

VIDEO-ON-DEMAND (VOD) SERVICE DURING THE PANDEMIC PERIOD: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY LOOK AT OVER THE TOP (OTT) PLATFORMS

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ABSTRACT

Corona pandemic has been bringing with new more uncertainties, and especially it reached the peak level while the government had imposed locked down strategies. Society, the business world, lifestyle all had been changed during this period. However, internet-based platforms became very popular as a source of entertainment. This study is based on a survey method to know the audience habits of watching video content using OTT platforms. The regression analysis has been conducted to know the real picture of the growing market. This study has attempted to analyze the OTT platform's market evolution considering the corona pandemic as an opportunity.

Keywords: OTT Platforms, web series, entertainment, sex, pandemic, locked down.

INTRODUCTION

History recalls that an epidemic can make a difference in a person's life as well as social well-being. The recent coronavirus also did the same. It has been spreading among human beings and other animals all over the world. It was discovered in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei Province in the People's Republic of China in late December 2019. It had obtained the peak position in respect of spreading for about one year between March 2020 and February 2021. The indirect effect of the coronavirus is thousand times severe than its own. Today it is not just limited to create serious types of pandemics around the globe, i.e. death or hunger or both of them. So-called developed countries of Europe or America including poor nations are already failed either to have control on virus movement or to provide proper healthcare facilities to the affected people. India proved the ultimate mismanagement in the health care sector in the second wave of corona pandemic in June 2021 with higher than four thousand death tolls per day.

All over the world, the lockdown policy has been implemented to have people inside the home. But the reality is that people cannot sit idle for the long run. When shopping malls, tea stalls, shops, religious organizations, public meetings, schools, offices are closed except for food supply and emergency services, but people came out of their homes to the roads or public places, markets, mosques, and temples as an alternative. Actually, it is really difficult to inspire people to keep them

inside the home. As human beings are creative and social, they work outside, make the gathering, and want to explore more earning options. In this circumstance, a few business scopes had been generated or escalated as such home delivery, online schooling or home office culture, etc. Now people are more using social networking sites, and many digital platforms to watch movies, documentaries, and other video content more and more during locked down periods. Once the television was the only option for watching those shows, now many options are being opened up. However, advanced science and technology have reduced the cost of production of electronics devices, and so the retail price of those daily life needed products has been reduced a lot too. Television and other low-price smart devices i.e. smart TV, smartphone, tablet PC, etc. became very popular among the people who are sheltered during locked-down periods.

Traditionally, as a source of entertainment, television telecasts different shows according to the television authorizes choice. But now audiences prefer video-on-demand (VOD) programs, which is not possible via traditional television. As a VOD service, the OTT application-based web series has become very popular in the world including Asian countries. The OTT platforms offer different types of video content but web series is the most popular one. It has started in the early 1990s and become popular since the 2000s. Generally, a web series is watched on any smart device like TV, computer, smartphones, etc. Having the advantage of locked

down periods, OTT-based platforms that are providing VOD, have gained a good market share already.

Unique contents, mostly based on sex, comedy, violence, extramarital relations conflict, etc. have caught the audience's attention more easily. Paramveer (2019) stated that the audience has been increased by 3.7 percent in this region by 2017. The number of web series and their audience, both have been increased a lot during the covid-19 periods. This study had tried to expose the growth of this industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The online entertainment industry had made a major growth recently as the lifestyle of the viewers changed a lot too with globalization. Ahuja (2020) had found some main reasons for viewing web series i.e. fast and cheaper internet availability, wider broadband internet service, young tend, etc. The study had stated that viewers have spent for more than eight hours per day to watch OTT platforms in India which is two hours more than the global audience.

Technology had changed the media world. Availability of internet TV and Video-On-Demand (VOD) service via OTT platforms are changing viewing patterns and habits. (Tryon, 2015; Punathambekar & Kumar, 2012). Smartphone availability has increased the number of OTT applications subscribers (Laghate, 2018).

Sung, et al (2015), Stickney et al (2019), and Stice, Prensell, and Spangler (2002) had already found that online streaming contents have an impact on the young generation. Research by Peterson (2016) coined the addiction of OTT platforms as the cause of the students' bad academic records. Paramveer (2019) found that most of the audience had preferred is web series, the second is the movie on OTT platforms.

As a source of entertainment, people prefer to subscribe (both paid and non-paid) to different OTT applications for Bangla video content in Bangladesh and the West Bengal of India. Most of the earlier studies have tried to explore the

audience's perception and impact on their lifestyle but have not focused on the business case. However, this study has attempted to explore the market growth of OTT platforms, especially which has been created during this corona pandemics.

METHODOLOGY

This study had been used both primary and secondary data. The survey method had been used to collect primary data. The questionnaire was about the watching habits of local people in Bangladesh and West Bengal of India as both use Bangla as their mother language. Bangla is one of the top ten used languages in the world. In many palaces, people use Bangla as a primary and secondary language, who have originated from Bangladesh and West Bangle province in India. A total of 50 respondents have been selected randomly from these two locations. In this research work, the two most famous OTT platforms Hoichoi and Zee5 had been considered as major platforms for language issue. Secondary data had been collected from different journal articles, magazine reviews, new leading and blogs from web forums, etc. However, an excel spreadsheet program was used to analyze data through percentage and regression analysis.

DISCUSSION

The OTT platforms are playing vital role in media industry since 1990. As a VOD service provider, new audiences are joining every moment from different part of the world. The web series is most common service of those streaming platforms (application). Since 1990, a lot of web series had been created around the globe, as such Global Village Idiots released on 1995, WhirlGirl released on 1999. However, the there are few renowned OTT platforms are operating in the Bangladeshi market including West Bangle part of India (See Table 01). In many cases it is found that West Bengal and Bangladesh have jointly produce those series and movies, having advantage of same language titled "Bangla".

Table 01: Top 10 OTT platforms* in Bangladesh

Platform	Established Year	Audience (%)
Bongo	2013	40
Bioscope	2016	10
Banglaflix	2016	5
Addatimes	2016	5

Hoichoi	2017	30
Cinespot	2018	4
Cinematic	2019	3
Toffee	2019	14
Binge	2020	3
Chorki	2021	1

*YouTube had been considered as a social networking site; so not appeared in this list

Source: Hossain, 2021

Table 01 shows the list of most common and popular platforms that offer both paid and non-paid video content. The local platforms in Bangladesh

and the West Bangla province of India are releasing in the regional language of Bangla. Few local stars have played various roles in different web series.

Table 02: Time Spent on OTT platforms

Duration	Mostly Watch	Percentage
1 hour to 2 hours	Movies	33
2 hours to 3 hours	Web Series	44
3 hours to more	Web Series and Others	23

Source: Hossain, 2021

Table 02 stated that approximately 33 percent of respondents use OTT applications for 1 to 2 hours and 44 percent of viewers use these applications for

2 to 3 hours. Approximately 23 percent of viewers watch video content for more than 3 hours.

Table 03: Cost per year for subscribing watching OTT platforms

Cost per Year	Percentage
Free / No subscription	80
Less than \$10	18
More than \$10	2

Source: Hossain, 2021

Table 03 represented the subscription fees for the audiences. Most of them (80%) try to enjoy free video content and rest of them are paying for the

OTT subscription.18 percent viewers are paying less than \$10 and only 2 percent pays higher.

Table 04: Reason for watching OTT

Reasons	Percentage
Convenience	33
Ready to Watch	17
Portability	25
International Content	25

Source: Hossain, 2021

Table 04 shows the reason why people watch via OTT platforms in Bangladesh and a provincial portion of India. Mostly (92%) audiences from the urban side, as they have the internet access. Due to less socioeconomic status people living in rural areas do not have the access to high speed internet

that required to play any OTT platforms. However, people chose OTT for its convenience to use (33%), on-demand service according to preference (17%), portability facility (25%) as well as the availability of international content (25%).

Table 05: Bangla Web Series released in Main* OTT platforms 2018-2021

Release Year	Number of web series*
2018	4
2019	7
2020	13

*Hoichoi & Zee5 Source: Movieetalks, 2021

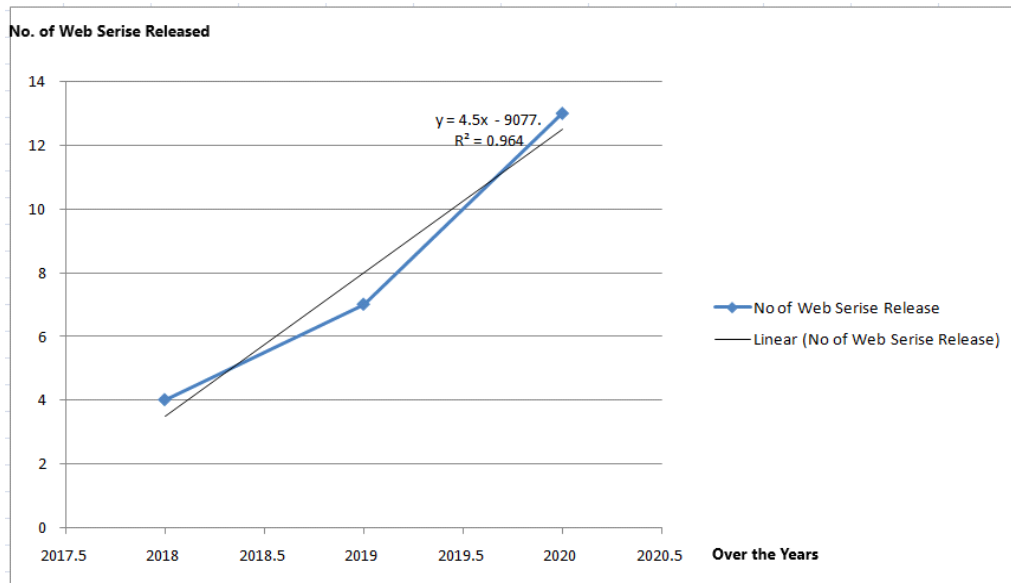
Table 05 represented the number of web series released in recent years. The study had considered only 'Hoichoi' and 'Zee5' as the main OTT

platforms because these two applications are available and popular from both Bangladesh and West Bangle where most applications are from one

side only. Since 2006, several independent web series began to achieve popularity over the conventional television programs. The study has

found that only 4 Bangla web series had been released in 2018. Then positive business case had raised the number to 7 by the following year.

Figure 01: Trend of Releasing Bangla Web Series (2017-2020)



Source: Movieetalks, 2021

Figure 01 presented the growth tend of the Bangla web series released during pandemic periods. Since late 2019 corona pandemic situation has been observing and governments in many countries had established locked-down strategies to keep people inside homes. However, in the year 2020, the production as well releases of the Bangla web series have been increased in number 13 which is 100 percent higher than its previous year 2019 and 200 higher compare to the year 2018 as R² equal to 0.964.

Now the OTT applications are preferred rather than to visit cinema halls to many audiences. The

contents without censorship and without advertisement, which is very common in Television programs, have been changing the watching experience of the viewers. Pandemic has changed the entire film industry a lot. Within the last three years, the producers and marketers of web video content are releasing four times higher compared to the number of releases in the year 2018. New investment in this sector also coming as SWAT analysis (See Figure 02) provide a green signal at all.

Figure 02: SWAT Analysis for Business Investing on OTT platforms

Stren gths	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low production cost due to use least technology and cast of new artist 2. Easy way to get audience 3. Semi-nude presentation possible 	Weakne ss	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take time to get revenue 2. Required smart device 3. Mostly teenage audience
Oppo rtuniti es	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Privilege for no censorship 5. Audiences are increasing 6. Lockdown culture support the business 	Threats	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Many OTT platform are coming, so competition is increasing 5. A proper authority have preview before release in future

Source: Hossain, 2021

Figure 02 presented a SWAT analyse of OTT based video content platforms with the view of the business prospective using primary data. Producers and Marketers are more like to invest in video

content creating for OTT platforms. A lot of business scopes create for this new sector for convenience and low cost of production. However, the pandemic, as well as government strict rules on

lock-down policy, have been accelerated the business a lot.

CONCLUSION

The OTT platforms are changing the whole media industry after the recent pandemic periods. The convenience of the medium, video quality of content, tendency to have new experiments have been boosted up the business within a very short time. Mobility via smartphone penetration, international collaborations between media moguls, and digital quality of the medium have resulted to get in more audiences. To reduce the cost of production and to gain more audience, the producer and marketer of web content have introduced the semi-nude presentation, sex-based stories and sexual activates in video content as a medium. Both

the supply of web content and demand for it has been raised by four times higher compering to 3 years before. However, it has already been considered as a growing and prospect-full business with a lot of successful cases. In comparison with traditional Television programs, producing a web series is easy and economic. A lot of new creators are joining this web video industry. As the web series is online based, without geographical limitations the audience can enjoy VOD service via a OTT platform from anywhere, anytime. It is also a quite easy option for the producers/marketer to reach a potentially global audience including commuters, travelers, etc. by providing 24 hours accessibility at their connivance time and device.

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