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RESEARCH ARTICLE

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VIDEO SERVICE PROVIDERS AND PIRACY.

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Abstract

The video entertainment sector in India is growing exponentially over the coming years. Of this, the video streaming industry is expected to show the highest growth due to the increasing number of over-the-top (OTT) services in India. These OTT services allow their customers to stream content directly over the internet, by-passing the traditional media distribution channels such as cable television providers. At the same time, India is also facing a serious threat from the piracy industry with it being among the top five countries for peer-to-peer (P2P) downloads.

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive comparison of the usage of the two sources based on primary as well as secondary data. The effects of the growth of OTT services on the piracy industry have also been analysed.

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Introduction:-

Since the beginning of films, the video entertainment industry never saw a downfall. With the growth of television, many people preferred it as their daily mode of amusement and even today the video entertainment sector is one of the most booming industries of India providing its consumers with a long list of options. Apart from the conventional legal sources like the movie theatres or the television, illegal and pirated sources became very common over the last decade due to their convenience and availability of more content. Also, a number of over the top media service providers have gained popularity in India since the last 3 years. This research project aims to compare the growing video service providers with the illegal counterparts as well as to understand the effects of this growth on the use of piracy. Before focusing on the comparison of the two, it is important to understand the existence of each of the entertainment sources individually.

Video Service Providers

These services, more commonly known as the Over-the-top (OTT) media services provide legal video content to their consumers over the internet. According to a report by the global accounting firm PwC, the Indian market for entertainment and media has the maximum growth rate globally and is also expected to stay the same way over the years. According to the report, India's video streaming industry is likely to grow at an Average Annual Growth Rate of 21.82% and will reach Rs. 11,977 Crore by 2023. Currently about 35 such providers are available in India, including the American platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video and even the local Indian providers like Hotstar and VOOT.

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Illegal Pirated Sources

In order to access the copyrighted content, a variety of unauthorized sources are available that allow their users to not only view but also download and share the content. The two major sources of such video entertainment include torrents and online illegal video streaming websites. These sources are usually maintained by other users who download and also share and upload the video content. Because of this there is no proper check on the quality as well as the safety of the content; however, this community of people also usually makes sure that consensus is involved in deciding the health of each available video file. Although these sources may turn out to be risky at times, users have started using different VPN services to make their identities anonymous on the internet. Although India ranks fourth in downloading Blu-ray files, the government has started taking initiatives to reduce the use of piracy and have blocked many of the illegal websites under the Sections 63, 63-A, 65 and 65-A of the Copyright Act, 1957. The users who still manage to view these blocked URLs may get up to 3 years in jail as well as a fine of up to Rs. 3 Lakh.

Methodology:-

The research to compare the use of the available legal and illegal sources of video entertainment was done on the basis of primary data collected using an online survey. A Google Form was used for the purpose and a total of 50 responses were collected from men and women less than 25 years of age. The selected age bracket was to ensure the awareness of the respondents regarding the issue.

Apart from the primary results, a comparative analysis was done with the help of existing secondary data: Cost

Video Service providers

Most of the video services charge monthly or annual costs from their subscribers. These costs may vary depending on the choice of service provider, the duration of the subscription, and even on the location (country) of the subscriber. A few of the providers also have special student discounts available. There are however, a few available providers that do not or require a subscription, or provide a free (advertisement-based) subscription to its users.

Illegal Pirated Sources

Most of these sources provide copied content for no charge. Sources like torrents and illegal video streaming websites provide their content to be downloaded for free whereas the pirated DVD vendors may charge some amount for each DVD they sell which turns out to be more expensive than the available legal video service providers.

Legality**Video Service providers**

The available video service providers have the permissions to allow streaming or downloading copyrighted content. They do not break any copyright laws and only provide content that is legally available to them.

Illegal Pirated Sources

Obviously, accessing content from pirated sources has a big risk of legal issues since these sources usually provide unauthorized access to copyrighted material. Once a user of the online pirated sources is revealed, their ISP can be monitored to track any illegal download activity. Legal actions including imposition of heavy fines or even suspension of the ISP license can take place.

Safety**Video Service providers**

Viewing and downloading content from these providers is completely safe and causes no malware risks and possibilities of data breaches since all the content is available online legally and with appropriate protection from online hackers.

Illegal Pirated Sources

The available online pirated sources (either websites or torrents) can cause malware risks as the accessed online websites or downloaded files may contain viruses that affect the working of the computer once they have entered the system. These sources also risk data breaches by online hack attacks. Using pirated DVDs however, cause no such risk since they are available offline and thus cannot be tracked.

Availability of Content

Video Service providers

As said before in the paper, the legal video service providers have content that they have the permission to access. Many of these services provided a great variety but still limited content for its subscribers. Not everything one desires will be available on a single service. Many of these providers have content exclusive to them, therefore, to view this content the user has no choice but to subscribe to the particular video service provider.

Illegal Pirated Sources

These sources provide unauthorized copyrighted content from all possible sources. Therefore, they can provide a much larger pool of choices to their users. Their dependency on piracy enables them to even provide the exclusive content of various legal services to their users for free and all at one location.

Quality of Content

Video Service providers

Being paid and reliable, the subscribers of these services expect the provided content to be of high video and sound quality and the services most of the times provide the same.

Illegal Pirated Sources

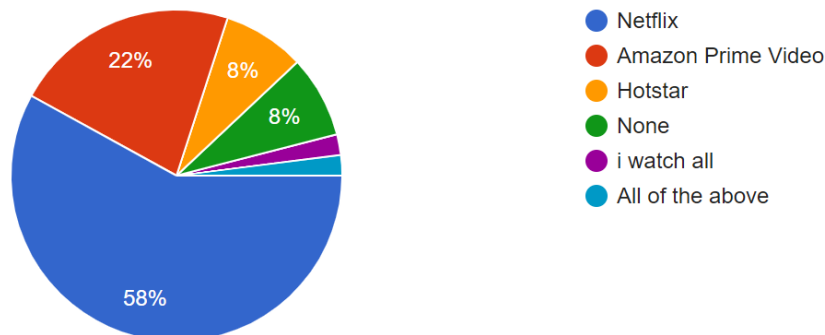
As compared to the video service providers, the quality of the pirated videos cannot be relied upon. They may contain multiple video files for the same content, the quality however varies. They may be of but video or sound quality or sometimes may or not even play the video.

Results:-

The primary results obtained from the online survey were presented in the form of pie charts for better comparison.

Do you use any of the available legal video streaming services?

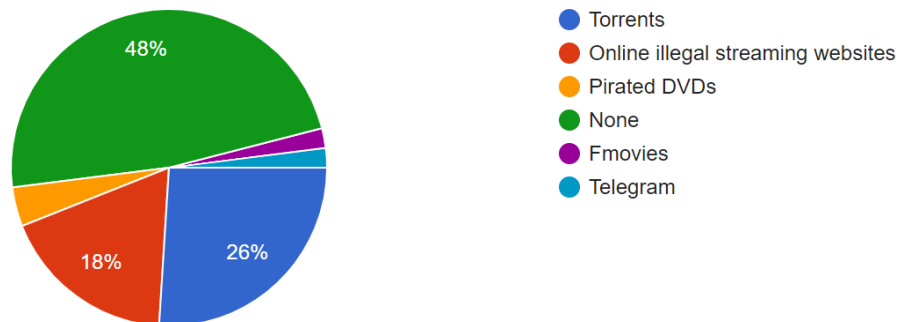
50 responses



1. It is seen from the pie chart that a very small percentage (8%) of people do not use any of the available legal video streaming services.
2. Netflix is found out to be the most commonly subscribed service.

Do you use any pirated for video streaming services?

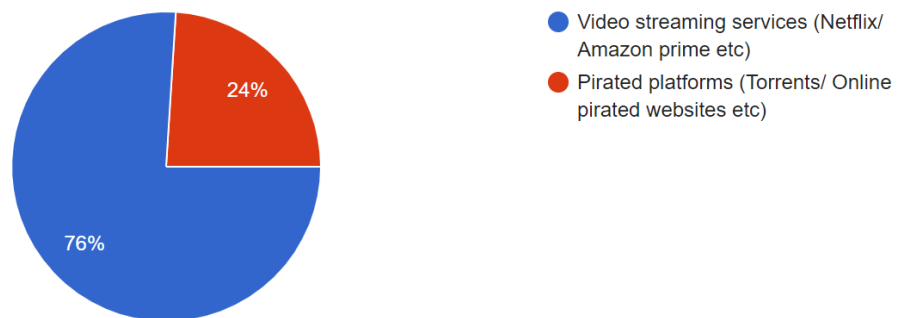
50 responses



1. It is observed that almost half of the responders do not use any of the illegal pirated sources.
2. Also, the majority of the remaining people prefer using torrents (26%) for video downloads or stream using online illegal websites (18%).

Which platform do you prefer more?

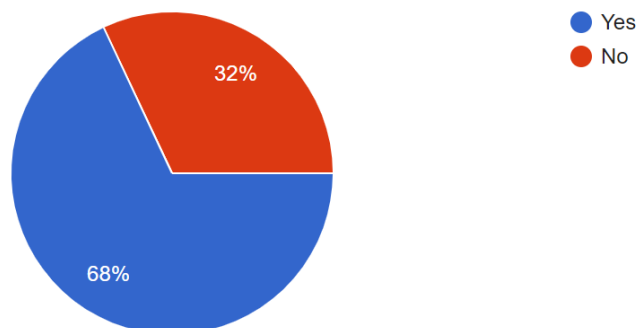
50 responses



1. The pie chart shows that a most of the people (76%) prefer to use the available legal services.
2. However, almost 1/4th of the people still resort to the illegal pirated platforms.

Has the growth of video streaming platforms decreased your dependency on piracy?

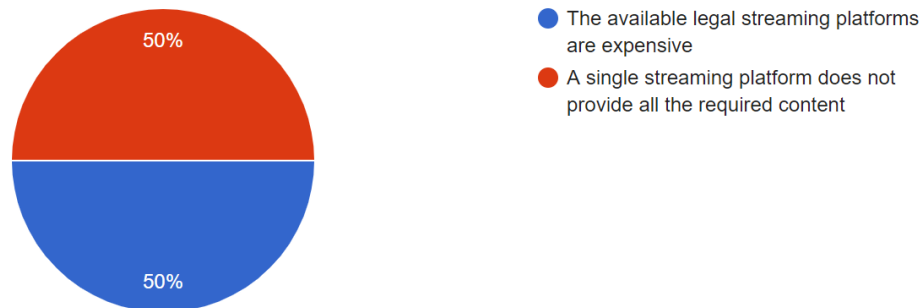
50 responses



It is observed that 68% of the responders claim that their dependency on piracy has decreased with the growth of the legal video streaming industry.

Why do you think the pirated platforms for video streaming are still used?

50 responses



1. The pie chart shows that people think that each of the 2 factors: Cost and Availability of Content contribute equally to the continued use of the illegal pirated platforms.
2. No other reason for the same came up from the survey.

Interpretations

It can be observed from the results of the online survey that most of the youth in India prefer to turn to the available legal video streaming services over the illegal alternatives with Netflix being the most common source. Also, with the increasing growth of the OTT services, the dependency of a huge proportion of people on the illegal sources has shifted to the available legal providers. There still exist many people who prefer the use of illegal sources and that the growth of the legal alternatives had no positive effect on their usage. The two predicted reasons: Cost and Availability of content contribute equally to this problem and no other major problem showed up. Due to the competitive nature of the video service providers, a wide range of exclusive content is available on each of these services. The subscribers therefore, need to subscribe for all of these services to access all the content of their choice. This in turn is restricting the downfall of the piracy industry which enables its users to easily access most of this exclusive content of the video service providers.

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Annexure

Questionnaire on Comparison of Legal and Illegal Video Service Providers

Do you use any of the available legal video streaming services?

- (a) Netflix (b) Amazon Prime Video (c) Hotstar
(d) None (e) Other _____

Do you use any pirated video streaming services?

- (a) Torrents (b) Online Illegal Streaming Websites (c) Pirated DVDs
(d) None (e) Other _____

Which platform do you prefer more?

- (a) Video Streaming Services (Netflix/ Amazon Prime etc)

(b) Pirated Platforms (Torrents/ Online Pirated Websites etc)

(c) Other _____

Has the growth of video streaming platforms decreased your dependency on piracy?

(a) Yes

(b) No

Why do you think the pirated platforms for video streaming are still used?

(a) The available legal streaming platforms are expensive

(b) A single streaming platform does not provide all the required content

(c) Other _____