

Promotional Strategies and Procedure for Releasing Web Series on OTT Platform

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Abstract:

The rapid expansion of Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms has transformed media consumption habits, offering audiences unparalleled flexibility and personalized viewing experiences. This paper deals with the promotional strategies and procedures critical to the successful release of web series on OTT platforms. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how content creators and marketers navigate this dynamic landscape to reach and engage target audiences effectively. It explores various promotional tactics, including social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, and data-driven marketing, to identify best practices for capturing audience interest. The research also highlights the collaborative efforts between content creators and OTT platforms, emphasizing the importance of strategic planning in marketing and distribution. Additionally, the paper investigates the role of cultural and regional considerations in shaping promotional strategies, demonstrating the significance of localized marketing to cater to diverse audience segments. Post-launch engagement strategies are also evaluated, focusing on how feedback mechanisms and engagement metrics are utilized to sustain viewer interest and adapt promotional efforts.

The research adopts a qualitative approach, combining primary and secondary data collection methods. A descriptive research type is employed, with primary data gathered through semi-structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with 39 industry professionals, including producers, directors, writers, OTT creative heads, distributors, and managers. Secondary data is sourced from the Internet, books, websites, research papers, marketing journals, and related texts. Thematic analysis is used to identify recurring themes, patterns, and meaningful insights in interview transcripts.

Key Words: Promotional, Webseries, OTT, Releasing, Indian & Digital Platform

Introduction :

The emergence of Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms has revolutionized the way audiences consume media content, shifting from traditional television and cinema to more flexible, on-demand viewing experiences. This transformation is driven by factors such as increased internet speed, affordable data plans, and the widespread adoption of smartphones. As a result, the number of viewers dedicating substantial portions of their daily routines to OTT platforms has surged, prompting content creators and marketers to develop new strategies for promoting web series on these platforms.

OTT platforms leverage advanced data analytics and algorithms to understand viewer preferences and offer personalized content recommendations, enhancing the viewing experience. The flexibility of OTT platforms allows audiences to watch content at their convenience, making them increasingly popular, especially among younger demographics. This shift has also influenced content creation, with web series designed to cater to binge-watching habits and the preference for short, easily consumable content.

Given the rapid evolution of digital technology and audience behavior, it is essential to explore effective promotional strategies and procedures for releasing web series on OTT platforms. Understanding these strategies can provide valuable insights for content creators, marketers, and platform providers, ensuring the successful launch and sustained engagement of web series in the competitive OTT landscape.

Literature Review :

The shift in audience behavior from traditional media to digital platforms while profound, is driven by factors such as increased internet speed, affordable data plans, and the proliferation of smartphones. Parnami & Jain (2021) observe that India has been slower to embrace streaming services compared to other countries, but the growing demand for internet connectivity and the introduction of 4G and LTE networks have made these services more accessible. This shift has led to a significant increase in the number of viewers dedicating substantial portions of their daily routines to OTT platforms. The rapid advancement of digital technology and the proliferation of online streaming platforms have precipitated a significant shift in audience behavior, fundamentally altering how media content is consumed. This shift is characterized by a move away from traditional media consumption patterns towards more personalized, on-demand viewing experiences facilitated by digital platforms.

Digital platforms leverage advanced data analytics and algorithms to analyze viewer preferences and behaviors, offering personalized content recommendations that enhance the viewing experience (Johnson, 2019). This level of personalization is unattainable through traditional media channels. By understanding individual viewer preferences, streaming services can curate a selection of shows and movies that are more likely to appeal to each user, thereby increasing viewer engagement and satisfaction. For instance, Netflix's recommendation system,

which accounts for over 80% of the content watched on the platform, tailors suggestions based on the viewing history and preferences of each user (Gomez-Uribe & Hunt, 2015). This personalized approach not only keeps viewers engaged but also helps in retaining subscribers by consistently offering content that matches their interests.

Another significant aspect of the audience shift is the move towards mobile viewing. The increasing penetration of smartphones and mobile internet has made it easier for audiences to watch content on the go (Anderson, 2019). According to the Mobile Marketing Association (MMA, 2018), the majority of video content is now consumed on mobile devices, reflecting a fundamental change in how audiences access media. This shift towards mobile viewing is particularly relevant in regions with high mobile internet penetration and where smartphones are the primary means of accessing the internet. For example, in India, the explosive growth of affordable smartphones and data plans has led to a surge in mobile video consumption, with platforms like YouTube and Hotstar seeing substantial increases in their mobile user base (Mehta, 2020).

Television serials adhere to fixed schedules, limiting viewership to specific times and locations. In contrast, web series provide unparalleled flexibility, allowing viewers to watch content at any time and from any location. The temporal constraints of TV serials are replaced by the freedom of choosing when and where to engage with web series. TV serials are bound by predetermined time limits, while web series enjoy the freedom of varied episode lengths, ranging from concise 3-minute episodes to more extensive formats. Web series cater to diverse viewer preferences, providing a customizable viewing experience. Additionally, the accessibility of web series extends beyond television screens, as they can be enjoyed on mobile devices, tablets, laptops, and desktops. Joshi sheds light on the nascent stage of web series, where the medium initially struggled to gain legitimacy. The advent of readily available cameras and video-sharing apps facilitated widespread content creation, often led by amateur writers and featuring emerging talents. The low production costs associated with this approach contributed to the unique charm and diversity of early web series. (Joshi, 2022).

In India, the demand for regional content has led to the rise of platforms like Zee5 and SonyLIV, which offer a wide array of content in various Indian languages, including Hindi and Marathi (Choudhary, 2019). These platforms recognize the significance of cultural specificity in content and tailor their offerings to meet the unique preferences of regional audiences.

Consumption pattern of OTT platforms in India by Saha & Satya Prasad, 2021 examined the consumption patterns of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms in India, scrutinizing viewer preferences across various devices like TV, smartphones, laptops, computers, and mobiles. The study underscores the industry's commitment to content, entertainment, and digital technology, contributing to a surge in OTT platform subscriptions. It encompasses both urban and rural audiences, investigating their utilization of digital tools and choices in consuming web content. The growth of OTT is attributed to factors such as competitive pricing, cost-effective data

packages, widespread internet accessibility, diverse content in multiple languages, ad-free programming, and binge-watching habits.

Kumari (2020) examines the shifts in consumer content consumption patterns in India following the advent of Over-the-Top (OTT) services and explores the factors contributing to the success of these services in the country's robust entertainment market. The traditional dominance of television and film markets has evolved with the widespread availability of OTT services throughout India. The paper identifies affordable internet connectivity as a crucial technological catalyst propelling the growth of OTT services in the region. A majority of users express satisfaction with the content diversity and service quality provided by OTT platforms.

OTT platforms have also influenced film distribution. The traditional theatrical release model has been challenged by the success of streaming platforms, which offer a more convenient and often more affordable alternative for moviegoers. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this trend, with many studios opting for digital releases on OTT platforms when theaters were closed (Mehta, 2020). OTT platforms have played a significant role in promoting regional and culturally specific content. By catering to diverse linguistic and cultural preferences, these platforms have expanded their audience base and supported local content industries. In India, for example, platforms like Zee5 and SonyLIV offer extensive libraries of content in various Indian languages, including Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, and Telugu, reflecting the country's linguistic diversity (Deshpande, 2021). OTT platforms have also enabled the global distribution of regional content, allowing shows and movies from different parts of the world to reach international audiences. This has led to a greater appreciation of cultural diversity and has opened up new markets for regional content creators (Lobato, 2019).

Methodology :

This research is based on collecting and analyzing both primary and secondary data. To gather primary data, the study uses two main sampling methods: Purposive and Snowball sampling. These methods, which do not rely on random selection, were chosen to ensure that the participants are relevant to the research topic and goals.

In this study, 39 interviews were conducted with various content creators who have worked between 2012 and 2022. These creators include scriptwriters, directors, actors, cinematographers, and other technicians. The research also relies on secondary sources such as newspapers, journal articles, books, and research papers for additional information.

For analyzing the qualitative data from the interviews, the study uses thematic analysis. This method helps identify common themes, patterns, and meaningful insights from the interview transcripts.

Aim and Objective :

Aim:

The aim of study is to examine and analyze the promotional strategies and procedures involved in releasing web series on OTT platforms. By investigating the various techniques employed by content creators and marketers, this study seeks to identify best practices and effective methods for reaching and engaging target audiences, ultimately contributing to the success of web series on OTT platforms.

Objectives:

1. To examine various promotional tactics, including social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, and cross-promotions.
2. To explore the role of personalized content recommendations and data-driven marketing in enhancing viewer engagement.
3. To investigate the collaborative efforts between production houses and OTT platforms in planning marketing and distribution.
4. To examine the importance of understanding regional preferences and cultural contexts in promotional strategies.
5. To analyze how audience feedback and engagement metrics are used to adjust promotional strategies and ensure continued success.

Discussion and Analysis :

Promotional Strategies for Web Series and Content Marketing:

Marketing a web series involves several important steps to ensure its success. First, it's crucial to comprehend the nature of the web series and identify its target audience by analyzing viewer preferences and geographical reach, whether regional, national, or international. With this understanding, a tailored promotion strategy is developed, focusing on the necessary promotion types for different audience segments and areas. This helps in creating content that resonates with them. Once the audience is identified, a tailored promotion strategy is developed, focusing on different types of promotion for different audience segments.

Collaboration with the OTT platform is key in planning marketing and distribution. The creative team at the production house collaborates with the OTT platform to plan marketing and distribution, deciding where to concentrate promotional efforts and what marketing materials are needed. Various promotional tactics including organizing launch events or special screenings, engaging audiences through social media platforms and online forums by sharing teasers, trailers, and behind-the-scenes content, and conducting interviews with the cast and crew to provide insights are employed to generate interest and engage the audience.

Understanding regional preferences and cultural contexts is also important. Localized promotions, such as on-ground events and advertisements, help connect with specific audience segments. Incorporating memes and real-life events into promotional content also helps create brand awareness. Teasers and trailers are crafted to pique curiosity without giving away major plot details, using creative editing, music, and emotional resonance. High production values, including good cinematography and sound design, enhance the overall viewing experience. Additionally, cross-promotions with other content creators or platforms, influencer marketing partnerships, and other strategic collaborations help expand reach. After the initial launch, the promotional strategy is continuously monitored and adjusted based on audience feedback and engagement metrics to ensure its effectiveness. By integrating these approaches, the marketing efforts for a web series can resonate effectively with the target audience, leading to successful viewership and engagement.

Consistently releasing new content and engaging with the audience through social media and interactive events help maintain interest and build a loyal fan base. Precisely targeted marketing content can be the difference between a flop and a hit.

Diversified Promotional Approaches and Targeted Audience :

Promoting a web series involves organizing events, social media campaigns, contests, interviews, and media outreach. Collaborating with artists, technicians, and creative heads, these strategies aim to engage and excite the audience. Activities like premieres, fan meet-ups, and social media posts create buzz, while contests and giveaways boost participation. Interviews with the cast and crew offer insights, deepening viewer connection. These efforts are tailored to align with audience interests, creating a cohesive promotional approach that maximizes reach and drives viewership.

Abhijit Kolhatkar, Producer and CEO of Reverb Productions, explains their promotional strategies for a project. They partnered with Red FM to conduct contests during the shoot, offering winners the chance to have tea with actress Abhidnya Bhave at the shoot location and take photos for Instagram. They also collaborated with the Marathi channel "Rajshri" for multiple interviews and secured half-page news coverage in almost every Marathi newspaper.

The industry professionals shed light on the crucial role of targeted promotions and marketing strategies in the production and success of television programs and series.

Creative Producer Prasad Kumthekar emphasizes the importance of identifying a target audience before creating content, considering their characteristics, preferences, and dislikes. He highlights the significance of promotions, encompassing on-ground, online, and cross-platform activities, designed to attract viewers through various mediums such as TV, radio, social media, and print. Kumthekar explains that advertisements are created to reach viewers through these diverse channels, directing them towards the series.

Director Sachin Darekar, known for "Ek Thi Begum" on MX Player, elaborates on the various methods employed to promote content, including television advertisements, social media campaigns, teaser ads, and trailers. He notes that the promotional process involves a limited role

for the director, with decision-making shared between the creative team and the platform. The focus is on ensuring that the series is widely discussed, directing audience attention toward watching it.

Each platform places significant emphasis on identifying and understanding the target audience for their web series. This allows them to design content that aligns with audience preferences. The nature of content and regional preferences vary, necessitating different strategies to attract specific audience segments. Some policies are based on demographic factors, and tailored strategies are developed to engage viewers in particular areas. Promotions include on-ground events, online strategies, and cross-promotion to draw viewers from various sources. Centering content creation around the target audience's likes and interests increases engagement.

Understanding and targeting specific audiences, tailoring promotional strategies accordingly, and leveraging diverse channels are crucial for attracting viewers and creating anticipation for television programs and series. The collaborative efforts of creative teams, platforms, and media partners significantly contribute to the success of these promotional campaigns.

Platform Considerations:

On different OTT platforms, the audience varies in interests and preferences, which influences their content choices. Identifying these preferences is a key strategy for each platform. Promotional strategies are designed based on the target audience, whether urban or rural, and must adhere to each platform's brand guidelines. These guidelines may include text placement, avoiding direct depictions of violence, and refraining from using cuss words to maintain their branding standards. The primary goal of creating a promo is to make a strong impact on the audience in the shortest time possible.

Sanket Pavse, Creative Head at One OTT, explains that each platform and organization tailors its strategy to its target audience. Television follows a TV U + R (Urban + Rural) model, while platforms like Netflix focus on urban audiences. For his app, targeting audiences in places like Pimpalgaon Malvi, Ahmadnagar, and Solapur is crucial, as these viewers prefer content like Kirtans, which have high viewership. Urban audiences, such as those in Mumbai, may not be the primary target but might still encounter the app. Different platforms cater to different demographics, such as Sony Liv focusing on South Indian content and Disney Hotstar on sports, based on research and management decisions.

Varun Narvekar, Director of "Aani Kay Hava" and "Do Gubbare" on Jio Cinema, highlights the diverse promotional strategies used by platforms, directors, and producers. As these entities are relatively new to the medium, they employ a variety of approaches, from flexible design elements to leveraging Instagram and other social media platforms. Each web series follows a unique promotional pattern, often featuring premieres and staggered episode releases. Viewer reactions are closely monitored, and despite being released on mobile devices, these premieres aim to provide an experience akin to a grand theater event.

Each OTT platform targets its own specific market, tailoring promotional strategies to reach Tier 1, Tier 2, urban, and rural audiences. Various subscription models, such as AVOD (ad-

supported video on demand) and SVOD (subscription video on demand), are offered to cater to different audience segments. Digital promotions and targeted advertising are used to attract viewers on these platforms. Marketing strategies are crafted by considering the preferences, habits, and regional and demographic differences of the target audience. This approach ensures that the content and promotional efforts resonate with the intended viewers, maximizing engagement and subscription rates.

Hybrid Advertising Model:

Platforms and various content creators use hybrid models for promotion, which combine AVOD (Advertising Video on Demand) and SVOD (Subscription Video on Demand) strategies. If the platform strategy is decided using this approach, it becomes easier to find different ways to increase income. If a hybrid promotion strategy is in place, there is room for more experimentation in content creation.

Tanmyee Dev, Creative Head at Sony Liv, discusses their approach to catering to different audience segments and shares an anecdote of how they targeted users with Jio packs who often have access to AVOD (ad-supported video on demand) platforms. For those without subscriptions to platforms like Netflix or Amazon, they offered the first episode for free to entice them into subscribing for longer periods. Sony Liv operates as a hybrid platform, offering both AVOD and SVOD (subscription video on demand) content. This strategy differs from traditional industry practices and allows for experimentation in content and marketing, reflecting the evolving landscape of the industry.

Impact of Social Media and Local Marketing

The influence of social media has been highlighted in the promotion of the web series. Some actors and actresses have a huge following on social media. Even small web series actors gain followers on social media and engage their audience. In it, the artists share their personal life experiences and events on social media. So that some of the episodes are linked to the promotion of the series. Social media has become a powerful tool for promoting series, helping directors, actors and producers connect and engage with their audience.

Tanmyee Dev, Creative Head at Sony Liv, highlights the importance of tailoring marketing strategies based on the target market. Sony Liv primarily targets Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities, focusing on regions where platforms like Netflix and Amazon also have a presence. However, they acknowledge the need to expand into rural areas where awareness of such platforms may be limited. Their marketing efforts are designed to resonate with the heartland of India, with specific targeting based on the content being promoted. For instance, series like "Mirzapur" may target regions like Delhi and UP, while more cerebral content like "Gullak" or "Panchayat" may focus on Tier 2 cities such as Kolhapur or Nashik. Digital promotion is a key component of their marketing strategy in reaching their intended audience.

Parinita Bhure, Creative Head at Zee Studio, discusses the diverse and innovative strategies used for promoting web series and films on social media. She notes that even lesser-known actors

can gain significant attention and engagement, helping to share personal moments that pique public interest without revealing too much of their private lives. These moments are often part of a larger promotional campaign. Examples include creating buzz around major life events or using intriguing teasers, like a scene mimicking the style of the film "Uri." Such tactics not only promote the content but also build brand awareness and foster positive engagement. Additionally, supporting social causes during promotions can generate news and further enhance the film's visibility.

Prasad Kumthekar, Creative Producer, highlights the importance of leveraging the social media presence of main actors or actresses to promote a series. Their social media accounts help connect with followers, enhancing engagement and visibility. On-ground promotions also play a crucial role. These include marketing events such as college visits, mall appearances, and live audience interactions. These interactions are often recorded and broadcasted on both on-air and OTT platforms, further boosting the promotional efforts and connecting with a wider audience.

Sarang Sathye, Director and Showrunner of Bhadipa, describes the comprehensive marketing strategy used for promoting the "Berojgaar" series. The approach included using rickshaws to advertise the series in every village, particularly targeting areas with high unemployment rates like Sangli and Kalyan-Dombivli. In Sangli, they leveraged actress Sai Tamhankar's local popularity by featuring her name on the rickshaws. Alongside this, a widespread poster campaign and social media advertisements were employed to generate interest and awareness. The promotional team also conducted village visits and interviews to directly engage with the audience. Additionally, they implemented digital marketing by launching a new YouTube channel called "Bhartiya Turing Party," using it to post teasers and create buzz. A teaser was initially posted on Bhadi Pa, followed by the announcement of the new channel, which helped build anticipation. These diverse strategies combined to effectively spread awareness and engage with a broad audience.

OTT platforms, while planning their promotion strategies, create marketing plans that consider different regions and cultural contexts. They advertise locally by ensuring the content of the series resonates with the people in that area. This includes putting up posters, organizing competitions in schools and colleges, and using rickshaws for advertisements in main markets. Specific programs are taken to locations and communities based on their interests and cultural backgrounds, ensuring a connection with the content of the series. For example, the promotion for Bha D Pa's "Berojgar" series involved rickshaw advertisements in Sangli and Bhiwandi, with announcements made by actress Sai Tamhankar, who hails from Sangli. A dedicated team is responsible for creating and implementing these strategies, handling social media promotion, and following a sequential release of promotional materials, such as posters and teasers, to build anticipation and engage the audience.

Creative direction and innovative tactics :

A web platform's promotional campaigns are shaped through collaboration between the creative team, directors, producers, and marketing experts. Each web series requires a unique

approach to developing a promotion strategy that aligns with its plot. The creative team works closely with the directors and producers to understand the essence of the series and provide creative direction. Many platforms now use characters and story elements from the web series in advertisements, which helps create curiosity and anticipation among potential viewers. This collaborative effort ensures that promotional strategies are tailored to effectively engage the audience and generate interest in the series.

Ajinkya Mhadgut, Director, explains that the creative team and OTT platform collaborate to determine how a trailer and teaser should be presented, often without direct involvement from the series director. Web series trailers need to reveal the intricate relationships, conflicts, and personalities of multiple important characters, making the process more continuous compared to cinema, where trailers are typically released shortly before the film's launch. During promotions, consideration is given to the target audience and the approach to reach them effectively. If the series includes nudity meant for a specific audience, it may be hinted at in the teaser but not fully revealed until the series is released, serving as a tool to pique interest and engage viewers until the launch. The approach can vary depending on the specific situation and content of the series.

Vivek Jadhav, Chief Assistant Director of "OK Computers" on Disney+ Hotstar, highlights that promotional strategies are tailored to the specific content of a web series. One popular trend is using memes to promote content, as demonstrated by the series "Panchayat," where characters become widely referenced and used in various contexts, significantly boosting marketing efforts. Similarly, characters like Sonu from "Mirzapur" can be marketable even without direct promotion. Such strategies, including leveraging character popularity and sometimes even negative publicity, are essential for marketing. They help in gaining popularity and eventually convert into effective promotions and advertisements.

Ranjit Gugale, Producer of "Do Gubbare," explains that while the director and producer are involved in shaping the series' look, the promotional strategies are often handled by a dedicated team. These strategies are tailored to the specific subject and audience of the series. For example, during the promotion of the "Pet Puran" web series, the team leveraged a large pet exhibition in Mumbai to connect directly with pet enthusiasts and pet parents. The artists visited the exhibition, showcased the trailer, and held a press conference, targeting an audience specifically interested in pets. Additionally, they engage in general interviews, social media activities, PR events, and interactive activities with the audience. Such comprehensive promotional efforts are typically organized with significant involvement from the platform.

Promotional campaigns for web series also include innovative strategies like using memes, character-based memes, and incorporating real-life events into content ads. These methods leverage current trends and audience engagement techniques to create brand awareness for the series. Trailers, teasers, and posters are crafted to captivate the audience's interest, highlighting key characters and important plot points without revealing critical plot details. This approach helps build anticipation and excitement for the web series, ensuring that the promotional content resonates with the target audience while maintaining an element of surprise and intrigue.

Creating Effective Trailers and Teasers:

Creating compelling trailers and teasers is crucial for engaging the audience emotionally and conveying the essence of the plot without giving away too much. These promotional materials emphasize the importance of music, pacing, and visual elements to captivate viewers. A teaser offers a brief glimpse and a feel of the series without revealing major plot details, typically lasting under 60 seconds. It aims to intrigue the audience and leave them wanting more. On the other hand, a trailer aims to immerse the audience in the world of the series, establishing a connection with the characters and storyline. A well-crafted trailer evokes emotional resonance and ensures that viewers feel invested in the narrative. It's essential to avoid trailers that feel disjointed or fail to evoke any emotional response, as they may fail to engage the audience effectively.

Shalabh Bade, an editor, outlines the process of conceptualizing and creating promotional material for a series. First, they carefully review the series content to understand what the creators want to highlight and what aspects should be kept confidential. Based on this understanding, they draft a script for the promo, marking specific shots and dialogues to be included. Then, they select appropriate music that aligns with the emotions and tone of the series, either from the series itself or from music libraries. The editing phase involves bringing all these elements together, including internal discussions with the team, the graphics department, and the creative lead. Finally, the first draft of the promo is presented to the client or creators for feedback and approval, completing the process.

Shishir Chausalkar, a sound designer, highlights the collaborative process involved in creating trailers, using the example of their work on the film "Walvi." As a team, they discussed various aspects such as the trailer's tone, sound effects, and the inclusion of specific elements like sails and chandeliers. These elements were chosen strategically to intrigue viewers and hint at the film's storyline without giving too much away. Chausalkar emphasized the importance of making the trailer engaging to attract the audience's attention, mentioning that the creative input of directors plays a significant role in this process. By carefully selecting elements and using creative techniques, they aim to captivate audiences and generate interest in the film.

Teasers are crafted to pique curiosity without divulging major plot details, relying on creative editing, music selection, and emotional resonance. They aim to evoke a sense of intrigue and anticipation in the audience. Similarly, trailers must strike a balance between revealing enough to generate interest and withholding key plot points to maintain suspense. Skilled editing, music, and visual elements are essential for creating impactful promotional materials. In the realm of web series, condensing ample content into a concise duration of 1 minute 30 seconds to 2 minutes poses a challenge. The goal is to sustain excitement, conceal the climax, and provide enough enticing glimpses to compel viewers to watch the series. Each editor brings a unique perspective to the promotional content, contributing to the diverse array of trailers and teasers created from the same source material.

Adopting Marketing Strategies for Regional Content and Targeted Audiences

Variation in audience preferences by region:

Marketing strategies must be tailored to regional segmentation due to the diverse cultures, customs, and preferences across different areas. Each region has unique content viewing habits, necessitating customized approaches to effectively reach and engage the audience. For instance, South Indian audiences often prefer watching movies and series in their mother tongue and gravitate towards content that resonates with their regional identity. By understanding these regional preferences, content can be curated to match the specific tastes of the audience. Consequently, marketing strategies are formulated with a region-specific focus, ensuring that promotional efforts are aligned with the distinct preferences and cultural nuances of each target market. This approach enhances the relevance and impact of the content, fostering deeper audience engagement and satisfaction.

Tanmyee Dev, the Creative Head at Sony Liv, discusses the importance of tailoring marketing strategies based on regional preferences. When targeting the South Indian market, where audiences are discerning film enthusiasts, it is crucial to provide high-quality, original content. Films like "Kantara" attract viewers who then expect similar engaging material, which helps retain their interest. The competition to secure rights for such content is intense, as platforms like Netflix, Amazon, and Sony Liv strive to meet the high expectations of these audiences. This approach ensures that once viewers are drawn to the platform by a standout film, they will continue to find appealing content that keeps them engaged.

Sanket Pavse, the Creative Head of One OTT, highlights the socio-economic and cultural differences in content consumption between urban and rural areas. He points out that in urban settings, people are more likely to subscribe to OTT platforms like Sony Liv for premium content, including award-winning films. Conversely, in rural areas, traditional TV viewing habits persist, such as families watching shows together during meals. Despite the availability of high-speed internet services like JIO Fiber, the mindset to leverage these services for streaming content hasn't fully taken root. Younger audiences in rural areas often resort to downloading shows from platforms like YouTube instead of subscribing due to cost concerns. This disparity underscores the varying mentalities and economic realities that influence media consumption across different regions.

This research highlights the importance of considering differences in mindset and consumption patterns among various socio-economic groups and regions when designing marketing strategies. These factors are crucial for effectively reaching and engaging diverse audiences. The data indicates that individuals between the ages of 25 and 50 are the primary consumers of content on OTT platforms, with significant content consumption in cities like Pune and Mumbai. This demographic information underscores the need to tailor content to audience preferences and habits, ensuring that marketing strategies are appropriately targeted. By aligning promotional efforts with the specific characteristics of the audience, such as age, location, and socio-economic background, content creators and platforms can enhance engagement and viewer satisfaction.

Significance of Regional Content:

Presently, regional content is being shown on different platforms. Netflix, a global platform, produced series like “Jamtara”, “Sacred Games”, “Delhi Crime” which are based on regional content. TVF has produced the series “Panchayat, Gullak” and “Kota Factory” which are based on the culture and affairs of the North Indian region. That means there is regional content in it. BhaDPa in Marathi series “Berojgar”, “Chikatgunde”, “Shantit Kranti” has depicted the Marathi culture and the regional atmosphere here. At the same time, Sony Live has released content like "Pet Puran", "Rocket Boys" not only in Hindi but also in dubbed Marathi and Tamil versions. Hence, it is felt that there is an audience presence for regional content. These developments highlight the importance of creating content that appeals to regional sensibilities.

Prasad Kumthekar, Creative Producer, emphasizes that marketing strategies for web series and movies change significantly based on the region and content. These strategies adapt to local nuances and sometimes use similar methods across different contexts. Each director and producer develops unique strategies tailored to their content. The promotion tactics depend heavily on the target audience and their preferences. For instance, a series set in a specific region might utilize the local accent and regional advertisements to enhance connection with the audience. If an actor from the series belongs to a particular region, marketing efforts can be customized to resonate with that region. For example, if a character in a series is from Sangli, promotional activities might focus on that region and use the local language. Thus, marketing strategies are designed to appeal to the audience segment most relevant to the content, ensuring effective engagement and reach.

Influence of Mediators, Research Teams and platforms:

Having a mediator and research team in the promotion and marketing process is crucial. This research provides a broad understanding of audience preferences, informing strategies accordingly. With insights from the research team, marketers can craft effective approaches and strategies to deliver web platform content more efficiently. This ensures that promotional efforts are well-targeted and resonate with the intended audience, maximizing engagement and reach.

Tanmyee Dev, Creative Head at Sony Liv, highlights the importance of data analytics in shaping content strategies on OTT platforms. Each platform, including newcomers like Sony Liv, employs research teams to analyze viewer behavior. Larger companies like Amazon and Netflix have robust research teams due to their substantial financial resources. Sony Liv focuses on understanding the Tamil language audience, noting that the 35 to 50 age group consumes the most content. The audience skews more male than female, with higher consumption in cities like Pune and Mumbai. Dev points out that shows like "Rocket Boys" are popular not only in Hindi but also in dubbed Marathi and Tamil versions, indicating a strong demand for regional content. Continuous analysis of these trends helps tailor content to audience preferences, enhancing engagement and reach.

Tanmyee Dev, Saurabh Shamraj, Writer of B.E. Rojgaar, and Prasad Kumthekar, Creative Producer, emphasize that OTT platforms target different audience segments, tailoring their strategies to the nature of the platform and the intended audience. For example, Zee5 reaches out

to the mass public, while Netflix focuses on metro cities and international shows. Sony Liv caters to a more intellectual audience, and Hotstar primarily targets male audiences, especially for IPL. Each platform aligns its content strategy with its established audience pattern. As trends evolve, platforms experiment with different types of content to see what resonates. Both mass-appeal AVOD content and premium content will continue to be produced. This cyclical pattern of content creation and audience engagement will persist, with each new medium experiencing its own cycle of trends and experimentation.

Importance of Local Faces, Actors and Festivals:

The advertisements for web series often highlight the use of regional faces and dialects to connect more deeply with local audiences. When a web series is set to be released, it is often strategically timed with regional festivals and events, considering the cultural significance of these occasions. Prominent regional actors are featured to attract the local audience. To promote a web series, actors participate in various promotional activities, such as giving interviews, appearing on talk shows, and engaging with their audience on social media. Different campaigns are launched where actors interact with the audience, engage in dialogues, and participate in events to connect with their fans. Additionally, actors and characters are often promoted on social media before the series release, generating discussions and building anticipation. This multifaceted promotional strategy leverages the cultural context and regional nuances to create a strong connection with the target audience.

Shalabh Bade, an editor, emphasizes the significance of incorporating regional elements into promos and trailers. He mentions giving importance to well-known regional faces and using regional dialects to make the content stand out, citing Siddharth Jadhav in "Simmba" as an example. Additionally, Bade notes that when scripting promos, consideration is given to regional festivities and cultural nuances, further enhancing the connection with the audience in specific regions. This approach ensures that the promotional content resonates deeply with viewers and reflects their cultural context.

Purnanad Wandekar, an actor from "Ek Thi Begum," highlights the importance of debates, discussions, and media engagements involving main characters to reach audiences effectively. These activities not only facilitate audience engagement but also contribute to increasing viewership by attracting new audiences. Wandekar underscores the significance of marketing in the success of web series or films, emphasizing its role in effectively reaching content to viewers.

Digital Promotion and Engagement:

Digital promotion has become a primary focus for every platform in the current landscape. Platforms maintain active accounts across various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and others. They utilize these channels to advertise by releasing trailers, teasers, posters, and other promotional materials. This digital approach allows platforms to reach a wide audience, engage with users directly, and generate excitement for their content in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Saurabh Shamraj, the writer of "B.E. Rojgaar," mentions the allocation of a separate budget for promotions during the series "Berojar." This budget allows for promotional activities in various cities and institutions, such as colleges, through events and engagements. Additionally, digital promotions, including YouTube advertisements and PR campaigns, are managed by dedicated teams responsible for strategizing and executing promotional efforts.

Digital media platforms not only provide cost-effective solutions but also yield fast results, making them highly advantageous for promotional campaigns. By engaging with the audience directly through these channels, platforms can create meaningful interactions, build anticipation for their content, and ultimately drive engagement and viewership. As a result, the importance of digital advertising continues to grow in the realm of content promotion.

Process for preparing schedule for web series release:

Process of Creating a Web Series schedule:

The production of a web series involves different steps, including writing, pre-production, casting, shooting, feedback and finalization. This process is a complex process of creating a web series. But at the time of making the web series, all the work is scheduled. Pre-production, production and post-production works are done according to that schedule. After that the release schedule of the series is made.

Tanmyee Dev, Creative Head at Sony Liv, outlines the process of producing a web series. It begins with the completion of commercial, legal, and development stages, after which the writer commences writing the episodes with dialogues. Once the writing is finalized, the project is approved for production, and pre-production tasks such as casting and budgeting are undertaken. Negotiations follow, along with feedback from the Standard and Practices (S&P) department to ensure compliance with regulations. After commercial aspects are finalized, a commissioning agreement is established with the production house, and shooting commences. Throughout this process, close monitoring is maintained, with oversight from the lead.

Considering the release schedule:

Choosing the right release schedule for a web series is crucial, as missing the mark can potentially undermine all the effort invested in its creation. Therefore, factors such as holidays, festivals, audience interest, and competition from other platforms are carefully considered when determining the release date. By strategically aligning the release schedule with favorable conditions and audience preferences, content creators can maximize the series' visibility, engagement, and overall success.

Tanmyee Dev, Creative Head at Sony Liv, explains the process of creating a release schedule for a web series. It involves considering various factors such as holidays, festivals, and viewers' leisure time to ensure an optimal release time. Typically, weekends, particularly Fridays, are preferred for releases, but web series offer more flexibility in scheduling. Factors like competition from other OTT platforms, the content's nature, and the target audience are all taken into account during the planning process. Additionally, upcoming web series on other platforms

are analyzed to understand the competition and make informed decisions about the release schedule. By carefully assessing these aspects, a release schedule that maximizes viewership and engagement is developed.

Sanket Pavse, Creative Head at One OTT, highlights the importance of aligning release schedules with current audience interests and trends. He emphasizes the need to cater to diverse interests such as politics, sports, Bollywood gossip, and religious festivals. For instance, content related to politics becomes popular during government changes, while religious festivals like Ram Navami and Akshay Tritiya prompt the release of relevant content. Pavse also mentions the significance of Maharashtrian culture, including the teachings of saints like Tukaram, Dnyaneshwar, and Eknath, which continue to resonate with the audience. This approach prioritizes commercial viability over artistic considerations to ensure content resonates with viewers and meets their evolving preferences.

The current trend in the market for releasing web series involves considering various factors such as audience preferences, political events, religious festivals, and cultural trends. Content creators analyze audience trends to understand which types of series are currently popular and what themes resonate with viewers. Additionally, they take into account external factors such as political events or religious festivals and assess how these align with the content of the series. By understanding these trends and preferences, creators can strategically plan the release schedule to capitalize on audience interest and maximize the series' impact and success.

Competition and Policy:

Competition within the entertainment industry, especially between Marathi and Hindi web series, underscores the importance of strategic release timing. Optimal release windows, such as long weekends or holidays, are targeted to capture audience attention effectively. Moreover, the release schedule takes into account the timing of other web series releases, both in Hindi and other languages. This ensures that the audience is not divided between multiple releases, maximizing viewership potential. By carefully considering competing platforms and release dates, content creators aim to optimize audience engagement and the success of their web series.

Tanmyee Dev, Creative Head at Sony Liv, notes that release schedules are influenced by competitors' actions, similar to the film industry. Factors such as weather conditions and competing releases on Fridays are taken into account when planning releases. Dev highlights the importance of considering viewers' choices, as they may decide between watching a movie or binge-watching a series over the weekend. This approach ensures that release timings are optimized to attract and engage audiences effectively.

Suunil Bodhankar, Executive Producer at Planet Marathi OTT, highlights that the competition in the Marathi content space is currently limited, mirroring a similar situation in Hindi content. To capitalize on viewers' availability, Bodhankar suggests releasing content during long weekends, holidays, or festivals. This timing ensures that people have ample leisure time to engage with the content without distractions from their daily routines or traditional activities.

The competition between Marathi and Hindi content is a significant factor in the entertainment industry, given that audiences often have similar interests across both languages. In some cases, Marathi audiences have shown a preference for Hindi content. This dynamic is carefully considered when formulating policies and strategies for content creation and distribution. By recognizing and adapting to this competition, content creators and platforms can better meet the diverse preferences of their audience base and remain competitive in the market.

Distribution and Platform Decision:

The release process for web series on OTT platforms differs from the traditional theatrical release of films. While movies have historically been released in theatres first and then on digital platforms, the trend is shifting towards simultaneous or subsequent releases on both platforms. This shift is driven by the increasing audience demand for content on OTT platforms. As a result, OTT platforms are developing their own release policies and strategies to cater to this growing audience base. This evolving landscape presents a contrast with the traditional release process, highlighting the changing dynamics of content consumption in the digital age.

Prasad Kumthekar, a Creative Producer, outlines the contrasting distribution processes between theatrical releases and OTT platform releases. In theaters, distributors must navigate complex logistics to secure screens and gauge audience turnout. This typically involves personal involvement from producers and establishing distribution networks. Conversely, OTT platforms handle the entire distribution process internally, either by commissioning content from production houses or directors. This shift places the responsibility solely on the OTT platform for organizing releases. However, a new trend is emerging where films initially released in theaters are re-released on OTT platforms, offering viewers who missed the theatrical release another chance to access the content and generating additional revenue in the process.

Sanket Pavse, Creative Head at One OTT, sheds light on different strategies for scheduling content releases. Some opt for a spaced-out approach, releasing content three months in advance to allow ample time for consumption before introducing new content. This strategy aims to maintain audience engagement by consistently offering fresh content over time. The timing and frequency of releases depend on the organization's overall strategy and its goals for audience engagement. The key is to ensure that viewers always have something new to anticipate with each release.

OTT platforms wield significant control over the distribution and release of content to their audiences. Decisions regarding the release schedule, timing, and approval process are typically made internally by the platform. Platforms like Amazon Prime Video and YouTube often base these decisions on factors such as audience engagement, market trends, and feedback from viewers. This allows them to optimize the release strategy for each series and maximize its reach and impact among their audience base.

Technical aspects of Streaming Process:

Technical considerations play a crucial role in the release of web series. Factors such as content format, server capacity, and the length and size of the series are carefully assessed to ensure

smooth delivery to the audience. Technical teams also evaluate the process of release, including the encoding, transcoding, and delivery methods to guarantee optimal performance and user experience across various devices and platforms. By addressing these technical aspects effectively, OTT platforms can enhance the reliability and accessibility of their content for viewers.

Sanjay Davara, an executive producer, outlines the process of content distribution on OTT platforms. He explains that each platform has its own servers and stations located in different countries like Singapore, India, the USA, and England. Footage captured by production houses and studios is shared in suitable formats and transmitted via satellite to these server stations. Once uploaded, viewers can access the content by subscribing to the platform on their mobile devices or laptops. This system forms the backbone of content distribution on OTT platforms, enabling audiences worldwide to access a diverse range of content seamlessly.

Understanding audience preferences, analyzing competition, and implementing platform-specific strategies are integral aspects of planning the release of a web series. This comprehensive approach encompasses various factors such as content format, server capacity, and technical considerations to ensure an optimized release process. By integrating these elements, OTT platforms can effectively produce, schedule, and release web series, thereby maximizing their reach and impact among viewers.

Conclusion :

Marketing a web series involves a multifaceted approach that starts with a thorough understanding of the target audience and extends through creative collaboration and adaptable strategies. This process begins with identifying the nature of the web series and analyzing viewer preferences and geographical reach, whether regional, national, or international. Understanding the target audience is crucial, as it allows creators to develop tailored promotional strategies that resonate with different audience segments and areas.

The creative team at the production house collaborates closely with OTT platforms to plan marketing and distribution efforts. This collaboration involves deciding where to concentrate promotional efforts and determining the necessary marketing materials. Various promotional tactics are employed to generate interest and engage the audience, including organizing launch events or special screenings, engaging audiences through social media platforms and online forums, sharing teasers, trailers, and behind-the-scenes content, and conducting interviews with the cast and crew to provide insights.

Cross-promotions with other content creators or platforms, influencer marketing partnerships, and strategic collaborations help expand the reach of the web series. After the initial launch, the promotional strategy is continuously monitored and adjusted based on audience feedback and engagement metrics to ensure its effectiveness. By integrating these approaches, marketing efforts for a web series can effectively resonate with the target audience, leading to successful viewership and engagement. Promotions include on-ground events, online strategies, and cross-promotion to draw viewers from various sources. Centering content creation around the target audience's likes and interests increases engagement.

Overall, marketing a web series requires a comprehensive approach that includes understanding audience preferences, employing creative promotional tactics, and leveraging various revenue streams. By adhering to platform-specific technical criteria and continuously adapting to audience feedback, creators can ensure their web series resonates with viewers, leading to successful engagement and viewership in the competitive digital landscape.

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