

Sunset on the Small Screen as Millennials Turn their Back on Television

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ABSTRACT

Approximately 210 million households in India own a Television set (Broadcast Audience Research Council, 2018). The cable penetration is more than 80%. Almost 50% of the current viewers are from rural India (Khandekar, 2021). Television seems to have lost its appeal among the urbanites, especially the millennials. The reason for the same could be attributed to the 4B's i.e. Boring programs and serials; Bombarding of Advertisements after every few minutes, Better Options Available due to internet and Busy Schedules of the millennials hardly leaves them time for television. Millennials are always on the lookout for new and better alternatives of entertainment. The young generation is fiercely independent and demanding would like to have the sovereign dictate with regards to the time and type of entertainment. Sharing is a big no and privacy is of prime significance. Internet based sources of entertainment, have made the circumstances very tough for the television industry. Wringing out of this situation, calls for some tough measures and out of the box strategies. The research paper based on secondary data obtained from reliable sources explores the reasons for the gloomy situation of television viewership among the millennials and suggests remedial measures for revival of television.

Keywords: Television, Millennials, OTT platforms, Viewership

Introduction

Around 65% of the country's population is below 35 years of age i.e. Gen Y and Gen Z. India has the highest millennial (Gen Y) population in the world. The television industry at any cost cannot afford to lose out on this huge segment of the society. A drop in viewership will result in a phenomenal decent in advertisement revenues. It is no secret that millennials are the main buyers and decision makers in the family and they exert a huge influence on the generation that follows (Gen Z). The huge amount of money, time and efforts invested in television advertisements goes for a toss if the advertisements run on television fail to grab the attention of the millennials. Its high time channels redesign a strategy to recover the lost ground, failing to do so will limit

television viewership only to sports (cricket matches) and perhaps some premiere movies. Some hard decisions on daily soaps are required; they ought to end in a specified number of episodes. The Indian television serials have been an object of derision, especially during the past decade. Numerous joke and memes are fabricated on the serials. These memes and jokes are widely circulated on the social media platforms. It is a hard reality that the charm of the serials is lost. The TRP for most serials has drastically dropped and will continue to drop further if the current state of affairs does not change. Television is losing its audience and the disappearance of the audience is very rapid. The millennials are still connected to the television, but this connect is more out of compulsion as other older members in the family watch TV.

Winning back the lost audiences is not an easy task especially with the intense competition around. But the game is still not lost; some innovative strategies could turn things around. The television industry should not expect an overnight change, but expect things to move gradually in the positive direction.

The Indian Millennials

Millennials are often cited as “Gen Y”. The millennials are people who fall in the age group of 23 to 38 years (Michael, 2019). The average age of the Indian millennials is 29 years and it is one of the youngest countries in the world (BrandWagon, 2021). They are considered to be the most happening cohort as they form approximately 34% of India's total population of 440 million (Sharma, 2021), have immense buying power and are very knowledgeable. The millennials in India crave for knowledge and keep updating themselves. Most of them are the earning members of the family. The Indian millennials are all set to hugely impact the economic growth of the country. It is estimated that Gen Y in India will be the world's biggest work force and the most potential market for all kinds of goods and services (Marwaha, 2021). The Indian millennials are the superstars of the growth story of Indian economy.

The Gen Y is the first generation to be digital natives. Millennials aspire for new things and look for ways to improve their life style. The millennials are comfortable with the local culture and adapt very easily with the global culture. They do not get attracted by the traditional techniques of marketing. Millennials love to shop online, during shopping this generation like to indulge in a range of online as well as offline shopping methods before making their final decision (Bhargava, 2017).

Millennials and Merriment

The millennials have found their alternative sources of entertainment. They now like to spend

their free time on their laptops / mobiles watching web series, YouTube, internet surfing, online shopping or engage social media interaction with friends and acquaintances. They prefer to have news updates online rather than watch TV news channels, the percentage of millennials watching online entertainment exceeds those who watch television (Bansal, 2018).

Gamming is one of the big attractions. At present, the gaming sector in India stands at \$ 1.2 billion and by 2023 it is expected to touch \$ 3 billion, currently India has 365 million mobile gamers and this number is expected to grow rapidly. A majority of these users belong to the Gen Y and Gen Z category (Bureau, 2021). The passion for gaming is high and many youngsters look at it as a career option. The percentage of female who desire to make it a career option exceeds those of the male amongst Gen Y and Gen Z (Correspondent, 2021).

65% of the millennials prefer to spend time on OTT platforms as compared to television. During the period of lockdown the OTT based games have become more popular. The OTT platforms are expected to have around 500 million users by 2020 (65% millennials and Gen Z prefer OTT over TV, 2020). Approximately 49% of the millennials spend on average four hours every day watching OTT content. Most young people normally subscribed to three new platforms during the lockdown phase. Binge watch OTT content is the trend (Binge-Watching culture is on the rise in India: DAN report, 2020). YouTube, Netflix, Disney, Xbox and Amazon prime are the five most powerful brands that connect with the millennials (Natareli, 2019).

Shopping online is one more way Gen Y likes to use their leisure time. More 50% of the population belonging to this segment love to shop online (Chadha, 2021). This young generation is expected to drive the internet and E-commerce growth in the country.

Triviality of Television

Television ruled the eras of 80s and 90s, but the rule seems to have come to an abrupt end. The entertainment industry in the country is facing a major disruption. This change seems to have impacted television the most. Television is gradually disappearing from houses (Theres Sudeep, 2019)

From Doordarshan to satellite channels, the television has come a long way. A few decades ago, T.V was the most popular source of entertainment. T.V serials were aired on specific days and were eagerly awaited. The numbers of episodes were limited and serials would wind up in a year's time. The T.V serials in the current era go on for years (take generation leaps). These

SWOT Analysis of TV Entertainment

Strength	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional source of entertainment almost every house owns a television in the country. It is considered to be a necessity. • Commands high viewership in rural areas of the country. • The older generation still considers television as the best source of entertainment. • It is looked upon as family entertainment, members of family watch television together e.g. cricket matches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives little or no room for flexibility in timing for the viewer. • Programs/ serials lack innovation. There are lots of financial constraints which are reflected in the quality of the programs televised. • Repetition of serials / movies and overdose of advertisements. • It is a very competitive industry, with many big and small players. There is intense competition among national and regional channels.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Companies are launching new and attractive models with latest technology. • Many new movies being realized through the medium of television instead of the traditional release through movies theaters. • Big stars / personalities showing inclination to be associated with television. • A lot of successful experimentation is happening and is expected to set a new trend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High penetration of the internet has opened up new avenues of entertainment. • It is difficult to keep pace with the constantly changing demands of the young generation. • Most advertisers going the digital way, thus restricting the flow of revenues through the channel of advertisements. • The high and rapidly embracing of the OTT platforms, especially by the young generation.

unending serials are generally watched only by the elderly people, while the young look at them with disdain. The young population enjoys watching crime stories that end in one or at the most a couple of episodes. They also watch with keen interest sports channels. The frequent fights for dominance of the T.V remote are long over as the young are hooked to gaming, social media and the rapidly emerging OTT platforms.

The Advent of OTT Platforms

The emergence of the OTT platforms was like the Arab Spring revolution that challenged and threw over many dynasty rulers. Approximately 34% of the country's population is using internet and this number is expected to grow very rapidly (Nitul, 2021). The deep penetration of the internet made things very cheap and effortless. The widely used internet enabled smart phones have only aided the growth of OTT platforms. Web series with strong content and innovative plots are the new rage. The success of the web series has now attracted high profile actors like Abhishek Bachchan, Bobby Deol, Manoj Bajpai, Samantha etc. from the film industry to venture into OTT platforms, as they have realized it (OTT) is the new attraction among the audiences. These fast emerging OTT platforms to some extent have helped many actors to reinvent themselves. It is no secret that the viewership of OTT platforms is on the rise, while the television is on the decline.

Among the type of content preferred on OTT, comedy is ranked first, while thrillers, crime and action genre were ranked second, third and fourth respectively. Money Heist (Spanish) and Breaking Bad (American) were the two most popular foreign web shows among Indian audiences (Jha, 2020). Amazon Prime and Netflix have the maximum subscribers, while the desi Hotstar and Zee5 are also well received by the audiences. Most of the young have multiple subscriptions and spent spend on an average 2 to 3 hours daily on OTT platforms. The number of hours was almost four times more during the

lockdown.(Amazon Prime and Netflix are preferred OTT platforms of the youth: DAN Report, 2020).

Suggested Strategies

- Channels can opt for mergers as happening in the banking and telecom sector. This will make them better equipped to fight the OTT threat.
- Conduct research to know what actually the audiences desire. Hire professionals, instead of just creative people to run the show.
- The current best-selling novels could be made into serials. Well known stars / script writers / directors of films can be signed. They can be the USP of the programs.
- Channels need to drastically cut down on the family serials. Popular serials from the western countries could be aired more frequently.
- Some tutors have a huge following on YouTube, utilized their services to attract Gen Y and Gen Z and thereby increase viewership with reference to education/coaching.
- Social media should be used more effectively to promote the new premier programs on television channels.

A few of the above suggested measures are already in place and have proven to be successful. It now requires to be implemented more often and in an improvised manner. A television is generally watched together with other members of the family, so it is family bonding, fun and entertainment. Advertisements during the programs ought to be limited. A few good programs could pave the way for return of the audiences to the good old television.

Conclusion

Television has lost touch with the rapidly changing times. Family oriented dramas are one of the main reasons that the young audiences avoid watching it. Repetition of the same movies for years should be avoided. Channels should tie

up with celebrities and have them as brand ambassadors. Research based programs that give information related to universities / careers will help in attracting Gen Y and Gen Z viewers. The pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns have accelerated the growth of OTT platforms not only in terms of hours spent but also added new subscribers.

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