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OTT Platforms Usage Among Youth During Lockdown

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Abstract

OTT media services are a rapidly growing media platform that are gaining momentum with every passing day. This paper attempts to get a better understanding of the trends and patterns pertaining to the usage of OTT platforms among the youth, especially during the lockdown period. The sample consisted of 395 respondents (170 males and 225 females) ranging from 17 to 26 years of age. The questionnaire consisting of 30 items was administered to the youth during the lockdown period through the online mode and percentage analysis was carried out to interpret the data. Obtained results showed that majority of the youth had subscriptions to more than one OTT platforms wherein Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hotstar were the top three OTT platforms. The lockdown had led to an increase in the usage and subscriptions of OTTs, with many consuming media content for more than two hours on the daily basis. Comedy, Sitcoms, Action and Horror were the most popular genres. Over half of the respondents reported such platforms to have an overall positive impact on their daily life. However, prolonged usage led to complaints of eye strain, headaches, back pain and fatigue.

***Key Words:* OTT, Digital media, Pandemic, Entertainment, Media platforms**

1. Introduction

Technology has transformed our lives including the way we communicate with each other, the way we shop, work and now even how we consume entertainment. With the advent of internet in telecommunications, a new form of online video streaming platform has emerged which is known as OTT or Over the Top Media Platform. OTT refers to the streaming of media services offered directly to the viewers via the internet and accessed through websites from either personal computers, smartphones, tablets or smart TVs. Some popular OTTs include- Netflix, Amazon Prime, Voot, Hotstar, Zee5, Hulu and Disney+ to name a few.

Newer generations have moved on to OTT platforms for a variety of reasons the main reason being the convenience of watching a show as per one's own convenience. Having an AI algorithm that recommends shows and series tailored to the users likes and preferences based on has been watched by the user, is beneficial for many such media platforms. OTTs at present not only showcase movies and shows, but also serve as online portals to showcase talents and performances such as music, dance, concerts, sports etc. which as a result can be used by people of different age groups.

With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic across the globe, many of the films and movies are now being released on major OTT platforms instead of waiting for the theatres to reopen. As a result, there is a growing popularity regarding the platform, making it an important and interesting area of research.

2. Literature Review

The advent of OTT or media streaming platforms have challenged the way we watch content. The 'push' and 'pull' mechanisms have originally been used in studies relating to logistics and supply chain management (Harrison, et.al , 2003) and the same can also be seen applicable in marketing and entertainment content. What makes modern digital services like Spotify or Netflix stand out, is that they are pulled by consumers whereas traditional T.V shows/movies push their content onto viewers (Hennig-Thurau & Houston, 2018). This implies that, instead of having to wait for a favourite show/serial/movie to be telecasted on the television, individuals now have the complete freedom to choose what, when and where they wish to consume the desired media content.

A study by (Dixit, et.al,2020) in the South East Asian countries of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia & Nepal during the COVID-19 pandemic found that most of the participants agreed that their internet usage had increased on a daily average by 27.6%. Overall, 73.7% participants had agreed to a considerable increase in their binge watching habits, with an increase in the average time of 3-5 hours (for 17.3% of participants) and more than 5 hours (for 11.5% of the participants). The study also indicated that 52.6% of the participants reported that the major psychological motivation for their binge watching was to pass time and escape boredom, 25% reported to binge watch for relieving stress and 15.7% used binge watching as a method to overcome loneliness.

A similar study by (Madnani & Fernandes, 2020) in India also found that the average hours spent on OTT platforms during the pandemic had increased from 0-2 to 2-5 hours and the average spending that users are willing to make on OTT platforms is around Rs. 100-300 per month. The study also found that the satisfaction of the viewers was directly related to the space to watch with family, quality of content, time to use OTT platforms and preference of OTT platforms over traditional T.V.

The Nudge theory is a popular concept in behavioural science that was popularized by (Thaler, Sunstein, 2009). It is based on the premise that indirect or subtle suggestions have the ability to influence the decision making and behaviour of groups or individuals. This can be achieved by designing choices which can trigger our cognitive processes to favour the outcome desired. Many OTT platforms can be seen incorporating this concept by showing the recommendation list and auto playing media content.

Binge watching is an important strategy for such companies because when customers are recommended content/shows by the AI algorithm, that are tailored to their preferences based on the shows that they have watched , it keeps them interested and thus less likely to cancel their subscriptions as long as they are bingeing (Jenner, 2015).

An Indian study conducted by (Gangwar, et.al, 2020) revealed that over 83.9% of the participants had reported to have started using a new OTT subscription during the lockdown. The study also showed that social media (opted by 70.8%) was the major source that was attracting one towards subscribing to an OTT platform.

An empirical study conducted by researchers (Bhullar &Chaudhary, 2020) in Tri city areas of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula in India, showed that 4 factors, namely - customisation, user interface, perceived enjoyment and content quality were having significant and positive impact on the attitudes of users towards adopting OTT media.

OTTs like Netflix are also winning the original content wars against traditional T.V by producing shows that are interesting, with no commercial breaks, complex narratives, captivating characters, and many cliff-hangers that help keep the audience engaged throughout. This gives rise to binge watching and when large amounts of audience binge watch shows, it leads to the public's growing preference for back to back, commercial free binges thus influencing screenwriters and marketing directors to produce shows that have heavily serialized storytelling with complicated plot lines that are filled with embedded cues /mysteries, and shorter episodes per season (Matrix, 2014).

OTTs release entire seasons at a time, which promotes long-form viewing as the main mode of entertainment consumption. Because of this many viewers wait until the entire season ends before deciding to watch a show (Burroughs, 2018). This highlights a drastic change in which entertainment is now consumed. Viewers at times wait for the entire season to come out and then watch the entire season of the show as per their convenience and free time.

Researchers (Castro et.al, 2019) investigated the motivations and affective states surrounding OTTs found that, relaxation, boredom relief and escapism were the 3 major motivators of the subjects/ participants to start watching TV fiction on Netflix. It was also seen that viewers had different motivations for watching Netflix depending on the time of the day. For example, it was seen that relaxation and escapism were the primary motivations to watch Netflix during the evenings and nights. Boredom and relief were the main motivations during the afternoons and evenings, wherein the durations of the sessions/watch time were also slightly shorter than those motivated by relaxation and escapism.

An analysis of OTT preferences in Jamshedpur during the pandemic by researchers (Rachita Ota, et. al, 2020) revealed that the reach of Hotstar was the maximum followed by Netflix. It was found that livestreaming of sports such as IPL & ISL was the major attraction of Hotstar along with the local Hindi TV serials that were widely consumed by the home makers. Netflix was popular among the students/millennials due to the original content, movies and the availability of Foreign Language web series including Dark Extraction and Money Heist.

A study by (Kakkar & Kalyani,2019) was done on product placements in web series. While the participants ranged from 14-55 years, researchers found that participants belonging to the age group of 20-35 years were significantly more likely to buy the products placed in the web series than the other age groups. It was also seen that brand endorsements done by celebrities in web series had more long-lasting impacts on the respondents in the study as compared to the traditional commercials.

Another study by (Patnaik, et.al, 2021) found that OTT platforms were the most preferred source of entertainment in comparison to other sources of media content (T.V, YouTube etc.). It was also seen that social recommendations and advertisements were the two main sources from where individuals became aware about their current OTT service.

Researchers (Sundarwal & Elangovan, 2020) also mention that as the subset of regional language speaking users is on the rise, major streaming services like Amazon Prime, and Netflix are focusing on producing content in 8 major regional languages, besides Hindi and English which are now the two most preferred languages on OTTs.

In view of the literature review and theories, the present study was conducted to understand the consumption patterns and trends of OTT platforms by the youth in the Indian context, during the COVID-19 lockdown.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

The sample for the study comprised of 395 respondents, including 225 females and 170 males from different backgrounds and varying levels of education. The ages of the respondents ranged from 17 to 26 years, with the mean age being 20 years (SD=1.27). Participants who were regular users of OTT platform were chosen for the study.

3.2 Data Collection & Tools

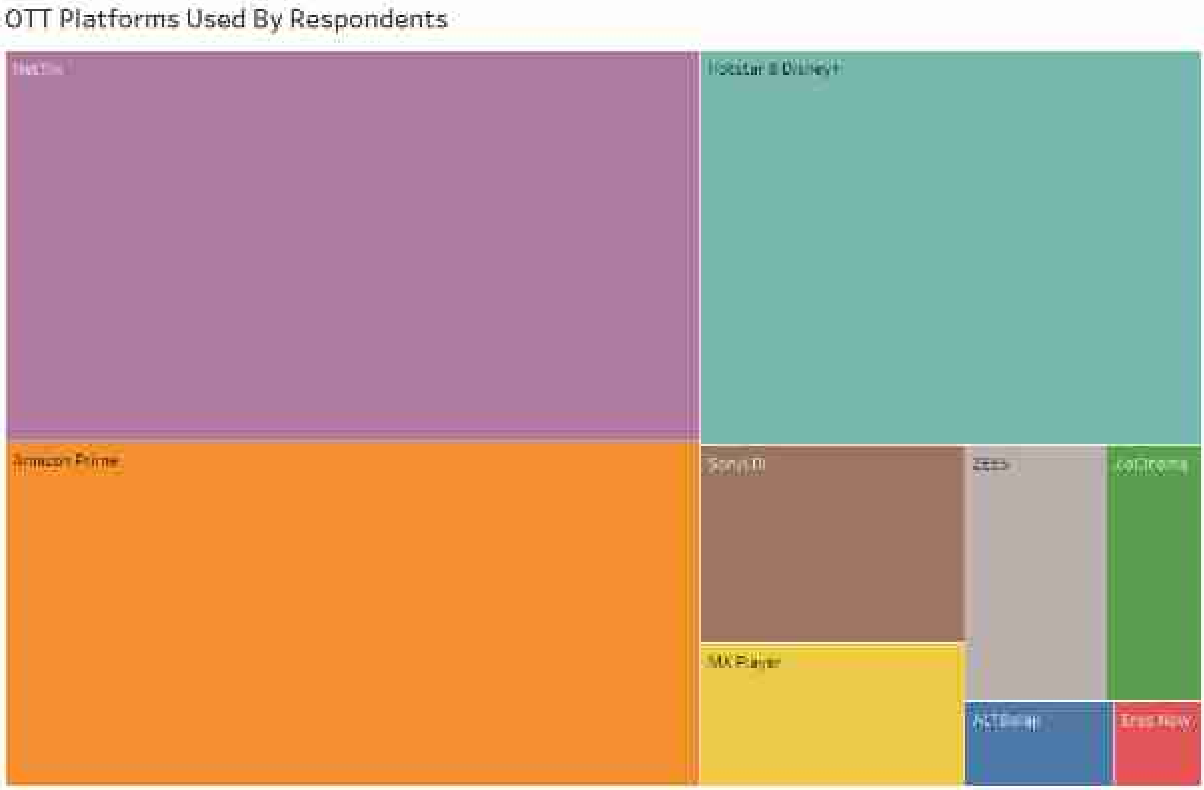
The questionnaire administered for the present study was developed by the researchers and circulated in the online mode via Google Forms. Additionally, a short telephonic interview was taken for 124 participants in order to get a clearer perspective for the study. The participants were given all the information about the present study and its purpose. They were asked about their participation on a voluntary basis and the informed consent was obtained. Precautions were taken to respect the confidentiality of their personal information and all of the participants were assured that the data obtained would not be misused. The questionnaire circulated consisted of 30 items including a combination of dichotomous questions, multiple choice questions, rating scales and open-ended questions. Percentage analysis were carried out for analysing the data.

4. Results

This section showcases the major findings of the statistical analysis that was carried out on the data collected.

Obtained results showed that over 84% of the respondents were using more than 1 OTT platform for watching media content. Out of this, Netflix was the most popular platform, used by majority (362 respondents), along with Amazon Prime (320 respondents) and Hotstar a.ka. Disney + Hotstar (264 respondents). This was followed by SonyLIV (70 respondents), MX Player (62 respondents) and ZEE5 (48 respondents). Following this were - JioCinema (33 respondents), ALTBalaji (17 respondents) Eros Now (10 respondents) and a few other platforms (16 respondents) as indicated in **Fig.1**.

Fig.1 The various OTT platforms used by respondents

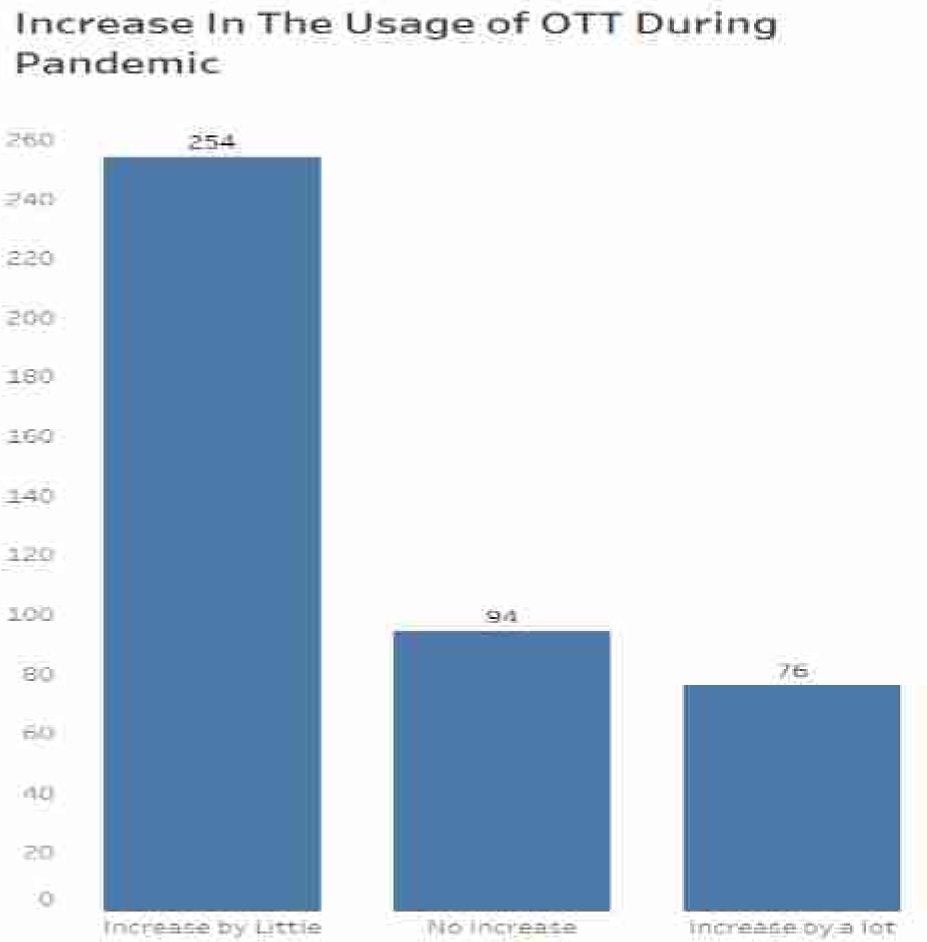


N=395

Mobile phones were found to be the most frequently used medium of media consumption (56.5%) as compared to laptops/desktops or smart T. Vs

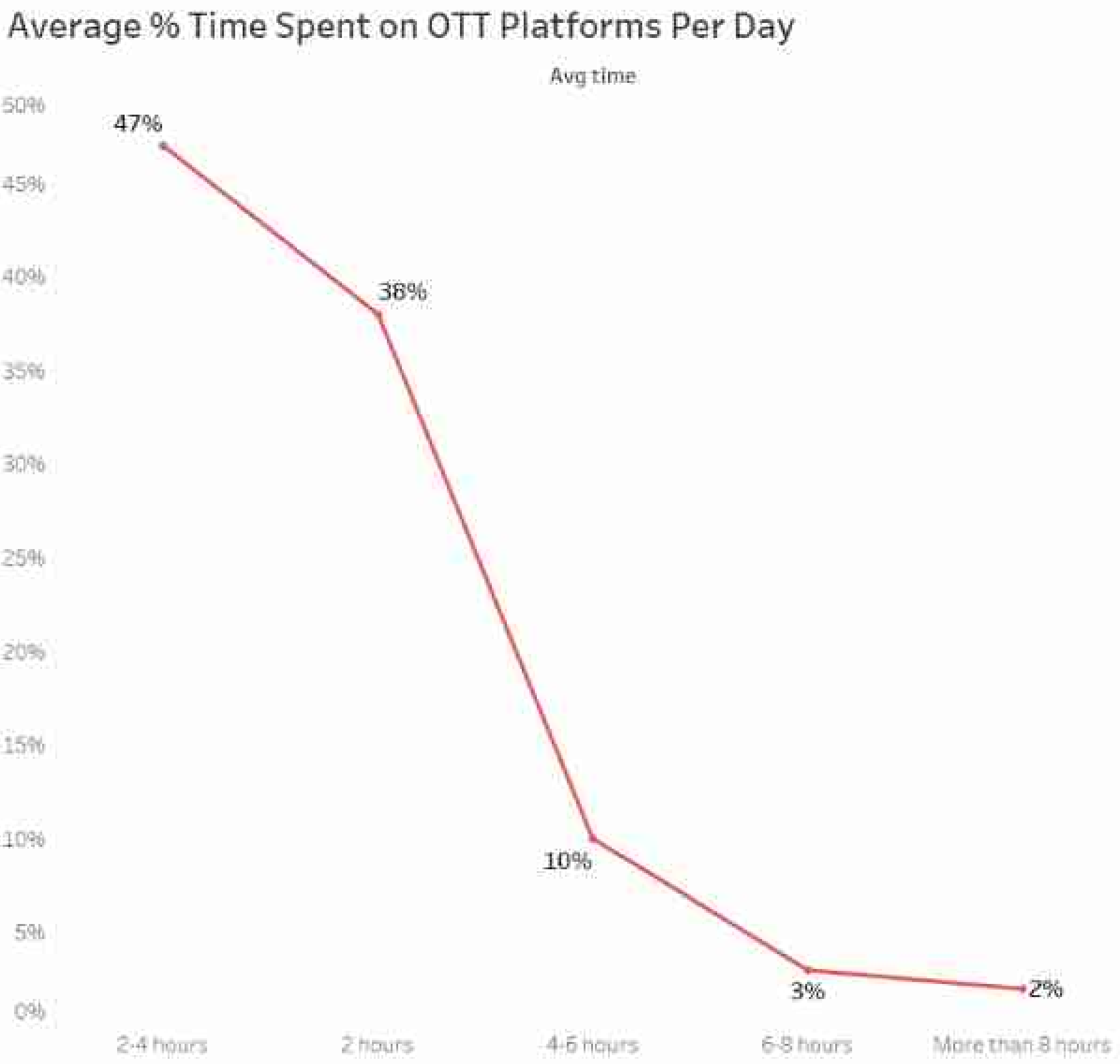
Over 75% of the respondents claimed that their usage of OTT platforms was more than it was before the lockdown, with 40% claiming to experience a little increase in the time spent while 35% claimed to experience a very significant increase in the time spent using OTT platforms post the lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, as seen in **Fig. 2.** Furthermore, 58.4% of the respondents were found to have purchased a new subscription to an OTT platform during the lockdown.

Fig.2 Increase in the usage of OTT during the pandemic



In case of the average time spent watching media content, 47% were found to spend 2-4 hours, 38% spent less than 2 hours, 10% spent 4-6 hours, 3% spent 6-8 hours and 2% spent more than 8 hours on such platforms as illustrated in **Fig.3.**

Fig.3 The average time respondents spend on OTT platforms per day



While majority of the respondents were satisfied with the services offered and did not face any issues with the platforms only 16.4% had faced the need to contact customer service to resolve their issues.

The data showed that over 58% of the respondents had their very own individual subscription to OTT platforms, out of which 87% preferred to have a yearly subscription over a monthly one. It was also found that 54.1% of the participants selected their subscriptions based on the HD or ultra-HD screen quality feature.

Results showed that over 69% of the respondents had agreed to pay for an OTT subscription as part of their telecoms plan if it was either offered at a discount or with an extended free trial period. Amongst this, 80% said they would avail this only if it was offered by their existing telecom service provider while 20% asserted to switch to another telecom service to avail the same.

Overall, 75.4% claimed that they primarily watch content on the OTT platforms alone by themselves. Furthermore, 72.2% of the respondents revealed that their parents never monitor the media content that they consume through these platforms.

The data revealed that majority (60.2%) now preferred watching movies/T. V series on OTT platforms as compared to movie theatres or cable T.Vs.

The most popular type of media content consumed was movies, closely followed by Web series, T.V series and documentaries. Similarly, the most popular genres included Comedy, Sitcoms, Action, Horror and Anime as indicated in **Fig.4.** and **Fig. 5.** Further analysis revealed that personal interest and recommendations by family and friends were the primary influencers of one's decision to watch a particular show/movie/series.

Fig.4 The type of genre watched by respondents on OTT platforms

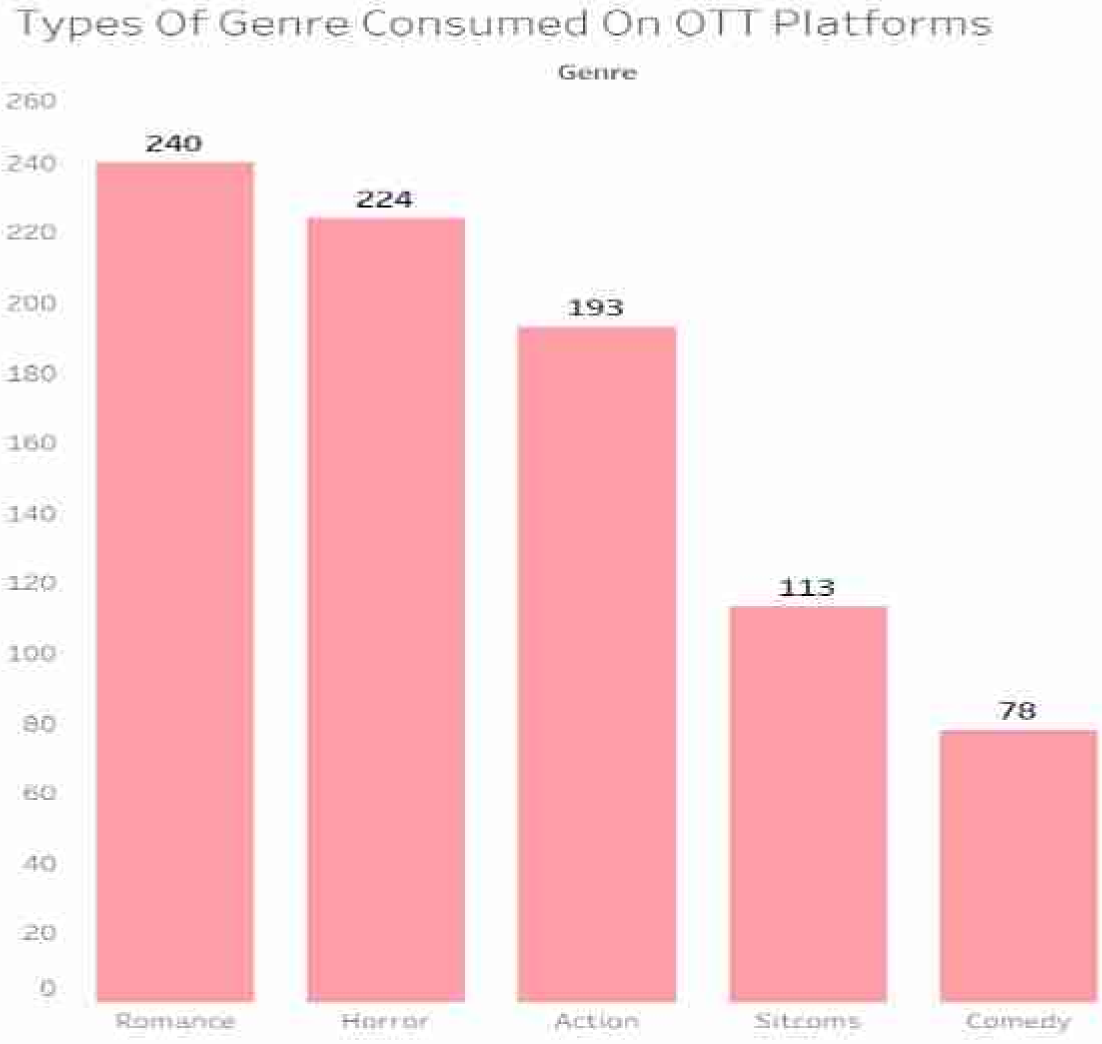
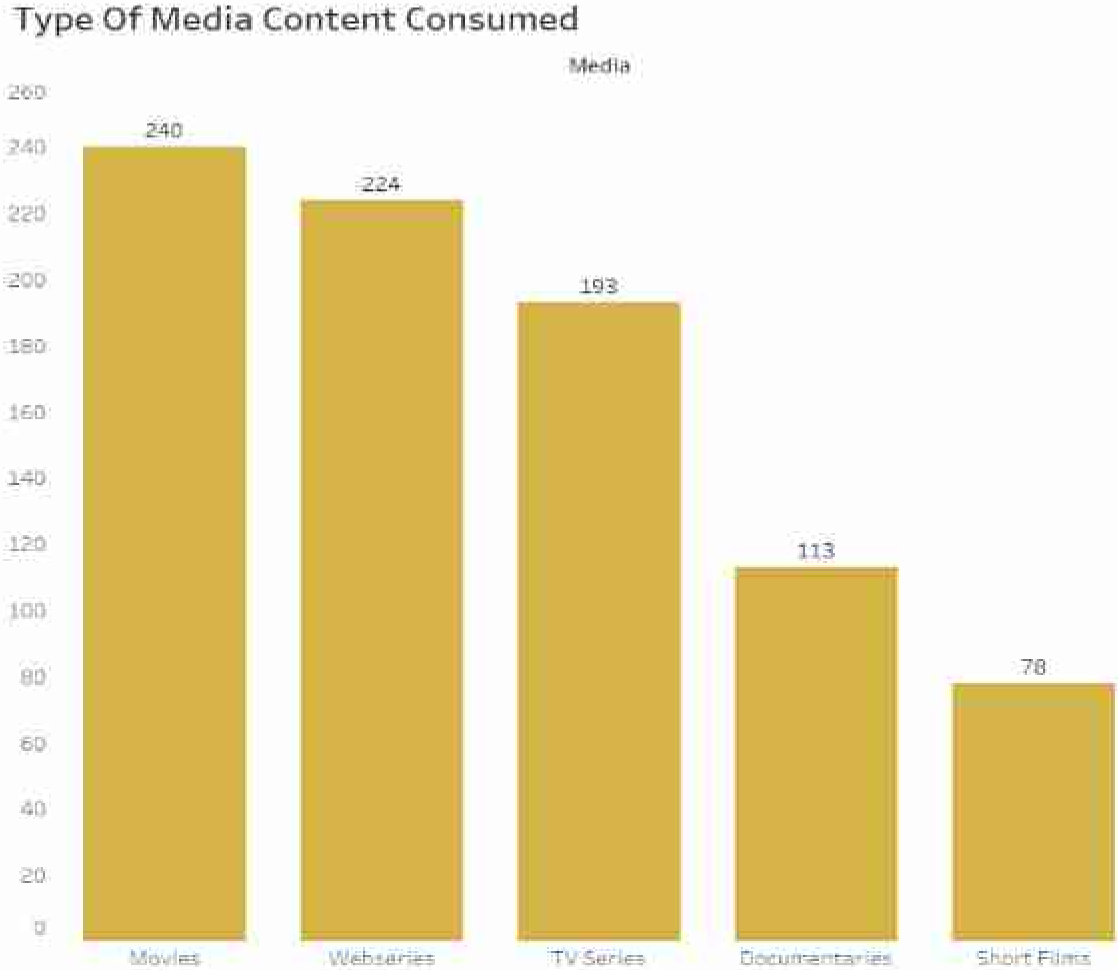


Fig.5 The type of media content consumed by respondents



When asked to rate the overall impact of OTT platforms on their daily life, 51% claimed that such platforms had a positive impact while 39% claimed that there was no impact and 10% stated that there was a negative impact caused by OTT platforms on their day to day life.

To get a clearer understanding of the impacts of OTT platforms on the daily life of participants, a telephonic interview was conducted for consenting participants. The most common themes for positive impacts included – a source for entertainment and leisure, knowledge about the world and other cultures , coping method for stress and boredom, change in perspective and a conversation starter. The negative themes included distraction, binge watching , procrastination and an increase in screen time. A summary of the major themes and verbatims obtained, have been illustrated in **Table.1.**

Table. 1 Depicting the major themes and verbatims obtained from respondents

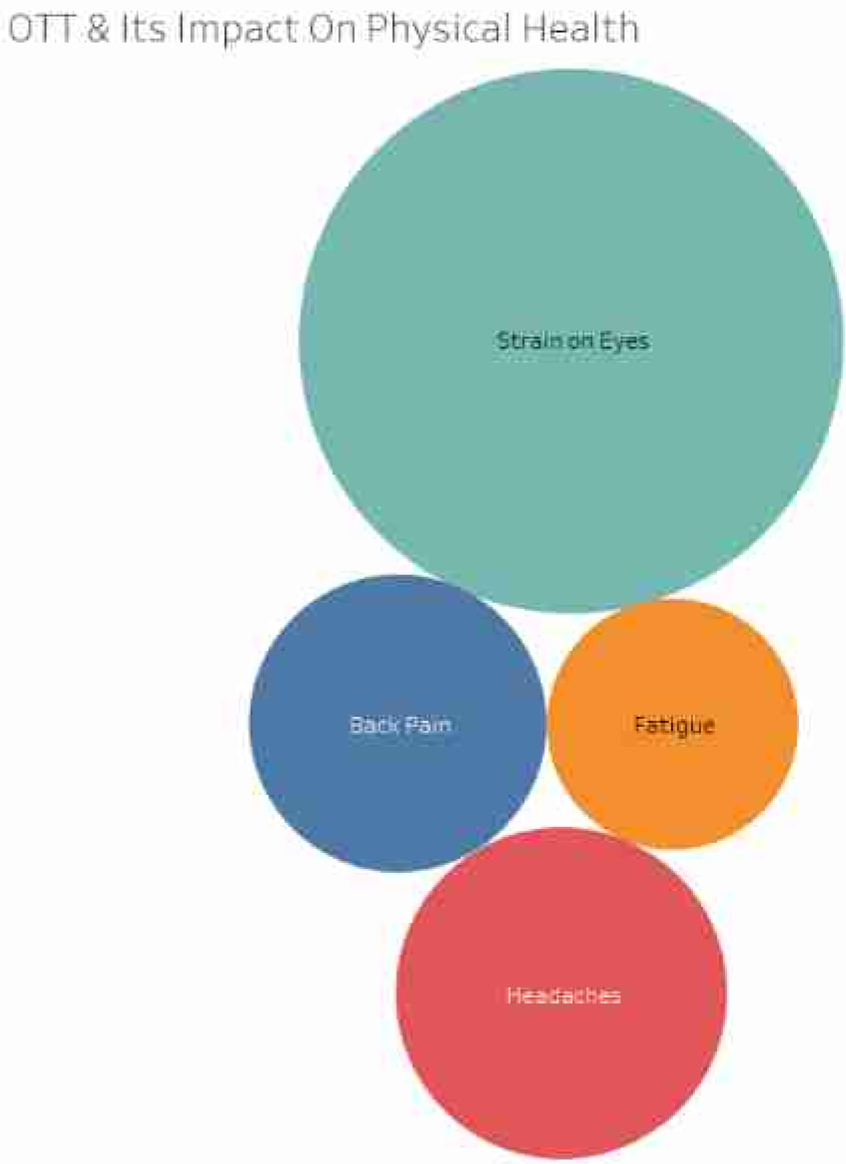
Impact	Themes		Verbatim
Positive	i)	Entertainment & Leisure	*"Netflix helps me pass time in an enjoyable way and also helps me relax."* *"I like passing time by watching a movie or two and unwinding for the day.. I use it as a way of relaxing and chilling for a reasonable amount of time. It has almost become a routine for me."* *"I have just started watching Anime on Netflix and it has really become something I look forward to after a long and tiring day. It is fun to watch and brings a smile to my face."*
	ii)	Information & Knowledge	*"Watching movies, series and documentaries on OTT platforms has helped me in improving my vocabulary and gain knowledge."* *"The wide range of dramas and documentaries available are very informative and interesting. I like watching them and learning intriguing facts about my topics of interest."* *"With content easily available from across the world, OTT platforms have helped me expand my knowledge about people, practices, society etc. I think by selectively picking out the good things from all of it, we can lead a much better life and encourage those around us to do so as well."*
	iii)	Tackling stress & boredom	*"They are very helpful in de-stressing. I feel like I can come home and unwind by putting on my favourite sitcom."* *"...personally, it has been a stress and boredom buster after a tiring day of studies."* *" It has helped me deal with boredom during lockdown"*

			"They give me a getaway from all the stresses in life because when I am watching any series or movie I do it with full concentration and my mind doesn't wander off to remind me of all the stress"
	iv)	New perspectives	*"OTTs have helped me expand my views and perspective by watching documentaries and informative shows."* *"It has made me more aware and sensitive of different cultures and issues."* *"They have been a great way to expand my awareness, perspectives and understanding of many socio-political issues."*
	v)	Conversation starter	*"They have impacted my life in a positive way as they help me in socialising and are often a great help to initiate conversations."* *" I now have topics to start a conversation with. Also, I would say my conversation skills have improved because of this."* *".. the type of content and the plethora of options have made me open up and discuss various topics of interests with my friends/family."*
Negative	i)	Distraction	*"I spend so much time watching stuff that it distracts me completely."* *"For a particular amount of money, we get a wide range of content to watch from. This also proves to be the negative side of it as the availability of something to watch just a click away becomes a distraction for me."*
	ii)	Binge watching	*"I frequently end up getting hooked on new and exciting series and binge watch them. This drains my energy and messes up my sleep schedule."*

		"It's very difficult to quit watching a show until I finish it entirely, which usually takes up a lot of my time"
	iii) Procrastination	*"I tend to procrastinate a lot and when I'm using Netflix or watching a new series."* *"I like watching new movies/shows online for free. But then I spend too much time thinking about them and do not get my work done on time."*
	iv) Excessive screen time	*"It is too addictive and has contributed to me wasting a lot of time by watching questionable content and my screen time has gone up significantly."* *"The prolonged hours spent has made me lethargic and lazy"*
No Impact	NA	*"They did not have a significant impact on my daily life. I mostly watch something while having meals and there is only limited usage other than that."* *"To be honest, I do not feel that OTT have had any impact on my life."*

The prolonged use of such platforms was also seen to have an impact on the physical health of participants as over 85.4% respondents reported to have experienced some form, or a combination of various impacts on their physical health. Some of the most common complaints were that of eye strain, followed by headaches, back pain and fatigue as showcased in **Fig.6.**

Fig.6 The physical impact of OTT services



Questions pertaining to motives behind watching a particular show, changes in feelings/emotions while consuming media and impact on online activity , yielded inconclusive results and therefore have not been included in the present paper.

5.Discussion

The present study was carried out with the objective of getting a better understanding of the trends and patterns pertaining to the usage of OTT platforms among the youth, especially during the lockdown period.

In the recent years the OTT sector in India has witnessed an exponential growth in popularity and is expected to generate a revenue of Rs. 338 billion by FY22 (IBEF, 2021). Further, a number of studies and reports have shown that the outbreak of COVID pandemic led to a significant increase in viewership and subscriptions of OTT platforms. India was seen to have a 30% rise in the number of pain subscriptions from 22.2 million to 29.0 million between the months of March and July in the year 2020 (1BEF, Knowledge Centre,2020). Similarly, our findings reflected that more than half of the respondents had purchased new OTT subscriptions during the lockdown, with over 75% admitting to spending more time than before on such platforms during the lockdown.

While the growing popularity of OTTs has given rise to more than 30 platforms, Amazon Prime, Hotstar (now Disney+ Hotstar) and Netflix have become the most well-known brands. Our findings showed that amongst the youth, Netflix was the most popular and used platform followed by Amazon Prime and Hotstar. The main reasons for their popularity were expansive choice of original and exclusive content. Being a mobile first market, it is no surprise that the present study illustrated that mobile phones were found to be the most frequent mode of watching content. This can also be attributed to convenience, easy access to internet and low mobile data charges. Moreover, some platforms are seen to offer subscription plans exclusively for mobile phones which are comparatively cheaper that those for laptops/T.Vs. etc. According to a recent report by Omnicom Media Group in 2020, titled 'COVID-19: The Impact on Media Consumption of Indians' showed that on an average Indians spend over 95 minutes on OTTS on a daily basis. Similarly, our findings showed that over 62% spent more than 2 hours every day using OTT platforms. Addictive use of digital media may have negative impacts including poor sleep, risk for cardiovascular diseases, impaired vision (Lissak,2018) and eyes strain which includes many symptoms like headaches, sore neck/shoulders/back, watery or dry eyes and burning/itching of eyes (Mayo Clinic) to name a few. In this context, our findings revealed that over 85% reported to experience some form of impact on their physical health due to the prolonged screen use while consuming media content. This highlights the dire need for individuals to take adequate breaks in between their screen time and also make changes by cutting down the total time spent on such platforms to prevent any damage to their health. Our findings illustrated that a large proportion of respondents watched content on OTT platforms alone by themselves. Similarly, in this context a comparative study between traditional T.V and OTT platforms by (Madhani & Nakhate, 2020) showed that participants mostly preferred to watch media content like web series /dramas on OTT platforms by themselves while traditional T.V was a preferred mode to watch content like news and sports with friends and family. This suggests one to look at OTT services and Television as two mediums that can coexist with each other as opposed to being seen in a dichotomy .

Although our findings showed that a significant number of respondents claimed to prefer watching movies on OTTs rather than in the theatres during the lockdown, it is unclear whether the same will hold true once the pandemic ends and the theatres resume operating like they did before. The present study also highlights the possibility for telecom service providers to include OTT subscriptions as a part of their plans , in order to cater to the needs of the masses and also gain profits.

5.1 Limitations

The present study can give one some useful insights and perspectives about the consumption patterns of OTT platforms among the youth but it is also important to consider some limitations of the present study for future studies.

Consumer preferences and reasons for opting for a specific platform or type of content have not been fully explained with the dimensions used for the study. It is also unclear whether the findings would be applicable to the scenario when the pandemic completely ends and traditional means of entertainment resume like before. Moreover, the administration of an online survey brings forth certain drawbacks to consider such as response bias and sampling bias. Lastly, only percentage analysis was carried out and there was an absence of higher order statistics which could have illustrated possibly more comprehensive associations between data sets.

5.2 Suggestions for Future Research

The present study mainly focused on the usage, trends and consumption patterns of media content on OTT platforms. Future research can be enhanced by studying the motives, incentives and influences that make one watch media content or binge watch such shows. Understanding the emotional impacts and influences of the content and characters on individuals along with the effectiveness of product placement in web series/shows/movies would also be useful. In depth interviews can allow researchers to understand the elements that make particular show/ movie captivating and popular, which in turn could help screenwriters and filmmakers produce desired content. Future researchers can also compare the consumption habits of media on OTT platforms during and after the pandemic.

6. Conclusion

OTTs are a rapidly growing media platform that are gaining momentum with every passing day. A variety of factors such as internet penetration, accessibility, smartphones and the lockdown have resulted in the rise in the number of OTT viewership and subscriptions. While Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hotstar are some of the leading platforms, there is an emergence of many other regional OTTs. Whether these platforms will completely overtake traditional T.V or theatres is still unclear and debatable, however it is certain that it has changed the way we consume entertainment today.

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Car Buying Behaviour in India

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Abstract

With the exponential increase in the number of cars bought, this paper attempts to explore and understand the patterns of consumer behaviour towards buying a car. The sample for this study consisted of 1015 adults (469 females and 546 males) from differing backgrounds and occupations. The questionnaire administered for the study was developed by the researchers and the data was collected online using Google forms. Percentage analysis and Mean comparison were carried out to interpret the data. Obtained results showed that buying a car was considered to be a necessity and family use was the primary motive to buy a car. Familiar brands, availability of parking space, advertisements and getting better offers were seen to be some factors influencing consumers. The comfort of a car was seen to be essential and features such as good mileage, dual airbags anti-lock braking system along with music system with USB/Radio/Bluetooth/AUX were considered to be important. Overall, Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai and Honda were the most liked and recommended car brands due to their affordable price range, features and comfort.

Key Words- ***Consumer Behaviour, Car Buying, Preference***

1. Introduction

The automobile industry of India is one of the largest in the world and is growing every year. With the easy availability of car loans, rise in salary, more disposable income and quick access to information, the task of purchasing a car has now become more streamlined and convenient. There have also been changes in ideologies towards cars. A few decades ago, owning a car was considered to be a luxury but in the present day and age, it is almost a necessity. In fact, families now owning two vehicles is a common sight. Buying a car is considered to be a high involvement purchase because unlike other products it is an expensive and an infrequent purchase that requires an extensive amount of research. For such complex purchases, it is important for car dealers and marketers to understand consumer behaviour towards buying a car such as – the features & accessories they are looking for, their main purpose for making a purchase, their priorities, preferences and so on. Thus, it is essential for us to study and understand what influences car buying decisions.

2. Literature Review

Many researches use the 5-stage model described by (Kotler & Keller, 2012) to understand consumer behaviour and the process involved while buying a particular commodity. As per this model, the 5 stages that are involved in the consumer decision process are namely- problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, product choice and post purchase. Applying this to the process of buying a car, we can establish the following: -Stage 1- Problem Recognition -here a consumer realizes the need to buy a car. Stage 2- Information Search -he uses different sources to find information about the cars available in the market. Stage 3- Evaluation of Alternatives-he compares several car models in terms of their price, features, deals etc. Stage 4- Product Choice – he chooses one particular car over another based on his own appraisal and reasoning. Stage 5- Post Purchase- consumer takes ownership and evaluates if the purchase has met his expectations or not.

According to (Shen,1997) population growth and increasing living standards of people can be seen as the major causes for the rise in number of cars in the cities. Based on the work of (Monga et. al 2012) it was seen that increase in disposable income was a contributing factor for purchasing a car. Their study also showed that growing family needs and an increase in the family size were some additional motives for buying a car. In another study that was conducted in the state of Karnataka (Joseph & Kamble, 2011) found that the availability of auto finance or consumer credit is an important aspect that influences the purchase of passenger cars. Similarly, researchers (Sheik & Ali,2013) in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu analysed consumer preferences towards passenger cars. It was found that certain factors like price, technology and comfort were taken into account by buyers before selecting a brand.

A 2013 study was targeted towards the luxury car segment of India, which is currently on the rise as more luxury cars are entering into the Indian markets. It was found that such types of cars were mostly preferred by High-Net-Worth Individuals who wished to differentiate themselves from others. The study also found that factors relating to demographics, socio-culture and customer requirements impacted the choices for those types of cars (Verma & Rathore, 2013) .

Various studies across India have reported that television advertising is one of the biggest influencers of car purchasing behaviour along with magazines, word of mouth and ratings. In the study conducted by (Srivastava & Matta 2014) in Delhi NCR, results illustrated that many respondents relied upon their friends and advertisements in case of determining a pre-purchase. Their study also showed that the decisions of the consumers were influenced by factors like culture, family and lifestyle. Another empirical study based in Hyderabad

(Ravinder & Srikrishna, 2017), found that purchasing of a car is greatly influenced by car advertisements followed by the recommendations of family and friends. It was also observed that in case of the small car segment of India, Alto 800 was the most preferred car followed by Santro, Tata Indica and Spark.

Researchers (Stella and Rajeshwari ,2012) focused on the relationship between customer satisfaction, brand image and information from mass media. Their study showed that many consumers rely upon inputs from their relatives/friends/spouses etc for decision making. Through the work of (Sharma, 2010) it was seen that when a buyer thinks of buying a new car, it takes on an average 9.8 days to research about the product and those who have used the car will take about 7.7 days. Researchers (Kaur, Sandhu,2004) found that some of the factors considered by consumers while buying a car were safety & comfort, luxury, reliability, ease of finance, variety, colour, fuel efficiency, spaciousness and brand image. Another study found that majority of the respondents preferred sedans (61%) followed by SUVs and Hatchbacks. MUV was seen to be the least favoured car type that was preferred by only (6.4%) of the respondents (Mathur et. al, 2018).

In view of the literature review and earlier studies cited, this study was conducted in order to understand the motives and patterns of consumer behaviour towards purchasing a car in the Indian context.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

The sample size for the study consisted of 1015 adults, comprising of 469 females and 546 males from varying socio-economic backgrounds and occupations. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 years to 65 years, with the mean age being 37 years (SD=9.56). The participants also had differing car budgets that ranged from up to 5 lakhs to above 15 lakhs. Table. 1 depicts the distribution of car budgets of the participants.

Table 1. Car Budgets of Participants

Car Budget (in Rupees):	Count
Above 15 Lakhs	214
Between 10 to 15 Lakhs	241
Between 5 to 10 Lakhs	345
Up to 5 Lakhs	215

3.2 Data Collection & Tools

The questionnaire was developed by the researchers and the data for the study was collected online via Google Forms, the link for which was shared through WhatsApp/E-mail. All the participants were informed the main purpose for the present study and the informed consent was obtained. Precautions were taken to respect the confidentiality of the participants and it was ensured that the data collected is valid and would not be misused. The questionnaire administered consisted of a total of 32 items which included a combination of dichotomous questions, multiple choice questions, rating scale questions, Likert scale questions and open- ended questions. The responses for the five-point Likert Scale ranged from (1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree). Percentage analysis, mean comparison and standard deviation was used for analysing the responses submitted.

4. Results & Discussion

This section showcases the major findings of the statistical analysis that was carried out on the data collected.

Findings showed that the most preferred mode of payment for buying a car was through cash or cheques (38%) and Equated Monthly Instalments (34%) followed by car loans offered by the banks/car dealers (28%).

Out of all the respondents of the study, 36% respondents did not own a car. Amongst those who already owned a car, more than half of the respondents were planning to buy a new car as an upgrade from their existing car. Furthermore, obtained results showed that parking space was an important aspect as 79% respondents claimed that they take availability of parking space into consideration before purchasing a car.

When the participants were asked if they would consider buying a second-hand car, majority (70%) of them had declined and only 30% had agreed. The figures also revealed that 37% of the respondents claimed that they relied on others suggestions more than their own when it came to making a purchase.

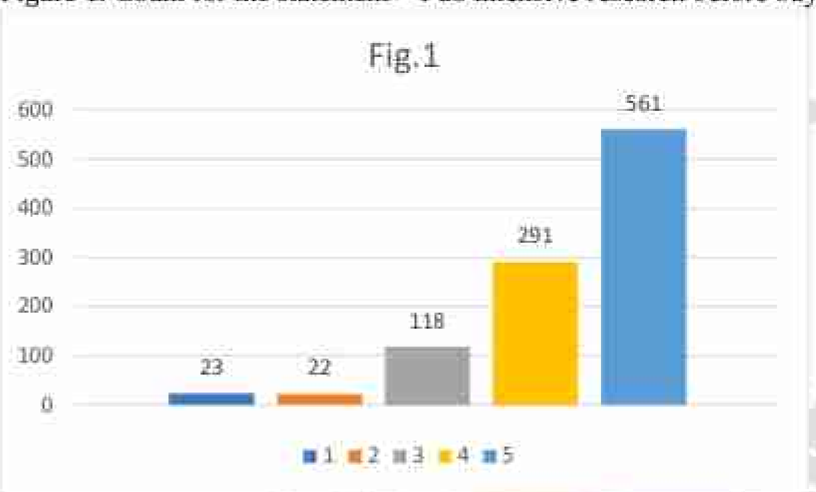
The results showed that family use was seen as a primary motive for buying a car by 73% respondents.

Obtained results indicated that advertisements play an important role as 62% of the participants stated that car advertisements were successful in affecting their thoughts and opinions of a particular car brand. Furthermore, it was also seen that over 76% of the respondents claimed to prefer brands that they knew and were familiar with , as compared to the newer brands available in the market.

The findings for the present study also revealed that 69% of the respondents were willingly to exceed their car budget if they were offered better features/offers on the car.

Results indicated that a large proportion of the respondents claimed to do intensive research before purchasing a product (*M*= 4.53, *SD*=0.9). When presented with the item- " I do intensive research before buying a product", 55% of the respondents had strongly agreed, 29% had agreed ,12% remained neutral, 2% had disagreed and another 2% had strongly disagreed with the item (Fig.1).

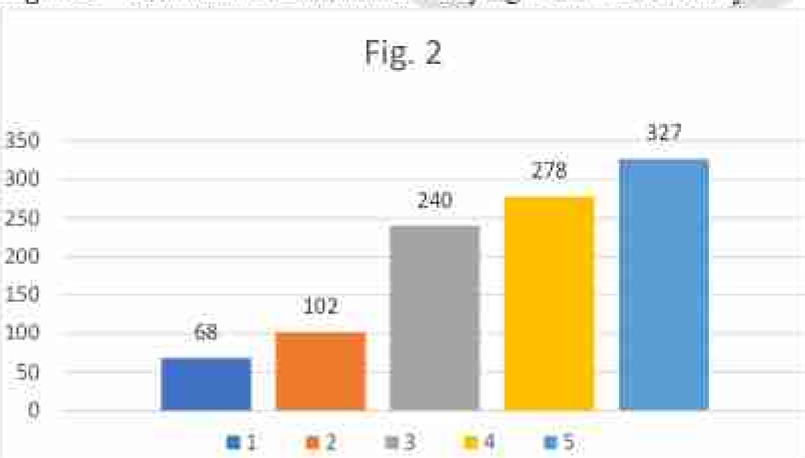
Figure 1. Count for the statement- "I do intensive research before buying a product."



Note. 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

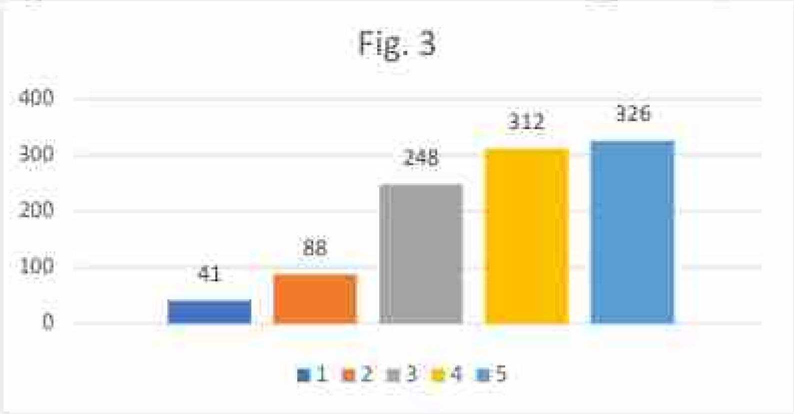
A significant number of respondents felt that buying a car is a necessity (*M*= 3.68, *SD* =1.2). When presented with the item "buying a car is a necessity", 32% had strongly agreed, 27% had agreed and 24% remained neutral. On the other hand, only 10% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed (Fig.2).

Figure.2 – Count for the statement- "Buying a car is a necessity"



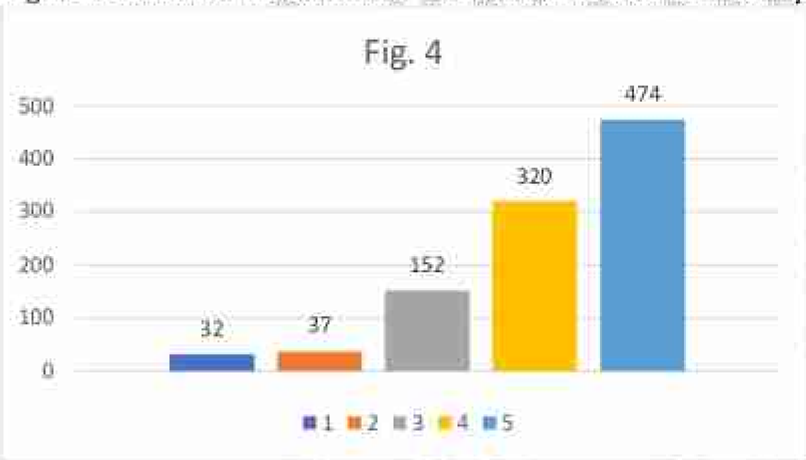
The data revealed that a number of people claimed to know exactly what they wanted before they even entered the store (*M*=3.7, *SD*= 1.1). When presented with the item- "Before entering the store, I know exactly what I want.", 32% had strongly agreed, 31% agreed and 24% remained neutral. Whereas, 9% and 4% had disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively (Fig.3).

Figure.3 – Count for the statement "Before entering the store, I know exactly what I want."



Obtained results showed that a large number of respondents preferred comfort over looks of a car (M=4.1, SD= 1.0). When presented with the item " The comfort of a car is more important than its looks.", 47% had strongly agreed, 31% had agreed and 15% remained neutral. On the other hand, only 4% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed (Fig.4).

Figure. 4- Count for the statement "The comfort of a car is more important than its looks."



A large proportion of participants were found to be neutral (neither agreed nor disagreed) when presented with the items such as – "The more expensive a car is, the more reliable is the car.", "A car is a symbol of prestige." and "Car dealers are likely to influence my purchasing decisions."

Participants were asked about the additional features they consider are important to have in a car. The data revealed that good mileage, dual airbags anti-lock braking system along with music system with USB/Radio/Bluetooth/AUX were seen to be some of the most important features. This was followed by heigh adjustable seatbelts and luxurious interior. On the other hand, features like heated seats, CNG system and sunroof were considered to be the least important.

Table.2 Car brands liked and recommended by the respondents

"Maruti Suzuki, old trusted brand, economical. Good mileage. Good post sale service. With less maintenance. It's Indian brand, very dependable and the spare parts are available everywhere."
"Hyundai because they're a reliable South-Korean brand manufacturing affordable cars with great features and they provide a very long warranty compared to other brands."
"Maruti Suzuki, very long-lasting cars, excellent servicing services, affordable price range, consistency in their brand."
"Hyundai. The features, mileage and interior provided by Hyundai is really good. Also, good range of cars at affordable price"
"Toyota and Honda are two amazing brands because they are not only comfortable but also affordable."
"Volkswagen. Well-engineered, innovation in design, balanced and sturdy, reliable, clean lines on the surface, adequate features, high on quality.
"BMW- Luxurious as well as good performance"
"Toyota cars have good interior and give good mileage. Its seatbelts are very comfortable and adjustable."
"Audi. At the price points that Audi operates in they have some of the best quality interior available."
"Mercedes, because of its new and upgrading features and comfort."
"Toyota. It is really good for hilly terrains and low maintenance".
"Hyundai is the brand that I like the most. Because its services are good. The car parts are easily available. The body is strong. And the looks are also good. Plus, the cars are affordable."
"Maruti Suzuki. Because it is affordable my most of the people and has good and all the basic features in an affordable budget."
"Honda. Their sedans are on par with some of the entry level luxury cars and prices are well managed, thanks to economies of scale."

In the last segment of the questionnaire respondents were asked to name a car brand that they really liked and would highly recommend along with the reasons for the same. It was seen that the top car brands preferred by majority of the respondents were Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai and Honda mainly due to their affordable price range, features and comfort. (Table.3) depicts some of the responses given by the participants when asked to name a car brand that they would recommend to their family and friends.

5. Discussion

The present study was carried out with the intention of getting a better understanding of the motives, preferences and aspects that affect a person's decision to purchase a car.

As the number of automobiles grow so does the demand for adequate parking space in both residential and public areas. It has been found that in the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, the population growth rate is 1% and the rate of motor vehicles increasing is at 7% (Delhi, Statistical Handbook, 2018). With the growing demand for parking spaces, it is observed that there have been a shortage of parking lots and an increase in the rates for the same. According to a study by (Roychowdhury et. al, 2018) increasing parking rates could possibly discourage people from buying more cars. As illustrated from our findings, parking space proved to be an important aspect that was taken into account before purchasing a car by majority of the participants.

Placing the findings of this study in the advertising literature, the present study contributes to the major role advertisements play in affecting thoughts towards a particular brand.

According to a study in the Journal of Consumer Research, it was seen that consumers were more likely to buy a product if they had previously focused their attention on it and were less likely to buy a product which they had previously ignored (Janiszewski et. al, 2013.) hence pointing to the aspect of familiarity. Similarly, as stated by authors (Genco et.al, 2013) in one of their books that, familiarity is one of the most powerful drivers of consumer behaviour and is an important factor for market research due to it being a major source of brand and product preference. Another study found that 68.3% (171 respondents) claimed that they did not even consider lesser known or new entrant brands while making a purchase. It was also seen that while 47 respondents said that they consider a new entrant during their purchasing decision, they did not end up buying it (Chandra, 2014). Similarly, our findings illustrated that a very large proportion of respondents preferred familiar brands over novel brands.

Indian society is collectivist in nature and promotes social cohesion. Family is the most important institution and consumption choices regarding expensive and infrequent purchases such as that of a car, are not oriented based on individual needs or characteristics. As seen in the present study, family use was seen as the primary motive for buying a car by majority. In line with this, a survey carried out by (CARS24,2020) found that 42% respondents felt the need to buy a car for family use. It was also noted that family requirements and the risk of COVID -19 infection have now emerged as some reasons for buying a car.

Implications- The present study can help researchers; car dealers and manufacturers learn from prospective car buyers to help sell cars that are in accordance with what consumers prefer and need.

Car manufacturers can consider keeping family use and comfort in mind while designing cars. This could mean including features such as high safety features, sufficient legroom, plenty of storage, proper air conditioning, soft seats, back & neck support, comfortable suspensions etc. to enhance consumer experience and prevent discomfort during long road trips.

Buying a car is generally the second most expensive purchase people make, after a house. While doing so, our study showed that consumers tend do intensive research before making a purchase to ensure that they make the best decision. Dealers and brands can step in here and provide tools and resources to compare unbiased reviews, research ratings, performance tests, features offered and price range.

As seen in the study, majority of the participants were willing to exceed their budgets if they were given better offers or features. This highlights the importance for car dealers to know what exactly the buyers want and then design attractive offers and packages that are personalised and tailored to their requirements or budgets.

It can also help marketers and advertising agents of brands to create impactful and effective advertisements in order to reach a wide pool of people and familiarize them with the commodities available in the market.

Limitations of the study-

While the present study provides useful consumer insights and perspectives, it is necessary to consider some of the limitations of the study.

Consumer preferences and behaviour for buying a car may not have been fully explained with the dimensions that were used for the study. Also, since the questionnaire was administered online and self-report measures were used for the collection of data, one must take into account the possible issues pertaining to response bias and sampling bias. In the study there was an absence of higher order statistics and the differences in attitudes and preferences across gender and different age groups was not analysed further.

Suggestions for future research-

1) Future studies can take into account the various other aspects of consumer preferences like specific car features/accessories, exterior design preference, car size/models, reviews etc. that would help contribute to future potential research.
2) In depth interviews with individuals pre and post purchase would also help get important insights useful for product development and advertising initiatives.
3) Future studies can also focus on the differences of priorities or features preferred across gender/generation/cultures.
4) It could also be useful to study the factors that lead to customer attachment / satisfaction as well as the impact of culture on consumer behaviour.

6. Conclusion

A car is now considered as a necessity and the number of cars bought is expected to increase over the next few years. With the growing number of brands and companies entering into the markets, it's necessary to recognize the needs and preferences of consumers so that products and services are tailored to their needs and requirements. This can allow consumers to make an easy and smooth purchase while companies and brands make optimum use of their resources. It can be said that buying behaviour of cars is influenced by a number of factors like parking space, family use, familiar brands, advertisements better offers and comfort to name a few. Car dealers and manufacturers should keep these factors in mind while manufacturing or marketing cars for better outcomes.

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