

Current Situation and Prospects of OTT Platform in Bangladesh : An Investigation from Users Perspective

Mahmuda Sikder* and Md. Abdul Karim**

Abstract: With the rapid growth of the internet and the proliferation of smartphone devices, OTT platforms have boomed globally. However, for Bangladesh, it is a comparatively new entertainment platform. The booming OTT platform, a streaming service, facilitates audiences with consuming desired contents at their convenient time, and place. The study aims at identifying users' behavioral patterns, analyze users' perceptions of usage of OTT platforms, and uncover the current state and prospects of OTT platforms in Bangladesh. To understand the users' motivations to subscribe to OTT platforms the Uses and Gratification Theory and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) for justifying the usefulness and ease of use of OTT have been applied in the study. Using the convenience sampling technique, an online survey with a questionnaire containing closed and open-ended questions was conducted on the respondents (N=100). The data reveals that 77% of the respondents think OTT platforms are better for entertainment than traditional media, a majority of OTT subscribers (82%) say OTT are user-friendly platform, and 63% of the OTT users are satisfied with this platform in term of usage, and the same percent of the respondents want a regulatory policy regarding OTT platforms while 50% and 44% of the respondents prefer OTT service because of its original content and content availability respectively. Web series and thriller content have been viewed the most by 70% and 63% of users. Violent, social awareness, intolerance and hate speech content are featured more on OTT platforms, and entertainment, socio-political awareness and educational content are on-demand content. Inadequacy of quality content, unrealistic and violent content, scarcity of user-demand content, video quality, and high subscription fees are the major challenges for OTT platforms. Acceptability of OTT, source of original content creation, scope of independent making, and smart and personal media are the major prospects of OTT platforms in Bangladesh.

Keywords: OTT platform, perceptions, behavioral pattern, subscription, entertainment

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Nowadays people can connect with each other from anywhere and at any time, also internet users have gained easy access to information. With the advancement of many sectors related to human life, the entertainment sector is also going through changes. Over the time, consumers are being habituated with the changed media landscape that replaces conventional media consumptions like watching linear TV and broadcasters, reading newspapers etc. by digital video streaming. OTT (Over-the-Top), a streaming service, using the internet, is a booming industry globally which have already reached to Bangladeshi market as well. The number of internet penetration is 5.18 billion in the world as of April 2023 which is 64.6 percent of the entire global population (Statista, 2023a). With the increase in internet users, the number of video streaming OTT platforms has also been increasing rapidly. The global number of users in the OTT video market was 2.4 billion in 2018 and 3.5 billion in 2023 and it is forecasted that the number will be 4.2 billion in 2027 (Statista, 2023b). So, it is apparent that OTT services have become increasingly popular in recent years. Now people are using the streaming platform as a convenient way to watch their favorite shows on the go and as a means of saving money. The number of internet users in Bangladesh has grown from 18 million in 2012 to over 130 million in 2023 (BTRC, 2023). This has made it easier for people to access streaming services and has led to a significant increase in the number of users. With the growth of internet penetration in Bangladesh, the market value of OTT platforms in Bangladesh has also been rising. The market value of video streaming is \$152 million in 2023 and it is expected to stand at \$263 million by 2027. And, the number of OTT users is expected to be 82 million by 2027 (Statista, 2023c).

As a result of the increasing penetration of the internet and the affordability and availability of smart devices, online streaming services first appeared in the mid-2000s. Streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime started online streaming across the world as they are no longer restricted to viewers within one country. The entire globe now has become their playground. Especially Netflix, by far the biggest player in this service, initiated the Over-the-Top (OTT) platform in 2007 in the world and it has extended its service in Bangladesh since 2016 (Chowdhury, 2019)

Following them, the Bangladeshi community introduced the first OTT platform in Bangladesh Bongo, in 2013. Subsequently, in 2016, Bioscope, Banglafilx, and Teleflix entered the market, expanding the availability of online streaming services. Later many OTT platforms like Cinespot as a dedicated platform showcasing Bangladeshi movies in 2018, and Toffee entered OTT market in 2019. In 2020 Binge entered with diverse contents

and in 2021 the OTT platform witnessed a significant transformation with the arrival of Chorki. This platform added many features like original movies, web series, and shorts, various Bengali and foreign contents (Paul, 2023).

Later, to expand the options available to viewers with a wide array of TV shows, movies, and live events Deepto TV launched Deepto Play in 2022, and more recently Channel I joined the race by launching iScreen, in 2023 by offering a diverse collection of movies, TV shows, and exclusive content (Paul, 2023). Besides Bangladeshi OTT platforms, Hoichoi, an Indian video streaming service, started its journey in September 2017. To spread entertainment in the Bengali language to Bengali-speaking people all over the world the streaming service commenced Bangladeshi content creation since its inception as Hoichoi Bangladesh in 2019 (Siddique, 2019). Therefore, with an aim to spread Bangladeshi content globally, the Popular Indian platform ZEE5 started its journey in Bangladesh in 2019 but their service has been closed since January 15, 2023 (*The Daily Star*, 2023, January 6).

The significant and solid growth of video streaming platforms in Bangladesh and abroad leads to discussion about its users and content rigorously. So, academic study needs to analyze users' perceptions of OTT platforms and ways of behaving to motivate them to subscribe to the platforms.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Over the last 50 years, a gradual change in digital habits occurred with rapid technological changes in Bangladesh. Internet-based social media Facebook started its journey in 2004, but in Bangladesh, it gained popularity in 2007 (Shaon, 2021). From then on, in a decade, there has been a tech-savvy generation who are directly involved in global trends and we fall within this trend. The OTT platform has also emerged as a part of this trend by means of small screens like television or smartphones. OTT is a subset of the overall Video on Demand (VoD) category and it is transmitted to the viewer via the internet without requiring users to subscribe to a traditional cable or satellite TV service. A typical VoD service allows users to watch any one of a large collection of content at any time (Upadhyay, 2020). OTT platforms running in Bangladesh are based on subscriptions categorized as SVoD. Due to payment barriers and lack of origin local content, international video streaming platforms like Netflix or Amazon Prime videos make their way to local streaming platforms.

Users and creators are moving towards OTT platforms because the internet is public, and it scales way is better than mailing DVDs. Users want to be able to stream content on their mobile devices whenever they want, which turns out to be good for content creators too, because this allows them to go

directly to users (Dobransky, 2021). As the video streaming service is a subscription-based service, here, content creators always try to motivate users by their content to subscribe to OTT platforms. That is why users are important for OTT platforms. So, some questions are, such as what are the users' perceptions and the ways of behaving regarding OTT platforms, what motivations work for the acceptance of OTT services, what types of content are consumed, and what contents they want more. Besides, what problems lie with OTT platforms in Bangladesh, and what is the future of video streaming services in Bangladesh? The answer to these questions is needed to find out the current situations and prospects of OTT platforms in Bangladesh. As there is lack of in-depth academic study in this regard, rigorous research is needed to get users' perceptions and behavioral patterns of booming OTTs and add insights into the OTT industry in Bangladesh.

1.3 Aims and objectives of the study

The general aims and objectives of the study are to critically analyze the current situations and prospects of OTTs in Bangladesh. Some specific objectives are:

1. To identify users' behavioral patterns in consuming video streaming platforms;
2. To analyze the users' perceptions of the usage of OTT platforms in Bangladesh;
3. To identify the challenges of OTT platforms in Bangladesh; and
4. To examine the prospects of it in the context of Bangladesh.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Uses and Gratification theory (U&G)

The uses and gratification media theory explains the way in which individuals use specific media among other media resources in their environment to satisfy their needs and to achieve their goals. The U&G theory, which was introduced first by Elihu Katz in the 1970s, is an audience-centric theory that posits that goal-directed and active users select a particular medium to gratify their specific needs like cognitive, affective, personal integration, and social integration (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973). Cognitive needs relate to information and increasing people's understanding; Affective needs relate to feelings, emotions, and pleasure. Personal integration means reinforcement of personal identity, status of a person, reliability, and belief; and Social integration needs are staying connected with family, friends, and working environment (Eginli & Tas, 2018). In the last 60 years, the audience-centric theory has been used successfully to explain the viewers' motivation to use various media such as newspapers, radio, television, and the Internet (Menon, 2022).

With the advent of the internet and advanced technology, many media have boomed like internet-based video streaming OTT platforms, YouTube, and Pay TV, etc. So, audiences have scopes to choose a particular medium actively from the large landscape of the media environment to fulfill their goals. Users' motivations for subscribing to video streaming OTT platforms, reasons for choosing the specific OTT platform, selection of the specific genre content among lots of content on OTT platforms, and what consumers' needs to be fulfilled by which OTT platform and what content can be analyzed under this theory. It is needless to say users' intention to use specific media and its content must be examined through the U&G theory. So, the Uses and Gratification is considered as an appropriate theory to study the OTT platforms.

2.2 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) posits that there are two factors that determine whether a computer system will be accepted or rejected by its potential users: perceived usefulness (PU), and perceived ease of use (PEU). PU is defined as "the degree to which a user believes that using a specific application system would increase his or her job performance and PEU is the degree to which a user expects that using the target system is somewhat free of effort" (Davis, 1989, p. 320). Furthermore, perceived ease of use affects perceived usefulness. Users believe streaming service technology which is easy to manipulate is useful.

According to the TAM model, if adopters of new technology get it useful and easy to use compared to the existing opportunities, they will have a positive attitude towards the new technology. It has been proven several times that a positive relationship between the factors and the ultimate acceptance of the new technology, especially in streaming services (Hossain, Alam & Muntazeri, 2020).

Video streaming OTT platform is a new system of technology to share videos and consume that emerged in the world and has already entered Bangladesh in recent times. If the technology of sharing and consumption of videos is easy to use then the barriers are conquered and if it is not easy to use and the interface is complicated, no one has a positive attitude towards it. So, under this model, users' motivations to use the new technology can be analyzed because when a person gets the usefulness of OTT services and gets variables to use more easily than existing system facilities to fulfill their goals then it will be accepted widely.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Literature review

From the Bangladeshi perspective, the research articles related to video streaming OTT platforms are inadequate. However, a few studies primarily

have been done on it. Therefore, newspaper articles, blogs, and observational write-ups have also been taken into consideration as literatures for review.

Paul (2023) in his observational and secondary data analysis-based study entitled *OTT platforms in Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects Analysis* discussed about problems and prospects of OTTs in Bangladesh. The study indicated some problems like scarcity of subscribers, adult and violent content, the prevalence of as-usual content, and problems regarding policy regulations. However, the researcher pointed out some hopes for OTTs in Bangladesh as some factors like the digital revolution, tech-savvy generation, scope of independent making, on-demand services facility, and original content facility may work for the blooming OTT industry in Bangladesh.

In his study entitled *A study on Over-the-Top (OTT) video streaming platforms in Bangladesh* Hossain (2022a) stated that the future of OTT platforms in Bangladesh is prosperous along with the continuation of OTT subscriptions, sixty-seven percent of users use OTT as their primary source of entertainment in terms of subscribers. Mobile phone device is the most popular with video streaming content consumption and the world streaming platform Netflix is more popular in Bangladesh. Sixty-six percent of the users seem that OTT platforms would affect their viewership pattern.

Hossain (2022b) in his article “Video-On-Demand (VoD) Service during the Pandemic Period: An Interdisciplinary Look at Over-the-Top (OTT) Platforms” said that production of a web series is easy and economical in comparison to traditional media. As the web series is online based OTT creates scope for new creators to join this web video industry. Through this platform producers/marketers can reach a potentially global audience including commuters, travelers, etc. by providing 24-hour accessibility at their suitable time and device.

Menon (2022) in his article “Purchase and continuation intentions of over-the-top (OTT) video streaming platform subscriptions: a uses and gratification theory perspective” stated that convenient navigability, binge-watching, entertainment, relaxation, social interaction, companionship, voyeurism, and information seeking are the eight factors of uses and gratification to use OTT platforms. In his article he also said, therefore, video streaming OTT platforms are gaining popularity across the world and present a new revenue model for service providers and content creators. However, the research on OTT is still at a promising stage.

Hossain, Alam, and Muntazeri (2020) stated that in the case of streaming, by paying a small subscription fee, and in some cases for free for some selected content on specific platforms, the users are able to watch licensed/owned content legally without having to struggle with any legal or even

moral dilemma. All of the features of OTTs are not described as content for all age-groups people. Specific age groups also face content identification problem which is not cleared fully. The OTT market is trying to fit into the case but it becomes harder due to lack of proper management.

Citing of a survey of 759 respondents in 2022, Paul B. (2023) mentioned in a report that most of the respondents of that survey were male (97.2%). This means a significant gender disparity exists in the usage of OTT in Bangladesh. The survey also reveals that the adaptation of OTT platforms is relatively low in rural areas as only 6.7% of the respondents used in rural areas whereas 82.1% in the urban areas. On the other hand, citizens aged between 19-30 years are the most active users of OTTs (51.6% of the respondents).

So, it is the best time to develop this sector in a sustainable way. Since the inadequateness of other rigorous researches exist on OTT platforms in the Bangladeshi context, there is a knowledge gap in this respect. To attain this goal, an intensive study has been done to address and contribute to insights on different aspects of this vibrant media like OTT. Moreover, anticipated potentials and barriers of OTTs could be defined and analyzed for the betterment of this sector.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Nature of the study

The mixed method approach has been applied in the study. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to analyze the comparatively new internet-based entertainment platforms. Every research method has strengths and weaknesses, and combining qualitative and quantitative data neutralized their weaknesses effectively (Creswell, 2014). Hence, mixed methods have been applied to gain a better understanding avoiding the weakness of a single approach.

4.2 Sampling of the study

The study was conducted on the OTT users of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University (JKKNIU), Trishal, Mymensingh. The area has been selected purposively. So, all OTT subscribers of JKKNIU like students, teachers and employees were considered as population of the study. It was observed that OTT subscribers were not found huge in number in the campus. Therefore, considering the unavailability of users, 100 OTT subscribers having either paid or free trial version, were selected as sample by applying convenient sampling technique to understand the consumers' perceptions and behavioral patterns.

4.3 Data collection tools

The survey method formulating semi-structured questionnaires and content analysis approach have been applied to collect data in line with research

aims and objectives. The well-semi-structured questionnaire, containing 20 closed and 2 open-ended questions, was prepared to collect the responses by email and social media like Facebook through a Google form link. Furthermore, the content analysis method has been applied to get results about the users' perceptions of the usage of OTT platforms in Bangladesh.

4.4 Data analyzing tools

Collected data have been analyzed through simple statistical measures like percentage, average, etc. The inductive and deductive methods are also used to analyze the comments and opinions of the respondents.

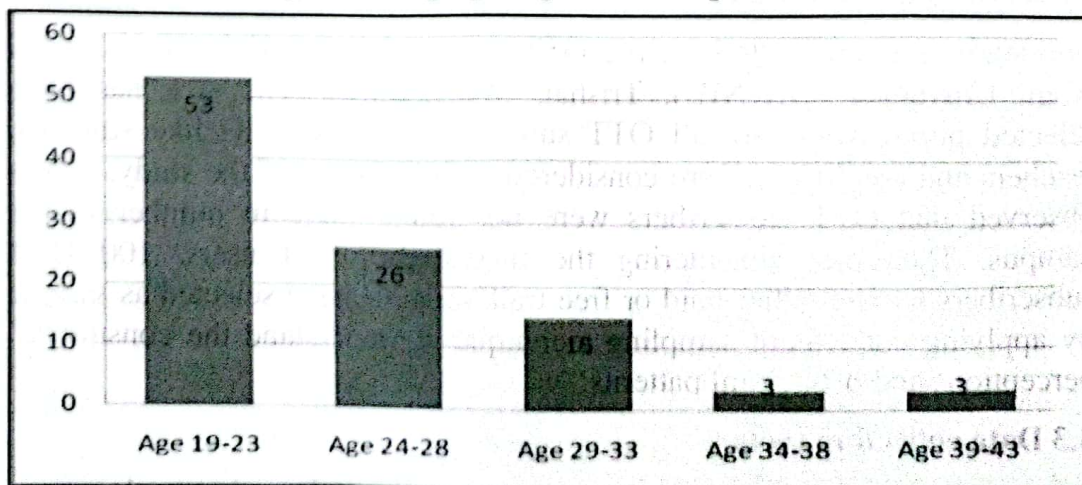
5. Data Presentation and Discussion

The data collected through survey questionnaires have been presented and discussed in a quantitative and qualitative manner. About 20 questions were closed-ended which are presented in the quantitative approach along with the demographic status of users also displayed in the statistical way. On the other hand, the other two open-ended questions are analyzed through the content analysis method. From the survey results, the challenges and prospects of OTT platforms in Bangladesh are also identified and examined. The quantitative and qualitative data are presented and discussed.

5.1 Demographic status of users

Majority of the respondents (53%) were aged 19 to 23. As shown in Figure 1, 26% of the respondents belonging to the age group 24 to 28 years were the second highest in using OTT platforms. Rest of the respondents (21%) was aged 29 or older. As per data youngsters were observed to be the early adopters and more habituated with the usage of OTT platforms in Bangladesh.

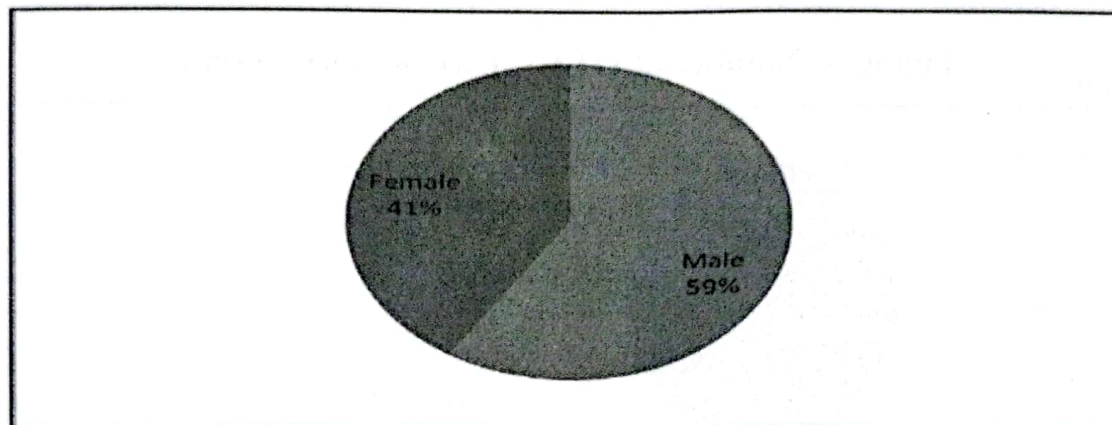
Figure 1: Age group of the respondents



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

Figure 2: Popularity of OTTs with Gender

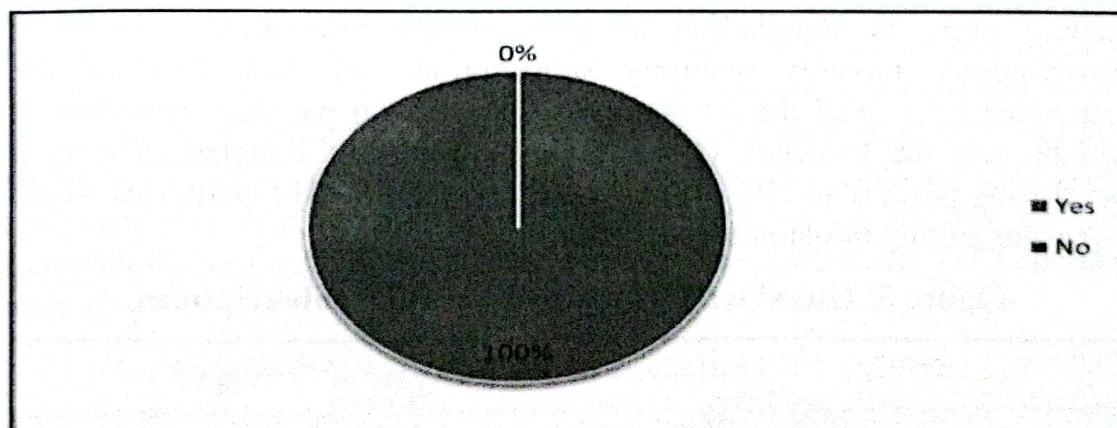
Figure 2 indicates that OTT platforms in Bangladesh are more popular with male than female users as 59 % of the respondents were male and the rest were female respondents. Data showed that male users are familiar with OTT platforms in Bangladesh in terms of OTT subscribers.



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

5.2 Presentation and discussion of quantitative data

Figure 3 reveals that all respondents were paid subscribers to the OTT service. Here, during the data collection, those who were used the free trial of the OTT service but immediately before they were paid subscribers and will be subscribers later, it is a matter of time, were considered paid subscribers.

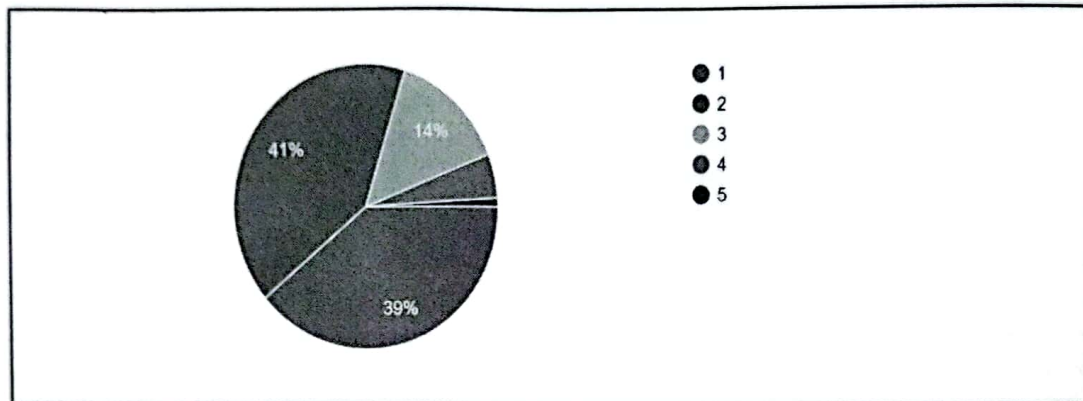
Figure 3: Users' tendency of being paid subscriber to OTT platforms

Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

As per Figure 4, 41% of the respondents were subscribers of two OTT platforms, 39% were one OTT platform subscriber and 14% of the respondents were subscribers of three OTT platforms. The rest (6%) of the respondents were subscribers of four and five OTT platforms. According to data it can be said that users' tendency to get infotainment being paid subscribers of OTT platforms in Bangladesh since majority of the respondents (61%) had more than one OTT subscriptions. Those users who

have three more OTT subscriptions can be called dominant users of streaming services. Although the number of this type of subscribers in Bangladesh is comparatively low. The uses and gratification theory indicates that users can choose a specific medium by their active choice to gratify their needs. Here, users subscribe one more OTT platform to meet their demand.

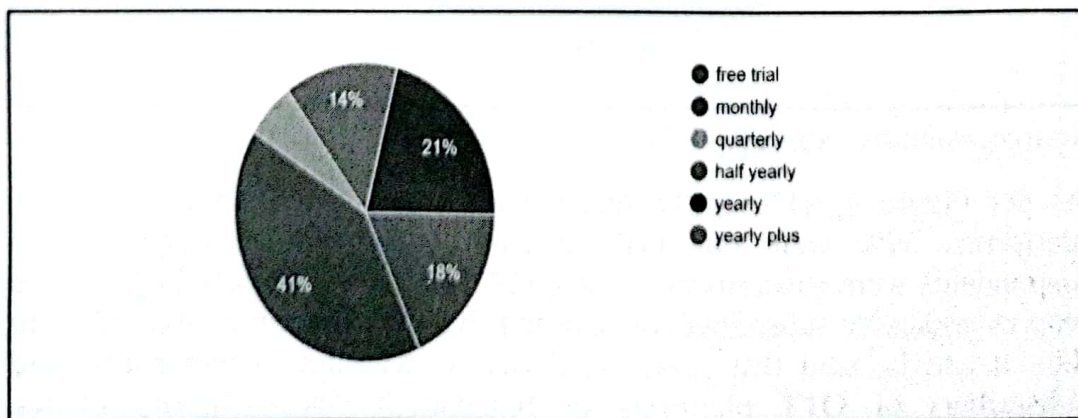
Figure 4: Number of OTT subscriptions by users



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

The tendency of OTT users to get OTT services for a period of time as Figure 5 shows, 41% of the respondents availed of the monthly package, 21% for a year, 14% for six months, 6% for quarterly and 18% of respondents availed of the free trial. But this free trial means users were subscribers of OTTs earlier but their subscription was over very immediately before data collection. Analysis showed that vulnerable OTT users are more than leading users in Bangladesh as 65% of the respondents avail free subscriptions, monthly quarterly subscription and only 35% of the respondents are avail the six to yearly subscription package. However, it can be said the tendency to use OTT platforms in Bangladesh is in a developing process as 21% of users have had faith in OTT platforms whole a year for getting infotainment contents.

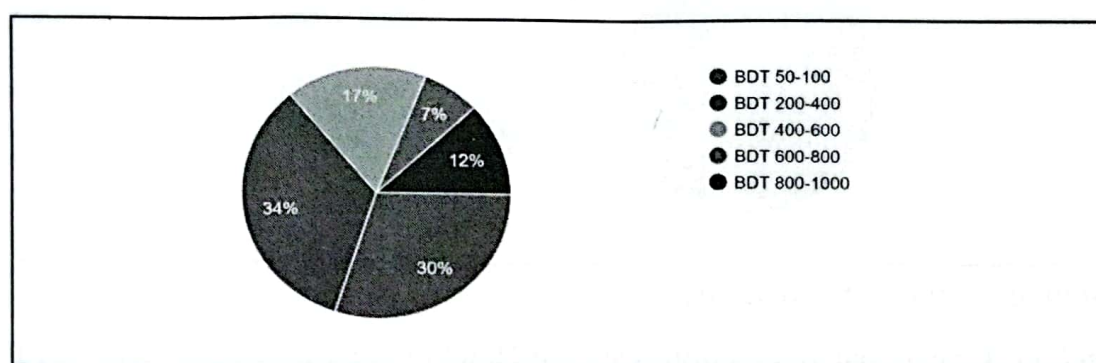
Figure 5: Users' tendency to avail of OTT subscriptions



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

Money spent on OTT content is crucial. The U&G theory indirectly says users would consume content of a medium in exchange for money if it appeals to them. As shown in Figure 6, 12% of the respondents answered that they spend BDT 800-1000 to get OTT service, 6 % of them pay BDT 600-800, simultaneously 17% of the respondents spend BDT 400-600. The highest portion, 34% of the respondents, subscribers spend BDT 200-400, and the second highest number of subscribers which means 30% of respondents paid BDT 50-100 to watch OTT content in Bangladesh. Data indicate that 64% of the respondents' range was found between 50-400 tk., and this section of people is considered the driving force of the OTT market. So, directors and OTT owners could think of it.

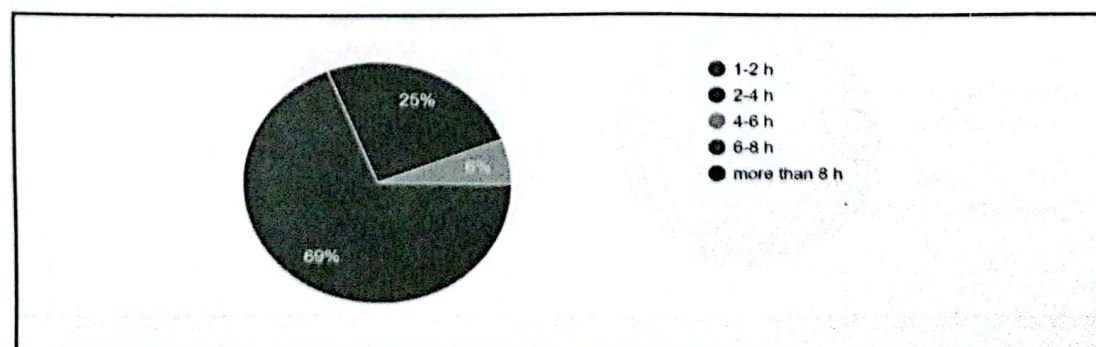
Figure 6: Expenditure pattern of OTT users



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

Daily viewing time of the subscribers is an important indicator of the behavioral patterns of the users. Users' tendency to consume OTT content in Bangladesh is remarkable as shown in Figure 7; 69% of the respondents use OTT for one to two hours, 25% of the subscribers consume OTT content for two to four hours, and four to six hours were spent by 6% of the respondents daily. One-fourth of the respondents have engaged with OTT platforms for two to four hours daily which is remarkable in the Bangladeshi context as audiences are becoming accustomed to OTT content gradually.

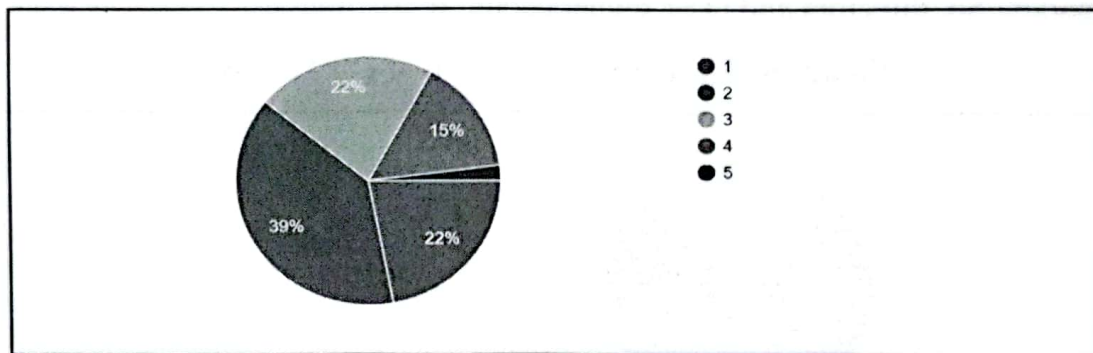
Figure 7: Time spending to consume OTT content



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

Consuming OTT content is a recent phenomenon in Bangladesh. Online streaming content users in Bangladesh have been familiar with OTT platforms since 2021. Figure 8 shows that 39% of the respondents have been watching OTT content for two years, 22% for one year and three years, and 15% of the respondents for four years. Data showed that the number of OTT users in Bangladesh is increasing year by year. The data also outline that users in Bangladesh adopt new technology gradually but sometimes significantly as 15% of the users have used OTT for four years but it transformed into 39% within two years.

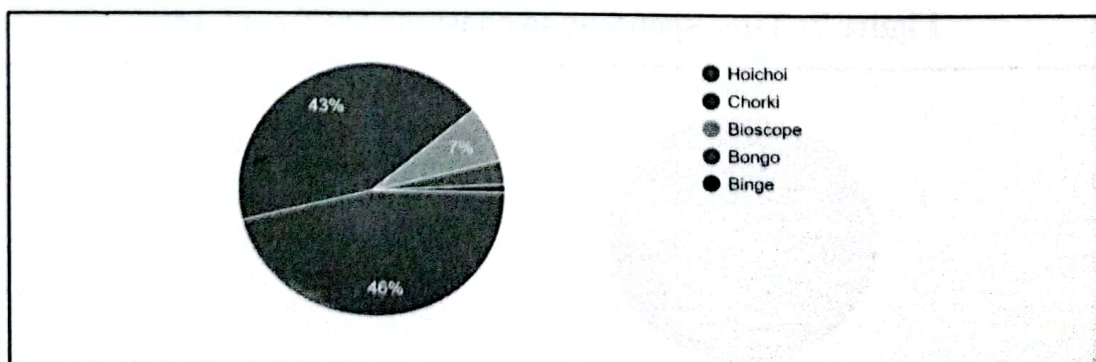
Figure 8: Users' timeframe for consuming OTTs



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

Indian Bangla content creation platform Hoichoi is more popular with OTT consumers in Bangladesh. As shown in Figure 9, 46% of the respondents showed their preference to Hoichoi followed by Chorki, 43%. Other platforms like Bioscope, Bongo, and Binge are much behind in the race to be preferred platforms by the users. Platforms introduced by the Bangladeshi community are becoming popular with users rapidly as Hoichoi started its journey in 2017 but Chorki in 2021. Users choose a particular medium like Hoichoi or Chorki from the large media landscape actively to fulfill their goals as per the U&G theory. The platforms those are lagging behind in terms of popularity should conduct research to identify their weaknesses compared with other platforms.

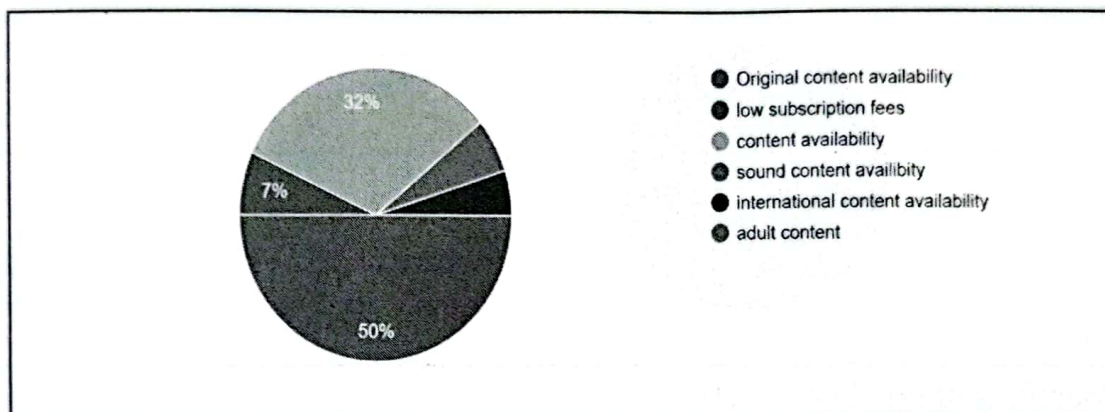
Figure 9: Users' preference for OTT platforms



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

Figure 10 indicates that 50% of respondents preferred a specific platform for original content availability and 32% of the users showed their preferences for content availability and another 7% for low subscription fees. OTT content availability like sound content and international content are less important factors to prefer by specific platform by user and adult content cannot be a factor for preference. Data shows that original content is a big factor in attracting OTT users rather than other factors.

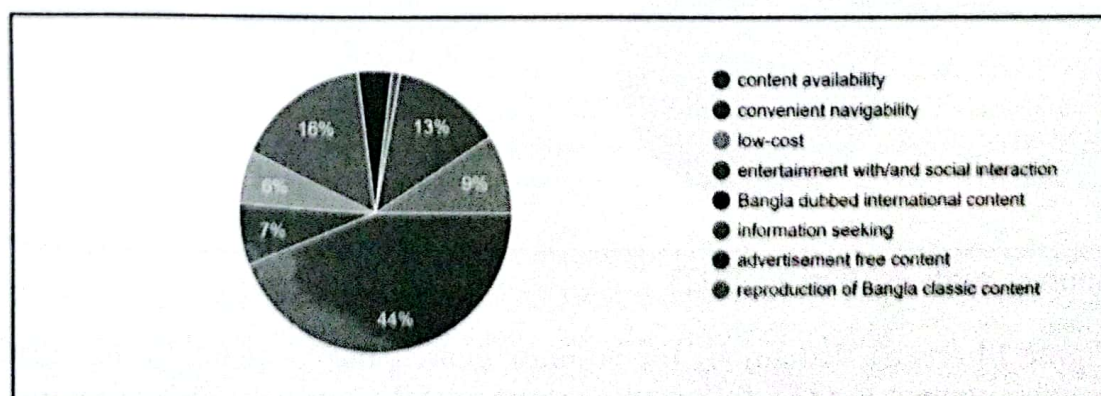
Figure 10: Factors for preference



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

Users are motivated mostly by content availability on OTT platforms to subscribe to online streaming services for entertainment as shown in Figure 11, 44% of respondents subscribe to OTT platforms for content availability, 16% for entertainment with / and social interaction, 13% for advertisement-free content, 9% for reproduction of Bangla classic content, 7% for convenient navigability, and 6% for low-cost and followed by Bangla dubbed international content and information seeking. Here, some factors motivated users to subscribe to OTT platforms than traditional media.

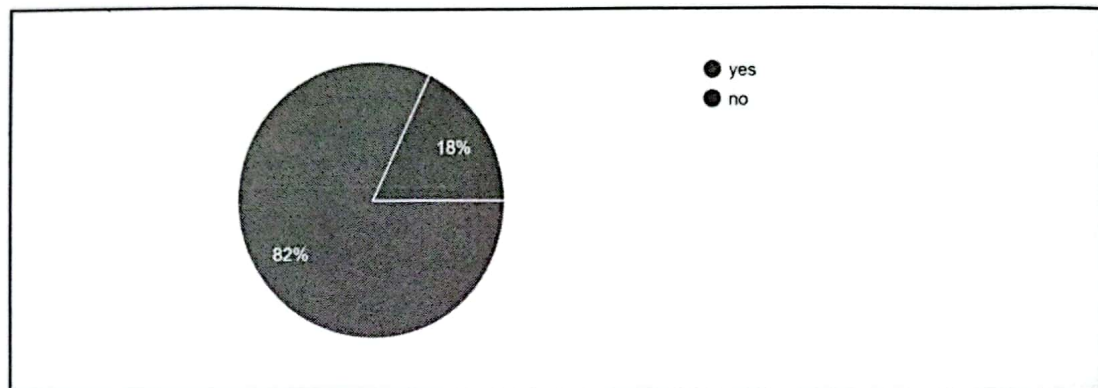
Figure 11: Users' motives to subscribe OTT platforms



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

About 82% of the respondents answered that OTT platforms are user-friendly and only 18% of the respondents considered this media as not user-friendly. As most of the respondents recognize that the usage system of the new entertainment media is easy to use and manipulate, it can be said that the streaming service technology is convenient. As the Technology Acceptance Model stated when a new technology is advantageous then its acceptance would be inclusive, the study findings indicate this.

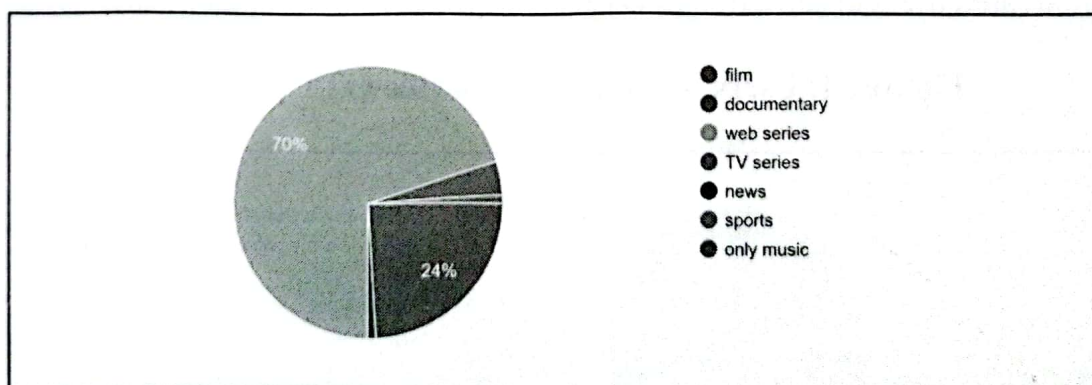
Figure 12: Acceptance of OTT platforms



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

Figure 13 shows that 70% of the respondents prefer web series to watch on OTT platforms and 24% of users watch films followed by TV series, sports, and documentaries. This indicates that OTT has developed as a platform preferable to entertainment seekers mainly. Serious contents like news and documentary are rarely accessed or preferred by the users of these platforms. No person watches the news and only music on OTT platforms. It is a significant matter for content creators while planning to develop contents for OTT platforms.

Figure 13: Users preference for content

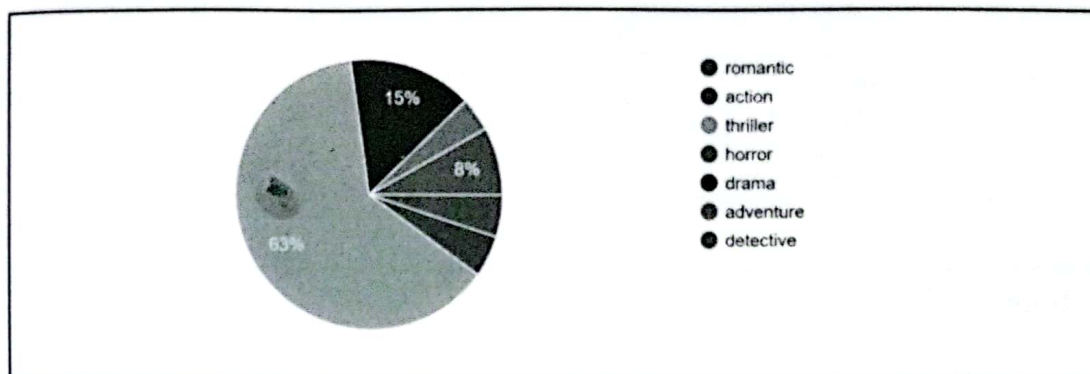


Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

Figure 14 reveals that among the program genres, thriller (63%) is the most popular content in OTT followed by drama (15%), and detective programs (8%). Other genres have much less viewers. This result is also significant

for OTT content creators to be considered as what types of programs are liked most by the consumers.

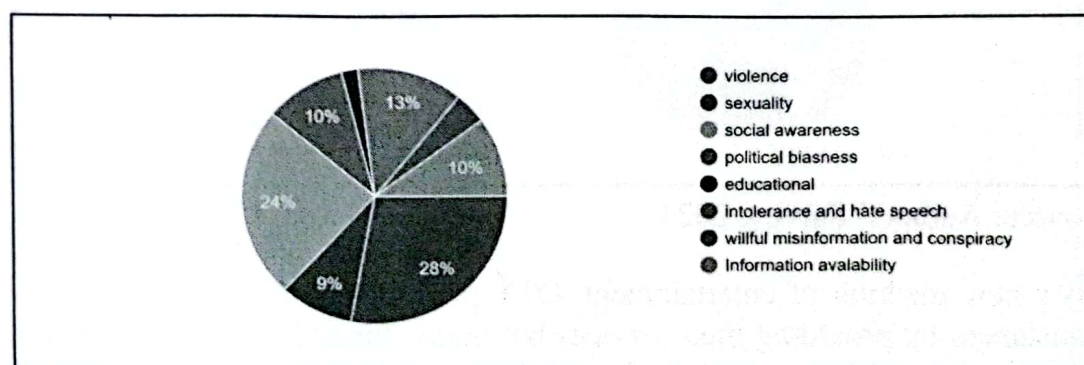
Figure 14: Users preference to specific genre content



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

As shown in Figure 15, users gave mixed answers to the presence of OTT content. Twenty-eight percent of the respondents answered violence, 24% social awareness, 13% intolerance and hate speech, political biases and information availability 10%, also 9% sexuality followed by willful misinformation and conspiracy and education content. According to users' opinions, the number of useful contents like social awareness, education, and information is comparatively less than contents like violence, hate speech and intolerance, political bias, and sexuality in the OTT. These things should be reconsidered by OTT content creators as OTT platforms have a great impact on society and culture.

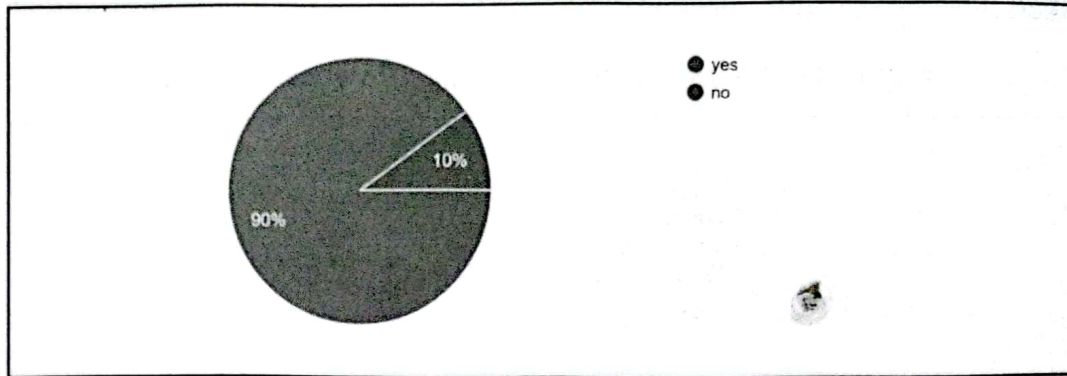
Figure 15: Content prevalence on OTT platforms



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

Figure 16 indicates that 90% of the respondents seem to believe that Bangladeshi content creators are somehow influenced by international OTT content regarding content creation. As the original content is the most influential factor to retain and attract users, it is necessary to come out from the umbrella of international media influence. OTT content creators should try to create content based on their own country's socio-cultural situations.

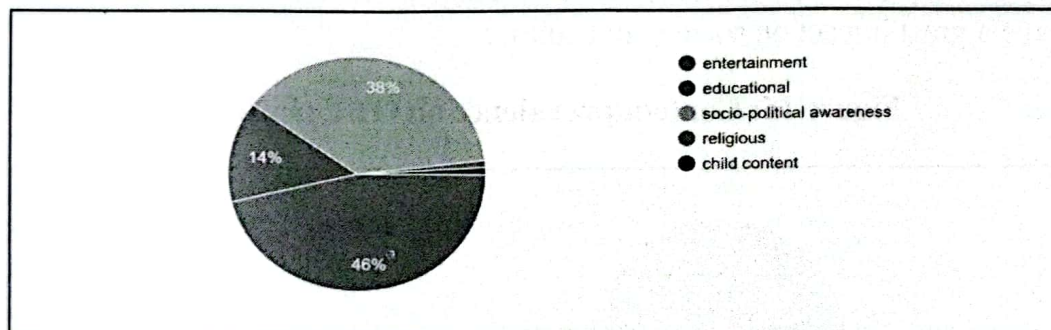
Figure 16: Content creators influenced by international content



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

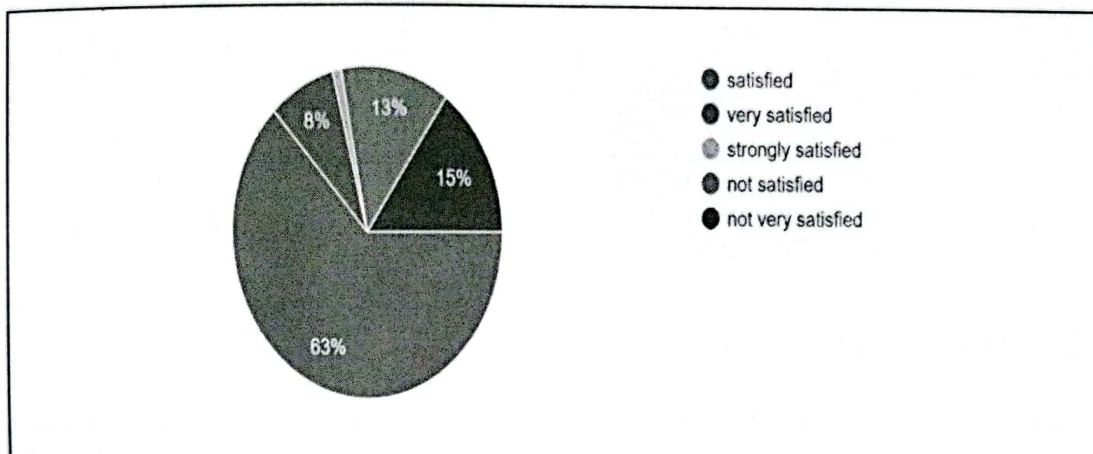
The analysis says that users demanded entertainment, socio-political awareness, and educational content more as shown in Figure 17, 46 % of the respondents want entertainment content, 38 % of the users demand socio-political awareness and 14% of the consumers wish to get educational content. Little demand showed for child and religious content. These results will be helpful for the OTT market in Bangladesh to design their contents. OTT platforms could develop in line with consumers' demands since consumers are the most important in the subscription-based model business like OTT platforms.

Figure 17: Users' demand for OTT content



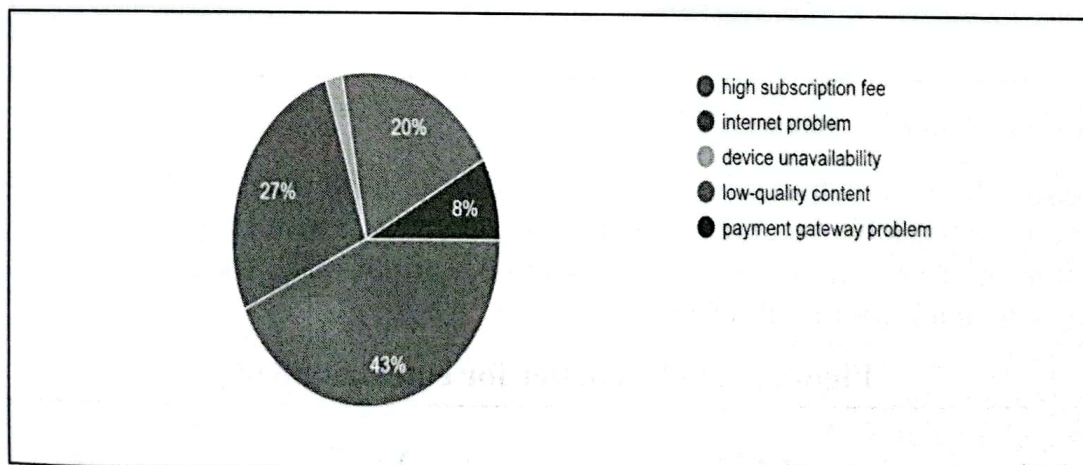
Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

As a new medium of entertainment, OTT platforms in Bangladesh satisfy consumers by providing their services but many things have to be done yet as users showed their negativity in satisfaction. Figure 18 reveals that 63 % of respondents are satisfied with OTT services, 15 % of respondents are not very satisfied and 13 % of users are not satisfied. In terms of the usage of OTT platforms users cannot be strongly satisfied so many things have to be done with these platforms. Within the short time since OTTs' inception in Bangladesh, these platforms have earned the satisfaction of 63% of the users which is significant. These results indicate that a transformation of media users from traditional media to digital media use has been occurring.

Figure 18: Users' satisfaction with OTT platforms

Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

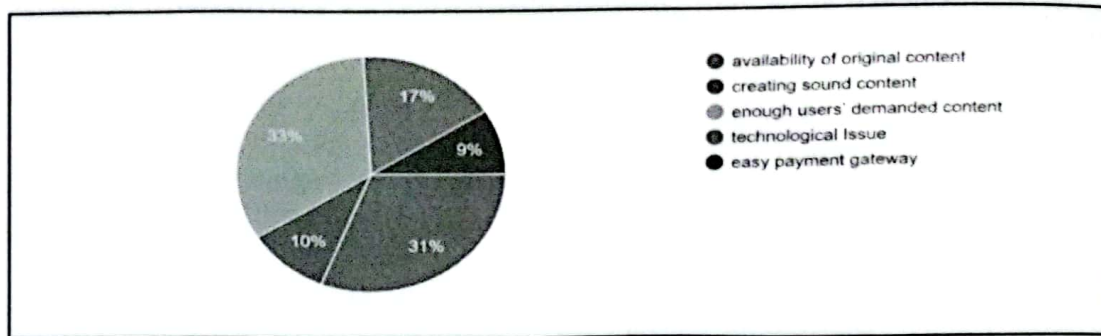
Figure 19 shows that 43% of respondents regard the subscription fees comparatively high, 27 % of users faced internet problems in consuming OTTs, and 20% of respondents said low-quality content is a problem to consuming these platforms. Only 8 % of users think the payment gateway should be improved. But the matter is device unavailability is not an issue to subscribe to OTT platforms in Bangladesh. So, the OTT industry in Bangladesh has to look for solutions to such kinds of problems that users have faced while consuming OTT contents to reach audiences widely.

Figure 19: Problems lie with OTT platforms

Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

Figure 20 indicates that 33% of the respondents thought that OTT content creators were lacking in creating contents that have demand among users. Another important lacking is original content availability (31%) followed by technological issues (17%), sound content (10%) and hassle-free payment gateway (9%). To boost the OTT market in Bangladesh it is necessary to emphasize creating user-demand and original contents too.

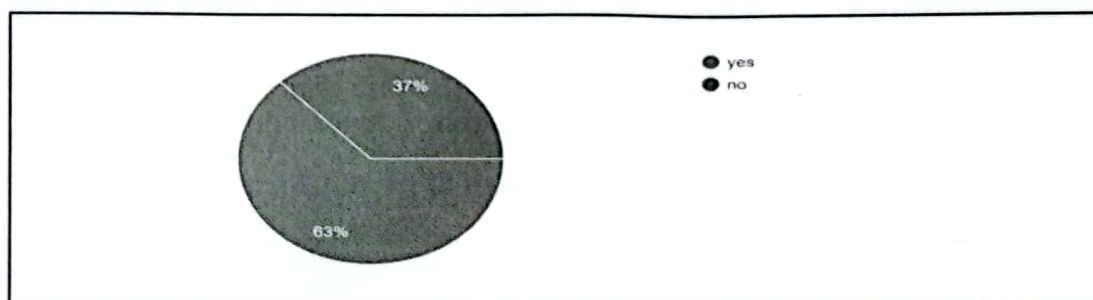
Figure 20: Lacks of OTTs in Bangladesh



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

Figure 21 shows that 63% of the respondents thought that the government should form an act or regulatory policy to bring OTT platforms under surveillance and the rest are against such regulatory measures. It seems that any policy helps to furnish a new platform in a good manner. So regulatory acts must be formed to keep in mind the industry's welfare and uphold the country's socio-cultural perspective.

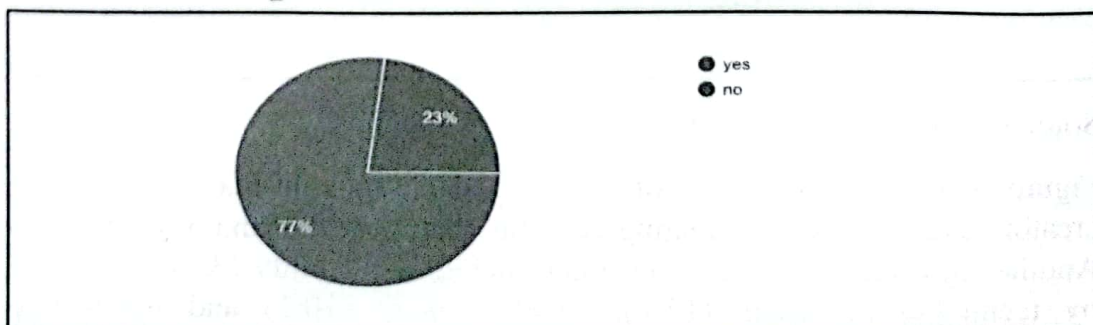
Figure 21: Policy or Act for OTT platforms



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

Figure 22 unveils that 77% of the respondents mentioned OTT platforms are better options for entertainment and education and rest of them didn't think. So it can be said that OTT could be a bright place for entertainment and education for its subscribers.

Figure 22: OTTs better for entertainment



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

5.3 Presentation of qualitative data from the responses to open-ended questions

Audiences' reactions to open-ended questions express the users' perceptions of the usage of OTT platforms in Bangladesh.

5.3.1 User-friendly entertainment media

OTT platforms gained popularity as user-friendly entertainment platforms as it is easily accessible. Moreover, categorization by genre facilitates finding desired content smoothly for any user. Most of the respondents (82%) agreed that OTTs are user-friendly platforms (Figure 12). Moreover, in open ended responses similar opinion was also found. For example, in interview, it was stated that OTT is a source of entertainment that is user-friendly, easier to find desired contents, and easily gets in devices like a phone (Muktadir, A. A. & Bobby, S. A. personal communication, July 23 & August 24, 2023).

5.3.2 Advertisement-free viewing experience

Subscription-based online streaming services are being watched more for their advertisement-free content. Users normally don't like any interruption while they are watching drama, film, etc. on entertainment media. In open-ended responses, it was found that users prefer OTT, because OTTs have advertisement-free content, and there is nothing to be interrupted and could be able to watch any web series without any advertisement.

5.3.3 Availability of diversified content

Many diversified contents are available in a single OTT platform but other traditional media like TV channels and cinema halls are specialized media-cinema halls for only films. So, online streaming services have the availability of diversified content like web series, drama, film, music, news, sports, etc. OTT platforms have all types of content that cannot be watched in other general traditional media and different genre content in a single platform (Akter, S. & N.A. Saim, N. A., personal communication, August 28, 2023)

5.3.4 Time and place convenient

Internet-based online streaming services are more flexible, comfortable, and convenient media than other traditional media. Users can access the OTT platform anytime and from anywhere in the world. Consumers now can avail OTT services to get content while staying at home and out simultaneously. The survey found that users prefer to watch OTT contents as these are time and space convenient.

5.3.5 Good entertainment platform

OTT platforms feature various contents for entertaining audiences. Users are more amazed by constant and exciting OTT content. Streaming services produce good content to attract and retain audiences generally. OTTs have available entertaining, and quality content which is better than other media (Mitra M. & Das A., personal communication, August 30, 2023). An OTT user said that in the OTT platform one can find contents according to one's self interest. And the content quality is far better than the cinemas that are being produced in Bangladesh (Bristy, N. S. personal communication, September 3, 2023)

5.3.6 Access to different cultural contents

OTT platforms have produced local and international content as well, which are related to different countries' cultures. Such content privileged users to introduce themselves to diversified cultures. A respondent opined that OTT platforms have facilitated audiences with a variety of content from different cultures which is easily accessible (Islam T., personal communication, July 22, 2023).

5.3.7 Original content

Original content is one of the main factors of OTT platforms in Bangladesh to attract mass audiences. Fifty percent (Figure 10) of the users opine they use OTT platforms for original content availability. Therefore, the survey finds that users use OTT media for the fast availability of original content, giving them the scope to watch various types of original content on OTT platforms.

5.4 Challenges of OTT platforms in Bangladesh

Analyzed data reveal some challenges for OTT platforms in Bangladesh. Some identified challenges are:

5.4.1 Inadequate quality content

Contents are the lifeline of OTT platforms. At present, many free video-sharing platforms like YouTube are available. So, to attract and retain audiences there is no alternative to produce quality content. Forty-four percent (Figure 11) of the respondents expressed content availability is a vital factor in subscribing to OTT platforms and twenty percent (Figure 19) of the respondents agreed that OTT platforms are producing low-quality content. In their opinions, the survey finds there are some good contents out on the OTT platforms but the amount is very low. OTT platforms should be more selective for good quality contents and they should bring more original contents as well. From these discussions, it can be pointed out that

content creators should produce more quality content with a good script, good artists, and advanced technology.

5.4.2 Unrealistic and violent content

A large number of the respondents think that OTT platforms are featured with violence, intolerance and hate speech, and sexual content. But respondents' preferences for contents featuring entertainment, socio-political awareness, and educational content are 46%, 38% and 14% respectively (Figure 17). Analyzing data indicate that OTT platforms in Bangladesh are being featured mostly with unrealistic and violent contents. But considering country's culture and users' expectations content creators should emphasize creating contents based on real stories, education, romance and society.

5.4.3 Scarcity of users' demand content

Users are very important parts of the subscription-based business model. As OTT platforms still follow the subscription-based model business, that's why users should be emphasized. About 33% (Figure 20) of the respondents think that OTT platforms in Bangladesh are lagging behind in producing users' demand contents. So, it would be taken as a big challenge and try to create such contents importantly.

5.4.4 High subscription fees

To make OTT platforms affordable for all classes of people and extend their service in every corner of the world including Bangladesh, subscription fees should be less than the existing fee structure. Forty-three percent (Figure 19) of the respondents expressed that they have faced problems in using OTT services for high subscription fees. Survey data finds that OTT platforms should lower the subscription fee so that everyone can enter this platform without hesitation.

5.4.5 Usage of advanced technology

The usage of advanced technology can bring quality changes in the OTT platforms' interface. Moreover, it would be tenfold better if proper equipment is used in the OTT platform by properly trained technicians. OTTs in Bangladesh are lagging behind technologically according to 17% (Figure 20) of the respondents. Users expressed that the survey found service providers should upgrade their respective websites so that the audience can have an uninterrupted viewing experience.

5.4.6 Payment gateway

In a subscription-based model business payment gateway is a very important tool. Around 9% (Figure 20) of respondents think that the payment gateway should be the easiest way.

5.4.7 Piracy problem

Content creators should emphasize the piracy problem. Some users think that if they get entertainment content free of cost using secret software then why do they spend money for this purpose? So, OTT service providers should take care of the matter to secure the booming media industry in Bangladesh.

5.4.8 Internet speed

As OTT platforms are internet-based entertainment media, steps should be taken to increase internet speed and the number of internet penetration to ensure seamless service. About 27% (Figure 19) of the respondents said they have to face internet problems while consuming OTT content.

5.4.9 Policy regulation problem

OTT platforms in Bangladesh are the new entertainment industry. Government patronization is needed to smooth the growth of the industry. Along with financial support, policy regulation is also needed for a new industry to develop in line with the country's dignity and sovereignty. Sixty-three percent (Figure 21) of the respondents thought that a regulatory policy is needed for OTT platforms in Bangladesh. But other 37% (Figure 21) of the respondents did not feel for regulatory policy from apprehension of suppression of freedom of speech. So, a comprehensive regulatory policy is needed which will help the betterment of the new industry and not be a barrier to telling the story freely.

5.5 Prospects of OTT platforms in Bangladesh

5.5.1 Acceptability of OTT platforms

The new landscape of entertainment media is much appraised by its users with some exceptions. Seventy-seven percent (Figure 22) of the respondents seemed that the new medium of entertainment is better than traditional like Television channels and Theatre/ Cinema halls media. Users' satisfaction led to such a result that is discussed in the uses and gratification theory. Users can use OTT platforms as they wish and consume as per their satisfaction. On the other hand, 82% (Figure 12) of the respondents think that OTT platforms are user-friendly entertainment media. Besides, 63% (Figure 18) of the respondents expressed their satisfaction regarding OTT platforms in Bangladesh. In acceptance of new technology or media, the Technology Acceptance Model argues to accept such media or technology that has perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. From this ground and users' perspective, it can be said that OTT platforms as new media are accepted by their potential users.

5.5.2 Source of original content creation

OTT platforms are subscription-based video-sharing platforms where original or any other content can be shared. Fifty (Figure 10) of the respondents answered that they prefer OTT platforms for original content. On the other hand, 31% (Figure 20) of respondents said OTTs are lagging behind in original content creation. It's a blessing for creators to produce original content and share it on OTT platforms which will motivate users to subscribe to OTTs.

5.5.3 Possibility of independent making

OTT platforms are one kind of blessing for independent creators as these platforms have already gained popularity for some independent content creators. The survey found that the number of cinema halls and multiplexes has not been increased as per expectation in the country. So, OTTs are a blessing for OTT filmmakers who remain out of different syndicates of produce.

5.5.4 Less time-consuming and universal media

OTT platforms have already proved that these are less time-consuming in content consumption as one user can watch OTT content at his or her convenience without going out, with time lapses. Besides, as it is internet-based media Bangladeshi OTT platforms would be universal media for the Bengali language community along with others across the world. On this platform, users can watch content partly at a time and then another part of the same content watch later at their convenience. So, this platform is more comfortable and less time-consuming.

5.5.5 Smart and personal media

OTT platforms can be called smart and personal media for people's entertainment. If one user has a smartphone and internet connection he or she can avail OTT services via subscriptions which is not possible in traditional entertainment media. Users can watch all contents available at any time but in television and cinema halls they don't have that choice. So, OTTs can be smart and personal media meanwhile traditional media are family media.

5.5.6 Painful and time-consuming: Some audiences gave negative reactions that OTT platforms are not better for entertainment saying it is time-consuming but less entertaining, a lot more painful, and not user-friendly than the traditional methods. These kinds of users are relatively low.

6. Conclusion

OTT platforms facilitate audiences with an unprecedented level of convenience and variety as people now have the freedom to choose when, where, and how to watch their beloved movies, television shows, and digital content. Recently subscription-based OTT platforms entered the Bangladeshi OTT market and are running with diverse contents. To understand the current situations and prospects of OTT platforms in Bangladesh a survey research has been conducted on subscribed users. Analyzing the respondents' data, users' behavioral patterns, perceptions of usage of OTT platforms, and the current state and prospects of OTTs have been understood. Among these respondents, 59% were male and 53% of respondents belonged to the age group of 19-23-year. Most of the respondents (77%) think that OTT platforms are better than traditional media for infotainment along 82% of users considered these platforms as user-friendly. Users preferred the Hoichoi platform the most, and OTTs are preferred for their original content and content availability, time and space convenience. Moreover, web series, films, and thriller content are mostly viewed on the OTT platforms. Therefore, 63% of users expressed their satisfaction with OTTs in Bangladesh. So, as a new entertainment medium, OTT platforms are accepted widely for entertainment in accordance to survey data analysis. However, audiences expressed their negative opinion about the content and their services like Inadequate quality content, more presence of unrealistic and violent content, fewer users' demand content, high subscription fees, payment gateway problems, and also regulatory policy problems, etc. With the solving of such kinds of challenges, the prospects of OTT platforms in Bangladesh would be brighter as these platforms have much acceptability, source of original content creation based on reality and socio-cultural perspectives of a country, and scope of making independently and towards a smart entertainment industry.

6.1 Suggestions

Some suggestions are given below for the betterment of OTT services and OTT content based on users' demand and data analyses collected from the survey.

- Reduce the subscription cost and introduce an easy payment gateway like hourly payment, Government or Corporate funds are needed to ensure quality content and expansion of the OTT industry.
- Concentrate on producing more original content; ethical, sound, entertaining and quality content, and focus on making social and educational contents with advanced technology.

- Form comprehensive regulatory policy, promote national and social stories for the country's own cultural representation, and avoid copying, unnecessary sexuality, and hate speech in contents.
- Conduct market research to find out users' demand, and inclusion of English subtitles, with emphasis on good script and video quality.

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