

The Role Of OTT Platforms In Influencing The Social And Ethical Values Of The Society

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ABSTRACT

India, a country known for its vast variety and rich cultural legacy, has a history that has been molded over millennia by a wide range of social, moral, and cultural forces. These ideas have been profoundly embedded in Indian culture via interactions with many civilizations, philosophies, and faiths over time. Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms have become effective means of presenting this diversity in the modern day by offering a variety of viewpoints. Although these platforms give prominence to underrepresented people, they also mirror social issues like the glamorization of drug use, alcohol use, nudity, and obscenity—concerns that frequently pass for contemporary.

OTT platforms, which provide consumers with the ease of streaming content across numerous devices, have altered the way that people consume entertainment. Today's youngsters have an abundance of alternatives available to them across all genres, unlike previous generations when there were restricted possibilities for entertainment. But in addition to this ease, worries about how OTT platforms can affect moral and cultural norms have surfaced. This study uses surveys and previously published research reports together with primary and secondary data analysis to look at this influence.

Even though OTT platforms have made media consumption more democratic, improper censoring has had unfavorable effects, especially for India's teenage population. The widespread distribution of unsuitable information has exacerbated the breakdown of social and familial ties as well as traditional cultural norms. Therefore, in order to protect India's cultural heritage and encourage responsible media consumption, it is crucial to address the ethical and societal ramifications of the unparalleled access to varied material that OTT platforms provide.

Keywords: OTT, Audience, OTT Services, Web-series, Indian Value

Introduction

OTT services frequently hold a vast variety of content, such as TV series, films, and user-generated material. The availability of a wide range of content prompts inquiries regarding censorship and content regulation. Concerns including hate speech, violence, sexual material, and explicit language might conflict with moral and social values. OTT platforms must handle these issues while upholding the right to free speech.

There is drastic shift from traditional media to digital media and especially audience attraction towards OTT platforms is very significant nowadays. Netflix, Amazon Prims, Airtel Xstream, Zee 5, SonyLiv, Hulu, Paramount etc. are very frequently used OTT platforms by the people and offers diverse content, only need is Internet. These platforms are not only changing the perceptions of the audience but also influencing the thoughts on many positive and negative topics. With the wide range of options like documentaries, shows, movies etc., these platforms are bypassing the traditional media and especially during the knock of Covid-19

pandemic. A significant effect of the COVID-19 epidemic on the streaming industry was an increase in over-the-top (OTT) content consumption, which in turn helped several streaming companies see an increase in revenue.

According to a recent **PwC** research, India is the world's fastest-growing market for streaming platforms, generally referred to as over-the-top, or OTT, service providers. It is anticipated to surpass South Korea, Germany, and Australia to become the sixth-largest market in the world by 2024 with an annual growth rate of 28.6%. Target audiences, genres, and topics of the content available on over-the-top (OTT) platforms are exceptionally diverse. While certain programming is renowned for pushing boundaries and delving into topics that are contentious, other content is more geared toward the likes of the general public. Discussions on how social issues are portrayed, how cultures are represented, and whether or not traditional values are at risk have arisen as a result of this diversity.

As the Precedence Research predicts that the over-the-top (OTT) business is predicted to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 26.30% from 2023 to 2032, from its estimated \$200 billion worth in 2022 to over US\$ 2,057.47 billion by that time.

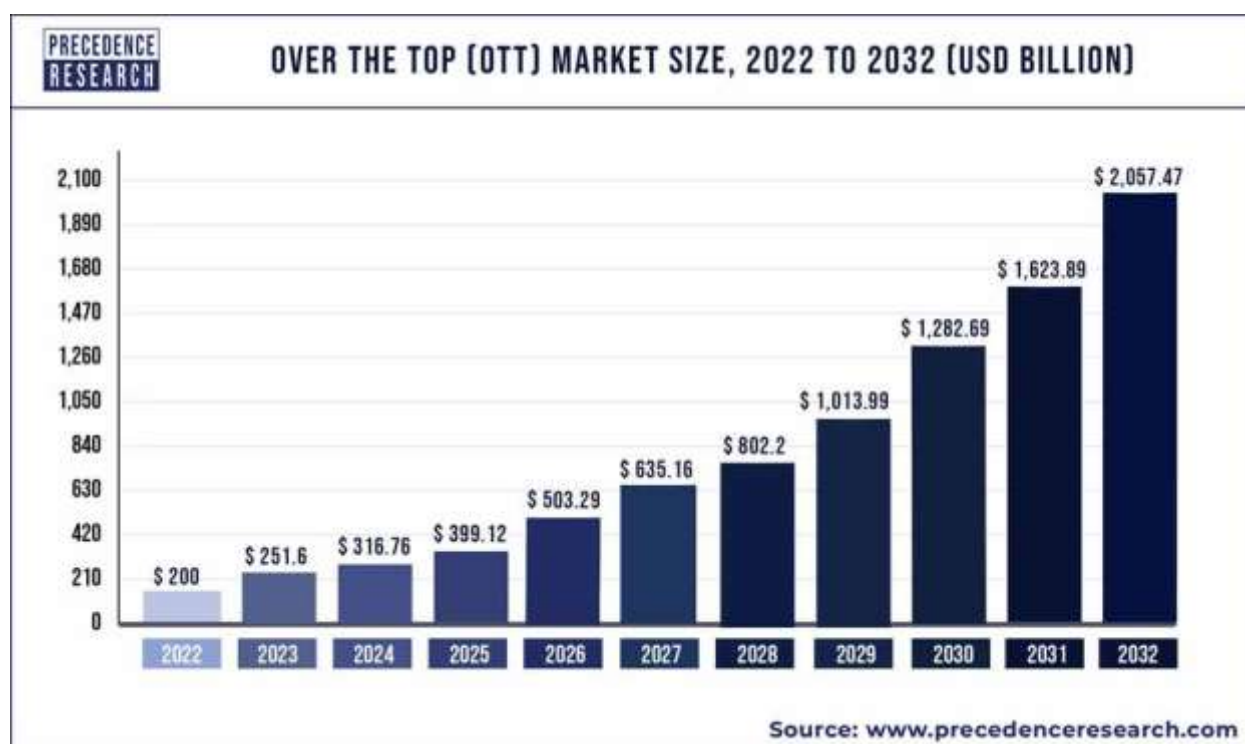


Figure 1: Market Size of OTT Platforms

The content available on OTT platforms varies widely in terms of topics, genres, and target groups. Some content is known for pushing boundaries and covering controversial topics, while other content appeals more to mainstream tastes. This diversity led to discussions about the expression of social issues, cultural expression, and the possible erosion of traditional values.

In early days, when there was no OTT platforms, people were sitting together to watch television programs. Shows like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Shri Krishna etc. were the shows people watched together. These shows not only cultivate the positive thoughts inside the people but also inspired them to become a valued person in life. These also made them unite and teach them good lessons. Now, with the OTT platforms, everyone watches their own shows according to their choices (Sowbarnika, 2020). This practice has not only disturbed the interpersonal relationships of the people but also influenced their mindset. There are so many dark series available on OTT platforms which are very popular also. These series are not only showing the dark reality, but also hampering their mindset. Crime rates are also boosting after watching these dark series. Somewhere these are giving clues to conduct crimes. In the absence of censorship, OTT platforms are offering all kinds of content which are improper in nature. Recently, The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (I&B) has reportedly ordered three OTT platforms—Hunters, Besharams, and Prime Play—to remove offensive content or face penalties, per the latest article in *The Indian Express*.

Reasons for the booming of OTT platforms with strong revenue are not a single one. Now, viewers can directly access these platforms on the go. It does not require any cable connection or set-up box. All you need is just a stable internet connection on a device. Earlier, people when missed their favorite shows on television, they would have to wait for a long time to watch a repetition of that show and sometimes, repetitions were not done by the channels which made them unhappy but with the OTT platforms, now people can watch their favorite show on any device including mobile and laptop on any place and at any time with the internet service.

There are more than 40 online platforms available in India in which most of them are in regional languages. These platforms are the most downloaded apps as compared to social media apps like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in every fifth Smartphone in recent days. OTT platforms have gained huge popularity after Covid-19 even big entertainment companies like Disney, Marvel, Pixar have also joined them for streaming their content over online platforms. These OTTs have made the life of common man interesting by offering diverse content just by downloading App over Smartphone, laptops, tablets and smart televisions. According to studies, online video streaming will grow to be valued up to **\$332 billion** by 2025, and as 5G technology becomes available full-fledged, these figures are expected to soar even more. However, the type of video those over-the-top providers are showing its audience is drawing criticism due to its graphic and mature content.

India is the second most populous country in the world with 1.3 billion people living there, but its average age is 29, making it one of the youngest in the world. This youngest country watching the OTT contents in the pattern of countries like USA and European countries where youth population are 38.8 years and 38 to 44 years respectively.

A recent study published in the journal npj Digital Medicine found that people who spend more time on OTT platforms and social media, such as Netflix, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, have significantly fewer hours of sleep, which makes them more susceptible to depression (Awasthi, 2021). It means rapid growth of market of OTT platforms in India making country pessimistic.

With 50% of smartphone app users between the ages of 18 and 24, Mann et al. (2015) noted in their article titled "Digital Video & the Connected Consumer" that OTT media platforms are aiming their marketing towards a younger audience.

It was notice that isolation has already increased with Covid-19 pandemic to avoid its consequences but OTT platforms have made the people addicted to it. Once people started watching web-series or web-content, they continue with that because of many options. Somewhere, this isolation is also impacting the human relations and human behavior. According to the research done by the Tripathi in 2020, participation of people in content viewing on OTT platforms during the period of self-isolation as well as lockdown may eventually become second nature to them. According to a survey done by the Mohan, Krishna & Datta, Pallavi & Thomas, Roseliya & Viswanath, Parvathy in (2021) among young people in India to find out how digital streaming services are influencing their movie-going experiences, modern viewers are looking for interactive, relatable, and unique content. For this they are also ready to pay extra amount in OTT platforms or in cinema halls. This research shows people are demanding something new and original content.

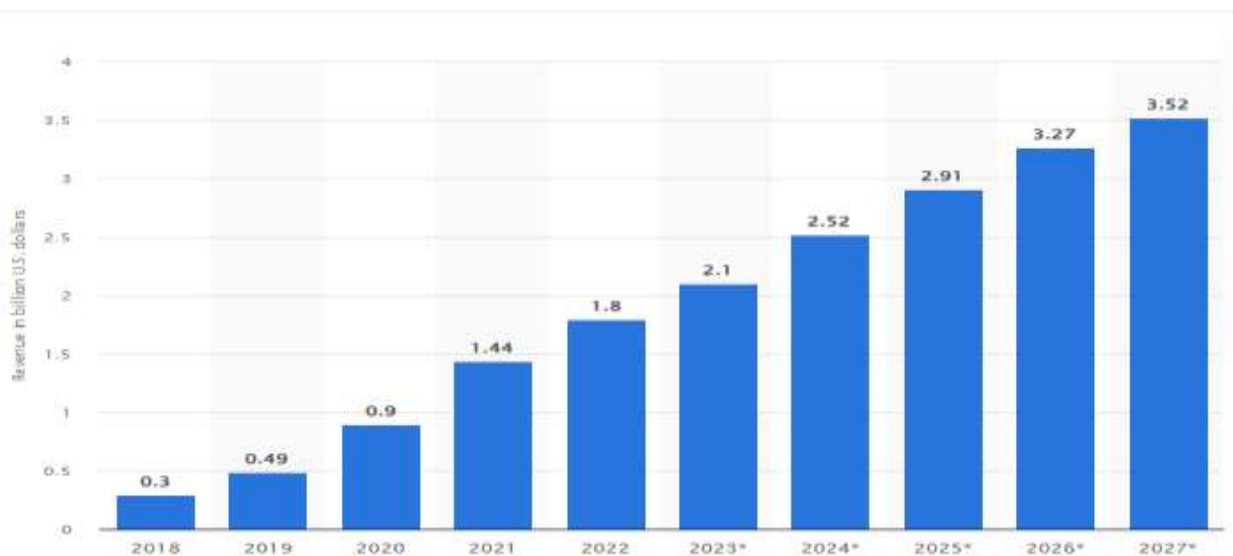


Figure 2:Revenue from OTT and video across India from 2018 to 2022, with estimates until 2027

Source –Statista Research Department, Nov 14, 2019

Statement of the Problem

As we all know, OTT platforms are easy to handle and available at a reasonable rate of subscription, but simultaneously, they are also somewhere making people addicted to them. It is also available on our smart TVs and laptops as well as on our mobile phones. Looking at some of the most popular shows on OTT platforms will quickly reveal that a large portion of the content is contentious and that some viewers or government organizations have voiced concerns. Nudity and obscenity are very common on OTT platforms, which indirectly raise questions about our elegant Indian culture. Lust Stories, The Night Manager, and Mirzapur are some of the popular web series among Indian OTT audiences, but these series had many controversial contents and used ill-treated languages. Alcohol, weed, cigarettes, tobacco, drugs, etc. are

directly showcasing on the OTT web series, which somehow hampers the youth and has an adverse effect on their behavior. There are also so many dark series that are liked by most of the young people, which also gives the young generation an idea of how to conduct crime. Here, the problem arises: how will the social and ethical values of Indian society remain safe if the content of the OTT platforms does not pass through the censorship process? A country like India, which is known for its rich culture all over the world, is losing its identity due to the unavailability of proper content on OTTs.

Objectives

- To analyse the frequency of use of OTT platforms by the people.
- To examine the social impact of OTT platforms on people.
- To examine the ethical impact of OTT platforms on people.
- To study how OTT platforms are spoiling the society.

Research Methodology

Based on a survey methodology, this research study is empirical in nature. It is a combination of the analytical and descriptive research methods. The purpose of the structural questionnaire was to determine how OTT platforms undermine society's moral and ethical standards. The standardized questionnaire is used as an instrument to collect the data, and it is the primary data for the research between the ages of 18 and 35. This age is selected because this age group is present on OTT platforms in the largest numbers. Google form is distributed to this age group to know the perceptions and impact of OTT platforms. This data is analysed using latest version of SPSS tool.

Findings

Demographical Data of the Respondents

GENDER

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	43	56.6	56.6	56.6
	Female	32	42.1	42.1	98.7
	Other	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table No1: Gender of the Respondents

AGE

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24 YEARS	59	77.6	77.6	77.6
	25-35	17	22.4	22.4	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table No 2: Age of the Respondents

The data indicates a significant skew towards younger respondents, with the majority falling into the 18-24 years age group.

The smaller representation of the 25-35 years age group suggests a less prevalent presence of individuals in this age bracket within the respondent pool.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	12 TH	8	10.5	10.5	10.5
	GRADUATION	51	67.1	67.1	77.6
	POST GRADUATION	3	3.9	3.9	81.6
	PG AND ABOVE	14	18.4	18.4	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table No 3: Educational Qualification of the Respondents

The data suggests a diverse educational background among the respondents, with a range of qualifications from 12th grade education to post-graduation. Graduates form the largest group within the respondent pool,

indicating a substantial presence of individuals with undergraduate degrees. Post-graduates and individuals with qualifications beyond post-graduation also contribute to the respondent pool, albeit in smaller proportions.

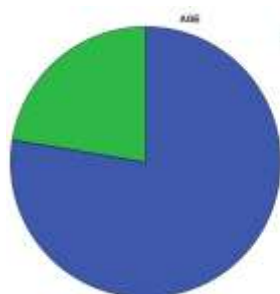


Figure 1: Age of the Respondents

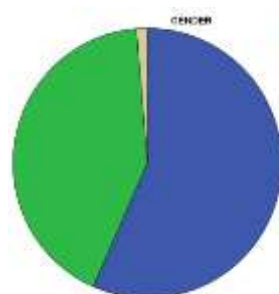


Figure 2: Gender of the Respondents

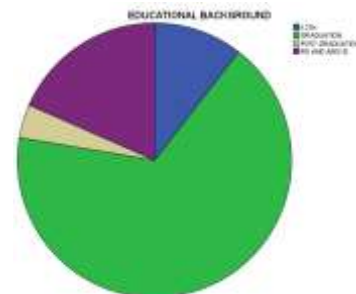


Figure 3: Educational Background of the Respondents

As the Figures 1, 2 and 3 are showing that the maximum participation is between age group of 18 to 25 years, males and graduates respectively

Frequency of use of OTT platforms by the people

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
GENDER * How frequently do you use OTT platforms to consume content?	76	100.0%	0	0.0%	76	100.0%

Table No 4: Summary of use OTT platforms to consume content

The Case Processing Summary provides assurance of the completeness of the dataset and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between gender and the frequency of OTT platform usage for content consumption.

GENDER * How frequently do you use OTT platforms to consume content?

Count

		How frequently do you use OTT platforms to consume content?					Total
		Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	
GENDER	Male	14	16	5	7	1	43
	Female	12	8	5	6	1	32
	Other	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total		26	25	10	13	2	76

Table No 5: Gender comparison of use of OTT platforms to consume content

From the table 5, both males and females predominantly use OTT platforms on a daily and weekly basis, with the highest counts in these categories. Males show slightly higher usage counts compared to females in most frequency categories, except for monthly usage where both genders have equal counts. The "Other" gender category has only one respondent, who uses OTT platforms on a weekly basis.

AGE * How frequently do you use OTT platforms to consume content?

Crosstabulation

Count

		How frequently do you use OTT platforms to consume content?					Total
		Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	
AGE	18-24 YEARS	18	21	8	10	2	59
	25-35 YEARS	8	4	2	3	0	17
Total		26	25	10	13	2	76

Table No 6: Age comparison of use of OTT platforms to consume content

From the Table 5, the age group 18-24 years shows higher usage counts across all frequency categories compared to the age group 25-35 years. Daily and weekly usages are the most prevalent patterns in both age groups, with the highest counts in these categories. The age group 25-35 years has lower usage counts overall, with no respondents indicating never using OTT platforms. The data suggests that OTT platform usage is more common among individuals in the younger age group (18-24 years) compared to those in the slightly older age group (25-35 years).

Daily and weekly usages are particularly prevalent among younger individuals, indicating a higher level of engagement with OTT content in this age group. The absence of respondents indicating never using OTT platforms in the age group 25-35 years suggests that OTT platform adoption is widespread across both age groups, albeit with varying usage patterns.

Social Impact of OTT Platforms on People

Do you believe that the content on OTT platforms has an impact on social behavior of people?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	26	34.2	34.2	34.2
Agree	39	51.3	51.3	85.5
Neutral	11	14.5	14.5	100.0
Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table No 7: OTT platforms has an impact on social behavior of people

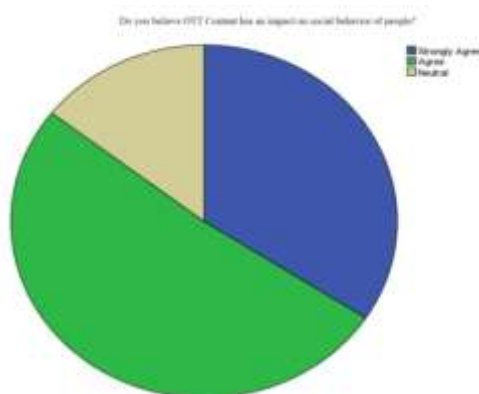


Figure 4: OTT Content has an impact on social behavior of people

A substantial majority of respondents (85.5%) either strongly agree or agree that content available on OTT platforms influences social behavior. A smaller portion (14.5%) remains neutral on the subject, indicating uncertainty or lack of a strong opinion. The data strongly suggests a prevalent belief among respondents that OTT content does have an impact on social behavior. The high percentage of respondents who strongly agree or agree indicates a significant level of conviction in the influence of OTT content on behavior. The neutral stance of a minority of respondents may reflect a degree of skepticism or a lack of sufficient evidence to form a firm opinion.

Further, they were given different genre to identify a range of specific aspects of OTT content that they perceive could negatively impact social values. These aspects encompass various themes such as Portrayal of relationships, family dynamics, gender roles, social norms, and civic responsibility. The high frequency of responses related to the "Portrayal of relationships" suggests a significant concern among respondents regarding how relationships are depicted in OTT content and their potential impact on social values. The inclusion of other aspects such as "Family dynamics," "Gender roles," and "Social norms and traditions" reflects a broad spectrum of concerns about the portrayal of societal constructs in OTT content. The selection of "Civic responsibility" as an aspect indicates a concern about the potential influence of OTT content on societal engagement and responsibility.

Do you think OTT platforms adequately represent diverse perspectives and cultures in their content?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	48	63.2	63.2	63.2
No	9	11.8	11.8	75.0
Not Sure	19	25.0	25.0	100.0

Table No 8: OTT platforms adequately represent diverse perspectives and cultures in their content

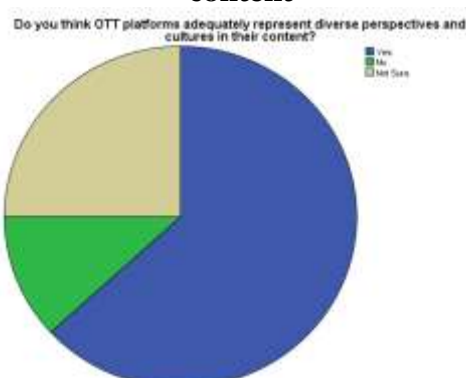


Figure 5: OTT platforms adequately represent diverse perspectives and cultures in their content

As the above table 8 is saying the majority of respondents (63.2%) believe that OTT platforms adequately represent diverse perspectives and cultures in their content. A smaller proportion (11.8%) indicates a negative perception, expressing that OTT platforms do not adequately represent diversity in their content.

A significant portion of respondents (25.0%) remain unsure or undecided about the representation of diversity on OTT platforms. The high percentage of respondents who believe that OTT platforms adequately represent diverse perspectives and cultures suggests a generally positive perception of the efforts made by these platforms in showcasing diversity. The respondents who expressed doubt or uncertainty may indicate a need for greater transparency or clarity in the portrayal of diversity on OTT platforms. The minority of respondents who indicated a negative perception may reflect concerns about underrepresentation or misrepresentation of certain communities or perspectives in OTT content.

Have you observed any changes in your own social values as a result of content consumed on OTT platforms?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	13	17.1	17.1	17.1
No	36	47.4	47.4	64.5
Not Sure	27	35.5	35.5	100.0
Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 9: Observe changes in social values after consuming OTT Content

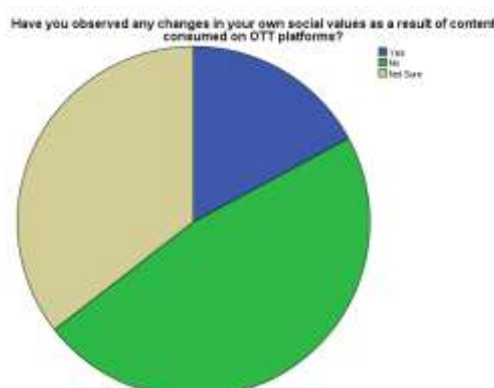


Figure 6: Observe changes in social values after consuming OTT Content

A plurality of respondents (47.4%) indicate that they have not observed any changes in their social values after consuming content on OTT platforms. A smaller proportion (17.1%) acknowledges that they have noticed changes in their social values due to OTT content consumption. A significant portion of respondents (35.5%) express uncertainty or indecision regarding the influence of OTT content on their social values. The data suggests a mixed perception among respondents regarding the impact of OTT content on their social values.

While nearly half of the respondents do not perceive any noticeable changes in their social values, a notable portion acknowledges that OTT content consumption has influenced their values to some extent. The uncertainty expressed by a significant number of respondents may reflect the complexity of assessing the direct influence of media content on individual values or the lack of conscious awareness of such influence.

Should OTT platforms include more content that promotes positive social messages and ethical values?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	61	80.3	80.3	80.3
No	6	7.9	7.9	88.2
Not Sure	9	11.8	11.8	100.0
Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 10: OTT platforms include more content that promotes positive social messages and ethical values

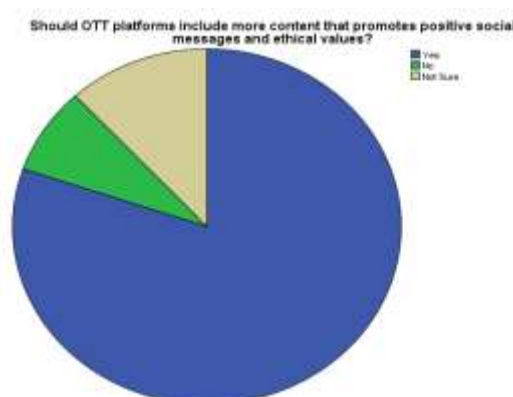


Figure 7: OTT platforms include more content that promotes positive social messages and ethical values

A large majority of respondents (80.3%) express a belief that OTT platforms should include more content promoting positive social messages and ethical values. A small percentage (7.9%) disagrees, indicating that they do not think OTT platforms should prioritize such content.

A modest proportion (11.8%) is unsure or undecided about the inclusion of such content on OTT platforms as table 10 explains.

The overwhelming majority of respondents advocating for more content promoting positive social messages and ethical values on OTT platforms suggests a strong desire for media that aligns with their values and contributes to positive societal outcomes.

The minority of respondents who disagree may have differing perspectives on the role of OTT platforms in promoting social messages and ethical values, or they may prioritize other factors such as entertainment or artistic expression.

The uncertainty expressed by a small portion of respondents may indicate a need for further information or clarification on the potential benefits or challenges associated with incorporating more socially conscious content on OTT platforms.

Ethical Impact of OTT Platforms on People
In your opinion, do you believe the content available on OTT platforms has an impact on ethical values?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	12	15.8	15.8	15.8
Agree	38	50.0	50.0	65.8
Neutral	24	31.6	31.6	97.4
Disagree	2	2.6	2.6	100.0
Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 11: Believe the content available on OTT platforms has an impact on ethical values

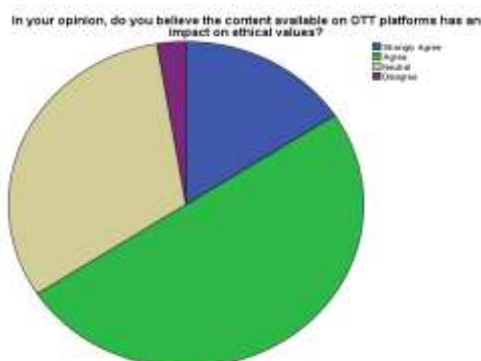


Figure 8: **Believe the content available on OTT platforms has an impact on ethical values**

Based on table 11, the majority of respondents believe that the content available on Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms has an impact on ethical values. Specifically, 15.8% of respondents strongly agree that OTT content has an impact on ethical values. 50.0% of respondents agree that OTT content has an impact on ethical values. 31.6% of respondents are neutral on the issue.

Only 2.6% of respondents disagree that OTT content has an impact on ethical values. This distribution suggests that a significant portion of the population acknowledges the influence of OTT content on ethical values, with the majority either agreeing or strongly agreeing on this point.

Have you become more aware of ethical issues or dilemmas through content on OTT platforms?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	36	47.4	47.4	47.4
No	18	23.7	23.7	71.1
Not Sure	22	28.9	28.9	100.0
Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 12: **Awareness on ethical issues or dilemmas through content on OTT platforms**

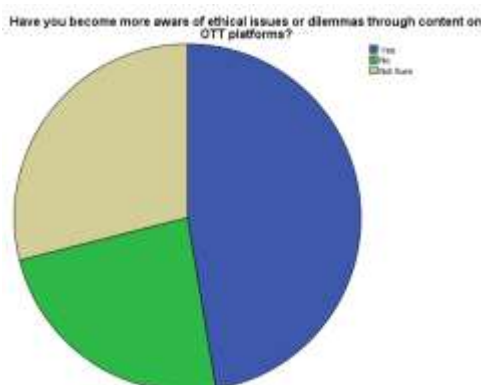


Figure 9: **Awareness on ethical issues or dilemmas through OTT contents**

The data shown in table 12 offers insights into respondents' awareness of ethical issues or dilemmas through content on Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms. The majority of respondents (47.4%) answered "Yes," indicating that they have become more aware of ethical issues or dilemmas through content on OTT platforms. This suggests that a significant portion of the respondents have recognized and engaged with ethical themes presented in OTT content. A smaller portion of respondents (23.7%) answered "No," indicating that they have not become more aware of ethical issues or dilemmas through OTT content. This suggests that some respondents may not perceive OTT content as a significant source of ethical awareness or may not have encountered content that raises ethical considerations. Approximately 28.9% of respondents answered "Not Sure." This response indicates uncertainty or ambiguity regarding the extent to which OTT content has contributed to their awareness of ethical issues or dilemmas. It's possible that these respondents may not have actively reflected on the ethical dimensions of the content they consume or may not have encountered content that explicitly addresses ethical concerns.

Do you believe OTT platforms have a responsibility to portray ethical behavior in their original content?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	51	67.1	67.1	67.1
No	10	13.2	13.2	80.3
Not sure	15	19.7	19.7	100.0
Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 13: Responsibility of OTT platforms to portray ethical behavior

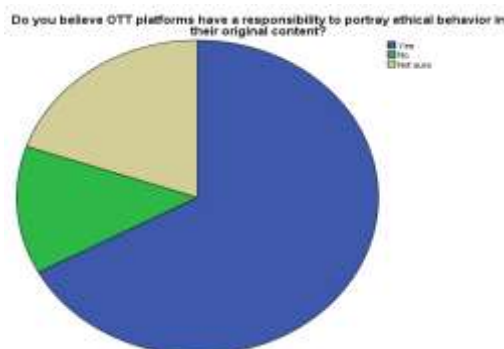


Figure 10: Responsibility of OTT platforms to portray ethical behavior

As table 13 predicts, The majority of respondents (67.1%) answered "Yes," indicating that they believe OTT platforms have a responsibility to portray ethical behavior in their original content. A smaller portion of respondents (13.2%) answered "No," indicating that they do not believe OTT platforms have a responsibility to portray ethical behavior in their original content. Approximately 19.7% of respondents answered "Not Sure." This response indicates uncertainty or ambiguity regarding the extent to which OTT platforms should prioritize ethical considerations in their original content. The data suggests that there is a significant expectation among respondents for OTT platforms to uphold ethical standards in their original content.

Should there be regulations or guidelines in place to monitor and control the social and ethical aspects of content on OTT platforms?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	56	73.7	73.7	73.7
No	11	14.5	14.5	88.2
Not sure	9	11.8	11.8	100.0
Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 14: Need of Regulations or guidelines in place to monitor and control OTT contents

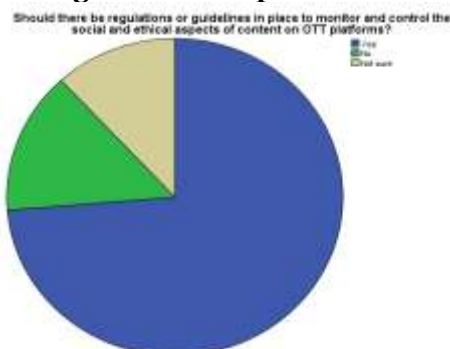


Figure 11: Regulations or guidelines in place to monitor and control OTT contents

The majority of respondents (73.7%) answered "Yes," indicating that they believe there should be regulations or guidelines in place to monitor and control the social and ethical aspects of content on OTT platforms. This suggests a strong consensus among respondents for regulatory measures to ensure ethical standards in OTT content. A smaller portion of respondents (14.5%) answered "No," indicating that they do not believe there should be regulations or guidelines in place for monitoring and controlling the social and ethical aspects of content on OTT platforms.

Around 11.8% of respondents answered "Not Sure." This response indicates uncertainty or ambiguity regarding the need for regulations or guidelines in this context. It's possible that these respondents may

recognize the potential benefits of regulatory measures but are unsure about the most appropriate approach or potential unintended consequences.

Conclusion and Recommendation

- Both males and females predominantly use OTT platforms on a daily and weekly basis, with slightly higher usage counts among males in most frequency categories. However, both genders show similar patterns of usage, particularly in the daily and weekly categories.
- Overall, the findings of the impact on social behavior of the people highlight the perceived influence of OTT content on social behavior, the importance of diverse representation, and the desire for more socially conscious content. These insights can inform discussions and decisions within the media industry regarding content creation, representation, and the promotion of positive social values on OTT platforms.
- Taken as a whole, the findings of the impact on ethical behavior of the people indicate recognition of the ethical dimensions of OTT content and a desire for platforms to prioritize ethical considerations in their content production. Additionally, there is widespread support for regulatory measures to ensure that OTT platforms uphold ethical standards and promote positive social values. These insights can inform discussions and decisions regarding content governance and regulatory frameworks in the OTT industry, aiming to foster responsible content creation and consumption practices.
- OTT platforms have a responsibility to portray ethical behavior in their original content. This entails avoiding harmful stereotypes, promoting respectful interactions, and addressing sensitive topics with care and sensitivity.
- There is a need for regulations or guidelines to monitor and control the social and ethical aspects of content on OTT platforms. Regulatory intervention can help ensure that OTT platforms adhere to ethical standards and contribute positively to societal values.

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