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## **Understanding OTT Usage Habits Among Generation Z: A Study from Maharashtra, India**

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### **Abstract**

The rapid proliferation of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms has significantly altered media consumption habits globally, particularly in India. This study explores the usage habits of Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms among Generation Z (individuals born between 1997 and 2012), focusing on respondents from Maharashtra, India.

The study focusses on OTT usage habits among Gen Z such as devices used, average hours spent per week consuming content on OTT platforms, preferred time for viewing content, number of subscriptions, subscription plans, frequency, content types, and more.

A sample of 502 respondents participated through an online survey. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, this research identifies emerging consumption trends. Findings from this study can provide valuable insights for OTT providers aiming to engage the Gen Z audience more effectively.

Recommendations for OTT providers to sustain Gen Z engagement include providing customized, multi-lingual content, leveraging data analytics for personalization, and offering value-for-money subscription plans

**Keywords:** Gen Z, OTT Platforms, India, Content Consumption, Subscription, Content Preferences, Maharashtra.



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## Introduction

In recent years, India has witnessed a digital revolution, marked by affordable internet access, increasing smartphone penetration, and a cultural shift toward on-demand content consumption. OTT platforms have become an integral part of digital entertainment, particularly for Generation Z, who demand autonomy, flexibility, and high-quality content

OTT (Over-the-Top) platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, and regional players like ZEE5 have emerged as dominant forces in the entertainment ecosystem, bypassing traditional cable television and cinema halls.

The growth of the Indian OTT industry is notable. According to a report by the Boston Consulting Group (2023), the Indian OTT market is expected to reach \$7 billion by 2030, driven by rising demand for regional and personalized content. A large segment fueling this growth is Generation Z (Gen Z), a cohort known for their digital nativity, short attention spans, and strong preferences for visual storytelling, interactivity, and social media integration.

Gen Z's consumption habits differ from previous generations - they favor binge-watching, content mobility (watching across devices), and ad-free experiences. Influenced by peer recommendations, social trends, and platform algorithms. Platforms have increasingly begun tailoring content and formats to suit these preferences, including short-form series, documentaries, and influencer-led shows.

Understanding these evolving consumption patterns is crucial for content creators, marketers, and OTT platforms aiming to maintain relevance in this competitive space. This study investigates Gen Z's OTT usage behaviours, preferences, and decision-making processes underlying their consumption habits. This research aims to analyze the OTT consumption habits among Gen Z in Maharashtra. Understanding these habits can help OTT providers enhance engagement, retention, and customer value. With the digital transformation accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, this generation's habits reflect a permanent shift in how media is consumed.



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## Literature Review

Multiple studies have highlighted the rise in OTT usage across India, with a specific focus on technological factors, affordability, and changing consumer behavior. Deshpande et al. (2020) pointed out willingness of teenagers to pay for their own OTT subscriptions. Parmar & Pandit (2021) noted OTT's emergence as the "New Television" in India. Nielsen (2021) found that Gen Z prefers streaming content over live TV, with an average daily screen time exceeding 4 hours on OTT platforms. Roy & Ghosh (2019) studied regional content consumption and found that Gen Z actively seeks culturally relevant narratives, especially in vernacular languages. Kumar & Dey (2020) discussed the impact of subscription models and freemium content on platform loyalty among young adults.

Rao & Iyer (2021) addressed parental control and content regulation issues, especially in context of mature content accessible to Gen Z. Other scholars such as Kumar and Parihar emphasized the digital boom during the COVID-19 pandemic, attributing the OTT surge to accessibility and content variety. However, there remains a gap in studies specifically analyzing Gen Z users in Maharashtra, which this study seeks to fill.

## Methodology

This is a descriptive research study using a quantitative approach. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire via Google Forms and supplemented by informal interactions for qualitative insight. The sample consisted of 502 respondents belonging to Generation Z from various urban and rural regions of Maharashtra ensuring diversity in gender, geography and economic background. Data was analysed to present findings and suggestions.

## Data Analysis

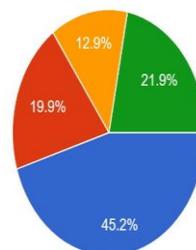
Data gathered with regards to OTT platform usage habits including responses on devices used, time spent per week, preferred time of viewing, number of platforms subscribed, shared subscription, preferred language, preferred category of content etc. was analysed to help understand the OTT platform usage habits among Generation Z.



**Table and Graph 1.1: Proportion of respondents based on how long they have been using OTT platforms**

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 12 months	110	21.9
24 months	65	12.9
36 months	100	19
48 months or more	227	45.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>100</b>

1] How long have you been using OTT platforms ?  
502 responses



**Interpretation**

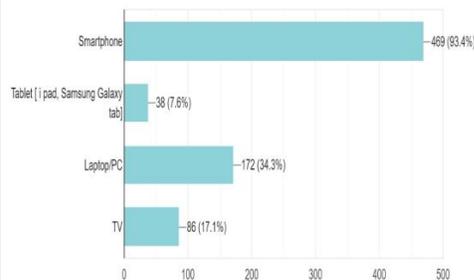
It can be inferred that almost half of the respondents have started viewing content during the pandemic induced lockdown. Covid19 pandemic kept people confined to their homes bringing restrictions on travel, socializing and ways of entertainment. Closing down of schools and colleges led many youngsters to OTT platforms which has continued post lockdown as well. About 13 percent have been using OTT platform for 24 months followed by a decent 22 percent of them using it during less than 12 months

**Table and Graph 1.2: Proportion of respondents based on the devices used to watch OTT content**

	Frequency	Percent
Smartphone	469	93.4
Tablet	38	7.6
Laptop/PC	172	34.3
TV	86	17.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>100</b>

2] Which device you use to watch OTT content ? [This question allows respondents to select more than one responses]

502 responses



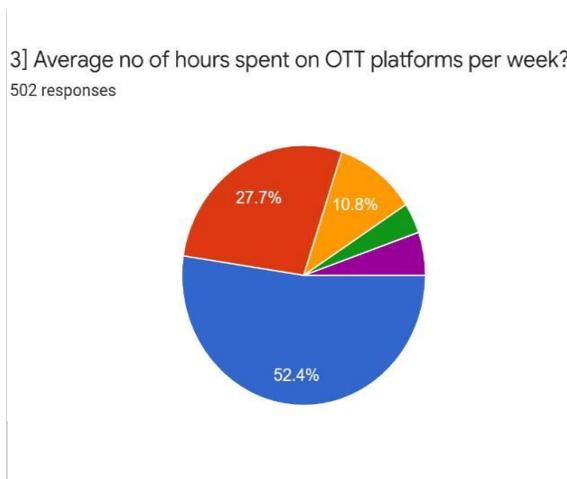


**Interpretation**

Observation from the bar graph shows that OTT platforms offer the advantage of viewing on one’s preferred device. Gen Z want to stream wherever they are. Not just TV but increasingly on their smart phone, laptop and computers. Majority respondents, 93 percent use smartphone to watch OTT content. Mobile phones are portable. 4G, 5G and wireless service has enabled preference for smart phones. Innovation and augmentations in the smart phone industry allows for better and full screen viewing, stereophonic sound and long life of battery. This makes it the preferred choice of device of the Generation Z. The high cost of tablet explains the limited use of tablets at 7.6 percent. Since Gen Z is represented majorly by students, a substantial proportion of respondents at 34 percent may possess or have access to laptop and computers which may be used for viewing content on OTT. About 17 percent respondents watch OTT content on TV.

**Table and Graph 1.3: Proportion of respondents based on average number of hours spent on OTT platforms per week**

Avg number of hours on OTT		
	Frequency	Percent
0-7 hour	263	52.4
8-14 hour	139	27.7
15-21 hour	54	10.8
22-28 hour	19	3.8
More than 28 hours	27	5.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>100</b>



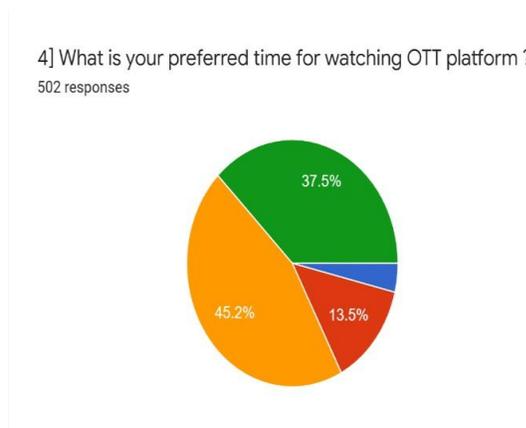
**Interpretation**

More than half of the respondents [52.4%] spend 0 -7 hours on OTT platform. It can be assumed that since the return to normalcy after Covid, the hours of watching OTT content has reduced. 27.7% of respondents spend 8-14 hours. There were 10.8% respondents who spend 15-21 hours and 5.4% of respondents spend more than 28 hours.

A small percentage of 3.8 % respondents are spending an average of 3 - 4 hours per day (22-28 hours per week) on OTT platforms.

**Table and Graph 14: Proportion of respondents based on the preferred time for watching OTT platform**

Preferred time		
	Frequency	Percent
Morning	19	3.8
Afternoon	68	13.5
Evening	227	45.2
Late night	188	37.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>100</b>

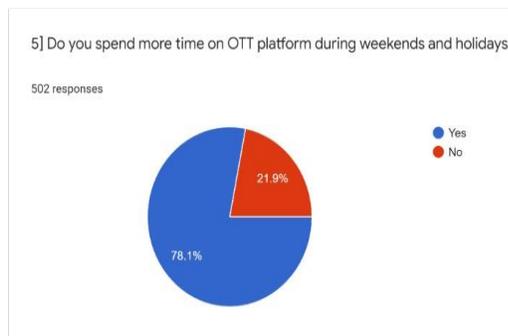


**Interpretation**

Out of the total 502 responses, majority respondents at about 83 percent prefer to watch OTT platform in the evening and late night. After a tiring day, watching favorite web series can bloom the mood. The percentage of respondents preferring late night movies is also considerably high at 37.5 percent. Mornings are busy at work or school and hence a negligible 4 percent respondents prefer to watch in the morning while 13.5 percent respondents prefer to watch in the afternoon.

**Table and Graph 1.5: Proportion of respondents agreed on more time spent on OTT platforms during weekends and holidays**

More time Spent on holidays		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	392	78.1
No	110	21.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>100</b>

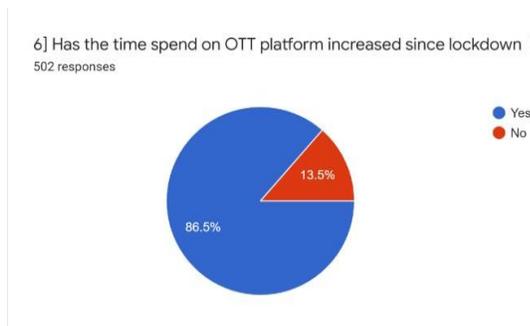


### Interpretation

Majority of respondents at 78 percent spend more time on OTT platform during weekends and holidays due to available free time while 22 percent respondents replied negatively.

**Table and Graph 1.6: Proportion of respondents based on increase in time spent on OTT since lockdown**

Increase in time spent since lockdown		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	434	86.5
No	68	13.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>100</b>

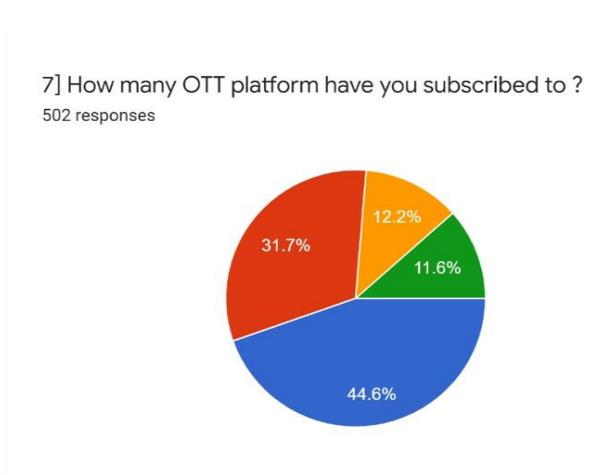


### Interpretation

Almost 87 percent respondents stated that there is an increase in the time spent on OTT platforms since lockdown. The lockdown forced the people to stay at home and social distancing was encouraged. Online entertainment platforms became a part of daily routine during lockdown and has now become almost like a ritual. Only 13 percent answered that there was no such increase in time spent on OTT platforms since lockdown.

**Table and Graph 1.7 Proportion of respondents based on number of subscriptions**

Number of subscriptions		
	Frequency	Percent
1	224	44.6
2	159	31.7
3	61	12.2
4 or more	58	11.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>100</b>



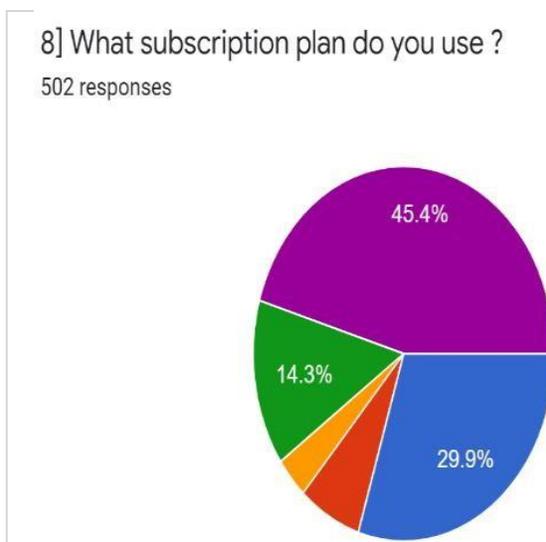


### Interpretation

Almost half of the respondents have subscribed to only one OTT platform which can be explained by the fact that the respondents are mainly students and also unemployed. It is observed that as the number of platforms subscribed increases, the percentage of respondents subscribing to them is decreased. There are several OTT platforms who also offer to watch some content for free hence Gen Z which is tech savvy may not subscribe to many OTT platforms. There are also many unknown sources from where web series or movies can be watched or downloaded for free e.g. Telegram, Netflix APK, Amazon APK, Spotify APK etc. However, these APK s may not support some phones (e.g. I phone). Users of OTT apps having more than one app installed on their devices poses a challenge with having unique users for the app and hence a decline in the advertising revenue for them.

**Table and Graph 1.8 Proportion of respondents based on Subscription plan**

Subscription plan		
	Frequency	Percent
Monthly	150	29.9
Quarterly	34	3.6
Half yearly	18	6.8
Annual	72	14.3
Depends on price	228	45.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>100</b>



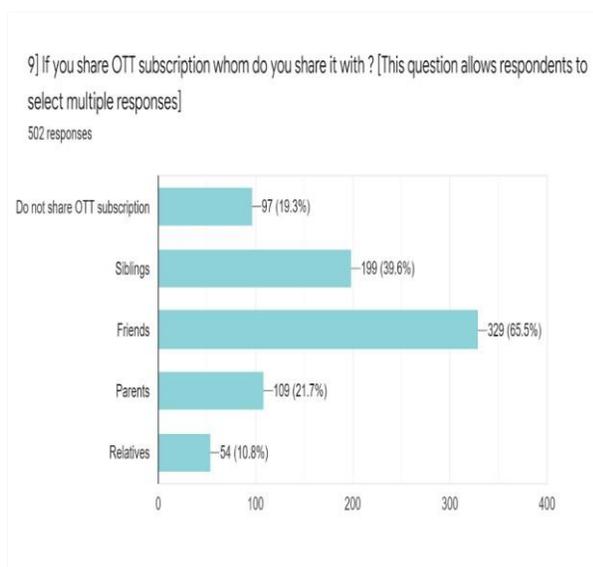
### Interpretation

Choices for subscription plan could be affected by their family incomes and availability of money. More than 45 percent of the respondents are sensitive to price and chose a subscription plan accordingly. Hence several operators target generation Z users by offering cheaper

alternative for young mobile users. 30 percent respondents opt for a monthly plan while 14 percent of respondents prefer an annual subscription. A very negligible proportion of respondents opt for biannual and quarterly subscriptions at 6.8 percent and 3.6 percent respectively.

**Table and Graph 1.9 Proportion of respondents based on sharing of subscription**

Sharing of subscription		
	Frequency	Percent
Do not share	97	19.3
Siblings	199	39.6
Friends	329	65.5
Parents	109	21.7
Relatives	54	10.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>100</b>



**Interpretation**

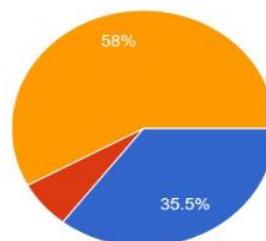
Observation from the table and graph indicate that respondents share subscriptions with more than one of the listed options. Most respondents at 65 percent share it with their friends. Generation Z considers friends as much close as family and it is very common to share subscription with them. This is followed by siblings at about 40 percent, and then with parents at about 22 percent. Family together constitutes 62 percent. Gen Z which is assumed to share a friendly equation with the parents have no hesitation sharing subscription with parents. A small percentage of respondents at are said to share it with relatives as well. Interestingly about 19 percent of the youngsters do not share subscription at all. This maybe for reasons of privacy as well out of the fear that sharing log in credentials with family and friends may make their account vulnerable to cyber attack



**Table and Graph 1.10 Proportion of respondents based on preference of language**

Language preference		
	Frequency	Percent
English	178	35.5
Regional	33	6.6
Both	291	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>100</b>

10] What is your preferred language for OTT platform ?  
502 responses



**Interpretation**

The above table and graph reveals that Generation Z is warming up to or is comfortable with content in English on OTT platforms. We can see that 35 percent prefer English content only while a good 58 percent of respondents prefer both English and regional language. It can be said that while they enjoy content in English there is an equal interest and growing demand for local and unique content as well. The respondents preferring only regional content is however just at over 6 percent.

**Table 1.11: Proportion showing frequency of watching the various categories of content on OTT platform**

Sr. No	Category	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	Category 1	218	137	85	52	10
2	Category 2	130	191	11	54	8
3	Category 3	165	156	112	63	36
4	Category 4	111	153	123	79	36
5	Category 5	169	134	90	83	26
6	Category 6	162	140	116	50	34



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Category 1: Action, Crime, Thriller, Horror and Science fiction

Category 2: History, Travel, Food, Documentaries, Biography

Category 3: Stand up Comedies, Cartoons, Fantasy

Category 4: Romance, Drama, Block buster

Category 5: Reality shows, Music and Musicals

Category 6: Sports

An analysis of viewing frequency across six OTT content categories revealed the following:

- **Category 1** had the highest regular viewership, with 218 respondents watching it *very often*.
- **Categories 5 and 6** also showed strong engagement, indicating high popularity.
- **Category 2** had the lowest "Very Often" viewership (130) but the highest "Often" responses (191), suggesting a moderate yet consistent audience.
- **Categories 3 and 4** had balanced viewership across all frequencies, indicating occasional or mixed interest.
- **Categories 3 and 4** also had the highest "Never" responses (36), pointing to limited appeal for some viewers.

## Findings

Findings obtained regarding OTT platform usage habits of Gen Z are presented below.

- 86.5% reported increased usage post-lockdown
- 93% accessed content via smart phones.
- Interestingly, more than half of the respondents spend only 0-7 hours per week, while a meagre 3.4% consume more than 28 hours of OTT content a week.
- 83% of respondents prefer to watch OTT content in the evening & late nights.
- 86.5% responded as Yes, while 13.5% responded as No, when asked if they spend more time watching OTT content on weekends and holidays.



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- 44.6% respondents subscribe to only one platform. As the number of channels subscribed increases, the percentage of respondents subscribing to them decreases
  - 45.4% of respondents are sensitive to price & choose a subscription plan based on price and monthly subscription is preferred by almost 30% respondents.
  - Most of the respondents share their subscription with friends at 65% and family at 62% (siblings 40 % and parents 22%). 19% respondents do not share their subscription at all.
  - 58% preferred both English and regional content; 35% preferred English-only content. Respondents preferring only regional language is however just at over 6%.
  - **Category 1** had the highest regular viewership, with 218 respondents watching it *very often*.
  - **Category 3** (Stand up Comedies, Cartoons, Fantasy) **and Category 4** (Romance, Drama, Block buster) had balanced viewership across all frequencies, indicating occasional or mixed interest. They also had the highest "Never" responses (36), pointing to limited appeal for some viewers.

Popular genres included thrillers, comedies, and documentaries. Romance and reality shows were least preferred.

### **Suggestions**

Attempt should be made by OTT service providers to enhance Lifetime Customer Value and keep them hooked to the platform by:

- Offering innovative, original and short format content to appeal to the Generation Z audience which is more evolved and mature and recognizes the value of quality and also to lure new customers
- Expanding multilingual content offerings and bring content from all over the world in different categories, format.
- Providing flexible and affordable subscription models. Platforms can deliver content at prices that makes the user know they are getting a value deal. They must fine tune the offering, upsell opportunities and promotion



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- Optimizing platforms for mobile viewing and enhance the audio-visual experience.
  - Using Business Analytics to efficiently collect viewing habits data to make personalized recommendations resulting in customer delight and improved engagement rates and also measure the effect of recommendation on consumption.

### **Scope for Future Research**

The study was restricted to generation Z. Similar studies can be conducted with people of other age groups such as senior citizens.

The study was restricted to respondents from state of Maharashtra. It may be possible to undertake a study covering larger geographical area.

Comparative studies can also be conducted based on demographic variables of age, gender, category of location etc.

Adding a different dimension such as negative impact of OTT platform on children can also be considered. Thus, this study will present immense scope of future research.

### **Conclusion**

This study confirms that Generation Z demonstrates distinct OTT usage patterns driven by convenience, quality content, and affordability. The OTT industry must continuously adapt to meet these preferences. With personalized content strategies and affordable plans, OTT platforms can convert this tech-savvy generation into long-term loyal customers. The findings emphasize that the future of digital entertainment lies in understanding and catering to the nuanced demands of Generation Z.



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