



Exploring the Prospect of Over-the-Top (OTT) Platforms in Bangladesh: A Study on the Users of Khulna District

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Over-the-Top (OTT) services are developing rapidly in line with the technologies' fast advancement. With the emergence of OTT platforms, the viewing experience has seen a drastic change. OTT platforms are becoming more attractive to viewers due to their diversity of content and less advertisements. The main purpose of this study is to understand the perception and satisfaction of the OTT users of Khulna District. This study also aims to investigate the OTT video streaming habits and preferences of the users. **Methods:** This study is based on a survey method to know the viewer's engagement, perception and satisfaction using OTT platforms. Using the convenience sampling technique, an online survey is administered to collect feedback from 200 respondents. **Results:** The findings of this study revealed that 48.5% people prefer OTT platforms as their major source of entertainment to television or other video streaming platforms. According to the study, Chorki is the viewer's most popular OTT video streaming service. A majority of OTT subscribers thought that the subscription fees in Bangladesh are higher (42.5%). Censorship is required for semi-nude or sex-based stories in OTT platforms, according to the majority of the users (47%). Therefore, majority of the subscribers are not satisfied with the content of these platforms (34%). Most of them (49%) faced technical difficulties while using OTT platforms. **Conclusion:** In Bangladesh, OTT platforms have enormous potentials. As the market for these services are expanding swiftly and investors are recognizing its protectives. This study is expected to help OTT service providers in designing their contents and services.

Keywords: Over-the-Top (OTT), Engagement, Perception, Satisfaction, Content Variety

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of OTT has caused a significant change in the whole entertainment sector. There was a time when there were only television and movie theatres were the two main audio-visual distribution channels available to consumers. As a result of the development of modern technology, the situation is altering presently. OTT platforms are currently altering audience viewing habits and developing as a type of mainstream media (Kumari,2020).

Over-the-top hosting and streaming services for video and audio are referred to the abbreviation "OTT". Initially used as content storage platforms, these services swiftly evolved to cover the creation and distribution of feature films, documentaries, and web series. Most OTT providers charge a monthly subscription fee for access to premium content and offer just a small amount of content for free (Sujith & Sumathi, 2021).

The global OTT market is anticipated to develop at a 14.3% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) to reach 86.80 billion by 2026. Affordability of internet connectivity and the accessibility of low-cost cell phones are both contributing factors in the rapid emergence of online streaming platforms (Menon, 2022). A study conducted in Bangladesh revealed that because of the availability of using smartphones, they prefer to use the diversity of OTT messaging apps to stay up to date on the most recent developments in mobile apps. Again, people are drawn to using OTT channels just because they have purchased an internet pack (Kamal,2020). The portability facility, convenience to use and the availability of international content are also working as the factors attracting the people of Bangladesh to subscribe to OTT platforms (Hossain, 2022). Moreover, people's intention to use the OTT platforms are being influenced positively by interaction and social gratification (Priya et al., 2021).

Dasgupta & Grover (2019) had found web series and movies are the most popular types of content for OTT websites. The majority of the respondents have been subscribed to more than three OTT platforms, while some respondents have even subscribed to more than three OTT platforms (Tiwari & Rai 2021). Mobile and laptop are the most popular device for watching content on OTT platform (Gangwar et al., 2020).

Hossain (2022) reported among Bangladeshi viewers, Netflix is the most popular video streaming service. In 2016, the massive global OTT video streaming service provider Netflix began offering its services in Bangladesh, there are reportedly close to 200,000 active Netflix customers (Shayan, 2020). The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) reports

that Netflix receives about \$21.6 million in revenue from Bangladeshi consumers. Furthermore, Dhaka Tribune reported that in Bangladesh, Bongo has more than 4.3 million members. (Chowdury, 2021). The emergence of OTT platforms has lowered the amount the number of television viewers. OTT is the main source of entertainment to most of the OTT users (Hossain, 2022). Additionally, it appears that people's decision to choose local cable television over OTT services is influenced by the price differential between the two (Khan, 2021).

The platforms must make an effort to provide more original Bengali material to their library so that users can consider purchasing platform subscriptions. The majority of people seem to think that the cost is excessive and advise setting the price of these subscriptions substantially lower (Khan, 2021). Shortage of infrastructural structure for creating content in Bangladesh is one of the main obstacles of OTT market in Bangladesh. Again, delivering the content to people sufficient skilled workforce is absent (Rashid, 2022).

According to BTRC, in December 2021 there were 123.82 million internet users in Bangladesh and 113.73 million of them were mobile internet users. There were around 10.09 million users who used both Internet Service Provider (ISP) and public switched telephone network (PSTN) for the internet (BTRC, 2021). People who use internet are potential subscribers for our OTT industry. It is estimated that by 2030, the OTT platform market size in Bangladesh will reach beyond the TK 1,000 crore landmark (Financial Express, 2022).

Most of the earlier studies have tried to explore users' preferences and determinants of consumers' over-the-top streaming preferences but have not focused on the user's perception and satisfaction towards these platforms. Again, a few studies is available in Bangladesh perspective. However, this study has attempted to explore user engagement more extensively along with users' perception and satisfaction towards OTT platforms that may assist service providers to develop the OTT services and a basis for future studies.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study is explanatory in nature and followed quantitative approach. Quantitative research collects and evaluates data using numbers and percentages. In this process, survey research method is used to collect quantitative data from the OTT platforms' users of Khulna District. A survey is a way to collect data from a sample of people with the conventional goal of extrapolating the findings to a larger population (Qualtrics, n.d.). This survey is conducted on the respondents using OTT platforms. It is an online based survey where google form is used for data collection.

3.2.1 Area of the Study

To explore the prospect of OTT platforms in Bangladesh, Khulna District is selected as the area of this study. Khulna District is a district of Bangladesh which is located in the Khulna Division. According to Banglapedia, the total area of this district is 4395 square kilometres. It consists of 9 upazilas and 5 thanas, 2 municipalities, 74 union parishads, 759 mouzas, 1119 villages, 1 city corporation, 31 wards and 181 mahallas.

3.2.2 Population and Sample Size

The population represents all units of a study area from which the researcher desires to generalize the results. The population of this study are the total OTT platforms users of Khulna district. But there is no statistical data is available about the number of OTT platform users of Khulna district. The researcher depends on the sampling technique to select participants. For the selection of participants, this study uses convenience sampling techniques, also known as non-probability sampling. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique is a way of selecting participants from the targeted population because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. In this procedure, samples are selected from several Facebook groups on the basis of ease of access and willingness to participate in this study. To analyse and cover the study smoothly, data is collected from 200 OTT users of Khulna district.

3.3 Instruments for Data Collection

For this study, questionnaires were the primary data gathering tools. A questionnaire is a list of questions that a researcher uses to gather data. The study utilized Google forms to gather data from people who had experience with OTT platforms through an online survey via email and social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp etc. Questionnaire develops with a set of questions including questions about users' OTT engagement, perception and satisfaction. Data collection process was carried out during the month of April and May, 2023.

3.4 Data Processing and Analysis

Data were processed and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20 after finishing the data collection. Variables including users' engagement, perception and satisfaction towards OTT platform was measured and later categorized for descriptive analysis.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic profile information of the study population is necessary to interpret the findings of the study. Table 1 shows demographic data comes from different categories which helps to understand users' demographic factor and potential consumers.

Table 1: *Characteristics of the Participants*

Co-variates	Frequency	Percentages	Co-variates	Frequency	Percentages
Age groups (years)			Gender		
18-20	42	21.0	Male	81	40
21-23	47	23.5	Female	103	51
24-26	86	43.0	Prefer not to say	17	9
27 and above	25	12.5			
Education			Area of residence		
S.S.C	8	4.0	Urban	121	61
H.S.C	9	4.5	Sub-urban	58	29
Honours	143	71.5	Rural area	21	10
Masters	40	20.0			
Income			Number of family members		
Below 30000	82	41.0	2-4	58	29.0
31000-40000	16	8.0	4-6	74	37.0
41000-50000	7	3.5	6-8	62	31.0
51000-60000	1	.5	8-10	6	3.0
Others	94	47.0			
occupation					
Govt. Employees	29	14.5			
Private	36	18.0			
Students	118	59.0			
Others	17	8.5			

It is crucial to grasp the demography of OTT users in each age group in order to comprehend the main trend with regard to this issue. The age group were classified into 4 segments. As shown in Table 1, the age range of respondents with the highest numbers (56.5%) was from 24- to 26-year-old and the age group of 27 and older had the lowest percentages of OTT customers. The small sample size of 200 respondents shows a difference in viewership of OTT content on the basis of gender. Study found the consumption of OTT content is highest among the females (51%). According to the study, the education level of the respondents is highest in the honours level (71.5%) and lowest in the S.S.C and H.S.C level. Student are the core respondents in this study (59%). The survey's key finding is that the younger people mostly use the OTT platforms as these platforms are the most preferred among the students rather than others.

A large portion of respondents who viewed OTT material reside in urban area (61%) and participants from rural areas are lower (10%). The use of paid OTT services was directly influenced by the respondents' monthly income. In this study, almost half of the respondents (47%) of this study choose not to specify their income as most of the respondents are students, although a large share of rest of the respondents (41%) earn below 30000, and the rest 12% earn between 31000 to 60000. Of all the respondents, most of the respondents (37%) belongs to a family of 4-6 members followed by 6-8 members (31%).

4.2 OTT Usages and Engagement Analysis

Data of table 2 exhibits the audience's usages and engagement to understand users' involvement with this platform which was analysed through frequency analysis.

Table 2: *OTT Usages and Engagement*

Co-variates	Fre- quency	Percent- ages	Co-variates	Fre- quency	Percent- ages
Duration			Spent money		
12 to 18 months	82	41.0	100-200 tk	2	1.5
18 to 24 months	29	14.5	200-300tk	90	45.0
Above 24 months	11	5.5	300-400tk	68	34.0
Less than 12 months	78	39.0	400-500tk	26	13.0
			more than 500 tk	11	5.5
Number of subscrip- tions			Preferred content		
More than three	4	2.0	Web series	90	44.9
One	106	53.0	Movies	50	24.6
Three	24	12.0	Drama	36	18.3
Two	66	33.0	Sports	12	6.3
			Others	12	6
Preferred OTT sites			Preferred content features		
Netflix	26	13	Dance/music	84	42
Hoicoi	30	14.93	Action	74	37
Chorki	32	16.23	Comedy	96	48
Bioscope	19	9.42	Favourite actor/actress	118	59
Bongo	19	9.42	Storyline	120	60
Zee5	17	8.77	Cinematography	126	63
Iflix	9	4.55	others	36	18
Rabbitholebd	7	3.57			
Others	9	4.55			
Spent time			Recently watched content		
Less than 2 hours	36	18	Yes	103	51.5
2to 4 hours	67	33.5	No	77	38.5
4to 6 hours	41	20.5	Preferred not to say	20	10.0
6 to 8 hours	30	15.0			
More than 8 hours	26	13			
Sources of information about OTT contents			Online Searching		
Friends/relatives	75	37.5	Yes	85	42.5
			No	99	49.5

Newspaper Ads	19	9.5	Preferred not to say	16	8.0
Social media	7	3.5	Total	200	100
Television Ads	85	42.5			
Others	14	7.0			
Preferred device			Main Purpose		
Laptop/desktop	60	30.0	Entertainment	90	32.3
Tab	6	3.0	Relaxation	91	32.6
Mobile	123	61.5	Social interaction	55	19.7
Television	11	5.5	Education	25	9.0
Preferred companion			Others	13	6.5
Alone	77	38.5	Major Source of Entertainment		
Family members	70	35.0	Yes	97	48.5
Friends	49	24.5	No	86	43.0
Others	4	2.0	prefer not to say	17	8.5
Recommendation					
Always	51	25.5			
Sometimes	116	58.0			
Hardly	23	11.5			
Never	10	5.0			
Reason for preference			Cinema hall Vs OTT		
Provides Personal viewing	47	18.5	Cinema Hall	48	24
Less advertisements	73	36.5	OTT	90	45
Varied Content	37	23.5	Both	62	31
Easily accessible	22	11.0			
Time saving	14	7.0			
Others	1	.5			

The frequency analysis of user's engagement revealed that 41% of the users had been using OTT platform for 12 to 18 months and more than half of the respondents (53%) had subscription at least in one OTT service.

This survey has uncovered the spending habits of Bangladeshi OTT users. Study found the majority of respondents (45%) prefer to spend between 200 and 300 tk on subscriptions followed by the respondents (34%) pay between 300 and 400 Tk per month. In order to assess subscriber viewing patterns on Bangladesh's OTT video streaming services respondents were asked about their spending time on these platforms. In response most of the respondents (33.5%) said they spend between 2 and 4 hours each day consuming OTT content. Web series and movies were the most preferred content types to the respondents. Chorki was favoured by the majority of respondents (16.23%) as their preferred OTT platform and Binge in the second highest number (15.58%).

In terms of the preferred features of the OTT content most of the respondents (63%) prefer cinematography/making of the OTT content followed by the storyline (60%). When it comes to the question of watching of any web series in recent time, most of the respondents (51.5%) were agreed with it. In response to the question of searching in online after knowing about OTT

content, 42.5% agreed with this. These results depicted users' active engagement and interest to the contents of OTT platforms. Study found social played an important role to promote newly released web series or movie of OTT platform as majority of the respondents (42.5%) came to know that through social media. Respondents also got information from friends/relatives, television and newspaper advertisements. The majority of users access OTT content on their mobile devices (61.5%), frequently by themselves (38.5%) and sometimes recommended the content to their friends and family members (51%) which increased the possibilities for potential consumers. To understand whether OTT platforms altered conventional forms of entertainment respondents were asked their major sources of entertainment. Around 47.5% of subscribers indicated that OTT was their main source of entertainment. The main usage of OTT platforms were for entertainment and relaxation with many people favouring them over movie theatres (45%) since they offered more individualized watching options and less advertising.

Perception

Data of table 3 shows the perception analysis of the OTT users. Overall perception of the users is categorized in 5 categories, Agreed, Strongly Agreed, Neutral, Disagreed, Strongly Disagreed.

Table 3: *Consumer Perception about OTT Platforms*

Co-variates	Fre- quency	Percent- ages	Co-variates	Fre- quency	Percent- ages
Lack quality content			Violent Content		
Yes	87	43.5	Agreed	64	32.0
No	95	47.5	Strongly Agreed	59	29.5
prefer not to say	18	9.0	Neutral	45	22.5
			Disagreed	30	15.0
			Strongly Disagreed	2	1.0
Consider purchasing multiple OTT platforms			Censorship		
Yes	97	48.5	Agreed	50	25.0
No	89	44.5	Strongly Agreed	44	22.0
Prefer not to say	14	7.0	Neutral	52	26.0
			Disagreed	50	25.0
			Strongly Disagreed	4	2.0
Subscription fees			Prosperous future		
Higher	85	42.5	Agreed	58	29.0
Lesser	37	18.5	Strongly Agreed	38	19.0
Reasonable	74	37.0	Neutral	42	21.0
Others	4	2.0	Disagreed	56	28.0
			Strongly Disagreed	5	2.5
Pirated Content					
Yes	85	42.5			
No	97	48.5			
Prefer not to say	18	9.0			

Nearly half of respondents (43.5%) admitted there is a lack of high-quality content, which indicates that a sizeable percentage of respondents are concerned about the quality of the content that was readily available. Study found a connection between OTT subscription and quality content, as the majority (48.5%) were prepared to pay in multiple OTT platforms, in the case of quality. It was important to comprehend respondents' views on the OTT platform subscription charge because it affects their purchasing behaviour. 42.5% of respondents overall stated that they believed fees were higher whereas 37% of respondents believe that the costs for OTT subscriptions were fair.

For a very long time, piracy has been a problem for both the media industry and OTT platforms. This is one of the main things preventing the platforms from growing inside the industry. When asked whether the expansion of OTT platforms was being hampered by the availability of pirated content, 48.5% of respondents said "No," while 42.5% said the contrary.

Among all the respondents, a significant percentage (62%) of the respondents agreed that "Violent content in the OTT platforms increase criminal activities in our society" which indicates the tendency of promoting violent content to attract the viewers. Obscenity and sexually explicit content were occasionally promoted on OTT platforms in order to draw viewers' attention and serve the needs of the plot. Interestingly, same number of respondents (25%) agreed and disagreed that censorship is required for semi-nude presentation or sex-based stories in OTT platforms. But, 22% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Additionally, 48% of respondents expressed some optimism about the future, being a new platform, it's critical to understand how users feel about OTT platforms' potential.

Satisfaction

Table 4 exhibits the satisfaction level which was analysed through frequency analysis. Satisfaction level is categorized in 5 categories, Satisfied, Strongly Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Strongly Dissatisfied.

Table 4: *Consumer Satisfaction towards OTT Platforms*

Co-variates	Frequency	Percent-ages	Co-variates	Frequency	Percent-ages
Content Satisfaction			Kind of difficulties		
Satisfied	40	20.0	Content navigation	116	58
Strongly Satisfied	43	21.5	Takes time to load	92	46
Neutral	48	24.0	Buying subscriptions	54	27
Dissatisfied	65	32.5	Interface Problem	22	11
Strongly Dissatisfied	4	2.0	Others	20	10

Effect of raising subscrip- tion fee			Customer care sup- port		
Yes	104	52.0	Yes	41	20.5
No	82	41.0	No	139	69.5
prefer not to say	14	7.0	Prefer not to say	20	10.0
Effects			Satisfaction in seek- ing support		
Cancel all subscriptions	146	73	Satisfied	13	14.4
Reduce some subscriptions	106	53	Strongly Satisfied	17	19
Change the package	48	24	Neutral	28	31.1
Others	18	9	Dissatisfied	31	34.4
Difficulties			Strongly Dissatisfied	1	1.1
Yes	99	49.5			
No	90	45.5			
Prefer not to say	11	5.5			

Bangladesh's OTT video streaming industry's success greatly depends on how satisfied subscribers are with the service. In this study, customers' satisfaction levels with OTT content had been investigated. Study found majority of the respondents (32%) were dissatisfied with the content of their subscribed OTT Platform. OTT platforms need to consider their target audience when creating their pricing strategy. Responding on the effect driven by an increase in subscription fee, 52% respondents answered 'Yes', where 41% opined the opposite. So, it can be said that if the subscription fee increase, most of the OTT users will be affected. It is important to understand the kind of effect on the OTT users for the rise of fee. According to the findings, if the OTT subscription fee increase a significant percentage will cancel all subscriptions (73%) and over the half of the respondents will cancel some subscriptions (53%).

There are several technological difficulties that over-the-top (OTT) users faced. As per the survey, 49.5% respondents encountered difficulties while using OTT platform, whereas 45% did not face difficulties and 5.5% of the respondents chose not to share any direct opinion.

A huge proportion of the respondents (58%) faced difficulties during content navigation or find something worth watching, whereas 46% thought that content took too long time to load. Moreover, 27% found it hard to buy subscription and 10% had interface problem. OTT apps allowed customer care support via email or calling. It is crucial to engage the audience and solve the difficulties they face. A great number of respondents (69.5%) never sought any support from customer care facing difficulty on OTT platform, where 20% did, and 10% of the respondents chose not to share any direct opinion. It can be said that most of the respondents did not seek any customer care support which might not be easily recognized by them.

It's important to know the users' satisfaction while seeking support on OTT platforms. Study found that most of the OTT users (35%) were dissatisfied with OTT platform's customer care support whereas close to 30% of the participants agreed with the support.

DISCUSSION

This study considered different aspects including OTT usage and engagement, perception and satisfaction of the users to explore the prospect of OTT platforms in Bangladesh. The first objective focused on user's engagement with this platform. This study observed OTT platforms as the main source of entertainment rather than television or other video streaming platforms to the majority of the respondents. OTT is the major source of entertainment to most of the OTT users in Bangladesh (Hossain 2022). People prefer to watch OTT platforms as it provides less advertisements, personal access and a variety of content. Findings of some previous studies also showed that people chose OTT for its convenience to use, variety of content and, usefulness. (Hossain,2022; Yeoleet al.2022; Sujuith & Sumathy,2021). Study revealed people prefer to watch web series and movies most of the time. Similarly, Dasgupta & Grover, (2019) found that web series and movies are the most popular types of content for OTT websites. Both the supply and demand of web content on OTT platforms have increased by four times in the last three years (Hossain 2022).

Hossain (2022) reported that Netflix is the most popular streaming video provider in Bangladesh among viewers while Hossain (2022) indicated Bongo as the most popular platform in Bangladesh. But this study found Chorki is preferred mostly by the majority of the respondents.

The findings of this study indicate that most of the people prefer OTT platform instead of going to the cinema hall. Hossain (2022) also found that OTT streaming has altered viewers' habits when it comes to watching television and going to the movies. This finding is consistent with Sony & Selvin (2021). Their study reported that the majority of the subscribers agreed that Over-the-Top applications will be a disruption to movie theatres. Hence, the findings of these studies indicate the popularity of OTT platforms compared to traditional media.

The second objective explored viewers' perceptions of these platforms. The majority (42%) of the respondents think the OTT subscription fees in Bangladesh are higher. People would be more acceptant of OTT platforms if the number of good quality content increased (Khan,2021). Most of the respondents think censorship is required for semi-nude presentations of sex-based stories in OTT platforms. Additionally, 58% of participants believe a dedicated law is

necessary for regulating OTT platform content, over 60% of participants believed the law could pose a barrier to creative freedom (Hasan, 2023).

The third objective focused on viewers' satisfaction with OTT platforms. The majority of the respondents are not satisfied with the content and services of OTT platforms. Most of them faced difficulties while content navigation, and buying subscriptions in OTT platforms. Most of users in India are satisfied with how the OTT platforms were being used (Kumari,2020) which is inconsistent with the results of current study.

Furthermore, comparisons with prior research highlighted the consistency of users' engagement, perception and satisfaction in discussions. Additionally, there are also some inconsistencies in users' preferences and satisfaction.

Strengths and Limitations

Using this study, one may assess the consumer potentials and OTT platforms' popularity, which would assist the platforms strengthen their arguments for reaching out to more potential users. This study may be helpful to start-up companies as they prepare their successful efforts. The study also determines how satisfied OTT platform users are. This is crucial for the development of the OTT business and related industries since it helps them to understand the dissatisfactions of their customers. Also, this might sustain healthy rivalry between OTT and rival mediums, which would support the entertainment sector and contribute to Bangladesh's economic growth.

There are some limitations of this research. In this study, the research area is limited. It is conducted only on the OTT users of Khulna district, but the result may vary in whole country perspectives. The results could have been impacted by the use of social media or age-based selection bias. Again, this study generalizes OTT platforms, it does not give a focus on any individual OTT platform. Time constraint is another limitation of this research as researcher gets a short time, and it was not possible to collect more data and analyse them more comprehensively.

CONCLUSION

OTT platforms have seen significant growth in the present, when digitalization is everyone's main priority. The OTT market continues to expand in Bangladesh and slowly gaining popularity with viewers. The COVID-19 epidemic has led to a surge in the use of OTT video streaming services in Bangladesh. The findings revealed that OTT platforms like Chorki, Binge, and Hoicoi are the leading OTT service providers. Due to their fewer advertisements and diversity

of content people prefer OTT platforms as their major source of entertainment rather than tv or other video streaming platforms. It has been found that people are not satisfied with the subscription fee of these platforms, it seems higher to them. Recommendation emphasized the need for increased the number of good quality content to attract more viewers. In conclusion, Bangladesh's OTT platforms have enormous potential. People may contemplate migrating to OTT content applications in droves if the prices can be controlled and the services can be improved. To get a more thorough examination and outcomes about the prospect of OTT platforms in Bangladesh, future study could be conducted by using both quantitative and qualitative approach. In addition, comparison between OTT platforms and other video streaming platforms can provide better understanding and clarity.

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