"From Broadcast To On-Demand: A Study On Changing Audience Consumption Patterns Leading To The Shift Of Mass Media Power From Television To Ott Platforms"

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Abstract: The mass media have seen a drastic evolution in the last few years, with a shift of power from traditional television to the rapidly growing Over-the-Top (OTT) streaming platforms. Traditional television was considered the most powerful and Dominant medium to shape opinions and create awareness. The emergence of OTT or digital platforms has changed the audience's consumption from following a schedule for watching content to on-demand content access, multi-screen consumption, and algorithm-driven content delivery. This Study focuses on the Structural, technological, and Industrial shift from television to OTT platforms through the theoretical concepts like Media Dependency theory, Uses and Gratification Theory, Technological Determinism, and Participatory Culture. It also critically analyses the changing revenue pattern, like SVOD and AVOD, and the change in content production, Localization, and differences between the OTT Originals and Television Serials. The study examines the shifting audience behavior based on binge-watching, multi-screen viewing, and shifting viewing habits. It underscores cultural globalization by way of global content consumption, heightened social representation, and new regulatory frameworks. Other ethical issues examined in the study include the privacy of data, bias in algorithms, corporate concentration, and political influence. It concludes by stating that television is changing into a platform-based system, and the future of mass media is a hybrid system, personalized, AI-driven, and globally connected.

Index Terms -Television, OTT platforms, On Demand, Mass Media Evolution, Theoretical Concepts, Participatory culture, The Medium is the Message, Subscription model, Localization, Mass media, binge-watching, AI-driven Algorithm, Hybrid Model.

I.   Theoretical Foundation and Media Power Shift

1.1 Mass Media Evolution
The mass media have never been left behind in terms of **creating awareness and educating** the masses using the tools provided by the mass media like newspapers, televisions, radio, and the movie industry. Mass media dates back to the **15th century** when **Gutenberg invented** the **printing press.** The one of the oldest media in the industry, which is most trusted, is the print media. The only weakness of the print media is that it is slow and not as widespread as new technologies.

Radio was an invention in early years of the **20th century** that was known as Instant audio communication. This technology was then expanded to an audio-visual form known as **Television** later in the **20th century**. It was the Dominating Mass media Medium across the globe to interact with the audience, which also determined the timetable and Content Dissemination.

The **internet and digital technology** emerged at the end of the 20 th and beginning of the 21 st centuries, which resulted in the development of **Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms**. These streaming platforms make available streaming services without the need of cables and satellites. OTT platforms made **on demand viewing** which enables the audience to watch anything anytime, anywhere, and anywhere. The digital streaming platform has taken over media power that used to be controlled by the traditional TV networks and has now consumed the media data, algorithms and content.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Key theories in the media can be used to explain the change in TV to streaming.

1. **Media Dependency Theory:** This concept, which was developed by **Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur**, holds that individuals tend to be more **influenced by the media** as they begin to rely on the media to get information and entertainment. This reliance has increased today with unlimited content on the internet.

2. **Uses and Gratifications Theory:** This theory is an invention of **Elihu Katz,** who views audiences as active users who **will choose media according to their needs** such as having the desire to be entertained or escape reality. Streaming sites fulfill such demands as they give the audience the chance to view what they desire at the time they desire.

3. **Technological Determinism:** It is a theory that is linked to **Marshall McLuhan** and argues that technology determines how we live and interact. In his widely-known quote, **The Medium is the Message,** the form of media that we consume is more significant to us than the content.

4. **Participatory Culture:** This concept by **Henry Jenkins** highlights that online media enables audiences **to participate in, create and share content.** This transforms the viewers into not being passive consumers but active people in media world.

Simply put, these theories enable us to know the reason and mode in which people are abandoning traditional television to streaming services.

1.3 Power Shift: Control Over Content

The **gatekeeping** process **which are the decisions on what is going to be disseminated to the masses** and this is a process that has changed a great deal over the years. During the traditional broadcasting era, TV networks and governments had a monopoly on the kind of programmes to be aired and the viewers had very little option. Today, the streaming sites such as Netflix have made gatekeeping more **algorithmic**; these sites observe our preferences and viewing patterns to provide us with content created specifically to appeal to us. Although we find this **personalization** about our viewing experience more pleasant, it is necessary to understand that still, corporate bodies have significant influence on the funding, licensing and algorithms determining what we watch. Thus, the media access, as broad as ever, is still dominated by the power structures.

1.4 Democratization or Re- centralization?

The **fourth pillar of democracy** is the media because it informs, promotes and exercises power in check. The emergence of OTT has revolutionized in regards to access to content, Content Distribution and Creation. Democratization of media implies the **freeing up and equitable content creation and access**. The streaming websites provide the same to the viewer to view the content at any time, and offers independence to small studios and individual creators to share their work with the world.

Nevertheless, re-centralization is occurring whereby applications such as Netflix, Prime Video, and Jio Hotstar dictate our **algorithms, user data, monetization and content visibility based on their preference**. This demonstrates that although there are numerous creators and content there are only a few who could conquer the Market.

Large platforms are competing internationally with local broadcasting companies. An example is that the regional services are still significant in countries such as India, where culturally relevant and

language-based content is needed, which demonstrates that the media today represent a manifestation of democratization and re-centralization.

1.5 Critical Analysis

The Television is not falling out of power but it is **changing with the Digital Era**. Viewers are moving towards the **on-demand platforms** and the advertisers are keeping pace. Recent research by **FICCI and EY India (2024)** indicates that the digital media was the most significant share, with 32 percent of the overall revenues, and TV revenues fell, with streaming services replacing traditional broadcasting. Nevertheless, there is the emergence of a **hybrid model**, in which TV is incorporated in OTT service with Smart TVs and Bundled Subscription. The Future of mass Communication will be **streaming platforms, personalization, AI-based recommendations, and multi-screen viewing,** which proves that television is not gone, it is evolving.

II. Structural and Industrial Transformation

2.1 Traditional Television Industry Model

The traditional TV business had a linear broadcasting system whereby programming could only be aired at scheduled times through cable and satellite networks. The audience was forced to consume programs at a particular time especially during the prime time.

Advertising was the major source of revenue. The channels such as Zed TV and Star Plus cost brands to air adverts during the popular shows. Viewership was measured as TRP (Television Rating Point) and by using this, the advertisement pricing was calculated. Increased TRP had the effect of increasing the number of advertisers and revenue.

The industry was centralised and production and distribution was controlled by national broadcasting networks. Regulatory barriers and high infrastructure spending were the major barriers to entry by new competitors.

2.2 Rise of OTT Platforms

The emergence of the Over the Top (OTT) platforms transformed the consumption of the media by delivering content directly to the user through the internet bypassing the cable and satellite. The significant platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney Hotstar, and ZEE5 have changed the way individuals consume content. Compared to the traditional TV, OTT platforms provide unlimited access, multi-platform features (smartphone, laptop, smart TV), and individualised recommendations through algorithms.

These income models are numerous on OTT platforms:

. SVOD (Subscription Video on Demand): It is a monthly charge or an annual payment (like Netflix).

. AVOD (Advertising Video on Demand) is the free entertainment which is sponsored by commercials.

Hybrid Model: Subscription and advertising (e.g., Disney Hotstar). This trend moved the media consumption towards scheduled and appointment viewing to flexible and user-controlled streaming.

2.3 Changing Revenue Patterns

The OTT platform revolution has significantly changed the media business revenue model.

To begin with, there is the growth of the subscription economy. Direct payment to access the content is now an option to the consumers without the need to rely on the traditional advertisement. Recurring subscription platforms enable platforms to invest in high-quality and original products since the revenue is on a regular basis.

Second, the TV advertising revenues have been dwindling slowly since viewers are turning into digital media. Advertisers prefer digital streaming services, as it offers them targeted advertising offered by the user data analytics. The digital platforms will offer quantified measures, including response rates

and popularity, which enhances the efficiency of advertising. Third, it is already a norm that brand integration and sponsored content are green. Rather than the separate commercial breaks, the brands are incorporated into the plots.

2.4 Content Production Shift

Patterns of content production have been affected by structural transformation too. OTT companies invest in high budget web series of cinematic nature. Well-written powerful, developed, and globally storytelling are typical features of the product of the Netflix India and Amazon Prime Video platforms. Seasons can be very short (8-10 episodes), and the focus is on the quality, rather than quantity.

The increase in the content of the region is another important change. OTTs produce programs in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi and Bengali among others so that they can reach a diverse audience. This is a localisation that enhances market penetration.

OTT platforms also favor global distribution. Online series on India can be found in other parts of the world, and international online series are sold in India, which has subtitles and dubbing. This global scale expands cultural exchange and market growth.

2.5 OTT Originals vs Television Serials

OTT originals and regular television serials have some clear differences.

Television serials tend to be of long duration and these have hundreds of episodes aimed at maintaining the high TRP ratings. They often resort to the family drama and emotional narration to attract a big number of viewers. The budgets are separated across several episodes and this may affect continuity. Comparatively, OTT originals are fewer in terms of the number of seasons and episodes. Their priorities are good storytelling, character richness and novel subject matter. The quality of production is enhanced and the pictures are more realistic and international. OTT services are also more creative than the traditional broadcasting norms.

There is also a difference in the involvement of the audience. Television promotes timed and passive watching, but OTT promotes binge-watching and personalised viewing.

2.6 Case Study: OTT Originals vs Television Serials

Comparing OTT originals to traditional television serials, one can see structural and creative differences.

Television series in the likes of Star Plus, Zed TV, normally have hundreds of episodes. Their main objective is to ensure that they are rated highly on TRP and, therefore, they focus mainly on family dramas and emotionally focused stories that would attract a wide audience. Budgets are spread over various episodes and sometimes this might lead to poor production quality.

Material also has to conform to narrowness of broadcasting and predetermined schedules.

III. Audience Behavior and Cultural Impact

3.1 Changing Viewing Habits

The rise of OTT platforms has fundamentally transformed how audiences engage with media. The traditional model of appointment viewing where audiences organized their schedules around fixed broadcast times has been replaced by binge- watching, where entire seasons are consumed in a single sitting. This shift reflects a deeper behavioral change: audiences are no longer passive recipients of scheduled content but active agents in curating their own entertainment experience.

Multi-screen consumption has further dismantled the boundaries of traditional viewing. Audiences today move seamlessly between smartphones, tablets, laptops, and smart TVs often engaging with a second screen simultaneously via social media. In India, the proliferation of affordable smartphones and low- cost data plans has made the mobile-first audience the dominant paradigm, especially in

semi-urban and rural markets, compelling platforms to invest in lower-bandwidth streaming and short-form content formats.

3.2 Audience Autonomy

OTT platforms have substantially expanded audience autonomy through personalization algorithms that analyze watch history, search behavior, viewing duration, and engagement patterns to curate a unique homepage for each user. While this empowers viewers by surfacing relevant content, it also raises concerns about filter bubbles wherein audiences are consistently exposed to familiar genres and viewpoints, limiting cultural and intellectual diversity.

The on-demand model grants viewers control over time and content: pausing, rewinding, downloading, and varying playback speeds are all expressions of a viewer-centric design philosophy absent from broadcast television. However, this autonomy is bounded. Licensing agreements, regional restrictions, and algorithmic optimization for retention mean that audience freedom is best understood as a managed freedom real within its parameters, but ultimately serving the platform's commercial logic.

3.3 Cultural Globalization

OTT platforms have emerged as powerful engines of cultural globalization, enabling content to circulate across linguistic and geographic boundaries at an unprecedented scale. The global success of Korean productions such as Squid Game and Spanish-language series like Money Heist demonstrated that linguistic barriers could be overcome through compelling storytelling, subtitling, and dubbing disrupting Hollywood's historical dominance in global entertainment.

Within India, the OTT revolution has catalyzed a remarkable resurgence of regional language content.Platforms such as ZEE5, Aha, and SonyLIV have invested in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, and Marathi productions, providing unprecedented visibility for identities and storytelling traditions historically underrepresented in national media..

3.4 Youth and the Digital Generation

Generation Z those born between 1997 and 2012 has grown up in a state of digital abundance, and their media consumption reflects fundamentally different expectations. They prefer mobile-first access, exhibit strong openness to international content (particularly K-drama, anime, and Latin American series), and rely heavily on social media recommendations rather than algorithmic discovery on platforms themselves. This cohort also represents the vanguard of cord-cutting: the ongoing decline in Pay TV subscriptions is driven significantly by younger urban consumers who have no meaningful relationship with scheduled broadcasting.

Meme culture and fan communities have become primary mechanisms through which Gen Z processes and amplifies media content. A single striking scene can generate thousands of memes within hours of a release, creating organic viral reach that extends well beyond a platform's subscriber base. Platforms and production companies have grown increasingly sophisticated in understanding and encouraging this behavior as a form of authentic, peer-driven marketing.

3.5 Social Impact

OTT platforms have expanded representation across dimensions of gender, sexuality, caste, religion, and region that traditional broadcast television constrained by advertiser caution and regulatory conservatism historically marginalized. In India, this has enabled bold storytelling around caste discrimination, queer identities, rural realities, and gender-based violence. Series such as Sacred Games, Mirzapur, Delhi Crime, and Panchayat broke sharply with broadcast conventions, attracting critical acclaim and audiences underserved by conventional channels.

However, the OTT era has also disrupted family viewing culture. The fragmentation of content across personalized feeds and individual devices has reduced the frequency of shared family viewing, eroding the common cultural reference points that broadcast television once created across generations. At the same time, diverse content catalogs and flexible scheduling have enabled new forms of intergenerational engagement, and global platform reach has created opportunities for

diaspora families to share cultural content across borders.

The introduction of India's IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 brought OTT platforms within a regulatory framework requiring content self-classification and grievance redressal. The long-term implications for creative freedom in Indian OTT content production remain an active subject of debate among practitioners, scholars, and civil society.

Summary of Key Themes

Section	Key Theme	Key Impact
3.1 Changing Viewing Habits	Appointment TV → Binge-Watching & Multi-screen	Audience-controlled, mobile-first consumption
3.2 Audience Autonomy	Personalization algorithms & on-demand access	Managed freedom within platform capitalism
3.3 Cultural Globalization	Cross-cultural content & regional Indian surge	K-drama, Spanish content, linguistic diversity
3.4 Youth & Digital Generation	Gen Z mobile-first, cord-cutting, meme culture	Fan communities drive organic platform growth
3.5 Social Impact	Bold themes, representation & regulatory shifts	Fragmented yet diversified family viewing

IV. Regulatory, Ethical and Future Perspectives

4.1 Regulation of Television

The television business in India has been strictly controlled by the government. It functions under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, and content and advertising guidelines published by. the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. It is these rules that determine the type of content that is shown. More so in terms of morality, religion, national security and the order of the day. Television happens to be a potent medium since it reaches to a mass audience including households in the rural areas. media that has to be checked. On the one hand regulation brings accountability but on the other hand is a cause of concern. regarding censorship and potential political interference with content. Due to this fact, the government can censor or alter the content that might be viewed. unsuitable or disreputable. Although this system is used to keep accountability and social balance, it also creates the question of censorship and how political influence can be used to take control of what audiences are. allowed to see. The television regulation thus indicates a controlled and the state monitored media structure.

4.2 OTT Regulation Debate

OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime video, and Disney+ Hotstar initially started with. not as many limitations as television. They abided by age-related self-regulation systems and in-house. content review. Nevertheless, scandals involving religious, political and obscene material resulted in government. intervention. In 2021, the OTT platforms were included in the IT Rules, which mandated content. mechanisms of classification and redress of grievances. The discussion is whether there should be a balance between creative. liberty with ethnic discernment and control. The current debate is an expression of a bigger tension, namely, the need to find a balance between creative freedom in digital storytelling. with cultural sensitivity and social responsibility.

4.3 Ethical Concerns

The rise of the OTT platforms has brought about critical ethical concerns. Data Privacy: Streaming providers gather the user information including viewing history, preferences, and device. data to make recommendations individual. Although this enhances user experience, it is frightening. regarding information abuse, consent, and data security threats. Bias in the algorithms: What the recommendation

algorithms show is based on. These systems may serve as a priority to popular or commercially viable content which may restrict diversity. strengthening particular cultural or ideological discourses. Screen Addiction: The autoplay, binge-release models, and personalised notifications. stimulate extended interaction. This has questioned the issue of too much screen time and its. implication on mental health, particularly younger audiences. Digital Paradigm: The availability of OTT services is based on the availability of quality internet and intelligent devices. Several low-income and rural communities continue to use the traditional television, which brings out the disparities. digital access.

4.4 Economic and Political Influence.

The control of media is more and more in big corporations. Global companies Netflix and Amazon have solid financial resources that enable them to control the production of content. and distribution. This has given rise to discussions on the cultural imperialism where western content might be having an effect on local. cultures. Simultaneously, regional content is also being promoted through OTT platforms and it provides local creators. global visibility. The role that the television and digital platforms have on the formation of the opinion of the population is important. and political discussions. These are also sites which invest in local and original Indian content providing local creators with international. exposure. Both digital algorithms and television news channels impact the masses politically by influencing the opinions. choosing what content becomes visible, trending or popularly discussed.

4.5 Future of Television & OTT

Television and OTT appear to be integrated and not replaced in the future. Smart TVs now integrate cable and streaming solutions together. The innovation that is transforming the way people view content includes live sports streaming and use of AI to make recommendations. Television will not die but is changing to a hybrid one that will coexist with digital. platforms. The actual change is on the way power, control, and audience behaviour is changing in the. digital era. Whether television will eventually go away is a question that comes up frequently but the total disappearance is. unlikely. Rather, the conventional TV can lose its cable subscriptions, and change with the times. into internet broadcasting. The future looks like a hybridized ecosystem with television and. OTT coexist, compete and collaborate in digitally connected media environment.

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