

# Doordarshan eyes partnership with streaming services

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**NEW DELHI:** Public broadcaster Doordarshan (DD) is exploring tying up with over-the-top (OTT) platforms for sharing their content through its Free Dish, India's only free direct-to-home (DTH) satellite TV service, people aware of the development said.

Doordarshan, which operates 23 satellite channels, covering about 92% of the country's population besides the DTH service, could help OTT platforms increase their reach, one of the people, a DD official, said on condition of anonymity. OTT platforms are content-streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and BigFlix.

DD is also looking at improving its own content to increase viewership and compete better with private broadcasters.

"DD has the largest rural reach while OTT platforms are largely urban. It's a win-win for both. Our viewers will get contemporary entertainment and they get rural reach, which is their future market," the official said.

OTT platforms reach about 16% of TV viewers, according to a study by Boston Consulting Group (BCG). Digital platforms account for 25% of media consumption by young viewers, and the share is likely to expand. The study forecast that OTT platforms' revenue, currently estimated at ₹3,500 crore, can grow to ₹35,000 crore in the next five years. A second DD official said the public broadcaster could ask these platforms to create content that is "suitable" for viewing on DD's network. "We would be looking at differentiated content; it could be educative or in public interest," this person said, also on condition of anonymity.

In addition to foreign OTT platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, domestic broadcasters have launched their own OTT platforms such as Voot (Viacom 18), Hotstar (Star India), Sony Liv and Zee 5. According to the BCG

**THE MOVE COULD HELP INCREASE THE REACH OF OVER-THE-TOP PLATFORMS, AND DD VIEWERS WILL GET CONTEMPORARY ENTERTAINMENT**

study, these OTT's offer a combination of ad support and behind-the-paywall content.

For OTT platforms, the monetary aspect would be the clincher in tying up with DD, said Samir Nair, head of Applause Entertainment, a content studio.

"Content created by the OTT platforms is expensive; their production costs are high so they would be looking at monetisation and cost. Each platform has different models; they would either be interested in selling content or syndicating it, but they will need to recover high investments (for content creation)," he said.

Prasar Bharati, of which DD is a broadcast arm, last month agreed to restart the process of auctioning slots on Free Dish, after approving a new policy for e-auctioning and a revised base price.

"We are thinking of either carrying out auctions for the eight slots that are empty or scrapping the existing contracts that are on extension to carry out fresh auctions. We have the option of cancelling the ones that have extensions, since the court had said that the day a new auction policy is formulated, the extensions will only be valid till then," the first person cited above said.

The last e-auction took place in July 2017, in which Free Dish earned ₹85.10 crore and awarded slots to 11 private broadcasters. A subsequent auction scheduled for August was cancelled by the broadcaster, citing administrative reasons. Base prices range from ₹6 crore to ₹15 crore, depending on the bouquet of services.