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Digital Era: An Opportunity for Independent Film Makers



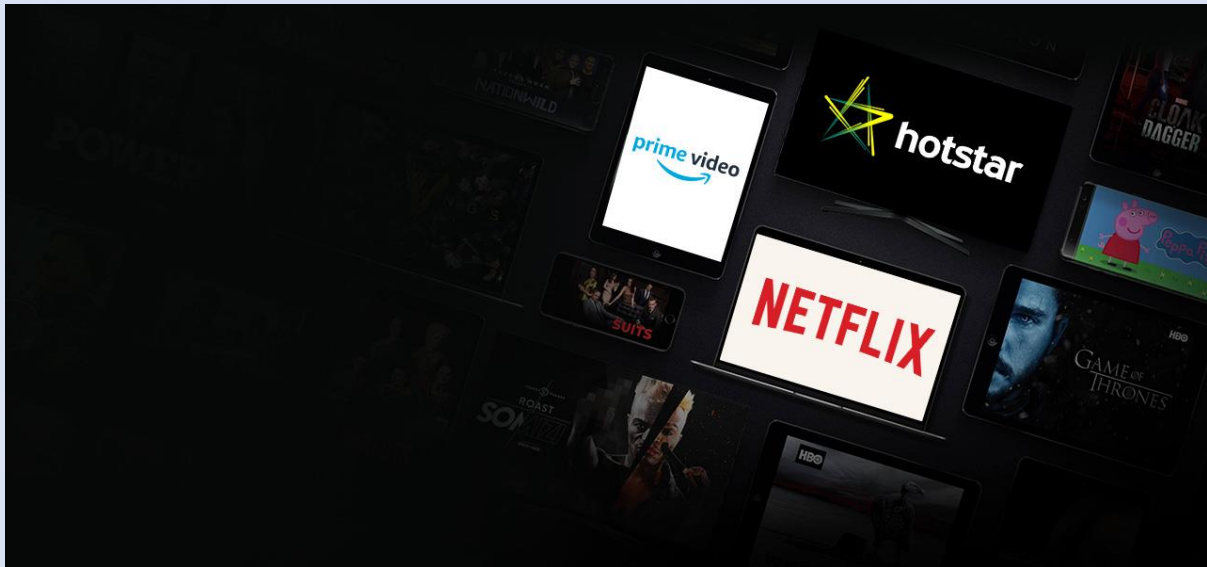
A great battle going on the aspects of film making since its journey started long back in the end of nineteenth century. Some argue that cinema above all is an art form and should true to its artistic demand while others are using it to become a commercially viable business entity. But why this battle is so persistent? May be because of the simple fact that a film demands arguably great figure of investment than any other art form existent in the society so far and most importantly may be because of the scope of using a film to do great turnover. This never-ending cold war has essentially created two distinct polarisations between USA's capitalism i.e. commercial cinema and Russia's communism which could be named as independent cinema while there are a few like Rajkumar Hirani, Amir Khan etc. also who are keen to use Jawaharlal's famous non-aligned movement. But unlike in the real cold war where both USA and Russia were economically strong and weaponised with nuclear power, in the cold war of cinema world, independent cinema is suffering from anaemia of low budget and absence of powerful weaponries i.e. audience reach. Still very

interestingly independent film movement has kept its existence alive over a century and still fighting for its due place keeping the cold war alive.

One of the most important back up independent film movement has been enjoying during this cold war is the film society movement and obviously film festivals. The negligible amount of audience reach it enjoys than that of any commercial film is because of these two platforms. These are the places where actually an independent filmmaker got his/her recognition and most importantly the strength and motivation to run the show. But now with the emergence of Digital Era the contribution of which can be equated with that one of Klaus Fuchs behind the Cold War, an independent filmmaker is also getting equipped with the strength of audience reach and also a bit of economic protein shake. In that way independent film movement, if may not be in a position to equally compete with the commercial cinema mechanism, to a great extent now can at least breath coming out of acute economic anaemia. But before analysing how Digital Medium is becoming the blood supply, we should first recognize the symptoms and reasons of this anaemia.

We all know that the main platform for a film to reach its audience is through the theatres or cinema halls. And a cinema hall is a business. With the emergence of Multiplex culture and distribution chain, these theatres or halls became a single unit to hit. If you can get a good distributor, you will get showtimes and a plenty number of halls in most of the cases where these numbers will proportionately effects or affects your ultimate viewer counts. Now in most of the cases for an independent film this numbers affects the viewers' count since the first two numbers turn out to be zero because of the simple fact that an independent film does not get a theatrical release. And why is that? Because the distributors do not feel interested with an independent project. And again, why is that? Because simply the Multiplex owners do not feel interested with an independent project because of its low budget which implies less star cast or even no star cast and also very less marketing or in many cases absolutely no marketing. And with all these facts what sum it up to is the fact that except the cast and crews and also their relatives and very few others, none else could watch an independent film. With the help of film societies and different film festivals (provided the project is good enough to secure a spot in those since the availability of such spots are very less) an independent film enjoys attention from merely 0.1% of the population and may be 1% of the film audiences. There are other socio-political-cultural factors behind this "Racism in Film Industry" which we are overlooking taking care of

the volume of the write-up, importance of your time to read it and also the patience of the writer himself.



On identifying the main aspects of the anaemic patient, now we should discuss the effect of giving it external blood supply through Digital Media. Without discussing the features, depth and basic nature and modus of operation of Digital Media; or, in other words simply believing the readers' knowledge the writer intends to directly jump to the weaponries of Digital Medium i.e. OTT platforms, Video Streaming Channels and Social Media. Now what is an OTT platform? Full form Over The Top and example Netflix hopefully is enough to answer that question. For Video Streaming Channels we should replace the example with YouTube or, Daily Motion and clear the idea for you. And with the believe that even if he intends to buy readers' time explaining Social Media to them he may be prosecuted publicly, the writer directly states the fact that these trio is helping independent film makers to reach their desired audiences directly breaking all the channels of Multiplex owners and distributors and showcase their projects and receive appreciations or, criticisms for the same. And most importantly they can actually now earn some revenue from these OTT Platforms and Video Streaming Channels. So, Bingo! Independent Film Makers are on a go and now can rub their shoulders with commercial giants and that's how Digital Era is helping Independent Film Movement.

Just when the writer tried to shut down his laptop typing so far, an over enthusiast reader asks him but how to reach Netflix and other OTT Platforms and what is the effect of Social Media in all these?

So, with great disappointment the writer has to type two more most important paragraphs only to answer that inquisitive reader and also may be to some little extent to pave the path for the next write up. Now with the emergence of Digital Era a new avenue has been opened up before the independent film makers, but when they tried to avail this avenue, they will surely face huge jam of monopoly and money power game. The mighty businessmen long ago smelt the power of Digital Media and started up their journey with Digital Distribution. Major OTT players like Netflix, Hooq or, Hotstar don't buy contents directly from the film makers. So, there are these Digital Distributors. In Video Streaming Platforms like YouTube there are so many channels that it's impossible to get proper audience reach without making paid promotions. And most importantly, in the Digital Era when you can actually make a video with your mobile and there are few instances where these videos do become considered as a successful short films and even in one or two instances feature films also been made with mobile camera and zero budget and received huge recognition, the number of filmmakers especially short film makers are increasing with a malignant growth and the number of contents are increasing in the square or, cube of an exponential rate.

So, with Digital Medium apparently when there is a huge scope for independent filmmakers, there is a simultaneously huger tussle waiting before them. Previously they had to war with commercial giants for their theatre place; now they have to fight with almost all individuals who possess a mobile camera and claim himself/herself an independent film maker and secure their place in their own sub-fraternity leave alone the prospect of more interested commercial parties into the Digital Film Making Business and already successful ones in the fraternity. So to end the write up here this should be mentioned clearly that with every good there is some bad and likewise in Digital Era with greater opportunities there are greater war and following the trend of last 6 billion years since the inception of life, in Digital Era also only those will thrive in the end who will be patient, committed and most deserving; just like what Charles Darwin said.

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