

# An Empirical Study of Change in Usage Level of Various OTT Platforms by Users in Kerala during COVID-19

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## ABSTRACT

In the past few years, over-the-top (OTT) video streaming services that offer direct streaming services to viewers have gained popularity around the world. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic there has been an increasing number of viewership of over-the-top (OTT) media platforms in India. The goal of this study is to examine the changes in usage level of OTT platforms by various users in Kerala during COVID-19. The study is quantitative in nature. Primary data was collected through online questionnaire. Statistical tools like chi-square and correlation were used for data analysis. The study has focused on the impact of various variables/factors, such as subscription cost, visual and audio impact, convenience, and genre preferred. In addition, the study focusses on the demographics that are engaged in OTT subscription. The findings of this study show that content superiority, system quality, and service differentiation had a beneficial impact on perceived value, which in turn influenced purchasing intentions and continuous usage intentions positively. It was found that service differentiation had a positive effect on buying intentions and continuous use intentions, using perceived value as a medium. High subscription cost and lack of ambience were some of the problems faced by most of the OTT users, and while analysing the demographic factors, we found that the younger generation (18-30 years) has the most influence on the purchase and continuous intention of OTT subscription.

**Keywords:** Genre, Age Group, Usage Level, Effectiveness, Convenience

## INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution in telecommunications, variously stated as ‘the app economy’, ‘large tech’, and ‘OTT offerings’, keep to brush throughout the worldwide economy. Streaming offerings are extensively taken into consideration as a cost-powerful opportunity, compared to conventional cable packages. In current years, OTT carriers like Netflix and Amazon Prime have all started generating unique content material that can solely be accessed via their service. Platforms like HBO and Disney+ additionally have special streaming licenses for formerly televised content material. In the current scenario, miles turn to these platforms for enjoyment and gets continuously indulge within these apps, heeding to binge which gave an upward push to fast growth of streaming apps. For years, looking at cable TV required a television set. However, today, because of the development

in primarily Internet-based delivery system, human beings can effortlessly gain access to OTT structures and content material from an extensive variety of devices. Any account holder can revel in the OTT platforms, and enjoy it from a gaming console, smartphone, tablet, or smart TV.

The presence of Indian customers on over-the-top (OTT) platforms is growing day by day, thanks to improved networks, stronger Internet access, and multimedia service-capable mobile phones. This increase in OTT consumption in India is due to the inclusion of new subscribers from Tier I and Tier II cities, which is attracting the attention of all media and entertainment companies. Many media and entertainment networks have developed their own platforms or are attempting to collaborate with other platforms to stream their content in response to the growing demand. In India, the OTT business is predicted to grow significantly during the next 5 years.

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Disney+ Hotstar, Amazon Prime Video, and Netflix are now the most popular OTT services in India. Several production house-backed local OTT businesses, such as SonyLIV, Voot, Zee5, ErosNow, and ALTBalaji, are fighting with these global giants and attempting to establish a foothold in the market. The OTT sector in India witnessed a 30% rise in the number of paid subscribers, from 22.2 million to 29.0 million, between March and July 2020. People have stayed at home because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying lockdown, which has resulted in an increase in subscribers for various OTT services. In addition, the coronavirus-related lockdown has hampered the cinema experience, and filmmakers are turning to OTT channels for fresh releases.

OTT stands for 'over-the-top' and refers to the exercise of streaming content material to clients directly over the Web. It represents the destiny of leisure, one that is already unfolding. It is, likewise, commonly carried out to video-on-call structures. However, it also refers to audio streaming, messaging offerings, or Internet-based voice calling solutions. OTT offerings are commonly monetised through paid subscriptions. However, there are exceptions.

OTT surely represents the destiny of the media, representing a pleasant manner of leisure. Human beings now have access to OTT apps, adding subscriptions via premium packages depending on the streaming culture, and there are many changes happening in the usage level and subscription pattern of users in Kerala, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the study, the usage level of OTT platforms by people of various age groups, and the content or genre which people of various age groups prefer to watch are identified. The various problems faced by users having subscriptions on multiple OTT platforms have also been analysed.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

OTT refers to film and TV content material supplied through a high-pace Internet connection as opposed to the cable or satellite providers. Among the users, the demand for content consumption has grown, and OTT channels have seen an upward increase in viewership. So, it is very important to study it from the point of view of the consumers about the usage level, problems faced, and

the preferred genre while availing OTT platforms. It is also important to analyse the time spent watching new movies through OTT platforms. It will be helpful for the service providers, distributors, and content creators to understand OTT's popularity. The paper also focusses on analysing the factors that make OTT movie releases more popular, especially among the viewers in Kerala during COVID-19.

## OBJECTIVES

- To determine the usage level of OTT platforms by people of various age groups.
- To study about the genre users mostly prefer to watch through the online platforms.
- To study about the convenience of users when they avail OTT platforms.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Emergence of OTT Platforms in India

Ghotbifar (2017) states that the digital revolution has modified the manner in which customers understand commercial enterprise strategies. From the age of locating the day's occasions in the morning newspaper to immediate gratification with updates from the social media, people's perception has changed through an era, where access is constrained to a digital platform.

According to Brosnan (2012), the idea of digital marketing was first used in the 1990s, even though at that time, it was especially about advertising to customers. However, at some stage between 2000 and 2010, with the emergence of the latest social and cell tools, the idea was expanded. It was converted from an advertising-oriented technique for users to a concept of making entertainment that engages with them.

Ebru (2018) discusses the emergence of OTT platforms over the past decade, and clearly mentions the more emerging factors that have given rise to the new economy of over-the-Internet and over-the-top (OTT) platforms. It also offers access to film and copyrighted contents, including TV shows, web-series, music shows, and so on, to be streamed with the help of the Internet, where the user can experience everything with the help of a gadget

that they carry with them. In addition, the OTT market is expected to grow to a significant rate of 17.1% over the next decade, and to reach approximately USD 3.49 billion by 2025, which shows an estimation of 80% increase between 2017 and 2022. According to the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) telecommunication trends report, with machine-to-machine communication, cloud systems, and OTT services, the mobile traffic is expected to grow by 61% from 2013 to 2018.

Krskova (2017) states that the globalised world has supplied the possibility of having a digital platform as a conversation tool in common. By using this tool, the budget is not always limited to getting the right of entry to the platform. However, it is proportional to the scope of clients they need to attain and the investments they are enabled to undertake.

According to Jan and Petra (2020), most firms are surrounded by social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Myspace and LinkedIn), and use significant resources to understand their rich social media connections. The audience are engaged and will receive updates, which helps them stay motivated to like, share, and follow their company's marketing updates. This results in an influencing factor for each consumer and will lead them to their pre-purchase decisions. Brands such as Coca-Cola, Starbucks, Red Bull, and Converse each boast over 35 million fans on Facebook alone, and spend significant organisational resources managing them. Firms have created advanced techniques to handle their social media marketing and they provide their customers with regular updates, matching the trends.

### **Subscription Rates and Major OTT Offerings**

Singh D. P. (2019) describes the subscription rates of various OTT platforms. The author states that the introduction of the Internet is converting the fashion of Indian cinema very rapidly. Reduced fees of these offerings lay the muse for the boom in OTT offerings like Netflix, Hotstar, Zee5, and Amazon Prime. Many ventures are generating video content material completely for these OTT offerings. These new ventures are converting the scenery of Indian television and cinemas. The customers revel in the sort of international and countrywide content

material. Action and comedy are the favourite movie genres. Web offerings are watched with greater regularity on the OTT platforms. Genres like young romance, movement, and urban-drama are mostly preferred.

The OTT business, according to Purdy (2018), is a complicated room dominated by 3 strong players: Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney Plus. Small businesses can find it difficult to carve out a niche in a competitive market where content reigns supreme, but if they concentrate on curating content, restricting account sharing, setting the right price, and improving customer relations, they will attract more customers. Price is a significant consideration when buying OTT services; content still drives the majority of customer decisions. Consumers value a diverse range of high-quality products from the Big 3, with "access to a large library of content" ranking as the top reason for subscribing to these services. Small players who promise to deliver services based on one of the above criteria are more likely to attract a large number of subscribers.

According to McAdams (2019), OTT apps clearly reflect India's future. The most important finding of the research was that 50% of OTT customers are experiencing "subscription fatigue" as a result of interacting with so many networks. It was also reported that the rise of large-scale platforms such as Disney Plus could have an impact on the prospects for smaller, niche services.

Laghate (2017) talks about how humans have skilled a boom withinside the use of OTT specifically via hand held devices. People select looking films on OTT structures in place of awaiting films and suggests to be launched on linear structures. People in India have extra alternatives among the OTT platforms, with Hotstar, Voot, Amazon top, Sony Liv, and Netflix. International players like Netflix, Amazon top, and Hotstar are the pioneers who began the fashion of OTT in the Indian entertainment industry. However, the spike that boomed the trend of OTT was the release of Jio internet services with the excessive velocity 4G net. Indian citizen now is capable of devouring content material at the OTT seamlessly. Most of the OTT structures are about presenting excellent content material and providing easy user experience.

## How OTT Platforms Differ from Traditional Media

Sadłowska et al. (2019) state that the traditional model of film festivals and home theatres, which act as the medium for the distribution of independent films, has lost its relevance in the age of the digital era. The rapid and unpredictable development of technology has pushed the whole film industry into the digital sphere. The rise of new film distribution models and channels is based on the simple and accessible flow of contents online; this has resulted in the emergence of numerous Video on Demand (VOD) giants. In the modern digital era, many art-house institutions have noticed the extent of this shift and are slowly developing new ways, by compromising with the demands of emerging preferences. Indeed, digital transformation is seen as key to the survival of certain companies and to make them able to adapt to digital changes (Sadłowska et al., 2019).

The 2 factors stated by Dixit (2020), which targeted at the desification of the Indian OTT and the techniques or one-of-a-kind approaches utilised by them to set up and advantage extra popularity are: 1) focussing at the neighbourhood content material and needs – This says that OTTs need to provide extra attention to offering neighbourhood content material, as humans are eager to ingest content material in their native language; 2) pricing strategy – OTT users had been attempting and adopting numerous pricing techniques to draw clients, like penetrative and strategic pricing. They use gear, including trials, to transform transient customers into permanent ones. They offer numerous bills and quantity of visitors, according to subscription, for comfort and account sharing.

## Future of OTT Market in India

According to Parikh (2020), India is the second-biggest marketplace in the Asia Pacific region in TV marketing. The penetration of TV in India is 61%. All types of content material suppliers for entertainment sectors have rolled their eyes closer to the Indian marketplace because of the promising scope of the Indian TV marketplace. Moreover, the FDI of 100% in all of the segments of the TV enterprises, was another add-on to attract the OTT

gamers and content material vendors. Thus the Indian marketplace is looked upon as a harvesting ground for not only the conventional OTT gamers but also for large and small broadcasters with their personal OTT services.

Kaushal (2020) states that there was a surge of 80% in the subscriber base of OTT gamers amid the lockdown. Due to the lockdown, humans were forced to stay home and did not have any alternatives for amusement than TV and digital content. With the cinema halls and shops closed, people were forced to discover different systems for content. OTT gamers, like ZEE5 and Alt Balaji, noticed an increase in their subscriber bases, whereas Amazon and Netflix refused to share their figures. We realise that because of this, numerous big-price-tag movies are set to be released on OTT platforms instead of cinema halls. This suggests the tremendous increase in popularity of OTT as a platform.

According to Vieira et al. (2019), the business markets corporations functioning in growing economies cope with the burgeoning use of the Internet, new digital buy methods, and a wide variety of social media and online income platforms. However, entrepreneurs are unclear about the pattern of the effect of firm-initiated (i.e., paid media, owned media, and virtual inbound advertising) and market-initiated (i.e., earned social media and natural search) virtual communications on B2B income and consumer acquisition. Owned media and virtual inbound advertising play a more considerable function in influencing consumer acquisition.

## Change in Usage level of OTT Platforms during COVID-19

According to Singh (2020), COVID-19 has affected OTT channels, causing an increase in usage and subscriber inability. According to a new survey by InMobi, 46% of viewers are viewing more content online. Experts believe that OTT services will continue to expand in the coming days as television networks run out of content. These networks are airing old content because they have been unable to shoot due to the lockdown. People would gravitate to OTT to watch fresh content in such a situation. To capitalise on this surge in popularity, platforms like Amazon Prime Video and Zee5 have made a number of their shows available for free viewing.

According to Sharma (2020), the ongoing COVID-19 disaster has forced the multiplexes to close down. As a result, the manufacturing homes are now providing content on OTT systems directly. This has grown to be a subject of concern among the multiplexes because the customers may deliver the conventional windowing pattern. INOX and PVR each issued a public declaration reacting to this issue. According to specialists that is option to a quick time period want of the movie industry which getting via way of means of economic difficulties. It is a win-win scenario for OTT gamers, who desire clean content material, and the filmmakers who had their manufacturing geared up, but were unable to release. The cinema generates extra sales for the manufacturing homes in comparison to the OTT systems.

Hamilton (2020) states that the Australian digital marketing firm (DUK) successfully transitioned throughout the 2020 Australian enterprise financial downturn created through the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. DUK's competencies, capabilities, and competitiveness shape its 3Cs Market Intelligence Framework. The strategic change matrix approach gives a company a visible map that may be matrix-boxed and fast interpreted. This technique is particularly beneficial when a company is faced with a perceived economic, or game-changing enterprise disaster, and to search for a brand-new sustainable enterprise-improving pathway or when a company desires to visualise its ongoing enterprise pathways into the future.

Iansiti and Lakhani (2020) state that the pandemic situation will certainly have a significant impact on all aspects of life, including how entertainment is consumed. Some of the trends we will witness would be deeper integration of technology and increased affinity to in-home entertainment. When consumers stay at home amid broadly disruptive events, their media and entertainment consumption rise nearly 60% and even more in some cases. While people are following expert advice and practicing social distancing and staying home, they will naturally gravitate towards TV and OTT for their

entertainment. The data from the past month has also indicated an uptick in viewership and we believe this trend will continue.

According to Schwartzel (2020), more Hollywood distributors changed their theatrical releases to digital streaming as the theatres remained closed, offering an important test for the future of movies. As a result, more movies are being produced with the living room, and not the multiplex, in mind. The outcome of this experiment will have significant implications for studio chiefs, movie producers, distributors, theatre owners, and movie maniacs. For decades, only theatres bagged the exclusive rights to play movies in selected screens for months before they became available, usually through premium digital services, and then on DVD or cable channels. Now studios are experimenting with changes to that model that gives preference to the taste of customers and when consumers expect to see those movies online. The box office remains an important source of revenue in the film industry, but digital rentals are typically more profitable and affordable to a normal customer than owning a movie ticket.

### **Users' Behaviour towards Digital and Online Marketing Platforms**

Mehdi (2018) states that users' communication has changed dramatically as a result of the Internet. Like-minded people from all around the world may now communicate their views, beliefs, and ideas through social media. The number of people using social networking sites is increasing, and Facebook is the most popular. The bulk of users are active on several social networking platforms. In social media platforms, survey respondents might be classified as joiners, collectors, or viewers, according to research.

Chemmanoor and Pandya (2017) state that in recent years, the availability of movie and entertainment-related data on the Internet and elsewhere has increased dramatically. This accomplishment bodes well for the viability of

future investigations targeted at resolving the difficulties that have just been raised. In the case of movies, they may differ in different countries or at different times. Marketers employ cutting-edge promotional methods to promote Bollywood films both in India and abroad. As a result, it emphasises the relevance of the audience's preferences for films.

Kumar and Gupta (2017) state that young people are becoming more interested in online marketing. People are hesitant to shop online because of security worries, the danger of non-delivery, the inconvenience risk, and the e-complicated retailer's return policy. In India, just a small percentage of Internet users shop online. The explanation for this could be that the industry's progress is being stymied by customers' attitudes towards high-tech purchases, rather than by technology. As a result, marketers must comprehend the breadth of buyer intentions for this type of commerce.

According to Singla and Arora (2015), social networking is becoming a more important marketing tool. Facebook has been found to be the most popular website, followed by YouTube. Mobile phones and laptops are the most common devices used to access social media sites. Clothing and entertainment products are the most commonly purchased items through social networking sites. As a result, social networking sites have an impact on their purchasing decisions. They regard it as a trustworthy source of information that makes finding information easier. By being attentive to information provided on social media platforms, the entertainment industry must take new steps to enhance sales.

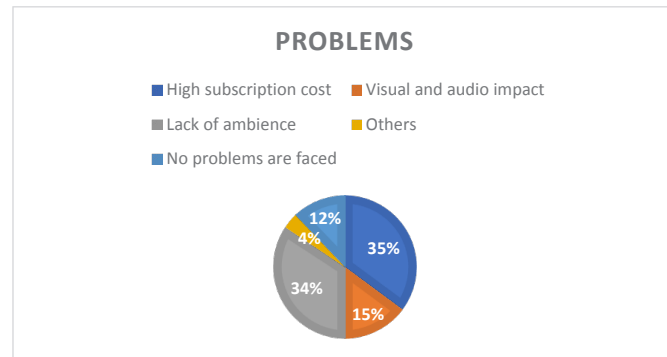
## METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature, based on the primary data from well-structured questionnaire. The subscribers of various OTT platforms in the state of Kerala have been taken as the population and a sample frame has been developed for convenience. The sample frame used in this research is the capital city of Kerala, Trivandrum. The sample size is taken as 100, due to time constraints. A structured questionnaire in the form of Google forms had been sent to the respondents and results were analysed using chi-square test and correlation test.

## ANALYSIS

### Percentage Analysis

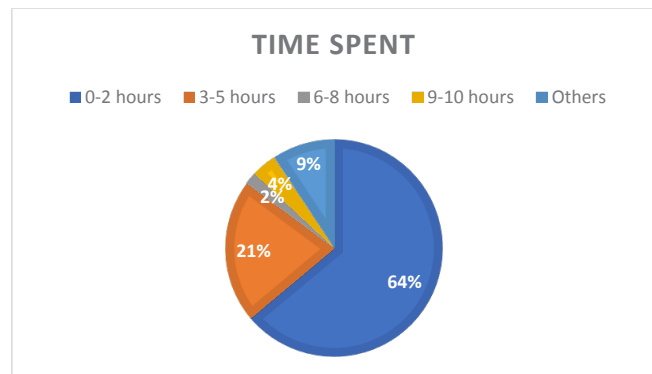
#### Problems Faced



**Fig. 1: Problems Faced**

From Fig. 1, it can be seen that the major problems faced by most people who use OTT platforms is high subscription cost (35%) and lack of ambience (34%). Most people find it difficult to subscribe to multiple OTT channels at different rates.

#### Time Spent



**Fig. 2: Time spent**

Fig. 2 shows that 64% of people from the total sample selected spent up to two hours per day on OTT platforms, and only 9% spent more than ten hours on OTT platforms.

Genre Preferred

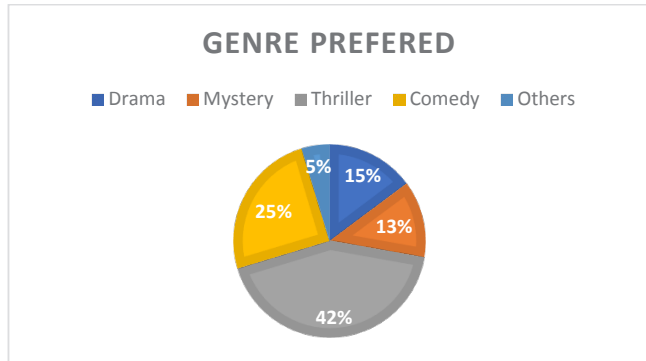


Fig. 3: Genre Preferred

From Fig. 3, it can be seen that 42% of the total sample prefer thriller movies and Web series on OTT platforms, while 25% prefer comedy and 5% like to watch contents of another genre.

Chi-Square Test

Relationship between Age Group and Usage of OTT Platforms

H0: There is no significant relationship between age group and usage of OTT platforms.

H1: There is a significant relationship between age group and usage of OTT platforms.

Observed Value

Table 1: Relation between Usage of OTT Platforms and Age Group

Age Group	Usage of OTT Platform		Total
	Yes	No	
19-30	90	14	104
31-40	3	1	4
Total	93	15	108

P value = 0.512586.

It can be seen that P value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis and we conclude that there is no significant relationship between age group and use of OTT platforms.

Relationship between Genre and Usage of OTT Platforms

H0: There is no significant relationship between genre and usage of OTT platforms.

H1: There is a significant relationship between genre and usage of OTT platforms.

Observed Value

Table 2: Relation between Usage of OTT Platforms and Genre

Genre	Use of OTT Platforms		
	Yes	No	Total
Drama	15	1	16
Mystery	13	1	14
Thriller	39	7	46
Comedy	24	3	27
Others	2	3	5
Total	93	15	108

P value = 0.033571.

It can be seen that P value is less than 0.05. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant relationship between genre and use of OTT platforms.

Relationship between Problems Faced and Usage of OTT Platforms

H0: There is no significant relationship between problems and usage of OTT platforms.

H1: There is a significant relationship between problems and usage of OTT platforms.

Observed Value

Table 3: Relation between Usage of OTT Platforms and Problems Faced

Problems Faced	Use of OTT Platforms		
	Yes	No	Total
High subscription cost	33	5	38
Visual and audio impact	15	1	16
Lack of ambience	29	8	37

<i>Problems Faced</i>	<i>Use of OTT Platforms</i>		
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Total</i>
Others	4	0	4
No problems are faced	12	1	13
Total	93	15	108

P value = 0.44667.

It can be seen that P value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, we accept null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant relationship between problems and usage of OTT platforms.

## Correlation

### Relationship between Convenience and Effectiveness of Using OTT Platforms

H0: There is no significant relationship between convenience and effectiveness of using OTT platforms.

H1: There is a significant relationship between convenience and effectiveness of using OTT platforms.

**Table 4: Relation between Convenience and Effectiveness**

		<i>Convenience</i>	<i>Effectiveness</i>
Convenience	Pearson Correlation	1	.235*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.015
	N	108	108
Effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	.235*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	
	N	108	108

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

P value = 0.015.

It can be seen that P value is less than 0.05 and is weakly correlated. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant relationship between convenience and effectiveness of using OTT platforms.

## FINDINGS

- Mostly, people in the age group 18-30 are seen as the active users of OTT platforms, whereas people

between 31 and 40 are only moderate users, and people above 41 years, who participated in the survey, are rare and non-active users of OTT platforms.

- Rather than watching exclusive content on TV channels like repeatedly telecasted reality shows, customers in Kerala feel it is more convenient to watch newly created and uploaded OTT video content.
- Thriller and comedy genres have a larger fan base and high viewership among Kerala customers because of high standards of creating and entertainment value.
- Users find it more effective to use OTT platforms during the lockdown. It kept them entertained, while selecting and watching content of various genres on a customised basis. It has collectively changed the movie watching habit of people, especially students.
- Most of the students in the age group 18-30 are availing nearly four OTT channels and are willing to spend an average of Rs. 200-500 per month; those between 31 and 40 are availing 1-2 OTT channels and are willing to spend an average of Rs. 100-300 per month.
- Customers' satisfaction level 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 platforms over television.
- A majority of people would prefer watching a movie in the cinema over OTT. OTT platforms have strongly influenced south India's customers, and people will see OTT as an equally popular platform for watching movies. It has changed the collective movie watching habit after 2020.

## CONCLUSION

This study found a large increase in OTT platforms during the pandemic. People have begun to consume more content through OTT platforms during the lockdown. By absorbing market share from other platforms, OTT platforms have experienced a significant inorganic growth. There is a sudden increase in the use of OTT over other mediums, and people are enthusiastic about movies released on OTTs simultaneously as in cinemas. This demonstrates that, although OTT platforms cannot wholly replace cinema, they establish their market and speculate

that few people would prefer OTT to the cinema in the future. The results revealed that students had adopted an online community of watching movies and shows. All of this is focussed on the services offered to consumers and attracting more subscribers day by day as competition has risen.

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