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OTT Platforms as a Means of Distributing Cultural and Entertainment Content in Ukraine

Abstract: *Introduction.* The relevance of the topic is due to the importance of developing Over-The-Top platforms, which provide access to digital content via the Internet, bypassing traditional cable and satellite television and play an important role in the distribution of cultural and entertainment content to society. *Purpose and methods.* The purpose of the article is to substantiate the theoretical foundations and practical recommendations for organizing OTT platforms as a means of distributing cultural and entertainment content on the Internet. The methodological basis of the study is the systematic, interdisciplinary and historical approaches to the study of information and communication processes in the socio-cultural sphere. *Results.* The history of the origin of OTT services and the experience of their use at the global level are studied. The main OTT platforms in the Ukrainian market are analyzed and the advantages and disadvantages of each of them are identified. The trends and prospects for the development of OTT in Ukraine are studied and the factors influencing their popularity are identified. The most popular and convenient platforms that provide the highest quality content in accordance with its cost are highlighted. *Conclusions.* The scientific novelty of the research results lies in the generalization, systematization and development of the main theoretical provisions on the organization of OTT platforms in Ukraine, taking into account the factors of modern influence. The significance of the study is manifested in the development of scientific and practical recommendations that will contribute to the development of ways to distribute cultural and entertainment content through OTT services. The obtained results identify and analyze the main trends in content distribution, indicate the directions of modernization and adaptation of services for their owners.

Keywords: OTT platforms, OTT service, cultural and entertainment content, Internet, television.

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1. Introduction

The problem formulation. OTT platforms as a means of content distribution play an important role in cultural and entertainment component of society. One of the main problems faced by OTT services in Ukraine is the inability to adapt their projects and services to the rapid changes in the modern world. In the era of rapid technological development and the introduction of innovative solutions in technical devices such as modern TVs, smartphones, and other gadgets, there is an unpredictable mix of external factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in the country. National OTT services are facing difficulties in the face of uncertainty and a large number of restrictions. There have been several provider and licensee closures, which creates a problem of limited supply for consumers.

State study of the problem. Theoretical and practical aspects of the management of socio-cultural activities and social communications are highlighted in the works of Yaroslav Martynyshyn, Olena Khlystun, Olena Kostyuchenko, Yelena Kovalenko, and Larysa Butko (Butko et al., 2022, 2023; Kovalenko, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2023; Martynyshyn & Khlystun, 2018; Martynyshyn & Kostyuchenko, 2018; Martynyshyn & Kovalenko, 2018; Martynyshyn et al., 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023) and other scientists.

The issues of distributing cultural and entertainment content and organizing the functioning of OTT platforms as a component of socio-cultural management are considered mainly in the works of foreign scholars, and have recently been covered in publications by domestic researchers. For example, Darren Kelsey (2017) in his book “Media and Affective Mythologies: Discourse, Archetypes and Ideology in Contemporary Politics” explores the role of OTT platforms in shaping contemporary popular culture and mythology. Nina Zrazhevskya (2022) examines platforms as part of media and society. Tausif Mulla (2022) also writes in this direction and reflects on the future of television and its replacement.

The most complete definitions of the OTT platform itself are given by scientists Reeti Agarwal, Ankit Mehrotra, Veenu Sharma, Armando Papa, Areej Malibari in the joint publication “Over-the-top (OTT) retailing in the post pandemic world. Unveiling consumer drivers and barriers using a qualitative study” (2023). The history of the past, a description of the present and a forecast of the future state of content distribution and the functioning of OTT platforms are revealed in their work “OTT and Live Streaming Services: Past, Present, and Future” (2021) by Seongcheol Kim, Hyunmi Baek and Dam Hee Kim. A deep and meaningful study of trends in the consumption of television and video content in the OTT era was conducted by Deloitte, consisting of Klaus Boehm, Ralf Esser, Paul Lee, Jasmin Raab in such a section as “The future of

the TV and video landscape by 2030” (2018), demonstrating not only the current statistics of needs, but also giving their recommendations for improvement and amelioration of negative factors. Other researchers have also covered this topic.

However, Ukrainian platforms are analyzed through the prism of analyzing monthly and general statistics reporting from the platforms themselves (Sweet.tv, Megogo, Kyivstar TV) or special statistical companies (Detector Media, Detector Ratings, Independent Rating Agency BIG DATA UA, and others), including articles by popular publications and comments by the owners of media services themselves, such as Oleksandr Rezunov, Yuriy Povoroznyk, Serhiy Sozanovsky of Film.ua Group, Oleksandr Bogutsky, CEO of Starlight Media, Yaroslav Pakholchuk, CEO of 1+1 media, and Mykola Chernotytsky. The sources of information include Forbes Ukraine magazine, discussions and interviews with platform owners and large media holdings and businesses about trends in the development of OTT services at conferences such as National Media Talk (National Media Talk, 2023) and Made in Ukraine by GlobalLogic: Media 2.0.

Unresolved issues. This topic goes beyond general discussions and highlights the key aspects that determine the success or failure of OTT services in Ukraine. One of the important but unresolved issues that significantly affects the functioning of these services is the unstable situation in the country, in particular the war that has been going on since February 2022. The course of events has forced domestic media providers and content developers to reconsider their approaches to creating and broadcasting entertainment material, as well as possible package offers for consumers. These issues have not been sufficiently studied both in the theoretical part and lack practical conclusions and advice.

In particular, the round-the-clock broadcast of the Media Marathon suspended the broadcast of entertainment content on most TV channels, necessitating a rethinking of the relevance of such content in the context of military operations and its relevance to the needs of viewers. This problem was also caused by the question of the appropriateness of this type of content and the lack of need for it among users. Over time, the issue began to transform. What remains unresolved is the extent to which this restriction is effective and whether it meets the current questions of the audience.

It is important to note that many Ukrainians who became forced migrants due to the war witnessed the lack of Ukrainian-language content on local TV and Internet platforms. This has sparked an increased interest in Ukrainian OTT services, which have become not only a source of entertainment content but also a means of preserving the native language and cultural heritage. However, the issue of accessibility and volume of Ukrainian-language content on such platforms, as well as the possibility of attracting new talent to create original content, remains unresolved.

Further consideration of unresolved issues related to aggregated information about all service providers, ratings, offers, and pricing policies in the OTT platform market becomes an important aspect of the study. Given the diversity of offers on the market, it is important to identify and emphasize the key characteristics that will determine the user's choice, as well as create mechanisms for access to objective and complete information.

Last but not least, OTT platforms need to interact with international companies and cooperate in adapting interfaces and content to the needs of users, taking into account the impact of the latest technologies. Currently, in the context of competition and rapid technological development, it is necessary to intensify efforts to attract international experience and technological innovations to ensure that Ukrainian OTT platforms remain competitive in the global market.

Thus, the problem of OTT platforms in Ukraine is determined by some unresolved issues that call into question not only the model of development of such services but also their ability to meet the needs of a modern viewer in a highly dynamic and unstable society.

2. Purpose and methods

The purpose and research tasks. The purpose of the study is to substantiate the theoretical and methodological foundations and practical recommendations for the organization of OTT platforms as a means of distributing cultural and entertainment content on the Internet.

Achieving this goal entailed solving the following tasks:

- to study the history of OTT services and the experience of their use at the global level;
- to analyze the main OTT platforms in the Ukrainian market and identify the advantages and disadvantages of each service;
- to study the trends and prospects for the development of OTT in Ukraine and identify the factors that influence their popularity;
- to identify the most popular and user-friendly OTT platforms in Ukraine that provide the highest quality content in accordance with its cost.

Methodology and methods. The study of the development and use of OTT platforms in Ukraine is based on a combination of theoretical and practical approaches. The theoretical basis is a methodological approach based on a combination of systemic (in structuring information, identifying functions and goals), interdisciplinary (through symbiosis and study of this topic from the perspective of various sciences, such as management, economics, political science, cultural studies, psychology and sociology) and historical approaches (in studying the formation of demand for OTT services in the world).

To solve these tasks, the following research methods were used: literary analysis (critical analysis of scientific literature to summarize and systematize the main theoretical provisions on the history, development and use of OTT platforms); terminological analysis (to clarify the essence of such concepts as OTT platforms and services, television and entertainment content, media sphere, etc.); observation and description (consists of active study and analysis of the functioning of OTT services and description of their capabilities); general scientific analysis and synthesis; modeling and forecasting (based on expert opinion and own observations to highlight the problem and ways to solve it). These methods interacted with each other to obtain a comprehensive and objective understanding of the role and impact of OTT platforms in the Ukrainian media space.

Information base. The legal framework, which includes laws and regulations governing the activities of OTT services and providers, is based on the main legislation: The Law of Ukraine “On Media” No. 2849-IX dated 13.12.2022 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022b), the Law of Ukraine “On Copyright and Related Rights” No. 2811-IX dated 01.12.2022 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022a), the Law of Ukraine “On Information” No. 2657-XII dated 02.10.1992 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1992). The National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting is also one of the main regulatory authorities. There are also additional rules for regulating activities prescribed in special legislation in the information sphere – the Laws of Ukraine “On the Ratification of the European Convention on Transfrontier Television” No. 687-VI of December 17, 2008 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2008), “On Electronic Commerce” No. 675-VIII of September 3, 2015 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2015), which contain lists of offenses and define the powers of state bodies to establish certain content restrictions. The research is based on a wide range of information sources covering the history and development of OTT platforms both globally and in the context of Ukraine. This includes: scientific literature, scientific and popular publications (research papers, articles and publications devoted to the history and technological improvement of OTT services), media resources (news portals, media companies and technology blogs), documents and reports (official documents, reports of companies and organizations that publish statistics on the OTT services market and the level of demand), statistics and analytics (using statistics and analytical reports to objectively determine trends and dynamics of OTT platforms), expert opinions and forecasts (assessments by experts in the field of media technology and entertainment content), as well as our own research and observations. This diverse information base allows us to provide a comprehensive and informed approach to analyzing the development of OTT platforms in Ukraine.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. The history and global experience of using OTT platforms

An OTT service (over-the-top – “above the console”) is a platform for watching video content via a regular Internet connection. To watch TV shows, movies, etc., you only need to have a SmartTV or an Android set-top box, or use a browser on laptops or apps on tablets and smartphones.

OTT technology originated about 15 years ago and has spread rapidly around the world as the Internet has grown. According to Fortune Business Insights, the global OTT services turnover will reach \$87 billion in 2026. Every year, spending on OTT services grows by 40% on average. The number of services is also growing. For example, Warner Media launched HBO Max streaming service and NBCUniversal launched Peacock. In 2019, another player launched Disney+. To stand out from the competition, OTT services try to attract users with original content. Thus, Netflix spends about \$17.3 billion annually on content production, Disney+ – about \$1 billion, HBO Max – up to \$2 billion. Peacock also spends about \$2 billion.

Moreover, OTT services will not be limited to content alone and will replace radio and television as tools for alerting citizens in emergency situations. For example, Canada uses streaming services to warn the population about dangerous storms or snowfalls. OTT, which has become an alternative to traditional TV channels, is a service where video content is generated, customized, sold and distributed online. OTT platforms, such as Netflix, Disney+, Amazon Prime Video, YouTube, and HBO Max, provide users with access to a variety of content on different gadgets (Mulla, 2022). This gives users a choice based on their own needs and preferences.

Netflix remains the leader in the international OTT subscription market with more than 210 million subscribers worldwide, but competition from Disney Plus and local OTT providers is weakening its position. There are various business models in the OTT market, such as subscriptions, advertising, freemium, premium, in-app purchases, time-limited individual rentals, or sponsored content. Over the past five years, OTT platforms have seen impressive subscriber growth, with further exponential growth in traffic, content, and subscribers expected. The total subscription revenue of various OTT platforms is USD 272.69 billion, and is projected to increase further, exceeding USD 316.10 billion in 2023. The OTT platforms market is expected to reach USD 462.90 billion by 2027, with a CAGR of 10.01% (Kim et al., 2021). The accuracy of these forecasts will be known later due to external factors affecting the global market.

The introduction of VHS in 1977 and the emergence of DVD 20 years later paved the way for the first alternatives to the cinema, but further deve-

lopment led to the emergence of streaming services. Launched in 2005 with the advent of YouTube, they have become the go-to way to watch movies at home, leading to a significant decline in movie theater attendance over the past decade (Kim et al., 2021). Given the availability of movies and TV series on OTT platforms, which are to some extent part of the entertainment content. Streaming services play a key role in the production and distribution of diverse and niche content, avoiding the limitations of traditional Hollywood studios (Sergi, 2020). This opens up opportunities for lesser-known filmmakers and projects that have a harder time getting financing or distribution through traditional channels. As a result, streaming platforms are expanding the repertoire of voices and perspectives, leading to more diverse content for different audiences (Film Track, n.d.). This has a good effect in attracting users to use OTT platforms.

3.2. The main players of the Ukrainian OTT services market: advantages and disadvantages

The outbreak of the war of the Russian occupation army against Ukraine and the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, significantly changed the media communication activities of national TV channels, affecting the distribution of cultural and entertainment content.

In a wide-ranging conversation between four of the main figures in the Ukrainian media market, Sergiy Sozanovsky of Film.ua Group, Oleksandr Bogutskyi, CEO of Starlight Media, Yaroslav Pakholchuk, CEO of 1+1 media, and Mykola Chernotytskyi, Chairman of the Board of Public Broadcasting, at Kyiv Media Week, Forbes Ukraine digital editor Viktor Kishchak managed to raise important issues about the state of Ukraine's media sector today and the challenges faced by media holdings since the outbreak of a full-scale war in Ukraine. The discussion highlighted the success of national content producers on various media industry platforms, especially during the war. Consumers have shown an increase in the use of media platforms and consumption of media content in general since the first days of the war, which has given content producers an impetus and an opportunity to develop the industry more effectively (Kishchak & Karmanska, 2023). OTT services have survived the first year of the great war and are now recovering their performance, producing and adapting their content in Ukrainian and taking steps towards international expansion.

Among the largest OTT services in Ukraine registered with the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting, there are three leaders: Megogo, Kyivstar TV, and Sweet.tv. Another major player, OLL.TV, owned by Rinat Akhmetov's media group, was closed after the entry into force of the Law on Media (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022b) along with other assets of Ukraina in the summer of 2022 (*Figure 1*).

Among the smaller players on the market, Volia TV, YouTV, Omega TV, and Lanet TV are present and in demand, and they have also received registration. The sports platform Setanta Sports, the online cinema of Ukrainian movies Takflix, and other thematic services. It is also worth mentioning three services of mobile operators that they have launched in partnership with large platforms: Kyivstar TV, Vodafone TV and TV Plus+ from lifecell. Global services include Netflix, Apple TV+, and Amazon. Major media companies are also gradually developing their own platforms. The digital platform 1+1 video by 1+1 media and Teleportal by StarLight Media (Dankova, 2023b). Each of the platforms has its pros and cons and can offer the user a certain set of attractive features and content (Yevtushenko, 2023). When choosing an OTT service, the audience takes into account many factors, including the amount of content offered according to individual preferences for a specific price.

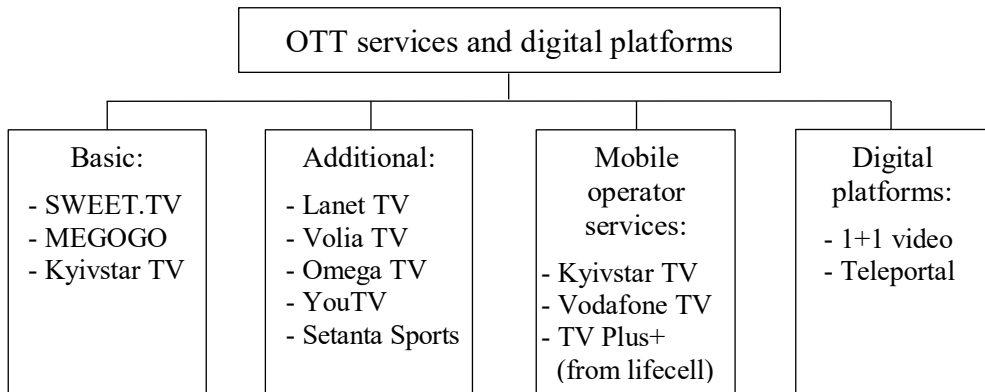


Figure 1. Major OTT services and digital platforms in Ukraine
Source: own development

SWEET.TV. The platform offers up to 277 channels, movies and TV series depending on the package subscription from your account. Most of the content is provided in high definition (HD, Full HD, 4K) for a comfortable and enjoyable viewing experience. The content is available in six European countries (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria), where the company has signed agreements to broadcast the most popular local and international channels and obtained a license to broadcast movies for cinemas.

Currently, the founder is Oleksandr Vitko (managing shareholder of the Helios group of companies (Shalanda, Kamchadal, Nebesna Krynysia and Trinity). Previously, the beneficial owner was Liubov Podorozhna (with a 74% stake), but in October 2023, she withdrew from the ownership of OTT Ukraine LLC, and Oleksandr Vitko himself became the beneficiary. The outbreak of

a full-scale war was a serious challenge for the company, as most of the team was located in Mariupol, where the service's servers were located and managed to be safely evacuated.

“Before the full-scale war, we were growing by 30%. But now it makes no sense to talk about pre-war plans and indicators, as we live in a completely new world”, said Sweet.tv CEO Oleksandr Rezunov in an interview with Detector Media (Dankova, 2023a). He also notes that over the year, hard and important work has been done to distribute the product in each country: from the interface language to the local currency, features and preferences of the population. While competitors have entered only the nearest country, Poland, SWEET.TV aims to become No. 1 in Europe.

Advantages:

- a wide library of content for different audiences: news, sports, movies, children's programs;
- the ability to watch programs in a recording;
- affordable tariff plans compared to competitors;
- monthly subscription to the selected package (no long-term contracts);
- regular additions and updates of content on the platform (movies, series, cartoons, channels).

The disadvantages of SWEET.TV lie in its limitations:

- dependence on the Internet: a stable and fast Internet connection is required for uninterrupted operation;
- content limitations: the platform offers a good selection of content, but it does not include channels and programs broadcast by the largest international streaming platforms;
- geographical quotas: some content is not available due to licensing agreements depending on the region.

SWEET.TV is constantly evolving and adapting to the needs of the digital market, offering functionality and content. It is important for users to assess their preferences, budget and needs before choosing a subscription.

MEGOGO. Currently, MEGOGO is the largest Ukrainian OTT service, whose beneficiary since September 2023 is the platform's CEO and founder Volodymyr Borovyk. According to the company's co-founder and co-owner Fedir Drozdovsky, before the war in Ukraine, the service had 55-65 million unique users per month. During the first days of the war, the customer base dropped by 20% and began to recover in the summer of 2022, until the platform managed to regain all the acquired audience. This happened due to the suspension of broadcasting for Russia and Belarus. Now the number is around 750 thousand subscribers, and the total number of unique users is almost 16 million.

The platform has a large collection of international and regional content: movies and TV series of various genres with language tracks and subtitles.

MEGOGO supports its Smart TV rating with functionality for Full HD, 4K and 8K TVs, as well as for Apple and Android TV media players and set-top boxes, offering more than 300 TV channels, a selection of more than 10,000 movies that viewers can rate and leave reviews, with additional rewind, pause and archive content that is stored for up to two weeks.

Strengths:

- a wide library of content for different age groups;
- improved adaptability and focus on regional content;
- regular replenishment and updating of content on the platform and service functionality;
- favorable cable TV tariff plans, taking into account content and price.

Weaknesses:

- content restrictions in some regions due to license agreements;
- high competition and vying for users' attention with global platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc.

Kyivstar TV. Kyivstar TV belongs to Solutions LLC (the legal entity of the service is Plus TV LLC), owned by two owners, Yaroslav Pakholchuk and Svitlana Mishchenko. In 2016, after acquiring the Viasat satellite platform from a Swedish company, Kyivstar TV came under the management of 1+1 Group, which had an OTT platform. Viasat and Kyivstar collaborated to create the Kyivstar TV platform, from which the operator receives a percentage of the turnover.

The platform allows you to watch TV on TV screens, computers, smartphones, TV tuners and tablets. A large number of channels, a catalog of movies, TV series, cartoons, and shows of various genres for different age groups is based on user habits, which can be watched both live with pause and recorded. Thousands of hours of domestic and foreign content, as well as exclusive previews. It is also possible to access certain content from the past that is stored in the archive.

In an interview with Forbes, Yaroslav Pakholchuk noted that the total number of platform subscribers is high: “I divide all subscribers into three categories: freemium, who use the service occasionally and for free; bundled, who have a subscription but do not use it and may not even know about it, but still pay (this is the specificity and unique offer of our partnership with Kyivstar, when we can juggle the choice of mobile, Internet and TV services); and the most important – paid active subscribers who use the service with different intensity”.

Advantages:

- over 300 TV channels, VOD library of 20 thousand movies, TV series, cartoons and shows;
- more than fifty channels without advertising;
- location-independent (you can watch from any device and anywhere in the world);

– regularly provides free access to the platform so that Ukrainians can legally watch movies, cartoons and shows without using “pirated” resources (Boiko, 2023). The content is open to subscribers of all mobile operators, and the platform can be used on five devices at once, including a smartphone, tablet, laptop, SMART-TV, and set-top box;

– pause and resume live broadcast, the ability to watch the program from the beginning;

– offering a package subscription of the user's choice;

– the ability to watch on 4 devices simultaneously.

Disadvantages:

– the service is focused on the Ukrainian audience, with limited access to foreign content;

– the amount of available content depends on the chosen tariff plan at the appropriate price.

In addition to these OTT services, there are more than a dozen other services on the market, including online platforms of such providers as Volia and Lanet. In 2020, Volia was acquired by Datagroup, the national fixed-line operator and digital services provider of Ukraine (owner of EEGF II Horizon Capital). The beneficiaries of Lanet are Viktor Mazur and Yulia Lantvoit.

The *Lanet TV* platform provides access to more than 170 Ukrainian and European TV channels of various genres online with the ability to watch them both in the mobile application and on other devices. Depending on the tariff plan, it is possible to watch on several devices simultaneously. For the convenience of users, all content on the platform is divided into seven thematic categories: broadcast, entertainment, sports, educational, music, information, and children's, from which users can create their own selections.

The app's strengths lie in five aspects:

– flexibility: you can watch TV from any place where there is Internet;

– variety: a wide range of channels to suit any preference;

– affordability: it is cheaper than cable or satellite TV;

– compatibility: the platform is compatible with smartphones, tablets and computers;

– extended pause: the suspension is valid for 120 minutes.

Weaknesses are caused by the presence of advertising and promotions depending on the subscription; compared to other platforms, the library of movies, TV shows, etc. is small.

Volia TV is a media service streaming national, international and premium channels covering news, sports, entertainment, children's television, movies with the ability of users to pause, rewind and record live broadcasts using different types of viewing devices. In addition, some channels offer video on demand. The cinema has a collection of movies that can be rented or purchased.

The advantages of the platform are emphasized by its pleasant design and intuitive interface, ease of navigation, and the availability of the “parental control” function to set restrictions on viewing certain content by children.

The disadvantages lie in the dependence on the strength of the Internet signal, strong competition even with Ukrainian players, the presence of advertising, and dependence on hardware equipment (set-top boxes) for a better connection.

The service *Omega TV* is owned by Oleg Shevchuk and Dmitry Patlatyuk of Omega Solutions LLC. OmegaTV is characterized by the simplicity of the service and the ability to watch rated TV channels in HD quality (including recording of broadcasts), movies, TV series on various devices from a selection of self-created playlists. There is also pause and rewind, a movie archive (7 days), and personalized selection in the Movie on TV section.

You can also add lesser-known services to the list. *YouTV* is owned by Maxim Smelyants, former director of Datagroup (the platform is also co-owned by the director of the Ukrainian Telecommunications Group Sergey Izhutov, Denis Oliynyk and Oleg Omelchenko). The legal entity of the service, Platform TV LLC, also owns the OTT service Prosto TV.

There are also niche OTT services on the Ukrainian market. For example, the American allusion to Netflix by director Nadiya Parfan is Takflix, where you can watch Ukrainian movies, paying for each one. Among the sports services is *Setanta Sports*. The company expanded its rights to broadcast and streaming in early 2022 after the Georgian holding Adjara Group bought the Ukrainian channel Setanta Ukraine, which led to the strengthening of the OTT platform. Setanta Sports is currently broadcasting in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Recently, the platform announced a joint package with Netflix, the so-called fan pack, which will allow you to connect to Setanta Sports and Netflix for a single fee.

Along with domestic services, Ukrainians also have popular international Netflix, Google Premium, and Apple TV, which, according to BigDataUa, have their own audience.

Having considered the advantages and disadvantages of the main OTT platforms of the Ukrainian market, the price of service packages for users based on their content and the amount of available content also plays an important role. The table below summarizes the prices for the respective service packages from the main providers of access to content on OTT platforms (*Table 1*).

When compiling the comparative table comparing the three main tariff plans of each content provider, we took as a basis such package components as the number of available channels, the number of movies, TV series, shows and cartoons, as well as additional bonus services and services. Considering the pricing policy of OTT services, the amount for a package of services ranges from UAH 99 to UAH 369 per month.

Table 1. Service packages from major content access providers on OTT platforms

OTT platforms	Types of tariff plans			
MEGOGO	x	<i>Light</i> C = 297 M >10000 P = 129	<i>Optimal</i> C = 387 M >11000 P = 199	<i>Maximum</i> C = 419 M >15000 P = 369
Kyivstar TV	<i>Light / Light start *</i>	<i>Basic</i> C >255 M >5000 P = 120	<i>Family</i> C >395 Video library P = 150	<i>Premium HD</i> C >370 M >20000 P = 200
SWEET TV	x	<i>S</i> C = 216 M ≈ 3000 P = 99	<i>M</i> C = 291 M ≈ 5000 P – from 99	<i>L</i> C = 305 M ≈ 10000 P = 249
Lanet TV	x	x	<i>“MIX”</i> Internet + TV P = 369	<i>“PON+”</i> Internet + TV P = 369
Omega TV	x	<i>Basic</i> C = 167 P = 99	<i>Premium</i> C = 182 Access to the archive “Kino on TV” P = 118	<i>Maximum</i> C = 206 Maximum access to the archive “Kino on TV” P = 148
Volia TV	x	<i>Fast and reliable</i> Internet P = 150	<i>Watch only the Top</i> Internet + TV P = 250	<i>When we are together, everyone benefits!</i> Internet + TV + mobile communication P = 300

*No extra charge (automatically included in mobile tariff plans) / no extra charge for 30 days (only for new Kyivstar TV users). C – number of channels; M – number of movies; P – price, UAH.

Source: developed on the basis of the data of the listed OTT platforms (Kyivstar, n.d.; Lanet, n.d.; MEGOGO, n.d.; OmegaTV, n.d.; SWEET.TV, n.d.; Volia, n.d.).

In the context of each service provider, Omega TV offers the lowest price for a package: UAH 99 for the Basic package with 167 channels, and UAH 148 for the Maximum package with 206 channels. But it is worth considering the quality and quantity of the content provided. Unfortunately, it loses out to a service that provides more content in the most expensive packages. This competitor is MEGOGO, which offers from 297 channels, more than 10,000 movies, TV series and other types of cultural and entertainment content for 129 UAH with the “Light” package, and 419 channels, more than 15,000 entertainment content for 369 UAH. OTT platforms such as SWEET.TV, which costs UAH 99 to 249 per package, and Kyivstar TV, which costs UAH 120 to 200, are

average in terms of price according to the content provided. It is worth noting that the aforementioned platforms regularly provide their services at a promotional price or offer additional access to a limited group of content (movies, TV series, cartoons, etc.). Such platforms as Volia TV and Lanet.TV do not charge a separate fee for using the platform alone, but provide package services that include only the Internet, or Internet + TV, or Internet + TV + mobile. They may also include additional access to the movie library on these platforms and other services according to the chosen tariff.

Among the six most well-known platforms, there are three main ones: MEGOGO, Kyivstar TV, and SWEET.TV. The ratio of price and quantity of available content meets the needs of users and the general algorithm of pricing for a certain volume. Another big plus is the fact that the services clearly separate the content, demonstrating a complete list of services in the middle of the platform that will be available when paying for a service package. They also have a convenient, clear, structured interface, the ability to view programs in the recording, pause and playback from a certain point. They are not limited to cultural and entertainment content, but also offer users educational content and audiobooks, which can attract the attention of a larger audience. Users increasingly value the ability to interact with content, such as choosing alternative scenarios, participating in virtual reality, or creating their own content. These new capabilities not only provide an immersive viewing experience, but also create a unique way for platforms to attract and retain audiences, helping to strengthen their leadership position in the entertainment content market. The implementation of artificial intelligence, augmented reality and innovative methods of analyzing user preferences are part of the strategies that make OTT platforms more attractive and modern for the audience. Given the rapid development of Internet technologies and the growing popularity of OTT platforms, it is important to consider cybersecurity issues. Users are becoming increasingly cautious about protecting their personal information, so platforms should focus on ensuring a high level of privacy and security. Implementing encryption measures, two-factor authentication, and enhanced protection against unauthorized access can help increase user trust in the platform and ensure a stable and secure audience.

3.3. Trends and prospects for the development of OTT services in Ukraine

Currently, there is a growing trend of declining demand for entertainment content on TV, which people are gradually abandoning. This can be seen in the statistics of channels compared to the pre-war period. Speaking about the Sweet.tv platform, Oleksandr Rezunov notes that the percentage of channels

watched in the marathon is declining, while the percentage of VOD (video on demand) and own channels broadcasting entertainment content is growing (Dankova, 2023a). The further retention and development of TV content depends on the scenario that will unfold after the victory.

The change in consumer demand is also supported by media professionals. In particular, at the National Media Talk (NMT) 2023 conference, Borys Stefankiv (Your Radio) explained that producers should focus on analyzing the audience and their preferences. In addition, for traditional media, a good solution would be to reinforce their credibility with new digital platforms or services and be present on all platforms.

According to Sweet.tv CEO Oleksander Rezunov, the most dangerous competitors today are pirates and the lack of a culture of paid content consumption (Dankova, 2023a). This is proved by a study by Gemius, which shows that only 31% of Ukrainians are willing to pay for content. That is, the majority (69% of people) choose illegal (pirated) content. Also, the development is somewhat slowed down by insufficient Internet coverage, but the situation is improving every year, as evidenced by the emergence of new platforms.

In the future, Ukrainians will prefer to watch content online, set up an online cinema at home, and personalize video platforms as they wish (Shevchenko, 2020). Taras Petriv of the Sospilnist Foundation emphasizes the truthfulness and usefulness of information, as well as convenient ways of presenting it to the consumer at the right time: “We are getting to the point where we will start to have a special nostalgia for newspapers. And I think we will live to see the time when we will be nostalgic for television”.

However, one should also take into account the peculiarities of these services. For example, Kyivstar TV has some users who receive a subscription to the service as a bundle (a package with the Internet) and may not use it. In an interview with Forbes, President of Kyivstar Oleksandr Komarov said that Kyivstar TV has about 1 million users, of which 80% pay for content and 20% are freemium users who are in a kind of “transit”. Also, since the start of the full-scale invasion, Sweet.tv has started working with FAST channels, which are monetized through the launch of advertising. This is done by stitching – inserting personalized ad units from advertisers into streaming. This technique creates a personalized ad unit for each user of the OTT service and allows customers to choose and pay only for the target audience (Dankova, 2023b). This type of monetization can satisfy both sides of such an exchange.

Instead, there is no room for aggressor services on the Ukrainian market. With the introduction of the Law “On Media” (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022b), special conditions were established for working during Russia's armed aggression. Therefore, the National Council began to compile a “List of Audio-

visual Media Services” commissioned by the aggressor state and the services of audiovisual service providers of the aggressor state, which are included in the state registers of the occupying state, use the default language of the aggressor state, and whose rules and policies are based on the national legislation of the aggressor state. Such services are blocked in Ukraine. The National Commission for the State Regulation of Electronic Communications, Radio Frequency Spectrum and Postal Services has been making decisions to restrict access to these websites, as well as the use of mobile applications and the installation of software for these services. This list already includes 22 Russian services: Ivi, Tvigle, Premier, Start, More and Okko, 24TV, Amediateka, Bas-kino, Filmix, HD Rezka, Kinogo, Kinokrad, Kinotochka, KinoZapas, Kion, Viju, GuideOnline, Laim HD TV – free online TV, Smotreshka, Tri kolor Kino i TV onlain, Tsifrovoe TV 20 kanalov besplatno.

Given these limitations, the Ukrainian market offers new prospects for domestic OTT services in the entertainment content distribution. Local companies have a unique opportunity to tailor their services to the specific needs of Ukrainian viewers, taking into account their language and cultural differences. The use of new technologies, cooperation with international partners, and the high-quality content provision can be key factors in successfully competing in the growing popularity of OTT services. In addition, looking at the global market, we can foresee the emergence of content aggregators that will combine various platforms. Such innovations can facilitate the consumption of entertainment content and allow viewers to conveniently use a variety of services. By focusing on quality, diversity, and regionalization, Ukrainian OTT platforms can be successful in this rapidly evolving industry.

This does not mean that after the war is over, Russian services are not guaranteed to return to the same level as Ukrainian ones. The scenario can unfold in any direction. But we should not rule out the option of their subsequent return to the territory of Ukraine.

4. Conclusions

Based on the results of the theoretical analysis of the functioning of OTT platforms as a means of distributing cultural and entertainment content on the Internet, the article compiles a rating of the most useful and high-quality OTT services in Ukraine that provide media services with entertainment content and provides practical recommendations for organizing OTT platforms.

1. The support of foreign companies plays a very important role. With the outbreak of a full-scale war in Ukraine, a problem arose with the dissemination of truthful information about the war in Ukraine abroad, through their

own media, countering fakes and informing citizens who were forced to go abroad. Ukrainians who were forced to move abroad faced the problem of a lack of information and entertainment content in their native language. In addition, some countries not only distribute, but also cooperate with Ukrainian OTT companies and grant licenses to show movies and TV channels. Currently, 40 companies in 25 countries also create and distribute media content in Ukrainian to support Ukraine.

2. A unique feature of OTT platforms is that they combine the entire range of content: TV channels, movies, series, shows, projects, cartoons, and even audiobooks, as well as exclusive preview screenings. The main advantage of OTT services is mobility, which allows users to access content from one account on different devices. To improve the viewing experience, OTT services are introducing innovations such as skipping the intro that is repeated in each episode or viewing all the ads at the beginning of the movie so that there are no interruptions. In general, OTT platforms have easy navigation and group content by type, topic, and other parameters to make it easier for users to find something new to watch. If you can't find something in the search, the service will offer alternative content that is selected based on user preferences. Many services also implement a system of profiles in case people with different tastes live in the house.

3. Experts warn that soon there will come a time when there may be too many services, so content aggregators from different platforms may appear, similar to the way we consume news now. In the global competition, local players have an advantage due to their market knowledge and the ability to adapt their services to consumer demands. In addition to new formats, OTT services are experimenting with monetization methods, using interactive advertising that meets the needs of specific users, or the possibility of buying directly from the service using the same card that was linked to the subscription payment. Owners of OTT platforms should improve their services because of the constant progress of the latest technologies, taking into account both external and internal processes of technology modernization, changes in society, and the cultural and social preferences of the population. Therefore, Ukrainian services have the potential to create clear and relevant content within the country with the prospect of entering the international market.

4. The research findings show that there are a number of OTT platforms in Ukraine that are particularly popular and user-friendly. Among the most significant aspects of influence on the rating of services for the provision of cultural and entertainment content on the Internet are: quality, usability of platforms, attractive interface, ease and simplicity of use, personalized offers, cost and completeness of the service package and included additional services. Thus, the selected OTT platforms in Ukraine can be considered not only po-

pular among viewers but also effective means of distributing entertainment content that successfully combines quality, convenience and accessibility.

The scientific novelty. The novelty of the study of OTT platforms in the context of entertainment content distribution in Ukraine has several key points of scientific novelty. First of all, the paper systematizes and analyzes the history of the origin and the impact of external factors, such as war and global changes (in particular, the pandemic), on the functioning, strategies, and selected areas of development of OTT platforms in the Ukrainian media market. The study uniqueness lies in a thorough analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the most popular Ukrainian services for broadcasting content and additional services. The findings expand our understanding of the OTT services market in Ukraine and the advantages of each of them, which can help you choose your content streamer and service provider based on a comparative analysis of the entire OTT market in Ukraine.

The significance of the study. The study findings are significant for both science and practice in the context of the development of the Ukrainian media space and its adaptation to modern challenges. In the context of global crises and military conflicts, the study identifies key opportunities and challenges for OTT platforms, which provides important guidance for media strategists, government agencies, and academics. The paper highlights the current state of the Ukrainian media sector, focusing on the retransmission of entertainment content via OTT platforms. The findings identify and analyze the main trends in content distribution, taking into account the influence of important factors. For practice, in particular, for OTT platform owners, the study is an invaluable resource. They can use the results to continuously modernize and adapt their services to rapid changes in the industry, ensuring that their audience has access to the necessary and relevant content even in the face of uncertainty and challenges. Thus, the results will become an effective tool for improving strategies and business approaches in the modern media industry.

Prospects for further research. One of the unresolved aspects that should be addressed in future research is the role of Ukrainian OTT platforms in shaping national cultural identity. The study could be expanded to include an analysis of the impact of OTT services on the speech practices and cultural stereotypes of Ukrainian society. Additionally, the prospects may include a comparative analysis of the development strategies of OTT platforms in Ukraine and other countries, taking into account their impact on the global media landscape. Another equally important aspect may be the study of the impact of the emergence of the latest technologies, gadgets and devices, as well as smart features such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, customized offers through the collection and analysis of information about the user's mood and preferences, and others.

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