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Risky Business

The Structure and Practice of Formal Film Distribution in the Hindi Film Industry

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"If content is king, distribution is God," quipped Sanjay Suri, an actor who had ventured into production with the film *I Am*, after a roundtable discussion on South Asian cinema in New York City in September 2010. Suri's comment characterizes film distribution as a tremendously generative force, which belies the conventional division of the political economy of filmmaking into the tripartite structure of production, distribution, and exhibition. In this chapter, I focus on distribution – the much overlooked and frequently misunderstood dimension of the Hindi film industry – and point to its crucially foundational and generative function within mainstream Hindi filmmaking.

Distribution is not just a matter of which film or whether a film makes it to an audience (Lobato 2012). In the case of the Hindi film industry, whether a film even gets made can also be dependent upon distributors and their particular arrangements with producers. In contemporary discussions about mass media, attention to the structures and processes of distribution often focuses on new platforms and opportunities for distribution made possible by the rapid proliferation of ICTs or on informal and extra-legal circulations made possible by piracy (Larkin 2004; Lobato 2012; Sundaram 2010). It is assumed that the structures and practices of formal theatrically oriented film distribution are standardized, transparent, and hence unremarkable to examine in greater detail.[1] However, in the case of the Hindi film industry, which is highly fragmented with hundreds of independent producers, distributors, exhibitors, and financiers, theatrical distribution provides the bulk – approximately 70% – of the industry's revenues (KPMG 2017).[2] Feature filmmaking in India also troubles the simple binary of formal and informal distribution outlined in scholarship where formality refers to industries that are

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regulated, measured, and governed, and informality refers to those that are not (Lobato 2012, 4). In the Hindi film industry, regulation, measurement, and governance have been perennial problems and many of its characteristics, such as the dearth of accurate statistics, inability to accurately measure outcome, low barriers to entry, porous boundaries, tax evasion, cash transactions, oral contracts, and incentives to obfuscate commercial information, are those more commonly associated with the "informal" sector.[3]

In this chapter, I elaborate upon the critical role played by distributors in the Hindi film industry and argue that in order to understand the industry and its practices of filmmaking at any given point in time, it is crucial to understand the structures and processes of formal film distribution. The nature of Hindi film distribution shapes and influences many other practices within the industry from casting and budgets to release strategies and the lack of formalized audience testing or market research. What do we learn about the Hindi film industry and the filmmaking process if we make distribution, rather than production, central to the analysis?[4] Examining distribution helps us to recognize the nature of power within the industry, understand how risk is managed, and trace the changing political economy of the film industry. It also expands our understanding of cinema beyond the finished film. While the film print, both in its earlier celluloid and current digital form, is the object that is distributed, formal film distribution in India is also premised on the *promise* of a film, a hypothetical enterprise where distributors speculate on intangibles such as stardom, theme, or plot.

This chapter examines how Hindi film distribution is produced, as well as what its distribution produces by outlining how the distribution network for Hindi cinema came into being and the impact that distribution structures and arrangements have had on the Hindi film industry (Lamarre 2015, 94). First, I outline the history of the film distribution system focusing on the reasons offered for its emergence, its cartographic specificities, and distributors' critical financial role in filmmaking. Then, I describe a series of conflicts between producers and distributors at different moments in the Hindi film industry's history to illustrate the nature of power and how risk is conceptualized and managed within a fragmented industry.

History and Structure of Distribution

Hindi films have been distributed throughout India and the world by a decentralized network of independent distributors who have been one of the primary sources of finance for Hindi film production until the entry of media conglomerates and corporate producers around 2003. Distribution as a distinct and separate structure within Indian filmmaking, however, did not emerge until the sound era in Indian cinema. The 1951 Film Enquiry Report, also referred to as the Patil Report, detailed the emergence of distribution as a critical feature of the film industry. Citing the 1928 *Indian Cinematograph Committee Report,* the *Patil Report* pointed out that during the silent era there were eleven film distribution agencies, which only distributed foreign films. In the case of Indian films, producers negotiated directly with exhibitors for their films' release. The Patil Report explained that with the increase in film production after the advent of sound, expansion of permanent and touring cinemas, as well as the geographical vastness of India, the "distributor has come into his own as an intermediary between the producer and the exhibitor. He is today the medium through which the other two branches of the industry are connected and the supply and demand linked" (Patil 1951, 115). Who were these distributors? The Report does not offer much detail other than to state, "The distributors in India are usually men who can command finance and seek remunerative investment and it is, therefore, easy for them to finance producers or become producers themselves, when this promises a better return on the investment" (Patil 1951, 116). The fluidity between occupational roles and low barriers to entry implied in this statement continues to be a characteristic feature of the contemporary Hindi film industry (Ganti 2012b).

Between 1938 and 1948, the Report noted a 400% increase in the number of distributors for Indian films from 214 to 887, with an associated decrease in the number of distributors for foreign films from 27 to only 10 in 1948. The majority of distributors were in southern India, since more than a third of the cinemas in India were located there. Madras, Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore, and Cochin formed the single largest unit in 1948 accounting for 338 distributors out of a total of 887 distributors in India. The Southern or South Circuit was one of five regional distribution circuits that had emerged by the late 1940s when UNESCO conducted a survey of film, press, and radio across seventeen countries. It mentioned that India was divided into five regional distribution circuits that covered India in "fairly distinct areas, grouped around the main production and distribution centres" (UNESCO 1948, 266). The circuits were: Bombay, CP and CI, North, South, and Bengal (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Distribution circuits of India, circa 1940s

Circuit	Regions	Cinemas
Bombay	Bombay Presidency, Kathiawar, Goa	Over 460
CP & CI	Central Provinces, Central India, Berar, Kandesh, Rajputana	Over 200
North	United Provinces, Delhi, East Punjab, Kashmir	Approx. 280
South	Madras, Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore, Cochin	Over 700
Bengal	West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam	Over 300

These circuits were a slightly rearranged version of the territories that existed a decade earlier. In 1939, as part of reporting about the Indian Motion Picture Congress that took place in Bombay in May, *The Times of India* published a special feature, "Indian Film Industry's Silver Jubilee Supplement." Among a series of articles about varied facets of filmmaking, the one about distribution stated the "country is divided into four main distributing zones: Madras Presidency, Northern India, Bengal and Burma, and Bombay combined with Central India and the Central Provinces."[5]

While the internal political boundaries of India have been dynamic and drawn and redrawn since 1947, the distribution territories that developed in the 1930s preserve a colonial geographical logic, both in terms of their boundaries as well as their names – i.e., Central Province, Central India, East Punjab, Nizam. The five distribution territories in India mentioned above are more commonly divided into 14 sub-territories, which are further divided into smaller units since a single distributor is unable to bear the cost of an entire territory, making the subdivisions the more salient distribution categories in terms of structuring film transactions.[6] The sub-territories are Bombay, Delhi/UP, East Punjab, West Bengal or Eastern, Bihar/Nepal, Assam, Orissa, CP (Central Province)/Berar, CI (Central India), Rajasthan, Nizam, Mysore, Andhra, and South or Tamil Nadu/Kerala. Thus, the distribution territories do not correspond to the contemporary political division of India into linguistically organized states. For example, the political-linguistic state of Maharashtra, of which Mumbai is the capital, is divided and portioned into the Bombay territory and the sub-territories of CP/Berar and Nizam. The Bombay territory, which is considered the territory with the highest revenue potential, includes the city of Mumbai and its suburbs, the entire state of Gujarat, parts of Karnataka, and only parts of Maharashtra. Another example of the distribution network overriding political boundaries is the inclusion of the independent nation-states of Nepal and Bhutan as parts of the domestic Eastern territory rather than the overseas territory (Map 1).[7] These distribution territories for Hindi cinema have been central to creating a taxonomy of the film industry's audiences. The geography of the distribution network produces a social imaginary of difference whereby taste is ascribed onto place, implicitly mapping film-viewing preferences in a vast and culturally diverse country like India on to ethnic and linguistic markers of identity (Ganti 2012a).

Intrigued by the persistence of colonial boundaries, I asked Santosh Singh Jain, the former president of the Central Circuit Cine Association – one of the most powerful organizations of distributors and exhibitors in the Hindi film industry that was incorporated in 1952 – why there had been no change in the nomenclature or geography of the film territories since the 1930s–1940s. Jain explained that it had to do with the temporal terms of distribution. Distributors used to purchase rights to exploit a film for ten years. Therefore, reconfiguring the film territories

Map 1 "Indian Film Distribution Territories" courtesy of Shyam Shroff, Shringar Films Pvt. Ltd.

to correspond to the political divisions that continued to be in flux well after 1947 would throw distributors' commercial arrangements into disarray. Jain stated:

> I had a picture for ten years, so if I have two years left, I don't want to give up my rights. I've been distributing in the same area, when I get a new picture I want to continue in the same area – that's how the system continued. If a geographical change came, and if I go along with the change, then I'll lose my rights of exploitation and my income will stop, so let me continue in this way in the original region.[8]

Jain's statements indicate the priority of temporality over geography in distribution arrangements.

The Patil Report also pointed to the critical financial role played by distributors in the production process. It stated that in many cases the distributor is not "a mere renter of films," but also directly finances production, and "in fact, in the financial scheme of the industry, the distributor has in some cases larger stakes than either the producer or exhibitor" (Patil 1951, 115). The Report also characterized the distributor's financial significance as a "baneful influence" on filmmaking because producers were beholden to distributors' ideas about what would be commercially successful in order to obtain finance (Patil 1951, 116). It mentioned that distributors "have been known to make suggestions about the story and even the music in the film," and "considering the financial relations between the producer and distributor, such 'suggestions' are generally taken as mandatory by the producer" (Patil 1951, 116). While the Patil Report points out and criticizes the crucial role played by distributors by providing finance for film production, its discussion also demonstrates how distributors operate as the primary consumer or audience for producers.

V.L. Vasa, the Vice-President of the Indian Motion Picture Distributors' Association (established in 1938), offers a contrast between distribution arrangements before and during World War II in an article published in the *Indian Talkie 1931–56: Silver Jubilee Souvenir*. In the early sound era, from 1931–1935, it was common for producers to choose a distributor and take advances for each film, with the agreement to supply the specific distributor with all of their films for the year. Under such an agreement, producers would refund the distributor any deficits incurred as a result of poor box-office performance. According to Vasa, this arrangement "imparted stability not only to production but to distribution also, as the producers gained in the case of successful pictures and the distributors could recover their losses, if any, from the pictures of the same producers, as there was a continuity of supply" (1956, 42). Vasa asserted that the decline in the number of films produced between 1941–1946 led to a change in the way producers negotiated distribution arrangements, whereby producers tried to displace the burden of risk on to distributors either by selling territorial rights or negative rights or by taking a minimum guarantee from distributors to cover their production costs.[9] While some producers continued with an older pattern of shouldering all of the risk, they still increased the amount of advances demanded from distributors. Thus, according to Vasa, "a beginning was made for the provision of finance by the Distributors along with the risk connected with production" (Vasa 1956, 42).

The decline in production coupled with an increase in the number of distributors – 400 distributors for 250 features in 1947 according to Vasa – created a situation where producers were willing to change distributors for every film and therefore "advance agreements have lost their meaning, as most producers are not in a position to refund the deficit, if any" (Vasa 1956, 42). Vasa lamented that by 1956, there were 700 distributors for Hindi films, which had raised the prices of films to "uneconomic levels due to shortage of theaters" (Vasa 1956, 42).[10] Vasa further complained, "Under such strange distressing conditions, it sometimes happens in Bombay Circuit that the distributor loses not only the amount he has paid to the producer by way of net minimum guarantee, but much more as he has to bear the brunt for exorbitant publicity costs and theatre deficits, which cannot be covered by the exploitation income from the circuit" (Vasa 1956, 43). The distributors' woes detailed by Vasa – from the prices charged by producers to the high costs of publicity and theater rentals – have been remarkably consistent over the span of Hindi film production in the post-Independence era. Such complaints are a regular feature of the discourse found in trade journals such as *Film Information* or *Trade Guide* that have been reporting about the Hindi film industry for decades.

Another persistent feature of the distribution apparatus for Hindi cinema dating back to the post-World War II era have been the types of arrangements between producers and distributors. The Patil Report lists four main types:

1) Outright purchase of the negative rights or exploitation rights perpetually for a specific period.
2) Functioning as an agent of the producer for a fixed commission, which normally varies between 10 and 20% of the returns.
3) Paying an advance against the lease of exploitation rights and a commission on the proceeds.
4) Offering a minimum guarantee to the producer against the lease of exploitation rights of a picture and a commission on the proceeds. (Patil 1951, 118)

Three of the four arrangements – outright sale, commission basis, and minimum guarantee – have continued into the present. When distributors buy a film on an outright basis, they pay the producer for the right to distribute a film for a certain amount of time. All expenses incurred in the distribution of the film as well as all income earned are solely the distributors. Not a very common practice, outright sale was the most common arrangement for overseas distribution until the late 1990s. When a film is distributed on a commission basis, distributors bear the least amount of risk because at the most they may invest in a film's publicity and print costs. Distributors deduct a certain percentage (25–50%) of box-office receipts as a commission and remit the rest to the producer.

The most common distribution arrangement in the film industry has been the minimum guarantee or "MG" system, which basically provides the working capital for production, where the territorial distributor bids for and guarantees the producer a specific sum that is disbursed in installments from the onset of production. For much of the post-Independence era, Hindi film producers have financed films primarily through the sale of their theatrical distribution rights within the MG system. Distributors normally pay 30–40% of the contracted amount during the production phase and the remainder at the time of the delivery of prints. At the time of a film's release, distributors pay for the print and publicity costs as well as theater rental. After distributors cover their costs and take their 20–25% commission, any remaining box-office collections are shared equally with the producer.

In such a system, territorial distributors bear the majority of the risk since the producer is guaranteed a certain price for the rights. Producers with clout price their films in order to make a profit, as there is such high uncertainty about the box-office success of any film. Even though the minimum guarantee system ostensibly accrues profits to producers once there is an overflow – the term used for the remainder of box-office revenues after distributors cover their cost and earn their commission – the chance of one's film generating an overflow is only between 10–15% yearly. The other factor in producers' pricing decisions is that they cannot trust distributors to share the overflow since distributors frequently use the revenues from successful films to cover their losses from unsuccessful films. Such a scenario is a consequence of the absence of a transparent system of data collection, especially when distributors are based far from Bombay.

Distributors are not only critical to the production process, but also to the classification of commercial outcome. One dominant metric for categorizing commercial outcome followed by the trade press, is based upon whether or not distributors make a profit and how much of it they make. Table 1.2 classifying the varying levels of commercial success, reveals the expectations that operate within the industry regarding how much films should earn. For example, a film that earns twice its cost, by which is meant the distributor's cost, is categorized only as a "semi-hit." Furthermore, although until the early 2000s distribution was decentralized and there were very few all-India distributors, the trade press tended to represent an all-India or "universal" hit as the benchmark, so that if a film did extremely well in one or two territories, earning more than thrice its cost for its distributors – what could be categorized as a "super-hit" – but did not fare as well in other parts of India, then its ranking got downgraded.[11]

Therefore, whether a Hindi film is a hit or a flop is actually connected to the distributor and not the theatrical audience. It is the distributor's pricing decisions rather than the number of tickets sold that determines whether a film is classified as a box-office success or failure. Such a formulation is connected to the fragmented nature of production and distribution where the sale of distribution rights has been the most common source of finance capital for filmmaking. In the MG system, the distributor's profit is a fact that could be independent of how many people actually saw

Table 1.2 Trade press classification of box-office outcome

Classification	**Super-Hit (AA)**	**Hit (A1)**	**Semi-Hit (A)**	**Overflow (BB)**	**Commission Earner (B1)**	**Average (B)**
Distributors' Earnings	3x cost or more	2 to 3x cost	about 2x cost	1.25 to 2x cost	1.2 to 1.25x cost	1 to 1.2x cost

Source: Data from Ganti, Tejaswini. 2012a. Producing Bollywood: Inside the Contemporary Hindi Film Industry. Durham: Duke University Press.

a film, for a distributor could have paid a high price for the rights of a film and have not earned as high a profit as anticipated. Thus, the amount of profit is not necessarily congruent with the size of the viewing audience. This is also because movie ticket prices in India are completely elastic; they can vary by movie, day, date, time of day, week of release, and seating location. For highly anticipated films, ticket prices are raised quite astronomically, and there can be a 100% differential between the ticket prices for different movies playing at the same theater. The auction-system for allocating distributors to films produces what is known in economic theory as a "winner's curse," so the distributor who wins the rights has the highest chance of having overestimated what a film will gross, hence having the highest chance for a flop (Thaler 1988).

The categories of hit and flop are thus generated when distributors' expectations are disrupted. High expectations can yield a flop and low expectations can yield a hit. Although as the buyers of films, distributors occupy the structural position of consumers within the filmmaking process, they are rarely implicated in the wide-ranging discussions about the commercial outcome of a film carried out in the film industry, print and broadcast media, and among viewers. Instead, filmmakers discuss box-office performance in terms of audience composition, tastes, and desires. Hits and flops are interpreted and represented by the news media and the film industry as indices of audience subjectivities rather than of distributors' commercial predictions (Ganti 2012a).

The emergence of the independent distribution system was significant for the Hindi film industry as distributors played a critical role in financing film production. However, this role did not translate into a consolidation of power within the industry. While the 1951 Patil Report cited distributors' creative interference, overall commercial orientation, and financing arrangements as issues that plagued producers, the post-Independence era has witnessed several contestations between producers and distributors over the sharing of risk, the duration of rights, and efforts to discipline and streamline production. In the following section, I discuss conflicts that arose between distributors and producers from the late 1960s until the early 2000s over the minimum guarantee system, actors' assignments, video rights, and satellite rights.

Contestations between Distributors and Producers

The lack of integration between production and distribution in Hindi filmmaking has meant that producers and territorial distributors often have competing interests. As a field of cultural production, the Hindi film industry's central dynamic has been contestations between agents who command cultural and symbolic capital, like producers and directors, and those who command economic capital like distributors (Bourdieu 1993). Disputes between distributors and producers over the decades highlight the fragmented nature of the Hindi film industry, its members' constant attempts to transfer risk, and distributors' efforts to discipline and rationalize the production sector. The changing nature of disputes also provides us insights into the transformations of the structure and political economy of the Hindi film industry that have occurred over the years and into the millennium. My discussion will focus on three main points of conflict: the minimum guarantee system; actors' schedules and assignments; and non-theatrical distribution rights.

Minimum Guarantee and the Sharing of Risk

While the minimum guarantee system (MG) has been the most prevalent distribution arrangement in the Hindi film industry, it has also been the one most criticized by distributors. As early as 1939, during the First Session of the Indian Motion Picture Congress, the Indian Motion Picture Distributors Association (IMPDA) passed a resolution (#20) which stated, "The present system of distributing pictures on a minimum guarantee is not in the interests of the film industry and urges upon all producers that distribution should be granted without asking minimum guarantee from the distributors" (Indian Motion Picture Congress 1939). Distributors' objections at that time were connected to the scarcity of capital along a film's circulatory apparatus, for according to the rationale stated in the resolution, an MG to producers meant that distributors had to charge an MG to exhibitors who were reluctant to pay. The resolutions from the Motion Picture Congress hint at the upper hand held by exhibitors over distributors; Resolution 13 by the IMPDA called upon exhibitors to stop booking stage shows and other stage attractions along with films as these were "ruinous to the general progress of the trade" (Indian Motion Picture Congress 1939).

Perhaps the most intense confrontation between producers and distributors over the MG system occurred in 1968 when distributors in Delhi-UP, East Punjab, CP-CI, and Rajasthan territories decided that they would no longer offer a minimum guarantee to producers and would only distribute films on an advance basis. As described above, in the advance arrangement, distributors advance an amount of money to producers, who have to repay the amount regardless of the film's fate at the box office. Unlike the MG system, the advance arrangement shifts the burden of risk entirely on to the producer. Hindi film producers retaliated immediately by calling for a ban on new releases in these territories. The Indian Motion Pictures Producers Association (IMPPA) and the Film Producers Guild of India (FPGI) called upon its members to refrain from entering into any contracts on an advance basis with distributors from the Central Circuit Cine Association (CCCA), Motion Picture Association (Delhi), and the East Punjab Motion Pictures Association – a move that could affect more than 1500 cinemas in the region. This dispute was extensively covered by *The Times of India*, including appearing several times as front-page news.[12] Even the Central government stepped in with the

Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting, K.K. Shah, attempting to adjudicate between the different parties as well as explain the crisis to the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of Parliament.[13] The dispute was finally resolved several months later in July 1968, when representatives of the IMPPA and the FPGI signed an agreement with the CCCA resuming business with mutually agreed upon ceilings on the minimum guarantee payable by distributors to producers.[14]

The dispute between distributors and producers was essentially over the sharing of risk, which was precipitated by a great deal of commercial failure in 1967. According to one news report, over 90% of the films, even those with big name stars, had flopped at the box office.[15] Under the MG system, distributors are more vulnerable to the vagaries of box-office performance than producers and thus the attempt by northern distributors to transfer the risk of the unpredictability of commercial performance on to producers.

The attempts by distributors in 1968 to impose a limit to the amount offered as a minimum guarantee did not last for very long, as subsequent trade discourse continues to lament the unreasonable amounts being demanded by producers as MG's. The January 9, 2016 issue of the trade magazine, *Film Information*, in a feature written by its editor, Komal Nahta, entitled "Lessons Year 2015 Taught," explicitly asserts, "overpricing is bad," referring to producers' practices of selling their distribution rights for very high sums with the assumption that distributors will never pay the overflow due to producers. Nahta complains, "The prices at which films are sold today are so prohibitive that the norm seems to be: losses to the distributors and profits to the producers! In other words, producers are not concerned about how their distributors will earn money so long as they (producers) make huge profits. That is why producers sell the distribution rights of their films at crazy prices."[16] The continuing phenomena of "overpricing" highlights three features of the Hindi film industry: the fact that distributors are willing to pay producers their asking "crazy" prices reveals that distributors perceive the potential for immense profit from these very films; distributors' readiness to buy certain films from which they do not recover their investment, demonstrates the highly uncertain knowledge environment in which they operate and their inability to predict audience response – for a film is only "overpriced" if the distributors did not profit; and finally, that the industry has very porous boundaries and few barriers to entry so that anyone with the requisite amount of capital who is willing to speculate on the commercial fate of a film can become a distributor.

"Star Ceilings": Regulating and Disciplining the Production Sector

Ever since the decline of the studio system in the aftermath of World War II, the Hindi film industry has been a star-oriented, star-driven, and star-controlled industry. Stars represent the apex of the film industry's hierarchy and wield a tremendous power within filmmaking, specifically in the conceptualization stage. It is important to note that not all actors are categorized as "stars." The Hindi film industry has a particular taxonomy of actors related to narrative presence, commercial success, career trajectory, and tenure. Furthermore, celebrity is not synonymous with stardom. Stars are those select actors who not only essay the roles of male and female protagonists within a Hindi film narrative, but are also regarded as a scarce commodity by producers, distributors, and financiers, and thereby monopolize the finance capital of the industry.

Producers frequently raise finance for their films on the strength of the star cast rather than the script. Scripts are usually written with specific male stars in mind and they possess the power to promote or destroy projects. Male stars often have more power than producers and directors to green light a film in the industry and they frequently initiate projects or are the first ones consulted about a project. If writers, producers, or directors who have not yet made a mark for themselves in the industry can persuade a male star about their story idea or script, the chances of it turning into a film are very high, since casting a male star is usually the first step in putting together a Hindi film. A star's readiness signals to producers, financiers, or directors the viability of a project, and once he is on board, this fact is used in the pre-production or early stages of production to raise finance and sell the distribution rights of the film.

What perhaps differentiates actors in the Hindi film industry most readily from their Western counterparts is that Hindi film actors since the 1950s have worked on multiple films simultaneously and therefore have huge bodies of work. This style of working is a consequence of the financial scenario that emerged after the breakdown of the studio system in the late 1940s. Due to the lack of steady finance, principal photography on a film occurred in a series of discontinuous schedules ranging from two days to two weeks over the span of months or even years, rather than from start to finish in one schedule, as producers tried to raise finance throughout the production process. Rather than being out of work during the periods that a particular film was not being shot, actors took on multiple assignments to be assured a steady stream of work and earnings. This system then bred its own vicious cycle where even if a producer had the requisite finance, actors were unavailable for a continuous production schedule as they had other film commitments. Therefore, the average elapsed time from the commencement of production to theatrical release took several years, which meant that distributors had to wait several years before they could recoup their costs or realize profits from their investment in particular films.

At different moments in the industry's history, distributors have attempted to discipline and regulate stars by imposing limits, or "ceilings" in industry parlance, on the number of film assignments they can take on simultaneously. On October 19, 1970, the Central Circuit Cine Association (CCCA), Indian Motion Pictures Producers Association (IMPPA), and the Film Producers Guild of India (FPGI) adopted a resolution stipulating that stars could not work on more than six films simultaneously. However, by February 1971, the FPGI changed course and distanced itself from the resolution with top producers arguing for a "flexible ceiling," stating that a strict application of the six film rule hampered producers from completing several half-finished films.[17] By September 1971, the FPGI decided to scrap the ceiling and the CCCA responded by ordering its members to not distribute films in which the leading stars had more than six films on hand.[18] According to the president of the CCCA, more than 600 films were still incomplete because of stars taking on too many assignments.[19] On April 12, 1972, CCCA and IMPPA passed another resolution calling upon its members to not enter into any contracts for the exhibition of films that starred actors working in more than six films at a time. However, after the producer Pramod Chakravarty brought a lawsuit against these resolutions in the Bombay Civil Court, the CCCA and IMPPA decided to reach a settlement and revoke the resolutions in August 1972.[20]

Efforts to impose a ceiling surfaced again in 1989 when the Film Producers Combine passed a resolution restricting its members from initiating a film featuring any of the forty stars whom they considered "over busy" or "overcommitted." The ceiling imposed at this time was 12 films for male stars and 15 films for female stars and character actors; the explosion of production by the late 1980s was apparent by the fact that some stars were committed to as many as 35–50 films at one time.[21] However, news reports at the time mentioned how industry insiders were skeptical of the ability to enforce the ceiling because if a top producer chose to ignore the resolution – as had happened in 1971–1972, nothing could really be done.[22]

When distributors attempted to enforce the 12-film ceiling by blocking the exhibition of films that flouted the resolution, the courts were not on their side. In December 1995, when the Film Distributors Council (FDC) blocked the exhibition of the film *Gambler* (Dayal Nihalani, 1995) because its producer made it with a male star who already had 12 film assignments for the year, the producer, Dhirubhai Shah, took the matter to the Monopolies & Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (MRTPC) charging that the FDC was engaging in restrictive trade practices. The MRTPC ruled that the film's screening could not be blocked.[23] Shah also broke away from the Filmmakers Combine and created a competing organization within the industry – the Association of Motion Pictures and Television Program Producers – as a way to bypass the resolution and the Filmmakers Combine.

These struggles over controlling actors' film assignments illustrate distributors' attempts to discipline and rationalize what appeared to be an overly chaotic and slow-moving production sector. Since the 2000s such contestations have diminished because top stars have voluntarily cut down on the number of film assignments. While many A-list directors in the post-millennium Hindi film industry only work on one film at a time, actors still work in multiple projects, but the numbers are much less than before – three to five rather than ten to fifteen, although new entrants into the industry frequently take on a rash of assignments. However, most actors publicly proclaim their desire to work on only one film at a time since this is perceived as a mark of quality and commitment to better cinema. Producers and directors with clout and respect can demand "block" dates from their actors and try to finish their shooting in one or two continuous schedules. The easier availability of funds (at much more reasonable interest rates) as a result of institutional finance and the entry of corporate production companies into the Hindi film industry from the early 2000s has also mitigated the financial uncertainties that plagued the production process, which was one of the underlying reasons for stars' mushrooming film assignments. As a result, since the mid-2000s films are being made much faster; many projects having their theatrical release within a year to fifteen months after the onset of production rather than the eighteen months to three years (or even longer) that it used to take in previous decades.

Temporality and Non-Theatrical Rights

Every new technology of audio-visual dissemination from video to satellite television to streaming has offered new revenue sources for producers, while posing a challenge to traditional theatrical distribution, which has led to periodic conflicts between producers and distributors over the duration of distribution rights. To understand these conflicts, it is first necessary to understand the distribution network's temporality. Traditionally, distributors bid for and bought the exclusive rights to distribute a film theatrically for 5–10 years in their particular territory. In addition to dividing India into territories and sub-territories, the distribution network also subdivides each territory by revenue-earning potential into "A-, B-, and C-class centers." A-class centers are generally more populated – major urban centers and large cities – with more cinemas and thus generate the largest revenues for the distributor. Another defining feature of an A-class center is the ability to fully collect revenues, for producers and distributors frequently comment that once their films are in B- or C-class centers, which include touring cinemas, they have no means of accurately tracking a film's earnings. Historically, such a division has meant that films were first released in A-class centers to garner their full commercial potential after which they slowly made their way to B- and C-class centers. Even then, Hindi films were not released in all of the major cities simultaneously. Films would be released first in Bombay and then open a few weeks later in other cities like Calcutta or Delhi.

This temporal arrangement was completely upended with the introduction of videocassette technology. After the Indian government relaxed import restrictions for VCR's and color television sets in 1982, the film industry was faced with unprecedented challenges as a result of a new, unregulated outlet for film viewing, from which it could not recover revenues.[24] Video's impact on the Hindi film industry was noticeable by the fact that references to the "video menace" started appearing in the film trade press by the early 1980s. For example, *Film Information* reported that at least a thousand pirated videos of the film *Desh Premee* (Manmohan Desai, 1982) were circulating in Bombay prior to the film's release on April 23, thereby cutting into the film's potential business. The entry of video in the early 1980s made a significant impact on the theatrical business in B- and C-class centers due to the time lag between a film's release in Bombay and its eventual appearance in the smaller towns, by which time the pirated videos of the films were easily available.

Initially, various organizations of the film industry mandated that producers could only sell video rights for overseas distribution and not for domestic, in an attempt to protect the theatrical sector. The All India Film Producers Council (AIFPC) issued a circular in April 1980, prohibiting producers from selling the video rights of their films for distribution within India. However, a complaint registered by a leading videocassette manufacturing company with the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (MRTPC) led to a ruling in June 1983 ordering the AIFPC to "cease and desist" from issuing such prohibitions.[25]

The conventional explanation for why Hindi filmmakers withheld the sale of domestic video rights has been explained as the film industry's shortsighted position. Pendakur asserts, "The film industry must be blamed for having created an adversarial relationship with the emerging video business. Instead of treating home video as a source of new revenues, Hindi film producers took an 'untenable' stand" (1989, 73). Such an explanation overlooks the fragmented nature of the industry and the competing interests between distributors and producers. As the primary source of capital and finance for filmmaking within the Hindi film industry, distributors, rather than producers, were the ones strongly opposed to the sale of video rights. The trade press during the early years of the advent of video, 1982–1984, illustrates this dissension. Strong statements by distributors threatening boycotts of producers who sell domestic video rights and denials by producers about having sold said rights kept appearing in trade magazines.

Producers started selling domestic video rights from 1984 and "officially" from 1987 onwards. In this period, in an attempt to recover revenues lost to piracy, producers released videocassettes of films simultaneously with their theatrical release. However, in December 1988, the Film Distributors' Council (FDC) along with the CCCA, IMPPA, and FPGI after many rounds of heated discussion passed a resolution stipulating that a film's video could not be released until 100 days after its theatrical release since the simultaneous video release was both cutting into the theatrical business as well as facilitating video piracy. The resolution was difficult to enforce as the issue emerged once again in 1994 when producers threatened to ban all new releases to protest the Film Distributors' Council's insistence that producers delay the release of videocassettes of their films for at least three months. While distributors argued for the chance to recover their investment from a film's theatrical release, producers argued for the right to earn revenues from the sale of video and cable rights.[26] While these conflicts over the timing of videocassettes were never resolved to either constituencies' satisfaction, certain release practices became standardized that affected the temporality of distribution. The simultaneous release of films in A-class centers as well as in the overseas territories began in the mid-1990s to thwart the problems of video and cable piracy in the higher revenue centers.

Interspersed in the struggles over the timing of video releases, was a significant conflict over the inclusion of video and ancillary rights in the standard distribution contract. On March 27–28, 1990, in a joint meeting between the Film Distributors Council (FDC) and Film Makers Combine (FMC) held in Delhi, distributors asserted that producers must include the video rights of their films in their distribution agreements since videos were adversely affecting theatrical box-office collections. Producers argued that granting video rights would not guarantee against piracy and insisted on their prerogative to sell their all-India video rights to video distributors. However, the FDC passed a resolution in that meeting declaring that no film would be acquired for theatrical distribution by its members and affiliates unless the home video, commercial video, cable TV, and rights for reproduction of the film in any other format were assigned simultaneously with its theatrical rights to territorial distributors. This resolution was to be applicable to all films for which the principal photography would commence on or after April 15, 1990.[27]

The most immediate response to this resolution was a spate of films – about 30 – starting production April 12–14, to circumvent the resolution. However, soon after, the Filmmakers Combine (FMC) condemned the resolution and released a press release in May stating that filmmakers were unanimous in their view that all rights – theatrical, commercial, non-commercial, video, TV, cable, and reproduction rights of the film in any other format – were the sole and exclusive property of producers and thus producers were entitled to deal with them in the way they saw fit. The FMC also characterized the issue in terms of freedom and autonomy, arguing that producers and distributors, like other business people, should be free to carry out their business according to their convenience and suitability without any interference from trade associations.[28]

By June, the FMC passed its own resolution condemning the FDC resolution as "arbitrary, illegal, unethical, and against all healthy trade practices," and decided to stop all deliveries of old and new pictures from August 9, 1990, in territories that were in the jurisdiction of the FDC, until the March 27/28 resolution was revoked. By early August, the FMC decided that it should open its own parallel distribution offices and formally inaugurated the Bombay Film Distributors' Association on August 4. These new associations would not insist on home video rights, TV rights, or any ancillary rights and they would provide a new option for producers to be able to release their films. The FMC stated that producers could release their films after the deadline through distributors who joined the Bombay

Film Distributors Association (BFDA). However, both the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association of India (CEAI) and Theatre Owners Association (TOA) had contracted arrangements with the Indian Motion Picture Distributors Association (IMPDA), which prohibited them from releasing films of distributors who were not a part of the IMPDA. The president of the CCCA, Santosh Singh Jain, quipped sarcastically in a feature in *Film Information*, "The Bombay Film Distributors' Association appears to me to be an imaginary distribution body. And since films distributed by the members of BFDA cannot be released in cinemas coming under the TOA and the CEAI, the BFDA will also have to construct cinemas – imaginary I suppose! That too, such cinemas have to spring up overnight."[29]

Not only was the unavailability of theaters a problem for the newly formed BFDA, many of the proposed associations in the northern territories of Delhi-UP and CPCI could not be formed due to a lack of support for creating a distributors' association to circumvent long standing organizations like the FDC and IMPDA. The FMC suffered further setbacks in its attempt to suspend all releases when the South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce and the Film Producers Guild of South India refused to direct their members to stop deliveries of their films. Many producers who had initially agreed to suspend the delivery of the prints of their completed films after August 9 had a change of heart and were purportedly requesting distributors to serve them with legal notices or court orders compelling them to deliver their films, thus enabling them to defy the FMC directive.[30]

What this particular battle between producers and distributors demonstrated was that the sites of power in the industry were decentralized and diffuse and neither group necessarily had the upper hand. While producers were unable to create an alternative distribution apparatus because of difficulties in expanding exhibition outlets, territorial distributors were not able to capture films' video and other non-theatrical rights. The conflict also illustrated the overall fragmentation and disunity within the industry where resolutions such as the FDC's demand of total rights or the FMC's declaration of an embargo on releases were difficult to implement and enforce. This particular conflict fizzled out as much larger issues emerged for the industry in the latter half of 1990 with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait leading to great losses in revenue from the Middle East and Gulf countries, which accounted for 25–30% of the industry's foreign earnings. Several months later in 1991, India embarked on an economic liberalization program that significantly altered the media landscape with the entry of satellite television, which had a tremendous impact on the Hindi film industry.

Each subsequent innovation in audiovisual technology has chipped away at distributors' monopoly over the circulation of films, and the disagreements between producers and distributors over the sale of rights continued into the millennium over the issue of satellite rights and telecasts. Distributors have always wanted a longer period to exploit films theatrically whereas producers have an incentive to sell the satellite telecast rights much earlier. Since the late 1990s, the rapid increase in the number of satellite television channels has benefited producers immensely, at the expense of distributors. In their bid to win audiences, satellite channels competed aggressively to buy the telecast rights for Hindi films and their willingness to pay substantial sums made satellite rights a significant source of revenue for producers. When a film did not do well at the box office, satellite rights offered producers a chance of recovering some revenue.

When satellite channels began to build their film libraries in the late 1990s, the sale of telecast rights resulted in conflicts between distributors who had traditionally obtained the rights to exploit a film for at least five years, and producers who were selling the broadcast rights for films, months after their release. Distributors protested that producers were denying them their right to recover their investment when films were broadcast on television before distributors had a chance to exploit the film theatrically. With the legitimate film print being broadcast on satellite channels just months after its theatrical release, distributors and exhibitors whose business was based in B- and C-class centers complained of significant losses due to decreasing theater attendance. Although producers and distributors came to an agreement in June 2000 that producers should wait one year before their new films were broadcast on television, the fierce bidding wars between satellite channels for broadcast rights made it difficult for many producers to honor the agreement. Producers and distributors came to a standoff in April 2003 when producers decided to withhold all new releases as a protest against distributors' demands that they wait at least six months before releasing their films on television. The boycott lasted for about four weeks and no new Hindi films were released, throwing off exhibition and release schedules.

The entry of satellite television in the early 1990s reduced the theatrical life of a film so that the terms of theatrical distribution have shrunk over the years from five years, to one year, to six-months and by 2012, three months. The advent of corporate production/distribution companies and the greater capital investment in exhibition infrastructure since the mid-2000s has also had a significant impact on distribution patterns, benchmarks of success, and the producer–distributor relationship. The window for a film's theatrical business has shrunk considerably due to the increase in the number of multiplex screens as well as the refurbishing of single-screen cinemas in smaller towns to enable digital delivery, whereby the film is transmitted to the theater via satellite, significantly reducing print costs and the opportunity for piracy. While these changes in exhibition have not increased the overall number of screens in India, they have done away with the temporal lag between the A-, B-, and C-class centers so that mainstream Hindi films with big-budgets and stars are released simultaneously across India and the world on a much wider scale than earlier decades. For example, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, because of the high costs associated with generating film prints – borne by the territorial distributor, a big-budget, much anticipated film would release with 200–500 prints in India, and perhaps another 100 in the overseas.

Since the entry of corporate distributors with their much deeper reserves of capital and the expansion of digital delivery to nearly half of the single-screen theaters in India, mainstream Hindi films currently release across 1500–3500 screens in India, and 300–1000 screens abroad. In such a scenario, producers and distributors are able to recoup revenues much faster, and the trade can assess the commercial fate of a film within the first two weeks of its theatrical run. Since the theatrical shelf life of a film has reduced from several months or even years to just a few weeks, the traditional tension between producers and distributors over the duration of rights has eased. These tensions have been replaced by those over revenue-sharing with exhibitors; producers and/or distributors have periodically clashed with multiplex operators over the terms of revenue-sharing, which came to a head in 2009 when producers and distributors withheld the release of Hindi films throughout India and the world for two months.

The entry of the Indian organized industrial sector into film production, and the ability of established producers to raise money from the Indian stock market by transforming their production companies into public limited companies, have diminished the role of the traditional territorial distributor from a source of finance and power to being a middleman between producer and exhibitor (Ganti 2012a). Since 2005, some commercially powerful producers have forgone the distributor and dealt directly with the multiplex chains, which harkens back to the silent era. In the instances where they are only distributing and not producing a film, the new corporate production/distribution companies are able to offer more lucrative distribution deals for producers because of their much higher threshold for financial risk than the traditional territorial distributor.

In the post-corporate scenario, established and successful producers have been able to offset the risk of financial loss by pricing the distribution, satellite, and music rights for their films in such a manner as to earn a profit prior to the film's release. These "table profits" as they are referred to in the industry have reached significant proportions because the corporates who have entered distribution are willing to pay enormous sums for a film's rights; these corporate distributors often recover and profit from their investment by re-selling the rights they have acquired from the producer to the independent territorial distributor who is still necessary to implement the actual release of a film especially in regions far from Bombay or other major urban centers. Thus, the advent of corporatization has further fragmented rather than consolidated the distribution sector.

Conclusions: The Future of Distribution in a Digital Landscape?

Much news was generated about the entry of Amazon and Netflix in 2016 both as content producers and distributors in the Indian media landscape, as the streaming platform economy expanded considerably in the region, and producers managed to unbundle their digital rights from satellite rights. The preliminary impact of these streaming platforms – referred to more commonly as OTT platforms – on the Hindi film industry was akin to the entry of satellite television with its bidding frenzy over broadcast rights as well as the tussle over the temporality of a film's release. The tensions are now between exhibitors and producers over when a film is available for streaming on an OTT platform. Paralleling earlier moments such as the emergence of satellite television and multiplex cinemas, the entry of OTT platforms profited the big players in the industry. Prominent production companies like Excel Entertainment, Dharma Productions, and Red Chillies signed package deals with Amazon Prime and Netflix, and films with established stars and directors fetched anywhere from 300–700 million (30–70 crores) rupees for their digital rights in 2018–2019, which enabled A-list producers to recover their production costs (and sometimes earn profits) even prior to their films' release or offset a poor theatrical box office. In 2018–2019, Netflix acquired nine and Amazon acquired 12 of the 30 highest grossing films of that year.[31] According to one young executive producer for a leading production company whom I spoke with in 2019, "Netflix and Amazon are willing to put down crazy figures because they think stars in India prioritize theatrical and therefore to attract stars, they are paying astronomical amounts for digital rights."

When the Covid-19 pandemic led to the closing of all movie theaters in India from March 2020, OTT platforms took on an even more significant role in the Hindi film industry as the only possible venue to release new films. Decisions by producers to premiere their films directly on platforms such as Amazon Prime and Disney-Hotstar rather than wait for theaters to open up led to a great deal of acrimony and conflict between producers and exhibitors.[32] The straight to digital release of films was represented by producers as a last-resort decision due to the extenuating circumstances of the pandemic and a way to stave off further financial losses incurred by waiting to release films.

With the entry of OTT platforms, we see once again how a new technology to disseminate films offers producers further opportunities to raise funds and earn profits while setting up competition to traditional modes of distribution and exhibition. However, the move to release films directly on these platforms as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic inhibits the very basis of how success is measured in the industry, which is through box-office outcome. Box-office outcome establishes the parameters of financial dealings – from star salaries to the amounts producers can charge for the sale of rights – and structures future decision-making within the industry (Ganti 2015). Equally significant is the way box-office outcome is used to market and publicize films as "hits" across various modes of media and to set the benchmarks for a star's popularity and power. Since digital platforms choose not to divulge viewing data, the ability of the film industry to determine a film's success or failure, and by analogy, the audience's verdict, is seriously undermined. For these reasons, direct digital release may not become the prevailing practice for mainstream filmmakers, post-pandemic.

What is distinctive about OTT platforms such as Amazon and Netflix, however, from earlier modes of dissemination is that by commissioning and greenlighting content they operate simultaneously as producers, distributors, and exhibitors – a sort of vertical integration that never existed in India. While the 1951 Patil Report lamented the "baneful influence" of distributors on filmmaking, OTT platforms thus far have been represented by media commentators and film professionals as having a salubrious effect because of their making available less mainstream and more niche content. Will OTT platforms fundamentally change the way films are made in India? Or will they adapt to the governing logics of the mainstream film industries? While the long-term impact that digital platforms will have on filmmaking in India remains to be seen, what is certain is that to understand the changing nature of filmmaking, one has to understand the changing practices of distribution.

Notes

1 Versus piracy and other informal networks; For example, Lobato posits a binary between formal and informal distribution and characterizes the former as marked by revenue-sharing business models, complex systems of statistical enumeration, and a structured release pattern Lobato (2012, 4).

2 This figure has not changed significantly for over a decade of industry reports.

3 Some sectors of the industry have become more formalized in terms of contracts and commercial transactions. For more about the structure, features, and political economy of the Hindi film industry see Ganti (2015 and 2012a).

4 This statement is inspired by Ferguson (2015).

5 "The Distribution Side of the Indian Film Industry: Scope for Organization" *The Times of India* May 5, 1939, A19.

6 Until 2001, the Rajshri Group was the only national distribution company – referred to as an "all-India" distributor in trade parlance – while all other distribution concerns were specific to a territory or a sub-territory.

7 A sixth territory, known as the "overseas territory," previously used to be undifferentiated from the point of view of distributors in India, but since the late 1990s has been subdivided into North America, United Kingdom, Gulf States, South Africa, etc.

8 Santosh Singh Jain (Former President, Central Circuit Cine Association), in conversation with the author, August 30, 2013.

9 This decline was a result of British restrictions on film stock during World War II. A Film Advisory Board was set up in 1940 by the colonial government and granted a monopoly over the distribution of raw film stock. By 1942 major shortages of raw stock occurred and only recognized producers received a maximum of 11,000 feet for features and 400 feet for trailers. Between 1943–1945, the colonial government imposed state control over raw stock distribution.

10 A moratorium on "non-essential building" right after Independence due to the shortage of cement and building materials meant that most states imposed a ban on theater construction and India to date has one of the lowest ratio of screens to population in the world.

11 When distributors throughout India provided the main source of finance capital for filmmaking, they bore a significant share of financial risk. Therefore, it was imperative for the overall functioning of the industry that films were positioned to succeed commercially all over India in order to project their ability to earn healthy profits for their territorial distributors. The idea of the universal hit was thus critical for the general financial health of the film industry (Ganti 2012a).

12 For example, the following front pages in 1968: March 13, "No new films after March 31:'strike' by Bombay producers;" March 29, "Film Producers and Distributors Reach Agreement;" March 31, "Shooting of films stops today;" April 1, "Bombay studios suspend production: 10,000 hit;" April 5, "Film Shows Not To Be Allowed in City from Today;" April 23, "City cinemas to reopen tomorrow;" July 10, "Film Producers & Distributors End Dispute."

13 See *The Times of India*, "Minister intervenes: film producers defer action," March 26, 1968a; "Panel to solve crisis in film industry," March 28, 1968c; "Shah explains film industry crisis," March 29, 1968d.

14 The ceilings were 725,000 rupees for color films plus a limit of 100,000 rupees for publicity; and 250,000 rupees for black and white films plus 50,000 rupees for publicity. See "Film Producers & Distributors End Dispute" *The Times of India*, July 10, 1986, 1.

15 "Anatomy of a Crisis" *The Times of India*, March 27, 1968, 8.

16 Komal Nahta "Lessons Year 2015 Taught" *Film Information*, January 9, 2016, 13.

17 The producers who broke away from the resolution included B.R. Chopra, G.P. Sippy, Shakti Samantha, and J. Om Prakash. See *The Times of India*, "Film Producers Split on Their Own Formula" February 23, 1971, 3.

18 "Cine Distributors Not for Lifting Curb" *The Times of India*, September 14, 1971, 5.

19 See "Project Reality, Satpathy Tells Film Industry" *The Times of India*, December 30, 1971, 5.

20 "Ceiling on Stars Withdrawn" *The Times of India*, August 5, 1972, 5.

21 Mahesh Mehta "Those Stars under the Ceiling" *The Times of India*, July 27, 1989, 17.

22 Ibid.

23 Biman Mukherji "Film Producers Clash over Star Rules" *The Times of India*, December 13, 1995, 1.

24 Restrictions were eased for a short period before the ASIAD games, taking place in New Delhi in November 1982. An estimated one million color television sets were imported as a result of this policy change, with the total number of sets in India increasing from five thousand to five million in less than two years (Pendakur 1989).

25 "MRTPC Sets Aside Ban on Video Rights" *The Times of India*, July 23, 1983, 10.

26 "Khalid Mohamed "Stop that Show!" *The Times of India*, May 8, 1994, 17.

27 "Distributors' Council's Resolve on Video Rights" *Film Information*, April 7, 1990.

28 "Producers Gear up to Hit Back at Distributors: FMC Favors Free Trade; Producers' General Meeting on June 10" *Film Information*, May 12, 1990.

29 Parallel Distributors' Body for Bombay Circuit Being Launched Today" *Film Information*, August 4, 1990.

30 "FMC Suffers Setbacks" *Film Information*, August 18, 1990.

31 Shikha Paliwal, "How the Rise of OTT Platforms Has Become a Boon for Films" *Exchange4Media*, August 27, 2019 https://www.exchange4media.com/media-othersnews/how-the-rise-of-ott-platforms-has-become-a-boon-for-films-99129.html.

32 "Movie Business Fights over Latest OTT Deals and Threats of Retributive Measures" *Film Companion*, May 19, 2020 https://www.filmcompanion.in/coronavirusupdates/movie-business-fights-over-latest-ott-deals-and-threat-of-retributive-measures.

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