



RESILIENCE STRATEGY ADOPTED BY FILM SECTOR DURING THE PANDEMIC IN SOUTHERN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

During covid-19 pandemic countless business sectors leading to serious disruptions for many industries. This study offers an understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the film industries and their response to the challenges they have encountered. Cinema of South India, refers to the cinema of the four major film industries in South India in four major languages of the region, namely — Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam. Based out of the cities of Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru, and Kochi, they are often colloquially referred to as Tollywood, Kollywood, Sandalwood, and Mollywood. In this paper we are denoting different problems faced by the film industries before pandemic and after pandemic. It shows the rise of OTT platforms and its impact in film industries. It compares the revenue of the respective film industries. Finally, it also shows the change in the perspective of the audience after the pandemic.

Cinema of South India, refers to the cinema of the four major film industries in South India; primarily engaged in making feature films in the four major languages of the region, namely — Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam. Based out of the cities of Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru, and Kochi, they are often colloquially referred to as Tollywood, Kollywood, Sandalwood, and Mollywood.

Locked down at home, movie lovers are catching old favorites and a few new releases on online streaming platforms. Big-budget movies wait for theaters to reopen, even as film-makers and distributors worry whether viewers will be ready to step into movie halls just yet. It is going to be a while before a movie-goer sits in a theater, a bag of buttered popcorn on the side, surrounded by scores of strangers. The threat of Covid-19 has brought cinema — the making of films, screening and viewing — to a standstill, and the impact is being felt across segments.

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INTRODUCTION

Cinema of South India, refers to the cinema of the four major film industries in South India; primarily engaged in making feature films in the four major languages of the region, namely — Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam. It is going to be a while before a movie-goer sits in a theatre, a bag of buttered popcorn on the side, surrounded by scores of strangers. The threat of Covid-19 has brought cinema — the making of films, screening and viewing — to a standstill, and the impact is being felt across segments.

The nationwide lockdown is being lifted in stages, but health experts warn against large gatherings or sitting in air-conditioned halls. Among those most affected by these warnings are film industries. With theatres and multiplexes shut, big production houses are not shooting and are deferring releases. Film shoots were cancelled soon after the nationwide lockdown took effect on March 25. Meanwhile cinema industry is not viewed as an “essential service” during lockdown. The South Indian film industry is in freeze frame as finished productions languish without release and half-finished ones wait to return to the sets after covid-19 lockdown. Big-budget movies wait for theatres to reopen. Southern Indian cinema stares at colossal losses. According to news reports, southern cinema industry faced big losses and the production and direction part got stuck. For example, the big budget producing- Telugu film industry got stuck with films valued at ₹2,000 crore. These films were either slated for release or were in production when Covid-19 halted all work.

At the same time locked down at home, most of the movie lovers are catching old favorites and started to adequate to watch few new releases on online streaming platforms. We should know that producers caught in a bind benefit from OTTs. A film released on an online platform means the producer is not just paid for it but also need not worry about distributors and expenses for theatrical exhibitions. The OTT platform gains because a new film premiered means more subscriptions for the platform, thereby leading to a revenue surge for streaming services. So, producers and many big shots are ready to use a new avenue for launching their projects — over-the-top (OTT) platforms such Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and other international and regional counterparts. Resilience after pandemic producers and directors are willing and wishing to release their big and small projects through OTT such like SOORARAI POTRU etc. By these details we can further go with depth analysis [6,7,8].

Methodology

The Indian film industry, one of the major industries for the economy in India has consistently performed well throughout the years and became the largest in the world. But over time the catastrophic effect of pandemic in the year 2020 causes major loss in film industries. Over 72% of global box office and over 12 billion collections in the form of tickets were dropped. The world health organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a public emergency on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March 2020, causing more than 674 million cases and 6.86 million deaths, making it one of the deadliest in history. The people got to lockdown in their respective areas for their own safety. Which increased most suicide cases over the world due to depression, and job losses. Film industry plays a major role in entertaining and relaxing people's minds. Due to increases in cases of covid patient's theaters were forced to shut down and people interactions were also prohibited. In order to rectify this situation OTT platform came into the picture.

Between January 2020 and January 2021, research showed increased engagement shares for over-the-top video original content and movies, along with television soaps. Making use of the situation, several new Over The Top (OTT) platform companies came into existence, and spread their footprint across India. Earlier, the OTT platforms were limited to cities. However, now it is available in every nook and corner of even villages. And the results are there for everyone to see. When people were restricted to their homes, they had no way to watch movies at theatres; naturally they moved towards Amazon Prime, Netflix, Disney+, Zee, Voot and other apps.

With the onset of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a number of movies released on OTT platforms, specifically Disney+ Hotstar and Amazon Prime Videos. Regional platforms' offering of local language content

also saw a boost during the same period. The first dependent OTT platform in India was BIGFlix, launched by Reliance Entertainment in 2008, however, today US giants Netflix and Amazon Prime Video are among the largest players. In terms of customer satisfaction, the subscription video on demand platforms Netflix and Amazon Prime Video also lead the way with scores of over 50%, meaning that a majority of users would recommend buying the streaming service to peers. However, in terms of the number of subscriptions, Hotstar (now Disney+Hotstar) is the most subscribed to OTT platform in India, with around 300 million active users and over 350 million downloads. For many middle-class Indians, Hotstar is more attractive due to its lower subscription rate.

OTT platform also called Over- the- top media service became one of the best solutions for film industries. Over 46 OTT providers of OTT are there in India, which distribute streaming media over the internet. OTT platforms have changed the way people consume content; we can see a sharp hike in the number of OTT platforms in India. Due to faster internet speeds and high demand of media products like sports, entertainment, lifestyle and movie etc. there is a tremendous growth of OTT platform.

Best OTT platforms with higher number of subscriptions: -

APPS	SUBSCRIPTION
NETFLIX	231 million
PRIME VIDEO	163.5 million
DISNEY + HOTSTAR	61.3 million
ALT BALAJI	3.88 million
SONY LIV	18.2 million
VOOT	1 million
DISCOVERY +	24 million
MX PLAYER	200 million
TVF PLAY	9.2 million
EROS NOW	18 million
ULLU APP	2.3 million
JIO CINEMA	5 million

Top four OTT platforms and their plans: -

NETFLIX

Netflix is a subscription-based streaming service that allows the subscribers to watch on internet-connected devices. It is one of the world's leading entertainment services with 231 million paid memberships in over 190 countries enjoying TV series, films and games in a variety of genres and languages. The content varies depending on the region. And it recommends TV shows and movies depending on the customer's interest. Netflix subscription plan is given below: -

MODEL	BASIC	STANDARD	PREMIUM	
Pricing (Indian Rupee)	₹149 INR/month	₹199 INR/month	₹499 INR/month	₹649 INR/month
Number of supported devices at a time	1	1	2	4
Number of mobile device or tablet to download at a time	1	1	2	4
Unlimited movies, TV shows, and mobile games	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ad-free TV shows and movies	✓	✓	✓	✓
Picture Quality	NA	Watch HD	Watch Full HD	Watch Ultra HD

PRIME VIDEO

Prime video is a streaming service offered by Amazon. While it's included as a part of Amazon Prime plans, it's also available as a standalone subscription for those who only want to enjoy the streaming platform.

Amazon has its own OTT platform in India called Amazon prime video. It is a growing OTT platform that offers a vast selection of movies and TV shows. The platform features a carefully picked collection of Indian shows and TV series, which is what Indian audiences want.

Plan Name	Plan Price	Duration	Benefits
Amazon Prime Mobile Yearly Plan	Rs 599	1 Year	You get access to Amazon originals, live cricket, and international movies; offline viewing; 480p resolution; single smartphone screen support
Amazon Prime Monthly Plan	Rs 179	1 Month	Free one or two-day deliveries, access to Amazon Prime Videos, Prime Music, special discounts, and more
Amazon Prime Quarterly Plan	Rs 459	3 Months	You end up saving a whopping Rs 78 over the plan and get access to early sale access on Amazon India
Amazon Prime Yearly Plan	Rs 1,499	1 Year	You end up saving a whopping Rs 337 over a year and get access to free deliveries, music and video streaming, and exclusive offers

DISNEY + HOTSTAR

Disney + Hotstar is a premium entertainment platform owned by the India based subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company. The Hotstar app is one of the most popular on-demand tv services in India, with over 100 million users. Enjoy a wide variety of shows, movies and sports events on Hotstar - streaming the latest entertainment content across various categories.

Disney+ Hotstar gives you access to all the channels owned by Star, such as HBO, Star World, Star Plus, and more. It also offers a variety of hot kids shows from Disney Channel, Disney XD and Disney Junior.

Plan Name	Plan Price	Duration	Benefits
Disney+ Hotstar Super Plan	₹899	1 Year	All content: Movies, live sports, TV, Specials Watch on TV or Laptop Number of devices that can be logged in:2 Max video quality: Full HD (1080p) Max audio quality: Dolby 5.1
Disney+ Hotstar Premium	Rs 299	1 Month	All content: Movies, live sports, TV, Specials Watch on TV or Laptop Number of devices that can be logged in:4 Max video quality:4K (2160p) Max audio quality: Dolby 5.1
Disney+ Hotstar Premium	Rs 1,499	1 Year	All content: Movies, live sports, TV, Specials Watch on TV or Laptop Number of devices that can be logged in:4 Max video quality:4K (2160p) Max audio quality: Dolby 5.1

TOP 5 BEST OTT FILMS RELEASED DURING THE PERIOD OF PANDEMIC

1. SOORARAI POTTRU

Soorarai Pottru is a 2020 Tamil language film directed by Sudha Kongara. It stars Suriya and Aparna Balamurali. This film is inspired by the events from the life of G. R. Gopinath, the founder of Air Deccan. This film was originally stated as a theatrical release, but it was affected by the pandemic. It was released digitally through Amazon Prime Video on 12 November 2020. The film received universal acclaim, praising the performance of both the lead roles. This film won five awards at the 68th National Film Awards, including Best Actor & Actress.

2. DRISHYAM 2

Drishyam 2 is a 2021 Malayalam film directed by Jeethu Joseph. It stars Mohanlal, Meena, Asha Sarath and Murali Gopy. This film is a remake of 2014 industry hit movie Drishyam. This film is a gripping tale of an investigation and a family which is threatened by it. This film was released through Amazon Prime Video Like the first film, this film received unanimous response all over the world and was remaked into several languages.

3. SARDAR UDHAM

Sardar Udham is a 2021 Hindi film directed by Shoojit Sircar. It stars Vicky Kaushal in the title role. This film is the biopic of freedom fighter Sardar Udham Singh. This Prime Video released film won critical and turned out to be one of the best Hindi films.

4. JAI BHIM

Jai Bhim is a 2021 Tamil film directed by T.J. Gnanavel, starring Suriya, Lijomol, Rajisha Vijayan and Manikandan. This film is based on real events. When a tribal man is arrested for a case of alleged theft, his wife turns to a human-rights lawyer to help bring justice. This film marks as one of the best films in Suriya's career and Lijomol's performance was critically acclaimed.

5. C U SOON

C U Soon is a 2020 Malayalam film directed by Mahesh Narayanan. This film stars Fahadh Faasil, Roshan Matthew and Darshana Rajendran. A software engineer, living in Kerala, is prompted by his family to look for his cousin's missing fiancée. As they stumble upon her video-based suicide note, he races against time to find her. this film was entirely shot on Apple devices. This film was one of the first films to be

released just after the pandemic starts. This film was critically successful and was lauded for its creative making.

TOP 5 GROSSING FILMS AFTER PANDEMIC

1. RRR

The global sensation RRR, directed by SS Rajamouli, starring Jr. NTR and Ram Charan, became the highest grosser worldwide. This film garnered a worldwide audience and won several accolades and grossed Rs.1258 crore worldwide.

2. KGF : CHAPTER 2.

The sequel to the 2018 kannada film KGF : chapter 1, directed by Prashanth Neel, became the highest grosser in Indian markets. It grossed Rs.437 crore from the Hindi markets and became the highest grossing film in Karnataka. The film's total collections crossed at Rs.1250 crore

3. PATHAAN

Shah Rukh Khan's film after four years exceeds all the expectations. The Sidharth Anand directorial film co-stars Deepika Padukone and John Abraham, is on the way to dethrone Baahubali 2's (approx. Rs.511 crore) record of highest grossing film in Hindi markets. The film's current collection stands at approximately Rs.1050 crore.

4. PONNIYIN SELVAN : PART 1

The two-part epic movie directed by Mani Ratnam consists of an ensemble cast including Vikram, Karthi, Jayam Ravi, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Trisha. This film is currently the highest-grossing film in the Tamil Nadu box office, grossing more than Rs.186 crore. The total collection of the film stands at Rs.500 crore.

5. VIKRAM

Kamal Hassan made a grand comeback through Lokesh Kanagaraj's Vikram. This film also has Vijay Sethupathi and Fahaadh Faasil in lead roles. This film overtook Baahubali's record of highest grosser in Tamil box office (which was later taken by PS:1). The film's total collection stands in between Rs.432 crore and Rs.500 crore.

CONCLUSION:

OTT platforms will garner more eyeballs — but only over time. Digital platforms are keeping people hooked to cinema while the theatres are closed. It has become the only, or limited option for people during the lockdown. This points out that while OTT platforms have gained popularity in the lockdown period, major projects will always look for theatre launches. Others, too, believe that OTT releases will not greatly affect the cinema industry. People will definitely come back to theatres because they are already fed up of watching the small screen and also some believe that cinema-watching is like a festival in India. "Movie-watching" is a part of social gathering for Indians. OTT platform has both negative and positive side that films be sold to OTT platforms only 60 days after being released in a theatre. Typically, a blockbuster movie runs for at least two months in major centers and multiplexes and positive side of OTT is that any blockbuster and personal wish list movie can be watched again and again with less charges at anywhere and anytime. There will be a time when OTTs and theatres will go hand-in-hand. But that ending may not happen yet.

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