

SEISMIC SHIFT IN FILM VIEWERSHIP TREND AMONG YOUNG AUDIENCE

Written by *Debsmita Sarkar*

Assistant Professor, Dum Dum Motijheel College, Kolkata, India

ABSTRACT

Human beings are constantly working for the betterment of life and living. Each passing day world discovers a new developed tool to make life more effortless. With the advent of internet and new media technology life became easier and more enjoyable. The effect of technology can be seen in almost all the areas of life. Entertainment industry is one which enjoys and suffers at the same time. People started adopting the new way of living discarding the traditional path such as watching films in cinemas. New technology also has an adverse effect on the viewership of films in theatres. It has been found from a study that maximum footfall in cinema consists of teenagers and young adults and recently they are being influenced by the technology's newbie over the top (OTT) entertainment platform.

For this study the researcher's main focus will be on the young audience and how their consumption pattern has brought a seismic or sudden change in film viewership trend. This study will also find out the factors responsible for the change in trend and reason behind opting OTT. Uses and gratifications theory (UGT) approach will define why and how people actively seek out OTT medium to satisfy their needs. A structured survey method using google form will be used to understand the consumption habit of the young viewers. The analysis of the response will be represented by employing quantitative technique.

Keywords: OTT, New Media, Cinema, Young Audience, Seismic Shift, Viewership Trend

INTRODUCTION

Communication got a new path after the advent of 'internet', which is a global network connecting millions of computers. The new improved technologies are entirely refining the way of communication. Specially, the new media technology according to Frederick Williams is creating a virtual "new medium of communication". With the advent of this technology interactivity with the people became easier and user control. Internet became one of the most useful and valuable technology of our daily lives. Based on the requirements we can utilize the internet technology for different purpose. Reaching out to individual from around the globe became accessible and affordable. People can access to enormous amount of information from the huge number of publications on internet. Sitting at home job seekers can find jobs, entertain oneself, and chat with friends.

Beside internet cell phone technology drastically changed the communication scenario. Cell phone is the merger of radio telephone technology. Guglielmo Marconi the radio pioneer invented the technology to transmit message from one place to another via radio waves. Cell phones used this radio technology to connect people while travelling around a large geographical area. These cell phones get connection from various cellular networks. As the days are passing cell phones are getting enhanced by several features like Instant messaging, games, video chatting, online shopping, watching videos, banking, listening to music, photography etc.

The effect of technology can be seen in almost all the areas of life. This developed technology is said to be the carrier of shift or sudden change in behaviour and habits of people globally. Entertainment industry is one which enjoys and suffers at the same time. Entertainment industry such as movies, TV shows, radio shows, news, music, newspapers, magazines, and books are reaching people through online medium. People started adopting the new way of living discarding the traditional path such as watching films in cinemas.

Regarding film industry maximum profit is earned through distribution and consumption in theatres. In a survey by 'Statista' it has been observed that 2019 is the year where 1650 millions of theatre tickets were sold in China followed by India in the second position with 1514 million. The article "Digital media trends" by Chris Arkenberg, David Cutbill, Jeff Loucks, Kevin

Westcott articulated “Studios derive almost half of their revenues from theatrical releases.” Although the average number of movie tickets purchased by Americans each year has declined from 4.2 in 2009 to 3.4 in 2019. Now a days studios does not depend solely on theatres to earn profit rather they distribute the content through different online platform.

Since the launch of YouTube in 2005, is considered to be one of the leading video sharing platforms. As Burgess and Green (2009) explained in their book, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*, “YouTube was one of a number of competing services aiming to remove the technical barriers to the widespread sharing of video online. Alina Vytiaz in the study “YouTube-A New era of TV?” mentioned that online video sharing platform YouTube is a direct competition of traditional TV as viewers especially young audience prefer to watch content online as the entire control of selection and consumption depends on the user. “India is YouTube’s fastest growing market with 265 million monthly active users” (Indian OTT platform, Report 2019).

Recently via internet medium viewers can access directly the over-the –top media services. This service bypasses the companies who used to control and distribute content with the help of cable and satellite. It has also killed the monopolistic competitors to reach directly to the subscribers of OTT platform. This media service offers content from global television channels, standalone videos, platform’s originals, films, podcast, news and Live TV. Access of OTT content is possible through internet connected devices such as mobile phones, smart TVs, set-top box, gaming consoles, desktop and laptops. In 2020 a sudden surge can be seen in the number of OTT platform. Before the operation of world’s entertainment industry was stopped the OTT platform was considered to be an extravagant product of the elite class. The state of pandemic, bound the film makers to distribute their content in DTH and online streaming platform to sustain in the business without loss. It also helped the consumers of entertainment content to fully utilise their lockdown time period. “OTT can help content reach millions of potential consumers at the fraction of the cost of a formal release and traditional ad promotions.” (Ankit Chhajer,2020)

On demand video platform’s success suddenly started to show flourishing colour when most of the entertainment business was at wreck. 'India's OTT Market: Witnessing a Rise in Number

of Paid Subscribers' by India Brand Equity Foundation (Oct 2020) mentioned that “Paid subscriptions on OTT video platforms grew to 29 million by July, a jump of 31% in just four months. The increase was 5 million in April alone, the biggest for a single month”.

OBJECTIVE

This study will find out the rate of acceptance of OTT platform by young viewers. Among different platforms available in India which are the most preferred one by the young viewers. Which factors are responsible for the change in trend and what are the reasons behind opting OTT are the purposes of this study?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Structured survey method is used for sampling. Data has been collected through online medium using google form. Close ended questionnaire is circulated among respondents of different demographics. To get an authentic result and unbiased finding the number of respondents were not decided prior hand. The total of 215 responses has been studied. Data analysis is done by using quantitative method with the help of coding sheet for calculating the frequency of predetermined variables to solve the research problem.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The structured questionnaires which were sent among people belonging to various age groups supports the findings of this study. A study by mint supports the view that youngster make up the majority of the film going audience in India. The maximum percentage of theatre audience is young people between the age group of 18 to 30 years. In this study the the first presumption which states that among young audience consumption of film content is preferable in online platform than other traditional medium. The finding of this study proves the hypothesis as 94.9% of respondents belong between the age group of 18 to 30 years among which 58.2% of

youngster prefer to watch film on online platforms. This result cannot be considered as contradictory with previous results as the response has been taken in the situation of Covid-19 pandemic. The 71.4% of people said they changed their preference due to close of theatre in lockdown period.

The second speculation states that due to availability of content on demand and flexibility in time with complete entertainment factor youngster prefers over the top platform. To fulfil this proposition a series of independent variables were used.

The variables explain the reason behind the preference of over-the-top platform. Most of the respondents rely on this platform to get entertainment. 58.2% of people stated flexitime being the main reason for choosing this entertainment medium followed by on demand content strategy. Besides the shows of television, mainstream release, OTT's content also consists of films, shows, with more enriched content which are disparate from previously available media programme. Admittance of time and place preference makes the platform more acceptable. The user can watch their show in their own language. These findings prove the above-mentioned speculations.

Maximum respondent i.e. 23.6% of mentioned two hours of time is spend by the viewers on this platform. As per the study there is a close gap between the people who favors to subscribe during new release and those who are monthly subscriber of an OTT platform. The former subscriber is 33.5% followed by 32% and only 29.4% does yearly subscription. In India OTT platforms subscriptions are cost effective for all type of audience. According to findings 42.5% of people spends around rupees 199 to 399 per month for consumption of content. People also restricts themselves to free episodes where some depends on others to download.

Content of this type of platforms plays a massive role in attracting viewers into it. Multigenre entertainment projects are available in one box. Most preferred type of programme is web series which contains multiple episodes. This web series can be of any genre for example crime, thriller, love story, drama, mythology etc. It has been found 79.1% are tempted to watch the series as the story telling approach keeps the viewer sit straight till the end of the last episode. Another most important factor is the role of censorship on this on binge platforms. Makers feel free to project their work without any barrier hence subjects like nudity, sexuality, abusive

language, crime etc were shown without any diminution. Though the host mentions the age limit of viewers but it becomes rare possible to control. In traditional mediums censorship stains the content for universal viewers and issues certificate on the type of audience. In this scenario the Union government has brought Over The Top (OTT) platforms, or video streaming service providers such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and others, under the ambit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. In a gazette notification issued and signed by President Ram Nath Kovind, online films, digital news and current affairs content now come under the purview of the I&B Ministry headed by Prakash Javadekar. While asking the respondents whether they want to bring this type of platform under the surveillance of censor board 36.7% of people mentioned that they want censor board to manage the content. 32.9% disagreed with the concept whereas 30.4% were in dilemma whether they want or not.

The last presumption of this study is people suddenly changed their consumption pattern due to the constraint of visiting theatre due to SARS-CoV-2 disease. 71.4% of people mentioned that pandemic and isolation is the only reason for changing their mode of entertainment. Only 25.7% of people are watching on demand contents from before this global hazard.

CONCLUSION

The study clearly depicts the changed scenario of viewership habit. This seismic change is the effect of 2020 pandemic as prodigious number of people started changing their consumption pattern after they experienced complete lockdown. The OTT platform has given a new dimension in choosing the content across the globe. New technology also has an adverse effect on the viewership of films in theatres. It has been found from the study that maximum number of teenagers and young adults are being influenced by the technology's newbie over the top (OTT) entertainment platform. This platform is gaining popularity as it gives the user choice of time and space. People also gets attracted to the films and shows with rich realistic content rather. As long as the internet data will remain cheap consumption of these platform will continue. The On-demand platform's contents are getting global recognition with the facility to watch it in understandable language. The chances of sustainability for this platform's demand seems positive with the young tech savvy user's satisfying qualities.

REFERENCES

- 2019. *Indian OTT platform report*. [ebook] Available at: <https://communicationcrafts.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Indian_ott_report2019.pdf> [Accessed 31 May 2021].
- 2021. [online] Available at: <<https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/in/pdf/2017/10/The-Digital-First-journey.pdf>> [Accessed 31 May 2021].
- Arkenberg, C., Cutbill, D., Loucks, J. and Westcott, K., 2021. [online] Available at: <<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/technology/future-of-the-movie-industry.html>> [Accessed 31 May 2021].
- Burgess, J. and Green, J., 2009. *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*.
- Chhajer, A., 2020. How OTT market will be a game-changer for the film industry. [Blog] *Brandequity.com*, Available at: <<https://brandequity.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/media/how-ott-market-will-be-a-game-changer-for-the-film-industry/75658326>> [Accessed 31 May 2021].
- ETBrandEquity.com. 2021. *India is the fastest-growing OTT market at 28.6 percent CAGR: PwC report - ET BrandEquity*. [online] Available at: <<https://brandequity.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/media/india-is-the-fastest-growing-ott-market-at-28-6-percent-cagr-pwc-report/78804323>> [Accessed 31 May 2021].
- Singh, P., 2019. New Media as a Change Agent of Indian Television and Cinema: A study of over-the-top Platforms. *Journal of Content, Community & Communication*, 9.