going out during this pandemic.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As the use of internet has increased during the pandemic, the dependency over the mobile devices have increased tremendously. Be it because of the work from home system, online classes and tutorials, and also for increasing apprehension of going out, people started staying more indoors. The generation Z (the generation born between the late 1990s to about 2010), the youngster had to restrict their movements due to the excessive growth of pandemic, now have to stay indoors and do most of their work via online internet use. Even for entertainment reasons, they had to restrict themselves to either OTT or C-tv (Cable TV). On account of this, the youth of Guwahati city also had to rely more on the available sources only. The present study is an attempt to assess the catalyst role of pandemic in increasing use of OTT platforms by the Gen Z of Guwahati City.

IV. OBJECTIVES

For the purpose of the study, the objectives have been selected as to assess the factors affecting for on-demand content popularity among users of the selected study area and also to study the preference on OTT platforms in comparison to pre-established platforms such as the television.

V. METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for the study includes both primary and secondary data. For collection of primary data, structured scheduled questionnaire was used with the total response being received is 200. The

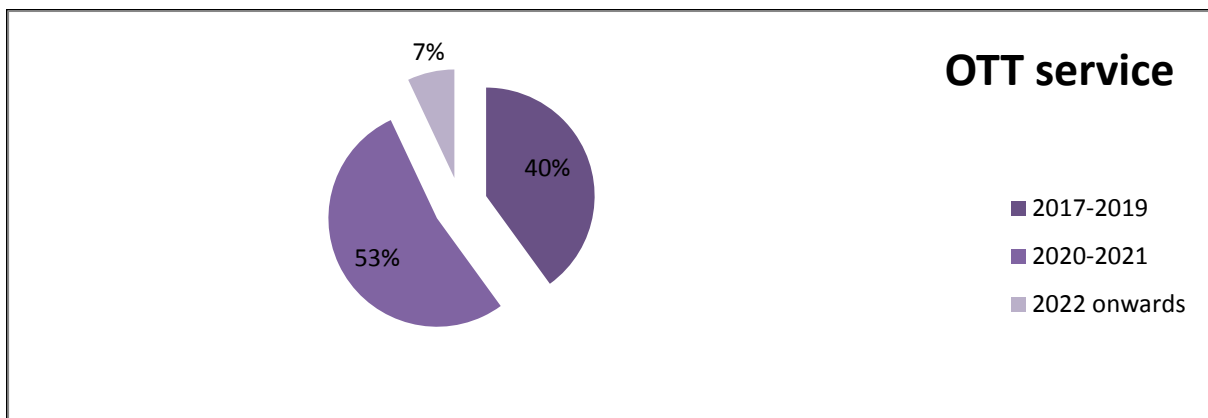
method of data collection adopted was judgment sampling within the Gen Z of Guwahati City. Secondary data has been referred from websites, journals, published reports and articles published in the various online platforms. After receiving the data, it has been analysed with the use of percentage analysis, tables and interpretation have been formulated based on the results.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to provide accuracy in receiving the data, the questionnaire has been distributed amongst different age range, gender, respondents with diverse occupation and income segments, if any.

The responses include 54% within the age range of 24 to 20 years, 36% ranging from 20 to 16 years and 10% only from below 16 years, being 55% of respondents female and 45% of respondents are male. 71% of the respondents are students, 18% service-holders and 11% are involved in business.

As the sampling technique being used judgment sampling, all respondents were using OTT services. With almost 40% of the respondents using OTT from 2017 onwards, 53% of the respondents started using OTT from 2020 onwards and 7% of the respondents have started using recently. With 88% of the respondents agreed that Covid 19 pandemic has influenced their decision to subscribe OTT, whereas 12% respondents disagreed that the pandemic has not influenced their decision to subscribe to OTT.



There has been various factors that has led to the growth of use of the Over-the-Top services recently, be it availability of fast internet facility, quality content without censorship, price factor, convenience of

watching later, portability, store of old series and dramas, local contents, shared viewing experience etc. With these factors considered, the following table has been created.

Factors	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Response
Fast internet Availability	106	32	26	10	26	200
Quality Content	98	36	30	12	24	200
Price	72	28	50	20	30	200
Convenience of watching later	92	38	30	6	34	200
Portability	116	26	24	12	22	200
Storehouse of Old Series and Dramas	96	38	26	4	36	200
Local Contents	94	42	34	16	14	200
Shared Viewing	82	66	30	6	16	200

Table: Factors influencing the choice of OTT over other forms of Media

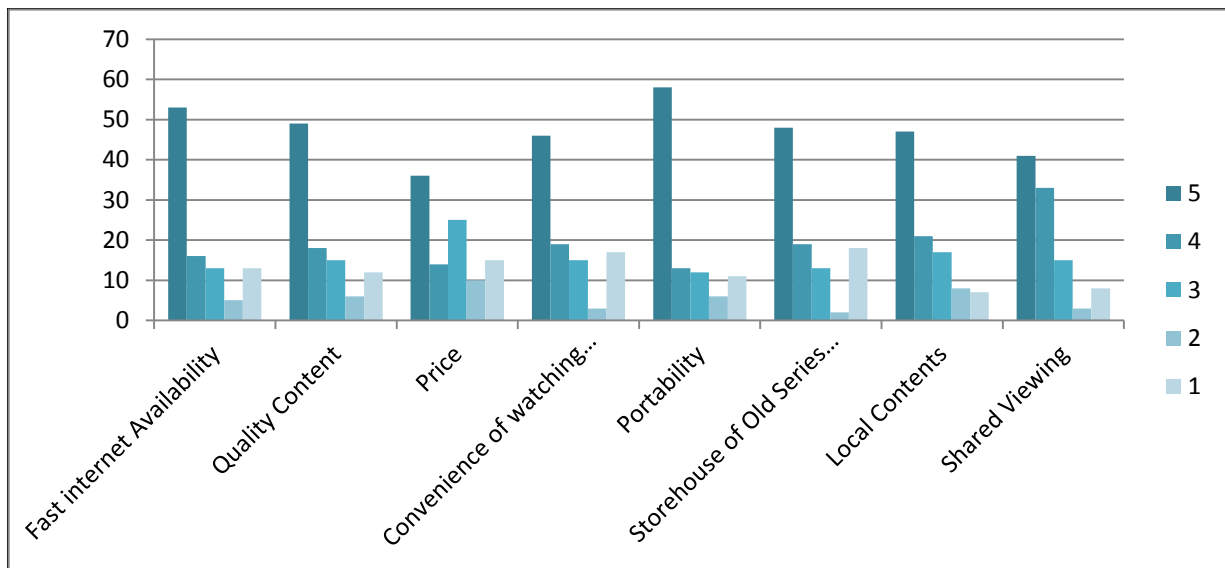


Figure: Factors influencing the choice of OTT over other forms of Media

Respondents also stated their average time spent on watching content on OTT platforms and 32% respondents state that they spend less than 2 hours in viewing contents, 45% between 2 to 4 hours, 23% of the respondent state they spend more than 4 hours in viewing different contents. Due to the accessibility of OTT over mobile devices, the respondents have got the ease of using services more. The question of preference of OTT and Television, 74% respondents stated that they watch OTT more, whereas 23% stated that they prefer watching Television more and 3% of the respondents state that they prefer watching both TV and OTT equally. The average time period during the day for

consumption of OTT stated that 64% of the respondents watch OTT contents any time of the day, mostly they like to binge-watch, whereas 25% stated that mostly during late night they prefer watching contents over OTT, 11% stated that they like to view contents during afternoon or evening time, basically to distress themselves from work pressure.

Respondents also state that the preferred genre to watch and 10% stated that they like to enjoy sports, 21% stated that they prefer watching documentaries, 42% prefer watching movies and 27% of the respondents stated that they prefer watching web-series more.

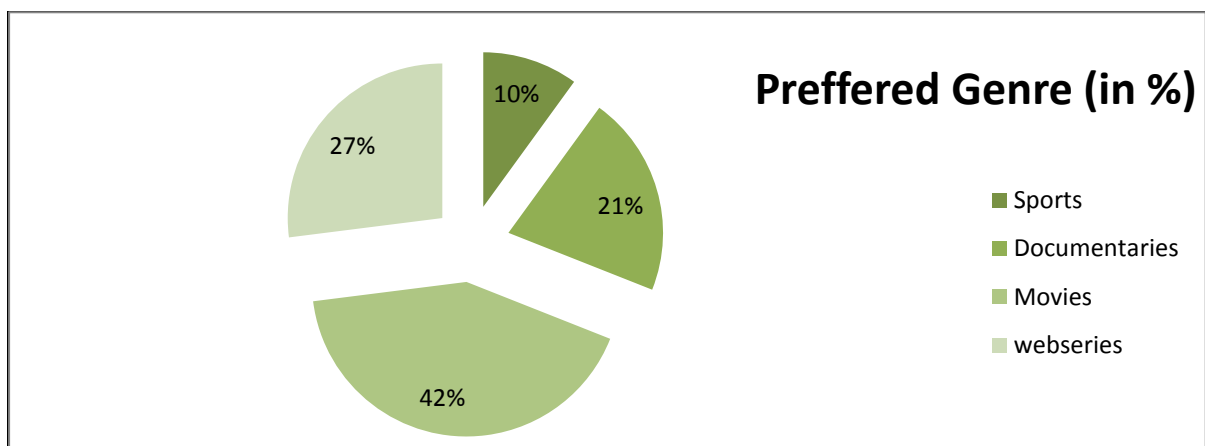


Figure: Preferred Genre of media contents available on OTT Platforms

While 36% stated that they have monthly subscription, 20% respondent state they have quarterly subscription, 59% stated that they have annual subscription. Due to the increasing popularity of content delivery through OTT, the people also have developed a kind of dependency and as the price of such subscription is less as compared to DTH or other source of media,

along with varied offers and discounts, it has been greatly able to influence the gen Z of the study area. While most of the respondents agree that due to Covid 19, the usage of OTT media contents have multiplied, they have become more and more comfortable in viewing contents through OTT platforms via mobile devices, rather than any other media services.

VII. CONCLUSION

As the world is changing with new and enhanced technology every day, the preference of use of various items has also changed drastically. Any viewing content after repeated consumption takes the form of a habit. With only limited channel services with very few contents through DTH, restricted the people in selecting the media that they wanted and which has been duly fulfilled by OTT services. For a young India, and for the younger generation of consumers with diverse choices, they have different demands and requirements in matter of choice related to media. The user friendly interface provided by the OTTs has for these kinds of reasons only doing better in comparison to DTH. OTT players have able to reach the tip of the iceberg, however, there is much more to explore and with the trend it is moving, OTTs will be the future of the country like India. The factors which are highly contributing to the growth of this sector are low cost compared to DTH, quality content, local content availability, etc. The pandemic acted as a catalyst in this process where more and more people started using OTT or spending more time than before. The progress of OTT has boosted other industries as well, particularly during the pandemic when demand for content on OTT witnessed a steep rise, which include the movie industry; it became easier to release new movies directly through OTT and people preferred watching them in the comfort of their homes which led to the need for better data services thus boosting the telecommunications industry as well.

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