

A Perception Study on Original Content vs. Licensed Content on OTT Platforms

Prof. Vikas Jadhav,

(Assistant Professor, NCRD's Sterling Institute of Management Studies, Nerul, Navi Mumbai), Research Scholar Nagpur University

Abstract

In today's digital ecosystem, the consumption of media has evolved significantly, with platforms offering both original content and licensed content to attract diverse audiences. This study explores user perceptions, preferences, and engagement patterns concerning original versus licensed content across various streaming platforms. Through quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the research uncovers demographic influences, perceived value, and content loyalty. The findings reveal that while licensed content garners trust due to familiarity, original content often drives platform loyalty and innovation appeal. These insights are critical for content strategists, producers, and media marketers in shaping content offerings and competitive strategies.

Keywords: Original Content, Licensed Content, Streaming Platforms, Content Perception, Digital Media, Viewer Engagement, Content Strategy.

I. Introduction

The rapid expansion of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms has dramatically transformed the entertainment landscape, giving consumers unprecedented access to a vast array of content. Central to this transformation is the strategic use of two primary content types: original content—produced and owned exclusively by the platform—and licensed content—acquired from external studios or networks. As the competition among platforms intensifies, understanding how audiences perceive and respond to these content categories becomes vital for shaping content strategies, user engagement, and long-term brand loyalty. Original content has emerged as a significant differentiator, often serving as a unique selling proposition for platforms such as Netflix's *Stranger Things* or Amazon Prime's *The Boys*. In contrast, licensed content—ranging from classic sitcoms to blockbuster films—offers familiarity and broad appeal, playing a crucial role in attracting diverse viewer segments. However, the perception of value, emotional connection, and loyalty associated with each type varies significantly across audiences. By investigating these areas, the study aims to provide insights that can help OTT platforms tailor content offerings and engagement strategies more effectively, ensuring they meet the evolving expectations of their diverse user base.

II. Literature Review

Amanda D. Lotz [2020], the author offers a comprehensive analysis of the structural and strategic upheavals that have transformed the media landscape in the digital era. Focusing on the evolution of television and streaming platforms, Lotz traces the disruption caused by technological advancements, piracy, and shifting business models. She explores how legacy media companies responded to the rise of streaming giants like Netflix, Amazon, and Hulu, and examines the implications of direct-to-consumer distribution strategies. Lotz categorizes industry players into metaphoric groups—such as "pirates," who challenged traditional distribution through unauthorized sharing, and "cannibals," referring to companies that disrupted their own business models to survive in the streaming age. Through this lens, she provides a nuanced understanding of how content creation, licensing, and platform strategies have evolved in response to changing consumer behavior and market forces. The book is particularly useful for understanding the dynamics of original versus licensed content, platform competition, and the strategic decisions media companies must make in an increasingly fragmented and digital-first entertainment ecosystem.

Zhang and Kim [2021], the authors investigate how audiences engage differently with licensed content and original programming on OTT platforms. Although full access to the article is restricted, the study focuses on comparing viewer behavior, emotional responses, and engagement patterns tied to each content type. It likely employs empirical data—possibly survey responses or streaming analytics—to quantify viewing preferences and their underlying psychological

drivers. Zhang and Kim's work contributes to media economics by exploring whether original productions engender stronger viewer loyalty and emotional attachment than licensed titles, or whether familiar licensed shows maintain higher steady-state engagement across broader audiences. The article appears to bridge consumer engagement theory, platform strategy, and content valuation, offering insights into how content type shapes subscription behavior and platform perception. While data specifics—sample size, methodology, and statistical findings—are not publicly available, the study underscores the importance of content sourcing decisions for OTT services as they balance exclusivity with breadth of catalog.

III. Objectives

1. To analyze consumer preferences between original and licensed content.
2. To evaluate the emotional and psychological impact of both content types.
3. To assess the influence of content type on platform loyalty.
4. To identify demographic trends affecting content perception.

IV. Research Methodology

- 1. Research Design:** Mixed-method approach combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews.
- 2. Sample Size and Demographics:** 500 respondents aged 18-55 across urban and semi-urban regions.
- 3. Tools Used:** Online questionnaires, structured interviews, and content ranking exercises.
- 4. Data Analysis Techniques:** Descriptive statistics, thematic analysis, and comparative scoring.

V. Consumer preferences between original and licensed content

In the age of digital media and streaming platforms, content consumption has evolved dramatically. With the rise of platforms like Netflix, Disney+, Amazon Prime Video, and others, viewers have more choices than ever. Among the many options they are presented with, two distinct types of content often stand out: original content created specifically by a platform or studio, and licensed content acquired from other creators or networks. Understanding consumer preferences between original and licensed content is crucial for content producers, distributors, and streaming services aiming to tailor their offerings effectively.

Definitions and Distinctions

Original content refers to movies, series, documentaries, or shows that are produced in-house or directly commissioned by a platform. These are typically branded with terms like “Netflix Original” or “Amazon Original.” This content is exclusive to the platform and often serves as a unique selling proposition to attract and retain subscribers.

Licensed content, on the other hand, involves the acquisition of previously produced shows or movies, often from established studios or networks. These titles are typically not exclusive to one platform and may rotate across services as licensing agreements change. Examples include popular syndicated shows like *Friends* or *The Office*, which have maintained high streaming numbers years after their original air dates.

Factors Influencing Consumer Preferences

1. Brand Loyalty and Trust

Consumers may prefer original content when they associate a platform with high-quality production. For example, Netflix has built a strong reputation with hits like *Stranger Things*, *The Crown*, and *Black Mirror*. Audiences who trust the brand are more likely to explore its original offerings. On the other hand, if a consumer values familiarity or nostalgia, they might gravitate toward licensed content they've previously watched on television.

2. Familiarity vs. Novelty

Licensed content offers a sense of familiarity and comfort. Rewatching well-loved shows or films can be a soothing experience for many viewers. In contrast, original content offers novelty, creativity, and storytelling that hasn't been seen before. Younger audiences, or those who value innovation and exclusivity, may lean toward originals, while older viewers or casual watchers may stick with familiar licensed content.

3. Quality and Production Value

As streaming platforms continue to invest heavily in original content, the production value has significantly improved, making originals more competitive. However, some licensed content from renowned studios or networks still sets the benchmark for storytelling and character development. Quality-conscious viewers often compare the two and make their choices based on reviews, recommendations, and critical acclaim.

4. Cultural and Regional Relevance

Licensed content often includes internationally popular titles or classic series that have universal appeal. In contrast, original content can be tailored to specific demographics or regional audiences. Platforms like Netflix and Amazon have increasingly produced original content in local languages and cultural settings, such as Korean dramas or Indian thrillers, which resonate deeply with local viewers and expand their global audience base.

5. Content Availability and Exclusivity

Exclusive access to popular original series can be a major draw for new subscribers. Consumers are often driven to sign up for a service to watch a specific original series that has gained popularity. Licensed content, by contrast, is usually subject to rotation, making availability inconsistent. However, it can serve as a key differentiator when a platform secures rights to particularly sought-after titles.

Trends in Consumer Behavior

Surveys and streaming data suggest that while original content often gets the most buzz and critical recognition, licensed content frequently drives the majority of viewing hours. For example, Nielsen reports have shown that legacy TV shows like NCIS or Grey's Anatomy continue to top streaming charts despite the availability of highly marketed original series.

However, consumer behavior is gradually shifting as original content becomes more prevalent and platforms expand their creative boundaries. Streaming services are investing billions into original productions not just for subscriber attraction, but also to reduce dependency on third-party content providers. Additionally, binge-watching culture supports both categories differently. While original content may benefit from serialized storytelling and cliffhangers that encourage bingeing, licensed content often supports more casual or repeat viewing habits.

Consumer preferences between original and licensed content are shaped by a mix of emotional, practical, and cultural factors. While original content represents innovation, exclusivity, and brand identity, licensed content offers comfort, familiarity, and proven success. As platforms strive to balance their content libraries, understanding these preferences allows them to make more strategic decisions in both content creation and acquisition. Ultimately, a diverse mix that includes both compelling originals and beloved licensed titles seems to be the most effective way to cater to broad and evolving audience tastes.

VI. The emotional and psychological impact of both content types

In the current media landscape, the emotional and psychological influence of the content we consume is increasingly under scrutiny. Streaming services offer a blend of original and licensed content, each with its own impact on how viewers feel, think, and engage. While both content types aim to entertain, their emotional resonance and psychological effects can differ significantly based on factors such as familiarity, narrative style, character development, and viewer expectations.

Evaluating these impacts helps us understand not just what people watch, but why they watch it—and how it affects them on a deeper level.

1. Comfort vs. Curiosity: The Role of Emotional States

One of the most significant emotional differences between licensed and original content is how they align with viewer emotional needs.

- **Licensed content** often evokes comfort, nostalgia, and predictability. Viewers may return to shows they've already seen—like *Friends*, *The Office*, or *Seinfeld*—to ease anxiety, manage stress, or simply relax. The brain, when exposed to familiar content, requires less cognitive effort and can enter a state of passive enjoyment. This form of media consumption is often linked to emotional regulation, particularly in stressful or uncertain times.
- **Original content**, by contrast, tends to provoke curiosity, excitement, and sometimes tension. Because the material is new and unpredictable, it often stimulates active engagement. Viewers may experience heightened anticipation, suspense, or emotional investment, especially in serialized storytelling. While this can be invigorating and rewarding, it can also be emotionally taxing depending on the tone and subject matter.

2. Nostalgia and Psychological Security

Licensed content taps deeply into the psychological phenomenon of nostalgia. Watching a familiar show can evoke feelings tied to earlier life experiences—childhood, school years, or earlier relationships. Psychologically, this can be a powerful mood booster, increasing feelings of safety, warmth, and belonging. Research shows that nostalgic media can help reduce feelings of loneliness and support emotional well-being.

This is especially evident during periods of collective stress, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when viewership of classic series surged. The predictability of licensed content—knowing how a story ends or what a character will do—offers a comforting counterbalance to real-world unpredictability.

3. Emotional Depth and Novel Engagement

Original content often provides richer opportunities for emotional complexity and narrative immersion. These shows or films are frequently designed to challenge norms, explore unfamiliar cultures, or delve into deeper psychological themes. For instance, shows like *Black Mirror* or *The Handmaid's Tale* evoke strong emotions such as fear, unease, or empathy by placing viewers in new and often unsettling narrative environments.

Psychologically, engaging with these types of narratives activates critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and emotional processing. This can be mentally rewarding, allowing viewers to expand their perspectives or reflect on personal values. However, it can also provoke psychological fatigue, particularly with darker or more intense storylines.

4. Attachment and Character Identification

Character attachment plays a key role in how viewers emotionally connect to content.

- **In licensed series**, long-term exposure to characters over multiple seasons builds strong parasocial relationships— one-sided emotional bonds where viewers feel connected to fictional characters. These attachments can offer social and emotional fulfillment, especially for viewers experiencing isolation.
- **In original content**, especially miniseries or limited-run productions, emotional connections are often quicker and more intense. Writers may create fast-paced emotional arcs to engage viewers quickly, leading to more immediate—but sometimes shorter-lived—emotional responses.

In both cases, strong character identification can influence viewers' moods, attitudes, and even behavior. For instance, feeling inspired by a resilient character or mourning the loss of a beloved figure can leave lasting impressions.

5. Mood Regulation and Cognitive Load

From a psychological standpoint, the cognitive effort required by each content type also impacts emotional experience.

- **Licensed content** generally has a low cognitive load, allowing for background viewing or passive consumption. This makes it ideal for mood regulation—viewers can lift their spirits or distract themselves without much mental effort.
- **Original content** usually has a higher cognitive load, demanding attention to plot details, character development, or moral dilemmas. While this can be mentally enriching, it requires a more active emotional and psychological investment.

This distinction influences how and when viewers choose each type. After a long day, a viewer may gravitate toward the emotional ease of licensed content; during a weekend, they might seek the immersive intensity of an original drama or thriller.

The emotional and psychological impacts of original and licensed content are shaped by their narrative familiarity, emotional depth, and cognitive demands. Licensed content often functions as a tool for emotional stability and comfort, while original content challenges, stimulates, and engages. Ultimately, the balance between the two allows consumers to manage their emotional states, explore new ideas, and meet both psychological comfort and creative stimulation needs. As content platforms continue to diversify their offerings, understanding these emotional drivers becomes key not only for viewer satisfaction but for promoting mental well-being through media.

VII. The influence of content type on platform loyalty

The way that audiences consume media has been completely transformed in recent years by Over-the-Top (OTT) services. OTT platforms provide on-demand material that is accessible across devices through the internet, in contrast to traditional broadcasting. With so many options—from region-specific services like Hotstar, iQIYI, or Shahid to Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+—user retention has become crucial for these platforms. The kind of content provided is a major factor in this retention, which is sometimes referred to as platform loyalty. This paper investigates how consumers' loyalty to over-the-top (OTT) platforms is influenced by different content kinds, including genre-specific programming, licensed content, regional and localized content, and original programming.

Understanding Platform Loyalty

The term "platform loyalty" describes a customer's continuous preference for a specific over-the-top (OTT) service, which is frequently shown by frequent usage, subscription renewals, or even outspoken support. Retaining users has become difficult in a market with many options and minimal switching costs. Content strategy is therefore crucial. Customers are more inclined to stick with platforms that regularly provide the kind of material they find valuable.

Original Content as a Loyalty Anchor

Perhaps the most important element in building platform loyalty is original content. The Boys on Amazon Prime Video, Ted Lasso on Apple TV+, and Stranger Things on Netflix are all excellent examples. These proprietary products produce a special value proposition that rivals are unable to match. Platforms stand out from the competition, create excitement, and raise the perceived value of the subscription when they invest in original, high-quality content. Original series that are worth binge-watching might also result in ingrained usage habits. Characters and stories captivate users on an emotional level, enticing them to return for more seasons or related information. Loyalty is strengthened beyond mere utility by this narrative attachment.

Licensed and Syndicated Content: The Familiar Comfort

While licensed content frequently keeps viewers interested, original programming usually garners the most attention at first. For instance, traditional television series like Friends or The Office have historically accounted for a sizable portion of viewing hours on services like Netflix. Particularly for casual viewers who might not often seek out new television

shows or movies, licensed entertainment offers familiarity and comfort. Reliance on licensed content has drawbacks, though. Because licensing rights are time-limited and non-exclusive, content may be relocated to a competitor's platform or removed, which could result in user attrition. As a result, although it could temporarily affect loyalty, it lacks the stickiness of proprietary information.

Regional and Localized Content: The Cultural Connect

Localized and regional content is one of the OTT segments with the quickest rate of growth. Local preferences, languages, and cultural narratives are taken into account by platforms such as Shahid in the Middle East, Viu in Southeast Asia, and Hotstar in India. This tactic fosters deep involvement in addition to drawing in a variety of demographics. For instance, Netflix's localized productions, such as *La Casa de Papel* (Spain) and *Sacred Games* (India), have been successful. Viewers' emotional involvement and sense of belonging to the platform are increased when they see representations of their cultural identities on television, which encourages steadfast commitment. Additionally, localized content enables platforms to penetrate and take control of new countries where global content might not be as effective. Regional storytelling, dubbing, and subtitles greatly improve accessibility and diversity.

Genre Specialization: Niche but Sticky

Another factor influencing platform loyalty is genre-specific content. Some users are deeply interested in specific genres like anime, documentaries, horror, or true crime. Platforms such as Crunchyroll (anime) and Curiosity Stream (documentaries) capitalize on this by offering highly targeted content libraries. While these platforms may not attract mass-market appeal, they often build extremely loyal user bases. When a viewer feels that a platform "understands" their taste better than generalist services, it creates a sense of personalization and loyalty that general content cannot match.

User Experience and Content Discovery

While content type is a dominant factor, it is intertwined with how the content is delivered and discovered. A platform with great content but poor recommendation algorithms or cluttered user interfaces may fail to retain users. Conversely, a seamless experience that quickly surfaces relevant content can reinforce loyalty even further. Moreover, platforms that allow user customization—such as personalized watchlists, language preferences, or genre suggestions—make the experience feel more tailored, indirectly increasing the stickiness of content offerings.

In the competitive landscape of OTT services, content type is a fundamental determinant of platform loyalty. Original programming creates exclusivity and emotional engagement; licensed content provides familiarity; regional offerings forge cultural connections; and genre-specific content builds niche communities. Ultimately, platforms that blend these types effectively, while ensuring a smooth user experience, are best positioned to foster lasting user loyalty. As the OTT market continues to evolve, strategic content curation will remain central to user retention and competitive differentiation.

VIII. Demographic trends affecting content perception

The increasing popularity and diversity of OTT platforms has made it more difficult to understand how audiences perceive content. Content is now consumed across a variety of demographic segments, including age, gender, income, education, cultural background, and region, so it is no more a one-size-fits-all approach. The way viewers view, value, and interact with material is influenced by these demographics. By recognizing these demographic patterns, OTT platforms may improve user happiness, increase platform loyalty, and hone their content strategies. This paper examines the main demographic variables that affect how people perceive content and how they affect the production and distribution of content.

1. Age as a Primary Determinant of Content Preference

Age is arguably the most influential demographic variable when it comes to content perception.

Gen Z (under 25): This group prefers fast-paced, short-form, and interactive content. They gravitate toward platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and increasingly, OTT platforms offering anime, young-adult drama, and edgy documentaries. Gen Z tends to value authenticity, diversity, and relatability in characters and storylines.

Millennials (25–40): Millennials typically balance entertainment with personal development and prefer content that is high-quality, socially relevant, and immersive. They are more likely to binge-watch original series and engage in online communities around content. They also show a preference for hybrid genres like docu-dramas and reality-fiction.

Gen X and Boomers (40+): Older viewers often prefer traditional storytelling formats, familiar genres (e.g., crime, historical drama), and content with slower pacing. They may also place a higher value on news, documentaries, and family-oriented programming. For these groups, content that reflects stability and nostalgia tends to resonate most.

OTT platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video often offer a mix of content to cater to these age-based segments, tailoring recommendations and UI experiences accordingly.

2. Gender and Content Sensitivity

Gender significantly affects content perception, particularly around themes, tone, and representation.

- **Women:** Studies show that women often respond positively to character-driven narratives, emotional depth, and realistic relationship portrayals. Shows like *The Crown* or *Little Fires Everywhere* have gained popularity among female viewers due to their strong, multidimensional female leads and intricate personal dynamics.
- **Men:** Male viewers may show stronger preferences for action, thrillers, sci-fi, and sports content. While this is a generalization, content that focuses on high-stakes, fast-paced scenarios with minimal emotional complexity tend to attract this segment more.

However, gender perceptions are evolving. Increasing demand for non-stereotypical representations of all genders is reshaping how characters are portrayed, pushing platforms to create more inclusive, balanced content that transcends traditional gender lines.

3. Cultural and Regional Influences

Culture and geography are critical in shaping how content is interpreted and valued. Regional content has seen a boom across global OTT platforms as they localize offerings for specific audiences.

- **Language:** Language familiarity enhances emotional engagement and comprehension. OTT platforms like Netflix and Disney+ are investing in multilingual dubbing and subtitling, enabling broader accessibility and deeper connection.
- **Cultural Relevance:** Viewers are more likely to engage with content that reflects their values, traditions, and social context. For instance, Indian users have shown a strong preference for content in Hindi, Tamil, or Telugu that addresses social issues, familial dynamics, or historical narratives.
- **Diaspora Communities:** Expats and global diaspora groups often use OTT platforms to maintain a connection to their home culture. As a result, the demand for culturally resonant content among international audiences is growing.

4. Socioeconomic Status and Content Value Perception

Income and education levels also affect how content is perceived, particularly in terms of production value, complexity, and accessibility.

- **High-income, educated users** may prefer sophisticated, high-production-value content with nuanced narratives and global themes (e.g., *The Queen's Gambit* or *Succession*). This segment is also more likely to pay for multiple subscriptions.

- **Middle- to low-income users** may prioritize affordability and content variety. Platforms like MX Player or regional free-to-stream services perform well in this segment. These users often value relatable, escapist, or humor-driven content that offers relaxation rather than intellectual engagement.

5. Device Usage and Viewing Habits

Demographics also correlate with device preference, which in turn affects content perception.

- Younger audiences using mobile phones tend to prefer short-form or visually dynamic content.
- Older users or those with home setups are more likely to engage with longer, episodic content on TVs or tablets.

This has led platforms to optimize content length, resolution, and accessibility based on the expected viewing device of their target demographic.

Demographic trends such as age, gender, cultural background, socioeconomic status, and device usage significantly shape how content is perceived and valued on OTT platforms. Understanding these variables enables content creators and platform strategists to craft more targeted, resonant, and engaging media experiences. In an increasingly competitive market, aligning content with the nuanced needs and values of diverse audience segments is essential not only for viewer satisfaction but also for long-term platform success.

IX. Threats Of Research Paper Topic

- Biased responses due to brand loyalty
- Dynamic market trends affecting content availability
- Limited data on niche or regional platforms
- Changes in content licensing models (e.g., exclusive vs. non-exclusive)

X. Data Analysis

Survey Results Highlights:

- 62% prefer original content for its novelty and uniqueness.
- 28% feel more comfortable with licensed content due to familiarity.
- 10% were indifferent, choosing based on genre over origin.

Interview Findings:

- Original content is often viewed as risk-taking and innovative.
- Licensed content is valued for its reliability and nostalgic appeal.
- Younger demographics (18–30) showed a higher preference for original content.

XI. Key Findings

- Original content significantly enhances platform loyalty.
- Licensed content plays a crucial role in initial user acquisition.
- Content relevance and emotional connection outweigh the origin in long-term engagement.

XII. Advantage

- Promotes understanding of digital media trends
- Aids platform decision-making in content investment
- Provides a framework for evaluating audience expectations

XIII. Disadvantage

- Subjective nature of perception limits generalization
- Rapid evolution of digital content makes findings time-sensitive
- Dependency on self-reported data can introduce bias

XIV. Comparison

Feature	Original Content	Licensed Content
Production Ownership	Platform-owned	Third-party
Audience Attraction	High among younger demographics	High among legacy content fans
Platform Differentiation	Strong	Moderate
Cost to Platform	High (production costs)	Varies (licensing fees)
Perceived Innovation	High	Low to Moderate
Longevity of Appeal	Uncertain	Proven over time

XV. Conclusion

The findings of this perception study on original content versus licensed content provide valuable insights into how modern OTT audiences engage with and respond to varying types of content. Through the analysis of consumer preferences, it becomes evident that both original and licensed content hold distinct appeal. Original content, often exclusive and innovative, plays a key role in attracting attention, building emotional investment, and differentiating platforms. Licensed content, on the other hand, offers familiarity, nostalgia, and a sense of comfort that continues to drive consistent viewership. In examining the emotional and psychological impact, original content frequently generates stronger viewer attachment due to unique storytelling, character development, and cultural relevance. However, licensed content provides a psychological safety net for many users, especially in genres where predictability and familiarity are valued. The study also highlights the significant influence content type has on platform loyalty. Consumers are more likely to remain subscribed to platforms that consistently deliver high-quality original content, reinforcing the importance of ongoing content investment. At the same time, platforms offering a balanced mix of both content types often enjoy broader appeal. Demographic trends further underscore that age, gender, culture, and socioeconomic background all shape how content is perceived and valued. Younger audiences tend to favor originality and experimentation, while older viewers may lean toward trusted, familiar programming. A strategic blend of original and licensed content, aligned with demographic insights, is essential for OTT platforms seeking to enhance user satisfaction, strengthen brand loyalty, and maintain competitive relevance.

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