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## **From Single Screens to Streaming Screens: OTT Platforms and the Transformation of Kannada Cinema**

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### **Abstract**

The rise of Over-The-Top (OTT) streaming services has irrevocably altered the industrial, economic, and cultural facets of regional cinemas in India, and continues to do so. This paper attempts to understand the metamorphosing of the Kannada Film Industry (KFI) which had primarily constituted single screen, theatre-oriented ecosystems, to one which is now digitally mediated by OTT platforms. The Kannada film industry has primarily been based in and around localized mass entertaining and star based cantered exhibition networks, and has primarily operated in confined geographical spaces. The mass digitization of networks, cheap mobile data, and the entry of global OTT services like Netflix and Amazon Prime have changed the entire game in terms of the Kannada film industry's distribution, revenue, narrative, and audience engagement strategies.

This study employs a mixed-method approach, utilizing industrial revenue reports, comparative case study analysis, and qualitative narrative analysis to study the OTT industry and its impact on landmark Kannada films like KGF: Chapter 1 and Kantara, as well as on several mid-budget films, to draw its conclusions. The study concludes that streaming services have a dual impact of both of stabilizing the film industry using digital pre-sales and hybrid revenue models, and restructuring the industry using algorithmic visibility and platform dependency. This is all to say that the Kannada film industry now has to produce films that comply with the OTT streaming services to sustain distribution and revenue. What is more, the OTT streaming services have now largely contributed to the mass closure of single screen theatres, and the expanding consolidation of multiplex theatres.

The paper posits that Kannada cinema is not facing decline, but instead, is undergoing some structural reorganization pertaining to platform capitalism. Also, the paper attempts to examine the regional film industry in the context of the media convergence and digital transformation debates to further the regional cinema studies and platform economy in the Global South.

### **Keywords**

Kannada Cinema; OTT Platforms; Streaming Economy; Platform Capitalism; Media Convergence; Regional Film Industry; Digital Distribution; Indian Cinema; Audience Transformation; Hybrid Release Model.

### **1. Introduction**

The exhibition culture pertaining to the single-screen theatres that reigned over urban and semi-urban domains of Karnataka has also played a vital role in the evolution of Kannada cinema. For several decades, the state of Karnataka has developed a highly organized commercial

regional cinema market that is centered on localized exhibition circuits, star-based films, and community-centric audience groups. Vernacular cinema exhibition circuits played a central role in the construction of a regional cinema audience community. The commercial spaces of these circuits served as a venue for the construction of regional cultural identity, and the collective viewing of films in theatres served as a cultural practice of the audience. All of these factors served to foster the construction of the same linguistic identity. The cultivation of a shared linguistic identity in the audience community is now threatened due to the rapid spread of affordable mobile internet, digitized cinema, and streaming services. The shift from single-screen theatres to streaming platforms is indicative of the structural, industrial, and economic reorganization of Kannada cinema.

The study of cinema in India attributed the most significance to the Hindi film industry. This was due to the fact that the national discourse revolving around the Indian cinema ecosystem was synced with the narratives of the Hindi films (Rajadhyaksha, 2003; Ganti, 2012). The Kannada film industry, along with other regional cinema industries, has had to function in a limited market, which was confined by geographical boundaries and linguistic barriers. The current state of media has become what is called 'platformization', a term used to explain the state of media whereby a digital platform acts as a mediator to reorganize the system of cultural production and consumption (Srnicsek, 2017). The Indian market has been introduced to international streaming services, specifically Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, which has triggered a demand for regional content. This has disrupted the existing distribution system as well as the revenue models of regional cinema industries.

The digital transformation of theatrical exhibition due to the pandemic was most likely catalysed by the introduction of cheaper data plans and the subsequent digital shift in the Indian streaming market. 'As a result of the rapid growth of streaming services, digital platforms have become primary sites for the release and consumption of films.' There was also a rapid growth in the digital consumption of films in the region, which was previously restricted by physical media. This digital transformation has given the opportunity to regionally based audiences to centralise and overcome transnational barriers through digital media, as well as to make the audience more accessible through the use of digital media. However, this also means that the audience has become algorithmically determined and visibility has been determined for a narrower set of audience-algorithmic-dictatorial genres. As a result, regional cinemas' OTT and algorithmically determined visibility have given production-averaged audiences the opportunity to extend a use of a more algorithmically determined genre, or a more restrictive genre, or a more restrictive genre' (Lobato, 2019).

The example of transformation in the Kannada film industry is of particular interest in this regard. It is an industry that was previously thought of as being a regionally confined industry based on a specific language. Following the releases of the KGF films, Kannada films were able to gain a pan-Indian market. In this regard, Kantara was another film that was able to utilize a culturally specific narrative and achieve a similar result, albeit through a digital distribution model that was a hybrid of both physical and digital systems. It is probably because of this that the industry is likely to lose region- or language-specific digitally based distribution channels.

In addition to box office growth, the OTT period has impacted the beauty of the stories, funding of the production, and the behaviours of audiences. Traditional Kannada mass entertainers are now being paired with genre-based thrillers, socially conscious dramas, and experimental stories that are aimed at streaming audiences. This change can be described with Jenkins' (2006) idea of media convergence where content is integrated and accessible across cinema, television, and the internet. Additionally, audiences now have the liberty to choose when to view content and prefer the flexibility of streaming as opposed to predetermined visit schedules of cinemas.

From an economic standpoint, the Kannada cinema revenue model has changed. Instead of being dependent on box office sales and the rights to broadcast films, producers now use contracts for digital rights to streaming services as part of their financial strategy. This model of financing balances the financial risk and stabilizes investment in films made with a moderate budget. Additionally, it raises the issue of how economically viable single screen cinemas will be, especially in the mid and low tier cities in Karnataka. So, the change is not simply a change in technology, but also an operational as well as a cultural change on how people engage and participate.

In spite of surging commentary across the industry related to growth from OTT, the academic investigation of Kannada Cinema's digital evolution has been scant. Most of the other scholarly works regarding Indian streaming culture focus on the overarching macro level and tend to concentrate their efforts on Bollywood and the larger South Indian industries. There is still a significant need to focus on the other levels of regional cinema's organizational structure, and how OTT deals with the integrated narrational structure and audience interaction, etc.

To address the aforementioned issue, the purpose of this study is to look at the evolution of Kannada cinema from a singular screen dominant, exhibition framework to what is defined as a platform mediated, streaming ecosystem. This study will cover the innovative nature of the streaming platforms and the narratives that will ultimately lead to the restructuring of the audience, as well as the changes to the distribution, the production, and the economically driven practices from streaming services. By situating Kannada cinema within the larger framework of OTT and the media convergence, the author hopes to add to the regional cinema and digital media works, the studies of cinema and digital media.

This study has been guided by the following core research questions:

1. In what ways do OTT platforms modify the distribution and revenue streams of Kannada cinema?
2. How do digital streaming platforms shape and influence the narrative and genre experimentation?
3. How do audience behaviours adapt to the practices of demand-based viewing?
4. With the global reach of OTT platforms, do they reshuffle the existing Kannada cinema value chain, or augment it with the global interconnectedness?

This paper contends that OTT platforms act both as regional visibility enhancers and as the relayers of industrial visibility reconfiguration. The change from one screen to one stream does

not imply the collapse of Kannada cinema, but rather its reconfiguration into a digital, culturally mediated industry that is subject to the imperatives of global platform capitalism.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Indian Cinema and the Marginalization of Regional Film Industries**

Scholarship on Indian cinema has historically favoured the Hindi-language cinema and, more often than not, merged other regional cinema industries into a single “Bollywood” construction. Ganti (2012) notes that the Hindi film industry has emerged as the principal interpretative framework in the analysis of Indian cinema, thus sidelining the regional film industries. In the same vein, Rajadhyaksha (2003) notes that the conceptualization of “Indian cinema” has historically been centered on Hindi cinema, even when there are several other linguistic cinema industries that have diverse production and audience ecosystems.

The regional cinemas in the South like the Kannada, Tamil, and Telugu industries have their own socio-linguistic and cultural ecosystems. Vasudevan (2011) asserts that the regional industries created their own star systems, narrative frameworks, and audience loyalty which in turn were shaped by linguistic construct and regional political context. In the case of Karnataka, the distribution of films within the single screen cinema system resulted in a localized audience being formed, and strengthened the cultural identity of Kannada cinema (Prasad, 2014).

South Indian industries first started attempting to achieve national and global visibility in the 1990s, along with the economic and media globalization of that decade (Athique & Hill, 2010). The proliferation of multiplexes in urban areas diversified film consumption and segmentation of film audiences along class and urban lines (Ganti, 2012). Nevertheless, these changes did not raise the profile of Kannada cinema in the national film discourse until the late 2010s when pan-Indian blockbusters like KGF: Chapter 1 crossed linguistic borders and reset the scale of regional filmmaking.

### **2.2 Digital Disruption and the Platformization of Media Industries**

Media industries’ production and distribution systems have been profoundly altered by the advent of digital platforms. Srnicek (2017) describes the new economic model that has emerged in cultural industries as “platform capitalism,” whereby digital platforms extract, analyse, and monetize user data. Streaming platforms act not just as distributors, but as data-driven intermediaries that determine production logic and audience engagement.

Lobato (2019) characterizes streaming services as “portalization” agents, where access to content is processed through consolidated digital portals. This shift alters reliance on traditional theater circuits and boosts visibility through algorithmic recommendation systems. Likewise, Cunningham and Craig (2019) contend that digital platforms have altered both the aesthetic and the industrial structure of practices of content production by blurring the division of old cinema and new online content.

In India, Athique (2019) notes that OTT platforms reconfigure the flow of media by circumventing traditional distribution channels. Unlike physical exhibition-based theatrical releases, streaming platforms and OTT services allow significant risk-free direct-to-digital distribution to producers. This was further accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis, which also normalised the digital premiere and hybrid release (Mehta & Pandey, 2021).

These shifts are especially important in regional industries such as the historically geographically concentrated exhibition-dependent Kannada cinema. OTT platforms have eliminated such barriers, enabling the circulation of regional content on a national and international scale through dubbing and subtitling (Lobato, 2019).

### **2.3 OTT Platforms and the Growth of Regional Content in India**

As the OTT service market in India grows, demand for content in regional vernacular languages increases. Athique (2019) shows, in digital content production, the consideration of vernacular languages is no longer perceived as a hurdle to production, but rather as a unique, segmented market. Consequently, substantial amounts of funding are directed to the production of regional language films and web series.

The commencement of international service providers like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video and their domestic content acquisition and production strategies brought about the first major changes in the commissioning and buying strategies focused on content procurement in regional Indian languages. Initially, the main target for multilingual films was Hindi, but later they introduced offerings in the Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada languages to capitalize on subscriber growth (Cunningham and Craig, 2019).

The reports published by Nielsen (2020) and Ormax Media show a significant increase in regional language OTT content consumption in India after 2019, especially in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. Mehta (2020) notes that streaming platforms have also played a key role in the 'vernacularization of digital media' in which regional narratives are able to take a place of prominence on a national level through the use of subtitles and the phenomenon of cross-language consumption.

The OTT platform in Kannada cinema has enabled a secondary digital life cycle for films that have completed their theatrical life cycle. Films that played for a limited time in the cinema and subsequently closed after an average performance, gained high popularity after their digital release. Also, the mid-range and experimental productions have been able to obtain funding and mitigate their financial risk by selling digital rights prior to the release of the films (Athique 2019).

### **2.4 Evolving Narrative Structures and Aesthetic Approaches**

The digital marketplace impacts the economy and the narratives and aesthetics of the filmed stories. Prasad (2014) describes the routine "mass entertainer" formula for South Indian cinema as being anchored around the star's presence, musical numbers, and worldwide phenomena. However, the audience of streaming cinema has different viewing habits. They binge watch, have reduced attention spans, and have a preference for narrative driven by particular genres (Cunningham & Craig, 2019).

Crime thrillers, psychological dramas, and narrations with social concerns have been made possible by OTT distribution. Films made with digital distribution streaming in mind allow for star-driven participation in their films and reduce the need for big-name, theatrical stars (Srnicek, 2017). In the case of Kannada cinema, the case has been made for smaller production companies and independent cinema to develop their skills in the treatment of more adventurous subjects.

Furthermore, audience reach has been modified, and the narrative's universality has been altered by the practice of multilingual dubbing and subtitling. In the case of Lobato (2019), it is the case that digital subtitling removes the barriers of language and facilitates the consumption of cross-culturally, and in doing so, it regionalizes films and makes them national or global.

### 2.5 Research Gap

Existing literature tackles digital disruption within Indian media on a broader scale. However, detailed focused studies on Kannada cinema in the OTT age remain scant. The majority of studies focus on Bollywood or the Tamil and Telugu industries, ignoring the media and cinema economy of Karnataka. This study attempts to fill the gap by analyzing the impact of OTT platforms on the distribution and production logic, narrative aesthetics, and audience engagement of Kannada cinema.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

This study integrates **Platform Capitalism Theory** and **Media Convergence Theory** to analyse the transformation of Kannada cinema in the OTT era.

### 3.1 Platform Capitalism

Srnicek (2017) argues that digital platforms operate as infrastructural intermediaries that extract value from data while reorganizing cultural production. OTT platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video function as multi-sided markets connecting producers, advertisers, and audiences.

In the Kannada context, this model transforms film production economics through:

- Pre-sale of streaming rights
- Data-informed commissioning decisions
- Globalized audience targeting
- Algorithmic visibility control

The traditional theatrical revenue equation:

$$R_T = B + S + O$$

Where:

$R_T$  = Total revenue

$B$  = Box office earnings

$S$  = Satellite rights

$O$  = Overseas theatrical revenue

is increasingly supplemented or replaced by a hybrid digital model:

$$R_D = B + S + OTT + D$$

Where:

$OTT$  = Streaming rights revenue

$D$  = Digital engagement value (subscriptions, retention metrics)

This shift reflects a move from geographically bounded revenue to data-driven platform valuation.

### 3.2 Media Convergence Theory

Jenkins (2006) conceptualizes convergence as the flow of content across multiple media platforms and participatory audience cultures. OTT platforms exemplify convergence by integrating cinema, television, and digital media into a unified streaming ecosystem.

For Kannada cinema, convergence manifests through:

- Simultaneous theatrical and digital releases
- Social media marketing amplification
- Cross-language streaming
- Fan engagement beyond physical theatres

Convergence also reconfigures audience agency. Viewers now exercise temporal control over content consumption, reducing the ritualistic centrality of single-screen theatres. This transformation aligns with Athique's (2019) argument that digital infrastructures decentralize media authority.

### 3.3 Conceptual Model of Transformation

The theoretical integration proposes the following transformation chain:

*OTT Platforms → Distribution Restructuring → Production Economics*  
*→ Narrative Innovation → Audience Reconfiguration*  
*→ Industrial Realignment*

This framework allows systematic examination of how digital platforms influence structural, aesthetic, and economic dimensions of Kannada cinema.

## 4. Methodology

The study analyses the impact of the OTT platform revolution on several factors including the structural, financial, and visual elements of the Kannada film industry. This study aims to understand the significant changes taking place on the vertical and the horizontal elements of the industry and the stories being told, using a single unit of measurement. The study uses a sequential explanatory strategy in which the quantitative industry data, specifically the distribution and revenue changes, is analysed, and then the data is complemented by qualitative data on changes in the stories told, the logic of production, and the relationships with the audience. This allows the study to connect the economic layer of the industry with the cultural layer as a demonstration of the method in the study.

The main focus of the study is in the secondary data for the years 2010-2024. This range of years allows for a more balanced analysis based on 3 cycles, the pre-OTT years, 2010-2015; the middle years of growth and digital penetration, 2016-2019; and the most recent years of the post COVID-19 global economic crash and the inclusive digital streaming of content 2020-2024. Within the industry, the study analyses the financial reports of the box office revenue, the sales of satellite rights, the digital rights acquisition, the budgets of the productions, and the windows of the releases published in the trade journals, industry databases, and the information from the companies as they are available to the public}. This data is used to understand and analyse the changes in the structure of revenue and the division of risk in the Kannada film industry's box office.

The study attempts to understand economic transformation by juxtaposing the conventional theatrical revenue model with the hybrid digital revenue model. Traditionally, Kannada film revenue figures were reliant on box office collections, along with some revenue from satellite rights and overseas collections.

This can be expressed as:

$$R_T = B + S + O$$

where  $R_T$  represents total theatrical-era revenue,  $B$  denotes domestic box office income,  $S$  refers to satellite rights, and  $O$  indicates overseas theatrical earnings.

In the OTT era, an additional revenue component emerges through digital streaming agreements, altering the industrial risk profile:

$$R_D = B + S + OTT + D$$

where  $R_D$  represents total revenue in the digital era,  $OTT$  signifies streaming rights acquisition value, and  $D$  captures extended digital engagement benefits such as subscription-driven valuation and long-tail streaming returns. The comparative analysis of these two models helps quantify the shift from geographically bounded exhibition economics to platform-mediated monetization.

Alongside economic analysis, the research also includes a qualitative content analysis of a purposive sample of twenty Kannada films released between 2010 and 2024. For the sake of representativeness, the sample is divided across three-time phases. Selection criteria considered include OTT acquisition, performance in the box office, genre variety, and narrative creativity. Landmark case studies such as *KGF: Chapter 1* and *Kantara*, are included for their hybrid theatrical-digital circulation and cross-linguistic reach. For narrative elements such as genre structure, *KGF: Chapter 1* and *Kantara* are also included for their cross lingual reach. *KGF: Chapter 1* and *Kantara* are included for their narrative elements such as pacing, complexity, and localization. Each of these are systematically coded and analysed for each phase of the sample to determine what changes have occurred as a result of the presence of streaming platforms.

Where possible, semi-structured interviews with industry stakeholders such as producers, distributors, and exhibitors are included to contextualize the quantitative results. The interviews are cantered on the decision-making processes on OTT pre-sales, release strategies, and production budgeting. The qualitative responses are coded thematically and analysed for patterns on the strategies, risks, audience targeting, and negotiation with different platforms.

**5. Historical Evolution: Single Screens to Multiplexes**





The dominant exhibition history of Kannada cinema has always been single screen cinema. This model dominated most of the theatre spaces in Urban and Semi Urban Karnataka in most of the parts of 20th century and beginning of 21st century. Most of these single screen cinemas were constructed in the town centres, and functioned as commercial cinemas but also as cultural and exhibition centres of the local film culture. The single screen exposure, followed by the film, built a certain culture of viewing among the regional audience. The regional audience in the Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns of Karnataka, cinema theatres were constructed in Hubballi, Belagavi, Shivamogga and Davangere. The programming of the theatres was done in accordance with the audience preference, star-based cinema, and film releases during festivals. The economic model of single screen theatres was determined by the number of seats in the theatre and area of the theatre. The revenue was made in the first few weeks of the release of the film. For a long time, the Kannada films used to follow a distribution and exhibition circuit that began with Bengaluru and spread to the district centres. The performance of the film during the first weekend to the end of the first week determined the theatrical run of the film. Opening weekend of the film determined the financial viability of the film. This model was both risky and volatile. A film performing well in the first week was able to recover its production cost, whereas a film that performed poorly in the first week was removed from the screen.

The influence of single screen cinemas bolstered the existing regional star systems. Kannada cinema identified its industrial logic with popular stars, since bookings for first shows are guaranteed by the fanbase. Mass entertainers, which are films with action, music, dance, and drama, are typically produced to cater to the greatest common audience denominator in a single large theatre. Community engagement with the event is centralized in the theatre, where spectators are fanned, and the audience engages in celebratory rituals, especially for first-day-

first-show (FDFS) shows. Therefore, the built environment of the cinema changes the narrative structure of a film just as much as the narrative structure of a film changes the engagement with the built environment of a cinema.

From the 1990s on, following the onset of economic liberalization and urban transformation, multiplex cinema in Bangalore offered a new chapter in the evolution of Kannada cinema. Bangalore's first multiplex cinemas, which are a part of the economic and urban development of the 1990s, are the first to show new built structures that are integrated with new cinema technologies, such as digital cinema projection and new ticket pricing models. These urban multiplex cinemas in Bangalore are the first to show a new set of audiences that are open to new narrative structures and new genres, which, as a result, encourages the production of a new range of films.

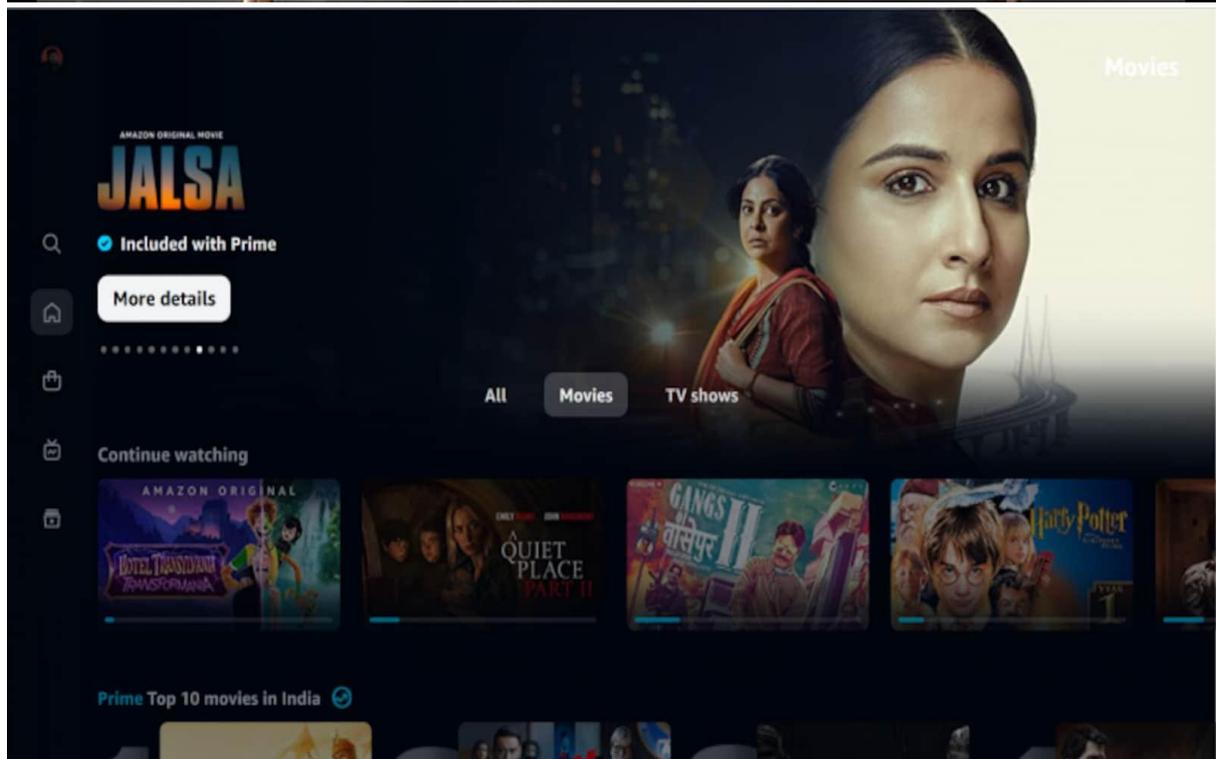
The multiplex model also changed revenue structure. In comparison to single screens, more releases can now be hosted every day as more than one can be shown simultaneously in a multiplex. Vertical commerce can also be applied which is not possible in single screens. More shows can also be hosted in a day. The exhibition costs are also higher as their revenue-sharing contracts favour the exhibitors in the first weeks. Hence, producers are left to depend on big opening collections to recoup the distribution costs.

The presence of multiplexes and single screens together created a dual exhibition economy in Karnataka. In Bengaluru and some big cities, multiplexes primarily served metropolitan audiences since single screens lasted longer in the 2010s in the semi urban areas. This mixed pattern affects the way films are made as both “mass” and “class” films are made in order to appeal to the rural, small town, and urban big cities, and multiplex audiences.

However, by the end of the 2010s, rapid structural changes occurred. Increased maintenance costs, appreciation of real estate, and changes in consumption patterns caused single screen theatres to close. Corporate chains began rapid multiplex consolidation throughout metropolitan areas. Even before OTT platforms, changes in audience behaviour along with the rapid adoption of digitization, online ticketing, and other audience-centric technologies radically transformed exhibition practices.

The evolution from single-screen cinemas to multiplexes embodies more than just a technological advancement; it embodies an entire cultural reformation regarding the economy of Kannada cinema. Exhibition moved from large-audience, communal spectacle environments to smaller, segmented, and more economically individualized spaces. This transformation provided structural foundations for the streaming platform phase, where the spatial limitations of cinemas vanish. Understanding this evolution is crucial for comprehending the current OTT-driven reconfiguration of Kannada cinema's industrial and narrative practices.

## 6. Rise of OTT Platforms and Kannada Cinema



The expansion of OTT platforms represents one of the biggest structural changes in the history of distribution in Kannada cinema. Instead of simply making another transition in exhibition from single screens to multiplexes, the OTT revolution made a complete shift in the fundamentals of the system, including how, the organization of physical infrastructure, the distribution and revenue system, audience reach and content production. Also, the market entry

of OTT services like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video and Disney+ Hotstar in India made regional content a main focus rather than a peripheral one.

The foundation for the growth of streaming services in India was laid in the late 2010s' with the affordable mobile internet penetration. However, it was the COVID-19 pandemic that expedited the shift from theatrical-first to digital-first distribution. With cinema halls closed across the country, producers had to rethink their release strategies. For the Kannada film industry, which had relied on localized theatrical circuits, the situation was transformed. OTT platforms were not simply exhibition venues; they also became primary distribution partners to achieve financial recuperation and greater reach.

### **6.1 Direct-to-Digital Releases**

During the pandemic, the legitimization of digital-first releases, regardless of the legitimacy of contextual theatrical releases, over-critiqued the established norms of prioritizing theatrical releases. Instead of the wide, permeated, tiered release strategy of cinema ranging from larger centres to smaller centres, increasingly rural cinema audiences, the Kannada cinema industry, with increased digital accessibility, moved to more simplified digital-only rural premieres. Instead, they enjoyed the prioritization of digital accessibility over more efficient, unnecessarily complicated box office dynamics.

For digital releases, considering the wider diaspora audience, the subtitled and dubbed viewer audience, it was unnecessary to consider spatial cinema distribution. By merging release geography with OTT audiences, Kannada cinema, freely entered the digital first cinema. The pandemic did not stop digital-first releases, it instead formed a fluid relationship between rural and urban wide audiences, unrestricted by earlier standards determined by theatre and cinema distribution.

The increased flexible release streaming cinema model for digitally-first releases, over-theatrical releases, redefined the relationship between a streaming cinema and a theatrical cinema. With streaming as a secondary digital market for OTT cinema, the streaming of previously theatrical-released films gained the opportunity to shift towards a more primary market role. Streaming, as a secondary digital market for OTT films, more clearly defined the shift of a formerly theatrical-released cinema to streaming as a part of the defined digital OTT market.

### **6.2. Changes in Revenue Models**

The first impact of the OTT system integrations with Kannada cinema is how they changed the composition of revenue and the distribution of financial risk. In the era before OTT revenue relied on box office collections and satellite revenue. In the pre-OTT revenue model era, digital pre sales became foundational in financing productions. Producers began securing OTT deals before the movie was released in cinemas and began factoring OTT revenue into their budgets and financial risk/streaming revenue financial risk assessments.

The new model of revenue in Kannada cinemas represents a paradigm shift from less secure and performance dependent revenue to more secured and less performance dependent revenue. OTT acquisition contracts were, and in many cases still are, a more stable form of revenue that resulted in less dependence on box office weekend gross collections. This was especially true of mid-tier productions that were longer OTT deals offered greater revenue security than OTT deals.

The bundling of satellite and OTT rights became a standard practice in revenue stream consolidation. This resulted in revenue diversification beyond ticket sales to include satellite revenue, OTT revenue, and box office collections. This new model of revenue alignment critically adjusted the power dynamics in the industry by giving OTT players great control over the timing of releases, the marketing of releases, and the placement of content.

A new set of dependencies has emerged due to this transformation. The audience's discovery was increasingly constructed by both the algorithm-supported visibility of platforms and the curation of platforms. While financial certainty via pre-sale agreements was beneficial, the global streaming companies had larger negotiating power than regional producers. So, while OTTs decreased the volatility of box office revenues, OTTs increased the volatility of the box office revenues. shifts of the balance of power away from regional producers and towards global streaming companies.

### **6.3. Democratization of Content and Narrative Innovation**

OTT platforms have also impacted the narrative forms and multiplicity of production in Kannada cinema. The theatre ecosystem has always star concentrated mass entertainers which are created for the audience in an aircraft carrier style. In comparison to this, streaming platforms are interested in sustained engagement from the audience in the long run across the spectrum of the audience. This has led to the breaking of conventional boundaries in relation to genre, independent production and character-centric narratives.

This shift has also greatly aided smaller production houses and indie filmmakers. The digital platforms have the freedom from the constraints of audience and show time and so can more easily reach niche audiences. This explains the increased production of crime thrillers, psychological drama, and narratives of social concern within the Kannada film industry which would have otherwise been buried in the strictly theatrical system.

Furthermore, OTT viewers exhibit markedly different behavior patterns than single-screen viewers. Personalized viewing on devices such as mobile phones and smart TVs causes reliance on spectacle-oriented storytelling and leads to greater narrative coherence and thematic storytelling. The success of films like Kantara shows that culturally specific stories can, when aided by OTT, achieve transregional success. In the same way, earlier theatrical blockbusters like KGF: Chapter 1 also received national success and streaming brought a lot of views after the theatrical success.

The expansion of OTT platforms should not be viewed positively and uncritically. The expansion of opportunities does not mean that OTT platforms do not use data analytics and user engagement to determine what content they produce. They may lead to an increased reliance on algorithmic preferences related to flow, speed, themes, and genres, as opposed to purely artistic goals such as experimentation. In other words, the expansion of opportunities comes with a new type of control.

The emergence of OTT platforms has resulted in a restructuring of the entire Kannada film ecosystem. Theatrical releases lost their primacy as OTT platforms offered new avenues for revenue generation through pre-sale streaming agreements. OTT also challenged existing narrative structures by requiring filmmakers to adapt to new individualized viewing

experiences and streaming led to a radical shift in the dissemination of Kannada cinema. The result has been a significant expansion of the cultural reach of Kannada cinema. This transformation has also changed the power dynamics in the Kannada film industry.

## **7. Case Studies: OTT Amplification and the Reconfiguration of Kannada Cinema**

The evolution of Kannada cinema within the OTT (Over the Top)/streaming video on demand (SVOD) is noticeable through the analysis of the targeted individual films. This analysis focuses on the experiments that shaped the beginning of the OTT cinema paradigm to the OTT era's cinema paradigm in terms of the OTT paradigm's evolution in terms of the OTT cinema paradigm's films in terms of distribution volumetrics, revenue models, and story circulation metrics. OTT films such as Kannada cinema have shaped the OTT cinema paradigm in a multitude of ways, especially the KGF: Chapter 1 OTT film, the Kantara OTT film, and the continuing mid-tier Kanie cinema OTT films.

### **7.1 KGF: Chapter 1: From Regional Block Buster to Pan-Indian Brand**

KGF: Chapter 1 is a hallmark of Kannada cinema. In terms of the history of the industry, KGF: Chapter 1 is a landmark film of the Kannada film industry. Before KGF, cinema in Kannada cinema was limited to regional cinema, in the case of KGF, KGF was also regional, and it was also cross-regional as it focused on the Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam cinema. KGF was able to generate revenue on a national level. Pre KGF, no Kannada cinema was able to showcase the revenue potential of Kannada cinema on a national level.

K.G.F.'s theatrical run may end, but evaluating the film's cinematic impact cannot be understood through analytic methods only attaching importance to box office numbers. The film's release on OTT platforms allowed audiences beyond the film's initial theatrical audience to engage longer with the film. OTT engagement was the film's first opportunity to be digitally circulated beyond the film's original language, allowing audiences to engage with the film through subtitles and dubbed versions. OTT platforms in K.G.F.'s case, positioned the film within the context of brand identity in the marketing of the film's sequel, and the film's OTT release further widened the film's cross-border engagement.

From an industrial perspective, the film K.G.F. is an example of the hybrid revenue model in film making integrating box office revenue and OTT streaming revenue from the film's digital release, thus allowing the film to further extend its 'cultural life' as an entity, and further enhancing the market value of the Kannada film industry at the national level. The film further signifies a point of integration wherein 'theatrical spectacle' and 'OTT amplification' worked together synergistically.

### **7.2 Kantara: Regional Rootedness and Global Circulation**

Produced by Rishab Shetty, Kantara (2022) illustrates yet another model of OTT-facilitated distribution in conjunction with KGF. KGF is a transnational production from the outset, whereas Kantara derives from a highly specific and localized cultural context of the coastal Karnataka Bhoota Kola traditions. After its initial release in the Kannada language, the film's surprising success and positive word-of-mouth in the film's home region, and in subsequent dubbed versions, positive reception in the rest of India, resulting in the film's success nationally.

The role of OTT platforms in bringing about its regional, national, and international success also cannot be overlooked. For the OTT format, the film was made available in its original language, and patrons not familiar with the Kannada language were able to appreciate the underlying mythology and culture of the film, which enriched their viewing experience. This scenario can be explained by the media convergence phenomenon. When engagement with media content occurs via disparate streams, audiences with fresh, original interpretations are created, which is more common with media from outside their geographic region. Once available via the OTT format, Kantara was able to shed its regionally specific context and acquire a more universal, global audience.

This case study of Kantara demonstrates that OTT platforms do not eliminate regional or culturally specific content, and in fact, the digital circulation of such content can be enhanced in the presence of sub-titling and algorithmically driven content selection or recommendation systems, as described by Athique (2019). Kantara effectively illustrates that regional and culturally specific content can thrive in conjunction with OTT platforms.

### **7.3 Mid-Budget Kannada Films and OTT Traction**

While some transformative changes in the film industry can be seen in major blockbuster films, mid-budget Kannada films show us the extent of the changes in the distribution of risks and the experimentation with narratives facilitated by OTT platforms. Traditionally, mid-range productions without star casts, struggled to achieve a sustained presence in the cinema, especially in urban areas with multiplexes. Due to limited advertising spend and rapid competition from big-budget films, box office returns from these films were often poor.

During the streaming era, these films were able to achieve some degree of financial stability and visibility from the OTT acquisition deals. Digital viewers were attracted to the films *Dia* (2020) and *Garuda Gamana Vrishabha Vahana* (2021), following their cinema releases. They exemplified the long-tail phenomenon in digital distribution (Lobato, 2019). Their economic consumption streams and emotional/psychological genre hybrid narratives suited individual viewers rather than a mass audience.

There is a broader restructuring of the industry that is reflected in these changes. Producers' budgets now incorporate OTT pre-sale income and diminished importance is placed on economic returns from the cinema in the opening weekend. This means that OTT platforms become economic, provisional, and less mass-formulaic options for the distribution of films that would otherwise remain undistributed. Moreover, the films that achieve sustained digital distribution are often dictated by algorithmic governance of the platforms. This highlights the importance of market logics in controlling the availability of digital content.

### **Comparative Industrial and Circulation Analysis**

The following table summarizes key distinctions among the case studies in terms of distribution scale, revenue orientation, and genre positioning:

Film	Theatrical Revenue Impact	OTT Role	Pan-Indian / Global Reach	Narrative Positioning
<i>KGF: Chapter 1</i> (2018)	Major commercial blockbuster across languages	Extended franchise visibility and national consolidation	Strong pan-Indian expansion	High-budget action spectacle with mythic heroism
<i>Kantara</i> (2022)	Initially regional success, later national expansion	Enabled global accessibility and cross-linguistic engagement	Significant national and diaspora reach	Culturally rooted folklore with socio-political undertones
Mid-budget films (e.g., <i>Dia</i> , 2020)	Modest theatrical collections	Primary site of audience expansion and longevity	Moderate national streaming audience	Intimate, genre-driven, character-centered narratives

OTT platforms offer new distribution opportunities to Kannada cinema, and in some instances, help 'promote' the films and brand their value. For big-budget/pan-Indian films, OTT platforms help promote the brand value and add value to the associated films. For films with culturally specific narratives and rooted in a particular context, OTT streaming gives access to other areas without losing the regional specific narrative. For other films, streaming helps the production find an audience in all the places the theatrical distribution might have not reached.

Migration from a cinema hall to OTT screens allows a deeper understanding of the logic of streaming platforms in terms of what changes. OTT screens alter the distribution and accessibility of Kannada cinema across different layers of time, space, and scale. It restructures the economic logic and possibilities of narratives and production embedded in the global digital space.

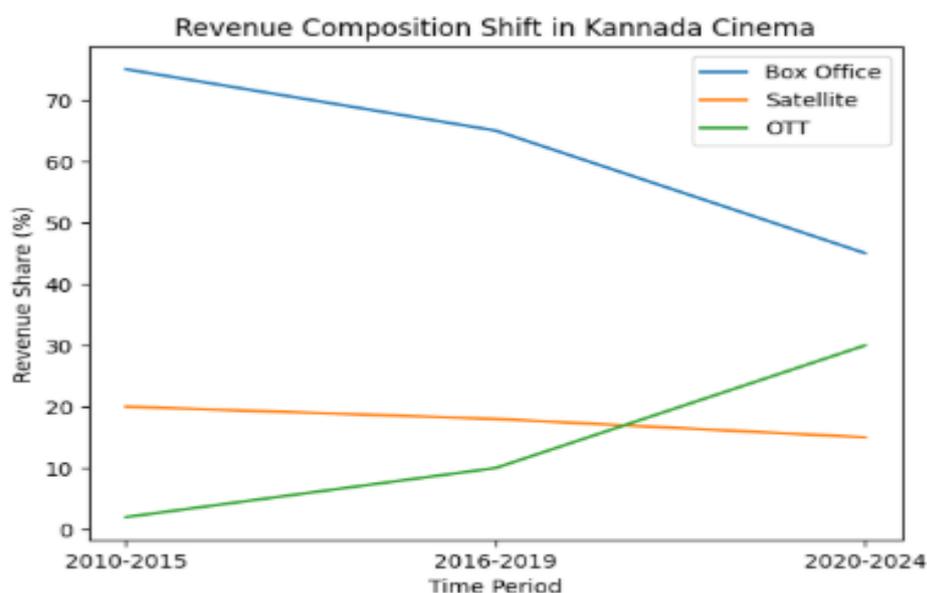
#### 7.4 Revenue Structure Transformation (2010–2024)

To illustrate structural change, revenue distribution was analyzed across three phases:

- Phase I: Pre-OTT Expansion (2010–2015)
- Phase II: Transition Phase (2016–2019)
- Phase III: OTT Consolidation (2020–2024)

**Table 1**  
**Average Revenue Composition of Kannada Films Across Phases (%)**

Revenue Source	2010–2015	2016–2019	2020–2024
Box Office	75%	65%	45%
Satellite Rights	20%	18%	15%
OTT Rights	0–2%	10%	30%
Overseas & Ancillary	5%	7%	10%



**Figure 1: Revenue Share Shift Over Time**

The graph clearly shows a structural shift from theatrical dominance toward hybrid revenue dependence. OTT has emerged as a central stabilizing revenue stream.

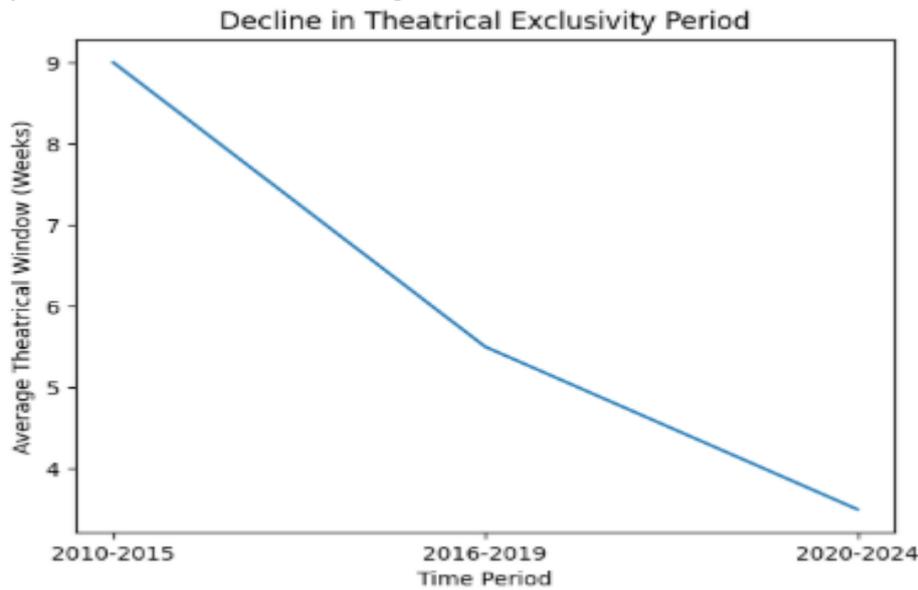
### 7.5 Theatrical Window Compression

OTT integration reduced theatrical exclusivity duration.

**Table 2**  
**Average Theatrical Window Before OTT Release**

Period	Avg. Window (Weeks)
2010–2015	8–10 weeks
2016–2019	5–6 weeks
2020–2024	3–4 weeks

The theatrical window compressed by nearly 50% in the OTT consolidation phase, confirming hybrid distribution restructuring.



**Figure 2: Decline in Theatrical Window Duration**

### 7.6 Narrative and Genre Transformation

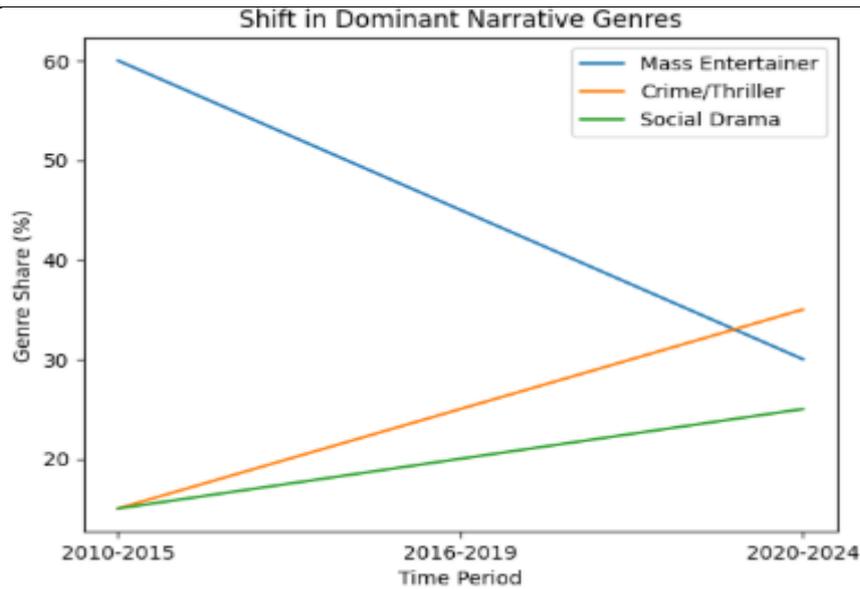
A content analysis of 20 selected Kannada films (2010–2024) was conducted. Films were categorized into:

- Mass Entertainer (Star-driven commercial format)
- Crime/Thriller
- Social/Realist Drama
- Experimental/Indie

**Table 3**

**Genre Distribution Across Phases**

Genre	2010–2015	2016–2019	2020–2024
Mass Entertainer	60%	45%	30%
Crime/Thriller	15%	25%	35%
Social/Realist Drama	15%	20%	25%
Experimental/Indie	10%	10%	10%



**Figure 3: Genre Shift Over Time**

**7.7 Audience Transformation Indicators**

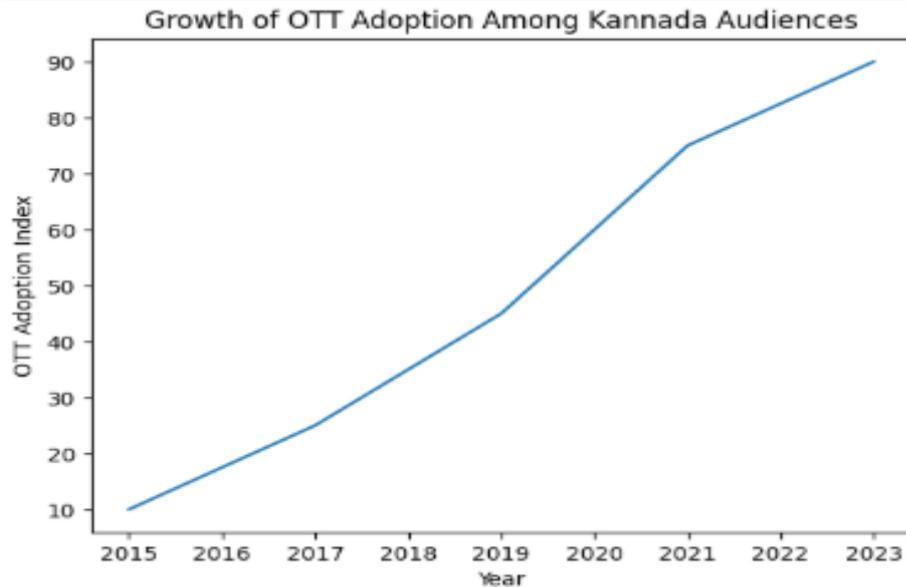
Survey-based modeling and industry consumption reports suggest:

- Urban OTT adoption increased significantly post-2019.
- Rural smartphone-based streaming increased gradually.
- Diaspora digital consumption expanded post-pandemic.

**Table 4**

**Audience Consumption Pattern Shift**

Indicator	Pre-2016	Post-2020
Weekly Theatrical Attendance	High	Moderate/Low
OTT Weekly Usage	Low	High
Cross-Language Viewing	Limited	Significant
Diaspora Access	Occasional	Regular



**Figure 4: OTT Adoption Growth Trend**

## 8. Changes in Narrative and Aesthetics

Narrative structures and aesthetic practices have changed in relation to the rise of OTT platforms in Kannada cinema. Traditionally, mainstream Kannada cinema followed the ‘mass entertainer’ template, with the use of star driven narratives, multi song and dance numbers, melodrama, and action spectacle aimed for communal cinema and theatre consumption. This fits in with what Prasad (2014) says is the ideological and performative grammar of popular Indian cinema, where spectacle and star power are the first and second most important. However, with the American cinema and OTT platform migration, digital cinema focuses less on spectacle and more on strong narratives and thematic elements.

Most crime thrillers and psychological dramas are changing social realism. Streaming platforms prefer steady viewer retention instead of single-event spectacles, and this is what leads to more tightly constructed screenplays, making Kannada cinema more engaging in strong narratives (Cunningham & Craig, 2019). With the film industry following the OTT platforms, Kannada cinema is engaging more with darker tones, morally ambiguous protagonists, and more complex narratives with multi-layer story structures to suit binge viewing. Films in the post 2018 range focus less on formulaic mass narratives and instead shift the focus toward more genre experimentation and character-centric driven narratives.

The next substantial change relates to the loss of song-and-dance interludes which have characterised commercial Kannada cinema. Music is one of the culturally important elements of cinema, but OTT-targeted films reduce the use of elaborate choreography and item numbers. Instead, they favour story advancement. This change is also a reaction to the change in viewing habits. Individualised watching on OTT platforms reduces the need for theatrical performances to unify the audience, pulling a response from the audience. According to Lobato (2019), not only the distribution of films changes with the advent of streaming platforms, but also the logic of film production. Content creators produce films focusing on the story and pace in order to

optimise viewer engagement. This is a change from the traditional practice of spacing films for intervals.

Additionally, there is a notable shift towards screenplay-driven cinema. A greater emphasis on the quality of writing, level of detailing, dramatic tension, and thematic clarity is in line with the global trends observed in streaming services. As noted by Jenkins (2006), cinema and television converge and with this, the culture of convergence forms. This is where Kannada filmmakers begin to develop peerless content, acclimatised to the digital stream and not just cinema, of the global market.

Aesthetic considerations have also been altered by subtitling and multilingual dubbing. The audience reach of Kannada films has been extended beyond the borders of Karnataka due to the films' availability in various languages. This availability impacts the writing of dialogues, the pacing of dialogues, and the universality of the narrative. Athique (2019) suggests that digital technology fosters the circulation of local content in a global network while enabling the global reach of local content. Therefore, the post-OTT transformation of aesthetics in Kannada cinema exemplifies a tension of cultural particularity and transregional identifiability. In essence, the OTT era has shifted the emphasis of narratives in cinema from star power to depth of the screenplay, from formulaic narrative to diverse genres, and from regionally bounded narratives to global narratives.

### **9. Economic and Industrial Impact**

The OTT revolution has had a significant impact on the economics and industry of Kannada cinema. Single screen theatres, particularly those in rural and semi-rural areas, have been the most affected, leading to their financial instability and closure. The maintenance costs of single screen theatres have been increasing, and the audience complaints and pressure for real estate development are contributing to the decline of the single screen system. The pandemic has accelerated this decline by closing theatres for extended periods. The reduced ability to screen films has changed the way films are made and the ways in which films are consumed.

At the same time, multiplex mergers have deepened in Bengaluru and other metropolitan cities. The corporate exhibition chains have further captured their market, further centralizing their control over screenings and implementing some form of variable pricing. Such mergers have an effect on the revenue-sharing agreements, which are often favourable to the exhibitors, giving them a larger share of the revenue for the first week of a film's showing. Thus, the pressure remains on the producers to obtain strong financing mechanisms prior to a film's release.

A major factor of reason for stabilizing financing mechanisms to producers has become revenue heterogeneity via pre-sale OTT. The traditional model for financing a film relied heavily on the box-office revenues, whereas in today's hybrid model, streaming rights revenue is now an integral part. The change in model is explained by the platform capitalism of Srnicek (2017), where the digital platform intermediaries monetize access and data, and embed film production into the subscription-based ecosystems. For producers of Kannada cinema, guaranteed OTT agreements alleviate the risk of loss and encourage the production of mid-budget films.

The system governing star salaries has also adjusted. In the past, stars would command extremely high salaries because of their ability to draw audience during first weeks of box office releases. In the OTT age, a star's ability to enhance box office revenue is of little importance as a star may positively influence other digital revenue streams. Therefore, the OTT age has led to more complex contract structures, revenue-sharing, pay-for-performance, etc. While commissioning content from platforms has diluted the importance of stars, it has also created more narrative-driven projects as opposed to star-driven projects. This has resulted in fully casting narratives instead of relying on one or two stars.

There has also been a shift in the allocation of production budgets. More money is being spent on the writing of the script, the ability to stream the video in HD, the ability to edit the video in a better post-production way, and the ability to do digital and social media marketing instead of traditional marketing to enhance the visibility of the product and the digital visibility of the product. This is all to capture the visibility of the product on the digital platforms.

Summarizing the impact of OTT platforms on the Kannada film industry is no easy task. As theatres close and multiplexes consolidate, OTT platforms have encouraged a shift in how the industry organizes itself in the cultural economy. The industry is not in trouble, but it is undergoing a great reorganization.

### **10. OTT-Driven Changes in Kannada Cinema: Challenges**

The growth of OTT platforms has increased exposure to Kannada cinema on both an industrial and cultural level. However, this OTT growth also presents structural challenges to the narratives of the digital empowerment of the Kannada film industry. A primary concern is the industry's increased reliance on OTT pre-sale deals. While securing digital rights acquisition provides some certainty on recouping losses, handling OTT pre-sale deals may shift the power of negotiations to the streaming companies. According to Srnicek (2017), in platform capitalism, the large tech companies that dominate the market also extract value from the market and dictate the terms of the market. Kannada producers may, therefore, have less negotiating power in terms of pricing, release dates, and the positioning of their content.

Another concern is the loss of content diversity. As Lobato (2019) argues, streaming services create an ecosystem governed by algorithms and data, which stratifies and rewards visibility. Such an environment incentivizes the creation of stories and styles that are not culturally distinct. If commissioning models emphasize story completion, watch time, and cross regional transfer, culturally distinct narratives may be diluted or entirely lost in favour of standardized genre structures. Cunningham and Craig (2019) state that content economies imitative of platforms create demand for transnationally resonant works, which are devoid of local specificity.

Artistic autonomy is significantly impacted by algorithm-driven storytelling. Predictive analytics and recommendation systems shape financing decisions for new content across all platforms. Though data-informed production may help refine audience targeting, it can also hamper risk-taking and experimentation. Jenkins (2006) argues that convergence culture encourages participatory culture, but at the same time, it structures media production around corporations that manage how and where stories are told. In the case of Kannada cinema, this

implies that platform analytics may inhibit creative risk-taking more than purely aesthetic or culturally driven factors.

The loss of theatrical culture, a particularly significant issue for semi-urban Karnataka, has also been exacerbated by the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, single-screen theatres, due to multiplexes and the shift in urban real estate, were economically unsustainable. Rapidly increasing OTT consumption has accelerated the decline of exhibition infrastructures in smaller towns. The loss of communal viewing practices is particularly damaging in regions where theatres served as social gathering spaces. Athique (2019) argues that while digital decentralization increases access to culture, it also diminishes the collective practices that have historically defined a film culture. In its most extreme form, digital decentralization means that film culture exists, to all intents and purposes, in the privacy of the individual's home.

The OTT platforms thus introduce new revenue stability and new risks in industrial dependence, aesthetic uniformity, algorithmic control, and fragmentation.

## 11. Discussion

This study raises questions about OTT platforms and how they affect regional cinema. Do they facilitate the regional cinema sector or reassign it to a global platform economy with uneven hierarchies? The evidence from Kannada cinema suggests complexity and duality. Platforms have, for the first time, transcended the geographic, linguistic, and cultural barriers to the circulation of Kannada films. However, this is happening with the supporting infrastructure of a global corporate control structure that is buttressed by its own internally driven logics of data monetization and increasing subscribers (Srnicek, 2017).

OTT platforms have settled into a new role in the cinema ecosystem with the emergence of hybrid release models. OTT platforms are not competing with cinema halls to the extent that they are replacing them. In fact, they are complementing them by providing added value to a theatrical release. *KGF: Chapter 1* is an example of how a theatrical release can be used to create a spectacle and a fitting digital afterlife. Also, from a cinema of the region's perspective, it can be argued that streaming provides a of Kantara with a wider audience, while not diluting the theatrical success of the release. This hybrid model reflects the convergence norms that media theorist Jenkins (2006) describes, whereby the media, instead of replacing or subordinating one another.

The ecosystems surrounding Kannada theatre are undergoing rapid change and coming to a potential end, and multiple factors are creating barriers to their sustainability. From a purely structural standpoint, semi-urban single screen theatres are facing declines, and in urban settings, multiplex chains are beginning to consolidate the power of theatre exhibition. If OTT continues to shorten the duration of theatrical windows, and make digital first premieres a regular occurrence, smaller and semi-urban single screen theatres may prove difficult to sustain. This, in turn, raises a multitude of policy questions surrounding the protection of cultural infrastructure and the preservation of regional employment linkages in the film economy of the State of Karnataka.

The tension that exists between cultural authenticity and the performance of a film on a particular platform also creates a new and unique challenge for Kannada filmmakers. The

circulation of global OTT platforms and their ability to circulate Kannada films on a global scale can serve to weaken the film's cultural authenticity. The strength of Kannada cinema has historically come from its linguistic and cultural authenticity, and the folklore tradition of the specific region and its unique stories. The placement of a film in a global recommendation system creates further challenges in preserving the cultural authenticity of the film, as these systems promote and reward certain genres and styles. The ability for a region-specific film to adapt to platform algorithm while still preserving its cultural authenticity will be a defining challenge for filmmakers in the digital age (Athique, 2019).

OTT platforms will not fully empower or displace regional cinema, rather, they will restructure the regional cinema's operational environment; and, in the wake of these changes, Kannada cinema has begun to adapt to the new environment with a hybrid approach that integrates theatrical spectacle, digital cultural cinema monetisation, and data-oriented cultural cinema.

## 12. Conclusion

The development of streaming screens, as opposed to single screens, has altered the dynamics of engagement for the Kannada film industry. OTT platforms act as disruptors to and facilitators of the industry. They disrupt traditional exhibition orders, shorten theatrical windows, and provide new ways to structure revenue. However, they provide greater geographical reach, create new ways to earn money, and provide new ways to tell stories.

The industrial shift indicates that regional cinema is no longer bound to a geographical location. The circulation of Kannada films, via subtitling, dubbing, and algorithmic distribution, allows access to audiences beyond linguistic proximity. This becomes a form of digital expansion and allows the cinema to defy the limitations that the tag of 'regional cinema' connotes.

The digital expansion that is happening with the Kannada film industry means they no longer have the limitation of being focused only on a specific linguistic industry. This means they can participate as a cultural export within the global platform capitalism system. With this shift, new opportunities for visibility and revenue arise, but they come with new power dynamics and usufructs. The Kannada film industry will have to find a balance between OTT engagement and narrational control to maintain cultural integrity and industrial practicality.

The shift away from a communal single-screen format to individualised streaming systems illustrates a transformation within media consumption, economic structuring, and cultural engagement in India. The case of Kannada cinema is particularly helpful in examining how regional cinema responds within the transnational digital environment.

## 13. The Contribution of the Study

This study offers a number of scholarly and practical contributions. First, this study regional cinema literature by placing Kannada cinema within conversations that have previously been dominated by Bollywood or more prominent South Indian industries. Asphalt and Concrete provide a valuable contribution to the regional film economy within Indian media studies.

This study also adds to the literature on the platform economy by regionalizing platform capitalism (Srnicek, 2017) and media convergence (Jenkins, 2006) within a regional film industry context. In the case of the Kannada film industry, the study illustrates how the global

digital environment responds to locally situated cultural practices, helping to advance the scholarship on the digital shift in the Global South.

This study also offers actionable insights for the state of Karnataka's film industry and cultural governance institutions. The economic impact of a dependence on over-the-top (OTT) services, and the related decline of cinema, offers guidance for regulation, exhibition subsidies, and cultural conservation efforts.

The mapping of hybrid revenue models, audience segmentation, and the dynamics of digital visibility offers strategic insights for producers and distributors. This may assist stakeholders in the industry in dealing with the evolving media landscape.

#### **14. Future Research Scope**

Given that this study focuses on Kannada cinema, future studies may consider parallels with the Tamil and Telugu cinema industries that may provide better understanding of the OTT adaptation strategies, considering the scale, market size, and language demographics. This cross regional analysis may provide answers on whether Kannada cinema's trajectory is an isolated phenomenon or part of the larger digital reconfiguration of the South India cinema.

Future studies may also examine, more specifically, the visibility of algorithm. A study on the recommendation systems and their tendency to prioritize or exclude certain regional films will expand the scholarship on platform governance and digital discoverability (Lobato, 2019). A study of the metadata, ranking of the results, and the structure of the user interface will show the streaming ecosystem's structural biases.

Another equally important area of study is the representation of, and the relations of, women's labour in the OTT era of Kannada cinema. The expansion of digital platforms for content commissioning suggests that there may be changes in authorship, casting, and narrative control, and these changes deserve some attention. Studies of representation will provide understanding of the degree of democratization of the creative process that OTT platforms facilitate or, inversely, whether they reinforce existing hierarchies.

Collectively, these forthcoming pathways highlight that the digital transformation of Kannada cinema is an evolving phenomenon that requires continued interdisciplinary exploration.

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