

## Exploring the Role of Social Media and Other Factors in the OTT Platform Landscape Post-Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

Over-the-top (OTT) platform delivers the content to the audience through the internet services. The online content is easily accessible on personal computers, mobiles, digital media players, and intelligent platforms. OTT is referred to as the new generation of modern television networks. However, extreme competition regarding the low cost of switching challenges customer acquisition and loyalty. The increase in the subscription prices strains customer retention. The OTT platforms shift their focus to offer tailored content to meet the viewer's needs. The study aims to determine the motivating factors in using the OTT platform and its adoption rate during post-pandemic times. In addition, the study focuses on determining the obstacles to using the OTT platform. The qualitative study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR), structured interview, and word cloud analysis to meet the study objectives. The researchers interacted with diverse respondents about OTT subscribers. The study findings indicated that the social media and the ads displayed are very effective and keep the customers engaged. People often subscribe to OTT platforms because of the ads displayed and social media content.

Keywords: Over-the-top (OTT), Internet, Streaming platforms, Web series

### INTRODUCTION

Consumers are gradually shifting from conventional television (TV) to Over-The-Top (OTT) streaming platforms (Kim et al., 2016). This streaming platform replaced traditional television as the primary source of amusement. It replaced the organized broadcasters by offering on-demand programs (Chakraborty, 2022). This media platform delivers the content to the audience through internet services. The online content is easily accessible on personal computers, mobiles, digital media players, and smart platforms. OTT has been referred to as the new generation of modern television networks. (Sharma and Lulandala, 2023). Statista (2023) suggested that online platforms such as HBO Max, Disney +, Amazon Prime Video, Netflix, and YouTube are significant players. OTT business models offer various subscription, premium, and time-limited rentals (Park, 2019). Recently, online platforms have noticed an extraordinary increase in subscription rates (Sharma, 2023).

Practitioners estimate that they will make substantial use of online platforms that may lead to high internet traffic, content, and number of users in the upcoming years (Statista, 2023). Since the lockdown, OTT has been booming and has gained much popularity compared to DTH. The number of social media users in India at the start of 2022 was equivalent to 33.4 percent of the total population (Statista, 2023). 74% of people are tired of social media

(Survey Monkey). According to The OrmaxOTTViewership Sizing Report 2022, the Indian OTT audience universe now counts 424 million people. In India, 119 million of these are currently paid OTT subscriptions. Regarding global social media users, India is in the second position with 755.47 million users and China is 1<sup>ST</sup> with 1021.96 million users. USA, Indonesia, and Brazil are in the following 3 positions with 302.25m, 217.53 m, and 165.45m users, respectively, as of 2023. (Demand Sage – 2023)

India is on track to become the world's second-largest OTT market (after the United States) by the end of fiscal year 2023, with a market value of INR 138 billion. According to recent data, there are currently 4.80 billion internet users in the world, accounting for roughly 61% of the world's population (Datareport.com). Social media users surged by more than 13% over the past year. Today, there are over 40 OTT platforms in India, including regional language platforms. It claims that the Indian OTT market will rise from \$1.5 billion in 2021 to \$4 billion in 2025 to \$12.5 billion by 2030.

The usage rate of OTT platforms in India increased with the speed of the internet. The country has observed a gradual increase in consumer demand for offering and consuming diverse media (sports, entertainment, and movies) (Karg, 2022; Mulla, 2022). In spite of the initial success, multinational companies now need help with the existing OTT platforms due to their market saturation (Sharma & Lulandala, 2023). Extreme competition in terms of the low cost of switching challenges customer acquisition and loyalty. The increase in the subscription prices strains customer retention. The OTT platforms shift their focus to offer tailored content to meet the viewer's needs (Palomba, 2022).

To improve user experience and retention, OTT platforms must develop deep insight into the individual attributes influencing the customers to adopt the platform (Talwar et al., 2023). The article is structured as follows: Section 2 explains the relevant literature and the existing gap in the current literature. Section 3 explains the study method adopted by the researchers. A details result and discussion are shown in section 4. Section 5 explains the study's conclusion

### **1. 3. Review of related studies**

Yeole (2022) mentioned that the prevalence of smartphones, the affordable internet data plans provided by Indian telecom service providers, the volume and high calibre of content available on these platforms, and the dynamics of the global media industry are all contributing to the popularity of OTT, which has a significant impact on the financial and regulatory issues faced by OTT service providers. The propensity of young people for unrestricted access to content for free is also crucial to fully complete content ownership in a constrained way. As a result, OTT platform use is significantly increasing, especially among young people.

Saini (2020) mentioned that the beginning with Hum Log in the early 1980s and including numerous successful shows like Ramayan, Mahabharat, Kyuki Sash Bhikabhibahuthi, and many others, television series dominated the Indian market as a source of everyday entertainment. However, web programs have been trendy since OTT services like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Alt Balaji first appeared. Product placement research in more recent media, such as computer, video, digital, internet, and simulation games, is increasing, according to Kureshi (2010), while it is diminishing in conventional media like television and film.

Patel et al. (2020) explained that the media plays an essential role in society for transferring information. Nowadays, Technology has also been the main driver for the growth of OTT platforms. Significant changes have occurred in the viewership of OTT platforms in recent years. A report by Google Trends describes that OTT leading platforms like Netflix and Hotstar have been the most searched OTT platforms since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a drastic shift in viewership; people are showing more interest in web series when compared to movies due to the great content that is brought into the series.

Ernst & Young (2016) reported that the developments in the IT sector have changed the mindset of the people from the traditional media ecosystem to new media platforms such as Netflix, Hotstar, Voot, ZEE5, etc. have brought changes to the growing market. It is also supported by the increasing number of smartphone users in the country. Affordable mobile phones and internet plans launched by various companies have also boosted the growth of OTT platforms. The number of Indian customers has increased in OTT platforms because of the quality and convenience; OTT Technology consists of nearly 70 million video viewers in India as of 2019-20.

Saini (2020) explained the relationship of the pandemic with the usage rate of OTT. The study findings suggested

that OTT was a preferred entertainment medium due to its cross-cultural content, accessibility of informative content, availability of internet data at competitive prices, subscription to virtually unlimited content, etc. The lockdown changed people's life patterns. 97.6% of people are under lockdown, as they are not allowed to set out; they spend their time in entertainment. On the other hand, people used TV largely compared to OTT for information. 61% of viewers feel that OTT has a better future than TV.

Pardon (2021) mentioned that to use the OTT platform, the buyer must be literate and have interactive technologies in their smart devices. The OTT platform was discovered to affect consumer loyalty and intention to use. Lee et. al. (1995) explained that traditional TV faces much competition since there are various options available such as downloading of video and easy availability of streaming devices like laptops and mobiles rather than TVs. These portable devices are better interactive for OTT services. Customer service is a crucial factor in retaining consumers. Younger people (those under 35) tend to use/watch more online videos by opting for these OTT platforms than older people. Traditional cable companies face stiff competition from these OTT platforms.

Damratoski et al. (2011) reported that OTT platforms can be watched through any device, and students prefer mobile phones. The majority of students utilize digital video recorders and watch television online. By using these technologies, the user rate increases. Baccarneet. al. (2013) highlighted that the viewer's now have access to additional screens with premium content thanks to Technology and digitalization. Students want a higher-quality signal with better features at a reasonable price. Players compete fiercely to provide improved services at a lesser price. He added that Netflix, Hot Star, and Jio are the most popular among Indian youth. These platforms offer free-trials initially, and most youths prefer web series over movies. In India, over-the-top applications are changing media consumption habits. The transition can be linked to the ease of service, personalized experience, and availability of worldwide content, among other factors. The future of OTT in India is optimistic due to increased smartphone penetration, economic convergence of media businesses at the national or worldwide level, and the quality of digital content reception.

Ritu (2018) states that digital media has become integral to people's daily lives and is a popular medium for acquiring and sharing information, sociability, entertainment, and marketing. Consumer tastes and attitudes are changing as a result of increased consumption of content via digital media, which may be attributed to improved internet connectivity, advanced digital devices, competitive data prices in India, and the accessible, on-the-go nature of internet media. Dobrianet. al. (2013) reported that customers enjoy higher clear quality video from the internet. Advertisements in the middle of the shows or series impact customers negatively. Customer engagement towards these platforms reduces the increase of buffering time. For example, for a 90-minute online video show, a 1% increase in buffering ratio decreases customer viewing by more than three minutes.

Pederson (2018) states that OTT provides its services to a larger worldwide audience. The majority of OTTs provide English subtitles for their videos. Subtitles were primarily a national phenomenon, but they became international with the rise of commercial television and DVD. It is now a worldwide aspect, thanks to online streaming. A worldwide OTT pioneer, Netflix adds regional language videos while servicing that region. It adds regional norms and local practices after modification. Vidhya (2018) reported that the rise in demand for OTT platforms has lessened the revenues at the box office. The movies were uploaded to the OTT platform very soon, which prompted people to subscribe to these platforms. According to the report by EY India and FICCI, the introduction of streaming services and film income is projected to surpass digital in the next two years, upsetting the entertainment industry.

Nair (2021) estimated the OTT platform's consumption rate and understood its future scope by conducting a primary quantitative method through the survey. With the emergence of OTT platforms, the viewing experience has drastically changed. With so many choices accessible today, the main question for customers is what factors impact their selection. Various factors, such as age, cost, convenience, content, and location, will likely affect. Traditional cable setups face much domination from these OTT platforms, and they find very content for entertainment. As a result, this experiment aims to investigate the dynamics of viewers and how they influence the viewing experience as OTT platforms expand.

Jhala (2021) estimated the average time people spend on OTT platforms and the satisfaction level of subscribers by collecting the primary data through questionnaires in India. With enhanced networks and more robust internet connectivity, the presence of subscribers for OTT platforms is increasing daily, leading to the growth of Hot star, Voot, etc. The pandemic has changed the viewing perspective of the audience. After COVID-19, people were

habituated to the usage of OTT platforms because TV and Cable networks could not provide entertainment to their viewers because of the lockdown. The OTT sector witnessed a 30% rise in paid subscribers from 22.2 million to 29 million between March and July 2020. This study aims to understand the different priorities of subscribers while using different OTT platforms.

### 1.1 3.1 Research Gap

Past studies have reported limited findings on user consumption constraints and inadequate literature on factors determining OTT usage. Qualitative studies must adopt a grounded theory approach to predict customer adoption and consumption behaviour. Researchers reported the user's experience, types of platform used (Baccarne et al., 2013), level of commitment and satisfaction (See-To et al., 2012), promotion efficiency linked with OTT platforms (Kim et al., 2021), pricing strategy of subscription, preferences of non-users of the OTT platform (Tsai, 2022).

Past studies have reported limited findings on user consumption constraints and inadequate literature on factors determining OTT usage. To address this gap in the literature, a broad study is needed to identify the range of motivating factors and hurdles experienced in using OTT platforms. The past literature focused on socio-cultural and technical features in isolation. They ignored the holistic viewpoint essential for the study. The present study focuses on filling the gap by listing the drivers of OTT usage behaviour as the study outcome would explain whether the users continue to use the OTT platform or, rather, they would discontinue using it. This study includes a hypothetical framework: Uses and Gratifications 2.0 Theory (UGT2.0; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). It aims to meet this research gap by determining the motivation and hurdles in using the OTT platforms.

## 2. 4. Methodology

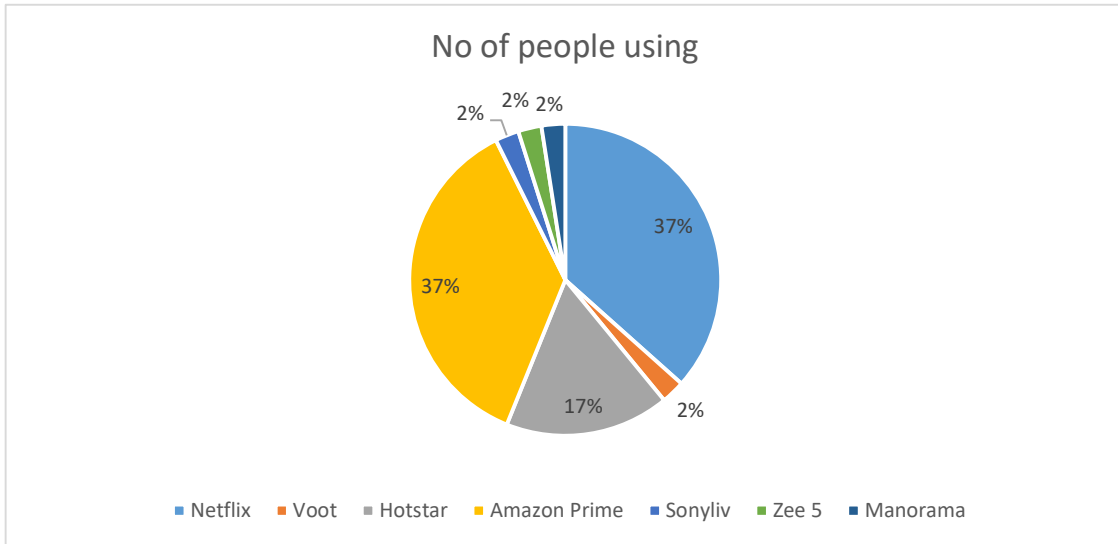
This study aims to answer two research questions (RQ). **RQ1.** What factors influence the use of the OTT platform after post-pandemic time? **RQ2.** Whether social media is considered an important factor in adopting the OTT platform. The qualitative study adopts structured interviews and thematic analysis to meet the study objectives. The researchers interacted with diverse respondents with regard to OTT subscribers. The respondents shared a wide variety of viewpoints and experiences. The researchers adopted grounded theory to identify repetitive themes and response patterns, providing important insight into the study findings. Subsequently, the researchers traced and identified obstacles and drivers to well-known theories of UGT 2.0. The study findings have hypothetical and practical propositions. Hypothetically, they expand their knowledge about the obstacles and drivers in OTT usage. The content creators and the OTT platform service providers can employ these viewpoints to plan to tackle obstacles and improve the user's experience. It would subsequently assist the OTT service providers in retaining their customers.

The study's research methodology is a mixed-method approach. Using the convenience sampling technique, a cross-sectional study is carried out among individuals 16 years of age and above. The location of this research is the southern part of India. Since we have added a lot of open-ended questions, we chose the number of respondents to be 50. Data was collected using a predetermined questionnaire, including qualitative questions, by circulating Google forms among the respondents. The questionnaire included questions based on consumer perceptions and how social media ads influence their buying behaviour.

The study used word cloud analysis to identify the shared preferences or themes from the open-ended questionnaire questions. The literature was also analysed using the word cloud technique to identify popular terms or themes mentioned in the various articles that were considered for the study. Excel, a statistical tool, was used in this study to analyse the data gathered, and the website <https://www.wordclouds.com/> was utilized to analyse the word cloud.

## 3. 5. Result

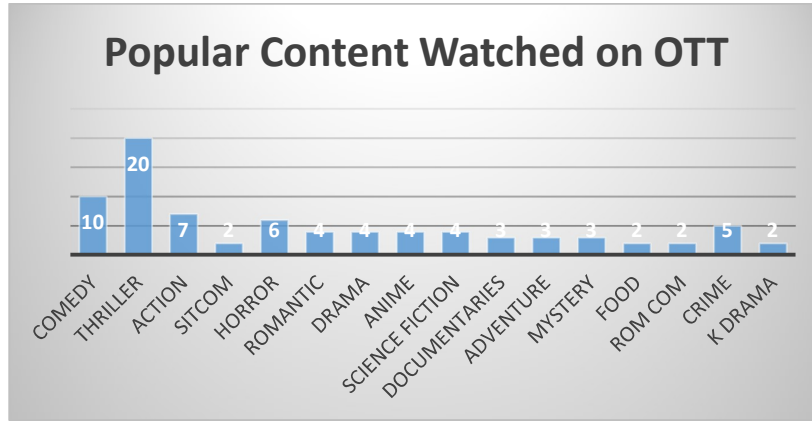
37% preference for both Netflix and Amazon Prime are seen in the above Fig. 1. The significant reasons why people favor OTT are its high quality, diversity, and clear material. It also has ad-free programming. In contrast to the DTH, OTT platforms are personalized. Anywhere, at any time, anyone can watch. This has a greater degree of user flexibility because there is no.



**Figure 1: Popular OTT platforms**

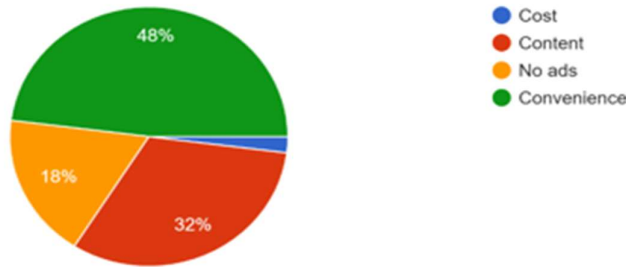
**Table 1: Responses to popular content**

Responses	Total
Comedy	10
Thriller	20
Action	7
Sitcom	2
Horror	6
Romantic	4
Drama	4
Anime	4
Science Fiction	4
Documentaries	3
Adventure	3
Mystery	3
Food	2
Rom-com	2
Crime	5
K Drama	2



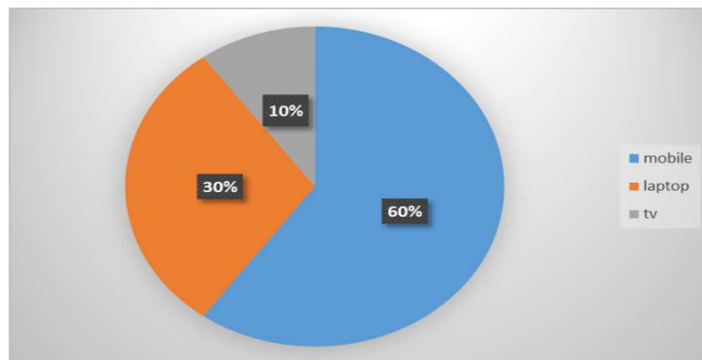
**Figure 2: Popular content watched on OTT platforms**

Most of our respondents chose thriller content as their first choice in terms of entertainment content, with comedy coming in at number two. Next came action, horror, drama, science fiction, action, and horror films, as per Table 1 and Fig 2.



**Figure3: Factors influencing the adoption of OTT platforms**

The fig:3 above indicates that around 48 % of individuals choose convenience over price. Given that, just 2% of people are affected by cost. OTT customers place value on the content in addition to convenience. We can infer from this that when content and convenience are high-quality, individuals are least troubled by cost. Many different answers can be given to this question. Since it was one of the best sources of entertainment, most of them had OTT subscriptions. The most significant benefits of the OTT platform have emerged as the availability of material, convenience, and an easier way to view your favourite series or films whenever and wherever you choose. People were prompted to subscribe by the displayed advertisements, word-of-mouth, and friend influence, among other factors. The options available regarding types, languages, choices of web series or movies, etc. are other factors that prompted people to use OTT platforms.



**Figure 4: Popular medium to use OTT platform online for entertainment**

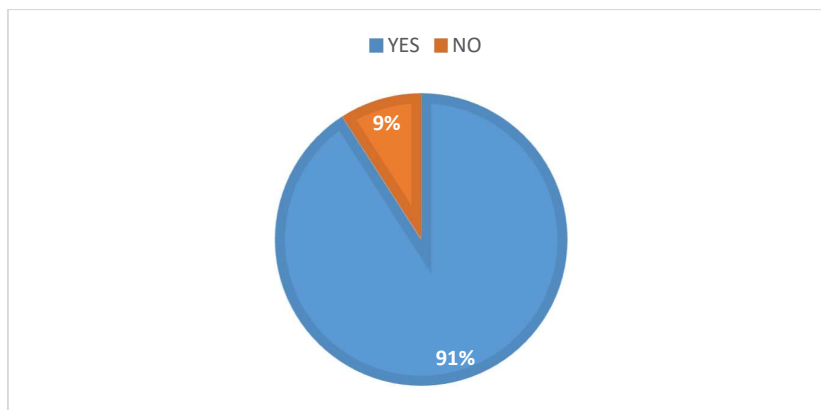
60% of respondents choose mobile, as shown in Fig. 4 above. For viewing their favorite content on OTT platforms, 30% of individuals prefer computers, while 10% prefer TV. According to the pie chart in Fig. 5, most respondents prefer mobile devices to laptops or TVs for watching OTT content since they are handier and take up less space.

**Table 2: Social media influence on buying decision of OTT platform**

Yes/No	Reasons
No	advertisements
Yes	By ads
Yes	Advertisements influence purchasing behaviour
Yes	The feedback and experiences shared by people influence the users
Yes	Certain trends make the users follow the same trends
Yes	Promotion of various movies and series
Yes	Certain promotions in social media are catchy, attract users, and influence them to purchase
Yes	It creates awareness and enhances certain ideas
Yes	Most of them tend to watch certain series and movies after watching reels related to those.
Yes	Users get to know about new products and related information through social media.
Yes	Since ads that pop up are based on products viewed or searched, better options are available.

**Table 3: Frequency of Social Media influence to buy OTT**

Yes	No
10	1



**Figure5: Social Media influence on buying decision of OTT platform**



**Fig 6: Reasons of influence by Social Media to buy decision of OTT platform**

Out of 50 responses, 10 said yes, and 1 said no when asked if social media influences decision-making (Fig. 6). The rest have more or less decided not to respond. Additionally, most of them believe that many purchasing considerations for some consumers have been influenced by the feedback and reviews offered by the customers. Figure 7 shows a variety of possibilities based on the consumers' search histories in movie commercials, reels, and a few pop-up advertisements. The best way to change customer behaviour is through social media.

**Table 4: Popular social media platform that influenced you to subscribe to OTT**

Responses
Social media influenced me to watch shows on OTT. Instagram influenced me to subscribe to OTT platforms.
Social media has sometimes influenced me to watch a show. The social media platform is Instagram, and the show's name is <b>Never Have I Ever</b> .
Instagram ads influenced me to watch shows.
Instagram influenced me to watch some movies and <b>anime</b> .
<b>Bigg Boss, Ravivaar with Star Parivaar, Smart Jodi</b> , etc., are a few shows that social media influenced me to watch.
The hype of <b>K-dramas, Money Heist</b> , etc. were a few shows I watched influenced by social media Instagram.
I subscribed to three OTT platforms, namely- Voot, Amazon Prime, and Hotstar, being influenced by YouTube.
I subscribed to 5 OTT platforms- Netflix, Amazon, Hotstar, SonyLiv, and Manorama Max by watching reels of Instagram
5- Netflix, Amazon, Hotstar, Zee5, and Sony Liv with the influence of Facebook
Two- Hotstar subscription with the influence of Twitter
Hotstar- Only to watch a movie about a deceased actor! With Facebook ads



Fig 7: Word Cloud analysis of the most influencing Social Media platform for OTT

The most influential social media network, as shown in Fig. 8 among the 11 respondents, is Instagram, followed by Facebook, according to an analysis of the word cloud. The other respondents prefer not to comment.

#### 4. 6. Conclusion

Since COVID-19, the OTT platforms have marked their presence intensely in every household. It was one of the greatest sources of entertainment. The spread of OTT and the content available were also through social media. People were engaged more on social media and were influenced to some extent. Most of the customers are extremely satisfied and are sure to continue to watch OTT platforms.

The data collected and responses have indicated the importance of OTT platforms and the extent to which social media influences customers. We have also come across how ads in social media play a significant role in creating or developing consumer needs. The interpretations show that social media and the ads displayed are very effective and keep the customers engaged. People often subscribe to OTT platforms because of the ads displayed and social media content. When the ads on TV tend to influence people's buying behaviour, the best way to avoid ads is by subscribing to OTT platforms. The convenience and the service quality make this OTT platform most preferable among the youth and others. The interpretation also stresses greater demand for Netflix as the benefits are attractive.

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