Cinema and OTT

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Abstract

The bond made while watching a television show with our whole family, the feeling of thrill which we experience in a movie hall, and the utter fascination which a person gets while watching a film in Cinema cannot ever be replicated by the new and ever growing Over the Top platforms, more commonly known as OTT platforms. Despite having negative impacts on the emotional and physical well being of a person, humans are attracted to the sheer luxury which OTT platforms tend to provide, and hence we see a rise in the usage of said platforms, while a simultaneous decline in people going to the Cinema over the past few years.

The key finding of this paper is carefully understanding the shift of users from Cinema to OTT platforms, and why this said change has taken place. The paper explains in detail how the audience has changed its preference over the past few years and also establishes reasons regarding why people are starting to now prefer OTT platforms. Additionally, the paper also delves deep into the preferences of the audience regarding OTT platforms, answering questions like which OTT platform do they prefer or which genre or language do people prefer watching films in.

Overall the paper concludes having given the reader thorough and precise information about the topic, and showcasing both the positive and negative sides of Cinema and OTT platforms.

Introduction

The story of India's entertainment industry is one of dreams, resilience, and relentless innovation. It began in the late 19th century when India was introduced to the moving picture, a moment that would forever change how stories were told and consumed. In 1896, the Lumière Brothers brought the first-ever film screening to Mumbai (Birth of Indian Cinema), mesmerizing audiences with their short films. This small spark ignited a passion for cinema in India, leading to the creation of the country's first silent feature film, *Raja Harishchandra*, in 1913, directed by Dadasaheb Phalke (Father of Indian Cinema). This was not just the birth of Indian cinema; it was the beginning of a cultural revolution that would capture the imaginations of millions for generations to come.

Before cinema took the centre stage, theatre had been a prominent form of storytelling in India. Traditional performances like *nautanki*, *jatra*, and *kathakali* had long entertained and educated the masses. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Indian theatre evolved with influences from Western drama, and playwrights like Girish Chandra Ghosh and Rabindranath Tagore elevated the art form (Bengali Drama). Theatre houses flourished, but the arrival of cinema introduced an entirely new experience—one that was more immersive and accessible to a larger audience.

The silent film era had its limitations, but it did not deter the growing passion for cinema. The introduction of sound in 1931 with *Alam Ara* changed everything. Now, films, also known as talkie films, were not just moving images; they could sing, speak, and evoke deeper emotions. The music and dialogues created an emotional bond with the audience, and cinema quickly became the most beloved form of entertainment in

India. The talkie films brought a revolution to the Indian film industry and completely overshadowed the silent movies at a time when they were at a peak, ultimately leading to their disappearance (Era of Talkies). The industry expanded rapidly, with luminaries like Bimal Roy, Mehboob Khan, and Raj Kapoor pushing creative boundaries.

The 1950s and 60s marked another milestone—the transition to color films. Kisan Kanya was a Hindi Cinecolor feature film directed by Moti Gidwani and produced by Imperial Pictures' Ardeshir Irani in 1937. The color film Kisan Kanya was the fruit of his efforts, and it was shot using the Cinecolor technique, which Irani had obtained from an American business (First Colour Film). While *Kisan Kanya* (1937) was India's first color film, it was in the post-independence era that colored storytelling truly flourished. Films like *Mughal-e-Azam* and *Guide* enchanted audiences with their grand visuals and evocative narratives. The cinema halls were packed, the demand for storytelling soared, and entertainment was no longer just a pastime—it had become an integral part of Indian culture.

As people's love for cinema grew, so did their desire to experience it in new ways. The arrival of television in the 1950s introduced an alternative medium of entertainment. Television in India has been in existence for about four decades. For the first 17 years, it spread haltingly and transmission was usually in black and white with restricted programming. However, with the 1980s came a wave of transformation—color television became widely available, and serials like *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* created a collective viewing experience, bringing families together in front of the screen. This serial reached the zenith of the world record viewership numbers for a single program. By the late 1980s more and more people started to buy television sets (History of Indian Television). The emotional connection between audiences and their screens deepened, and television became a household staple.

The 1990s and early 2000s saw the rise of cable television and satellite channels, offering a diverse range of content. The cable TV industry exploded in the early 1990s when the broadcast industry was liberalized, and saw the entry of many foreign players like Rupert Murdoch's Star TV Network in 1991, MTV, and others. With increasing accessibility, cinema was no longer confined to theatres (TV Broadcasting in India). Films reached living rooms, bridging the gap between traditional cinema and modern entertainment. As technology advanced, so did the audience's appetite for convenience. People wanted entertainment on their terms—when they wanted, where they wanted.

Enter the digital era. The early 2010s witnessed the birth of Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms, a phenomenon that would redefine entertainment consumption in India. It was during this period that India witnessed a cinematic evolution. Movies premiered directly on OTT platforms, and a fresh wave of digital programming flooded the screens every week. Streaming giants like Disney+ Hotstar, Prime Video, and Netflix led the charge, introducing the audience to a treasure trove of diverse content. With high-speed internet and smartphones becoming common, audiences no longer had to wait for a scheduled broadcast or a theatre release (Rise in OTT). Binge-watching became a cultural trend, and regional storytelling flourished like never before. The rise of OTT platforms gave independent filmmakers and storytellers a global stage, breaking the monopoly of mainstream cinema and enabling diverse voices to be heard, while also leading to a decline in cable television (Decline in Cable TV in India).

Today, the entertainment industry in India is more dynamic than ever. From the silent reels of the past to the immersive world of OTT streaming, every advancement has been driven by the audience's insatiable desire for stories. The magic of cinema remains, but its medium has evolved, adapting to the changing times and embracing the digital revolution. What began as a simple screening in 1896 has now transformed

into a vast, limitless universe of storytelling, where emotions, art, and technology continue to shape the future of entertainment in India.

Literature Survey-

While looking for the various literatures on the relevant topic, some intuitive thoughts have been found. Anderson (1983) described Cinema as a tool for propaganda,storytelling and national identity formation. Studies of Kim (2021) suggest that the ease of access provided by OTT platforms has contributed to a decline in cinema attendance. Iyengar (2020) stated that pandemic accelerated the OTT boom, reducing dependence on theatrical releases. Lobato (2019) described how the OTT platforms have disrupted the film industry's revenue model. Box office collections were once the primary source of revenue, digital streaming now offers direct-to-digital releases and subscription-based models. This has affected employment patterns in the film industry, with increased reliance on digital distribution. OTT platforms allow independent filmmakers to reach global audiences without relying on major production houses (Kohli & Roy, 2020) which has provided a variety of narratives. In spite of these benefits OTT is having a negative psychological impact on viewers along with sleep cycle disorder (Flayelle et al., 2020). Kuss & Griffiths(2017)stated that cinema promotes a shared cultural experience, but OTT platforms depend on individualized viewing habits**,** leading to concerns about social isolation and addiction (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). On the other hand according to Hanson (2018) cinema-going remains a social activity that fosters community engagement. According to Bhattacharya (2021) OTT platforms releases do not need censor board permission which has two impacts. While it enjoys freedom of expression, it is also increasing debates in various social topics.

Literature Gap

From the various literatures, the consumer's preference between OTT and cinema hall in A metropolitan city like Kolkata was not found .Hence this paper takes up such a study.

Objectives- The paper tries to evaluate

1. The choices and preferences of the respondents regarding OTT
2. The perceptions of the respondents regarding Movie theatre and OTT

Methodology

The paper is completely based on primary data. A primary survey was taken up in the city of Kolkata during January 2025 to February 2025. It was a random sample survey. 125 responses were collected through a questionnaire floated by google forms. The responses were then tabulated and described with the help of some simple charts and diagrams. Relevant data from vVarious literatures and magazines were also collected.

Result & Analysis- For analysing the scenario, firstly the demographic situation of thr respondents should be evaluated. Here are the followings.

DEMOGRAPHIC

Gender:

The survey got a total response from 125 people, amongst whom there was a majority of females with the number being 79, and the male responses being 46.

Age:

The age bracket was very varied. It was divided into 5 subgroups, namely: below 18, with 19 people; between 18 to 25, with 13 people; between 25 to 35, with 10 people, being the minority; between 35 to 50, with 50 people, being the majority; and finally, above 50, with 33 people.
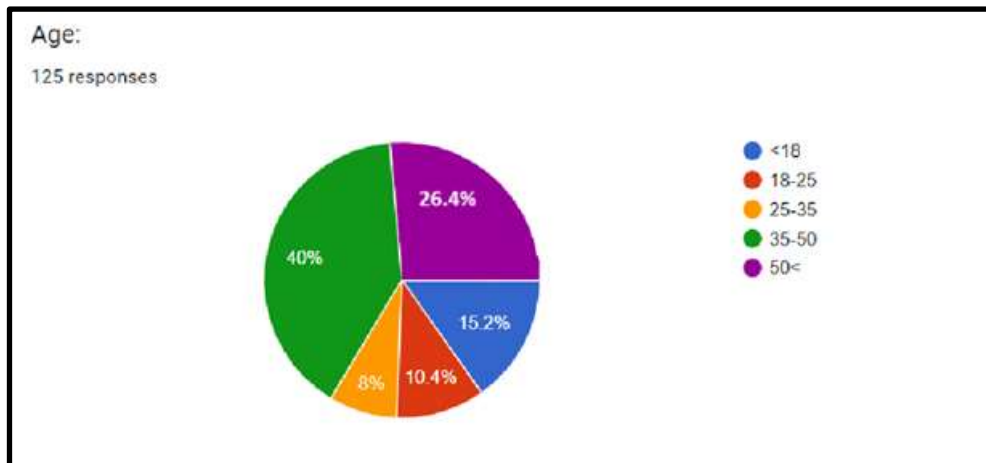
Recommendations:

On being asked where they mostly got their movie recommendations from, to know the most popular source of spreading information, we came to the conclusion that their Friends are the ones giving the most recommendations with 80% of the people getting information from them. Around 50% of these people also get movie recommendations from Social Media platforms, like YouTube, Instagram, etc. Recommendations from Families and Trailers are also taken into account with around 40% and 30% of the people respectively relying on them. Physical Poster is the last instrument of giving recommendations with their viewing rates being at only about 2.5%. Some people also get recommendations from their college etc.
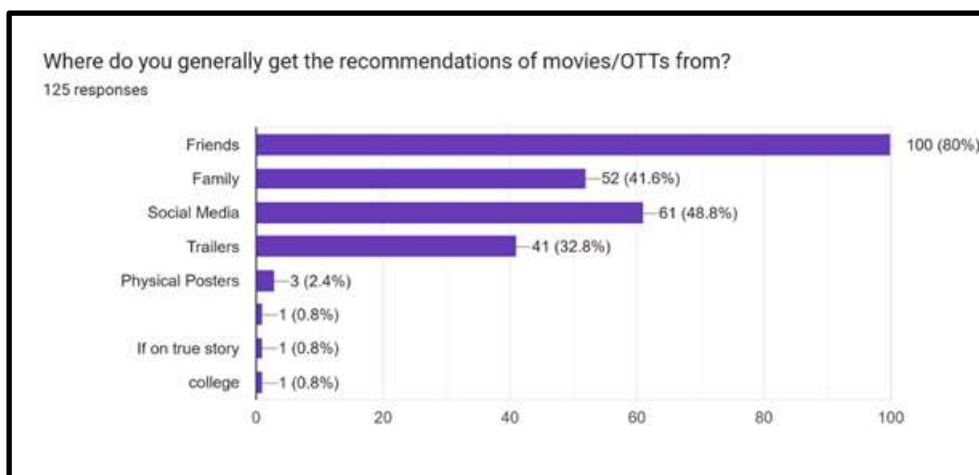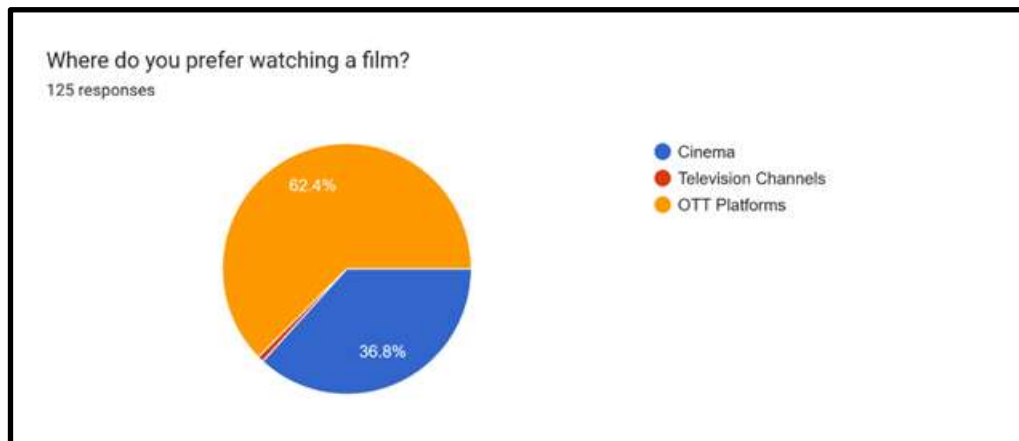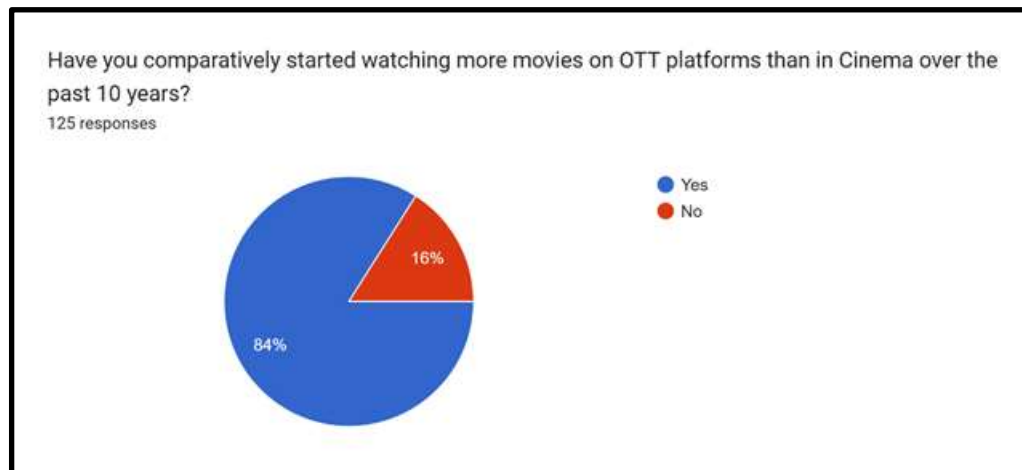

PREFERENCE

Where:

When people were asked the most important question, where they preferred watching a film, the majority of responses highlighted the fact that OTT Platforms are the most preferred platform of watching films with 78 people choosing the same. Cinema, not too far behind, is also a preferred platform for 46 people.

Whereas only 1 person chose Television Channels as their preferred platform showcasing its declined audience.

Comparing:

To understand the change in preferences of people, we asked whether they have started watching more movies on OTT platforms than in Cinema over the past 10 years. With the conclusion highlighting a majority of people of 84% having shifted their preference to OTT platforms, while the rest either still having an equal watch time in both platforms or still having Cinema as their most preferred platform.


Why:

The reasons for this change in preference were very varied. Around 50% of the people chose the luxury of watching at home. 30% changed also because of the easy accessibility of OTT platforms. 25% of the people changed their choice because it is a cheaper option. Exactly 20% of the people agreed that going to the cinema is a physical task and hence have changed their preference. But the most popular answer, explaining the shift of the viewership from Cinema to OTTs, was that the people could now watch the movies at their own pace.

Book or Movie:

When asked about their preference about books and movies, we come to a straightforward conclusion.

More than 50% of the people would prefer simply just watching the movie and not reading the book at all. And in the case of watching a movie and reading a book, the majority, with 30%, prefers first reading the book and then watching the movie, while only around 14% prefer doing it the opposite way. On the complete other side with only 4% voters choosing this, they prefer just reading the book and not watching its movie altogether.
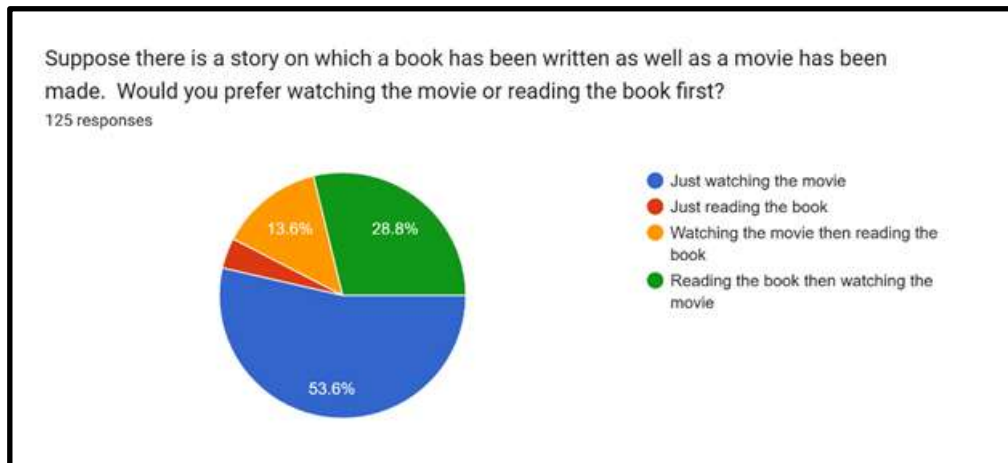
Which OTT:

Even the OTT platforms have started expanding, and different people with different interests prefer certain specific OTT platforms amongst the so many available. The most used and preferred OTT platform with a majority of around 80% of the votes is Netflix. Next there is Disney Hotstar which is used by around 9% of the people, and the only other significant preference goes to Amazon Prime with around 7% votes. All other platforms like JioCinema, SonyLIV, ZEE5, Apple TV and Telegram have minimal usage rates.
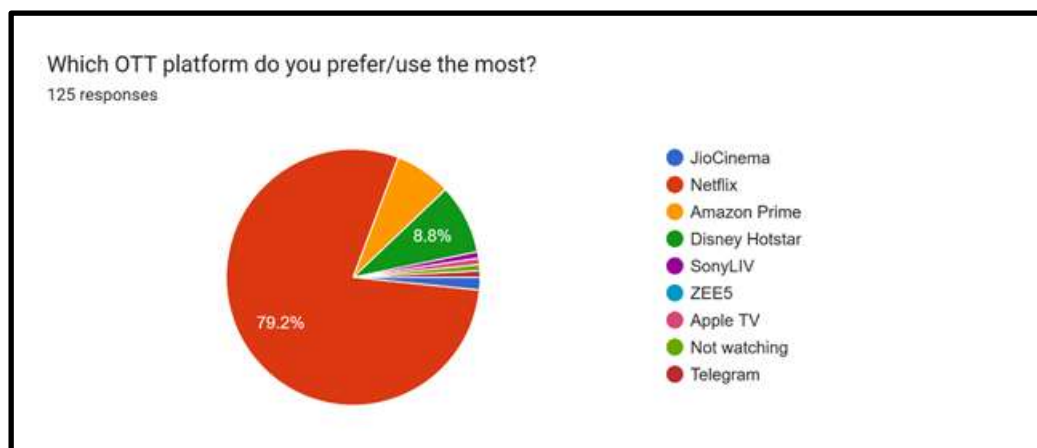

Ranking:

When all the people were asked to rank the same OTT platforms according to their liking, we see a slight change. Netflix comes at first place, being the highest ranked. However, in second place now comes Amazon Prime. The third rank goes to Disney Hotstar, fourth to JioCinema, fifth to SonyLIV, sixth to ZEE5, and seventh to "other" platforms.

Why:

Subsequently, when asked the reasons behind ranking the platforms as they did, we get to know that around 75% think their chosen OTT platform has better options available in movies and series. Around 40% ranked the platforms also based on having less or no advertisements. For 20% of the people, the reason behind their ranking was also less technical issues in their selected OTT platform. And around 5% of the people had other reasons like less subscription fees, more exclusive releases etc.

Length of movies and series:

Next, to know about the preference in the length of movies and series, out of the 4 options; for films, the majority (approx. 50%) chose 1 to 2 hours films, making in the most preferable, while 2 to 3 hours films were also not too behind with approximately 45% votes; while for series we see a huge gap, as the majority prefers watching 3 to 4 seasons series with 44% people selecting it, while only around 20% people prefer watching 8 to 9 seasons series.
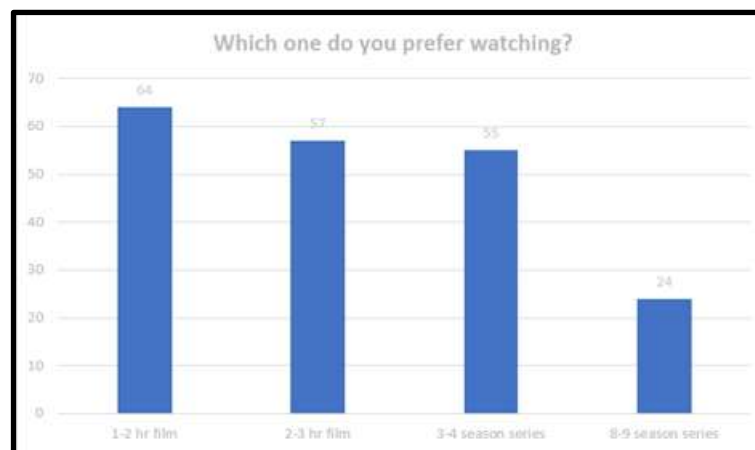

How much time:

To get to know their screen time, on the basis of movies and series, in a week, we asked them how much time they think they spend watching films. With a clear majority, around 50% people think they spend only about 2-5 hours watching films or series in a week. Around 30% think they spend 5-10 hours for the same, while around 11% believe they spend 10-15 hours. Continuing the pattern of disinclination, only about 7% people think they spend 15-20 hours watching films and series in a week, and with the minority, only 4% of the people believe they spend more than 20 hours in a week watching films and series.
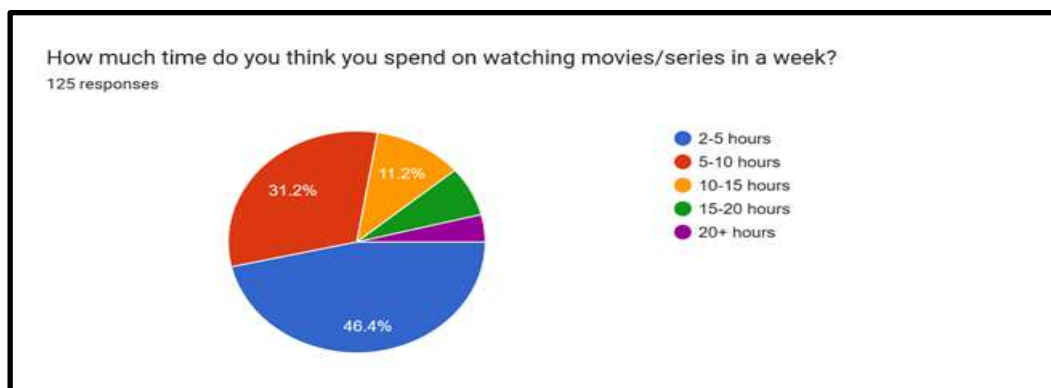
Genre:

Films are of many genres and of course the preference in these genres varies from person to person. A staggering 70% of the people like watching Comedy the most, having a clear majority. Almost having equal preferences, Romance and Mystery are preferred by around 50% of the voters. Next, we have Adventure also being highly preferred with more than 40% votes. Almost tied again are two genres which generally go hand in hand, Action and Drama, with about 32% people preferring them. Fantasy and Horror movies are also not far behind with about 16% votes. And other genres like Thriller, History, Sci-fi and Documentaries have minimal preference but are still alive.
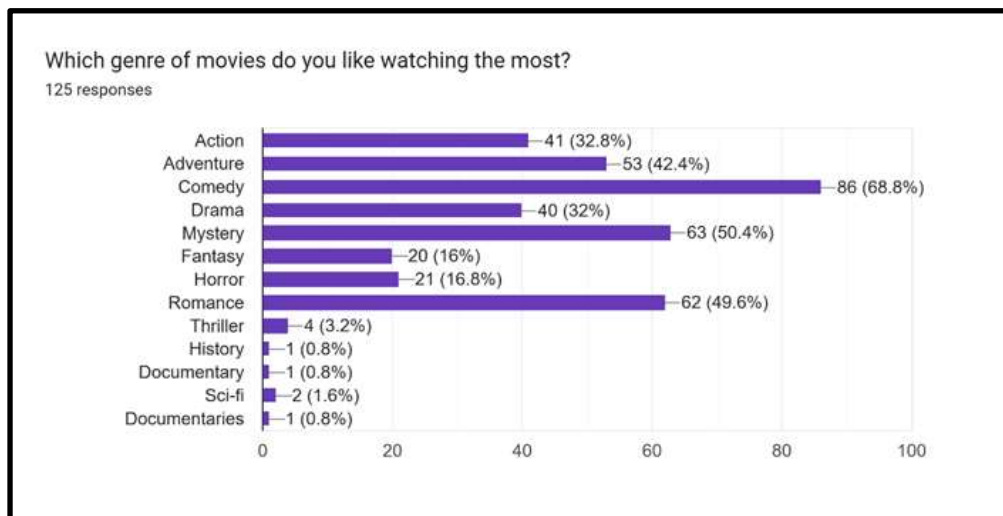

Language:

To explore the linguistic preferences of the people, they were asked their preference in the language of the films they watched, and through this we see a huge gap. The absolute majority of the people prefer watching Hindi and English films with around 90% and 80% votes respectively. Then falling down to only about 10% is Bengali films, while other languages like Tamil, Spanish, German and Korean also have minimal but few votes. On a different note, we also see that around 5% of the people would not mind watching a film in any language, if it would be dubbed to the language of their choice.
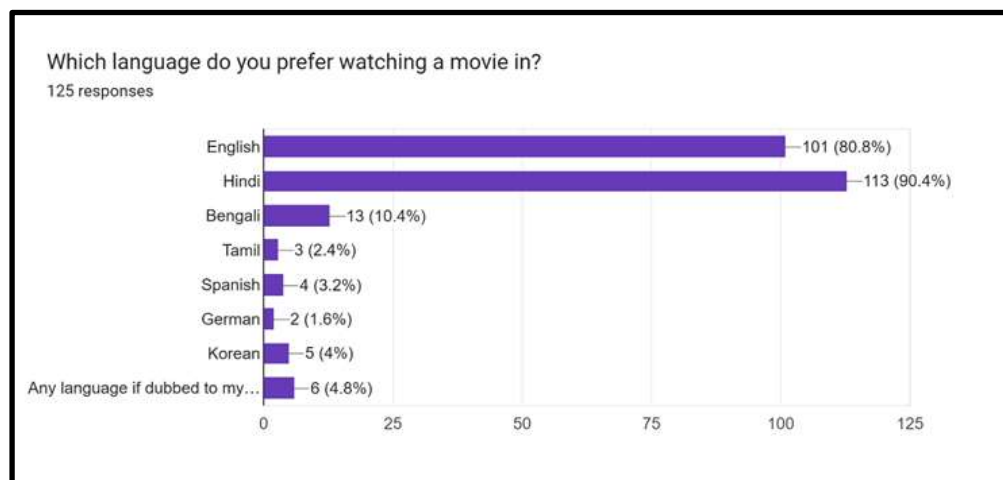
PERCEPTION

Reason:

There are many different reasons why people would watch a movie or rather be eager to watch it. It includes the movie's cast, director, songs, production house etc. For more than 65% of the people, the plot of the movie is the sole reason behind them wanting to watch a movie. Along with that the other significant reason for more than 25% of the people are the lead actors or actresses in the film. Other factors like the Director, Songs in the movie and the production house have also minimal but some significance.
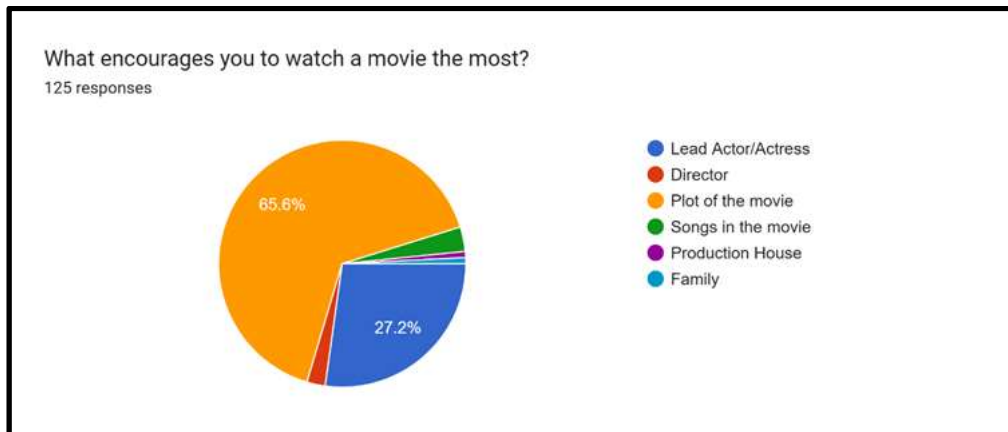
Subscription fees:

To watch good movies on good OTT platforms, subscription fees are charged, and it may or may not be an impactful factor for the viewers. With the majority, more than 46% of the people say that subscription fees have no impact on their decision to watch movies on OTT Platforms. Around 40% of the other viewers say that subscription fees do have an impact on their decision but minimally. Whereas, more than 15% people state that subscription fees for an OTT Platform have a major impact on their decision to watch movies on the said platform.
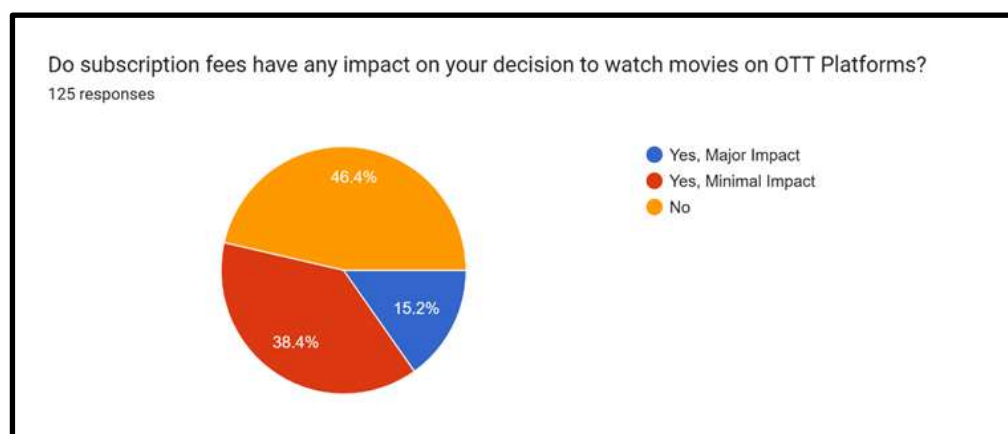
Conclusion-

This story of India's entertainment industry, with all its transformations, developments and milestones still thrives in the 21st century, and should not change for quite some time. India has had heart-touching theatre plays, legendary directors, dynamic actors, and even more thought-provoking and powerful films.

From silent films, to theatre, to talkie films, to colour feature films in cinemas, India has indeed adapted and grown. In today's world, OTTs do dominate this integral part of one of the greatest art forms, but movie theatres still have their own charm. Just like Sir Orson Welles, an American Director, once said, "The cinema has no boundary; it is a ribbon of dream."Hence society can imagine that in the upcoming years, cinema will not hold back. With more developments and improvements in techniques of filmmaking, and more possible ways of streaming those films for the audiences' comfort, the society should be ready for the vast changes that are yet to come.

The paper concludes that Cinema is indeed losing its true essence which is disheartening. More importance should be given to this significant part of the entertainment industry. But as of right now, with ever-growing global streaming platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, the audiences' comfort is well looked after. Yes, OTTs do have their pros and cons, but after all, doesn't each comfortable and valuable art form made for humans and made by humans have its pros and cons. Currently, people do prefer OTTs over cinemas for various reasons, like comfort in watching, less of a physical task etc., but that doesn't mean there are no people on Earth who don't like watching films on a big screen. That doesn't mean there are no families that still sit and watch Television programmes on television channels. A complete shift from Cinema to OTT, is frankly impossible. There is always going to be a small percentage of the audience who will always prefer experiencing the thrill and excitement of a new film in the Cinema. Even something which is as perfect as it can be, in today's world, doesn't and won't ever get the full support of the 8 billion people in the world, so this paper doesn't expect OTTs to function any differently. With the infinite demand of the audience, there are always more improvements that can and will be made in the entertainment industry in the world and especially in India. But one thing is for sure, whether it be in the form of Television, Cinema or OTTs, this greatest art form comprising literature, sculptures, architectures, paintings, acting and sound, will never lose its essence and will always thrive in India, as well as in the whole world.

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