

Study on the Future Development of Streaming Media and Traditional Media

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Abstract: The rapid rise of streaming has fundamentally changed the global film industry, challenging the traditional dominance of film and television as the primary distribution channels. With film as the background, this article explores whether streaming media will completely replace traditional media. It examines the unique characteristics of streaming platforms, including flexibility, global reach, and data-driven personalization, while also highlighting the cultural and experiential value offered by traditional media, such as the immersive and social nature of movies. By analyzing the coexistence and competition between the two models, the study pinpoints areas of synergy, like synchronous issuance and revenue - sharing models. Moreover, it delves into the influence of streaming on film production, distribution, and consumption, underlining its role in enhancing content diversity and transforming viewing habits. The findings suggest that while streaming will continue to gain prominence, the unique cultural and experiential advantages of traditional media make it unlikely to be completely replaced. In its place is a two-track system that ADAPTS to both traditional and digital distribution methods, ensuring the continued evolution of the industry to meet the needs of different audiences.

Keywords: Streaming platform, movie, traditional movie, technology

1. Introduction

Cinema is classified as both an art and a science. It serves as a medium for communication, knowledge, and amusement [1]. Over the past several decades, the film industry has experienced a profound transformation - from film to digital and then to streaming. In recent years, the rapid development of the Internet has led to the rapid rise of streaming media in the global film industry, which has gradually changed the production, distribution and consumption model of films. Streaming media refers to the real-time transmission of media over the internet since the 1990s. It has evolved to encompass various on-demand services like cable TV video on demand and catch-up services like MVPD video on demand. Today, it mainly refers to mainstream media services that have revolutionized traditional media consumption [2]. From global platforms such as Netflix and Disney+ to regional localised services, streaming has gained a wide audience with its immediacy, personalisation and low cost. However, traditional media such as cinemas and TV stations still play an important role in specific areas, especially when it comes to the high-end movie-going experience and the sense of cultural ritual. Therefore, the debate about whether streaming media will completely replace traditional media has become an important topic in the current research of film industry. With

film as the background, this study explores the rise of streaming media in the film field and its impact on traditional media through literature reviews.

2. The Dynamics and Challenges of Traditional Film Distribution

2.1. Characteristics of Traditional Film Distribution Mode

The film distribution mode of traditional media has remarkable characteristics, among which the core communication channel is the cinema. As the primary position of film distribution, cinema has become an important part of the film industry chain with its unique presentation and communication ability. The charm of the cinema is that it provides a unique large-screen visual experience, which is not only due to the shock effect of the screen size, but also thanks to the support of state-of-the-art sound technology and high-definition picture quality. The wide screen and surround sound immerse the audience in the world of the film, unique visual and auditory experiences that cannot be found elsewhere [3]. Let viewers feel a shock that is completely different from daily life. This immersive viewing experience not only shows the charm of film as an audiovisual art, but also creates a deep emotional resonance for the audience, forming a cultural value that is difficult to be replaced. In addition, TV plays an important role in the film distribution system of traditional media. As an important channel for secondary distribution, TV broadcasting of films significantly extends the life cycle of films and enables them to cover more audience groups. Different from the centralized broadcast mode of movie theaters, TV stations bring film works to millions of households by broadcasting movies in fixed periods, especially in family scenes. TV stations provide a more convenient and cost-effective way to watch movies. For those who cannot go to the cinema due to geographical or time constraints, television has become an important supplementary channel for film distribution. Through television, viewers can enjoy diverse film productions in the comfort of their homes, and this convenience greatly expands the audience's range of films.

2.2. Limitations of Traditional Film Distribution Mode

Although traditional media are important in the film industry, their limitations are becoming more and more apparent. First, the traditional film distribution model is limited by geography and time. The physical location of the cinema and the specific time schedules limit audience choice. Audiences need to travel to designated locations on a fixed schedule, which is not friendly to audiences living in remote areas or with limited time. At the same time, TV broadcasting also has the problem of the fixed time, the audience can only watch the movie content at the specified time, can not choose at any time according to personal needs. This limitation is particularly prominent in today's fast-paced society. On the other hand, traditional media have higher film distribution costs. For instance, the typical expenditure for producing a major studio film has reached approximately \$65 million. However, the production expenses do not encompass distribution and marketing, which typically add around \$35 million, resulting in a total expenditure of around \$100 million to make and sell a blockbuster film. These figures are an average for most movies, and for additional movies, prices will be higher. For example, Spider-man 2, cost \$200 million to make and another \$75 million to market [4]. The reason why the distribution cost is so high is that the operation of the cinema requires a large amount of capital investment, including the maintenance of hardware facilities and labor costs. However, such a high cost mode has formed a large entry barrier for small production companies and independent films, and limited the dissemination scope of their works. In contrast, streaming platforms offer lower costs and more flexible distribution methods, which allows more creators to show their work to a global audience.

3. Background and Characteristics of the Rise of Streaming Media Platforms

With the rapid development of Internet technology and the change of user needs, streaming media platforms gradually become an important force to keep pace with traditional media. Streaming platforms, with technology-driven personalized recommendations, efficient global distribution and innovative content production models, provide audiences with more convenient and diversified movie-watching choices. This new platform has not only changed the way film and television works are distributed, but also redefined the operation logic of the film industry, and injected new vitality into the production, dissemination and consumption of films.

3.1. Technology and Market Drivers

The rise of streaming media platforms is inseparable from technological progress and market demand. The rapid development of technology has provided the infrastructure support for the streaming media industry, and the shift in consumer viewing habits has further spawned the booming development of this new industry. The popularity of high-speed Internet is an important technical basis for the rise of streaming media platforms. The wide application of network technologies such as optical fiber broadband and 5G not only significantly improves the data transmission speed, but also improves the stability and coverage of network connections. Users can stream HD video, even in 4K or 8K resolution, at home over the Internet without worrying about delays or degraded picture quality. In addition, advances in data compression technology have made the transfer of high-quality video files more efficient, significantly reducing users' traffic costs when watching streaming content [5]. At the same time, the popularity of smart devices has further boosted the development of streaming platforms. Devices such as smartphones, tablets, smart TVs and streaming boxes have become important tools for home viewing, through which viewers can access streaming platforms anytime, anywhere. For example, streaming devices such as Chromecast and Apple TV can project content from the phone or tablet to the TV, providing users with a large-screen viewing experience. Many homes are even equipped with professional-grade home theater systems, so that viewers can get the same audio-visual effects as movie theaters at home. The popularity of such devices has not only lowered the barrier to entry, but also prompted users to use streaming services more frequently for their daily entertainment needs.

In addition, the technological development of streaming media platforms has met modern users' dual pursuit of personalization and convenience, significantly changing traditional movie-watching habits. In the past, users had to go to a theater or watch a TV show at a specific time and place to watch a movie, but streaming platforms broke these restrictions with the "watch anytime, anywhere" feature. Users can simply turn on the streaming platform and easily watch their favorite movies or episodes on their phones, tablets, laptops or smart TVs, whether they are on the couch at home, in the bedroom, or even during their commute. This convenience is especially evident in the domestic scene [6]. For many viewers, the home has gradually become the primary viewing place. On the one hand, viewers can enjoy the experience of large screen and high-definition picture quality through smart TVs or streaming media boxes. On the other hand, the on-demand capabilities of streaming platforms give users the freedom to choose when to watch movies without being constrained by fixed broadcast schedules. For example, some users might watch a family comedy with their family after dinner, or enjoy a mystery blockbuster alone in their living room on a weekend afternoon. Compared to the fixed schedules and high ticket prices of traditional movie theaters, streaming platforms offer audiences more flexibility and choice.

3.2. Characteristics of Streaming Media Platforms

The recommendation algorithm of streaming media platform is one of its core competitiveness, offer tailored suggestions that assist viewers in discovering high-quality films pertinent to their interests. To maintain user engagement and entertainment, it is essential that these recommendations are often updated and align with a user's previous activity on the site [7]. Another advantage of the recommendation algorithm is its accuracy, which not only saves users the time to select content, but also effectively promotes the exposure of long-tail content. For example, some obscure but high-quality independent films or documentaries may find it difficult to get cinema or TV playback opportunities in traditional distribution models, but through the recommendation algorithm of streaming media, these works can be accurately pushed to potential audiences and get wider attention. Therefore, the recommendation algorithm not only enhances the user's personalized experience, but also optimizes the efficiency of content distribution.

Another feature of the streaming media platform is its global distribution ability, which has broadened the market boundary of the film industry. Through Internet technology, streaming media platforms can quickly spread film and television content to all parts of the world across geographical and cultural restrictions. Platforms such as Netflix and Disney+ are examples of a global strategy that not only provides localized content, but also meets the needs of audiences in different regions through multilingual subtitles and dubbing services. This global distribution mode makes the transmission of film and television works no longer rely on the traditional regional distribution system, such as the regional screening of cinema lines or regional broadcasting restrictions of TV stations.

3.3. Innovation and Revolution of Streaming Media to Film Industry

Through its unique operating model, streaming media platforms effectively reduce many costs in the process of film distribution, while greatly expanding the coverage of the market, providing support for the sustainable development of the film industry. First of all, the digital distribution of streaming platforms allows movies to reach audiences directly over the Internet, without relying on physical media or physical channels. This model avoids the transportation, storage and material production costs involved in previous film releases. For example, while traditional movies need to be distributed through copy production or Blu-ray disc production, streaming platforms can simply upload digital files and distribute content worldwide. This efficient distribution mechanism significantly reduces logistics and production costs, saving a lot of money for film production companies and distributors [8]. Secondly, streaming media platforms integrate distribution, promotion and playback links through a unified online platform architecture, thereby reducing the cost of intermediate links. The recommendation algorithm, advertising space, user evaluation and other functions on the platform constitute a low-cost and efficient content promotion system. Unlike the traditional model, which relies on a large number of external publicity channels, streaming media platforms can rely on their own technology and ecosystem to achieve accurate audience reach, which not only saves publicity costs, but also improves the transformation effect of marketing. Netflix, for example, uses recommendation algorithms to push new movies directly to the front page of the most likely viewers, reducing the waste of extensive advertising coverage.

4. Coexistence and Competition between Traditional Media and Streaming Media

With the rapid development of streaming media, the relationship between traditional media and streaming media has gradually evolved into a complex coexistence and competition relationship. Traditional media still occupies an irreplaceable position with its deep cultural accumulation and unique experience methods, while streaming media has won the favor of a new generation of viewers with its flexibility and innovative ability.

4.1. Comparative Advantages and Challenges of Traditional and Streaming Media

Despite the rapid growth of streaming platforms in recent years and their changing and shaping of many habits [9], traditional media retains unique competitive advantages, particularly in the movie-going experience and cultural symbolism. Traditional media is renowned for its immersive movie-watching model, providing experiences that streaming cannot replicate, for instance, 4D cinemas utilize advanced technology to create a fully immersive environment, making audiences feel as though they are part of the film. Audiences' shared feelings and emotional exchanges in theaters have injected profound humanistic significance into traditional media [10]. In contrast, streaming media has emerged as a popular choice because of its flexibility and low acquisition costs. It enables viewers to access a wide variety of content at any time and in any place, which is especially appealing to younger audiences who are looking for immediacy and variety. Streaming platforms leverage big data and artificial intelligence to recommend personalized content, enhancing user engagement. However, they face challenges, including limitations in providing an immersive experience comparable to theaters, as home equipment often falls short of delivering theater-level sound and visuals. Furthermore, while streaming media offers a wealth of content, its innovation and production quality can sometimes fail to meet the expectations of high-end audiences, leading to issues of homogenization. The low barriers to entry in the streaming market have also resulted in fragmentation and intense competition, which may threaten the long-term sustainability of these platforms.

4.2. Possibilities for Cooperation and Integration

Despite the competition, the cooperation and integration between traditional media and streaming media are becoming a new development trend. The cooperative model between theaters and streaming platforms provides more possibilities for film distribution and viewing. For example, many movies are starting to adopt a simultaneous release model, in which movies are available on streaming platforms at the same time they are shown in theaters. This approach not only expands the audience's choice range, but also realizes the benefit sharing of both parties through the box office sharing mechanism [10]. In addition, traditional media and streaming media are also collaborating in the field of content creation and technology. Many streaming platforms jointly launch high-quality original content with traditional film production companies to meet the audience's demand for high-quality content by integrating the resources and advantages of both sides. At the same time, streaming media can also use the distribution channels and marketing networks of traditional media to further expand its market coverage. This cooperation and integration not only helps to ease the competitive pressure between the two, but also provides a more diversified viewing experience for the audience.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has explored the transformative impact of streaming media on the global film industry, particularly about traditional media. This analysis revealed that while streaming platforms offer unique advantages such as flexibility, global reach, and data-driven personalization, traditional media maintains significant cultural and experiential value, especially in providing immersive cinematic experiences. The findings suggest that rather than outright replacement, it witnesses the emergence of a two-track system that accommodates both traditional and digital distribution methods. This coexistence allows for a diverse array of content and viewing options that cater to the evolving needs of different audiences. However, this research is not without its limitations. The study primarily relied on a literature review and did not employ empirical research methods, which could have provided deeper insights into audience behaviors and preferences.

Additionally, the scope of literature examined was somewhat limited, potentially overlooking emerging trends and innovations in the industry. Future research could benefit from a more comprehensive empirical approach, incorporating quantitative data and case studies to analyze the dynamics of audience engagement with both streaming and traditional media. Moreover, expanding the literature review to include a wider range of sources could enhance our understanding of the ongoing evolution in film distribution and consumption patterns. By addressing these gaps, subsequent studies can further illuminate the complex relationship between streaming platforms and traditional media, paving the way for a more nuanced understanding of the film industry's future.

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