# South Asian OTT platforms struggle to capture UK and US diaspora amid fierce competition and costly subscriptions



The evolution of OTT (Over-The-Top) platforms has fundamentally altered media consumption patterns, particularly for South Asian content consumers in Western markets such as the UK and the US. Since their inception in the early 2000s, OTT services have grown from hosting reruns and niche programming to becoming dynamic ecosystems offering original series, live broadcasts, and exclusive sports and entertainment coverage. This transformation has been driven by improvements in broadband internet, streaming technology, and the rise of smart TVs and streaming devices including Roku, Chromecast, and Apple TV.

Early movers like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video recognised the potential of these platforms and invested heavily in creating original content coupled with multilingual options. For the South Asian diaspora, traditionally reliant on cable and satellite services to access content from the Indian subcontinent, this marked a pivotal shift. As major international streaming services incorporated South Asian programming, audiences increasingly migrated to these platforms. However, the absence of consistently strong OTT offerings from Indian and Pakistani providers has created a vacuum, resulting in a sizeable portion of the audience turning to global streaming giants or, alternatively, resorting to piracy due to lack of availability.

Despite the demand for South Asian content, OTT platforms originating from the subcontinent have encountered difficulties establishing themselves robustly in Western markets. Some Indian apps have made attempts to enter the UK and US, albeit inconsistently. For example, Hotstar initially entered the US market but withdrew abruptly, later integrating some of its content into Hulu/Disney. Similarly, Voot's expansion efforts in the UK and US ended prematurely without smooth migration to its new incarnation, JioCinema (now branded as JioStar). SonyLIV continues to be accessible internationally but has yet to make a significant market impact. ZEE5 Global is present in multiple regions but has struggled to achieve substantial success.

The fragmented and slow expansion strategy of South Asian OTT providers has limited their ability to capture market share, allowing mainstream platforms to dominate. Pricing also poses a challenge: subscribing individually to ZEE5 (£6.99), SonyLIV (£3.00), and Hotstar (£5.99) can sum to around £16 per month. In contrast, UK consumers can access an entire suite of South Asian channels alongside Netflix and Discovery+ for around £12-£15 via Sky or Virgin Media, often lower with discounts. Furthermore, limited everyday fresh Hindi content and the lack of live TV options have contributed to these platforms being priced out of competitive range.

The OTT landscape is shifting beyond direct-to-consumer models, with bundling emerging as a key strategy to reduce subscriber churn and improve retention. Insights from the recent Connected TV World Summit (CTWS), presented by Ampere Analysis, highlight the growing consumer demand for ad-supported subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) tiers. In the UK, such ad-supported tiers attract price-sensitive households that previously avoided subscription video services. In the US, these tiers enable consumers to access multiple services simultaneously while limiting cancellations.

Some attempts at bundling have been made. YuppTV, for instance, bundles SonyLIV with live South Asian channels, yet it faces two main obstacles: its bundle does not include all leading South Asian OTT platforms and its marketing and customer acquisition efforts remain weak, limiting adoption.

Looking ahead, South Asian OTT platforms may need to adapt significantly to thrive in UK and US markets. Improvements could include:

* Developing stronger bundling strategies through collaboration with global aggregators and regional platforms to lower costs and enhance accessibility.
* Expanding exclusive and original content offerings tailored for diaspora audiences, with an increased focus on local programming to engage younger viewers.
* Enhancing marketing and distribution strategies with stronger acquisition and retention plans, including increased on-ground presence to boost brand visibility.
* Introducing lower-cost, ad-supported tiers to attract broader and more price-sensitive audiences.

Until these challenges are addressed, South Asian OTT platforms are likely to continue struggling outside the subcontinent, leaving diaspora audiences to rely on global streaming services or resort to piracy. The underlying market and revenue potential remain substantial, but realising this opportunity will depend heavily on strategic execution and innovation.

The BizAsiaLive report provides this overview of the current OTT landscape for South Asian platforms in Western markets, underscoring the need for decisive moves to capitalise on growing global demand.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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