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Journal of Development Economics and Management Research Studies (JDMS)
A Peer Reviewed Open Access International Journal
ISSN: 2582 5119 (Online)



Crossref Prefix No: 10.53422
10(16), 65-70, April-June, 2023
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A Study on Consumers' Preference towards OTT Platforms during the Post Covid-19 Lockdown Periods

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Abstract:

This research paper analyses the changing consumer preferences towards over-the-top (OTT) platforms in the post Covid-19 lockdown period. With the pandemic forcing people to stay indoors and limiting access to traditional forms of entertainment, OTT platforms have witnessed a surge in popularity. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods to gather insights into the factors driving consumer behavior towards OTT platforms. Through an online survey and in-depth interviews with OTT users, the study finds that factors such as ease of use, affordability, and availability of diverse content play a significant role in shaping consumer preferences. The study also sheds light on the emerging trends in the OTT industry and offers insights that can be useful for businesses in this sector. Overall, this research provides a valuable contribution to the understanding of how the pandemic has impacted the media consumption habits of consumers and offers insights for OTT platforms to cater to the evolving needs of their users.

INTRODUCTION:

The Covid-19 pandemic has produced an unprecedented impact on people's lives across the globe. With social distancing measures in place and restrictions on movement, individuals have increasingly turned to digital forms of entertainment. Among these, over-the-top (OTT) platforms have witnessed a surge in popularity, offering viewers a wide range of content from movies and TV shows to documentaries and original programming. As the pandemic subsides and the world adapts to the new normal, it is crucial to understand the factors that shape consumer preferences towards these platforms. This research paper aims to analyze the changing consumer behavior towards OTT platforms in the post Covid-19 lockdown period.

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The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods to gather insights into the factors driving consumer behavior towards these platforms. By understanding these factors, businesses in the OTT industry can develop effective strategies to cater to the evolving needs of their users. Overall, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on the impact of the pandemic on media consumption habits and offers insights for businesses in the OTT industry to thrive in a post-Covid world.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Shaurya Parnami and Tushar Jain, (2021) have discovered that During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of active subscribers to OTT streaming platforms has increased by almost 6 million users in a single year in India alone. Their study surveys a sample population of 200 respondents and aims to ascertain whether their usage of OTT platforms has increased or not, by how much time, and the perceived reasons behind this increase. The study found that the subscribers of these OTT platforms had increased their usage by almost 3 hours on a daily average due to the pandemic, citing various reasons such as 'Boredom', 'Excess time', 'New content' etc. They further observed that this increase in usage is very encouraging for the new players in the market to launch their streaming services and foreign OTT platforms looking to launch in India (for ex. Hulu and HBO Max). It means that there is a demand for such services in India.

Kavita Sharma and Emmanuel Elioth Lulandala, (2022) case study is based approach and survey based research method arrived at seven resilient OTT strategies; competitive low pricing, enhancing customer experience, launching innovative service plans, content localisation, strategic collaboration, flexibility in technology adoption and proactive sales promotion. Consequent to adopting these strategies, consumers' usage of OTT evolved from occasional to habitual. Convenience, ease of accessibility, risk of contracting COVID-19, variety and quality of content, online reviews and affordability drive consumer preference for OTT. Also, this study revealed consumers' varied OTT experiences.

Divya Madnani, Semila Fernandes, Nidhi Madnani, (2022), through a primary research and focus group discussion arrived at the findings showing that lockdown has played a major role in the increase in viewership of OTT platforms, as people working from home are also using OTT platforms more. The average hours spent on OTT have increased from 0–2 to 2–5 h and average spending that users are willing to make on OTT platforms is Rs 100–300 (per month). The satisfaction level of customers is directly related to space to watch with family, time to use OTT platforms, the quality of content on OTT platforms and preference of OTT platform over television. Also, factors such as age group, occupation, city and income groups also determine the usage of the OTT platform.

Sumathi Mohan and Sujith TS, (2021), research is based on primary data arrived at the possible reasons that lend OTT services their popularity, among subscribers that include convenience and high-quality content. The expansion of OTT services is also aided by low-cost internet connection prices. People are enthusiastic about movies being launched on OTT platforms at specific times, yet they prefer to watch movies in theatres rather than on OTT platforms. The study found that the majority of the consumers are satisfied with the OTT video

streaming platform. The researcher uses two variables for measuring the perception of the users. The study found overall satisfaction with a mean score of 4.01. only OTT users from Thrissur were recruited for the study, therefore generalizations for the entire.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Despite a large scale increase in the adoption of OTT platforms all across the world, following the pandemic induced lockdown. There is a limited understanding on the specific factors that have driven this surge. Besides, there is also a limited understanding of where OTT platforms stand vis-à-vis to films/TV Channels, the traditional mediums of entertainment, and whether OTT platforms hold a competitive edge over them. Moreover, the entertainment industry is staring at a bleak future, marred with uncertainties, with no clarity on what will drive entertainment in the upcoming decade.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

With the above problem statement set in place, the research seeks to accomplish the following objectives.

- To assess the spread of OTT Platforms, post covid-lockdowns
- To study the popularity of OTT media platforms in comparison to films/ TV Channels.
- To investigate and gain an understanding of the future trajectory of Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

One Way ANOVA

Change in usage pattern of OTT platforms, post covid-19 lockdowns and age

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference between change in usage patterns of OTT platforms, post covid-19 lockdowns and age of the respondents' age

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): There is significant difference between change in usage patterns of OTT platforms, post covid-19 lockdowns and age of the respondents' age

| ANOVA | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------|
| How has your OTT usage pattern changed post-covid 19 lockdowns ? | | | | | |
| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Between Groups | 0.355 | 2 | 0.177 | 0.185 | 0.831 |
| Within Groups | 121.715 | 127 | 0.958 | | |
| Total | 122.069 | 129 | | | |

Inference:

From the table, it is inferred that the significant value is .0831. It is greater than .05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This reveals that there is no significant difference between

between change in usage patterns of OTT platforms, post covid-19 lockdowns and age of the respondents' age

Continuation of use of OTT platforms in the future and Age group

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference between respondent's decision to continue the use of OTT platforms in the future and their age

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): There is significant difference between respondent's decision to continue the use of OTT platforms in the future and their age

| ANOVA | | | | | |
|---|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------|
| How likely are you to continue to use OTT platforms in the future ? | | | | | |
| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Between Groups | 1.670 | 2 | 0.835 | 1.685 | 0.190 |
| Within Groups | 62.953 | 127 | 0.496 | | |
| Total | 64.623 | 129 | | | |

Inference:

The table shows that the value is 0.190 which is much greater than .05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This reveals that there is no significant difference between respondent's decision to continue the use of OTT platforms in the future and their age.

Chi-Square test

Cancellation of traditional cable/satellite TV subscription in favour of using OTT platforms and educational background

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference between respondent's decision to cancel traditional cable/satellite TV subscription in favour of using OTT platforms and their educational background.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): There is significant difference between respondent's decision to cancel traditional cable/satellite TV subscription in favour of using OTT platforms and their educational background.

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | .003a | 2 | 0.998 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 0.003 | 2 | 0.998 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 0.001 | 1 | 0.981 |
| N of Valid Cases | 130 | | |

Inference:

From the table, it is clear that the significant value is .998 and it is much greater than .05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This reveals that there is no significant difference respondent's decision to cancel traditional cable/satellite TV subscription in favour of using OTT platforms and their educational background.

FINDINGS:

Based on the above analysis, it is clear that the lockdowns induced by Covid-19 have led to a significant rise in the usage of OTT platforms. These platforms have surpassed cable/satellite TV networks and even cinema theatres in popularity, emerging as the preferred mode of entertainment in current times. It can be reasonably inferred that in the future, OTT platforms will continue to dominate the entertainment industry. The numerous advantages offered by OTT platforms, such as affordable pricing, user-friendly interface, and access to diverse content at the convenience of time and location, make them more attractive than traditional forms of entertainment.

SUGGESTIONS:

- **Develop strategies for OTT platforms:** Based on the findings of the study, it would be essential to develop strategies for OTT platforms to attract more customers. These strategies could include content development, pricing, promotions, and improving the user experience.
- **Enhance user experience:** The study should focus on identifying factors that affect the user experience and recommend ways to enhance the same. For instance, the study can recommend improvements to the user interface or platform functionality to make it more user-friendly.
- **Analyse the effect of marketing on consumer behaviour:** The research project should analyse the effect of marketing on consumer behaviour. For instance, it should evaluate the effectiveness of different marketing campaigns and provide recommendations on how to target specific audiences.
- **Evaluate competition:** The research project should evaluate the competition in the OTT industry and recommend ways to differentiate the platform from other providers. This could involve analysing the strengths and weaknesses of competitors and identifying areas where the platform can improve.
- **Conduct further research:** Finally, the research project should suggest conducting further research to understand evolving consumer behaviour and preferences in the post-COVID-19 world. This could involve monitoring changes in the OTT industry and evaluating the effectiveness of the recommendations made in the study.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the preferences of consumers towards OTT platforms. With the lockdowns and restrictions, people have turned to these platforms for entertainment, information and social interaction. Our research has revealed that factors such as content quality, affordability, ease of use and variety of options are key drivers of consumer preferences towards OTT platforms. Providers need to keep these factors in mind and continue to adapt their services to meet the changing needs and preferences of consumers. The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of OTT platforms, and it is likely that they will continue to be a popular choice for entertainment and communication even after the pandemic subsides.

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