# Indian Media Going Bold Through Web Series: A Study

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#### **Abstract**

Indian mass media has been drastically evolved since the emergence of digital world. New trends of entertainment are now followed by viral and scripted stories via internet. Web series are one such entertainment source which is the series of videos. These videos can be scripted or non-scripted. However, sometimes web series can be informative but most of the times, web series are for entertainment purpose. In India, web series are tirelessly gaining attention of audience especially the youth. The reason can be the content. Web series were telecasted earlier but didn't get desired outcomes. However, in early 2000s web series started to earn fame and got a prominence in India. The presentation and content of web series have popularize the series at the best. But, in that urge to get more and more fame, Indian web series are drastically breaking the restrictions by broadcasting the boldest content ever. There are a lot of web series that, in order to gain popularity and views, show the content which can be objectionable. There are now a lot of web series, showing adult content and crossing every possible limit. Indian actors and actresses are the part of these web series, making the series a success. However, there would be a strong impact on the minds of audience as well. This study intends to show the boundaries broken by Indian web series and how these web series play an impactful role on the mindset of youth. A survey will be conducted among target audience to know the reasons behind this boldness. The study aims at presenting quantitative results.

Keywords: Web series, entertainment, changes, content, videos

#### INTRODUCTION

The internet has not only changed people's communication methods and means ofInformation collection and dissemination, but has also changed media consumption habits. Web series is one of the products that were launched on the internet based on traditional TV series' formats. Web series have enriched people's lives and made the entertainment industry full of variety (Wu & Chen, 2015). The trend toward internet globalization and online video content consumption generated abundant online video platforms and cultivated the new "on-demand" generation in India. The urban Indian youth with their high speed internet connections are barely tuning into television and detest the typical serials and soaps. Casual chats with many in this demographic reveal that apart from tuning into the news and watching an occasional movie, they don't have much use for their TV sets. But they do love web series and consuming one after another has become their way of life.

The web series are made with the content being totally youth oriented to which young audience can easily relate to. The recent web series available are based on the lifestyle of youth nowadays and how they deal with their day to day issues. It has changed the stereotype presentation of content of daily soap operas. New media or digital media is an innovative and interactive medium so far. The audience are content consumer as well as content creator. Anyone can upload content of their choice in platforms like you tube. Digital platform has made it possible to bring all the entertainment to mobile platform all you need to have is a smartphone and internet connection and it can keep you glued for hours and hours.

Our new generation likes the new concept of web series. Internet has now become an inseparable part of our younger generation these days. With the availability of high speed internet connection and easy availability is an add on benefit to the web series. Content of these web series revolve around youngsters this new concept of broadcasting has given a new scope to marketing sector as well. Commercialisation on digital forum is a unique way of approaching audience. Many big names of industry are coming forward and joining the platform where they are showcasing a totally different content from television and films. Ekta Kapoor the queen of Indian Soap operas has jumped int50 the business with her own production house i.e ALT BALAJI which produces series for the digital platform. Vikram Bhatt produces web series under VB Films. Many big actors like Nmrat Kaur, Rajkumar Rao Sakshi Tanwar, Surveen Chawla, Tisca Chopra have entered in to the business which is adding to the existing charm of the web industry.

There are various platforms mentioned under which is actively used by youth for watching these web series and apart from these there are many more platforms which are used for consumption of the content and with the bright future predicted there is a possibility of many more entrants to the field.

### **Amazon Prime**

Amazon Prime is a paid subscription service offered by Amazon.com that gives users access to free two-day delivery (one-day in select areas), streaming video/music and other benefits for a monthly or yearly fee. As of April 2017, Consumer Intelligence Research Partners estimates that Prime has more than 80 million paying users. College students and anyone who has a .edu domain in their email address can get privileges, including discounts on Prime, such as free 2 day shipping. Prime's primary marketplace competitor, who provides similar benefits without a membership fee.In 2005, Amazon announced the creation of Amazon Prime, a membership offering free two-day shipping within the contiguous United States on all eligible purchases for a flat annual fee of \$79 (equivalent to \$99 in 2017),as well as discounted one-day shipping rates. Amazon launched the program in Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom in 2007; in France (as "Amazon Premium") in 2008, in Italy in 2011, in Canada in 2013, in India in July 2016 and in Mexico in March 2017.

# Netflix

Netflix is an American entertainment company founded by Reed Hastings and Marc Randolph on August 29, 1997, in Scotts Valley; California. It specializes in and provides streaming media, video-on-demand online, and, DVD by mail. In 2013, Netflix expanded into film and television production as well as online distribution. It is headquartered in Los Gatos, California. Netflix's initial business model included DVD sales and rental, although Hastings jettisoned DVD sales about a year after Netflix's founding to focus on the DVD rental by mail business. In 2007, Netflix expanded its business with the introduction of streaming media, while retaining the DVD and Blu-ray rental service. The company expanded internationally, with streaming made available to Canada in 2010and continued growing its streaming service from there; by January 2016, Netflix services operated in over 190 countries - it is available worldwide except Mainland China, Syria, North Korea and Crimea. Netflix entered the contentproduction industry in 2012, debuting its first series, Lilly hammer. It has greatly expanded the production of both film and television series since then, offering "Netflix Original" content through its online library of films and television. Netflix released an estimated 126 original series or films in 2016, more than any other network or cable channel. As of January 2018, Netflix had 117.58 million paying subscribers worldwide, including 54.75 million in the United States. Their efforts to produce new content, secure the rights for additional content, and diversify through 190 countries has resulted in the company racking up billions in long term debt: \$21.9 billion as of September 2017, up from \$16.8 billion from the same time the previous year, although only \$6.5 billion of this is long term debt, the remaining are long term obligations. Netflix's headquarters are in 121 Albright Way, Los Gatos, California, United States. They also have other offices in the Netherlands, Brazil, India, Japan, and South Korea.

#### Hotstar

Hotstar is an Indian digital and mobile entertainment platform launched in February 2015 by Star India. This app is owned by Novi Digital Entertainment. It provides streaming media and video-on-demand online. The app garnered 340 million views for all 49 matches during the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 and over 200 million views during the Indian Premier League Season 8. With over 100 million downloads, hotstar has more than 100 advertisers on the platform. Hotstar contents are provided either free of cost or on a subscription basis. Premium contents are available only to premium membership holders. Bulk of their revenue generation is through advertisements. Some cricket talk shows like Juicy Half Volley (A World Cup Weekly Wrap-up) have been put particularly on hotstar.

#### Voot

Voot, launched in March 2016, forms the digital arm of Viacom 18. It is Viacom18's advertising-led video-on-demand platform that is available as an app for iOS and Android users, and a website for desktop consumption. Voot is available only in India and hosts over 40,000 hours of video content that includes shows from channels like MTV, Nickelodeon and Colors. Content is also available in multiple languages like Kannada, Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati and Tamil. It also hosts many Bollywood films for

streaming. It has produces several 'Voot Original' shows for streaming as well. In the children's segment, it is working on shows in Malayalam and Telugu.

# YouTube

YouTube is an American video-sharing website headquartered in San Bruno, California. The service was created by three former PayPal employees—Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim—in February 2005. Google bought the site in November 2006 for US\$1.65 billion; YouTube now operates as one of Google's subsidiaries. YouTube allows users to upload, view, rate, share, add to favourites, report, comment on videos, and subscribe to other users. It offers a wide variety of user-generated and corporate media videos. Available content includes video clips, TV show clips, music videos, short and documentary films, audio recordings, movie trailers, live streams, and other content such as video blogging, short original videos, and educational videos. Most of the content on YouTube is uploaded by individuals, but media corporations including CBS, the BBC, Vevo, and Hulu offer some of their material via YouTube as part of the YouTube partnership program. Unregistered users can only watch videos on the site, while registered users are permitted to upload an unlimited number of videos and add comments to videos. Videos deemed potentially inappropriate are available only to registered users affirming themselves to be at least 18 years old. You Tube earns advertising revenue from Google AdSense, a program which targets ads according to site content and audience. The vast majority of its videos are free to view, but there are exceptions, including subscription-based premium channels, film rentals, as well as YouTube Red, a subscription service offering ad-free access to the website and access to exclusive content made in partnership with existing users. As of February 2017, there are more than 400 hours of content uploaded to YouTube each minute, and one billion hours of content are watched on YouTube every day. As of August 2017, the website is ranked as the second-most popular site in the world by Alexa Internet, a web traffic analysis company.

With the age of digital media transforming at such a high rate many online companies in India have come up to cater to the needs of people.

#### **Permanent Roommates**

Permanent Roommates is an Indian web series created by The Viral Fever (TVF) and Biswapati Sarkar. This series revolves around a young couple, Tanya and Mikesh, who after being in a long distance relationship for 3 years face the prospect of marriage. The first season had its premiere on YouTube on October 29, 2014. The second season broadcast on TVF Play, The Viral Fever's premium online video streaming medium, on February 14, 2016. Permanent Roommates has been renewed for a third season, which will premiere in 2018. Permanent Roommates follows the story of commitment-wary Tanya, and Mikesh, her overeager long-distance boyfriend who returns to India from the United States of America to surprise Tanya and to ask her to marry him. Acting upon the advice of her roommate and her own reluctance to get married to someone who barely knows her, Tanya refuses, but gives in to Mikesh's persistence. The two eventually strike a compromise, opting to move in together first. The subsequent

events- a fallout, followed by conciliation, and Tanya's premarital pregnancy end in the two of them planning their wedding, with unforeseen consequences.

# **Spotlight**

Spotlight is a fictional biopic of a Bollywood starlet starring Dahleez's Tridha Choudhury along with Sid Makkar. Produced by Viu, Culture Machine and Loneranger Productions, this is the second series presented by Vikram Bhatt after Maaya, his attempt on exploring BDSM. Available in the format of ten episodes, this series claims to 'expose Bollywood'. It is no secret however that the Bhatts have been exploring and exposing Bollywood since times immemorial. Spotlight traces the journey Sana Sanyal, an upcoming actress in the Hindi film industry whose ambition knows no bounds. But like all others, her heart craves true love that she finds while working on her first big-budget film opposite a young and dashing married actor. After Sana chasing him, they start a whirlwind romance and both fall for each other. When there are chances that news of this romance can break her career, Sana smartly does something which shocks everyone! She speaks publicly about her affair which gains her brownie points in the outside world but damages her love life and in the process, she starts making more enemies. And what follows is sabotaging careers, mean moves, court cases and mudslinging. Spotlight is all about 'dirty' Bollywood power game.

#### **Pitchers**

TVF Pitchers is an Indian web series created by The Viral Fever (TVF) and developed by Arunabh Kumar. The first season consists of five episodes and premiered online on The Viral Fever's content portal TVF Play on 3 June 2015. A week later, on 10 June, it premiered on YouTube. The season finale premiered on TVFPlay on 30 August 2015. It follows four friends, Naveen, Jitu, Yogi and Mandal, who quit their jobs in order to develop their own start-up company. Four friends, Naveen Bansal (Naveen), JitendraMaheshwari (Jitu), Yogendra Kumar (Yogi) and SaurabhMandal (Mandal), enter the business world by launching their own start-up company. Naveen becomes angry for not getting a project from the company in which he works, gets drunk and resigns. He faces a dilemma when he is offered a position in a branch office located in Beijing. He leaves for the airport but upon reaching there he realizes that he is not destined for routine jobs. At the same time, he receives news of his "B-Plan" reaching the final of the NASSCOM start-up conclave. This sets off a chain of events in which the four rediscover what they really want in life, and face challenges in getting their start-up idea off the ground.

#### **Baked**

Baked is Indian fiction web series which chronicles the misadventures of three university flatmates who decide to start a midnight food delivery service. It is produced by Pechkas Pictures and ScoopWhoop Talkies. The show is written and directed by Vishwajoy Mukherjee and Akash Mehta. The cast of the show is ShantanuAnam, PranayManchanda, ManikPapneja and KritiVij. The show follows their life and the revolving cast around them. It sounds simple, but what it does in terms of narrative is a giant leap for

original Indian content. After the first couple of episodes, conventional structure is thrown to the dogs, and what ensues is a shitstorm.

# Girl in the city

Girl in the City is a web series starring MithilaPalkar, who plays the titular role of Meera. The show is about a girl from a humble family who, like millions of others, has come to Mumbai from Dehradun, to fulfil her dreams. A combination of love, friendship, ambition, it has gained a lot of hearts.

#### REVIEW OF LITREATURE

"Bang Baja Baarat to Tripling, web series are the future: Nikhil Taneja" (Showsha.com) states that lot of people are watching web series nowadays as they are presenting their content in local flavour with which audience can connect easily which clearly forecast a bright future of these ventures in India.

"Cinema on way out, the future is the web" (Financial Express) states that some of the biggest name of bollywood is joining the industry and are busy creating content for web. The delivery of audio or video over the internet without any involvement of a multiple system operator in control or distribution of content—is wooing the audience and this industry is giving other mediums of entertainment a run for their money.

"Indian Web series is slowly replacing formulaic soaps on television" (The Hindu) states that edgy and fresh, web series which have made their mark in India break free from staid television formats-there are no time frames to follow ,no censorship issues and there is no old saas bahu saga presented in these web episodes. World is moving web-wards which clearly make a glorious future for web series.

Yin Yiyi in his thesis "An analysis of Chinese web series development and strategy Go Princess Go: A case study(2016) states that internet has changed people's communication method and web series have enriched people's lives and made the entertainment industry full of variety.

"Online is where quality serials are" (Times of India) states that web series have become an ideal watch for generation Y because of their realistic portrayal with the right amount of drama, comedy and romance. With keen minds drawing up the scripts, professional actors and top-notch technical crew is helping to make a web-series a big success.

**Pierrin Alexandre** in his article "Web-Series emerge from the shadows" (2017) states that web series existed since at least 20 years but it is only now, and finally the future is bright with many big names joining the platform the future is promising.

# Significance of the study

The study will help to know about the rising popularity of web series in India. This study aims at studying that how Indian media is going bold when it comes to content presentation. Digital platform is in its booming stage all thanks to high speed internet and network service providers, web series is becoming a huge hit among youth because of its content and creativity. This study will help to know the impact of these web series on youth and it has also been tried to analyse the future of these web series.

# **Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to outline the acceptance of the content presented by web series and what effects it has among its audience. The new wave of web series has widened the horizon of the online videos.

- 1. To analyse that how Indian media is going bold in content presentation through web series,
- 2. To identify whether web series are accepted by the audience.
- 3. To know the effect of web series in the present society

# **HYPOTHESES**

- 1. YouTube is the most popular platform for watching web series.
- 2. Indian media is going bold in terms of content presentation in web series.
- 3. Digital platform is earning popularity among audience.
- 4. Web series holds a promising future and also possess threat to television industry in India

# Research Methodology

This study is an empirical study with sample size of 100 young adults in Jalandhar. The sample constituted various college and university students and people between the age group of 16 to 30 years of age. Purposive quota sampling technique was used. The data obtained will be subjected to simple percentage analysis.

# **Data Analysis and Discussion**

# Q1. Do you watch web series?

Of those who filled the questionnaire 64.8 percent were regular web series consumers, while 31.8 percent respondents sometimes indulge themselves in web series viewing. Only 3.4 percent of all the respondents were not viewers of web series.

# Q2. Total time spent watching web series?

75 percent of the total respondents binge watches web series for 1-2 hrs. Daily.20.5 percent of all the respondents spends 3-4 hrs.daily to watch their favourite web series.3 percent of all the respondents watch web series for good7-8 hrs. While only 2 percent indulge in 5-6 hrs. of regular web series viewing.

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# Q3.According to you which is most popular genre of web series?

When genre of web series is discussed with the respondents 31.8 percent respondents loved humour and enjoyed various web series based on comedy as comedy as genre releases tensions of daily life. 28.4 percent of total respondents were inclined towards romantic genre because at this age inclination towards love and romance is comparatively high. 26.1 percent respondents loved thriller as a genre for web series. Horror web series share 9.1 percent audience. 4.6 percent of the total respondents loved erotic as genre for web series as web a medium which is uncensored eroticism is becoming quite popular as a content for web series.

# Q4. Which is the most popular platform for watching web series?

YouTube with total 55.7 percent enjoys the position of most popular platform for watching web series, this is because of the fact that YouTube is not a paid format and maximum people are aware about YouTube. Netflix with 34.1 percent respondents is also popular reason being that Netflix is a devoted platform for online streaming and it also hosts exclusive series that are only available in Netflix. Hotstar is slowly gaining popularity as 5.2 of total respondents use hotstar as a platform for watching web series the rising popularity is because it hosts special programme during IPL season. Amazon Prime and Voot enjoy 3 percent and 2 percent usage as a platform for watching web series respectively.

# Q5. Do you think language used in web series is demeaning and abusive?

When respondents were asked about the language used in web series the response was mixed out of total respondents 43.2 percent were not agreed to the point that language used in web series is abusive or demeaning, while 43.2 percent agreed that language used in web series is abusive and demeaning to some extent.14.8 percent of the total respondent were not in the favour that language used in web series is either abusive or demeaning.

# Q6. Do you think web series like "Permanent Roommates" etc are portraying present society perfectly?

Respondents when asked about the portrayal of the present society by web series 50 percent of the total respondents agreed that nowadays web series to some extent portray the society aptly this is can be because most of the web series are based on the life of people living in metro society so every youth cannot connect with them.35.2 percent agreed that these series are the perfect portrayal of the modern society as content deals with love affairs, live-in relationships, friendships etc.14.8 percent of the total respondents disagreed to the point that web series are the real portrayal of the modern society.

# Q7. Do you think through web series Indian media is going bold in content presentation?

Talking about the content presentation in web series out of total respondents 64.8 percent agreed that Indian is becoming bold when it comes to the content showcased in various web series. Web series deals with various bold issues like live in relationship, BDSM, LGBT etc which were considered as a taboo by Indian society.21.6 percent respondents were partially in favour that web series are becoming bold while 13.6 percent respondents disagreed that Indian media is going bold through web series.

# O8. Do you agree that bold and sensitive topics picked up by the web series are now accepted by the society?

68.2 percent of the total respondents agreed to the point that now the topics chosen by web series are actually accepted by the modern society. They believed that Indian society is a progressive society which is making itself adaptive to the changes. 20.5 percent of the respondents strongly agreed and 8 percent disagreed that even now these topics are not accepted by the society.

# O9. Do you think that boldness presented in web series will affect society?

Out of total respondents 51.1 percent agreed that content presented by web series have an impact on society as media cultivates thoughts, opinion, behaviour etc. Media messages works like bullet that hit the audience. 14.8 percent disagreed that it will not affect the society in anyways while 34.1 percent were in confused state about the affect of the content on society.

#### Q10. Do you feel the need of censorship in the web content?

Talking about the censorship 40.9 percent of the total respondents were in the favour that the content of web series should be censored to some extent because internet is a open source and maximum people nowadays have an access to internet and everybody is not intelligent enough to take all the presented content positively it can also affect negatively when taken otherwise.35.2 percent felt that there should be no restriction when it come to content presentation it should be kept open for creativity. 23.9 percent agreed that there should be censorship in digital platform too.

#### Q11. Which is your favourite web series?

Permanent Roommates and Spotlight with 27.3 percent respectively are most popular web series among youth permanent roommates being the oldest web series and it has glued the audience by its content while spotlight is the true story which exposed hardships of Bollywood life .21.6 percent liked pitchers 20.5 percent enjoy watching Girl in the city rest enjoy Baked.

# Q12. With the big names like Ekta Kapoor, Vikram Bhatt etc entering the field, will give a boom to web industry?

58 percent of the total respondents agreed that biggies of TV and film industry entering in the digital platform will give platform a required boost. 22.7 percent believed that it will be beneficial to some extent only while 19.3 percent disagreed that these big names will have any effect to the web industry.

#### Q13. Do you think Digital platform will soon overpower the television industry?

81.8 percent of the total respondents believed that digital platform is the future of entertainment and soon it will replace television as internet as a medium provides room for creativity that is better than old saas – bahu sagas served every time by Indian television. It gives us freedom of choice.18.2 percent believed that television a traditional medium will always stand strong than digital mediums.

#### Q14. Do you think web series in India have bright future?

Future of web series in India seems bright with 89.8 percent of the total respondents agreed to the point that web series holds a shining future. Since its inception in 2013 there is no looking behind popularity graph is increasing day by day. Only 10.2 percent of the total respondents were not agreed to the opinion.

#### **Conclusion**

# **Hypotheses Testing**

YouTube is the most popular platform for watching web series. YouTube as a platform has gained maximum popularity when it comes to the usage as maximum number of audience nowadays use YouTube for viewing content online. The present study shows that 55.7 percent among studied respondents use YouTube for watching online content hence hypothesis 1 is proved true.

Indian media is going bold in terms of content presentation in web series. Content presented by web series strikes no resemblance with the content that is served by TV and films as Internet is a platform which is open for creativity and is free from censorship many bold topics are chosen as a subject for web series. The present study with 64.8 percent respondents favoured that media is breaking its boundaries when it comes to content presentation; subject, theme etc are going bold. Hence hypothesis 2 is proved true.

Digital platform is earning popularity among audience. Digital platform compared to other platform is making its mark rapidly. Digital platform is a hit among the audience thanks to the network connectivity and with the launch of JIO telecom services high speed connectivity is available to everyone at a reduced prices. With the availability of the technology this platform is a hit among its audience. The present study shows that 81.8 percent audience are in favour of digital platform over other traditional medium. Hence hypothesis 3 is proved true.

Web series holds a promising future and also possess threat to television industry in India. Television industry is every time serving the same old saas bahu saga but web industry comes with a difference maximum content is youth oriented which deals with daily lifestyle of youth. Youth can easily connect themselves to these web series which add to its popularity. The present study with 89.8 percent respondents supported the point that web series holds a bright future and is also becoming a threat to TV. Hence hypothesis 4 proves to be true.

The future of web series are pretty flaring and positive, where new story tellers who want to narrate their stories, actors and actresses who want to act get the chance to showcase their talent from the platform of internet where more and more people are connected to web so it has great and prosperous future ahead. Some of the biggest production houses in the film industry have already created a separate division for creating content for the Web. The competition is, of course, getting intense with the emergence of international players such as Amazon Prime Video and Netflix. "We are all finally competing for the same set of eyeballs, same share of wallet and mind space. So it's not just TV or multiplex, but any other form of entertainment—it could be a sports event, a visit to the mall or a stroll on the beach. If you are free, we would rather have you watching stuff we have made," says Ashish Patil, head, Y-Films, a division of Yash Raj Films. If cable television killed Doordarshan, it won't be wrong to say the Internet killed cable television and it's now eyeing cinema houses. Over-the-top content (OTT)—the delivery of

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audio or video over the Internet without any involvement of a multiple-system operator in control or distribution of content—is wooing audiences. OTT platforms (such as Amazon Prime Video, Netflix and VEQTA), video-on-demand services (such as SonyLIV and Voot) and YouTube channels (such as Y-Films and 'VB on the Web', Bhatt's channel) are giving other mediums of entertainment a run for their money. Whether stuck in traffic, riding the Metro or lazing at home, the availability of quality content at the click of a button is what's driving the online revolution. The Web is providing content that's fresh, but the same can't be said about TV and Bollywood. The 70 mm screen might or might not gather dust in the near future, but the battle lines have been drawn. The fight for content isn't going to die anytime soon. With this medium, there is enough space for everyone's content and much scope for innovation.

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