# 3. Cinema in Digital Age: The OTT Challenge

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The dynamics of the Indian entertainment market are conclusively determined by changing the omnipresent Internet. The scale and effect of India's cellular market in the coming years has grown amazing, thanks to millions of individuals and the deployment of 3G, 4G, and 5G networks. Viewers watch movies, documentaries, and web series that utilize various technologies on their smartphone devices. The movies and other video material uploaded by Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+Hotstar, and Zee5 bear testimony to it. It now poses a significant threat to the movie industry. This study seeks to understand the impact of digital streaming platforms on Indian Cinemas and the issues they zero in on. It also examines how the Indian film business is evolving and spells out OTT's dangers to the movie industry by focusing on the time, content, acceptability, outreach, financial, and new avenues aspects of OTT. This will be summarised by outlining ways that theatres can continue to be relevant and steps that both media platforms may take to work together.

Keywords: Cinema, Content Creativity, OTT, Media, Netflix, Stars and Youth

### INTRODUCTION

The Indian film business has expanded tremendously, from little rolling-image scenes on roads to small theatres in towns and villages, from single-projector theatres to enormous multiplex complexes. The combination of strong economic indicators, a large consumer base, changing preferences, and supportive government policies positions India as a dynamic marketplace for the entertainment and leisure sector. It presents numerous opportunities for businesses to tap into the country's growing demand for diverse entertainment experiences. It looks incredible to learn that the consumers spend more on recreation and entertainment than the entire economy, owing to favourable demographics and increased disposable income. Varghese and Chinnaiah (2021) mentioned that despite the technical breakthroughs that have brought the movie theatre

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sector to this point, the spread of the internet is really a matter of concern. The dual challenge of efficiency and affordability posed by the internet has has profound impact on theatres. Further, it aggravates problem by increasing the number of client choices. In the cinema sector, OTT (Over-The-Top) media service platforms are a disruptive technology. Ojha (2022) remarked that the time to cut out for viewing a movie was shrinking. The average person today visits theatres less regularly than they did 10 to 15 years ago. Against this backdrop, the OTT phenomenon arose. It was unavoidable, given the desire to see something new. The number of OTT streaming platforms has increased substantially in recent years. This can be linked to introducing new technologies and public awareness of them. People now have access to tens of thousands of different types of information, mainly motivated by their requirements or a desire to kill time, similar to how the country adopted 4G technology in 2012. Mobile devices, desktops, and televisions may all use the services. Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar, and Zee5 are some of the platforms that offer OTT services. When these businesses provide movies and other video content online, Shalparni et al. (2022) predicted the harm these businesses will pose to movie theatres. Ambwani (2022) said the pandemic "wholly belonged to the small screen."

#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This paper aims to objectively evaluate OTT through the prism of the potential risks that loom large over movie theatres. It makes it a point to determine whether the emergence of OTT platforms such as Amazon, Netflix, Hotstar, and others has influenced the movie theatre sector and, if so, how it affects customers.

- 1. To analyze the Indian OTT market.
- 2. To examine the causes of the development of OTT platforms.
- 3. To assess the OTT sector's risk to the movie theatre sector.
- 4. To evaluate the OTT platform's weaknesses in the current environment.
- 5. To analyze the public opinion about OTT and movie theatres.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Although specific quantitative assessments of particular aspects are also considered, the research is primarily qualitative. The approach of hypothetical deduction analysis is utilized to assess the results. The following secondary data sources are used to compile the data:

- 1. Books, periodicals, journals, newspaper articles and websites.
- 2. The websites of the OTT Corporation and Multiplex, respectively.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will aid in our comprehension of the OTT market and the direction of the movie industry. The main goal of the study is to identify any concerns that the OTT



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industry may pose to movie theatres. In addition, it was addressed if movie theatres might succeed in the face of OTT's difficulties.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Sharma (2020) estimates that the Indian OTT market is currently worth \$0.5 billion and will be worth \$5 billion by 2023. She also says that some filmmakers are increasingly turning to OTT to reach their intended audience. Indeed, video streaming services, especially for binge-watchers, have made viewing films on the go more accessible, affordable, and convenient.

According to Usmani (2018), the OTT platform may pose a significant threat to the film business. "In two years, digital entertainment in India will be bigger than the world's largest film industry," he predicts. In addition, he offered further statistics to back up his prediction that, by 2020, cinema revenue will likely climb gradually to roughly Rs 19,200 crore whereas the OTT climbed to Rs 22,400 crore. He also apprehensions regarding the "extremely low" speed of the internet and further stated that, "with even a five-second delay in video streaming due to loading costing a content publisher a quarter of its viewership."

According to Bhattacharya (2019), "Cinemas are a dying breed in India, contrary to popular belief. Despite the popularity of over-the-top services such as Netflix and Hotstar, single-screen theatres are becoming increasingly uncommon." She noted that India is a woefully under-screened nation when discussing the likely explanation of cinema's declining trend. She further compares the number of screens in China and India, which are around 60,000 and 10,000 respectively. The studies also shows that there are only eight movie theatres per million people, and that when Indians become free, two-thirds of them no longer have access to movies.

Varghese and Chinnaiah (2021) studied customer behaviour towards OTT platforms and the cinema, taking into account factors including time spent, cost, and experience. They feel that OTT apps have a promising future in India. The research also looked at how well the Indian public saw the media and entertainment sectors of the nation. According to the research, the Indian public believes that mobile applications are transforming the country's media and entertainment industries. These advancements are the result of media accessibility, content efficacy, low-cost media, and new initiatives. Thakur (2021) focuses on the development of OTT platforms in India as well as the elements that have influenced their growth over time. According to the authors, the rise in smartphone and internet usage in India after 2015, the country's young population, and the variety of available content were the primary drivers of OTT platform popularity in India. According to the study, COVID boosted the industry's strength through boosting membership.

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### **DEFINING OTT**

According to Shalparni et al. (2022), an over-the-top (OTT) platform is "a streaming media service that directly offers service to viewers via broadcast and internet." The concept of over-the-top (OTT) platforms includes two important components. The first component is that these are media platforms, or more accurately, platforms for mass media that deal with streaming video. The second component is that the transmission is done directly over the internet. Therefore no cable connection or direct-to-home service is necessary to access them. Many firms have launched streaming services that allow consumers to watch episodes and movies whenever and wherever they want with a simple subscription. BIGFLIX, launched by Reliance Entertainment in 2008, was India's first OTT platform (Laghate, 2017). In India, there are now 40 streaming services available, the most popular of which being Disney+ Hotstar, Netflix, Amazon Prime, Sony LIV, and Zee5. The Indian OTT industry was valued 2,150 crores in 2018, and it is expected to grow to \$15 billion by 2030. By 2020, the OTT sector will generate around 19 billion rupees in revenue. Video streaming applications will have logged 240 billion hours by 2020. The Indian digital market will expand the greatest in 2019-2020, with a 49% increase. The number of paying users in the OTT business rose by 30% between March and July 2020, from 22.2 million to 29.0 million. The figures provided above demonstrate how quickly India's OTT business is expanding (Shalparni P Y, Punyashree B, & Kumar, 2022).

# DEVELOPMENT OF OTT IN INDIA

As previously stated, BIGFlix was India's first widely used and respected OTT platform. It was developed in 2008 by Reliance Entertainment to meet the expanding demands of the Indian digital business. In 2017, the site was relaunched globally. (Laghate, 2017) BiGFlix provided thousands of movies in multiple languages. The first OTT mobile app in India, nexGTv, was developed by Digivive in 2010 and gives users access to live TV and on-demand video. The Indian Premier League's games were the first to be streamed live on mobile devices in 2013 and 2014 thanks to the nexGTv app. When Ditto TV and Sony Live were founded in 2013 to meet client demand, the OTT business surged rapidly. The video-on-demand platform "Ditto TV" from Zed Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZED) included programming from all media channels, including Star, Sony, Viacom, ZED, and others. During its first year of operation in 2012, Ditto TV provided its services in all major worldwide markets, including the United States, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, New Zealand, Australia, and others. On February 15, 2018, the service was merged with ZED 5. On the other side, SonyLiv debuted on January 23, 2013. Sony Pictures Networks India Pvt. Ltd. owns the Indian television network, as well as the video-on-demand service platform "SonyLiv" in India.

Netflix is a well-known streaming service provider that launched in India in 2016. It is an American corporation based in Los Gatos, California. There are good TV series,



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films, documentaries, and Netflix originals available. The monthly membership fees range from 199 to 799 rupees. The company has carved out a substantial presence in the Indian market by providing three subscription plan options: Basic, Standard HD, and Premium Ultra HD.

Amazon Prime Video, sometimes known as Prime Video, is an American provider of on-demand video streaming services. It was presented on July 26, 2016 in Bengaluru, India. To entice customers to use its services, it first provided a 60-day free trial. Mirzapur's first and second seasons were among the most anticipated and popular series in India. We have two membership options: 129 rupees per month or 999 rupees per year. Amazon Prime has a children's section and a selection of TV episodes and films from many genres.

Hot Star, which is owned and operated by Star India, made its debut in India on February 11, 2015. It has already secured the streaming rights to the Indian Premier League. The Walt Disney Corporation purchased both Star and Hot Star in 2019; on April 3, 2020, Disney+Hotstar was launched. There are currently VIP and Premium membership tiers available. Annual premium membership is \$1,499, while VIP membership costs \$399.

In addition to these major OTT platforms, ALT Balaji, JioCinema, Voot, and MX Player are well-known in the Indian market. They all made their debuts between 2016 and 2019. The most popular web series on MX Player are Bhaukaal, Ek This Begam, Raktanchal, and Aashram. Furthermore, Voot offers live streaming of Big Boss' popular Indian TV show 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As a result of these OTT platforms, there is a greater need for high-quality, user-friendly content. OTT has built a worldwide stage to exhibit talent from all across the world. (Thakur, 2021)

### TIME MANAGEMENT

Because of the limited time available to average viewers, going to the movies for 4 hours is becoming increasingly difficult. We may start and stop watching, watch in instalments, repeat bits for clarification, and arrange our viewing all at once or in pieces thanks to over-the-top (OTT) content. Several stories took 7-8 hours to tell and were unsuitable for a theatrical production. Thanks to OTT, these stories could now be recreated as web series and savvy producers created innovative sequels that engaged viewers for hours. Even though they are open-ended, these web series have a beginning and an end. They do not drag on indefinitely like TV soap operas. If they do not have any other distribution options, you can watch short films on OTT. It is a large canvas for preserving old films, documentaries, and entertainment content. (Ojha, 2022)

Regarding the flexibility to view whenever and whenever, actress Vicky Koshal previously stated, "With a theatrical release, there is always pressure that the film will go out of theatres the following Friday. Even if you do not feel like watching it now, you can watch it ten days later with OTT. That is the type of independence provided by OTT platforms." (Roy, 2022)

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It is also linked to binge viewing. If these web series were converted into movies, you would have to travel to the Cinema to watch each episode, which would drive you insane because of the unresolved mystery. You struggle with time management; therefore, OTT platforms provide a sensible way to accomplish it according to your schedule. Except for movies and TV soap operas, they do not last forever or terminate suddenly. Most people prefer binge-watching versus planned viewing, and the internet allows them to do so. Everyone has a phone and internet connection, and people pick what they watch. It is no longer necessary for everyone in the house to watch whatever the consensus is on the one TV. While their parents watch TV, their children watch stuff on their phones or tablets, or vice versa. As a result, actors who formerly had supporting roles in major motion pictures are becoming stars. The main issue is the actor's age. (Roy, 2022)

#### **CONTENT CREATIVITY**

In contrast to films made for profit and usually catering to the lowest common denominator, the internet allows the creation of modern and nuanced stories. Furthermore, the duration of a series allows viewers to associate with a specific character. (Roy, 2022) The Covid-19 epidemic spurred the development of the fledgling internet media and entertainment industry and changed its growth trajectory. There was an increase in viewers and viewing time as a result of the acceptance of a more technologically sophisticated form of entertainment that outgrew traditional media. As online demand for high-quality information increased, extensive content libraries were formed, resulting in a higher emphasis on stories across all languages. (Roy, 2022) Bollywood must analyze its reality and content. They must reconsider the jaded czars' recent failed efforts that resulted in Bunty-Bubly-2, Sadak-2, and Hungama-2. How can they expect people to attend these movies, let alone in a \$400 theatre? The single reason for OTT's success is that content is now the primary draw. Independent filmmakers that create films with amazing content and innovative stories are the toast of these platforms. Given that there is so much beautiful, relevant, and readily understandable information at our fingertips and that we are spoiled for choice and convenience, the question is whether Bollywood can generate stuff that will draw us back to the cinemas more regularly in the current climate. (Ojha, 2022)

OTT is gaining popularity at an alarming rate. The watershed event signalled a historic shift in which demand for high-quality materials surged. Manish Kalra stated, "At Zee5, we doubled down on our efforts to provide hyper-personalized, real, relevant, and resonant content to satiate India's growing appetite for compelling content." (Roy, 2022)

As the so-called "new age medium," the web provides some relevant material. "On OTT, there are no boundaries regarding actors," Siddhant explains. When you are on OTT, everything melts away. In any route ahead, equality and equality have always been excellent. However, the pressure is increased with OTT performance since people

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will not connect with you if they do not appreciate your acting. The audience has also gained power since they may humiliate you on Twitter if they do not like your work. (Roy, 2022)

### PUBLIC ACCEPTABILITY AND OUTREACH

OTT has a far more extensive reach than Indian Cinema. The two major platforms, Amazon and Netflix, have access to around 190 nations; Actor Nawazuddin says, "There is a much bigger world outside Bollywood." (Roy, 2022) Bollywood pales in comparison to OTT. As the Indian diaspora worldwide is eager to watch their films and web series, the importance of OTT further strengthens. Vicky Kaushal says, "Indian film needs to reach out all across the globe, and that is possible only through OTT platform". (Roy, 2022)

Regional marketplaces present industry participants with significant future possibilities. OTT has increased its audience and given content producers access to new markets. The rise in digital consumption will continue and only strengthen over time, which is good news for the sector's expansion. As the streaming industry transitions to an interactive exchange of information and ideas between customers and providers, the focus on engaged consumers has increased to a record high. Manish Kalra said, "Our active subscribers increased by 2.6x, engagement increased by 1.3x, and our average subscribers increased by 3x in 2020. Traffic from around India was visible, strengthening our position as the multilingual storyteller for various entertainment seekers. We were able to leverage our customer-centric strategy to create a content library that is jam-packed with quality material for entertainment seekers around the nation. As of the second quarter of the fiscal year 2021–2022, our worldwide monthly active user (MAU) count is 9.3 crore, and our daily active user (DAU) count is 90 lakh." (Roy, 2022)

Let us examine the popularity of watching OTT web series. We can see that Rudra: The Edge of Darkness, which debuted on Disney+Hotstar and received 35.2 million views, has the most significant number of views. Views for Aashram Season 3 total 34.4 million. Koffee with Karan has 32.2 million views, up to 29.6 million for Panchayat Season 2. With 17.2 million viewers, Anupama: Namaste London, a soap opera, also has a stake in this. According to these statistics, OTT platforms' acceptance and reach are expanding significantly and endangering Indian Cinema.

Table 1: Numbers of views of particular web series

S.No.	Name of Movie or Webseries	Release Date	OTT Platform	No. of views
1.	Rudra: The Edge of Darkness	March 4, 2022	Disney+ Hotstar	35.2 Million views
2.	Aasharam Season 3	June 3, 2022	MX Player	34.4 Million views
3.	Koffee With Karan Season 7	July 2, 2022	Disney+ Hotstar	32.2 Million views

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4.	Panchayat Season 2	May 18, 2022	Amazon Prime	29.6 Million views
5.	Anupama Namaste America	April 25, 2022	Disney+ Hotstar	17.2 Million views

**Source:** Top 10 Web Series & Ott Movies In India 2023 Most Watched & Viewed On Ott Available at: https://www.bollymoviereviewz.com/2022/06/top-web-series-in-india-most-watched.html

#### THE BURDEN ON THE POCKET

Because amusement and money go hand in hand, it is evident that you should only seek entertainment that is within your budget and avoid those that are not. At the intersection of this issue is OTT, which allows you to subscribe to great entertainment for a month for approximately the same price as you would pay to go to the movies. (Shalparni P Y, Punyashree B, & Kumar, 2022) When the statistics are compared, it is evident that the average cost of a movie ticket has ranged from 87 to 119 since 2015. So, in 2022, to view a movie with a family of four, one must invest about 476 (4\*119); however, if one has a Netflix subscription, the complete family may watch a movie for just 149 rupees. You also have a monthly membership, meaning you may watch other movies and web series for just 149 rupees monthly. Compared to other platforms, the subscription cost in one month for other platforms such as Amazon Prime, Disney+Hotstar, and Zee5 is 179, 299, and 133, correspondingly. It highlights a difference ranging from Rs. 177 to Rs. 343. That means an additional platform subscription. As a result, OTT is becoming a barrier to cinema accessibility.

Table 2: Average Cost of Movie Tickets since 2015

S.No.	Year	The average cost of movie tickets (in Rupees)
1.	2015	92
2.	2016	96
3,	2017	95
4.	2018	104
5.	2019	106
6.	2020	91
7.	2021	87
8.	2022	119

**Source:** Average cost of movie tickets in India from 2015 to 2021 Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1346978/india-average-movie-ticket-

price/#:~:text=Movie%20ticket%20prices%20in%20India,87%20Indian%20rupees%20in%202021



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Table 3: Average Monthly Subscription Charges vs Gap Between the Cinema Ticket

S.No.	OTT Platform	Average Monthly Subscription Charges	The gap between the Average Subscription and Average Ticket in 2022 for a family of four persons [(4*Average Ticket Price) - Average Monthly Subscription]
1.	Netflix	149	476 - 149 = 327
2.	Amazon Prime	179	476 - 179 = 297
3.	Disney+Hotstar	299	476 - 299 = 177
4.	Zee5	133	476 - 133 = 343

Source: Complete List of OTT Platforms in India 2023 Available at: https://www.getfleek.app/blog/ott-platforms-in-india

### INCULCATING NEW DIMENSIONS IN THE YOUTH

The online platform has spawned some of the most talented artists recently. Because of OTT, several actors have become new stars. The OTT explosion has also brought us many new performers who have appeared in web series and feature films. There is room for everyone, save jaded stars who stick to their tried-and-true "tricks." (Ojha, 2022) The term "star" is no longer exclusive to Bollywood. The most admirable aspect of OTT, in the eyes of digital platform performers, is that they are not compelled to perform over the course of a single weekend and that the length of their performances is considerable. (Roy, 2022)

Shefali Shah, Dhairya Karwa, Siddhant Chaturvedi, Jitendra Kumar, Kirti Kulhari, Pratik Gandhi, and Ahsaas Channa are some of the key performers getting traction through OTT. Some older actors, such as Manoj Vajpayee, Pankaj Tripathi, and Saif Ali Khan, are also reincarnated in this popularity. Actor Jitendra Kumar aka Jeetu Bhaiyya, attributed his success to OTT, saying, "OTT has paved the space for performers to thrive with tremendous freedom...Because of OTT, artists are in a better position now...Because of OTT's reach, deserving artists may find their audience." (Vajpayee, 2022) As a result, OTT has altered the fates of numerous actors. It has also altered our perception of actors. There is no hero or heroine on this platform. "OTT changed my career graph," says actress Shefali Shah, recently starred in Human, which was shown on Disney+Hotstar. On OTT platforms, some of the most popular series are targeted at women. We have access to a multitude of material because to OTT, and I am honoured to be a creator during this time. "This is the kind of work that I wanted to do, and it changed because of Delhi Crime because of people's perception of me," the actor said of her jobs. She enhances her freedom and selection by asserting that offers,

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whether in primary roles or secondary roles, include a greater range of components, are "exactly the kind of acting that I have been yearning for." (Roy, 2022)

Dhairya Karwa, who co-starred with Deepika Padukone in Gehraiyaan, adds, "This is the first time I will be seen in a lead role, and that is the responsibility an actor is looking for or working towards." Furthermore, as a performer, that is the type of responsibility you desire. She went on to say, "As a performer, you want your work to be seen by the widest audience possible." (Roy, 2022)

Actors confess that they have only been able to live in the previous two years due to OTT. It has expanded the prospects for performers, directors, and everyone behind the camera to continue working. Dhairya argues that no work is restricted to a specific location or country. Currently, foreign television series and films are well-liked in here, while our shows are well-liked abroad. Delhi Crime has received Emmy awards, while Sacred Games has gained international acclaim. Being a performer now, amid the OTT boom, is amazing, in my opinion. (Roy, 2022) Actor Siddhant Chaturvedi is hopeful about the new direction of OTT and emphasizes the importance of audience preference while picking the material. The actor claims that viewers now decide what they want to see and don't want to see. People are monitoring what you do, so you can't use your popularity to deceive them. (Roy, 2022)

The most essential thing for any artisan is satisfaction. Many doors have opened as a result of the more excellent craft. The same thing was done when we discussed films in the past, but now OTT is open to first-time directors, writers, actors, and musicians. Each piece of OTT content has a unique character since there are so many firsts. (Roy, 2022)

### WHERE THE OTT LAGS

Although OTT offers many advantages, it also has certain disadvantages. Regarding his film Ponmagal Vandhal, which aired on OTT during the COVID period, cinematographer Ramji says, "We had intended exquisite detailing in several sequences, but on the small screen, such things remained overlooked." There are several issues with OTT. Problems with inspections before to final release are especially crucial since, unlike OTT, where creators have fewer alternatives for a correction once the film has been uploaded, one may physically check for revisions after the final screening in a theatre. Another issue is the internet connection. One such beast is the user's shifting internet speed. "The most difficult problem will be this," says Balaji Gopal, a digital Cinema designer and colourist. We might talk about content quality in a place like Chennai. But what about cities in Tier II? Unless we have a unified high-speed internet, the small screen will never be able to compete with theatres. It was difficult, but "this is the need of the hour," says Avik Mukhopadhyay, a three-time National Awardwinning cinematographer whose most recent film, Gulabo Sitabo, was one of the biggest Hindi films to hit an OTT platform. Ramji agrees, but he hopes that the structure of the release will be revealed ahead of time so that he may once again enhance the viewing experience. (Ramachandran, 2020)

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### **CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

The discussion above entails the lines by Ojha (2022) that "OTT's success is based solely on the fact that content is the new star. These platforms' toast is small filmmakers, excellent content, and unique tales." The biggest benefit of OTT platforms is that they allow customers access to a lot of content via a subscription-based system which encourages users to upgrade to a paid membership by offering free content with a certain collection. As a result of this strategy, user watching patterns have changed as it advances to the premium membership model. The major benefits of using OTT services over going to the movies in theatres for viewers are convenience and portability. Customers may now access a variety of content at their convenience and a fair price thanks to OTT platforms. (Varghese & Chinnaiah, 2021)

Thus, there has been a change in consumer viewing habits, with content-driven films being preferred in theatres that were formerly picked for commercial or big-star films. A movie's reviews and ratings are crucial in determining whether or not it should be exhibited in a theatre. Theatrical experience, screen size, sound quality, and ambiance are important factors that moviegoers who prefer to watch in theatres believe offer them an edge over doing so on OTT platforms. A user's experience when watching a movie in a theatre might be very different. (Varghese & Chinnaiah, 2021)

The study found that people seldom go to movie theatres and prefer to watch content on OTT services. Thus, the data studied above demonstrates that time management, content originality, public acceptance and outreach, the load on the purse, and instilling new dimensions for the youth are the areas where OTT outperforms Cinema. However, there are several concerns where OTT still lags, such as difficulties with detailing and internet speed. According to current trends, both sectors will co-exist, as Soojit Sarkar stated, "I have always felt that both the experiences -- watching a web series or a film on a digital platform and going to a Cinema hall - will co-exist." (Roy, 2020)

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