

Navigating the Digital Stream: Influences, Consequences, and Opportunities for Young Individuals in the World of Web Series

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Abstract

In the contemporary era, online series and streaming content have emerged as primary leisure pursuits for the youth. The escalating popularity of web series has led to a surge in content creation by major corporations like Amazon, Netflix, Sony TV, Hotstar, and Eros Now, investing significantly in local productions. This study explores the increasing appeal of web series, attributed to their ability to present unconventional stories and characters not typically found on traditional television. Platforms such as BitTorrent, YouTube, Amazon Prime Video, and Netflix offer viewers the flexibility to engage with content at their convenience.

Our research aims to elucidate the perspectives of young individuals regarding web series and online streaming media. Focusing on platforms like BitTorrent, YouTube, Amazon Prime Video, and Netflix, the study employs a quantitative approach through a questionnaire survey. Participants include young professionals, undergraduates, and graduate students actively involved in internet video consumption. The study not only delves into the psychological impact of internet television but also examines its influence on behavioural patterns.

By employing the limited existing information, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the entertainment industry, internet streaming, online content, and their societal implications. "Navigating the Digital Stream: Influences, Consequences, and Opportunities for Young Individuals in the World of Web Series" serves as a comprehensive exploration of the dynamic relationship between web series consumption and the evolving landscape of youth entertainment preferences.

Keywords:

- Online streaming
- Youth
- Web series
- Over the top (OTT)

Introduction:

In recent years, adolescent internet usage has seen a notable increase. This surge can be attributed to the prevalent notion that young individuals are engrossed in social media, leading to the thriving popularity of web series across the subcontinent. In contrast to their television counterparts, web series are characterized by brevity, showcasing novel concepts and imaginative plot twists, whereas television serials can span over years, presenting extended narratives with irregular plots.

The duration of web series can vary at the creators' discretion, allowing for both short and lengthy formats. Accessibility is universal, enabling viewers to watch at their convenience from any location.

Anticipation builds consistently for the next episode of a favoured internet series, underscoring the widespread appeal. The increasing popularity of online programming among the youth is attributed to its flexibility, allowing viewers to tailor their engagement with content. This diversity in material is proving advantageous for the online entertainment industry, given that a substantial majority of online programs culminate in delivering some form of lesson or insight to the viewer.

The advent of the Internet has not only caused global disruptions in the television industry but has also exerted a significant impact on young people across all subcontinents through web series and various online media. The entertainment sector has witnessed remarkable growth in recent years, facilitated by the expansive array of media choices available to global audiences and the overall ease of accessing information through online streaming video.

The widespread availability of broadband, coupled with the introduction of faster and more affordable internet services, particularly through mobile connections, has contributed to a rapid surge in the accessibility of online content (Creß et al., 2022). Consequently, there has been an upswing in the number of individuals seeking information online and an increase in the time spent consuming content in the digital realm.

The ascent of high-quality, creatively crafted internet programming has been complemented by the rapid growth of over-the-top (OTT) platform services, contributing to the formation of a new addiction. The integration of technology and OTT platforms is deemed beneficial for society, as highlighted by Daly (2021). This integration proves to be a significant tool in capturing people's attention and provides a stable business foundation for low-budget film producers.

Every over-the-top (OTT) service relies on key metrics such as "like," "share," "comment," "subscribe," "watch," and "review." To discern the significance of these emerging trends, a survey was conducted among Netflix customers. Many of these individuals engaged in binge-watching the streaming service's premiere episodes of original television programming, subsequently sharing their positive reviews on social media. This study aimed to unravel the importance attached to these trends among the consumers of such OTT services.

A survey revealed that the average consumer dedicates 6 hours and 29 minutes weekly to online streaming video, providing indisputable evidence of the escalating popularity of this mode of entertainment. The term "web series" commonly denotes a sequence of short films uploaded at regular intervals on the internet, crafting a continuous narrative akin to daily soap operas or traditional television series. This format diverges from conventional television by being accessible online (Daly, 2021).

As individuals increasingly abandon traditional broadcast television in favour of streaming services like Netflix and Hulu, critics argue that this shift undermines cultural cohesion, known as the "water cooler conversation," which traditionally unites people through shared mass media experiences. The Netflix effect, allowing fans to binge-watch numerous episodes in a single sitting,

extends beyond mere convenience and customization, particularly resonating with the Facebook generation, encompassing both Generations Z and Y's teens and young adults (Dhiman & Malik, 2021). The accessibility of video-on-demand facilitates active participation in cultural conversations.

Over time, web series have consistently expanded their thematic range, covering a diverse array of topics. However, concerns arise as young people, with their fundamentally different worldview, internalize messages from these series that may normalize violence and abusive behaviour in society (Flett et al., 2022).

The scope of the study:

This research endeavors to establish a theoretical framework that explores the mental and interpersonal implications arising from the online streaming consumption of crime-themed, gory, and otherwise unsettling web series among young people.

Objective of the study:

- Gain insight into the psychological and social consequences stemming from the consumption of web series among young individuals.
- Ascertain the sentiments of the youth concerning web series and various forms of internet video entertainment.
- Understand the detrimental impact of excessive binge-watching on the emotional and physical well-being of young individuals.

Literature review:

Consumer behaviour within the realm of streaming video processes is recognized as a dynamic and volatile phenomenon, necessitating a focused consideration of viewer behaviour during content creation (Qiu, Fan, & Cui, Yi, 2022; Cui & Wang, 2022). The literature underscores the importance of understanding viewer actions and preferences in shaping the streaming video landscape.

India's OTT landscape is dominated by Hotstar, owned by Star TV, with a substantial user base of 75 million individuals across urban and rural areas since its establishment in 2015 (Aadeetya, 2018). Amazon Prime Video holds the second position with an 11 million-strong member base, while Netflix, with around 5 million members, presents a unique subject for research due to its distinct characteristics and target audience of affluent, urban youth proficient in English (Joglekar, 2018).

A notable shift in viewing habits is observed, as viewers increasingly opt for binge-watching, consuming multiple episodes of a series in quick succession (Pomerantez, 2013). This trend is substantiated by Nielsen's 2013 investigation, revealing that 88% of Netflix subscribers engage in binge-watching, leading to accelerated consumer activity and increased purchases (Nielsen, 2013).

The influence of product positioning and placement on the production of web series for OTT platforms is emphasized, with successful audience engagement attributed to effective product and content placement strategies (Kakkar & Nayak, 2019). OTT platforms, resembling Amazon Prime and Netflix, provide streamlined access to extensive media libraries, reshaping viewer behaviour and platform preferences through the integration of mobile devices, Internet TV/Video-On-Demand (VOD), and OTT technologies (Vishal et al., 2015). This revolution signifies a transformative shift in how viewers interact with content and technology in the contemporary media landscape.

Research Methodology:

The research methodology played a pivotal role in facilitating the identification of various approaches, methodologies, and pertinent issues related to the research topic. It served as a valuable tool in guiding the scientists through the investigation, enabling them to tackle essential challenges inherent to the study. This research adhered to the principles of qualitative research, employing a meticulously designed questionnaire to gather primary data. Secondary data, sourced from journals and past research, provided additional insights into the impact of Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms on the younger generation. A straightforward random sampling technique was utilized to select an estimated sample of 100 respondents.

The data collection process involved gathering secondary information from diverse internet databases and primary data through in-person interviews and online surveys. The primary data gathering instrument primarily comprised an online survey, and following data collection, the researcher applied both qualitative and quantitative methodologies for analysis. The study team utilized various methods, including questionnaires, in-person interviews, observations, Right to Know Act requests, and a literature review to collect primary and secondary data. For questionnaire dissemination, a Google Forms survey, consisting mainly of closed-ended questions, was shared with respondents via email.

As the study progresses, a well-defined mechanism for data collection and processing will be developed, ensuring comprehensive coverage and rigorous analysis of the gathered information.

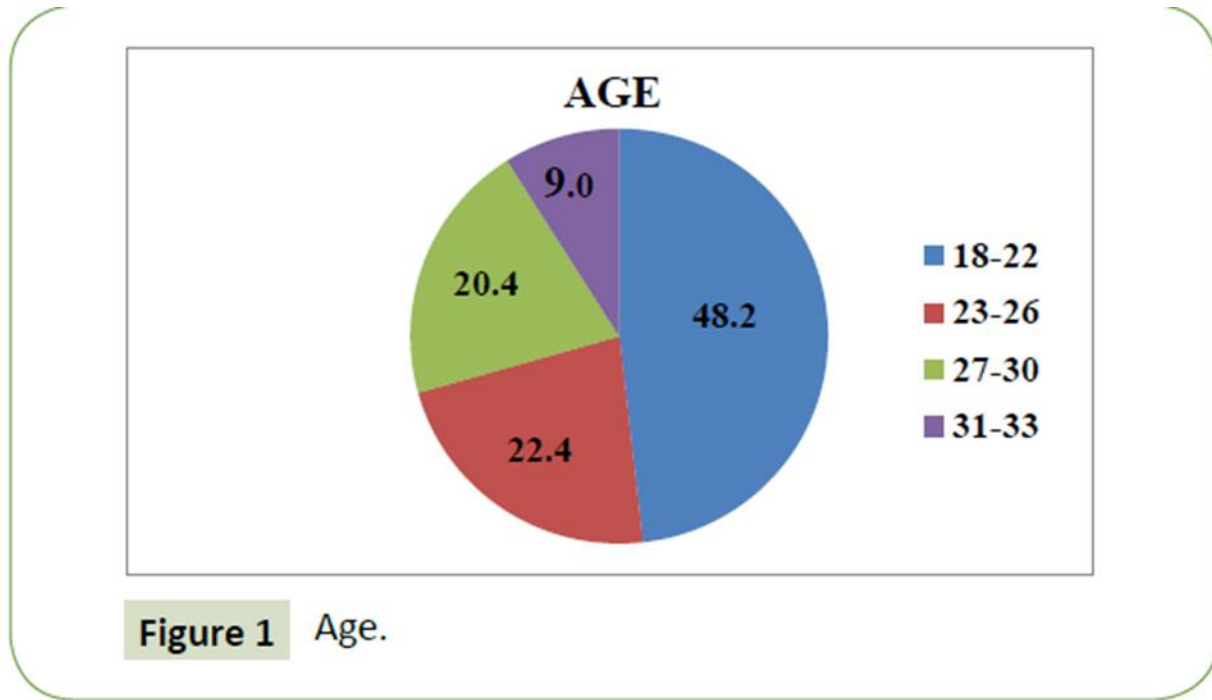
Data analysis and interpretation:

Adopting a descriptive research methodology, we systematically generated and analyzed the quantitative data collected, leading to a nuanced understanding of various aspects of our study. The key focus during this phase was on the determination of the study's significance.

Through quantitative analysis, we delved into the numerical representation of our data, providing a comprehensive overview of patterns, trends, and associations within the collected information. This method allowed us to draw meaningful insights and draw connections between different variables, facilitating a thorough exploration of the research questions.

The significance of the study was assessed through the critical examination of the quantitative findings, elucidating the broader implications of our research within the context of the chosen topic. By employing statistical tools and techniques, we were able to derive meaningful

conclusions and contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This phase lays the foundation for the subsequent stages of our research, guiding further exploration and discussion based on the insights gleaned from the data analysis.



Based on the collected responses, a clear conclusion emerges, indicating that nearly half (48.1%) of the study's participants fall within the age bracket of less than 22 years old. This demographic group represents a significant portion of the respondents. In contrast, the proportion of participants aged 23 to 26 is slightly higher at 22.4%, those between 27 and 30 constitute 20.4%, and individuals aged 31 to 33 make up 9.0% of the study's population. These findings highlight the diverse age distribution within the participant pool, shedding light on the varying perspectives and experiences across different age groups.

Table: 1

Participants	Age range
48.1%	18y -22y
22.4%	23y -26y
20.4%	27y-30y
9.0%	31y-33y

Question asked to the respondent:

1. Which video-sharing site now has the most users streaming content online?

A significant portion of respondents, 33%, identified Netflix as their most frequently used internet provider for streaming videos. Following closely, 25.40% of participants indicated their preference for watching videos on YouTube. The distribution further reveals that 17.10% of respondents favor Hotstar, 11.0% use Sony Liv, 8.00% opt for Amazon Prime, 5.00% choose Eros Now, and 3.20% utilize torrent sites for streaming content.

The data suggests a clear preference among respondents for Netflix as the most popular streaming service, with YouTube closely following. This inclination towards Netflix and YouTube highlights a trend where users favor free video streaming options over subscribing to other Over-The-Top (OTT) services, underlining the significant market dominance of these two platforms in the online streaming landscape.

Table 2:

Video sharing sites	Usage %
Netflix	25.40%
YouTube	17.10%
Hot star	11.0%
Sony liv	8.00%
Amazon Prime	5.00%

2. How many hours a day do you spend watching online videos, such as web series?

Most respondents, comprising 70.20%, indicated that they typically spend between 1 and 3 hours per day watching internet videos, including web series. A substantial portion, 22.30% of participants, reported spending between 4 and 6 hours daily on online video consumption. A smaller segment, accounting for 7.60% of respondents, mentioned spending between 7 and 9 hours per day watching online videos. What impact, if any, do web series and other internet media have on a person's psychology, in your opinion?

The data highlights a prevalent trend among respondents, with a significant majority dedicating 1 to 3 hours each day to watching online videos. While a noteworthy portion engages in a moderate consumption pattern of 4 to 6 hours, a smaller yet notable segment allocates a substantial 7 to 9 hours daily to online video viewing. These insights provide valuable information on the varied viewing habits of participants, contributing to a nuanced understanding of their online video consumption behaviors.

3. After seeing a violent or nasty internet series, do you feel more enraged and hostile?

Upon inquiry about the emotional impact of watching violent or unsettling internet series, a substantial 78.0% of respondents answered negatively, indicating that they do not feel more enraged and hostile after such viewing experiences. A smaller percentage, comprising 12.0% of participants, acknowledged feeling more furious and aggressive. Additionally, 10% of respondents expressed uncertainty regarding the impact of web series on their emotional state.

Most respondents seem to report resilience to heightened anger or hostility after viewing violent or nasty internet series. However, a notable segment acknowledges experiencing increased feelings of fury and aggression. The presence of uncertainty within the responses highlights the complexity of emotional responses to such content, suggesting the need for further exploration into the psychological effects of internet series on viewers.

4. Are you concerned that the prevalence of anxiety and sadness in contemporary culture may be attributable to the proliferation of online video content and web series?

In examining the concerns about the potential link between the widespread anxiety and sadness in contemporary culture and the proliferation of online video content and web series, 20% of respondents firmly asserted that they were not concerned about this association. On the other hand, 20% agreed with the statement, expressing apprehension about the impact of web series and online content on mental well-being. A notable 9% of respondents remained uncertain about whether web series and internet content were contributors to their feelings of fear and despair.

The responses reflect a diverse range of attitudes toward the potential correlation between the prevalence of anxiety and sadness in contemporary culture and the extensive presence of online video content and web series. While a significant portion appears unconcerned, an equally substantial percentage expresses worry about the potential negative impact of such content on mental health. The presence of uncertainty highlights the need for a more nuanced examination of the complex relationship between media consumption and emotional well-being.

5. According to you, do crime-themed television programmes based on online series contribute to the rise of crime in our society?

When queried about the potential impact of crime-themed television programs based on online series on the rise of crime in society, a significant portion of respondents, 40.20%, expressed the belief that crime rates have increased due to web series. In contrast, 32.20% disagreed with this assessment, asserting that there is no direct connection. Additionally, 27.50% of respondents admitted uncertainty regarding whether web series contribute to an increase in criminal behavior in society.

6. Consider that internet series have an impact on the language and behaviour of adolescents?

Regarding the influence of internet series on the language and behavior of adolescents, 62% of respondents acknowledged the impact, believing that web series do affect the language and behavior of young people. In contrast, 30% disagreed with this notion, asserting that internet series have no significant influence in this regard. A smaller segment, comprising 7% of respondents, expressed uncertainty about the impact of web series on the language and behavior of adolescents.

The responses highlight diverse opinions on the potential contributions of crime-themed television programs based on online series to the rise of crime in society. Similarly, opinions differ on whether internet series influence the language and behavior of adolescents. These findings underscore the complex and varied perspectives held by respondents on the societal implications of web series content.

Discussion:

With the available information, it is safe to declare that web series have a significant impact on the youth worldwide. Since they are streamed online, they naturally appeal to a younger demographic. A recent study indicated that most young people spend between one and three hours each day viewing web series in English. Over-the-top (OTT) services may provide full seasons of favorite television programs or individual episodes that can be viewed in a single sitting. In contrast to television, seasons of content on various platforms are released concurrently (Creß et al., 2022).

Some shows are created solely for entertainment; therefore, they can be quite engaging and interesting (Rout et al., 2022). A cliffhanger typically follows the conclusion of an episode or season. This suggests that the writers and producers of these episodes or seasons put significant attention into creating suspense and intrigue for the next plot. Consequently, viewers fall for the trap and decide to continue watching to get the desired result. Whether our eyes are imploring us to close them, or our bodies are pleading with us to rest and sleep, we must heed their screams.

However, our bodies are suffering due to this addiction. We cannot reverse our decision to surpass our physical boundaries (Schettino et al., 2022). Many health concerns have emerged as a direct result of this circumstance. Watching several episodes of a show in rapid succession prevents the brain from entering a relaxed state, and our bodies are unable to recoup from the lack of sleep they have been receiving. Insufficient sleep can cause serious mental and physical health issues, injuries, decreased productivity, and an increased risk of premature death.

The eyes are among the first locations where the effects are seen. We frequently forget to blink when watching television, despite the fact that our eyes require frequent rest periods and can grow rapidly exhausted from gazing at the screen (Streams in the Wasteland: Mediated Ritual Fantasy in the Age of Netflix - ProQuest, n.d.). Excessive exposure to blue light may be detrimental to the eyes and has been related to cataracts and macular degeneration, both of which can cause temporary or permanent vision loss. Extended periods of screen use, particularly in the dark, have the potential to cause progressive and severe injury.

Poor dietary habits, such as frequent fast-food consumption and eating family meals in front of the television, decreased levels of physical activity, issues with sleep and fatigue, blood clots, heart problems, poor diet, social isolation, behavioral addiction, and cognitive decline are all associated with binge-watching (Streams in the Wasteland: Mediated Ritual Fantasy in the Age of Netflix - ProQuest, n.d.).

Teenagers show a greater interest in action and crime-themed online shows. The majority of responders attribute an increase in inappropriate behavior to web series. It was also established that there is a substantial correlation between anxiety, solitude, depression, and insomnia among young people. There are disadvantages to viewing web series, but there are also possible benefits if approached in the appropriate manner.

Due to the ubiquitous availability of mobile phones and the absence of parental supervision, children and adolescents are exposed to age-inappropriate information (Wagh et al., 2022). The abuse of the freedom to speak and print anything has the potential to inflame tensions on multiple fronts, including political, national, religious, and sexist issues. And the situation could worsen from here on out.

Profanities, sometimes known as swear words, create a great deal of damage in contemporary society, especially among adolescents. The authors of these shows portray the use of profanity as "cool," and young people interpret it in the same manner (Wagh et al., 2022). Teens continue to use these derogatory terms to acquire acceptance among their peers. A person's desire to smoke cigarettes, do drugs, drink excessively, and curse is intertwined with their mood, such that when feeling depressed or furious, for example, they may feel forced to act in these ways. Alcohol and cigarette use among adolescents and young adults are on the rise, making it more important than ever to learn more about its origins and effects.

When numerous elements are evaluated, it is evident that web series and other forms of entertainment that can be broadcast online have a significant impact on youth. Young people's interest has been successfully captured and redirected away from traditional television soap operas by the content developed and exhibited on online platforms (Wang et al., 2022). Youth have acknowledged that the psychological repercussions of the content available on OTT platforms, including sexual, abusive, and violent content, as well as alcohol and drug-related content, have affected their daily lives (Wang et al., 2022). Not only are today's youngsters falling behind academically, but they are also becoming increasingly susceptible to health issues. When individuals spend an excessive amount of time watching television, it might damage their relationships with their loved ones (Wang, 2023).

Conclusion:

The findings of this study underscore the strong influence of web series and other forms of online streaming entertainment on young people. The widespread availability and distribution of web series content online capture the attention of the younger demographic. However, it is crucial to note that there have been negative psychological consequences observed among young people in Asia due to the content available on Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms.

The data analysis reveals a significant impact of internet series on young individuals, with a substantial proportion spending between one to three hours daily engaged in English language web series viewing. Notably, action and criminal programs emerged as the most favored genres among young people in the online space.

Contrary to popular beliefs, the study did not find a causal relationship between the phenomenon of "youth being attracted to drugs and alcohol" and the "social and psychological consequences of web series on young individuals." However, a correlation was observed between the reported experiences of anxiety, seclusion, depression, sleeplessness, and similar conditions, and the belief that the viewing of web series affects the academic performance of young individuals.

In conclusion, engaging in web series viewing presents both benefits and drawbacks, contingent upon its effective utilization. Understanding the nuanced relationship between web series consumption and its impact on the well-being and behaviors of young individuals is essential for promoting responsible and informed viewing habits. This study contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse surrounding the role of web series in the lives of the youth, emphasizing the need for further research and thoughtful consideration of the implications associated with this form of entertainment.

Declaration:

I, Najeeha Rahman Quadri, solemnly declare that the research article titled "Navigating the Digital Stream: Influences, Consequences, and Opportunities for Young Individuals in the World of Web Series" submitted for publication in the Journal of Xi'an Shiyou University is an authentic piece of my own work. I am the sole author of this article and affirm that it has not been previously published.

All sources of information utilized in this article, encompassing text, figures, tables, and references, have been duly acknowledged and cited. Materials, data, or concepts derived from external sources have been appropriately referenced in adherence to the established guidelines and standards of academic integrity.

I explicitly state that the opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this article are solely my own and do not reflect the views of any institution, organization, or individual. I acknowledge the potential consequences of providing false information or misrepresentation, which may lead to the rejection of my article from consideration for publication.

Furthermore, I affirm that I have meticulously reviewed and edited the manuscript to ensure its accuracy, clarity, and coherence before submission. I am fully committed to making any necessary revisions or supplying additional information as requested by the editorial board of the Journal of Xi'an Shiyou University during the review process.

By submitting this manuscript, I hereby grant the Journal of Xi'an Shiyou University the right to review, edit, publish, and distribute the article if accepted for publication. I willingly agree to

adhere to the ethical and publishing standards established by the Journal of Xi'an Shiyou University.

Signed:



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