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MONOPOLY AND ANTI COMPETITION IN FILM DISTRIBUTION: LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF MULTIPLEX CHAINS FAVOURING BIG STUDIOS

Saanhvi Srivastava

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how film distribution in India has gradually become skewed in favour of big studios, especially after the growth of multiplex chains. What started as a limited-distributor market has slowly turned into a system where small and regional filmmakers are being pushed out not through direct bans, but through practices that favour the powerful. Advance booking of halls, extended and premium show slots, and festival-time releases are mostly reserved for high-budget films, leaving smaller films with little room to breathe. These issues don't just raise concerns under the Competition Act (Sections 3 and 4), but also under constitutional protections like Articles 14, 15, 21, and 301.The research asks: *To what extent does the current Indian legal framework actually protect fair competition in film distribution and what needs to change to make it better and more inclusive?*

The reforms suggested are simple but necessary. Multiplexes need to be more transparent about how they pick films and share profits. No single chain should dominate a whole region. Even reserving a small number of screens for independent or regional cinema could make a big difference. And there has to be a faster way to settle disputes, because by the time decisions are made, the film's chance has often already passed. With no clear law covering many of these unfair practices, change is long overdue.

Keywords- Film Distribution, Anti-Competitive Practices, Multiplex Monopoly, Cultural Diversity, Competition Law in India

INTRODUCTION

Usually, for a movie to get made and released on the silver screen, three main people are needed: the producer, the distributor, and the hall owner. The producer makes the movie, the distributor buys it, and then showcases it to the audience in exhibition centers.[1]

The Indian film industry was initially highly unorganized with no standard distribution patterns. The system worked through territories. India was divided into ten circuits like Bombay circuit, Eastern circuit, Delhi-U.P. circuit, C.P.-C.I.-Rajasthan circuit, Punjab circuit, and South circuit[2]. In each territory, a few wealthy distributors would buy films directly from producers by paying a fixed amount upfront. These distributors then kept all the profits from screening the movies in cinema halls within their territory. The rights varied - some distributors got forever rights to the film, while others had time-limited contracts, typically for five years. This allowed them to re-release the same movie multiple times in their area whenever they wanted.

However, in the second stage, this system became more complex over time. The unorganized nature led to situations where producers would approach distributors for money to fund their next film, especially if their previous movie had failed. Sometimes distributors ended up making more profits than the actual producers. As distributors began trusting certain producers and believing that taking films from them would be profitable, they started investing money directly into film production. This eventually strengthened producer-distributor relationships, with producers fixing their distributors beforehand rather than seeking buyers after completion.[3]

The profit-sharing model became one-sided: distributors took all profits from successful films, while losses gave them 5-year or forever re-release rights. Meanwhile, producers started seeking advance money from distributors for their next projects. This led to advance booking of territories, where whichever distributor paid the most got the territory. This is how monopoly subtly began taking shape.

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[1] Hemant Singh, *How Is Box Office Collection Calculated?*, Jagran Josh, https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/how-is-box-office-collection-calculated-1532684559-1 (last visited July 14, 2020).

[2] Harman Patil ed., *Hindi Film Distribution Circuits*, Alchetron, https://alchetron.com/Hindi-film-distribution-circuits (last visited July 12, 2025).

[3] Sambit Rohan Choudhury, *The Indian Film Industry: Demystifying the Revenue Streams*, Medium (Apr. 26, 2023), https://medium.com/@sambitrohanchoudhury/title-the-indian-film-industry-demystifying-the-revenue-streams-61e11d661b3e.

THE SUBTLE CHANGE

However, distributors grew tired of the old method due to frequent losses. They shifted to a new approach: instead of buying films outright, they would pay advance money to producers with an agreement to take the picture for their territory. Under this new system, when the film released in halls, profits would be split fifty-fifty between producer and distributor. This marked a significant change in the distribution method.[4]

Today's system works differently - there's no advance payment, distributors simply provide halls and take around say 15 percent commission without buying the film. Initially, distributors would charge ambiguous money from producers. Since this wasn't the digital era, no one could figure out actual ticket sales or revenue generation - producers had no way to know the real numbers. Whatever amount the distributor told them, producers had to accept. This is where theft began - distributors would take their 15 percent plus extra from whatever amount they did not report to producers. Politics came into play through policies and taxation, making the system even more complex.

In single screen cinemas, taxation on tickets reached extremely high levels - often 50 percent or more. The money flow worked like this: after the government took its tax share, the hall owner got paid first, then the distributor took his cut, and whatever remained went to the producer.

THE EMERGENCE OF MULTIPLEXES

This is when multiplexes emerged. The hall owners faced losses and were not allowed to construct anything on that land as it was earmarked for halls only. People who were highly connected with the government submitted proposals for halls combined with shopping complexes. Examples include Zee Cinema and Wave Cinemas, which were foreign-inspired concepts. Multiplexes were defined as having more than 2 screens plus a shopping complex, called a mall regardless of size. The government introduced attractive tax policies: first 3 years completely tax-free for entrepreneurs, 4th, 5th and 6th year some percent, and from 7th year onwards 50 percent tax. This was theoretically the breakeven point. The policy was designed to encourage more people to open

[4] Gulzar, Govind Nihalani & Saibal Chatterjee, *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema* (Popular Prakashan 2003).

multiplexes, allowing entrepreneurs to recover their investment and earn profits through cinema halls.

Corporate companies entered the scene with massive fund-raising capabilities through banks, IPOs, venture capitalists, and merchant bankers. Some companies were huge - for example, Fun Republic used the stock market and public platforms to raise funds. They started creating chains of multiplexes across different territories, like INOX and PVR. Since they had 6 years of assured profits before full taxation kicked in, the business model worked well for them.

PRESENT SCENARIO

Now direct tie-ups emerged between multiplex owners and producers - distributors were no longer needed. For example, multiplex companies would directly partner with ABC Productions. The distributor became just a facilitator, handling poster setup, marketing, and promotional activities. B-type and C-type producers now approached distributors so that multiplex owners would release their films. However, distributors didn't pay producers or buy films anymore - instead, producers gave distributors money for technical stuff, uploading, and standees. Multiplex owners formed tie-ups where big production houses and multiplex owners would book halls in advance[5] during festivals like Eid, Diwali, and Holi, leaving no space for small producers. This is where monopoly truly began, with many laws being violated while some areas had no governing laws at all.

Regional makers and small producers are now left with only around 30 percent of opportunities because they don't have sufficient funds. Hall owners allow their films only if they think it can be profitable, and that too maybe one show in rare cases where the producer might have paid for all tickets as surety. They aren't given a fair chance to exhibit or showcase their films. Meanwhile, big production houses operate like the old system where distributors (now hall owners) buy and show films. Even when big films flop, it's negotiated, but for small and regional producers, there's clear inequality.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

COMPETITION ACT,2002

[5] Randy ed., *How Does Film Distribution Work?*, Aviron Pictures (Sept. 14, 2021).

Section 3[6] plays a major role in building a fair market especially in India's film distribution industry. Simply put, it stops businesses from making deals that harm competition. Thus if big film studios team up with multiplex chains to block smaller films or set terms that clearly favour the big production houses, that's considered anti-competition. These practices reduce audience choice and give unfair advantages, which is exactly what this section aims to prevent.

In India, the way films make it to the big screen often mirrors the exact concerns that Section 3 of the Competition Act, 2002 tries to address. Take, for instance, what's been happening since the PVR-INOX merger. These cinema giants have been known to sign exclusive deals with major production houses like Reliance Entertainment or Disney Star India arrangements that tilt the playing field.[7]

What this means in practice is that the most desirable screens and showtimes tend to go to big-budget films backed by powerful studios. Smaller players, independent filmmakers and regional distributors are edged out, not because their films lack merit, but because they're locked out of the system. The audience loses too. With fewer options on offer, diverse stories and voices struggle to find space in mainstream cinemas. The way some big players in India's film industry operate shows how unfair things can get and that's exactly what Section 3 of the Competition Act tries to prevent.

HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL AGREEMENTS

When companies like PVR, INOX, Cinepolis, or Carnival work together in ways that reduce competition say, by fixing ticket prices, splitting up regions so they don't compete with each other, or quietly agreeing not to screen certain independent films it becomes a serious problem. These are called horizontal agreements, and under Section 3(3), they're illegal because they hurt smaller players and limit what audiences can watch.[8]

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[6] Md. Imran Wahab, *Anti-Competitive Agreements: Section 3 of the Competition Act, 2002*, Legal Service India, https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-15390-anti-competitive-agreements-section-3-of-the-competition-act-2002.html (last visited July 12, 2025).

[7] Geethika Satti, Mere Exchange of Information Amongst the Members of a Trade Association Does Not Amount to Collusion, LexForti (Jan. 17, 2021), https://lexforti.com/legal-news/mere-exchange-of-information-amongst-the-members-of-a-trade-association-does-not-amount-to-collusion/.

[8] Harsh Gupta, *An Analysis of Section 3(3) of the Competition Act, 2002*, iPleaders Blog (Oct. 4, 2021), https://blog.ipleaders.in/an-analysis-of-section-33-of-the-competition-act-2002/ (last visited July 12, 2025).

There's also another kind of deal that the law watches closely, this time between companies at different levels, like a studio and a multiplex. This falls under Section 3(4)[9]. For example, a studio might only give its blockbuster to a theatre if the theatre also agrees to show a lesser-known film from the same company. Or they might refuse to work with smaller distributors altogether. Sometimes, they even try to control ticket prices from above. All of this reduces choice and makes it harder for independent voices to reach the screen. These sections of the law are there to make sure powerful companies don't gang up whether with their rivals or with their business partners in ways that shut out competition and limit what audiences get to see.

ABUSE OF DOMINANT POWER

When one player gets too powerful in any market, there's a risk they'll start using that power unfairly and that's exactly what Section 4 of the Competition Act[10] tries to stop. It deals with what's known as abuse of dominant position. You can see this play out pretty clearly in the case of the PVR-INOX merger. After joining forces, they now control over 1,600 screens across the country. That's a lot especially in cities where multiplexes dominate. With that kind of reach, they don't just influence what gets shown they can shape who gets shown. Big studios might get better revenue deals, while smaller distributors are handed tougher conditions. Indie films and regional cinema often get fewer screens, or they're pushed to odd timings when fewer people are likely to watch.

Sometimes, this influence goes even further. A company with this much control over exhibition might start using that position to expand into distribution or production making it even harder for others to compete. And that's the heart of the issue: when a company stops just being big and starts using its size to shut others out, it crosses the line. That's what the law means by abuse of dominance.

CASES

FICCI-Multiplex Association vs. United Producers/Distributors Forum (2011):

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[9] Rachit Garg, *Anti-Competitive Clauses in Vertical Agreements*, iPleaders Blog (May 3, 2024), https://blog.ipleaders.in/anti-competitive-clauses-in-vertical-agreements/ (last visited July 12, 2025).
[10] Aishwarya Agrawal, *Abuse of Dominant Position in Competition Law*, LawBhoomi (Sept. 15, 2023), https://lawbhoomi.com/abuse-of-dominant-position-in-competition-law/ (last visited July 12, 2025).

This case[11] was basically about a standoff between two powerful groups in the film industry, the multiplex owners and the film producers. The producers felt that multiplex chains were taking too big a cut from ticket sales, so they decided to push back. They stopped releasing new films to multiplexes for a while, hoping this would force better revenue-sharing deals.

The multiplex owners weren't happy and took the matter to the Competition Commission of India (CCI), claiming that the producers were teaming up unfairly to block film releases which, they argued, was anti-competitive.

But when the CCI looked into it, they saw things differently. The producers weren't trying to harm the market they were just negotiating better terms, which they had every right to do. In the end, the CCI ruled that no laws were broken and there was no anti-competitive behaviour.

Recent Dismissal (2023)

In 2023, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) dismissed a complaint made against major multiplex chains like PVR, INOX, Cinepolis, and Carnival. The complaint was filed by RSVP Movies, a production company, which claimed that these multiplexes were working together to demand unfair charges like the Virtual Print Fee (VPF) and were forcing film producers into strict, one-sided revenue-sharing terms. However, after reviewing the case, the CCI found no clear evidence that these chains were acting together or forming a cartel. It pointed out that VPF was an industry-wide practice adopted globally, and the agreements between producers and multiplexes were made through regular negotiations. Since there was no proof of any formal collusion or abuse of dominance, the CCI ruled that there was no violation of competition law and closed the case.

AMENDMENT OF THE COMPETITION ACT

The Deal Value Threshold (DVT)[12], brought in through the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2023, was meant to help regulators catch big mergers and takeovers especially in fast-moving sectors like tech and digital that might have slipped through the cracks before. But when it comes to the film distribution industry, this rule doesn't quite fit. Most of the deals between major film studios

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[11] FICCI-Multiplex Ass'n of India v. United Producers/Distributors Forum, Case No. 01 of 2011, Competition Comm'n of India, Order dated Apr. 5, 2011.

[12] Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP, *Competition Commission of India Provides Updated Deal Value Threshold*, LawFlash (Sept. 19, 2024), https://www.morganlewis.com/pubs/2024/09/competition-commission-of-india-provides-updated-deal-value-threshold.

and multiplex chains don't hit the ₹2,000 crore mark, even though they can have a huge impact on the market. Because of that, these deals aren't even looked at by the Competition Commission of India. So, practices like exclusive tie-ups or refusing screen space to smaller films often go unchecked. While DVT is a smart step for modern industries, it ends up missing real problems in the film world problems that hurt independent filmmakers and limit what audiences get to see.

PRE-AMENDMENT

Before the 2023 amendment, the Competition Act suffered from several loopholes. Key terms like "appreciable adverse effect on competition" were vaguely defined, allowing anti-competitive conduct to slip through. The burden of proof lay with complainants, making it difficult for small players to challenge powerful entities. Section 3(5)'s broad IP exemptions were often misused to justify exclusive arrangements, while delayed CCI enforcement meant that remedies came too late.

POST-AMENDMENT

Post-amendment, new gaps have emerged. The Deal Value Threshold (DVT), notified only in September 2024, allowed major consolidations like PVR-INOX to bypass scrutiny. The ₹2,000 crore limit still excludes smaller yet harmful regional mergers. There is also a lack of clarity on when to impose structural versus behavioral remedies, often favouring lenient outcomes. Additionally, OTT and digital platforms remain poorly regulated, as traditional thresholds fail to account for their growing market dominance.

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

Article 301[13] of the Constitution is supposed to guarantee free trade and movement across India. In theory, that should mean an open playing field where everyone from big studios to small, independent filmmakers gets a fair shot. But in practice, that's not really how things play out in the film distribution space. Multiplex chains often give clear preference to big-budget films from major studios. Smaller films, regional ones, indie projects, first-time directors struggle to get decent show slots, or even screen space at all. And that's a problem, because it quietly shuts out competition and goes against the very idea of market freedom that Article 301 stands for.

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[13] Constitution of India art. 301, available at *LatestLaws* (last visited July 12, 2025), https://www.latestlaws.com/bare-acts/central-acts-rules/article-301-constitution-of-india-freedom-of-trade-commerce-and-intercourse.

This unfair tilt usually comes in the form of exclusive screening deals, better time slots for blockbusters, or revenue-sharing models that simply don't favour the little guy. So while the law promises free trade, these on-ground practices act like invisible walls. Now, the Competition Act of 2002 is meant to deal with exactly this kind of thing anti-competitive behaviour. But enforcement in the entertainment sector has been weak. One reason is the vague phrasing in Article 301 itself. It says freedom of trade is "subject to other provisions in Part XIII," which makes things murky. What's a fair restriction? What's abuse? That's not always easy to tell.

It gets more complicated because multiplex chains operate across multiple states, but state film policies differ. So there's confusion over who has authority to step in. And then there's vertical integration-where theatre chains have direct ties to distributors or producers. That kind of setup raises serious conflict-of-interest questions. But our current legal framework doesn't really address it. So despite what the Constitution promises, the system still favours the big players, and smaller creators are left trying to break into a space that's already stacked against them.

CINEMATOGRAPHER'S ACT, 1952

The Cinematograph Act of 1952[14] was supposed to regulate what films get shown through the CBFC[15], but for independent filmmakers, it often ends up doing more harm than good. Big studios, with their connections and experience, usually get their films cleared quickly. Smaller filmmakers? They often face delays that mess with release plans and eat into already tight budgets. Multiplexes can make things worse by using cinema licensing rules to turn away films on technical grounds. And since getting certified is mandatory before a film can be shown, the bigger distributors who know how to time things end up with a serious advantage. Smaller creators are left waiting, unsure of when or even if their film will make it to theatres.

The law itself doesn't help much either. There's no set timeline for certification, and a lot of the language like what counts as "public exhibition" is vague. Add to that the confusion over whether certain decisions fall under the Centre or the states, and things just get more complicated. What's

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[14] Sankalpita Pal, *Introduction to CBFC and the Cinematograph Act, 1952*, iPleaders Blog (Nov. 4, 2020), https://blog.ipleaders.in/introduction-cbfc-cinematograph-act-1952/ (last visited July 12, 2025).

[15] "Film Certification in India: Politicisation and Moral Conservatism of the 'Censor' Board," *Economic & Political Weekly Engage* (last visited July 12, 2025), https://www.epw.in/engage/article/film-certification-india-politicisation-and-moral.

frustrating is that the 2023 Amendment didn't really address any of this. So, for smaller filmmakers, the system still feels like it's working against them.

GREY AREAS

- In India, film distribution works with barely any legal structure, especially around how revenue is split unlike industries like banking or telecom that are tightly controlled. This lack of rules allows all kinds of unclear and often unfair deals. Big studios usually get 60–70% of revenue, while smaller producers often end up with just 30–40%. Multiplexes also make unregulated deductions like for marketing, upkeep, or even house expenses, with no standard rules for payments, which are often delayed for months. Revenue calculations in distributor-exhibitor deals aren't shared, and smaller theatre owners face unfair terms like huge minimum guarantees and holdback clauses. Sometimes losses from one film are recovered using another's earnings, making things more uneven. OTT platforms aren't transparent either how they divide revenue from ads, subscriptions, or bundles is unclear, and regional pricing differences are never really explained.[16] Without any clear laws in place, smaller creators are left exposed, raising serious concerns about fairness and equal access under Article 301.

- There are cases where multiplex chains make regional or indie filmmakers pay for every seat in advance just because they assume no one will show up. It's a harsh setup. The entire financial risk lands on the smaller creators, while the multiplexes don't lose a rupee. They play it safe, but it's at the cost of someone who's already struggling to get screen space. It's a subtle way of keeping control deciding, even before release, that a film won't do well and then setting up money barriers that make sure it barely gets seen. It hurts film diversity and pushes independent voices further to the margins.

- Revenue-sharing in India's film industry raises real concerns under Article 14 (equality) and Article 19(1)(g) (freedom of profession). Films with similar content often get treated

[16] Lalit Kumar, *A Study on the Impact of the OTT Platform on the Cinema with Special Reference to the Cinema Audience*, ResearchGate, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376650380 (last visited July 12, 2025).

very differently, just because one comes from a powerful studio. That’s not just unfair it amounts to arbitrary discrimination. There’s no standard way to negotiate terms either, which puts independent filmmakers at a serious disadvantage and makes it harder for them to sustain their work. Legally, the gaps are hard to miss. The Indian Contract Act, 1872 doesn’t address what happens when one party has all the power, especially in creative fields. The Competition Act, 2002 doesn’t specifically tackle unfair revenue-sharing either. And audiences? They’re left out too. Consumer protection laws don’t cover inflated ticket prices or limited film access. So in the end, both creators and viewers are left exposed, with no real support from existing laws.

- India’s film distribution space is full of informal practices that often work against regional and independent filmmakers. Big studios regularly lock in 60–80% of screens well in advance, sometimes months ahead, leaving little space for smaller films even during local festivals where public demand may favour them. Timings are skewed too: large productions dominate prime slots between 6 and 10 PM, while smaller films are pushed into off-hours like early mornings or late nights, which naturally limits footfall. Then there’s the issue of minimum run periods. Larger films tend to get guaranteed 2–4 week slots, whereas indie titles are often pulled after just a few days under vague terms about performance even if they’re doing reasonably well. Regional films also face language and cultural hurdles: they get fewer screens even in their home states and rarely travel across states because of translation gaps or inconsistent policies. These patterns aren’t just oversight—they entrench studio dominance and push diverse voices further to the margins, narrowing the creative space that Indian cinema is meant to offer.

- Regional and indie films in India often don’t stand a chance, and this isn’t just a creative issue it’s a constitutional one. Under Article 15, there’s supposed to be no discrimination. But when a film gets sidelined just because of the language it’s in or where it comes from, that’s hard to ignore. Hindi films dominate, even in states where people speak other languages. It doesn’t feel fair. Then there’s Article 21, people have the right to information, to cultural expression, to identity. But if diverse stories don’t reach screens, that right loses meaning. Article 29, which protects cultural and educational rights, also takes a hit. When regional films struggle to find screens, how can those cultures survive or grow?

This plays out in real, everyday ways. Marathi films often get just a fraction of screens even in Maharashtra. South Indian films rarely make it to theatres in the North. Documentaries? Hardly ever shown. And even films that win awards ones that get global praise barely see the light of day here. The system seems tilted. It keeps the spotlight on a few, while pushing everyone else to the edge. And in a country as diverse as India, that's not just a creative loss, it's a structural problem.

Here's how it usually goes: if a theatre wants to screen a big festival release from a major studio, they're often told they also have to take on smaller, less popular titles from the same banner. It's a package deal, no blockbuster unless you agree to the whole bundle. Then there's the minimum guarantee system. Studios ask for huge sums upfront just to allow a film to be shown. Smaller distributors or theatre owners can't match those amounts, so they're automatically out of the picture.

Sometimes, it gets even more restrictive. Filmmakers, actors, and even cinema owners are warned not to collaborate with others if they're already tied to a big release. Some of these deals cover premium formats too like IMAX or Dolby, so the same rules apply, just with fancier tech. The worst part? None of this is actually illegal in a clear-cut way. There are no specific rules in place in India to deal with this kind of behaviour, which means these practices continue without any real check. And in that kind of setup, it's always the smaller creators who lose the most.

UNREGULATED PRACTICES IN FILM RELEASE TIMING AND PLATFORM ACCESS

- India has no law setting timelines for when a film can move from theatres to OTT or TV. Big studios and platforms decide these gaps, often leaving smaller filmmakers stuck.A film might stay in cinemas longer than it needs to, even if it's not doing well, just to meet contract terms. OTT deals are often exclusive and lengthy, with no standard or room for negotiation. Independent producers usually have no say.Sometimes films release late in certain states without reason. High-quality formats are also kept limited to specific platforms, giving them an edge.

  The system isn't illegal but it's tilted heavily in favour of those with power and money.

- Everything about how films are released when they come out, where they play, how they're promoted tends to benefit big studios. Blockbusters get the best slots around holidays and weekends. Smaller films are often squeezed into less visible release dates. On OTT platforms, it's the same story big films are all over the homepage, while indie films are hard to even find.Even when it comes to screen quality, big films get first access to formats like IMAX or Dolby. Smaller ones usually don't get those options at all or are released much later.

  None of this is illegal but it all adds up. Smaller films get pushed aside, struggle to be seen, and end up losing out on both audiences and earnings.

- Many filmmakers today want to release their films in theatres and online at the same time, a common practice abroad. But in India, this is often blocked by theatre chains and distributors. They fear losing ticket sales, so they pressure producers to avoid same-day OTT releases. Some contracts even ban multi-platform or multi-region launches completely. Even format options are restricted, like allowing only 2D versions first, while IMAX or Dolby releases are delayed or platform-locked. These limits hurt smaller filmmakers the most, cutting off chances to reach wider audiences quickly and flexibly.

REFORMS

Honestly, if we really want to fix how film distribution works, we need some basic but important changes. First off, multiplexes should be upfront about how they decide which films get shown where, and how the money's split. Right now, that's all behind closed doors and it's the smaller films that lose out. Also, no single chain should be allowed to completely dominate a region. When one player controls everything, it just shuts out everyone else. It would also make a big difference if theatres had to give even a small percentage of screens to indie or regional films, it's not much to ask, and it gives those stories a fair shot. And finally, there should be a quicker way to sort out disputes. Films don't have time to wait around for legal fixes by the time a decision comes, the moment's already gone.

CONCLUSION

India's film distribution system is long overdue for serious legal reform. Right now, it's shaped by monopolies, unfair deals, and a lack of basic transparency, leaving both creators and audiences at a disadvantage. What we need is a dedicated Film Distribution Regulation Act that brings together all the scattered rules and fills the many gaps in the current system.

This law should cover the entire journey of a film, from production and licensing to theatre release and online streaming[17]. It must set clear rules for how revenue is shared, how screens are allocated, and how discrimination is prevented while also protecting consumer rights. For revenue-sharing, there should be standard accounting practices, real-time earnings updates, and easy ways to resolve disputes. When it comes to screen space, there should be fair quotas for independent and regional films, equal access to time slots, and decisions based on performance, not politics.

As streaming platforms gain power, we also need rules to make their algorithms more transparent. Content shouldn't be hidden or promoted unfairly, and viewers deserve real choice not just what's pushed by a platform. The Competition Act also needs to be updated with specific rules for the entertainment industry, especially to stop companies from locking up screens, merging unfairly, or keeping content exclusive to themselves.

Viewers deserve the same protections here as in other services: fair pricing, reliable access, and a proper way to file complaints. And with so much user data being used behind the scenes, there must be clear consent rules, data safeguards, and accountability for how algorithms affect what people see.

For all this to work, we need dedicated tribunals, faster systems to handle complaints, and regular checks on how the market is functioning. Most importantly, the whole system must follow the Constitution. That means regular audits, legal pathways for review, and policies that respect basic rights like equality, freedom of expression, cultural access, and the right to work and trade.

Without clear laws in place, a few powerful players will keep dominating the system, shutting out new voices and making it harder for audiences to access diverse, meaningful cinema. It's time for the law to catch up.

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[17] Saumya Jain & Jyoti Panday, *OTT Regulation in India: Turf Wars & Definitional Ambiguities*, Internet Governance Project (Sept. 26, 2024), https://www.internetgovernance.org/2024/09/26/ott-regulation-in-india-turf-wars-definitional-ambiguities/ (last visited July 12, 2025).