



Product Update: OTT (Fiction) Content Testing

To account for the expansion of OTT content consumption during the pandemic, and the evolution of audience taste & preferences, engagement drivers used in Ormax Stream Test have been updated recently

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By Our Insights Desk

Summary

- The expansion of OTT audience base during the pandemic, as well as the growth in volume of OTT content, has had a significant impact on audience's taste and preference
 - In this context, we have updated our tools Ormax Stream Test, used for testing streaming content, to capture the audience reality of today's times more accurately
 - A re-haul of Ormax Power Rating (OPR) Drivers, separately for web-series and direct-to-OTT films, forms the crux of this product update
 - Four new drivers – Young Generation's mindset, Inspiration, Rooted in Culture, and Swag – have been introduced in this update
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The OTT (or streaming) content category has witnessed significant growth in the last couple of years, not only in terms of an expanding audience base, but also in terms of the volume of content being produced. This diversity of content offering (especially in the fiction content space, i.e., web-series and direct-to-OTT films), as well as the infusion of new viewers into the category, has changed the content landscape considerably, and has had a defining impact on the audience's tastes and preferences.

In our streaming content testing tools **Ormax Stream Test**, we use **Ormax Power Rating (OPR)** as a metric to capture the likability and engagement of the audience with the show or film being tested. This rating, on a 0-100 scale, encapsulates the audience approval or rejection of the content, e.g., a score of 70+ suggests the audience have whole-heartedly accepted the content, while a score below 40 suggests outright rejection.

To arrive at the OPR for any online show or direct-to-OTT film, we use 'OPR Drivers', i.e., factors (or benefits) that can have a positive influence on a show or film's audience engagement, once they have decided to watch the content in question. OPR Drivers are identified through extensive ongoing qualitative research. These drivers are then assigned weights to reflect their relative importance, based on statistical modeling of high-OPR shows and films released in the last 12 months.

While weights are updated every six months, updating drivers is a less-frequent exercise. After all, we don't expect consumer benefits from a category to fundamentally change more than once in a few years. But given the watershed impact of the pandemic on the content landscape in India, a drivers update seemed imperative, so that OPR Drivers accurately reflect consumer expectations from streaming content in 2023. For this, extensive

qualitative research was conducted between June and August last year, followed by large-sample quantitative research to validate the new drivers, and assign weights to them. This research was conducted across India, and the drivers selected are 'universal' (same across languages), but their weights vary by language, capturing the taste nuances each language audience bring with them. In this update, only drivers for fiction content were updated. A similar exercise is scheduled for non-scripted content in the near future.

Among OTT fiction content, separate sets of OPR drivers (and their weights) were identified for web-series and direct-to-OTT films, due to the fundamentally different nature of the two formats. For example, the driver 'Layered Narrative' is definitionally a driver for web-series, but not for films, which are shorter in their runtime. We define this driver as: A multi-dimensional and layered narrative, with several sub-plots, parallel story lines and characters, resulting in an evolved and cerebral viewing experience.

Drivers for direct-to-OTT films are conceptualised as being different from the drivers for theatrical content, as the change in medium and context of consumption, from the big-screen and communal viewing experience in theatres, to mobile and personal consumption devices, directly impacts the audience's expectations from the content.

You can download a product update deck [here](#), which details all the drivers. A summary of important changes in the update follows:

Emotional Heft, defined as 'emotional depth because of characters and conflicts, leading to an experience that engages the viewer emotionally', has moved from ninth to first rank in weightage, for web-series. The success of shows like Panchayat, Rocket Boys, and Gullak

reflects a certain maturity of taste in a category that started off predominantly with plot-heavy thrillers and suspense dramas. Even within that genre, shows like Paatal Lok, Mumbai Diaries 26/11, etc., highlight that situating thriller in a more poignant context, with greater pathos within the stories, results in greater engagement, as the audience's taste evolve in this direction. Emotional Heft also emerges as the most significant driver for direct-to-OTT films, symptomizing that more intimate, emotionally-engaging and character-driven films like Shershaah, Sardar Udham, etc., find resonance in the OTT context.

However, in contrast to theatrical content, **Glamour & Beauty** (defined as: Beautiful & eye-pleasing visuals, depicted through attractive cast, trendy styling, accessories, etc., resulting in escapist aspiration), is conspicuously absent as an audience expectation, both for online shows and direct-to-OTT films, as visual escapism is still not viewed as a relevant benefit, with gritty, real and authentic depictions being considered as more germane to the category.

In addition to the changes above, four new drivers have been added in this update:

1. Young Generation's Mindset

Definition: Depiction of stories and characters in a way that relate to today's youth, their life, their thinking, their culture and their aspirations

The success of youth-centric shows like Kota Factory, Aspirants, Hostel Daze, and College Romance, or direct-to-OTT films like Mimi, is reflected in the emergence of Young Generation's Mindset as an engagement driver in the OTT context. This driver is not just

limited to the presence of youthful characters in the narrative, but is a larger idea about whether the story or characters capture and reflect an approach that mirrors the thinking of today's youth.

2. Inspiration

Definition: Depiction of extraordinary acts of courage, creativity or competence, that ignite a desire to accomplish something

While an ever-present driver in our theatrical content testing products (Ormax Moviescope and Ormax First Draft), the dark, almost-cynical tonality of content within the OTT category meant that this driver was not very relevant in the context of online content earlier. However, properties like Rocket Boys and Shershaah, which depict stories of highly competent and admirable personalities, have established this archetypal need firmly in the OTT content's context.

3. Rooted In Culture

Definition: Story, characters and presentation that have their roots in values, traditions, culture and ethos of India (or the region of relevance), creating a sense of feel-good reinforcement

Grounded and relatable milieus in shows like Panchayat, Gullak, or Ghar Waapsi, the importance of familial bonds depicted in shows like Mai, The Aam Aadmi Family, or Tripling, and themes pertaining to the larger national culture in films like Jai Bhim, highlight an

appreciation for certain rootedness in the stories that online audiences consume. The expansion of online content audience to those from smaller towns and lower socio-economic strata has fueled the emergence of this driver, indicating the growing appetite for more relatable and rooted stories.

4. Swag

Definition: Depiction of characters that display style, confidence, and irreverence, portrayed through their looks, mannerism, actions & dialogues

Characters like Srikant Tiwari from The Family Man, Harshad Mehta from Scam 1992, and Aarya from Aarya, who have a non-conformist disposition and captivating screen presence, and exude self-assuredness, evoke a sense of vicarious empowerment and confidence in the audience. This driver has higher significance in the theatrical context, but features as a new, low-weighted driver for OTT content too.

[Click here](#) to download the 2022 product update deck for Ormax Stream Test.

To read our comprehensive explainer on Content Testing, [click here](#)