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Streaming Sites Sprint, Theatres Crawl

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[News18.com](#)

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Chennai, India



Theatres are facing a perilous future, as the OTT giants are proving to be tough competition offering a mind-boggling variety and often the latest releases.

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With OTT being more cost effective, many theatrical releases are struggling at the box office.

When television became popular in the US during the late 1950s, it was predicted that this would spell doom for theatres. But nothing of the sort happened. One important reason for this was the small screen could not become a substitute for the big screen, certainly content wise.

But today, with the torrent of streaming platforms, theatres are certainly facing a perilous future, because the OTT (Over-the-Top) giants are proving to be tough competition offering a mind-boggling variety and often the latest releases.

Another important reason is economics. A ticket in most of India's metros costs upwards of Rs 300, and if a family of four were to troop in, the entrance alone will be a minimum of Rs 1200. And a tub of popcorn is Rs 200 and plus the cost of transport. So, the family would easily spend Rs 2000 or more for every theatrical outing. This can work out to Rs 24,000 a year – assuming that the family would visit a theatre once a month.

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Compared with this, one can subscribe to several OTT platforms for a much lesser amount – for a whole year – and watch dozens and dozens of movies in a month. There is a wide canvas on offer.

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So, unless one is a film critic, a career that necessitates watching a movie the day it opens, others can wait for a couple of weeks to see it from the comfort of their living rooms. And what is more, a family can watch the same film time and again, and in their own sweet time.

So, probably it is time for producers to do some hard thinking, and consider letting their movies play on streaming platforms as quickly as possible after they have had their theatrical openings. Otherwise, they may get dated. And people can lose interest.

Aamir Khan was recently quoted as having said that he would not allow *Lal Singh Chaddha* to stream at least for another six months; seems unwise, given that the film has done poorly at the box-office. Would it not be prudent of him to get whatever more he can by allowing it on an OTT platform? Also, he can then hope for many, many more to watch his remake of the Tom Hanks starrer, *Forrest Gump*, a brilliant piece of cinema.

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Such dogmatic attitude cost the Cannes Film Festival an awful lot. French distributors have been adamant that they will not allow movies premiering at the Festival to play on streaming sites before they have had theatrical openings. And there must be a long window period between these and streaming on platforms like Netflix, Amazon and the like — which said no to this. The result: some great films went to Venice (Cannes' biggest competitor today), which has gained immensely. Its selections are often better than Cannes', and many Venice titles have been trooping to the Oscars.

The Guardian film critic, Xan Brooks, says: "In the past 10-years or so I've much preferred it (Venice) to Cannes and the lineup this year is especially impressive."

A Variety report said that things are not looking up for the cinemas. "With a series of question marks on the calendar through the remainder of the year, there's at least one movie that exhibitors expect to triumph. The bad news? It's coming to Netflix."

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"The highly anticipated *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* will debut Dec. 23 on the streaming service, as well as 'in select theatres on a to-be-announced date,' [Netflix](#) reported.

(A theatrical run is necessitated by a rule which states that a film must be shown in cinemas for a certain period

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"But, much to the chagrin of movie theatre operators, *Glass Onion..* is not expected to secure a significant theatrical rollout," Variety added.

Perhaps, theatres need to think big, huge blockbusters that will present grandeur and magic on the large screen. Till then, the streamers will continue to remain giants!

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