



International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

OTT Platforms in COVID Era: A Chaos or Bliss

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ABSTRACT

The unforeseen global pandemic known as COVID-19 altered how audiences consume entertainment across many media channels. During this time, adoption of OTTs emerged as a trend. This study attempts to understand the growth of OTT platforms during the lockdown and the future potential or scope of OTT platforms. To grasp the potential of OTT platforms in the future, it is important to comprehend the amount of the sharp increase in demand during the pandemic. A structured questionnaire technique was utilised to gather the primary data. It is clear from the study that usage and popularity of OTT platforms have only increased since their introduction. People were found to use OTT platforms more frequently due to the variety of contents available than any other channels, including social media, traditional media platforms or gaming for entertainment.

Keywords: OTT platforms, Global Pandemic, Lockdown, Media Channels, Traditional media platforms.

INTRODUCTION

An OTT media platform is a streaming media service that is made available to users directly online. In contrast to access to cable or satellite TV, over-the-top services refer to the direct distribution of movies and TV shows to internet users. The majority of OTT platforms provide streaming services, which allow the users to watch the content on a Video-on-Demand basis where the users can choose the programme and time according to your choice and convenience as contrary to traditional media platforms which provide scheduled programming. OTT content can be downloaded at the user's request and immediately accessed. Over-the-top services are currently quite popular and largely acknowledged as a new technology worldwide. The OTT industry has already seen innovative development, enabling users to obtain any material they want in a single space. The growth of new OTT media, which provides services to viewers directly via the internet, is a result of better networks, more internet connections, technological advancements, and the accessibility of smart gadgets. The OTT platforms have seen a tremendous increase in newer audience growth due to COVID-19. OTT content is drawing in a lot of new subscribers, who are also giving very favourable reviews. The need for newer and more exclusive material will compel high budget producers and filmmakers to distribute their films directly into the OTT channels rather than in movie theatres due to a trend of people watching numerous content channels at once.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Garima Sharma Nijhawan & Surbhi Dahiya (2020) highlighted that OTT firms have just been able to scratch the surface of the regional Indian market; there is enormous opportunity to go deeper in the future. Only 40 OTT apps and a small amount of regional content have helped this medium carve out a new market in urban India. The mass acceptance of the medium in metropolitan areas, where people have better spending power than in semi-urban or rural India, has been greatly aided by COVID 19.

Apoorv Raj & Aravind Nair (2021) suggested that the number of people watching traditional media, like television and multiplexes, would be significantly impacted by the spread of OTT platforms in India. While some respondents who prefer going to the movies in a multiplex will probably continue to do so, this number is also likely to decline. OTT platform services will likely have an impact on the number of people who watch television and cinemas in the future. They further stated that OTT platform services will be seen as the technology of the future and have a big impact on how we all watch TV.

Kshamali Sanjay Sontakke (2021) stated that without a doubt, India's OTT sector is expanding quickly because to the low cost of the internet network and the lockdown-induced conditions. More original content in our regional languages will be released via OTT in the upcoming years,

which will further strengthen our entertainment sector. Once things return to normal, the TV, OTT, and film industries will coexist and produce more original material.

Priya Malhotra, Akshay Kumar & Anu Yadav (2021) observed that although every age group uses this form of entertainment, younger generations are mostly drawn to it. The most popular platform overall is found to be Netflix, whose original and thrilling entertainment content is well known. Amazon Prime is a close second because it primarily produces Indian-made content. They highlighted that there are numerous benefits to selecting OTT over TV. entertainment, flexibility, on-demand contents, distinctive content, cost efficiency, language, and accessibility

Sujith.T.S & M.Sumathy (2021) concluded that the effects of COVID-19 and the national lockdown are still having an impact on daily life, and both India and the rest of the world are using more and more video streaming services. This study identifies the variables influencing millennial customers of Amazon Prime Video in the Thrissur district's satisfaction. Price, perceived value, audio and video quality, and content quality are closely related and influence how satisfied millennial Amazon Prime Video subscribers are.

Sarjid Ahmed & Bhanita Das (2022) found out that majority of those in the 19–35 age range spend their spare time consistently watching content on OTT platforms. Regardless of gender, location, or monthly income, the majority of people in this age group are students and singles who enjoy picking up their smartphone, opening their preferred OTT app, choosing their preferred content, and quickly starting to stream it. Male and female participants agree that their screen time has roughly doubled of two since the pandemic began.

Vidhya K. & Arjun Govind (2022) described there has been significant investment in OTT platforms, it is quite simple to predict that they will overtake traditional platforms. For Indian consumers, the price plan of the OTT platforms is more affordable as many telecom operators in India cut the cost of their internet service in an effort to compete with data plans, which has encouraged customers to utilise OTT services more frequently. OTT platforms are constantly looking for methods to provide more engaging content that is not already available. People were severely affected by the COVID-19 shutdown, and since they were stuck to their houses, they used OTT platforms to relax and unwind.

OBJECTIVES

The goal of this study is to investigate and evaluate the factors that influence popularity of OTT in India during lockdown period. This study will also assist OTT players in detecting shifting customer needs and devising strategies to effectively address the OTT threat, enabling OTT providers to meet those needs and will also find out the future scope of OTT platforms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary data has been collected from 150 respondents by online survey method through google forms with the help of structured closed ended questionnaire. One section of the questionnaire consists the questions regarding demographic data and the other section about the usage and preference of OTT platforms during lockdown. The secondary data has been collected through various journals, online resources etc. The data set was imported into Tables and pie charts for visualization, and it contains all the variables necessary to demonstrate the effects of changes in OTT usage.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	73	48.67
	Female	77	51.33
	Total	150	100
Age Group	Below 18	21	14
	18-25	37	24.67
	26-35	42	28
	36-50	33	22
	Above 50	17	11.33
	Total	150	100
Educational Qualification	Uneducated	3	2
	Under graduate	40	26.67
	Graduate	36	24
	Post graduate or above	45	30

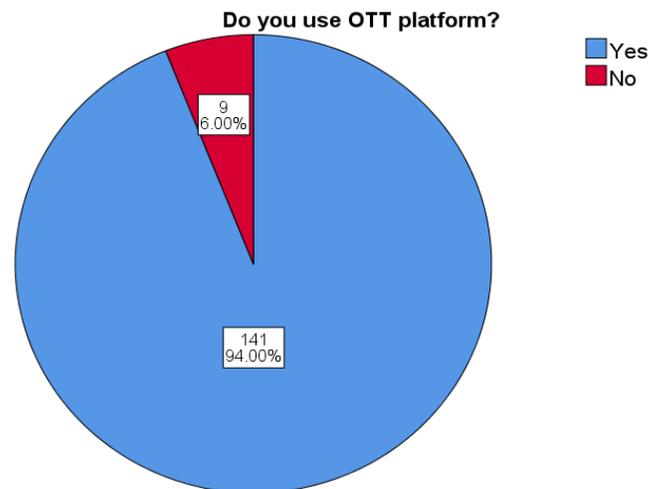
	Professional	26	17.33
	Total	150	100
Occupation	Salaried/Professionals	55	36.67
	Self-employed	36	24
	Student	42	28
	Housewife	17	11.33
	Total	150	100
Level of Income	Low	44	29.33
	Middle	57	38
	High	49	32.67
	Total	150	100

Descriptive Analysis:

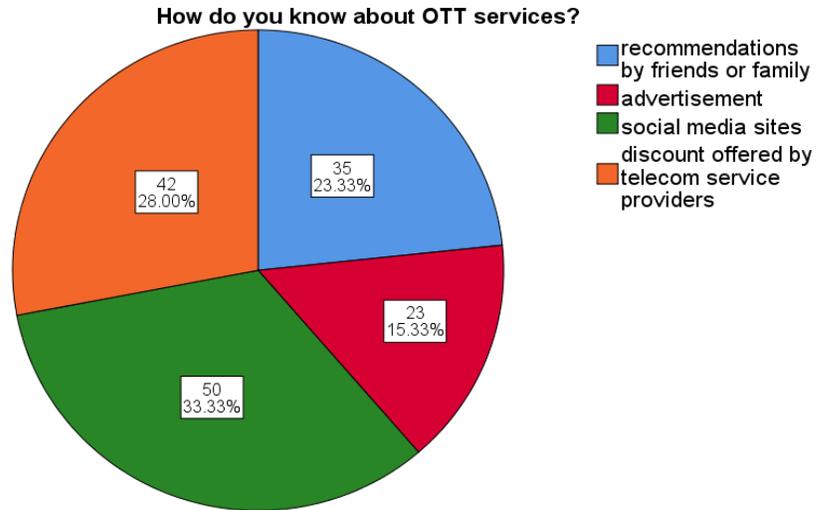
The table 1 shows the demographic profile of the samples collected. This table shows that out of 150 respondents, 51.33% respondents are female and 48.67% are male. Majority of the respondents belonged to 18-25 and 26-35 age group. The respondents are mostly undergraduate, graduate and post graduate or above, only 2% of them are uneducated. The table indicated that 36.67% of the respondents are salaried/professionals, 24% are self-employed, 28% are students and only 11.33% respondents are housewives. The samples consist of 38% respondents from middle level of income, 32.67% are from high level of income and 29.33% are from low level of income.

Usage of OTT during lockdown: An analysis

Knowledge about OTT platform

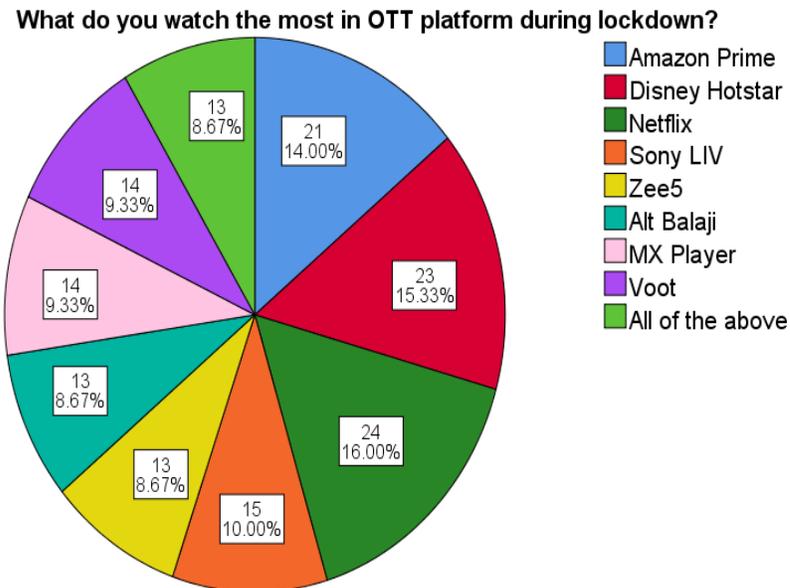


The above fig indicates that 94% respondents use OTT platforms for their entertainment purpose only 6% respondents still don't use OTT platforms and therefore they are deemed fit for the research purpose.

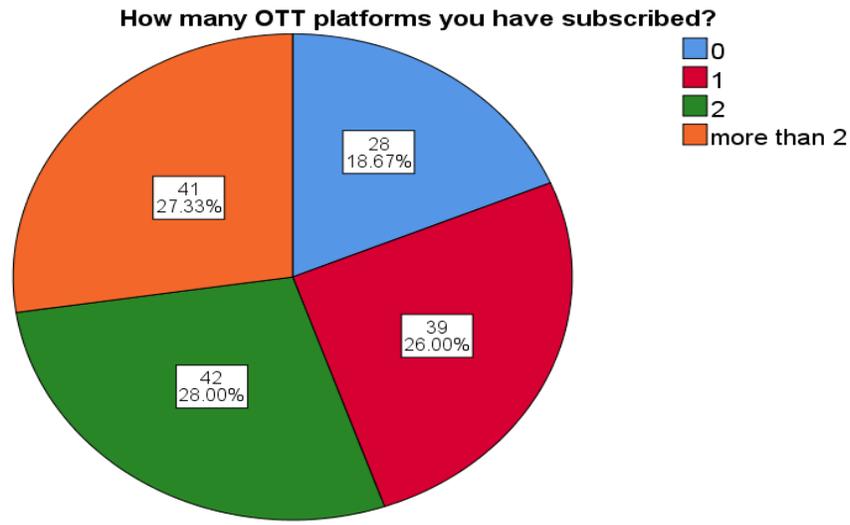


The fig shows that mostly they got to know about new OTT services or programmes through social media sites and by the discount or plans offered by their telecom service providers followed by the recommendations given friends or family and lastly by advertisements.

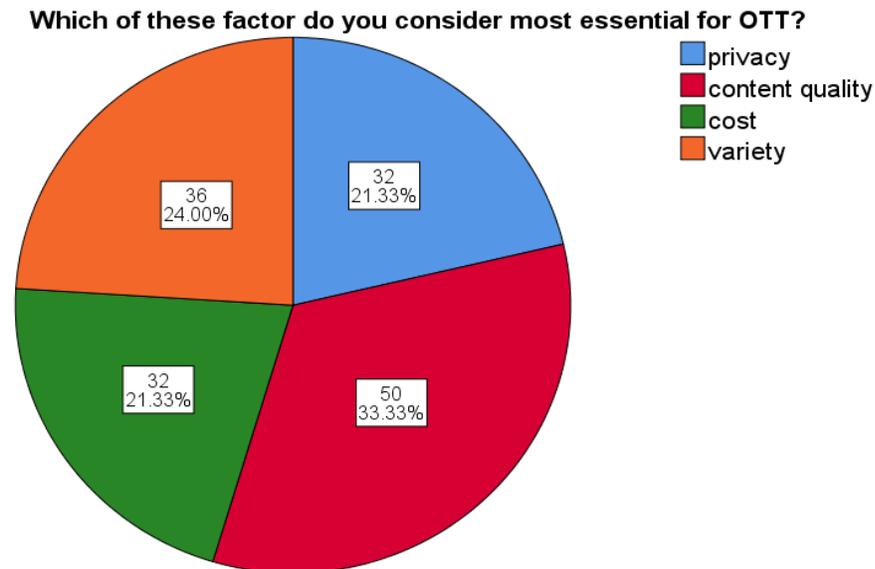
Most preferred OTT app



The above fig indicates that top 3 most preferred apps by the respondents are Netflix, Disney Hotstar and Amazon Prime Video. The least preferred are Alt Balaji & Zee5.

OTT subscription

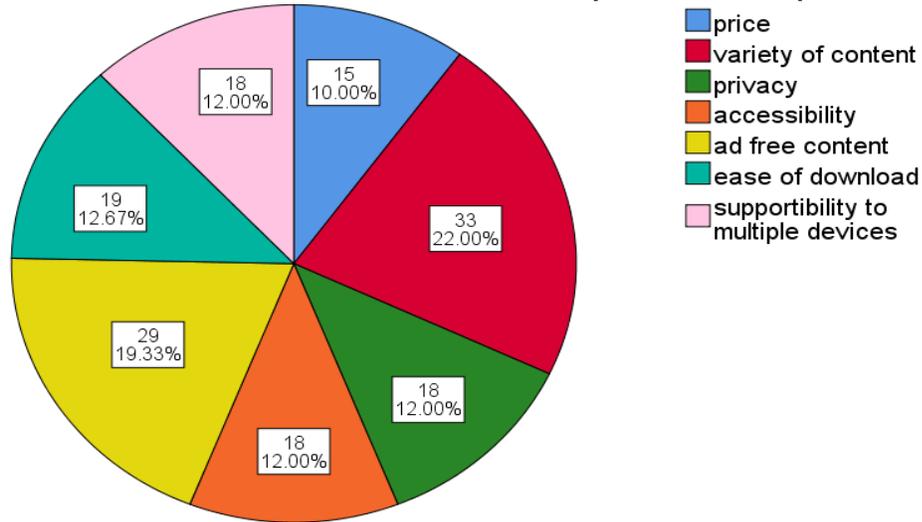
The above fig shows that 28% of the respondents have subscribed 2 platforms, 27.33% of the respondents have subscribed more than 2 platforms, 26% of the respondents have subscribed 1 platform and only 18.67% have not subscribed any of the OTT platforms.

Most essential factor for OTT

The above fig shows that most essential factor for the viewers of OTT is content quality afterwards it is variations in the content which the OTT platforms is providing and lastly, privacy and cost is the least essential factors for the respondents.

Reason to shift

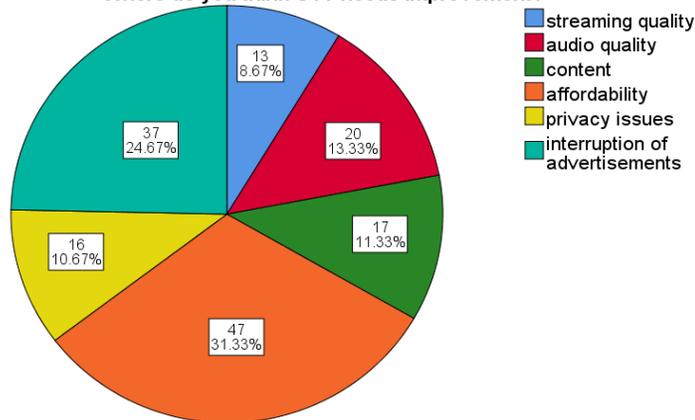
What is the reason behind to shift from conventional platform to OTT platform?



The major reasons to shift from traditional media platforms to OTT platforms are variety and ad free contents available on OTT platforms. The least preferred reason is price.

Improvement in OTT platforms

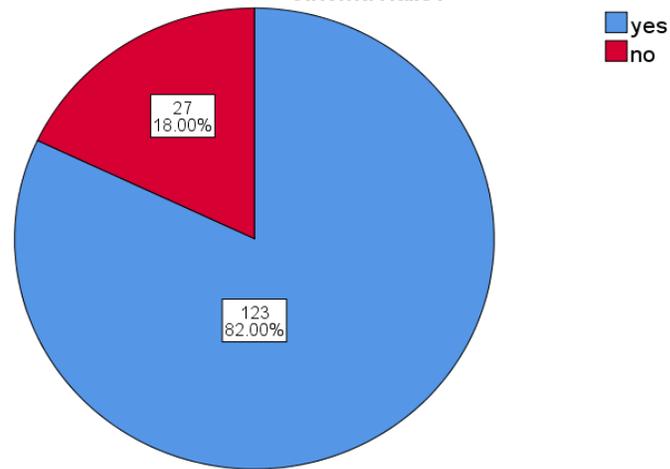
Where do you think OTT needs improvement?



The above fig indicates that the main area where the majority of the respondents believed OTT needs improvement is affordability and least important area is the quality of the streaming.

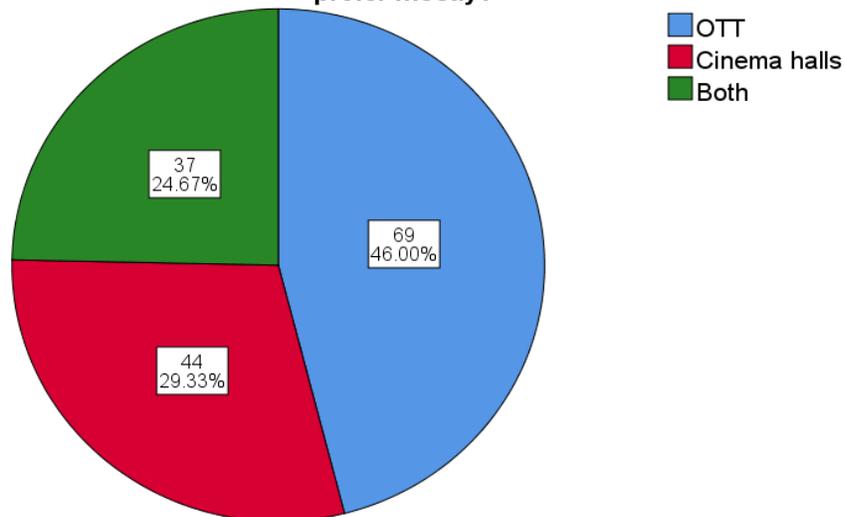
OTT vs. Cinema Halls

Have you ever waited for a movie to be released in OTT rather than watching it in Cinema Halls?

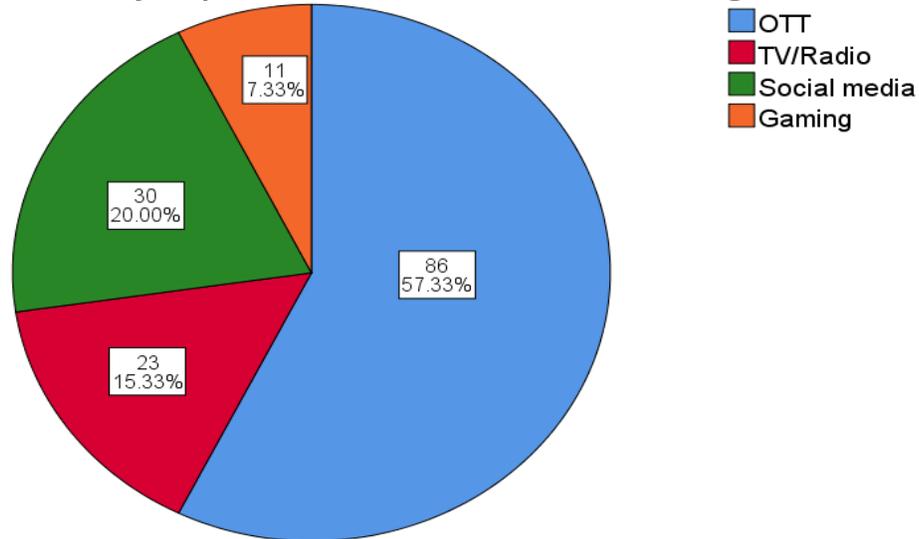


As most of the movies are now releasing directly on the OTT platforms, 82% of the respondents agreed they waited for a movie to be released in OTT platforms rather than on cinema halls as indicated in the fig.

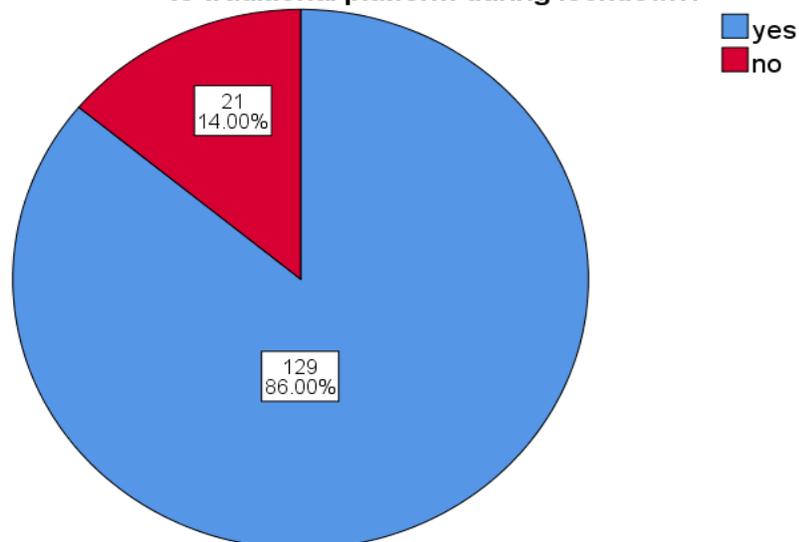
If a movie releases in Cinema Halls and on OTT platform together, what would you prefer mostly?



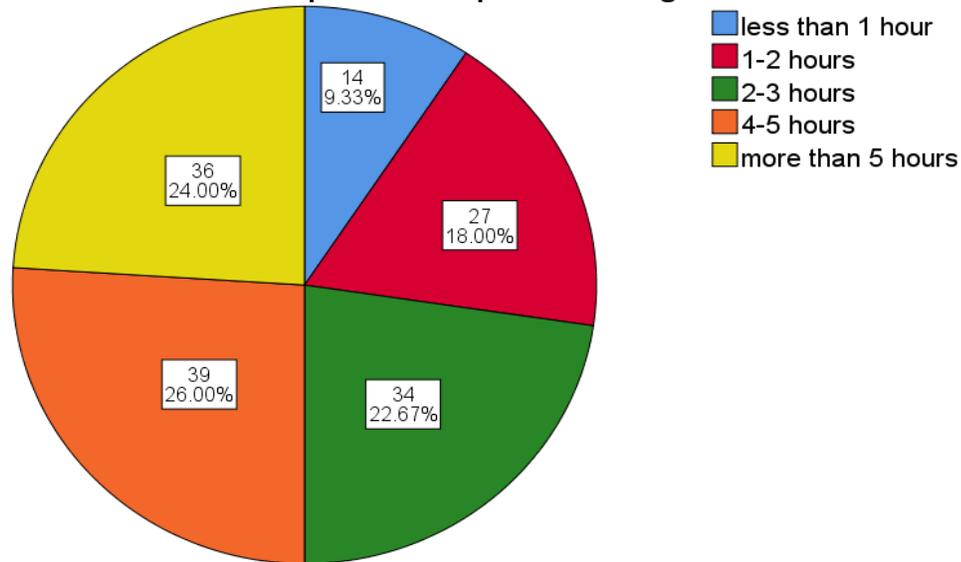
46% of the respondents are in favour if a movie releases in Cinema halls & OTT platforms together they will prefer OTT over the Cinema halls. 29.33% of the respondents still prefers Cinema halls over OTT platforms for watching a movie and 24.67% of the respondents are neutral about their opinion regarding the matter.

*Preferred media during lockdown***What was your preferred media for entertainment during lockdown?**

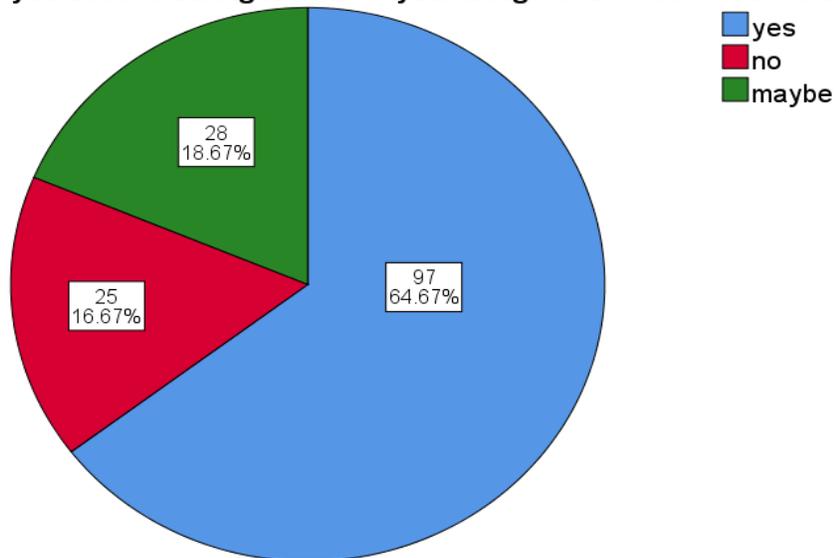
The above fig indicates that OTT was the most preferred media for entertainment during lockdown among the respondents followed by social media, TV/Radio and gaming respectively.

Do you believe OTT platform allow you to binge watch more content in comparison to traditional platform during lockdown?

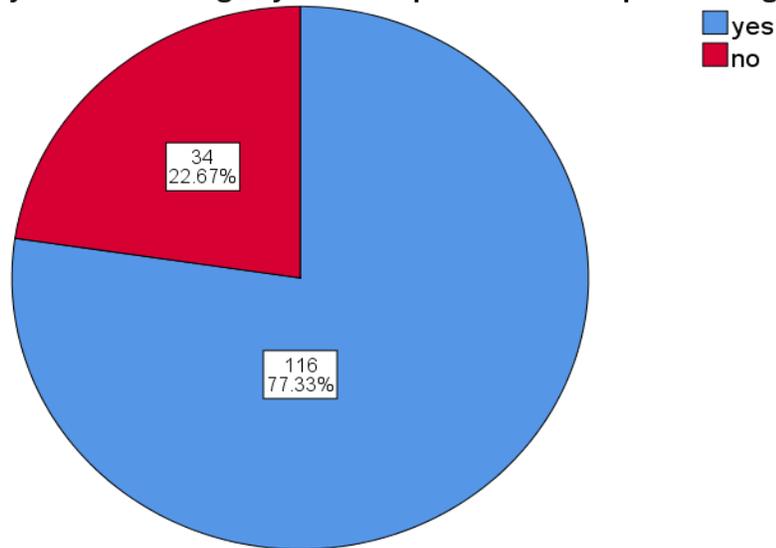
86% of the respondents are in favour that OTT platforms allowed them to binge watch more content in comparison of the traditional media platform during lockdowns but 14% of the respondents has denied the statement as indicated in the fig.

*Time spent on OTT platform during lockdown***What was the time spent on OTT platform during lockdown?**

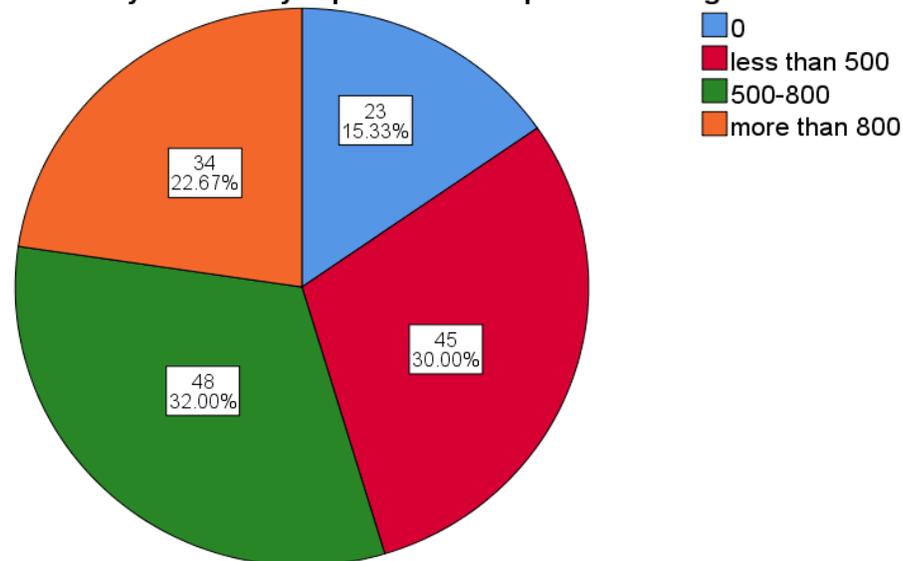
The above fig indicates that 26% of the respondents spent 4-5 hours, 24% of them spent more than 5 hours, 22.67% of them spent 2-3 hours, 18% of them spent 1-2 hours and 9.33% spent only less than hour daily on OTT streamings during lockdown.

*Growth in the usage of OTT services***Do you believe during lockdown your usage of OTT services increased?**

The above fig shows that 64.67% respondents agreed that their usage towards OTT services has increased during lockdown, 18.67% respondents were not sure about it & 16.67% of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

Have you started using any new OTT platform subscription during lockdown?

The above fig shows that 77.33% of the respondents had started exploring new OTT platforms and subscribed during the period of lockdown and rest of the respondents were not using any new platform.

Monthly expenses paid regarding OTT platforms**What was your monthly expenses in OTT platform during lockdown?**

The above fig indicates that 32% of the respondents paid 500-800 per month, 30% of them paid less than 500, 22.67% paid more than 800 for OTT subscription. Only 15.33% didn't pay or subscribed to any OTT platforms.

KEY FINDINGS

- 94% of the respondents use OTT platforms for their entertainment purpose out of which only 18.67% has not taken any OTT subscription.
- Most of the respondents who uses OTT subscription are from the age group of 18-25 and 26-35.
- The three dominant players in OTT platforms are Netflix with 16%, Disney Hotstar with 15.33% and Amazon prime with 14% respectively.

- Variety of content, ad free content and ease of download are three major reasons for people to switch from conventional media to OTT platforms.
- Majority of the respondents believed OTT needs to be more affordable.
- Majority of the respondents' preferred media for entertainment during lockdown was OTT where they spent on an average 4-5 hours daily or more and their monthly expense was near about 500-800 or less than 500.
- 77.33% of the respondents agreed that they started new OTT subscriptions during the lockdown era.

CONCLUSION

The future of OTT platforms in India is quite promising, and video consumption will rise along with the growth of the internet and mobile devices. The current and forthcoming generations have lost interest in using cinema as a social platform for interaction; instead, they choose to stay indoors, where it is more comfortable for them to sit on couches, and use their screens to tour the world. After COVID 19, OTT platforms have captured a lot of market space due to its growing popularity but it is still debatable to say that OTT eventually will replace traditional media platforms, however it is certainly changing the entertainment sector. The reason for its popularity is the attractive and unique content they are providing which is not available in the traditional media platforms. Marketers must let customers know that OTT platforms meet their need for ease. Viewers are free to watch any content, whenever and wherever they want. The subscription fee is the barrier to this platform's easy going, and most users prefer free videos to paid ones. They must explain how their platform offers maximum convenience, is usable everywhere and valuable in terms of content, and that, unlike other media, the consumer just pays for what they view.

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