

# Zee5 readies to take on TikTok



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Mumbai, 16 February

Over-the-top (OTT) streaming service Zee5 will soon become the first in the country to launch a short video app, taking on ByteDance's TikTok. Timed just after the India debut of Disney+, which is slated for March-end on Hotstar, the move is aimed at increasing engagement and users, top executives at Zee5 said. The initiative is also in line with what Punit Goenka, managing director, Zee Entertainment Enterprises, had talked earlier about taking the broadcaster's digital business to the next level.

Zee5 has earmarked capital expenditure in excess of ₹100 crore over the next one year, 60 per cent of which will be used to beef up content, 20 per cent to enhance technology, and the rest for

marketing and sales.

The short video platform will be part of the Zee5 universe and will be monetised through advertising, said Chief Executive Officer Tarun Katial. In the beta stage currently, users will be able to upload 90-second videos while they catch up with original shows and movies on the streaming service.

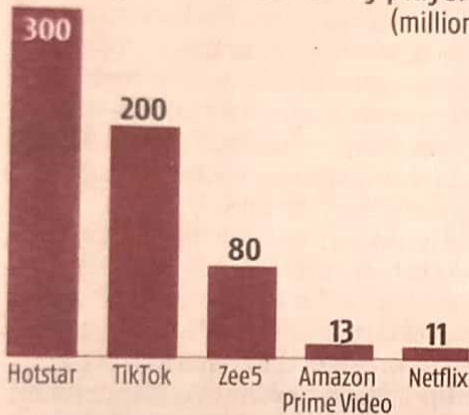
"Our in-house content will be repurposed into bite-sized entertainment for those seeking short-format videos. We will also bring our influencers, stars, and characters to interact

with users and run challenges from time to time," said Katial.

Additionally, Zee5 is also getting into the gamification of popular Zee TV characters, creating a fantasy league in a first for a streaming service.

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Monthly active users of key players (million)



Sources: Industry, company

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OTT market size in India (₹ cr)



\*Estimates  
Source: PwC

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Analysts say Zee5's effort to create a user-generated-and-engaged video platform comes as TikTok emerges as a 'break-out' app in India. Some 44 per cent — or 323 million — of TikTok's total app downloads in 2019 were from India, a 27 per cent jump over 2018.

Globally, the time spent on TikTok grew by 210 per cent in 2019, the bulk of it contributed by users in India, said experts. Zee5's monthly active users now stand at around 80 million and the plan, said Katial, was to take it to 100 million by June. Hotstar's monthly active user base, according to industry estimates, is pegged at 300 million, largely owing to its sports content. The entry of Disney+, however, will change the dynamics significantly for Hotstar, which will now have access to Disney's library of films and shows, in addition to sports.

While Zee5 has no plans to step into the sports genre, it has been steadily growing its slate of original shows and movies. This calendar year alone Zee5 will launch over 80 original shows, including sequels to popular franchises such as *Rangbaaz*, *Final Call*, *Abhay*, and *Broken But Beautiful*. It is rolling out digital-only films on its platform, apart from grabbing the video rights of popular Bollywood titles such as *Uri: The Surgical Strike*, competing with the likes of Amazon Prime Video and Netflix, who have been aggressive on that front.

Katial said the platform recently launched a progressive web application that requires less processing capacity to stream, enabling the user to watch content on any telecom network.

Zee5 is also working on optimising the video size of its shows to lower data consumption, at a time when data prices are set to rise in the domestic market.