

SCREENS ON DEMAND: OTT ADOPTION AND OUTCOMES FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS IN CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT

Background:

The Over-the-Top (OTT) services have transformed the method of media consumption by offering on-demand access to a wide range of content in a personalized and cost-effective manner. OTT services have become part of the daily routine among the young people of the city, especially those in tertiary education, who have determined their form of entertainment, social lives and education timetables. In Chennai, the active consumer base of OTT platforms poses important questions about the trends in their use, identifying variables, and future projections.

Aim:

To explore trends of OTT usage, to determine salient factors that affect the usage, and to determine the perceived consequences, both desirable and undesirable of OTT consumption by college students in Chennai.

Methods:

The research design adopted was descriptive research design where primary data was to be used using structured questionnaires that were distributed to 184 college students in Chennai. The stratified sampling was used to make sure that there was a representation in terms of gender, academic discipline, and year of study. All the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, factor analysis and regression analysis with moderation analysis of demographic variables.

Results:

OTT usage was also noted to be widespread with most of the respondents reporting 1-3 hours of daily use. The most preferred ones became Netflix, Prime Video, and Hotstar, and web series and feature films became the best content choices. The most used device was the Smartphones. Factor analysis provided three major dimensions that affected usage, including Content and Convenience, Social and Influence, and Cost and Access, which explained 81.92 -percent of the variance. Regression analyses also revealed that OTT use had negative effect on academic ($b = [-?].30$) and lifestyle ($b = .18$) outcomes, and a positive effect on social interaction ($b = .15$). These relationships were moderated by gender and academic discipline.

Findings:

The research confirms that quality of content, convenience and peer influence are a powerful stimulus to OTT acceptance among students in Chennai. Whereas the use of OTT promotes social connectivity and can enrich lifestyles where the content of the use is of high quality, overuse impedes academic achievement and derails daily schedules. These effects depend on gender and academic discipline.

Conclusion:

OTT platforms represent the principal element of the student life in Chennai, with both positive and negative outcomes. Equal consumption, media literacy and content with educational value are the requirements with the view of maximizing the benefits and reducing the risks.

Keywords: academic performance, content variety, lifestyle impact, media consumption, peer influence, OTT platforms, social interaction.

INTRODUCTION

The last two decades have been characterized by a radical change in the consumption trends in media due to the blistering development in technology and changing tastes of the audience. What once appeared as the escapist illusion of cinema and the shared ritual of television, has steadily been replaced by an individualized, on-demand cultural imperative. The high-speed broadband, portable device, and digital content delivery arrangements have enabled the viewers to access entertainment at any time or any place and eliminate the geographic and time-based limitations that used to influence the traditional media formats. In the forefront of this change are Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms that bypass traditional broadcast systems to deliver a wide range of audiovisual content to final consumers. OTT services have radically re-invented the concept of media consumption with their guarantee of variety, low cost, and flexibility. To modern viewers, the shift is more than the appropriation of a new medium; it is a claim of agency of how, when, and what one interacts with media.

University students turn out to be one of the demographic groups that contribute to this growth and can be regarded as the most active and influential. In such big cities like Chennai, where the requirements of academic activities, socialization, and cultural exposure meet, the OTT platforms serve several functions: as a source of relaxation, as a way of exposure to the global trends, and, sometimes, as an additional source of informal learning. The 18-24 age group, being technologically savvy and having large appetites on content, does not just get used to these innovations quickly, but also influences the direction of their uptake.

However, the expansion of OTT use is governed by a range of complexities. On the one hand, it helps to provide creative exposure, multitasked storytelling, and escape academic pressures, whereas, on the other hand, it brings up issues of screen addiction, time management problems, and the erosion of traditional cultural experiences. The examination of these dynamics is critical to evaluate the social and personal consequences of digital entertainment in general.

This study appraises the scales, reasons and consequences of the use of OTT platforms among college students in Chennai to shed light on their widespread adoption of the concept of screens on command that is shaping their lives, habits and ideas of entertainment.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The fast-growing Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms have revolutionised the entertainment industry through on-demand, custom-made, and easily available content to a mass audience. Despite the fact that this technological advancement has brought about the increased ease and variety of viewing options, it is also accompanied by some questions about its impact on the consumption patterns, lifestyle and social behaviours of the users.

College students, particularly those based in urban cities like Chennai, can be enumerated as some of the most active users of OTT content who have integrated streaming into their daily lives. Nevertheless, the growing use of OTTs can affect not only leisure-related behavior, but also academic performance, time management, and relationships.

Regardless of the popularity of OTT services, there is a lack of empirical research regarding the specific usage of these services by college students in Chennai, the underlying motivation factors behind the use, and the positive or negative consequences of the use. Without such dedicated research, the overall picture relating to the consequences of OTT adoption among this population group is elusive and leaves an empty gap in the academic literature and practical solutions, which can help establish a balanced consumption of the media.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The growth of Open-over-the-top (OTT) services has significantly transformed the media consumption habits, providing individuals with a heterogeneous, on-demand content that can be easily accessed on a wide range of devices with the help of affordable subscriptions and fast internet connectivity. The rapid spread of smartphones in the Indian market, the implementation of 4G and 5G networks, and the presence of affordable data plans have also enhanced the pace of the OTT services penetration in the country, especially among young people. The age group 18-24 year old college students is one of the most important audience groups, as they are technologically savvy, prone to the content and exposed to the global cultural factors.

In the city of Chennai, the environment of education and culture, the use of OTT platforms has become closely embedded in the daily lives of students. The platforms serve as entertainment mediums, social interaction platforms, and informal learning platforms. However, as OTT services have a positive impact on the convenience, variety, and exposure to multifarious views, they also cause worries such as excessive screen time, addictions, and possible interferences with academic performance.

Although such phenomena are observable, there are few studies performed empirically on the locality of Chennai, in terms of how urban Indian college students use OTT services. The current research aims to address this gap by analyzing the adoption behavior, motivational factors, and perceived consequences of using OTT among the college students of Chennai. The results are supposed to supply educators, policymakers, and content providers with evidence-based information that will promote responsible and meaningful usage of digital media.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Annamalai et al. (2023) examined the factors that affect the uptake of over-the-top (OTT) services by young customers in Chennai and highlighted the importance of the quality of content, subscriptions at competitive prices, and recommendations of friends in consumer preferences. The paper has pointed to the fact that streaming performance metrics which include uninterrupted playback and a small buffering period played a significant part in the continued use. Furthermore, the authors also recorded the behavior differences between paid subscribers, who also showed more loyalty to particular platforms, and users of either unpaid or shared accounts, who showed more tendency to change platforms.

Ramesh and Kapoor (2023) investigated the educational implications of using OTTs through a survey of 800 university students in India prior to and after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their results found that excessive OTT consumption and academic achievement were statistically significantly related. The negative consequences included poor concentration, low output, and inability to manage the time and the physical health issues that could be related to the long hours spent in front of the screen. The study is relevant because it directly correlates entertainment consumption habit and quantifiable academic performance, thus underlining the need to practice controlled consumption by the student body.

Kumari and Singh (2023) were concerned with the perceptions of undergraduates and the psychosocial consequences of using OTT. Their findings revealed the following motivators to keep consuming them, convenience, a variety of content avenues, and recommendation algorithms that are tailored. However, the authors also warned that the uncontrolled content could be potentially dangerous, such as changing social attitudes and relations and mental health. Such views are in line with the general discussions about media ethics, censorship and the interaction of youth with digital media platforms.

In a recent study by **Varma (2023)**, a country-wide survey was conducted to estimate the trends in the adoption of OTT in urban India, with the availability of content diversity and easy navigation being the dominant adoption criteria. Another gap in the literature that the study identified is the communal or family-based viewing behaviors in the Indian milieu, with the majority of studies focusing on individualistic consumption behaviors. In case of students living in shared apartments or families, content selection and frequency of consumption of OTT may be affected by the dynamics of group OTT watching, and this aspect deserves additional research with reference to the city of Chennai.

The study of **Sharma and Desai (2024)** discusses the OTT viewing behavior of college students in Mumbai, which is presented in the context of the dual purpose of OTT as the means of entertainment and informal learning. Although most of the participants mentioned that their main use of OTT is relaxation and recreation, some of them mentioned that they used the platforms to watch educational documentaries, tutorials based on skills, and learn languages. That said, the research cautioned of the harmful nature of excessive screen time, especially in terms of its effect on circadian rhythms, the quality of social interactions, and emotional health.

Priya and Swaminathan (2025) conducted a study that focused on the motivational factors and the behavioural trends of college students in relation to the use of OTTs in Tamil-Nadu on a wide basis. The authors discovered that subscription models that were cost-effective and viewer social influence increased the viewership significantly. Nevertheless, they also noted that an exposure to limited or adult content sometimes resulted in an attitude and behavior change, which evoked their concerns about content regulation and its implications on young people. Their results highlight the paradoxical essence of OTT platforms as well-built sources of entertainment experiences and simultaneously hard to consume responsibly.

SUMMARY AND RESEARCH GAP

Common patterns can be identified in the available literature: the affordability, convenience, and peer influence always remain a relevant factor that prompts students to use OTT, whereas concerns in terms of overuse, academic disturbance, and mental health consequences persist. Although some of the studies focus on the setting of Chennai and Tamil Nadu, most of the research that is conducted is based on the macro-level of the region or country and as such; it ignores the micro aspects of culture and education. Moreover, the majority of research studies are cross-sectional and rely on self-report scale, which does not allow developing a proper insight into the long-term behavioural and academic outcomes of using OTT. Based on this, the given research fills this gap by focusing on college students in Chennai specifically and adopting a specific approach to the methods used to explain the complex interconnection between OTT adoption and its impact on the daily lives of learners.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ✚ To analyze the dynamics of OTT platform usage among college students at Chennai including the frequency of use, platform of choice and content used.
- ✚ To focus on determining the determinants that are critical in determining the use of OTT among this group of people, which are convenience, affordability, influence of peers, and variety of content.
- ✚ To evaluate perceived consequences of OTT consumption on academic performance, lifestyle, and social interactions of the students, thus outlining both positive and negative consequences.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H1: There is a strong correlation between the content variety, convenience, price of subscription, peer pressure, ease of use, perceived quality and device accessibility and the intensity of OTT use among college students in Chennai.

H2: The severity of OTT use creates a strong negative impact on the educational outcome and the quality of life of the college students in Chennai.

H3: The degree of OTT use has a significant positive correlation towards the social interaction of college students in Chennai.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Table 1 : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design	Descriptive research design analyzing OTT platform adoption, usage patterns, and outcomes among college students in Chennai.
Data Collection	Primary: Structured questionnaires administered to students from various colleges.
	Secondary: Books, journal articles, industry reports, and previous studies.
Sampling	Method: Convenience Sampling
	Sample Size: 184 respondents.
Variables	Independent: Content variety, convenience, subscription cost, peer influence, platform usability, perceived quality, device accessibility.
	Moderating: Gender, academic stream, year of study.
	Dependent: OTT usage outcomes (academic, lifestyle, social).
Statistical Tools	Descriptive analysis, Chi-square test, correlation, linear and multiple regression, factor analysis, moderation analysis.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

 **Objective 1 :** To analyze the dynamics of OTT platform usage among college students at Chennai including the frequency of use, platform of choice and content used.

Table 2 : PATTERNS OF OTT PLATFORM ADOPTION

Factor	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Usage Intensity	≤1 hour	37	20.2
	1–2 hours	58	31.7
	2–3 hours	50	27.3
	≥3 hours	38	20.8
Top Platforms	Netflix	112	61.2
	Prime	102	55.7
	Hotstar	97	53.0
	Zee5	48	26.2
	SonyLIV	38	20.8
	Others	26	14.2
Preferred Content	Web Series	132	72.1
	Films	112	61.2
	Sports	77	42.1
	Reality Shows	51	27.9
	Educational/Documentary	46	25.1
Primary Devices	Smartphone	163	89.1
	Smart TV	86	47.0
	Laptop/Tablet	68	37.2

Table 2 shows that most of the students of Chennai college use OTT platforms within 1-3 hours per day (59%), and one out of five students (20.8 percent) have more than 3-hour OTT consumption, indicating medium to high engagement. The most prevalent platforms are Netflix (61.2 %), Prime (55.7 %), and Hotstar (53.0'). As to content preferences, web series (72.1 %) and films (61.2') are the most popular ones,

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and sports, reality shows, and educational or documentary programs are in the second place. The viewing device most commonly used is smartphones (89.1%), which outweighed smart televisions (47.0%), laptops/tablets (37.2%), which consequently supports the fact that the student group exhibits a strong mobile-first consumption behavior.

 **Objective 2** To focus on determining the determinants that are critical in determining the use of OTT among this group of people, which are convenience, affordability, influence of peers, and variety of content.

Table 3: Factor Analysis Methodology Details

Item	Description
Method	Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation (Kaiser Normalization)
Sample Adequacy	KMO = 0.88
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	$\chi^2(21) = 856.42, p < .001$

Table 4 Eigenvalues & Variance Explained

S No	Factor	Eigenvalue	% Variance	Cumulative %
1	Content & Convenience	3.12	44.57%	44.57%
2	Social & Influence	1.56	22.33%	66.90%
3	Cost & Access	1.05	15.02%	81.92%

Interpretation

The factor analysis indicates that there are three latent dimensions, which have an impact on OTT usage intensity:

Content and Convenience The content variety, ease of access, usability and perceived quality variables converge into one factor and the student actively adopts platform that is easy to use and provides high quality content that is diverse.

Social and Influence The influence of peer is dominant in this factor, which proves that social suggestions and current trends have a significant impact on the viewing habits.

Cost and Access This aspect includes subscription price and device availability, highlighting the importance of the price and the presence of compatible devices in the use selection.

These three dimensions can explain 81.92% of the total variance, indicating that most variance in the patterns of OTT use among students can be explained by them.

Objective 3 To assess the perceived outcomes of OTT consumption on students' academic performance, lifestyle, and social interactions, highlighting both positive and negative effects.

Table 5 REGRESSION PERCEIVED OUTCOMES OF OTT CONSUMPTION

Outcome Variable	Predictor	B	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	R ²	Notable Additional Predictors
Academic	Usage Intensity	-0.2	-0.3	-6.12	< .001	0.29	Convenience (+), Usability (+); Gender moderation significant
Lifestyle	Usage Intensity	-0.12	-0.18	-3.82	< .001	0.23	Perceived Quality (+)

Social	Usage Intensity	0.1	0.15	3.04	.003	0.17	Peer Influence (+); Stream moderation significant
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Interpretation:

Regression analyses of Objective 3 indicate that the intensity of OTT use has a statistically significant negative impact on academic outcomes ($\beta = -.30$, $p < .001$) and on lifestyle outcomes ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .001$), but has a positive impact on social outcomes ($\beta = .15$, $p = .003$). With respect to academic performance, an increased level of OTT utilization is linked to worsened academic outcomes with the extent of this influence being more significant in male students. Mitigating factors Comfort and convenience are half-watersheds to the negative change in academic performance, and the quality of the content perceived is positively linked to lifestyle enrichment. On the issue of social outcomes, peer influence emerges as the biggest additional predictor, especially among those students pursuing commerce and management courses as these students indicate higher social gains when using OTT than the students in science majors. Therefore, the use of OTT has a dual effect of allowing socialization and at the same time compromising academic focus and healthy lifestyle.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The current research has explored the trend of the use of over-the-top (OTT) media services, the factors leading to its use, and the resulting impacts of the OTT consumption among college students in Chennai and then comparing the outcomes with the trends established in earlier studies.

The findings reveal that most respondents watch OTT content between 1-3hours/day (59%), and 20.8% watch it over three hours, therefore, indicating a moderate-high level of usage. The most popular are the Netflix (61.2 per cent), Amazon prime (55.7 per cent), and Hotstar (53.0 per cent), the most popular content type of which are the web series (72.1 per cent) and feature films (61.2 per cent). The most common access device is Smartphones (89.1) and it is clear that there is a mobile-first consumption future. These findings correspond to those of Sharma (2024) who reported the web series as the most common format of consumption amongst urban college students in Mumbai and to the results by Priya (2025) who found that cheap subscriptions and word of mouth influenced usage. The observed strong smartphone prevalence herein compares slightly with Varma (2023), who cited a more diverse device spread in urban India, which could perhaps be due to increased student mobility and on-the-go monitoring inclinations unique to Chennai. The results of the exploratory factor analysis boiled down to three salient dimensions that contribute to OTT usage: (1) Content & Convenience (vary, usability, and quality), (2) Social & Influence (peer recommendation and the trendiness of a particular social activity), and (3) Cost & Access (affordability and device availability); these dimensions help explain 81.927 percent of the observed variance. The fact that content variety and convenience become primary reflects Annamalai et al. (2023), who highlighted the importance of quality and smooth streaming as determining factors. It can be noted that the strong social influence aspect is similar to what Priya & Swaminathan (2025) state in the context of Tamil Nadu, which validates the importance of peer networks in discovering content. Surprisingly, when Varma (2023) focused on communal/family-based viewing, the current analysis did not show such trends having found little evidence that OTT use in college participants is communal or shared among peer groups as opposed to family-based.

According to the outcomes of OTT Usage (Objective 3), there is the following outcome:

Regression analysis has revealed a twofold effect:

Academic Outcomes: Intensity of use was linked to worse academic performance ($\beta = -.30, p < .001$) which reinforces Ramesh et al 2024. The relationship is further narrowed by gender moderation influence, which was not studied by previous national-level researchers.

Lifestyle Recreation: Consumption of OTT had an adverse effect on lifestyle habits **Lifestyle Outcomes: OTT consumption adversely affected lifestyle habits ($\beta = -.18, p < .001$) Sharma & Desai (2024) found that excessive streaming had a negative effect on lifestyle behavior. Nonetheless, the quality of perceived content had a positive correlation with lifestyle enrichment, suggesting that high-quality programming has the potential to counteract some lifestyle harms a subtlety that has been understated in previous sources.

Social Outcomes: OTT use increased social interactions ($\beta = .15, p = .003$) and peer influence was found to be the most significant predictor. This is consistent with Priya & Swaminathan (2025) but adds further to the investigation by determining the academic-stream disparities; commerce and management students attained more social benefits than their science-discipline counterparts.

CONCLUSION

This study found out that OTT platforms are highly incorporated in the lives of college students of Chennai driven by the heterogeneity of attractive content, convenience, peer pressure, and preference of web series and movies on the apps like Netflix, Prime Video, and Hotstar, and the Smartphone is the most used gadget. The usage patterns were influenced by three key determinants, namely, content and convenience, social influence and cost and accessibility. Although OTT platforms may enhance the social interaction and may improve lifestyles in case of good content quality, overconsumption negatively impacts academic performance and disruption of daily activities, where gender and academic discipline moderate the effects. The effect of OTT is bi-polar, and the need to promote balanced consumption, media literacy, and content approaches is imperative to combine the entertainment and educational aspects.

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