

How OTT platforms changed entertainment for good

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"We release new content every Thursday at 8 pm. Our regular subscribers habitually log in to check out our catalogue. Even if we don't give any announcements, they don't forget to check." Chorki also plans to make sequels of their popular originals, along with experimenting with new projects. "We are working with the analytics carefully, to understand the market demands," Rony adds.

According to him, subscription pricing for OTT platforms should always be competitive.

"It depends on the quality and quantity of the content," he shares. "Our audiences have faith in us. Most of our subscribers are enrolled for six months as of now, which is a positive sign. We are still working on making the functions of the platform more user-friendly."

Chorki also started a project for people outside Dhaka. "Our series, 'Shaaticup', was a part of this initiative," explains Rony. "The entire cast and crew are from Rajshahi. There are many young, talented artistes out there, and not everyone can come to Dhaka to explore opportunities. We will continue to work with them through decentralisation."

Bongo is one of the pioneering streaming services in the country. Senior



▲ Ashfaque Nipun's "Mohanagar", released on Hoichoi.

PHOTO: STAR

"Nowadays, people are genuinely interested in good content, but streaming service providers in Bangladesh have to face the challenge that piracy will occur, and audiences will take time to get into the habit of subscribing."

Sakib R Khan

Content Executive of the company, Yeassir Arafat, shares that they are improving their market with different projects and also making their subscriptions more user-friendly. They have two modes available: advertisements based on video demand (AVOD) and subscription-based video on demand (SVOD).

"Since the pandemic hit in March 2020, our management decided to make the platform available on AVOD mode to encourage people to stay indoors, which has increased our users by 100 times. It was a major turning point for our marketing," says Arafat.

"We have also made some popular movies available for free, which no other platforms will offer. Shakib Khan's films like 'Don', 'Password', and 'Moner Moto Manush Pailam Na', are in our catalogue, for free."

Subscribers can also download content of their choice from Bongo's library to watch offline on the app.

Bongo's series, Based on Books (BOB), featuring adaptations of

popular, contemporary novels, was widely appreciated.

"I believe we are the first local streaming service to raise awareness on digital copyright acts, through broad marketing. Producers were unaware of their ownership rights. Through our multi-channel networks, we brought in 600 partners, including some prominent channels," explains Arafat.

ZEE5 Global has also been performing well in Bangladesh.

Rashmi Punshi, SVP of Global PR PR & Corporate Communication and Special Projects of the company, discusses their strategies. "Since we have entered the market, we have received strong responses from audiences for our content in Bangladesh," she shares. "We

have consciously made an exception to keep premium, original Bangla content free for local viewers. We have seen significant viewership growth as a result."

Rashmi believes that by giving people easy access to hours of quality content for free, ZEE5 Global is able to combat piracy.

"We have produced and launched many Bangla originals with award-winning directors in Bangladesh. These stories have reached audiences in over 190 countries across the globe," she adds.

These strategies not only led ZEE5 Global to increase their viewership in Bangladesh threefold, but also gain appreciation from audiences in the US and UK, among other markets.

Streaming services were experiencing slow growth when the Covid-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for rapid transformation of this medium. Although OTT platforms have not fully jumped onto mainstream entertainment across the country, they are slowly winning over audiences. Adoption of improved technologies, budget-friendly subscription options, investments in original and locally relevant content, among other factors, will aid in furthering growth in the Bangladeshi OTT space.

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▲ Mostofa Sarwar Farooki's "Ladies & Gentlemen", released on ZEE5 Global.



Kisloo Golam Haider's "Laboni", released on Bongo BD.

Mizanur Rahman Aryan's "Networker Baire", aired on Chorki.

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