A Referred Peer Review Research Journal

Vindhyan Bloom

ISSN-2319-8478 Vol-15 Issue-4, July 2026

Manuscript Information	Reviewed 10-07-2026	Accepted 16-07-2026	Published 31-07-2026	Paper No. VB-2026-07-11
DOI	https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21892128			

Challenges Ahead: A case study of Content Overload, Viewer Engagement, and OTT Platform Survival in India

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Abstract: Over-the-top (OTT) platforms refer to media services provided directly to viewers via the Internet, bypassing traditional cable or satellite TV providers. Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, and regional platforms like Hotstar and ALT Balaji in India exemplify this trend. (OTT) streaming industry in India has experienced unprecedented growth over the past decade, driven by increased internet penetration, affordable data plans, smartphone adoption, and changing consumer preferences. OTT platforms have revolutionized how consumers access content, providing on-demand viewing, diverse genres, and personalization. Over-the-top (OTT) platforms have revolutionized the way people consume media in India. These platforms provide on-demand access to a wide range of content, including movies, TV shows, web series, and original content, bypassing traditional distribution channels like cable or satellite TV. While the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated OTT consumption, the industry now faces a new phase characterized by intense competition, content saturation, subscription fatigue, and challenges in sustaining viewer engagement. This case study examines the emerging issues of content overload and declining audience attention within India's OTT ecosystem and evaluates the strategies adopted by major streaming platforms to ensure long-term survival. Drawing upon secondary data from industry reports, academic literature, market analyses, and case evidence from leading OTT platforms, the study explores how content abundance affects consumer decision-making, binge-watching behavior, platform loyalty, and subscription retention. The findings suggest that although OTT platforms have successfully expanded their content libraries and diversified offerings, excessive content availability may lead to decision fatigue and reduced viewer satisfaction. The study further highlights the role of artificial intelligence, personalized recommendations, viewer analytics, regional content, and hybrid monetization models in addressing these challenges. The paper concludes that sustainable growth in the OTT industry will depend on balancing content quantity with quality, enhancing personalization, and developing effective retention strategies in an increasingly competitive digital entertainment landscape.

Keywords: OTT Platforms, Content Overload, Viewer Engagement, Digital

ISSN-2319-8478
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Streaming, Subscription Fatigue, Content Saturation, Audience Retention, India.

The media and entertainment industry have undergone significant transformation with the emergence of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms. OTT services deliver video content directly to consumers through internet-enabled devices, eliminating the need for traditional cable and satellite television networks. In India, platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, JioCinema, Sony LIV, Zee5, and MX Player have revolutionized content consumption patterns. The growth of new media technologies has changed the way consumers used to look toward television and broadcast media. The developing countries of feralu crative market to OTT players **(Kim, & Kim, 2017).** Today, consumers are shifting from television services to innovative webcasting or online streaming services that enable high-quality, original content accessible through the Internet **(Camilleri & Falzon, 2021). (Kapoor and Dwivedi 2021)** observed that OTT platforms have transformed entertainment consumption by providing flexibility, personalization, and on-demand accessibility. Being the second largest online market in the world, with a diverse and young population, OTTconsumption in India is bound to grow in the coming future **(Nagaraj,Singh,&Yasa,2021)**. The OTT players are trying to find new ways to enhance their customers experiences and remain competitive **(Camilleri&Falzon, 2021).**Hence, to understand the Indian consumers who come from diverse socio economic and cultural backgrounds, there is a need to systematically investigate their attitudes toward accepting OTT services**(Bhatt, 2022)**. Moreover, the investigation into the consumers'intention to pay for OTTservices has been very limited **(Gupta & Singharia, 2021; Nagaraj*etal.*,2021)**.Based on are view spanning2007to2021,**(Mulla2022)** identified several factors that lead to the adoption of OTT.

The authors argue that consumer preferences have shifted from scheduled television viewing to individualized content experiences. **(Gupta and Singh 2020)** highlighted that binge-watching behavior has become a defining characteristic of OTT consumption, significantly influencing viewer engagement and content strategies.**(Sharma 2023)** emphasized that AI-powered recommendation systems play a critical role in helping viewers discover relevant content amid growing content libraries. Consumers are subscribing to over-the-top(OTT) services for more informative, convenient, customized and diverse significant mediator as well as a direct determinant of the usage intention of OTT services by consumers. Several studies have used TAM (Technology acceptance model) to understand user behaviour toward OTT services. The streaming of entertainment programs via OTT platforms has given rise to a new kind of television, replacing the classical TV channels**(Puthiyakath&Goswami,2021)**.

India is one of these markets where OTT services are growing rapidly. According to a report by Redseer Strategy Consultants **(ETGovernment, 2022).** To harness the massive growth potential in online video consumption, the OTT players haveinnovateddifferentbusinessmodels(e.g. subscription-basedandadvertising-based)to alignwithcustomerexpectations**(Gupta&Singharia,2021).**

According to **(Deloitte 2024)**, subscription fatigue has emerged as a major concern globally as consumers increasingly subscribe to multiple streaming services while becoming more selective regarding recurring expenditures. **(Kumar and Verma2022)** argued that content saturation

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can negatively impact viewer satisfaction because excessive choice often increases cognitive effort in content selection.Research by **(PwC2024)** suggests that OTT platforms must increasingly focus on customer retention rather than subscriber acquisition due to rising competition and market maturity. The expansion of OTT platforms gained significant momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic, as nationwide lockdowns and social distancing measures substantially increased the demand for digital entertainment services. With traditional forms of leisure and entertainment becoming inaccessible, consumers increasingly turned to streaming platforms for on-demand content, resulting in unprecedented growth in OTT adoption and usage. However, as the industry has evolved beyond the pandemic-driven surge, streaming providers are confronted with a new set of strategic and operational challenges. The growing number of OTT services, coupled with continuous investments in original programming and content acquisition, has created an increasingly saturated digital entertainment landscape. While the availability of extensive and diverse content libraries initially enhanced consumer appeal, the overwhelming volume of choices has also given rise to content overload. This phenomenon often leads to information overload, decision fatigue, and fragmented subscription behaviour, where users distribute their attention and spending across multiple platforms. As audiences are faced with an ever-expanding catalogue of movies, series, and digital content, discovering relevant and satisfying viewing options becomes increasingly complex. Consequently, OTT providers can no longer rely solely on expanding their content libraries as a competitive strategy. Instead, they must prioritize intelligent personalization, AI-driven recommendation systems, viewer analytics, high-quality regional and original content, and effective customer retention strategies to sustain user engagement and maintain long-term competitiveness in an increasingly crowded marketplace. Despite growing scholarship on OTT adoption, limited studies examine content overload and platform sustainability within the Indian context, creating a significant research gap addressed by this study. This study investigates these emerging challenges and analyses how OTT platforms are adapting to sustain growth in India's evolving streaming ecosystem. Existing literature extensively discusses OTT adoption, binge-watching behavior, artificial intelligence, and monetization strategies. However, relatively few studies focus on the emerging challenge of content overload and its implications for viewer engagement and platform survival in India. This study addresses this gap by examining how excessive content availability affects audience behavior and how OTT providers are responding through technological and strategic interventions.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the emerging phenomenon of content overload within India's rapidly evolving Over-the-Top (OTT) streaming ecosystem and its implications for the future sustainability of digital entertainment platforms. Specifically, the study seeks to analyse how the abundance of content influences viewer engagement, content discovery, and consumption behaviour in an increasingly competitive market. It further aims to investigate the challenges arising from subscription fatigue, intensified platform competition, and fragmented consumer attention across multiple streaming services. In addition, the research evaluates the various

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strategies adopted by OTT platforms to enhance audience retention, strengthen customer loyalty, and improve user experience through technological innovations and personalized services. Finally, the study explores the long-term sustainability prospects of OTT platforms in India by examining the role of content quality, artificial intelligence, viewer analytics, regional programming, and evolving monetization models in ensuring continued growth and competitive advantage.

5. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative case study research design to investigate the contemporary challenges confronting the OTT streaming industry in India. A case study approach is particularly appropriate as it facilitates an in-depth examination of complex industry dynamics, consumer behaviour, and platform-level strategies within their real-world context. The research is primarily based on secondary data collected from a wide range of credible and authoritative sources to ensure comprehensive analysis and interpretation. These sources include peer-reviewed academic journals, industry reports, market research publications, government documents, annual reports and official publications of OTT companies, business news articles, and digital media studies. The collected information has been critically reviewed and synthesized to identify key themes related to content overload, viewer engagement, subscription fatigue, platform competition, audience retention strategies, and the long-term sustainability of OTT platforms in India. Through thematic analysis and comparative examination of industry evidence, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the evolving challenges and strategic responses shaping the Indian OTT ecosystem.

Case Selection

The study focuses on major OTT platforms operating in India, including: Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, JioCinema, Sony LIV, Zee5.These platforms were selected because of their substantial market presence and diverse business models.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes. Which is related to Content saturation, Viewer engagement, Subscription fatigue, Audience retention, Platform sustainability.The findings were interpreted within the framework of digital media economics and consumer behavior theory.

Case Analysis and Discussion

Content Overload in the OTT Era- The rapid expansion of OTT platforms has significantly increased the availability of movies, web series, documentaries, and regional content. While this abundance provides viewers with greater choice, it has also created a "paradox of choice," where users often spend more time searching for content than actually watching it. As a result, decision fatigue can emerge, reducing user satisfaction and making content discovery a major challenge for streaming services.

Viewer Engagement Challenges- Viewer engagement remains a key determinant of success in the OTT industry. Although binge-watching initially enhanced watch time and platform loyalty, excessive consumption has contributed to viewer fatigue and declining attention spans. Modern audiences increasingly expect personalized recommendations, compelling storytelling, culturally relevant content, and seamless viewing experiences. Consequently, OTT platforms must continuously innovate their content

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and engagement strategies to sustain audience interest and retention.

Subscription Fatigue and Market Fragmentation-The growing number of streaming services has fragmented content availability across multiple platforms, often requiring consumers to maintain several subscriptions to access their preferred content. This has led to subscription fatigue, where users become hesitant to pay for multiple recurring services. In response, many viewers rotate subscriptions, cancel underused platforms, or migrate toward ad-supported alternatives, creating challenges for OTT providers in maintaining stable revenues and long-term customer loyalty.

AI-Driven Personalization as a Solution- Artificial Intelligence has become a crucial solution for addressing content overload and improving user experiences. Through recommendation engines, predictive analytics, behavioural profiling, and personalized notifications, OTT platforms can deliver content that aligns with individual viewer preferences. These technologies simplify content discovery, enhance user satisfaction, and increase engagement. Furthermore, AI-driven insights support better content investment decisions and strengthen audience retention strategies.

Regional Content and Audience Retention- The rise of regional content has emerged as a significant growth driver in India's OTT ecosystem. Streaming platforms are increasingly investing in original content across languages such as Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, and Marathi to cater to diverse audience preferences. By offering culturally relevant narratives and localized storytelling, regional content helps platforms expand their subscriber base, deepen viewer engagement, and foster stronger audience loyalty.

OTT Platform Survival Strategies -To remain competitive and sustainable in an increasingly crowded market, OTT platforms are adopting a range of strategic initiatives. Hybrid monetization models that combine Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD), Advertising Video on Demand (AVOD), and freemium offerings enable providers to serve both premium and price-sensitive consumers. Simultaneously, investments in exclusive original content help differentiate platforms from competitors. Strategic partnerships with telecom operators and digital ecosystems further enhance subscriber acquisition and retention. Additionally, the use of viewer analytics and data-driven decision-making allows platforms to optimize content production, personalize marketing efforts, and improve overall business performance.

Key Findings of the Study

The study highlights that content overload has become a major challenge in India's OTT ecosystem, often leading to decision fatigue and lower viewer satisfaction. The increasing fragmentation of streaming services has also intensified subscription fatigue, as consumers are required to maintain multiple subscriptions to access diverse content. To address these challenges, OTT platforms are increasingly leveraging AI-driven personalization, which enhances content discovery, user engagement, and viewing experiences. The findings further indicate that regional content serves as a critical driver of audience acquisition and retention by offering culturally relevant storytelling. Additionally, hybrid monetization models combining SVOD, AVOD, and freemium offerings contribute to greater business sustainability. Overall, the study suggests that long-term success in the OTT industry will depend less on acquiring new subscribers and more on

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effectively retaining and engaging existing audiences.

Conclusion

The Indian OTT industry has entered a phase of maturity characterized by intense competition, content saturation, and evolving consumer expectations. While the proliferation of content has enhanced viewer choice, it has also created challenges such as content overload, subscription fatigue, and declining engagement. This study finds that sustainable growth in the OTT ecosystem depends on the effective use of AI-driven personalization, viewer analytics, regional content strategies, and hybrid monetization models. As competition intensifies, OTT platforms must focus on enhancing user experience, strengthening audience retention, and delivering differentiated value. Ultimately, long-term success will be determined not by the volume of content offered, but by a platform's ability to create meaningful and personalized viewing experiences that foster lasting consumer loyalty.

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