

The great entertainment shift

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other major cities and towns, and at this rate, the numbers will only go up.

However, it is not just TV shows and films, and it is not just on YouTube either that the entertainment consumption is taking place. There is at least one company that has been licensing content for the digital media and releasing it on multiple platforms.

Bongo BD has over 25,000 videos on their content library, all of which they have legal distribution rights for. Their movie library has an impressive range – from classic movies like 'Neel Akasher Niche' and 'Emiler Goyenda Bahini', to today's blockbuster 'Rana Pagla The Mental' and 'Action Jasmine'; they have it all, along with an excellent catalogue of documentaries and docudramas.

They are also producing original shows in web series formats, in collaboration with other YouTubers and talents.

One of the other most important types of content they have acquired digital broadcast rights to – which is also one of the most vigorously – consumed by the Bangladeshi audience is

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live sports, particularly televised cricket taking place in Bangladesh.

Most importantly, it is not just a YouTube channel, but a proper digital entertainment service provider. Aside from a YouTube channel, they have content hosted on their site, a WAP portal and a smartphone app. According to the founder and managing director of the company, Ahad Md Bhui, they have a daily visitor count of 1.5 million per day across all platforms. And the revenue they generate is also not just from viewership, but pre-roll, in-roll and post-roll advertisements, and popup and banner ads, as well as subscription charges on their WAP portal.

"There has been a huge shift in the market since we started business three and a half years ago," says Ahad. "When we wanted to license content from producers and distributors, they would not even understand what we want but now the scene has completely changed," he says, adding that Bongo is

already licensing content in Nepal, Sri Lanka and India to launch similar services there.

"If you see abroad, subscription-based on-demand services like Netflix and Amazon have taken over traditional TV by a fair margin and I think it is only a matter of time before the concept comes to the sub-continent," he adds.

Although, it has not been that strong a case yet, music streaming services are also making their mark slowly but steadily in the market. Two major telecom operators have their own subscription-based music-streaming smartphone app-based services, while there are a few independent ones as well, like Gaan.

However, with web content consumption on the rise, there will be cases of people trying to illegally benefit from it. Freeloading (using someone else's content to make profit) is a problem with digital content worldwide and Bangladesh will be no different.

The case of "Aynabaji" is a glaring example of that. The film's producers made the film available on a telecom operator's on-demand streaming service and despite their best efforts to prevent piracy, the blockbuster hit film was pirated from there and multiple copies of it ended up on YouTube, and even on Facebook Live Streams.

No matter how hard you try to protect it, there is always a way to copy it and re-upload it by someone else. So what is required here is a clear idea of the procedure. Bongo BD says they have won a staggering 30,000 cases regarding content rights, which shows that if someone knows the rules and plays by the book, there are ways to protect them.

The digital entertainment shift is happening, and it is happening fast. As for content producers and distributors, whoever capitalises on it better will be the bigger winner, as the two cases in point, Ntv and Bongo, clearly indicate.

The legal aspects also need to be

ironed out better and maybe the government can come up with something specific for this, so that no one can unfairly profit riding on someone else's rightful property.

As for whether people will watch television content sitting in their living rooms with their families in five years, who knows?

Less than 30 years ago, the people of Bangladesh only watched one TV channel and radio was a prime entertainment medium. The change in people's idea of entertainment content and consumption in the last five years alone is a big indicator of how fast this world is moving, and leaves it quite impossible to predict what entertainment will be like in five years.

But here's a guess: a lot of it will have to do with Virtual Reality.

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