THE IMPACT OF E-WOM ON USERS’ ATTITUDES TOWARD OVER-THE-TOP (OTT) STREAMING VIDEO CONTENT AND ITS SUBSCRIPTION INTENTION. – YOUNG INDIANS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Empirical research suggests a high impact of e-WOM on the user’s attitude leading to their behavioral intention. This research paper is a novel attempt to understand the impact of electronic word-of-mouth on users’ attitudes toward the content of OTT, leading to its subscription intention.

Theoretical framework: “Content” is one of the key factors behind the exponential growth and viewership of OTT platforms in India. But how the users develop their attitude to watch or subscribe a specific content largely depends on word of mouth (WOM) or electronic word of mouth(e-WOM) information.

Design/method/approach: The data is collected from 250 respondents using the measured items from existing scales to test their validity and reliability in the OTT industry. Structural equation modeling is then used to examine the influence of e-WOM on the user’s attitudes toward content and subscription intention.

Findings: The results indicate a positive and significant impact of e-WOM on the user’s attitude towards content and subscription intention. e-WOM is a significant predictor

Research, Practical & Social implication: The paper offers valuable insights to the prominent marketers of OTTs in devising appropriate content promotion or content enhancement strategies which could lead to a favorable e-WOM about their content.

Originality/value: There has been immense research on the different aspects OTTs, but none has been done in context to OTT streaming video content’s e-WOM and subscription intention. Thus, the paper extends the existing research on OTTs to a new area, namely e-WOM.

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O IMPACTO DO E-WOM SOBRE AS ATITUDES DOS USUÁRIOS EM RELAÇÃO AO CONTEÚDO DE VÍDEO EM STREAMING OVER-THE-TOP (OTT) E SUA INTENÇÃO DE ASSINATURA. - PERSPECTIVA DOS JOVENS ÍNDIOS

RESUMO

Objetivo: Pesquisas empíricas sugerem um alto impacto da e-WOM sobre a atitude do usuário que leva a sua intenção comportamental. Este trabalho de pesquisa é uma nova tentativa de entender o impacto do boca-a-boca eletrônico nas relações dos usuários ao conteúdo da OTT, levando à sua intenção de assinatura.

Estrutura teórica: O “conteúdo” é um dos fatores-chave por trás do crescimento exponencial e da audiência das plataformas OTT na Índia. Mas como os usuários desenvolvem sua atitude para assistir ou assinar um conteúdo específico depende em grande parte das informações boca-a-boca (WOM) ou eletrônicas (e-WOM).

Design/método/abordagem: Os dados são coletados de 250 respondentes usando os itens medidos das escalas existentes para testar sua validade e confiabilidade na indústria de OTT. A modelagem da equação estrutural é

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EL IMPACTO DE E-WOM EN LAS ACTITUDES DE LOS USUARIOS HACIA LOS CONTENIDOS DE VÍDEO EN STREAMING OVER-THE-TOP (OTT) Y SU INTENCIÓN DE SUSCRIPCIÓN. – PERSPECTIVA DE LOS JÓVENES INDIOS

RESUMEN

Propósito: La investigación empírica sugiere un alto impacto del e-WOM en la actitud del usuario que conduce a su intención de comportamiento. Este trabajo de investigación es un intento novedoso de comprender el impacto del boca a boca electrónico en la actitud de los usuarios hacia el contenido de OTT, que conduce a su intención de suscripción.

Marco teórico: El “contenido” es uno de los factores clave detrás del crecimiento exponencial y la audiencia de las plataformas OTT en la India. Pero cómo los usuarios desarrollan su actitud para ver o suscribirse a un contenido específico depende en gran medida del boca a boca (WOM) o del boca a boca electrónico (e-WOM).

Diseño/método/enfoque: Se recogen datos de 250 encuestados utilizando los ítems medidos de las escalas existentes para comprobar su validez y fiabilidad en la industria OTT. A continuación se utiliza un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales para examinar la influencia del e-WOM en las actitudes de los usuarios hacia los contenidos y la intención de suscripción.

Resultados: Los resultados indican un impacto positivo y significativo de e-WOM en la actitud del usuario hacia el contenido y la intención de suscripción. e-WOM es un predictor significativo.

Implicaciones sociales, prácticas y de investigación: Este artículo ofrece información valiosa a los responsables de marketing de las OTT a la hora de diseñar estrategias adecuadas de promoción o mejora de contenidos que puedan conducir a un e-WOM favorable sobre sus contenidos.

Originalidad/valor: Se han realizado numerosas investigaciones sobre los diferentes aspectos de las OTT, pero ninguna se ha realizado en el contexto de la e-WOM y la intención de suscripción de los contenidos de vídeo en streaming OTT. Por lo tanto, este artículo amplía la investigación existente sobre OTT a un nuevo ámbito, a saber, la e-WOM.

Palabras clave: Plataformas OTT, e-WOM, Contenido, Actitud Hacia el Contenido, Intención de Suscripción.

INTRODUCTION

The year-on-year proliferation of the OTT industry in India has proved that OTTs are the most sought-after means of entertainment for today’s youngsters. This is evident from the fact that 89% of young Indians under 35 years of age consume OTTs to satisfy their entertainment needs, (Bhatia, 2019 Counterpoint Research’s survey report.) There are more than 40 OTT service providers, which offer a wide variety of original content in many Indian languages. India which is expected to become the world’s sixth-largest OTT market by 2024 has recently witnessed a boost in its number of paid users. (Power water coopers report, 2020).
Many recent academic studies also suggest that (SVOD) i.e., subscription-based Video on demand is remarkably progressing because of its original curated content (Panda and Pandey, 2017; Camilleri and Falzon, 2021). Content has occupied a central place among OTT users and has become a key factor in motivating users to adopt OTT (Hino, 2015). Exciting and Unique content provides greater satisfaction to the users (Hino and Amicahi-Hamburger, 2013). But, with the abundance of content available on OTTs, what makes the users watch the content specific to their choices? Do the reviews/ratings and recommendations of the content on specialized websites, blogs, or social network groups help develop their attitude about the specific content? Research across the world has proved that word-of-mouth about any product or service on the internet plays a positive role in influencing the user’s behavior intention towards that product. (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Smith et al., 2005; Trusov et al.; 2009 Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012). Priya et al., 2021 in their research on OTT platforms also concluded that among all other factors “user’s interaction” with the content of OTT plays a pertinent role in influencing their subscription intention. The growing word of mouth on the internet about content has become a common practice among users. Especially, youth is the most prominent group of the population interested in reading or writing e-reviews, ratings, and recommendations. Young digital natives have become so vocal to express and exchange their views, ideas, and information on websites, among their peers, family, or other social groups about the content they must watch on OTT platforms. This, in turn, might affect the other’s attitude about that content, and they decide to watch the same content or subscribe to that platform. Thus, online word of mouth or e-WOM could be an important factor leading to the user’s subscription intention to OTTs. With the increasing internet penetration, e-WOM has become a bigger and wider substitute for WOM with increasing size and effect on people.

Noted researchers (Ismagilova et al. 2017; 2019) defined “Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) as the exchange of ideas, ongoing information, between the group of potential consumers, who are consuming or have earlier consumed any product, brand or service.” e-WOM can have access to several individuals or institutions via the Internet. Human behavior and attitude are greatly influenced by e-WOM information. (Filieri et al. 2018). There is a significant impact of word-of-mouth communications on consumers’ attitudes and behavioral intentions (e.g., Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012 Chatterjee, 2001; Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Herr et al., 1991; Kiecker and Cowles, 2001; Sen and Lerman, 2007; Smith and Vogt, 1995; Xia and Bechwati, 2008). e-WOM is one of the key areas of research that has been studied by eminent researchers across the world in various areas of study. But, despite the fact very little attention to the effectiveness of e-WOM communication and its different forms has been paid
till now in the field of media or entertainment. Past studies include work done by (Craig et al. 2015) who examined the relationship between the e-WOM communication of a movie before its release and the audience’s intention to watch that movie. The study concluded that “e-WOM-Volume” i.e the number of communications on social media about a movie greatly influences the audiences to watch a particular movie. (Bae and Kim,2019) studied the impact of early e-WOM on average TV ratings of some initial episodes in terms of frequency of WOM communications and positive and negative WOM over the internet. The results of the study showed the significant impact of “e-WOM -Valence” (positive and negative communication) as compared to “Volume” on average TV ratings.

Apart from media and entertainment the studies done in other areas include e-WOM and its different forms and dimensions. The studies of (Chih et al. 2013; Ladhari and Michaud 2015) in the field of social media marketing and the travel industry suggests that e-WOM communication strongly impacts consumers’ attitudes towards the product/service, which in turn leads to their purchase. (Baber et al. 2016; Chih et al. 2013; Liao et al. 2016; Teng et al. 2017; Xiaofen and Yiling 2009). All these studies have shown the relationship between e-WOM, attitude towards the product/brand, and purchase intention with a large effect size. Due to the increasing prominence of e-WOM in consumer behavior research, this study is a first-ever attempt to understand the influence of e-WOM on the OTT industry, especially on young consumers and their subscription intention. The impact of e-WOM in the OTT industry has been analyzed with two key factors, First, “Attitude towards content” and second “subscription intention”. The study has the following objective to find out:

The direct impact of “e-WOM influence” on users’ attitudes towards content.

The direct impact of users’ “attitudes towards the content” on subscription intention.

The indirect impact of “e-WOM influence” on subscription intention.

The next part of the paper provides a literature review associated with e-WOM and users’ attitudes toward the content. Based on that the hypothesis and conceptual model are drawn. Further through research methodology and data analysis, the results are achieved. In the end, the findings and inferences are made for further research and practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is the first-ever attempt to establish a link between e-WOM- Attitude towards content and Subscription intention. No study exists in past in this direction concerning OTT platforms, therefore literature review related to e-WOM and attitude towards content and subscription intention will be provided separately.
Previous Research on the Impact of e-WOM in Shaping Consumers’ Attitudes

E-WOM in general refers to the exchange of knowledge that consumers possess about any product, service, brand, or company through the internet (Babić Rosario et al., 2016). The extent of electronic word-of-mouth is very wide as compared with “offline” WOM, in terms of reach & connectivity as the internet has become a common platform for the user seek any new information. Through e-WOM any positive and negative information about a product or service can be simultaneously obtained from a variety of third parties (Chatterjee, 2001). (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2003) explained the benefits of e-WOM are its anonymity and limitless control over WOM in terms of the constraints of space and time (Dellarocas, 2003), which multiple users can simultaneously access (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006). In relation to OTT industry “e-WOM can be defined as sharing and exchange of information, ideas, and views about the content of OTT platforms on the internet in the form of user ratings, reviews, and recommendations”.

In various consumer behavior studies, the impact of e-WOM has been investigated from a variety of perspectives, such as brand attitude (Wu and Wang, 2011), product attitude (Chih et al. 2013; Ladhari and Michaud 2015), purchase intention (Lai Ying and Chung, 2007; Liao et al. 2016; Teng et al. 2017) and product sales (Liu, 2006). Some of the studies done in the entertainment industry include (Chintagunta et al., 2010) which measured the impact of online movie reviews on their box-office performance. Others who have done similar work include (Dellarocas et al., 2007; Elberse and Eliashberg, 2003; Eliashberg and Shugan, 1997; Liu, 2006) All these studies found a positive influence of e-WOM on the performance of their dependent variable. In the television industry e-WOM has been observed from different perspectives such as early episode’s e-WOM effect on average TV rating was investigated by Bae and Kim, in 2019, e-WOM after every episode was analyzed by (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004), and the relationship between word of mouth and viewing of TV programs (Romaniuk, 2007). (Yeh,2015) investigated the influence of e-WOM predictions on TV ratings through grey relational analysis. The results of all these studies showed that the positive influence of e-WOM contributes to a good marketing outcome for products, services, and companies.

Interesting and advanced work was offered by Liu et al. (2016) on TV ratings by collecting the consumers’ e-WOM. Filtering the e-WOM data through cloud computing, machine learning, and text mining from Twitter this study also showed the importance of Twitter as a big platform for generating e-WOM. The study has found e-WOM as one of the major contributing agents to generating high TV ratings in turn leading to sales. The above-mentioned studies present the influence of e-WOM in the television industry, but none of the
studies have so far analyzed the impact of e-WOM on the attitude of users. In the work done by Liu in 2006 the persuasive effect of e-WOM has been talked about which plays a major role in enhancing consumers’ attitudes (Liu, 2006). Some other studies conducted on YouTube by (Ayeh et al., 2013); (Hansen et al., 2014); (Yuksel 2016); and (Putri & Wandebori 2016), found that source information (another name for e-WOM) has a positive and significant effect on attitude. (Mir & Rehman, 2013; Utami & Rahyuda, 2019) studied the influence of product-related UGC (User-generated content) on YouTube and found that a piece of useful information on the internet had a positive and significant effect on consumers’ attitude towards UGC.

Thus, all the available literature showed that e-WOM had a potential influence on market outcomes in various aspects; and hence, can impact the consumer decision-making process. The present study aims to extend the previous research on e-WOM exclusively in the field of the OTT industry. The study also picked the idea from some recent research studies, done so far on the consumer behavior adoption of OTT platforms which laid stress on the importance of consumer interaction, social influence, recommendations, and word-of-mouth as important influencers of purchase/subscription decisions (Bhattacharaya et al,2021, Menon,2022). (Chavalitcheevin,2018) in their study concluded that peer opinions/ suggestions about content influence others to watch the same content. As OTT is a nascent industry currently, e-WOM messages can be a very important source for users impacting their subscription decision-making. Equally important for marketers in the strategic management process (Shin et al., 2016). The availability of recommendation lists, guide, and content information is very important to generate the consumer intention to subscribe to OTT platforms (Wang et al., 2005). The OTT industry solely emphasizes users’ entertainment. For seeking entertainment such as watching a movie/ TV show or web series users usually check the online opinions of other users to build up their attitude towards its content. For e. g. IMD.com is an internet database that allows users to share their e-WOM (review/ ratings) for particular entertainment content such as TV shows/movies/web series, etc. (IMDb.com). Thus, e-WOM about OTT content can become a permanent element of the online marketing mix by contributing a great deal to shaping the attitude of users in making their final decision towards purchasing.

Previous Research on the Impact of Consumers’ Attitudes on Purchase Intention

“Attitude is defined as an inner state of mind that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Eagly and Chaiken 2007). The theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen,1991) states that “attitude is an independent variable of consumer purchase
intention”. Users’ attitudes towards any product or service could significantly contribute to deciding its purchase intention. User’s “Attitude” is one of the most important factors that has not been studied so far in the OTT industry. Studies in fields of management, psychology, tourism, etc. have proved that “consumer attitudes” towards a product or service are a significant predictor of their purchase intention. (Ismagilova et al.2020) in their meta-study on the possible impact of e-WOM on consumer intention to buy a product, identified “Attitude” as a suitable independent as well as mediating factor affecting consumer purchase intention. Other studies, based on attitudes for e.g (Lee et al. 2011) studied consumers’ attitudes towards their online shopping and found that a positive attitude has a positive influence on the purchase intention of products. Similarly, (Mohan and Kinslin, 2022) in their study did not find any relationship between attitude and purchase intention. The different ways users evaluate any product or service online put an impact on their behavior outcome. (Hsu et al. 2013) in their study found that Consumers’ attitudes towards UGC (another name for e-WOM) will increase if it comes from a reliable source.

As OTT is a service industry that offers audio-visual content over the internet, they charge a subscription fee from the users in return for that. Many OTT streaming platforms have their own subscription fee, terms, and conditions to subscribe to their platforms. Most of them offer discounts, attractive subscription plans, and a free trial period to initially woo the users. Recent studies (Camilleri and Falzon,2021; Menon,2022) have confirmed that “Content” on OTT platforms with entertainment value in it significantly influences the user’s “subscription intention”. The subscription intention of OTT refers to the act of purchasing the subscription of an OTT platform repeatedly based on the user’s willingness (Menon,2022). It highly depends on the user’s pre-purchase satisfaction (Chen and Lin,2009; Menon,2022). Research studies in past have concluded in their findings that “Content” is the most pertinent reason for shaping the users’ attitude towards subscribing to an OTT platform. (Malewar and Bajaj.,2020) in their study highlight some important features of OTT influencing consumer adoption such as comfort, ease of use, pleasure, etc. Among all other features, they stressed the uniqueness of OTT content which makes it distinctive, attracts users, and is the strongest reason for its adoption. Similarly, (Camilleri and Falzon, 2021) investigate users’ motivation to subscribe to OTT and also revealed that users seek gratification from the OTT’s Content and this creates subscription intention among them. In the case of OTT, the reviews and ratings of content shared by users will be considered reliable by other users. E.g., if a new user is willing to subscribe to any OTT platform, he will first read the reviews or recommendations of other users about the content of that platform and will then make his subscription intention. As on OTTs,
the users have risks of being exposed to adult, violent, or hateful content, in such a case users would like to use recommendation/review systems to get suggestions about content. (Sivamol and Suresh, 2018) found that the user builds their trust and confidence in other users’ ratings, reviews, and content recommendations given on a verified website or on the platform itself will lead to an impact his/on her attitude. As, trust is an important contributor to human psychology, which creates a set of beliefs and attitudes among persons (Helm, 2014). “Trust is an important contributor to a responsive attitude” (Jones, 2004; Mullin, 2005; McGeer 2008; Helm, 2014). In this study, we assume that users trust the reviews, ratings, opinions, and recommendations of other users for the OTT content shared on the internet. They are also willing to subscribe to an OTT platform at any given price if they have a positive attitude about the content.

Across the nations, studies have proved that the user’s attitude towards a product/service could be a suitable mediator that positively affects their purchase intention. A study done on Indonesians, purchase intention of cosmetics products finds out, that the user’s attitudes toward online reviews have a big effect size on their purchase intention (Putri & Wandebo, 2016). Similarly, (Wang, 2015) also found a positive and direct effect of the relationship between consumers’ attitude towards UGC on YouTube and cosmetics purchase intention based on the available WOM on the internet. Although several studies have been done in different areas on the relationship between attitude towards product/service and purchase intention, our study offers a special insight by extending this literature into a newer area i.e OTT industry. The research done on OTT in the past is majorly focused on the user’s motivations and perceptions towards accepting OTT platforms, through the technology acceptance framework (Lee et al, 2019; Dasgupta and Grover, 2019; Camilleri and Falzon, 2020; Bhattacharyya et al. 2021). We aim to contribute to the existing knowledge of OTT by exploring its new dimensions mainly “Attitude towards Content”. Thus, this research aims to fulfill the present gap and suggests users’ attitudes toward the content” could be an appropriate mediating factor between e-WOM influence and subscription intention. The above arguments lead to the following hypothesis:

H1. e-WOM influence has an impact on Attitude towards the content.
H2. e-WOM influence has a direct impact on subscription intention.
H3. Attitude towards content has an impact on subscription intention.

Conceptual Model

The available literature on the effects of e-WOM communication has led us to conclude that online WOM could influence factors such as attitude toward content and subscription...
Intention. Based on this the research model is developed in Figure 1 to test this effect empirically.

![Conceptual Model](source<prepared by Author (2022))

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Survey Questionnaire Design**

Based on the literature review findings, the survey questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire mainly focused on three key areas related to the study i.e e-WOM influence, attitude towards the content, and subscription intention. All the items of the questionnaire are adapted from past studies based on similar areas of research except a few. The five items of e-WOM influence (e-WOM) are adapted from (Eneizan et al., 2020) they operationalized E-wom in the context of the online shopping experience. (Joo, 2014) used E-wom in the context of social-commerce usage, (Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012; Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold, 2011) who operationalized e-WOM for brand image and purchase intention in the automobile industry. The reliability and validity of all the items have been already established in past studies. Of the four items of Attitude Towards Content, two have been adopted (Zainal, 2016). The rest two items are made by the researcher. Lastly, in the subscription intention, the three items have been adapted (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2014). The language of all the items of the three constructs has been modified to make them fit in context to OTT platforms. To add more clarity and precision to the questionnaire items, a brief focus group discussion was initially set-up in a university among three students and two marketing faculties and one industry expert to get their views on OTT content and e-WOM effect on user’s choices.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts, in the first part, the responses of the 12 items were measured on a five-point Likert scale where 1 means (strongly disagree) and 5
means (strongly agree). In the second part some demographic items were included such as age, gender, and course of study. Other than demographic information four additional questions were also included to obtain some basic characteristics of the respondent’s behavior.

To empirically investigate our model with “e-WOM influence” on the user’s “Subscription intention” with the mediating role of the user’s “Attitude towards its content”. A pilot study was done on initial 78 responses as per (MacKenzie and Podsakoff’s, 2012) guidelines.

Data Collection

The study mainly targeted young adults in the age bracket of 18-25. Through stratified sampling, the data has been collected from the students at a private university based in Greater Noida, India. The basic requirement of the respondent’s participation was that they must be users of at least one or two subscription-based OTT platforms and are willing to subscribe more in the future based on their content. The questionnaires were distributed via e-mail to 330 respondents comprised of graduate, postgraduate, and Ph.D. level students. Of the total valid responses found out were 250 after eliminating unanswered questionnaires.

As Greater Noida is a part of the National capital region of India, the young adults especially the students there are most prone to the use of any new technology and are considered early adopters in subscribing to OTT platforms. (Yang, 2005; Wong et. al, 2014) (Counterpoint Researcher’s report). They might reflect a true representation of the entire young population of India as they have come from different parts of the country to study. They are more inclined toward watching OTT on TV, laptops, mobile phones, and other devices with affordable data packages. The sample selection that was done is also consistent with the previous research done on OTT in India (Dasgupta and Grover, 2019; Camilleri and Falzon, 2020). Table 1 presents the respondent’s characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table No:1. Respondents’ Characteristics.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuing degree</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily time spent watching OTT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Impact of e-Wom on Users’ Attitudes Toward Over-the-top (OTT) Streaming Video Content and its Subscription Intention. – Young Indians Perspective

Table No:2. Operationalization of variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-wom influence</td>
<td>I often read other users’ online reviews to know which original content is good for me to watch on OTT platforms</td>
<td>Jillian and Samiei, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I often consult other users’ online reviews/ratings to help choose the right content to watch on OTT platforms</td>
<td>Eneizan et al, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My e-community frequently posts their online reviews/recommendations to watch specific content on OTT platforms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I actively seek the online opinions of other people about OTT content to decide what to watch next.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Those online reviews/ratings, which emphasize negative aspects of OTT content are especially relevant to my decision.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Att Towards CT</td>
<td>I watch the content only if the online opinions of other users are noteworthy.</td>
<td>Zainal, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think that following the other user’s reviews/ratings of OTT content would be favorable for me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am overall satisfied with the online reviews/ratings and opinions of other users and find them useful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have a fair opinion about OTT content after reading the online reviews and recommendations of other users.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscription Intention</td>
<td>After having read the reviews about OTT content, it makes me desire to subscribe to a particular OTT</td>
<td>Venkatesh et al, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I intend to seek more reviews and opinions from other users about OTT content.</td>
<td>Bataineh, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would like to continue subscribing to OTT platforms based on the user’s reviews and recommendations in the future too.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the current study, the two-stage systematic procedure for analyzing the measurement model and structural model suggested by (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988) has been followed using Smart PLS 3.32 (Ringle et al., 2015). In measurement model assessment firstly, the reliability and validity of the constructs are checked. The composite reliability (CR) and
convergent validity of constructs are assessed through the factor loadings, Cronbach’s Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), Dillon- Goldstein’s rho (rho_A), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) The results are presented in Table 3 as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Loadings/weight</th>
<th>Composite Reliability</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
<th>Rho A</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e-WOM influence</td>
<td>e-wom 1</td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e-wom 2</td>
<td>0.846</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e-wom 3</td>
<td>0.853</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e-wom 4</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e-wom 5</td>
<td>0.758</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards Content</td>
<td>Att CT1</td>
<td>0.831</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.914</td>
<td>0.875</td>
<td>0.876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Att CT2</td>
<td>0.874</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Att CT3</td>
<td>0.864</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Att CT4</td>
<td>0.842</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.I</td>
<td>SI1</td>
<td>0.889</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.938</td>
<td>0.901</td>
<td>0.902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SI2</td>
<td>0.915</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SI3</td>
<td>0.937</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Calculation (2022)

After accessing the Convergent reliability and validity of the model, the constructs have been evaluated to test their discriminant Validity. The two methods used for checking Discriminant Validity are the Fornell- Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait- Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT). According to Fornell- Larcker (1981), when the square root of the value of AVE of the construct is more than the correlation coefficient of other constructs, discriminant validity is said to be achieved. The below table no 4, represents the values of discriminant validity, showing the criteria mentioned above are achieved.
The Impact of e-Wom on Users’ Attitudes Toward Over-the-top (Ott) Streaming Video Content and its Subscription Intention. – Young Indians Perspective

Table No:4 Discriminant Validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Att Towards CT</th>
<th>P E-wom</th>
<th>Subscription Intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Att Towards CT</td>
<td>0.853</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-wom influence</td>
<td>0.679</td>
<td>0.831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscription Intention</td>
<td>0.797</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTMT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Att Towards CT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P E-wom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscription Intention</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source- Author’s calculation (2022)

HTMT (Henseler et al., 2015) is called the ratio of correlation between two constructs to determine whether they are significantly different from 1. Researchers all over the world (Xia and Chengb, 2017; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019) believe that the HTMT approach secures better sensitivity and specificity rates (Fornell- Larcker, 1981). The above table indicates calculated HTMT values of less than 0.9 for a construct which means the discriminant value is achieved (Gold et al., 2001; Voorhees et al., 2016). Thus, the overall measurement results are satisfactory and indicate suitability to proceed with the evaluation of the structural model.

Structural Model Assessment

In this section firstly, the multicollinearity issues of the model are overserved through the VIF values. VIF values are used to check or measure the amount of collinearity in the model. In our study, the inner VIF value of Attitude towards Content is 1.000 Perceived e-wom is 1.856. The values are less than the recommended range of 3.33 (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw,2006). Hence, there are no multicollinearity issues observed.

Secondly, the hypothesis was tested through bootstrapping analysis. The results are presented in Table IV which indicates the individual test of the significance of the relationship among the factors. It was found that e-WOM influence had a positive impact on the Attitude towards the content of OTT. with Beta= 0.679, t= 8.901, indicating that for users e-WOM was an important antecedent of attitude towards content. It is also observed that e-WOM also had a strong positive effect on subscription intention (Beta= 0.396, t= 6.277). The results suggest that e-WOM communications play a major role in influencing users for subscribing to OTT platforms. Finally, Attitude towards content leads to Subscription Intention with B= 0.546, t= 13.737) indicating that attitude towards content affects the subscription intention OTT among the users. The hypothesis testing results are present in Table 5.
After the hypothesis testing, the value of (R2) coefficient of determination was evaluated. The R2 value of Attitude towards content is 0.461 and subscription intention is 0.708. These values are above 0.26, which infers significant predictive precision of the model (Cohen, 1988). The R2 values are indicative of young adults’ subscription intention of OTT platforms, which is determined by their attitude towards its content through their e-WOM influence. The results also indicated the significant effect size (f2) values of the constructs. Cohen (1988) proposed to analyze the statistical magnitude of the construct through f2 values. Concerning attitude towards content and subscription intention, the f2 value is 0.549 which means a huge effect size. While the effect size (f2) between perceived e-WOM and attitude towards content is 0.856, also indicates a huge effect size. For perceived e-WOM and subscription intention, the (f2) value is 0.251 which indicates a moderate effect size. Figure 2 sheds light on the path analysis results of the structural model.

Table No:5 Hypothesis testing results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Effect size (f2)</th>
<th>T Statistics</th>
<th>Confidence Intervals</th>
<th>Hypothesis Testing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Att Towards CT -&gt; Subscription Intention</td>
<td>0.546</td>
<td>13.737</td>
<td>(0.417-0.658)</td>
<td>0.549 Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-WOM influence -&gt; Att Towards CT</td>
<td>0.679</td>
<td>8.901</td>
<td>(0.572-0.766)</td>
<td>0.856 Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-WOM influence -&gt; Subscription Intention</td>
<td>0.369</td>
<td>6.277</td>
<td>(0.260-0.490)</td>
<td>0.251 Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source - Author’s Calculation (2022)
The Impact of e-Wom on Users’ Attitudes Toward Over-the-top (OTT) Streaming Video Content and its Subscription Intention. – Young Indians Perspective

Figure 2: Path analysis result

In the model fit indices of the structural model, the standard root means square residual value (SRMR) for the model was 0.051, less than 0.08 which represents an acceptable model fit. (Hu and Bentler, 1999, Sarstedt et al., 2020)

Further to examine the relationship between two factors that affect the subscription intention, an analysis of standardized direct, indirect, and total effects was performed (see Table No:5). Particularly the direct effect of perceived e-wom on subscription intention is (0.369). the analysis also indicates that e-wom has an indirect impact on subscription intention (0.371) through the mediation of attitude towards content.

Table No:6 Disintegration of Total effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Factor</th>
<th>Dependent Factor</th>
<th>Total effect</th>
<th>Indirect effect</th>
<th>Direct effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-wom</td>
<td>Att towards CT</td>
<td>0.679</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-wom</td>
<td>Subscription Intention</td>
<td>0.740</td>
<td>0.371</td>
<td>0.369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Att towards CT</td>
<td>Subscription Intention</td>
<td>0.546</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.546</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source - Author’s Calculation (2022)

CONCLUSION

The research started with empirical evidence that virtual communities have nowadays become popular platforms for youngsters where they can disseminate their reviews, ratings, and opinions about a particular content to watch on OTT platforms. In recent times, Internet usage for hedonic activities such as watching OTT platforms has become a common practice.
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among users (Weniger and Loebbecke, 2011). They are always willing to share their views, experiences, and opinions about consuming any entertainment show, new web series/movie, etc. The findings of the study confirmed the assumption that e-WOM communication has a strong impact on users’ attitudes toward the content of OTT platforms and their subscription intention. The results of the conceptual model conclude that the users watch the OTT content only after having satisfaction with its online reviews and ratings. Their attitude towards content is highly impacted by the online opinions of other people, and they think following their reviews, ratings, and recommendations is beneficial for them. They want to utilize their time by watching quality content only. All the respondents intend that they will subscribe to any OTT platform based on its content’s reviews, ratings, and recommendations in the future also. The results of the study are also consistent with the previous research that suggested that in an online WOM context, users take a special interest in reading and writing reviews about the content that they have watched or want to watch. (Ismagilova et al. 2020)

These results act as real or direct feedback for marketers who are always willing to analyze the attitudes of the users towards their content. The user’s attitudes toward the content of OTT platforms are a response factor that plays a significant role for the OTT owners. Based on the influence of e-WOM on the user’s attitude they can improve the production and promotion of their content in terms of its quality in the future. Alongside, the analysis of respondents’ experiences with OTT platforms reveals that most of them search the reviews/ratings of OTT content on specialized websites followed by messages posted on e-communities, social media sites, and professional blogs. This substantial information could be used by the marketing managers to create or develop all these channels in such a way to enhance e-WOM communication for their content among the users. For e.g designing separate pages for social networking sites, personalized marketing of content on the user’s display as per their content taste, and choices so that they get encouragement to read or write more e-WOM. Marketers should regularly monitor all these channels to understand the users’ preferences and attitudes towards their content by analyzing all e-WOM communications. This will not only help them in gaining the initial subscription of their platforms but will also help in predicting the future subscription intention of the users. Thus, to gain more subscriptions for their platforms, the user’s attitude towards the content plays a significant role. This study has a distinct value from past research in this field which has applied TAM (Bhattacharaya et al., 2021) UTAUT(Hino, 2015; Malewar and Bajaj, 2020), and UGT frameworks (Camilleri and Falzon, 2020; Menon, 2022) to understand the user’s attitudes, motivations, perceptions and behavioral intentions towards adopting OTT platforms.
This empirical study provides a very specific and crisp understanding to the marketing managers on how to increase their subscribers not just viewers. Through the e-WOM communications about their content, they can sense the user’s overall attitude such as (feelings, sentiments, opinions, and excitement) for the content which indirectly means increasing subscriptions. Managers should understand that to attract the number of subscribers for their OTT platforms they must pay attention to the production of content that holds a bigger perceived value in the user’s minds. And to ensure the continuous usage intention of their platforms they must work towards creating a perceived value of their content for their targeted users. (Rauniar, 2014).

Another important implication is that to gain initial subscribers for the platforms the owners need to work on generating a positive e-WOM of their content among users. This is possible through effective advertising and promotion strategies such as campaign planning, celebrity endorsements, and running contests. But, at the same time, they should be aware of the risks of negative e-WOM. This can be found in the existing literature too. (Bae and Kim, 2019) in their study have found that early e-WOM valence i.e. (positive or negative) communications has a significant impact on TV ratings of the program. The marketers thereby should pay more attention to the quality and degree of WOM communication on the internet by closely monitoring all the sensible communications about their content and designing appropriate strategies for the future. (Kozinets et al., 2010). This becomes especially important when they are launching new and original content. As OTTs are a nascent industry mainly targeted toward young audiences e-WOM plays a very important role in their future market penetration.

Thus, the OTT owners by regularly assessing the attitude of the users about their content can create or update their content as per the viewer’s choices and preferences. e-WOM generated by the existing consumers affects market outcomes soon through the informative effect (increasing awareness of the product) or persuasive effect (enhancing attitude toward the product) (Liu, 2006). This will indirectly help them to sell more subscriptions.

The current research study also has a few limitations. Firstly, it has combined all the e-WOM dimensions in a single construct i.e “e-WOM influence” Secondly, the conceptual model is drawn based on the assumption that users trust all the e-WOM communications in the context of OTT content. Lastly, the price of an OTT platform subscription has also been not considered while analyzing the user’s subscription intention to OTT. In the future, the study can be expanded by the mediation effect of these two factors on the conceptual model. Also, the e-WOM can be studied in a greater capacity by adding more dimensions to it such as volume,
valence, and credibility. Unlike all previous studies, this study creates an unusual attempt to analyze the content of OTT which is a unique aspect of every platform. Despite all these limitations, we expect that this empirical study will open new possibilities for future researchers, and practitioners to investigate the users’ behavior, and consumption patterns and analyze their attitudes and expectations in-depth toward OTT content.

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