

## Prospects and Challenges of Pakistani Film Industry in Digital Age

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*In the digital world, film is changing a lot with the passage of time. Since 2007, social media platforms have created a new digital revolution in the world. Since 2010, social media and digital platforms have become much more popular in Pakistan as well. Applications for social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have made an influence in every industry. Particularly in the fields of communication and marketing, there has been a significant shift. The film industry has also been impacted by it in a similar way. The number of moviegoers has substantially expanded thanks to OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon, Disney, Prime Video, and others in the world of digital media. This study intends to examine the present situation of the Pakistani film industry in light of digital technology, taking into account both its difficulties and prospects. The researcher also analyses in depth the ways that digital technology is altering the processes used in Pakistani cinema production and dissemination. Researchers also pinpoint the effects of digital technology and problems associated with it, such as infrastructure, piracy, and censorship. The overall goal of the research is to offer methods and practices that industry stakeholders may use to prosper in the digital age and to give a thorough examination of the effects of digital technology on the Pakistani film industry. In order to maintain their competitiveness in the digital era, industry stakeholders might embrace and put into practice the tactics and practices identified by researchers. How much benefit Pakistan film industry is reaping from these modern platforms? Also, are we making the best use of all these sources or not? And what we will need to use them. In this research we will try to find the answer to all these questions. Or have these modern platforms caused any damage to the Film industry. Which medium is better for our industry between traditional cinema and digital cinema? In what medium are we capable of moving forward? On the other hand, how can we move forward by benefiting from this modern technology? Where will we find ease in this? For this, we will conduct in-depth interviews with film directors, producers, distributors and artists.*

## 1. Introduction

Films are the major source of entertainment in every era. Since the creation of Pakistan till the beginning of the 21st century, the cinema screen has been a major means of conveying films to moviegoers. The advent of first the VCR and then the computer and the accompanying CD at the end of the twentieth century undoubtedly further limited cinema screens in a society like Pakistan. In the digital era, the Pakistani film industry, commonly known as Lollywood, has seen considerable changes. The growth of social media and digital platforms has given filmmakers new opportunities for audience involvement, distribution, and promotion (Mallya, 2022).

The transition from conventional film distribution to digital channels is one of the biggest developments. The popularity of streaming platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime has given Pakistani filmmakers access to new audiences. Additionally, filmmakers may now reach a bigger audience and market their films directly to viewers thanks to social media sites like YouTube and Facebook (Endavo, 2020). The use of digital technology has also transformed the way films are made in Pakistan. Advances in camera technology, special effects, and post-production software have enabled filmmakers to create high-quality films at a lower cost than in the past. This has led to a resurgence of Pakistani cinema and a new generation of filmmakers who are exploring innovative and experimental storytelling techniques (Thenews.com, 2013).

### 1.1 Historical Perspective of Pakistan Film Industry

Lollywood, or Pakistani cinema, is the term used to describe the country's film industry. Pakistan is home to a number of film studios, the most of which are situated in the nation's three largest cities: Karachi, Lahore, and Faisalabad. After years of decline, Pakistani cinema has recently begun to blossom once more, entertaining both local audiences and expats living overseas. Pakistani culture has benefited greatly from Pakistani movies. There are several film industries in Pakistan, the majority of which are regional and specialized (Express Tribune, 2019)

Joyland was the first film from Pakistan to be screened at Cannes in 2022. The Pakistani Film Fraternity selected it as Pakistan's submission for the Best International Feature Film category of the 95th Academy Awards (Pakistan Film Magazine, 2023).

### 1.2 Independent Screening of Indian Films

In the first five years of Pakistan's existence, only 34 films were released, which is an average of seven films per year. Due to independent screening of Indian films, rarity of film studios and lack of capital, no progress could be made in the field of film making. There was no dearth of artists as many of the film artists of Lahore had become unemployed before partition. Many artists from Bombay and Calcutta also came to Lahore, while others had to go back due to unfavorable conditions.

Indian film distributors used to release their films in Pakistani cinemas without any hindrance. Lahore, then the largest city in Pakistan for over a hundred Indian Hindi/Urdu films produced annually, had only twenty cinemas. Like today, film making was then confined to the middle class of a few big cities. Big films used to face tough competition. In

such a situation, it was very difficult for the Pakistani films that became blockbusters to find their place in the cinemas.

Despite such stiff competition, tradition has it that the Pakistani film *Shahida* (1949) celebrated jubilees in Delhi and Lucknow. *Phere* (1949), *Du Ansu* and *Laare* (1950) also did great business. But *Dupatta* (1952) proved to be the first film to shake up the entire Indian film circuit. The film originally established the same continuity as *Madam Noor Jahan*, the superstar actress and singer of the 1940s Dhari. His last two films before Partition, *Jaganu* and *Mirzasahibaan* (1947) were also the highest-grossing films of the year (Pakistan Film Magazine, 2023).

The huge success of Pakistan's first musical Urdu film, *Dupatta* (1952), did not go down well with some extremists in India, and incidents of vandalism reportedly took place at several Indian cinemas where the super hit film was being screened. As a response to Indian bias and narrow-mindedness, on October 29, 1952, the government of Pakistan enacted a new law for film distributors, restricting the free exhibition of Indian films, under which only licensed distributors could sell Indian films to Pakistani cinemas. And could import American films. This permit could be obtained only by Pakistani citizens. This bold decision was taken during the reign of Khawaja Nazimuddin, the weakest Prime Minister of Pakistan who was sacked first (Pakistani Cinema's Turbulent History, 2012).

A separate import policy was formulated for the then two parts of Pakistan i.e. East Pakistan and West Pakistan. The main reason for this was that Bengalis were only interested in films made in their mother tongue, which were produced in large numbers in Calcutta. In contrast, Bengali films were of no importance in present-day Pakistan where Hindi/Urdu apart from Punjabi films were in demand. The government of Pakistan decided to enter into a film-for-film deal with India under the "barter system". This very wise decision was made during the tenure of then Prime Minister Muhammad Ali Bogra, who is also called the first "puppet" and "imported" Prime Minister of Pakistan (Pakistan Film Magazine, 2023).

This historic decision had far-reaching consequences. While on the one hand the number of Pakistani films increased several times, film distributors also jumped into the field of filmmaking for their own interests. After Lahore, films also started being made in Karachi and Dhaka. Karachi's first film was *Hamari Zaban* (1955) and Dhaka's first film was *Mukh wa Makhoosh* (1956). In the same year, the first Sindhi film *Omar Marvi* (1956) was also made in Karachi. The positive results of this Pakistan-India agreement on the "barter system" can be gauged from the fact that in the first seven years of Pakistan's release, only 51 films were released, but in the next five years, another 149 films graced the cinemas.

### 1.3 1960's Era

While only 200 films were made in the first twelve years of Pakistan or the mid-1940s/50s, the number of films in the mid-1960s exceeded 700. As if more than 70 films were being released every year. In the mid-1960s, there were big names in every field of film, but no big films like *Pachas Ki Dhari* could be made, even though the government had banned the screening of new Indian films under a law in 1962 and only for five years. Old Indian films were allowed to be shown in Pakistani cinemas. (Pakistan Film Magazine, 2023)

However, a golden era of films and filmmaking had begun in this period. Urdu films, mostly on social themes while Punjabi films were being made on the class conflict of the rural environment. In terms of film music, it was the golden era of Pakistan's film history.

Pakistani films had become a lucrative business and the government was earning a lot of foreign exchange through entertainment tax. Thousands of people were employed in films while black money launderers also had money because there was no better way to launder black money. It is also worth mentioning here that the cost of the Grand Mosque of Pakistan built in Lahore's Iqbal Park was also met by levying additional taxes on race course and cinema tickets. Some of the major film events of the 1960s are as follows:

Gul Bakauli (1961) was the first partial, Sangam (1964) was the first full Urdu film while Panj Darya (1968) was the first Punjabi color film. Naila (1965) was the first superhit color film. Chanda (1962) was the first Urdu film made in East Pakistan, but Dhaka's Urdu films were usually dubbed from Bengali into Urdu and their Urdu songs were recorded in film studios in Lahore. Punjabi film Ji Dar (1965) and Urdu film Armaan (1966) became the first Platinum Jubilees while Urdu film Zarqa (1969) proved to be the first Diamond Jubilee films.

One of the most memorable films of the period, Badnaam (1966) was the first Pakistani film that was hugely popular in the former Soviet Union and was dubbed into seventeen different Russian languages. (From Golden Age to Struggle: The Journey of Pakistani Cinema, 2023). Son of Pakistan (1966) was a Bengali national unity film set in Dhaka, former East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh) and released on Independence Day.

Interestingly, the word "Pakistan" was used in the title of any Pakistani film during the period of Muttahida Pakistan i.e. 1947 to 1971 only in this single film made in Dhaka. The tragedy is that this film was released in the same year when the founder of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, presented the famous six points of secession which became the basis for the establishment of Bangladesh.

#### **1.4 Establishment of Central Censor Board**

On March 24, 1961, the autocratic government of General Ayub Khan implemented the first film censorship policy through an ordinance without consultation. The Central Censor Board was established in Rawalpindi while the main film industry was in Lahore but they had to go to Rawalpindi for the Censor Certificate. No one could even protest against this excess because the first martial law was in force in the country.

After the fall of the Ayub regime, on August 28, 1970, the film and cinema industry went on strike against illegal restrictions and unnecessary taxes. General Yahya Khan's martial law government had established Censor Board branches in Lahore and Karachi as well, accepting the demands.

On September 3, 1979, a new censorship law was enacted under General Zia Maloon, which mandated the registration of filmmakers and directors and banned many old Pakistani films because they contained political propaganda. The main target of Amer Mardud was Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, who is mentioned in many films and songs (Pakistan Film Magazine, 2023). The last change in the censorship law was in 2010 when according to the 18th

constitutional amendment passed by President Asif Ali Zardari, each province now has its own censorship board.

### **1.5 Establishment of NAFDEC (National Film Development Corporation)**

On July 28, 1974, the People's Government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto announced the establishment of a government organization "National Film Development Corporation", the main objectives of which are the establishment of a National Film Academy, the promotion of quality films, the exhibition and export of Pakistani films abroad. , import of quality foreign films, provision of modern equipment to movie theaters, import, storage and delivery of raw film, establishment of quality cinemas and revival of film studios in Karachi, besides protection of basic rights of film workers. NAFDEC, in his early days, was very active in achieving his goals. Two modern cinemas were built in Islamabad at government expense, and some films were also invested. Beyond The Last Mountain (1976) became the first English film of international standard. Historical films such as Khak Wa Khoon (1979) were also made, based on the story of the establishment of Pakistan. But the failure of these films showed how much there is a contradiction between the so-called national and public thinking in Pakistan (Pakistan Film Magazine, 2023).

Interestingly, the filmmakers and cinema owners themselves did not cooperate with NEFDEC. The government wanted world-class films, but the imagination and reach of filmmakers was very limited, while cinema owners wanted to import the same foreign films that people wanted to watch. The bureaucracy also showed its traditional incompetence.

With the departure of the Bhutto government, where other institutions were destroyed, even NAFDEC could not survive and after continuous decline, it was completely closed during the reign of General Musharraf.

### **1.6 1990's Era**

In the mid-1990s, more than 700 films were released at an annual average of 73 films, and the film business was booming. The number of Urdu and Punjabi films remained the same in this period. In this era of cable and satellite TV, action Punjabi films were in vogue until mid-2000s, but after the assassination of Sultan Rahi on January 9, 1996, Punjabi films deflated. There was a temporary boom in Urdu films, but due to their limited circuit, they could not do the same business as Punjabi films. In such a situation, the filmmakers faced the stage of finding Sultan Rahi's successor. Qaraa Fall, actor Shaan filled the gap and in the late 1990s, the era of action Punjabi films began once again and lasted for a full decade.

### **1.7 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the Pakistani Film Industry**

Even in the mid-2000s, action Punjabi films continued to flourish and Shaan continued to play the role of Sultan Rahi very well. Urdu films were also made but Pashto films did the most business. The number of films released dropped significantly, and around 500 films were released across the country, an annual average of about 50, or one film per week.

After a gap of 26 years, the screening of Indian films started again in Pakistan, which continued till 2019. On April 23, 2006, the famous Indian film Mughal Azam (1960) was

screened at Golestan Cinema in Lahore, but it flopped badly in the presence of the film *Majajan* (2006). Unfortunately, it was a one-way traffic as Pakistani films were not releasing in India. This was the era of another dictator General Pervez Musharraf.

In the second half of 2010, Urdu films once again gained momentum and released double the number of Punjabi films, but the annual average was only 35 films. This was still better than the average of fifty percent (Pakistan Film Magazine, 2023)

In this period, the film industry of Lahore declined and was replaced by the film industry of Karachi, where films of international standards began to be made according to modern requirements. Technically, great progress was made, but no major breakthrough could be made in the creative field. The worst condition in contemporary films has been the film music which used to be the hallmark of our films (Stakeholders Tense over Dwindling Number of Films, 2019).

Today's films are watched only by the middle class in the multi-complex cinemas of a few big cities. The internet has captured the world in a smart phone where there is a wealth of entertainment of all kinds on social media. In such a situation, the importance of the film for the common man, which used to pull him to the theaters and used to remain in the theaters for weeks, months, even years, is no longer there. 2020 also sees the continuation of the previous half. Due to digital cinema, films can be released simultaneously all over the world. In this way, the film business has increased significantly, the latest example of which is *The Legend of Moolah Jat* (2022), which is said to have earned more than two billion rupees. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, the industry went through a period of decline due to political instability, economic challenges, and censorship issues.

Film, which is considered as the biggest source of entertainment even today. With the changing times, this film has evolved a lot. Along with new themes, new and successful experiments are being done to bring the film to the audience. Since partition, Pakistan Film Industry and cinema evolves and produced some great hits in 60's and late 70's. Pakistan Film Industry known as Lollywood suffered badly in the 80's and 90's due to unwanted political crisis.

Despite being overshadowed by Bollywood, bad scripts, censorship, and a lack of technology, the Pakistani film industry has seen a significant transformation in the twenty-first century. Young Pakistani performers have changed the film business despite these flaws because to their talents on screen. With *Khuda Ke Liye* (2007) and *Bol* (2011), renowned TV producer Shoaib Mansoor was successful in reviving the moviegoing experience (The Numbers, 2019).

In recent years, the industry has seen a resurgence with the rise of digital technology and the growing popularity of independent filmmaking. According to the Pakistan Film Producers Association, the industry produced over 20 films in 2021, up from just six in 2010. The industry has also seen an increase in international recognition, with Pakistani films winning awards at major film festivals such as Cannes (*The Losing Side*, 2023; *Darling*, 2019; DW, 2022).

## 1.8 Digital Filmmaking and Video Production

We are surrounded by the wonders of technology everywhere we turn. Technology has changed our lives in every way imaginable, from healthcare, e-commerce, education, industry, and media to even retail.

It caused a paradigm change in the movie business. Technology gives the film business a much-needed advantage across the board, from filming to post-production, editing to distribution and marketing.

Everyone has been asking how technology may be employed in the filmmaking process, and digital filmmaking is the answer. Motion photos are digitally captured throughout this procedure. In contrast to film cinematography, which requires film stock, digital cinematography makes use of a camera's digital sensor to record light. These photographs are then saved on cassettes or digital files. (Film Connection, 2023)

A digital movie might also be a recording produced using a film recorder and seen with a traditional film projector, or it could be a film reel that has been scanned and repaired using a motion picture film scanner.

Digital cinema, as opposed to high-definition television, does not necessarily follow aspect ratios, frame rates, and other common high-definition video standards. In digital cinema, resolutions are expressed using horizontal pixel counts, which are frequently 2K (2048x1080 or 2.2 megapixels) or 4K (4096x2160 or 8.8 megapixels). The 2K and 4K resolutions utilised in digital cinema projection are referred to as DCI 2K and DCI 4K, respectively. They identify themselves as Digital Cinema Initiatives (DCI, 2022). The majority of theatres all over the world moved to digital video projection in the early 2010s as digital cinema technology developed. Digital cinema technology has developed throughout the years, providing audiences with more immersive experiences with 3D, RPX, 4DX, and ScreenX.

## 1.9 Digital Cinematography

Digital cinematography is the process of creating motion pictures using digital image sensors rather of film stock. As digital technology has developed over the past few years, this practice has become more popular. Since the middle of the 2010s, the bulk of films have been captured and distributed digitally. Products have been released by a large number of companies, including well-known producers of film cameras like Arri and Panavision, as well as cutting-edge producers like Red, Blackmagic, Silicon Imaging, and Vision Research, as well as companies that have traditionally specialized in consumer and broadcast video equipment like Sony, GoPro, and Panasonic (Archambault, 2023). Although digital capture still has a different appearance from analogue film, professional 4K digital film cameras possessed resolution and dynamic range capabilities that, as of 2017, were about similar to those of 35mm film (PetaPixel, 2016).

## 1.10 OTT (Over-the-top) Platforms

Over-the-top (OTT) media services are ones that are offered directly to viewers via the Internet. OTT stays away from the companies that normally act as content distributors or controllers, such as cable, broadcast, and satellite TV platforms. It has also been used to

designate no-carrier cellphones and applications for phones that communicate data in this way, including both those that replace other call modes and those that update software, in order to prevent monopolistic competition.

The term is most frequently used to describe (SVoD) subscription-based video on demand services that offer access to film and television content (including both previously airing episodes and films for which rights have been obtained from the content owner and original content made especially for the service OTT (Over-the-Top) providers offer a number of "skinny" television solutions that give users access to live streaming of traditional specialty channels. These services imitate standard satellite or cable TV providers, but instead of distributing the content over a closed, private network using pricey, specialised equipment like set-top boxes, they use the public Internet (Endavo, 2022).

The most popular means to access over-the-top services are through websites on personal computers, applications on mobile devices (such smartphones and tablets), digital media players (including game consoles), and TVs with built-in Smart TV platforms.

### **1.11 The Impact of Digitalization on the Film Industry**

Films have always had magic. They are doors to very different worlds. They provide a haven from the problems of the world. They represent the crew's loving artistry and the outward manifestation of the filmmaker's soul. Yes, movies encompass all of this and much more. Films are able to simultaneously release and tame the amazing capabilities of technology in breath-taking new ways because they are the perfect fusion of art and science.

The combination of cinema and technology has perhaps never been stronger or more important than it is right now. In reality, the rise of digital technology is profoundly transforming every facet of the filmmaking process, including how movies are developed, promoted, and watched by consumers. These OTT platforms have something for everyone, including documentaries, top IMDB films, and binge-worthy original series. If you're seeking an endless stream of entertainment, relax, and let us introduce you to the world of OTT video streaming services (Winstead, 2023).

### **1.12 Growth of OTT Platforms**

Over the past two years, OTT platforms have proliferated in sub-continent. Regarding the commercial and the setting in which these materials are presented to the public, the method for releasing movies online has altered the entertainment sector. To sell movies online via OTT Platforms, producers, distributors, and other industry players are actively involved and practicing self-publishing. The congested OTT industry in subcontinent was estimated to be worth Rs. 21.5 billion in 2018 and might increase to Rs. 35 billion over the following several years. With over 500 million users and an estimated ranking in the top ten, video OTT revenue was Rs. 2, 019 crores in 2017 and is projected to reach Rs. 5,955 crores by 2022 at a constant rate of 8 percent (Teyuto, 2022).

The adoption and implementation of digital technology in Pakistani film production is alarming. While there have been some advances in digital technology in the Pakistani film industry, there is still a lack of research on the extent of its adoption and implementation in film production. This includes the use of digital cameras, special effects, and post-production



techniques. The impact of digital distribution on the Pakistani film industry is the real issue. With the increasing availability of digital distribution platforms, there is a need to examine the impact of these platforms on the Pakistani film industry. This includes their influence on the distribution of films and their economic impact on the industry.

Censorship is the major issue for Pakistani filmmakers. They face real challenge to get censorship board certificates from various platforms. Piracy is another major issue for the filmmakers in the industry. To control the pirated material in the market, there is no strict check and balance. When we talk about the system or any infrastructure of the film industry, there is no structure of the film here. There is no complete system that can do anything about the film industry. Competition is the other challenge for the film industry. In the presence of Indian and Hollywood films in the market, how they compete and manage their viewership is the big question for the Pakistan film industry. The challenges and opportunities for Pakistani film production and distribution is the main research gap we will try to find out.

While digital technology has the potential to transform the Pakistani film industry, there are also challenges that need to be addressed, such as the digital divide and issues related to piracy. There is a need to examine the challenges and opportunities for the Pakistani film industry in digital age.

Despite the growth and revitalization of the Pakistani film industry in recent years, the industry faces numerous challenges in adapting to the digital technology. The emergence of new digital technologies, platforms, and distribution channels has disrupted traditional modes of film production, distribution, and consumption, leading to significant changes in the industry landscape. Like when researcher talk about the various online applications available for distribution which in result a smaller number of cinema goers. However, there is a lack of research on how these changes are affecting the Pakistani film industry, and how industry stakeholders are responding to these challenges. There are five different themes of the present study basis on which this study is conducted. These are piracy, censorship, competition, technological barrier and lack of infrastructure. Therefore, this research is designed to investigate the impact of digital technology on the Pakistani film industry, and to identify the strategies and practices that industry stakeholders can adopt to thrive in the digital age.

### **1.13 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are;

- To analyze the current state of the Pakistani film industry in the context of digital technology, including the challenges and opportunities.
- To evaluate the ways in which digital technology is changing the modes of film production, distribution, and consumption in the Pakistani film industry.
- To identify the strategies and practices that industry stakeholders can adopt and implemented in the digital age to remain competitive.
- To understand the impact of digital technology on Pakistani film industry.

- To identify the impact of digital technology and the issues related to that technology such as piracy, censorship, competition, technological barriers and lack of infrastructure.

The overall goal of the research is to offer methods and practices that industry stakeholders may use to prosper in the digital age and to give a thorough examination of the effects of digital technology on the Pakistani film industry.

### **Significance of the Study**

Film industry is always an important cultural and economic institution that contributes to the country's identity and development. To ensure the industry's long-term viability and growth, it is essential to comprehend how digital technology is affecting it. This research will help filmmakers and distributors in exploring new opportunities in the form of digital platforms in the film industry. It will also present some practical frame work of all these opportunities to filmmakers and distributors.

## **2. Literature Review**

Many studies have been conducted on film in digital age but few are much relevant and address the issue of our main topic regarding prospects and challenges of Pakistan film industry in digital age. In various researches, the researchers focus on the challenges faced by Pakistan film industry. But in some recent researches, researchers also focus on the impact of digital technology on Pakistan film industry.

In addition to being an entertaining medium, movies and films are also useful for propaganda, education, and opinion formation. It is impossible to undervalue the importance of film in the modern world. Films bring not only the good of the society but also the hidden stories of the society on the screen. In some societies they are also made to serve a particular agenda and displayed to the public. Films also play a very important role in creating the narrative of society.

According to some of the writers who talked about the existence of Pakistani Film Industry in the early age, they thought that in Pakistani society film didn't get the rightful acceptance for its growth. Films treated as immortal or film related person treated as infidels (Ahmad, 2017).

There has been a lot of talk about the use of digital technology in films around the world. Numerous research articles, columns and blogs have been written on it. But in Pakistan very short work has been done in this regard. Some works are mentioned here with references. "The Reemergence of Pakistani Cinema: Globalization, Hybridity, and the Role of Women" explores the recent revival of the Pakistani film industry and the role of women in driving this revival. The author argues that the industry has become more inclusive and diverse, with female filmmakers and actors playing a key role in shaping new narratives and challenging traditional gender roles (Kirmani, 2017).

### **2.1 Theoretical Frame Work**

Media literacy theory linked to effects of digital technology on the Pakistani film industry in the form of challenges and other ways; Baran and Stanley clearly discussed in their book "Introduction to Mass Communication" about the Media literacy theory which emphasizes the importance of understanding media content, including how it is constructed,

what messages it conveys, and how it is received by audiences. In the context of the Pakistani film industry, media literacy theory used to explore how digital technology is influencing the films, including the themes.

In the context of the Pakistani film industry, media literacy theory used to examine how digital technology is changing the ownership and control of film production and distribution, and how this is impacting the diversity and quality of films

Media literacy theory emphasizes the need for individuals to develop critical thinking, analytical, and creative skills to engage with media content. In the context of the Pakistani film industry, media literacy theory used to explore how digital technology is changing the skills and competencies required for film production and distribution, and how individuals can develop these skills to succeed in the industry.

Media literacy theory emphasizes the need to understand how media content affects individuals and society.

## **2.2 Relevancy of Theory with Research**

In the context of the Pakistani film industry, media literacy theory used to examine the prospects and challenges of Pakistani Film Industry in digital era including their consumption patterns and preferences for different types of films.

Overall, media literacy theory provided a useful framework for understanding how digital technology is changing the Pakistani film industry, and how individuals and society engaged with this technology in a critical and informed manner. This theory explains how new innovations are adopted and spread throughout society. In the context of the Pakistani film industry, the concept of innovation diffusion can be used to explore how digital technology is being adopted and integrated into the film production process.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

Exploratory research conducted to identify the prospects and challenges in Pakistani Film Industry in digital era. It is often used in studies that explore complex phenomena, such as social interactions, attitudes, and beliefs. In in-depth interviews, data is coded and categorized into themes or patterns, which are then used to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

### **3.2 In-depth Interviews**

In the context of the Pakistan film industry, in-depth interviews with directors, producers, actors, and distributors could provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the industry, as well as the perspectives and experiences of key stakeholders. This study identifies themes such as censorship, piracy, infrastructure, competition and technology, as well as explore the potential for international recognition and the role of independent filmmaking. Overall, this analysis provides valuable insights into the Pakistan film industry, and studies methods could offer a comprehensive understanding of the industry and its challenges and prospects.

### **3.3 Research Approach**

The study employs a qualitative research strategy. This method offers a thorough grasp of the effect of digital technology on the sector from several angles.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with industry stakeholders such as directors, producers, actors and distributors. Secondary data were gathered from industry reports, academic literature, and online sources.

### **3.5 Procedure**

Through creating a liaison for in-depth interviews of the various stakeholders and with their permissions on their working spots and their consent, researcher conducted video and audio interviews with hand written notes of the related respondents of the Pakistan Film Industry.

### **3.6 Population**

The population of the study consisted on stake holders (distributors, directors, producers and actors) of the Pakistani film industry.

### **3.7 Sampling Technique**

Sampling technique plays an important role in achieving the best result of any research. For the existing research, purposive and stratified sampling was used to select industry stakeholders who are directly involved in the production, distribution, and consumption of Pakistani films in the digital age. Because of the film industry related issue all major stake holders of the industry were selected for the best result. The sample also includes respondents from different age groups and genders to capture a diverse range of perspectives.

### **3.8 Sample Size/ Participants**

The study was based on total of 20 interviews in this research. For in-depth interviews, we considered 20 professional filmmakers and divided into four main categories;

- 5 Directors
- 5 Producers
- 5 Actors
- 5 Distributors

### **3.9 Sample Characteristics**

The various characteristics of our sample are:

- At least five years of experience in the industry
- Popular figure of film industry in his specialized field.
- User of digital media applications
- Lahore based respondents

### 3.10 Construction of Structured Questions for Interviews

The questionnaire was developed after reading the literature and identifying the themes out of it. The research philosophy lets the researcher decide whether the work was being done according to the expectations and test concerns. The theory of science is available in several directions but the one chosen in this study was the realism approach.

As per Mohajan (2018), the realism approach includes the use of concrete facts and figures through actual study and clarification of responses. The major reason for choosing realism approach was the discussion and concrete results related to the Prospects and Challenges of Pakistan Film Industry in Digital Era. The path to realism was the strongest for this setting.

This study had undertaken the path using the interview questionnaire to decide the findings which support or condemn the research questions. Open ended questions for in-depth interviews are the part of questions.

Data collection is a methodical process for gathering and analyzing large amounts of information in order to answer important questions and evaluate the results. This looks for all information related to a particular topic. Data was gathered and contributed to other experiments on ideas designed to show a pattern.

Several important themes were considered in the framework of the study on the effect of digital technology on the Pakistani film industry.

## 4. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis is the process that uses mathematical and logical methods to systematically analyze and define, condense, recapture and assess data. Several results generating methods offer a way of drawing deductive conclusions from the findings and separating the effect from the action triggered by the state of treatment provided (Shamoo et al., 2003) Techniques for quantitative and qualitative data analysis can be selected for study analysis.

### 4.1 Findings and Results

We will discuss about the findings and results of our study. The in depth interviews of producers, actors, directors and distributors were conducted in person. The total no. of respondents is 20 which includes 5 producers, 5 directors, 5 actors and 5 distributors. All the respondents belong to Lahore. They work in the film industry for past many years.

They were asked about the Prospects and Challenges of Pakistan Film Industry in digital age. The structured questionnaire was designed for this purpose. Based on their answers and views, the analysis is given as under:

For the current study, qualitative data analysis methods were used. For qualitative analysis, interviews were conducted. After evaluating previous studies relevant to this topic, the project structured questionnaire was designed. For the gathering of knowledge and interpretation of the findings of this report, the most important research questions were chosen.

Descriptive analysis method was considered the one with the help of which the results could be presented in the form of thematic values. This method was suitable to present the results in detail because it described all the themes obtained from the interviews.

#### **4.2 Theme Wise Findings**

Here we discuss the theme wise findings of our research;

#### **4.3 Lack of Infrastructure**

There is a serious shortage of production houses in the country. Only Lahore and Karachi have some better production houses for the film for any medium. Respondent no. 6, put a detail has mentioned in great detail the shortage of production houses and equipment. According to him, unless there is an infrastructure, nothing good can happen. Along with this, government inattention has also been mentioned.

Respondent no. 4 has said that the tragedy is that the film industry has not yet been given the status of an industry due to which there is no infrastructure of any kind., equipment and the experts who operate them all count as a better infrastructure. Similarly, cinemas equipped with modern facilities are only around a hundred in the entire country. If you don't build modern cinemas, then how can you expect moviegoers to visit cinemas to watch movies.

Respondent no. 17 said that by infrastructure you can also take OTT platforms. Pakistan still does not have a single OTT platform where it can launch its own films. A good OTT platform can definitely act as an injection for new actors, filmmakers and people connected to the film industry.

#### **4.4 Piracy**

When it comes to piracy, there are more challenges on digital platforms. According to respondent no. 8, if we want to control piracy at the digital level, we need to be fully aware of online streaming platforms. Our filmmakers have to understand these modern tools and then use them better then only we can protect our content from piracy.

Respondent no. 3 said that, piracy is a major challenge that the entire world is currently facing but various online platforms are now solving it by linking copyright with monetization. Major examples of these are YouTube and Facebook which immediately block pirated material as well as terminate accounts.

According to respondent no. 11, to fight piracy we need to provide thorough training to our directors, producers and distributors. Let them know what steps to take to avoid this. Only then will there be a lasting solution to this problem.

#### **4.5 Censorship**

Censorship is a huge problem. On which 18 out of twenty people have raised objection. According to respondent no. 8, the bribery market is hot in different places in the name of censorship. Earlier there was just a federal censorship board, but now filmmakers have to obtain separate censorship certificates from each location and province. Due to which their difficulties have increased a lot. As per the respondent no. 15, after the censorship fee, everywhere extra money has to be paid in the form of bribe then somewhere you get censorship certificate. And in some cases, after getting the certificate, you are not allowed to show in theaters and never get a cinema screen. The latest example is the film of Sarmad Khoosat, Zindagi Tamasha, which was banned after releasing the censorship certificate.

Respondent no. 3 added that the Pakistan Censorship Board is present since partition from which all films made in Pakistan must get a certificate before release. But now, the provincial censorship boards launched which means more complications in this process. Acquiring all these certificates is no less than a big challenge for a filmmaker. There are mechanisms in place to ensure this practice on digital platforms as well.

#### **4.6 Competition**

When it comes to the competition, the reviewers seem to be a bit divided. Especially the distributors seem to be open about it.

According to respondent no. 20, in the Pakistan film industry, only few competitive films are made, which are liked by the moviegoers. Compared to this, when it comes to Indian movies, Pakistani fans watch them more enthusiastically. They do three times more business than Pakistani films. Especially if a film of one of the Bollywood Khans is released, it earns more than four times.

According to respondent no. 3, Pakistani fans like to watch Indian movies as well as Hollywood movies. Especially in areas where there are modern cinemas, the high class society likes to watch English films. They don't prefer local movies that much and the main reason for this is the traditional cheesy movies that tend to fail simply because of the use of old technology and violence.

Respondent no. 9 said that, when it comes to digital streaming platforms, Bollywood and Hollywood are far ahead in terms of content due to the absence of Pakistani platforms there as well. Unless Pakistan builds a good OTT platform and has its own content, it cannot compete with them.

#### **4.7 Technological Barriers**

All the respondents agree that if we want to make a better film than the world, we have to improve the technology and our technique. Only then will we be able to move forward. For example, respondent no. 16 said that we have to take the help of modern production tools more and more. Only when we use modern equipment will our film stand out on the big screen and do more business.

Respondent no. 7 further added that when we talk about modern production and modern tools, a recent example comes before us Maula Jutt. In which high quality work has been done and all modern technology and techniques have been used in the production. From video production to audio production, Maula Jutt has excelled in every aspect of the production. Which is loved all over the world. It has done excellent business not only in Pakistan but also in the whole world and has made its place in the most successful Pakistani films of all time.

Respondent no. 11 said that same is the case with the content created on digital streaming platforms as well. If we create latest stories and content with latest equipment we may proceed further and launch our own OTT platform to compete with the international audience and market.

#### **4.8 Discussion**

From the standpoint of the viewer, digital filmmaking has completely taken over the industry. The benefits of 3D glasses, VR headsets, IMAX, 7D, and other technologies are available to moviegoers. On OTT services like Netflix, Disney Hotstar, Amazon Prime, YouTube, and others, people may also take pleasure in watching movies in the convenience

of their own homes. Technology's involvement has increased the scope of movie-making, movie-watching, and other revenue-generating activities in addition to simplifying them.

To reach a large audience today, a substantial marketing investment is no longer necessary. The films in digital format are not restricted to conventional distribution channels. All you need is good content and presentation. Digital movie releases on OTT services can help you achieve enormous success and open doors of success for the filmmakers (Winstead, 2023).

Digital filmmaking is far more cost- and time-effective than traditional filming. A digital print is also free from the worries about deterioration or physical harm. Furthermore, it makes it possible for theatres to show alternative programming, such as opera and live theatre. In the past, keeping conventional films required a lot of time, money, and logistical effort. However, the advent of digital cinema has clearly substantially and significantly lessened all of these concerns. We now just require a few megabytes of storage space for the film as opposed to massive physical storage areas. Digital copies of films may be stored on servers for a fraction of the cost of preserving actual films.

To sum up, effective story production may be achieved with a sensible mix of video equipment, computer program, and software. One has to be skilled in technological know-how and efficient lighting techniques to edit and render videos till post-production.

Producers and directors look for candidates with excellent managerial and technical knowledge skills in order to get the best results via captivating narrative. As a result, a well-designed digital filmmaking course may be useful since it gives students the skills and knowledge they need to create stories that are up to par with industry standards. The whole movie-making process is changing as a result of advances in digital technology, from production to editing to distribution. In addition to being substantially less expensive than film cameras, contemporary digital cameras are also significantly more useful.

## **5. Conclusion**

The argument has been made that the golden age of the film business ended more than fifty years ago. But digitalization may usher in a new golden era. Production is now possible at a degree of cinematic fidelity that was before unimaginable because to digital technology. Release dates have gotten closer together with a decrease in production expenses. As a result, the craft of filmmaking is now more accessible than ever to independent and small companies. The ability to communicate with a really global audience has been made feasible by social media, much like how it has altered how films are promoted and distributed. The digital medium has played an important role in making filmmaking easier. Along with this, the moviegoers have also been introduced to a completely new environment.

### **5.1 Recommendations**

Following are the recommendations for improving the Pakistan film industry in the digital age.

- The government should ensure the establishment of a digital OTT platform under its auspices so that filmmakers can not only make new films without any fear, but also not suffer from any uncertainty regarding their distribution.



- Pakistan film industry in digital age needs government patronage. In which the government will give substantial grants to the digital film makers which will be an attraction for the new and young film directors and producers.
- Government have to give full exemption of taxes and fees in various capacities to people associated with digital film making. This will also make it easier for new and young filmmakers to enter and groom in the industry.
- The government of Pakistan should make the digital film industry a full-fledged industry and attract investors by providing various facilities to make it profitable.
- Conducting digital film making training workshops for young filmmakers at the government level will also be a good opportunity for people associated with the digital film industry.
- Government and private digital filmmakers sign international contracts with major digital film producing countries. In which young digital filmmakers should be involved and trained with latest technology and they can use this experience at the local level to produce state of the art digital film content.
- Digital films can also play a significant role in improving the country's economy. If digital films based on good and quality stories will be produced keeping in mind the digital online streaming platforms and global audience, then surely our digital films can also earn foreign exchange from all over the world and bring them to the country. Foreign exchange can be earned from these international films which can play a role in improving the image of Pakistan in the whole world along with improving the national economy.

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