

In-depth analysis of challenges facing the movie industry in the pandemic era and its competition with VOD platforms

بررسی چالش های سینما در دوران کرونا و رقابت با شبکه نمایش خانگی با نگاهی به آینده صنعت سینما

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Abstract

After the covid-19 pandemic and its impact, the movie industry faced the challenge of theaters shutting down and the audience migrating to evergrowing VOD platforms. However, these problems seem to be the new normal of the industry and would still be a presiding presence even after returning to normalcy.

In this research, the production and distribution processes and the impact of the pandemic on them in the past two years have been analyzed. The study inspects the financial decline of the industry in the past few years compared to the massive growth of streaming services and how these numbers compare against each other, and what could be interpreted from them.

The research has been done to uncover how the covid-19 virus has acted as a disrupter to the industry, how it propelled innovation through unseen strategies, and how the film business could adapt and survive the growing changes with stress factors it faces. This paper tries to evaluate the shape of the movie industry in the post-corona era and how some changes will be a permanent staple of the field to adapt to the surge in VOD platforms and streaming services and the audience's preference for the stay at-home movie experience.

Keywords: Cinema, Video on Demand, Post-corona Cinema, Online screening, Film Production

Introduction

The year 2019 considered one of the most successful years for the entertainment industry, especially for the global cinema. It seemed that 2019 would be the year followed by more prolific years, but contrary to the predictions, that year ended disappointingly. A deadly and highly contagious virus called Covid-19 quickly spread to different parts of the world, involving millions of citizens and killing many people.

To control the spread of this disease, the governments took national shutdowns limiting the social relations of citizens, and the prolongation of these cases caused severe losses to the economic body of many commercial, social, and cultural activities. Many businesses were closed, and many people became unemployed. Due to the nature of its group viewing, the cinema was at the top of the list of forced closures. In the meantime, the businesses maintaining their activities on the web platform and using internet

connections were able to benefit even from these conditions and take advantage of this opportunity.

This issue happened to the entertainment industry and specifically to home television networks. Online broadcasting platforms have expanded their activities dramatically by using the developing platform of the Internet worldwide and attracting the attention of many audiences. This issue undeniably affected the changes in global cinema due to the spread of Corona. In this way, we have investigated the same subject in the following research. The research follows the events of global cinema in the last two years influenced by the Covid-19 outbreak and how the development of VODs has shaped these changes even before the Outbreak.

Accordingly, the first part of this article is devoted to the subject of cinema under the influence of Corona. A study on how the spread of this disease affected cultural and artistic activities worldwide, how filmmakers resumed their productions, what was the state of the global cinema box office during the peak of the Outbreak, and what changes nationwide vaccination and the gradual reopening of cinemas did have in this matter.

The second part of this article focuses on the development of the home television network and the impact that the Corona pandemic had on this issue. In this section, we first describe the development of the Home Theater Network activities during the Corona outbreak. Then we mention how the film companies reacted to compete with the influence of VODs on the world's mainstream cinema market.

The third part focuses on the effect of Corona on Iranian cinema and the predicted vision for its future. In this section, firstly, explanations are provided regarding the spread of Coronavirus in Iran and its impact on cinema activities. Then we discuss the online screenings' failure and the damage caused to the economic structure of Iranian cinema followed by this failure. At the end of this section, we present information related to the development of Iranian VODs and some of the challenges they have faced during this period to examine the current state of Iranian cinema screenings and the prospects for its future.

The fourth part of this article also deals with the vision of the future of global cinema and the general predictions for it. Investigating which way the competition between movie theaters and online streaming platforms will go in the era of post-corona cinema and what will be the impact of this competition on the future of movies.

Due to the novelty of the subject and the lack of many articles or books in this field, we used reliable domestic and foreign specialized-analytical news agencies and websites as the principal sources of information. In addition, the time criterion of this research is until the end of 2021.

Background of the research

This study examines both the Iranian cinema and the global cinema from the beginning of the outbreak of Corona until the end of 2021. Due to the newness of the subject, we have found no significant case among the Persian books and topics related to this research, so for this research we have selected and used the Persian sources online from reputable news agencies and sites. However, among the English articles, there are limited cases such as *Cinema, Life and Other Viruses: The Future of Filmmaking, Film Education and Film Studies in the Age of Covid-19 Pandemic* by Akser's research and *Coronavirus and the European Film Industry* by Katsarova's research. We studied this issue and used it in the current research.

Research method

We have done this research with a descriptive-analytical method. The studies for the realization of this research are library-based and include reliable sources in Farsi and English in the field of reporting events related to changes in the cinema, entertainment industry, and video media and analyzing and investigating the trends of common changes during the Corona pandemic in the world. Having diversity in selected sources has helped us to be able to address the changes caused by this phenomenon to the Iranian Cinema, in addition to having a universal model regarding the changes in cinema in the era of Corona. Although due to the late period of the research topic, which is focused primarily on the age of the Covid-19 pandemic, there are not many written sources, and we have tried to use the most reliable and up-to-date online sources.

Cinema Under the Influence of the Corona Pandemic

The first cases of infection with the Covid-19 virus were reported in the middle of December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. "The National Health Commission of China officially announced on December 30, 2019, that the new virus had spread in the country." (Bosejin, 2020)

This epidemic caused many cultural and artistic activities to be closed, as well as activities in other fields. Various cultural and artistic events such as festivals, exhibitions, cinemas, theaters, concerts, and bookstores had to stop their activities. The rate of coronavirus transmission was so high that within a few months, many meetings and gatherings were closed to break the circle of its spread between people, and many cultural and artistic programs were postponed until further notice.

For example, in France, many music concerts of famous artists and other cultural programs, which were supposed to perform in spring, were canceled.

The French government has banned gatherings with more than 5,000 people held in closed environments. Cinemas in this country faced a 25% decrease in ticket sales and a 30% decrease in cinema audiences since the beginning of 2020 due to the non-release of new domestic films and American blockbusters. Almost half of the French television programs, recording with a large audience at TV studios, were forced to continue their work for several months without any audience. (Ebtekar, 2020)

As another cultural center of Europe, Italy experienced conditions similar to France or even worse. In the first months of the pandemic, the number of people infected with the coronavirus in this country increased exponentially, and this caused the most severe restrictions on the cultural-artistic activities of this country. Due to these conditions, only 30% of the theaters' total capacity operated, so to deal with the spread of the coronavirus, the audience in the cinema halls had to maintain a distance of at least one meter from each other.

Mario Lorini, the head of the Italian National Association of Cinemas, said, "Since the width of each seat is 60 cm, with two empty seats on either side and one empty seat in front and back, every moviegoer is at a safe distance from other people." (Ebtekar, 2020)

The Covid-19 outbreak caused the closure of 70 thousand cinemas in China, about 2500 cinemas in America, and more than 9000 cinemas in the European continent. A crisis that caused a 5 billion dollar loss to the global cinema box office at the beginning of the pandemic. (Katsarova, 2020)

These events heralded many financial losses; involving various small and large businesses in a few months and making thousands of people lose their jobs. Due to its direct connection with human society, the entertainment industry, especially cinema, has had the most closures in the last two years and has experienced severe financial losses.

The total income of the global cinema box office has decreased by more than 70% due to the crisis of the spread of the coronavirus, which was associated with the closure of cinemas and the non-screening of many works. (Shaisteh, 2019)

According to the "World Economic Forum" website, the daily value of the cinema, television, and creative arts industry is about 60 million pounds in the British economy. Considering thousands of people would lose their jobs during this critical period, this issue would affect other sectors. It has also affected the economy of the society. According to the statistics of this website, before the outbreak of Corona, the annual income of major film studios and film distribution companies was about 136 billion dollars, which made them a significant figure in the global economy.

In Hollywood, one of the main hubs of the global movie industry, have employed nearly two million people, and about 400,000 American businesses are related to the movie industry. According to the "NBC" website, more than 700,000 Hollywood employees live in California, and their annual salaries and benefits are about 16 billion dollars. (Mokri, 2020)

Changing the production process to resume the filming on movie sets

On a global scale, the outbreak of Corona caused the stoppage of so many film productions. A situation that first seemed reasonable due to the terror caused by an infectious and deadly disease. However, the fact that the income obtained from the production and distribution of those works tied to the lives of many people around the world caused various people to try to think about the conditions for resuming the production of films.

In April 2020, a committee chaired by Steven Soderbergh, who has directed films such as *Traffic* (2000) and *Outbreak* (2011), was formed to consult with state officials, health officials, studio executives, and representatives of different trade unions. To provide a consulting solution for resuming the production stages of American film and television projects. The result of the investigations on this issue finally led to the issuance of a 22-page safety manual, which required big and small production companies and all art groups to observe health principles and create a so-called "bubble-shaped" environment to start their projects. (Mokri, 2020)

This safety manual would obligate all the agents on the scene to use masks, disinfect their hands and observe social distancing as much as possible, especially in closed places. Actors who could not use masks not in front of the camera or behind the make-up table had to use protective devices that prevented contaminated particles from hitting their faces to maintain their health. These measures quickly made their way to the production stage of many cinematic productions in different parts of the world, requiring everyone to comply with them to continue their production processes.

Covid safety measures budget caused the production costs to increase significantly, which was more challenging for the activities of small and independent film production companies. The costs would increase even more if the production stopped for several days due to the illness of one or more employees. For this reason, even the producers of expensive films forced their production crew to follow the instructions to prevent this issue.

The state of the global box office at the peak of the pandemic era

The outbreak of Corona stopped the production of many film projects globally. On the other hand, many films' releases were postponed from 2020 to 2021. "Facing the fact that eradication from the pandemic would not happen this year made the situation more complicated for producers and companies." (snn, 2022)

There was a notable point related to the cinema industry in China, the country with the first cases of

coronavirus infections, which was able to control the spread of it at the highest speed. In the same way, the cinema economy of China, which had a noticeable growth in the past few years, has suffered less damage than other film industries in the world. The Chinese films were able to achieve significant sales by having relatively suitable screenings during the pandemic conditions. This subject caused tremendous growth in the market of Chinese cinema and the development of its domestic film productions.

Thus considered one of the most successful film markets in the world for years, Indian cinema has faced many problems in the last two years. Difficulties like paying rent, subscriptions, and other things related to movie theaters have become a big challenge for many moviegoers in this country. In a situation where only 600 films out of 1800 films produced released in film theaters, dozens of them have been released directly to the audience digitally without having a single screening. (Khanna, 2020).

At the beginning of March 2020, predictions indicated that the global box office could lose five billion dollars due to the effects of the pandemic, while in April 2019; the cinema grew by five billion compared to the same date in 2018. "Predictions showed the amount of sales in 2020 a similar number to 2018. But this amount was only the financial loss of a major distribution company in America at the beginning of 2021." (Daneshjoo, 2022)

On March 8, 2020, the Italian government ordered all cinemas to close for a month. Immediately after that, the governments of countries such as Qatar, America, England, Australia, South Korea, New Zealand, Japan, and Singapore, also closed their cinemas in the same month, and French cinemas informed that due to the increase of infected people, theaters could only operate at half of their halls' capacity. From January to March 2020, the amount of financial damage to the global box office was 70-75% in Italy, 60% in South Korea, 35% in Hong Kong, The Philippines, and Singapore, 30% in Taiwan and The United States itself as one of the principal suppliers of commercial films for distribution around the world, reached 80%. Also, during the Corona outbreak, the share of every American citizen watching movies per year has increased from an average of 6 times to 1. Based on this, the decrease in box office sales in American cinemas has exceeded 80%. While the box office sales of Chinese cinemas in 2021 have increased by about 50% compared to the same period before the outbreak of Corona. Due to the closure of so many movie theaters during the covid-19 outbreak in 2020, AMC suffered a financial loss of nearly 4.6 billion dollars. In addition to the closing of a large number of movie theaters around the world, the withdrawal of American blockbuster movies caused this company to face a 77.3% decrease in revenue, which means that the 5.5 billion dollars in 2019 would decrease to only 1.2 billion dollars in 2020. Therefore, the company's stock will face a negative impact and a significant decrease of \$3.15 per share compared to 35 cents in 2019. (snn, 2022)

Even with the reopening of most of this movie theater chain by the end of 2020, the public acceptance of the screenings was so low due to health restrictions and the use of minimum theater facilities. Therefore, unlike previous years, Chinese cinema became the most profitable film market in the world instead of American cinema.

Nationwide vaccination and the reopening of more cinemas, the return of hope to the global box office

The sales of cinemas in different parts of the world have an irregular trend even after reopening. The spread of Corona and the death rate caused by it had a prominent effect on the sales trend of the global box office in the last few months. Thus, the decrease in those factors has caused a relative increase in sales. However, in 2021, nationwide vaccination in most countries conflicting with this disease has been an important step.

Although many people have not yet accepted to use of the vaccine, receiving two doses of the vaccine by other citizens has controlled the spread of this disease to a significant extent, which led to the reopening of more cinemas. On the other hand, complying with health guidelines is considered one of the priorities in all public places has made film theaters unable to use a significant part of their capacity in each screening.

Big-budget films like *A Quiet Place 2*, *Fast and Furious 9*, and *Black Widow* opened with \$48 million, \$70 million, and \$80 million, respectively, at the U.S. box office in the early months of 2021, showing promising signs of audience comeback to have s in cinema halls. (Shayesteh, 2021)

In this order, in the list of the top 10 best-selling movies of 2021:

The *Immortals*, *Shang Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, *Godzilla vs. Kong*, *Venom: Let the Carnage Come*, *Chinatown Detective 3*, and *Fast and Furious 9* ranked tenth to fourth on the list. There is only one non-Hollywood production in the last seven films, but also the two in third and second places are non-Hollywood production. “*Hello, Mom*” with 841 million dollars, and “*Battle of Changjin*” Lake with more than 902 million dollars, ranked 3rd and 2nd, both are Chinese cinema productions. (BoxOfficeMojo, 2021)

This statistic shows that when most of the expensive works of Hollywood cinemas had been far from what it expected in global sales, Chinese cinema has had an affluent film market, as in 2020, due to widespread vaccination and strict control of the spread of Corona.

The development of VODs and the impact of the Corona pandemic

To examine the emergence and growth of this digital phenomenon, one must refer to the early years of the 21st century, the era of the Internet and information communication significant growth, and right after the arrival of sites that provided textual, visual, and

multimedia content, when great companies and audiences felt the need to use platforms providing video content.

“Changes in internet technology have made it possible to deliver a richer mix of different media to audiences through the possibility of data streaming.” (Garrison 2001, 174), and the formation of these platforms was based on the need and capacity of the audience towards the media. “Thus, the content distribution platform that allows viewers to choose when, where, and how to access the media is called video-on-demand, or VOD for short.” (Morgan, 2021) Online distribution platforms have three special characteristics, which are “Simple accessibility, flexibility and high communication ability.” (Garrison 2001, 174-175)

These three characteristics were the same characteristics that the online revolution and the development of the Internet had with information even before the development of online streaming services.” (Changsong & Marta 2021, 3) Another feature that online streaming platforms such as Netflix, which also produces and distributes movies, had even before the spread of Corona was that they at least created more freedom of action for independent filmmakers. For example, “In 2016, Kenneth Lonergan and the producers of *Manchester by the Sea* released their film widely in collaboration with Amazon.” (Kay, 2016)

In addition to the restrictions caused by the Coronavirus, one of the main reasons for the failure of the global cinema box office to return to normal can be considered the success of the VODs in attracting cinema audiences. “To the extent that the release of several cinematographic works in these platforms, caused the number of ticket sales in film theaters has reached its lowest level.” (Shaisteh, 2022) Platforms that only have been established for a few years now compete with the famous film companies of the cinema industry with speed and strength more than before due to the conditions that have arisen in the last two years.

The impact of online streaming platforms on the mainstream cinema market in Corona

Major film production companies like Disney and Warner Brothers, which made significant profits every year by producing and releasing their blockbuster movies in film theaters around the world, delayed their new movies for several months due to the spread of Corona, hoped for the re-opening of film theaters, emerging of public and increasing ticket sales. However, the persistence of these special conditions made Christopher Nolan's *Tenet*, the movie that was supposed to bring the audience back to the cinemas, a failure.

The movie distribution industry was waiting for a so-called phenomenon, hoping that the release of Christopher Nolan's blockbuster would bring back the movie industry to its good days. The release of this film had postponed several times, but in the end, it was not satisfactory for moviegoers. It almost proved that the public fear of being with strangers at a close distance affected the audience's decision to return to movie theaters. (Akser 2020, 2)

Tenet's release failed to meet expectations, and despite a \$200 million budget, it only sold around \$363 million worldwide. This incident made the idea of streaming movies online come to the minds of the owners of big Hollywood companies. During the decline of general release in cinemas, Disney decided to consider its online distribution platform Disney Plus, which used to broadcast its production series before Corona, to broadcast its high-budget movies in 2020 to be able to compete in the online streaming market with platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime.

For example, produced with a budget of 200 million dollars, Disney distributed Mulan through Disney Plus. The animated film Spirit, the leading representative of the Pixar animation company in the awards season, was released to the audience on December 25 on the same platform. (Bosjin, 2019)

To have a share in this competition and due to the pandemic conditions, Warner Bros decided to release its works on its newly established online streaming platform HBO Max immediately after the limited release in theaters.

With the screening of the director's cut of its highly anticipated movie Zack Snyder's Justice League, this distribution platform drew a lot of attention. Warner announced that the company has decided to release other blockbusters in 2021, such as Wonder Woman: 1984 and the expensive adaptation of Frank Herbert's famous novel The Dune would also present to the audience via its online streaming service (ibid, 2019).

Universal is another famous film production company in Hollywood that insists on releasing its expensive works in theaters and does not have an online streaming platform. However, this company, like several other Hollywood companies, such as Paramount and Sony, upon seeing the declining state of public screenings in cinemas, tried to conclude contracts with cinema owners such as AMC and Cinemark to reduce the theatrical window of its films.

Based on this, the release window is supposed to reduce from usually three months to less than three weeks. So the films which could not achieve significant sales in that period will be taken out of the release cycle and quickly made available to online streaming platforms for global digital. (Ibid, 2019)

In this order, the online streaming platforms, which first relied on the streaming of series and films after the end of their theatrical window and later on their own series and film productions, were able to buy the rights for streaming a large number of currently released works during the Corona period to attract the audience of various film trends.

The effect of Corona on Iranian cinema and its future prospects

The spread of Corona caused the closure of many businesses in Iran, as in many other parts of the world. Since the end of the 2020 winter, the corona disease

has covered most parts of the country. Like many other events in the country, the government canceled cultural and artistic events. Movie theaters, like other places of public gatherings, were forced to accept a long-term closure. "Since most cities in Iran quickly entered the red state, like many other businesses in culture, art, and entertainment, film theaters were closed too." (Donyayeeqtesad, 2019)

This issue caused various concerns for the film industry, with the long-term closure of movie theaters as the only place for showing movies in Iran. Since the beginning, this was worrying news for Iranian cinema due to the chaotic conditions the national box office has been facing in the last few years.

For many employees, the closure and postponement of film productions caused unemployment and forced staying home. The closure of movie theaters, especially single-purpose and old cinemas made many employees and workers in these theaters jobless. Executive positions were at risk due to the closure of several months. (Farabi, 2020)

The third case was related to films that were not only waiting for a few months to be released at the beginning of the New Year but also after the closure of cinemas for an unknown period.

They should have been waiting for more months because the screening capacity of Iranian cinema in the previous year was 73 films. Despite the conditions, this number would decrease significantly in the New Year. (Mansouri, 2020)

As a result, considering the disturbances in the country's economic changes, this issue made a huge loss to film producers.

The failure of online screening and damage to the body of Iranian cinema during the pandemic

To improve the situation, the Iranian Organization of Cinema and Audiovisual Affairs encouraged filmmakers to screen online on Iranian home theater streaming platforms such as Namava and Filimo, which have been broadcasting audio and video products due to the development of Internet capabilities in Iran in the last few years. These platforms used to buy the rights to stream films online after their release in theaters and even produce and stream serials, and now they could have become the groundwork for the online stream of films that were still in the queue for screening.

In 2018, Iranian Cinema's turnover was 1500 billion tomans, of which 800 billion belonged to the home cinema; this ratio will be around 75% of the total turnover of Iranian cinema in 2019 due to the spread of Corona in the home theater sector. VOD platforms have a direct relationship with the bandwidth determined by the government. If we compare the state of the internet with the quality, it had ten years ago, we realize its quality development and users' growth, which are the result of continuous efforts in this field. (IRNA, 2019)

“However, from the beginning, most of the producers did not accept online releases for their movies.” (Hamidi, 2021) The two main reasons can be the producers’ lack of confidence in the significant financial return to fulfill the satisfaction of their investors (especially individuals and the private sector). The second reason is the concern about the lack of sufficient security of the films against smuggling and illegal stream of IPs on such platforms.

Development of Iranian home theater networks activities and their challenges during the decline of Iranian cinema

With the expansion of the streaming platforms’ audience, in addition to cinema, they were competing with Iran’s official television. This problem caused the foundation of a regulatory institution called Satra to control the production of these platforms to have more control over the quantity and manner of these platforms’ products. This issue has caused the owners of these platforms to protest against the severe interference of this institution in their production process. Their arguing for inconsistency between the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Broadcasting Organization has made them unable to have correct knowledge and perspective of Satra’s decisions.

The market of home theater networks needs its own proper rules. Unfortunately, these platforms have spent most of their time on marginal issues in the past few years since their formation. The general dispute is over who will supervise them, the government or extra-authority supervision. It is a regulatory principle accepted primarily, and the government must implement it as a law. However, for the advancement of production, the applicant and the government should observe a series of requirements. (Ghafari, 2021)

While Persian VOD platforms have improved in quality, they remain far behind the world’s serialization products, such as those produced by Netflix. Despite this, many Iranians are interested in local content, so most Persian language content is confined to programs provided by these platforms, and many Iranians welcome them.

The current situation of cinema screenings and the prospects of Iranian cinema productions after Corona

Film theaters in the main cities reopened after a long time in the winter of 2021. It happened due to the pandemic situation getting to a stable state. However, health restrictions and social distancing limited their activities, which made cinema owners use a minor part of the capacity of theater halls and sell a limited number of tickets for each screening. The incident caused the commercial failure of the film *Hero*, the new work of the famous director Asghar Farhadi.

According to this, in the coming months, the market would consider financial indicators of a successful film much lower than the amounts that defined the success

of one at Iran’s box office before the pandemic. Of course, many believe that not using the capacity of cinemas is only a part of the story. The significant one is the economic problems that Iranian cinema will face even after the full reopening of cinemas. This problem relates to changes in the audience’s habits due to their strong bond with the home theater network in the last two years. People usually went to the cinemas as a family before the spread of Corona. For them, the cinema was more of an entertainment aspect, but now, by paying less money at home, they can watch the products of the home television network. It is not hard to say that they prefer watching Iranian movies in film theaters. However, Iranian cinema needs to make changes in the works it presents through movie theaters soon to compete with home screening platforms.

The vision of global film industry in the post-corona era

Corona has caused many events in the last two years, and this disease like other activities (industries) affected cinema. At first, there was uncertainty and even resistance to change, but in the end, most people working in the film industry had to adapt to the new conditions. For cinema, more than anything else, Corona paved the way for activities that were moving slowly for several years. Activities that people expected to see them make changes years later. For a few years, the owners of film theaters felt the danger of a fierce competitor, such as online streaming platforms, and tried to deal with it. The pandemic caused these platforms to attract audiences that used to go to film theaters.

According to a survey conducted by the Variety website at the pick of the Corona pandemic in 2020, about 70 percent of Americans said that even if movies screened at the same time in theaters and at home for the same price, they would still prefer to watch new movies only at home. In the future, this issue may lead to a significant change in the global film. (Mokri, 2020)

Based on the new report published by PricewaterhouseCoopers, the global box office will not return to normal conditions before the start of the Coronavirus pandemic in 2019 until 2024, and the growth of online streaming platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime will continue. This company has announced that the total global cinema sales will reach 45.2 billion dollars in 2024 by examining 14 sectors of the computer game industry to advertising and cinema in 53 countries. Meanwhile, this figure reached only 13 million dollars in 2020, when governments forced most film theaters to close their doors to the audience. The total value of the entertainment and media industry also reached two trillion dollars in 2020, with an unprecedented four percent decrease. The company also predicts that the value of the online streaming service industry will grow by more than 10% annually by 2025 and reach \$81.3 billion. (Shayesteh, 2021)

It seems that the only solution for big companies for making theaters profitable is to support the production and distribution of movies, making a unique experience for audiences. Something that provides them with additional value beyond what they watch on online streaming platforms and through their mobile phones and home TVs.

The work that major Hollywood companies have been doing more or less in the last few years with superhero movies or expensive and huge blockbusters, and soon they may intend to continue this process because by the end of 2021, with all the ups and downs that cinema has experienced in these two years. It ended with the success of the Disney-Marvel superhero blockbuster *Spider-Man: No Way Home*. "This film became the best-selling film of 2021, with global sales amounting to one million and 160 thousand dollars." (BoxOfficeMojo, 2021)

The Effect of Competition between VODs and Film Theaters on the Future of cinema

Predictions showed that the dominance of digital cinema and the takeover of a principal part of the world's mainstream film market by Blockbusters, which has advanced now by the drastic entry of online streaming platforms, would soon affect the production and release of a specific current of films. Films that emerged from the aesthetics of the 1970s or so-called post-classic Hollywood as a serious threat that may ruin their screening cycle and turn them into the nostalgia of cinephiles.

It seems these works may no longer have a place in film theaters that screen expensive and flamboyant blockbusters, nor in online streaming platforms that, apart from streaming their commercial films, they only support independent filmmakers with limited budgets.

In this way, this trend can bring changes in cinematic aesthetics that limit most directors to two paths of filmmaking: filmmaking in the style of superhero works full of flamboyant fantasy or conforming to the conventional aesthetics of low-budget TV series. In this way, the standards streaming platforms look for are not limited to attracting audiences. They are also involved in the choice of cinematic storytelling and expressive changes in the future of cinema. In other words, these platforms are building their monopoly not only in the production and in distribution of films but also in the structures and conventions of cinematic storytelling. (Van Esler 2020, 966)

Conclusion

During the last two years, a virus called Covid-19 has affected all industries and the global economy. Many professions still have not returned to their plausible conditions, and some have a long way to go before returning to normal conditions. However, among these, a handful will probably never return to how things were before the Corona era, and the cinema industry is one of those cases. Watching movies as a group at home and through streaming services at a lower cost and at any time and place has made some

principal challenges for bringing back the general cinema audience to the theaters and somehow turned these streaming services into serious competitors for film theaters.

A competitor that has attracted even the most prominent figures of film production and, in addition to the advantage it has depending on its nature, is creating a more intense competition by increasing the quality of film productions. These streaming services have completely changed the viewing culture, and without a doubt, we are now facing a phenomenon called post-corona cinema.

This phenomenon has made a new field of study for many researchers in film studies. It has prompted issues such as viewers' relationship with post-corona cinema, their place in the economic and commercial changes of new films, and how they understand rhetorical expressions in the digital era through streaming services, and it will become one of the main challenges of this field creating the possibility of research in these new aspects.

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