



## Is Censorship on OTT platform required: Perspective of Youth with reference to Ahmedabad?

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### Abstract

Censorship is a right or power by government or regulating authority to control the viewing of some content in order to maintain law and order situation in the country and harmony among society and mass in general. The Article 19 of Indian constitution gives right to freedom of speech and expressions but Articles 19(2) also restricts it in a reasonable manner and sense. As in India, there are no laws or rules regulating OTT platforms as it is a relatively new medium of entertainment. In present research we analyze the perspective of youth with regards to censorship. The data is collected from the youth in the Ahmedabad city of the Gujarat State. A structured questionnaire has been created using Google form and circulated online. The study find out that

youth are not aware about the regulation related to OTT censorship but the need of censorship is quite visible among youth.

Keywords: Over-the-top (OTT), Censorship, Content Regulation

## 1. Introduction

We all have witnessed the ban on books, movies, scenes or blurry images of victims in newspaper, age limit to going to a movie or particular art work as it offended the certain age group, community or religion. These are some illustrations of censorship.

The term censorship has been derived from the Latin word known as “censere” which means to give opinion to assess or check something. Censorship is the process or the step of removing, deletion or containment of which can cause an outrage in the society (Sriram & Sandhiya, 2020).

According to Merriam Webster “Censorship is the suppression of speech, public communication or other information on the basis that such material is considered objectionable, harmful, sensitive or inconvenient (Public Broadcasting Service, USA, 2018).

It is the prevention of publication, transmission, or exhibition of material considered undesirable for the general public to possess or be exposed to.

According to Encarta encyclopedia Censorship is supervision and control of the information and ideas circulated within the society in modern times censorship refers to the examination of media including books, periodicals, plays, motion pictures and television and radio programs, for the purpose of altering or suppressing parts thought to be offensive. The offensive material may be considered immoral or obscene, heretical, or blasphemous, seditious or treasonable or injurious to national security (Public Broadcasting Service, USA, 2018).

From the above definitions we can say that Censorship is a right or power by government or regulating authority to control the viewing of some content in order to maintain law and order situation in the country and harmony among society and mass in general.

Censorship in India is important because we know that many religion, culture and race resides in India and for that we are famous for that is unity in diversity so censorship make a shield for the content and content makers and prohibit them from making some content which can harm the religious or cultural feeling of them and due to that no situation occurs which can create situation which can disturb law and order of the country and peace in general (Samriti & Sharma, 2020).

### Evolution of censorship in India

We all have seen sometimes blurred pictures of victims in newspapers and daily, a beep sound during some dialogues in the film, age restrictions for watching the film in theaters. This all has been prohibited because in a direct or indirect way it harms the sentiments of a particular community all these signs are nothing but it is Censorship (Sriram Bhagavattula, 2020). The Article 19 of Indian constitution gives right to freedom of speech and expressions but Articles 19(2) also restricts it in a reasonable manner and sense. It States that “Nothing in sub clause (a) of clause ( 1 ) shall affect the operation of any existing law, or prevent the State from making any law, in so far as such law imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub clause in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence. And it is an important element of censorship in India (Sriram Bhagavattula, 2020).

The film industry in India is believed to be the most effective medium to connect to the people in the language they understand and represent. The Indian film and theatre industry have seen evolution from Street dramas, to motion pictures, colour pictures, T.V. Channels, cassettes and DVDs and currently due to advent and increase of internet infrastructure usage of online streaming and OTT platforms Indian film and cinema industry have seen such a vast evolution. (Sriram Bhagavattula, 2020).

Films are the platforms which express the thinking of the viewer they perceive which is allowed under Article 19(1) of Indian constitution. The films cannot be treated as same platform like reading Book, Magazine or newspaper and this features allow film to act as a different medium due to its effectiveness and vastness and thus the apex court have said that reasonable restrictions can be implied by considering nations security and sentiment under Article 19(2) and stated that “The framers of our Constitution deemed it essential to permit such reasonable restriction as they intended to strike a proper balance between the liberty guaranteed and the social interests specified in Article 19 (2). Article 19(2) of the constitution of India has always been in the favor of reasonable censorship in the film and digital content when the question is of integrity, sovereign, nations security they have always been in favor of the censorship to avoid violence and imbalance in the country and maintain law and order situation (Drishti IAS, 2021).

The country recently has witnessed various violence and anti-national movements have been taken due to release of some films (Haider, Water, Madras Cafe, Padmavati, Jodha Akbar and many more). Some scenes of a film were removed from the films and then released and some films were completely banned due to its sensitive content (Like: UnFreedom, Fire, Parzania, Firaq and many more). And this has paved the way for online streaming sites where we can choose the content according to the wish and will of the viewer.

OTT refers to Over-The-Top platforms. An over-the-top (OTT) media service is something that is delivered to audiences directly over the internet. There are four different types of OTT markets i.e. Advertising Video on Demand (AVOD), Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD), Transactional Video on Demand (TVOD) and Freemium. The subscription based on demand platform is growing significantly in recent scenario due to digital release of movies. Further OTT services are comparatively easy to access through personal computers, apps and mobile devices (Sanghi, 2020). The pandemic situation also provides more viewership to these streaming platforms. The streaming platform reaches from metro and urban cities to the semi urban areas of the nation in no time (Chen, 2017). In the name of providing local content and viewer's choice we can see that online platforms started using foul and abusive language, soft pornography and adultery very commonly. As in India, there are no laws or rules regulating OTT platforms as it is a relatively new medium of entertainment (Aggarwal, 2021). Thus in present research we analyze the perspective of youth with regards to censorship.

## 2. Literature Review

“Censorship of OTT Platforms : A Boon or Bane” by Nagoriastha States that by viewing the present scenario there is need of an unbiased regulatory body or authority is must the internet content cannot be control and determined by self regulatory body the main task of this authority or the body is that to differentiate the reasonable content it also points out that Government and OTT platforms should come together on a table and bring solution to the problem and bring end to this issue total censorship of OTT platforms will transfer that shows into the mere television shows the audience today looks at the content that shows truth of the society and deals with socio-political issues hence there is should be a regulatory body which keep that sentiment of single class of people doesn't get harmed and the regulation gap is also at alarming stage.

“Censorship of OTT Platform – A Necessity”, by Lexlife notes that OTT platforms have been unregulated for many times that why the reason it is most likely by film makers , directors , producers so many times the government have tried to give signal to get the platforms regulated but OTT industry was against it stating the reason that it can hamper their creativity so for solution many OTT platforms have signed self regulation code where the viewer is having the power for it. It also note that there can be offensive content for one individual but that content cannot be offensive for others and it also states that there is already provision in Information technology act of 2000 to deal with explicit content.

“How Censoring of OTT Platforms will Hamper art” by Satyaki Baidya which notes that censorship on OTT platforms can hamper the creativity of its directors and producers and will bard them from what they want to show case and even take the note that OTT industry have good share in the economy of the country if regulation is implied there also then it can bring back investment from that industry and also notifies once important point that is community viewing is outdated now a days every individual will have its own mobile

and will be watching content over it so stating that reason they say that regulation should not be implied because where watching the content the content we want so there should no regulation implied on the content which can hamper the creativity of film makers and industry associated with it.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Objectives

- To understand the role of censorship in India
- To check the awareness of censorship among youth
- To understand the perspective of youth towards the censorship on OTT platform

#### 3.2 Data Set

The study considers the youth perspective to understand the need of censorship on OTT platforms. The data is collected from the youth (age between 15 to 35) in the Ahmedabad city of the Gujarat State. A structured questionnaire has been created using Google form and circulated online. A total 141 responses were collected and used for the study.

#### 3.3 Hypothesis

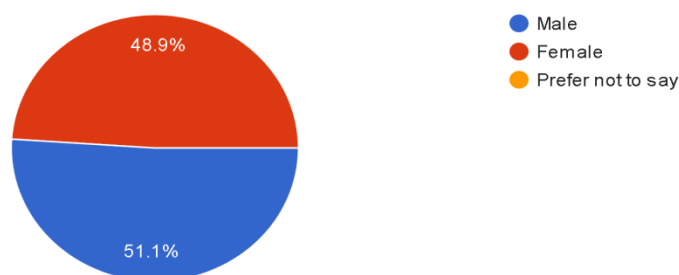
- There is awareness among youth regarding the censorship.
- The non censorship of OTT platforms increased unhealthy content

### 4. Data Analysis

In this section we describe the data set.

Gender

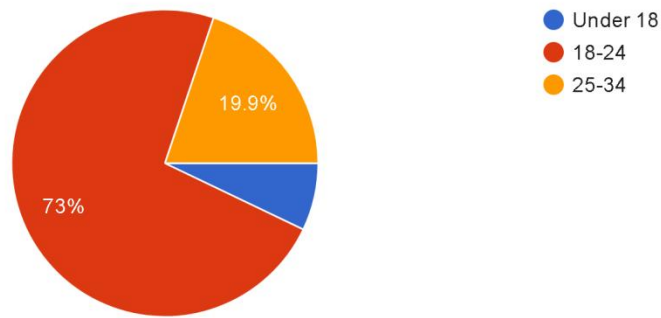
141 responses



As the pie chart 51.1 percent respondent are male and 48.9 percent respondents are female. There is no huge difference between the data set with regards to gender.

## Age (in years)

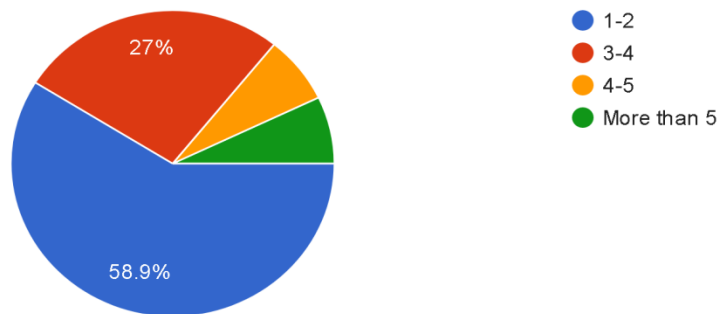
141 responses



With regards to age most of the respondents (73%) are among the age group of 18-24 of age. The age group of 25-34 consist the 19.9 percent respondents.

### On average, how many films or web series do you watch per week (include Television movies and OTT platform)

141 responses

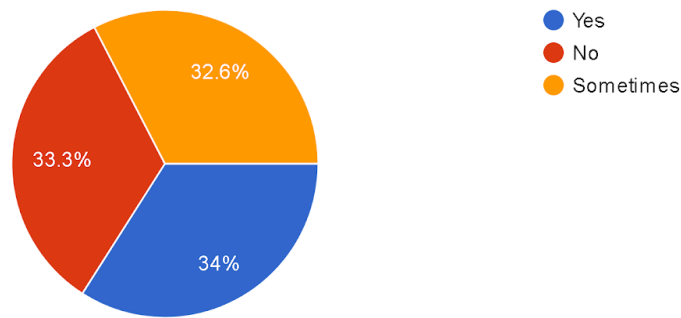


Most of the youth (58.9 percent) watched 1-2 web series per week. 27 percent youth watch 3-4 movies or web series per week.

Section 5(B)1 of Cinematography Amendment bill is about the guidelines or parameters of certifying the films and it was formed under Article 19(2) of constitution which is non-negotiable. The Sub division of existing U/A category is to divide the Current Unrestricted exhibition categories into age based categories that is like U/A7+ , U/A 13+ , U/A 16+. The views of youth regarding to keep check on the category of the content they are watching is quite disheartening.

Do you check category (+13, +16, +18) before watching any shows/movies ?

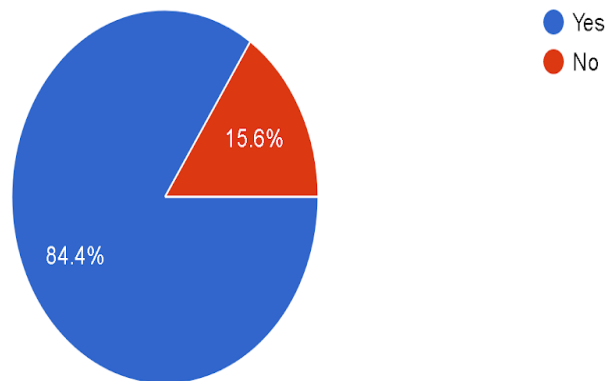
141 responses



Only 34 percent of the respondent checks the category of the content before watching it. 33.3 percent respondent does not prefer to check the category of the content which they are watching. But the good part is most of the respondents are aware about the kids safety provided by some of the streaming platforms like Netflix, Disney Hotstar, Voot etc.

Are you aware about the kids safe mode which is applicable on your device when you use any OTT platforms?

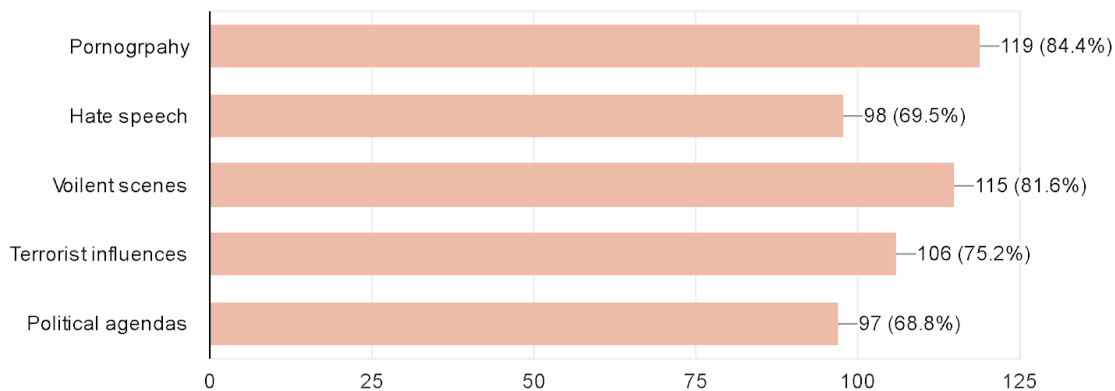
141 responses



We here look what are the content and stigmas which youth feel to be censored.

## Which type(s) of Censorship are you aware of ?

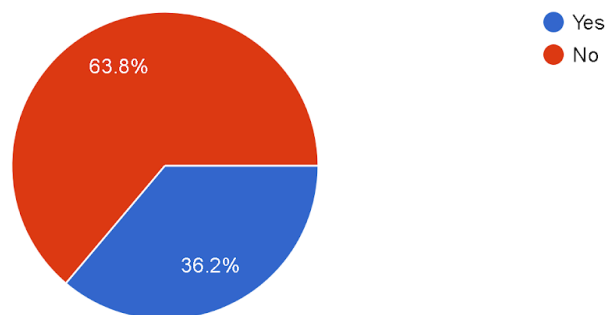
141 responses



These are the items which youth should be feeling to be censored. The awareness towards the regulations related to censorship is again the concern as youth are not well aware about the rules and regulations related the same.

## Are you aware about Article 19(1) which talk about self regulation of content?

141 responses



By seeing the graph we can clearly see that there is quite less awareness among youth with regard to censorship norms. Thus we can reject the statement “there is awareness among youth regarding the censorship”.

We further prefer to analysis whether gender plays a role in awareness towards Article 19(1).



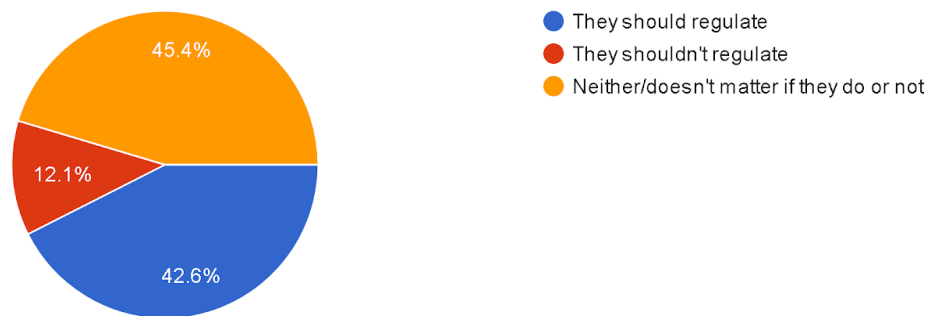
**Table 1: Awareness of youth towards law related to censorship and the need of laws**

Awareness of youth towards self regulation of content				Youth feel the need of censorship		
	Aware	Not aware	Total	Needed	Not needed	Total
Male	26	45	71	52	19	71
Female	25	45	70	59	11	70
Total	51	90	141	111	30	141

There is no impact of gender with respect to awareness towards self regulation of the content. We have a preference to know whether youth want to have censorship on OTT platform. Out of 141 respondents, 111 (79 percent) respondents feel the need of censorship on OTT platforms in India. The youth opinioned that government and court can play a prominent role in case of censorship. The judicial system was not always in the side of censoring each or every content that is believed or alleged to be harmful. The judiciary of India is always been in the favor of reasonable censorship. Here we present the view of youth on whether the offensive content should be regulated by government or not.

Do you believe that the offensive content should be regulate by Government or Not ?

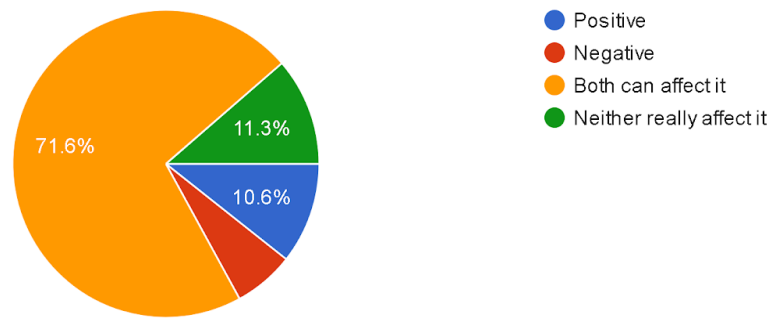
141 responses



On the other hand censorship can be hindrances to the creativity of the makers. It hampers the right to artistic freedom of creator. Further in the name of blocking harmful information, censorship restricts real information that empowers local communities. The lack of access to truths often leads to ignorance.

Does censorship affect creators or directors productivity in a positive or negative way ?

141 responses



The youth feels that censorship can affect the content quality in both positive and negative ways. In favour it helps to maintain social morality whereas most of the makers state that they provide the content of viewers taste.

On the other hand adult content is easily accessible on these streaming platforms. In some cases OTT platforms are showing pornography in the name of web shows and users demand. The web shows of Alt Balaji and Ollu app can be an apt example for the same.

To check the hypothesis that the non censorship of OTT platforms increased unhealthy content we use four item sexual content, foul and abusive language, non kids friendly content and adultery.

Table 2: F Test for two sample of variance

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances								
sexual content			Foul and abusive language		Not kids friendly content		Promotes Adultery	
	Variable 1	Variable 2	Variable 1	Variable 2	Variable 1	Variable 2	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	1.492857	3.37143	1.4928571	3.178571	1.492857	3.15	1.492857	3.3857143
Variance	0.251747	2.85385	0.2517472	3.327595	0.251747	2.660791	0.251747	1.9796506
Observations	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140
df	139	139	139	139	139	139	139	139
F	0.088213		0.0756544		0.094614		0.127167	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0		0		0		0	
F Critical one-tail	0.755794		0.7557943		0.755794		0.755794	

The calculated values are less than critical value in all cases which leads us to accept the null hypothesis that the non censorship of OTT platforms increased unhealthy content.

On the concluding note we suggest that OTT platforms should implement a self-regulation code, which includes global best practices with age-appropriate certification. In this way the creative liberties and freedom of expression must continue to protect and users will not feel outraged and hurt. This gives wings to creativity, not manufactured outrage.

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