

DIGITAL MEDIA CONSUMERISM

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the trends of expenditure made by consumers on digital streaming platforms and on other complimentary products (like merchandise, internet data and concert tickets). With reference to survey in Oct 2024, an attempt to calculate this flow of monetary expenditure to various production houses and content creators is made, as a significant portion of revenue is dependent on the nationality of content consumed by audience. Analysis of the percentage of total revenue outflow is studied. Finally, a dual system is suggested for maintaining sustainability in the media industry that allows healthy consumerism and ensures regulation, awareness and circulation of media properly with small modifications like allowing dubbing and subtitling of content in different languages. Under the sub-theme of Measuring and Monitoring Circular Economy Performance, this study attempts to highlight film as a commodity and how sustainable approach can help the industry flourish better.

Keywords: Consumer Expenditure, Digital Streaming, Revenue Flow, Media Sustainability, Circular Economy

INTRODUCTION

The digital media landscape has undergone a revolutionary transformation with the rapid adoption of streaming platforms, leading to significant shifts in

consumer behavior and expenditure patterns. This study delves into the expenditure trends of Indian audiences on digital streaming platforms, analyzing monetary outflows on subscriptions, merchandise, internet data, and related products. Using survey data from October 2024, it highlights how global content consumption drives revenue flows to foreign production houses and platforms, revealing the dominance of international media in the Indian digital space. The study also explores sustainable practices, suggesting a dual system of localization and regulation to foster a balanced, sustainable media industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cinema, with its unique ontology, transcends time, creating a tension between presence and absence while shaping perceptions of history and craving authenticity^[7]. Reproduction technologies, once feared for disrupting the entertainment industry, irrevocably changed its business model^[9]. Film marketing and distribution target audiences through strategic release dates, bandwidth, and sociocultural factors influencing consumption^{[8][13]}. Technological advances like satellites and YouTube revolutionized media access and consumption^{[5][11]}. India's growing OTT market, fueled by smartphones and freemium models, reflects shifts from traditional setups^[17]. Expenditures on OTT services mirror affordability patterns, blending fandom-driven merchandising and evolving consumer behaviours^{[4][22]}. Finally, cultural trade restrictions aim to protect indigenous industries from foreign dominance^[16].

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study trends of expenditure in Digital Streaming Platforms.
- To estimate monetary outflow by Indian audience to Foreign Production Houses.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Area and Population: The survey focuses on Kamrup Metropolitan District, Assam, with a population of 1,253,938 (4% of Assam's total population per the 2011 Census). The study population includes 4% of Assam's 25.28 million internet subscribers, totaling 1,011,200 subscribers (TRAI, 2023).

Sample Size: Using the Yamane formula with a 5% margin of error, the sample size is calculated as 400.

Data Collected: Data was collected in October 2024, using both primary and secondary sources.

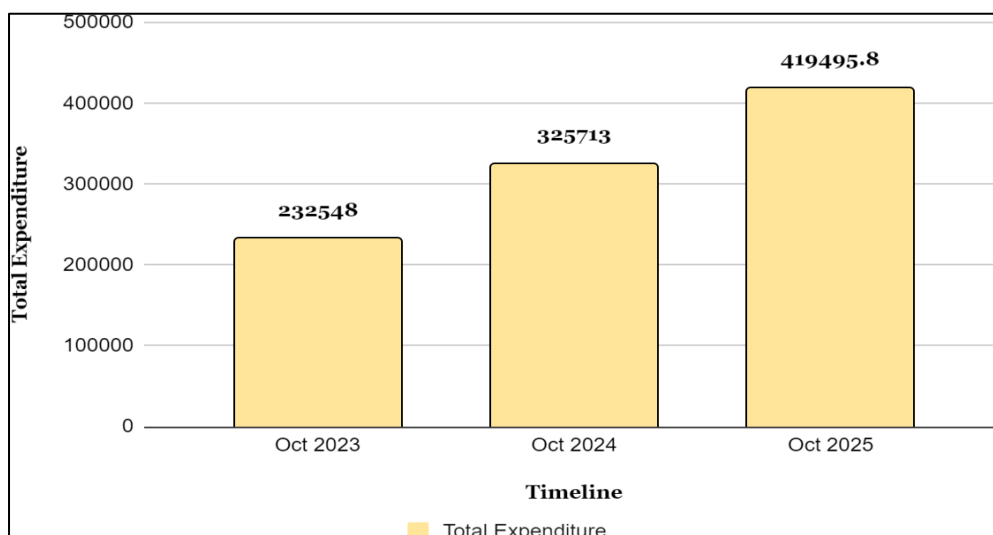
Analyzing Tool:

- Microsoft Excel has been used to work with data and represent it via pictorial tools of data representation.
- The time value of money is calculated based on internet data costs. Average data consumption for streaming is 3.78 GB per hour across SD, HD, and UHD/4K formats. With data costing ₹13/GB (0.16 USD), the total expenditure is approximately ₹50 per hour (Security, 2024; cabke.co.uk, 2023).
- For studying trends of expenditure, respondents were asked to specify how much they have increased expenditure in the past year on digital streaming platforms and how likely are they going to increase it further, on a scale of 0 to 5.
- For the purpose of studying the nationality of content consumed by the audience, respondents were asked to select the amount of content they consume of various nationality. A 5-point scale was used as a degree of measure.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The Expenditure Matrix

This section examines respondents' expenditure trends on digital streaming platforms, including time, subscriptions, merchandise, and movie tickets, analyzed by gender and age demographics. The total expenditure in October 2024 is marked at ₹325713.

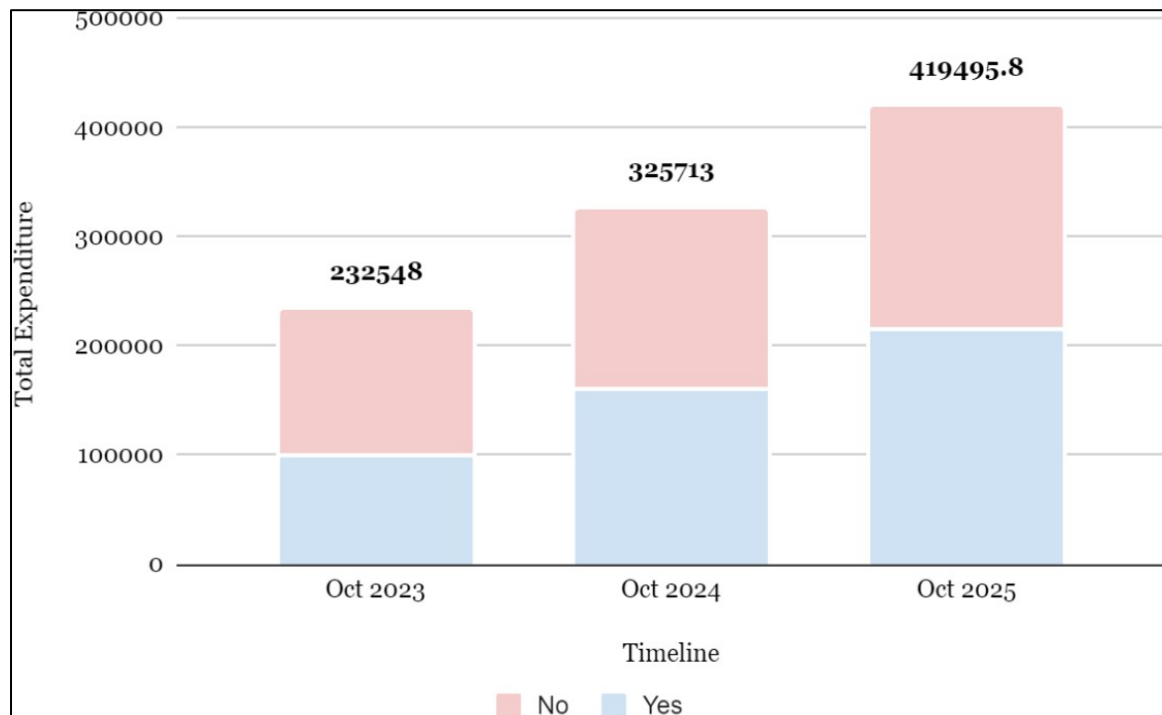


Graph 1 : Total Expenditure in Digital Streaming Platforms

Digital media consumerism.

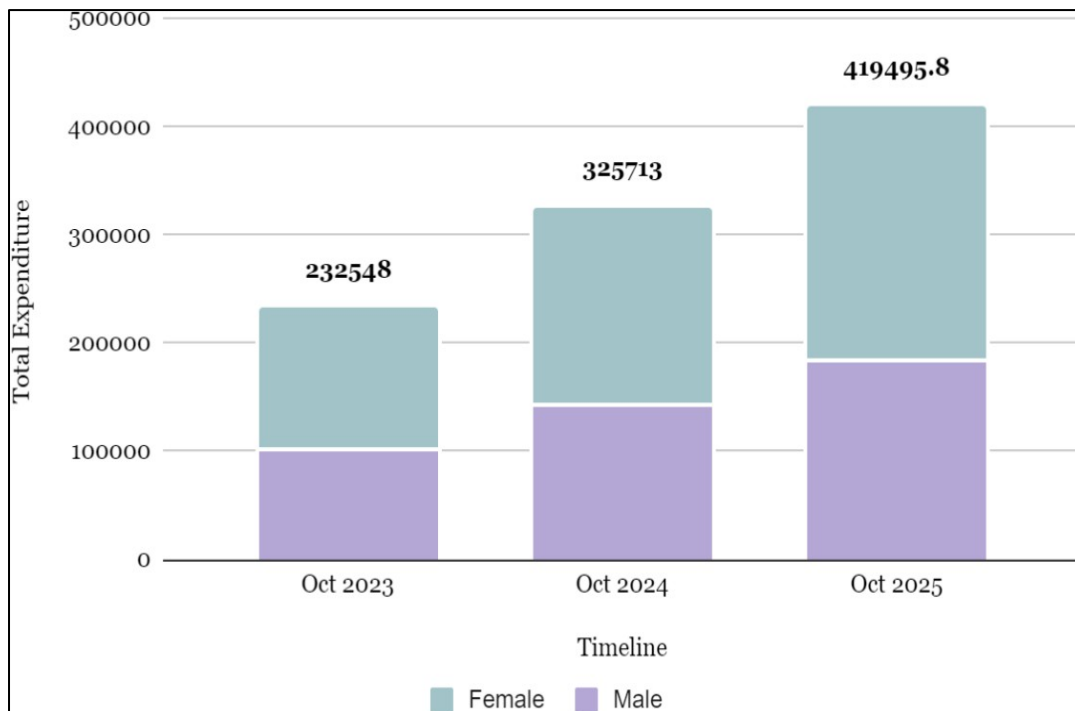
It has grown from the past year by 40.06% and is expected to grow by 28.79% in the following year. Respondents were also asked to mark if they had subscribed to any digital streaming platform.

It is observed that in the previous year, 44% of the people did not subscribe to any platform, this year, 50% respondents subscribed and the percentage is expected to increase to 54%. It is observed that, a considerable amount of expenditure is carried out by respondents who have not subscribed to any platform at all.



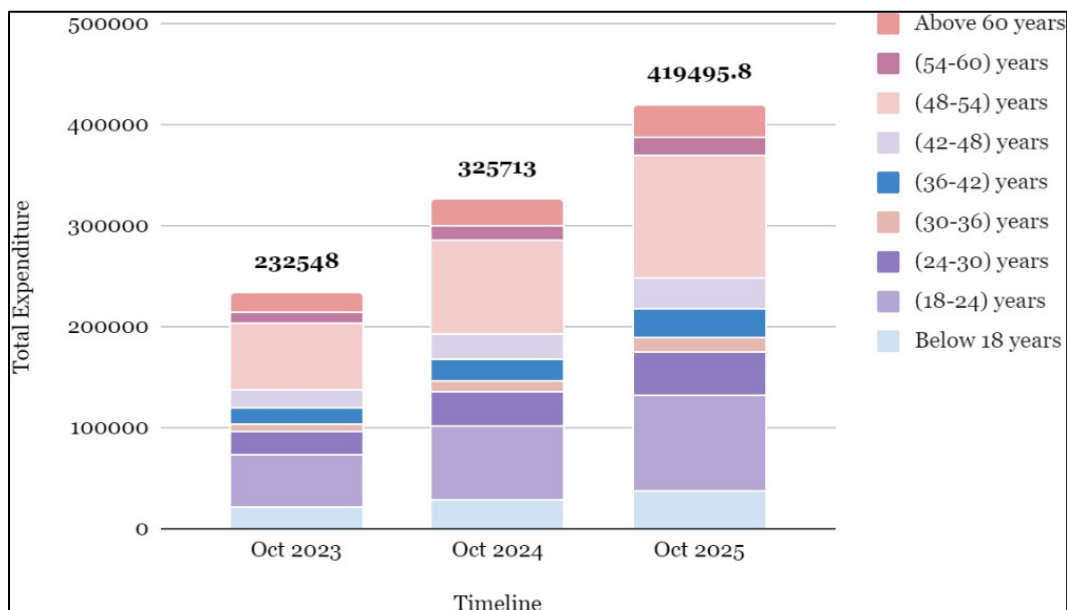
Graph 2 : Expenditure by subscribers and non-subscribers

Total Expenditure: Demographic Representation



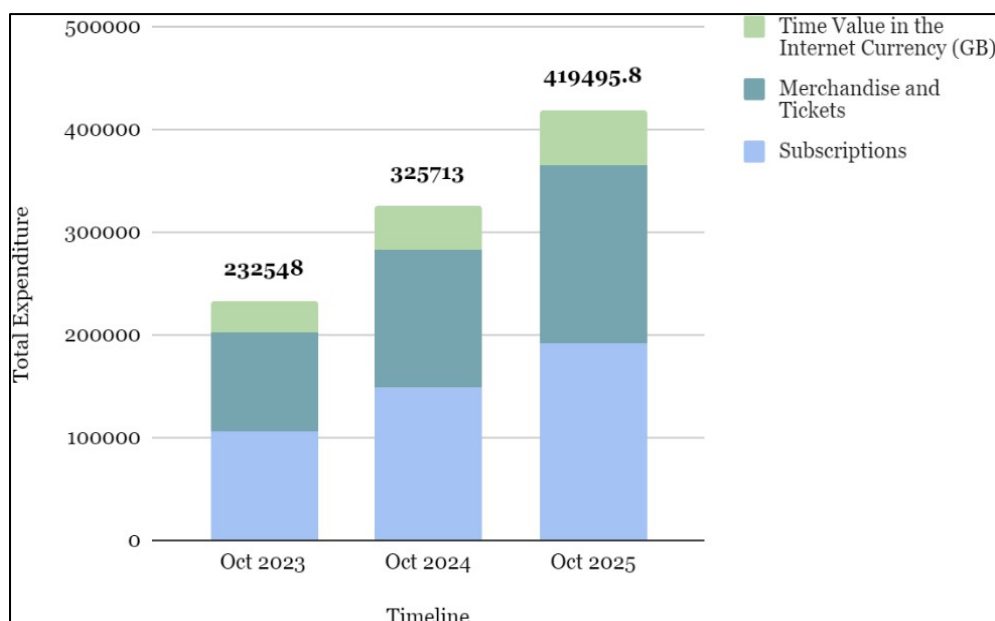
Graph 3 : Expenditure Trends with respect to Gender

Though the current expenditure of females is lesser as compared to men, it is expected to grow by ₹50,000 in 2025.



Graph 4 : Expenditure Trends with Age

It can be inferred that the working class or the customers, are not necessarily the consumers of the digital streaming platforms. This is because, even though they subscribe to platforms, their consumption of internet data and low purchase of movie tickets and merchandise, lead to low monetary expenditure in comparison to the dependent population and the age groups that have just attained monetary income or are in the fag end of their working age bracket.

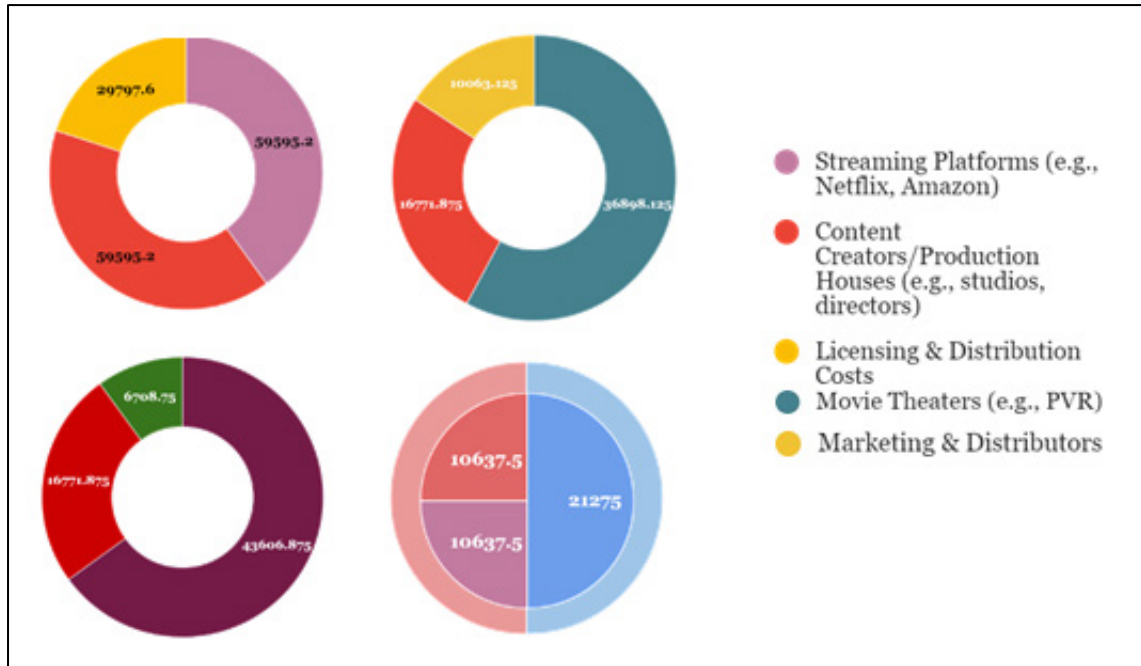


Graph 5 : Expenditure Trends with Constituent Elements of Purchase

Over 55% of total expenditure is not from subscriptions, with merchandise purchases like film posters and t-shirts following regular content streaming. In 2024, the 400 survey respondents paid ₹510,600 to internet service providers. Aggregated to Kamrup Metro’s population, ISPs earned ₹516.3 billion in 2024. Notably, Kamrup Metro is one of India’s 773 districts.

The Monetary Flow: Where Does The Money Go?

Examining the flow of money post-purchase, focusing on three key recipients on the supply side: internet service providers (e.g., Jio, BSNL), platforms (e.g., Netflix, PVR), and production houses (e.g., KTV, Dharma Productions).



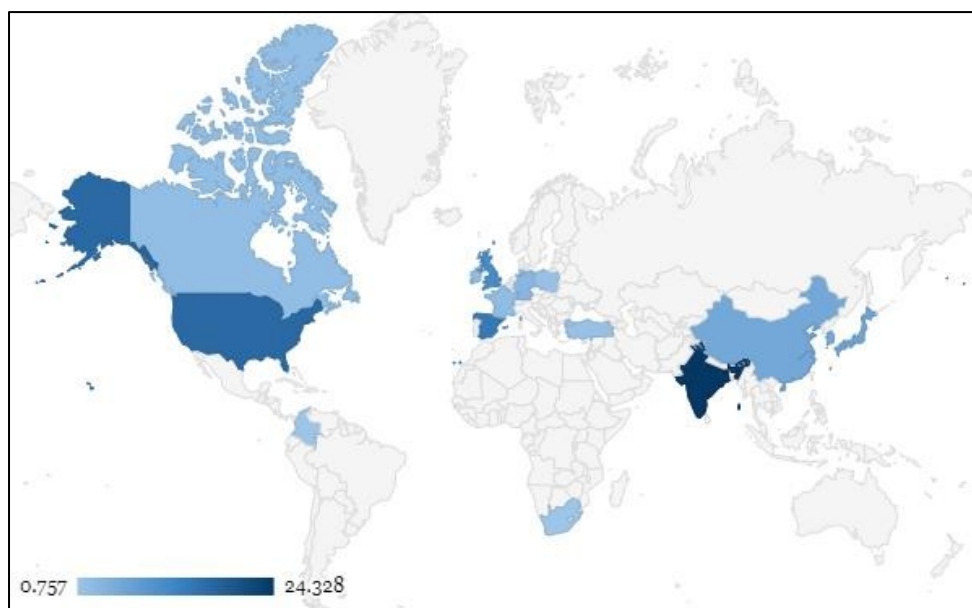
Graph 6 : Revenue Distribution (in Indian Rupees ₹)

Monetary Outflow

With the exception of movie theatres, distributors, Jio Cinema as a streaming platform and internet service providers, all other avenues are international and are heavily dependent on the nationality of content consumed by audience.

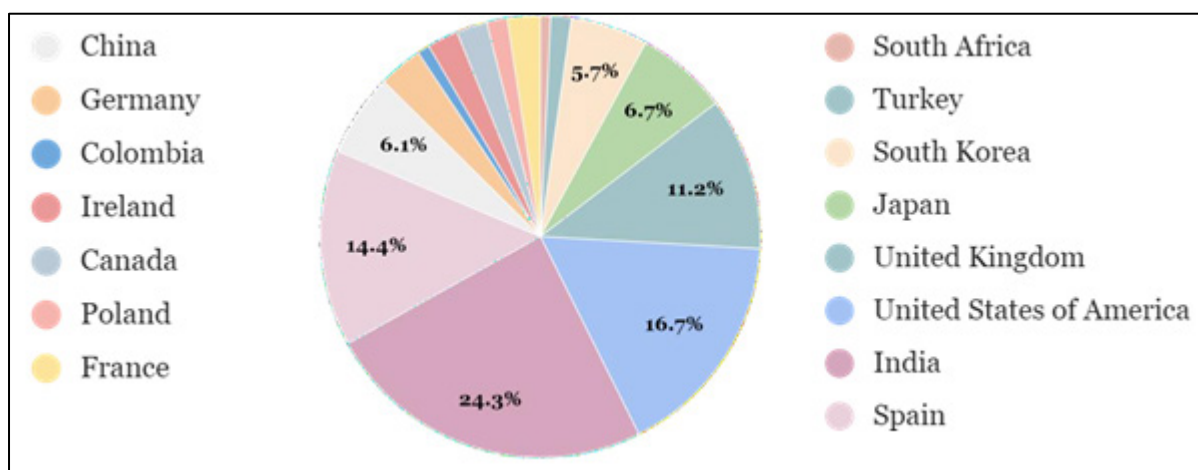
Also, all popular streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV+, HBO Max (via partnerships), Discovery+ are based in the United States of America hence, revenue receipts are received there as well.

With reference to the same, it is calculated that; ₹64132 is retained in Domestic Market, ₹53635 is received in USA via platforms fees, ₹53635 is susceptible to the content streamed by audience, as per recorded data of October 2024.



Graph 7 : Consumption Patterns

It is observed that, India receives the darkest shade, hence the maximum viewers of content. To put the same into better perspective, pie chart has been generated.



Graph 8 : Percentage of Content Consumed

It is observed that majority of Indian digital spaces have been occupied by American (Game of Thrones), Britain (Peaky Blinders), Spanish (Squid Game), South Korean (Crash Landing on You), Colombian (Narcos) and more.

THE WAY FORWARD

To achieve trade balance in the media industry, two strategies are suggested:

1. **Boosting National Content:** Promote regional and localized content domestically and globally, as seen with Dangal in China and platforms

like Hoichoi and Planet Marathi catering to regional markets (Reverie, 2024).

2. **Regulating Foreign Content:** Implement content guidelines through the Cinematograph Act, 1952, and leverage co-production treaties with countries like the UK and France, though mutual treaties for equal digital space are lacking.

Shyam Benegal, President of FFSI, highlighted the film society movement's impact in Kerala, Bengal, and Maharashtra. Sustainability in media is supported via theaters and OTT platforms.

CONCLUSION

The research underscores the intricate patterns of consumer spending on digital streaming platforms and the associated economic implications for the Indian audience and global content creators. With streaming platforms rapidly expanding, the study highlights significant monetary outflows from Indian consumers to international production houses, demonstrating the influence of global content on local spending behaviors. Despite India's vibrant entertainment industry, foreign content continues to dominate digital spaces, leading to substantial revenue outflow.

The findings suggest a dual strategy for fostering sustainability in the media industry. Firstly, boosting the production and promotion of Indian content, both domestically and globally, can help bridge the trade imbalance. Localization efforts, such as dubbing and subtitling, have proven successful in expanding audience reach. Secondly, implementing regulatory frameworks and fostering individual awareness regarding foreign content can encourage a balanced consumption pattern.

Ultimately, this study emphasizes the need for a circular economy approach in digital media consumerism, where local industries are empowered, and global collaborations are optimized. By aligning consumer preferences with sustainable practices, the media industry can thrive while ensuring equitable revenue distribution and cultural representation.

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