MAPPING AUDIENCE-USERS' MOBILITY: OTT PLATFORMS ON THE SMARTPHONE SCREEN

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Abstract
The increasing popularity of the smartphone screen as a ubiquitous device of everyday life also points towards how it invites the audience-user to play and fiddle with it, as a gadget, as a tool and as a toy. There has been work in the fields of gaming and virtual life platforms that suggests a 'playful' turn in media studies (Silverstone, 1999; Neitzel and Nohr, 2006; Thimm, 2010). The smartphone screen lends itself very well to the practice of playful activity. Apart from being a communication device, it is also a playful device, one which we toy with when we are bored, for leisure and pleasure. The screen itself and the apps within it offer unprecedented ways of playability to pleasure ourselves and it is telling that for Android phones, apps can be downloaded from the platform 'Play Store'. The concept of play then can be used as a frame to engage with contemporary media culture being produced on the screen. This transformation of screen cultures and spectatorship and the changing viewing practices with the coming of OTT point towards very particular affordances and limitations initiated by these new modalities of screen consumption. This aspect of play, and the conditions of mediation and its impact on everyday intimate and social life of the audience has been significant. This paper argues that the smartphone screen offers the pleasures of play operating within the regime of mobility and generates new modalities of watching films and television content for audiences.

Keywords: screen, youth, play, mobility, OT

Introduction
In an article published in The Quartz in 2018 titled, 'Indians love watching videos on their phones – as long as it is for free', an image of two men sharing a smartphone screen lying down on their beds, and another man lying down on a platform next to them using his smartphone as well, is deeply evocative (Bhattacharya, 2018). The article also cites a report published by the Boston Consulting Group in the year 2018, that one of the primary reasons for growth of OTT (Over-the-top) video platforms

in India is the adoption of inexpensive smartphones, followed by cheap mobile data and broadband. The central premise of the article is that Indians are gravitating towards using smartphones, primarily for watching videos, as long as they don't have to pay for them. The visual culture of the screen then is embedded in the images we produce and consume, in information we seek and provide, in data we generate and access and in networks we build and get connected to. Contemporary OTT services or online video streaming greatly structures screen consumption, production, practices and rituals, sometimes converging and departing from cinema and television viewing.

With the smartphone screen offering various possibilities of playing with the device, it has not received a sustained examination within the field of studies, apart from work on video games (which has been recent), to use it as a frame of analysis for other media forms and texts. Play can then be used creatively to look at it as a mode of media consumption and as a cultural practice, specifically where there is consumption of new media forms not exclusively for instrumental use of digital technologies, which might be still considered ambiguous owing to their fleeting nature.

One of the most significant books on the development of the concept of play by Huizinga (1955) defines play as:

[...] a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary life" as being "not meant", but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings. (p.13)

According to him then, play is reality at one moment but also stands outside of it, it offers freedom and choice but involves adherence to rules, the rules need to be followed but can also be bent. In that sense, the act of play might not have utility but is still useful, it looks like it is meaningless but yet the acts are meaningful. This aspect of play, and the conditions of mediation and its impact on everyday intimate and social life of the audience has been significant, and understudied. From the time Nanna Verhoeff (2012) wrote about various mobile screens and the systems of navigation they produce, the smartphone screen and technologies have vastly changed. The contemporary moment then can be seen as a temporary albeit transitional space, and point of departure to discuss the smartphone screen. The screen is not just an object, the dual-ness of on-screen images/applications as well as viewing and handling of the screen make it a practice. The possibilities of the smartphone screen have led to new kinds of leisure principles. Hence the smartphone screen is placed very uniquely in comparison to the other media objects in the landscape.

Additionally, our experience of the screen is increasingly mobile and active, no longer bound by the cinema hall or the television set in the domestic setting. The mobile self is getting produced via mobilities of production and consumption, thereby transforming the user into occupying the liminal space of a 'prosumer'. Smartphones make it a possibility to interface with these screens during transit, when mobile, situated in public and private contexts. Our mobility across time and space, is not just a physical act of the body but effective in how we respond, interact and communicate – a visceral and embodied experience. It is important to add there that the various modes of mobility offered by different screens and their experiences has been a recurring theme in the works of screen archaeologist Huhtamo (1997), on film and spatiality by Bruno (1997) and virtual windows of the computer screen by Friedberg (2006).

Taking this concept of play further, I argue that the smartphone screen and the pleasures of play operate within the regime of mobility. This article is looking at the transformation of screen cultures and spectatorship, the changing viewing practices with the coming of OTT, especially on the smartphone screen, to understand the affordances and limitations initiated by these new modalities of screen consumption. Consequently, does the regime of mobility impact transmedia video content for the new audience-users, their viewing practices, and how they view 'content' on screen?

Smartphone Screen Cultures

In another study conducted by MoMAGIC (a Big Data and AI based mobile advertising company) on consumer preferences between OTT and DTH (Direct-to-home) platforms in August 2019, 55% of the respondents said they now preferred to watch and consume video content on OTT, whereas 41% of the respondents continued to prefer watching content on DTH. In another study published by KPMG (2019) titled 'Unravelling the online digital video consumer' in 2019, about 87% of the respondents consumed online content on their smartphones. Spending 70 minutes a day on OTT platforms, every session was for an average of 40 minutes, and the viewing frequency was about 12.5 times per week. The study also mentioned that the age groups of 15-24 and 25-36 spend the most time per week at 9.2 hours and 8.3 hours respectively, though followed closely by the age groups of 37-50 and 50+ as well. Smartphones then are the most preferred medium to access OTT platforms versus a TV or a tablet due to its convenience and cheap mobile data prices. It has also been reported that OTT platforms in India added about 3-4 million new users in the period between March 2020 and April 2020, owing to the national lockdown imposed due to Covid-19 pandemic (Tandon, Jha and Tewari, 2020). These statistics point to an emerging screen spectatorship culture, with online video, film and television content converging on the smartphone screen.

The smartphone screen has generated new modalities of watching films and television content for audiences. OTT consumption on the smartphone screen displaces television viewing or watching films as a “family activity” in urban India thereby reconfiguring social formations (Mankekar, 1999). With the access to this content mediated via the smartphone screen, across multiple platforms, there are newer ways of imagining the audiences as well. They are more diverse in the content they consume, as content consumption has become an individual activity not tied to the domestic context of viewing.

Some of the leading players in the OTT space include big tech giants such as Amazon, Apple, Reliance Jio, and traditional broadcast networks such as Sony, Zee, Walt Disney, among others (see Table 1 in the appendix). In many ways now, the consolidation in the OTT industry seems to mirror the concentration of ownership in cable television in India. It has also been argued that the illusion of choice of having multiple platforms and the apparent ‘decentralisation’ due to displacement of programmatic television masks the increasing centralisation in proliferation of digital platforms and technologies (Naidu and Laghate, 2021). Zuboff (2019) has argued similarly that big technology companies, in collision with the state, have now enabled an era of information civilization, where our ways of seeing, knowing and being are governed by technology and data, a true hallmark of ‘surveillance capitalism’ (p.23). In India for instance, the period between 2016 and 2017 saw Reliance Jio shaking the mobile data space by introducing their 4G services free of cost, thereby cornering the market and on-boarding a huge section of the Indian population as mobile-data users (Parbat, 2016).

Locating the Screen Audience-User

It was projected that by 2020 India would have the second largest online video audience, with about 350 million people touted to watch content via OTT platforms and there are now about 30 broadcaster-owned OTT platforms (Lidhoo, 2021). The strict boundaries of platforms, medium and content have now blurred, or even dissolved in this case, with OTT platforms offering all kinds of content, including but not limited to television series, original web series, films, theatrical plays, stand-up comic acts, news, sports, documentaries etc.

In present times, the technological, social and cultural contexts in which contemporary audiences exist have changed significantly. Emerging technological developments, proliferation of newer distribution platforms, the changing viewing contexts, and new screen laws are transforming the spectator. The smartphone screen audience-user is significantly different from the legacy film and television audience. I use the term audience-user here, for even though spectator studies evolved to include an active audience perspective, freeing the audiences from being bound by the text, by seeing them as active producers of meaning, however the traditional medium context of film and television screens still limits the possibilities of being an audience-user. Some have also called the new audience a prosumer, collapsing the differences between consumers and producers (Ritzer et al, 2012). The smartphone screen is dependent on user's inputs and navigation of the screen, it produces a more active viewing context, also allowing viewers to create their own content, memes, social media posts, and images in relation to the content they consume. The audience now, as smartphone screen users are offered numerous participatory opportunities. Since the co-occupying of the user position by audiences, we see the Internet offering multiple possibilities of interaction for them. The explosion of blogging sites, sharing of peer to peer music, films and television content, and the emergence and growth of platforms such as YouTube have made audiences occupy the user, producer and consumer positions, and move along them with ease. The use of the internet then facilitates a greater level of participation by the audience-user. The audience then is both the subject and object now - which is how the platforms are engaging with audiences, but also how they are being engaged by the audience at the same time. Hence the context of the type of exhibition space and its technologies becomes an important query here in our discussion of the audience-user.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with young men and women between the ages of 18 and 30, residing in Delhi between November 2020 to May 2021 over video-conferencing (Table 2 in the appendix) . Interviewees were found through snowball sampling method in the researcher's extended network. Smartphone adoption and mobile data usage figures remain high for this age bracket, which also comprises the majority of OTT viewers. It is for this reason that OTT platforms such as Amazon Prime run special subscription offers for audience-users in the age group of 18-24, dubbed as their Youth Offer. My choice of interviewees was not limited to a particular OTT platform, but those who watched online content primarily on their smartphones along with other devices, including tablets and laptops. However a majority of my respondents spoke about their experiences of

Netflix, Amazon Prime, Sony Liv and Disney+ Hotstar exclusively. Their viewing practices ranged from an hour to four hours a day, sometimes going above that limit over the weekends. The methodological toolbox involved interpretation of information gathered from research participants via interviews, as well as the representation of these experiences outside the context of this research including, films, memes, advertisements and videos. These interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded on the basis of their practices and experiences. These were then viewed from the lens of playful screen experience and mobility to make further theoretical linkages. Pseudonyms for interviewees are used wherever names are mentioned.

Mapping the OTT phenomenon

OTT platforms in India and elsewhere exist in an enmeshed network of emerging digital technologies and infrastructure (smartphones, broadband networks, fibre-optic cables and Internet), global and Indian players, small and large corporations and production houses, state regulation and policy, and the related political, economic and social concerns of this new cultural practice. Hence these new culture industries are influenced by large technology corporations such as Amazon, Facebook, Apple and Google significantly as they seek to diversify their products and integrate their existing users with their new cultural offerings by promoting newer ways of imagining the smartphone screen and influencing contemporary screen cultures by not just distributing content but also inserting themselves into the production of new content.

Mobile data rates in India are relatively cheaper in comparison to other countries, with prices starting from Rs $0.24/GB in 2019 (Datta, 2018). In the initial years of its launch in 2016 Netflix was affected by low and patchy data speeds, leading to increased buffering time and quality issues. This led to many news reports questioning the viability of Netflix in the country as well as online memes which poked fun at India's data infrastructure and global aspirations of watching Netflix (Dixit, 2016). Now however there has been a growth in smartphone users in India as the figures from 2018 show 340 million users, and there has been a growth in average data usage per subscriber per month to 8.7 GB in 2018 from 0.88 BG per month in 2016. The average mobile data download speed has also increased to 9.93 Mbps in 2018 from 8.88 Mbps in 2017 (Roy, 2019).

Classifying India as a mobile-first country, Amazon Prime launched in 2016, now released its mobile-only video plan in India in January 2021. This has been in collaboration with Airtel, a leading telecom network provider in India. This subscription will work only on a smartphone, offering SD (Standard Definition) streaming quality content making use of mobile data. This is also coupled with mobile data plans exclusively to watch Amazon Prime content for Airtel subscribers, the plans can be recharged, beginning as low as $1.19. Disney+ Hotstar has also recently collaborated with Airtel to offer free subscription to its subscribers for one year. Vodafone Idea, another telecom network operator has also tied up with leading OTT platforms offering reduced subscription rates. OTT players often seem to be partnering with telecom companies, as a distribution platform, to boost subscriptions and expand markets for mobile data users.

The emergence of OTT can also be traced to the limits of programmatic television in terms of timing, scheduling, and variety. Television viewing has always been a ritualised and time-bound activity, with families and individuals tuning in at certain times of the day for specific content. The ability to be mobile with smartphones, tablets and laptops also tapped into the need to be free from fixed timings and schedules. The freedom to watch anything anytime has been a great driver for OTT. Additionally, the phenomenon of 'binge-watching' which allowed for consumption of multiple episodes across seasons became the hallmark of OTT consumption, which also prompted television networks to run binge-shows over the weekend on television to capture and retain their audiences. Again with cinema, the ease of watching a film, with a flick of a button, proved to be very seductive for the audiences, who were looking for flexible viewing practices without advertising, which was a constant on television. All of this has also contributed to a shift in the storage of television and cinematic content for audience-users, with the practice of downloading and storing films and television shows on hard disks a thing of the past. Many of my respondents shared how it seems to be a futile exercise now, since almost everything is available online, waiting to be streamed.

The scenario post Covid-19 has seen even more consolidation of audiences online, due to lockdowns which halted television and film production entirely (PTI, 2021). Since people were confined to their homes, they found solace in OTT content, surfing through their libraries, watching reruns of previous shows and older films. This period has also seen many platforms recording a growth of 30-40% in new subscriptions and audiences (Biswas and Mitter, 2021). It has been reported that 2020 onwards and post the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a surge in cord-cutting or the practice of cancelling cable television subscription in favour of Internet-based and wireless content consumption (Peres, 2020).

Playful Screen Consumption: Notes from Audience Survey

Roger Silverstone (1999) argues that mass media and play are in fact inseparable. For him we are all players in a game, switching contexts in ever-increasing blurring of boundaries when we tune in the radio, switch on the television or log on the Internet. Further he believes that we access media for a multitude of processes, including but not limited to, for work, for information, for entertainment, for education, and sometimes simply for pleasure. Fiske (1987) has similarly argued that the very process of the pleasures of engaging with media texts and images, such as changing television channels is a kind of playful exploration.

Gamification is very evident in sports content streaming, for instance, there are emerging opportunities for engagement and monetisation, with personalised sporting statistics, options for fantasy play, betting tips and odds, quizzes and interactive games to keep audience-users hooked to the platform. Ajay shared how during the IPL in 2020, Disney+ Hotstar introduced its 'Watch'N Play' feature, calling it an 'immersive experience' by allowing audience-users to upload their selfie videos, duets, and the opportunity to discuss the match in real time by commenting in the interactive section.

Game mechanics are also employed in the genre of fictional content, ZEE5 launched its ZEE5 Super Family (ZSF) gaming experience for their Hindi-language content in February 2020. As part of their playful offering, audience-users were allowed to watch ads and earn points in return. The cumulated points then can be redeemed later at the platform by buying subscription packs. Richa shared how she can choose her favourite character across the shows, and predict and place bets on how the character's arc will progress. Successful predictions stand the chance to win rewards such as cars, smartphones, gift vouchers and ZEE5 subscription. All this feeds into the assumption that audience-users will then connect with their innate or acquired competitive nature and spend more time on the app. Additionally, this platform introduced PLAY5, a feature by which brands can engage with audience-users via hyper-personalised advertisements in an interactive format. While earlier ZEE5 used gamification elements for their non-fiction reality-based shows, by inviting audience-users to vote, comment and change the course of the program, now however they reward them by "elevating content viewing experience… get rewards… for following their favourite shows" (Desai, 2019, para 4).

Netflix also introduced 'Netflix Party' in 2020, which provided for a co-viewing feature in the app. Shweta revealed how she can now share the link of what she is watching with her friends and others. The link continues to stream in real-time and hence whenever a friend opens the link, all of them would watch the same content on their screens. Users can also pause, rewind and play at the same time. This is very similar to and reminiscent of multiplayer video games which are played by two or more players simultaneously across different screens.

In order to keep up with emerging trends of short-format videos and drive more traffic on their apps, platforms such as Eros Now introduced a short-form video content offering called 'Quickies'. ZEE5 similarly leveraged the banning of TikTok, and introduced HiPi, as a platform for audience users to upload their own short videos. MX Player, another OTT platform introduced actual games in their app to encourage users to play them and earn MX Coins, something that Rahul does extensively. These coins can then be used to unlock premium content on the platform or even use them as discounts or coupons for shopping on e-commerce platforms such as PayTM, Myntra and OYO Rooms.

The year 2020 has ushered in a series of transformations that has also affected the media industry immensely. With nationwide lockdowns, disruption in production schedules, the confinement of audiences at home, the closing of cinema halls, all have contributed to further changing screen cultures and practices. The quality of immersion has been given a lot of emphasis with respect to television and cinematic content viewing. The fact that the smartphone screen allows audience-users to do multiple things at once, rather than getting lost in what they consume. The preoccupation of television and film studies in definitively describing what are the immersive qualities of television and the cinema screen, have taken away our attention from the changing expectations and needs of the audience-users themselves from the audio-visual content they consume on smartphone screens.

In one of the interviews, Rama spoke of how OTT offers her uninterrupted flow of watching content. The flow she mentions here refers to the flow of watching all episodes at once. But this 'flow' also has a very significant history in television studies, and is a useful entry point into understanding how the regime of mobility operates on OTT platforms. The idea of a television flow was proposed by Williams (1974) who conceived of television as both a technology and cultural form and described how the audience gets locked in by a specific channel. Williams argues that television flow is continuous, in the sense that it does not end with a specific show, and encourages the audience to keep coming back for different televisual content (p.72) .The idea of television flow has also been theorised by Jensen (1994) in the context of the agentic capacities of audiences to make the choice of entering or exiting the television flow. Jensen mentions three flows, the first at the level of the channel, the second at the level of the viewer, and the third is a broader macro level of television programming itself. The flow of the channel refers to the streaming of a bouquet of content offered by it, the flow of the viewer refers to how audiences moved from different television programmes, and the broader macro-level flow refers to a combination of the kind of programming television channels distribute and the viewing choices of the audiences (p.295). A significant point here is when Jensen spoke of how proliferation of channels does not automatically suggest more empowered choices for the viewer, but the structuration of the viewer in the superstructure, in terms of having the choice of selecting from an existing pool of wide choices. This is where perhaps OTT streaming of content converges and also departs from television flow offering new forms of mobility. What has changed, among other things, is the transformation of the context and cultural place of television, due to the change in technology, the nature of programming, new user interfaces and also the expectations of the audience-user itself. While even globally the experience of televisual content has transformed, for the Indian audiences specifically it has signalled a shift in scheduling of content and in their access to a wide variety of shows, which were gatekept due to censorship norms of cable television broadcasting.

While the flow of audio-visual content offered by OTT platforms continues to mirror some of the traditional televisual practices, the limits of region, scheduling, language and time slots have become immaterial now, breaking from the earlier 'flow of television'. The limits of generic programming which circumscribed televisual flow does not exist anymore, with every OTT platform offering the mobility to access all genres of content via its library. The limits of time and scheduling constraints, television broadcasting rules of showing adult content (sexuality, violence and abusive language) late in the night for instance, and the interruption by advertisements, are irrelevant now. Sama for instance shared how shared how she was keenly following the release of a Polish film, 365 Days (Białowąs and Mandes, 2021), an erotic romantic drama, and was hoping to catch it in India, when the Netflix offered it for streaming. Playing it on her smartphone screen at home gave her the privacy to watch the film away from the policing and prying eyes of her parents. Tanvi and Ananya similarly shared how they now had the opportunity to consume erotic content on their smartphone screens in an increasingly mobile and private fashion.

The traditional televisual flow for audiences has also been disrupted. The limits on the flow on what can be watched at what time, dependent on the programming schedule is also immaterial, with audience-users consuming and inserting themselves in different kinds of audio-visual content. For example, the earlier practice of stumbling upon a show or film on TV and not having the ability to start from the beginning, has given way to going back or forward, depending on the audience-user's choice and need. Ravi for instance shared how he would play some parts of the episodes on his ride back home in the cab on his smartphone, only to go back and play from the beginning with his wife.

The broad macro-level of programming and audience-user choice, continues to operate in interesting ways however. The library of offerings on OTT platforms far exceeds what television channels could offer. There is now both horizontal and vertical choice, something that was not available in the televisual macro flow. Viewers can go in and out of a media text with a flick. Television, and to a good extent cinema, is organized by the logic of geographical territories. Cable systems, local channels and affiliates, distribution agreements all tied them to geographical territories and have now given way to national-level programming, available across regions in all languages to everyone. Most OTT platforms also became a platform for reruns, a kind of downstream market for television to license its content, offering a mobility in distribution as well. Aman shared how he managed to stream a show called The Shield. He had earlier struggled to find a DVD or torrents of the show back home in India.

Much like how televisual viewing has transformed, watching cinema and its related practices and rituals have changed too. Rishi spoke of how earlier he would come to know of a film's release by catching its trailer or a song on television, sometimes reading an interview or a review in the newspaper. This was followed by the actual physical journey to the theatre to watch a film, which was accompanied by its practices and rituals. Subsequently this changed when posters of films would be released on social media, or when the actors in the film would put up constant updates of the film's production and release date on their personal social media accounts, thereby creating an interest in the film. Now increasingly, even before the Covid-19 pandemic, films were directly being released online on OTT platforms (also called direct-to-digital), via exclusive film deals, completely changing the film viewing experience (Bruney and Kirkland, 2020).

Additionally, films and television shows are shifting from being a social experience to a means to fill time in public spaces, to alleviate the boredom of waiting for time to pass, easing the potential discomfort of being alone in public, as well as creating a private space for oneself. At the same time it has also led to new forms of online sociality, with consuming, creating and sharing of memes about the content being watched, sending and receiving recommendation from friends, as well as writing reviews of content they are consuming. Nehill for instance now finds himself reviewing films and shows watched on OTT on his social network regularly, inserting himself in this mobility of consuming and producing, while simultaneously playing the content on his smartphone.

All of these new forms of online sociality produced by the mobility of OTT apps, makes the media content itself mobile, giving it a new lease of life on different platforms. Cinema and television viewing is now increasingly site-agnostic, that is, it is not specific anymore to a medium, or traditional practices expected out of television and cinematic viewing. It is important to sign-post that the phenomenon of cord-cutting and platform mobility has also produced the idea of being platform-agnostic. This refers to the notion that audience-users are willing to consume all kinds of content, irrespective of the genre, not placing any apparent value on the screen and size of the image. Hence as early as 2007, Apple iPhone had released an advertisement called 'Calamari', where the voice-over convinces the viewer that they can easily switch from watching a film such as Pirates of the Caribbean on their iPhone to looking for seafood restaurant options in their vicinity, with a flick of a finger (playing on the fact that watching the film might evoke the desire to eat seafood) (Shaw, 2007). Subsequently, a kind of travel is now evident between various screens, with television and cinema now existing in a shifting mediascape of multiple screens, viewing practices and platforms. Additionally, television program scheduling earlier was more or less analogous to everyday life, especially in terms of temporality and spatiality, gendered and age division in television consumption (Modleski, 1983) and the scheduling mirroring audiences' routines and the kind of audience expected at a certain time (Fiske, 1987).

The aura and ontological fixity of television and cinema seems to have been displaced, as all televisual and cinematic texts are being conflated under the category of 'content'. Streaming has hence disrupted the television and cinema flow, in terms of their temporal and spatial structures. Now the mobility offered by OTT apps has made this temporality of television scheduling redundant. This time-space compression has been described by social scientists as an acute need by contemporary capitalism to accelerate the speed of the circulation of capital and information in society. Harvey (1990) for instance has referred to this compression as a process which alters the objective features of time and space and makes us modify our lives and our worlds accordingly. Our daily lives are unpredictable, and being bound to the programming schedule or cinema timings seems like a disadvantage for audience-users who would rather choose to consume at leisure of convenience. The theatrical release of Indian films on a Thursday or a Friday to capture the audience over the weekend to get in more numbers, seems futile now, with increasing number of films in India being released online, and television series released online with all episodes at once, available to be watched any day and time of the week.

Even the 'liveness' of television is not such a concern, with many preferring to pause what they are consuming, to take phone calls, sending texts, reading trivia about what they are watching, sending an email, scrolling through social media feeds, among other activities. Morley (2002) had argued that national broadcasting gave a sense of national unity, creating this imaginary audience bound by the idea of a nation, similar to Benedict Anderson's (1991) conceptualization of an "imagined community". That has somehow given way to meme creation on social media, commenting on shows popularly watched, much like how fans do as meme-creators. Even national addresses by the Prime Minister and other governing heads are streamed live over Twitter and other social media handles for instance, allowing audience-users to respond in real-time, comment with jokes, give their feedback, pause and resume, making their private viewing at once public. Hence consumption of content on apps can both fracture and unify audience-users, with users coming together to form temporary online socialities (developing social links online),and also disassociating to withdraw to their private consumption bubbles.

For instance, Vinayak shared how when he watched the Wimbledon series recently, they would pause and scroll Twitter to read posts about the match, update his own status, and resume watching. Aamna also shared how her film viewing practices have also been disrupted, when she pauses to see the name of actors, go online to read trivia about them, and sometimes even resume watching a film after a week. As an example, Amazon Prime, that also owns IMDB.com (Internet Movie Database), has linked all content on its platform with IMDB, allowing users to pause, hover around the left of the screen to see the names of actors and actresses in that particular scene, and read more information about them.

The screen also offers the mobility to watch different kinds of content within the OTT app as well as across apps. Many respondents referred to the freedom and ability to watch global television shows and cinematic content they never had access to earlier. OTT apps have then facilitated the flow of transnational television shows. The textual transformation in OTT content which also offers subtitles makes content accessible to Indians who are English-educated but nevertheless keep the subtitles switched on to follow content more coherently. This was echoed by more than a few respondents who have been brought up in Delhi and have learnt English as a second language, finding that the subtitles aid their mobility of watching all kinds of content with unhindered access.

Conclusion

The incursion of the smartphone screen into the audience-user's everyday life including homes, offices, commuting, and all public and private spaces has in many ways contributed towards pulling the centre of gravity away from the television and cinema screen. It is a new power and cultural centre with traditional production houses and network production is now being eclipsed by OTT technology platforms, such as Netflix and Amazon Prime producing their own original programming and introducing mobilities of playing the screen.With access to films and televisual content on the smartphone screen, modes of viewing have transformed, as have viewing practices, both temporally and spatially. A shift in perceptions of visuality has ensured that the exhibition context does not inflect the textuality of the content, and is not considered subordinate to it. Subsequently, the aesthetic and cultural assumptions of the intrinsic qualities of what television and cinema are, and are supposed to be, seem limiting, and even arrogant now, considering such ontological arguments do not seem tenable and viable any more, in context of the smartphone screen.

The smartphone has forged new ways of playing and connecting people to their society and culture and is intimately involved in people's lives, leading to the formation of audience-users and new kinds of screen cultures in overlapping and complex ways. India is on a smartphone-intensive technological development course, and if we follow Marshall McLuhan (1964), then the perceptions of our encounter with the smartphone screen and the content on it is framed by the aesthetic dimension of the screen. Secondly, he also spoke of how initially older technologies and media appear as the content of newer technologies, slowly giving way to new frameworks and features. There is hence a technological shaping of very particular instances of everyday routines (culture), producing new relations between audience-users and the media, and newer ways in which media companies insert themselves in the lives of audience-users. Consequently, OTT apps exist in a liminal space - as a distribution platform, a media company, a library or an archive, a film and television producer, a service - in this mediation and remediation between the screen and the audience-user. Conflating all forms of mediums under the category of 'content' has also produced an ontological cataclysm for the industry and the blurring of boundaries, with OTT platforms and audience-users not entirely keen to differentiate or position any differently television and cinematic content, thereby producing new ways of negotiating within the cultural embeddedness of content and its consumption as a playful act.

As has been the case with television, OTT platforms are shaped and are shaped by audience-user's experiences. As the interviews reveal, the playful and mobile experience is not necessarily uniform or stable, but certainly shows increasing engagement, outside the audio-visual text, by consuming memes, sharing reviews, giving the text an extension or a new lease of life, and context by consuming it in other spaces.

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Appendix

Table 1:
Leading OTT Video Platforms in India 2021

S.No.	Platform	Parent Company	Monetization Model	Subscribers
1	YouTube	Google	AVOD	260 million[1]
2	Netflix	Netflix	SVOD	4.6 million[2]
3	Amazon Prime	Amazon	SVOD	17 million[2]
4	Disney+ Hotstar	Walt Disney	Hybrid: SVOD + AVOD	34 million[2]
5	Sony Liv	Sony	Hybrid: SVOD + AVOD	5.5[3]
6	Jio TV	Reliance	Hybrid: SVOD + AVOD	100 million[4]
7	Voot	Viacom	AVOD	1 million[5]
8	ZEE5	Zee	Hybrid: SVOD + AVOD	72.6[6]
9	Eros Now	Eros	SVOD	39.9 million[7]
10	Alt Balaji	Balaji	Hybrid: SVOD + AVOD	35 million[8]

Advertising Video on Demand – AVOD
Subscription Video on Demand – SVOD

Note:
The data for Netflix, Amazon Prime and Disney+ Hotstar is from "Disney+ Hotstar notches up 34 mn subscriber in India, Indonesia" by Mint, 2021 (https://www.livemint.com/companies/company-results/disney-hotstar-notches-up-34-mn-subscribers-in-india-indonesia-11620977152919.html). Data for YouTube is from "YouTube and WhatsApp inch closer to half a billion users in India" by TechCrunch, 2021. https://techcrunch.com/2021/01/11/youtube-and-whatsapp-inch-closer-

to-half-a-billion-users-in-india/). The data for Sony Liv, Zee 5 and Alt Balaji is from "Amazon, SonyLiv, MX Player, Alt Balaji and Zee5 on what's next for OTT in India" by The Drum, 2021 (https://www.thedrum.com/news/2021/05/07/amazon-sonyliv-mx-player-altbalaji-and-zee5-what-s-next-ott-india). The data for Voot is from "Voot Select ropes in one million subscribers in a year" by The Hindu Business Line, 2021 (https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/info-tech/voot-select-ropes-in-one-million-subscribers-in-a-year/article34046601.ece).The data for Jio TV is from "SonyLiv third Indian video-streaming app after Hotstar and JioTV to cross 100 million play store downloads", 2019 (https://yourstory.com/2019/07/google-play-store-video-streaming-hotstar-jiotv-sonyliv/amp). All data in the public domain.

S. No.	Pseudonym	OTT Duration on Smartphone Screen (per day)	Gender	Age	Screens (in order of OTT use)	OTT Platforms used
1	Richa	2-3 hours	Female	25	Smartphone, Laptop, TV	YouTube, Amazon Prime, Disney+ Hotstar, Sony Liv
2	Ajay	4 hours	Male	19	Smartphone, Tablet, TV	YouTube, Netflix, Amazon Prime, Zee5, Sony Liv, Voot
3	Shweta	1 hour	Female	18	Tablet, Smartphone	Amazon Prime, Sony Liv, Zee5, Disney+ Hotstar, JioTV
4	Rama	2-3 hours	Female	18	Smartphone, Tablet, TV	YouTube, Amazon Prime, MX Player, Eros Now, Voot
5	Tanvi	4 hours	Female	19	Smartphone, Laptop	Netflix, Sony Liv, Zee5, Disney+ Hotstar, Voot, Alt Balaji
6	Rahul	2-3 hours	Male	23	Smartphone, Tablet, Laptop, TV	YouTube, Amazon Prime, Disney+ Hotstar, Eros Now, Voot
7	Sama	3-4 hours	Female	18	Smartphone, Laptop	Netflix, Sony Liv, Disney+ Hotstar, Alt Balaji
8	Arjun	2-3 hours	Male	20	Smartphone	YouTube, JioTV
9	Ananya	2 hours	Female	26	Tablet, Smartphone, TV	YouTube, Netflix, Sony Liv, Zee5, Disney+ Hotstar, Voot
10	Aamna	1 hours	Female	28	Smartphone, Laptop, TV	YouTube, Amazon Prime, Sony Liv, Zee5, Disney+ Hotstar, Eros Now, Alt Balaji
11	Ravi	1-2 hours	Male	22	Smartphone, Tablet, Laptop	Netflix, JioTV, Sony Liv, Disney+ Hotstar
12	Parikshi	1-2 hours	Female	24	Smartphone, TV	Amazon Prime, Disney+ Hotstar, Zee5, Eros Now
13	Aman	2 hours	Male	18	Smartphone, TV	Netflix, Voot, Zee5, Sony Liv
14	Rishi	2-3 hours	Male	19	Smartphone, Tablet, Laptop	YouTube, Amazon Prime, Sony Liv, Zee5, Disney+ Hotstar

15	Nikhil	2 hours	Male	22	Laptop, Smartphone	Amazon Prime, Zee5, JioTV, Voot, Alt Balaji
16	Nehill	1 hour	Male	29	Smartphone, TV	YouTube, Amazon Prime, Sony Liv, Zee5, Disney+ Hotstar
17	Aditi	3 to 4 hours	Female	21	Tablet, Smartphone	Netflix, Disney+ Hotstar, Eros Now, Sony Liv, Voot, Alt Balaji
18	Vinayak	2 hours	Male	27	Smartphone, Laptop, TV	YouTube, Amazon Prime, Zee5, Sony Liv, Voot