

Movies on OTT Platforms and its Impact on College Students in Tamil Nadu

Mahalakshmi U.N, Research Scholar, Department of Communication and Journalism, Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India

Kiran Prasad, Professor and Head, Department of Communication and Journalism, Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Tirupati- 517502, Andhra Pradesh, India.

ABSTRACT

Cinema is the major source of entertainment and also one of the sources to influence thoughts, attitudes, behavior and belief of Indian people. Movies communicated to people in masses which is a form of escapism for all age groups. The trend is being affected by the OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon prime, Disney+ hotstar, and so on. Due to the global pandemic situation (Covid - 19) and lockdown people were forced to stay inside their home and adapted to OTT platforms which provided unlimited access to world movies within indoors. People prefer OTT platforms since they can easily watch latest shows or films anytime and anywhere as the subscription cost is cheaper than the cost of a ticket at multiplex. Due to huge demand and delay of the high budget movie production, there is a great opening for the independent film makers to try their luck. Using quantitative approach as a methodological tool this paper attempts to understand the movie viewing habits through OTT and the motivational factors for watching movies by college students in Tamil Nadu on OTT platforms, which genre they usually prefer watching and its impact. This research concludes that affordable OTT subscriptions and recommendations from their friends had increased the frequency of watching movies. Restricted content watching had an adverse effect on students which resulted in their behavior change. Binge-watching has an impact on their academic performances, adverse health issues, and so on.

Keywords: *OTT, Technology, Cinema, Movie Theatres, Customer Preference*

INTRODUCTION

Technology development in this decade of the 21st century has made a tremendous change in the society as well as economy. In the past few years, online streaming is trending by allowing viewers access to a huge amount of content globally which has remarkable growth due to the pandemic situation and lockdown. The evolution of cloud storage, online streaming, management of databases, and distributed systems have given rise to a variety of over-the-top software and applications which give the users an option other than local television (Lad, Butala & Bide, 2020)

The technological growth worldwide and in India is witnessing momentum growth in the cinema industry. Internet and smartphones are changing the viewing pattern of the audience rapidly. The new techniques like social networking sites, digital platforms, and wifi sticks had replaced TV and theatre watching (Singh, 2019). The movie industry in India has been locked in a fierce competition for audiences due to the advent of online streaming facilities. The global COVID - 19 pandemic situation has intensified this struggle, since many cinema halls worldwide remained closed, which made the consumers switch to OTT platforms. The OTT service providers deliver audio, video, and other media over the internet and bypass the traditional operator's network (Sujata, Sohag, Tanu, Chintan, Shubhman & Sumit, 2015). Despite this threat, cinema offers a consumer a unique and special experience, and by embracing the right tools and strategies to adapt, the cinema industry could be set to thrive in turbulent times (Czekala, 2021).

OTT services are series, films, and shows provided on the online platform for the consumers by the content providers (Chatterjee & Pal, 2020). Across the world, over 149 billion people have subscribed to OTT channels like Hulu, Netflix, Amazon Prime, and so on (ReportLinker, 2022). In India, more than 350 million people are using the OTT platform and it is estimated to hit 500 million users in 2023. The global OTT market size is expected to reach \$ 179.9 billion by 2025 where the market growth will increase by 14.3% (Global Newswire, 2020). On the other hand in India, the subscription to various OTT platforms had increased by 49% (OTT subscription, 2022).

According to the BCG report, it is reported that 16 percent of India's media consumption is already on digital platforms and by 2023 the Indian OTT market size is expected to reach 5

billion dollars. The technological developments, change in people's preferences, convenience, and like the same paved the way for the evolution of OTT platforms.

A sudden increase in the usage of OTT platforms was witnessed due to the outbreak of COVID – 19. The pandemic started in early March 2020 in India which forced everyone to stay at home. Lockdown provided more free time to almost all people around the world which resulted in more people engaging with content on television and later on to online streaming services (Mohan, Datta, Viswanath & Thomas, 2021) since televisions were airing the old content due to non-production of new serials/ episodes.

A new lease of life has been seen in people's habits and preferences. Video calls, chats, gaming, series, and movies are popular choices for people to spend their time during the lockdown. COVID -19 reshaped the consumers' content preferences. People started to subscribe to OTT platforms since they get quality content with quantity and that too without any third-party advertisers (Kim, 2016). OTT is a convenient medium for consumers, where they can spend quality time with friends and family (Madnani, Fernandes & Madnani, 2020). This new era started the concept of binge-watching (Prasad, 2022). Work from home professionals also spent time on OTT as they had a flexible schedule. Variables like annual income, age, convenience, and no advertisements have impacted the growth of OTT platforms during the outbreak of COVID -19, and its been also extended.

With Internet connection, people have started watching web series on both mobile and immobile devices, due to which people have started watching it anytime and anywhere increasing its reach. People prefer using OTT services over the traditional medium because

- High-quality content at a low cost: The OTT platforms provide us with numerous options and to access them; people need an internet connection and an annual subscription fee. Most of the houses have Internet connections, so all they need is an annual subscription fee which is less than the TV subscription plans).
- Original content and multiple genres: People are bored of watching the same repetitive content and they have been looking for something new. These platforms are

offering the audience with a great variety and less censored content that is attracting the audience.

The biggest advantage is that the Film Censor Board of India has still not loomed like a hungry vulture on the OTT content in India. This is why many directors and producers choose the OTT platforms to release their movies or web series without the disturbances of censorship (“Censorship of”, 2021). The best part is, that there is no need for censorship on OTT in India (Saha& Prasad, 2021). Unlike cinema halls, OTT content is largely meant for private viewing. The technology in OTT platforms also allows a clear classification of family content and mature content. It’s easy for those who don’t wish to watch any mature themes to stay away. From action thriller to drama or dark humor to survival drama it’s easy to find the content of any genre.

OTT platforms are easy to access our favorite content anytime, anywhere in our language. It just requires a stable internet connection and a compatible viewing device. Whereas, in the case of traditional cable networks people get bound by physical and geographical requirements for cable. This freedom of location makes it very convenient for viewers. Most OTT platforms aim at increasing viewership by releasing web series in different languages. They just need to log in to their streaming account from anywhere, choose a language, and start streaming. Moreover, one can control the playback of the series and can skip to the next or previous scenes. Such controls are not available on cable TV or theatres. Also, there are options to customize a list of favorite movies and watch them any time later.

However, the increasing competition of such platforms is causing customer subscription fatigue. i.e. the availability of many platforms at once is prompting the audience to be selective of their subscriptions.

RELATED STUDIES

Everyone was finding solace in OTT platforms since no films were released in theaters and no shooting for neither movies nor televisions were taking place (Patel, Khaida&Awasys, 2020). This changed the audience watching habits. The COVID – 19 lockdown was a blessing for OTT players because the subscriptions increased to 80% and subscriptions for OTT platforms such as

Zee5 and AltBalaji had grown tremendously (Kaushal, 2020). The BARC Nielsen report records that there has been a significant hike in the consumption of TV and new platforms during the lockdown. There was a significant impact on media consumption because of the social distancing, quarantining, and staying at home. Consumers' media consumption patterns changed since they spent more time staying indoors.

Consumers were accessing more social media thus increasing the time spent on smartphones by 1.5 hours (Nielsen.com, 2020). According to the Influential Market Report, there has been a 29% rise in the usage of social media. Instagram and Youtube viewers rose to 32% and 44% respectively since many were working from home (Madnani, Fernandes & Madnani, 2020). The audience no longer takes in what is being fed to them since the online video services are spreading (Brubaker, 2020; Jurgensen, 2019). There had been a shift from traditional mediums toward online video channels (Netflix, 2013). Viewers can watch shows according to their schedule and enjoy it (Schweidel & Moe, 2016). The cost and comfort are the significant factors behind the usage and watching of any video content (Patel, Khaida & Awasya, 2020). The consumers for the movies have seen a significant rise across the platforms. Cinema streaming service MIBI has seen a 28% rise in viewership on its platform in a period of one month (Patnaik, Shah & More, 2021).

Ruggerio (2000) stated that the following are the factors for the audience shift from the traditional medium to the OTT services: Interactivity gives the audience control; Asynchronicity allows the audience to access and watch whenever they want; Demassification provides the audience with a variety of content and leaves them to choose what they want to watch. Audiences are giving importance to the content and the narrative style (Matrix, 2014), and they are motivated to use the technology as they can control the time, place, and manner of consumption (Steiner & Xu, 2018).

When a person experiences flow, he/she is totally involved with total concentration, losing track of time, inner satisfaction, and a gratifying state of mind. Chou & Ting (2003) added that those who experience more of the flow have more chances to become addicted. On the other hand, Feenay (2014) stated that watching OTT content is associated with rewards as after having a long hard-working, people would want to reward themselves by planning well in advance for

their binge-watching escapade. But this binge-watching may lead to loneliness, depression, and isolation which can be detrimental to the overall psychological and mental health of an individual (Pandey & Pandey, 2017). Researchers said that people use television for different reasons and web users use OTT services to satisfy their various needs (Coffey & Stipp, 1997; Steinkamp, 2020) which leads to various impacts.

Based on the review of literature the researchers proposed the conceptual framework in figure 1.

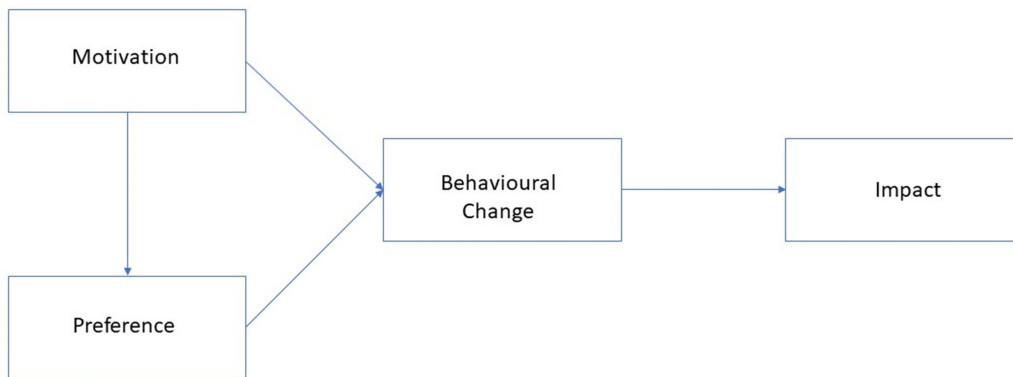


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The researchers would like to understand the movie viewing habits through OTT and the motivational factors for watching movies by college students in Tamil Nadu on OTT platforms, which genre they usually prefer watching and its impact.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on our research, we collected data from primary and secondary sources through the stratified random sampling process. The medium that we used is online, where we circulated the questionnaire to our target audience. A total of 134 samples were collected from Tamil Nadu.

The questionnaire was created in Google form and was circulated to college students. The data was collected from a few of the recognized and prestigious institutions in and around Tamil Nadu.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The age group was split into four categories. The majority of the students who watch movies on OTT platforms belong to the 20- 23 age group with 47.1% followed by 32.4% of the students falling in the 18-20 age group and 20.6% belonging to the above 23 age group category. No respondents were found in the age group category of under 18. The majority of the samples were from post-graduate respondents with 60% of them being female.

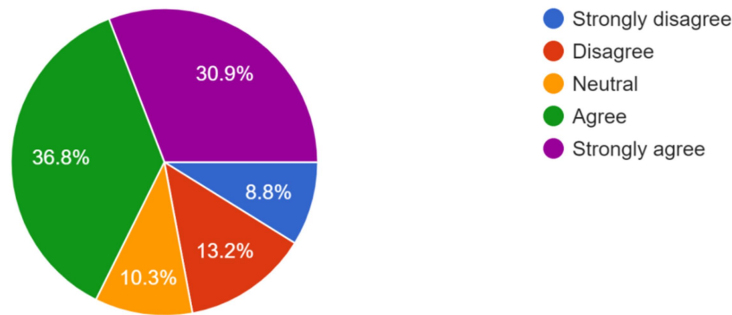


Figure 2: Watching movies on OTT platforms during lockdown period

The above pie chart clearly says that more than 60% of them started to watch movies on OTT platforms during the lockdown period

The reliability test was done on all the variables and the values are above 0.5 and hence reliable (Table 1).

Construct	Cronbach’s Value
Motivation	0.709
Preferences	0.686
Behaviour Change	0.667
Impact	0.805

Table 1 - Reliability Test

Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate	S.E	C.R.	P	Label
preference < motivation -- -	.160	.028	5.785	***	
behchng < preference -- -	.291	.175	1.663	.096	
behchng < motivation -- -	.226	.061	3.695	***	
impact < behchng -- -	.262	.049	5.361	***	

Table 2 - Regression Weight

Three significant structural paths among the exogenous latent variables are found to be significant. The maximum regression weight is of motivation (5.785) impacting preferences followed by behavioral change (5.361) on impact and motivation (3.695) with behavioral change. with an absolute value is less than 0.001.

As mentioned, in the chi-square test in SEM, it is more beneficial to use alternative indices. The value of CMIN/DF is 4.986 which indicates a reasonable fit. The CFI of 0.901 indicates an adequate fit between the structural model and sample data, and the GFI of 1.046 and RMSEA of 0.020 suggest a good fit. Based on the GFI and CFI indices, it can be concluded that there is a relatively good fit between the model and data.

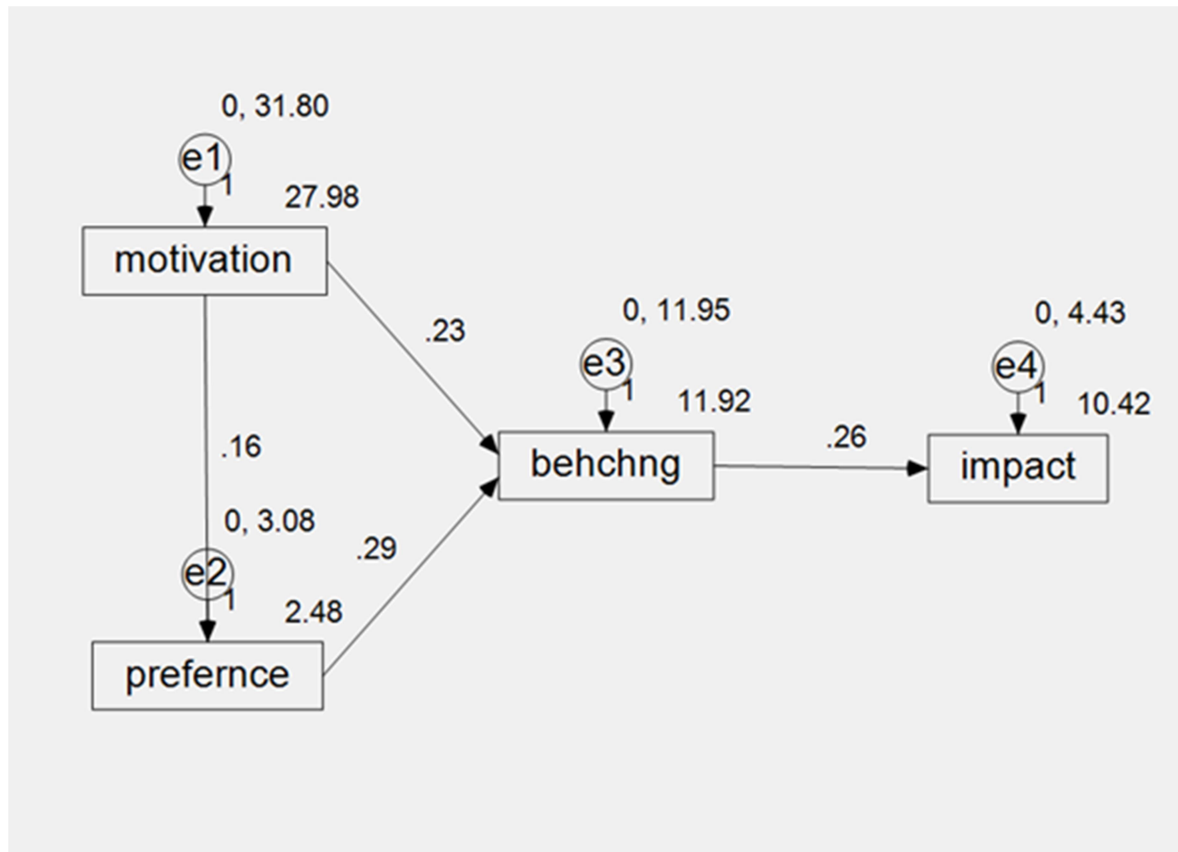


Figure 3 - The empirically proved proposed conceptual framework

India Brand equity foundation survey result stated that the OTT subscribers increased to 29 million in July 2020 which was only 21.4 million in January 2020 Shahidi (2020). This clearly shows that there was a huge increase in OTT subscribers as people had to stay at home during the lockdown. They had no access to entertainment outside and were forced to remain indoors. Due to the lockdown, no new production was carried out either by television or the movie industry. Televisions were forced to repeat the old content to fill their prime time slots and to hold their audiences. Though new movies were ready for release they could not be exhibited in theaters since theaters remained closed. Initially, they enjoyed watching the repeated content as they had no options but later they got bored and started to search for the new content eagerly wherever available and thus leading to the OTT platforms.

It is interesting to notice that affordability, convenience, entertainment, quality content, multilingual shows, and the like played a significant role in motivating people to prefer the OTT platforms over other media.

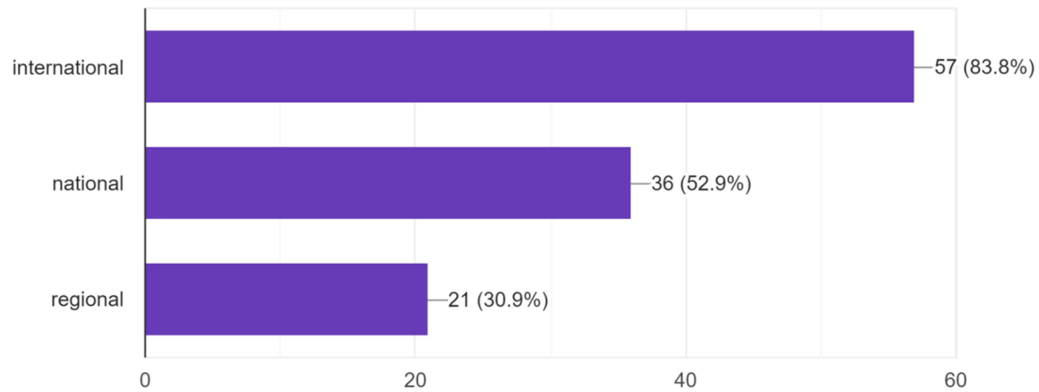


Figure 4 - Subscription of OTT platform service providers

From graph 1 it is very much visible that students prefer to subscribe to international OTT service providers than the national and regional OTT service providers. Production quality, variety of genres, original content, heavy movie databases, less censorship, and multilingual content were the core factors for them to prefer International platforms rather than national or regional platforms.

Apart from web series and original content, students prefer to watch movies on OTT platforms. Earlier students preferred to watch movies in theaters. However, there is a change in this trend which is very much visible. Due to the post-pandemic economic situation, not many are lavishly spending money on entertainment. Moreover, since the subscriptions are existing, students pointed out that they wait for the OTT release of the movies.

Generally, students watch various types of genres but more than 70% of the students mentioned that they prefer to watch thriller and mystery movies, followed by Romance, comedy, fantasy, and so on. Students were held up with college work/academic activities during the daytime and generally preferred to watch movies late at night. There is a disturbance in their routine night sleep which affects their regular sleeping pattern. Due to improper sleep, they are inactive during the daytime and they could not concentrate on their academic activities. Since they could not par with the academic excellence they feel pressurized, stressed, and depressed.

In addition to private space, they do not have any other disturbances and anyone to monitor what they watch. Surprisingly students accepted that this allowed them to access rated R for sexuality content. When they discuss it with their peer groups they come to know more about these kinds of movies which become habitual. This leads them to isolate themselves to watch more similar content. There is a behavioral change in their activities/attitudes that they try to avoid socializing with their family and friends. They also agreed that they are not willing to watch movies with family members and relatives. Apart from late-night watching, few students agreed that they watch movies during online classes which affected their academic performances.

CONCLUSION

Most of them started to watch movies on OTT platforms during the lockdown period since theaters remained closed. Students were motivated to watch movies on OTT platforms since it is cost-effective and convenient. Multilingual and International content attracts them invariably. Affordable OTT subscriptions and recommendations from their friends had increased the frequency of watching movies. Restricted content watching had an adverse effect on students which resulted in their behavior change. Binge-watching has an impact on their academic performances, adverse health issues, and so on. With the invention of any new technology, both positive and negative impacts will be there. Proper guidance by the parents in explaining to their wards to recognize the nature of the fantasy/ reel world with the real world will help them to understand situations better and act accordingly rather than going through the process of self-realization.

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