

Coffee with Toffee

Healthy entertainment for the whole family

Healthy entertainment for the whole family Toffee is a recently launched OTT platform in Bangladesh, from parent company, Banglalink. After starting its journey little over a year ago, they have become a behemoth, holding the top position in the Entertainment category of Google Play. But to understand why it is important, and how it has grown so much in such a short time, we need to go back, and first take a refresher in the history of the industry.

The global cable subscription rate is expected to decline by another 7 percent this year. What was once thought to be an indispensable part of our lives are being replaced with web platforms like YouTube and Netflix. Even the mighty Martin Scorsese released his latest masterpiece on Netflix.

Tastes are shifting. Where hours would be spent in front of TVs once, those hours are instead spent behind platforms like YouTube and Netflix. And if there is a single entity that can be credited with completely disrupting the market right when TV seemed to be at the height of their popularity, that would be OTT platforms.

On the personal side, this means that anyone can watch whatever they want, whenever they want. On the collective side, it means that there is an alternative for people from all walks of life. People now have more access to healthy and safe entertainment, instead of the vile poison that is churned out by the dozens throughout the Internet.

There, however, is a major hurdle here. The issue with OTT platforms is the paywalls. While four dollars a month is not much for some people, it can be the difference between starvation and a decent meal. As Anis – a cabin boy – said, “Paying for Internet is already a luxury. How can I even think about subscriptions?”

But that is why, amongst the 13 local OTT

platforms, Toffee is special, because aside from having an impressive selection of live satellite channels and an immaculate selection of local and international content, they have seemingly found the key to solving the issue of accessibility. Like massively democratic institutes such as Twitch and YouTube, Toffee has taken the high road, and offered access to their site, free of charge.

Toffee was launched little over a year ago, in November, 2019. They started out with 70 channels, but now have added around 100 live satellite channels to their roster. The pool includes both local and international TV channels and touches on all the major categories such as movie, music, infotainment, sports, kids, etc.

The sports channels are especially important, as finding a stable way to watch football matches, as well as cricket over the Internet becomes especially challenging during the more serious derbies. This move has proved prudent for the platform, as Toffee not only has the highest number of TV channels among any local app, but as stated, it is also the number one app in the entertainment category of Google's app store.

While it solves the problem of accessibility, there comes the question of content, the backbone of any kind of streaming platform. Aside from the television channels, it also has to have a good amount of quality shows and films and these are only published on Toffee once it passes through a strict screening process to filter out anything objectionable. And to this end, Toffee aces as well.

Alongside the international heavy hitters from Turkey like *Kuruluş: Osman*, Toffee also has classics like *'Hotath Brishti'* and landmark dramas like *'Ratri Prohor'*. Toffee's current strategy is to acquire streaming rights of different kinds of classics such as this and introduce them to a new audience.



What sets Toffee apart even more is their focus on User Generated Content, and how they plan to approach it. A lesser company would require big shot content creators to come to their offices with completed projects before having them uploaded to the site. And as long as the content is lucrative, very little attention is given to the quality.

Toffee has taken the opposite approach. Toffee simply offers a local creator's platform to showcase talents and monetise from it. One just has to go to the upload section of the app and upload what they want to show to the world. And after a rigorous process of quality control and vetting, if the content is approved, only then will the content be made available on the platform. Once the content is published on Toffee, creators will be eligible to monetise it with minimum criteria compared to established platforms like YouTube and Facebook.

That's not all. From various sources, Toffee aims to select top recruits, who they will later mentor and coach. Like the graduate film programmes from the best places in the world, these workshops will be designed to guide and enable them to be the best content creators. The only two things that are needed here are strong visions and burning talents. When it comes to monetisation, due to the lack of paywalls, the monetisation scheme for all of these content makers are advertisements. Toffee would be the first local platform that would offer attractive monetisation to creators. Through empowering programmes for both users and creators, and paving the way for modern and sensible practices for the industry as a whole, Toffee aims to completely revolutionise the local OTT industry, and through that, they aim to make a lasting impact on the history of the country's content landscape as a whole. There are more than 10,000 OTT platforms in the world, and if anything can be said for certain, it is that this number will only double in the coming decade. With a population dividend that is considered a boon by a lot of countries and with a generation that is just itching to tell their stories, Bangladesh might just become the next success story in the land of digital entertainment. And with a talent like Toffee on our side, getting our own 'David vs Goliath' moment is just a matter of time.

