

Quote by Munish Vaid, Vice President, Primus Partners

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India's streaming boom stalls as television retains dominant grip on viewers| Report

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It may be an overstatement to say that cord-cutting is gaining traction in India, as a recent report by media consulting firm Ormax shows that the country still has nearly three television viewers for every one person watching over-the-top (OTT) content.

However, the study highlighted that most streaming platforms remain focused on metro audiences, while TV continues to be the primary source of household entertainment in rural India.

The cord-cutting narrative—people quitting television for digital streaming platforms—is somewhat exaggerated in the Indian context, said Nitin Gupta, chief content officer, Chaupal, which streams content in Punjabi, Haryanvi, and Bhojpuri. Households, instead of abandoning cable entirely, are using both TV and OTT together.

“OTT segments seem small due to different consumption patterns and rates. TV continues to have a massive reach across markets, supported by affordable packs, familiarity, and strong regional programming. While OTT platforms have witnessed rapid growth, their monetization, especially through paid subscriptions, is limited to a smaller, urban, and younger demographic,” he clarified.

The cord-cutting narrative in the country has been slightly overstated, agreed Kaushik Das, founder and chief executive, AAO NXT, an Odia-language OTT platform. “India is not a one-size-fits-all market, and consumption behaviours vary widely across geographies, languages, and generations. TV continues to hold a strong cultural and habitual place, especially in tier-II, tier-III, and rural India,” he added.

Besides, some individuals may not have access to smartphones, internet connectivity, or smart TVs, making it challenging for them to watch OTT content, said Rajat Agrawal, chief operating officer at content production firm Ultra Media & Entertainment Group.

There are several other reasons—such as lifestyle or personal preferences, Agrawal added, noting that some prefer other forms of entertainment like reading, gaming, or outdoor activities; older adults or those in rural areas are more inclined toward linear TV due to familiarity or limited access to technology; while some might not find engaging content on either TV or OTT platforms.

Subscription costs can also be a deterrent, and with the growing pull of social media, many people are spending more time online and less on traditional or streaming video.

Large untapped market

The October report, *Venn It Happens: OTT & Linear TV Audience Intersection*, estimated the country’s TV viewer base to be 298 million, against OTTs’ 110 million.

The study also found a significant overlap: 491 million Indians watch content on both television and OTT platforms, while 565 million belong to the video-dark segment—those who don’t consume video content at all.

Many emphasized that the video-dark segment is fascinating because it reveals gaps that go beyond content. “In many cases, this segment represents communities where infrastructure, access, or digital literacy is still catching up, particularly in rural and semi-rural India. There’s also a smaller, more urban subset that may have access but chooses other entertainment formats like short-form social media, gaming, or simply non-digital leisure,” Das said.

He added that this segment presents both a challenge and an opportunity, and his company is experimenting with ways to bring first-time digital audiences into the fold through lightweight apps, vernacular-first storytelling, and formats that don't require long attention spans, as stepping stones into deeper content engagement.

OTT executives, like Das, also view the overlapping audience as an exciting segment. These are habitual content consumers who move seamlessly between TV and OTT, and are extremely valuable both in terms of scale and monetization. They understand content formats, are comfortable with multiple platforms, and often look for variety, quality, and regional authenticity.

"That overlapping base, almost half a billion people, is actually where the biggest opportunity lies. These are viewers who are comfortable switching between a big screen and a phone. They are the ones who will watch cricket or news on TV and then move to OTT for a web series or movie," said Munish Vaid, vice-president, Primus Partners, a management consultancy firm.

"For them, hybrid strategies work best: big-ticket sports and reality content that still runs on TV, combined with strong local originals and catch-up streaming online," he added.

From an advertiser's perspective, this segment is more beneficial—these are engaged, multi-screen consumers, and they often sit in the middle- to upper-income brackets that brands love, Vaid added.

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