


Chapter 11

A Review of OTT Platforms in India: Challenges and Current Status

Nitish Kumar Ojha

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2236-0766>

Amity University, Noida, India

Abhishek Vaish

Indian Institute of Information Technology, Allahabad, India

ABSTRACT

Watching movies and serials has been the best form of entertainment in India, and its policies, delivery of the content, production, and related features were regulated by the government however with the growth of technology, it sub-branched into many segments later on. In the last decade, the availability of internet technology with mobile phones and satellite televisions allowed a new form of stream-based content delivery model, termed OTT (over the top). This content delivery has enabled 'leisure watching' in Indian society opposite to traditional binge-watching so it raised many issues at many levels, notably content delivery, content quality, accessibility, and most significantly controlling the freedom of expression under the boundary of creativity. This chapter reviews previously passed regulations, their current status matching the current situation, and the need for a new mechanism if any. This chapter also discusses the pros and cons of censorship hinges, its challenges, and the future scope for new legislation matching the ethics in the shadow of globalization.

INTRODUCTION

After Covid19, one word has become very common in our life - OTT Platform, nowadays it is very popular in the world of films. In today's time, if someone is getting bored, then he can pick up the phone and watch any video of his choice whenever he wants and can watch series, shows, and movies on the OTT platform. OTT has made entertainment quite easy. OTT platform means – an over-the-top

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platform, which provides video or other digital media content through the Internet, this OTT platform is a type of app that Google Available on the Play Store, all companies have different OTT platforms, to use these OTT platforms, and you have to subscribe to these OTT platforms (Sujata et al., 2015). OTT platform was started in America, and it gradually came to India, but now its demand is increasing very fast. It is mainly used for video-on-demand platforms, audio streaming, OTT devices, VoIP calls, and communication channels. Used for messaging etc. (Novak et al., 2000). The rapid growth of OTT platforms in India, with projections of 50 million viewers by 2023, has led to concerns about regulation and the introduction of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. These rules have faced backlash and legal challenges due to concerns about their impact on media freedom, and the draft amendments in 2022 have also sparked concerns about vague provisions and a lack of transparency [Badlani et al., 2022].

Regulating OTT content poses challenges due to its on-demand nature, the volume of content, and its global accessibility. There are also concerns about the enforcement of regulations on foreign content and the potential rise of piracy. Balancing the regulation of content with the principles of free speech and expression is crucial in a democratic nation like India [Naik, 2023].

The Indian government's guidelines for digital media content, including OTT platforms, emphasize the need for age-related classifications for content, implementation of parental locks and age verification mechanisms, and caution when depicting racial and religious groups [Mansouri, 2023].

History: India's first independent OTT platform was BIGFlix, launched by Reliance Entertainment in 2008 [2]. It paved the way for the growth of Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms in India. During 2013 and 2014, these platforms started offering the streaming of Premier League matches on smartphones [1]. OTT platforms have gained popularity in India, allowing users to access a wide range of shows and movies across various media channels, including Star [1]. The introduction of BIGFlix and the subsequent growth of OTT platforms have revolutionized the way Indians consume entertainment content. Netflix, the American streaming giant, officially launched its service in India in January 2016. It marked the entry of international OTT platforms into the Indian market, providing Indian audiences access to a wide range of global content. Amazon Prime Video entered the Indian market in December 2016, further intensifying the competition among OTT platforms. It offered a mix of international and local content. Disney acquired 21st Century Fox in 2019, leading to the integration of Disney's content into the Hotstar platform. In April 2020, it was rebranded as Disney+ Hotstar, offering a blend of Disney and Hotstar content. Some mergers and acquisitions took place in the Indian OTT market, such as the acquisition of MX Player by Times Internet and the merger of Zee5 and SonyLIV. These developments aimed to strengthen the platforms' positions in the highly competitive market. The history of OTT platforms in India shows their rapid growth and adaptation to the diverse preferences of Indian audiences. The market continues to evolve, with increasing investments in original content production and the introduction of regulatory frameworks to shape the industry's future.

Technological Advancement of OTT

Advancement can be seen in almost every kind of OTT platform so first, see what kind of OTT is available in the Indian market. The platform of OTT can be made in two types according to its quality. These can also be separated by calling them audio or video (Tiwary et al., 2020).

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