ANALYZING THE CONTENT PREFERENCES AND CHOICES OF THE INDIAN OTT CONTENT CONSUMER (SERIES & DIRECT TO OTT FILMS)

by

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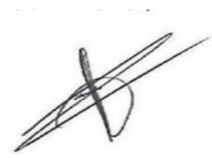

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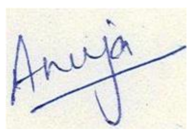

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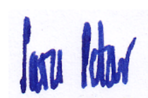

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ABSTRACT

ANALYZING THE CONTENT PREFERENCES AND CHOICES OF THE INDIAN OTT CONTENT CONSUMER (SERIES & DIRECT TO OTT FILMS)

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The accessibility and mobility of content created an upsurge in the demand for content amongst various consumer segments. The era of digital communication has transformed the way the story tellers told their stories to the audiences. The content created for digital media stood out from the traditional ways of storytelling and content production. Taking a leap from the digital world of Meta and YouTube, is the world of streaming platforms that swooned the other media platforms by the sheer choice of the content and its penetration into the loyal consumer base that the traditional media took eons to build on. The audience had a refreshing break from the sitcoms and melodramatic soap operas to refreshing stories that did not make their way to the box office. A world full of stories, narratives from the hinterland to Queen's palace or even the kingdoms of the seven provinces and their game of thrones, the tales across genres, gripping performances, and no barriers of censor of subjects that can stir social or political discussions or discords – that is the world of OTT that we now live in.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Digitalization across the globe has triggered new epoch of content creation, consumption, and dissemination. While it is swiftly changing the way the world is engaging with the profusion of online content, the phenomenon is indeed a reflection of the transitory cultural and cognitive shift of the society and the consumer's mind. As India witnesses stark change in the definition of Entertainment, the surge in the internet penetration, affordability high speed internet and smartphones, has turned the Indian audience hungry for interminable Engagement with the online world and Entertainment.

The traditional media formats of appointment viewing or shared viewing experience for the audience has been on a decline; the consumer now wants consumers' moment of leisure and entertainment at his time, his place, his device as per his desire! The audience is relentlessly seeking a break from the monotony of the cliché styles of storytelling and genres of stories that have been portrayed across traditional mediums like TV and Cinema! The availability, affordability and access to streaming platforms and OTT offering differentiated content across Indian regions and languages have given birth to an irresistible need to be constantly engaged with content and narratives.

On the flip side, the new era has also been a challenging time for the platforms and content creators to map the consumer's preference, to engage and retain consumers' attention and cherish their loyalty.

I would like to call it the era of Content on Demand not just because the consumer is demanding for more content but even the content is demanding the consumer to watch it before he or she suffers from FOMO (Fear of missing out) or for the sake of relativity with the characters of the stories or even with your peers. It is interesting to note that while floating in the limitless seas of digital innovations, the consumer's behavior, preference, and consumption have been that of high adrenaline obsessive compulsion and exploration. Loyalty of the consumer now is only that of a flirtatious stranger wanting an instant ROI or moment of delight or high engagement. The theories of procedural cognitive study of the consumers engagement with campaign communication and content that is available to them in plenty and bounds, the segmentized categorization of consumer's reason to watch various forms of narratives and their appreciation of it, have not yet explained the paradigm shift of content consumption and consumer's choice of content on OTT platforms.

CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF INDIAN OTT INDUSTRY

2.1 Growth of Indian OTT Industry

Rising boundlessly from the lull of the pandemic phase, is the Indian Media and Entertainment, which is expected to be a part of the global top 10 shortly. The overall media and entertainment sector is expected to grow up to INR 3,224.24 Bn by FY 2025 expanding at a CAGR of ~10% as per the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of India. The Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Report 2022 (FICCI) stated the key contributors to this growth as digital, films, and television and VFX.

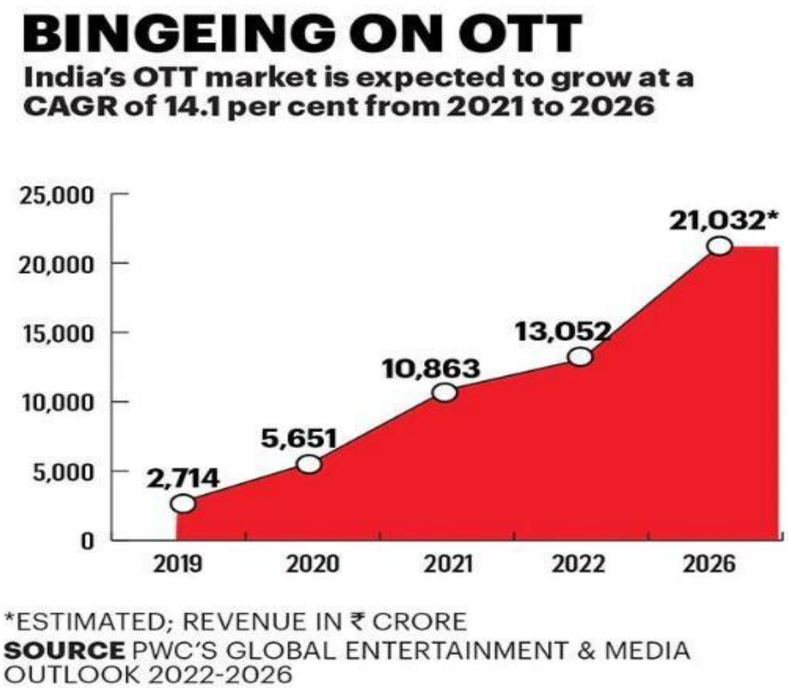

Figure 2.1: Growth of OTT in India

Source: PWC 'S GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT & MEDIA OUTLOOK 2022 - 2026

It is predicted that Indian OTT market will overtake the revenue of Print and Films segment by FY 2025. Despite being at a Nascent stage, OTT platforms and their content has found a remarkable acceptance from the Indian Audience. Affordability or at free access, ease of accessibility via connected devices like smart TVs, PCs, tablets, smartphones linked through internet and availability of original content on demand, especially in regional languages; are the key factors leading to the success of OTT in India.

As stated in the FICCI (M & E Report 2022), India is amongst the largest content producers in the world – with 150k hours of TV content, 2,500 hours of premium OTT content, and 2,000 hours of filmed content produced in 2021. India has over 950 animation and VFX studios, 185k electronic artists, and 139 universities – and is fast becoming the content back office of the world.

2.2 Segmentation of OTT Platforms

The primary segmentation of the OTT Industry is basis their revenue models:

- AVOD: Advertising Based Video on Demand
- SVOD: Subscriber Based Video on Demand
- TVOD: Transaction Based Video on Demand

The landscape of OTT players in India is growing rapidly for both AVOD and SVOD segment of the industry. The table given below illustrates the key players in both segments, while there are many smaller players, especially in regional content market striving to increase their reach and market penetration.

Monetization models of OTT players in India		
Monetization Model	**Details**	**Key Players**
Advertising video on demand (AVOD)	Users have completely free access to content and platform earns all revenues through advertisement	Youtube, VOOT, MX Player, TVF Play, Arre
Subscription video on demand (SVOD)	Users pay subscription charges and get access to the entire catalogue of content, which is behind the paywall	Amazon Prime Video, Netflix, Eros Now, Yupp TV, Sun Nxt, HOOQ
Freemium	Hybrid OTT business model that combines various features of AVOD and SVOD models. Catch up TV is usually available for free across such broadcaster backed Freemium platforms	Hotstar, Sony Liv, Zee5 , ALT Balaji
Transactional video on demand (TVOD)	Users pay one-time payment per view on live events, series or movies instead of subscribing to a large library and costlier packages	Veqta

Figure 2.2.1: Monetization models prevalent in the Indian Market

Source: KPMG Report 2019 - Unravelling the Digital Video Consumer

The AVOD model has been accounting for major share of revenue for the OTT platforms and is expected to continue as the leader of the segment till FY 2026(Quadintel Report 22 - India OTT

Market). The SVOD market too is growing and is expected to grow in the coming years depending on the affordability and availability of premium content as per consumer's preference. The pie chart given below illustrates the Audience Segmentation across various OTT Service Models present in India.

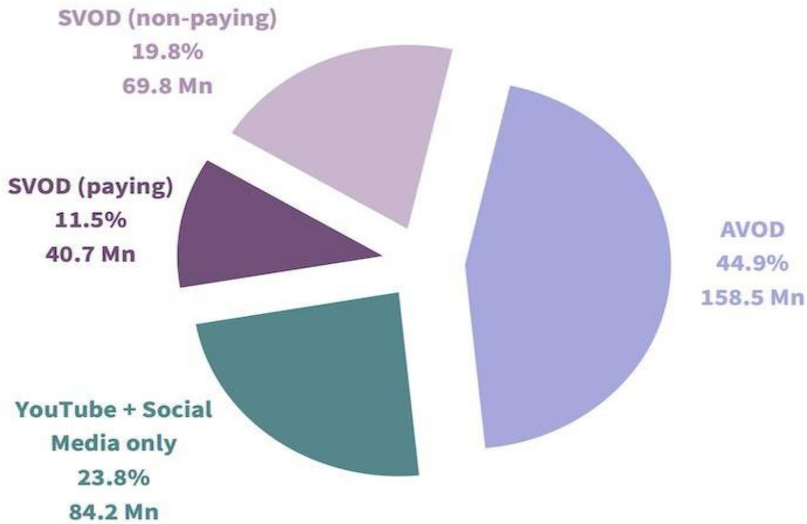

Figure 2.2.2: Audience Segmentation across OTT model in India

Source: Ormax OTT Audience Report 2021

2.3 Overview: Content Catalogue of the Indian OTT Platforms

As the platforms get set ready for what is the WAR OF THE STREAMING PLATFORMS, the gamechangers are the Content offering and the price packaging for the end consumer.

Majority of the Indian platforms took the top positions by riding on the movie catalogue and streaming popular TV shows and events; both Indian and International. Disney Hotstar is a classic example of curated content offering of IPL matches, Star TV shows across languages, promising movie catalogue and acquisition of the popular International Series GAME OF THRONES. Interestingly the prequel to the same series 'HOUSE OF DRAGONS, seems to be a big bet for Disney Hotstar. Most Indian TV broadcasters have been riding the similar wave by creating consumer engagement and content extensions of TV content to their OTT platform while investing heavily in acquisition of shows and formats and commissioning original content. The latter part i.e., ORIGINAL CONTENT, is the DIFFERENTIATOR that can aide consumer acquisition and retention. However, it is also a tricky game to play and win! It is worth noting that multinational giants including NETFLIX, have not been able to crack the DIFFERENTIATED CONTENT OFFERING for the diverse consumers in India basis.

As per the KPMG report of 2019 – 20, Nine out of 10 new internet users in India prefer to watch content in their native languages. Interestingly, the Hindi content library of the key players would be at least ten times the regional language library even though consumers from TIER 2 and TIER 3 market have more time at their hands to watch content, given the lifestyle, and prefer to view content in their own languages. Tools like dubbing and subtitling has also enabled the OTT users to watch content from different parts of the country and even other countries. Cultural relevance, promising storytelling, refreshing story plots and realism in content, especially from Turkey & Korea has been an addictive Hook for the Indian OTT audience.

The trend on movies consumed through OTT is equally fascinating. The streaming era has blown apart the myths around Big Star Cast and the 'MASALA FORMULA' for Hits. The trend is shifting towards powerful storytelling and narratives which are diverse, entertaining, and engaging. For instance, even female first narratives have been well accepted by the audience contrary to the belief that only an A lister Male star governs the box office. Genres beyond action or thriller, have received affection and praises from audience viewing a variety of stories online. A key breakthrough in the Film Industry is the trend of Bilingual or Pan India films which has become a success formula for the makers, thanks to the OTT ecosystem where in audience from different parts of the country is celebrating the Indian heroism and their tales without biases or barriers. The success of PUSHPA is a case study and many more are in the pipeline.

2.4 The Real Gamechanger for Indian OTT Platforms

What does India love watching on Streaming platforms is a multimillion-dollar question that can change the fate of Media and Entertainment Industry. It is prudent to study the content consumption patterns across languages, genres, and content formats along with the socio-cultural change that is governing the consumer's choice of content. Will the streaming platforms find a way to predict the consumer's choice and behavior to build sustaining affinity and engagement, is indeed an interesting space to watch out for!

CHAPTER 3

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The war of the consumer's Mindspace and loyalty is not a new one in the media and entertainment industry. Newer media has always made the traditional ones feel threatened and every phase of new media calls for a battle to win over their consumers and understand their 'Buyology'. The Buyology for content is a complex one to crack as compared to a commodity as it is also governed by the intrinsic beliefs, need to change, and need to portray self in the world where everyone is trying to redefine the word 'Identity'. There is void in the theoretical study of consumer preference, the driving force behind it, and the ready to binge content served to them that is serving as their adrenaline rush in the era of rise of streaming platforms. The summary of the literature review (Chapter 5) further testifies the need of an in-depth study on the said subject.

The native TV viewing audience took to OTT to break the monotony of the narratives showcased as TV soap operas and the Family drama that had almost become redundant for the Gen Z and even for the generation before them, yet TV Industry in India continued to 'dummify' the audience or over drilled the primitive success formula of vamps, villains, mother in laws and extra martial affairs that were done to death for decades. What became the need gap opportunity was to showcase stories that were beyond the realm of TV programming, OTT however, used Crime, Thriller and explicit relationship or sex as their launchpad. The audience was obviously high on it for it was the only relief in long format content viewing! Sadly, instead of innovating with changing trends, OTT in India has now made, Crime, Controversy, Thriller and Sexual content as their set formula for getting the eyeballs. What is perceived as the consumer's demand is probably the consumer's need-based choice. However, the conclusion that Digital India only loves crime, thriller and sex is debatable.

While the surge in content consumption on streaming is across the globe, what kind of narratives are enticing the millions of Kings and Queens (Indian Consumers) across India as they define the right to leisure & indulgence and addiction of it through video consumption? Is the consumer still making the choice or is the newer style of narrative subconsciously driving the consumer to make a choice without them realizing the driving force behind their own choices; if the latter is true who is the REAL KING in the world of new age storytelling on steaming platforms and OTT in India? It is critical to understand the consumer's need, preference, and behavior towards content on Indian Streaming platforms including series and direct to OTT films; are they high on entertainment from crime-based stories or was it the lack of positive narratives produced in real and relatable form of content production that led to the drift?

Researchers have successfully highlighted the reasons for the growth of OTT in India through various research methods. However, the growth of OTT Industry is dependent on in depth analyses of the consumer preferences and their need to engage with content. This study is, therefore, aimed at understanding the content consumption preference of the OTT consumers within the framework of the socio - cultural transition of India aided by Digitization.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND FRAMEWORK

4.1 Objectives and Framework

The scope of the research is to understand the audience's preference and their need to engage with original content across genres, available on Indian OTT. The study shall focus on a threefold research agenda: -

- Audience segmentation basis their preference, time spent, purchase patterns and extent of engagement with OTT platforms.
- Their preference of original content on OTT: Individual Preferences, Exogenous Factors & Availability of content.
- Mapping the landscape of OTT platforms content offering and consumer's demand: Complimentary to Consumer Demand, Deviation from Consumer Demand, and the Analysis of the gap in consumer demand and OTT platform's offering.

4.2 Hypothesis

- Indian Internet users are consuming significant volumes of content on Indian OTT platforms due to ease of access, affordability, and diversity of content.
- Indian OTT platforms are providing diverse original content series to their consumers basis the preferences mapped for their target audience.
- The consumer's choice to view the content is dependent on personal preferences, external factors like word of mouth, peer pressure, FOMO, need to feel one with the community or need to stand out basis personal choices.

CHAPTER 5

LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Theoretical framework

The story of storytelling is as old as the existence of Homo sapiens. Roland Barthes states "narrative begins with the very history of humanity" (1988, p. 95). As stated by George Gerbner "Humans are the only species that lives in the world erected by the stories we tell. The story telling process used to be handcrafted, home-made community inspired.

Barthes in his research work dwelled on the perspective - "Numberless are the world's narratives. First, in a prodigious variety of genres supported by articulated speech, oral or written; by image, fixed or moving; by gesture; and by an organized mixture of all these substances. It is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, tragedy, comedy, epic, history, pantomime, painting, sculpture, cinema, comic books, news stories, televisual stories, conversations, and aesthetic objects. Narrative occurs in all periods, all places, all societies; it begins with the very history of mankind. . ." (1985, p. 95).

The concept was further explained by Wolfgang Kraus as "We configure our lives and our relationship to the world as narrative and that we also engage in our daily interactions and the organization of what we have experienced with the help of an ongoing narrative" (2000, p. 4)

As information sharing became vital for society to function with ease and efficiency; a few genius minds invented means for the information and stories to reach its audience. Marconi invented Radio, Farnsworth was the man who gave us the gift of Television and the first motion picture photography was created by Lumiere Brothers and Thomas Edison in the 1890s (Neuman, 2010) The stories hence travelled across households, across geographies across age groups. Mankind now had a refined definition of entertainment through devices that became a part of lifestyle and cultural exchange.

"The term used to describe the approach is SCOT: Social Construct of Technology, a model of historical analysis popularized by Bijker, Hughes, and Pinch" (1987, Technological Innovation). As newspapers became the journalistic mirror of the society, radio moved from the tabletop to mobiles and cars, Television sets became less bulky and showcased diverse channels with differentiated programming, the audience had the privilege to choose what they watch or hear in their leisure time, whether with family, friends or as a solo experience.

George Gerbner highlighted "Television is the source of the most broadly shared images and messages in history. It is the mainstream of the common symbolic environment into which our children are born and in which we all live out our lives. While channels proliferate, their contents concentrate. For most viewers, new types of delivery systems such as cable, satellite, and the internet mean even deeper penetration and integration of the dominant patterns of images and messages everyday life." He further stated, "Every country's television system reflects the historical, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts within which it has developed" (Gerbner, 1958, 1969). Gerbner's Cultivation analysis focused on the consequences of exposure to its recurrent patterns of stories, images, and messages primarily on Television. It highlighted the impact of Television on the minds of the audience depending on the consumption patterns (hours of content watched) and the content driving the socio – cognitive ecology of the audience base. The Cultivation theory analyzed the concept of violence, victimhood – villainization, sex-roles, political orientations, 'traditional' values & social stereotypes across countries. The in-depth study of the medium and content, in a way benchmarks cultivation theory as a methodology for media studies across generations.

Scholar McLuhan wrote, "the content of any medium is always another medium", while many have challenged his perspective, the fact of the matter remains that the content of an old medium has been consumed across newer medium and technology has only aided the content to travel across geographies and different sections of the society. Mc Luhan's statement becomes more prominent in context of the digital world that we now live in; the innovations in technology and digital media took the world by an enormous storm of information and content; sharing information and content via images, sound, videos produced from different media forms & formats is being shared 24* 7 across age groups and geographies. (Mc Luhan,1964)

5.2 Theory of Intellectual Technology and the world of OTT

The new forms of interactive digital communication transformed the media ecosystem in all its aspects: proposing new business models, fragmenting, and redistributing the audiences, and promoting the 'Creative Commons' culture and user-generated content (Scolari, 2009b). Pierre Levy (1994) was one of the first scholars to illustrate the impact of technology of collective consciousness of the society. He proposed the theory of 'Intellectual Technology' as he believed technology creates changes in the way people relate to each other and even their relationship with technology.

Surowiecki (2004) in his research explained that the collective intelligence in cyberworld; comprises the diversity of opinion within a group, allowance of existence of subgroup and plurality of perspectives, mechanism of inclusion of individual judgements on the collective decision. He popularized the term "wisdom of the crowd" which in many ways explains the behavior of the content consumer in today's day and age. While the theory profoundly details the evident collective consumer behavior, the digital world thrives on the "self" that is supposedly individualistic even if the programmers and programmatic digital algorithms have prototyped almost every human being that has access to internet.

As TV continued to find its ways to stay relevant in the digital age, Digital Video Recorder which enabled consumer to control what and when they view the content, were launched in America in 1999. The world saw the birth and boom of VOD and OTT /Streaming platforms soon after! It was in the same phase that social networking platforms like Facebook originated and became a sparkling success story amongst the youth across the globe. As rightly stated by Thacker (2004)," Everything is connected, nothing happens in isolation" The new reality of media and entertainment was referred to as an "era of plenty television and of ubiquitous information in which multichannel options offer an endless choice not only on traditional television screens, but also on the new platforms that have recently emerged and are now part of the daily lives of millions of users" (Serra, Sá & Souza Filho, 2015, 1)

Interestingly, the idiom "over the top" is commonly used when someone is making excessive effort to accomplish a task. The phrase came into existence during the World War I when the British soldiers emerged from troughs to attack the enemies. The emergence of OTT or Streaming platforms created a similar disruption in the media and content industry. Streaming platforms created a universe of narratives that were never seen before on TV and the lack of regulation of content only allowed them to expand the horizon with diverse content that the consumer could access whenever, wherever basis their mood or preference. It can be conveniently concluded that "people who want to get content anywhere, anytime and on any device show great interest in OTT services "(Hooper et al., 2010).

As stated by Nikken (2018,106), "the technological revolution has brought the internet, Wi-Fi, smartphones, tablets, and all kinds of other interconnected and easily usable devices. As a result, even very young children like toddlers and infants already are capable of handling media devices like touchscreens on their own, which is unprecedented in history". Scholar Mendes wrote in his journal; "It is hardly difficult to see or predict that new generations are watching less generalist television channels on their television sets. Not so much due to the quality (or the lack of it) of the programs, but because staring at a TV, in the living room or in the bedroom, is less comfortable than carrying a personal device (computer, tablet, mobile phone)." (Mendes P. B. ,2017).

The viewing habits of 'GenZ' have been on interest to most media platforms and brands in the era of digital and streaming platforms. It is evident that "New viewing options such as connected TV, streaming, video and mobile apps has changed the way Millennials watch" (Gutierrez, 2018 online). Interestingly Dickinson's (2014) research also highlighted 'happiness' being a driving factor directly linked to with Millennials switching from traditional TV services to OTT. It reaffirms the uses and gratification theory (Katz 1959; Katz et al.1974) that states that consumer exercise his/her choice to select the media and content to satisfy their cognitive, affective, integrative, social integrative and tension release needs.

Affordability and accessibility of internet, affordability of mobile devices, surge in high adrenaline content served on OTT at low bandwidth and at lucrative pricing led to burgeoning rise in the consumer's quest for content. Mobile Streaming of videos with high resolution (4k) is easily achievable through the 5G internet service offered at affordable prices by all telecom operators in India. As per the PWC report on Indian Mobile users, 29% of Indian users are willing to pay a premium price for 5G for consistent connectivity and better video quality. Similar were the findings on willingness to pay for household broadband or high-speed internet; contrary to life in the 1990s or early 2000s. Average Indian household now thrives on multiple screens viewing experience as opposed to the collective viewing experience of the family show that was almost like a ritual in most Indian families.

It must be noted that multiscreen engagement with OTT with an increased time spent per avg user is primarily driven by the diversity of content that is available to the user across day parts and without any limitation of geography or language. Indian viewers have also discovered ways to consume and connect with non-entertainment or non-GEC content via digital platforms including streaming or OTT platforms. They explore content in different genres including educational, self-help, learning, cooking, travelling and many more. It is hence inevitable that Streaming Platforms are consistently under immense pressure to map and offer content as per the consumers preference. It makes it even more crucial for them to effectively manage the demand – supply of content to be relevant and generate sustainable profit.

Demand analysis is particularly important and difficult for media and communications firms (Kim 2006; Burney et al. 2002; Green et al. 2002; Taylor et al. 1972). The fundamentals of marketing revolve around 'Demand creates Supply', however, the era of digitization and streaming platforms makes it obvious that the 'power to create and determine demand lies with the media communications firms themselves and the marketing messages they present (Bagdikian, 2000). The debate on power intensifies in case of Streaming platforms as each OTT /Streaming platform is striving for the loyalty and Mind space of the consumer who is perpetually flirting with all forms of content basis their preference in the attempt to find consistent quality engagement for their mind.

5.3 Summary

Transitivity has become the new reality of the content consumer who is constantly seeking for narratives that could help them transcend into a fictional world that feels real and relatable. While the Streaming platforms have the power to create and market content in genres that traditional media platforms could not, the consumer has the power of choice that takes them to multiple streaming platforms to view diverse content whenever they want.

An important aspect of content on Indian OTT and the consumer behavior is the dichotomy of hyper localization and globalization of content. While Culture has become increasingly global (Featherstone, 1990; Robertson 1992), many sociologists and scholars have debated the concept of homogenizing global culture (Friedman Jonathan, 1994; Inglehart and Baker, 2000). Content, just like culture cannot be homogeneous, it can be consumed by anyone from any part of the world, but it is produced in realm on realities and sensibilities of the character's universe.

Glocalization (Robertson, 1992) of world culture; probably is the closest reasoning that can be stated for the popularity and consumption of content across communities, countries, and segments of global viewers.

With the surge of social networking platforms, content creators found an effective way to put forth their content to their audience, which was not achievable in the era of traditional media.

The consumers had the opportunity to explore global content and while enjoying regional & culturally rich content in languages they understood.

Majority of the multinational OTT platforms in India too launched with licensed content from western markets followed by original content in Hindi, only to realize that they will have to produce in more than one language to build their consumer base and satisfy the content needs of the Indian consumers. Deep-rooted cultural influence of the consumers paved way for the Regional OTTs, whose management identified the need gap in the consumer's need for personalized and culturally rich content that satiates their need to feel one within their community and accentuate the pride of the region they belong to.

Rise of YouTube, social media and now the Streaming platforms gave Indian consumer, the access to content from countries like Korea, Turkey, Pakistan, Japan, and of course most sought markets of USA & UK. It allowed viewers to cherish differentiated story telling from different cultures which they could relate to either because of the characters or their journeys. Celebrated shows like 'Game of Thrones', 'House of Cards' to the recent global hit 'Squid Game' became an overnight success in India. The programmatic recommendation tools aided the discovery of content for consumer unaware of the diverse stories and dramas around them.

Like they say, there are always two sides to the coin. The tech driven content platforms and engines' offering for the consumer is often debated to a new age avatar of media imperialism. According to Scott Fitzgerald (2019), "At the global scale, established media industries have increasingly needed to deal with the strategies of "tech sector" actors and their attempts to interlink consumer access to cultural commodities into their own value chains. To some extent, such changes replicate the form of relationship between large capitals and small capitals long characteristic of the cultural industries. However, it has become evident that the future of cultural enterprises is increasingly influenced by a handful of powerful communication companies that employ an "arm's length" approach to content production and whose business strategies are not driven primarily by a concern to develop the cultural industries per se. Consequently, the assumed foundations of media and cultural production and distribution have shifted significantly with the rise of digital giants such as Google, Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Netflix, and Facebook. As their market power has grown, their products, platforms, and services are becoming a central subject of litigation, policy reformulation, and regulatory investigation around the globe." (Scott Fitzgerald,2019)

Hesmondhalgh, argued "instead of simply delivering TV shows, music and films onto our devices and screens, major firms are sinking huge amounts of money into the content itself." He said that these developments are best seen as "a wholesale media power grab by the tech sector."

It again reflects on the question as to who has the real power in the demand and supply of the content in the era of streaming platforms where the consumer has plurality of preference and plentiful offering. The Streaming platforms on the other side are constantly seeding in content in genres like crime, thriller, thought provoking social narratives, explicit sexual narratives and much more because of lack of regulation by government or authorities.

Despite their attempts to lure the consumer and effectively induce “binge-watching “or “media marathoning” as they call it, the platforms constantly struggle to find a resolve of the consumer’s ‘platform hopping’ behavior. “This platform-hopping behavior arises in a world where consumers know what they want to watch beforehand, fetch the content that interests them quickly, watch it, and leave” (Chernev 2003). Scholars in Psychology have further explained the behavior as “not be inclined to search too much for content, in particular because individuals have limited cognitive processes, they have short attention spans, and they have difficulty processing new information” (Camerer 2003, Thaler Richard and Sunstein Cass 2008).

It is hence an implied assumption that Godinho’s recommendation: “User's interest can be renewed by the platform by sending out well crafted, personal recommendations of content to them” (Godinho de Matos & Ferreira, 2018) is the best strategy for the Streaming Platforms to work around consumer loyalty to the extent possible in the dynamic landscape of content in the era of streaming.

Several scholars have highlighted the key factors that impact the consumer’s decision to engage with the platforms, namely, trust, engagement, perceived risk, quality and usefulness, ease of use, attitude of customer, service experience and many more (Chang & Chen, 2008; Delafrooz et al., 2011)

Appelbaum (2001) in his research explained Consumer Engagement as rational loyalty based on three key factors, that is, overall satisfaction, repurchase intention and intent to be an advocate for the brand. In the content industry, the brand is not restricted or limited to the OTT platform; a comprehensive definition of the brand also includes the content series and its narratives and characters. The level of a customer’s investment in a brand with cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Hollebeek, 2011, pp. 555–573); behavioral manifestations of a customer towards a brand beyond purchase (Doorn et al., 2010) and the perspective stated in the work of Toor et al. (2017), set the premise for the purpose of this study of the Indian Consumers’ preference of content on OTT.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Introduction: Methodological Approach

“Social science exploration is a broad-ranging, purposive, systematic, prearranged undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description and understanding of an area of social or psychological life. Such exploration is, depending on the standpoint taken, a distinctive way of conducting science—a scientific process—a special methodological approach (as contrasted with confirmation), and a pervasive personal orientation of the explorer. The emergent generalizations are many and varied; they include the descriptive facts, folk concepts, cultural artifacts, structural arrangements, social processes, and beliefs and belief systems normally found there” (Vogt, 1999, p 105)

Researchers across the globe have conducted media studies through quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches over decade. Many have based their work on the ‘Grounded Theory’, that was first proposed by Glaser and Strauss (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), who described a qualitative research method that seeks to develop theory that is “grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed” (Myers, 2013). Qualitative research has grown significantly since the introduction of Grounded Theory. While researchers from varied backgrounds and interests have invested time and effort on qualitative research, it has been argued for years that in depth study of cognitive choices and the motivation behind it, is much needed. Boulding emphasized on the need to “travel over a field of study” with the object of extending “the reader's field of acquaintance with the complex cases of the real world” (Boulding,p. 5,1958). Researcher Partington also highlighted the need for “more inductive, theory-building studies, using empirical data to build theories which are useful, relevant and up-to-date” (Partington, 2000, p. 91).

“Considering the crucial need and value of exploratory research in the case of the social and psychological sciences, it is an odd commentary on these sciences that their current methodological preoccupations are practically mute on this type of research” (Blumer, 1969, p. 42).

Cambridge University Press’ Book ‘Production of Knowledge’ describes Exploratory research as “an attempt to discover something new and interesting by working through a research topic and is the soul of good research” While exploratory Research is neither common nor irrelevant, it was argued that “Most of the technology of ‘confirmatory’ non qualitative research in both the social and natural sciences is aimed at preventing discovery” (Kirk and Miller ,1986, p. 15)

Researchers have used the method effectively as it enables a two-pronged approach: Flexible usage of data and open-minded approach to find the data. The process of flexible usage of data, as explained by Max Weber's model is to acquire an intimate, first-hand understanding (Verstehen) of the human acts being observed. It is followed by construction of the generalizations into a grounded theory explaining the object of study which is described in the works of Glaser (1978, 1995, pp. 3–17).

Scholars Harden and Thomas opined " The review is descriptive and follows an integrative synthesis approach, which "attempts to summarize the contents of multiple studies and minimizes any interpretation on the part of the reviewer" (Harden & Thomas, 2010, p. 752).

Peter Cooper, author of about 45 research papers, contributed immensely to the growth of qualitative research by transforming the nature of the method from formal 'question and answer sessions' into in-depth explorations and analyses of perceptions, attitudes, and feelings. He found the gaps in the approaches governed by psychoanalytic approaches that were disregarded immensely due to their narrow focus on the repressed motives or unexpressed needs of the focus groups. 'Various models of attitudes, behavior, motivation, and inhibitions (Fishbein & Ajzen 1972) phenomenology and participant observation gained interest and advocacy as legit approaches to for research in media, advertising, and content business' (Alan Brathwaite and Simon Patterson, 2012)

6.2 Research Design

The study shall be exploratory research conducted basis qualitative analysis of the data sourced via:

- Open Ended Surveys for OTT audience conducted online in a sample size of 200 respondents,
- In Depth Interviews with veterans in the Content Industry and
- Content Analysis basis secondary sources namely Industry Reports and Analytics published by agencies closely studying the Media and Entertainment Industry.

6.2.1 Sample

For the purpose of survey, the sample is the selection of people from the Indian population that views OTT content. The Interviews shall be conducted with 6 – 8 veterans of the Indian Content Industry who are in the business content creation, dissemination, marketing and reviewing content.

6.2.2 Sample Size

The size of the sample for research is 200. The age group of 18 – 45 from various Indian cities.

6.2.3 Sampling Technique

The survey will be conducted online via google forms, email, LinkedIn, Meta, and WhatsApp. The questionnaire will be circulated online to the respondents for their ease.

The Interviews with Industry Veterans will be conducted in person through audio- or audio-visual format recording depending on their convenience.

6.2.4 Data Collection

For the purpose of research, data is collected from primary, secondary and tertiary sources.

Primary Data: Primary Data will be collected basis online survey conducted amongst OTT viewers in India and Interviews of Veterans

Secondary Data: Secondary data will be analyzed through Industry Reports and Analytics published by agencies closely studying the Media and Entertainment Industry

6.3 Sample Questionnaire for Online Survey

Device	I would prefer to experience OTT streaming on Mobile
	I would prefer to experience OTT streaming on Laptop Screen
	I would prefer to experience OTT streaming on TV Screen
Ease of Use	I feel OTT Platform is easy to use as I can access it anytime anywhere
	I find it easy to search for content basis my choice on OTT
Intent & Influence	I subscribed to OTT because I was recommended to do so by friends, family, and peers
	I rely on the recommendation of friends, family, peers to watch shows
	I always check the ratings of the show before watching content on OTT and paying for content
	I rely on critic’s reviews before watching content
	I consider word of mouth popularity of content before exploring it
	I am an explorer; I try content on all platforms
	I love sharing my reviews about the content I watch on OTT
	I depend on the recommendations given by platform and Top 10 trend on platform to decide on which content to watch
	OTT platform recommendations are always accurate, they just know what I like to watch
	OTT platform recommendations are terrible, I do not rely on them
Cost	I enjoy watching free content online
	I feel comfortable to pay a basic fee to view content of my choice online
	I tend to find lower price option while purchasing OTT subscription
	I feel I spend less money to watch a film online as compared to watching it in theatres
	I feel rate of subscription compels me to choose OTT video streaming
	I usually switch my subscription from one OTT to another depending on the cost of content
	I feel if OTT service provider could reduce cost, I can subscribe to more platforms
	I feel subscribing on OTT video streaming fits better into my budget
	I feel OTT video streaming gives me options on subscription from weekly to yearly

Convenience	I find it convenient to view the content I want even when I am on the go
	It is difficult to watch online content in the presence of family members
	It is convenient to choose OTT platforms basis content availability
	It is convenient to use OTT platforms because I can watch content anytime
	I feel my location governs which OTT service I use
	I prefer to watch OTT video streaming because it is in my control
	I feel OTT video streaming offers content which is more entertaining
Content Preferences – OTT shows	I prefer a broad choice of shows available on the OTT platforms
	I enjoy watching live sports including cricket on OTT platforms
	I enjoy playing online games on OTT platforms
	I enjoy watching lighthearted fiction web series
	I only watch OTT for comedy shows or dose of laughter
	I like to watch international shows on OTT
	I like watching Korean Drama on OTT
	I like watching serials from other countries
	I like watching Indian TV serials on OTT
	I like watching crime and murder mysteries on OTT
	I Like watching adult content on OTT – Love and sex drama
	I like content with scandals, taboo, or controversy on OTT as it is unavailable on TV
	I like watching shows with subtitles or dubbing even though they are made in other Indian languages
	I like watching Turkish drama on OTT
	I like watching realistic narratives or stories that feel real or relatable
	I like watching family drama on OTT
	I watch Horror shows on OTT
	I like love stories and relationship drama on OTT
	I like educational content, including documentaries, that helps me gain knowledge
	I watch skill-based videos like cooking, dancing, arts, singing, etc.
	I like watching Game shows or reality hunt on OTT
	I like watching captive reality shows on OTT
Content Production & Stories	I prefer international shows as they have better content quality for both production and story telling
	I prefer watching regional stories as they have better stories than Hindi
	I enjoy watching stories with distinct characters
	I only care for entertainment, storyline, or production and quality does not matter
	I like watching stories from heartland or rural areas
	I prefer Urban or futuristic stories
	I like fantasy heroes and sci fi
	I like watching the desi masala content with Male heroes and their stunts
	I like watching female first stories

	I like stories inspired by real events, real people, or real characters
Language Preference – OTT	I prefer watching shows in my native language
	I prefer watching regional stories from different parts of India with subtitles
	I enjoy watching international fiction shows with subtitles
	I feel regional language shows are more engaging
	I explore content in different languages even if I do not understand the language
	I watch OTT shows made in more than two languages in addition to English shows
	I feel more connected to the story and characters of shows in regional languages
	I like watching shows in regional language as it gives me a sense of pride of the state
	I like watching shows in regional language as others at home or in social circle also enjoy it
Movies – OTT	I prefer watching films on OTT as compared to watching them in the theatre
	I do not prefer watching films on OTT as it does not give me the cinema like larger than life feel
	I enjoy watching films in different languages on OTT
	I enjoy the Direct to OTT films because they have better stories
	I enjoy the movie experience on OTT as they have a huge library of films – new and old
	I enjoy watching dubbed movies on OTT
	I enjoy the movie experience on OTT as I can watch it anytime, anywhere, and can take breaks whenever I want
	I experiment with my movie preference on OTT as I don't have to waste money on buying tickets, I can watch any film even if it is not a big hit or big release

6.4 Sample Questions for Interview with Industry Veterans

- Your perspective on the growth of OTT platforms in India?
- International players vs Indian OTT platforms, who has an upper hand in the Indian Market?
- While AVOD is the major contributor to the OTT revenue, what according to you is the driving force for SVOD growth in India?
- What according to you is Digital India watching?
- What kind of narratives, stories and screenplays are getting the audience attention?
- Is Crime, Thriller and Scandal the flavor of the season or do you think India would need something more than Mirzapur, Paatal lok and Scam 1992?
- What is the ROI for the platforms when they invest millions in creation of a series – does it translate to equal or more new subscribers on SVOD?
- Are the audience and advertisers okay to associate with Crime, thriller, sex on OTT?
- Do you think there is a need to regulate the content on OTT just like there are laws of broadcast media?
- Are the narratives on OTT a reflection of the transitory phase of our society?
- Is OTT fueling the regional pride or is it aiding uniting in diversity as India celebrates content from across the country in different Indian languages?
- Why do you think OTT viewership is still male skewed?
- Do you think OTT can create a positive impact narrative while nurturing diversity, equality and inclusivity?
- How has OTT helped the Ecosystem of Indian Cinema?
- Is OTT a boon for the content creator or consumer?
- What does it take to have a profitable OTT platform?
- What’s the best formula for consumer retention on Indian OTT?
- The best shows on Indian OTT?
- The shows on Indian OTT you thought should not have been made or are worth a miss?
- Is SVOD here to stay or should it be a hybrid model?
- Is Content truly the king or is crime and controversy the king of the Indian OTT?

CHAPTER 7

SURVEY RESULTS: DATA ANALYSIS

The chapter describes the various aspects of analysis done basis the survey conducted amongst the OTT consumers across the country. It comprises of the sequence of the key findings of the survey and the interviews conducted for the research. To begin with, the demographic analysis of the respondents was done to understand the profile the audience patronizing OTT in India. The data set is further analyzed to map the consumer's preference of viewing experience and key factors driving their preference for content on OTT. The third section of the showcases an in – depth analyses of their preferences of languages, narratives, and genres. The data has been analyzed qualitatively and illustrated via tables, bar graphs and pie – charts. The results of the survey are, finally compared to the interviews with the veterans of the industry to present a comprehensive overview of the content on OTT platforms in India, in Chapter5.

7.1 Demographic Study – Consumer Profiling

The section contains the consumer profile – age, gender, and profession. Consumer's demographic data forms the basis of various analysis of the correlation and differentiation of preference of content on Indian OTT.

7.1.1 Gender Profiling

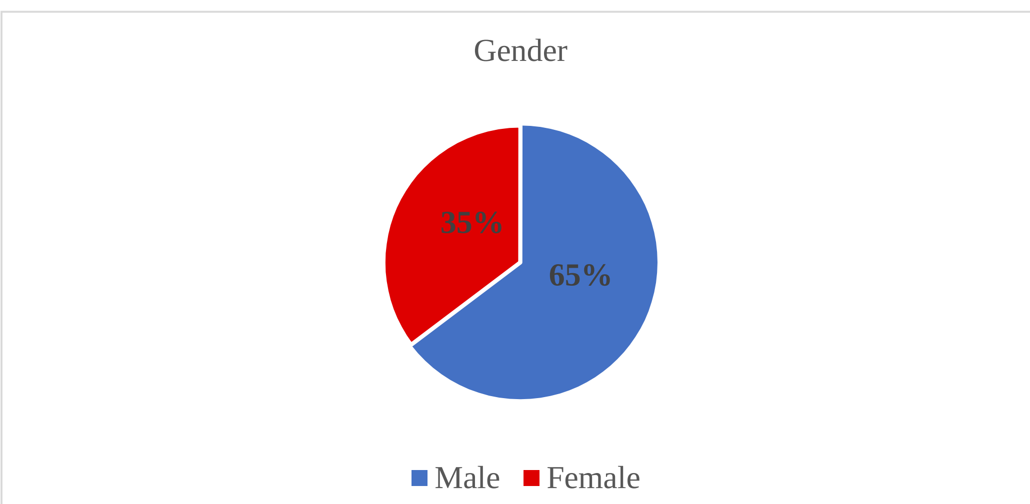

Figure 7.1.1 Gender Profiling

The survey data has been collected from across metros and semi metros across the country from internet users who consume content on Indian OTT for entertainment and leisure. The findings of the survey showed that sample size of 204 respondents consists of 65 percent Male and 35 percent Female.

7.1.2 Age Group Segmentation

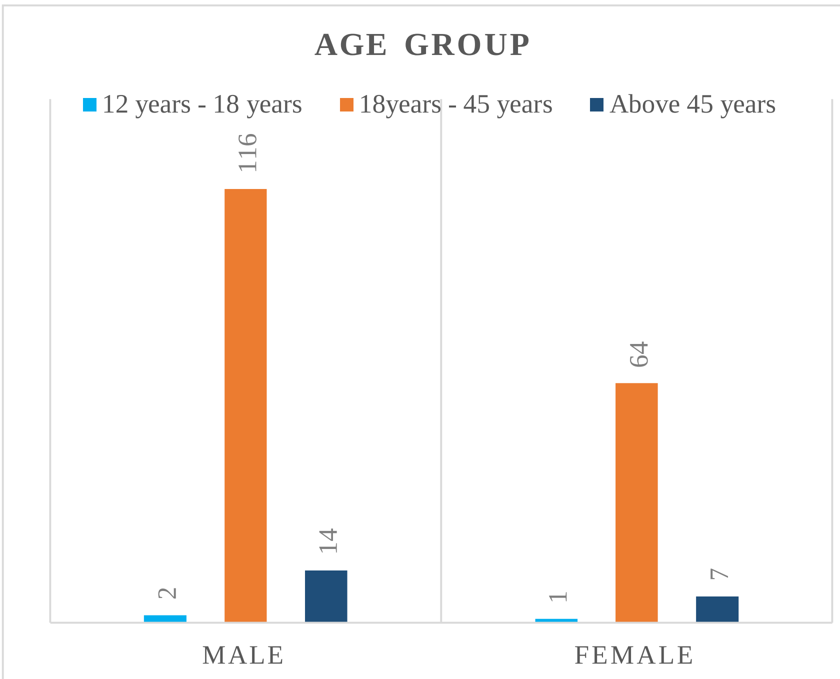

Figure 7.1.2 Age Group Segmentation

The data set was further analyzed basis the age group. The data represents that 88 percent of the respondents were in the age group of 18 years – 45 years. About 10 percent of the respondents were above 45 years of age and 1 percent were below 18 years.

The primary set of consideration for the sub sections hence shall deep dive into the patterns and preference of the core age group of 18 years – 45 years and highlight contrasts or comparisons, if any, with the other age groups.

7.1.3 Consumer Profiling: Profession

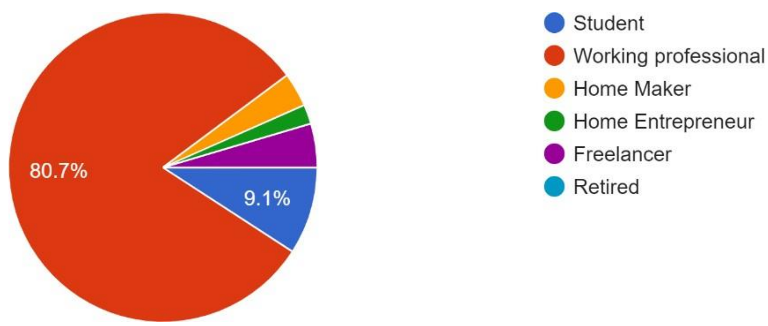

Figure 7.1.3(a) Consumer Profiling: Profession

The findings as highlighted in the Figure 7.1.3(a) is that majority of the OTT consumers in the same size are Working Professionals (80.7 %), followed by Students (9.1%) and Homemakers (3.6%). Figure 7.1.3(b) further details out the gender wise percentage analysis of profession of the respondents.

		Profession					
Gender	**Age - Group**	**Freelancer**	**Home Entrepreneur**	**Home Maker**	**Student**	**Working Professional**	**Grand Total**
Male	12 - 18	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.53%	0.00%	0.98%
	18-45	37.50%	50.00%	0.00%	42.11%	62.05%	56.86%
	Above 45	25.00%	0.00%	14.29%	0.00%	6.63%	6.86%
Male Total		**62.50%**	**50.00%**	**14.29%**	**52.63%**	**68.67%**	**64.71%**
Female	12 - 18	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.26%	0.00%	0.49%
	18-45	37.50%	25.00%	42.86%	42.11%	29.52%	31.37%
	Above 45	0.00%	25.00%	42.86%	0.00%	1.81%	3.43%
Female Total		**37.50%**	**50.00%**	**85.71%**	**47.37%**	**31.33%**	**35.29%**

Table 7.1.3(b) Consumer Profiling: Profession

The data set is skewed towards working professionals for the male respondents (68.67percent of the male respondents) and towards homemakers in the female set of respondents (85.71percent of the female respondents).

7.2 Study of Preference of Screens & Devices

As per the analysis done on the preference of screens and devices, the single device OTT consumption is 53.96%. Under single device, TV screen viewing experience stands out as the preferred mode of viewing which watching OTT for the respondents (55.5%) and primarily comprises of the respondents from age group of 18 years – 45 years, followed by those above 45 years.

Device Preferences	Freelancer	Home Entrepreneur	Home Maker	Student	Working professional
Laptop	**1**			**2**	**13**
12 - 18				1	
18-45	1			1	13
Laptop, TV	**2**			**1**	**11**
18-45	1			1	11
Above 45	1				
Mobile			**2**	**5**	**25**
12 - 18				1	
18-45			1	4	23
Above 45			1		2
Mobile, Laptop			**1**	**4**	**14**
18-45				4	13
Above 45			1		1
Mobile, Laptop, TV	**1**		**1**	**4**	**30**
18-45	1		1	4	29
Above 45					1
Mobile, TV	**1**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**19**
12 - 18				1	
18-45	1	1		1	18
Above 45			1		1
TV	**3**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**53**
18-45	2	1	1	1	44
Above 45	1	1	1		9
Grand Total	**8**	**3**	**7**	**19**	**165**

Table 7.2(a) Study of Preference of Screens & Devices

TV continues to be the preferred screen for OTT viewing even in the Gender Based Study of the Data set, followed by mobile and laptop as showcased in Table 7.2(b)

Device Preferences	Female	Male	Grand Total	Male	Female
Laptop	4	12	16	9.23%	5.56%
Laptop, TV	7	7	14	5.38%	9.72%
Mobile	12	20	32	15.38%	16.67%
Mobile, Laptop	6	13	19	10.00%	8.33%
Mobile, Laptop, TV	11	25	36	19.23%	15.28%
Mobile, TV	11	13	24	10.00%	15.28%
TV	21	40	61	30.77%	29.17%

Table 7.2(b) Study of Preference of Screens & Devices

7.3 Study of the Key Driver to Adoption of OTT

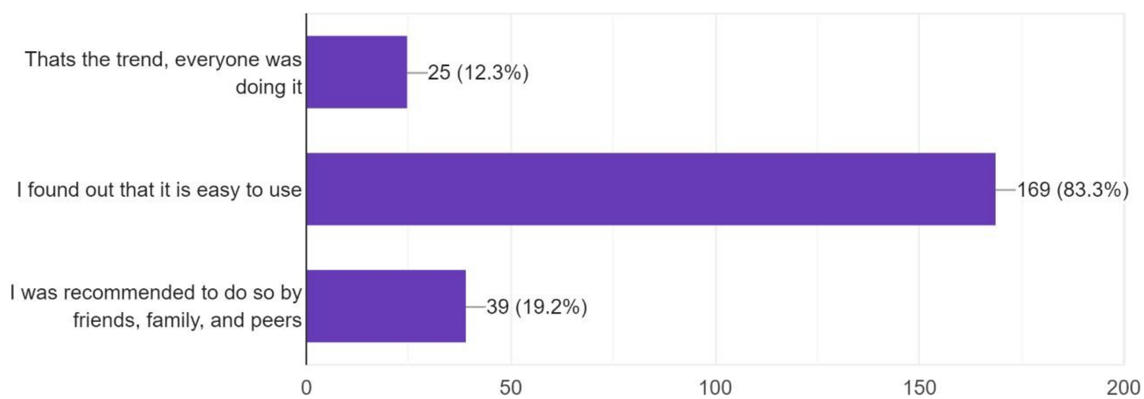

Figure 7.3(a) Study of the Key Driver to Adoption of OTT

Ease of Use is the key reason for OTT Adoption as per the findings of the survey, followed by those who were influenced or motivated by friends, family, or peers. The ease of use is further analyzed, as highlighted in Figure 7.3(b) as the ease of accessibility of OTT (Anytime, anywhere access) and ease of searching for content that entertains the consumer.

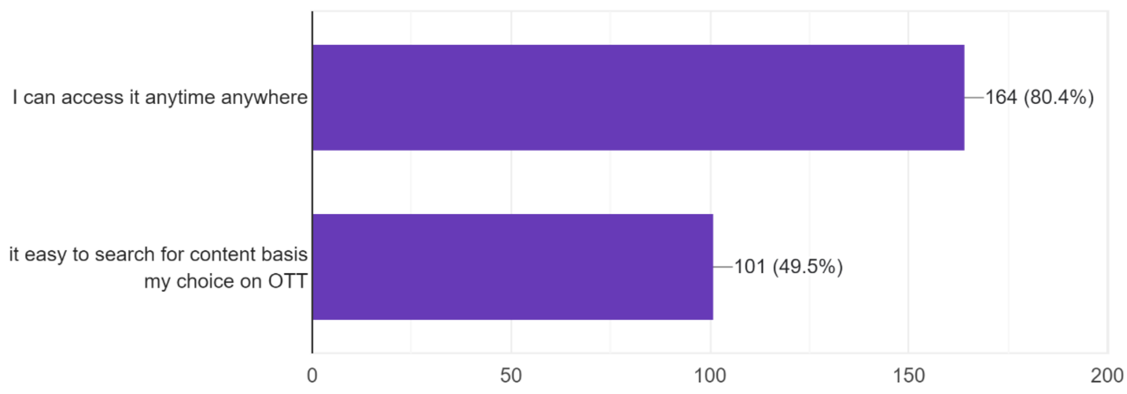

Figure 7.3(b) Study of the Key Driver to Adoption of OTT

As per the findings, accessibility of content – anytime and anywhere entertainment proposition is the key driver for the consumer's preference for OTT (80.4%). There is also a significant segment of the consumer who find it easy to explore and find content basis their preferences on OTT (49.5%)

7.4 Pricing Analysis: Impact of Pricing on the Consumer Choices

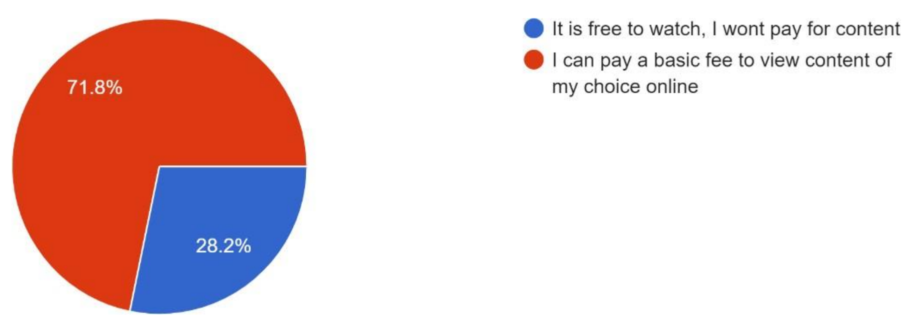

Figure 7.4(a) Pricing Analysis: Impact of Pricing on the Consumer Choices

The survey findings clearly highlight that the consumers are willing to pay a basic fee to view content of their choice online. Only 28.2 percent of the respondents opined they don't prefer to pay for content and would like to watch free of cost shows/videos or films. Majority of the respondents (84.2 percent) also stated that they spend less money to watch films on OTT as compared to going to a theatre (Figure 7.4(b))

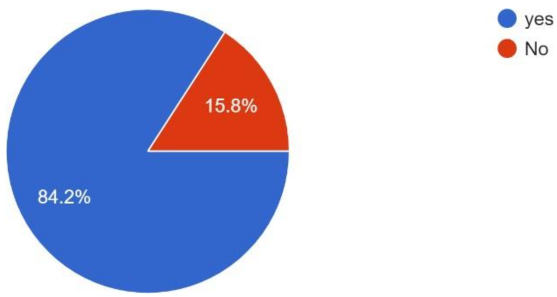

Figure 7.4(b): Survey Question: I Spend less money to watch a film online as compared to watching it in theatres.

The analyses of the pricing as an influencer of the consumer's preference of OTT was further analyzed basis their opinion on the rate of subscription of the OTT platforms.

I feel rate of subscription compels me to choose OTT video streaming	**Responses**		
Profession	No	**Yes**	**Total**
Freelancer	**4**	**4**	**8**
Female	2	1	3
Male	2	3	5
Home Entrepreneur		**3**	**3**
Female		2	2
Male		1	1
Home Maker	**1**	**6**	**7**
Female	1	5	6
Male		1	1
Student	**9**	**10**	**19**
Female	5	4	9
Male	4	6	10
Working professional	**81**	**80**	**161**
Female	33	18	51
Male	48	62	110
Grand Total	**95**	**103**	**198**

Table 7.4(c) Survey Question: I feel rate of subscription compels me to choose OTT video streaming.

Amongst the working professionals, the female respondents, as highlighted in Table 7.4(c) opined that pricing of the OTT is not a key driver to their choice of OTT, however, the male respondents, were more sensitive to the price and make their choices basis the pricing. Similar was the result for the homemakers as majority of them agreed that price does matter! The finding also illustrates that finding on the student is split almost equally between those who are price sensitive and those who are okay to pay a suitable price to watch the content of their choice.

Count of I feel rate of subscription compels me to choose OTT video streaming	**Responses**	
Gender	**No**	**Yes**
Female	41	30
Male	54	73
Grand Total	**95**	**103**

Table 7.4(d) Survey question: I feel rate of subscription compels me to choose OTT video streaming.

As we deep dived into the various aspects 'pricing led decisions and preferences of the consumers, we found that 80.4 percent prefer subscribing to OTT video streaming if fits better into their budget

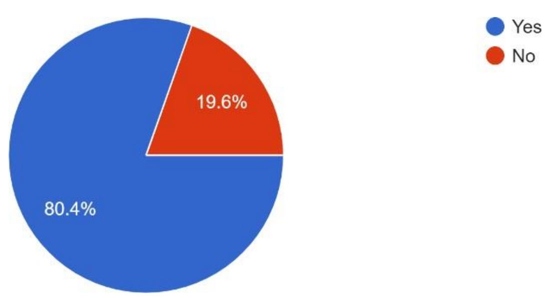

Figure 7.4(e): Survey Question: I prefer to subscribe to OTT video streaming if fits better into their budget.

85.4 percent respondents stated that they can subscribe to more platforms if the OTT service providers could reduce the cost of subscription while 14.4 percent did not have the willingness to add more platforms to their OTT subscription list (Figure 7.4(f))

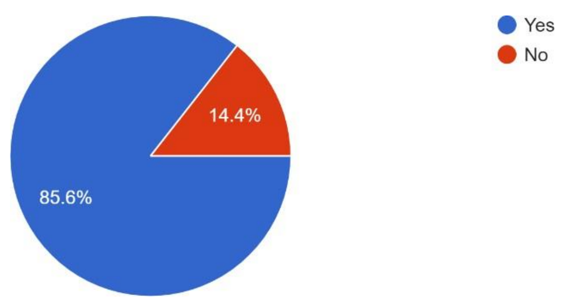

Figure 7.4(f): Survey Question: I feel if OTT service provider could reduce cost, I can subscribe to more platforms.

The results of the responses to the question on the switching of the OTT subscription from one OTT platform to another clearly indicate that the consumers are willing to pay the cost of the content they enjoy. 61.1 percent consumers prefer to change their OTT subscriptions if they were inclined to watch content available at a certain price on another platform.

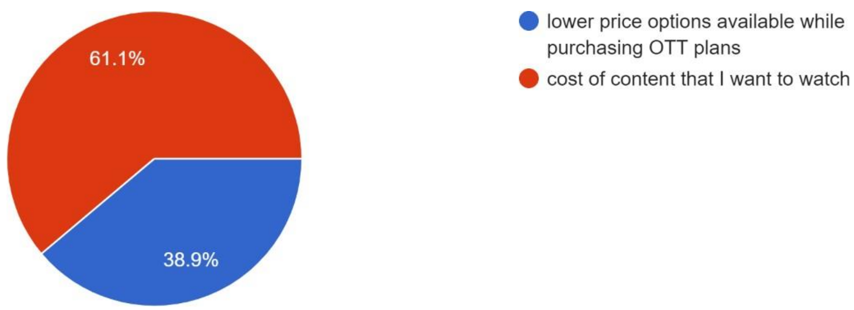

Figure 7.4(g): Survey Question: I usually switch my subscription depending on______.

7.5 Analysis: Factor's influencing consumer's choices to watch content

I decide what to watch on OTT basis	**Below 18**	**18years-45years**	**Above 45years**	**Total**
Recommendation of friends, family, peers	**2**	**115**	**15**	**132**
I always check the ratings of the show	**1**	**81**	**6**	**88**
Critic's reviews	0	34	0	34
Recommendation of platforms and top 10 shows trend	**1**	**49**	**7**	**57**
Word of mouth popularity of content	0	**63**	**9**	72

Table 7.5(a) Survey Question: I decide what to watch on OTT basis_____.

Recommendation of friends, family and peers is the key driver for the decision making for OTT Consumers which helps that discover and watch content on OTT. The respondent data also indicates consideration of online rating of the content before deciding on what content should be viewed by them. The audience segment of 18years to 45 years also relies on the 'word of mouth' popularity of the show as they explore the plethora of series and films on Indian OTT.

While watching OTT, I decide on what to watch basis	Female	Male	Grand Total
Critic's reviews before watching content	**2**	**3**	**5**
Always accurate, they just know what I like to watch	1	1	2
good to have but I also rely on my instinct or recommendations	1	2	3
I always check the ratings of the show before watching content on OTT and paying for content	**7**	**28**	**35**
Always accurate, they just know what I like to watch	1	7	8
good to have but I also rely on my instinct or recommendations	5	19	24
Terrible, I do not rely on them	1	2	3
I depend on the recommendations given by platform and Top 10 trend on platform to decide on which content to watch	**7**	**11**	**18**
Always accurate, they just know what I like to watch	3	2	5
good to have but I also rely on my instinct or recommendations	4	9	13
Recommendation of friends, family, peers	**19**	**28**	**47**
Always accurate, they just know what I like to watch	5	7	12
good to have but I also rely on my instinct or recommendations	14	17	31
Terrible, I do not rely on them		2	2
No Response		2	2
word of mouth popularity of content before exploring it	**5**	**17**	**22**
Always accurate, they just know what I like to watch		1	1
good to have but I also rely on my instinct or recommendations	4	12	16
Terrible, I do not rely on them	1	4	5
Grand Total	**40**	**87**	**127**

Table 7.5(b) Survey Question: While watching OTT, I decide on what to watch basis_______.

An in-depth analysis of multiple factors influencing the decision of 'What to Watch' specific to the Gender wise segmentation of the data has been done to understand the similarities and contrast in consumer behavior. As depicted in the Table 7.5 (b), while both Female and Male respondents prefer to watch content that has been highly recommended by their family, friends, or peers; the consideration of the review the rating of the content is more skewed towards the Male respondents and compared to the Female respondents (Male: Female Ratio is 4: 1)

I think the content recommendation algorithm on OTT is	**Freelancer**	**Home Entrepreneur**	**Home Maker**	**Student**	**Working professional**
always accurate, they just know what I like to watch	1			6	31
good to have but I also rely on my instinct or recommendations	7	3	6	12	122
terrible, I do not rely on them			1	1	12
Grand Total	**8**	**3**	**7**	**19**	**165**

Table 7.5(c) Survey Question: I think the content recommendation algorithm on OTT is_______.

The survey attempted to probe the respondents' opinion on the content recommendation algorithms of the OTT platforms and the findings further validate their preference to rely on their instincts and recommendations of their social or family circle while the OTT recommendations are good to have.

7.6 Analysis of Consumer's Preference of Language: Native Language, Regional Language Subtitled Content

Until the rise of OTT, the Indian consumers were dependent on the programming of the regional GEC channels to satiate their hunger for content in their native language. As the OTT platforms expand their consumer base in India, there are offering a wide variety of differentiated stories from different parts of India to lure the consumers who prefer watching content in regional languages.

The findings of the survey as highlighted in Table 7.6 (a) state that 52.45 percent of the respondents prefer watching content in their native language while 46.57 percent have been exploring content irrespective of the language barriers. The affinity of viewing content in natively language is more amongst the male respondents as compared to the female respondents.

I prefer watching shows in my native language	Female	Male	Grand Total
Yes	45.83%	56.06%	52.45%
No	54.17%	42.42%	46.57%

Table 7.6(a) Survey Question: I prefer watching shows in my native language.

As we delved deeper into the consumer's affinity towards content in regional languages, the results of the survey indicate that as many as 61 percent respondents believe that OTT shows made in Indian regional languages are more engaging that Hindi Content.

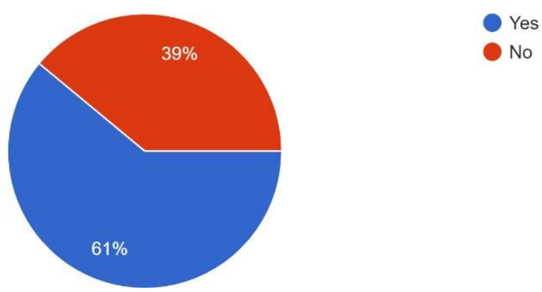

Figure 7.6(b): Survey Question: I feel OTT Shows made in regional language are more engaging.

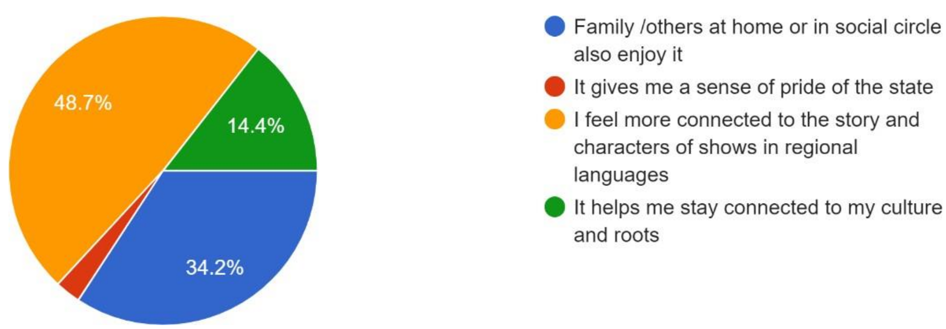

Figure 7.6(c): Survey Question: I feel more inclined to watch OTT shows in regional languages because______.

48.7 percent of the respondents felt more connected to the story and characters of the shows and regional stories and 34.2 percent respondents feel inclined towards regional content because family and others at home or in social circle also enjoy it (Figure 7.6(c)) Regional content and narratives , therefore , function as a common passion point that bring more togetherness in terms of shared moments of indulgence in entertainment or a sense of commonality and relatability with whose around you.

I feel more inclined to watch OTT shows in regional languages because	**Female**	**Male**
I feel more connected to the story and characters of shows in regional languages	42.86%	52.46%
Family /others at home or in social circle also enjoy it	39.68%	30.33%
It helps me stay connected to my culture and roots	14.29%	14.75%
It gives me a sense of pride of the state	3.17%	2.46%

Table 7.6(d) Survey Question: I feel more inclined to watch OTT shows in regional languages because______.

In concurrence of the finding that majority of the male respondents prefer viewing content in regional language is that finding that key reason for their preference is because they feel more connected to the story and characters of shows in regional languages. In case of Female respondents, their opinions are equally influenced by the relatability of the character and stories and the joy or bonding with family or social circle basis the shared viewing experience.

The diversification in content programming on Indian OTT, on the other hand, has motivated the consumers to explore and experiment with content in different languages depending on their preference of narratives and genres of stories and shows. Table 7.6 (e) depicts the respondent's preference of content from across the globe (with or without subtitles).

The findings state that Male working professionals have a strong affinity towards international fiction shows with subtitles (40.15 percent) followed by regional stories from different parts of the country with subtitles (25 percent).

The female respondents are more exploratory and experimental in their quest for entertainment. As per the findings, they have a strong inclination towards international fiction shows with subtitles and are also willing to watch content in different languages even if they don't understand the languages well enough.

There is an evident contrast in the female's preference of stories from different parts of India as, unlike the male respondents, the females lack interest in narratives from different regions of the country even if they are with subtitles.

The result therefore indicates a high consumer demand for international fiction shows and a demand for more regional content with subtitles, especially for the male consumers of OTT content.

Consumer Preference	Profession	Female	Male
Watching international fiction shows with subtitles	Working professional	33.33%	40.15%
	Student	6.94%	2.27%
	Freelancer	0.00%	0.76%
	Home Maker	1.39%	0.00%
	Home Entrepreneur	0.00%	0.76%
Watching international fiction shows with subtitles Total		**41.67%**	**43.94%**
Exploring content in different languages even if I do not understand the language	Working professional	25.00%	18.18%
	Student	1.39%	0.76%
	Freelancer	2.78%	1.52%
	Home Maker	1.39%	0.00%
	Home Entrepreneur	1.39%	0.00%
Exploring content in different languages even if I do not understand the language Total		**31.94%**	**20.45%**
Watching regional stories from different parts of India with subtitles	Working professional	11.11%	25.00%
	Student	4.17%	4.55%
	Freelancer	1.39%	1.52%
	Home Maker	5.56%	0.76%
	Home Entrepreneur	1.39%	0.00%
Watching regional stories from different parts of India with subtitles Total		**23.61%**	**31.82%**

Table 7.6(e) Consumer Preference from Across the Globe

7.7 Analysis of Consumer's Preference of Narratives and Production Quality of Content on OTT

The survey questionnaire consisted of curated questions to understand the audience's preference of narratives and their inclination to watch content that has high quality production values. The finding clearly showcases the preference for international shows as the audience believes they have great narratives and production values. The next preference was for the narratives inspired by real events, people, or characters. Distinct characterization in the narratives has been highlighted as a 'pull factor' for the Indian OTT audience.

Futuristic stories, sci – fi or fantasty and stories with desi masala, male heroes and their stunts didn't have too many takers amongest the survey respondents. Female first stories got the lowest traction as per the analysis detailed in Figure 7.7(a)

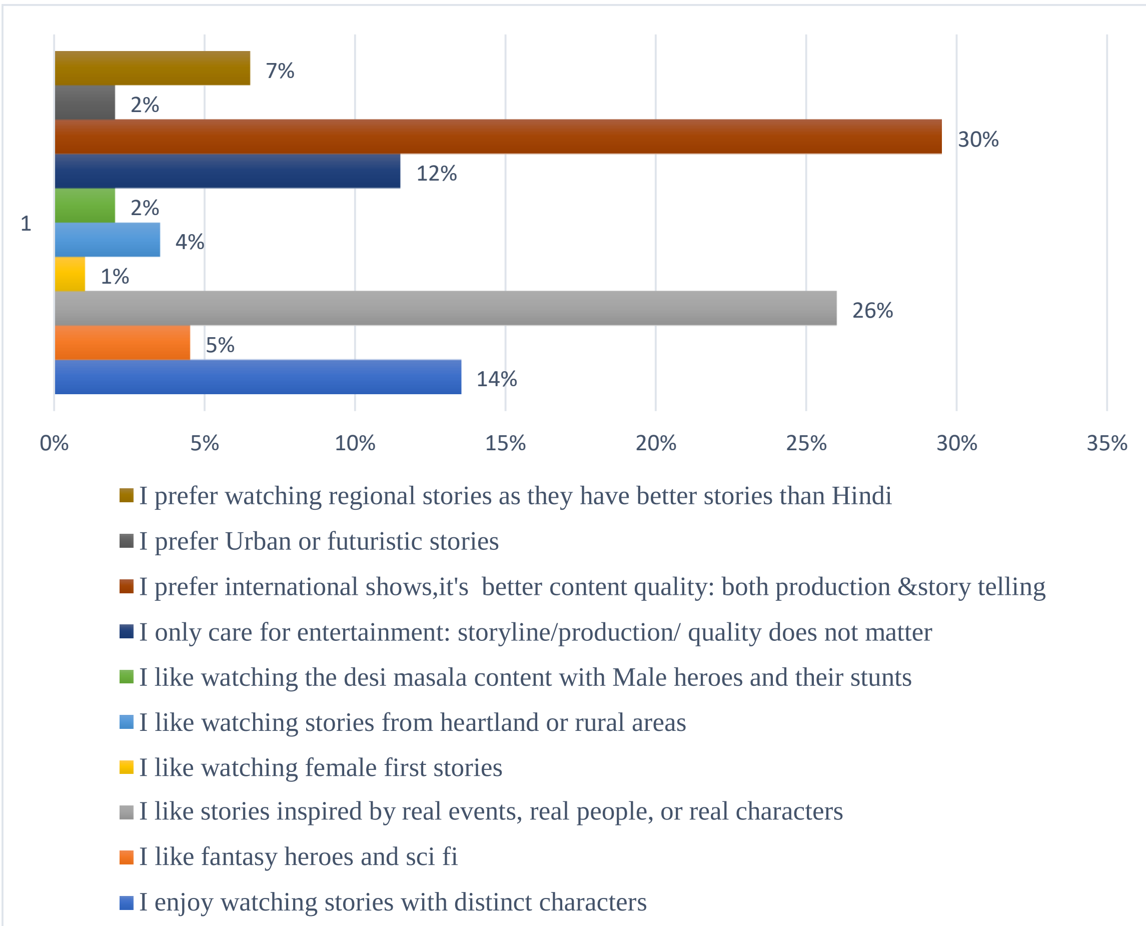

Figure 7.7(a) Consumer Preference of Narratives

The data set was further analyzed to study the gender wise segmentation of the preferences as depicted in Table 7.7(b). While there is consensus in both the genders when it comes to their preference for international shows and stories with realism, the preference for fantasy heroes and sci – fi content was more amongst the female respondents. The stories of heartland or rural areas, on the other side, didn't find too may takers in both the genders. The male respondents, as depicted earlier, have a higher preference for regional narratives than the female respondents.

There is almost an equal section of both male and female audience (11.36 percent & 11.11 percent respectively) that doesn't pay much attention to an analysis of narratives or quality of production, they only care for their entertainment however it happens!

Preference	Female	Male
I prefer international shows as they have better content quality for both production and story telling	26.39%	30.30%
I like stories inspired by real events, real people, or real characters	26.39%	25.00%
I enjoy watching stories with distinct characters	18.06%	10.61%
I only care for entertainment: storyline, or production and quality does not matter	11.11%	11.36%
I prefer watching regional stories as they have better stories than Hindi	2.78%	8.33%
I like fantasy heroes and sci fi	8.33%	2.27%
I like watching stories from heartland or rural areas	2.78%	3.79%
I prefer Urban or futuristic stories	0.00%	3.03%
I like watching the desi masala content with Male heroes and their stunts	0.00%	3.03%
I like watching female first stories	2.78%	0.00%

Table 7.7 (b) Consumer Preference of Narratives (Gender-wise)

7.8 Analysis of Consumer's Preference of Genres of Content

The respondents were given a range of content genres available on Indian OTT platforms for them to choose from. The responses were tabulated for a detailed study of the genres that attract and excite the Indian content consumer. The Level 1 analysis have been done to find the top preferences of genres amongst the audiences (Figure 7.8 (a)) followed by a gender wise analysis of the preference of genres (Figure 7.8 (b)) to highlight the similarities and contrast in the kind of content patronized by the male and female audiences in India.

The results highlight Lighthearted Fiction Series as the top preference of content genre on Indian OTT and is patronized by both female and male consumers. Live sports are the second most viewed content on OTT and is heavily male skewed in terms of the gender segmentation. Comedy shows, international shows and realistic narratives are the next in the order of ranking of the responses. Crime – Murder mysteries, Subtitled shows of other Indian Languages and serials from other countries with subtitles had almost similar ranking in the audience's genre preference study.

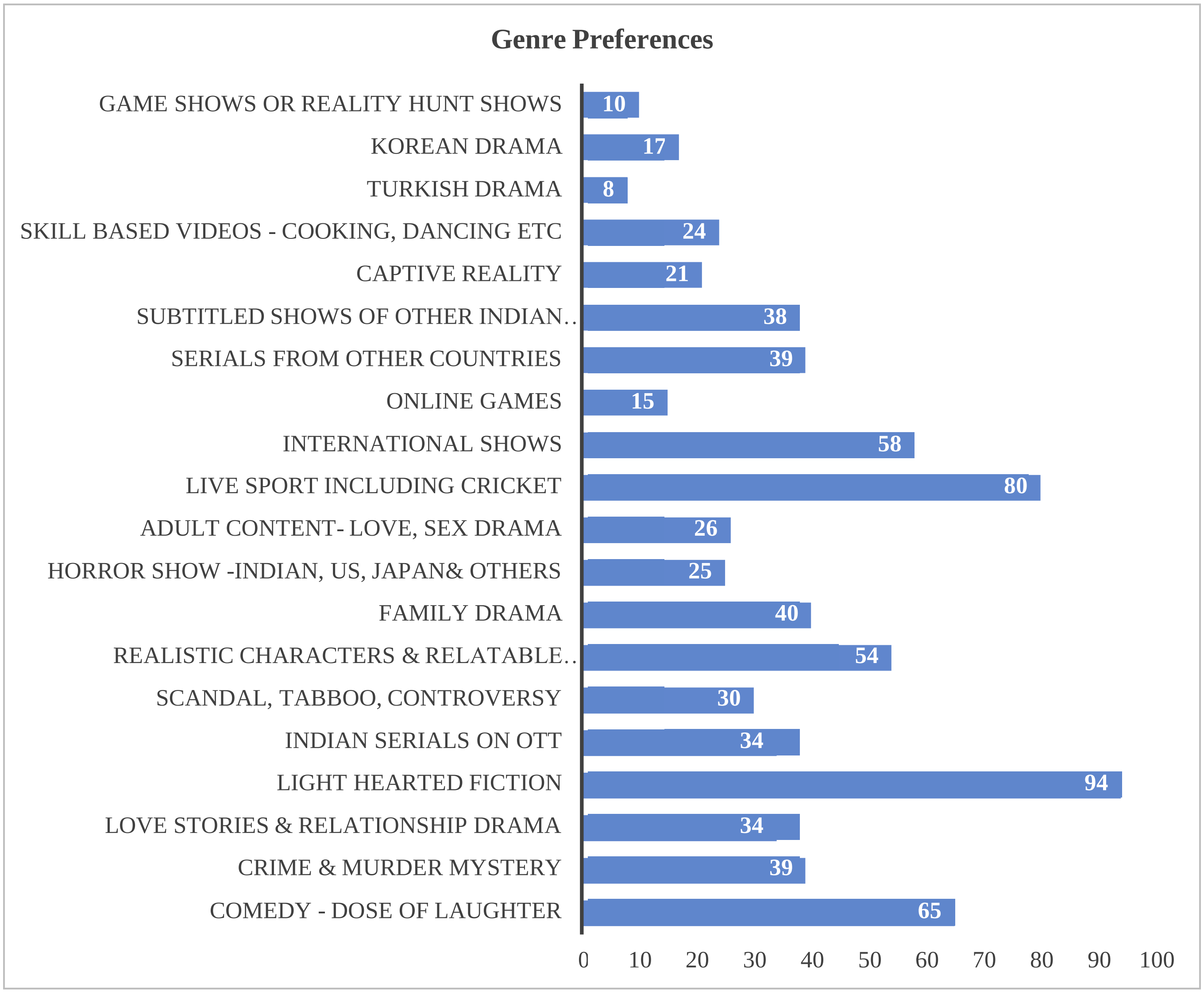

Figure 7.8 (a) Genre Preferences

The content genres that had almost equal affinity amongst male and female audience (Figure 7.8(b)) are: -

- Lighthearted fictions
- Love Stories & Relationship Drama
- Family Drama
- Serials from other countries
- Captive Reality & Reality Hunt

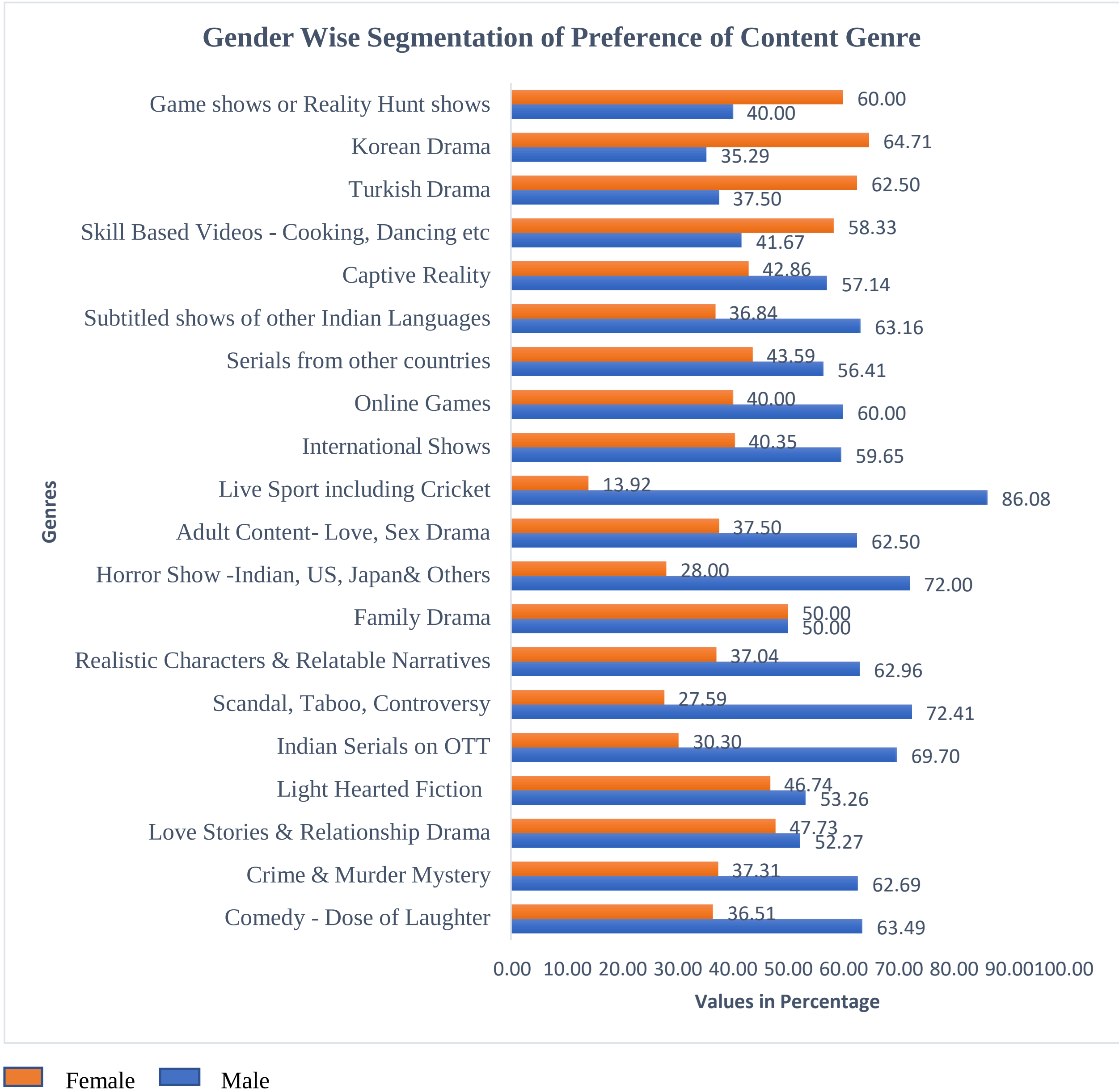

Figure 7.8 (b) Gender Wise Segmentation of Preference of Content Genre

Female respondents have a higher inclination towards the following genres over the male respondents (Figure 7.8(b)): -

* Korean Drama
* Turkish Drama
* Games shows or Reality Hunt
* Skill Based Videos

The data was further analyzed to decipher the top preferences of Male and Female respondents. Figure 7.8(c) and 7.8 (d).

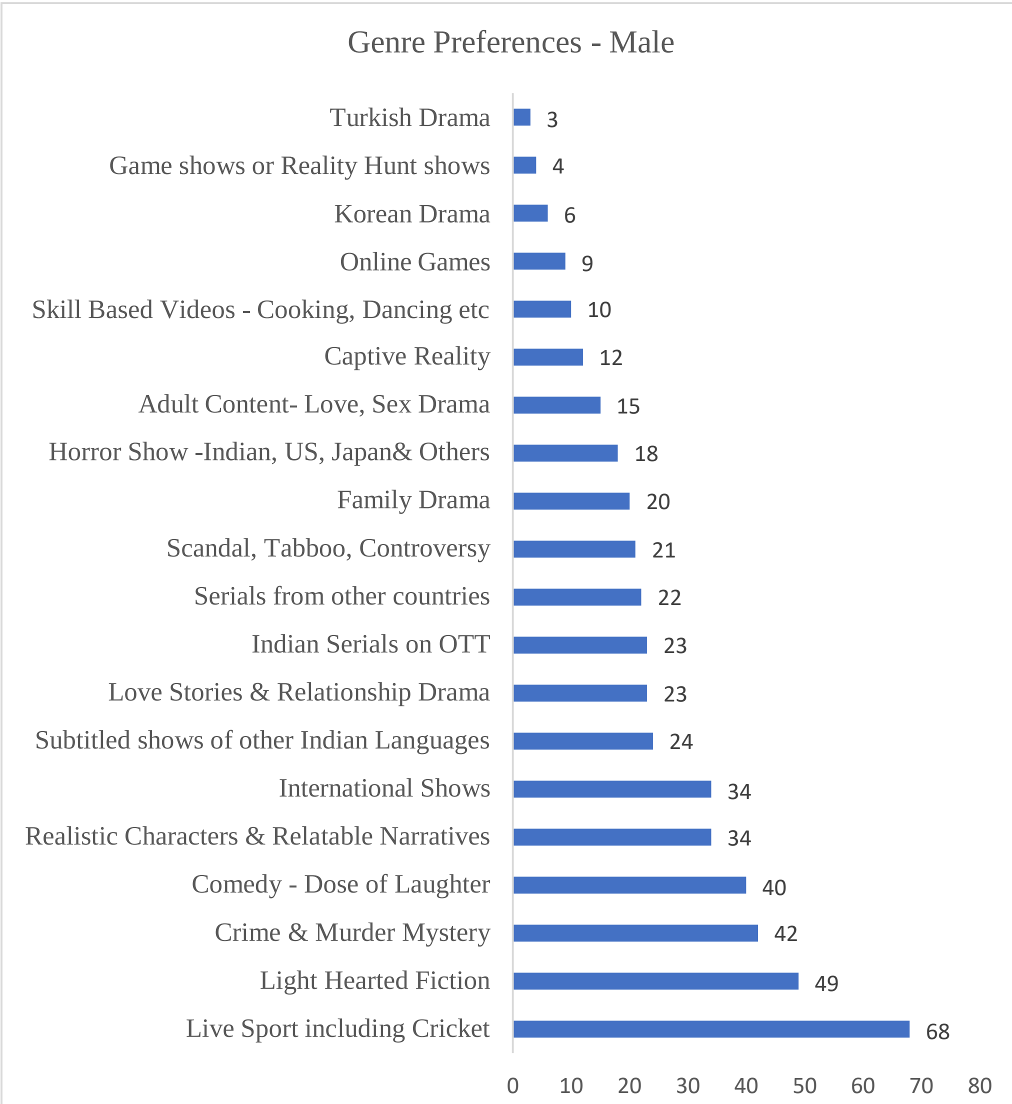

Figure 7.8 (c) Genre Preferences - Male

As showcased in the above figure, the top Genre preferences for Male respondents are: -

- Live Sports (including Cricket)
- Lighthearted Fiction
- Crime & Murder Mystery
- Comedy Shows – Dose of Laughter
- Realistic Characters and Relatable Narratives
- International Shows
- Subtitled shows of other languages

The top Genre preferences for female respondents as illustrated in the Figure 7.8(d) are: -

- Comedy Shows – Dose of Laughter
- Lighthearted Fiction shows
- Live Sports
- Family Drama
- Crime & Murder Mystery
- Subtitled shows of other languages
- Love Stories & Relation Drama

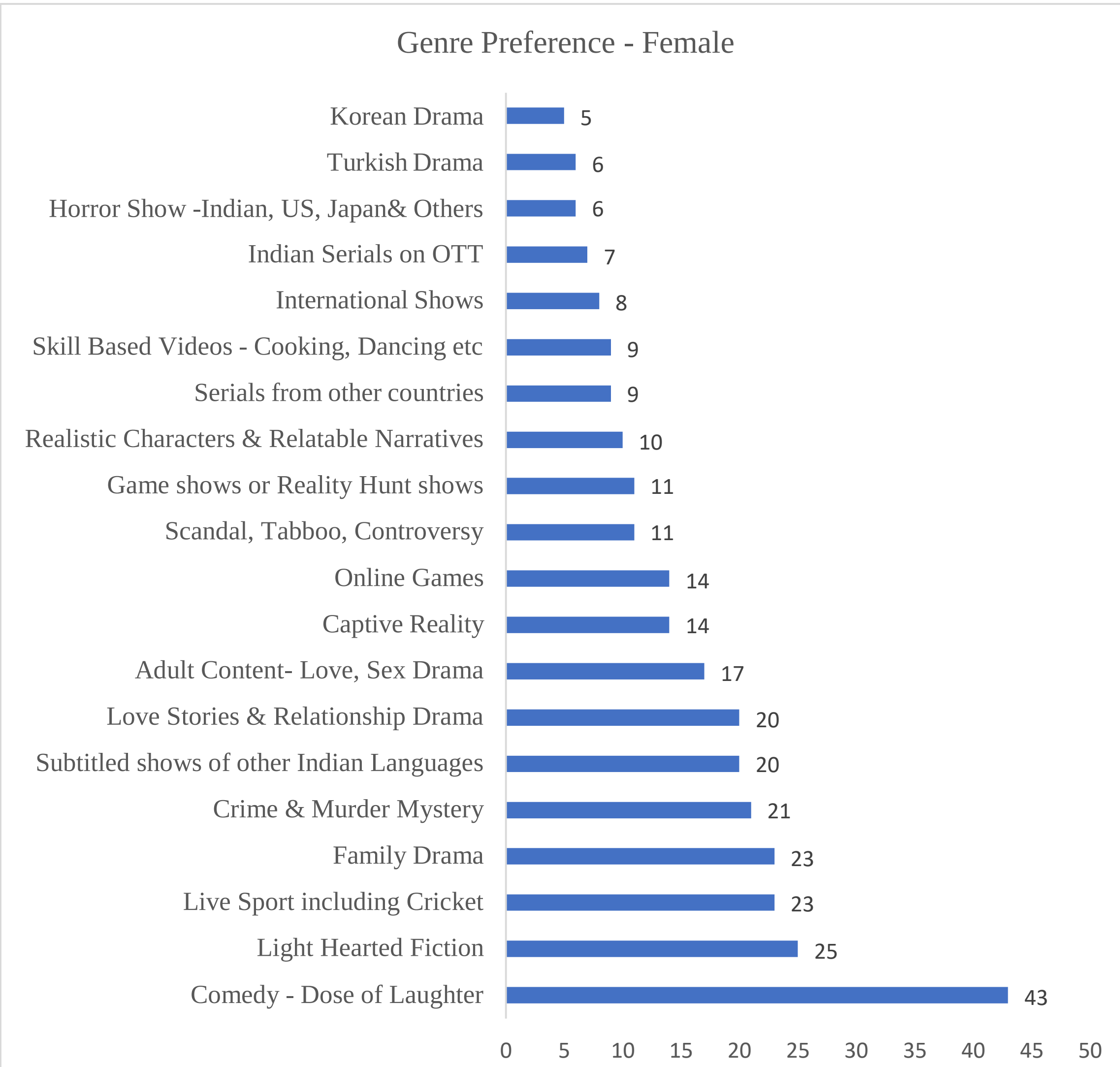

Figure 7.8 (d) Genre Preference - Female

The discussion of the genre wise preferences of the respondents and the comparison of the findings with that of the interviews conducted with Industry veterans shall enable us to get a comprehensive overview of the demand for content on OTT and offering from the Indian OTT platforms.

CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS & CONCLUSION

In furtherance to the detailed analysis of the survey, key findings of the consumer's preference of content consumption on OTT has been highlighted along with the key insights of the industry veterans and professionals who were interviewed to get an in depth understanding of the OTT ecosystem in India. The latter section of the chapter comprises of the recommendation, limitation, and future implication of the domain.

8.1 Survey Finding

- The ease of usage and anytime, anywhere accessibility gives OTT the upper hand over the traditional forms of entertainment media.
- In contrast to the preference of mobility, the respondents' preferred mode of viewing content on OTT has been the TV screen, likely reason for the same is the cinematic experience of large screen viewing for OTT content.
- The core TG is willing to pay a basic fee to watch OTT content, if it fits into their budget (80.4 percent). It must be noted that male respondents are sensitive to the price offering of the platforms.
- The consumers are willing to patronize more OTT platforms if the price pack for subscription can be in their affordability range (85.4 percent).
- The consumers seem to be loyal to the content and not the platforms. 61.1 percent consumers stated that they switch platforms depending on the content offering.
- The key influencers for the consumers' decision to watch the content or discoverability are the recommendations of friends, family, peers, word of mouth and the online ratings. It reinstates the fact that good content is the key driver to consumer loyalty and acquisition for OTT platforms.
- As opposed to the Television GEC viewing pattern, consumer on OTT has a diversity of choice and preference of content in different languages. 52.45 percent of the respondents prefer watching content in their native language while others prefer exploring content in different languages. Female consumers indulge content created in diverse languages than men.
- There is high affinity towards content made in regional Indian languages over Hindi. 61 percent respondents believe that OTT shows made in Indian regional languages are more engaging that Hindi Content.
- Their affinity towards content in regional languages is further substantiated as the male respondents stated they feel more connected to the story and characters of shows in the regional languages while the Female respondents expressed that their affinity is equally

influenced by the relatability of the characters and stories and the joy or bonding with family or social circle basis the shared viewing experience.

- Top Genres preference of Content on Indian OTT for Male respondents are: -
  - Live Sports (including Cricket)
  - Lighthearted Fiction
  - Crime & Murder Mystery
  - Comedy Shows – Dose of Laughter
  - Realistic Characters and Relatable Narratives
  - International Shows
  - Subtitled shows of other languages

- Top Genre preference of Content on Indian OTT for Female respondents are: -
  - Comedy Shows – Dose of Laughter
  - Lighthearted Fiction shows
  - Live Sports
  - Family Drama
  - Crime & Murder Mystery
  - Subtitled shows of other languages
  - Love Stories & Relation Drama

- Female respondents have a higher inclination towards content with subtitles from different parts of the world especially from Korea and Turkey.
- Male respondents, especially working professionals, also have a strong affinity towards content with subtitles: International fiction shows with subtitles (40.15 percent) and regional stories from different parts of the country with subtitles (25 percent).

8.2 Research Interviews: Overview

8.2.1 CEO, Vistas Media Capital

Growth of OTT platforms in India

India has witnessed a significant growth so far in the OTT space. It, however, has been a sort of an evolution phase wherein different players have tried out various business models to understand consumer preferences. As per CEO, Vistas Media Capital, we can expect consolidation, deeper penetration of industry and expansion of the userbase in the next five years.

International OTT platforms in India vs Native Indian OTT platforms

He opines that the one who can successfully understand the taste of an Indian consumer shall have the upper hand. Localization of content is what has worked everywhere in the world, it is more an understanding of this that will differentiate the OTT platforms.

Content Preferences of Indian OTT Consumer

India is such a big country that it is impossible to generalize the consumer or his/her preference. A significant segment of the audience that loves to watch local stories told in a contemporary way and there is a smaller segment of audience who is willing to pay for premium international content. Indian consumers preference is diverse; there are times when romantic stories worked, then comes a wave of comedies followed by stories from heartland. It all depends on what is the timing and what is the audience one is catering to. He opines that Crime, Thriller and Scandal is a segment that has worked for decades globally and will continue to do so in India as well.

Content Regulation for Indian OTT Platforms

There is a need to categorize the content and, till technology can guarantee effective control on who is watching it, regulation may be required. Controlling content or creators is not a solution as it has never worked in the past globally.

Rise of Regional Content on Indian OTT

A lot of regional content was not able to reach its audience due to distribution challenges and in that respect, OTT is enabling the masses to consumer content without any barriers. Regional content being able to reach a larger audience aids new monetization avenues for content creators, their ability to create content that can travel globally.

8.2.2 Co-founder, Arha Media Pvt Ltd

Growth of OTT in India

Arha Media Co-founder says "we are at a fascinating stage of the growth for the entertainment sector in India. Out of the 220 million TV homes, we have currently seen a shift of about 40 million to pure SVOD OTT platforms. The rest are all still the AVOD consumers and they are gradually converting." He predicts that in the next 5 years we should have 100 billion SVOD paying homes in the country from the 40 million that we have right now and believes SVOD still has a huge opportunity in India to grow.

Key Risks for SVOD in India

- Cluttered Marketplace: Plethora of apps that are launching in the market would create an overload of choice for the consumer. The risk will get mitigated by the aggregators coming in pretty much like how it happened in broadcasting where aggregators filled an offer for all the SVOD OTTs as a bundle. So that will get sorted.

- Internet Penetration: While we say we have 3G and 4G the penetration is still low and that will continue to undermine the growth of SVOD OTT.
- Content Programming: Today's 25-year-old is very much a part of the OTT generation, 35 years comprise the TV generation who are converting to OTT, but the 15-year-old has moved to gaming. The OTT players must reinvent their strategy and get high scale high level gaming.

Challenges for AVOD in India

While the Indian advertisers migrating to digital media rapidly, 80% of investments are dedicated to companies which are only getting bigger which are Google and Facebook. So, all AVOD platforms, hence, are chasing the rest of the pie which is not picking up. Unless you have sports, it can drive any group strategy in India, the AVOD play for a regular individual independent OTT platform, global or local, is going to be much harder in India than SVOD play in the next 3-5 years, till the advertising landscape shifts away significantly from Google and Facebook.

OTT Audience Segmentation

All the data shows 70:30 ratio for Male: Female segmentation of OTT consumers in India but as per Co-Founder Arha Media, the viewership of women is higher than 30%. He opined: "We live in a country; majority of this consumption is coming from remember from mobile the data what we have of the sim card. I think the female viewership is higher than the projected because a lot of women are wanting on mobile with sim cards in the names of somebody else in the family, like their husbands, so I think the viewership is higher than what is portrayed."

Consumer's willingness to Pay

He states "Young India is not willing to pay" is a myth, Young India is willing to pay if the pricing is right, like Netflix has done.

Consumer's Preferences of Content Genres

Crime, thrillers, and scams/scandals form a big part of OTT content. It is also true that TV measurement is also skewed and driven by the housewives' watching soaps. The success of Friends and all the shows coming back despite being old shows, tells us that there is big space for comedy. I think there is also a big space for drama and romance as we have seen in the success of some of the films that have come to OTT. Reality shows and Documentary series are already picking in the western market and getting traction amongst Indian consumers. Non - fiction such as game shows, talk shows and reality shows, is ever evolving, as the Indian audience loves watching their celebrities in real up-close formats. So, there is much wider bouquet than sex and crime we thought 5 years ago

Unlike the common perception, He disagrees that sexual content is driving the audience towards specific OTTs. He states explicit content and sex as premise are two different things.

Content Regulation for Indian OTT Platforms

He emphasizes on the need for self-regulation by OTT platforms in India. He states: "As media owners and content creators we don't realize sometimes the kind of effect we have on young minds. And I think we are irresponsible sometimes. But I don't think the government needs to regulate. I think broadcasting has done the self-regulation beautifully well, I think a lot more self-regulation on part of the OTT is needed. For sure, some of the content out there is just beyond irresponsible."

Is Content on OTT a reflection of the Indian Society

Co-Founder Arha Media believes there are two kinds of creators in this country: Some who are in touch with the real India and some who are completely delusional, and they project a certain sense of self onto what the Indian youth is. He opines that Indian youths are far more sorted than some of the film makers portray in the film spaces. The good thing is the audience is telling them via rejecting their films and content. A big upheaval is needed in the kind of storytelling that we do and for that people must connect with the masses.

Popularity of Regional Content amongst Indian OTT consumers

He states that the heart of content is the language, the language and stories that are set in our land are both diverse for it, stories set in our land in terms of, they are set in the local terms, characters, there are many India there is not one India. He explained that local language OTT like his platform AHA, are tapping into the natives' sense and native belonging with language as a key driver. It is also about the native identity, the native culture, native customs, native looks and so on and so forth. So, it looks lot more than language, but language is the primary driver. While regional connect is true for the broadcaster's universe as well, none of the big national platforms had ever had significant reach in South except for Sun TV until Star acquired Vijay, Maa TV and so on. The films from South are now ruling the box office nationally. People are high on the native stories which we thought earlier were restricted to appealing in their language, thanks to OTT and dubbing, are now traveling much wider. I think the whole generation of young Indians have grown up now to watch with subtitles or accept dubbing.

Quality and Cost of Production of OTT content

Massive Cost of Production of OTT content for Indian Platforms is a bubble. Many big platforms have cut down their budgets for shows in India as it is unsustainable. Today we work at a 10x the budget of TV per day in terms of what we shoot but it is less than 10% of what films are paying in Telugu and as per Cofounder Arha Media, that is the sweet spot. He reinstates that the budget increase that has happened in the last 3 years, is unsustainable and it must be rationalized. Shows like Game of Thrones that break out from the norm is well justified as the western audience is willing to pay for OTT content. Sadly, the Indian audience will never pay that fee for premium content. SVOD content production and acquisition prices must rationalized as just SVOD subscriptions will not help breaking even and hence he suggests that we will have to find other monetization ways to get to a break even, but the production costs must be controlled.

Impact of OTT on the business of Indian Cinema

He affirms that OTT has been a boon for the diversification and mass reach for Indian Cinema. He states "Some of our best names would have been dead because theatrically their films have been rejected for the last 3 years. I think OTT has, kind of, salvaged that and OTT is funding the growth of, that what you would say, the off-stream cinema. Mainstream cinema still lives in theatres and then OTT does add to their economy but for the off-mainstream cinema or what I would say the urban elite cinema already has, kind of, saved the day for them. In general, I think, without OTT the Indian cinema economy would have been on a much bigger decline than it is right now."

8.2.3 Film Critic, Founder (Film Companion)

Impact of OTT: An Industry Perspective

It has been very exciting because it has created a whole new avenue for storytelling, for types of stories, especially for artists and story tellers because otherwise films are, the gatekeepers are much stronger in the world of cinema. Not that its easy on OTT either but at least it is an option. The fundamental shift of OTT has been to really empower writers and give them work.

OTT Audience Segmentation

Number wise it is truly male skewed, however, what is so heartening is that how many women are part of the ecosystem. It is of course women leaders at Amazon or Netflix, those in positions of power but also how many female directors there are, how many female artists who Bollywood had no clue what to do with have got a whole other career flourishing from Sushmita Sen, Madhuri Dixit Nene, Sonali Bendre, Ravina Tandon, Lara Dutta, all these attractive, very talented women. Films had no clue what to do with them because they do not know what to write for a woman who is of a certain age but not motherly, there is nothing maternal, she is still attractive, she is still a sexual being, but OTT has found space for all of them.

Diversity & Inclusivity of Content on Indian OTT

Just the fact that more women are front lining up shows, for example, Arya is about Sushmita, Made in Heaven is about Sobhita Dhulipala even though Arjun has an equal role in it, and the narratives around queer characters. OTT is serialized storytelling where you have more hours, you get more in depth. It is not caricatures that you need to deal with, it is by design more diverse and inclusive.

Consumer's Preferences of Content Genres

Crime and thrillers are the top genres, especially when they are interestingly done, also when they lend themselves to that whole format of cliffhanger at the end of every episode. However, the consumer has more to choose from. Something like 'Made in Heaven' which was extremely successful and was not crime or thriller though it has shades of a little bit of it but its more about a human story. A story about class, about gender, about being gay in this country is of interest to the consumers. A ‘Scam 1992’ is crime, but it is not a gangster story or murder mystery. It is financial crime. One must recognize that there is no official censorship, but there are topics now that are taboo. Neither will makers go near politics, nor will platforms go near politics, or caste, in terms of something that’s too close to the world that we are living in. Hence, anything that is gripping and provides some aspect of escape and will not get you in trouble with the powers that be. And that is what is working.

Content Regulation for Indian OTT Platforms

In a country like India, there needs to be some level of monitoring, but an OTT platform is a choice you make, it is a payment you make. So, if you do not like, do not watch it. However, there should be internal regulation by the industry itself, which is what is happening pretty much right now.

Is Content on OTT a reflection of the Indian Society

Content is a reflection, obviously, because the content creators come from the same society. What is being put up there, what people are consuming, it all reflects the current zeitgeist, what is the mood of that moment - Is it progressive enough? No.

About the portrayal of women, about item songs, about not being seductive. Just trying to approach characters with little more depth and nuance, but is it there yet? No, by a long shot.

Impact of Reviews on Discoverability and Viewership of Content

Look at how all of us now watch everything, it has been magical as a viewer, as a critique, it has been amazing to see things from other places. Reviews surely help content discoverability and that is why film critiques and curators are even more important today than they have ever been. There is just too much content and too little time, no one has the bandwidth to go through so much. Film Critics, Content Reviewers and curators can help people discover promising content. Let us take a film like The Great Indian Kitchen, a Malayalam film, nobody initially knew about. In fact, Amazon rejected it when they first tried to sell it to Amazon. But because of word of mouth, because of critical acclaim, all critiques kept recommending it to each other and it just got this momentum and became a phenomenon.

Need for Content Reviewers for Indian Entertainment Industry

It is very important because you need people who are skilled but also because in an environment where everything is transactional, you need people who are not for sale. That is very important. There should be people you can rely on.

International shows on platforms like Netflix vs In-House Production on Indian OTT

Founder, Film Companion shared that during the interview she did with Ted Sarandos (CEO, Netflix), he said “Look, it takes many iterations to get it right.” It is a skill set and just because one can make feature films does not mean one can make serials or write characters that can stay interesting. The quality of content and production in India is improving and it will keep evolving.

Impact of OTT on the business of Indian Cinema

Now audiences are very clear that this is what we will go to theatre for, and this is what we will watch at home. Maybe, what they want to watch at home maybe more edgy, maybe you can see it alone, one can see things that you might not be comfortable looking at with your family or with partners. Audience is ok to wait for weeks for the film to get to the OTT platforms so that they can stream it as per their convenience. She emphasized on the clarity of audience's choice - they know what they want on the theatre is the big screen experience, they want the event, or the star, or something that feels exciting in a communal space.

She appreciates the contribution of OTT to the films business in India, especially the release and streaming of films on OTT during the pandemic of 2020 – 21 without which the economy of film industry would have tanked completely.

8.2.4 President, Partnerships and Trading, Group M India

Business of OTT in India

President, Partnerships and Trading, Group M India states" The OTT industry in India has not arrived at a sustainable model. There is a mismatch in the investment made to create content or to acquire subscribers (paid or free), and the revenues earned either by subscription or advertising."

Huge amount of investment that is going into the content creation is not yielding the kind of subscriptions or the kind of advertising revenue or even the kind of audience that they should be able to aggregate to investment in money. There is a challenge, and it is not about distribution anymore because with 4G and mobile connectivity being literally all prevalent in India, access to content is not the challenge but access to the content where it needs to be paid for surely is a challenge because for most Indians, subscriptions that the OTTs are charging are unaffordable.

There is a challenge of input cost on one side, cost of acquisition of consumer on the other side, high entry barriers for consumers to consume the content that has been created at such a high cost, and all of these put together result in a business model which is unviable and unsustainable. Unless and until the players, one or more of them, start figuring out how they are going to start making it viable and sustainable and start experimenting with these levers and these variables to arrive at a formula that allows them to produce content, good content, tell stories which are great stories in controlled costs, in controlled acquisition of consumers, with extremely low entry barriers for consumers to actually consume the content, if not anything it should be similar to the cost that consumer should pay for cable or satellite.

Profitability of OTT Platforms in India

Television has proved to us that we can create content in controlled, with extremely tight budgets, and in extremely controlled manner. OTTs when they launched and even today, did not have any business metrics on what investment should go into content vs the kind of ROI that they can get from the content. Today a lot of the series that are getting produced are probably 3x, 4x of a mid-size movie in terms of investments, this is no way that one can recover the money.

It is not that the money is going into telling wonderful stories, writing wonderful stories, the money is going into expansive production setups which, honestly, do not add value to storytelling beyond a point. So, the content creators and these platform orders, must surely rein in the kind of budgets they are working on. If they do not rein, they will be forced to rein because the money will dry out very soon. The input cost of production should come down dramatically. Secondly, there must be a very strong focus on consumer acquisition, audience acquisition. All OTTs in India have tried to follow what Netflix did in US and tried to ape that model. The fact of the matter is that even Netflix accepted that if they need to continue to acquire the consumers, they will probably need to have an ad funded model as well where consumers entry barriers are low. As far as India is concerned, if OTT must become what TV is in India, the consumer should be able to watch content across all OTT players from approximately the same or lesser cost. The emergence of aggregators is a boon to the ecosystem, companies like OTT Play or even at an extreme like Jio or even Tata Play, are aggregating multiple content destinations in terms of OTT apps into one subscription and making it affordable and leading to faster acquisition of consumers for the platforms and lowering entry barriers. To add on, if platforms can add advertising as well, and build a unified consumer view through a measurement panel which goes on digital, mobile as well as it goes on CTV (connected TVs), we would surely have an equivalent of a TV kind of an ecosystem in India.

Loyalty of Indian OTT Consumers

They key trait of OTT or video on demand is that the trigger for any content consumption is – what is recommended to you or basis what you search. Unlike linear television where the trigger for you to tune in, in most cases, is a published program chart and you tune in to consume that content as per specified times. You do browse sometimes genres like, for example, news or genres like music, you do brows across channels without any specific content in mind. In the case of OTT, the content that you consume, either you know what you want to consume or search for it because you heard about it through word of mouth, you have read about it, there is somebody who appreciated the content or you have just seen an advertisement which talks about that content, and you search for that content. Majority of content consumption happens through the recommendation that you get on your home screen and basis that recommendation that you get becomes your window or rather the door to that universe of thousands of hours of content that you reside on that OTT platform.

Content Regulation for Indian OTT Platforms

Any environment which is accessible to the masses will have to be self-regulated in some form. Television is self-regulated, and it may eventually happen for OTT as well. On video on demand platforms, there will always be a challenge on what content is possible, what is not possible but self-regulation will ensure that content, which is downright sleezy or soft porn like, does not make it into the mainstream. Just as it has happened in the case of TV. Given the environment, few platforms tried to get audiences basis some soft porn kind of content and advertisers have shunned them and even when they have tried to change, they removed all the content that they used to do earlier. Now that, the impression and perception of that platform, has been saved for life in the minds of advertisers. It is very difficult to change that perception now as content led to the aggregation of a certain kind of audiences who may not necessarily be the audiences that an advertiser wants to reach out to. So, if not anything, business will drive self-regulation.

Is Content on OTT a reflection of the Indian Society

He opines that most storytelling reflects the times that we live in, have lived in or we predict that we will live in. It is always about the society, past, current, and future. Science fiction tries to project society of the future, but good science fiction content always plays up to the human level, always plays on the basic of emotions that humans go through and interplay of relationships, that does not change. That can be a setting change. It is very rarely the pieces of content which are completely delinked from it.

Diversity of Content on OTT

He shared his nostalgic memories of watching foreign films on Doordarshan during his childhood. They used to feature award winning films across languages; not just English language but Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, all languages; from across the world. It was a world very different form our world and it was fascinating. He said "Today, with OTT, we do not have to wait for Sundays to consume the content across the world. There are two things that are happening. One, you do not need to be too different or eclectic to want to consume content which is not from your language or not from your culture because the world has come closer in these past 30-40 years. There are some common threats across every single country. There are common likes and dislikes, there are things that we do culturally which everybody can relate to across the globe. As people travel, as people exchange views with each other, as they consume content from across the globe and different languages, the appreciation and understanding of culture and differences as well as the likeness that is significantly, has improved. I am talking about global context because the same, principal applies for a county like India as well, within a country like India as well."

Rise of Regional Content on Indian OTT

Languages which used to be alien to the audiences, are being consumed on OTT, loved, enjoyed and appreciated; and it is leading to a truly Pan Indian content marketplace. President, Partnerships and Trading, Group M India credits the OTT ecosystem in breaking some of these barriers of content consumption and exposing audiences to different kind of content, different languages, different genres, different cultures. For a country like India, it will start leading to better appreciation and respect for a multicultural society, which is what we are. We never looked at it like that, we have all looked at it as silos and pockets. Content has the power to open our eyes to the multicultural societies we truly are.

Positive Impact and Inclusivity: Impact of Content on Indian OTT

He believes that the need for Positive Impact and Inclusivity is not just on OTT, but a need across all kinds of platforms including OTT and all kind of content creators. Unfortunately, through the years, our media showcased shows that may have entertained the masses, however, had some very regressive value systems and stereotypes. The power of content is such that even in families or in cultures, and we are multicultural society, some of those regressive thoughts, practices end up being mimicked and practiced in cultures where they do not exist. So, it is dangerous. Indian audience has been subjected to such content for 40-50 years now, since the time private television came in. OTTs have not changed yet; they have just made their narratives and their productions slicker but a lot of them continue to showcase the storytelling or the characterization in a regressive manner.

Just like content creates fashion, just like content creates and molds culture, food, what we experiment with every day, it also strongly influences culture. Unfortunately, the power of content in 80-90% of the cases is being deployed to change people's cultures or habits regressively. The power is in our hands, why should we not tell stories which are beautiful, which are truly empowering, which can change people's mindset, which can make people a little bit more open about or perceiving different kinds of views from the people around them, which can make them more inclusive, which can make them more tolerant, which can make them more sensitive to the environment and the world we live in? He believes and recommends that we should invest behind showing the world that one can tell beautiful stories, extremely entertaining stories which leave a positive impact in people's minds and change them in their roots, change them culturally, change them fundamentally.

Impact of OTT on the business of Indian Cinema

The pandemic has surely changed the dynamics of the cinema industry as it completely derailed the cinema industry especially Bollywood which is still struggling to tell stories that the audience can appreciate.

OTTs discovered that the investment they may make for a mid-budget film, is the same as investing in producing 8 episodes of web series. He believes that the movie ecosystem is so big that movies do not get made for a platform. Movies get made for everyone to walk into a nearby theater and experience that content without any barriers. It reaches out to significantly a larger audience and the kind of buzz that a theatrical creates, the kind of marketing that goes behind taking a movie to a theater, it adds so much more anticipation for audiences who would have not been able to go to the theatre to consume the content, and it does better then on television or OTT.

8.2.5 Co-Founder, Hoichoi

Growth of OTT Platforms in India

OTT in India is still in a nascent stage, it is evolving and has a tremendous potential. Keeping in mind that India's pay ecosystem is very difficult, there are a lot of challenges. Talking of numbers, India – Pakistan match streamed on OTT has concurrent views of 12 million people, that is a huge number. OTTs have done remarkably well, they have built the technology, they have spent money to acquire customer, found market to create content and the key contributor to the growth is the cheap data availability in our market. Indian OTT market are at 7-9% of Merger &Acquisition and it can reach 20-25% in probably 4-5 years or 6 years. That will be huge, so we are poised to very big growth.

Stating his experience from the Bangla market, He said, "There are certain kind of stories that are been told on big screen and there are certain kind of stories which were happening at television level. There is a gap because both the markets, the big-ticket film market and the television market are matured market and the creators have understood what audience want and they are creating content as per the needs of that set of audience. There is a gap of premium content which is bingeworthy, which is little longish format where you can tell stories which are edgy, experimental, genres that are not being delivered through other mediums. As the first mover in the Bengal market, Hoichoi promised original Bengali content for its audience at regular intervals to satiate their content needs. The platform targeted 10 million Bengali speaking Indians, who can pay, already they are transacting in the digital medium through various e-commerce sites or international platforms, and gave them a taste of that international storytelling, larger formats, where they can spend a lot of time. Hoichoi has done extremely well in terms of acquiring and sustaining its audience engagement by delivering premium content, which is created at an optimum cost and hence outshined as the first and the most Profitable Indian OTT.

SVOD vs AVOD: Which is a profitable business model in India

He disagreed with the question - "All businesses have their own models and recovery models and survival models and all of that. SVOD, if you ask, we say from a Hoichoi perspective, this is what we wanted to do. We wanted to create premium content where people should pay for the content. If I am delivering that promise, I am also sure or aware that what kind of content I will not create, something which you are able to watch free at YouTube or any other platform."

As per the CO FOUNDER, HOICHOI, one should look at both the streams & models: SVOD & AVOD and figure out a way how to address both.

ROI Model for OTT in India

The ROI model for OTT is very platform specific and depends on their business objectives. There is no 'fit to all' formula because the customer size, bundling, syndication for a platform can be completely different from another platform's approach to content business. The right balance of cost, production values and the outcome expected from the content is of supreme importance. Speaking about Hoichoi's perspective, He shared, "We very much rely on ROI. After doing like 125 shows, we probably have reached the level where we can assess what is safe or risky as content. However, beyond that, it is very difficult to predict."

He is optimistic that the platforms shall figure out the right investment for their content that helps drive ROI and profitability.

OTT Audience Segmentation

While the data would show that the audience is very male skewed, it is because in most households in India the male purchases the sim card or the subscription. The wallet or the credit card connected to your e-commerce is probably the husbands' or brothers' or fathers'. The data hence only reports basis the transaction and not the actual consumption. The real data is little different, the actual viewership, is growing at a 2x rate. While the wallet is with male in the house, the time is with the female. The real split is supposedly 60-40 and is expected to be 50-50 or even larger from female perspective by 2024 – 2025.

Rise of Regional Content on Indian OTT

He believes that the term ‘Regional’ may not be appropriate for non-Hindi content in India as the consumer base is much wider for it to be addressed as a region. Population of almost 250 million cannot be regional. He said, “Just because we are a part of a whole big universe and always have this motherly figure of Bollywood and all of that, that is not true. The true thing is we are a language player, our stories are unique, we have a vast history of literature. Not only in India but across the world, the writers are renowned, and they have been translated and read across the globe. For instance, somebody sitting in Philippines, probably, is watching Rabindranath stories on Netflix because those are unique stories. How we consume Shakespeare in all the languages. The audience is getting aware of the vast library of stories in different regions of India, being told by great creators, probably in their languages where the essence of the story comes out. Thanks to the international players, we got this habit of watching the content from across the globe in any language you want to.”

Preference of Content Genres of Indian Consumers

While the perception is that Crime, Thriller, Scandal are the most preferred genres on OTT, the number one OTT show today is ‘Anupama’. If ‘Anupama’ (Fiction Drama) is working, it indicates the hunger for watching all kinds of content. Probably crime thrillers are not being made in other platforms, they are more publicized, people are talking more about it, but the staple would still be the stories related with drama, with romance, with family. For example, Gullak (Fiction Drama) is probably highest watched show, but nobody is aware of it. Similar is the case with Panchayat (Fiction Drama). The show ‘Sampurna’, on Hoichoi is the biggest hit, it is a very family kind of a show with a little matured story. Everything sells here but to make it right you must present it in a certain way.

Content Strategy: Data Insights or Instincts

To begin with, there is a lot of data, there are many tools, and every tool gives you a new dimension to the data that one has. As shared by the CO FOUNDER, HOICHOI, they do not bring that data knowledge to their creative room! Data Insights are analyzed for tracking consumer retention, acquisition, and consumer behavior. However, content is basis instinct and the merit of the story. It is based on the gut, understanding, and experience of the team at Hoichoi.

8.2.6 Senior General Manager, Manoramamax

Growth of OTT in India

OTT platforms have shifted the experience of the end user in terms of choice of content, ease of consumption, and freedom of choice to view the content from anywhere at any time. So, the shift is real, and the penetration of OTT users is increasing month-on-month. Even the penetration and affordability of Connected TVs have increased multifold, due to which the consumption of OTTs has increased. The average person has now got the freedom of choice to do what he wishes when he wishes to, along with the freedom to watch his favorite entertainment when he is free.

International OTT platforms vs Native Indian OTT

Currently, the market is poised to favor the international platforms as they have deeper pockets and can churn out better content to the end users. However, the emergence of regional OTTs is upsetting this trend as the regional OTTs understand the local markets much better, create more familiar content, and can produce it at a much more affordable cost. Adding to this, the technology parameters introduced by the larger international players like sub-titling, multi-lingual dubbing is helping these regional players make their content available to the entire World and the consumption is increasing multifold.

AVOD vs SVOD Platforms

Speaking of Manoramamax, He shared, “We are experiencing a better traction for the subscription content on our own platform.” The end user is looking for unique content and ease of watching the latest movies. By providing this regularly, the traction for subscription services is the maximum.

Profitability of OTT in India

Smart choice of a platform provider who can deliver a fine user experience and be economic as well, intelligent choice of movies that will work in the OTT space, producing good content at relatively economic prices, and pricing the OTT well (without discounting unnecessarily) can create a profitable OTT platform early.

OTT Audience Segmentation

OTT consumption is not male skewed if one looks at content wise ratings. It is only the sports and news which is getting consumed by relatively larger number of males. The consumption of fiction shows is closer to equal and skewed towards women in some cases.

Diversity & Inclusivity of Content on Indian OTT

Amongst the media available today, it is certainly creating a positive impact by telling stories of diversity, equality, and inclusiveness. And this is because there is no compulsion to cater to the ‘mass’ masses. Every content has a target audience which discovers it and then spreads it by word of mouth across time.

Content Preference of Indian Consumer on OTT

The consumption of digital India is turning towards regional and newer content, whether they be movies or web-series. This regional content does not apply to just the region each user is from. Users today are used to watching entire web-series from across the globe in languages otherwise unknown to these, thus, giving a new name to K-Dramas in India post the Ekta Kapoor days on TV.

Authentic content, whether it be fiction or reality, is based on detailed works. In terms of genres, though, there is an overkill of it, thrillers work and so does comedy.

Crime, Thriller and Scandal worked to capture the attention of the user to the World of OTT. However, for the long run, more genres like humor, romance, and fantasy will capture more attention. Also, the reason for the true success is the scripting. Unless the scripting is strong, a Mirzapur could deteriorate into a Maharani which, while it has its good points, is certainly not a well scripted story.

Rise of Regional Content on OTT

It is certainly aiding unity in diversity as there is content available across the globe for one to enjoy if one looks for it. It is making the search and consumption of such content easier. The stories being said are as real (or as real as the perspective of the user) as they can be. So, it is opening the horizons of consumer's own experience.

Impact of OTT on the business of Indian Cinema

Indian Cinema has truly become Indian cinema today as it is now about movies created from all parts of the country, which are minting money at the box office, rather than a handful of producers from Mumbai who held a stranglehold over 'Bollywood'. Today artists are chosen from across the country and allowed to speak the language they are comfortable with and being cast in movies (not to mention web-series and other shows on OTT). Multi-linguals are the way mainstream cinema is progressing. Cinema has also started evolving into a niche of large-scale fantasy movies which make it important to watch them on the large screen.

OTT has opened the avenue of watching cinema early from the comfort of one's own home. It has opened the choice to content beyond what the cinemas could bring to us as web-series and niche cinema. It has expanded the doors to welcome cinema from all parts of the globe to one's living room. It has taken away the artificial censor for now at least. So, yes, it is a boon.

8.3 Analysis basis Secondary Sources: Industry Reports and Analytics published by agencies closely studying the Media and Entertainment Industry

- According to the IAMAI Report (2022 – 23), the count of Internet users in India is expected to reach 900 million by 2025, increasing at a CAGR of 45% until 2025.

- The PwC report for 2022 projects India's Media and entertainment Industry to reach US$ 53.99 billion by 2026 and the Advertising revenue in India to reach US$ 5.42 billion by 2024.

- The rapid growth of OTT channels has increased emphasis on animated intellectual property (IP) content and larger investments in VFX by studios has provided animation and VFX studios with opportunities in both domestic and international markets.

- According to BCG, India's SVOD subscriptions is estimated to be 90-100 million (FY 2022) and is primarily driven by affordable OTT subscription offers and rise in demand for content led engagement amongst consumers.

- Statista Report 2022 pronounces Disney+ Hotstar (29% market share), as the leading OTT player in India followed by Jio TV (23% market share) and Amazon Prime Video. The report also highlights that 33% of people watch online videos on a Smart TV with video-enabled apps and 23% users are hooked on to video game console.

- According to the SBI report, the rise of OTT has led to a decline in multiplexes' profits as over 50 % consumers watch OTT for over 5 hours a month. Local and regional OTT have been catering to the consumers' need for content and entertainment in regional /native languages. The cost of multiplex tickets seems to be too high in comparison to the cost of subscription of OTTs that premier or showcase top releases across languages. The report estimates that OTT has already chipped away 7-9 per cent of the entertainment industry share and revenue. Technological innovations like Smart TV, Chromecast have helped bring theatre like experience at home and hence aiding comfort of watching films on OTT for the consumers.

- As per Ormax OTT Audience Report 2022, the OTT audience base in India is 423.8 million, i.e., 30 % market penetration. The report further categorized the Indian OTT consumers in 4 key categories:

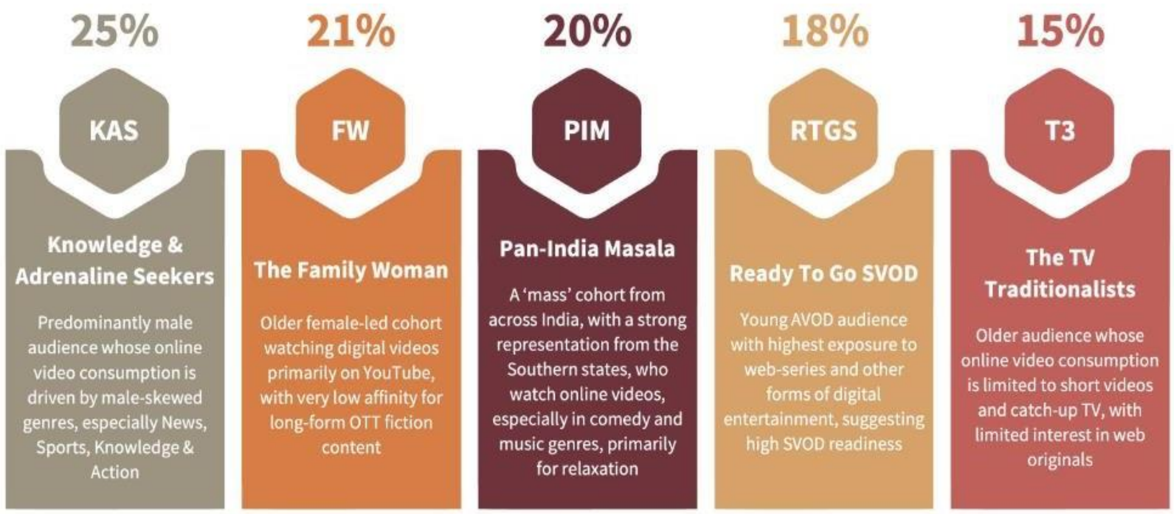

Figure 8.3.1: Audience Profile: Indian OTT consumers

Source: Ormax OTT Audience Report 2022

The report further states that an average Indian OTT consumer watches content produced in 4.6 languages, while they understand only 50 % of it. The availability of dubbed content and subtitles enables the consumer to explore content in different languages including Spanish and Korean.

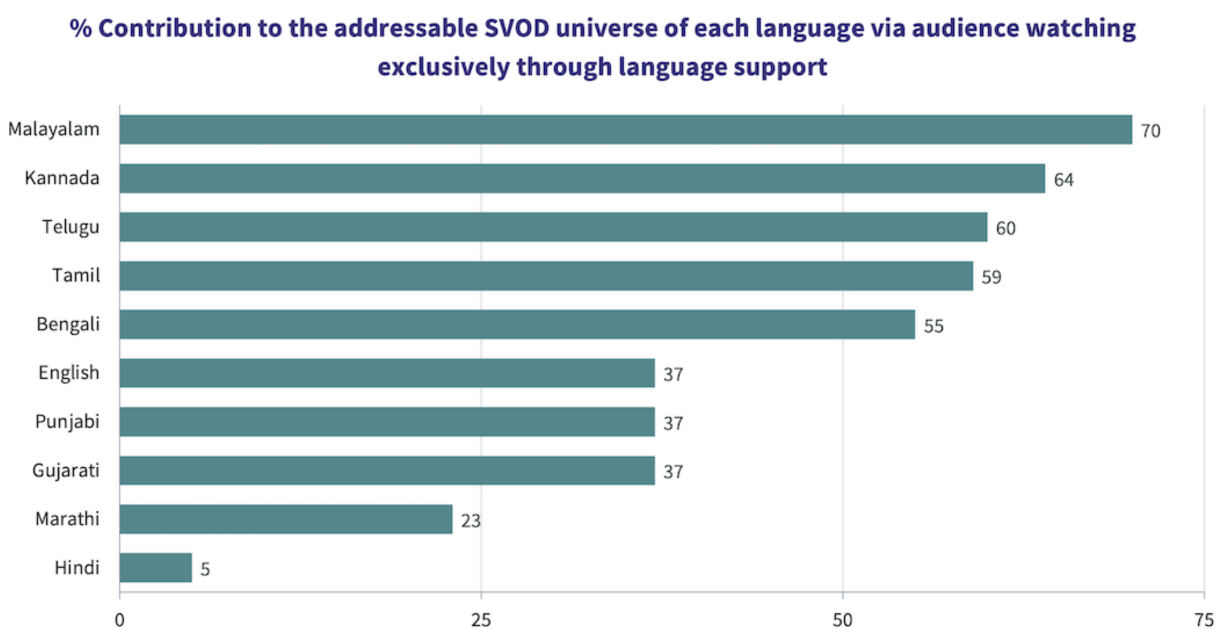

Figure 8.3.2: Audience Profile: Indian OTT consumers

Source: Ormax OTT Audience Report 2022

8.4 Conclusion

India is a country of diverse cultures and languages. The penetration of Internet, availability of smartphones, internet packages and subscription packs at an affordable price has led to a surge in the demand for content consumption in India. Anytime, anywhere accessibility of OTT allows the consumers the choice to enjoy the privacy of watching content basis the individual's choice, at the same time they may choose to enjoy the shared viewing experience while watching shows or films with their loved ones. Personalization of content curation enables the OTT user to explore more and more options in genres of their choice, while the catalogue on traditional media was limited to their primetime shows. In addition, traditional media adhered to the regulatory norms and was programmed basis the geographical sensibilities, OTT offers plethora of content from different parts of the globe on distinct subjects and genres.

The impact of OTT, according to the findings is two pronged. It has helped the consumer explore and enjoy the content in their native language accentuating the cultural pride and sense of belongingness, at the same time, the OTT platforms offer content from across the globe which makes the OTT, a universe of stories from different parts of the world that gives the consumer an exploratory immersive experience.

The pandemic and the rise of OTT have clearly been eye openers for the Entertainment industry in India. While majority of the movies found their way to OTT during the pandemic, the post pandemic phase is that stands as the real test of the pudding! The cost of acquisition for films is directly proportional to the star cast and the merit of the narrative. Many platforms are now willing to watch over the pulse of the market and box office performance before they bet on the films. It is hence evident that there is a need to create gripping narratives that satiate the hunger for content for the consumer. The audience needs more than the cliché story telling prevalent in certain celebrated sections of the industry. It must be noted that the audience preference for genres like thriller, crime, or scandal, cannot be the only funnel for programming strategy. Most fence sitters who have now converted to OTT audience are also the traditional TV viewers and hence, enjoy the fiction drama, lighthearted family entertainment done differently to break the monotony of the typical TV like content.

The cost of production for Indian OTT shows has been a subject of debate as many industry experts have questioned the sustainability and ROI of the content being created by the Platforms in India. Given the massive demand for content, it is evident that no platform can fulfil the demand if they invest heavily in production, optimization of cost of content, hence, is inevitable to be able to churn volumes of good quality, engaging content to acquire new consumers and to retain the existing subscribers. The research also indicates the need for competent pricing of subscriptions to enable the consumer to have more than one platform's subscription. While the profitability of the business of OTT in India remains as the elephant in the room that most players are unwilling to address, there is a need to invent business models that are commercially viable and profitable.

To conclude, the consumer is the king, the game of OTT is for those who know how to entertain the king while being considerate to his pocket.

CHAPTER 9

LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & SCOPE OF FUTURE RESEARCH

9.1 Limitations

The study currently is limited to the sample size of 200 respondents, SEC A from Metros and Semi Metros. The findings therefore are skewed towards the educated and earning class of the society. The limitation of geographical spread and socio – economic profiling of the respondents is also evident in the preference of content genres of the consumers. The choice of content and genres may change drastically as the study is expanded to rural Indian audience and to SEC B & C of the social metrics of living standards.

Further, the interviews are conducted amongst the veterans of Industry representing native Indian OTT platforms or key influencers of OTT ecosystem in India. Access to International Players operational in India can help gain a comprehensive perspective of business models and ROI for content basis their experience in the global market.

There is a limitation of literature reviews that elaborate on content consumption trends, key drivers for content preferences and the diverse choices of the consumers in the age of digital media. There is no rating or measurement for the content or performance of content on OTT other than the user generated reviews or ratings published by media publications.

The profitability of OTT platforms in India cannot be gauged inconspicuously in the absence of credible documentation of the revenues earned by OTT players in India.

9.2 Recommendations

- There is a need to innovate hybrid (AVOD & SVOD) models for OTT in India.
- TVOD is an interesting model for a price sensitive market like India.
- Self-Regulation protocols to be made mandatory for OTT players.
- Lucrative price packages & Innovative plans for Subscribers can help acquire more consumers.
- Content Investment and Strategy must cater to the content needs of both men and women as opposed to the male skewed program slate.
- Robust content strategy & pipeline to acquire and engage new consumers and to retain existing subscribers.
- Strategic emphasis on creation, acquisition and dissemination of Regional Films and shows.
- Credible Content Review and Rating Mechanism.
- OTTs in India must promote the content slates by means of consumer reviews and word of mouth publicity as that is the most sought after means of content discovery for the audience.

- Indian Consumers enjoy watching International Shows, competitive content acquisition strategy by Indian OTT can help them entertain their audience with shows from across the globe.
- Credible Rating and Reporting System for OTTs performance (Reach and Revenue) & Consumer engagement in India.

9.3 Scope of Future Research

- In depth study of Business Models & Content Strategy for OTT across the globe.
- Region wise study of consumer behavior, preference of content and willingness to pay for content.
- Language wise analytical study of content across genres in both Fiction and Non-Fiction.
- Metrics to evaluate ROI of Content for OTT.
- Study on Content Regulatory practices for Indian OTT.

APPENDIX A

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