

## **A Diversity Assessment of Indian Regional Content on OTT Platforms – A Theoretical Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The way we consume material has been dramatically changed by over-the-top (OTT) platforms. According to a recent report titled Indian OTT Platforms 2023, Indian audiences prefer localised content on OTT platforms. A FICCI-PwC analysis predicts that by 2025, regional language consumption on OTT platforms would surpass Hindi, which currently accounts for 45% of total time spent. According to ABI Research, the global over-the-top (OTT) video market will continue to expand quickly. By 2022, the OTT market is expected to produce a staggering \$51.4 billion, with a CAGR of 10 percent. OTT platforms, which cater to regional markets' unique likes and preferences, are already emerging. The regional OTT providers have a clear goal in mind: to satisfy the demand for native audiences' content. Regional OTT platforms have exploded in the last year in markets like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh-Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. aha (Telugu), hoichoi (Bengali), Planet Marathi, Koode (Malayalam), and City Short TV (Gujarati) are a few of the well-known platforms in this area. OTT is following in the TV broadcasting's footsteps. Regional storytelling on the digital media has been successfully changed by regional content. Local content has untapped potential and the capacity to forge deep connections with viewers. This review article emphasises the variety of regional Indian content available on OTT platforms.

**Keywords:** Regional OTT, Local Language, Regional Market, Web series, Local Taste

**Introduction:**

Over-the-top (OTT) platforms are online video streaming services that offer content to viewers directly without the requirement for a traditional cable or satellite TV subscription. OTT platforms have grown in popularity over the past few years as a result of technological developments and changes in consumer viewing behaviour [1]. Many OTT platforms range from free ad-supported services like Pluto TV and Tubi to subscription-based services like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. Some OTT platforms include a combination of content that is sponsored by ads and subscriptions. The variety of viewing possibilities that OTT platforms provide is one of their main benefits. OTT video can be accessed by viewers from any internet-connected device, including smartphones, tablets, computers, and smart TVs, in contrast to traditional TV. Instead, then being forced to watch at a certain time, this enables people to watch their preferred television series and films on their own terms. [1].

The variety of content offered in many regional languages is another benefit of OTT platforms. Many platforms provide films and TV series, including exclusive content not available elsewhere. [1, 2]. As a result, there is now more rivalry among OTT providers, and each platform is attempting to stand out by providing special services and content. OTT platforms have also changed the way that TV advertising is often done. Many OTT platforms earn revenue through subscription fees rather than relying on advertising revenue to support their operations. Due to this, businesses have had to change how they approach consumers, such as by using customized advertising or product placement [1, 2].

The use of OTT platforms is not without its difficulties. Content fragmentation is one of the key issues. It can be difficult and expensive for consumers to obtain all the content they want to watch because there are so many platforms that offer unique content. As a result, aggregator services like Roku and Apple TV have become more popular, enabling users to access many OTT platforms using only one device. Piracy is another difficulty for OTT services. Users can more easily download or stream copyrighted information illegally because OTT content is supplied online. This might have a big effect on how much money OTT platforms and content providers make. The way we consume video content has been revolutionized by OTT services, which now provide users more flexibility and choice than ever. OTT platforms have drawbacks, but despite this, their popularity is growing, and it is probable that they will continue to influence how the entertainment business develops in the future [1, 2, 3].

## **Historical Perspective:**

The origins of OTT platforms may be found in the early stages of the internet, when businesses first began experimenting with the distribution of video content online. RealNetworks released RealPlayer, a streaming media player, in the 1990s, enabling users to view internet video content. But the idea of OTT platforms didn't start to catch on until the middle of the 2000s. Netflix's streaming service, which allowed customers to watch films and TV shows online, was introduced in 2007. The company's streaming service was initially exclusively accessible to clients who had a subscription to its DVD rental service, but it was eventually made available as a stand-alone service. Hulu, which offers ad-supported streaming of TV series and films, was introduced in 2008. Amazon Prime Video, which gave Amazon Prime members access to limitless streaming of films and TV episodes, was then introduced in 2011[2, 3].

Since then, the number of OTT platforms has skyrocketed and new services are now being introduced annually. Disney introduced Disney Movies Anywhere in 2013, the company's first OTT service, which later changed its name to Disney+. HBO Now, a stand-alone streaming service, was introduced in 2015. YouTube introduced YouTube TV, a live TV subscription service, in 2016. Facebook also introduced its Watch platform in 2017, which provides original and user-generated content [3].

The rise of OTT platforms has had a huge impact on the entertainment market, upending cable companies and traditional TV networks. Many traditional media firms have responded by launching their OTT channels, including HBO Max from WarnerMedia, CBS All Access from NBC, and Peacock from NBC. OTT platforms today play a significant role in the entertainment sector by providing viewers with a huge variety of on-demand material. In the upcoming years, it's anticipated that OTT platforms will continue to gain popularity as more businesses debut their streaming services and as the number of users rises [1, 2, 3].

### **Indian Perspective:**

In India, OTT platforms have experienced enormous growth and popularity during Covid-19. India is the second-largest internet user market in the world. Viewers can now more easily access streaming services on a variety of devices due to the expansion of high-speed internet connectivity. [1, 2].

### **Some of the popular OTT platforms in India include:**

1. **Netflix:** In 2016, Netflix was introduced in India, where it swiftly gained popularity among local viewers. It provides a large selection of foreign and Indian content, including as TV series, motion pictures, and documentaries.
2. **Amazon Prime Video:** A combination of Indian and foreign content, including films, TV episodes, and locally produced original content, is available on Amazon Prime Video, which was introduced to India in 2016.
3. **Disney+ Hotstar:** A famous OTT network in India called Disney+ Hotstar offers a combination of domestic and foreign content, such as films, TV series, sports, and news.
4. **Zee5:** Zee5 is an Indian OTT platform launched by the Zee Network. It offers a wide range of Indian content, including movies, TV shows, and original content produced by Zee.
5. **Voot:** Viacom18 introduced the OTT portal Voot in India. In addition to films, TV series, and unique Viacom18 content, it offers a mixture of Indian and foreign entertainment.
6. **SonyLIV:** Sony Pictures Networks India introduced the OTT platform SonyLIV in India. It provides a mixture of content from India and beyond, such as films, TV shows, sports, and news.

The need for OTT services in India has intensified provider rivalry, with each platform attempting to set itself apart by providing distinctive features or content. To draw viewers and stand out in a congested industry, many platforms have started creating unique content in India. However, India's OTT platforms have also had to deal with regulatory issues as a result of the country's new laws and norms governing the content that may be found on these platforms. For instance, the Indian government passed new regulations in 2021 that mandate OTT platforms self-regulate their content and include a complaints process for users [2, 3, 4].

### **Regulations on OTT Platforms:**

In many nations throughout the world, OTT platforms have been subject to varying degrees of regulation. National governments or regulatory agencies in charge of media and telecommunications often have jurisdiction over OTT platform regulation. The nature and extent of regulation of OTT platforms varies widely across different countries. While other nations have adopted a laxer approach to regulating these platforms, certain nations have strong regulations in place that apply to both traditional TV networks and OTT platforms. [5, 6].

In some nations, OTT platforms are subject to the same regulations that apply to traditional broadcasters, including limitations on the type of content that may be broadcast and the hours at which it may be aired. In some nations, guidelines or recommendations rather than mandatory laws are in place for OTT platforms, making them subject to less stringent controls [7].

**Here are some examples of the regulations that have been introduced in different countries:**

1. **India:** The Indian government put up new regulations in 2021 that mandate OTT platforms self-regulate their content and offer a complaints process for users. Additionally, platforms must categorize content based on age suitability and post content warnings in accordance with the regulations.
2. **UK:** OTT platforms are governed by the Office of Communications (Ofcom) in the UK. Ofcom has the authority to enforce broadcasting regulations, such as those that govern child protection and the removal of inappropriate or dangerous content.
3. **USA:** In terms of advertising and marketing policies, OTT platforms in the USA are governed by the same laws as conventional broadcasters. The content that can be viewed on these sites is currently not subject to any specific rules, though.
4. **Singapore:** The Broadcasting (Class License) Notification, which mandates that platforms adhere to content standards and classification regulations, is in effect in Singapore and applies to OTT platforms.

It is difficult to strike a balance between encouraging creative freedom and making sure that content is appropriate for all viewers when it comes to OTT platform regulation. Governments and regulatory agencies will probably continue to evaluate and revise the laws in place to control these platforms as their popularity grows [8].

**Diversity of Indian Regional Content:**

India has many different languages. According to specialists in the field, interest in regional film was already growing. Regional language users outnumbered English language viewers by a stunning 201 million, according to a Google and KPMG study. Even in regional languages around the world, there is a huge demand for films and original content from OTT companies. Instead of being initially a niche offering, regional content becoming available on OTT platforms has cleared the path for mass-market acceptance. The demand for local content will rise as over-the-top services become more popular in India. According to studies, there will be 500 million OTT platform users within the next three years, of which at least 90% will not speak English and at least 50% will not speak Hindi [8,9].

### **Multi-Lingual OTT Content:**

Audiovisual content that is offered over-the-top (OTT) to viewers directly over the internet instead of through traditional broadcast or cable TV networks is referred to as this. Over the past few years, OTT services have become much more popular in India as viewers choose personalized and on-demand content.

The availability of multilingual material is one of the important elements driving the expansion of the OTT business in India. India is a multicultural nation with numerous regional tongues, therefore there is a great demand for content in various languages. OTT platforms are meeting this demand by providing content in a variety of languages. [8,9,16].

Viewers now have more options thanks to the availability of regional content on OTT platforms, which caters to their linguistic and cultural interest. This has not only made it possible to reach a larger audience, but it has also boosted the number of people who watch localized material. Regional actors, directors, and writers now have more options because to the creation of original regional content for OTT platforms, which has helped India's entertainment sector expand.

Many regional actors have become well-known and well-liked as a result of their appearances in regional OTT content. The local film industry has benefited from the creation of original localised content. This has inspired more filmmakers to create top-notch content in regional languages so that a larger audience may see their work.

### **Some of the popular multi-lingual OTT platforms in India include:**

**Netflix:** Netflix has a vast library of content in multiple languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Bengali, and more. The platform has also produced original content in regional languages such as Sacred Games (Hindi), Paava Kadhaigal (Tamil), and more [8,9,16].

**Amazon Prime Video:** Amazon Prime Video also offers a wide range of content in various languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, and more. The platform has also produced original content in regional languages such as The Family Man (Hindi) and Breathe: Into the Shadows (Hindi).

**Disney+ Hotstar:** Disney+ Hotstar offers content in several languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, and more. The platform has also produced original content in regional languages such as Aarya (Hindi) and Triples (Tamil).

**Zee5:** Zee5 is a platform primarily focusing on regional content, offering content in various languages such as Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, Bengali, and more. The platform has also produced original content in regional languages such as Kaafir (Hindi) and Godman (Tamil).

**Voot:** Voot is another platform that offers content in various languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and more. The platform has also produced original content in regional languages such as Asur (Hindi) and The Raikar Case (Marathi).

The availability of multi-lingual content on these platforms has not only catered to the demand of regional language viewers but has also helped in reaching a wider audience. The production of original content in regional languages has also given a boost to the entertainment industry, providing opportunities for regional actors and filmmakers.

### **Reasons why regional language content boomed on OTT platforms**

There are a number of causes behind the increase in regional language content on OTT platforms in India, including:

**Diversity:** Viewers prefer to consume material in their local language because India is a multicultural nation with many different official languages. Recognizing this, OTT platforms have begun to offer regional content in a number of languages, aiding in the expansion of regional language content.

**Demand:** Due to the growing interest in relatable and culturally appropriate information, there has been a considerable growth in the demand for regional content in recent years. This desire has been met by the availability of regional language programming on OTT platforms, which has given viewers more choices.



**Original Content:** The production of original regional language material by OTT platforms has boosted the local film industry. This has improved content quality and given performers, directors, and writers greater employment opportunities.

**Availability:** The use of cellphones and internet connectivity has increased, making OTT platforms more widely available. Viewers can now more easily access local content at any time and from any location thanks to this.

**Cost-effective:** The cost of regional language content on OTT platforms is frequently less expensive than going to the movies or paying for cable TV. Due to this, it has become a desirable choice for viewers looking for inexpensive entertainment.

**Word of Mouth:** In the Indian entertainment sector, word-of-mouth is a potent tool. Positive comments and feedback about regional language material on OTT platforms cause it to gain popularity and success by swiftly spreading through word-of-mouth.

### **Future of Regional Content on OTT platforms in India**

As the popularity of regional language material keeps rising, the future of regional content on OTT platforms in India appears promising. Here are some themes that are anticipated to influence regional content on OTT platforms in the future:

**More Original Content:** OTT platforms will keep creating more locally-produced original content because it works well to draw in and keep viewers. As a result, local authors, directors, and actors will have more possibilities, which will help the entertainment sector expand [8,9,16, 27, 28].

**Expansion to More Languages:** Despite the fact that OTT platforms provide content in a number of regional languages, there is still room for growth. Platforms might begin concentrating on underutilized languages, catering to specialized audiences, and expanding their selection of available material.

**Localization:** Localization will become more concentrated as OTT platforms include more regional languages. This entails producing content in the regional tongue that reflects regional tradition, culture, beliefs, and customs. The information will become more appealing and relatable as a result.

**Monetization:** Even if local content on OTT platforms has gained popularity, monetization is still difficult. To continue creating top-notch localized content, OTT platforms will need to explore creative monetization plans like pay-per-view or subscription-based models.

**International Expansion:** In order to appeal to the diaspora and foreign viewers who are interested in Indian regional content, OTT platforms may consider expanding abroad as a result of the rising popularity of regional content. This will give local actors and filmmakers fresh chances to present their work on a global stage. [8, 9, 16, 27, 28].

With more original content, development into other languages, localization, monetization, and international expansion anticipated to influence the sector, the future of regional content on OTT platforms in India is bright. OTT platforms will need to constantly inventing and adapting as viewers continue to demand regional language material in order to be competitive and deliver high-quality content that satisfies their viewers' needs.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, regional content is the key to increasing subscribers and providing unique content in languages that people in both emerging and established countries are familiar with. Regional video content streaming, magazines, and series may have a major growth over the next few years as trends already indicate that consumers have a demand for content in their mother tongue. The availability of content in multiple languages has considerably contributed to the surge in popularity of OTT platforms in India. OTT platforms are responding to the increased demand for regional language content by providing material in a variety of languages. It is anticipated that more OTT platforms would concentrate on generating and supplying regional content as the popularity of regional language content rises, helping to fuel India's entertainment industry's expansion.

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