

OTT AND CENSORSHIP: AN ANALYTIC STUDY

**Illili Jakha Khujumi¹, Sumaya Abdisamad Mohamed², Kuldeep Singh³, Shatabdi Sharma⁴,
Anurag Baruah⁵**

¹B.A. Hons in Psychology, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India, ²B.A. Hons in English Literature, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India, ³B.A. Hons in Geography, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India, ⁴B.A. Hons in Politics Science, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India, ⁵B.A. Hons in Psychology, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India

Under the Guidance of Dr. Paramjit Singh*

*School of Social Science and Languages
Lovely Professional University*

***Corresponding Author**

Abstract: -

In the present scenario the whole world has surpass a period of long prevailed lock-down which the people around worldwide have never seen before, for such a long time. In such a boredom situation, in the era of this advance technology and the Internet, most of us like to spend their free time in front of the digital screen, where they have many options to stream. The main focus and objectives of our online research work is to find out about the reason behind the enormous rise and growth of OTT platform during the lockdown period imposed after the pandemic period of Covid-19 during 2020 summers and also to find out does certain OTT contents require censorship or not, as there is enormous increase in the nos. of subscribers for this online platform and finally the thinking of OTT platforms users about the online platforms contents and their view ships. And the final the approaches and reasons behind our research work is to understand about this needful demand of our generation i.e., main reason is that the lockdown imposed worldwide make us to shift from conventional medium to this OTT platform because of inaccessibility of movies theaters and another reason is to enjoy the entertainment life from sitting back in home and have unlimited enjoyment with the help of our finger touches. Now days most of us have the accessibility to internet which also make people to shift to the OTT platforms and this all things also make these online platforms more vulnerable to watch anywhere & by anybody.

The research work was possible to come upon a certain conclusion because we have conducted the online survey with the help of some questionnaires methods which includes the different subjects thinking, knowledge and information gatherings. We have analyzed the datum of all above the subjects and came to a certain point which make us understand about the requirement of censorship for these OTT platforms.

INTRODUCTION: -

The unprecedented social distancing measures during the 2020 worldwide lockdowns which also includes the shutting down of cinema halls, theaters have made people turn to OTT (over-the-top) platforms for entertainment or also for knowledge purpose, leading to a surge in online video consumption with accessibility on internet to almost every individual.

OTT platforms are the results of internet accessibility to the viewers. OTT platform services or apps let viewers to stream movies, web series reality shows and TV shows on our smart devices like computers, smart OLD TVs and smart phones. Voot stream, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ Hotstar are some of the among top popular OTT platforms available in India. OTT platforms stands for 'over-the-top' of platforms, which means to any media services providers that provides online streaming of video content like TV shows, web series and movies via media services providers app or website over the usage of internet instead of traditional or conventional way of distribution networks such as cinema halls, theaters, cable and DTH. The OTTs platforms initially started as the online contents hosting platforms, but very soon came into existences of making originals of their own by themselves only. To have an access over the OTT platforms we need to have an internet connection and compatible hardware components like mobile phones screen, tabs, smart TVs (OLEDs or LCDs) laptops or computers windows, to watch the contents while surfing online. One can watch or stream OTT contents anytime and anywhere via these platforms instead of following a guide or waiting for our favorite shows and movies to watch air standing at long tickets counters lines outside the cinema halls. This is also one of the reasons among the popularity and rise of OTT platforms.

As OTT platforms are completely the new source of entertainment in India, there are no laws or rules governing these platforms as these are now a days assessable by anyone which also make them vulnerable, especially to young age peoples. These platforms provide divers variety of free and paid contents and also use AI technology to recommend content based on our watch history on this online platform. The national lockdown followed up by COVID-19 pandemic over the worldwide saw the up rise huge consumption of online content on OTTs platforms increase enormously. Before that, OTTs had a very small and niche market globally. As a result of shutdown of cinema halls during lockdown periods, several viewers and users switched to OTT platforms for entertainment and knowledge-based purpose. Even many big producers of film industries found it more easily feasible to release their films with the help of streaming services to minimize their losses. 'OTT release' became quite normal for films and TV shows last year and even now also as they can release anything without any censorship rules headache.

According to censorship making body the first form of censorship is the restriction of informational resources that can lead to be dangerous to viewer's sentiments or likely to cause heated public debate in our community, nation, or even internationally (DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS). The media consumption behavior of these platforms uses that higher percentage of audience watched content in night and at a two-hour daily basis which indicated that a lot many forfeited contents is viewed maybe. The power to declare certain publications forfeited and issue warrants for them is exercised through registration search under Section 95 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Most laws in India can be easily modified to fit into handy narratives. Several doubts have been made about the CBFC's autonomy, including whether the CBFC's slogan of ensuring film certification without compromising artistic freedoms expression is true. The CBFC's primary role is to certify films, not to censor content. Media Consumption Timing had an interesting result is that the OTT viewership was divided into a variety based on Age group and content. With the increase in the internet and mobile user's day by day, the future of OTT platforms, service provider or apps looks growing and bright. There are regular concerns raised about this online show's narration weakening a culture and values of society, or the use of some controversial words, or the depiction of a specific location. In the recent time FIR was filed against shows producer and acting bodies of a popular show named The Kashmir files, claiming that it is diluting the image of the actual region.

This controversy was mainly made to highlight the fact that while this governance may restrict filmmakers' creative freedom, it may prove to be advantageous in restricting the content that children should be protected from. At the time of their enormous rise the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting did not go into detail on how these OTT sites will be regulated. According to rumors, the censorship standards could be like same as found in the Central Board of Film Certification model.

The global worldwide lockdown situation resulted in a sudden growth in online viewing percentage. There was also an alteration in consumption primetime of OTT which changed to 08 pm from 11 pm to 12 am (Financial Express, Apr 06, 2020). According to Google Trends official websites report OTT leading platforms like Netflix and Hot star were the most-searched OTT platforms since March 1 2020. Similarly, Daily average users for Amazon Prime had a hike of whooping 83 percent, which meant there was an ever-growing appetite for the online Content Consumption since the lockdown (CNBCTV18, Apr 16, 2020). The need of censorship also because of issues like screen watching addiction and excessive internet usage, both of which can lead to a variety of psychiatric issues and also weakling the physical body structure. Another issue may arise for those most vulnerable to under the age of 18, i.e., children and teenagers. We are all aware that some of the content broadcasted is not age-required and may have their negative consequences for the mental health. Teenagers are more likely to watch what they see adults doing, making it difficult for parents to warn or prevent them from seeing content that is inappropriate for their age group.

There are many things to address this all issue is for these OTT platforms that they would make certain time limit to watch certain contents, for the children and teenagers and is to develop alternatives that include a self-regulation system as well as advanced parental control, making the process easier for both parents and general users. In a similar way, the Malaysian Netflix (an OTT network platform) has attempted to use this system. This idea allows parents to create a second password for their Netflix accounts, allowing them to better control what their children watch. Although such a model has not yet been adopted in India, it is not far off. This is the best solution that we can do until we are not able to find a permanent addressing to the broadcasting problems and censorship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

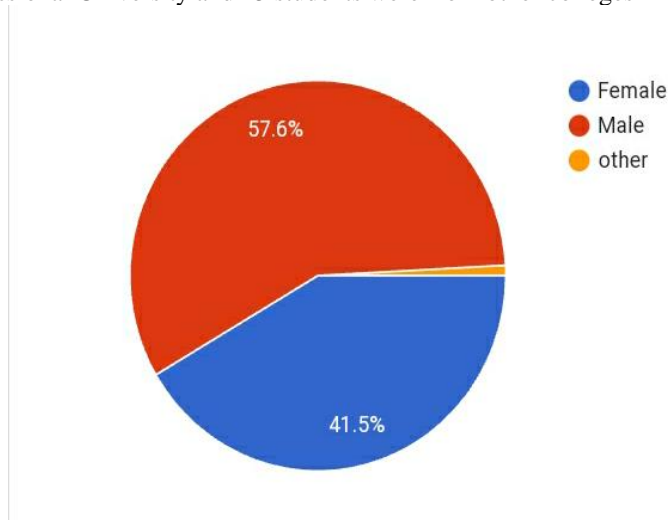
Literature relating to the field was surveyed before undertaking this research work for better insight of our research topic. As media and technology evolved rapidly, rise in online streaming consumption were to be expected. In every society, media plays an integral part of the superstructure. It plays a vital role in information dissemination. **(Patel, an Analysis of Impact of Personal Communication Technology on Public Policy Making Process in India, 2017)**. In a survey conducted by **InMobi**, a smartphone marketing platform, there was a 46% hike in online content streaming. There was also a modification in consumption primetime of OTT which changed to 7 p.m. from 10 p.m. to 12 a.m. **(Financial Express, April 06, 2020)**. According to **Google Trends report**, OTT leading platforms like Hot star and Netflix were the most-searched OTT platforms since 1st March 2020. Similarly, Daily average users for Amazon Prime had a hike of whopping 83%, which meant there was an ever-growing hunger for Content Consumption since the lockdown **(CNBCTV18, Apr 16, 2020)**. Many studies have shown that pricing is one of the main factors in people cord-cutting and moving towards online streaming platforms **(Sundaravel E. and Elangovan N. 2020)**. Also, Players like Prime Video and Netflix are Subscription-based Video on Demand (SVoD) services, where consumers have to make a regular payment, typically monthly, and get access to their library of video content. The OTT apps have become the most downloaded app category ahead of social media messaging apps like WhatsApp, facebook and e-commerce apps like Amazon and Flipkart. The streaming market will collectively account for 46% of the overall growth in the Indian entertainment and media industry from 2017 to 2022 **(PwC India, 2018)**. In an article by **(Sapna Chaurasia, 2022)** expressed that too much freedom and no censorship would result in display of content which may be inappropriate for children or may have harmful influence on the society. On the other hand, too many limitations in **form** of censorship may lead to restriction on freedom of expression and restrict the boundaries of creativity. **(Dr. Surbhi Dahiya, 2020)** Stated that to understand the current consumption patterns and its impact, it is vitally important to understand the natural relationship between mass media and its effect on the social fabric of the society. From drama, to sports, to politics, to changing gender roles, to realistic issue-based themes, to revolutionary thoughts, to parallel cinema becoming more mainstream, the content has changed over time to suit contemporary sensibilities.

METHODOLOGY

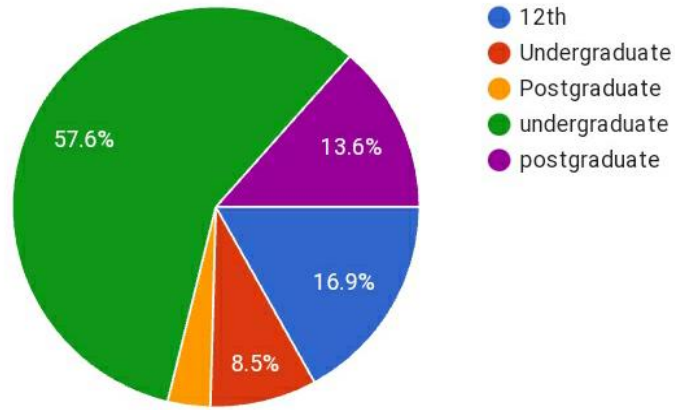
This research is based on analytic study. So far, there are only a few studies in this particular field so we took the help of documents and media reports. For data collection we used self-made questionnaires and distributed it. Online survey through google forms were conducted to analyze each response and the opinions they had on this particular topic. Sampling method applied for this research is Random sampling method. For the study, both primary and secondary data was used. For primary, the data was collected with the help of online questionnaires and secondary data was collected through journals, articles and websites. The sample size for this research is of 118 respondents from various universities were collected. Quantitative data analysis technique was used to analyze the data.

ANALYSIS

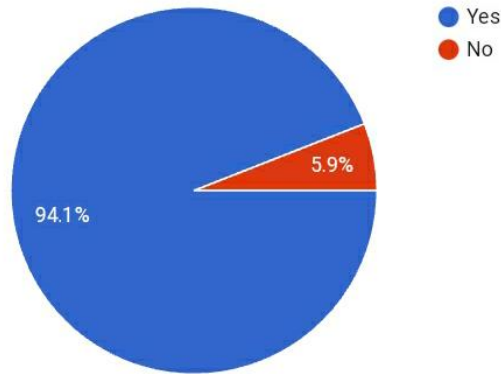
We were successful in collecting 118 responses. In our survey 57.6 % were male respondents, 41.5% female respondents and 0.8% were from other genders so in the first below graph represents that students who filled the questionnaire are 55 from Lovely Professional University and 45 students were from other colleges



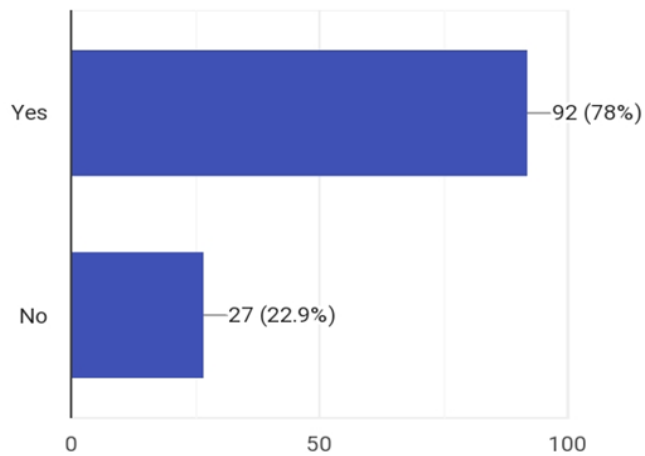
Next question was about qualification where we can see students of 12th standard, graduates and also post graduates participating voluntarily where 57.3% were from Lovely Professional University and 42.7% of them from other colleges.



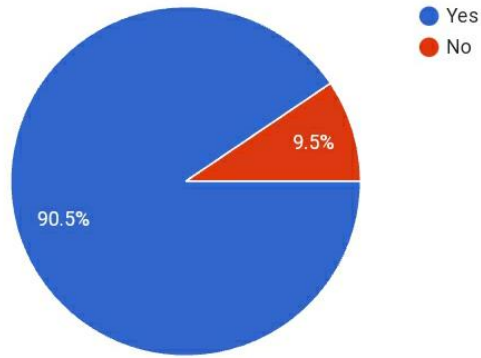
Majority that is, 94.1% of the students were aware about the term OTT as we can see in the given pie chart



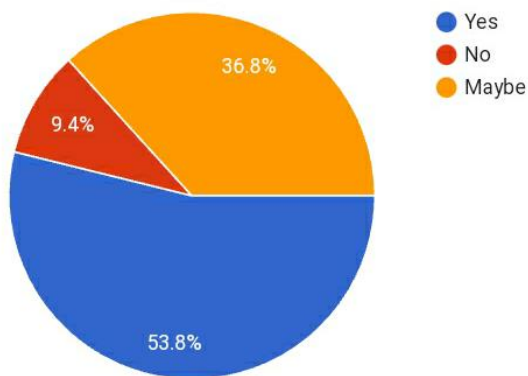
78 % of them confirmed usage of OTT platforms rest 22.9% denied on the same.



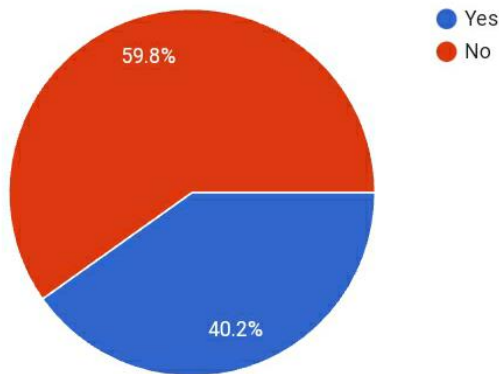
90.5 % respondents were aware of the term Censorship and only 9.5 % were unaware.



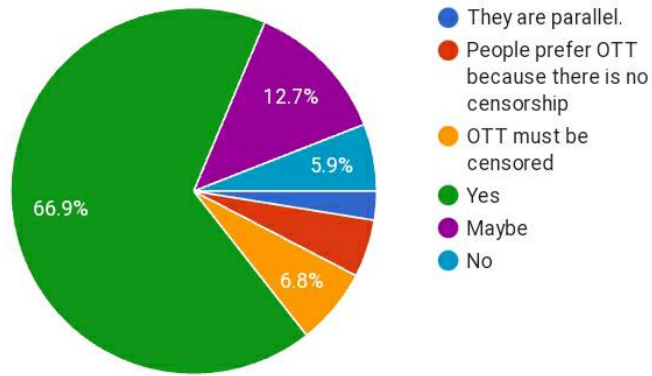
53.8% were believed and responded that life is tough without OTT.



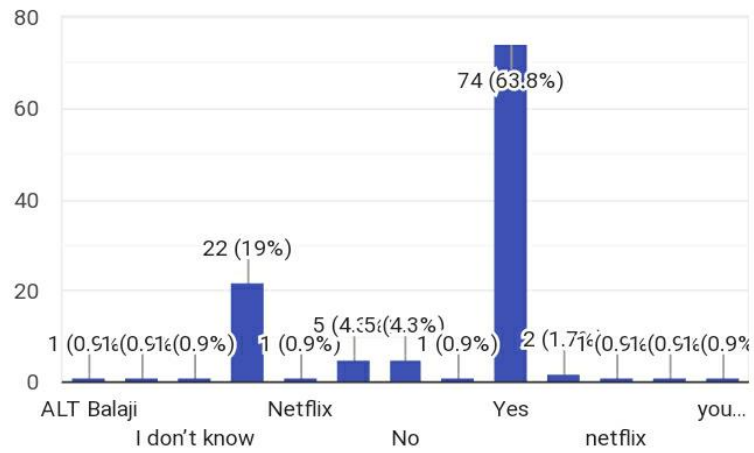
59.8% responded that Censorship is not important. Whereas, 40.2% responded that yes, it is important.



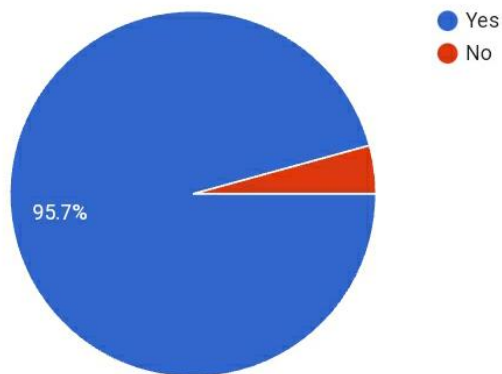
We see a diversity of answers when asked about the relationship between OTT and Censorship



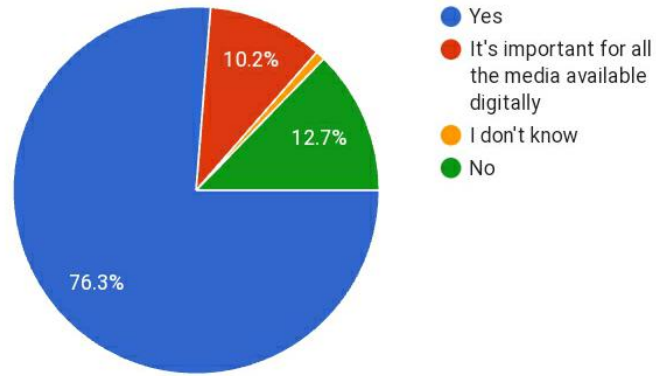
We can see a variety of well-known OTT platforms by respondents.



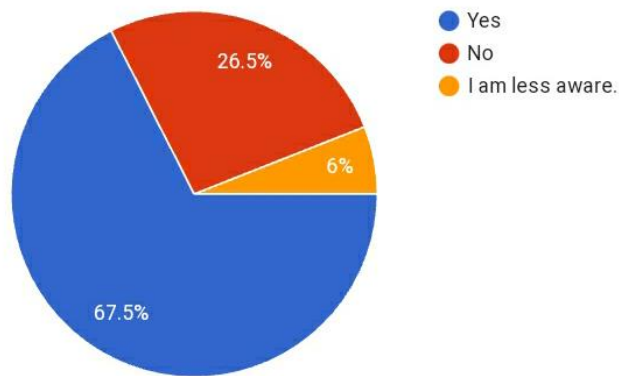
95.7% responded that OTT played an important role in the information revolution and development and rest disagreed on the same.



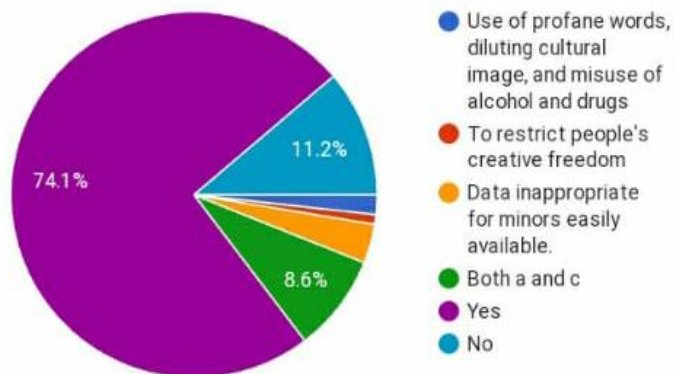
76.3% respondents were in favor of the statement that censorship is important only for Press Media.



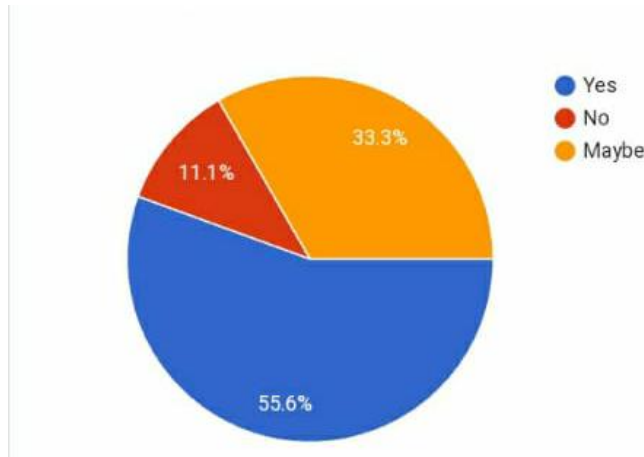
A majority of 67.5% rightfully responded that OTT must be censored.



There we can see a diversity again when it was asked that why there is a controversy regarding Censorship Of OTT?



55.6% responded that awareness is important for topics as such.



We can see male, female and other genders participating actively on the survey from universities and colleges apart from Lovely Professional University too and the fact that majority of them were aware about both the terms OTT and Censorship respectively. We also got to know that majority of them use OTT platforms. Most of them answered in favor of the statement that OTT played an important role in the information revolution and development. Most of them believe OTT is only important for Press Media. Majority of them responded OTT must be censored and also awareness is necessary on topics as such.

CONCLUSION

OTT platforms are gaining so much user base nowadays. They are promoting varied opinions and thoughts. Indian directors and producers are creating content on OTT platforms, which are competing with international content. Censorship of OTT may discourage investments and diverse content. And hence, self-regulation code is much better than censorship in the case of OTT platforms. OTT platforms have the maximum user base nowadays. They have proved themselves to be the source of enormous knowledge, thoughts, and opinions. 10 years from now, if these platforms are allowed to be themselves, they will reach heights. These platforms can be the source of the highest employment and income. Indian directors and producers are creating content on these OTT platforms without any hampers and putting in all their creativity in the content, which is even competing in the International market. These OTT platforms are not only helping us grow nationally but also internationally. If censorship comes into existence in these OTT platforms, it will not only hamper creativity and reduce the number of users worldwide but also discourage foreign investment. Thus, in my opinion, as “Literature is the mirror of Society”, similarly no matter how the image may be, these OTT platforms show the true image of the society which people should know about. Preventing them to create an image will ultimately lead to the fall of our society as a whole. Also, these OTT platforms, as they have already come up with a self-regulatory code, must be followed as this code is far much better than the Censorship of these OTT platforms, as according to me Censorship is of no use as far as Art is concerned.

SUGGESTIONS

- What can be done to address this issue is for these OTT platforms to develop alternatives that include a self-regulation system as well as advanced parental control, making the process easier for both parents and general viewers.
- In a similar vein, Malaysian Netflix (an OTT network) has attempted to use this system. This approach allows parents to create a second password for their Netflix accounts, allowing them to better control what their children watch. Although such a model has not yet been adopted in India, it is not far off
- It is the parents and adults at home who sign up for subscriptions on these OTT platforms' packages, and it is them who have a final say on what is appropriate for their children to watch and what is not. This is the best we can do until we find a permanent solution to the broadcasting problem.
- Finally, last and most important recommendation is constructing the regulations for jurisdiction of service provider, while empowering the consumers and legal authorities to resume issues, raised from digital platform, at greater ease. The service providers should be specifically governed and held responsible under the jurisdiction of Indian courts, or arbitration.

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