Impact Of OTT (Over-The-Top) Web Series On Consumer Behaviour And Purchase Decisions In Urban India

Koushik Chatterjee
Assistant Professor, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata
Bhavika Kashyap
Scholar, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata
Dr. Kathakali Bandopadhyay
Assistant Professor, Subarnarekha Mahavidylaya, Jhargram

OTT (OVER-THE-TOP) PLATFORM AND ITS MEANING

OTT or Over-the-Top, signifies digital media entertainment services provided via the Internet, bypassing traditional cable or satellite television providers. It commonly relates to high-quality content services which are associated with traditional broadcast operators and content production houses accessible online at any time and anywhere across a variety of devices such as computers, tablets, smartphones, and smart TVs. Alternatively, a more appropriate definition could be "media services that the customers are inclined to pay for" or "media requiring authentication for access" (Kokaram, Crinon, & Catania , 2015).

During the era of cable TV and DTH (Direct-to-Home) services when people were dependent on middlemen such as set-top box companies or local cable TV distributors. Today, content can be accessed directly using the internet on their website. Since these OTT Platforms are available to the viewers directly eliminating any middlemen in between, they are known as Over-The-Top. In a literal sense, they go over the top of the middlemen. The first OTT Platform to be launched in India was Reliance Entertainment's Big Flix in 2008 although it was a Video on Demand service where a payment was required to be made for the film to get its access (Rathee, 2022).

INCREASED THE POPULARITY OF OTT PLATFORMS IN INDIA OVER THE RECENT YEARS

In January 2016, Netflix entered the Indian market which coincidentally was the same year in which Reliance Jio entered the market, and the data rates were reduced significantly, giving access to the OTT Platforms to a large audience. People could access the internet and could stream movies/shows relatively cheaply on these platforms (Rathee, 2022). Moreover, in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit India, most of the video consumption occurred indoors, especially at a higher level due to the lockdown, providing the OTT platforms with new customers. Most of the users even opted to wait for a movie to be released on OTT platforms rather than watching it in theatres, thereby giving these platforms a significant push towards growth through non-organic means, capitalizing on the market share of other platforms. (Patnaik , Shah, & More, 2021)

Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
May – August 2024 I Third Year I Fourth Issue I ISSN - 2583-0341
A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

42

DIFFERENTIATING FACTORS BETWEEN WEB SERIES & TV SHOWS

A television show comprises a set of programs produced for broadcast on television under a common series title. These series have a predetermined schedule for airing on television, as they are subject to network and broadcasting regulations. Conversely, a web series consists of scripted or non-scripted online videos presented in episodic format, without a fixed broadcasting schedule. These series are released and streamed on platforms such as Netflix, HBO Max, YouTube, Disney+, ESPN+, Hulu, Vimeo, Amazon Prime Video, etc. (Sethmini, 2022). Web series have gained vast popularity among the young demographic who seek alternative entertainment options to traditional television programmes such as daily soaps, household stories, and reality shows (Verma, 2018).

HAVE BRANDS FOLLOWED ALONG WITH THE CHANGING CONSUMER PREFERENCES FOR CONTENT CONSUMPTION

According to a report by Ormax Media in 2023, it was expected that the number of OTT platform users would increase by 13.5% in that year. The OTT universe is used by 34% of the Indian population (India, 2023). Unlike traditional television with fixed schedules of airing, streaming platforms offer users the flexibility to watch content anytime, anywhere and on any device, making it an attractive frontier for advertisers.

Advertisers are capitalizing on the interactive nature of these streaming platforms to create immersive, engaging, and even shoppable ad experiences. Interactive ads seamlessly blend into the content, enhancing the viewing experience and recall by the consumers afterwards. Leveraging this data, advertisers can tailor campaigns, target specific audiences, and maximize their ROI. From innovative placements to exclusive content, brands are utilizing streaming's power to effectively engage audiences and enhance their brand image.

An insightful report reveals that 80% of Indian streaming audiences prefer ad-supported content over ad-free content provided by OTT platforms requiring a monthly subscription (Magnite, 2022). This preference brings to light the value of streaming services as a frontier for advertisers, offering opportunities to drive brand awareness, engagement, and conversations.
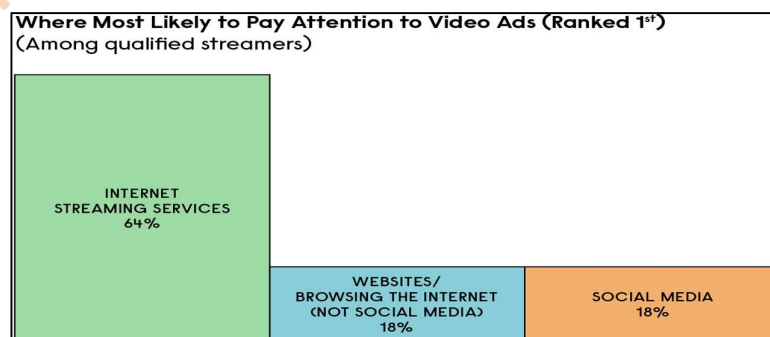

Where Most Likely to Pay Attention to Video Ads (Ranked 1st)
(Among qualified streamers)

INTERNET STREAMING SERVICES 64%

WEBSITES/ BROWSING THE INTERNET (NOT SOCIAL MEDIA) 18%

SOCIAL MEDIA 18%

Figure 1: Ads on streaming platforms capture more attention than video ads on social (Magnite report)

Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
May – August 2024 I Third Year I Fourth Issue I ISSN - 2583-0341
A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

43

Furthermore, an EY-FICCI study found that 59% of Indian streamers spend an average of 8 hours per week streaming content on large screens in their homes. The decrease in Pay TV subscribers in India underscores the shift towards digital streaming. Advertisers are adapting their strategies to deliver enhanced ad experiences, focusing on creative storytelling and leveraging dynamic digital environments to drive engagement and recall (EY, 2024).

INFLUENCE OF OTT WEB SERIES ON CONSUMERS' FASHION PURCHASE DECISIONS

Netflix has revealed Bridgerton as the most-watched show in Netflix history. It also affected the retail market. Empire line dresses made a comeback, and floral clothing' saw a 55% increase in its sales following the leading ladies in Bridgerton. The UK had reported a higher sales surge for clothing items featured in the show.

Other notable mentions include "The Queen's Gambit" which had increased the retail demand for "chess boards by over 232%" (in the UK). The impact of "Stranger Things" is visible each time it comes up with a new season. Season 2 correlated with the most popular time in which people searched for '80s fashion'. "Flat caps" which were considered a thing of the past, came into trend with the debut of Peaky Blinders in 2013.

Retailers need to be conscious of Netflix's influence on consumer behaviour. Consumers' media consumption habits are evolving with digitization and retailers must keep up with these developments (Myers, 2021).

1. *Analysis of the situation* :

There was a total of 113 respondents who participated in the survey and were between 16 years to 62 years of age. Out of them, the majority were in the age range of 18-24. Among the respondents, 65.5% were female and 34.5% were male. This table shows the demographic background of the respondents.

Table : 1

	Demographics	%
Age	Under 18	0.9
	18-24	84.1
	25-34	11.5
	35-54	1.8
	55 and above	1.8
Gender	Female	65.5
	Male	34.5
Education Level	High school or below	11.5
	Bachelor's Degree	79.6
	Master's Degree	8
	Doctorate or Professional Degree	0.9
Occupation	Student	78.8

Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
May – August 2024 I Third Year I Fourth Issue I ISSN - 2583-0341
A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

44

Employed (Full-time/Part-time)	15.9
Self-Employed	3.5
Unemployed	1.8

Demographic information of the respondents (Author Generated)

FINDINGS

Analysis 1: Identify specific marketing strategies employed by OTT platforms' web series and their effectiveness in influencing consumer behaviour

This study investigated the marketing tactics used by marketers/advertisers in influencing the viewers of OTT web series in this changing digital landscape. The survey revealed that 65.4% of the respondents watch OTT web series at least once a week and due to this OTT platforms come forward as a new medium for advertisers to catch the attention of their present/past/prospective customers. 59.3% of the respondents were able to recall the product/brand they saw in a web series (product placement) in the past 30 days and the advertisements that interrupt in between the episodes were perceived as strategically placed by 69.3% of the respondents and they also think it is an effective medium for advertising.

People who regularly watch web series have better awareness of new or unpopular brands or products as there are instances where people think that they have seen an advertisement for the first time on an OTT web series. While these advertisements or product placements might have convinced only a small number of viewers of the web series to try their products, it has surely increased its brand awareness and reputation of a large number of viewers.

Analysis 2: Offer insights into the varying susceptibility of different demographic groups to the influence of OTT platforms' web series on purchase decisions

It was found that around 24% of the respondents between the age group of 18-24 had not made any purchase under the influence of an advertisement they saw in an OTT web series. Around 50% of the respondents of the age group 25-34 had not made any purchase under the influence of an advertisement they saw in an OTT web series. The relatively older generations are observed to be not influenced by these advertisements because they are more careful of their spending habits and may not buy or invest in something that won't provide much value to them.

Table : 2

	(%)		
Age	**Yes**	**No**	**Not sure**
below 18	100.00	0.00	0.00
18-24	27.37	24.21	48.42
25-34	30.77	53.85	15.38
35-54	50.00	50.00	0.00

Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
May – August 2024 I Third Year I Fourth Issue I ISSN - 2583-0341
A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

45

55 and above	100.00	0.00	0.00

Table 1: Age-wise presentation of the influence of an advertisement in an OTT web series or a promotional tie-in with a web series on a customer's desire to purchase a product or service (Author Generated)

Demarcating the data based on gender, we found that 28.21% of the male respondents and 31.08% of the female respondents had purchased a product/service after seeing it in a web series. There is not much difference between the male and female respondents which implies that both are influenced similarly.

Table : 3

	(%)		
Gender	**yes**	**no**	**not sure**
male	28.21	38.46	33.33
female	31.08	21.62	47.30

Table 2: Gender-wise presentation of influence of an advertisement in an OTT web series or a promotional tie-in with a web series on a customer's desire to purchase a product or service (Author Generated)

There is a large percentage of respondents who are not sure about the impact of these advertisements on their purchase decision. This might be because sometimes the content consumed by viewers gets stored in their subconscious mind. They might not be able to recall where they saw it but they will remember what they saw.

Analysis 3: Provide a nuanced understanding of the impact of OTT platforms on consumers' adoption of trends in urban India

It was found that viewers pay attention to the outfits, accessories, lifestyles, and other details that web series that catch their attention. The perceived attractiveness of a character's attire or a clothing item, the presentation of the trend in an aspirational light, an easily adaptable trend, a trend creating curiosity in the mind of the viewer or a trend fitting the existing personality or interest of the viewer can positively impact trend adoption by a viewer indicating that consumers use web series to get inspiration for the kinds of trends they want to follow. It has also been noticed that if a person has seen or heard about a particular item (say a particular hat) earlier through some other medium and then he/she comes across it in a web series, then it will create curiosity in his/her mind and will force him/her to learn more about it.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Since viewers select the platforms and the web series at their discretion, the advertisers can specifically pinpoint the platforms and the web series that their target demographic

Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
May – August 2024 I Third Year I Fourth Issue I ISSN - 2583-0341
A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

46

chooses the most. This can reduce the advertisement expenses of the advertisers while increasing their reach among their target audience. This can ensure effective communication among consumers.

- Further, these advertisements accompanied with shows/series can provide useful information to the advertisers. These advertisements are mostly interactive and the viewers can select the advertisements to get to know more about the products/brands or they can skip them (available with an ad-free subscription). This can help the advertisers understand the consumer's responses to the advertisements and upscale or personalize their products or advertisements accordingly.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

- The study may have a limited sample size or lack of diversity in terms of demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status as the study is based in the urban area of Kolkata.
- The sample of respondents used for the study is skewed towards the relatively younger, college students.
- The study may focus on the short-term effects of the OTT web series on influencing consumer behaviour and purchase decisions, without assessing long-term outcomes or sustained behaviour change.

REFERENCES

1. Dey, A., & Sharma, A. (2021). Analyzing the impact of OTT platforms on consumer behavior: A study of Indian consumers. International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature, 9(4), 83-91.

2. [Dhruv Rathee]. (2022, December 16). *How Digital Media DESTROYED Bollywood? | Business Model of Netflix / OTT | Dhruv Rathee* [Video]. Youtube. https://youtu.be/byC5e6X9q80?si=cmnHND5ZMitHBhMv

3. EY. (2024). #Reinvent India's media & entertainment sector is innovating for the future. In *assets.ey.com*. Ernst & Young. https://assets.ey.com/content/dam/ey-sites/ey-com/en_in/news/2024/03/ey-in-india-s-media-entertainment-sector-is-innovating-for-the-future-03-2024.pdf

4. India, C. (2023, November 8). *34% of India now using OTT: Ormax report*. Campaignasia. Retrieved March 27, 2024, from

Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
May – August 2024 I Third Year I Fourth Issue I ISSN - 2583-0341
A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

47

https://www.campaignasia.com/article/34-of-india-now-using-ott-ormax-report/492596#:~:text=Ormax%20Media%20has%20released%20its,India%20currently%20uses%20the%20medium.

5. Kokaram, A., Crinon, R., & Catania, N. (2015). *OTT (Over-The-Top) in 2015. SMPTE Motion Imaging Journal, 124(6), 65–68.* doi:10.5594/j18597

6. Kumar, R. (2020). The advent of OTT platforms: A study on emerging trends and consumption pattern in India. International Journal of Scientific Research and Management, 8(8), 1-5.

7. Magnite (2022, November 22). *Ads on Streaming Platforms Capture More Attention Than Ads on Social Media in India, According to New Magnite Research*. Magnite.com. Retrieved March 27, 2024, from https://www.magnite.com/press/ads-on-streaming-platforms-capture-more-attention-than-ads-on-social-media-in-india/