GEN Z AND THE PROBLEM OF PARADOX OF CHOICE ON OTT PLATFORM

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ABSTRACT:

This research paper explores the problems created due to the paradox of choice on the OTT platform. In this paper, researchers focus on respondents who belong to Generation Z (age group 11 to 27). Gen Z has witnessed the birth and rise of the OTT industry(from 1997 to till date). The Entertainment Industry has a tremendous mark on human life. There are various sources of Entertainment prevailing for many years and the OTT platform is one of them which started around 2008 in India. The spread of COVID-19 and lockdowns worldwide proved to be a remarkable boom for the OTT platforms. OTT provides a wide range of content giving its viewers abundant choices on what to watch. The majority of the users of the OTT platform belong to Generation Z. The objective of the research is to study problems created due to the paradox of choice in their understanding and analysis of the topic on different parameters. Researchers found that respondents face the problem of a paradox of choice while using an OTT platform. Researchers have also provided some solutions for users as well as OTT platforms.

KEYWORDS: GEN Z, Paradox of choice, covid 19, OTT platforms, Entertainment industry,

INTRODUCTION:

India has 481 million (48.11 crore) OTT users. It rapidly took over other entertainment platforms like TV, Theatre, and play because of its multi-services including different Genres such as; Rom-Com, Thriller, Sci-fi, Horror, Mystery, Series, Anime, Movies, etc. This diversified content portfolio Acts as a catalyst for the paradox of choice, For instance, when an individual must decide between two Food items, it can be early done. On the other hand, when he is given 20 options to select from, it becomes difficult for him to do so. The paradox of choice is the psychological impact on an individual's mind due to the availability of a large no of options. This is the same case with OTT platform users. With a wide range of options, they cannot decide what to watch and waste time watching nothing. As it consumes time the level of utility also decreases and increases stress. According to Hicks law, it can be explained that the time consumed while scrolling is inversely related to the satisfaction (Utility) gained by the viewer. As Schwartz says, adding options to people's lives increases their expectations that one option is better. Some OTT platforms like Netflix have taken the initiative to solve the problem of choice paradox and help its users overcome it by enabling filtration showing Top 10 shows, options of 'Surprise me', Recently Viewed, Categories showing different genres, etc. Although this helped viewers to a certain extent, it could not completely eradicate stress. A viewer visits OTT platforms to reduce stress and ends up having more stress which hurts the minds of the viewers and results in a complete diversion of the main objective of OTT platforms as their main Motto is to provide relaxation instead of stress. On the other hand, if a user chooses TV or theatre as an entertainment option he/she feels less stressed. While watching on Theatre users have only one option at a time so they can avoid analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW –

Abhishek Rana in the article 'Paradox of Choice and Netflix',2022 stated that, to a certain point offering options is good, it provides freedom to choose but there comes a point at which the availability of too many options makes it harder for a person to make a decision and a state of confusion and stress, the user may not decide at all. With a wide array of content already available, Netflix surely understands the Paradox of choice. They wouldn't want their users to be dissatisfied while taking a long to choose something to watch next and abandon making a decision, it would be bad for their business.

Glen Davis: The product designer of Netflix took on the challenge to solve this problem "I'm browsing too long and I'd rather actually be watching right now". So, what did Netflix do? Netflix is striving to overcome choice overload by customizing content. Netflix came up with "Top 10 shows in your country", "Play something" (the shuffle feature of Netflix), Popular on Netflix, Content based on category and past viewing history, etc. They are providing less to make the selection easier. Hence, Glen's initiative led to deriving solutions to eliminate choices.

Hick's law: this law states that having plenty of choices affects an individual's decision-making time. It puts time against the Number of choices and complexity of choices. Hick–Hyman law assesses cognitive information capacity in choice reaction experiments. The amount of time taken to process a certain number of bits in the Hick–Hyman law is known as the "rate of gain of information". The plain language implication of the finding is that

increasing the number of choices does not directly increase the time to choose. In other words, twice as many choices do not result in twice as long to choose. Also, because the relationship is logarithmic, the increase in the time it takes to choose becomes less and less as the number of choices increases.

Carlos A. Gomez-Uribe and Neil Hunt. 2016.

Humans are facing an increasing number of choices in every aspect of their lives—certainly around media such as videos, music, and books, other taste-based questions such as vacation rentals, restaurants, and so on, but more importantly, around areas such as health insurance plans and treatments and tests, job searches, education and learning, dating and finding life partners, and many other areas in which choice matters significantly. We are convinced that the field of recommender systems will continue to play a pivotal role in using the wealth of data now available to make these choices manageable, effectively guiding people to the truly best few options for them to be evaluated, resulting in better decisions.

Barry Schwartz in his talk on the "Paradox of choices" says that the availability of choices, which initially was introduced to help us make decisions with freedom (happiness) makes us feel stressed and sometimes dissatisfied too. In this book, Schwartz argues that eliminating subscriber choices can greatly reduce anxiety for viewers. The book analyses the behaviour of different types of people (in particular, maximizes and satisfiers) facing the rich choice. This book argues that the dramatic explosion in choice—from the mundane to the profound challenges of balancing career, family, and individual needs—has paradoxically become a problem instead of a solution and how our obsession with choice encourages us to seek that which makes us feel worse.

M. Piasecki and S. Hanna Stated that it is a common assumption in Western developed societies that the more choice people have the more freedom they have and the more freedom they have the more welfare they have. A syllogism thus suggests that the more choice people have the more welfare they have. Yet it was shown in multiple experiments that increasing the amount of choice is related to an increased feeling of satisfaction only up to a certain point. Beyond this threshold, a growing amount of choice starts to hurt the decision-maker.

Patnaik, Pushkar & Singh, Paramveer. (2021) The main reason for the rise of the OTT platform Is the tendency of youth to not share their screen with others. Gen Z mostly prefers to watch on mobiles. genres like romance, comedy, and drama are preferred by them. Indian youth think that OTT platforms are going to disrupt the traditional way of watching TV. Indian youth agreed that there is a significant change in mental and physical habits due to watching OTT. However, there is no significant impact on the sleeping pattern of youth. 52% of youth feel that they don't feel any change in their behavior after watching OTT content while 48% of youth feel this difference. The OTT platform market in India will become a 30 billion $ industry in 2030.

Why Paradox of Choice is Good for Netflix – usually paradox of choice is considered a negative factor for OTT platform users. when a user searches for something he suffers from analysis paralysis At this point Netflix recommendation system comes for help. Netflix uses the philosophy of "first cause then cure". Netflix itself provides thousands of movies, web series, and serials and then helps users to choose from them. It makes users more loyal and engaged with the platform. Selecting something to watch from the huge catalogue of Netflix is a

complex task and Netflix introduced it as a treasure hunt task. In this process, Netflix uses the Zeigarnik effect of psychology which means people tend to remember unfinished or incomplete tasks better than completed tasks (a term coined by Bluma Zeigarnik). According to this effect, users remember that movie or content that they had half watched while scrolling.

LITERATURE GAP –

A large amount of research is available about the paradox of choice but very little research is available on the paradox of choice on the OTT platform. there are more than 50+ OTT platforms available but only NETFLIX has done so much research on the paradox of choice. The majority of the research is done in the age group of youth (above 20).

NEED FOR STUDY –

The problem of choosing between a huge library of content on an OTT platform is one of the major issues experienced by its users, which leads to stress, OTT platforms like Netflix have introduced filtration trying to tackle this but it is not able to eliminate the issue. A solution to this problem is very much needed because it not only leads to stress but it also leads to the wastage of users' precious time. The Significance of this research paper is to analyze the whole scenario of the Paradox of choice, To find ways and means an individual and as well as OTT platform can adapt to overcome Choice Paralysis.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE:

- To analyze human behavior while choosing what to watch on the OTT platform.

- To understand the problem of over-choosing prevailing on the OTT platform.

- To know what measures the OTT platform takes to overcome the paradox of choice.

- To know about the habits of respondents while using the OTT platform.

- To come up with possible solutions for overcoming the paradox of choices.

LIMITATION TO STUDY:

- The study is limited to GEN Z (Age group 11 – 27).

- This study is restricted to the region of Mumbai, its suburbs, and Thane district.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research methodology for this research paper will involve a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. To begin with, a literature review will be conducted to gather information on previous studies and theories related to choice paralysis. This will involve searching online databases such as Google Scholar, Research Gate, Microsoft Academic, and Semantic Scholar, as well as surfing online. Also, Primary data is collected by sending a Google questionnaire form using a random sampling method, which includes major close-ended questions.

Sample Size	140
Method of Sampling	Convenience Sampling
Method of Data Collection	Google Questionnaire Form
Method of data	Primary and Secondary
Analysis and Interpretation	Mumbai and its suburbs, Thane and its suburbs
Data Analysis Technique	Graphs, Charts, Percentage.

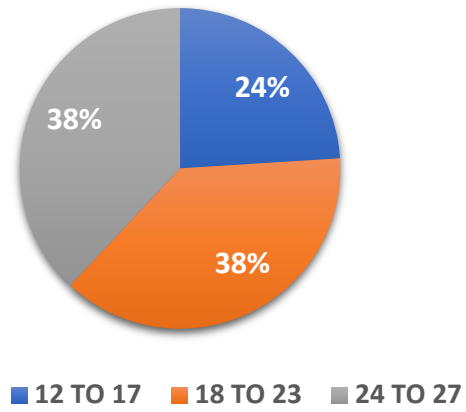## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA - GENDER

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
78	62	140
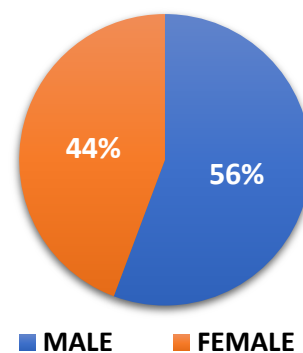
Interpretation: According to the above pie chart and table, there are 56% i.e. 78 male respondents, and 44% i.e. 62 female respondents.
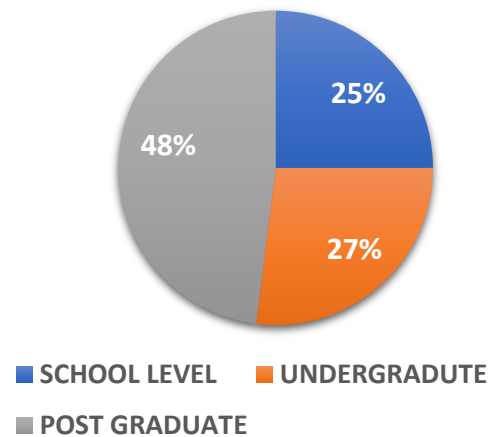
2. AGE GROUP

AGE GROUP	TOTAL
12 TO 17	33
18 TO 23	54
24 TO 27	53

Interpretation: According to the pie chart and table,

the highest number of respondents belongs to the age group of 18-23 (38%) and 24 – 27 (38%). From age group 12-17 (24%).
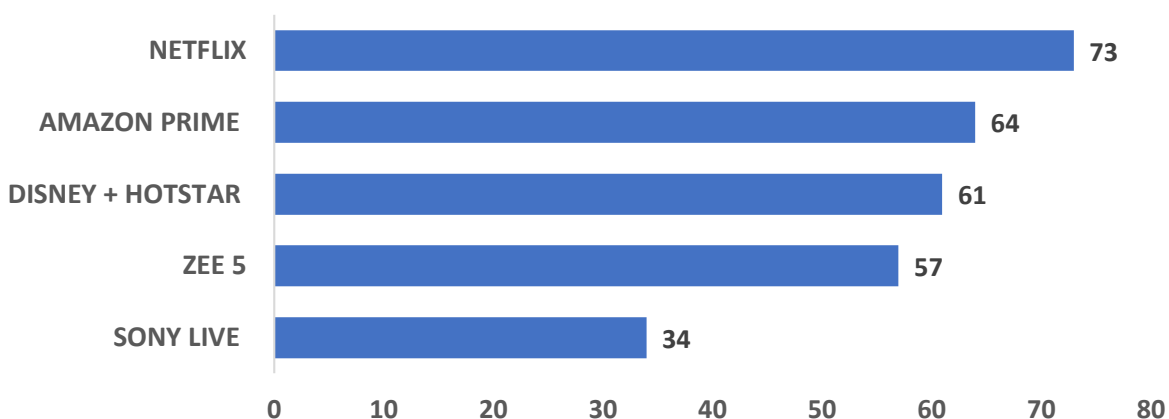
3. EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

EDUCATION	NO OF USER
SCHOOL LEVEL	35
UNDERGRADUATE	38
POSTGRADUATE	67

Interpretation: According to the above pie chart and table, 25% (35) of the respondents are at school level. 27 % (38) of respondents are undergraduate. 48% (67) are postgraduate.

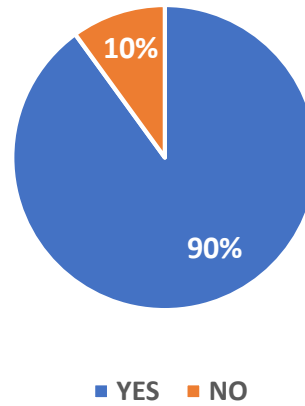## 4. Which of these platforms do you prefer to watch?

Interpretation - Netflix has the most users which is 73. Amazon Prime is in second position with 63.
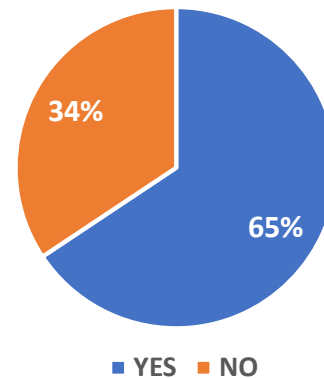
5. Do you know about choice paralysis?

YES	NO
125	15

Interpretation: According to the above pie chart and table, 90% (125) of the respondents know of the concept of choice paralysis, and the other 10%(15) do not know.

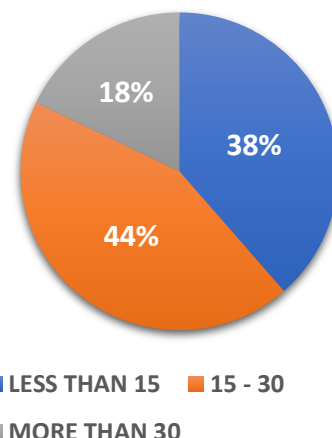**6. Do you believe that too many choices lead to no choice?**

YES	NO
92	48

Interpretation - 65% (92) of respondents voted YES and 34%(48) for NO. 58 respondents agree with the fact that "Too many choices lead to no choices ".

7. How much time do you spend searching for content to watch? (in minutes)

TIME SPEND (MINUTES)	NO OF USER
LESS THAN 15	54
15 - 30	61
MORE THAN 30	25

Interpretation - According to the above pie chart and table, the highest number of respondents 44%(61) spent over 15-30 mins on scrolling, followed by 38% (54) spends over less than 15 mins and 18%(25) spends more than 30 minutes.
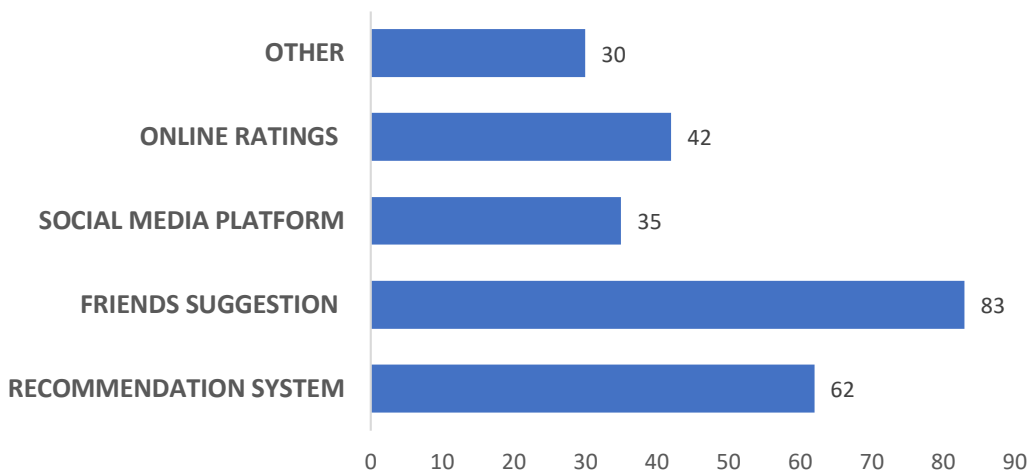
8. While scrolling over the huge base of content, do you end up watching nothing?
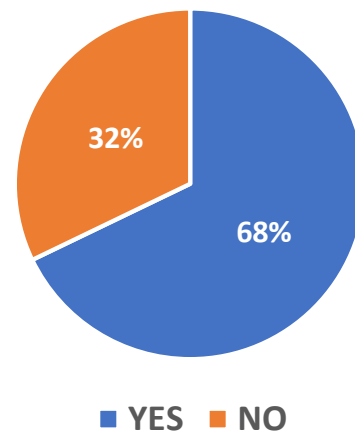
YES	NO
84	56
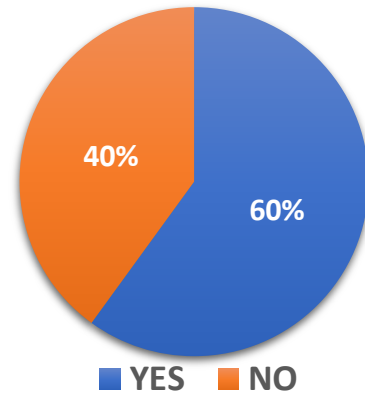
Interpretation - According to the above pie chart and table, 60 % (84) of respondents voted for YES. 40% (56) of respondents accept that they watch something after scrolling.

9. How do you overcome the problem of choosing what to watch?

10. Do you like to have so many options on the ott platform?

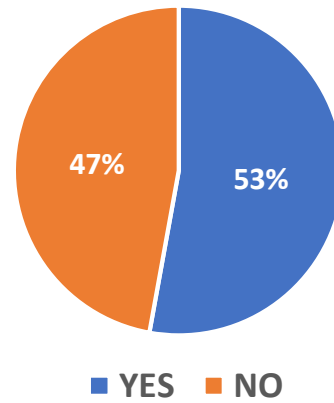| YES	NO
95	45

Interpretation – According to the above pie chart, 68% (95) of respondents agree with having so many options on the OTT platform. at the same time, only 32% (45) of respondents don't like it.

11. Would you like to have comments or a review section for the movie and series?

YES	NO
74	66

Interpretation – According to the above pie chart and table, (74) of respondents voted for YES. 53% (66) of respondents would like to have a comments or review section. 47 %

■ YES ■ NO

FINDINGS:

1. Friend's recommendations are 4x more influential than any other sources.

2. Although users are facing the paradox of choice problem they like to have so many options on the OTT platform.

3. Most users are already aware of the choice paradox.

4. Time spent scrolling is the major problem faced by the viewers of OTT platforms.

5. Netflix is the most-watched OTT platform.

6. After friends' recommendations, the various social media apps are the second most trusted source by users. Users would like to have a comment section on the OTT platform.

7. The average time spent by users on the OTT platform for searching content is 15 – 30 minutes.

What an individual can do to overcome this problem:

1. Make a list of genres or types of shows and movies that you enjoy which will narrow down the options and make it easier to choose something. Also, Set a time limit for choosing and give yourself a certain amount of time such as 10 minutes, to browse and make a decision. This will prevent you from getting lost in endless options and indecision.

2. The user can even ask friends or family for recommendations. They may have watched something recently that they think you would enjoy.

3. You might use the "My List" feature on Netflix to save shows and movies you are interested in watching. Then, when you are ready to choose something, you can easily access your list and pick from those options. You should not be afraid to try something new. Sometimes we get stuck in the same patterns of watching the same types of shows and movies. Mix it up and try something outside of your comfort zone. You may discover a new favorite.

4. If all else fails, use the "random episode" or "random movie" feature on Netflix. This will automatically select a show or movie for you, taking the decision out of your hands.

What OTT platforms can do to help users -

The OTT platform can implement features such as **trailers, synopsis, and ratings** from critics and other users to help users quickly evaluate and make decisions about the content they want to watch. OTT platforms can also invest in original content and exclusive programming to offer unique and diverse content options that cannot be found elsewhere, thus reducing the need to search for content on other platforms.

1. **This or That -**what to watch on the OTT platform is a decision-making task. A task always gets simple when you complete it in a fun way. OTT platform can add a fun game to tackle the problem of many options. As we know if there are 2 food items then the person can easily choose one of them but if there are 20 then it takes a great deal of time to choose.

Hypothetical situation - **A** wants to buy a Jersey with a player's name for a football match. He loved Cristiano and Messi, so he took 10 minutes to choose a jersey. On the other hand, there is **B** who loves Messi, Neymar, and Cristiano, and Pele he takes 20 to 25 minutes to decide.

So, our solution is - when the user opens the Ott platform if he/ she finds it difficult to choose she can Play the game. He will get 2 thumbnails from 2 different categories for example Game of Thrones (Action) and Mismatched (Romance)After selecting one of them the user will get content related to it nothing else.

2. **Connect with friends**

As we know Facebook uses a friend's community to join people who have the same interests. As per one research friend, the recommendation is 3 times more influential than recommendations from other sources. OTT platforms can give the option to the users to join or create a community that shares their interests. Related to what to watch. Netflix uses 1 filter like this i.e. top 10 but the thing is that it depends on the whole population who is using Netflix. an individual may not be like the web series that the majority of people like. our solution is to add the option to connect with friends. With this option, users will get the recommendation that content is watched by their peers and relatives.

Hypothetical situation - Recently Netflix released a new web series named PQRS (fake name)A, B, and C watched this series and they liked it very much. On their next get-together trio discusses this series. At that time D and E felt like the fish out of the water. The same thing happened in the next get-together with the new web series. Again, they feel inferior in their friend circle. After that, they come to know about the feature and connect with friends so whenever they get confused about what to watch they use this feature. OTT platform can add a limit for group members to recommend precise content.

3. **Express your mood in one word**

Humans are emotional creatures; each individual reacts differently in the same situations. And we can also see this differentiation in their choices and interest. The choice of viewers for entertainment is influenced by many

factors like surroundings, environmental space, people around, emotional state, and likewise. Abut the most important factor is the emotional state because decisions are psychologically influenced by emotions.

 For overcoming the Choice Paradox the OTT platform can Adopt, ' Express your mood in the word'. This method is simply based on giving recommendations regarding their current mood. Users will be provided with the interface having different words where each word expresses an emotion. For Example, Sad, Happy, Alone, Exciting, and likewise. Viewers can choose an option according to their mood and what type of mood they have after watching a show. This Solution can simplify the stratification of content precisely and will help to overcome the Choice Paradox.

4. **Comment Section:**

Suppose we are looking toward the solution to the Paradox of Choice. One of the solutions can be adding a comment section for every movie and show. A comment will be provided by the user who already had watched that show. For any service or movie, the gist of the show given is according to the producer's perspective. The reviews of every viewer will be different after watching the same show. This is a Human Nature.

But what if before watching a Series or a Movie on the OTT platform, they get to know the comments/reviews of others who watched that before? It will be very much useful for them. As we can see Instagram has a reel section and YouTube has a short comment section, things like this can be a solution to the Paradox of Choice. Rather than showing all comments OTT platform can add an option for only community comments.

5. **Scrolling alarm**

In today's world time is the most precious thing, users watch OTT platforms in the time that is reserved for relaxation, but when they open the OTT platform at least the first 15 to 20 minutes are just wasted scrolling and scrolling. when users Understand They have wasted there they feel stressed. so, our solution is to set a specific time limit per individual for example if the user wants to select one out of the available content. We know this technique because we use it every day, while waking up in the morning sometimes we snooze the alarm for 5 min. This sneezing alarm time differs from person to person. for some it is 5 for others it may be 10. OTT platform has to give full freedom to users to set their scrolling time which will save users from the paradox of choice paralysis.

Conclusion -

Gen Z has witnessed the rise of the digital world. Digitalization has influenced the life of human beings in many aspects. One of those aspects is the ability to choose from an abundant option. It can be choosing educational

courses from Coursera, ordering food from Zomato, applying for jobs on LinkedIn, and even selecting a life partner from matrimony sites.

All these things lead to a paradox of choice and the entertainment industry is also no exception. Traditional ways of entertainment for relaxation are becoming outdated. Modern entertainment sources like movies, web series, short films, watching international sports are taking their places. Gen Z mainly includes schoolchildren, college students, and Young adults who are adjusting to their new jobs and family responsibilities. All of these stages of life demand competitiveness and consistency. In this period of cutthroat competition individuals feel stressed out. At that point relaxation is required here entertainment plays an important role. To Tackle the problem of paradox of choice individual must know what he/ she exactly wants. The individual has to give more time to think and decide before exploring abundant options as per the Japanese people you have to give sixty percent of your time for decision making and forty percent for execution. Their execution is considered as a zero-error margin because they have already given time for thinking and decision-making and in the case of the OTT platform paradox of choice played a vital role in increasing customer engagement and loyalty. However, users are paying for their marketing strategy in the form of time loss and dissatisfaction due to loss of opportunity cost. From the user's point of view even though users are facing analysis paralysis they still want large content in their OTT platform catalogue.

This research paper concludes that even though the paradox of choice is a universal problem it is a kind of subjective. It depends on individual preference whether he/ she wants abundant options in life like Western philosophy or He/ she is happy with minimalist living. The same rule applies to choosing what to watch on the OTT platform in less or more proportion.

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