



An Analysis of the Paradigm Shift of Youths from Cinema Hall to OTT Platforms in the 21st Century in India

¹Azmee Zaheer, * ¹Kaushal Kishore Mishra, ¹Pawan Pant, and ¹Akriti Gupta

¹University School of Business, Chandigarh University, NH-95 Chandigarh-Ludhiana Highway, Mohali, Punjab, India,
Abstract

Purpose: The proliferation of OTT services has disrupted the media and entertainment sectors. The substantial increase in living standards, along with widespread internet connectivity, inexpensive and rapidly evolving consumer expectations, and continuously advancing smartphone technology and internet services, has propelled the expansion of the over-the-top business. Content is seen as paramount in contemporary media. With OTT platforms enabling personalization, there exists a significant possibility of disseminating it to a substantially bigger audience, appealing to both creators and viewers.

Design: This research adopted a theoretical approach to the question of how the traditional entertainment format transitioned towards an OTT platform. This research paper highlights the shift in viewership from theatres to OTT format in our country. An in-depth literature review of existing research theories, frameworks, and models related to the topic under research shall be conducted.

Methodology: The research tool of the study shall be Content Analysis. A thorough literature review of e-content, case studies, research papers, reports, and books will be conducted to study the relationship between traditional media and OTT.

Findings: OTT appeals to the tastes of the current generation of millennials and other generations for whom the content produced by the conventional TV sector does not even come close to meeting their preferences. Many over-the-top (OTT) networks present television programs and motion pictures that, despite appearing to follow current trends, are more mature, relatable, radical, and thought-provoking for today's young. As viewers begin to switch to such a platform, many customers are cancelling their DTH subscriptions with their previous DTH providers.

Originality Value: A systematized investigation of contents and artefacts was conducted using content analysis to get insights into the shift in global thought patterns toward a green economy.

Keywords: OTT, Theater, Content, Movie, Web Series.

Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 was a once-in-a-lifetime event that threw us all into a novel environment. This condition clearly proves to be an unanticipated and significant ground-breaking initiative taken by a lot of traditional companies and industry paradigms, bringing with it a frightening period of uncertainty that needs extreme attention and care. While a wide range of industries were affected, specific sectors that were reliant on global supply chains saw their profits plummet. For such global chains, both the scale and manufacturing have seen significant changes. Their profit margins have shrunk dramatically. Similarly, the film and theatre industries have enjoyed considerable growth and a substantial reduction in their net profit (Sonal T. 2020).

Even though the OTT industry is not immune from the outbreak effects, besides seeing a massive increase in viewership and subscriptions in the short term, The OTT industry is also concerned that there is limited content and demand is too high in comparison to supply as production has recently resumed when combined with the recession, which is proving to be a significant challenge and leading to massive un-subscriptions. This, in turn, is expected to result in substantial employment losses and a narrowing of profit margins as content becomes scarce in an age when content is hailed as "king."

The public is apprehensive and opts to depend solely on OTT service providers, as cinemas reopen at reduced capacity with the persistent threat of getting the alarming illness. Self-isolation and quarantine have resulted in an increase in home media consumption, with gaming and on-demand movie streaming services gaining popularity (Sonal T. 2020). This proves to be a threat to the conventional moviegoing experience, with some predicting the industry's collapse as a result of this habit-forming behaviour. In this research paper, we will examine shifting patterns in relation to theatres and OTT platforms, with a particular focus on the situation that existed following the pandemic, which was produced by a unique coronavirus.

The current work was written based on secondary research. Various papers issued by renowned publishing houses such as Deloitte, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and BCG were used to map and analyze the different trends that have been detected in the post-pandemic world with respect to cinema culture, OTT media, and other entertainment sources.

Literature Review

A number of business heavyweights, as well as consulting organizations, were drawn to the entertainment industry and its predicament during the stormy times of the novel COVID-19 virus. Their perspectives on how the industry would fare after the coronavirus epidemic were opposed. Some of them speculated that the dominance of OTT platforms over conventional ones had been long overdue and that the epidemic had only hastened the process. (Chhajer, 2020). Others (the majority) believed that the time had come for the two diverse channels to coexist in peace. The latter group adamantly rejected the idea that Covid-19 would bring the golden era of cinema theatres to an end. It was fascinating to see how polarised the viewpoints were by a lot of people in the same industry. The reasoning behind both viewpoints is enjoyable, which is unquestionably undebatable.

It is undeniable that predictions were made regarding the potential decline of conventional cinema theatres as the over-the-top (OTT) industry continues to rise in prominence (Horn J. 2020). Additionally, the time spent at home led to a significant increase in binge-watching habits among consumers.

This, nonetheless, does not and cannot indicate the conclusion of the golden era of cinema theatres. The assertion that the significant surge in OTT subscribers is merely a transient phenomenon is supported by concrete data from several consulting firms, which will be elaborated on in subsequent sections. It was predicted that after the limits imposed by the government during the epidemic were lifted, established business models would once again take primacy in the minds of consumers and that the phase of coexistence between OTT and movie theatres would begin. (Sharma K. 2020).

Rise of Over the Top (OTT) Industry

According to a current study conducted by the Boston Consulting Group, India's OTT media business, which is currently valued at 0.5 billion dollars, is expected to rise to 5 billion dollars by 2023. (BCG.2018). The easy excess it provides to its clients while keeping in mind the needs and affordability factors is said to be the driving force behind its rise. The "OTT Revolution" has been coined to describe its rapid expansion.



Source: BCG: Entertainment Goes Online A \$5 Billion Opportunity

The OTT industry has undeniably transformed media consumption habits, marking a significant shift in how audiences engage with content. The 2000s witnessed a remarkable expansion of internet and mobile connectivity infrastructure, leading to a substantial increase in the popularity of diverse media services. A recent poll by Deloitte Insights reveals that 68 per cent of individuals currently hold subscriptions to at least one of the numerous OTT platforms, while 65 per cent maintain subscriptions to traditional pay TV (Deloitte Insights, 2020).

Streaming service companies are benefiting from consumer spending trends. In these tumultuous times when we are physically separated, nine out of every ten users preferred watching a motion picture on various over-the-top (OTT) service providers' platforms in India, in comparison to only two out of every eight users who have been observed to visit a cinema theatre still. This was discovered in a survey undertaken by MoMagic, an app distribution service company (IANS, 2020).

Research Dig has dived into the issue and found that the impact of the sudden outbreak of coronavirus was an unprecedented crisis on the OTT platforms in newly published research that is comprehensive. A fascinating figure that tends to stand out is that while the OTT business had a CAGR of roughly 16 per cent prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, since then, there has been a big leap in the compound annual growth rate, which is currently anticipated to be more than 19 per cent following the pandemic. By 2026, the value of the entire business is predicted to reach a staggering \$438.5 billion thanks to this massive boost in growth. Before the coronavirus crisis, these numbers were expected to reach little more than \$400 billion by 2026. The current COVID-19 crisis has had an excellent impact on the entire OTT industry, it is safe to say. Consumers have been enjoying numerous amounts of content on various OTT channels while at home, far more than previously imagined, which has driven traffic on such platforms forward.

However, a relevant question that arises at this moment is what is so unique about over-the-top (OTT) channels that it concluded in such a massive increase in their viewership and media share.

Various variables, many of which are numerous, have all played a part in propelling OTT to such a high degree of consumer acceptance. To mention a few, premium content on OTTs, flexible pricing models meant to meet varied paying capacities of consumers, easy access over smartphones, tablets, laptops, smart TV, and lastly, the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis that quickly extended its tentacles all over the world. (Adhikari K.2020).

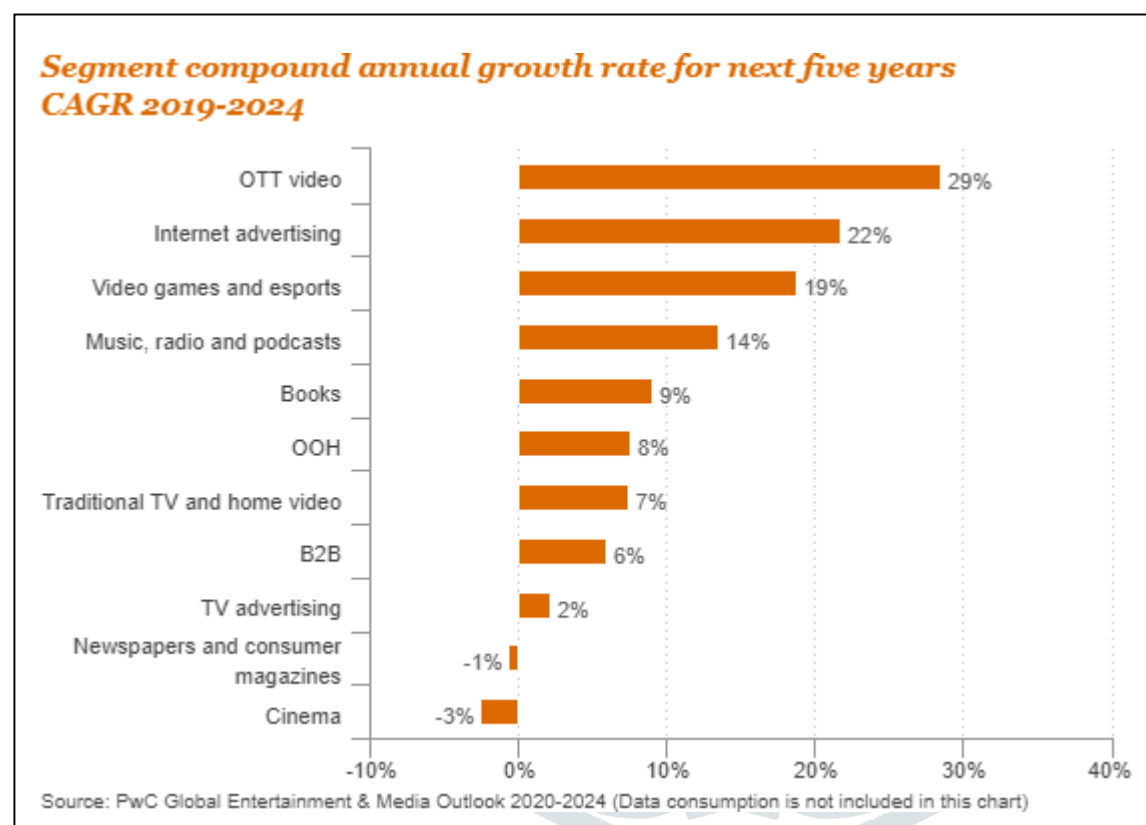
OTT satisfies the tastes of today's millennials and other generations, for whom the traditional TV industry's material does not even match their preferences. The conventional industry's shows do not cater to their needs of what is enjoyable, and such traditional platforms are mediocre and terribly fail to create anything that might be deemed "excellent" for such a generation.

On the other hand, a large number of over-the-top (OTT) channels feature shows and movies that are, on the surface, matching current trends, more thoughtful, relatable, radical, and thought-provoking for today's youth. Viewers, in turn, are beginning to transfer over to such a platform, resulting in a large number of consumers unsubscribing from their old DTH providers.

Currently, a large portion of the content being streamed on OTT platforms revolves around such stories that appeal to people because they are much closer to reality. Twenty years ago, information situated in an international location was used to hold the audience's attention. However, a detailed examination of the content that has been showcased for the past three to four years reveals that the programming is primarily set in tier 2 and tier 3 cities and villages around the country. (Adhikari K.2020).

Plots, stories, and web series that showcase the country by being written keeping in mind locations like Kanpur, Kota, Bhopal, and Agra have been able to draw in audiences since they tend to delve into the behaviours of the characters that represent reality. OTT has succeeded in establishing itself as a personal viewing time for consumers, and it is this personal viewing time that viewers prefer to utilize to watch content that they feel authentic, even if it is too depressing. The art of storytelling is like that, which has shaped and will continue to shape the dynamics of content in the OTT era. As a result, the programming presented on OTT tends to fall midway between cinema and television. (Adhikari, K.2020).

Is it the end of the Conventional theatre era?



Source: PwC Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2020-2024.

While it is evident that the breakout of COVID-19 was an unparalleled disaster, as indicated by the graph above, the game is far from done.

The revolutionary COVID-19 pandemic was able to shut down movie theatres that two world wars couldn't. However, as Mark Twain pointed out in his reports, the demise of the large cinema has always been a bit of a stretch. The threat began with the development of television, followed by the introduction of home video, computer games, interactive movies, the surge of illegal movie downloading, and currently, virtual reality, which is "threatening" to displace the big screen out of business. (K. Zhao, 2020).

There will always be viewers who still desire and want to get out of their houses, party, purchase pricey meals and enjoy cinematic dynamism on a grand scale. A transition does not appear to be feasible in the long run.

We have had no choice but to make this change because of the issues that have arisen in recent years. (K. Zhao, 2020).

Experts believe that theatres will very definitely continue to exist. According to them, the audience has a nostalgic and emotional commitment to the entire theatre and movie experience, which dates back to their youth and will, without a doubt, come back as soon as it is medically safe to do so to the theatres and cinema. In the meantime, the uncertainty that cinemas are experiencing will undoubtedly persist as long as the coronavirus remains a serious threat, preventing people from congregating indoors in large numbers, implying that the upheaval will last longer than expected.

As PwC principal CJ Bangah put it, "Cinema has taken a beating this year." PwC does not forecast any industry business until 2024, so that is going back to where they were before the epidemic struck. There is no doubt that early access to superhit movies, combined with the nostalgia associated with movie theatres, has played a significant role in luring us to the film in the past. However, this can not imply that movies are unrivalled and will never confront new competition in the shape of entertainment options available for viewers comfortably in their own homes. Augmented and virtual reality innovations, as well as big star, big budget movies released directly on the OTT platform, continue to challenge traditional attitudes toward watching cinema in theatres (Linnane C.2020).

All of this is to say that getting out of the home to unwind, relax and socialize while partaking in cinema experiences is interwoven into the cultural and social fabric of our magnificent societies. Furthermore, some people consider "gourmet" food an escapism experience, as well as a complement to the overall experience of going to the movies, which is still immensely appealing. It is a significant source of income for the film. If the track record of previous periods is judged to be correct, occupancy, be it operating profits, footfalls, revenue, and the box office approach, will carry on to exist as an alternative believed to be feasible for both content creators and movie halls. It is sometimes used as the most crucial indicator for determining whether or not a film is a success. It is highly doubtful that films with large budgets will go down the over-the-top route, at least in the near future, until and unless something genuinely unique in terms of the content and connection to a specific platform of this type emerges. (Sharma, K. 2020).

As discussed above, both the modes manage to hang on to their USP in their extraordinary ways of working as well as the followers that are associated with them, at least for the time being. While both mediums at issue herein offer information that is perceived to be comparable, they are easily able to distinguish themselves from one another due to customer characteristics and purposes that are significantly different. One may prefer theatre experiences when watching sci-fi, 3D animation or highly anticipated box-office releases. Still, for more daily streaming on-the-go content such as history, web series, interviews, podcasts, unique interest content, and documentaries, one would undoubtedly turn to OTT platforms. It is more precise to assert that OTT has influenced current television viewership rather than the cinematic experience. (Sharma. K.2020).

The current generation is increasingly looking curiously for information that is engaging, entertaining, relatable, and original and is ready to purchase premium plans to get access to full content streaming on platforms that

they consider to be wholly transformative in experiences. Consumers' desires for a satisfying experience will undoubtedly remain at the forefront of the entertainment industry's attention. As a result, the OTT platform demonstrates the case as if it were the end of motion picture viewing in theatres, which would be absolutely incorrect. However, it is reasonable to state that today's customers have a plethora of plausible choices available to them. (Sharma, K. 2020).

OTT Current Trends in India

In 2020, India saw 29 million individuals investing in a total of 53 million OTT video subscriptions, excluding those bundled with data plans.

- The strategic move by Hotstar to place the IPL behind a paywall, the surge in direct-to-digital film releases during the pandemic, and the absence of fresh television content for four months were significant catalysts for growth.
- OTT platforms invested over INR10.2 billion in the production of 220 titles in 2020, not including acquired movie rights and sports content. This investment led to the creation of approximately 1,200 hours of original content, encompassing both films and episodic programs.
- In 2019 and 2020, Netflix invested INR 30 billion in content within India, unveiling more than 60 titles, which included the launch of 17 films and 11 series. This strategic move positioned India as one of the company's premier content production hubs globally.
- Following the IPL's transition to a subscription model, Disney+ Hotstar reported reaching 26 million paid subscribers by the conclusion of November 2020.
- OTT operators are expected to significantly enhance their investment in original content, projecting a rise to approximately INR19.2 billion in 2021, marking a 17% increase from 2019. Furthermore, their total content expenditure, which encompasses sports, is anticipated to reach INR300 billion from 2021 to 2025.
- In 2021, approximately 500 original games are set to launch across various platforms.
- The emergence of language OTT platforms like Aha (Telugu), Koode (Malayalam), and City Shor TV marked a significant trend in 2020. Gujarati. Planet Marathi and Letsflix are set to make their debut in the Marathi OTT market.
- A total of 284 million individuals utilized data bundles for video content consumption.
- Telecommunications companies and aggregators presented premium OTT subscriptions, bundled with data and/or devices, at a compelling price point beginning at INR150 per month.
- Telcos were responsible for up to 85% of the viewership on some OTT sites. In 2020, carriers paid roughly INR7 billion for content, and this figure is projected to rise.
- By 2025, it is projected that approximately 400 million individuals will engage with content via telecom and aggregator bundles, utilizing a mix of minimum guarantee and per-stream agreements.
- A total of 450 million was spent on digital advertising, resulting in an increase in revenue from digital platforms.

Future Trends of OTT Platforms in India:

- The demand for original content is expected to increase significantly, reaching over 3,000 hours annually by 2023, a fourfold rise from 2019 levels.
- By 2025, it is expected that the usage of regional languages on OTT platforms will surpass that of Hindi, which currently accounts for 45 per cent of the overall viewing time.
- Sports are expected to play a more significant role in generating subscription income, which might contribute to a rise in the value of digital media rights.
- Under the proposed content code, procedures for material curation, inspections, and monitoring controls will become required.
- As the total quality standard rises to satisfy the demands of a better-informed audience, content expenditures will persist and increase, especially in regional markets. OTT platforms and various social media intermediaries are subject to regulation.
- In India, digital platforms have been unregulated, with no formal regulatory structure in place other than the rules of the Information Technology Act, to which they are subject. Several attempts have been made in the recent past to comprehend the necessity for and manner of regulating digital content through case legislation, consultation papers, and self-regulation codes. OTT participants have made attempts to build a more transparent system of self-regulation.

Depending on the current conditions, it isn't easy to anticipate the future of the media and entertainment industry.

The following facts must be remembered in this regard:

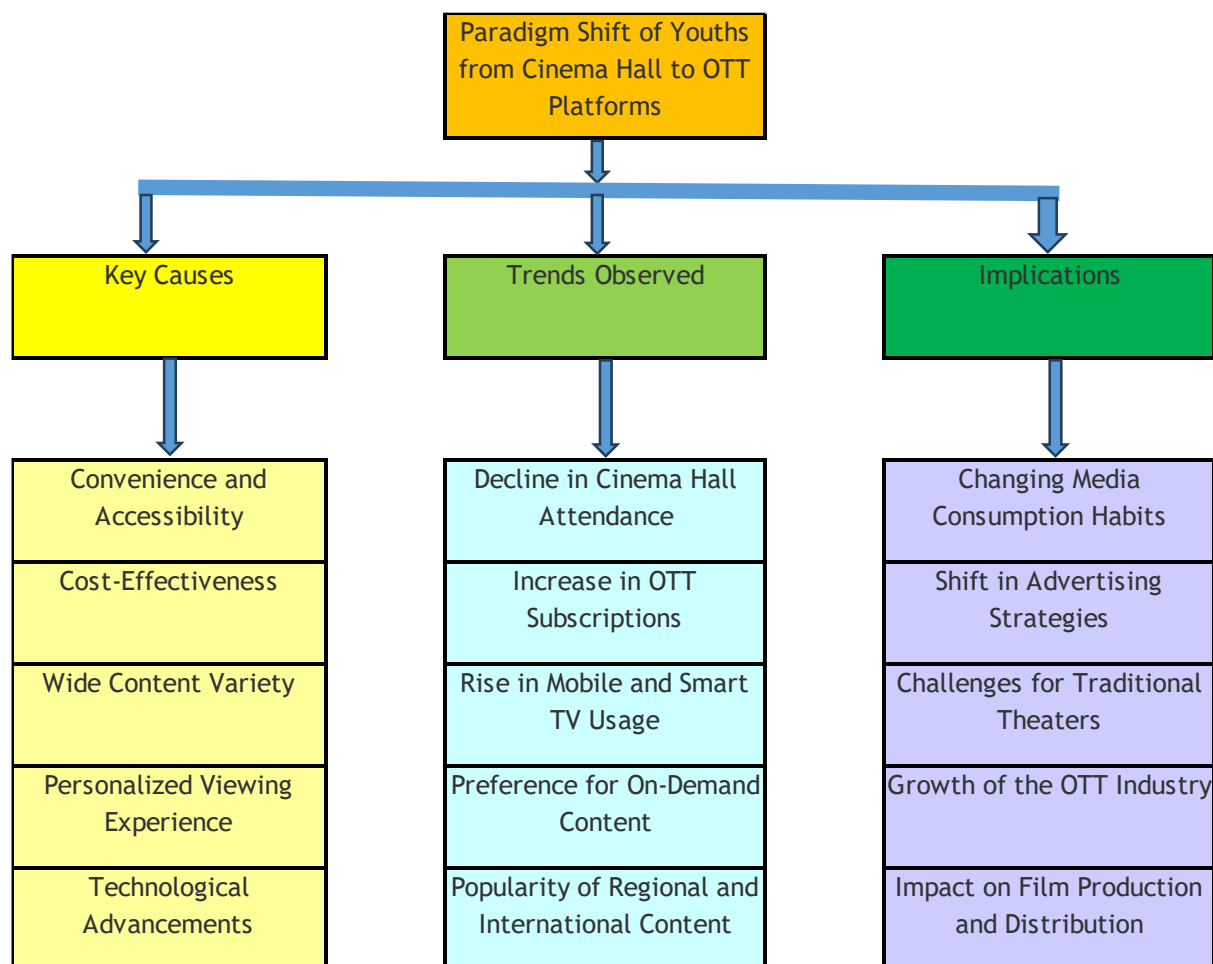
- Despite the undeniable fact that OTT subscription revenues have increased by 100%, broadband memberships have increased by 20%. 2019 was a profitable year in terms of revenue, fueled by movie theatre footfalls (FICCI-EY.2020), with over four million new smart television set connections made this year.
- Some of them see the OTT platform as a threat to the cinema industry. It is also the reason that OTT channels tend to drive consumers to theatres, specifically those who are fans of previous sequels to franchise films, to see the new release. (FICCI-EY.2020)
- Traditional business rules are unquestionably being challenged, but experts feel that a balanced correlation is maintained between OTT platforms and cinemas or theatres, which can be afflicted as long as a specific window of reasonability is maintained. (FICCI-EY. 2020)

Although the public is presently captivated by the notion of consuming material from the convenience of their homes, a new survey by BookMyShow revealed that 54% of Indians are still curious and want to step out of their comfort zone and home to experience their favourite movies after an extended lockdown restriction lifted for a short duration of fifteen to ninety days. Moreover, despite the formidable presence of OTT behemoths such as Netflix, established in 1997, Amazon, founded in 2005, and Hulu, launched in 2008, US BOC has demonstrated significant growth, achieving a compound annual growth rate of nearly 3% from 2010 to 2019. Such case studies instil trust in conventional businesses, implying that the two platforms under discussion,

namely, over-the-top platforms and theatres, are entirely separate mediums for viewing material and can coexist peacefully. (Lohoty et al. 2020).

Model for Understanding Paradigm shift of youths from Cinema Halls to OTT Platforms

The authors developed the following model after reviewing the secondary data and an extensive review of the literature on the topic. This model will be helpful in analysing the industry's current situations.



Source: Author's Creation

Key Causes

- **Convenience and Accessibility:** OTT systems provide unparalleled ease by enabling users to access content whenever and wherever they want without having to travel. The future of entertainment in India will likely feature a coexistence of theatres and OTT services. (Varghese, 2021) Theatres may concentrate on providing immersive experiences via technologies such as IMAX and 4DX, whilst OTT platforms will persist in innovating with interactive content, tailored suggestions, and regional inclusion.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** OTT platform subscriptions are significantly less expensive than traditional moviegoing because they offer limitless entertainment at a relatively low price. OTT platforms provide entertainment at a substantially lower cost than attending a theatre, which includes expenses for tickets, transportation, and concessions. I have observed enormous content libraries accessible for about INR 149 per month on some platforms.

- **Wide Content Variety:** Over-the-top (OTT) services provide a plethora of shows, spanning content from every conceivable genre in many languages and cultures, catering to both global- and niche-targeted audiences. OTT services accommodate diverse tastes by offering a honeypot of internationally-themed series, blockbuster films, independent films, and regionalized content. The offering of personalized recommendations through artificial intelligence enhances customer satisfaction. Young people, considered by their disparate tastes, are mainstream proponents of these platforms and are, therefore, users of the same.
- **Personalized Viewing Experience:** Customized functionalities, like personalized recommendations, pause/resume capabilities, and adaptable viewing, augment the entire user experience.
- **Technological Advancements:** High-speed internet, smart devices, and advanced streaming technology have helped the customer experience smooth viewing. The proliferation of affordable smartphones and widespread high-speed internet access have democratized access to OTT platforms. These provide substantially improved viewer experiences across the board. As per Deloitte's report, by 2022, India had about 700 million internet users, mainly under the age of 35. Platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, and domestic services like SonyLIV and Zee5 have capitalized on digital evolution to deliver the user a "content-at-will" experience.

Trends Observed

- **Decline in Cinema Hall Attendance:** With OTT gaining more mainstream popularity, traditional cinemas are witnessing a remarkable decline in attendance due to changes in audience tastes- a wretched casualty, perhaps. Failure to provide modern cinema infrastructure and comparatively steep ticket prices in tier-2 and tier-3 cities make it difficult for the young to see themselves opting for cinemas. In contrast, OTT platforms are more accessible and affordable.
- **Increase in OTT Subscriptions:** The increase in OTT subscriptions indicates a burgeoning preference for digital platforms, as people choose economical streaming alternatives.
- **Rise in Mobile and Smart TV Usage:** The proliferation of mobile devices and smart televisions has transformed content consumption, propelling OTT viewing to unprecedented levels.
- **Preference for On-Demand Content:** Today, audiences love the freedom and instant gratification of OTT platforms, where they can view content at their convenience. (Sowbharnika,2020) OTT has, by and large, opened up the world of regional cinema and storytelling, which is otherwise often marginalized in mainstream theatres. Jhansi (Telugu) has gained national recognition, and the movie Kantara (Kannada) has opened vistas of culture for young viewers.
- **Popularity of Regional and International Content:** OTT allows people to share different stories from other countries and regions. In doing so, many different audiences are involved, and that's another

benefit of OTT platforms in terms of cultural inclusivity. Movies were traditionally a social activity, including family and friends. The growth of OTT has made movie watching more personal and solitary. Individual choice is okay, but it weakens the shared experience that made Indian cinema so powerful.

Implications

- **Changing Media Consumption Habits:** The way people consume media is evolving due to OTT services. Streaming has supplanted films and television as the primary source of entertainment. (Singh, P. 2019) Alongside movies and television series, numerous short videos on OTT platforms such as YouTube and MX Player cater to the fast-paced lifestyles and limited attention spans of youth. This trend indicates a transformation in the narrative techniques and enjoyment of storytelling.
- **Shift in Advertising Strategies:** OTT platforms are making use of personalized ad placements based on viewer data for targeted advertising campaigns. In fact, now relatively common are hybrid release models that open in theatres with very closely staggered subsequent releases on OTT. In this way, both approaches can appeal to different audiences while maximizing revenue.
- **Challenges for Traditional Theaters:** The emergence of OTT platforms has created challenges for traditional theatres, affecting their revenue and reducing their audience demographics. The pandemic served as a significant disruptor. With cinema halls closed and social distancing measures in place, younger audiences began to rely on OTT services for both new releases and older content. Movies such as *Gulabo Sitabo* and *Shakuntala Devi* were released exclusively on digital platforms, establishing a new standard in the Indian entertainment sector.
- **Growth of the OTT Industry:** Emerging audiences are transforming the content landscape by favouring captivating narratives and cutting-edge formats. OTT platforms are utilizing data analytics to match content with audience preferences, thereby maintaining continuous engagement. Growing investments, a surge in subscribers worldwide, and the production of original content are all contributing to the OTT industry's notable expansion.

Impact on Film Production and Distribution: OTT channels are becoming increasingly critical to filmmakers for content distribution, allowing quicker worldwide access (Saini, 2020). However, such events are rare rather than the rule, big-budget spectacles like *RRR* or *KGF*. The comfort and ease of OTT exceed the attraction of a theatrical release for most films.

Discussion for Future Research

Considering the current condition of the nation's film industry, a direct-to-digital approach seems to be an advantageous choice for both filmmakers and OTT platforms, particularly as certain producers may be facing liquidity challenges, as well as a corresponding delay in monetisation—all of which would place a significant financial burden on them. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity and assurance regarding the reopening of movie theatres, as well as the uncertainty that even if they do reopen, they will attract the desired number of

visitors. OTT platforms, on the other hand, are battling for content for their growing subscriber base, who are spending more and more time in the comfort of their own homes.

In the long term, alongside the expanding market of OTT streaming services, there is a burgeoning opportunity for the rise of Pay-Per-View, which is becoming increasingly popular in the country, similar to trends observed in the West. Reliance Jio, a subsidiary of the Reliance Group, asserts its capability to present 'First Day, First Show' on its platform JioCinema. It would be intriguing to ascertain if, when, and how the giant would execute it. Moreover, it is generally believed that direct-to-digital reality will capture a portion of growth in the future, with little evidence suggesting a shift in the fundamental economic model employed by theatres or movie chains. Theatres, cinema chains, and OTT platforms will achieve a sustainable equilibrium and maintain profitable growth as alternative content consumption channels, with one providing the comfort of home and the other delivering an immersive cinematic experience. (Lohoty, P. et al., 2020).

Conclusion:

According to PwC, India has the most potential of any market across the world, and a surge in growth would see total video revenue earned via OTT overtake Germany, Australia, and South Korea to become the sixth-largest market in 2024.

While the OTT sector has changed the way people consume media content, the movie industry is far from dead. The proliferation of over-the-top platforms has generated significant apprehension among filmmakers, who contend that this growth signifies the ultimate demise of the movie experience.

Video streaming platforms have rendered movie watching more cost-effective, easy, and accessible during travel, particularly for those inclined towards binge-watching. Nonetheless, the provision of early access to major films, along with the nostalgia linked to the cinematic experience, has significantly contributed to attracting audiences to theatres (Linnane C. 2020). A harmonious equilibrium between the two mediums will be attained in the future.

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Biography

¹Azme Zaheer, * ¹Kaushal Kishore Mishra, ¹Pawan Pant, and ¹Bhaskara Srinivas

1- Dr. Azmee Zaheer is an Assistant Professor at the University School of Business, MBA department, Chandigarh University, Gharuan, Punjab. She has completed her PhD and MPhil in Management from Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University) Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. She received a Gold Medalist for M.phil's exemplary work. She has four years of research experience, 3.5 years of corporate experience in marketing, and 1.5 years of academic experience in marketing. She has also contributed to various research journals like Scopus, Web of Sciences, UGC Care, and Edited Book and has participated in multiple national and international seminars. Azmee.zaheer@gmail.com ORCID Id : <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6281-2608>

2 - Prof. (Dr.) K. K. Mishra is working as a Professor of Marketing at the University School of Business, Chandigarh University, Mohali, Punjab. He has published 54 national and international research papers in Scopus-indexed journals and book chapters and presented 31 papers at national and international conferences. He has four patent rights and three copyrights. He has 25 years of teaching and research experience. He has supervised two PhD scholars. He has twice qualified for UGC NET in Management. He has received the Best Faculty Award three times from the Indian Institute of Materials Management, National Head Quarters, Mumbai, in 2009, 2016 and 2018, respectively. He has been conferred the Best Paper Award for the paper titled "Harnessing AI: Unveiling Educators' Intentions and Synergy in Education", presented at the 8th International Conference on Information System Design and Intelligent Applications (ISDIS 2024) in Dubai, UAE, in 2024. He has chaired technical sessions of international conferences organized by the Indian Institute of Materials Management, Mumbai, in 2016 and 2018 and OP Jindal University Raigarh, in 2022 and 2023. He did his PhD in "Strategy formulation for marketing services in rural Uttar Pradesh" from Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon University, Allahabad. He can be contacted at email: kkmsitmbbk@gmail.com. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6466-0575>

3- Dr Pawan Pant is working as an Associate Professor of Management at the University School of Business, Chandigarh University, Mohali, Punjab. He has published eight research papers, one in a national journal and one in an international journal. He has 11 years of teaching experience and worked as an Assistant Manager (Purchase) at Pacific Industries Ltd., Udaipur (Rajasthan) for one year. His area of specialization is Economics. email: pawanpant04@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1774-5650>

4- Dr. Akriti Gupta is working as an Assistant Professor at the University School of Business, Chandigarh University, Mohali, Punjab. Her research prowess extends across pivotal domains, encompassing stock markets, foreign investments, international trade, and financial technologies. Dr. Gupta's dedication to advancing scholarly knowledge is evident through her participation in international conferences, including a notable paper presentation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Her research contributions are disseminated across prestigious SCOPUS and ABDC-listed journals, underscoring her unwavering commitment to advancing knowledge. Additionally, she has actively engaged in enriching her academic repertoire by completing courses through NPTEL, further enhancing her standing as a committed and continuously evolving academician. guptakriti.11@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6918-232X>

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