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**WAVES**  
WORLD AUDIO VISUAL &  
ENTERTAINMENT SUMMIT  
Connecting Creators, Connecting Countries.

# Blueprint for a Creative India:

Key Takeaways from the  
WAVES 2025  
Conference Track





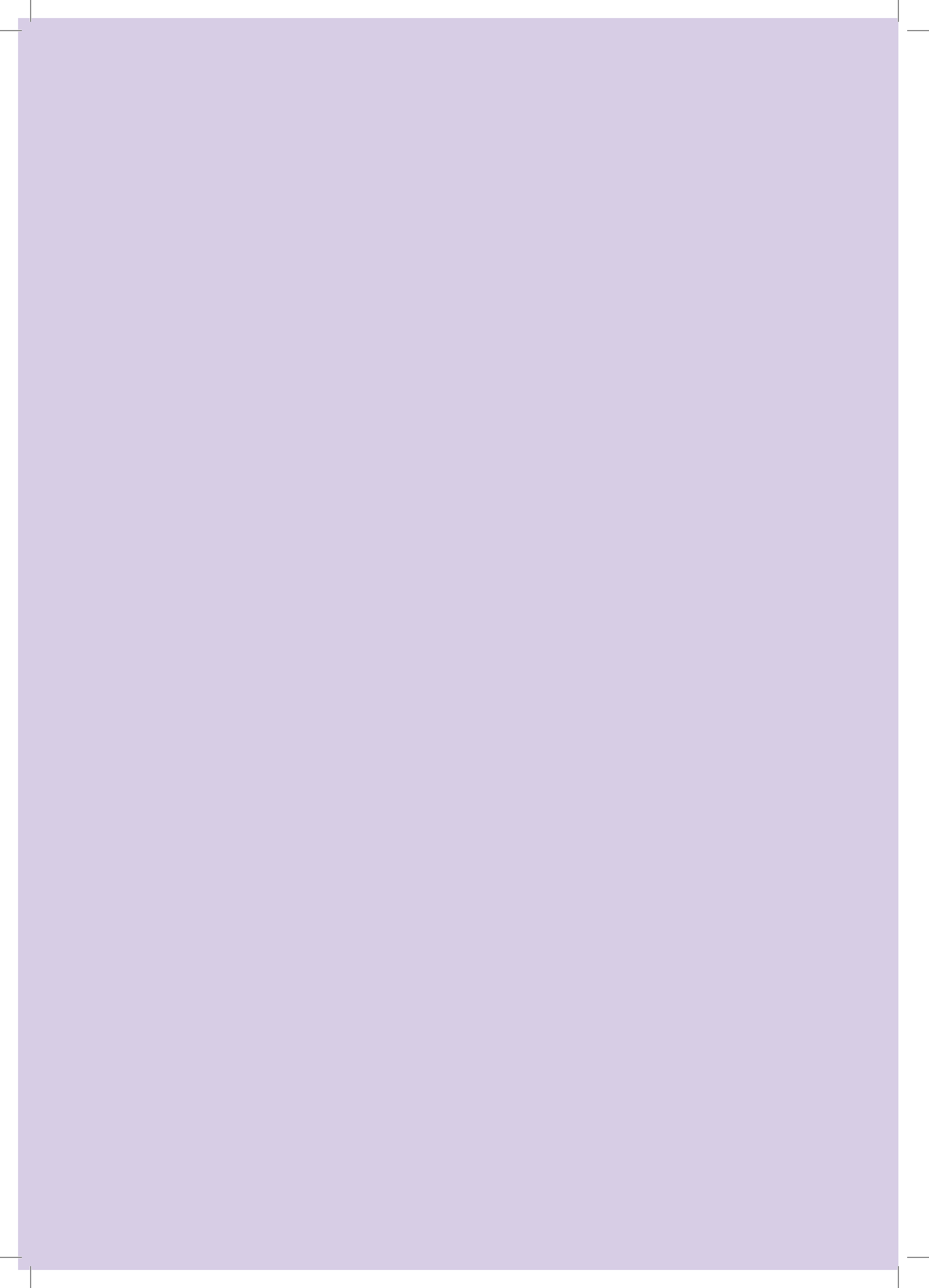


## Preface

The WAVES Summit 2025, held in Mumbai from May 1st to 4th, stands as a landmark event in India's ascent toward global creative leadership. Far more than a conventional conference, it was crafted as a dynamic platform to ignite innovation, foster cross-sector collaboration, and amplify India's cultural influence within the global media and entertainment (M&E) industry. With India targeting a \$100 billion creative economy by 2030, the summit convened a diverse array of stakeholders—industry pioneers, policymakers, technologists, creators, and academics—to shape a bold, actionable vision for the future.

Structured around a unique “wave-based” framework, the summit progressed through three interconnected phases: exploring macro-level trends, delving into sectoral innovations, and laying foundational strategies for sustainable growth. This approach ensured that discussions were both expansive and focused, giving voice to established luminaries and emerging talents alike. From artificial intelligence (AI) to cultural diplomacy, the summit addressed the multifaceted challenges and opportunities defining the creative economy in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

This report encapsulates the spirit of WAVES 2025: its ambition to position India as a global creative powerhouse, its insights into the interplay of technology and culture, and its roadmap for transforming vision into reality. It serves as both a reflection of the summit's achievements and a call to action for stakeholders to drive India's creative economy forward.



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## Introduction

**WAVES Summit 2025**, held from May 1–4 at Mumbai’s Jio World Convention Centre, marked a pivotal moment in India’s journey to become a global media and entertainment (M&E) leader. Designed as a hub for innovation, collaboration, and cultural exchange, the summit brought together industry leaders, policymakers, creators, technologists, and academics to shape the future of the creative economy.

With the bold aim of transforming India into a \$100 billion creative powerhouse by 2030, WAVES 2025 served as more than just a conference—it was a strategic platform leveraging India’s storytelling legacy, youthful population, and tech capabilities to drive global influence.

The summit’s unique “wave-based” structure—three progressive phases over four days—enabled over 140 curated sessions that explored:

- **Macro Trends:** AI’s impact, global content alliances, and soft power through storytelling, featuring Mukesh Ambani’s vision for a \$100 billion entertainment future.
- **Sectoral Innovation:** Advances in gaming, VFX, short-form, and regional content, showcasing the blend of tradition and technology.
- **Strategic Transformation:** Focus on policy reform, skills development, sustainability, and cultural preservation through masterclasses and expert panels.

This layered approach promoted cross-sector collaboration, with dedicated attention to underrepresented voices—women in VFX, rural creators, Northeast filmmakers, and the global Indian diaspora—ensuring inclusive growth.

WAVES 2025 also spotlighted the balance of heritage and innovation. As digital platforms democratize content, India’s rich narratives—from mythology to regional cinema—are gaining global traction. At the same time, industry challenges like piracy, funding gaps, and talent shortages were addressed through calls for robust policy and partnerships.

From reimagining Indian comics to globalizing Indian music and bridging sports and entertainment, WAVES 2025 embodied *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*—the world is one family—positioning India as a visionary force in shaping the global creative future.

## Executive Summary

The WAVES Summit 2025, held at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai from May 1–4, brought together a wide spectrum of stakeholders to map the future of India's media and entertainment (M&E) sector. With over 140 sessions and participation from industry leaders, policymakers, creators, educators, and technologists, the summit examined the transformation of India's creative economy through the lenses of technology, cultural heritage, inclusion, and strategic reform.

The summit provided a progressive, layered exploration of the sector's landscape—from global trends and creative technologies to regional storytelling and systemic challenges. This report provides a structured synthesis of the insights shared across offering a strategic narrative of where India stands today—and where it must head to achieve its \$100 billion M&E vision by 2030.

## Visionary Foundations

The summit opened with a wide-angle view of the macro forces and digital disruptions reshaping global media. Key discussions revolved around the transformative role of AI in creative production and distribution. Presentations demonstrated how:

- Advertising agencies like WPP are deploying AI to build scalable, personalized campaigns.
- AI tools such as MidJourney and NVIDIA's generative platforms are now central to modern filmmaking and gaming pipelines.

However, ethical caution was a consistent theme, with experts emphasizing the importance of human creativity, authorship, and narrative integrity in an AI-augmented ecosystem.

The sessions also explored the globalization of Indian content, with leaders from Netflix, T-Series, and YouTube highlighting how Indian stories—whether mythological, musical, or cinematic—are gaining traction worldwide. Success stories like *RRR* and the global footprint of T-Series (40% of revenue from international markets) underscored India's rising cultural capital and storytelling appeal.



## Sectoral Advancements

Day two shifted focus to the inner workings of the creative economy, diving deep into sectoral dynamics and emerging trends.

Key themes included:

- The creator economy boom, where 100+ million Indian creators, supported by investments like YouTube's ₹850 crore fund, are driving content innovation, despite continued challenges in monetization, visibility, and AI accessibility.
- Gaming and VFX integration, which is creating cross-sectoral ecosystems across sports, cinema, and advertising, powered by immersive technology.
- The rise of short-form and mobile-first storytelling, reflecting the preferences of India's digitally native Gen Z and rural youth audiences.

This wave also celebrated the regional diversification of India's creative engine. Sessions spotlighted filmmakers from the Northeast, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra, showing how regional narratives—delivered through OTTs, social media, and independent cinema—are gaining both national recognition and international interest.

## Strategic Pillars

The final day examined structural reforms, long-term sustainability, and policy alignment. The focus was on building resilience, equity, and global readiness into India's creative systems.

**Highlights included:**

- A detailed look at policy and regulatory frameworks, addressing issues such as piracy, IP protection, and the need for public-private partnerships to build production and distribution infrastructure—especially in underserved regions like Northeast India.
- Education and upskilling, especially in virtual production, animation, and digital rights management, emerged as critical needs to support a future-ready workforce.

- Panels on cultural preservation emphasized the revival of cinematic classics (e.g., *Tumbbad*), promotion of regional languages, and India's capacity to project soft power through cinema, tourism, and diplomacy.

Masterclasses and interdisciplinary dialogues revealed how M&E intersects with national identity, global strategy, and social impact—offering not just content, but context for how India is perceived on the world stage.

## Cross-Cutting Themes

Three recurring threads unified the summit's sessions and inform the structure of this report:

- **Technology + Tradition:** Rather than seeing AI and automation as threats to cultural authenticity, WAVES 2025 framed them as tools to amplify India's narrative depth—bringing mythology, folklore, and heritage into the global digital age.
- **Inclusivity by Design:** A consistent focus on gender equity, regional representation, and rural access was reflected in programs like Netflix's "Women Back to Work" VFX initiative, and explorations of Direct-to-Mobile (D2M) as a game-changer for rural connectivity.
- **Creativity as Economic Engine:** Speakers and panelists positioned M&E not just as a soft power tool, but as a strategic economic sector—on par with IT and manufacturing—capable of generating jobs, exports, and innovation-led growth.

This report captures the depth and nuance of WAVES Summit 2025—offering stakeholders an integrated view of India's creative economy in motion. It serves as a strategic guide for those seeking to understand, participate in, or invest in the next phase of India's global creative journey. Whether you're a policymaker, platform, producer, or educator, the insights here reveal the roadmap and readiness for India's creative future.





# Day 1

## Plenary & Sessions









## Plenary: Legends & Legacies: The Stories that Shaped India's Soul

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 12:30 – 1:15 PM | **Venue:** Jasmine I

### Speakers

- Rajinikanth, Actor
- Chiranjeevi, Actor
- Hema Malini, Actor

- Mohanlal, Actor
- Mithun Chakraborty, Actor

### Moderator

- Akshay Kumar, Actor



## Overview

This session brought together five cinematic legends—Rajinikanth, Mohanlal, Chiranjeevi, Mithun Chakraborty, and Hema Malini—on one platform, moderated by Akshay Kumar, to reflect on the journey of Indian cinema and its cultural legacy.

The session also acknowledged the WAVES initiative by the Government of India as a transformative cultural platform, with the stars expressing their appreciation for the effort to spotlight India's entertainment, arts, and heritage on a global stage.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Opening Remarks by Akshay Kumar:**
  - Akshay expressed his humility in moderating such a panel of legendary actors and emphasized his desire to learn from their experiences rather than conduct a traditional panel.

- **Hema Malini on WAVES and Cultural Recognition:**
  - She praised the WAVES initiative and the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, noting how the program would benefit Indian arts, cinema, and culture at large. She expressed pride in being part of this historic moment.
- **Chiranjeevi on Aspirations and Inspirations:**
  - Chiranjeevi shared his early journey—from performing dances as a child to aspiring for stardom in a competitive South Indian film industry dominated by legends.
  - He reflected on how he drew inspiration from peers and predecessors, such as Mithun Chakraborty's National Award-winning performance, Hema Malini's stunts in *Sholay*, and Kamal Haasan's dance prowess. His goal, he said, was to bring authenticity and relatability to his performances.
- **Mohanlal on Balancing Art and Entertainment:**
  - Mohanlal discussed the blurred lines between art-house and commercial cinema in Malayalam film. He emphasized that Malayalam cinema values storytelling and substance, and that even art films carried entertainment value.
  - He noted his career path, working with critically acclaimed directors as well as mainstream filmmakers, and emphasized that cinema, in its best form, merges both art and entertainment.

## Key Takeaways

- **Cinematic Legacy:** The panel offered a rare glimpse into the mindset of India's greatest actors, who have individually shaped regional and national cinema through decades of impactful work.
- **WAVES as a Cultural Milestone:** The session affirmed the importance of initiatives like WAVES in preserving and celebrating India's rich artistic heritage and global cultural influence.
- **Inspiration Across Generations:** From Chiranjeevi drawing motivation from Mithun Chakraborty to discussions on content-driven cinema by Mohanlal, the session underscored how inspiration and legacy transcend generations and regions.
- **Art and Commerce Coexistence:** Especially through Mohanlal's remarks, the discussion highlighted the integrated nature of meaningful storytelling and commercial success, particularly in Malayalam cinema.

## Plenary: The Journey-From Outsider to Ruler

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 2:00 – 2:45 PM | **Venue:** Jasmine I

### Speakers

■ Shah Rukh Khan, Actor      ■ Deepika Padukone, Actor

### Moderator

■ Karan Johar, Filmmaker



## Overview

This session featured Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone in a heartfelt conversation with Karan Johar, reflecting on stardom, authenticity, and the future of Indian cinema. They discussed romance, image vs. identity, and the importance of kindness and self-awareness in the entertainment industry.

## Key Highlights

- **Romance & Respect:**

Shah Rukh and Deepika agreed that real chemistry comes from *respect*, not performance. It's about how you make someone feel—even off camera.

- **Authenticity over Image:**

Shah Rukh advised young actors to focus on self-awareness:

“Stop trying to be seen—start seeing yourself.”

Deepika emphasized staying true to one’s individuality despite external noise.

- **On WAVES:**

Both praised WAVES as a visionary platform for uniting tech, arts, and culture. Shah Rukh called for better infrastructure, more theatres, and international collaborations.

- **Closing Thought:**

“The world needs more *gentleness*,” Shah Rukh concluded, crediting his fans for shaping his humility and grace.

## Keynote: The Future of Advertising

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 1600 – 1615 Hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine 01

### Keynote Speaker

■ Mark Read, CEO, WPP



## Key discussions and deliberations

- **Overview:**

The keynote focused on the AI revolution's profound impact on advertising, particularly generative AI's ability to augment human creativity by analyzing documents, making recommendations, and producing content. Read outlined AI's influence across three areas at WPP: how work is created (e.g., streamlined workflows), produced (e.g., via WPP's open video platform with motion AI), and experienced by consumers (e.g., personalized campaigns).

- **Key contributions:**

- **Mark Read's Insights:** As WPP's CEO, Read framed AI as a pivotal force in the fifth Industrial Revolution, augmenting human creativity across advertising's value chain. He highlighted WPP's leadership in adopting AI for creative workflows, production efficiency, and personalized consumer experiences, citing their open video platform and motion AI capabilities.



- o **Campaign Examples:** The “Galentine’s Day” video demonstrated AI’s role in transforming creative processes, while the Mondelez ad with Shah Rukh Khan illustrated how AI enables scalable, personalized storytelling, reinforcing India’s cultural influence in global advertising.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - o **Adoption of AI Technologies:** While AI’s potential was showcased, integrating generative AI into existing workflows may pose challenges for agencies and MSMEs, including training and infrastructure costs.
  - o **Maintaining Human Creativity:** The reliance on AI for tasks like content creation raises concerns about preserving the human touch in advertising, which remains critical for emotional resonance.
  - o **Scalability vs. Quality:** Producing high-quality, AI-driven content on a scale, as demonstrated by WPP’s platform, may face challenges in maintaining consistency and cultural relevance across diverse markets.
  - o **Accessibility for MSMEs:** Although platforms democratize advertising, smaller enterprises may struggle to access or afford advanced AI tools, potentially widening the gap between large agencies like WPP and smaller players.

## Key takeaways

- **Advertising’s Economic Impact:** The \$1 trillion global advertising industry, growing at 6–7% annually, drives brand trust and economic growth, with digital platforms enabling MSME participation.
- **AI’s Transformative Role:** Generative AI redefines advertising by enhancing creative workflows, streamlining production, and delivering personalized consumer experiences.
- **WPP’s Leadership:** WPP’s AI innovations, like the open video platform and motion AI, position it at the forefront of scalable, high-quality content creation.
- **Cultural Resonance:** Campaigns like Mondelez’s Shah Rukh Khan ad highlight AI’s ability to deliver personalized, culturally relevant storytelling.
- **Inclusive Growth:** Democratized access to advertising platforms fosters a vibrant, inclusive creative economy, though challenges remain in AI adoption and maintaining human creativity.

## Keynote: Building the Next Global Entertainment Revolution from India

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 1615 – 1630 Hrs. | **Venue:** Jasmine 01

### Keynote Speaker

■ Mukesh Ambani, Chairman and MD of Reliance Industries



## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - Mukesh Ambani outlined India's potential to lead the global media and entertainment industry, driven by a 5,000-year storytelling tradition, a 1.4 billion-strong population with an average age of 29, and world-class digital infrastructure, including 1.2 billion mobile screens. He highlighted the industry's current \$28 billion valuation and its potential to reach \$100 billion in a decade, fueled by AI's ability to enhance content creation, distribution, and monetization across languages and geographies. Ambani showcased Jio's role in democratizing high-speed internet and setting viewership records through JioCinema, while the partnership with Mox and Jio Hotstar aims to compete globally. He proposed four action points: seizing economic opportunities, creating global content, forging international partnerships, and using creativity to foster hope and unity, aligning with the G20 motto *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family).

- **Key contributions:**
  - **Mukesh Ambani's Vision:** Ambani emphasized India's "unbeatable advantages" in content, demography, and technology, positioning the \$100 billion industry goal as a driver of jobs and entrepreneurship. He highlighted AI's revolutionary impact, comparing it to the advent of silent cinema, and Jio's leadership in affordable internet and innovative platforms like JioCinema and Jio Hotstar.
  - **Acknowledgment of Cultural Icons:** Ambani saluted Indian legends like Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Rajinikanth, Gulzar, and Hema Malini as cultural ambassadors, reinforcing the global influence of India's creative talent.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - **Scaling to \$100 Billion:** While ambitious, growing the industry from \$28 billion to \$100 billion requires significant investment, infrastructure, and policy support, which were not detailed.
  - **Global Content Creation:** Shifting from India-centric to globally resonant content, especially from regional creators, poses challenges in terms of skills, funding, and market access.
  - **Competition with Global Players:** Matching or surpassing global entertainment tech and storytelling standards, as targeted by Jio Hotstar, involves competing with established giants, requiring innovation and resources.
  - **Content Demand and Diversity:** Meeting the global hunger for "hope, happiness, and healing" through multilingual, immersive content demands rapid scaling of production capacity and creator support.

## Key takeaways

- **India's Global Potential:** India's storytelling heritage, young demographic, and digital infrastructure position it to lead the \$100 billion global entertainment industry.
- **AI and Technology as Catalysts:** AI enhances content creation and distribution, enabling multilingual, immersive experiences on platforms like JioCinema and Jio Hotstar.
- **Jio's Leadership:** Jio's affordable internet and innovative platforms have revolutionized access and set global standards in streaming and interactive content.
- **Action Points for Growth:** Scaling the industry requires global content creation, international partnerships, and using creativity to foster unity and optimism.
- **Cultural and Strategic Moment:** Entertainment is India's "real path" to soft power, uniting the world through hope and harmony, as embodied by the WAVES Summit's vision.

## Keynote: Design, Media and Creativity in the Age of AI

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 1630 – 1645 Hrs. | **Venue:** Jasmine 01

### Speaker

■ Shantanu Narayen, CEO, Adobe



## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:** The keynote focused on the intersection of creativity, technology, and India's global potential. Major points included India's leadership in mobile, digital payments, and AI, with 100 million content creators and a 10% growth in freelance creatives over the past decade. The CEO highlighted Adobe's evolution from 1983's PostScript to modern AI tools like Firefly, emphasizing generative AI's role in enabling creators to overcome creative barriers, produce hyper-localized content, and transcend traditional mediums. The discussion also covered India's opportunities across the AI stack (data, models, agents, applications) and the importance of ethical AI through creator attribution and content provenance.
- **Key contributions:**
  - Mr. Shantanu Narayen underscored India's potential to lead the global creative economy, citing generative AI's ability to streamline storytelling and production. He introduced Adobe's Firefly as a commercially safe AI model and highlighted the Content Authenticity Initiative, supported by 4,500 members, including The Times of India and The Hindu, to protect creators' intellectual property.
  - **Appreciation for Mukesh Ambani:** Mr. Shantanu Narayen mentioned of Jio's impact, enabling 500 million Indians to consume OTT content

via affordable mobile internet, reinforcing India's infrastructure as a catalyst for creative consumption.

- **Prime Minister's Call for Responsible Innovation:** The CEO aligned Adobe's ethical AI efforts with the Prime Minister's emphasis on responsible innovation, framing India as a potential leader in ethical AI governance.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - **Digital Sovereignty and Data:** Training AI models on Indian cultural and linguistic data was presented as an opportunity but also implies challenges in ensuring data privacy, security, and cultural representation.
  - **Meeting Content Demand:** The CEO noted that demand for short-form and video content surpasses supply, particularly in gaming and regional languages, posing a challenge for creators and platforms to scale production.
  - **Ethical AI Implementation:** While Adobe's Firefly models are commercially safe, broader adoption of ethical AI practices across the industry remains a concern, requiring widespread commitment to content provenance and IP protection.
  - **AI Literacy and Accessibility:** The call for AI literacy for all ages suggests a potential gap in workforce readiness and education, which could hinder India's ability to fully capitalize on AI opportunities.

## Key takeaways

- **India's Creative Leadership:** India's 100 million content creators and mobile infrastructure position it as a global hub for creativity, with AI as a key driver.
- **AI's Transformative Role:** Generative AI enhances ideation, production, and localization, enabling creators to meet growing content demands and tell culturally rich stories.
- **Adobe's Contributions:** Adobe's tools, from Photoshop to Firefly, empower creators, with a commitment to ethical AI via the Content Authenticity Initiative.
- **Economic Opportunity:** India's next economic growth lies in creativity, not just software, with opportunities across the AI stack and new business models.
- **Ethical AI Leadership:** India can lead globally by prioritizing ethical AI, protecting creators' IP, and investing in AI literacy and responsible innovation.
- **Call for Collaboration:** Partnerships between Adobe, the government, and stakeholders are essential to realize India's potential in the global creative economy.



## Keynote: Powering the Creator Economy in India

**Date:** 01 May 2025 | **Time:** 1645 – 1700 Hrs. | **Venue:** Jasmine 01

**Speaker**

■ Neal Mohan, CEO, YouTube



## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - Neal Mohan emphasized India's transformation into a "Creator Nation," with over 100 million YouTube channels uploading content in the past year and 15,000 surpassing one million subscribers. He announced a ₹850 crore investment over two years to bolster India's creator ecosystem, building on ₹21,000 crore paid to Indian creators in the last three years. Mohan highlighted YouTube's role as a global cultural engine, noting that Indian content garnered 45 billion hours of international watch time last year. The session, hosted by Gautam Anand, featured creators Mark Rober and Gautami Kawale, who discussed multilingual content, STEM storytelling, and India's potential as a content hub, amplified by AI-powered reach.
- **Key contributions:**
  - Neal Mohan: As YouTube CEO, Mohan underscored India's creator boom, crediting the Prime Minister's digital leadership (25 million

YouTube subscribers) and announcing the ₹850 crore investment. He framed YouTube as a platform for cultural export, citing 45 billion hours of global watch time for Indian content.

- o Gautam Anand: As session host and APAC Vice President, Anand facilitated discussions with creators, emphasizing strategies for building global audiences.
- o Mark Rober and Gautami Kawale: Rober shared insights on STEM-focused content and global appeal, while Kawale (Slayy Point) highlighted the growing demand for Indian narratives and multilingual storytelling.

- **Challenges and concerns:**

- o **Scaling Creator Growth:** While not explicitly stated, the rapid increase from 11,000 to 15,000 channels with over one million subscribers suggests challenges in sustaining quality and support for new creators.
- o **Content Saturation:** The sheer volume of 100 million channels uploading content implies potential issues with discoverability and competition, though not directly addressed.
- o **AI and Accessibility:** The reliance on AI-powered reach raises unmentioned concerns about equitable access to technology and algorithmic fairness for smaller creators.

## Key takeaways

- India is a “Creator Nation,” with over 100 million YouTube channels and 15,000 surpassing one million subscribers, driving global cultural influence.
- YouTube’s ₹850 crore investment over two years will accelerate creator growth, building on ₹21,000 crore paid to Indian creators in three years.
- Indian content’s 45 billion hours of international watch time underscores its global appeal, amplified by multilingual and STEM storytelling.
- Collaborative platforms and AI-powered tools are key to empowering creators, but challenges like content saturation and equitable access persist.



## Keynote: Creative Bridges -Unlocking the Power of Cultural & Creative Partnerships Between the UK & India

**Date:** 01 May 2025 | **Time:** 1535 – 1555 Hrs. | **Venue:** Jasmine 02

### Keynote Speaker

■ Lisa Nandy, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport of the United Kingdom



## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - o Nandy underscored the deep cultural and personal bonds between the UK and India, referencing her Kolkata roots and historical figures like Sophia Duleep Singh. She celebrated the 2 million-strong Indian diaspora as a “living bridge” and highlighted mutual influences in music (e.g., The Beatles), film (e.g., Bend It Like Beckham), and sports. The speech emphasized the UK’s creative industry strengths, including a 31% rise in production spending and competitive tax reliefs. Nandy announced a Bilateral Cultural Federation Agreement to enhance collaboration between flagship institutions, positioning both nations as global storytelling leaders. She also stressed addressing global challenges like the climate crisis through cultural partnerships.

- **Key contributions:**
  - o Lisa Nandy: As the first Indian-origin Labour cabinet minister, Nandy shared her personal connection to India, framing the diaspora's contributions as integral to British identity. She highlighted recent trade deals worth over £400 million and India's cricket investments, while advocating for India's 2036 Paralympics bid.
  - o Cultural References: Contributions of figures like Sophia Duleep Singh (suffragette) and modern creatives like Harri (fashion designer) were cited to illustrate the diaspora's impact.
  - o Institutional Vision: Nandy proposed a Cultural Federation Agreement, emphasizing partnerships between museums, theatres, and media industries to drive innovation.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - o **Global Challenges:** The climate crisis was noted as a pressing issue requiring cross-cultural collaboration, though specific strategies were not detailed.
  - o **Balancing Growth and Heritage:** While not explicitly raised, the challenge of preserving cultural heritage while scaling modern creative industries was implied in the call for empowering new storytellers.
  - o **Implementation of Agreements:** The proposed Cultural Federation Agreement's success depends on effective execution, which was not addressed in detail.

## Key takeaways

- The UK and India share a profound cultural and historical bond, strengthened by a 2 million-strong Indian diaspora.
- Creative industries, including film, music, and sports, are vital for bilateral growth, with the UK offering robust infrastructure and tax incentives.
- The proposed Bilateral Cultural Federation Agreement will foster institutional collaboration, enhancing storytelling and innovation.
- Empowering the next generation of diverse storytellers is critical for addressing global challenges like the climate crisis and driving shared prosperity

## Session: Storytelling in the Age of AI

**Date:** 01 May 2025 | **Time:** 1600 – 1620 Hrs. | **Venue:** Jasmine II

**Speaker**

■ Shekhar Kapur, Filmmaker & Visionary Director (*Elizabeth*, *Mr. India*)

**Moderator**

■ Mr. Barun Das, MD & CEO, TV9 Network

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - Shekhar Kapur reflected on his cross-cultural cinematic experiences and raised philosophical questions about AI's role in art. The panel examined whether machines can replicate emotional nuance and whether AI enhances or erodes originality. The session sparked a broader cultural conversation about authorship, authenticity, and the future of human creativity in an increasingly digital world.
- **Key contributions:**
  - Shekhar Kapur: Offered insights into storytelling across eras and cultures, voicing cautious optimism about AI as a creative partner—so long as it remains guided by human intent.
  - Barun Das: Framed AI as both opportunity and challenge, steering the conversation toward the responsibilities of creators and technologists alike.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - Authenticity vs. Automation: Can AI mimic the depth of lived experience?
  - Creative Gatekeeping: Will AI democratize access or introduce new hierarchies through algorithms?
  - Cultural Nuance: Risk of losing local textures in AI-generated global storytelling.

## Key Takeaways

- AI is transforming storytelling from a solitary act into a co-authored experience.
- The human element—emotion, memory, cultural specificity—remains irreplaceable.
- Ethical frameworks are needed to guide AI's role in creative industries.
- The future of storytelling will be defined by collaboration, not competition, between human and machine.

## Plenary: Braving the Odds – Scripting a New Narrative

**Date:** 01 May 2025 | **Time:** 1620– 1700 Hrs. | **Venue:** Jasmine II

**Speakers:**

- Rona-Lee Shim'on, Actress (*Fauda*), Israel
- Bianca Balti, Supermodel & Entrepreneur, Italy
- Ariane Hingst, German Football Legend & Sports Commentator

**Moderator:**

- Mr. Barun Das, MD & CEO, TV9 Network

### Overview

This dynamic, women-led session brought together global icons who have defied convention and carved new paths in their respective fields. Rona-Lee Shim'on, Bianca Balti, and Ariane Hingst shared powerful stories of resilience, identity, and courage. Framed by host Barun Das, the session spotlighted how storytelling becomes a form of activism when women reclaim narratives—challenging stereotypes, pushing boundaries, and reshaping media for the better.

### Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - Each speaker shared deeply personal journeys of breaking through industry and cultural expectations. Rona-Lee spoke about portraying complex female characters in a conflict-ridden region; Bianca discussed body image, motherhood, and entrepreneurship; Ariane reflected on leadership in sports and the evolving space for women in commentary roles. Together, they emphasized that the media must evolve to reflect diverse realities, not outdated archetypes.
- **Key contributions:**
  - Rona-Lee Shim'on: Highlighted the importance of nuanced female roles in conflict-based storytelling.
  - Bianca Balti: Advocated for authentic beauty and honest narratives around motherhood and entrepreneurship.



- Ariane Hingst: Spoke on sports as a platform for social change and the need for women in decision-making roles in media.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - Persistent Gender Stereotypes: Despite success, each speaker faced cultural and systemic barriers.
  - Media Representation Gaps: Lack of diverse female voices at decision-making levels.
  - Balancing Public Persona with Personal Identity: Struggles with visibility and vulnerability in global media.

## Key Takeaways

- Women are rewriting the script—not just participating in media, but transforming it.
- Representation matters: nuanced, diverse female stories can challenge global narratives.
- Storytelling is activism when it centers lived experience and defies convention.
- True inclusion in media demands courage, collaboration, and structural change.

## Session: Talent Beyond Borders

**Date:** 01 May 2025 | **Time:** 1800 – 1830 Hrs. | **Venue:** Jasmine II

### Speakers

- Allu Arjun, Actor
- Barun Das, MD & CEO, TV9 Network

### Moderator

- Mr. Barun Das, MD & CEO, TV9 Network



## Overview

The session featured Allu Arjun, the National Award-winning actor and global icon, in conversation with Mr. Barun Das. Focusing on the global rise of Indian cinema, the discussion celebrated how Allu Arjun's success, particularly with *Pushpa*, exemplifies the merging of local culture with international appeal. The conversation also highlighted the actor's unique blend of action, emotion, and style, which has redefined Indian heroism for a global audience.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The conversation centered around the *Pushpa* phenomenon and Allu Arjun's rise from regional stardom to global recognition. The actor's combination of unique dance moves, intense drama, and personal discipline has led him to captivate international audiences. The discussion unpacked how his on-screen charisma and evolving image of masculinity and heroism have redefined Indian cinema's place in the

global entertainment industry.

- **Key contributions:**

- Allu Arjun: The actor reflected on his journey, shared insights on his success, and discussed how the global appeal of his films has transformed regional cinema.
- Barun Das: The moderator guided the conversation, drawing out Allu Arjun's thoughts on bridging the gap between local stories and global audiences.

- **Challenges and concerns:**

- Sustaining Global Appeal: The challenge of balancing regional roots while consistently appealing to international audiences.
- Cultural Sensitivity: Ensuring that the distinct cultural elements of Telugu cinema resonate on the global stage without losing their authenticity.

## Key Takeaways

- Cultural Evolution: Allu Arjun's journey represents the global rise of Telugu cinema, with local stories breaking boundaries and reaching international audiences.
- Success Formula: Allu Arjun's blend of dance, drama, and discipline has proven to be a successful formula in capturing hearts worldwide.
- Re-defining Heroism: Indian cinema, led by Allu Arjun's performances, is reshaping global perceptions of masculinity and heroism, positioning India as a growing influence in global entertainment.

## Session: Regulating Broadcast in the Digital Age — Key Frameworks and Challenges

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 14:30–15:15 hrs | **Venue:** Room No. 202

### Speakers

- Mr. Anil Kumar Lahoti, Chairman, TRAI (Keynote Speaker)
- Mr. Ahmed Nadeem, Secretary General, ABU, Malaysia
- Mr. Lois Boswell, CEO, AVIA, Singapore
- Ms. Philomena Gnanapragasam, Director, AIBD, Malaysia
- Ms. Carolina Lorenzon

### Moderator

- Mr. Kashyap Pathak, Director, Media and Entertainment, Deloitte India

## Overview

This session explored evolving regulatory frameworks for broadcast in the digital era, focusing on the convergence of linear and digital media, the rise of OTT platforms, consumer protection, and the role of regulatory institutions. It addressed global models and called attention to the complexity and urgency of modernizing India's approach to media governance. The discussion covered the evolution of broadcast regulation in India from 1995 to 2017, TRAI and MIB's current consumer protection mechanisms, the impact of OTT and digital media consumption trends, regulatory asymmetry between linear and digital platforms, the content vs. platform regulation debate, lessons from global models like Europe's DSA/DMA and Japan, inter-agency coordination challenges involving TRAI, MIB, and MeITY, the growing need for media literacy and responsible content creation, and the balance between creative freedom and accountability.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

### • Summary of Discussions:

- o The session began by acknowledging India's remarkable growth in the Media & Entertainment sector—from \$12 billion to \$34 billion in the last decade. Key regulatory moments were reviewed, including the initial regulation of cable TV in 1995 and the completion of digitalization in 2017.
- o TRAI, working alongside the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, has implemented consumer-centric frameworks, but faces new challenges as digital media—now a \$9.4 billion industry—outpaces traditional TV.
- o The rapid rise of OTT is attributed to affordable internet and personalized, regional, interactive, and on-demand content. However, the divergence between rules governing digital vs. linear platforms has widened, creating regulatory gaps.



- The session also addressed jurisdictional overlaps, the need for coherent policymaking, and lessons from Europe's Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA), which enforce higher accountability on tech platforms.
- **Key Contributions:**
  - **Anil Kumar Lahoti (TRAI):** Highlighted India's digitalisation journey and stressed the importance of safeguarding consumer interests without stifling innovation. Addressed key regulatory dilemmas: content vs. platform regulation and bridging the digital-linear divide.
  - **Ahmed Nadeem (ABU):** Advocated for regulatory convergence and creative liberty. Cautioned against fragmented oversight by TRAI, MIB, and MeITY.
  - **Philomena Gnanapragasam (AIBD):** Described the digital landscape as an “unregulated jungle” and emphasized the urgent need for media literacy and a shared societal responsibility.
  - **Carolina Lorenzon:** Noted that traditional TV is heavily regulated, while digital platforms enjoy more freedom. Discussed Europe's approach to rebalancing this through DSA and DMA and called for mechanisms to ensure media pluralism.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**
  - Regulatory fragmentation and inter-agency overlap
  - Complexity of content regulation without suppressing creative expression
  - Growing digital divide in oversight of OTT vs. TV
  - Absence of a regulatory framework for user-generated content
  - Societal risks posed by misinformation and unregulated digital consumption

## Key Takeaways

- India must build a unified and future-ready broadcast regulatory ecosystem.
- Collaboration among TRAI, MIB, and MeITY is essential to avoid regulatory duplication and confusion.
- The regulatory approach must strike a careful balance—preserving creative freedom while ensuring consumer protection.
- Self-regulation by platforms is necessary but insufficient; formal oversight must be strengthened.
- Promoting media literacy is critical to empowering audiences and sustaining responsible content ecosystems.

## Session-The New Arcade: VC Perspectives on Gaming's Next Frontier

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 1430-1515 hrs. | **Venue:** Room 203

### Speakers

- Anuj Tandon, Partner, Bitkraft Ventures
- Sharan Tulsiani, Founder, Jetapult
- Vinay Bansal, Founder and CEO  
Inflection Point Ventures
- Nihansh Bhat, Lead Corporate Developer at KRAFTON Inc.
- Jeremy Lim – Principal, GFR Fund

### Moderator

- Aditya Mani, Founder, Yologram Style



## Overview

This session explores the future of gaming from a venture capital perspective, highlighting where investment is flowing, what innovations are driving change, and how startups are transforming the gaming landscape into immersive, creator-driven, and personalized experiences. Bringing together a diverse audience of industry professionals, including content creators, technology developers, and innovators passionate about gaming, "The New Arcade: VC Perspectives on Gaming's Next Frontier" dives into the evolving world of video games through the lens of venture capitalists shaping its future. From immersive virtual worlds to creator-driven economies and hyper-personalized experiences, this insightful panel explores where the money is flowing and why. Discover what's next in gaming innovation, how startups are redefining player engagement, and why investors believe the new arcade isn't a place — it's a platform. Game on.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- There is a growing digital infrastructure, storytelling tradition, and a large youth population that are catalyzing a gaming revolution. India today resembles China's gaming boom era around 2008-2014.
- VCs are increasingly applying thesis-driven funding approaches focused on gaming, interactive media, and AI-driven development. Emerging markets like India prioritize strategic balancing of capital between high-traction investments and visionary moonshot bets, with dynamic, and data-informed evolution of their theses-based portfolio insights.
- Moonshot bets are made selectively, usually on visionary founders or innovative ideas.
- Most funds are targeting early-stage to growth-stage gaming startups. Investments focus on companies with strong product-market fit, resilient and coachable founders, and scalable models.
- AI is transforming the entire game development ecosystem – from asset creation and testing to personalization and monetization. AI allows small, agile teams to build games independently and with scale.
- High-quality content and robust technology are foundational for successful gaming IPs; Indian media creators are being encouraged to explore IP licensing, transmedia expansion, and gamification of stories.

## Audience Engagement

- Monetizing IPs like gaming characters that can be created based on a film – Building games around existing IPs like that of films and characters is promising but hard due to complexity in licensing and scaling fun, engaging gameplay as gaming industry is far more transparent and easier to work within gaming IPs.
- Games are becoming platforms for digital interaction, replacing traditional social media for younger audiences; therefore, future content consumption may be centered on game-adjacent platforms.

## Key takeaways

- **VFX now starts in pre-production** – Previsualization and AI-driven planning ensure seamless execution before filming.
- **Invisible VFX is transforming realism** – AI-generated characters blend flawlessly into live-action footage.
- **Automation is reshaping careers** – AI handles routine tasks, but creativity and storytelling remain human-led.
- **India is rising as a VFX leader** – Large-scale world-building and AI-driven efficiency boost global competitiveness.
- **Policy and education need reform** – VFX training should focus on storytelling, creative direction, and pre-production.

## Session: Remembering Manoj Kumar: Ace Film Maker, True Nationalist

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1430-1515 Hrs | **Venue:** Room: 205

### Speakers:

- Kunal Goswami, Actor, Businessperson, and Son of Shri Manoj Kumar
- Madhur Bhandarkar, Film Maker
- Dr. Raajeev Shrivastav, Senior Author, Lyricist, Cine Historian & Film Director
- Bharathi S Pradhan, Senior Critic, Columnist & Author

### Moderator

- Mayank Shekhar, Film critic, journalist, podcaster

## Overview

To honor the life, work, and legacy of Manoj Kumar, the session explored his pioneering role in Indian patriotic cinema and the personal and professional impact he had on his peers and the nation. It was a tribute reflecting on his contributions as a filmmaker, writer, director, producer, lyricist, and true nationalist. The panel discussed personal memories, the evolution of nationalistic cinema, and Manoj Kumar's enduring influence on Indian film and society.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions**
  - o The session opened with a heartfelt introduction by Mayank Shekhar, noting Manoj Kumar's recent passing and his multifaceted contributions to Indian cinema.
  - o Panelists shared personal anecdotes and memories, highlighting Manoj Kumar's approachable nature and the deep sense of patriotism that permeated his films.
  - o The discussion traced Manoj Kumar's early life, including his experiences during Partition, his move to Delhi, and eventual rise in Bombay's film industry.
  - o The panel explored the unique niche Manoj Kumar carved out—commercially successful, socially relevant, and deeply nationalistic cinema.
  - o The conversation also addressed Manoj Kumar's sacrifices in maintaining his patriotic image and the challenges of making meaningful cinema within the commercial framework.



- **Key Contributions:**
  - o **Madhur Bhandarkar** recalled being inspired by Manoj Kumar's films from childhood, especially the innovative way he shot songs and addressed social issues. He shared personal interactions with Manoj Kumar, noting his humility and encouragement for younger filmmakers.
  - o **Bharathi S Pradhan** shared her regret at not completing a biography on Manoj Kumar, recounting a poignant meeting where he expressed his desire to make one last film and considered collaborating with Madhur Bhandarkar.
  - o **Dr. Raajeev Shrivastav** emphasized Manoj Kumar's ability to connect with common people and his role in bringing Lal Bahadur Shastri's slogan "Jai Jawan Jai Kisan" to life through cinema, particularly with *Upkaar*.
  - o **Kunal Goswami** provided insight into Manoj Kumar's early hardships, his passion for Indian culture, and his pioneering spirit in creating patriotic cinema, often ghostwriting and ghost-directing in his early days. He highlighted the personal sacrifices Manoj Kumar made to maintain his "Bharat" image.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**
  - o The panel reflected on the difficulty of sustaining a career in a niche as challenging as patriotic cinema, especially when contemporaries were making far more films for commercial gain.
  - o Bharathi S Pradhan lamented the incomplete biography, a lost opportunity to document Manoj Kumar's life in his own words.
  - o The discussion acknowledged the challenge of balancing commercial success with meaningful, message-driven cinema.

## Key takeaways

- Manoj Kumar was a trailblazer in Indian patriotic cinema, uniquely blending commercial appeal with strong nationalistic and social messages.
- His films (*Upkaar*, *Roti KapdaMakaan*, *Purab Aur Paschim*, *Kranti*) remain relevant and continue to inspire filmmakers and audiences alike.
- Manoj Kumar's personal journey-from Partition refugee to iconic filmmaker-underscored his deep connection to Indian identity and culture.
- The session highlighted the importance of documenting and preserving the stories of such influential figures, as well as the ongoing need for cinema that reflects and shapes national consciousness.
- As articulated by the panel, Manoj Kumar's legacy is not just in his films, but in the values and inspiration he imparted to generations of filmmakers, critics, and audiences.

## Fireside chat: Riding the AI Wave, Navigating the Future of Creative Contents for AVGC

**Date:** 01 May 2025 | **Time:** 1430 – 1515 Hrs | **Venue:** Room 206

### Speakers

- Richard Kerris, VP Global M&E, Nvidia
- Vishal Dhupar, MD, Nvidia India

## Overview

The WAVES Summit fireside chat with Vishal Dhupar (MD, NVIDIA India) and Richard Kerris (VP, Developer Relations, NVIDIA) explored how AI is transforming media, storytelling, and creative workflows. Emphasizing India's potential as a global content leader, the session highlighted NVIDIA's tech innovations and India's cultural strengths. Discussions focused on how generative AI democratizes creativity, boosts multilingual content production, and reinforces cultural ownership. The talk also underscored the need for ethical AI training and updated creative education to empower future artists.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The session traced NVIDIA's evolution from computing to AI-driven creative workflows. Dhupar described AI as a collaborative intelligence, while Kerris explained how generative AI reduces production time by generating assets like visuals and effects. India's shift from tech hub to content creator was discussed, with AI enabling hyper-local, multilingual storytelling. Real-world applications included AI-translation of the PM's keynote and the idea of creating 1,000 personalized versions of a film. Concerns around AI's impact on artists and the importance of ethical use and education were also addressed.
- **Key contributions:**
  - **Vishal Dhupar's Insights:** He explained NVIDIA's transition from entertainment computing to AI-enhanced creativity, highlighting AI's evolution from rule-based to learning-based systems that accelerate collaboration.
  - **Richard Kerris's Perspective:** He emphasized AI's ability to make creative tools accessible, citing India's digital leap as a launchpad for global content distribution.
  - **Reference to PM's Keynote:** The AI-powered 15-second translation of the PM's address illustrated AI's practical use in bridging language gaps, while noting room for emotional and latency improvements.

- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - **Artist Concerns About AI:** Artists fear the loss of traditional processes, even as AI opens new creative possibilities.
  - **Latency and Emotional Fidelity in AI Translation:** Current tech still struggles with real-time, emotionally resonant multilingual output.
  - **Ethical AI Training:** It's crucial to train AI with cultural sensitivity to preserve authenticity.
  - **Creative Education Gap:** Artists must be equipped with basic AI knowledge to effectively use emerging tools.

## Audience Engagement

- *Q: Will AI access costs rise?*  
Costs may shift, but AI can reduce production resources, especially in media.
- *Q: Who owns AI-generated content?*  
Ownership of training data is key. Tools like Adobe's respect artist rights in model training.
- *Q: Should education evolve with AI?*  
Yes — AI can assist educators, while teaching must still focus on fundamentals.
- *Q: Can AI grasp Indian music's complexity?*  
AI can learn structures and patterns in Indian classical music if models are properly trained.
- *Q: AI-generated music on streaming platforms?*  
The value of content matters more than its creation method — AI is already part of many tools.
- *Q: GPUs vs. better-trained models?*  
Both matter, but well-trained models will have greater impact in coming years.
- *Q: India-NVIDIA collaboration potential?*  
India's talent and scale make it a strong partner for global AI and content innovation.

## Key Takeaways

- **AI-Driven Creativity:** Generative AI accelerates and democratizes content creation.
- **India's Content Leadership:** India is poised to lead globally with its culture and tech capabilities.
- **Hyper-Localized Content:** AI supports massive-scale multilingual, culturally rich media.
- **Ethical AI and Education:** Responsible training and updated education empower creators.
- **NVIDIA's Role:** NVIDIA's tech backbone is driving the future of creative AI and content innovation.

## Session: Leveraging Audience Intelligence for Content Strategy

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 15:30–16:15 hrs | **Venue:** Room No. 202

### Speakers

- Mr. L.V. Krishnan, CEO, TAM Media Research
- Mr. Shashi Sinha, CEO, IPG Media Brands / BARC
- Mr. Shailesh Kapoor, Founder & CEO, Ormax Media
- Mr. Hovhannes Movsisyan, Executive Director, Public TV Armenia
- Mr. Derrick Gray, Chief Research & Operations Officer, Numeris

### Moderator

- Mr. Nalin Vashistha, Director, Technology & Transformation, Deloitte India



## Overview

This session explored how insights into audience behavior across platforms—TV, mobile, and OTT—can shape smarter content strategy and advertising. It examined challenges in unifying viewership metrics and discussed the global shift toward comprehensive measurement systems. The discussion covered understanding digital-first measurement methods across mobile, connected TV (CTV), and linear platforms, showcasing global case studies like BARB's Project Dovetail and Project Origin, insights into panel reach and depth in India through BARC, addressing the streaming blind spot with measurement of non-subscriber activity, lessons from Armenia's adaptation to digital-first content, integrating quantitative (viewership) and qualitative (attention) metrics, developing unified tracking across screens and platforms, and the need for collaboration among broadcasters, platforms, and regulators.



## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussions:**

- The panel addressed the complexities of audience measurement in a multi-device world. Current initiatives such as Project Swan in India are working to bridge the data divide between mobile and TV audiences. It was noted that Indian viewers are exposed to over 840 ads daily, raising concerns about content fatigue and ad clutter. BARC's expansion into connected TV data and its large panel infrastructure was presented as a robust model, though still evolving. Meanwhile, in Armenia, the unregulated dominance of Indian shows led to national reflection on content sovereignty and digital reform. OTT platforms struggle with understanding non-subscribing viewers, a critical data gap for conversion. The industry remains divided on how to measure viewer attention and reconcile it with viewing duration.

- **Key Contributions:**

- **L.V. Krishnan:** Emphasized the need for an integrated view across mobile, TV, and CTV; highlighted global experiments in measurement convergence.
- **Shashi Sinha:** Shared BARC's efforts to expand its panel to include CTV and integrate digital signals into mainstream viewership tracking.
- **Shailesh Kapoor:** Warned of OTT's blind spots, especially among non-subscribers; called for industry-wide education in audience intelligence.
- **Hovhannes Movsisyan:** Spoke on Armenia's transition toward digital-first strategies, and the regulatory issues they faced in curating local content.
- **Derrick Gray:** Urged standardization of attention and viewing metrics; discussed Canada's integrated model through Numeris.

- **Challenges and Concerns:**

- Fragmentation of data between digital and linear ecosystems
- Inconsistent standards across platforms and measurement providers
- OTT's limited visibility into potential customer behavior
- Difficulty quantifying attention and viewer engagement meaningfully
- Small-market content regulation affecting fair competition and cultural balance

## Audience Engagement

The session generated strong audience interest with dynamic participation. Attendees raised questions about the feasibility of a universal measurement standard, strategies for capturing non-subscriber behavior, and approaches to combine attention metrics with time-spent data. Several participants suggested standardizing metrics across the board to make data more actionable. Overall, the interaction reflected a shared industry desire to evolve toward more intelligent and accountable content planning.

## Key Takeaways

- Unified measurement remains an aspiration; current models are still fragmented.
- Industry-wide collaboration is crucial to overcome resistance and enable cross-platform integration.
- Global initiatives like France's and Canada's serve as viable case studies for India.
- Interpretation of audience intelligence must become more nuanced and widespread.
- Combining attention (qualitative) and viewing (quantitative) data is essential for modern content strategy.
- Traditional television retains strong engagement; digital complements rather than replaces it.

## Session- Building Cinematic Universes: Fireside Chat with the Visionaries Behind VFX Blockbusters

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 1530-1615 hrs. | **Venue:** Room 203

### Speakers

- Jaykar Arudra, VFX Supervisor, DNEG:
- Srinivas Mohan, Senior VFX Supervisor, India:
- Sandeep Kamal, Creative Director, Mihira Visual Labs.

### Moderator

- Akhauri P. Sinha, Managing Director, Framestore India.

## Overview

This session explored the evolving role of VFX and AI in building large-scale cinematic universes in India, focusing on workflow transformations, storytelling opportunities, and the shift from post-production to pre-production-led planning in mainstream content creation. It united pioneers transforming cinematic world-building through cutting-edge VFX and virtual production, with experts behind global blockbusters decoding how AI-driven environments, real-time rendering, and scalable virtual sets are democratizing epic storytelling. The dialogue explored photorealistic VFX breakthroughs and the economics of virtual production, revealing how next-gen films will blend gripping narratives with technological precision to create unprecedented viewer experiences.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Key Contributions:**
  - **Invisible VFX:** Srinivas Mohan demonstrated how neural networks in *Indian 2* produced AI-generated characters indistinguishable from live action—showcasing the power of “invisible VFX”.
  - **Pre-Production Rigor:** Jaykar Arudra shared insights from *Brahmāstra*, stressing that phenomenal shots are conceived through months of pre-visualization, not on-the-spot improvisation.
  - **Realism through Research:** Sandeep Kamal illustrated how films like *Agni* recreated fire hazards using physical simulations, research into smoke dynamics, and minimal CGI—underscoring the balance between logic and cinematic magic.
  - **Automation vs Creativity:** Srinivas noted that while AI will automate up to 80% of routine VFX tasks, the essence of storytelling and creative direction will remain human-led.
  - **World Building:** The panel discussed the development of *Baahubali*'s comprehensive “world bible” that enabled cross-platform IP extension into animation and gaming.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**

- o **Training Gaps:** A shared concern was the overproduction of “VFX operators” rather than creative artists, due to tool-based instruction in training institutes.
- o **Career Progression Post-AI:** A key question from the audience probed how junior artists could grow if AI eliminates foundational roles—highlighting the need for structured mentorship and creative upskilling.
- o **Budget Planning:** While budgets are improving, speakers emphasized that real savings and visual quality emerge when VFX is integrated during storyboarding, not post-shoot.

## Audience Engagement

The session concluded with a high-energy Q&A, where the most discussed topics included:

- **Franchise Creation:** How *Baahubali*’s world bible helped scale into animation, gaming, and merchandising.
- **Upskilling for the AI Era:** A young professional questioned how entry-level VFX artists could grow as automation eliminates basic jobs, a concern acknowledged by the panel with a call for structured mentorship.
- **Global Competitiveness:** Attendees resonated with the sentiment that India is now at par—or in some cases ahead—of the West in select VFX outputs, due to AI and creativity.

## Key takeaways

- **Pre-production is crucial for high-quality VFX** – Experts stressed that phenomenal visual effects rely on rigorous planning, including previsualization, AI-driven workflows, and structured concept development before filming begins.
- **Invisible VFX enhances realism** – AI-generated characters, as showcased in *Indian 2*, now seamlessly integrate with live-action, making digital elements indistinguishable from real footage.
- **AI-driven automation is reshaping VFX roles** – While AI will streamline up to 80% of repetitive tasks, experts emphasized that storytelling, creative direction, and design will remain human-led, necessitating mentorship and skill development.
- **India is emerging as a global VFX leader** – Large-scale world-building, like *Baahubali*’s “world bible,” enables cross-platform expansion into animation, gaming, and merchandising, positioning Indian studios competitively in international markets.
- **Policy and education must evolve** – Industry leaders advocate for shifting VFX education from tool-based instruction to storytelling and design thinking, alongside incentives like tax breaks for pre-production efforts.



## Session: Role of IP & Copyright for Audio-Visual Performers and Content Creators

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1530-1615 Hrs | **Venue:** Room No 205

### Speakers

- Mr. Daren Tang, Director General, WIPO
- Feroz Abbas Khan, Director and Playwright
- Steve Krone, Film and Television Producer
- Anjum Rajabali, Renowned Scriptwriter

### Chairperson/Moderator

- Ameet Datta, Leading IPR attorney and Managing Counsel at ADP Law Offices

## Overview

As streaming services expand across borders, safeguarding intellectual property becomes a cornerstone of fair compensation and creative sustainability. This session brought together global leaders and Indian stakeholders to address pressing issues around enforcement, performer royalties, and the role of international treaties, emphasizing the need for robust frameworks to support the rights of creators in India's evolving digital ecosystem. It covered understanding performers' rights, including royalties for re-broadcast, dubbing, international remakes, and digital reuse, challenges faced by writers, composers, and directors in retaining control, the rising relevance of performer rights due to OTT platforms and global streaming, collective rights management comparing India's system with global best practices, India's role in global IP frameworks like the Beijing Treaty, challenges in enforcement, particularly in digital usage tracking and cross-border rights, and the significant gap in knowledge among creators regarding their rights.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The session focused on how digital content, especially from India, is consumed globally, yet performers and creators often receive no royalties. As emphasized by Daren Tang, a global approach is essential to match the borderless nature of digital content. Ameet Datta pointed out that India's statutory protections exist, but enforcement is scattered and often ineffective.
- **Key contributions:**
  - Daren Tang highlighted the Beijing Treaty as a major step forward, but

underlined that its implementation is uneven across nations, especially in developing countries.

- o Steve Krone discussed the economic impact of unlicensed streaming, pointing out that piracy is no longer just about theft, but about undermining entire business models.
- o Feroz Abbas Khan shared his personal challenges with tracking reuse of his theatrical works on OTT platforms and called for a centralized system for rights management.
- o Anjum Rajabali stressed the need to educate writers and creators, particularly newcomers, on what rights they can retain and how to negotiate contracts that protect them.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - o Cross-border enforcement is expensive and complex; creators cannot afford to chase every infringement.
  - o Piracy has become sophisticated, using technologies like VPNs, mirror sites, and even legal grey areas.
  - o There is fragmented collective rights management in India, making royalty collection inefficient.
  - o Low awareness among creators and even producers about treaties and available protections.

## Audience Engagement

The audience posed questions about specific protections available under Indian law for dubbing and international adaptation. Many young filmmakers inquired about how to initiate royalty claims and the role of copyright societies

## Key takeaways

- The future of performers' rights lies in **global alignment of laws**, not isolated national protections.
- **Collective management systems in India need overhaul** and integration with digital tracking technologies.
- Awareness campaigns and legal literacy for creators are as important as policy reform.

## Session: The Business of Influence: Creators Shaping Global Culture

**Date:** 01 May 2025 | **Time:** 1530 – 1615 Hrs. | **Venue:** Room 206

### Speakers

- Mayo Murasaki, Mayo Japan
- Akash Jadhav, Indian Farmer
- Ranveer Brar, Chef
- Jeetendra Advani, Chess Talk

### Moderator

- Gautam Anand, VP, Youtube APAC

## Overview

The panel discussion aimed to explore how YouTube creators across diverse domains—culinary arts, agriculture, chess, and cross-cultural content—are leveraging the platform to globalize Indian culture and knowledge. By sharing personal journeys and strategies, the panelists sought to inspire creators to build authentic, culturally rooted content that resonates globally while addressing challenges like responsible representation and technological innovation. They shared how they identified content gaps and started their YouTube channels, discussed the importance of authenticity and positivity in cross-cultural storytelling, explored strategies for connecting with international viewers through niche content, and examined the use of AI tools and the value of aligned brand collaborations.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The panel, moderated by Gautam Anand, highlighted YouTube's role in taking Indian culture global through diverse content areas. Mayo Murasaki emphasized people-to-people diplomacy in her Hindi-focused content, promoting positivity and thorough research. Ranveer Brar underscored authentic storytelling in culinary arts, balancing tradition and innovation. Aakash Jhadav showcased agriculture's global appeal through practical and nature-focused videos, while Jeetendra Advani discussed chess's universal passion, tailoring content for beginners to advanced players. Key themes included responsible cultural representation, the power of local languages, and AI's potential in content creation, alongside challenges in maintaining authenticity with tools like AI dubbing. The panelists advised creators to prioritize consistency, originality, and culturally rooted storytelling over chasing trends.

- **Key contributions:**

- **Mayo Murasaki:** As a Japanese Hindi content creator, Mayo stressed responsible representation through positivity and research, viewing her work as cultural diplomacy. She shared India's hospitality as a personal discovery, reinforcing her connection to the country.
- **Ranveer Brar:** Brar framed cooking as an expressive connection, emphasizing authentic brand partnerships aligned with his mission to globalize Indian cuisine. He highlighted AI's role across the creative pipeline, advocating for integrated YouTube tools.
- **Aakash Jhadav:** Jhadav discussed agriculture's global resonance through practical tutorials and nature content, noting the popularity of "Juggadi India" and his use of AI tools to enhance reach.
- **Jeetendra Advani (ChessTalk):** Advani outlined chess's global appeal, structuring content for diverse audiences (beginners, casual viewers, advanced players) and supporting AI integration for seamless content creation.

- **Challenges and concerns:**

- **Maintaining Authenticity with AI:** Mayo expressed concerns that AI dubbing could dilute her Hindi-speaking brand, pushing her to focus on unique content. Others saw AI's potential but noted the need for better platform integration.
- **Balancing Tradition and Innovation:** Brar highlighted the challenge of responsibly showcasing traditions while innovating, requiring creators to define their boundaries.
- **Content Discoverability:** The rise of niche sectors like agriculture and chess implies unstated challenges in standing out amidst YouTube's vast content landscape.
- **Sustaining Viewer Trust:** Brar's selective approach to brand partnerships underscored the challenge of maintaining audience trust through value-aligned collaborations.

## Key takeaways

- YouTube enables creators to globalize Indian culture through diverse niches like culinary arts, agriculture, chess, and cross-cultural content, emphasizing local identity and languages.
- Responsible cultural representation requires positivity, thorough research, and people-to-people diplomacy, as seen in Mayo's approach.
- AI tools enhance content creation but pose challenges in maintaining authenticity, necessitating unique and creative strategies.
- Building global audiences hinges on consistency, originality, and culturally rooted storytelling, with authentic brand partnerships amplifying impact.



## Session: Anime Ascending: Unlocking Global Potential in Storytelling, Fandom, and Industry Growth

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 1630 -1800 hrs. | **Venue:** Room 203,

### Speakers

- Mr. Hideo Katsumata - President, The Anime Times Company, Japan
- Mr. Makoto Kimura, CEO, Blue Rights
- Mr. Atsuo Nakayama, CEO & President, Re Entertainment Co., Ltd.
- Mr. Macoto Tezka, Director, CEO, Neontetra
- Ms. Anu Sikka, Business Head - Kids Entertainment and Infotainment, JioStar

### Moderator

- Munjal Shroff: Chair, FICCI AVGC-XR Forum & Co-Founder, Graphiti Studio

## Overview

This session explored the evolution of the anime industry, focusing on its history, global expansion, and India's potential as a key market. It examined localization strategies, cross-border collaborations, and how emerging technologies like AI and Web3 are shaping anime distribution, production, and monetization. Bringing together industry leaders to decode anime's cultural, economic, and technological impact, experts discussed the growth of Japanese IP, localization challenges in India, and new monetization models powered by digital innovations. The conversation highlighted anime's influence on merchandise ecosystems, cross-industry partnerships, and the need for strategic budgeting to sustain high-quality productions in evolving global markets.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Presentation on the history, origin and evolution of anime:** Anime's close relation with Manga; the most popular and revolutionary animes, their themes and their influence on the entertainment industry.
- **Fundamentals of Anime Industry in Japan:** The anime industry thrives on three key pillars-manga creators and publishers, manufacturing and merchandising, and TV stations and media- working together to develop, distribute, and commercialize anime worldwide.
- **Presentation on Japanese IP business potential:**

- **Economic impact of Japanese characters:** Japan achieved to build \$10B size characters in 1970s-80s golden age.
- **Japanese IP business potential and India's potential as a market:** India is currently a big and growing market, full of potential for Japanese entertainment industry while markets in USA, China and UK have matured. Fandom for anime is growing fast in India.
- **Localization of content in India:** Both animation distribution and content are crucial. In India, 3 considerations for **localization of content** are:
  - **Diversity in languages and dialects:** Animated expressions and language should be easily understood by the kids belonging from varying backgrounds. Cultural similarities and relatability to the kids are most important to judge whether an anime will pick up or not.
  - **Differences in societal connections:** Making real connection with audience is important especially to tap into licensed merchandise sales. For this, differences in social construct need to be accommodated to successfully build a fan community.
  - **Local collaborations for content:** This is the most difficult aspect for many Japanese studios as detailed reading and accurate portrayal of characters are required before taking up the project. Example:- Requests to do Mahabharata and Ramayan in animation, and putting cricket in animation.
- **Challenges that anime industry faces today:**
  - Distance between some creators and their understanding of business aspects
  - The scale of operations, since everything from distribution to creation is global now
  - Tapping new markets for Japanese anime due to competition by OTTs and American animations
- **New opportunities presented by the upcoming technologies such as Web3, NFTs and AI:**
  - **New investment opportunities:** Making investments in anime easier for global producers
  - **Enhanced dubbing, subtitling, and localization through GenAI:** To dub from Japanese language directly (instead of English language) becomes a challenge as word base becomes very large creating

problems with mechanization. Subtitles deliver better content instead of dubbed versions because inaccuracy in dubbing creeps in.

- o **Bridging cultural gaps to enhance appeal and reach a broader audience:** Since American anime style is very different from that of Japanese, technology is now helping take inputs from various style of expression and communication.
- **Cost constraints can sometimes facilitate innovation:** Audience can be engaged through low-cost productions as well. Eg, budget considerations leading to the remarkable Disney-style animation.
- **Investment considerations from an Indian broadcaster's point-of-view:** Ratings are primary indicators of a series' success. Also, revenues, response from audience, repeat audience and number of seasons matter.
- **Importance of data in spotting global trends:** Generally, what has worked for Japanese audience was also a hit in the international market. Stories are rooted at one place so that the specific fanbase is covered. But trends might change with time. It is crucial to keep futuristic vision and gauge global audience expectations.

## Key takeaways

- **India is a rapidly growing market for anime** – With increasing fandom and untapped potential, India presents a significant opportunity for Japanese entertainment studios.
- **Localization is essential for success in India** – Cultural adaptation, language diversity, and relatable themes help anime resonate with Indian audiences and drive merchandise sales.
- **Emerging technologies are reshaping anime production** – AI, Web3, and GenAI enhance dubbing, subtitling, and cross-cultural adaptation, making anime more accessible globally.
- **Cross-industry collaborations foster growth** – Co-created content, music integration, and merchandise ecosystems strengthen anime's presence and commercial viability in India.
- **Investments and strategic budgeting impact sustainability** – Rising production costs challenge creators, but leveraging emerging tech can optimize budgets and improve animation quality.

## Session: Challenges and Solutions in Cross-Border Productions

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 1715–1800 hrs | **Venue:** Room No 205

### Speakers

- Alastair Clark – Producer, Wellington Film, UK
- Dr. Queen Blessing – Filmmaker, Nigeria
- Dan Wolman – Veteran Filmmaker, Israel
- Heo Yong Kuk – CEO, Alimoli Studio, South Korea
- Maria Pia Ammirati – Director, RAI Fiction, Italy

### Moderator

- Prathyush Parasuraman, Author

## Overview

This panel convened filmmakers and producers from diverse regions to explore the creative and logistical complexities of cross-border productions. Against the backdrop of globalization, the discussion tackled financial disparities, cultural nuances, aesthetic translation, and political sensitivities that shape international co-productions today. It addressed financial inequality in global co-productions, cultural representation and storytelling authenticity, navigating political and social sensitivities, cross-cultural aesthetics in animation and series content, barriers to institutional support and funding access, the need for ethical frameworks in global collaborations, and promoting diversity and inclusion in international narratives.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The panel addressed the multi-layered challenges faced by filmmakers working across borders—ranging from inadequate financial ecosystems to cultural stereotyping. Each speaker brought regional context to these global issues, offering grounded perspectives and potential solutions.
- **Key contributions:**
  - **Dr. Queen Blessing** opened by highlighting the financial and structural hurdles in Nigeria’s Nollywood industry. She pointed out the contrast between high output and low formal support, emphasizing the urgent need for equitable access to global film financing for African storytellers.
  - **Dan Wolman** cautioned against superficial depictions of “the other,” especially when working across unfamiliar cultures. Drawing from his work with East Asian communities, he advocated for **authentic, respectful storytelling** grounded in deep local research.



- o **Heo Yong Kuk** provided a critical look at **creative expression in South Korea**, noting how polarized public discourse and censorship pressures often stifle bold storytelling.
- o **Maria Pia Ammirati** stressed the **need for transnational infrastructure** to support serialized storytelling and animation. She pointed out that content aesthetics vary dramatically across regions, affecting character design and audience relatability.
- o **Alastair Clark** shared examples of successful UK co-productions and emphasized the importance of **legal clarity and shared creative ownership** when navigating multi-country agreements.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - o Unequal access to international funding and production grants
  - o Risk of cultural misrepresentation or dilution in pursuit of broader market appeal
  - o Navigating political sensitivities that limit freedom of expression
  - o Lack of a unified legal framework for international co-productions
  - o Aesthetic conflicts in globalized content creation (e.g., character design in animation)

## Audience Engagement

The audience raised questions about funding pathways for first-time filmmakers from underrepresented geographies and discussed whether international film markets are inclusive or still skewed in favor of Western aesthetics. Several young producers sought advice on managing creative control in co-productions.

## Key takeaways

- Cross-border storytelling offers enormous creative and cultural opportunity—but demands structural reform to be equitable.
- Funding ecosystems must become more inclusive, particularly for filmmakers from the Global South.
- Cultural sensitivity and storytelling authenticity are non-negotiable in ethical co-productions.
- The industry must develop shared standards and legal templates for smoother international collaboration.
- A global storytelling culture must prioritize mutual respect, diversity, and ethical co-creation over market-driven narratives.

## Session: Indian M&E @100: Reimagining the Future of Media and Entertainment

**Date:** 01 May 2025 | **Time:** 1630 – 1715 Hrs. | **Venue:** Room 206

### Speakers

- Rajan Navani, Founder and CEO, Jetsynthesys,
- Vikram Tanna, CEO- Eros Now
- Vineet Karnik, MD, GroupM

### Moderator

- Vanita Kohli Khandekar, Contributing Editor, Business Standard



## Overview

The panel discussion aimed to envision the future of India's ₹164 trillion Media and Entertainment (M&E) industry by exploring digital transformation, AI-driven storytelling, and scalable innovation. The speakers sought to highlight opportunities for India to become a global innovation hub while addressing challenges in preserving cultural integrity, mastering AI adoption, and meeting the demands of a "digital always" generation. The discussion focused on the industry's 60% digital share and the need for scalable digital infrastructure, explored AI's role in redefining content creation through automation and virtual production, discussed the rise of Gen Z, Bharat, and personalized media consumption in Tier 2 and 3 cities, and addressed the importance of technology-driven monetization and disproportionate investment for global competitiveness.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The panel, moderated by Vanita Kohli Khandekar, examined the M&E industry's fourth disruption phase, driven by a "digital always" generation and growing consumption in Tier 2 and 3 cities. With 60% of the ₹164 trillion industry already digital, speakers emphasized building unique intellectual property (IP) and leveraging AI for storytelling, automation, and virtual production. The shift from reach to relationship as media currency was highlighted, powered by Gen AI, Gen Z, and Bharat. AI's potential to empower SMEs with high-quality advertising and scalability was noted, alongside challenges like early-stage Agentic AI adoption, prompt engineering, and risks of over-personalized algorithmic content eroding creativity. The discussion underscored the move toward experiential and phygital models, with AI enabling real-time content-driven commerce, positioning India as a potential global M&E innovation hub.
- **Key contributions:**
  - Rajan Navani: Emphasized the industry's fourth disruption phase, advocating for unique IP development and digital infrastructure built on talent and creator ecosystems. He highlighted the experiential economy and the need for disproportionate investment to achieve scale.
  - Vikram Tanna: Stressed AI's transformative potential in storytelling, enabling content creation without physical constraints. He introduced the shift from reach to relationship, driven by Gen AI, Gen Z, and Bharat, and emphasized empowering SMEs through AI-driven advertising.
  - Vikram Karnik: Focused on India's potential as a global innovation lab, highlighting the role of prompt engineering and the need to preserve cultural and creative integrity amidst AI adoption. He noted the shift to real-time content-driven commerce.
  - Vanita Kohli Khandekar: As moderator, facilitated discussions on balancing technology and creativity, ensuring focus on practical challenges like monetization and cultural representation.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - Early-Stage AI Adoption: Agentic AI is in its infancy, with challenges in language and training models limiting its effectiveness.
  - Over-Personalization Risks: Heavy reliance on algorithmic content risks diminishing human creativity and cultural values, requiring careful integration.

- o Prompt Engineering: Effective AI use demands skills in asking the right questions, necessitating widespread education and training.
- o Achieving Scale: Limited entertainment spend and the need for globally competitive products require disproportionate investment, posing challenges for smaller players.
- o Content Deluge: The volume of content complicates audience engagement, with the challenge of convincing users to process and act on advertising.

## Key takeaways

- India's ₹164 trillion M&E industry, 60% digital, is in its fourth disruption phase, driven by Gen Z, Bharat, and AI-powered storytelling.
- AI enables automation, virtual production, and SME scalability, but requires prompt engineering and careful integration to preserve creativity.
- The shift from reach to relationship as media currency, alongside real-time content-driven commerce, is redefining monetization and engagement.
- Achieving global scale demands disproportionate investment, unique IP development, and education in technology, positioning India as a potential M&E innovation hub.



## Session: Challenges and Prospects of Cinema in Northeast India

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 1715–1800 hrs | **Venue:** Room: 205

### Speakers

- Jahnu Barua – Padma Bhushan Awardee, Director, Actor
- Aimee Baruah – Actor, Director, Producer; 3-time National Award Winner; Member, Steering Committee
- Jatin Bora – Actor
- Ravi Sarma – Actor
- Dominic Sangma – National Award-winning Director
- Haobam Paban Kumar – National Award-winning Director

### Chairperson/Moderator

Tribeny Rai – Filmmaker

## Overview

The session explored the historical marginalization of Northeast Indian cinema, infrastructure and logistical barriers to filmmaking, funding challenges and market access, linguistic and cultural identity in cinema, and digital and festival platforms as new avenues. It emphasized the need for policy-level support and film education, regional collaboration, and pan-Indian engagement, and reframing national cinematic narratives. Additionally, the session was a tribute to Manoj Kumar, reflecting on his contributions as a filmmaker, writer, director, producer, lyricist, and true nationalist. The panel discussed personal memories, the evolution of nationalistic cinema, and Manoj Kumar's enduring influence on Indian film and society.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The panel examined why cinema from the Northeastern states continues to be overlooked in the Indian film ecosystem despite its deep cultural wealth. Discussions spanned the lack of institutional infrastructure, linguistic erasure, and economic hurdles, balanced by hope from rising recognition and digital decentralization.
- **Key contributions:**
  - **Jahnu Barua** addressed the historical invisibility of Northeast cinema and called for institutional acknowledgment of its cultural significance.
  - **Aimee Baruah** stressed the importance of authentic storytelling and

the struggles filmmakers face in securing funding, often relying on personal finances or limited state support.

- o **Dominic Sangma** and **Haobam Paban Kumar** emphasized the power of indigenous narratives in reclaiming voice and identity, while also highlighting the logistical limitations due to geography and infrastructure.
- o **Jatin Bora** and **Ravi Sarma** discussed audience engagement, noting a growing curiosity among younger viewers for regional and culturally rich content, signaling shifting viewer expectations.
- Challenges and concerns
  - o Inadequate production and post-production infrastructure
  - o Lack of dedicated film schools and technical training
  - o Minimal archiving and preservation of regional film heritage
  - o Funding difficulties and dependency on small or irregular grants
  - o Marginalization in mainstream Indian media and festivals
  - o Risk of cultural misrepresentation and homogenization

## Audience Engagement

The session drew interest from aspiring filmmakers, students, and policy enthusiasts who asked about mechanisms to build co-production networks and the role of OTT platforms in uplifting regional voices. Some questioned how regional cinema could better access global film markets.

## Key takeaways

- Northeast Indian cinema remains underrepresented, but carries immense untapped potential.
- The region needs dedicated policy frameworks, including infrastructure investment, funding schemes, and archiving initiatives.
- Language and cultural diversity must be embraced rather than simplified in national cinema narratives.
- Digital platforms and film festivals are proving crucial for visibility and outreach.
- Collaboration within and beyond the region can foster a more inclusive and interconnected Indian cinematic identity.
- For Northeast cinema to thrive, it must be recognized not as peripheral—but as integral to India's cultural and cinematic future.

## Masterclass: Bringing stories to life with GenAI

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 1430–1530hrs | **Venue:** Room: 204A

**Speaker**

- Pradeep Kulasekaran, Solution Architect, NVIDIA

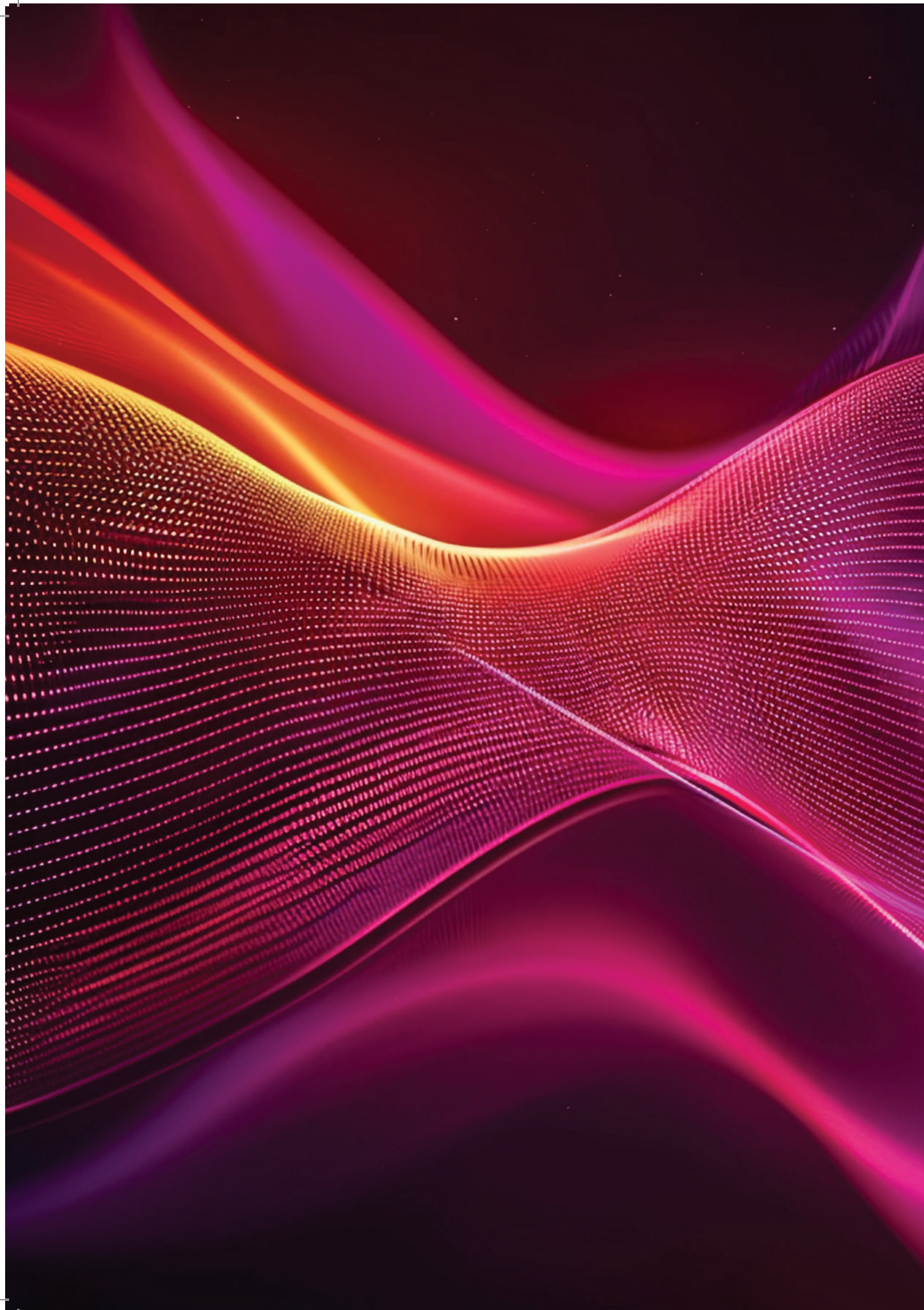
## Masterclass: Culture as a Fuel to Build Brand

**Date:** 1st May 2025 | **Time:** 1540–1635hrs | **Venue:** Room: 204A

**Speaker**

- Prem Narayan, CSO, Ogilvy India (WPP) & supported by team







# Day 2

## Plenary & Sessions









## Plenary: Studios of the Future: Putting India on World Studio Map

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1100-1145 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine I

### Speakers

- Aamir Khan, Actor
- Namit Malhotra, CEO Prime Focus
- Dinesh Vijan, Producer, Maddock Films
- Ajay Bijli, Founder, PVR/Inox
- Charles Roven, President, Atlas Entertainment
- Ritesh Sidhwani

### Moderator

- Mayank Shekhar, Film Critic



## Overview

The primary aim of the session was to explore how Indian cinema can evolve by blending traditional storytelling with emerging technologies to resonate with global audiences. The conversation centered around the industry's shift from theatrical-first releases to OTT platforms, the integration of AI, VFX, and immersive formats, and the need to build narratives that remain rooted in Indian culture while achieving global appeal. The speakers also addressed the growing importance of IP-driven content, the emergence of creators as entrepreneurial forces, and the broader role of Indian cinema in shaping cultural diplomacy and international influence.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

The panel highlighted the dynamic transformation of Indian cinema in the digital age. Aamir Khan emphasized the importance of crafting culturally authentic stories that can be scaled through innovative technology. Drawing from his experience, he stressed that originality and emotional connection are what truly resonate with audiences worldwide. Ritesh Sidhwani spoke about how OTT platforms have democratized access to content, making Indian stories more discoverable across borders. He highlighted the shift towards franchise-building and content ecosystems that go beyond single films. Alia Bhatt focused on the role of storytelling that combines emotional depth with visual innovation, noting that audiences today expect immersive experiences backed by substance. Together, the panelists acknowledged the need to strike a balance between creative risk-taking and commercial sustainability.

They also identified several challenges in this transformation. Among these were the complexities of maintaining cultural authenticity while appealing to international audiences, the rapid pace of technological change outpacing regulation—especially around IP protection—and the difficulty in consistently producing high-quality, globally relevant content. The conversation underscored the necessity for Indian cinema to stay grounded in its unique narrative voice, while embracing the tools and platforms that define the future.

## Key Takeaways

The discussion reaffirmed that Indian cinema stands at a pivotal juncture where tradition and innovation must work hand in hand. Technology, including AI and immersive formats, offers filmmakers new ways to tell age-old stories in formats that captivate global audiences. OTT platforms are not just a distribution channel but a powerful tool for cultural expansion. The next phase of growth lies in building strong IP, supporting creator-driven content, and continuously evolving while staying true to Indian storytelling roots. Indian cinema's global impact will be determined by its ability to adapt creatively while honoring its distinct voice.

## Fireside Chat - India's Innovation Renaissance: The Next Decade of Global-First Startups

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1050-1115 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine I

### Speakers

■ Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Founder, Biocon

### Moderator

■ Maneet Ahuja, Editor-at-large, Forbes



## Overview

The primary objective of the discussion was to explore how India can integrate its rich cultural traditions with cutting-edge technologies to create globally impactful narratives, products, and innovations. By drawing from epics like the Ramayana and India's longstanding creative heritage, the conversation emphasized leveraging modern digital platforms, immersive tech, and the startup ecosystem to transform Indian stories into global phenomena. The dialogue aimed to inspire Indian entrepreneurs, creators, and innovators to embrace tradition while pushing the boundaries of technology to drive economic growth, cultural influence, and national identity on the world stage.

It discussed how technology can globalize Indian epics like the Ramayana, creating timeless narratives for a global audience, explored how India's digital infrastructure and young population can drive global innovation using AI, VFX, and immersive technologies, analyzed the role of startups in scaling India's Media & Entertainment sector and building a \$1 trillion Orange Economy, identified how Indian startups can use creative traditions to develop Artificially Intelligent Properties (AIPs) with

global appeal, discussed the potential of individual creators to become unicorns by leveraging technology and protecting intellectual property (IP), and outlined a vision for India to make a global impact in healthcare and the creative economy through technology and tradition.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**

- o The discussion centered on the synergy between India's cultural heritage and modern technology to create globally resonant narratives. Kiran emphasized the potential of technology to transform traditional stories like the Ramayana into universal epics, drawing parallels with Star Wars. India's digital infrastructure, with over 1 billion smartphones and a tech-savvy Gen Z, was highlighted as a launchpad for innovation in AI, VFX, and immersive storytelling. The conversation also focused on scaling the Media & Entertainment sector from \$20 billion to a \$1 trillion Orange Economy by 2047, using films as a starting point to build franchises and ecosystems. The importance of IP-driven creativity, immersive experiences through AR/VR, and globalizing Indian stories beyond the diaspora were recurring themes. Kiran's biotech journey underscored the need for perseverance and strategic ideation to achieve global impact

- **Key contributions:**

- o Kiran provided critical insights, drawing from her experience scaling Biocon from a garage to a global healthcare player. She advocated for using technology to globalize Indian narratives, citing George Lucas's Star Wars as an example of adapting cultural epics for universal appeal. She emphasized starting small, ideating, and evolving strategies, likening innovation to creating a blockbuster. Kiran also highlighted the potential of creators as unicorns, stressing the importance of IP protection and originality. She referenced Shekhar Kapur and A.R. Rahman's AI-driven experiments in Dharavi as examples of blending tradition with technology. Her vision for Biocon and India's Orange Economy underscored affordable healthcare and culturally resonant storytelling as parallel paths to global influence

- **Challenges and concerns:**

- o Several challenges emerged during the discussion. Scaling the Media & Entertainment sector to a \$1 trillion Orange Economy requires significant investment and infrastructure beyond current capabilities. Protecting intellectual property in a rapidly evolving digital landscape poses a



hurdle for creators and startups. The risk of failure in innovative ventures was acknowledged, with Kiran noting her own setbacks in biotech as a reminder of the perseverance required. Additionally, creating globally relevant narratives that transcend the Indian diaspora while maintaining cultural authenticity remains a complex task. The discussion also raised concerns about the need for young entrepreneurs to balance immersive technologies like AR/VR with accessible, scalable formats to reach diverse audiences.

## Audience Engagement

- **Interactive Q&A:** Maneet facilitated audience questions, allowing participants to probe Kiran's insights on technology, startups, and global storytelling.
- **Real-Time Polling:** Attendees shared views on the feasibility of a \$1 trillion Orange Economy, providing data on perceived challenges and opportunities.
- **Social Media Interaction:** Participants posted reactions and questions on platforms like X, amplifying the discussion's reach and engaging a broader audience.
- **Case Study Discussions:** Audience members discussed examples like Naatu Naatu's global success, exploring how similar achievements could be replicated.

## Key takeaways

- **Globalizing Narratives:** Technology can transform Indian epics like the Ramayana into universal stories, akin to Star Wars, by leveraging AI, VFX, and immersive formats.
- **Tech-Driven Innovation:** India's 1 billion smartphones and digital infrastructure position it to lead in global innovation, starting with small, strategic ideas.
- **Orange Economy Potential:** Scaling the Media & Entertainment sector to a \$1 trillion Orange Economy by 2047 requires building franchises and ecosystems beyond films.
- **Creative Legacy:** Startups can develop Artificially Intelligent Properties by blending India's creative traditions with AR/VR for immersive storytelling.
- **Creator Economy:** IP-driven creators, supported by technology, can become the next unicorns, but originality and perseverance are critical.
- **Global Impact:** India's stories and innovations, inspired by successes like Biocon, can resonate globally by embracing cultural identity and technology.

## Keynote - Taking Indian Culture to the World

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1120-1135 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine I

**Speaker**

■ Nita Ambani, JioStar



## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The keynote emphasized India's timeless cultural legacy as a global force, tracing its influence from ancient times to the present. Discussions underscored the seamless blend of tradition and modernity in Indian culture, exemplified by the global appeal of the sari, classical dances, and cinema. The Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre's upcoming event at Lincoln Center was highlighted as a milestone in showcasing India's arts, crafts, and cuisine. The speech called for a synergy between ancient wisdom and modern technology to shape a world driven by purpose and conscience.
- **Key contributions:**
  - During the keynote, several key contributions were made to advance the global presence of Indian culture. The announcement of a grand cultural showcase at New York's Lincoln Center marked a major step in taking Indian heritage to the world stage. The Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre was highlighted as a hub for preserving and promoting

India's artistic legacy, while the Swadesh movement was introduced to support and globalize traditional Indian crafts. The keynote emphasized empowering creators and storytellers as modern ambassadors of Indian culture and introduced the vision of blending ancient Indian wisdom with modern technology to shape a more ethical and human-centered future.

- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - While India's cultural influence is rising, the speech acknowledged historical periods when its voice was muted, posing a challenge to reclaiming its global prominence. Ensuring that traditional arts and crafts remain relevant in a rapidly modernizing world is a concern. Balancing the integration of ancient intelligence with artificial intelligence requires careful navigation to preserve cultural essence. The speech also highlighted the need to sustain the momentum of cultural initiatives amidst competing global narratives.

## Audience Engagement

- **Call to creators:** A direct and emotional appeal was made to artists, designers, storytellers, and musicians to see themselves as modern custodians of India's soul
- **Cultural references:** The speech invoked deeply familiar symbols like the sari, epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and folk traditions to build emotional resonance with the audience
- **Youth empowerment:** Young Indians were called upon to become global ambassadors of Indian culture, embracing their roots while innovating boldly for the future
- **Event announcement:** The Lincoln Center showcase was presented as a landmark event that would engage and excite audiences worldwide and give Indian culture a prestigious global stage

## Key takeaways

- **Living heritage:** Indian culture is not static or preserved in museums—it is lived every day and constantly evolving
- **Global platforms:** With initiatives like NMACC and Swadesh, Indian arts and traditions are now gaining visibility and respect on the world stage
- **Cultural compass:** In a fast-changing, tech-driven world, India's spiritual depth and ancient wisdom can offer balance and meaning
- **New custodians:** Young Indians, women leaders, and creative professionals are the modern torchbearers of India's cultural journey
- **Global moment:** India's cultural resurgence is aligned with its economic rise—this is the moment to take its full story to the world, with pride and purpose

## OTT & Digital-Driven Democratization of Content Creation and Consumption

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 11:00-01:30hrs | **Venue:** Room 202

### Speaker

■David Unger (Artists International Association), ■William Pfeiffer (Globalgate), ■Amala Akkineni (Annapurna Studios), ■Sandeep Marwah (AAFT), ■Sachin Pilgaonkar, Pankaj Gupta (AWS), ■Sudhir Chaudhary, ■Rituparna Sengupta, ■Amish Tripathi, Mahima Kaul (Netflix), ■Sameer Nair (Applause Entertainment), ■Shefali Bhushan, ■Kriti Kharbanda, ■Nitin Bawankule (AWS), ■Nicolas Granatino (Ridley Scott CG), ■Shamani Joshi (Rolling Stone India), ■Vaibhav Modi (Victor Tango), ■Isha Talwar, ■Manoj Padmanabhan (AWS), ■Aditi Shrivastava (Pocket Aces), ■Soumya Mukherjee (Hoichoi), ■Vishnu Mohta (Hoichoi), ■Shruti Paul (Accenture), among others

### Moderators

■Sajan Raj Kurup, Avinash Pandey, Shamani Joshi

## Overview

At the WAVES Summit 2025, the Roundtable on **‘OTT & Digital-Driven Democratisation of Content Creation and Consumption’** convened over 100 key figures from cinema, tech, policy, and venture capital. Jointly curated by AWS, Primus Partners, and Rolling Stone India, the session served as a convergence point of creativity, commerce, and innovation. The event was inaugurated with the launch of the industry report *“Press Play – India’s OTT Story Goes Global”* by Shri Ashish Shelar, Hon’ble Minister of Culture, Heritage & IT, Maharashtra.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The Roundtable highlighted India’s strategic shift toward becoming a global hub for tech-enabled storytelling through the OTT and digital content ecosystem. Panelists discussed the growing role of public broadcasters in supporting multilingual content, the importance of public-private partnerships, and India’s rising potential in co-productions and hybrid monetisation models for global audiences. The sessions explored how emerging technologies like AI, AR/VR, gaming, and cloud are transforming the AVGC sector and enabling immersive content

creation. Special attention was given to infrastructure development, skilling the youth, and creating inclusive pathways for regional and vernacular storytellers to reach global platforms. The discussions reflected a common vision: to leverage technology and creativity for democratized, scalable, and globally competitive storytelling.

- **Key contributions:**

- o **Shri Gaurav Dwivedi, CEO, Prasar Bharati**, emphasized how WAVES OTT expands access beyond linear formats and empowers regional voices across India.
- o **Smt. Amala Akkineni** advocated for institutional mentorship for regional creators and suggested funding mechanisms to amplify vernacular storytelling globally.
- o A major highlight was the signing of an **MoU between Andhra Pradesh Tourism and Creativeland Asia to establish Creatorland** – India's first Transmedia Entertainment City, projected to create over 150,000 jobs and upskill 10,000 youth annually.

- **Challenges and concerns:**

- o Need for scalable monetization models tailored to India's diverse linguistic landscape.
- o Lack of formal support and mentorship for regional creators to navigate global OTT ecosystems.
- o Bridging infrastructure gaps in Tier II and III regions to enable inclusive growth in creative-tech.

## Audience Engagement

- o **Active participation from over 100 attendees** across cinema, technology, policy, and investment domains.
- o **Robust Q&A sessions** following each panel segment, reflecting strong interest in policy and technology synergies.
- o **Networking opportunities** led to multiple offline discussions on co-productions and regional content collaboration.
- o **High enthusiasm for WAVES OTT's role** in reviving legacy content and enabling new-age creators.



- o **Positive reception to the Creatorland announcement**, with several creators expressing interest in engaging with the Andhra Pradesh initiative.

## Key takeaways

- **Inflection Point:** India is at an inflection point in digital storytelling, combining content, tech, and policy to reach global audiences.
- **WAVES OTT:** It is redefining public broadcasting by embracing a creator-first, digital-native approach.
- **Strategic partnerships:** The Creatorland initiative, are key to building sustainable ecosystems for immersive content and transmedia ventures.
- **AI, Gaming and AR/VR:** The convergence of AI, gaming, and AR/VR is not only transforming content but is also driving job creation and future-ready skill development.
- **Public-private cooperation:** It will be critical to unlocking India's full creative potential in the global OTT space.

## Keynote- Opportunities brought by AI in Media and Entertainment

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1140-1210 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine I

**Speaker**

■ Richard G. Kerris, VP, NVIDIA

### Overview

The objective of this initiative is to highlight the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the media and entertainment (M&E) industry, specifically focusing on its integration into workflows such as live production, content creation, personalized recommendation engines, and media accessibility. The content aims to emphasize how AI is revolutionizing the industry by improving efficiency, enhancing creativity, and providing new opportunities for both developers and creators. It explores AI's impact on the M&E industry, focusing on various aspects like visual effects, content creation, and real-time data analytics, and discusses the role of developers in implementing AI solutions within media workflows. The initiative highlights key partnerships and tools, such as RTX Kit, Holoscan for Media, and Adobe's AI tools, that support developers. It also explores the democratization of content creation and the evolution of media formats through AI, discussing innovative companies and solutions that integrate AI into media production, such as Arcturus, Runway, and Beaver. Finally, it explores the future potential of AI in the M&E industry, particularly in regions like India.

### Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The conversation highlighted the rapid evolution of AI in the media and entertainment industry, showing how AI is transforming everything from content creation to live production. AI is increasingly integrated into media workflows, making processes more efficient, accessible, and tailored to individual user needs. The advancements in AI technologies, such as neural rendering, real-time data analytics, and interactive AI-driven experiences, are making it possible for creators to experiment with new formats and narratives. Key partnerships with tech giants and innovative startups are crucial in driving this change, providing developers with tools to push boundaries and build smarter, more engaging content.

- **Key contributions:**
  - AI-driven tools like RTX Kit, RTX Pro, and Holoscan for Media are revolutionizing media workflows by enabling real-time, high-performance graphics and live broadcasting without costly hardware. Microservices and blueprints simplify complex tasks like video summarization, while tools like Fugatto enhance audio creativity. Platforms such as nvidia.com and build.video.com further democratize access, allowing developers at all levels to experiment and innovate.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - Key concerns include ethical issues around authorship of AI-generated content and the risk of replacing human creativity. Ensuring AI tools empower rather than replace creators, maintaining professional standards while staying accessible, and avoiding overdependence on automation are critical for sustainable, responsible adoption.

## Audience Engagement

- **Realizing Benefits:** Exploring the benefits of AI integration in media workflows and its potential to enhance creative expression.
- **Enhancing Collaboration:** Encouraging collaboration between developers, creators, and tech companies to drive innovation in AI-driven media solutions.
- **Case Studies:** Highlighting real-world applications and case studies, such as Sky Television's use of video summarization for sports.
- **Promotion:** Promoting the democratization of creative tools and making AI accessible to a broader audience, particularly emerging markets like India.

## Key takeaways

- **AI is revolutionizing the M&E industry** by enabling more efficient, personalized, and interactive content creation.
- **Developers are crucial** to unlocking the potential of AI in media workflows, and AI tools like RTX Kit and Holoscan empower them to innovate.
- **AI-driven solutions**, such as real-time content adaptation and personalized video experiences, are reshaping how media is consumed and produced.
- **Companies and platforms are working to make AI accessible**, ensuring that it complements the creativity of artists and content creators.
- **The ongoing development of AI in the M&E space** offers significant opportunities for both established industry players and emerging startups.

## Plenary Session: Cinema – The Soft Power

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1215–1300 Hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine I

### Speakers

- Kareena Kapoor Khan, Actor
- Vijay Devarakonda, Actor

### Moderator

- Karan Johar, Director & Producer



## Overview

The session explored Indian cinema's emerging status as a global soft power, emphasizing its ability to influence perceptions, culture, and diplomacy through storytelling. It focused on how Indian films are increasingly being recognized beyond the diaspora, their contribution to cross-cultural dialogue, and the growing synergy between regional and mainstream cinema. The discussion also underscored the potential of Indian cinema to create a global footprint by leveraging its artistic diversity, language, music, and emotional depth.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussion**
  - The dialogue highlighted the global resonance of Indian cinema through anecdotes of international recognition and audience engagement. Karan Johar emphasized cinema's influence in building cultural bridges,

referencing the global success of films like *RRR* and *Three Idiots*. Kareena Kapoor spoke about India's storytelling richness and the need for authenticity in narratives, while Vijay Devarakonda reflected on the growing bond between northern and southern industries and the importance of cinema in preserving language and culture. They discussed how cinema introduces India to the world, likening it to a cultural ambassador that inspires curiosity, admiration, and emotional connection.

- **Key Contributions:**

- o Kareena Kapoor shared her perspective on the global appeal of Indian stories, citing her experience with *Jab We Met* and how films continue to touch audiences across borders. Vijay Devarakonda offered insights into cinema as a unifying cultural force, highlighting how South Indian films have found widespread acceptance in the North and vice versa. He emphasized the need to increase distribution to make Indian cinema more accessible worldwide. Karan Johar, as moderator, drew attention to the role of collaborations and the growing recognition of Indian cinema in global forums, citing examples like *Homebound* and *Ramayan* as symbols of India's storytelling evolution.

- **Challenges and Concerns:**

- o The panel acknowledged key barriers in making Indian cinema a global soft power. Limited international distribution remains a major constraint, often restricting films to diaspora audiences. There is also a challenge in overcoming the "South vs. North" narrative within Indian cinema, which can hinder collaboration and unity. Additionally, the panel noted that global audiences often lack exposure to Indian regional languages and cultures, making cultural translation and marketing more complex. Ensuring creative authenticity while appealing to global viewership was highlighted as a delicate balance that filmmakers must navigate.

## Key Takeaways

- Indian cinema has the potential to become a global cultural force by telling authentic stories that reflect the nation's diversity and values. Expanding international distribution, promoting collaboration across regions, and investing in culturally rooted yet universally resonant narratives are essential steps forward. Cinema not only preserves languages and traditions but also fosters global understanding. With support from the industry and government, India can project its identity powerfully through film, influencing perceptions and strengthening cultural diplomacy worldwide.



## Plenary - From Binge-Watching to Bite-Sized: Changing Landscape of Streaming Content

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1000-1045 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine II

### Speakers

- Pulkit Trivedi, MD, India, Snap Inc.
- Alan Lan, Head of Business, APAC, X Corp.
- Shivnath Thukral, Vice President, Public Policy, Meta India.
- Gautam Anand, VP, YouTube APAC, Boris Khanchalian.
- Deputy CEO, Gazprom Media Holding.
- Ankush Sachdeva, Cofounder & CEO, ShareChat & Moj

### Moderator

- Kunj Sanghvi, Vice President, Kuku FM

## Overview

The session aimed to explore the rapid rise of short-form, bite-sized content in India, examining why this format resonates deeply with Indian audiences and how it is reshaping the creator economy. By bringing together industry leaders from platforms like YouTube, X Corp, Snap Inc., ShareChat, Moj, and Gazprom Media Holding, the discussion sought to uncover the human insights driving this trend, the role of technology like AI in content creation, and the implications for advertising and storytelling. The objective was to understand how Indian creators are leveraging these platforms to tell authentic, hyperlocal stories and to predict future trends in this dynamic content landscape.

The session introduced the global spread of Indian storytelling through short-form content and discussed why Indians are drawn to mid-sized, bite-sized content, exploring the human insights behind this trend. It examined how platforms like YouTube, X, Snapchat, ShareChat, and Moj are enabling creators through short-form and hybrid formats, and the role of AI in scaling content creation and enhancing creator productivity. The discussion analyzed evolving humor formats, such as sarcasm and slice-of-life storytelling, particularly in mid-India, and provided insights into global perspectives on short-form content, with a focus on Russia. It evaluated the advertising potential of short-form content and its competition with long-form formats, and predicted future trends for Indian creators and the creator economy.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The panel explored the cultural and technological shifts that have led

to an explosion of short-form and bite-sized content in India. Speakers highlighted how changing viewer habits, especially among the youth and mobile-first audiences, have influenced creators to adopt faster, more engaging formats. This transformation parallels the way content is consumed—anytime, anywhere—blending casual entertainment with expressive, authentic storytelling. AI was emphasized as a major enabler, enhancing content creation while preserving creative control. The conversation also touched on how platforms are adapting monetization strategies and focusing on regional diversity to scale creator ecosystems.

- **Key contributions:**

- **Gautam Anand (YouTube):** Stressed that Shorts serve as a gateway to deeper engagement; emphasized AI's role in productivity and localization.
- **Alan Lan (X):** Noted that India's expressive, mobile-first culture is naturally suited to bite-sized formats; highlighted the surge in raw, hyperlocal content.
- **Pulkit Trivedi (Snap):** Focused on self-expression and how content habits vary contextually across commuting and living room settings; also underlined the importance of personalization and GenAI tools.
- **Ankush Sachdeva (ShareChat& Moj):** Emphasized the democratization of content creation in small towns and how AI supports scale and creativity.
- **Boris Khanchalian (Gazprom Media):** Provided a global lens, likening short-form to “fast food content” while reaffirming the enduring need for diverse, high-quality formats.

- **Challenges and concerns:**

- Participants raised concerns about sustaining creator earnings in a competitive landscape, with Ankush Sachdeva expressing hope for a fairer creator economy. The challenge of capturing and retaining audience attention was a recurring theme, with Pulkit Trivedi noting that creating “thumb-stopping” ads is five times harder than two years ago due to shrinking attention spans. Another concern was balancing the use of AI to enhance creativity without overshadowing human artistry, as emphasized by multiple speakers who stressed that AI is a tool, not a replacement for creativity. Additionally, the session touched on the need to ensure that hyperlocal and regional content remains authentic while scaling globally, a challenge for platforms aiming to cater to diverse audiences.

## Key takeaways

- **Engagement Gateway:** Short-form content is a gateway to deeper engagement, resonating with India's young, mobile-first audience due to its accessibility and alignment with fast-paced lifestyles.
- **AI Enablement:** AI is a critical enabler in the creator economy, powering tools for scripting, editing, and personalization while preserving human creativity.
- **Humor Evolution:** Humor formats like sarcasm and slice-of-life storytelling are thriving, particularly in mid-India, driven by relatable, authentic content from small-town creators.
- **Ad Market Growth:** India's ad market is poised for significant growth, with attention metrics redefining advertising value and creators diversifying revenue through commerce and brand deals.
- **Hyperlocal Expansion:** The creator economy is expanding beyond urban centers, with hyperlocal and regional storytelling set to drive the next wave of growth.
- **Future Trends:** Generative AI and sustainable creator earnings are predicted to shape the future, democratizing premium content creation and fostering a fairer ecosystem.

## Plenary The Hyper-Personalised Ad Revolution: Connecting One-to-One

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1050-1135 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine II

### Speakers

- Rishabh Sharma, Head of Brand Strategy, APAC, X
- Praseon Joshi, Chairman-APAC McCann Worldgroup,
- Satya Raghwan, Director, Marketing Partner, Google,
- CVL Srinivas, Country Manager WPP India,
- Arun Srinivas, Director, Head of Ads Business, Meta India

### Moderator

- Chetan Krishnaswamy, Vice President, Public Policy, Amazon India

## Overview

The objective of this session is to explore the evolving landscape of digital advertising in India, especially in the context of its rapid growth and cultural diversity. The discussion aims to examine how brands can adapt their strategies to harness the power of hyper-personalization, evolving formats, and the growing importance of regional languages and cultural nuances. The session also delves into the role of creativity and responsible data usage in shaping effective advertising campaigns that resonate with diverse Indian audiences. With India's advertising industry set to double over the next four years, there is a focus on ensuring that brands balance innovation with respect for consumer privacy and cultural sensibilities.

The session provides an overview of India's rapidly growing digital advertising industry and key market drivers, highlighting the emergence of hyper-personalized advertising driven by AI, data, and real-time user behavior. It emphasizes the increasing importance of multilingual and regional content to connect with diverse audiences and analyzes evolving consumer behavior through the 4S framework: Streaming, Scrolling, Searching, Shopping. The discussion also addresses the rise of multi-screen usage and dynamic content consumption patterns across demographics, the emphasis on responsible targeting, privacy compliance, and ethical use of consumer data, and the continued centrality of creativity and emotional storytelling in delivering impactful campaigns.



## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The discussion revolved around the opportunities and challenges in India's booming digital advertising landscape. Key points included the significance of cultural diversity, which makes India a unique market for hyper-personalized ads. The rapid adoption of internet and smartphone usage is driving changes in consumer behavior, making regional content more influential. The participants highlighted the role of AI and technology in driving personalized advertising but emphasized the need for brands to be mindful of consumer privacy. Creativity was discussed as being crucial in crafting authentic and emotionally resonant campaigns, even in a data-driven era. There was also a focus on how brands must remain adaptable and balance precision targeting with respect for consumer autonomy.
- **Key contributions:**
  - **Rishabh:** Emphasized the importance of catering to regional content and languages, stressing that India functions like multiple countries due to its linguistic and cultural diversity. He also highlighted the significant role of voice integration and local nuances in advertising.
  - **Satya:** Furnished insights from Google's perspective, introducing the 4S framework (Streaming, Scrolling, Searching, Shopping) to explain the complex consumer behavior across generations and the importance of context-aware advertising.
  - **Prasoon:** Discussed the central role of creativity in advertising, stressing the need for brands to connect with consumers at an emotional level while being mindful of authenticity. He also addressed the responsibility of advertisers in shaping the cultural narrative and the potential risks of over-personalization.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - A key concern discussed was the need for brands to avoid being overly intrusive with hyper-personalized ads, striking a balance between relevance and respecting consumer space. Participants also highlighted the challenge of balancing innovation with legal and ethical considerations, particularly with the upcoming Digital Personal Data Protection Act in India. Additionally, the importance of cultural sensitivity was emphasized, with brands needing to ensure their ads are culturally respectful and

avoid oversimplifying or stereotyping complex cultural nuances, while fostering inclusivity.

## Audience Engagement

- **Audience questions** on how to incorporate local languages and cultural sensitivities into advertising campaigns.
- **Discussions** on how AI and real-time targeting impact consumer engagement.
- **Queries about the potential risks** of oversaturating audiences with personalized ads and the implications of data privacy regulations.
- **Interest in understanding the 4S framework** and how brands can adapt their strategies to the diverse consumer behavior patterns across India.
- **Audience sharing experiences** of regional campaigns that have successfully resonated with local audiences.

## Key takeaways

- **Hyper-personalization is crucial:** With the growing influence of data and AI, advertisers must focus on delivering content that feels relevant to individuals, leveraging real-time insights to craft dynamic and contextually appropriate messages.
- **Regional and multilingual content is essential:** Given India's cultural and linguistic diversity, brands need to adapt their strategies to embrace regional languages and formats to drive greater engagement and relevance.
- **Creativity remains the cornerstone:** While technology plays a vital role in targeting and personalization, creative storytelling that resonates emotionally with audiences remains at the heart of effective advertising.
- **Data privacy is paramount:** Brands must use consumer data responsibly, adhering to privacy regulations like the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, and avoid overly intrusive targeting that could alienate consumers.
- **Consistency and adaptability:** Brands need to maintain a consistent identity across all touchpoints while staying agile enough to adapt to changing consumer behaviors, preferences, and cultural nuances.

## Fireside Chat - Trends and Virality: How Gen Z consumes content

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1240-13:00 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine III

### Speakers

- Adam Mosseri, Head, Instagram, Meta,
- Shraddha Kapoor, Actor



### Overview

The session aimed to delve into India's accelerating influence on Instagram's global platform dynamics, spotlighting how cultural traditions, technological accessibility, and a deep-rooted storytelling ethos have contributed to the rise of a diverse creator economy. It also served to bridge the gap between platform leadership and users through humor, personal anecdotes, and an authentic exchange of ideas. The session began with a cultural welcome and icebreaker, presenting a traditional Maharashtrian sweet and introducing Indian dabba culture. Light-hearted humor was used to build rapport, with a playful request to delete DMs serving as a segue into the session and establishing an engaging connection with the audience. The discussion explored India's digital impact on Instagram, examining India's role as the largest market and how its creators are influencing global product development.

It also covered data accessibility and its role in democratization, examining how the drop in data costs has enabled widespread digital content creation. Insights were

shared on the importance of authenticity on social media, emphasizing why being real and relatable matters more than perfectly polished content. The session clarified Instagram's approach to Reels vs. Photos, addressing perceptions about algorithm favoritism and breaking down engagement metrics. Strategies for community building as a public figure were discussed, focusing on personal methods and content choices that foster audience connection and loyalty. The balance between personal and professional content was reflected upon, highlighting how to humanize a professional platform presence without losing focus or credibility.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - o The session provided an enriching blend of humor, insight, and reflection on how India is not only consuming but actively shaping Instagram's content ecosystem. From the welcoming gesture of puran poli to heartfelt anecdotes about family interruptions during filming, the conversation stayed grounded in real experiences. Both Shraddha and Adam explored the tension between professional polish and personal authenticity, offering nuanced views on how creators today navigate an increasingly complex digital space
- **Key contributions:**
  - o Shraddha brought warmth, cultural resonance, and a creator's perspective rooted in humor and lived experience. She articulated how traditional Indian values intersect with modern digital creativity. Adam contributed a global and strategic viewpoint, acknowledging India's central role in driving product innovation at Instagram. Their mutual respect and candid conversation provided attendees with valuable lessons on digital expression, platform evolution, and leadership relatability.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - o While the tone was largely celebratory, the discussion surfaced several subtle challenges. The constant pressure on creators to stay relevant in a fast-paced algorithm-driven environment can be exhausting. There were concerns about how perceived algorithm preferences (e.g., favoring videos) could unintentionally marginalize some content styles. Balancing authenticity with the need to meet performance metrics continues to be a complex issue for creators across markets.



## Audience Engagement

- **Laughter and Enthusiasm During Cultural Icebreaker** – The puran poli moment and reference to Indian dabba culture struck an immediate chord with the audience.
- **Positive Reaction to Humor and Personal Stories** – The playful DM deletion request and anecdotes about home filming resonated strongly.
- **High Interest in Creator-Focused Insights and Strategies** – Viewers were keenly attentive during discussions on authenticity, memes, and community building.
- **Energetic Participation in Final Group Selfie** – The selfie request brought out visible excitement, with audience members eagerly responding to Adam's call for expressive poses.

## Key takeaways

- **India's Creative Community is Setting Global Trends on Instagram** – From Reels to content formats, Indian usage patterns are influencing product decisions.
- **Low-Cost Internet Has Catalyzed a Digital Content Boom** – Accessibility has empowered millions to become creators, regardless of equipment or background.
- **Authenticity is More Valuable Than Perfection** – Being genuine and relatable is more sustainable and impactful than overly polished personas.
- **Video Content May Perform Better, But Formats Aren't One-Size-Fits-All** – Instagram's algorithm responds to engagement, not format preference, offering space for all styles.
- **Meme Culture is a Powerful Tool for Connection and Virality** – Leveraging local humor and relatable formats can significantly boost community engagement.
- **Community-Building Relies on Personal Voice, Not Just Strategy** – Success often comes from tapping into one's own quirks, passions, and unfiltered moments.
- **Instagram Aims to Be Both a Creative Playground and a Practical Tool** – The platform continues to evolve with creators in mind, balancing fun and function.

## Plenary - News and Narratives: Shaping the Global Perspective

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1430-1515 Hrs | **Venue:** Room 206

### Speakers

- Ms. Elizaveta Brodskaya, First Deputy Editor in Chief, Russia Today,
- Mohammed Fahad Al-Harthi, CEO, Saudi Broadcasting Authority,
- HE Sheikh Abdulla Bin Mohamed Bin Buti Bin Ahmed, Chairman, National Media Office, UAE,
- Ashok Malik, Partner, The Asia Group,
- Anant Goenka, Executive Director, The Indian Express Group

### Moderator

- Palki Sharma Upadhyay, Managing Editor, Network 18

## Overview

The objective of the panel discussion, moderated by Palki Sharma, was to explore the evolving role of media as a force that shapes global narratives, economies, and power dynamics, moving beyond its traditional role as a mere messenger. The session aimed to dissect issues of narrative control, media bias, objectivity, platform censorship, and the business crisis in journalism, with a focus on how these dynamics play out in India and the Global South. The panelists—Lisa from Russia Today, Anant Goenka from Indian Express, and Ashok Malik from India Group—sought to highlight the challenges and opportunities for independent journalism in a fragmented, digital-first world, emphasizing the need for authenticity, adaptability, and a uniquely Indian perspective.

Palki Sharma opened the discussion by framing media as a shaper of narratives and global power balances. The conversation then moved to narrative control and media bias, discussing Western media's narrative dominance and responses from alternative outlets like RT and Indian Express. The objectivity debate explored the balance between objectivity and affiliation in journalism, including the role of anonymous sources. The examination of platform censorship highlighted its impact on public discourse and media reach. The panel analyzed the economic challenges facing traditional journalism and the need for new formats. They also discussed the cultural and strategic role of media in national security, business, and reshaping India's global image. The session concluded with reflections on objectivity, audience trust, and the future of journalism.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - o The session opened with the premise that media is not just a conveyor of facts but a strategic force shaping geopolitics and public perception. The conversation covered how Western media allegedly monopolizes global narratives, how independent journalism in India is under pressure from both state influence and economic decline, and how social media platforms often censor dissenting voices. A vibrant debate unfolded over the role of anonymous sources, objectivity, and the commercialization of journalists as brands. Participants critically examined the double standards, biases, and evolving audience expectations from media in a digital-first world.
- **Key contributions:**
  - o Lisa from RT criticized the Western media for its ideological bias and dominance in shaping global perceptions, claiming RT exists to provide counter-narratives, especially for underreported regions. Anant Goenka emphasized the importance of institutional journalism in holding power accountable, celebrating the Indian Express's independent investigations. Ashok Malik positioned media as a strategic asset tied to foreign policy and national perception, advocating for India to set its own media benchmarks rather than mimicking Western models. All three highlighted the evolving media landscape and stressed the need for credible storytelling and reform in formats and platforms.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - o Participants noted the declining financial viability of traditional journalism, especially in countries like India where content has historically been free. There were concerns about increasing ideological polarization, the superficiality of social media discourse, and censorship by tech platforms acting under governmental influence. Skepticism was expressed over the public's shrinking appetite for freedom of press and in-depth journalism, and fears were raised about the dominance of viral content over substantive reporting. The erosion of objectivity and the rise of "journalists as influencers" were also seen as threats to institutional credibility.

## Audience Engagement

- **Q&A on Narrative Control:** Audience questions focused on how media bias shapes global perceptions, particularly in conflict zones.
- **Polls on Platform Censorship:** Interactive polls on social media's role in suppressing voices sparked debates on free speech.
- **Discussion on Indian Media's Role:** Attendees engaged in lively exchanges about Indian media's need to balance critique and celebration.
- **Case Study Reactions:** Examples like the Panama Papers and Iraq WMDs prompted audience reflections on journalism's accountability.
- **Digital Format Suggestions:** Audience suggestions for short-form video and social media strategies resonated with panelists' calls for innovation.

## Key takeaways

- **Media as a Strategic Force:** Media shapes economies, foreign policy, and global power, far beyond its role as a messenger.
- **Western Narrative Dominance:** Western media's control over global narratives often marginalizes alternative perspectives and fuels selective coverage.
- **Independent Journalism's Value:** A free press, exemplified by Indian Express's investigations, is critical for accountability, despite audience disinterest.
- **Platform Censorship Threat:** Social media's alignment with governmental interests, as seen in RT's bans, undermines public discourse.
- **Business Model Crisis:** Journalism's declining revenues and reluctance to pay for content in India weaken field reporting and credibility.
- **Need for Digital Adaptation:** Legacy media must innovate with formats like short-form video to meet evolving audience expectations.
- **India's Global Potential:** Indian media should leverage its diversity to set global examples, moving beyond Western validation.



## Plenary: Stories that touch hearts around the world

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1530-1615 Hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine II

### Speakers

- Kaitlin Yarnall, Chief Storytelling Officer, National Geographic Society (NGC),
- Justin Warbrooke, EVP & Chief Financial Officer, Disney,
- Kelly Day, VP, International, Amazon Prime Video,
- Rajkumar Hirani, Film Director, Phil Hardman, Executive Vice President & General Manager, BBC Studios Asia

### Chairperson/Moderator

- Amish Tripathi, Author, Former Indian Diplomat and Broadcaster

## Overview

The objective of the discussion was to explore the global appeal of Indian cinema, examining how Indian filmmakers can create stories that resonate with diverse international audiences while preserving the authenticity of their narratives. The session also delved into broader storytelling strategies, trends in nonfiction content, and the role of AI in filmmaking. The discussion featured insights from filmmaker Raju Hirani on creating Indian films with global appeal and explored nonfiction storytelling and its global reach with perspectives from BBC Studios Asia.

It compared storytelling approaches for animal and human subjects in documentaries and examined National Geographic's approach to maintaining brand identity and authenticity. The session analyzed corporate strategies for merging creative organizations and leveraging local expertise in India, addressed the polarization of content success in the current attention economy, and evaluated the role of AI in filmmaking and its limitations. It also discussed BBC Studios' balance of news and entertainment with universal themes, explored IP monetization strategies for Indian creators, and reflected on the importance of patience and passion in selecting authentic stories.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The discussions centered around the idea that Indian cinema, especially when targeting non-Indian audiences, must retain its core cultural identity and authentic storytelling. Raju Hirani emphasized that a story should come from a personal place and remain true to its origin, as altering it to suit international tastes risks losing its essence. Additionally, the

importance of excellence and authenticity was highlighted in nonfiction storytelling, where global audiences, particularly younger viewers, quickly spot inauthentic content. The role of social media in amplifying stories, as well as the evolution of filmmaking, especially with the rise of AI, were also addressed.

- **Key contributions:**

- Raju Hirani's contribution was significant, stressing that filmmakers should create stories based on genuine belief, rather than trying to engineer films to suit international markets. He compared this process to adjusting a Punjabi dish to suit a foreign palate, warning that such changes might dilute the original essence. Phil from BBC Studios Asia provided valuable insights into nonfiction storytelling, sharing how authenticity and excellence remain essential in creating globally resonant content. Additionally, he emphasized how the attention economy and social media have reshaped storytelling across formats.

- **Challenges and concerns:**

- A major concern raised during the discussions was the growing fragmentation of audiences, particularly due to the rise of short-form content and the pervasive influence of smartphones. This trend has made it harder to capture and retain audience attention, leading to a polarization in content, either films or shows become massive hits or fade away quickly. Additionally, while AI offers potential in filmmaking, its current role is still more supplementary, as it cannot independently create meaningful stories. Another challenge discussed was the difficulty in merging different creative cultures within organizations, especially when dealing with global entities like National Geographic and BBC.

## Audience Engagement

- **Interactive Q&A with Raju Hirani:** Audience members engaged directly with Hirani, asking about his creative process and strategies for balancing authenticity with appeal.
- **Polls on Content Preferences:** Attendees participated in polls to share preferences for fictional vs. nonfiction storytelling, sparking discussions on audience tastes.
- **Social Media Amplification:** Participants actively shared session insights on platforms like X, amplifying key quotes from speakers and fostering online engagement.

- **Panel Discussions:** The audience contributed questions during panel segments, particularly on AI's role and IP monetization, enriching the dialogue.
- **Networking Sessions:** Post-discussion networking allowed attendees to connect with speakers, sharing ideas on global storytelling trends.

## Key takeaways

- **Authenticity is Paramount:** Authentic storytelling, rooted in personal conviction, is critical for resonating with global audiences without losing cultural essence.
- **Excellence Drives Appeal:** High-quality production and genuine narratives are universal constants that attract diverse audiences, especially younger ones.
- **Social media Amplifies Reach:** Platforms like X play a pivotal role in amplifying international stories, enhancing their global visibility.
- **Content Polarization is a Reality:** The attention economy creates a divide where only standout content succeeds, necessitating strong marketing and quality.
- **AI as a Tool, not a Creator:** AI supports filmmaking but cannot replace human creativity in crafting meaningful stories.
- **Universal Themes Resonate:** Themes like love, loss, and conflict transcend cultural boundaries, making local stories globally relatable.
- **IP Monetization Requires Strategy:** Indian creators should focus on strong storytelling first, then extend IP organically across platforms with internal alignment.

## Session: The Changing Face of Indian Cinema

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 3:20 – 4:05 PM | **Venue:** Jasmine Hall 3

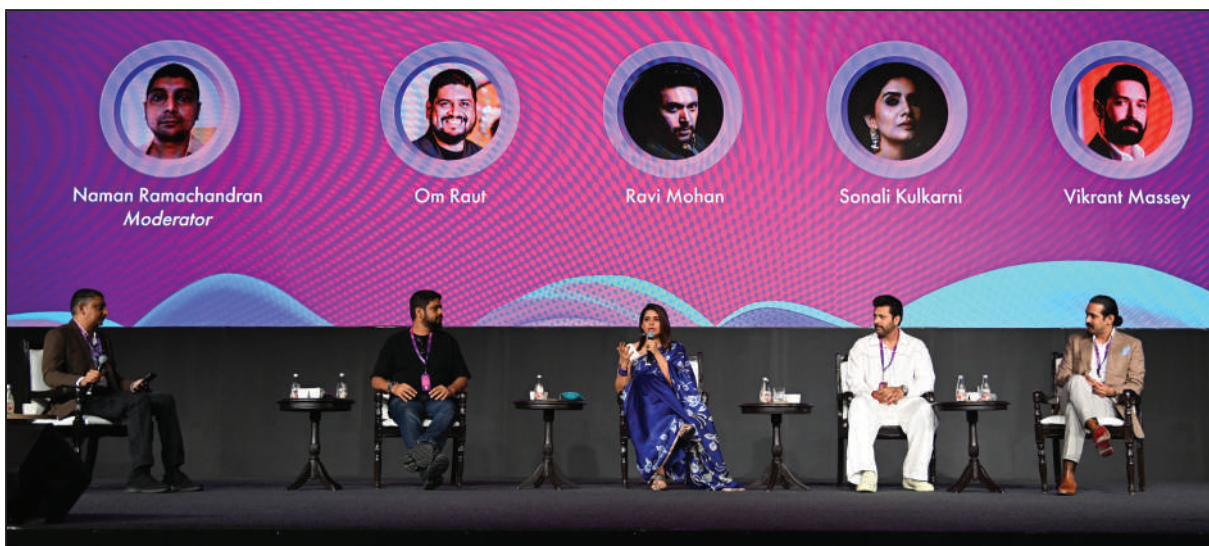
### Speakers

■ Vikrant Massey,  
■ Sonali Kulkarni,

■ Ravi Mohan,  
■ Om Raut

### Moderator

■ Naman Ramachandran



## Overview

A distinguished panel, moderated by Naman Ramachandran, delved into the evolving landscape of Indian cinema, focusing on shifts in storytelling, audience engagement, and industry dynamics.

- Vikrant Massey emphasized the importance of creating meaningful content that resonates globally, advocating for a balance between commercial success and artistic integrity.
- Om Raut discussed how technological advancements, especially in visual effects and digital platforms, have expanded the possibilities for storytelling.
- Sonali Kulkarni reflected on her experiences navigating the industry's transformation, particularly how the roles of actors have evolved with digital media and changing audience preferences.
- Ravi Mohan highlighted the need for strategic planning and innovation to remain competitive in the industry.



## Session: Pan-Indian Cinema: Myth or Momentum?

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 10:00 – 10:45 AM | **Venue:** Jasmine Hall 3

### Speakers

■ Nagarjuna, ■ Anupam Kher, ■ Karthi, ■ Khushbu

### Moderator

■ Naman Ramachandran



## Session Overview

The session focused on the evolving landscape of Indian cinema, specifically the rise of pan-Indian films and their impact on the industry.

- **Karthi** and **Khushbu** shared insights into the challenges and opportunities of the growing trend of pan-Indian cinema. They emphasized the importance of creating storytelling that resonates across diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, stressing the need for content that appeals to a global audience while retaining its regional essence.
- **Anupam Kher** compared the WAVES summit to the World Economic Forum in Davos, calling it a "historic" event that facilitates global collaboration in the film industry.
- **Nagarjuna** highlighted the significance of such forums in fostering international partnerships and global collaborations within the entertainment sector.

## Keynote - Unifying Power of Media Content

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1050-1105 Hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine III

**Speaker**

■ Alexander Zharov, CEO Gazprom-Media holding



### Overview

The primary objective of the address is to highlight the potential of cultural diplomacy through collaborative media ventures between Russia and India. It emphasizes the importance of joint film production and distribution as a medium to foster shared values, strengthen bilateral relations, and build emotional and cultural bridges between the two nations. The address showcases specific initiatives undertaken by Russian entities to engage with Indian counterparts, aiming to deepen this collaboration through both professional media projects and user-generated content.

The discussion highlighted the renewed collaboration between filmmakers from both nations, presenting the new film project "The Little King of My Heart," a cross-cultural comedy involving Indian and Russian actors. It emphasized the role of Central Partnership in international film distribution, outlining its importance in bringing films across borders, and announced the distribution of "The Wizard of the Emerald City" in India, sharing success in introducing Russian family cinema to Indian markets. The address focused on promoting cross-cultural values

through cinema, leveraging shared themes such as family, honor, and spirituality. It encouraged the growth of user-generated content as a means of digital diplomacy, leveraging social platforms to foster cultural understanding, and positioned RuTube as a platform for international content exchange, offering an alternative channel for global creators. The session concluded by emphasizing the strengthening of cultural and emotional connections between India and Russia, using media as a bridge for younger generations.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - o The discussion centered on the evolving collaboration between Russia and India in the field of cinema and media. Highlighting past co-productions and introducing new projects like *The Little King of My Heart*, the speaker underscored cinema's role in promoting shared cultural values. The session also introduced distribution efforts by *Central Partnership*, which is actively working to bring Russian films to Indian audiences and vice versa. Furthermore, the speaker addressed the growing significance of user-generated content in shaping international perceptions and called for wider participation on platforms like *RuTube*. Overall, the talk positioned media collaboration as a key pillar of modern cultural diplomacy.
- **Key contributions:**
  - o Key contributions include the completion of the film *The Little King of My Heart*, a significant Indo-Russian collaboration, and the establishment of international film distribution pathways via *Central Partnership*. The Russian side also facilitated cooperation with Indian local authorities and the Embassy of India in Moscow. The speaker's efforts to promote RuTube as a platform for global content creators also reflect an innovative approach to widening cultural interaction beyond professional media. Notably, the support from PM Narendra Modi lends political backing to the initiative, reinforcing its diplomatic importance.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - o Despite optimism, several challenges persist. Co-productions like *The Little King of My Heart* are still not fully institutionalized as standard practice, suggesting a need for more formal agreements and infrastructure. There is also the inherent complexity of coordinating production across different cultural and bureaucratic systems. Moreover, the success of user-generated content as a diplomatic tool relies on overcoming digital divides, language barriers, and content moderation issues. Building mutual trust and maintaining creative authenticity while serving political

or diplomatic goals remains a delicate balance.

## Audience Engagement

- **Presentation of the teaser for *The Little King of My Heart*:** Offering a preview to generate excitement and interest.
- **Reference to the positive reception and support from Indian leadership:** Reinforcing political and public support.
- **Invitation for foreign creators to join *RuTube* and share content:** Encouraging global participation on a Russian platform.
- **Emphasis on emotional and cultural resonance for younger generations:** Targeting the next generation for long-term impact.
- **Call to action for increased collaboration in film and digital media:** Encouraging deeper engagement across sectors.

## Key takeaways

- **Film and media are powerful tools for fostering cultural diplomacy:** They can communicate shared values and emotions.
- **Indo-Russian cinematic collaborations are being revived and expanded:** A new era of cultural cooperation is underway.
- **Political support is crucial for successful cultural projects:** Endorsements from leaders provide momentum.
- **Distribution channels like *Central Partnership* can bridge international markets:** They enable wider content reach.
- **User-generated content plays a growing role in cross-cultural understanding:** Ordinary individuals now influence global narratives.
- **Platforms like *RuTube* could serve as global stages for cultural exchange:** Offering new digital avenues for cooperation.

## Fireside Chat - The Evolution of Music - What It Takes To Go Global Today

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1110-1130 Hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine II

### Speakers

- Ms. Dustee Jenkins, Chief Public Affairs Officer, Spotify,
- Badshah, Rapper/Singer

### Moderator

- Aparshakti Khurana, Actor

## Overview

The discussion aims to explore the paradigm shift in the music industry, particularly focusing on the Indian context, and how platforms like Spotify are enabling global exposure, fostering government collaboration, and supporting local talent through data and technological innovations. The evolution of music consumption and discovery in the digital age has transformed how audiences engage with music, with platforms like Spotify playing a crucial role in democratizing music access. Government support for the creative sector in India has further bolstered this transformation, providing a conducive environment for growth.

Artist empowerment through data and tools like Spotify for Artists has enabled musicians to better understand their audience and tailor their content accordingly. This has led to increased global collaborations and a rise in India's cultural influence on the world stage. Audience preferences and content trends continue to evolve, reflecting the diverse cultural and linguistic landscape of India. Celebrating this diversity, the music industry in India is thriving, with local talent gaining unprecedented global exposure.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - o The conversation revolved around the transformative impact of platforms like Spotify on music production, distribution, and discovery in India and globally. The dialogue emphasized how digital streaming has enabled artists to break traditional barriers, with India emerging as a major hub of cultural output. The panelists highlighted government initiatives supporting the arts, the role of data in refining music strategy, and the increasing significance of regional diversity and authenticity in global success.



- **Key contributions:**
  - o The conversation revolved around the transformative impact of platforms like Spotify on music production, distribution, and discovery in India and globally. The dialogue emphasized how digital streaming has enabled artists to break traditional barriers, with India emerging as a major hub of cultural output. The panelists highlighted government initiatives supporting the arts, the role of data in refining music strategy, and the increasing significance of regional diversity and authenticity in global success.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - o While platforms like Spotify have made music more accessible, concerns were raised about noise content overshadowing musical artistry. However, both Dustee and Badshah emphasized the user's choice and the need to focus on authenticity. Another underlying challenge was breaking international stereotypes about Indian music and culture, which requires continued investment and pride in regional identities.

## Audience Engagement

- **Artist Tools:** Emphasis on Spotify for Artists as a powerful tool for emerging musicians
- **Content Variety:** Discussion around the inclusiveness of content—from music to podcasts
- **Listener Behavior:** Insights into how streaming platforms influence listener behavior
- **Cultural Representation:** Interaction on cultural diversity and language representation

## Key takeaways

- **India's Growth Potential:** India is a rapidly growing and influential market for global music
- **Democratized Discovery:** Digital platforms have democratized access and discovery in the music industry
- **Data Empowerment:** Data analytics empowers artists to make strategic creative decisions
- **Cultural Authenticity:** Cultural authenticity and rootedness can drive global success
- **Government Backing:** Government support is essential for sustaining creative momentum
- **Diverse Content Needs:** Content variety beyond music is essential to cater to diverse audiences

## Plenary Intersection of Sports, Technology, Entrepreneurship & Media – The REAL STEM

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 11:50-12:35 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine III

### Speakers

- Dhaval Ponda, Global Head of Media, Entertainment & Sports, Tata Communications,
- Ravi Shashtri Former Head Coach , Indian Cricket Team),
- Prashant Khanna Head of Production & Technology ,Sports, JioStar,
- Nullah Sarker Founder, Executive Director, Member of the Board of Directors, Kosmos,
- Harsh Jain CEO & Co-founder, Dream 11

### Moderator

- Dheer Momaya, Producer, Entrepreneur

## Overview

The conversation explores the rapid evolution of the sports ecosystem through the convergence of sports, technology, entertainment, and media (STEM), emphasizing how storytelling, personalization, and immersive tech experiences are reshaping the way fans engage with sports and how brands and platforms are adapting to this dynamic landscape. The evolution of sports media has transitioned from traditional broadcasting to digital and multi-platform engagement, integrating analytics, multi-angle viewing, and immersive content to enhance the fan experience. Fan-centric innovations are making sports more accessible and customizable for diverse audiences, while storytelling and athlete narratives are building deeper fandom and emotional connections.

Fantasy sports are engaging passive viewers and supporting lesser-known leagues, creating new opportunities for fan interaction. Business and branding opportunities are being monetized through targeted advertising and content strategies, reflecting the dynamic nature of the sports industry. The future of live content is trending towards mobile-first, interactive, and cloud-based content delivery, ensuring that fans can engage with sports in more personalized and immersive ways.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - Key insights highlighted the evolution of sports viewership, with Shastri reflecting on the shift from radio and Doordarshan to today's immersive,

multi-platform experiences. Dream11 showcased how fantasy sports turn passive fans into active participants, powering both engagement and discoverability for smaller leagues. Jio's product leadership shared how personalized feeds, multiple camera angles, and accessibility features like sign language commentary are shaping the future of digital broadcasting. The session underscored how India's sports ecosystem is moving from just broadcasting games to building layered fan experiences, and how content personalization, fantasy gaming, and tech-enabled accessibility are redefining the future of sports.

- **Key contributions:**

- o Ravi shared insights on the dramatic shift from his early broadcasting days to today's multi-platform environment. Dheer facilitated cross-industry perspectives, connecting sports tech with storytelling and business. Prashant elaborated on how technology enables inclusivity and customization in live sports broadcasts. Nullah emphasized the power of athlete-led narratives in building global connections. Vikrant explained how fantasy sports transform viewers into active fans and support niche leagues. Dhaval illustrated the role of global infrastructure in delivering massive volumes of live sports content and its growing importance across digital consumption models.

- **Challenges and concerns:**

- o The ever-expanding landscape raises concerns about balancing technology with authentic fan connection, ensuring accessibility across all demographics, and maintaining content quality amidst mass personalization. There's also the challenge of keeping up with infrastructure demands and navigating monetization in an oversaturated attention economy. Ensuring that smaller leagues and emerging athletes are not overshadowed by elite sports remains a continuing concern.

## Audience Engagement

- **Immersive Experiences:** Multi-camera angles, regional commentary, and analytics-rich feeds
- **Personalization Tools:** Social viewing, sign-language commentary, and descriptive audio
- **Interactive Platforms:** Fantasy sports turning passive fans into active participants
- **Athlete-Centric Content:** First-person narratives and behind-the-scenes documentaries
- **Mobile Accessibility:** Cloud-based and real-time sports viewing on the go

## Key takeaways

- **Fan-First Approach:** Sports content is being built around personalized fan experiences
- **Technology as Enabler:** Infrastructure and analytics drive large-scale engagement
- **Storytelling Matters:** Athlete narratives foster emotional connection and global reach
- **Massive Market Potential:** India's scale and youth demographic are catalysts for innovation
- **Inclusive Innovation:** Accessibility features are essential to the modern sports experience
- **STEM Convergence:** The future of sports lies at the intersection of sports, tech, entertainment, and media

## Fireside Chat- Building a Global Powerhouse: Saudi Arabia's Vision for Gaming and Esports

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1240-13:00 Hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine III

### Speakers

■ H.E. Faisal bin Bandar bin Sultan Al Saud, Chairman of Saudi Esports Federation

### Chairperson/Moderator

■ Mr. Girish Menon, Chief Strategy Officer, Jetsynthesys

## Overview

The discussion aimed to explore the strategic importance of esports in shaping a youth-centered culture, particularly in Saudi Arabia, and to understand the initiatives driving its growth as a cultural and economic movement. The conversation highlighted the evolution of esports from a community-driven passion to a structured industry, with insights into Saudi Arabia's top-down and grassroots approaches, while drawing parallels with the growing esports scene in India. Understanding the strategic focus behind Saudi Arabia's emphasis on esports, the discussion covered large-scale initiatives like the Esports World Cup and their top-down approach, as well as grassroots efforts to build a sustainable esports ecosystem.

Career path programs fostering community engagement and professional opportunities in esports were also highlighted. The global impact of these initiatives and collaborations with other nations in the esports industry were addressed, showcasing the broader implications of esports as a cultural and economic force.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The discussion highlighted Saudi Arabia's comprehensive and community-driven approach to developing esports as a strategic pillar of youth engagement, economic diversification, and cultural impact. Starting with minimal resources, the Kingdom rapidly scaled its efforts, resulting in major international events, world-class infrastructure, and unprecedented community participation. The dialogue also touched upon India's own growing interest in esports and the potential for collaborative learning and exchange.



- **Key contributions:**
  - Saudi Arabia has contributed to the global esports landscape by hosting international tournaments, supporting charitable causes through esports, and creating educational and career pathways for youth. The establishment of localized servers, esports academies, and platforms for aspiring commentators demonstrates a holistic model of ecosystem building that integrates government policy, private partnerships, and grassroots participation.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - The esports industry remains new and fast evolving, with challenges including the need for consistent infrastructure, inclusive career development, and the risk of excluding underserved communities. Ensuring diversity, sustaining community trust, and maintaining alignment with international standards also pose ongoing concerns.

## Audience Engagement

- **Community Interaction:** Extensive involvement with esports enthusiasts
- **Content Creator Engagement:** Valuing contributions from gaming influencers and industry voices

## Key takeaways

- **Esports Evolution:** Rapid transformation from entertainment to a structured industry
- **Strategic Investments:** Saudi Arabia's role as a global esports hub through major initiatives
- **Community-Driven Approach:** Success of tournaments and programs driven by gamer engagement
- **Educational and Grassroots Efforts:** Long-term sustainability through structured training
- **Global Connectivity:** Collaboration with international federations to strengthen esports networking

## Presentation & Interaction - Human x Machine x Story: Crafting the Next Chapter of Entertainment

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1305-1330 Hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine III

### Speakers

- Kamal Bhadada - President, TCS Interactive,
- Aparna Ganesh - Vice President, Tata Sons Ltd,
- Ashok Krish - Head, TCS, AI Practice

## Overview

The session aims to explore how India can leapfrog in its creative capability by leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and content technology. Through a real-life case study involving a traditional Paithani sari weaver from Aurangabad, the session demonstrates how small-scale creators and marketers can harness AI tools to expand their reach, drive personalization, and create scalable, data-driven marketing campaigns. The goal is to show how technology democratizes creativity and empowers local artisans to operate at par with large brands — faster, smarter, and more effectively.

An introduction to AI's role in transforming both the creative and marketing industries highlights how these capabilities are becoming more accessible for small businesses. The case study of a Paithani sari weaver aiming to expand beyond local markets exemplifies how a traditional artisan from Maharashtra seeks to take his product to a larger, global market with the help of AI. AI tools are used to quickly gather consumer insights and market trends that would otherwise take months through traditional research. These insights are then turned into ideation and campaign creation, utilizing AI to generate multiple creative concepts and marketing campaigns based on the collected data.

Visual content creation through AI includes the use of virtual influencers and digital visuals to represent products and campaigns. AI plays a crucial role in enabling small businesses to experiment with various email campaigns and track their performance in real-time, ensuring effective campaign execution and performance tracking.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - o The discussion revolved around how generative AI can be embedded across the marketing value chain — from research to ideation, content creation to performance analysis — allowing even the smallest brands to compete with global players. Using the Paithani sari case study, the team demonstrated how AI could generate consumer insights, develop tailored campaigns, simulate virtual influencers, track engagement, and even replicate the emotional touchpoints of in-store experiences through voice AI. The session emphasized the speed, accessibility, and effectiveness of this AI-powered creative process.
- **Key contributions:**
  - o Kamal and Ashok introduced the conceptual framework, highlighting AI's transformative role in creativity. Aparna elaborated on the marketing value chain and consumer insights. Ashok showcased how generative AI enables campaign ideation and virtual influencer creation. The team collectively demonstrated the integration of AI into storytelling, performance optimization, and customer engagement, culminating in a fully developed marketing prototype within 24 hours.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - o While the session celebrated AI's potential, it subtly acknowledged some challenges — including the need for creative-engineering collaboration, understanding evolving consumer behavior, and ensuring cultural context in automation. There are also underlying concerns around data ethics, authenticity in AI-generated personas, and accessibility of such technology to truly rural and under-resourced creators.

## Audience Engagement

- **Interactive demonstration of how AI-generated insights can drive marketing strategies.**

The audience was shown how AI can gather and analyze market insights to drive the development of effective marketing strategies.
- **An example of a Paithani sari weaver using ChatGPT to gather market insights for expansion.**

A live demonstration of how a small business owner can use AI to gain insights for expanding to new markets, like Delhi and Chennai.

- **Real-time AI-powered conversations simulating customer engagement for product personalization.**

The audience witnessed a simulation where AI personalized a customer's shopping experience, offering personalized recommendations based on preferences.

- **Illustration of AI-driven ideation and content creation to visualize marketing campaigns.**

The process of generating multiple campaign ideas and visuals through AI tools was demonstrated, showcasing how small businesses can scale their creative processes.

- **Insights into how AI allows for faster testing and iteration of marketing materials without large teams.**

It was shown how small brands can test different versions of emails or campaigns quickly, without needing large marketing teams or data scientists.

## Key takeaways

- **AI can empower small businesses** by democratizing access to tools that were previously available only to larger brands.
- **Research and consumer insights** can now be gathered and analyzed in a fraction of the time using AI, giving small brands a competitive edge.
- **Content ideation and campaign creation** can be enhanced and scaled with AI, enabling rapid testing of different marketing concepts and visuals.
- **Virtual influencers** and personalized, AI-driven customer engagements are key trends in the evolving marketing landscape.
- **AI tools** now allow small businesses to run extensive experiments and track performance metrics without the need for large teams or data scientists.
- **Aspiration, experimentation, and imagination** are crucial traits for brands to thrive in the AI-driven future, with technology amplifying human creativity.

## Plenary: Breaking New Ground – Evolution of Storytelling in a Digital Era

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 6:00–6:45 PM | **Venue:** Jasmine III

### Speakers

- Michael Lehmann – Director, Screenwriter, Producer (USA)
- Tanya Bami – Series Head, Netflix India
- Ruchikaa Kapoor Sheikh – Director, Original Films, Netflix India
- Guneet Monga Kapoor – Producer, Oscar Awardee
- Siddharth Roy Kapur – Film Producer
- Supriya Yarlagadda – Executive Director, Annapurna Studios

### Moderator

- Baradwaj Rangan, Film Critic and Writer

## Overview

This session explored how storytelling is evolving in the digital era, with a focus on how streaming platforms, audience behavior, and global connectivity are reshaping narrative structures and content creation. The panel examined how creators navigate the balance between data and instinct, local authenticity and global reach, and artistic freedom versus commercial demands.

## Key Themes & Highlights

- **Evolution of Narrative Models:** Michael Lehmann emphasized the freedom digital platforms provide for innovation and risk-taking.
- **Creative Decisions: Data vs. Instinct:** Tanya Bami highlighted Netflix's balance between analytics and creative judgment.
- **Global-Local Storytelling:** Ruchikaa Kapoor Sheikh shared how Netflix India roots stories in local culture while appealing universally.
- **Democratization of Content:** Guneet Monga Kapoor showcased how digital access has elevated underrepresented voices to global stages.
- **Rise of Long-Format Content:** Siddharth Roy Kapur noted the opportunities and challenges of extended storytelling formats.
- **Core of Storytelling:** Supriya Yarlagadda stressed that emotional resonance remains the heart of all great narratives.



## Audience Interaction & Insights

Participants posed questions about data's influence, content commissioning differences between streaming and theatrical, and what types of stories Indian creators should prioritize for global success.

## Key Takeaways

- Digital platforms have opened the field to diverse, previously unheard voices.
- Balancing analytics with creative instinct is essential in the current storytelling landscape.
- Culturally grounded, emotionally resonant Indian stories are thriving globally.
- Streaming has unlocked opportunities for deeper, longer narratives.
- Strong storytelling remains rooted in emotional and human connection, regardless of format.

## Fireside Chat: Google Music AI Announcement

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1625-1645 Hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine III

### Speakers

■ Shankar Mahadevan

### Chairperson/Moderator

■ Paul Smith, Managing Director, YouTube Music, APAC

## Overview:

The primary objective of this groundbreaking event was to celebrate the convergence of music and technology through the official launch of Music AI Sandbox in India. This initiative, a first-of-its-kind collaboration between Google Labs, YouTube, and Grammy-winning artist Shankar Mahadevan, was introduced to explore how artificial intelligence can serve as a meaningful partner in the music creation process. It aimed to demonstrate that AI, when used responsibly, can enhance human creativity rather than replace it—bridging imagination with innovation, and empowering musicians at every stage of their artistic journey.

The event included a presentation of the new suite of AI tools aimed at aiding musicians in songwriting and music production, celebrating Shankar Mahadevan's recent Grammy win and his dual expertise in music and computer science. A reflective dialogue explored the intersection of music and technology, blending tradition with innovation. Shankar shared his firsthand experience using the Music AI Sandbox tools, emphasizing the importance of maintaining artistic control and integrity when using generative AI. The event concluded with a documentary screening, depicting the co-creation process at Shankar's Navi Mumbai studio.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - o The event featured an insightful conversation on the role of AI in music creation, led by Shankar Mahadevan. He shared his initial skepticism and curiosity about integrating AI into the deeply personal process of composing music. Drawing parallels with past innovations in his career, like launching an online music academy, he emphasized that technological tools—if guided responsibly—can expand traditional practices. His experience with the Music AI Sandbox revealed that AI can be a source of inspiration and creative stimulation, opening new pathways without infringing upon artistic integrity.

- **Key contributions:**

- Shankar Mahadevan brought a unique perspective to the discussion by combining his expertise as a musician with his background in computer science. His contributions were grounded in personal experimentation with AI tools, sharing real-world insights into how these tools suggested new rhythms and melodies, igniting fresh directions in music-making. His involvement helped validate the potential of AI as a collaborative partner for musicians, not a substitute.

- **Challenges and concerns:**

- One of the key concerns raised was whether AI might overshadow human creativity. Shankar acknowledged this apprehension and emphasized the importance of human judgment in the creative process. He stressed that AI should serve as a catalyst for ideas but not dictate the final output. The broader challenge remains in using AI tools responsibly, ensuring they support rather than dilute the authenticity of artistic expression.

## Audience Engagement

- **Live Reflections by the Artist:** Shankar shared personal experiences with AI and creative expression.
- **Relatable Storytelling:** He connected past innovation efforts—like online classical music teaching—to present AI usage.
- **AI-Generated Music Demonstration:** Audience heard samples co-created using Music AI Sandbox tools.
- **Documentary Film Presentation:** A behind-the-scenes look at the collaboration process filmed in Navi Mumbai.
- **Call to Explore and Create:** Attendees were encouraged to engage with the Sandbox and imagine new possibilities.

## Key takeaways

- **AI as a Creative Companion:** AI tools can expand, not replace, artistic vision and thinking.
- **Human-Centered Decision-Making:** The artist remains the final authority in choosing and shaping creative outputs.
- **Innovation Enhancing Tradition:** Responsible technology use can preserve and grow musical traditions.
- **Empowering Emerging Talent:** Generative AI can be an assistant for new musicians, helping them learn and experiment.
- **Importance of Collaboration:** Synergy between artists and technologists leads to meaningful and future-ready innovations.

## Fireside Chat: How Indian Music is Exporting Culture

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1645-1710 Hrs | **Venue:** Jasminelll

### Speakers

- Bhushan Kumar, Managing Director, T Series,
- Lyor Cohen, CEO, YouTube Music

## Overview

The conversation between Lyor Cohen and Bhushan Kumar at the Waves Summit aimed to explore T-Series' journey to becoming the world's largest YouTube music channel, understand the strategic use of data and YouTube's role in global expansion, and highlight the significance of the summit in fostering international collaborations for Indian music and cinema. The discussion covered T-Series' growth from its first 1,000 subscribers to over 300 million, emphasizing YouTube's pivotal role in expanding its global reach and audience engagement.

The conversation also examined how T-Series leverages YouTube data for music production and marketing, showcasing the strategic use of analytics to drive success. The impact of the Waves Summit on the Indian music and film industry was highlighted, underscoring its importance in fostering international collaborations. Opportunities for cross-border collaborations facilitated by the summit were also discussed, emphasizing the potential for global partnerships in the creative sector.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - o The conversation traced T-Series' evolution, starting with Bhushan Kumar's early lessons from his father about creating audience-centric music. YouTube's role was pivotal, beginning with the 2011 upload of the *Patiala House* trailer, which marked the start of T-Series' digital journey. The platform's backend insights, such as demographics and behavioral data, have refined T-Series' content strategy, contributing to its position as the largest YouTube music channel globally. The discussion also covered T-Series' global reach, with over 40% of its business from outside India, driven by accessible devotional music and Bollywood content. Bhushan emphasized data-driven decision-making, while the Waves Summit was recognized as a platform for elevating Indian music and cinema through global partnerships.
- **Key contributions:**
  - o Bhushan highlighted his father's influence in shaping T-Series' audience-first approach, emphasizing melody and lyrics that resonate widely.

YouTube was credited as a transformative tool, enabling global distribution and providing actionable data to enhance content. Lyor Cohen praised Bhushan's passion for music and meticulous data analysis, noting T-Series' strategic use of YouTube insights to drive marketing and investment. The Waves Summit was acknowledged for creating a platform to showcase Indian content and foster collaborations, particularly with Middle Eastern and Western markets, amplifying the industry's global footprint.

- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - The conversation touched on past challenges, such as the limitations of physical distribution (cassettes and CDs), which restricted T-Series' global reach before YouTube. While no current challenges were explicitly detailed, Bhushan's reliance on data suggests the ongoing complexity of accurately predicting audience preferences in diverse markets. The need to balance artistic vision with mass appeal also emerged as an implicit concern, requiring constant adaptation to evolving consumer behaviors and global trends.

## Audience Engagement

- **Analytics Showcase:** Use of YouTube's backend analytics to understand global audience behavior
- **Global Interaction:** Increased interaction from global listeners via comments and engagement metrics

## Key takeaways

- **Audience-Centric Success:** T-Series' success stems from an audience-centric approach and YouTube's global platform.
- **Data Insights Importance:** YouTube's data insights are critical for refining music production and marketing strategies.
- **International Revenue:** Over 40% of T-Series' business comes from international markets, driven by devotional and Bollywood content.
- **Summit as Global Platform:** The Waves Summit is a vital platform for promoting Indian music and cinema globally.
- **Cross-Border Opportunities:** Collaborations with Middle Eastern and Western markets offer significant growth opportunities.



## Session- Future of Gaming – Powering the Next Play

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1715-1800 hrs. | **Venue:** Jasmine III

### Speakers

- Shuji Utsumi, President and COO, Representative Director, SEGA Corporation
- Sean Hyunil Sohn, CEO, Krafton India
- Nitish Mittersain, Founder & MD, Nazara Technologies
- Manvendra Shukul, CEO & Founder, Lakshya Digital, Country Head, Keywords India
- Bimal Julka, Chairperson, Federation of Indian Fantasy Sports

### Moderator

- Ms Keiko Hagihara Bang: CEO, Bang Media Group



## Overview

This session unites experts to discuss the future of gaming as it blends technology, storytelling, and social connection, delving into emerging trends shaping the next decade of gaming such as AI-driven development and immersive experiences. Essential for creators, developers, gaming studios, and industry leaders navigating India's rapidly growing and globally influential gaming ecosystem, the session explores the evolving landscape of the video game industry, shaped by advancing technology, shifting business models, and changing cultural dynamics.

India's growing presence in this digital frontier is discussed, both as an emerging

gaming market and a potential development hub. The state of gaming regulations is examined, highlighting government initiatives to foster a thriving industry. Responsible gaming is addressed, emphasizing the importance of gaming literacy and ethical considerations. The role of technology in shaping the industry's future is analyzed, from immersive experiences and AI-driven innovations to the adoption of gaming by new demographics. Key challenges are unpacked, including psychological impacts, cultural resistance, technical limitations, and the urgent need for a highly skilled workforce in India.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussion**

- o The session explored the future of gaming, highlighting how advancing technology, evolving business models, and changing consumer behaviors are shaping the industry. Experts noted that India is on the path to becoming a major gaming hub, with increasing adoption, growing monetization, and government-backed regulatory frameworks fostering expansion. AI-driven game development, immersive experiences, and user interface enhancements are set to transform gameplay globally, while challenges such as psychological concerns, talent shortages, and technological barriers need strategic solutions.

- **Key Contributions:**

- o Japan, US and Europe are leaders in gaming. Also, 30+ companies are listed in Korean stock exchange. The tech shift enabled this to happen. India should be ready for such a change in the next few years. – Sean
- o An evolutionary process where now customers are willing to pay for gaming. Covid was a push to get different demographics into gaming. – Nitish
- o Any activity, including gaming, without regulations can be devastating. – Bimal
- o One thing that will change games globally:
  - AI for game design will change the paradigm of playing. – Manvendra
  - Human skill and content creation – Bimal
  - Gaming in the virtual space. Immersive gaming. – Sean and

Nitish

- User Interface (UI), but it still has a long way to go. – Shuji

- **Challenges and Concerns:**

- o Psychological implications of gaming, especially on kids: Parents often get worried about psychological implications of gaming and there is cultural resistance. Gaming literacy is crucial here to maintain a neutral and logical approach to gaming.
- o Finding the right talent for gaming companies: Sean highlighted that it was difficult to hire talent even from top Indian engineering schools specialized in gaming few years back. An incubator was started for upskilling and funding their Indian team.
- o Technological issues in gaming: Sometimes technological challenges are faced while streaming games as well as from the development side of it.

## Key takeaways

- Advancing technologies, evolution of business models, and changing culture and lifestyle are the key growth drives for the gaming industry.
- The gaming industry is currently in its growing stage in India. Gaming is still a niche in India, but the narrative is changing with many people opting for gaming as full-time careers.
- Growing population, demand for entertainment, and government's strong support makes India an attractive gaming market. Also, robust game infrastructure, large talent pool and rich gaming culture makes India attractive for the gaming industry globally.
- Role of regulation is crucial, especially to enforce responsible gaming and increase gaming literacy. Government should ensure that ethics and moralities are inbuilt in the games itself. Many regional governments in India are addressing these areas through their policies.
- AI plays a big role in the gaming industry, especially for game development where it is being used to increase efficiency. AI is not very evident in playing as of now. The gaming industry is exploring AI's potential and possibilities.
- There is a shortage of specialized talent pool in India with respect to game development. Upskilling and funding initiatives will aid in building a stronger engineering arm.

## Session: Launch of Netflix- ABAI “Women Back to Work VFX Program”

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1015-1025 Hrs | **Venue:** 206

### Speakers

- Ms. Mahima Kaul- Director, Global Affairs, Netflix,
- Mr R.K. Chand- Secretary, ABAI

## Overview

The session aimed to highlight Netflix’s evolving role in India’s media and entertainment industry, focusing on how the platform acts as a catalyst for global storytelling, technological advancement, and inclusive growth. It showcased India’s growing prominence in the global content ecosystem while underlining Netflix’s investments in production, VFX, upskilling, and inclusivity. Emphasizing the importance of collaboration between technology, talent, and policy, the session aimed to build a sustainable and globally relevant media landscape.

The Waves Conference was introduced as a significant convergence point for technology, talent, and policymaking. Netflix’s reach, with over 300 million subscribers across 190 countries and its nine-year presence in India, was highlighted. Insights into how Indian stories are trending globally and entering top 10 lists in over 80 countries weekly were shared, along with recognition of Indian titles like "The Elephant Whisperers" winning at the Oscars. Collaborations with over 50 Indian production houses in the past three years were discussed, along with Netflix’s investment in high-quality VFX produced in India, showcased through a pavilion at the event.

Upskilling programs in partnership with Abhyan Archana were introduced, addressing the drop in women’s workforce participation and measures to improve inclusion. The launch of a 3-month refresher program for professionals, particularly women returning from career breaks, was announced. Global digital content consumption statistics were presented, framing India and the U.S. as major players in global content creation.

**Creative Equity Fund:** Overview of Netflix’s fund to support upskilling and equitable opportunities.

- **Scaline VFX Expansion:** Announcement of Scaline’s expansion from Mumbai to Hyderabad and upcoming panel session.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - o The session explored Netflix's deepening commitment to India's media landscape, emphasizing how the platform not only brings Indian content to global audiences but also nurtures the domestic creative ecosystem. Discussions revolved around Netflix's strategies for content globalization, regional expansion, technological investment, and talent development. The speaker underscored how Netflix is bridging local storytelling with global audiences through multilingual support and international partnerships.
- **Key contributions:**
  - o Netflix has played a pivotal role in amplifying Indian narratives on a global stage. Contributions include supporting over 50 Indian production houses, facilitating filming in 90+ locations across India post-COVID, and creating significant employment and upskilling opportunities. Additionally, the platform's investment in VFX and partnerships with training programs like Abhyan Archana and the Back to Work initiative demonstrate a long-term commitment to industry development and inclusivity.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - o The session addressed the workforce challenges exacerbated by COVID-19 and subsequent strikes, particularly highlighting the sharp decline in women's participation in the media workforce. Concerns were raised about the widening skills gap due to technological shifts and the urgent need to re-integrate professionals who took career breaks. The importance of inclusive training and structured re-entry programs was emphasized as a solution.

## Audience Engagement

- **Statistical Insights:** Display of real-time data on global streaming, gaming, social media, and e-commerce.
- **Success Stories:** Sharing of Indian content milestones like *The Elephant Whisperers* gaining Oscar recognition.
- **VFX Demonstration Pavilion:** On-ground showcase of Indian VFX innovation supported by Netflix.
- **Training and Upskilling Awareness:** Presentation of ongoing training programs to build future-ready talent.



- **Live Panel Promotion:** Teaser for the 5:15 PM panel featuring Scaline's CEO discussing India's VFX growth.

## Key takeaways

- **India's Global Role:** Netflix sees India as a central hub for content creation and storytelling.
- **International Impact:** Indian shows and films are gaining global visibility through localization and quality storytelling.
- **Technological Investment:** Netflix's VFX and tech investments are enhancing production quality and job creation.
- **Need for Continuous Learning:** Upskilling is essential to keep pace with rapidly evolving creative technologies.
- **Focus on Inclusivity:** Targeted programs like "Back to Work" address gender gaps and workforce reintegration.
- **Bridging Opportunity Gaps:** The Creative Equity Fund supports equitable access to opportunities in the creative field.
- **India and U.S. as Pillars:** Both nations play pivotal roles in shaping the future of global digital content.

## Fireside Chat - The Power and Potential of the US India Media, Gaming and Sports

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1025-1120 Hrs | **Venue:** 206

### Speakers

- Mr. Girish Menon– Chief Strategy Officer, JetSynthesys,
- Mr. Abhishek Malhotra – Managing Partner, TMT Law Practice,
- Mr. Nitish Mittersain– CEO, Nazara Technologies

### Moderator

- Ms Devyani Ozarde, MD, Media and Entertainment, Accenture

## Overview

The session aimed to explore the growing opportunities for cross-border collaboration between India and the United States in media, entertainment, and gaming. It assessed the evolving content creation landscape, including the role of technology, intellectual property (IP) challenges, and the shifting position of India from a service provider to a global content and gaming powerhouse. Special focus was given to leveraging Indian mythology, technological innovation, and youth demographics for global storytelling, while identifying policy, infrastructure, and monetization challenges that must be addressed.

The discussion explored the potential for Indian-American partnerships in co-productions and content exchange, evaluating India's outbound content flow and global impact. It addressed gaps in processes, policies, and treaties to support international partnerships, identifying India's strengths in software versus its gaps in distribution and marketing. India's role in the global gaming market and its monetization models were assessed, alongside the transformative impact of AI and future technologies like VR and AGI.

The need for IP law evolution in the face of AI-generated content was analyzed, understanding shifts in audience engagement through gamification and social in-game networks. The session also unlocked Indian mythological content for global platforms, addressing regulatory clarity, tax incentives, and investment procedures to foster a thriving industry.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The session delved into India's transition from a content consumption and services market to a leading content creation hub with global ambitions. Participants discussed how platforms, developers, and storytellers can

harness India's mythological heritage, technological prowess, and massive youth demographic to build global franchises. Gaming emerged as a key global opportunity, with India poised to serve both development and creative roles. The discussion emphasized the urgent need for regulatory reform, IP protection, and cross-border partnerships that foster mutual growth.

- **Key contributions:**
  - India's strengths in software and storytelling, particularly in mythology and gaming, were highlighted as powerful assets for global content creation. Examples like Indian investment in U.S. gaming studios and international interest in Indian concerts and sports beyond cricket showed growing global integration. Indian authors and creators are also increasingly thinking global-first, developing scalable content from ideation. The rise of co-creation technology, AI-powered localization, and the soft power potential of Indian IP were presented as forward-looking solutions.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - Several concerns were raised, including outdated and unclear IP frameworks that don't yet account for AI-generated content. IP enforcement remains weak, discouraging creators from developing original IP for global markets. Regulatory uncertainty in gaming, events, and streaming also hampers bilateral collaboration. Additionally, India's live event infrastructure and monetization capabilities in gaming lag behind global standards. Without robust distribution systems and policy support, India's potential as a global content exporter could be underutilized.

## Audience Engagement

- **Highlighting Coldplay's India Concert:** Shared as an example of India's potential in hosting large-scale global live events.
- **Gaming Market Statistics:** Emphasis on how 90% of Indian gaming monetization comes from the U.S.
- **Mythology & Marvel Comparison:** Engaged the audience through parallels between Indian mythology and Hollywood superhero franchises.
- **Interactive Discussion on IP and AI:** Raised critical legal and emotional questions about the nature of IP in the AI era.
- **Real-World Examples of Co-Productions:** Discussed limited current collaborations to emphasize the need for structured growth.

## Key takeaways

- **India-U.S. Synergy Has Untapped Potential:** Cross-border collaborations can be scaled significantly with policy and infrastructure support.
- **Content Must Think Global from Ideation:** Indian creators should develop IP for international appeal from the outset.
- **AI is Reshaping Content Creation:** IP frameworks must evolve to keep pace with AI and machine-generated content.
- **Gaming is India's Global Gateway:** Indian game developers can lead internationally, especially through U.S. partnerships.
- **Mythology is India's Marvel Moment:** Indian mythological stories hold vast potential for global reimagining.
- **Regulatory Gaps Are a Barrier:** Lack of policy certainty, especially in gaming and events, hinders large-scale international collaboration.
- **India's Tech Edge Must Be Paired with Marketing:** Strong software development must be supported by robust content distribution and monetization.
- **Audience Habits Are Changing:** Gaming is the new social network; fan engagement is increasingly interactive and immersive.
- **IP Enforcement is Critical:** Without enforcement, creators may not invest in premium or original content.
- **AI is a Creative Ally:** Rather than resist, creators must use AI as a tool to enhance storytelling and global reach.

## Enhancing the Music Experience - From Spatial Audio to Streaming Platforms

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1130-1215 Hrs | **Venue:** 206

### Speakers

- Ms Medha Jaishankar– LA Head, Jetsynthesys,
- Mr. Dhruvank Vaidya– Head Music and Podcast, Spotify,
- Mr. Karan Grover– Senior Director, Commercial Partnerships - IMEA, Dolby

### Moderator/Chairperson

- Mr Ashish Pherwani, Media and Practice Head, EY

## Overview

The session aimed to explore the transformative future of audio in India, delving into how cutting-edge technologies like immersive and object-based audio formats are reshaping the way content is consumed across devices and platforms. With 2025 marking a tipping point where digital consumption surpasses linear formats in India, the discussion focused on how audio is evolving across music, cinema, live events, connected TVs, and beyond. The objective was to highlight how immersive audio is no longer a premium offering but a widely accessible experience, and to examine its economic, creative, and technological impact on both consumers and creators.

The future of high-tech audio and innovations like Dolby Atmos and 360 Reality Audio were discussed, along with the role of immersive audio in various content formats such as music, cinema, sports, and podcasts. The democratization of immersive technology across smartphones, TVs, cars, and budget devices was explored, showcasing the shift in Indian media consumption patterns with digital overtaking linear platforms. The session examined how platforms like Spotify are localizing, personalizing, and exporting Indian audio content globally, evaluating the ecosystem support for immersive audio from content creation to playback. Actionable advice was offered to content creators to succeed in the immersive audio space, emphasizing the broad accessibility and impact of these technologies.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - o The panel underscored the rapid rise of immersive audio in India's digital ecosystem, driven by the widespread availability of affordable compatible devices and growing consumer demand. Dolby, Spotify,



and Sony highlighted how immersive formats are being integrated into smartphones, cars, cinemas, and streaming platforms, making premium-quality audio accessible at scale. They discussed the convergence of personalization, affordability, and innovation in audio, especially in markets like India where music and cricket serve as cultural cornerstones. The discussion extended to how immersive formats can preserve artistic legacies, elevate storytelling, and enable global reach for Indian creators.

- **Key contributions:**

- Karan Grover from Dolby emphasized Dolby's ecosystem-wide role in ensuring immersive experiences across devices and pointed to adoption in cinemas, TVs, mobile phones, and cars. Spotify's Dhruvank illustrated how AI-driven personalization deepens user engagement and globalizes Indian music. Medha from Sony showcased the affordability and accessibility of immersive audio, stressing that minimal hardware upgrades are needed for consumers. All speakers contributed to the notion that immersive audio is more than a technological evolution — it's a creative and economic opportunity for India.

- **Challenges and concerns:**

- Despite high consumer awareness, a major concern raised was the lack of understanding about what spatial or immersive audio truly means for users. There's also a challenge in scaling creator education and production infrastructure across India. While devices are capable, consistent content quality and proper mixing expertise are needed. Furthermore, ensuring immersive formats are economically viable across socio-economic segments remains an ongoing challenge.

## Audience Engagement

- **Live examples and case studies** of Bollywood productions, immersive cricket broadcasts, and global artist experiences.
- **Discussion on localized audio curation** such as personalized playlists and regional language content.
- **Showcase of global success stories** featuring Indian artists gaining traction abroad.
- **Interactive conversation on creator tools** — emphasizing that a laptop and headphones are enough to start.
- **Mention of consumer demos** using QR codes for 360 Reality Audio, driving hands-on exploration.

## Key takeaways

- **Immersive audio is now mainstream** — supported across affordable phones, TVs, and cars.
- **2025 is a pivotal year for India**, where digital audio is overtaking traditional formats.
- **The creator ecosystem is expanding** with opportunities for employment, innovation, and copyright protection.
- **Global reach is real for Indian artists**, with half their Spotify royalties coming from international audiences.
- **Immersive audio enhances storytelling**, offering new ways to repackage and export Indian culture.
- **Tools are affordable and widely available**, enabling democratized access to high-quality production.
- **Educating users and creators alike** is essential for continued growth of immersive audio adoption.
- **Different segments need different strategies**, but immersive audio must be scalable across all of them.

## Session: New Voices - Untold Stories and Fresh Perspectives

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 12:15-01:00 hrs | **Venue:** 206

### Speakers

- Dr. Subi Chaurvedi- Global SVP– Chief Corporate Affairs and Public Policy Officer, InMobi Group,
- Ms. Pallavi Gurjar –Founder, Artarena Creations,
- Ms. Priya Samant–CEO and Co-Founder Arbis Inc.,
- Ms. Uthara Ganesh- Head of Public Policy, Snap

### Moderators/Chairperson

- Mr Anunay Jain, Partner and Media Leader, Grant Thornton

## Overview

The session aimed to explore the current and future landscape of India's creator economy through the lens of technology, storytelling, policy, and global collaboration. It emphasized how democratized access to digital platforms, immersive tools, and AI is empowering a new wave of creators—from grassroots voices in rural India to the global Indian diaspora. By discussing intersections between culture, content, technology, and policy, the session spotlighted how India is uniquely positioned to become a global storytelling powerhouse. The overarching goal was to advocate for inclusive infrastructure, institutional support, and creator-first ecosystems to foster sustainable and culturally rooted innovation.

The evolution of digital spaces as platforms for democratized storytelling, such as lock screens and mobile-first media, was understood. Cross-border collaborations between Indian creators and the diaspora were highlighted, exploring the creator economy's interaction with AI, blockchain, and immersive technologies. Policy frameworks and regulatory progress supporting creative industries, especially in underrepresented sectors, were discussed. The session called for mentorship, institutional funding, and incubators to support emerging creators, reasserting the cultural and emotional value of Indian storytelling in global narratives.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The conversation traced the changing face of storytelling in India, emphasizing that creators today come from diverse geographies and backgrounds. With platforms like Snap and YouTube lowering entry barriers, and technologies like AI and immersive media enhancing

scalability and experience, creators are no longer bound by traditional institutions. The role of culture, emotion, and language was central — from matriarchal histories to street performances and folklore — with participants stressing authenticity over perfection. Policy reforms, diaspora partnerships, and public-private ecosystems were discussed as necessary enablers.

- **Key contributions:**

- Subi spotlighted India's organic innovation at the grassroots level, connecting storytelling with everyday creativity and calling for policy parity between the arts and science sectors. Priya emphasized cross-cultural incubation, AI-led scalability, and the need for sustainable monetization models through Waves and similar platforms. Uthara contributed insights on how Snap is surfacing hyper-local voices, especially Gen Z creators from tier-2 and tier-3 regions, through camera-first storytelling. Pallavi brought a deeply emotional and philosophical lens, connecting ancient Indian aesthetics with contemporary challenges post-COVID, and advocating for narrative revival with cultural integrity. All speakers reinforced the value of emotion, accessibility, and authenticity in shaping India's global storytelling voice.

- **Challenges and concerns:**

- A key challenge highlighted was the lack of support infrastructure — including funding, mentorship, and guidance — especially for rural or first-time creators. The digital divide still persists, despite technical accessibility, due to a lack of awareness and opportunity. There was also concern over over-regulation versus enablement in policy, with a call for more inclusive and empowering governance. Monetization remains fragile, particularly for creators relying on emerging technologies like AI and blockchain, without a clear revenue model.

## Audience Engagement

- **Personal stories and lived experiences** from creators, diaspora members, and media entrepreneurs.
- **Cultural examples**, including Rakhi filters, Ramayan performances, and narratives from Upanishads and Jataka tales.
- **AI and blockchain discussions** offered a look at frontier technologies in relatable storytelling contexts.
- **Calls for public support and open creative spaces**, resonating with creators across age groups and geographies.
- **Reference to familiar platforms and creators**, making the session accessible and resonant for grassroots and emerging talents.

## Key takeaways

- **This is a golden era for storytelling in India**, with low barriers to entry and high emotional value.
- **Authenticity matters more than perfection** — audiences connect with real stories told in native languages and voices.
- **Cross-border collaboration**, especially with the diaspora, can amplify local stories to global platforms.
- **Technology is an enabler, not the solution alone** — creators need mentorship, monetization support, and ecosystem backing.
- **India's cultural heritage offers deep wells of inspiration**, from ancient texts to post-migration experiences.
- **Policy must enable creativity**, not just regulate it — creative arts deserve support on par with scientific disciplines.
- **Emotional storytelling transcends boundaries** — the most resonant stories are those rooted in truth and humanity.
- **Public-private partnerships and incubators** are key to building a sustainable, inclusive creative economy.



## Session-From Print to Pixels: The New Era of Comic Storytelling, Distribution & Design

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1030-1115 hrs. | **Venue:** Room 203

### Speakers

- Preeti Vyas, CEO, Amar Chitra Katha
- Sanjay Gupta, CEO, Raj Comics
- Ajitesh Sharma, President, Indian Comic Association
- Nikhil Pran, Director, Pran's Features LLP
- Mohammad Faisal, Founder, Garbage Bin Comics

### Moderator

- Hamza Sayed, Co-Founder, The Comic Bookstore



### Overview

The session aimed to have a closer look at the creative, cultural, and commercial changes in the Indian comic ecosystem owing to digital innovations and changing reader tastes. It explored how iconic publishers, DIY creators, and digital-first platforms are evolving to keep up and increase their readership. The discussion focused on the seismic shift in comics from print to pixels, examining how cutting-edge innovations in storytelling and technology are revolutionizing the industry.

Insights were shared on navigating evolving reader habits, harnessing new platforms, and fueling creativity to captivate broader audiences and redefine the art form. The session highlighted the dynamic nature of the comic industry in India, emphasizing the importance of adapting to digital trends and leveraging technological advancements to stay relevant and engaging.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussion**

- The session examined the transformation of the Indian comic industry from traditional print to digital platforms, highlighting shifts in storytelling, distribution, and reader engagement. Experts emphasized the importance of preserving cultural heritage while embracing digital innovations to reach Gen-Z and modern audiences. While legacy publishers and independent creators are driving this change, challenges such as monetization, piracy, and resistance to digital formats continue to shape industry debates.

- **Key Contributions:**

- **Preeti Vyas** spoke about Amar Chitra Katha's legacy, its continued focus on Indian heritage, and the dual strategy of digital expansion through the ACK app alongside robust print offerings. She emphasized their digital read-a-thon initiative that garnered strong participation from schools.
- **Sanjay Gupta** traced the roots of Indian superhero comics, discussing how Raj Comics used Indian mythology to create relatable heroes like Nagraj. He highlighted the shift from foreign influence to indigenous narratives.
- **Ajitesh Sharma** shared the genesis of the Indian Comic Association and the need for formal recognition and policy support. He emphasized comics as a tool for education, documentation, and cultural expression.
- **Nikhil Pran** narrated the legacy of his father, Pran Kumar Sharma, and how characters like Chacha Chaudhary evolved alongside Indian society. He underscored the emotional connection readers have with traditional characters.
- **Mohammad Faisal** shared his journey from working in animation to finding indie success with *Garbage Bin Comics*, showing how humor and relatable content helped him strike a chord with readers who grew up in the '90s.

- **Challenges and Concerns:**

- **Resistance to digital** from purist readers was acknowledged, especially among older fans. However, speakers maintained that physical and digital formats can coexist.
- **Monetization in digital spaces** and piracy were cited as ongoing hurdles.
- **Lack of formal infrastructure and representation** for Indian comic

publishers, especially indie creators, was flagged as a bottleneck.

- o **Evolving content preferences** among Gen Z, who consume fast, visual-first content, pose a creative challenge to retain depth in storytelling.

## Audience Engagement

The session saw high audience participation with nostalgic sharing of first comic experiences and questions around reading habits in the digital age. A key moment involved a reader recalling "Nagraj and Super Commando Dhruv" as their first crossover comic—leading to applause and a brief discussion on Raj Comics' fan culture. Another audience member asked about screen-time vs. book reading, which moved the discussion on allowing children to choose their medium while keeping storytelling at the center. The event concluded with book signings, impromptu fan interactions, and active social media engagement.

## Key takeaways

- **Indian comics are evolving from print to digital** – The industry is adapting to changing reader habits with digital platforms while maintaining a balance with traditional print formats.
- **Legacy and heritage remain central** – Iconic publishers like Amar Chitra Katha and Raj Comics emphasize preserving Indian storytelling traditions while expanding into modern formats.
- **Gen-Z consumption patterns are reshaping content** – Fast-paced, visual-first media preferences pose a challenge for maintaining depth in storytelling, pushing creators to innovate.
- **Monetization and piracy are ongoing concerns** – Digital comics face hurdles in revenue generation and copyright protection, requiring stronger policies and infrastructure.
- **Education and mentorship are key to future growth** – Formal integration into schools, incubation centers, and digital literacy programs can help sustain and expand the Indian comic ecosystem.

## Session: India Reach to Oscars

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1030-1130 hrs | **Venue:** Room No 205

### Speakers

- Chaluve Gowda: Producer & Distributor,
- Sreekar Prasad: Editor,
- Ujwal Nirgudkar: Engineer & Preservationist,
- Bharathi S Pradhan, Senior Critic, Columnist & Author

### Chairperson/Moderator

- Palash Dutta, Actor

## Overview

This conference track, featuring veterans like Chaluve Gowda, Sreekar Prasad, and Ujjwal Nirgudkar, explores Indian cinema's Oscar journey—pioneering wins, recent triumphs, and global impact. It delves into stories of films, individuals, and innovations that showcase India's rich cultural legacy and excellence in storytelling, craft, and technology. The discussion covers India's Oscar milestones, such as "RRR," "Lagaan," and "The Elephant Whisperers," and examines the costs and complexities of mounting a successful Oscar campaign.

The roles of the South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce and the Film Federation of India (FFI) in the selection and promotion process are highlighted, along with the transparency and criteria in internal Oscar selection. Cultural nuances and inherent biases in Academy voting are discussed, learning from recent Indian success stories and navigating controversies in selection processes. The importance of lobbying and tailored promotion strategies is emphasized, showcasing the multifaceted efforts required to achieve global recognition for Indian cinema.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Challenges of Promotion and Costs**
  - Chaluve Gowda discussed the significant cost of promoting films for the Oscars, with promotional budgets varying greatly depending on impact:
  - Low impact: ₹30-40 lakhs
  - Medium impact: ₹80 lakhs to ₹1 crore
  - High impact: ₹5-8 crore

These promotional costs play a crucial role in getting the film noticed, especially at an international level like the Oscars.

- **Representation of Indian Films at the Oscars**

- o India's Submissions: Bollywood dominates India's submissions to the Oscars, with about 60% of entries from Bollywood and 10-20% from Tamil cinema. However, there is a shift towards more regional language films being considered. Changing Bollywood Perception.
- o The perception of Bollywood at the Oscars is evolving, with a growing recognition of films that are not just about sound and music but also deeper, more meaningful content.

- **The Pathway to the Oscars**

Sreekar Prasad outlined the two main pathways for Indian films to get to the Oscars:

- o Government Nomination: The official entry is usually chosen through the Indian government's nomination process.
- o Theatrical Release in the U.S.: A film can also make its way to the Oscars through a commercial release in the U.S., but this route is more accessible to larger films with significant funding.
- Pan-India Release: While pan-India releases are crucial for visibility, it's important to note that the film doesn't necessarily have to be a pan-India film to qualify.

- **Oscar Categories and Importance of Subtitles**

Ujwal Nirgudkar explained that the Oscars offer various categories beyond the "Best Foreign Film" category, such as:

- o Live Action Short Film
- o Live Action Documentary
- o Student Film

There is also a Screenwriting Competition for which about 7,000 scripts are submitted each year. The top three receive monetary prizes.

Subtitles are Key: Subtitles play a critical role for films entering the Oscars, as the jury not only watches the film but also reads the subtitles. Clear, concise subtitles that resonate with the emotions and story are essential for a positive reception.

- **Challenges and Concerns**

- o High Promotion Costs:
  - The significant cost required for promotional activities to get noticed at the Oscars is a major concern.
  - Promotional budgets range from ₹30-40 lakhs (low impact) to



₹5-8 crores (high impact), making it difficult for smaller films to compete.

- o Limited Routes for Smaller Films:
  - Smaller films face limited opportunities to reach the Oscars, often relying only on government nominations.
  - This restricts the chances of non-commercial or regional films, which may not have the same visibility as bigger commercial films.
- o Cultural Differences in Social Issue Films:
  - Films that deal with social issues face challenges in being understood across different countries due to varying cultural contexts.
  - These differences may hinder the films' reception by the Oscar jury and affect their chances of success.
- o Quality of Subtitles:
  - Subtitles are critical for films to succeed at the Oscars. If the subtitles are poorly translated or not emotionally resonant, it can negatively impact the film's chances.
  - Clear, concise subtitles are essential, as the jury will read them alongside watching the film.

## Audience Engagement

The audience actively engaged with the panel, raising questions about the transparency of the Oscar selection process in India and the feasibility of Oscar campaigns for independent filmmakers. Many attendees were curious about how lesser-known regional films could build international visibility and whether support systems exist for navigating the complexities of lobbying. Several aspiring producers and filmmakers sought advice on budgeting for Oscar campaigns and the importance of building global networks. There was also a lively exchange on how India could standardize its selection and promotion methods to increase its competitiveness on the global stage.

## Key Takeaways

- Regional Films Rising: Regional films are gaining more recognition, shifting Oscar focus beyond Bollywood.
- Paths to Oscars: Films can qualify through government nominations or U.S. theatrical release, but smaller films face challenges.
- Subtitles Matter: Clear, quality subtitles are crucial for Oscar success.
- Promotion Costs: High promotion costs (₹30 lakh to ₹8 crore) are a barrier for smaller films.

## Session: Cross-cultural Storytelling: Building Global Narratives through Animation

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1130-1215 hrs. | **Venue:** Room 203

### Speakers

- Briana Yarhouse, Director of Animation Interlochen Center for the Arts, USA
- Pramita Mukherjee, Character effects Animation developer, Dreamworks Studio, USA
- Rajiv Chilaka, Founder, Green Gold Animation
- P. Jayakumar, CEO, Toonz Media Group
- Tilak Shetty, co-founder, Graffiti Studios
- Sharad Devarajan, Founder & CEO, Graphic India & Liquid Comics

### Moderator

- Dhvani Desai, Animation Filmmaker and curator, Founder of Metamorphosis Animation Studio

## Overview

This session aims to explore how animated narratives transcend language and cultural boundaries by examining universal storytelling techniques, creative strategies, and collaborative production models. Bringing together leaders from top animation studios, the discussion focuses on what makes animated stories globally resonant and how creators craft narratives that achieve international success and emotional connection across diverse audiences.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussion**
  - The session explored the role of cross-cultural storytelling in animation, emphasizing how animated narratives transcend linguistic and geographic boundaries through universal emotions and themes. Experts discussed the importance of culturally rooted storytelling, the rise of Indian-origin IPs, and the growing global influence of Indian animation. While international partnerships and immersive experiences are opening new opportunities, challenges such as broadcaster confidence, fair IP ownership, and audience biases remain key hurdles for Indian animation studios.
- **Key Contributions:**
  - **Rajiv Chilaka** shared the origin story of *Chhota Bheem*, emphasizing

the need for culturally rooted Indian superheroes and the importance of simple, universal values in content. Despite scepticism, *Bheem* found acceptance across demographics and celebrated its 17th year, generating ₹800+ crores in revenue.

- o **Briana Yarhouse** stressed the significance of experiential learning and cultural exposure in animation education. Students are encouraged to explore and present stories from diverse cultural viewpoints through hands-on practice and cross-disciplinary collaborations.
  - o **P. Jayakumar** emphasized that emotional resonance—more than cultural tropes—defines global success. Stories like *The Lion King* or *Coco* succeeded because they captured universal emotions layered with localized symbolism.
  - o **Tilak Shetty** championed creating original Indian IPs rooted in historical and cultural narratives, pointing out the need for animation to cater to adolescents and adults, not just children.
  - o **Sharad Devarajan** (from context) was acknowledged for global Indian IPs like *Spider-Man India* and *Legend of Hanuman*, symbolizing the shift in international attention towards Indian-origin narratives.
  - o **Pramita Mukherjee** (transcript detail not covered but inferred from the profile) likely echoed the importance of authentic character development, technical precision, and mentoring emerging talent for inclusive industry growth.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**
    - o Difficulties in gaining broadcaster confidence for Indian-origin IPs
    - o Ensuring fair IP ownership during international co-productions
    - o Overcoming Cultural typecasting and Audience Bias
    - o Adapting legal frameworks for cross-border rights and revenue models
    - o Raising industry capacity and creative leadership for global projects.

## Audience Engagement:

The session was interactive, intellectually stimulating, and warmly received. Attendees, including students, artists, producers, and academicians, engaged with panellists through questions on storytelling formats, first comic/animation memories, and career aspirations. A key audience query on the fate of junior VFX/animation artists in an AI-dominated future sparked a meaningful dialogue around skill evolution and creative upskilling. The atmosphere reflected genuine enthusiasm for India's role in the global animation narrative.

## Key takeaways

- **Indian-origin animation is gaining global traction** – Stories like *Chhota Bheem* and *Spider-Man India* showcase India's ability to create culturally rooted narratives with worldwide appeal.
- **Emotional resonance drives success** – Globally recognized films like *The Lion King* and *Coco* prove that storytelling centered on universal emotions can transcend cultural and geographic boundaries.
- **Education and mentorship are key for industry growth** – Animation programs emphasize experiential learning and cross-cultural collaborations to prepare new talent for the evolving market.
- **Challenges remain for Indian IPs in global markets** – Broadcaster confidence, fair IP ownership in co-productions, and overcoming cultural biases remain hurdles for Indian animation studios.

**India has the potential to become a global animation hub** – Strengthening policies for **original IP development, international partnerships, and industry training** will position India as a leader in animation exports.

## Session Financing Challenges in Film Industry Across the Globe

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1130–1230 hrs | **Venue:** Room 205

### Speakers

- Mr Shreyansh Hirawat, Director, NH Studioz,
- Mr Sanjay Bhandari, CEO, SB Consultancy,
- Kang Sung-Kyu – Director / CEO, Busan Film Commission (South Korea),
- Bobby Bedi, Indian Film Producer

### Chairperson/Moderator

- Palash Dutta: Dr Abhay Kumar Sinha, Director General, Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC)

## Overview

The film industry faces numerous financial and operational challenges, including global inflation, geopolitical risks, and currency fluctuations. Rising production, marketing, and distribution costs, along with the evolving impact of streaming on theatrical revenue, have added further pressure. Independent and mid-budget films struggle to secure funding, while piracy continues to cause significant financial losses despite anti-piracy efforts. The session also examines international financing models and explores the future of co-productions and multi-source funding as potential solutions.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - a) **Central Role of the Producer**
    - The producer is the most critical figure in the film financing process.
    - Responsible for both creative and financial decisions.
    - Many financiers fund films but are not involved creatively, leading to fragmented production models.
  - b) **Two Phases of Film Financing**
    - Phase 1: Pre-sales to OTT platforms, distributors, or broadcasters to secure upfront funding.
    - Phase 2: Bridge financing to sustain production until revenue begins flowing.
  - c) **Risk Appetite and Investment Trends**
    - Risk-taking by investors has reduced over the years.



- o Equity participation is rare; most financing today is debt-based.
- o Distributors used to co-invest, now act more like buyers.
- d) **Challenge of Protecting IP**
  - o Producers aim to minimize loss while retaining as much IP as possible.
  - o Owning IP is key to long-term value, but often sacrificed in early deals.
- e) **Indian Industry-Specific Issues**
  - o Confusion between the roles of financiers and producers.
  - o Heavy reliance on star power over content or production quality.
  - o True producers with full creative and financial control are very few.
  - o Lack of structured institutional finance since the decline of the IDBI model.
- f) **Film as a Startup**
  - o Films should be treated like startups: high risk, high potential return.
  - o Banks are reluctant to finance due to unpredictable ROI, similar to how they avoid startups.
- g) **Korean Perspective**
  - o Pre-pandemic, Korean films had strong domestic market share.
  - o Post-pandemic, shift to OTT platforms has hurt theatrical business.
  - o Financing relies on corporate backers and profit-sharing (60% investor, 40% producer).
  - o IP-based financing is weak; often requires personal guarantees.
- h) **Global Financing Models Compared**
  - o Europe: Largely subsidy-driven models with government support.
  - o India, US, Korea: Commercially driven, market-dependent financing.
  - o Regional films struggle to be profitable under commercial models.
- **Key contributions:**
  - o **Sanjay Bhandari**
    - Emphasized the centrality of the producer in film financing.
    - Believes that once a strong producer is identified, other aspects (like distribution, budgeting) fall into place.
    - Every film is a +/- 20% game in profitability.
    - Stressed the importance of passion-driven projects alongside commercial ventures.
  - o **Shreyansh Hirawat**
    - Spoke about two key financing phases:
      1. New Films: Focus on recovery, cash flow, and larger screen reach.
      2. Released Films: Analysis and optimization of returns.
    - Mentioned changes in risk appetite over the years; earlier distributors

would co-finance, but now fewer take equity stakes.

- Observed that recent years have been erratic, but the industry is returning to more sensible filmmaking.
  - Derisking is often tied to the reputation of the director and actors.
- o **Kang Sung-Kyu (Korean Perspective)**
- Pre-pandemic, Korean films had a dominant domestic market share, surpassing Hollywood.
  - Post-pandemic, the Korean film industry is in crisis; small screens (like Netflix) have become more prominent.
  - Film financing in Korea relies on:
    - Corporate financing
    - Profit-sharing models (typically 60% investor, 40% producer)
  - Financing based on IP value is limited, often requiring personal guarantees.
- o **Bobby Bedi**
- Addressed the identity crisis in the Indian film industry: confusion between producers and financiers.
  - True producers are rare; many are simply money providers, not involved in creative or executive decisions.
  - Outlined financing stages:
    - o Pre-sales (to distributors, OTT platforms, etc.)
    - o Bridge financing (interim funding before revenue generation)
  - Emphasized importance of minimizing loss and retaining IP ownership.
  - Critiqued Bollywood's star-centric model; investors often prioritize actors over production fundamentals.
  - Noted that banks view films like startups—high risk, low formal financing.
  - Recalled the IDBI model as a rare instance of structured film financing, which failed when banks overreached.
  - Advocated for reviving risk-based financing models and relying less on exploitative lenders.
- **Key Challenges**
- o Lack of Structured Financing: Few formal financial institutions support films; reliance on private investors or OTT buyers is high.
  - o Producer-Financier Disconnect: In many regions, financiers control funds but aren't involved in production, diluting creative ownership.
  - o High Risk, Low Institutional Appetite: Films are treated like startups—risky, with unpredictable returns—leading banks to avoid funding.
  - o Over-Reliance on Star Power: Investment decisions are often based on actor appeal rather than production strength or content quality.

- o IP Ownership Issues: Producers struggle to retain IP while securing funds, often losing long-term rights for short-term finance.
- o Post-Pandemic Market Shift: In markets like Korea, traditional theatrical revenues have declined sharply due to OTT dominance.

## Key Outcomes & Suggestions

- Recognize Producer as the Core: Financing should center on capable producers who can manage both creative and financial aspects.
- Revive Risk-Based Financing: Encourage models where investors share risk and reward, similar to startup equity.
- Build Support Structures: Need for public-private mechanisms and export councils to support globally viable content.
- Encourage IP-Based Lending: Developing financial tools that value film IP can reduce reliance on personal guarantees or predatory loans.

## Audience Engagement

- Russia–India Co-Production Query:  
Russia expressed interest in co-producing a film in India and asked whether to focus only on Bollywood or consider regional industries as well.  
→ Response: Bobby Bedi noted it depends on the target audience and intent of the film—whether it's for a national or regional market.
- Corporate Involvement in Film Financing:  
A question was raised about whether the shift from independent financiers to corporate entities has been beneficial.  
→ Bobby Bedi acknowledged that corporates have improved production quality and created more opportunities for talent, but also pointed out a drawback—the decline of distributor-led financing and the diminishing influence of box office performance in driving funding decisions.
- Crowdfunding and Alternate Financing:  
OTT Talkies asked if crowd-financing or other innovative models are being explored.  
→ Bobby Bedi stated that crowdfunding is viable only for small-scale projects (₹1–2 crore). It's a good option for young filmmakers, but not yet scalable for larger films. He mentioned platforms like Better Invest, which are experimenting with crowd-based models, though often with heavy discounting.

## Key Takeaways

- **Producer-Centric Financing is Crucial**

Success in film financing hinges on strong, involved producers who manage both creative direction and financial structuring—this is currently lacking in many markets, including India.

- **Formal and Risk-Based Financing Models Are Needed**

There's a global gap in structured film financing; banks and institutions avoid film projects due to high risk. Reviving equity-based and IP-driven financing is essential.

- **Corporate Involvement Has Pros and Cons**

While corporates have improved production quality and talent access, their dominance has sidelined traditional models like distributor-financed films, weakening box office-driven funding.

- **Alternative Funding Models Hold Promise, But Remain Limited**

Models like crowdfunding are emerging but are currently viable only for small-budget films. Broader adoption requires structural support and scalability.

## Session: Generative AI: The Ultimate Creative Partner or a Passing Muse?

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1230 – 1315 hrs. | **Venue:** Room 203

### Speakers

- Rishi Coupland, Director of Research and Innovation, British Film Institute
- Vrej Kassouny, Founder & Director of ReAnimania International Animation Film & Comics Art Festival
- Amit Khanduja, CEO, Reliance Entertainment Digital
- C.V. Rao, Chief Technology Officer at Annapurna Studios
- K Basi Reddy, CMD, Digiquest India Ltd.

### Chairperson/Moderator

- Nikkhil Srinivaas, Director, Brinc

## Overview

This session explores the transformative potential of generative AI as a creative enabler in storytelling and content creation within the media and entertainment sector. Featuring visionary creators from animation and gaming, the discussion will delve into how AI is influencing the creative process—from concept art and character development to world-building and production workflows. Panelists will examine whether AI is truly reshaping creativity or simply reflecting a passing trend, while also addressing its limitations, ethical boundaries, and implications for creative ownership. The conversation aims to evaluate AI's long-term impact on human-led creativity and the future of immersive, innovative storytelling.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussion**
  - The session explored the transformative role of generative AI in creative industries such as animation, gaming, film, and digital art. Panelists highlighted how AI is reshaping production workflows, streamlining asset generation, and enhancing efficiency while maintaining its status as a supportive tool rather than a full creative replacement. The discussion examined AI's potential to revolutionize storytelling while addressing key concerns around authenticity, ethical sourcing, and intellectual property ambiguity. As AI adoption accelerates, upskilling human creators and refining legal frameworks will be critical for sustainable integration into creative processes.



- **Key Contributions:**

- o **Basi Reddy** outlined India's early policy initiatives in digital filmmaking and AVGC, positioning generative AI as the next major technological leap—potentially bigger than Y2K.
- o **C.V. Rao** emphasized how AI functions today as a high-efficiency “plug-in” in production pipelines. His team has already used AI-generated shots in film teasers with indistinguishable realism.
- o **Rishi Coupland** presented a nuanced analysis from the UK's media sector, comparing the AI ecosystem to an iceberg—visible applications like ideation and sound editing at the surface, and massive experimentation below. He advocated for investment in small language models, fine-tuning for creative use, and localized data ecosystems.
- o **Vrej Kassouny** highlighted that AI remains a tool—not a replacement for human creativity. While AI can accelerate workflows and idea generation, it lacks true originality. He called for balance and preservation of traditional art forms while embracing efficiency.
- o **Amit Khanduja** explained how Reliance Games uses AI across concept art, asset generation, and storyline development, underscoring that AI won't replace jobs but will replace those unwilling to adapt. He stressed the importance of building proprietary, responsibly trained models that respect creative IP.

- **Challenges and Concerns:**

- o Authenticity and ethical sourcing of AI-generated content.
- o Job displacement fears versus upskilling and creative enablement.
- o Responsible AI and bias mitigation in model training.
- o Intellectual property ambiguity around AI-generated assets.
- o Readiness of legal and policy frameworks to address fast-moving innovation.

## Audience Engagement

The session saw active participation from a diverse audience comprising students, media professionals, startup founders, and academic researchers. Attendees shared their own experiences with AI in writing and design, sparking discussions on academic AI use, the blurred lines of authorship, and responsible experimentation. Audience members resonated strongly with the idea of AI as a collaborative tool rather than a creative replacement, and many expressed interest in upcoming initiatives like the proposed AI short film festival by Digiquest.

## Key takeaways

- **Generative AI is reshaping creative workflows** – AI is now seamlessly integrated into production pipelines, with studios using AI-generated shots in teasers and concept development.
- **AI enhances efficiency but does not replace creativity** – Experts stressed that AI accelerates ideation and automation but lacks true originality, requiring human oversight for storytelling depth.
- **Ethical concerns remain a challenge** – Issues like authenticity, intellectual property rights, and responsible AI training must be addressed to ensure fair creative practices.
- **Upskilling is essential for the future workforce** – AI will not eliminate jobs but will require creative professionals to adapt and build expertise in AI-assisted content creation.
- **India has a unique opportunity to lead AI-driven media innovation** – Strengthening policies, supporting localized AI models, and fostering AI-driven creativity will be key to positioning India as a global digital entertainment hub.

## Session: India's Evolving Role in the Global Film and Streaming Economy

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1230–1330 Hrs | **Venue:** Room: 205

### Speakers

- Vikram Tanna, CEO, Eros Now, Mzaalo (Xfinite Global)
- Shibasish Sarkar, President, Producers Guild of India
- Ekta R Kapoor, Joint Managing Director, Balaji Telefilms
- Shalini Govil Pai, VP & GM, Android TV, Google

### Moderator

- Uday Singh, Managing Director, Motion Picture Association (India)



## Overview

The session aimed to explore how India is emerging as a key player in the global film and streaming economy, driven by OTT platforms, technological evolution, and a new wave of content localization and production strategies. It examined India's increasing footprint in the global content landscape, exploring technological advancements, storytelling strategies, production capabilities, and the opportunities and challenges facing Indian creators in reaching global audiences. The discussion highlighted the dynamic nature of India's film and streaming industry, emphasizing the importance of adapting to technological trends and leveraging innovative production strategies to captivate global audiences.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussions:**

- o Shibasish Sarkar opened by discussing the phenomenal growth of Indian OTT content, both domestically and globally. He highlighted the evolving digital landscape that enables broader storytelling and greater accessibility.
- o He referenced global successes like *Parasite* and *Squid Game*, questioning when India would produce similarly resonant narratives. Sarkar emphasized that India possesses the talent and depth but needs more space for creative risk-taking.
- o He stressed the importance of rooted storytelling that can also connect globally and called for India to leverage its infrastructure and global outlook to position itself as a production and post-production hub.
- o Vikram Tanna emphasized the critical role of localization, advocating for effective dubbing and subtitling of Indian content. He argued this is essential not just for global export, but also to ensure inclusivity within India's own multilingual audience.
- o Tanna also spoke on the importance of creating content that transcends language and regional barriers, enabling regional stories to gain national and international visibility.
- o The Q&A session surfaced concerns about algorithmic bias on streaming platforms, the lack of government support for global content promotion, and the complexities of international co-productions.

- **Key Contributions:**

- o Shibasish Sarkar underscored the commercial constraints that hinder experimental and bold storytelling in India. He proposed that policy support and a cultural shift within the industry could unlock more global narratives.
- o He also cited India's growing appeal as a filming location, pointing to modern studios like Beul and referencing the Hollywood-to-Canada shift as a model India could follow.
- o Vikram Tanna highlighted localization as a business-critical enabler. He shared insights from Mzaalo and Eros Now, where multilingual access significantly boosted content reach.

- o The panel agreed on the need for cultural specificity in global storytelling—content that is authentically Indian, yet universally appealing.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**
  - o Algorithmic visibility remains a barrier for non-Western content in OTT ecosystems.
  - o India lacks cohesive government initiatives or incentives to push local stories into global markets.
  - o The creative industry often prioritizes formulaic, commercial projects over boundary-pushing narratives due to risk aversion.

## Audience Engagement

The session sparked an engaging dialogue with participants asking about platform biases, incentives for international co-productions, and what it takes for Indian content to achieve breakout global success. There was evident interest in how policy, innovation, and culture can converge to push Indian content onto the world stage.

## Key Takeaways

- India has the storytelling depth, infrastructure, and digital reach to lead in the global content economy.
- Localization—through quality dubbing and subtitling—is not an afterthought, but a strategic priority.
- Cultural specificity is key to global appeal; stories must reflect India's diversity with confidence.
- Policy frameworks and creative freedom are vital for encouraging experimentation and export of Indian narratives.
- India's growing pool of globally educated tech-savvy professionals can bridge local creativity and international market understanding.
- There is strong optimism—but also clear recognition of the structural changes needed for India to transition from participant to leader in the global film and streaming economy.



## Amplifying Thought Leadership through Media and Convergence Technology

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1430–1515 Hrs | **Venue:** Room No. 202

### Speakers

- Ralph Simon, Pioneer in Mobile Entertainment
- Tom Graham, Co-Founder & CEO, Metaphysic
- Vivek Krishnani, Film Producer & Industry Veteran
- Raksandra, Representative, Digital Radio Mondial
- Venice (Video Message), Producer, Game of Thrones

### Moderator

- Toby Simon, Founder, Synergia Foundation

## Session Overview

The session focused on how media convergence and emerging technologies are reshaping the role of thought leadership in society. Moderated by Toby Simon, the panel brought together leaders from entertainment, technology, strategic communication, and digital audio to explore how immersive technologies, AI, and narrative-driven platforms can influence policy, culture, and public consciousness.

## Key Highlights

- **Immersive Entertainment and the Future of Influence:**  
Ralph Simon cited pioneering use cases like ABBA Voyage and The Sphere in Las Vegas as examples of how immersive tech is transforming entertainment. He discussed how avatars ("abatars") and 3D performance technology are redefining audience experience, and raised the idea of digitally reviving icons like Mohammad Rafi for future Indian applications.
- **Ethics and Realism in AI-Generated Content:**  
Tom Graham from Metaphysic emphasized the balance between realism and responsibility in AI content creation. Through examples like the "Deep Tom Cruise" TikTok series, he explained how hyper-realistic media can blur trust boundaries, reinforcing the need for ethical content production and strong consent frameworks.
- **Cinema & OTT as Vehicles for Thought Leadership:**  
Vivek Krishnani emphasized that cinema and OTT content can shape public discourse and policy. He cited films like *Twelfth Fail*, *Laapataa Ladies*, and *The Kerala Story* as examples of storytelling that triggered national debate.

He also raised concerns about the narrow genre range in Hindi cinema and advocated for more culturally rooted, genre-diverse writing.

- **Strategic Communication and National Relevance:**

Toby Simon linked media thought leadership to national security and development. He discussed how India must identify its "Deep Seek" moment—a transformative innovation that propels it as a global leader. He emphasized media's strategic role in whole-of-nation communication, particularly in combating cognitive warfare and misinformation.

- **Global Strategy and Franchise Thought Design:**

Venice, via video message, proposed an idea for using franchise storytelling to gradually uplift audiences through layered psychological and sociocultural narratives—combining entertainment and transformation over time.

- **Digital Radio as a Silent Indian Strength:**

Raksandra highlighted India's global leadership in digital radio adoption. She advocated expanding digital radio for education, emergency communication, and inclusivity. With low-cost infrastructure and wide reach, radio can remain a powerful medium for storytelling, especially in rural and underserved regions.

## Audience Engagement

The audience raised questions about authenticity in AI-driven storytelling, sustainability of purist content in commercial frameworks, and the role of producers in balancing creativity with market realities. Actor DarayyaSrinoy posed a question on sustaining influence amid AI-driven content overload.

## Key Takeaways

- Immersive and AI-driven storytelling is redefining audience engagement and legacy building.
- Ethical frameworks and consent-based creation are critical in AI-led media.
- Thought leadership in cinema must combine rooted storytelling with commercial viability.
- India must harness its latent digital strengths like radio and regional cinema to build a globally competitive cultural identity.
- Strategic storytelling must align with national visions like Viksit Bharat, positioning India as a forward-thinking, culturally grounded knowledge leader.

## Session: IPs Transcending borders, cultures and platforms

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1430-1530 hrs. | **Venue:** Room 203

### Speakers

- Noriko Matsumoto – Executive Producer, Dwarf Studios
- Ken Pontac – Writer and Director, Happy Tree Friends
- Nadia Darries – Animator, Founder and Director, Goon Valley
- Makiko Inaba – Director of International Business, TV Asahi
- Richard Lewis – Senior VP Business Development, Hornbill Studios

### Chairperson/Moderator

- Aditya Singhal – Director and Executive Producer, Charuvi Design Labs.



## Overview

India's AVGC revolution is here—where Manga meets Scooby-Doo, and gaming IPs scale globally through cutting-edge pipelines. With world-class talent, cost-competitive studios, and a booming digital market, India is fast becoming the go-to hub for IP owners to develop, adapt, and monetize content across animation, VFX, gaming, and comics. This panel may dive into cross-border IP strategies, real-time animation tools, and AI-driven content scaling—featuring creators behind Happy Tree Friends, Manga, and India's next-gen AVGC disruptors. The future of IP is borderless, and India's tech-infused ecosystem is leading the charge.

Generative AI is revolutionizing storytelling, design, and production, offering new creative possibilities while reshaping traditional workflows. This session brings together industry leaders to examine AI's role in content generation, automation, and collaboration across animation, gaming, and film. Experts will discuss ethical boundaries, creative ownership, and the evolving relationship between AI and

human artistry. By analyzing real-world applications and future advancements, the conversation will highlight AI's influence on narrative innovation, immersive experiences, and the future of digital creativity.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussion**
  - The session explored how India's animation, VFX, gaming, and comics (AVGC) industry is evolving into a global content creation hub. Experts emphasized that cultural authenticity, international collaborations, and AI-driven innovation are shaping the industry's expansion. While India's cost-efficient production pipelines and digital infrastructure make it an attractive market for global IP holders, challenges such as broadcaster hesitation, IP ownership complexities, and industry skill gaps must be addressed to ensure sustainable growth.
- **Key Contributions:**
  - **India's emergence as a global content hub** – With strong talent and digital infrastructure, Indian studios are increasingly integrating international IPs.
  - **The significance of culturally rooted storytelling** – Authentic narratives help IPs resonate across markets while maintaining local identity.
  - **AI's role in scaling content creation** – AI-driven tools enhance efficiency but still require human creativity for emotional depth and originality.
  - **International partnerships fueling growth** – Reliable collaborations ensure smooth adaptation of IPs, boosting global accessibility and appeal.
- **Challenges And Concerns:**
  - **Broadcaster confidence in Indian IPs** – Global distributors often hesitate to back Indian-origin content, slowing mainstream adoption.
  - **Complexity in IP ownership during co-productions** – Navigating fair revenue-sharing and ownership rights in cross-border projects remains a challenge.
  - **Overcoming biases in storytelling** – Audience resistance and cultural typecasting impact how Indian stories are received internationally.
  - **Policy and skill development gaps** – Lack of structured training and government-backed incentives limits opportunities for local creators.

## Key takeaways

- **India is becoming a global content creation hub** – With a vast talent pool, cost-effective production, and strong digital infrastructure, Indian studios are shaping international IPs.
- **Authenticity in storytelling is essential** – Successful IPs blend genuine narratives with universal themes, ensuring cultural relevance and global appeal.
- **AI is enhancing scalability but lacks human creativity** – AI-driven tools boost efficiency, but emotional depth and originality remain human-led.
- **Collaboration with international studios is key** – Strong cross-border partnerships help Indian content adapt to global markets while maintaining cultural identity.
- **India's AVGC sector has untapped potential** – With policy support, investment, and skill development, India can become a dominant force in global content creation.



## Session: Film Festivals: Catalysts for Creativity, Culture and Commerce

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1430–1515 Hrs | **Venue:** Room: 205

### Speakers

- Nadia Dresti, Board Member and Industry Advisory Board Coordinator, Locarno Film Festival
- Dennis Ruh, Film and Media Industry Director and Film Festival Expert
- Shekhar Kapur, Filmmaker and Festival Director, IFFI

### Moderator

- Deepti Dcunha, Film Programmer

## Overview

To explore the evolving role of international film festivals in shaping creative careers, enabling cultural exchange, and driving commercial success, especially for emerging filmmakers from India and other underrepresented regions. The session examined how global film festivals serve as launchpads for new voices, foster cross-cultural collaboration, and bridge the gap between art and commerce. It emphasized how festivals provide exposure, co-production opportunities, and critical acclaim, forming a vital part of the global film ecosystem.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussions:**
  - o Dennis Ruh highlighted the growing commercial value of film festivals, especially when paired with structured markets like Berlinale's European Film Market. He noted how this pairing creates a fertile environment for sales, distribution, and international co-productions.
  - o He stressed that for independent filmmakers, visibility through prestigious festivals is a catalyst for scaling up creative projects and accessing global funding avenues.
  - o Nadia Dresti shared insights on initiatives like Open Doors under Locarno Pro, designed to support filmmakers from underrepresented geographies. She cited examples where such collaborations have led to global success and wider distribution networks.
  - o Shekhar Kapur offered a visionary perspective, stating that storytelling is no longer confined to traditional cinema but extends to digital platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and live theatre. He acknowledged that while mediums evolve, the core of storytelling remains cinematic and emotionally resonant.
  - o The session referenced success stories like *The Lunchbox* and *Tantigo* to

illustrate the dual creative and commercial impact of the festival circuit.

- o Kapadia's global ascent was highlighted as a reflection of how distinct Indian narratives resonate deeply with international audiences when nurtured through festivals.
- **Key Contributions:**
  - o Dennis Ruh emphasized that film markets tied to festivals are triggering a renaissance in global co-productions and sales.
  - o Nadia Dresti pointed out that films like *Tantigo* exemplify how powerful regional narratives can be scaled, remade, and rewarded across borders.
  - o Shekhar Kapur underscored the growing role of emerging technologies such as AI and immersive formats in reshaping cinema's future while keeping its emotional essence intact.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**
  - o Emerging filmmakers often lack clarity on how best to leverage festivals—for distribution, networking, or funding—which may limit their impact.
  - o There remains a need for greater support in navigating co-production agreements and accessing international financing channels.
  - o The competitive nature of top-tier festivals can overshadow equally compelling work from less resourced regions unless supported by curatorial and institutional frameworks.

## Audience Engagement

The discussion sparked thoughtful questions from attendees regarding co-production mechanisms, festival strategy, and how to approach festivals with intentionality. There was a palpable enthusiasm for learning how to align artistic ambition with commercial opportunity through the festival route.

## Key Takeaways

- Film festivals are no longer just exhibition platforms—they are engines of global cinema, fueling careers, collaborations, and commerce.
- Programs like Locarno's Open Doors exemplify how curatorial focus can empower filmmakers from underrepresented regions.
- Pairing festivals with film markets multiplies the value for independent creators by expanding access to distribution, co-productions, and financing.
- Indian filmmakers are increasingly finding success on the global stage through festivals, with storytelling that resonates across cultures.
- To fully benefit, creators must approach festivals with a clear strategy—identifying their goals, whether exposure, funding, or global partnerships.
- The future of film festivals lies in embracing diverse formats and technologies, while continuing to nurture storytelling rooted in emotion and culture.

## Session: The AI-Powered Creator Economy- Opportunities and Challenges in India

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 02:30-03:15 hrs | **Venue:** Room 206

### Speakers

- Brandon B. Braum Brandon Max, Shutter Authority:
- Raghav Anil Kumar, PiXimperfect,
- Unmesh Dinda,
- Achina Mayya

### Chairperson/Moderator

- Ajay Vidyasagar ,MD ,Youtube (South East Asia and Emerging Markets)



## Overview

The session aimed to explore the evolving relationship between human creativity and AI, focusing on how AI is enhancing productivity and transforming storytelling for creators. The goal was to demonstrate how AI tools are enabling creators to produce high-quality content at scale, streamline workflows, and democratize storytelling for people from all backgrounds and regions. Ajay opened the discussion by emphasizing the evolving role of AI in creativity and how it can enhance productivity while retaining the human touch in storytelling.

Achina and Unmesh shared how AI tools have transformed content creation, from ideation and scripting to visual assets and final outputs. The accessibility of AI for creators was discussed, highlighting how AI has made the filmmaking and content creation process more accessible, even for creators with limited resources. Brandon highlighted that AI should not overshadow the core of storytelling—great ideas, stressing the importance of vision and authenticity. Achina shared how AI tools are helping creators scale content in multiple languages, breaking down language barriers.

The panel explored how AI tools can be simplified and made accessible to everyday users, not just tech professionals. Raghav emphasized that while AI enhances creativity, it should not replace the authenticity or human element in content creation. The discussion concluded with how AI adoption can be accelerated in India by normalizing its use in daily life and empowering people of all ages and backgrounds to use these tools.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The session discussed the profound impact of AI on content creation, from automating routine tasks to enhancing the creative process. Panelists highlighted how AI tools are being used across various stages of production, making content creation faster, more accessible, and scalable. They also addressed how AI is helping creators maintain their authenticity and vision, despite the rise of automated tools.
- **Key contributions:**
  - **Ajay** set the stage by questioning the role of AI in enhancing human creativity, urging the panel to explore its potential in transforming storytelling.
  - **Achina** showcased how AI tools have streamlined the content creation process, making it possible to produce up to 100 videos per day and eliminating the fatigue of daily production.
  - **Unmesh** contributed by describing AI as a powerful assistant for creators, from ideation and content generation to publishing and enhancing videos.
  - **Raghav** shared insights on how AI has made the filmmaking process more accessible, allowing creators to achieve professional results without technical barriers.
  - **Brandon** provided a philosophical perspective on AI, emphasizing that the creator's vision remains the key element in successful storytelling, even with advanced tools at their disposal.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - There were concerns about over-relying on AI and losing the human touch in content creation. Raghav stressed that while AI is useful for enhancing creativity, it should not be used as a shortcut to produce content that lacks authenticity. Additionally, some panelists expressed the need for creators to balance AI assistance with retaining their original voice and vision. There was also concern about the potential for AI to overwhelm less tech-savvy individuals, which could leave certain groups behind if proper training and resources weren't made accessible.

## Audience Engagement

- **Real-life examples of AI in action**  
The panel shared personal experiences and examples, like Achina's use of AI avatars and voice cloning, which helped create educational videos without needing to shoot content daily.
- **Discussion on AI's accessibility for creators with limited resources.**  
Brandon and Raghav discussed how AI democratizes content creation, allowing creators with limited budgets to produce high-quality content.
- **Addressing how AI can simplify complex tasks for creators.**  
Unmesh demonstrated how AI tools can generate ideas, titles, and designs based on YouTube analytics, making the creative process more strategic and less time-consuming.
- **Interactive dialogue on AI's role in multi-language content creation.**  
Achina discussed how AI enables content creators to produce multilingual content with ease, facilitating broader audience reach.
- **Insights on empowering everyday people to use AI.**  
The panel touched on the importance of making AI tools accessible to all, with examples of people learning to use AI in non-technical fields, like teaching a cook to use Gemini.

## Key takeaways

- **AI enhances productivity in content creation.**  
AI has become an essential tool for creators, enabling them to produce more content in less time, without sacrificing quality.
- **AI democratizes storytelling.**  
AI tools allow creators from all backgrounds to produce high-quality content, breaking down barriers that once existed due to limited resources.
- **Creators should focus on their ideas, not mastering every tool.**  
Brandon's advice was to stay curious, focus on ideas, and use the best available AI tools to bring those ideas to life rather than trying to master every tool.
- **AI should enhance creativity, not replace authenticity.**  
Raghav emphasized that AI is a tool to elevate creativity but should not be used to create content that lacks human connection or authenticity.
- **AI helps scale content in multiple languages.**  
AI tools enable creators to easily produce content in multiple languages, allowing them to reach a global audience and overcome language barriers.
- **AI can be made accessible to everyday people.**  
By normalizing AI in daily life and providing training, AI can be made accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds, empowering them to become storytellers.



## Session-From Swipes to Stories: India's Interactive Media Consumer Unlocked

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1530-1615 hrs. | **Venue:** Room 203

### Speakers

- Shuji Utsumi, President and COO, Representative Director, SEGA Corporation
- Aditya Deshpande, Vice President, Lumikai:
- Salone Sehgal, Founder and Managing Partner, Lumikai

## Overview

To unveil and analyze the evolving consumption behaviors, monetization trends, and demographic shifts among India's interactive media users and gamers, based on Lumikai's annual consumer insights report.

Explore the seismic shift in gaming and interactive media, as India's digital audiences evolve beyond passive consumption into immersive, participatory experiences. Discuss how emerging technologies, behavioral trends, and new engagement models are revolutionizing interactive entertainment. Share insights on leveraging fresh consumer data, unlocking monetization opportunities, and adapting to dynamic audience preferences to shape the future of India's gaming ecosystem.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussion**
  - The session provided in-depth insights into India's rapidly evolving interactive media and gaming ecosystem. Experts highlighted India's growing audience engagement, monetization trends, and inclusivity, with gaming revenues surpassing cinema and cricket. The rise of non-metro adoption, AI-driven monetization, and transmedia storytelling signals an increasingly sophisticated and expansive gaming market. While global investment interest and scaling opportunities are on the rise, challenges such as pricing localization, ad optimization, and game development barriers remain key concerns in shaping India's gaming future.
- **Key Contributions:**
  - **India's gaming industry is thriving** – The sector reached \$3.8B in FY24 with over 590M gamers, surpassing revenues from cinema and cricket.
  - **Gaming has transitioned to interactive engagement** – Players are shifting from passive consumption to participatory and creative experiences, fueling new industry opportunities.
  - **Inclusivity is increasing** – 44% of interactive media users are women, highlighting the growing diversity in gaming audiences.

- o **Expanding beyond urban centers** – With 66% non-metro penetration, gaming adoption is accelerating across India, not just in major cities.
- o **Engagement is at an all-time high** – Gaming participation has grown by 30% YoY, with users averaging 13 hours of gameplay per week.
- o **Mid-core games drive monetization** – Titles like BGMI and Clash of Clans are leveraging in-app purchases to generate revenue.
- o **Mobile-first monetization is booming** – UPI and microtransactions dominate, with over 80% of gamers using digital payments for transactions.
- o **Regional market differences are evident** – South India leads in time spent gaming, while West India shows the highest payment propensity for purchases.
- o **Transmedia storytelling is the future** – Shuji Utsumi (SEGA) emphasized cross-platform entertainment and cultural convergence in shaping interactive experiences.
- o **India's gaming industry has massive potential** – SEGA recognized India's young talent pool and government support, reinforcing its position as an emerging global hub.
- o **SEGA is eyeing Indian partnerships** – Plans to collaborate on AI, storytelling, and mobile gaming signal long-term investment in the region.
- o **India's gaming growth parallels China's trajectory** – SEGA compared India's current industry stage to China's boom a decade ago, highlighting untapped potential.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**
  - o Lack of pricing localization by global publishers—Indian users are still subjected to Western pricing structures.
  - o Ad experiences are often poor or generic, not tailored to maturing Indian gamer preferences.
  - o Despite growth, Indian developers face challenges in scaling games to global standards.
  - o Quality expectations are rising, but high ad loads may trigger churn.

## Audience Engagement

The session sparked active audience interaction. A notable exchange featured a young gamer questioning the uniform global pricing of in-app purchases and the poor personalization of gaming ads in India. Lumikai acknowledged the gap and cited increasing eCPMs and growing maturity in ad optimization. SEGA's Utsumi welcomed the feedback and emphasized the need for deeper localization strategies. The Q&A reflected rising awareness and sophistication among Indian gamers.

## Key takeaways

- **India's gaming industry is scaling rapidly** – The sector hit **\$3.8B in FY24**, with **590M+ gamers**, surpassing revenues from cinema and cricket.
- **Gaming has shifted from passive consumption to interactive experiences** – Players now engage **creatively and socially**, driving new monetization opportunities.
- **Inclusivity is growing** – **44% of interactive media users are women**, signaling a more diverse gaming audience.
- **Non-metro gaming adoption is accelerating** – **66% penetration beyond urban centers** highlights widespread national engagement.
- **AI and microtransactions are fueling monetization** – **UPI dominates payments**, and mid-core games like **BGM lead in-app purchase revenue growth**.
- **India's potential is attracting global investment** – SEGA acknowledged **India's talent pool and government support**, announcing future partnerships in AI, storytelling, and mobile gaming.
- **Localization gaps persist** – Indian gamers face **Western pricing structures and generic ad experiences**, necessitating region-specific strategies.
- **Industry challenges remain** – While demand is rising, **Indian game developers struggle to scale globally** and meet quality expectations.

## Breakout Session: Balancing Act – Do Audiences Shape Creators or Creators Shape Audiences?

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1530–1630 Hrs | **Venue:** Room: 205

### Speakers

- Prerna Singh, CEO, Bhansali Productions, India
- Sameer Nair, CEO, Applause Entertainment, India
- Shefali Shah, Actor, India
- Aditi Rao Hydari, Actor, India
- Monika Shergill, VP Content, Netflix Indiz
- Zahan Kapoor, Actor, India

### Chairperson/Moderator

- Marya Shakil, Journalist, NDTV

## Overview

To unpack the dynamic, evolving relationship between content creators and audiences in the digital era—understanding whether content is audience-driven, creator-led, or a symbiotic reflection of both. This session investigated how storytelling, audience tastes, and digital platforms are co-evolving in the current landscape. It examined iconic Indian content that has gained global acclaim and discussed whether creators shape public sensibilities or audiences dictate creative direction.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussion**
  - o The panel opened with a reflection on the global success of Indian titles like *GangubaiKathiawadi* and *Heeramandi*—projects rooted in Indian culture but crafted with global appeal. The consensus was that authentic storytelling can transcend borders when done with emotional and visual depth.
  - o Shefali Shah shared her journey with *Delhi Crime*, explaining how audience response shaped both character depth and creative pressure in later seasons. She highlighted how audience attachment to characters transforms actors into cultural symbols.
  - o Aditi Rao Hydari described the web series format as a “marathon,” allowing deeper engagement with characters over time—reflecting audience preference for layered, emotionally resonant stories.
  - o Sameer Nair emphasized the myth of omnipotent creators. He observed that in the age of data and audience analytics, even creators are listeners—learning from how stories are consumed and iterated.
  - o Monika Shergill articulated that storytelling today exists within a fluid feedback

- loop. She called it a “chicken-and-egg” situation—creators influence trends, but audiences shape how those trends mature and spread.
- o Prerna Singh stressed the importance of rooted storytelling—how content like *Heeramandi* balances heritage, scale, and cinematic richness to resonate with both domestic and global viewers.
  - o The discussion also touched on the impact of regional storytelling, real-life adaptations, and visual spectacle in engaging new demographics.
- **Key Contributions:**
    - o Shefali Shah highlighted how audience expectations can redefine character arcs and push performance boundaries.
    - o Sameer Nair pointed out that creators today are also part of the audience ecosystem—navigating instinct, trends, and feedback.
    - o Monika Shergill emphasized that creators and audiences operate in tandem, with streaming platforms accelerating this two-way engagement.
  - **Challenges and Concerns:**
    - o There’s a growing pressure on creators to continuously evolve in response to rapidly shifting viewer tastes.
    - o Audiences can sometimes become echo chambers, rewarding familiarity over innovation.
    - o The long-format structure of digital storytelling demands not just depth but sustained audience interest across episodes and seasons.

## Audience Engagement

The session sparked interactive questions on the nature of creative autonomy in the digital age, the role of AI and data in storytelling decisions, and how actors adapt to longer narrative arcs. Attendees explored how to maintain originality while responding to audience signals.

## Key Takeaways

- There is no definitive answer to whether audiences shape creators or vice versa—it’s an ongoing, evolving dialogue.
- Digital platforms have amplified the complexity of this relationship, making it more interactive and immediate.
- Rooted, authentic stories that blend emotional truth with cinematic craftsmanship are winning globally.
- Creators must strike a balance between instinct, audience data, and the courage to take narrative risks.
- Successful storytelling today lies in this “balancing act”—where creators initiate a vision and audiences give it relevance and momentum.
- The future of content will be defined by collaboration—not just between creators and producers, but between creators and their audiences.



## Session: Empowering Regional Platforms: Globalizing Indian Content

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1530-1615 Hrs | **Venue:** Room 206

### Speakers

- Shashank Vaishnav, Co-Founder, Stage,
- Amogh Dusat, Director & Head of content, Amazon MX player,
- Vishnu Mohta, Co-founder, HoiChoi,
- Nitin Gupta, Chief Content Officer, Chaupal

### Moderator

- Gautam Raj Anand, Founder Hubhopper

## Overview

The panel discussion aimed to explore how regional content creation, distribution, and consumption are evolving within the global OTT landscape. It addressed the importance of authentic storytelling, the role of AI in localization, challenges like piracy, and how platforms are supporting regional creators. Emphasis was placed on understanding cultural nuances and how regional stories can be effectively distributed across diverse global audiences while maintaining emotional and cultural resonance.

The discussion explored how Indian films can appeal to non-Indian audiences, with insights from filmmaker Raju Hirani. It also examined the role of platforms like Chaupal, HoiChoi, MX Player, and Stage in promoting regional Indian content globally. The global success of nonfiction content was discussed, with perspectives from BBC Studios Asia, and approaches to animal and human subjects in documentaries were compared, focusing on authenticity and excellence. The panel analyzed National Geographic's maintenance of brand identity and corporate strategies like the Star-Viacom18 merger.

AI's role in enhancing scalability and personalization in dubbing and localization while retaining emotional nuances was evaluated. The impact of piracy on the content value chain and potential solutions were addressed. Finally, the discussion explored the polarization of content success in the attention economy and the role of marketing in driving content success.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The panel discussions highlighted the importance of regional content in the digital age, focusing on cultural authenticity, the role of AI in dubbing and localization, and the challenges posed by piracy. There was a collective agreement on the need for creators to own their stories, free from foreign-controlled narratives, and share them in a way that resonates emotionally with global audiences. Platforms are increasingly focusing on regional diversity, language neutrality, and tech-driven solutions to reach broader audiences.
- **Key contributions:**
  - Nitin (Chaupal) discussed the platform's commitment to preserving family-friendly content and promoting regional diversity, focusing on stories from Punjab's river-divided areas.
  - Vishnu (HoiChoi) shared insights into the challenges of distributing content globally, emphasizing that success is unpredictable and depends on local cultural nuances, not just language.
  - Amogh (MX Player) highlighted how tech has broken down language barriers, allowing content to be accessible to a wider audience, regardless of language, and how MX Player is catering to diverse audiences with its vast catalog.
  - Stage emphasized a culture-first approach, expanding from 3 dialects to 20+, ensuring that content resonates emotionally with audiences in their native languages
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - Piracy continues to be a significant concern, undermining content value and impacting creators, producers, and jobs. Platforms face the challenge of protecting intellectual property while offering affordable, accessible content. AI-driven localization, while a cost-saver, poses a risk of losing emotional depth and cultural authenticity, as regional content thrives on emotional storytelling that AI may not fully capture.

## Audience Engagement

- **Cultural Understanding:** The importance of understanding and addressing cultural nuances was emphasized to ensure content resonates with local and global audiences.

- **Platforms:** The role of platforms like Chaupal in promoting regional, family-oriented content sparked discussions on how local stories can be told to global audiences.

## Key takeaways

- **Regional Storytelling:** Authentic regional storytelling is crucial for breaking global stereotypes and offering a true representation of cultures.
- **No linguistic barrier:** Language is no longer a barrier for content consumption, as audiences are drawn to compelling stories rather than language-specific content.
- **Dubbing with AI:** AI in dubbing and localization offers scalability but must be balanced with emotional depth and cultural relevance to avoid losing the essence of regional narratives.
- **Piracy as a challenge:** Piracy remains a persistent challenge that requires more robust policy enforcement and collaborations across platforms to ensure creators are protected.
- **Expanded portfolio:** Platforms are increasingly focusing on expanding their offerings in local dialects, ensuring that regional stories resonate deeply with users in their mother tongue.

## Session: Beyond the Stage - Theatre 2.0 needs a New Act

**Date:** 02 May 2025 | **Time:** 1630 – 1730 Hrs. | **Venue:** Room No 202

### Speakers

- Amita Prasad Sarbhai, Additional Secretary, MoC, GoI
- Chittaranjan Tripathi, Director, National School of Drama
- Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Actor, NSD Alumni
- Sawanand Kirkire, Writer and Actor

### Moderator

- Mita Vashisht, Actor

## Overview

The session explored how Indian theatre, rooted in *Natyashastra*, remains a powerful medium for societal reflection, healing, and education. It emphasized theatre's role beyond entertainment—highlighting its scientific and emotional foundations. Speakers discussed the need to integrate modern technology, ensure wider access through NSD's outreach initiatives, and preserve folk and classical forms. The goal: democratize theatre, make it relevant in the digital era, and elevate it to a global stage.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - Theatre was framed as a deeply human art, crucial for emotional connection in a tech-dominated world. NSD's unique training—grounded in physical, emotional, and spiritual awareness—was celebrated. The session stressed expanding theatre's reach to all age groups and communities, leveraging government support, and adapting theatre education for current and future generations. Key contributions:
  - NSD Alumni: Shared journeys from stage to screen; emphasized theatre's transformative power and need for national expansion.
  - Ministry of Culture: Outlined initiatives including funding, new NSD branches, and global collaborations.
  - Practitioners: Highlighted theatre as a space for honesty and healing, especially in contrast to digital superficiality.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - Sustainability of Institutions: Maintaining long-term support while

adapting to change.

- o Balancing Tech & Tradition: Integrating innovation without losing theatrical authenticity.
- o Inclusive Education: Scaling theatre training to rural and underrepresented populations.

## Key Takeaways

- Theatre is a tool for personal truth, cultural identity, and collective healing—urgently needed today.
- *Natyashastra* offers a scientific, holistic foundation for performance art, now globally recognized.
- Government and NSD are pushing for modernization, wider access, and international presence.
- Folk traditions evoke deep memory and emotion, reinforcing theatre's cultural importance.
- A thoughtful blend of tradition, inclusivity, and technology will define Theatre 2.0's future.



## Session: Lights, Camera, Destination! Branding India Through Films

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 1600–1730 Hrs | **Venue:** Room: 205

### Speakers

- Mugdha Sinha, Managing Director, India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), Government of India
- Prithul Kumar, Joint Secretary (I&B) and Managing Director, National Film Development Corporation (NFDC)
- Bhumi Pednekar, Actress
- Nitin Tej Ahuja, CEO, Producers Guild of India
- Rajender Kumar, Secretary (Tourism), Government of Gujarat

### Moderator

- Supriya Suri, Founder, Creative Economic Forum

## Overview

This session explores the intersection of film tourism, cultural identity, and India's role in global soft power. The discussion will focus on how Indian cinema promotes tourism by showcasing the country's landscapes and culture, positioning India as a global destination. The session aims to highlight the strategic role of Indian cinema in boosting tourism and shaping global perceptions of India. Panellists will discuss how iconic Indian films and locations serve as cultural touchstones that encourage global tourism and foster a deeper understanding of Indian culture.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussions:**
  - **Film Tourism as Soft Power:** Speakers explored how cinema, through its portrayal of Indian landmarks and superstars' homes (like those of Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan), has become a tool for global cultural exchange.
  - **Tech Integration in Film:** The growing influence of VFX and digital technology in Indian cinema was discussed. Films like *Baahubali* and the upcoming *Ramayana* are pushing India towards a leadership role in visual storytelling.
  - **Addressing Cinematic Stereotypes:** Panelists discussed how Indian

cinema should reclaim its narrative, moving away from the stereotypical portrayal seen in films like *Slumdog Millionaire* and *Monsoon Wedding*. The importance of authentic, homegrown storytelling was emphasized.

- o **Cultural Pride and Global Connectivity:** Indian cultural values such as family, tradition, and history should remain central to cinema, as they have universal appeal and resonate worldwide.
- o **Language and Tech for Global Appeal:** The potential for Indian cinema to break language barriers using multilingual subtitles and other technology was discussed as a means to enhance global accessibility while preserving cultural integrity.

### Key Contributions:

- o Mugdha Sinha emphasized the role of iconic sites like Film City in boosting tourism through cinematic ties.
- o Prithul Kumar noted the importance of positioning India as a destination for both tourists and filmmakers.
- o Bhumi Pednekar shared her experiences with films that showcase Indian culture and family values.
- o Rajender Kumar talked about how Gujarat's tourism initiatives tie into cinematic promotions.
- o Nitin Tej Ahuja discussed the role of producers in facilitating collaboration between tourism boards and filmmakers.

### Challenges and Concerns:

- o Films like *Slumdog Millionaire* often perpetuate one-dimensional, poverty-focused stereotypes of India, which may misrepresent the country's diversity.
- o How to integrate technology and culture without losing the essence of Indian identity, especially when appealing to international audiences.

## Audience Engagement

The session was interactive, with questions from the audience about how specific locations like Rajasthan and Gujarat have benefited from film tourism. Attendees also explored the potential impact of digital platforms in bringing Indian stories to new international audiences.

## Key Takeaways

- **Film Tourism's Role in India's Global Soft Power:** Indian films promote tourism through their depiction of scenic locations and iconic landmarks, boosting both tourism and cultural exchange.
- **Leveraging Technology for Global Impact:** Indian cinema's use of VFX and digital tools places it in competition with global cinematic powers, opening doors to economic growth.
- **Owning the Narrative:** India must take control of its own stories, presenting an authentic, nuanced image of the country through homegrown filmmakers.
- **Cultural Pride and Representation:** Preserving Indian cultural values in films helps maintain global respect and recognition.
- **Multilingual and Cultural Integration:** By embracing technological solutions like multilingual subtitles, Indian cinema can overcome language barriers while preserving its cultural authenticity.

## Future of News and Entertainment in the Age of AI

**Date:** 2nd May 2025 | **Time:** 04:15-05:00 hrs | **Venue:** 206

### Speakers

- Shekhar Kapur, Filmmaker
- Timur Bekmambetov, Filmmaker
- Vijay Subramaniam, Founder & Group CEO, Collective Artists Network
- Ms Viktoria Polikarpova, Head of Sputnik International
- Bivek Sharma, Chief AI officer PwC, UK

### Moderator/Chairperson

- Pragya Misra, Lead Public Policy & Partnerships for India, Open AI

## Overview:

The session aimed to explore the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence in democratizing storytelling and disrupting traditional models across media, content creation, journalism, and business. By highlighting how AI is empowering grassroots creators, flattening organizational hierarchies, and redefining creativity and economic models, the session sought to emphasize AI's potential as a tool for societal change. It also addressed the shift from augmentation to full-scale AI-generated content, legal and ethical complexities, and India's unique opportunity in this evolving global narrative.

The discussion explored how AI enables wider access to filmmaking and storytelling, examining AI's role in shifting hierarchies and empowering marginalized voices. It highlighted drastic reductions in production costs through AI tools and discussed copyright issues, monetization models, and valuation challenges. Insights into AI-led transformation in jobs, film schools, and journalism were shared, emphasizing how local stories can gain global traction via AI platforms, showcasing India's unique creative opportunity in this evolving landscape.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The session focused on how AI is catalyzing a bottom-up transformation in creative industries, challenging traditional gatekeepers and empowering underrepresented voices. Through real-world examples, such as AI film schools for underprivileged youth and cleaning staff mastering prompting over CEOs, the discourse highlighted a paradigm shift where access to intelligence and tools trumps formal credentials. The conversation extended to new commercial models, AI's role in journalism, and the rise of the creator economy.

- **Key contributions:**
  - Participants contributed thought-provoking perspectives on how AI tools like Sora, Stable Diffusion, and voice cloning are lowering barriers to entry across industries. Examples of content creation by grassroots creators, implementation of AI in newsrooms for efficiency, and blockchain-based compensation mechanisms showcased practical innovations. Venture capitalists shared views on the disruption of legacy models and the emergence of AI-native startups with higher agility and reach.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - Despite optimism, several concerns were raised, including legal ambiguities around copyright and AI training data, ethical implications of synthetic content, and the risk of job displacement. The blurred line between AI-assisted and AI-created content raised questions about authenticity and human creativity. Additionally, valuation challenges and economic myths surrounding AI-driven startups were discussed as emerging hurdles in the evolving landscape.

## Audience Engagement

- **Real-time Polling:** Engaged the audience with questions about AI use in their fields.
- **Live Demos:** Showcased AI tools like montage generators and voice cloners.
- **Interactive Q&A:** Encouraged discussions on personal experiences with AI in content creation.
- **Breakout Discussions:** Facilitated small group exchanges on legal, ethical, and economic dimensions.

## Key takeaways

- **AI is a creative equalizer:** It democratizes access to storytelling and challenges legacy power structures.
- **Prompting is the new literacy:** Skill in interacting with AI tools can outweigh traditional qualifications.
- **Cost and scale disruption is real:** AI drastically reduces production costs and scales content to billions of devices.
- **Legal frameworks must evolve:** Current contracts and IP laws are not equipped for AI-generated content.
- **India is poised for a creative boom:** With AI, small-town voices can reach and resonate with global audiences.
- **Human creativity remains vital:** Despite AI's rise, true creativity still lies in human chaos and emotion.



## Session: VFX in APAC: The Scanline Lens

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1715-1800Hrs | **Venue:** Room 206

### Speakers

- Greg Anderson, Chief Operating Officer, Scanline VFX

## Overview

The objective of Greg Anderson's presentation was to outline the strategic vision, operational excellence, and technological innovation driving Scanline VFX and Eyeline Studios, with a focus on their integration with Netflix, expansion into India, and the transformative role of AI in VFX workflows. Anderson aimed to highlight the company's creator-first culture, global collaboration, and commitment to developing local talent in Hyderabad to support high-quality, impactful visual storytelling across film, TV, gaming, and anime.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The presentation centered on Scanline VFX and Eyeline Studios' pivotal role in delivering high-end visual effects for global content, underscored by their integration with Netflix since 2021, which enables early collaboration with content teams for enhanced creative outcomes. Anderson emphasized the company's "bold, beautiful, believable" creative ethos and its people-first culture, supported by a 24/7 global pipeline of over 1,000 artists across six countries. The strategic expansion into Hyderabad was a key focus, highlighting its role as a hub for operational and creative excellence, with seamless collaboration across global teams. Anderson also discussed the transformative potential of AI in VFX, positioning it as a tool to enhance artist workflows by automating repetitive tasks, alongside the company's patented technologies in computer vision and lighting. The discussion extended to the applicability of VFX expertise in gaming and anime, with an emphasis on the creative-technical overlap across these media.
- **Key contributions:**
  - Anderson's presentation contributed valuable insights into the evolving VFX industry, particularly the strategic importance of India in global content creation. His emphasis on Hyderabad as a hub for talent development and operational scalability showcased a forward-thinking

approach to global workflows. The integration of AI as a creative enabler, rather than a threat, provided a nuanced perspective on technology adoption, supported by Eyeline's R&D advancements in computer vision and machine learning. The discussion of open-source versus proprietary AI tools highlighted the need for differentiation to maintain a competitive edge. Additionally, Anderson's vision for a creator-first culture and mentorship-driven growth resonated as a model for fostering innovation and collaboration in a global creative industry.

- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - Key challenges included the open-source nature of AI, which complicates differentiation in a competitive market, requiring first-mover strategies to establish a strategic edge. Anderson noted that while AI is early-stage, its integration into proprietary workflows must be carefully managed to maximize efficiency without compromising creative integrity. The expansion into Hyderabad, while promising, raises concerns about building a robust local talent pool capable of supporting global workflows. Additionally, the lack of current plans for Eyeline stage builds in India poses a potential limitation for scaling advanced production capabilities locally, though Anderson indicated openness to future opportunities.

## Audience Engagement

- **Q&A on AI Impact:** Interactive Q&A session on AI's role in VFX, with audience questions about its impact on job roles.
- **Polls on Hyderabad's Potential:** Polls on the potential of Hyderabad as a global VFX hub, sparking lively discussions.
- **Case Study Showcases:** Case study showcases of Scanline's work (e.g., Your Office), which captivated the audience.
- **Career Opportunity Dialogue:** Open dialogue on mentorship and career opportunities for Indian artists, resonating with local attendees.
- **Tech Demo Enthusiasm:** Live demo of Eyeline's patented lighting techniques, drawing strong interest from tech enthusiasts.

## Key takeaways

- **Industry Leadership:** Scanline VFX and Eyeline Studios are leaders in high-end VFX, with a creator-first approach and global pipeline delivering over 70 titles annually.
- **Hyderabad's Strategic Role:** Hyderabad's strategic expansion strengthens

global workflows, with a focus on developing local talent.

- **AI as a Creative Tool:** AI is a transformative tool for VFX, enhancing efficiency by automating repetitive tasks while preserving creative storytelling.
- **R&D Innovation:** Eyeline's R&D in computer vision and lighting, backed by patents, drives innovation in production challenges.
- **AI Differentiation Challenges:** The open-source nature of AI presents differentiation challenges, but first-mover advantages are critical.
- **Cross-Media Expertise:** VFX expertise is transferable to gaming and anime, with shared creative-technical skillsets.
- **India's Global Impact:** India, particularly Hyderabad, is poised to play a pivotal role in the future of global content and technology.

## Masterclass: AI in Gaming & Esports: Unlocking Business Value in the fastest-growing Sector

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1000-1030Hrs | **Venue:** Room 204A

**Speaker**

■ Girish Menon, Chief Strategy Officer, Jetsynthesys

## Masterclass: Insights into Filmmaking and the Entertainment Industry

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1130-1330 Hrs | **Venue:** Room 204A

**Speaker**

■ Michael Lehmann

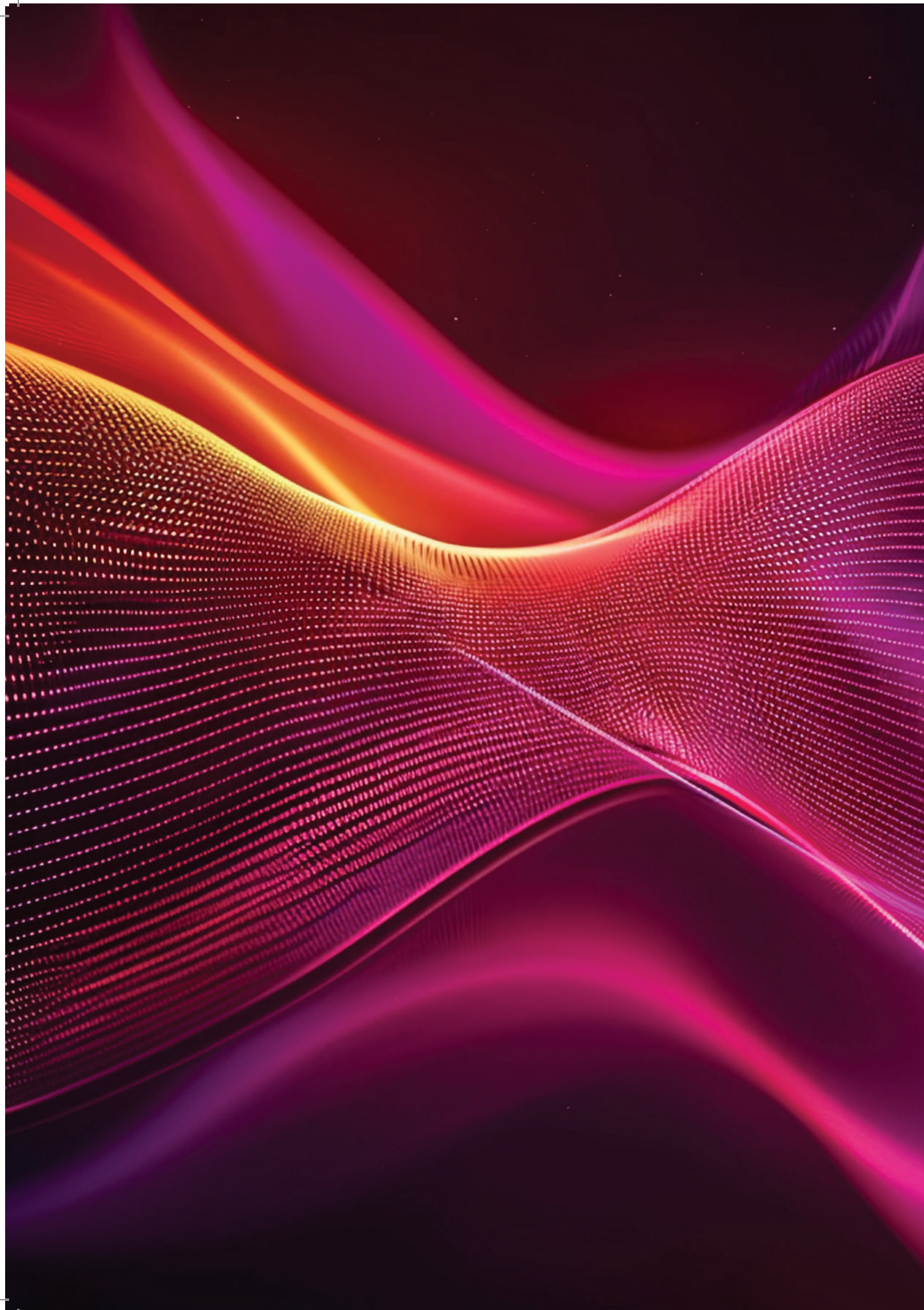
## Masterclass :The Craft of Direction

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1130-1330 Hrs | **Venue:** Room 204A

**Speaker**

■ Farhan Akhtar, Director, Producer & Actor





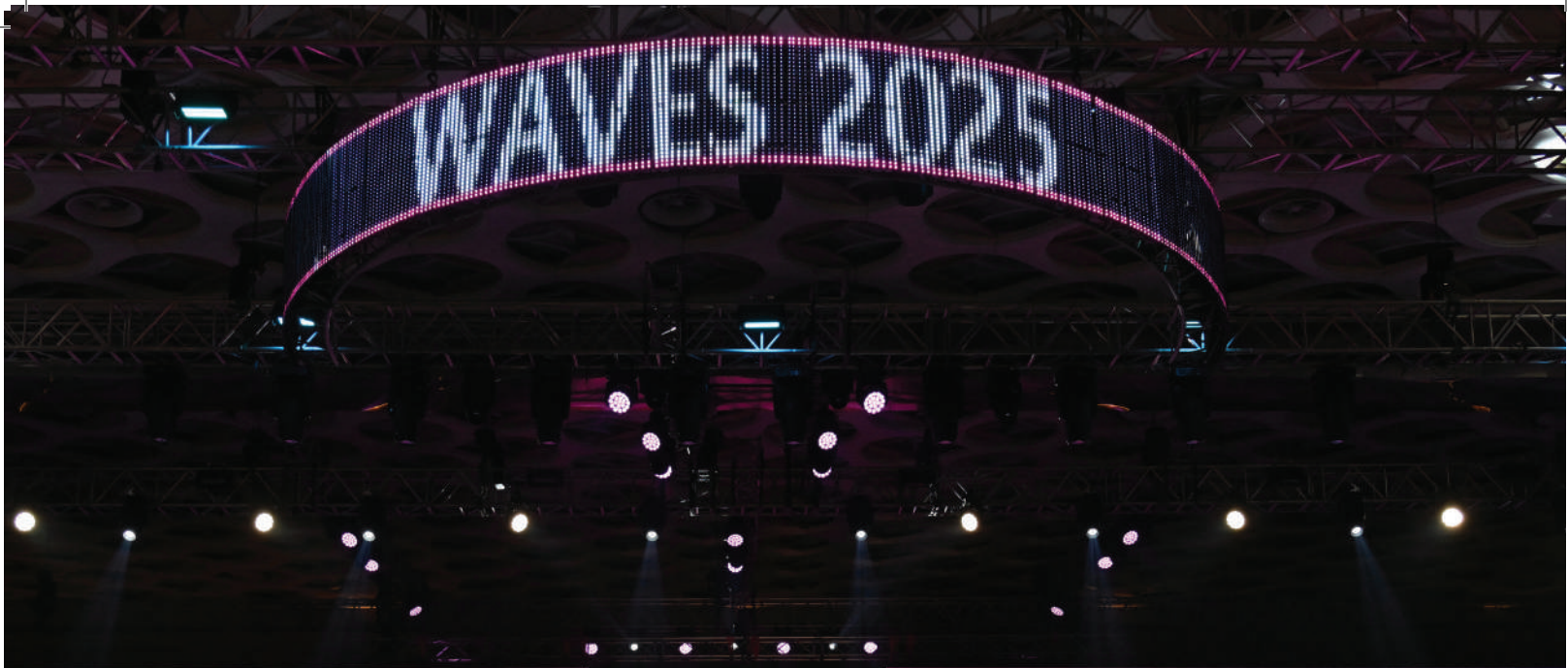


# Day 3

## Plenary & Sessions









## Plenary - Live, Immersive and Digital Experience: How Sports Leagues are driving innovation

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 10:00 – 10:45 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine I

### Speakers

- Anil Kumble, Former Indian Cricketer,
- Vita Dani, Co-founder of Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) & Co-owner of ISL club Chennai FC,
- Matthew Hayden, Former Cricketer,
- Monish Shah, Founder & CEO of DreamSetGo

### Chairperson/Moderator

- Jatin Sapru, sports broadcaster-television host and cricket commentator

## Overview

The session aimed to explore how technology is transforming fan engagement and the broader sports ecosystem in India. By bringing together industry leaders and athletes, the conversation focused on leveraging innovation, data, and immersive tools to elevate sporting experiences, build fan communities, drive participation, and ultimately contribute to sporting excellence, including medal aspirations. The panel delved into storytelling, localization, AI-driven personalization, and infrastructure for grassroots and elite development.

The discussion examined how technology is reshaping the way fans engage with sports across platforms, using data analytics, AI, and immersive content to inform gameplay and enhance audience connection. Localization and personalized commentary through regional languages and cultural storytelling were highlighted to deepen fan engagement. The emergence of short-form content, behind-the-scenes access, and athlete branding were discussed as key strategies for content and player visibility. The importance of investing in youth, multisport culture, and future-ready sports tech ecosystems was emphasized. The session also imagined the possibilities of "blank cheque" innovations, envisioning a future without budget constraints.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - o The panel discussed the multi-dimensional transformation of sports through technology and storytelling. From heat mapping in table tennis to bat sensor data in cricket, technology is helping improve both

performance and viewer experience. The conversation emphasized the convergence of real-time data, AI tools, regional content, and grassroots initiatives to expand sports accessibility and appeal. Personalization and immersive experiences were recognized as critical to engaging the next generation of fans.

- **Key contributions:**

- Vita Dani showcased how UTT is using visual tools like two-colored balls and audio innovation to elevate the table tennis viewing experience. Anil Kumble stressed localization and fan-first design in sports tech, citing innovations like Spektacom and regional language commentary. Matthew Hayden advocated for metrics that celebrate athleticism and championed AI's role in cross-cultural commentary. Monish Shah highlighted the evolution of fan journeys—from physical souvenirs to real-time apps—and the role of AI in enhancing them.

- **Challenges and concerns:**

- The panel acknowledged several concerns, including the need for wider investment beyond cricket, better grassroots support, and the potential of private equity overshadowing genuine community-building. They noted the need to maintain fairness and integrity in sport while integrating tech, and the importance of making sports participation inclusive in a health-challenged country like India.

## Audience Engagement

- **Multi-Language Commentary Options:** Use of platforms like JioCinema to offer regional commentary streams.
- **Immersive Audio and Visuals:** Innovative mic setups and camera angles to enhance sensory connection with the sport.
- **Second-Screen Consumption:** Viewers watching games while simultaneously engaging with statistics and behind-the-scenes content.
- **Athlete-Led Content:** Players embracing cameras and content creation for deeper fan involvement.
- **Fan Memory Mapping:** Digital tools like memory websites and apps that track fan experiences and journeys.

## Key takeaways

- **Technology is Central to Modern Fan Engagement:** Tools like sensors, AI, and immersive content are shaping how fans experience sport.
- **Localization Drives Reach:** Commentary in native languages builds strong regional connections and expands audiences.
- **Short-Form and Behind-the-Scenes Content is Vital:** Modern fans demand diverse content formats and real-time insights.
- **Grassroots Investment is Critical:** Long-term sporting success relies on developing a wide base of talent and infrastructure.
- **Cross-Sport Innovation is Needed:** Tech solutions must expand beyond cricket to benefit India's entire sports ecosystem.
- **Sports Must Inspire Participation:** Beyond entertainment, sport has the power to improve lives and build national pride.

## Fireside Chat - Media in India: Past 25 years and Journey Ahead - to 2047

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 10:50 – 11:05 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine I

### Speakers

■ Uday Shankar, Vice Chairman, JioStar

### Chairperson/Moderator

■ Vivek Couto, Managing & Executive Director, Media Partners Asia

## Overview

The session discussed India's media and entertainment industry, focusing on local creativity, regional storytelling, digital innovation, and future growth. It examined content creation, distribution, monetization, and regulatory challenges, emphasizing the importance of adapting to market changes.

## Key Discussions:

- **Summary:**
  - India's media growth is driven by regional content and digital access, but outdated models and limited creators are challenges. Regulatory frameworks need updating for TV and digital platforms.
- **Contributions:**
  - Uday Shankar stressed affordable pricing, regional content, and the need for more creative talent.
- **Challenges:**
  - Content creator shortages, outdated production models, Bollywood stagnation, and regulatory constraints.

## Key Takeaways:

- **Localization is Essential:** Focus on Indian narratives.
- **Talent Needs to Scale:** Demand exceeds current capacity.
- **Both Streaming & Pay TV Are Growing:** Both segments thrive in India.
- **Monetization Must Evolve:** Ads and subscriptions are outdated.
- **Affordability is Key:** Low pricing is critical.
- **Policy Must Adapt to Digital:** Regulations need flexibility.



## Plenary: Connected Devices Changing the World of Entertainment

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 11:10 – 11:55 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine I

### Speakers

- Sushant Sreeram, Chief Marketing Officer, JioStar,
- Brijesh Bhatia, VP, Wearables Engineering, Meta,
- Tushar Vyas, CSO, WPP,
- Nitin Pai, CMO, Tata Elxsi

### Moderator

- Technical Guruji (Gaurav Chaudhary)

## Overview

The session explored how connected devices, AI, and design are reshaping entertainment in India, especially in Tier 2/3 cities. It highlighted trends like multi-device use, personalized content, smart wearables, and immersive, localized experiences. The goal: to build seamless, emotionally engaging ecosystems driven by user behavior.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary:**
  - Shift from TV to multi-device experiences. JioStar's Max View format engaged 20M+ users; personalization via ML reached half a billion. Smart glasses with AI/AR aim to enhance real-world interaction.
- **Contributions:**
  - Brijesh Bhatia on smart glasses democratizing content; Sushant Sreeram on JioStar's reach; Nitin Pai on design simplifying tech; Tushar Vyas on ads as content journeys.
- **Challenges:**
  - Balancing seamless design across devices, managing tech scalability, preventing digital isolation, and ensuring wearables enhance human connection.

## Audience Engagement

- Seamless design across devices
- Personalization in smaller cities

- Practical uses of smart glasses
- Making ads feel native
- Handling IPL-scale surges
- Future of content formats

## Key Takeaways

- Entertainment is multi-device and unified
- Personalization drives engagement, especially in smaller cities
- AI/AR will define next-gen interfaces
- Design is key to user-friendly tech
- Ads must integrate into content
- Traditional screens may fadeDiverse content formats will coexist

## Fireside Chat - Streaming the New India: Culture, Connectivity & Creative Capital

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 12:00 – 12:30 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine I

### Speakers

■ Mr. Ted Sarandos, CEO, Netflix

### Chairperson/Moderator

■ Saif Ali Khan, Actor



## Overview

The session explored how streaming platforms, especially Netflix, have transformed Indian storytelling. It focused on creative freedom, global reach for local stories, and cultural and economic impacts. With voices like Saif Ali Khan and Ted Sarandos, the discussion highlighted streaming's role in reshaping narratives, audience engagement, and the future of entertainment.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary:**

Netflix's entry with *Sacred Games* marked a shift toward diverse, experimental content in India. Saif Ali Khan discussed how streaming empowers actors and storytelling. Ted Sarandos highlighted how authentic

local stories, like *Roma* and *Squid Game*, succeed globally. The platform has generated \$2B in economic impact and produced 150 Indian originals, while also coexisting with traditional cinema.

- **Key contributions:**

Saif shared how streaming extends content life and allows deeper character work. He emphasized India's storytelling heritage. Ted shared global strategy insights and noted 3B hours of Indian content watched worldwide, reinforcing the demand for authentic, local stories.

- **Challenges and concerns:**

Balancing cultural authenticity with global appeal is key. The rise of streaming raises questions about cinema's future, though India shows potential for coexistence. Attention span concerns persist, but strong content still draws long engagement.

## Audience Engagement

- High Netflix usage confirmed through polling
- Saif and Ted's Q&A on storytelling's future
- Personal stories and global examples resonated deeply with the audience

## Key Takeaways

- **Streaming Is Transformative:** It enables creative freedom, global exposure, and instant access.
- **Local Stories Have Global Power:** Authentic narratives connect worldwide when rooted in culture.
- **Economic & Cultural Impact Is Significant:** \$2B impact and 3B hours of Indian content viewed globally.
- **Streaming and Cinema Can Coexist:** India's audience supports both formats.
- **Storytelling Is Evolving:** Long-form, culturally rich content continues to thrive.
- **Success Drives Broader Effects:** Hit shows influence tourism, media, and culture.

## Announcement, Release of Report - MPA Report Launch

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 12:35 – 01:30 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine I

### Speakers

- Charles Rivkin, Chairman and CEO, MPA,
- HMOS, I&B

## Overview

The session highlighted India's rising influence in global entertainment and the Motion Picture Association's (MPA) commitment to fueling its creative economy. Key findings from MPA's report showed the sector generates \$60 billion and supports 2.6 million jobs. The discussion stressed the need for policy-industry alignment in IP protection, workforce development, and global partnerships to help India achieve its \$100 billion creative economy goal.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- The MPA and Government of India emphasized shared goals for industry growth. Charles Rivkin underscored MPA's role in policy, investment, and promoting Indian content globally.
- Dr. L. Murugan highlighted the government's initiatives in IP protection, production incentives, and promoting Indian cinema internationally.
- Challenges included IP enforcement, skilling for global demand, and ethical AI use in content creation.

## Audience Engagement

- Presentation of MPA's economic data and industry showcase video.
- Strong turnout from policymakers and industry leaders.
- Success stories like *RRR* and *Baahubali* resonated widely.

## Key Takeaways

- India's entertainment sector is a global economic force.
- MPA is committed to long-term investment and collaboration.
- Strong IP frameworks and anti-piracy laws are vital.
- Streaming is accelerating global reach for Indian stories.
- Public-private partnerships are key to scaling India's creative economy to \$100 billion.



## Plenary: Lights, Camera, XR: Production is reshaping Global Cinema

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 2:30 PM – 3:15 PM | **Venue:** Jasmine I

### Speakers

- Ketan Mehta (Indian Film Director)
- Brian Nitzkin, Senior Vice President of Business Development, Orbital Studios
- Simon Ingram, Journalist & Author
- Ashish Kulkarni, Ex- Chairman of AVGC -XR Forum-FICCI, Founder, PunnaryugArtvision Pvt Ltd

### Moderator

- Rajeev Kheror: CEO, Lytus Studios & OTT



## Overview

The session explores how VFX, Virtual Production (VP), and Extended Reality (XR) are transforming Indian cinema, enhancing production efficiency, and boosting India's global filmmaking presence. It focuses on the current state of VP and XR in India, the challenges, opportunities, and global partnerships shaping the future of the industry.

## Key Discussions

- **Cinematic Revolution:** Virtual environments are becoming a new language of visual storytelling, blending imagination with execution.

- **VP and XR in India:** Adoption began 3-4 years ago, with Mumbai and Hyderabad leading. VP is gaining traction in period films and web series.
- **Industry Evolution:** India's AVGC-XR ecosystem is well-developed, with significant world-class VFX output. Scaling is expected in the next few years.
- **Shifting Trends in Hollywood:** Hollywood is embracing collaboration and integrated workflows to reduce time and costs, which India can adopt.
- **Cultural and Global Shifts:** India must embrace the evolving production culture and its linguistic diversity to succeed in VP.
- **Future Outlook:** In 7-10 years, India is expected to be a major player in animation, gaming, and VFX, benefiting from cost advantages and strong policies.

## Audience Engagement

- **Growth Potential:** The VP industry is set to grow from \$5 billion in 2025 to \$11 billion within 7 years, excluding sectors like gaming, sports, and education.
- **Government Support:** National and state-level policies are fostering industry growth with incentives, infrastructure, and international partnerships.
- **Skilled Workforce:** India aims to scale its workforce to 2 million professionals by 2030.

## Key Takeaways

- **VP Growth:** India's VP and AVGC-XR industry, although in early stages, is evolving rapidly with strong production capabilities.
- **Adapting to Change:** Filmmakers must embrace VP to streamline production and save time and costs.
- **Collaboration is Key:** Effective collaboration and education on technology's potential are crucial to ecosystem growth.
- **Global Leadership:** India is on track to become a global leader in VP and immersive media in the next 7-10 years.
- **Challenges:** High initial costs, talent shortages, and creative evolution are obstacles, along with a need for better marketing and distribution strategies.

## Session: Crafting the impossible: Practical stunts and digital worlds in the age of AI

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1515-1600 hrs. | **Venue:** Jasmine I

### Speakers

- Dan Glass, Global Creative Director, DNEG ,
- Guy Norris, Action Director

### Moderator

- Biren Ghose; Chairman, CII National Committee & Former Managing Director – APAC - Technicolor Group

## Overview

This session explores the intersection of traditional practical stunts and cutting-edge technologies like AI and VFX in modern filmmaking. It discusses how these tools are used to enhance action sequences, create realistic visuals, and push the boundaries of storytelling. The integration of digital tools with human ingenuity is emphasized, addressing both the opportunities and challenges that arise. The session covers the evolving definition of realism, the collaboration between human creativity and technology, and how AI and VFX are transforming action filmmaking into more immersive, visually stunning experiences.

- **Key Contributions:**

- **Blending movement art with visual storytelling:** The fusion of practical stunts and digital effects is shaping the future of action films.
- **Technology as an enabler, not a replacement:** AI and VFX enhance storytelling but do not replace the emotional connections built through human creativity.
- **Evolution of immersive digital storytelling:** Technology enables multi-layered, interactive experiences, enhancing audience engagement beyond linear narratives.

- **Challenges and Concerns:**

- **Audience attention in evolving narratives:** As technology reshapes storytelling, keeping audiences engaged remains a challenge.
- **Exposure for emerging creators:** New business models create more competition, making it difficult for creators to gain recognition.

- **IP protection in a digital-first era:** With remote work increasing, protecting character rights is crucial, though story protection is complex.

## Audience Engagement

- **Storytelling vs. Technology:** Emphasizing that characters and emotional connection remain central to storytelling, even with technological advancements.
- **IP protection from employees:** Remote work has proven artists' trustworthiness, though protecting characters rather than stories is more feasible.
- **Capturing audience attention in a competitive ecosystem:** With a growing number of creators, exposure and finding platforms for shorter content is crucial.

## Key Takeaways

- **Improved stunt safety:** AI and VFX enhance safety for stuntmen, enabling more complex stunts with fewer risks. Face-swapping and motion capture further streamline production.
- **Human involvement remains critical:** Despite digital avatars, human physicality drives avatar movement, underscoring the need for artists to upskill alongside technological progress.
- **Storytelling at the forefront:** Technology amplifies the narrative but storytelling remains the core of creating emotional connections.
- **Creative tools and challenges:** Advanced production tools and AI-driven idea generation expand creative possibilities but introduce challenges in cost management and efficient production.
- **Ongoing challenges for creators:** Gaining exposure, securing IP, and keeping audiences engaged remain key hurdles in the evolving creative landscape.

## Plenary: OTT Revolution: How AI, Personalization & Interactive Content Are Changing Streaming Landscape

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 10:00 – 10:45 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine III

### Speakers

- Gaurav Gandhi, Vice-President, Asia-Pacific & MENA, Prime Video,
- Monika Shergil, VP - Content, Netflix India,
- Neeraj Roy, Managing Director, Hungama Digital Media Entertainment,
- Gaurav Banerjee, MD and CEO, Sony Pictures Networks India,
- Bharath Ram, Chief Product Officer, JioStar

### Moderator

- Rohit Jain, President, Lionsgate Play Asia

## Overview

The session explored how AI and technology are transforming India's entertainment industry, focusing on content creation, personalization, and audience engagement. It discussed the shift from traditional storytelling to tech-driven formats, with platforms using AI to enhance user experiences and broaden reach through multilingual content. The role of sports events like IPL in converting viewers into long-term consumers was highlighted, along with the rise of the creator economy driven by accessible AI tools. Future monetization models, community engagement formats like live events, and the need for talent development were also addressed. Overall, the session emphasized how technology is reshaping content, empowering creators, and driving sustainable growth in industry.

## Key Discussions

- **Personalization & Technology:** AI, data, and behavior tracking are central to personalizing content and engaging users. Platforms now act as enablers for creators, who bring pre-validated audiences.
- **Explosion of Content:** AI tools have democratized content creation, leading to an explosion of genres.
- **Monetization:** Focus on data leasing and integrated commerce models, while ensuring deep storytelling.
- **Creator Empowerment:** AI is enabling even non-technical creators to craft personalized content and ads.



- **Challenges:** Content oversaturation, limited user attention, and outdated monetization models. There's also a need for industry-academia partnerships and careful management of personalization to avoid echo chambers.

## Audience Engagement

- **Polling:** Real-time feedback on content personalization preferences.
- **Creator Q&A:** Discussions on monetization and platform partnerships.
- **AI Demonstrations:** Exploring the use of AI in storytelling.
- **Language Preferences:** Insights on managing multilingual needs.

## Key Takeaways

- **Personalization is Strategic:** It's about understanding user behavior and emotions, not just technical algorithms.
- **AI Levels the Playing Field:** Non-tech creators can now leverage AI for content creation.
- **Platforms as Coaches:** Platforms are shifting to be partners, helping creators with pre-validated content.
- **Sports as Viewer Retention Funnel:** Events like IPL are key for long-term audience engagement.
- **India's Creative Potential:** With a young population and increasing digital access, India is set for a global storytelling boom.
- **Evolving Monetization:** Data-driven commerce and creator marketplaces will drive future growth.
- **Upskilling Talent:** Structured learning programs are critical for scaling content creation talent.

## Plenary - Evolution of Digital News: Staying Relevant in the Age of Information Overload

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 10:50 – 11:35 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine III

### Speakers

- Sanjay Sindhwani, CEO, The Indian Express Digital,
- Ashok Bagriya, Head, RT India,
- Nalin Mehta, Managing Editor, MoneyControl

### Moderator

- Siddharth Zarabi, Editor, Business Today

## Overview

The session explored the future of digital news amid growing influence from AI, algorithmic content distribution, and evolving audience behavior. Media leaders discussed the decline of editorial control, the dominance of Big Tech in news distribution and monetization, and the urgent need to rebuild trust in journalism. Core topics included the breakdown of ad-based revenue models, the rise of regional language content, shifting media literacy habits (from reading to voice and AI), and the contrast between print's curated trust and digital's algorithmic curation. Also addressed were misinformation risks, declining youth attention spans, and the growing preference for creator-led news over traditional media brands.

## Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The panel noted a major power shift from publishers to tech platforms, driven by opaque algorithms. AI is reshaping content discovery, while ad-based models are failing. Diversified monetization—like paywalls and services—is necessary. Regional content is growing, editorial authority is fading, and trust needs rebuilding. Younger users favor short, influencer-led formats over traditional media.
- **Key contributions:**
  - *Sanjay Sindhwani* warned of algorithmic control and stressed diversified models and regional content.
  - *Nalin Mehta* emphasized newsroom restructuring, the need for trust and utility, and editorial rigor.

- Ashok offered a global view on censorship and advocated paywalls and youth-focused formats.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - Concerns included failing ad models, algorithmic suppression, misinformation, disengaged youth, and declining brand loyalty. AI may further disrupt journalism by spreading low-quality, unverified content. Trust is eroding, and legacy institutions must adapt to a creator-first ecosystem.

## Audience Engagement

- Youth favored concise, visual news (Inshorts, Reels, Finnshots).
- Many trust individual influences over traditional media brands.
- Attendees questioned paywall feasibility and regional monetization.
- Real-life examples highlighted the risks of misinformation from creator-led content.

## Key Takeaways

- **Algorithms dominate digital distribution**—media must adapt or risk irrelevance.
- **Ad revenue alone is unsustainable**—subscriptions, services, and innovation are key.
- **Regional content is growing rapidly**, especially in non-English, smaller markets.
- **AI is transforming journalism**, from discovery to content creation.
- **Print remains valuable** due to trust and curated experiences.
- **Younger audiences prefer influencers**—formats must evolve accordingly.
- **Trust and credibility are essential** for long-term success.
- **Innovative platform-native formats** are critical to engage modern audiences.

## Plenary: Piracy-Safeguarding content through technology

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 1200 – 1245 Hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine III

### Speakers

- Vivek Couto, Managing & Executive Director, Media Partners Asia,
- Dr. Shruti Mantri, Associate Director, ISB Institute of Data Science, Indian School of Business,
- Praveen Anand, Anand and Anand Associates,
- Anurag Kashyap, Head of Anti-Piracy Operations, DAZN,
- Anil Lale, Head-Legal, Jio Hotstar

### Moderator

- Neil Gane, Vice President, and Head of Asia Pacific, IP House

## Overview

The session aimed to address the growing threat of digital piracy in India and its economic, legal, and cybersecurity impacts on the creative industry. It highlighted the evolution of piracy from peer-to-peer sharing to advanced streaming platforms, discussing its monetization strategies and the harm to legitimate services. The session explored technological, legal, and policy solutions to protect content, convert piracy users into paying subscribers, and mitigate cybersecurity risks like malware and phishing. It also emphasized the need for faster legal responses and digital literacy programs to educate younger audiences on the dangers of piracy.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The panel comprehensively examined piracy's transformation into a mainstream, organized digital enterprise that rivals legal platforms in technology and monetization. The conversation spanned the financial impact on the creative economy, cybersecurity consequences, and strategies to convert piracy users into paying subscribers. Speakers emphasized multi-stakeholder collaboration, robust technology adoption, legal enforcement, and awareness-building as pillars of an effective anti-piracy ecosystem.
- **Key contributions:**
  - *Neil and Vivek* laid the foundation by outlining piracy's evolution and quantifying its economic cost to India's screen industry.
  - *Shruti* shared data-driven insights into consumer behavior and malware risks.

- o *Anurag* introduced the “3 D’s” framework — Detection, Disruption, Deterrence — for real-time monitoring and takedowns.
  - o *Anil* detailed Jio’s use of AI, token validation, and blockchain as proactive countermeasures.
  - o *Praveen* stressed the need for legal reform and judicial education to keep pace with digital threats.
  - o *Shruti* closed with a rallying call for collective responsibility across sectors.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
    - o Piracy’s decentralized and adaptive nature makes enforcement difficult. Legal delays, lack of judicial understanding of IP issues, and the anonymity of domain registration hinder effective prosecution. Public perception, especially among youth, remains indifferent to piracy’s dangers, despite widespread awareness of malware risks. There is also a need to shift from reactive to preventive strategies through innovation and legal reform.

## Audience Engagement

- **Presentation of Research Data:** Shruti shared public survey results and malware analysis that engaged the audience with hard statistics.
- **Discussion on Case Studies and Enforcement Successes:** Real-world examples of watermark tracing, takedowns, and AI deployment sparked interactive discussion.
- **Calls for Public Collaboration:** Multiple speakers urged universities, tech firms, and legal entities to partner on awareness campaigns.
- **Preview of Upcoming Digital Piracy Summit:** The announcement of the July summit in Hyderabad encouraged audience anticipation and involvement.

## Key Takeaways

- **Piracy is Now Mainstream and Monetized:** Piracy has evolved into a commercial ecosystem, operating like OTTs and posing a direct threat to legitimate platforms.
- **Economic Losses Are Substantial, but Reversible:** Effective anti-piracy efforts could convert 45% of piracy users, unlocking over \$1 billion in lost earnings.
- **Digital Piracy Fuels Cybercrime:** Malware, ransomware, and phishing are major threats tied to pirated content.
- **Technology is Both the Problem and the Solution:** AI, watermarking, and blockchain are vital tools for content protection and traceability.
- **Legal Reform and Judicial Training are Critical:** IP cases require faster resolution and stronger penalties to act as deterrents.
- **Youth are Most at Risk and Need Awareness:** Targeted education campaigns for the 18–24 demographic are essential to shift behavior.



## Plenary - Live, Immersive and Digital Experience : How Sports Leagues are driving innovation

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 12:50 – 01:30 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine III

### Speaker

■ Shri Mohan Charan Majhi, Chief Minister of Odisha

### Participants

■ Anupam Goswami, Raksha, Mittal, Nic, Fazel, Yannick

### Chairperson/Moderator

■ Mantra Mugdha, Actor, Director, RJ

## Overview

The objective of the session was to highlight the cultural and developmental importance of indigenous sports in India and to explore actionable strategies for their national resurgence and global recognition. The session aimed to foster dialogue among government leaders, sports industry experts, and global stakeholders on how to elevate traditional Indian games like Kho Kho, Kabaddi, and others through strategic investment, media amplification, and technological innovation.

### Overview

- **Promotion of Indigenous Sports:** Emphasizing the need to revive and celebrate traditional games rooted in Indian culture.
- **Infrastructure and Grassroots Development:** Discussing initiatives such as stadium building, training centers, and village-level programs.
- **Broadcast and Media Visibility:** Highlighting the role of television and digital platforms in increasing viewership and appeal.
- **Globalization of Indian Games:** Strategizing on how to take Indian sports like Kho Kho to international audiences.
- **Role of Technology and Innovation:** Exploring how AR, streaming, and regional commentary can enhance the fan experience.
- **Policy and Strategic Support:** Calling for coordinated government backing, financial support, and international collaboration.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The panelists shared insights into the cultural significance and untapped potential of indigenous sports. Odisha's CM underlined the state's commitment to grassroots sports development, particularly Kho Kho. Industry leaders like Anupam Goswami and Mittal reflected on the transformative journey of Kabaddi through professional leagues, highlighting it as a roadmap for Kho Kho. Other speakers emphasized the importance of storytelling, technology, and coordinated efforts between government, federations, and media to ensure these sports not only survive but thrive on the global stage.
- **Key contributions:**
  - **Shri Mohan Charan Majhi (CM of Odisha):** Emphasized grassroots development, infrastructure creation, and vision to "create champions in every village."
  - **Anupam Goswami:** Demonstrated how strategic league creation like PKL can mainstream traditional sports.
  - **Mittal:** Advocated for government and diplomatic support, financial investment, and the creation of digital and live experiences.
  - **Nic:** Provided a global framework through which indigenous sports could enter the international arena, using historical waves of sport globalization.
  - **Yannick:** Emphasized storytelling, hero-making, and tech-enabled access as critical enablers of sports popularity.
  - **Raksha and Fazel (Audio):** Reinforced the need for self-owned formats and how indigenous sports can be life-changing professions.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - Indian federations currently lack the scale, resources, and global networks needed to expand independently, making strong government and private sector support essential—much like successful models seen in countries like Korea. The limited visibility, absence of standardized formats, and weak international partnerships further hinder global acceptance, while indigenous sports remain in early stages of development in areas like R&D, marketing, and content creation.

## Audience Engagement

- **Live Storytelling Appeal:** Emphasized how unpredictability in games draws emotional investment from viewers.
- **Cultural Ownership:** Reignited pride in traditional Indian games and their legacy.
- **Call to Action for Diaspora:** Encouraged global Indians to promote these games in their resident countries.
- **Interactive Formats:** Suggestions on how digital platforms and live streaming can pull youth and global audiences.

## Key takeaways

- **Indigenous sports are cultural assets** with the potential to unify communities and inspire youth.
- **Kho Kho and Kabaddi have shown scalable models** for transforming local games into national and international phenomena.
- **Government support is vital** in terms of funding, infrastructure, and international outreach.
- **Technology is a key enabler** — regional streaming, augmented reality, and fan analytics can enhance engagement.
- **Globalization of Indian sports is achievable** with the right coordination between federations, media, and government.
- **Heroes matter — storytelling and visibility** will drive adoption and pride, both in India and abroad.

## Session: Launch of a white paper on ‘Fantasy Sports as a catalyst for India’s AI Revolution in Sports

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 03:30 – 04:15 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine III

### Speakers

- Joy Bhattacharjya, DG, FIFS,
- Bhavit Sheth, Co-Founder, Dream Sports,
- Naren Kachroo, Google Cloud

## Overview

The session marked the official launch of Professor Vishal Mishra’s white paper, *"Fantasy Sports as a Catalyst for India’s AI Revolution in Sports,"* highlighting the transformative potential of fantasy sports in advancing AI/ML innovation in India. It aimed to engage youth, especially from premier academic institutions, through the Sports Data Game-A-Thon, encouraging the creation of AI-powered sports solutions. The event featured a presentation of the white paper, an introduction to the Throne initiative, a summary of the Game-A-Thon, a recorded expert address by Professor Mishra, and recognition of top student teams. It also underscored the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting’s support and concluded with a call to action for stakeholders to engage with the white paper and its vision.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The session centered on the synergy between sports and AI, highlighting fantasy sports as a valuable data source for AI/ML models. The white paper explored the use of real-time data—like player stats and weather—to develop predictive tools. The Game-A-Thon was showcased as a platform to engage youth in bridging sports passion with tech skills.
- **Key contributions:**
  - Professor Vishal Mishra’s research positioned fantasy sports as a powerful yet underused tool for AI development, proposing its integration into India’s national AI mission. Joy Bhattacharjya emphasized how the Throne initiative and Game-A-Thon connected students from institutions like IITs and NITs with real-world AI applications, promoting experiential learning.
- **Challenges and concerns:**
  - Technical issues in processing real-time sports data and building scalable

AI models were noted. Additionally, gaps in coordination between academia, industry, and government were identified as barriers to broader deployment of innovations.

## Audience Engagement

- **Student Participation:** Involvement from top institutions including IITs and NITs.
- **Recognition of Talent:** Awards celebrated innovation and technical excellence.
- **Interactive Segments:** Included Q&A and networking opportunities.
- **Industry-Academia Exposure:** Engagements with Dream Sports and Google Cloud professionals.
- **White Paper Distribution:** Promoted as an accessible resource for all stakeholders.

## Key Takeaways

- **AI & Fantasy Sports Synergy:** Sports data is ideal for AI model development.
- **Policy Integration:** Sports data should feature in national AI strategies.
- **Youth Engagement:** Sports attract young talent to AI/ML fields.
- **Scalable Innovation:** Game-A-Thon proved AI's practical applicability.
- **Cross-Sector Potential:** Bridging gaps between academia, industry, and policy.
- **Accessible Knowledge:** White paper offers an easy-to-grasp guide for all audiences.



## Plenary: How Music Can Amplify India's Global Identity - From Sound to Soft Power

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 04:20 – 05:15 hrs | **Venue:** Jasmine III

### Speaker

- Amruta Fadnavis, Artist, ■ Kumar Taurani, MD, Tips Industries Ltd.,
- Devraj Sanyal, MD, Universal Music Group India,
- Ralph Simon, CEO, Mobilium Global, ■ Asees Kaur, Artist

### Chairperson/Moderator

- Tarsame Mittal

## Overview

The objective of the session was to explore how Indian music can evolve into a global soft power asset and what role platforms like Spotify and other stakeholders can play in transforming India's music industry. The session aimed to evaluate India's potential to shape a global musical identity through non-film music, regional diversity, and international performances, and to discuss the ecosystem and institutional support required to scale Indian music globally.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:** The panelists emphasized the transformation of India's music landscape through platforms like Spotify, which have empowered independent and regional artists to reach global audiences. Discussions revolved around the emergence of I-Pop as a movement, the increasing importance of music in diplomacy and social causes, and how regional diversity can be harnessed for a stronger global identity. The role of the diaspora, audience engagement abroad, and cross-lingual music production were central themes, along with the need for systemic support to sustain momentum.
- **Key contributions:** Amar highlighted Spotify's strategic focus on non-film music and how initiatives like curated playlists and global discovery features have amplified Indian music. Amruta showcased how music has supported social change and cultural identity, drawing parallels to global phenomena like K-pop. Asees shared her journey from Bollywood to independent global artist, while Kumar and Ralph provided insights on the resurgence of music production and the importance of festivals and education. All speakers advocated for stronger institutional and government support.

- **Challenges and concerns:** The primary challenges identified include the dominance of Hindi and Punjabi over other Indian languages, lack of cohesive identity for Indian pop music, insufficient government grants and performance venues, and inadequate music education infrastructure. Panelists also highlighted the need to shift from seeing music as a product for export to a natural cultural connector.

## Audience Engagement

- **Live Music References:** Mentions of Spotify's recent concert and iconic performances created excitement among attendees.
- **Artist Anecdotes:** Personal stories, such as Asees performing internationally and Ralph's experience at All About Music, resonated deeply with the audience.
- **Global Music Comparisons:** References to K-pop, reggae, and Coldplay's Indian concerts helped contextualize Indian music's potential.

## Key takeaways

- **I-Pop Is Emerging as a Movement:** Non-film Indian music has gained global traction and requires a unified identity.
- **Global Audience Is Ready for Indian Music:** Nearly 50% of Indian artist earnings come from international listeners, reflecting strong global interest.
- **Government and Institutional Support Is Crucial:** Music education, grants, and performance venues are needed to sustain and grow India's music ecosystem.
- **Diaspora and Digital Platforms Are Catalysts:** Platforms like Spotify and the Indian diaspora play a key role in global music discovery.
- **Music Transcends Borders and Builds Cultural Capital:** Indian music can be a strategic tool for diplomacy, tourism, and national branding.

## Session: Bridging the Gap: Commissioning Content & Government Support for AVGC Creators

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1030-1130 hrs. | **Venue:** Room 203

### Speakers

- Charuvi Agarwal – Founder, Charuvi Design Labs
- Gaurav Dwivedi – CEO, Prasar Bharti
- Jayesh Ranjan – Special Chief Secretary, Telangana
- Mike Hankey – Consul General, US Consulate in Mumbai, India
- Takashi Suzuki – Chief Director General, Japan External Trade Organisation (Jetro)

### Moderator

- Shalini S Sharma - PHDCCI

## Overview

This panel explored how platforms, broadcasters, and government policies can support creators by improving access to funding, global distribution, and content commissions. It addressed challenges like limited capital and market access, while emphasizing the role of mentorship, policy, and training in building a sustainable creative ecosystem.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary:**
  - Experts stressed the need for government backing, platform support, and international partnerships to boost India's AVGC sector. Discussions focused on enabling culturally rooted content to scale globally and closing gaps in funding and infrastructure.
- **Key Contributions:**
  - India's AVGC sector is becoming a global player.
  - Regional, culturally rich stories are gaining momentum.
  - Stronger policies and funding can empower creators.
  - Platforms and mentors are key to a sustainable ecosystem.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**
  - Independent creators face funding shortages.
  - Global scalability and access remain tough.

- o Policy frameworks need reform.
- o Algorithms can restrict creative freedom.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- Global growth needs infrastructure and partnerships.
- Authentic Indian content resonates worldwide.
- Policy and funding support are critical.
- Financing gaps must be bridged creatively.
- Platform algorithms shape content direction.

## Session: Decline in the Theatrical Industry and Sparse Cinema Distribution

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 1000–1130 Hrs | **Venue:** Room: 205

### Speakers

- Abhay Sinha, President, IMPPA
- Ishan Saxena, CEO, B4U Network UK
- Shibasish Sarkar, Group CEO, Reliance Entertainment & President, Producers Guild of India
- Yusuf Shaikh, CEO, Founder, Janta Cinema
- Sushil Chaudhary, Picture Time Cinemas
- Devang Sampat, MD/CEO, Cinepolis India

### Moderator

- Viveck Vaswani, Actor, Producer



## Overview

The session addressed the economic pressures and challenges confronting India's traditional theatrical distribution model. With the rise of streaming platforms and declining theater attendance, filmmakers are adapting to new distribution and production methods. Discussions focused on changing audience habits, increased costs, fewer cinema screens, and the global trend toward direct-to-digital releases reshaping India's film industry strategies.



## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - **Shrinking Theatrical Landscape:** Shibasish Sarkar noted that despite passion for content, rising costs and fewer screens have reduced opportunities for theatrical success, forcing a rethink of release strategies.
  - **Value vs. Accessibility:** Sarkar compared cinema pricing to budget airlines, highlighting higher ticket costs that exclude many viewers, while digital platforms attract audiences with affordable convenience.
  - **Adapting to Streaming Platforms:** Emphasis was placed on embracing streaming and hybrid releases, shrinking theatrical windows, and learning from markets like Australia.
  - **Importance of Dubbing for Regional Audiences:** Vikram Tanna highlighted dubbing in regional languages as essential for reaching broader Indian audiences amid expanding content consumption.
  - **Audience Behavior and Content Consumption:** A shift toward multi-language and multi-region content consumption is driving demand for dubbed and subtitled content.
  - **Government Intervention:** The Q&A explored the government's potential role in supporting traditional theatrical culture amid digital-first trends.
- **Key Contributions:**
  - Abhay Sinha discussed challenges in sustaining theatrical ecosystems with declining footfall.
  - Ishan Saxena spoke on international platforms bridging theatrical and digital gaps.
  - Yusuf Shaikh explained Janta Cinema's efforts to improve accessibility and affordability.
  - Devang Sampat shared Cinepolis India's hybrid release strategies.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**
  - Rising ticket prices and reduced distribution are pushing audiences away from theaters, accelerating digital-first adoption.
  - There is a need for balance between digital and theatrical releases to maintain accessibility and appeal.

## Audience Engagement

- Questions centered on the future of regional cinema, government subsidies for theatrical support, and whether streaming might fully replace theaters.

## Key Takeaways

- Traditional theatrical distribution is declining but not disappearing, with digital-first models growing.
- Hybrid release models combining digital and theatrical launches are becoming common.
- Regional language dubbing and subtitling are vital for expanding reach.
- Rising ticket costs are shifting viewers toward affordable streaming options, necessitating new distribution approaches.
- Government support is increasingly recognized as necessary to preserve India's theatrical culture.

## Session:- Building Brands, Building Business

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 19:30 – 10:10 hrs | **Venue:**206

### Speakers

- Morta, Kabita's Kitchen, Labour Law Advisor,
- Yashi Tank from Suyash Fashion

### Chairperson/Moderator

- Niharika Pande

## Overview

The session explored how creators transform personal brands and passions into successful entrepreneurial ventures within the creator economy. It highlighted creators' journeys from content creation to building sustainable businesses rooted in authenticity, creativity, and community engagement. Panelists shared breakthrough moments, scaling strategies, and lessons learned while evolving from hobbyists to business owners across sectors like fashion, gaming, food, and finance.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- The panel focused on creators bridging content and commerce by embracing consistency, audience feedback, resilience, and adaptability.
- Yashi described growing her fashion brand through organic demand and teamwork.
- Naman shared founding an eSports organization based on collective growth.
- Rishabh discussed diverse ventures inspired by personal needs and community input.
- Kavita spoke about turning persistence in content creation into a food brand built on audience trust.
- Challenges included managing unpredictability of virality, operational complexities, balancing authenticity with monetization, and ethical considerations in sensitive sectors.

## Audience Engagement

- Creators shared personal, relatable stories, fostering emotional connection and transparency about failures and struggles.
- Real business examples were discussed, linking products and services to their entrepreneurial narratives.
- Recognition of collaborators and cross-industry insights enriched the discussion, highlighting the creator economy's diversity.

## Key Takeaways

- Success often requires consistency and patience before breakthroughs occur.
- Authenticity is a vital strategic advantage for building loyal audiences.
- Audience feedback is crucial for innovation and refining businesses.
- Partnerships with complementary skills support growth and operations.
- The creator economy is diverse, spanning physical products and services, offering many paths for creative entrepreneurship.

## Session: Revolutionizing the Content Delivery: Promise of Next Generation Broadcasting

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 11:30 AM – 12:15 PM | **Venue:** Room No. 202

### Speakers

- Christopher S Ripley, President and CEO, Sinclair Inc., Canada
- Apurva Chandra, Arbitrator, ICA
- Abhay Karandikar, DST
- Madeleine Noland, President, ATSC, USA
- Victor Lee, Director, MBC, South Korea
- Vinosh B James, Director, Qualcomm

### Moderator

- Gunjan Gupta, Director, Technology & Transformation – ET&P: Tech, Strategy & Transformation, Deloitte

## Overview

The session discussed opportunities and challenges in deploying Direct-to-Mobile (D2M) broadcasting in India, focusing on infrastructure limits, device readiness, and lessons from global examples. D2M was seen as a way to deliver affordable, diverse content, especially where internet access is poor.

## Key discussions & Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussions:**
  - The U.S. and other countries see D2M as a solution to limited telecom spectrum.
  - India's rural internet weaknesses make D2M appealing for single-TV households.
  - India can skip traditional digital transitions and adopt D2M directly.
  - Korea's DMB showed how D2M lowers mobile data costs.
  - Open standards and user-focused rollout are critical.
- **Key Contributions:**
  - U.S. lacks mobile terrestrial broadcast; suggested FreeDish mobile models.
  - Need for national standards and pilot projects emphasized.



- o Mobile is India's primary device; no major tech barriers.
- o Open standards drive innovation; country-specific evolution needed.
- o Collaboration between broadcasters and telecoms is vital.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**
  - o Few D2M-compatible devices and no national standards.
  - o Reliance on telecom networks despite poor coverage.
  - o Modern phones lack FM capability

## Audience Engagement

Focused on government priorities like disaster response and education, with D2M seen as a multi-purpose solution.

## Key Takeaways

- D2M can improve content access for many.
- Device and ecosystem gaps must be addressed.
- Pilot programs and standards are essential for success.

## Session – The Game Changer Roundtable: Reimagining Education for India's Game Creators

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1130-1230 Hrs | **Venue:** Room 203

### Speakers

- Shruti Verma, Senior Marketing Lead, Epic Games
- Ganesh S, Academic Convenor, XTIC, IIT Madras
- Roby John, Co-founder and CEO of SuperGaming
- Yat Sui, Co-founder and Executive Chairman of Animoca Brands

### Moderator

- Sridhar Muppidi, Co-Founder, Yesgname

## Overview

The roundtable aimed to assess and reimagine the educational landscape for India's emerging game development sector. It brought together key stakeholders to discuss the skill gaps and evolving demands of the gaming industry. Participants explored curriculum updates incorporating AI, game design, and interactive technologies. The session facilitated dialogue between academia and industry to encourage real-world learning and mentorship. It ultimately laid the groundwork for more future-ready education models for aspiring game creators in India.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussion:**
  - The roundtable focused on reimagining education for India's game creators, emphasizing the need for curriculum modernization, stronger industry-academia collaborations, and AI integration in game development. Experts discussed how game education must evolve to equip students with relevant skills, while also fostering cultural representation and storytelling innovation. The discussion underscored the importance of structured faculty training, startup incubation, and policy incentives to support the growing gaming ecosystem in India.
- **Key Contributions:**
  - **Modernizing game education** – Panelists emphasized updating curricula to include AI-driven game development, immersive storytelling, monetization strategies, and AR/VR technologies.
  - **Strengthening industry-academia collaboration** – Institutions must partner with gaming studios to offer real-world experience through internships, mentorship programs, and project-based learning.

- o **Encouraging cultural representation** – Localized narratives, folklore-based gaming, and diverse storytelling can help Indian game developers appeal to both domestic and global audiences.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**
  - o **Lack of industry exposure in education** – Many academic programs remain theoretical, leaving students unprepared for practical game development roles.
  - o **Funding bottlenecks for emerging creators** – Limited grants and financial support make it difficult for students and independent developers to scale their projects.
  - o **Faculty training gaps** – Educators lack structured programs to familiarize themselves with modern game engines, AI applications, and emerging interactive technologies.

## Audience Engagement

The session concluded with a high-energy Q&A, where the most discussed topics included:

- How many of you think current game education prepares students for real-world industry needs?
- What's the ONE skill every future game creator must have?
- If you could change one thing in India's game design curriculum, what would it be? • Which should be the priority: coding skills, storytelling, or cultural relevance in game education?

## Key takeaways

- **Modernizing game education** – Industry-aligned modules on AI, game storytelling, monetization, and emerging technologies must be integrated into curricula.
- **Stronger industry partnerships** – Mentorship, internships, and collaborative projects between institutions and gaming studios will enhance real-world learning.
- **Cultural relevance in game creation** – Game education should encourage Indian narratives, local languages, and folklore to foster unique storytelling opportunities.
- **Upskilling faculty and students** – Structured training programs and certifications must be provided for educators to stay updated with industry advancements.
- **Funding avenues for creators** – Grants, innovation labs, and startup pathways should be introduced to support student-led game development projects.

## Session: International rights holders' perspectives on content protection strategies & synergies

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 1130–1230 Hrs | **Venue:** Room: 205

### Speakers

- Tatsuya Otsuka, Deputy Senior Director of International Affairs, Content Overseas Distribution Association (CODA)
- Itae Choi, Executive Director of the Copyright Association of Korea;
- MsJihe Lee, CEO, Liri Bridge Studio, South Korea
- Ms Dawn Barriteau, Vice President, Content Protection (Asia Pacific) Motion Picture Association
- Rajkumar Akella, Producer and Executive, Manager, Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce

### Moderator

- Mr. Mok Ho Fai, Vice President, Content Protection Legal, Asia Pacific Alliance for Creativity and Entertainment (ACE)

## Overview

The session aimed to discuss the growing threat of digital piracy in a globally connected media landscape, examining enforcement challenges and exploring cross-border strategies for protecting intellectual property and creative content. It focused on understanding the evolution of digital piracy and its technological shifts, exploring legal and enforcement challenges across jurisdictions. Insights and initiatives from industry and government-backed organizations were shared, discussing collaborative frameworks for international content protection. Producer perspectives on IP theft and content duplication risks were also examined, highlighting the multifaceted efforts required to combat digital piracy effectively.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussions:**
  - The panel explored the transformation of piracy from local bootlegging to a sophisticated, cross-border cybercrime. Speakers highlighted that piracy today involves coordinated networks leveraging technology, decentralized hosting, and legal loopholes across multiple countries. It was agreed that individual enforcement is ineffective without synchronized international cooperation.
- **Key Contributions:**
  - **Mr. Mok Ho Fai** opened the session by framing piracy as a serious global

crime, not just a civil infringement, emphasizing ACE's role in building investigative networks.

- o **Tatsuya Otsuka** shared Japan's experience through CODA's enforcement operations in Asia and the launch of the Cross Border Enforcement Project (CBEP) targeting pirate networks in Europe and South America.
  - o **Itae Choi** described Korea's 24/7 anti-piracy monitoring system, legal mechanisms, and extensive collaboration with global partners like MPA and ACE.
  - o **Jihe Lee** provided a producer's view, recounting incidents of co-production IP theft, the lack of post-agreement safeguards, and the helplessness creators feel when their work is misused across borders.
  - o **Dawn Barriteau** emphasized the need for forensic tools, intelligence-sharing, and capacity-building among law enforcement agencies, especially in emerging markets.
  - o **Rajkumar Akella** spoke of piracy's impact on regional cinema and the unique vulnerabilities of smaller language industries where legal resources are limited and piracy disproportionately affects box office returns.
- **Challenges and Concerns Raised:**
    - o Lack of harmonized copyright enforcement frameworks between countries
    - o Jurisdictional complexity when infringers, servers, and users are in different nations
    - o Difficulty in prosecuting content theft in co-production scenarios
    - o Use of piracy platforms for broader cybercrime (e.g., malware, fraud)
    - o Under-reporting and under-resourcing in regional film industries

## Audience Engagement

The audience actively engaged with questions around legislative gaps in their own countries, the role of AI in detecting piracy, and how creators and small producers can proactively protect their IP. Several attendees requested further information on the Cross Border Enforcement Project and how they could collaborate with ACE, CODA, and COA.



## Key Takeaways

- Piracy is no longer a localized nuisance—it is organized, cyber-enabled crime with global implications.
- Cross-border cooperation between enforcement bodies, producers, and governments is crucial.
- There is a pressing need for capacity-building, policy harmonization, and real-time intelligence sharing.
- Content creators—especially in co-productions—must ensure contractual safeguards and IP audits.
- Stronger alliances like those between ACE, CODA, COA, and MPA are essential to mount a unified response.

## Session: Digital Dreams & Cinematic Visions

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 1230-1330 hrs | **Venue:** Room 202

### Speakers

- Sanjay Dubey, IAS, Addl Chief Secretary, Government of Madhya Pradesh
- Sheo Shekhar Shukla, IAS, Pr Secretary, Tourism and MD, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board.
- Ekta Kapoor, Producer and Director
- Ashish S. Kulkarni, Chairman, FICCI AVGC Forum
- Jyotirmoy Saha, Founder & CEO, August Media group
- Shobha Sant, Producer

### Moderator

- Naman Ramachandran

## Overview

This session explored Madhya Pradesh's growing appeal as a film production and AVGC hub, focusing on incentives, policies, infrastructure, and ecosystem development to attract and support filmmakers and studios.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Incentives & Facilities:** Financial rebates and a streamlined one-stop permission system are key to attracting production. Scenic, work-friendly locations enhance appeal.
- **Policy & Competitiveness:** Madhya Pradesh offers strong financial incentives, easy permissions, and promotes local talent and languages. Comparisons drawn with Spain and Malta's successful rebate models.
- **Film Tourism Policy:** Success contributed to a filmmaker-friendly approach, rich heritage, ease of doing business, and positive repeat business.
- **AVGC Integration:** Policies now cover animation, VFX, gaming, and comics with incentives for IP creation, studio setup, and payroll subsidies, accessed through a single window.
- **Regional Advantages:** Cities like Indore and Bhopal offer affordable infrastructure, skilled workforce, good quality of life, driving growth in studios and creative industries.
- **Government Initiatives:** Investments in skill parks, museums, and cultural branding enhance the creative ecosystem.

## Key Takeaways

- Financial incentives and simplified permissions are vital to attract large productions.
- Madhya Pradesh's heritage and ecosystem create a strong competitive edge.
- Integrated film and AVGC policies foster sustainable growth across traditional and digital content sectors.
- Repeat project incentives and local talent promotion ensure long-term industry development.
- Government support and global benchmarks provide a roadmap for continued success.

## Session: The Magic of Smita Patil's Art in Shyam Benegal's Brilliant Cinema

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 1230–1330 Hrs | **Venue:** Room: 205

### Speakers

- Arunaraje Patil, Filmmaker
- Ashok Rane, Film Critic
- Ketan Mehta, Indian Film Director

### Moderator

- Shivendra Singh Dungarpur, Founder Director, Film Heritage Foundation

## Overview

The session celebrated the life and work of Smita Patil, one of Indian cinema's most powerful and expressive actors, through the lens of her collaborations with master filmmaker Shyam Benegal. The discussion aimed to explore Patil's acting philosophy, her most iconic roles, and her enduring influence on Indian cinematic storytelling.

The session revisited the groundbreaking performances of Smita Patil in films like *Manthan*, *Bhumika*, and *Mirch Masala*, examining her method, authenticity, and the depth of her craft. The panel offered insights into Patil's creative process, her aspirations beyond acting, and the profound emotional and political resonance of her roles.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **An Actor of Depth and Precision:**  
Ashok Rane described Smita Patil as a "thinking actor"—someone who completely immersed herself into every character. Her dedication extended to post-production, especially dubbing, where she ensured that her vocal expressions matched the emotional nuances of her performance.
- **Landmark Performances – *Bhumika* and *Manthan*:**  
The panel highlighted Patil's role in *Bhumika* (1977), where she portrayed an actress navigating a deeply conflicted personal and professional life, earning her the National Film Award. In *Manthan* (1976), her portrayal of rural struggle and resilience became a hallmark of naturalistic performance and social commitment.

- **A Filmmaker in the Making:**

Smita Patil's curiosity for filmmaking extended beyond acting. Peers recalled her deep interest in learning about direction and editing, hinting at the possibility of a directorial future that was sadly never realized.

- **Authenticity at the Core:**

Arunaraje Patil spoke about the rare authenticity that Patil brought to each role. She likened Smita's presence to that of her own mother—strong, sincere, and unflinchingly real. This emotional truth, according to Arunaraje, distinguished her from her peers.

- **Mirch Masala – A Role of Grit and Grace:**

Ketan Mehta, director of *Mirch Masala* (1987), recalled Patil's resilience during the difficult shoot. Filming in a harsh environment, Patil remained focused and deeply committed, delivering a fierce feminist performance as Sonbai that remains iconic in Indian cinema.

- **Total Immersion in Character:**

Ashok Rane emphasized how Patil “became” her characters—she didn't perform from the outside but internalized the psyche and lived experience of every role. Whether portraying a housewife or a rebel, her acting was a complete embodiment of character and context.

## Audience Engagement

Audience members expressed admiration for Patil's timeless performances and asked the panelists about her legacy in feminist cinema, her unrealized ambitions as a director, and how her acting methods continue to inspire contemporary performers.

## Key Takeaways

- **Smita Patil's Craft:** A master of emotional depth and vocal expression, she brought intense thought and care to every performance.
- **Iconic Roles in Indian Parallel Cinema:** Films like *Bhumika*, *Manthan*, and *Mirch Masala* showcased her ability to combine vulnerability and strength.
- **Behind the Camera Aspirations:** Smita had an emerging vision for direction, reflecting her all-round understanding of cinema.
- **Authenticity as Identity:** Her performances were marked by lived emotion and unfiltered truth, as recalled by close collaborators.
- **Legacy:** Smita Patil remains unmatched in her ability to blend spontaneity, grace, and social consciousness—an enduring figure in the history of Indian cinema.



## Session: - X for Government

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 12:40 – 01:30 hrs | **Venue:** Room 206

### Speakers

- Kathleen Reen, Senior Director, Head of Global Government Affairs, Asia Pacific, X Corp,
- Japreet Grewal

## Overview

The objective of the session was to equip government agencies, public sector entities, and organizations with the knowledge and tools necessary to establish a strong, authentic presence on platform X. The session also focused on educating attendees about features like Community Notes, premium badges, translation tools, and cybersecurity, aimed at enhancing engagement, combating misinformation, and improving public sector communication.

The agenda covered setting up an effective profile on X, explaining the benefits of various verification badges (Gray, Blue, Gold), and introducing the Community Notes feature that allows users to add context to misleading posts. It also included discussions on X's translation tools and AI support for Indian languages, insights into cybersecurity and user safety measures, and closing thoughts on how X has evolved as a tool for public engagement, verification, and combating misinformation.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of discussions:**
  - The session highlighted how X is becoming a vital tool for public communication, enabling organizations to reach and engage with a wide audience. Discussions covered key features such as setting up profiles, using multimedia to tell stories, and the importance of the Community Notes feature in tackling misinformation. Additionally, X's efforts to provide translation services and robust cybersecurity were emphasized as crucial for expanding accessibility and ensuring user safety.
- **Key contributions:**
  - The session provided valuable insights into how X is empowering government agencies and public sector entities to enhance their digital presence and engagement. One of the key contributions was the detailed explanation of the three badge types—Gray, Blue, and Gold, which help establish authenticity and credibility for organizations. The Gray badge

specifically supports official government entities, while the blue and gold badges offer premium features and greater campaign customization. Another significant contribution was the introduction of **Community Notes**, a feature that addresses misinformation by allowing users to add context to misleading posts.

- **Challenges and concerns:**

- Despite the numerous advancements, there were several challenges and concerns discussed during the session. One key issue is the current limitations in supporting mixed-language posts, such as Hinglish, which hinder the platform's ability to fully address the multilingual nature of Indian communication. Additionally, while Community Notes is an excellent tool for combating misinformation, there were concerns about potential misuse or manipulation of the system by high-volume contributors. Although the platform uses an algorithm to penalize such behavior, the fear of manipulation remains a concern for some participants. Moreover, some attendees raised questions about the need for further refinement in the translation tools, particularly for more complex regional language needs in public-sector messaging.

## Audience Engagement

- **Q&A on Regional Language Translation:** Attendees showed interest in how Grok can support translation for public sector messaging in Indian languages.
- **Discussion on Community Notes:** Questions around incentives for contributors and quality control within the Community Notes feature.
- **Concerns about Misuse of Notes:** Participants asked if Community Notes could be manipulated by high-volume contributors, and how the platform ensures the quality of contributions.

## Key takeaways

- **X is a powerful tool** for government agencies and public sector entities to build authentic engagement and transparency.
- **Community Notes** play a key role in addressing misinformation and providing fact-based context for disputed posts.
- **Translation capabilities** via AI (Grok) make content more accessible, especially in diverse Indian languages, helping to reach wider audiences.
- **Cybersecurity** remains a critical concern, with X prioritizing safety and offering tools for account recovery and digital hygiene.
- **Social recognition and contributor status** within Community Notes incentivize high-quality contributions, ensuring accuracy and preventing manipulation.

## Session- Masterclass on Art of comics and storytelling

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1430-1530 hrs | **Venue:** Room 203

### Speaker

■ Anupam Sinha, Author and Sequential Illustrator, India

## Overview

The session aimed to explore and discuss the evolution of Indian comics from traditional print formats to digital platforms, addressing the challenges and opportunities in adapting comic storytelling for digital media, including mobile apps, web platforms, and animation. It highlighted innovative distribution strategies that go beyond bookstores, such as online subscriptions, crowdfunding, and digital publishing. The focus was on fan engagement in the digital age, examining how social media, fan communities, and interactive platforms are reshaping the connection between creators and their audience. Additionally, the session emphasized preserving legacy characters like Nagraj and Dhruva while appealing to modern audiences and embracing new storytelling techniques.

The agenda included a look into how digital tools and formats are transforming storytelling in comics, with an emphasis on artistic and narrative innovation. It explored emerging platforms and business models for delivering comics digitally, including apps, web releases, and subscription services. Discussions also covered leveraging social media, online communities, and digital events to build stronger relationships with fans. Real-world success stories of Indian comics that have successfully transitioned from print to digital were presented, offering insights into what worked and why.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussion:**
  - The masterclass explored the transformation of storytelling in Indian comics as they shift from traditional print formats to digital platforms. Discussions focused on emerging distribution strategies, interactive fan engagement, and preserving legacy characters like Nagraj and Dhruva while adapting to modern storytelling techniques. The session underscored the importance of leveraging social media and digital forums to create strong reader communities and highlighted the challenges and opportunities of multimedia integration in digital comics.

- **Key Contributions:**

- **Modernizing Game Education:** Updating curricula to include AI-driven game development, immersive storytelling, monetization strategies, and AR/VR technologies.
- **Strengthening Industry-Academia Collaboration:** Partnering with gaming studios to offer real-world experience through internships, mentorship programs, and project-based learning.
- **Encouraging Cultural Representation:** Promoting localized narratives, folklore-based gaming, and diverse storytelling to appeal to both domestic and global audiences.

- **Challenges and Concerns:**

- **Lack of Industry Exposure in Education:** Many academic programs remain theoretical, leaving students unprepared for practical game development roles.
- **Funding Bottlenecks for Emerging Creators:** Limited grants and financial support make it difficult for students and independent developers to scale their projects.
- **Faculty Training Gaps:** Educators lack structured programs to familiarize themselves with modern game engines, AI applications, and emerging interactive technologies.

## Audience Engagement:

- **Building Fan Communities** -Encouraging the creation and nurturing of online communities through platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and dedicated forums to keep fans involved and invested.
- **Interactive Experiences** - Incorporating features like polls, live Q&As, behind-the-scenes content, and sneak peeks to make fans feel like part of the creative journey.
- **Feedback Loops**-Using comments, reviews, and analytics to gather audience feedback and adapt content based on reader preferences and behavior.
- **Personalized Communication**-Engaging fans through targeted newsletters, character-focused updates, or creator-led messages to strengthen emotional connection.
- **Events and Collaborations**-Hosting virtual meetups, comic launches, contests, and collaborations with influencers to expand reach and deepen fan loyalty.

## Key takeaways

- **Indian comics are evolving from print to digital** – The industry is adapting to changing reader habits with digital platforms while maintaining a balance with traditional print formats.
- **Legacy and heritage remain central** – Iconic publishers like Amar Chitra Katha and Raj Comics emphasize preserving Indian storytelling traditions while expanding into modern formats.
- **Gen-Z consumption patterns are reshaping content** – Fast-paced, visual-first media preferences pose a challenge for maintaining depth in storytelling, pushing creators to innovate.
- **Monetization and piracy are ongoing concerns** – Digital comics face hurdles in revenue generation and copyright protection, requiring stronger policies and infrastructure.
- **Education and mentorship are key to future growth** – Formal integration into schools, incubation centers, and digital literacy programs can help sustain and expand the Indian comic ecosystem.



## Session: Future of Cinema – Reimagining Filmmaking Through AI

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 1430–1515 Hrs | **Venue:** Room: 205

### Speakers

- Mandar Natekar, Co-Founder & CEO, Neural Garage
- Raghavendra Naik, Filmmaker and Creator of Apocalypse

### Moderator / Chairperson

- Chaitanya Chinchlikar, Vice President & CTO, Whistling Woods International

## Overview

The session aimed to explore the intersection of artificial intelligence and filmmaking, focusing on the tools, processes, and creative challenges involved in integrating AI into cinematic workflows. It delved into the practical applications of AI in filmmaking, from image generation to video production, examining current tools and addressing key technical and creative hurdles. The discussion also envisioned a future where AI enhances rather than replaces human creativity in cinema.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **AI in the Filmmaking Process:**  
Speakers outlined a typical AI-driven pipeline: beginning with concept or prompt generation, moving to image creation via tools like MidJourney and LTX Studio, and eventually stitching visuals into moving sequences using platforms like Runway.
- **Tools of the Trade:**  
Both speakers highlighted the use of Lora training, in-painting, and other AI techniques to achieve consistency in characters, refine facial expressions, and improve the visual coherence of scenes. These tools help speed up pre-production and visualization stages.
- **Maintaining Character Consistency:**  
Mandar Natekar emphasized how AI can maintain facial and character uniformity across scenes—a major breakthrough in AI-aided storytelling. However, face swapping still struggles with angle shifts and dynamic poses.
- **Audio-Visual Synchronization Challenges:**

Raghavendra Naik shared firsthand experiences in syncing AI-generated voices and lyrics with video, noting that current technology often falls short in matching lips with voice, especially for music videos or dialogue-driven content.

- **Creativity Augmented, Not Replaced:**

Both speakers agreed that AI democratizes access to filmmaking tools, allowing emerging creators to visualize ideas quickly. Still, mastery of cinematic language and narrative structure remains vital.

## Audience Engagement

- The audience posed questions around the pace of AI development and when full-face syncing might become viable.
- There was active discussion about job displacement, with panelists asserting that AI would augment—not eliminate—roles by shifting the required skill set.
- Several attendees expressed concerns about the cost of advanced tools; panelists recommended beginning with free versions and focusing on prompt refinement to make the most of available resources.

## Key Takeaways

- **AI is at Version 0.9:** We are still in the experimental phase of AI filmmaking, with powerful upgrades on the horizon.
- **Tools will Integrate into Mainstream Platforms:** Future workflows may seamlessly combine AI engines with software like Adobe Premiere Pro, reducing friction for creators.
- **Creativity Remains Central:** While AI can assist in pre-visualization and production, traditional filmmaking skills—like storytelling, direction, and editing—remain critical.
- **Job Roles Will Evolve:** Filmmakers who can creatively harness AI will have a competitive edge, not just in speed but in experimentation.
- **Start Small, Learn Fast:** Use free tools, master prompt engineering, and experiment boldly before investing in premium AI subscriptions.

## Session: Masterclass on Virtual Production

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1530-1615 hrs | **Venue:** Room 203

**Speaker**

- CV Rao, Chief Technology Officer, Annapurna Studios Private Limited
- Jagadeesh Bommiseti, Virtual Cinematographer, Annapurna Studios

### Overview

The objective of this session is to explore the revolutionary technology of Virtual Production and its transformative impact on filmmaking, storytelling, and content creation. As virtual environments and real-time rendering become integral to modern production workflows, this session aims to provide attendees with insights into how Virtual Production is reshaping the future of cinema, television, and digital media.

The agenda includes understanding key concepts such as real-time rendering, motion capture, LED volume stages, and virtual sets. It showcases technological advancements that enhance immersive environments and streamline filmmaking processes. The session highlights case studies and practical applications from major films and TV series to demonstrate how Virtual Production is transforming storytelling. Attendees will gain behind-the-scenes insights into Virtual Production setups, detailing the roles of directors, VFX artists, and other key crew members. Future trends in Virtual Production, including AI, AR, and mixed reality advancements, will be discussed, along with their impact on the creative industries. The session will also equip attendees with knowledge to incorporate Virtual Production technologies into their own creative projects.

### Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussion:**
  - o The masterclass provided a comprehensive exploration of Virtual Production, emphasizing its role in transforming filmmaking, storytelling, and content creation. Attendees gained insights into real-time rendering, motion capture, and LED volume stages, with discussions on technological advancements that enhance visual realism and efficiency. Industry experts showcased case studies from major films and TV shows, highlighting the practical applications of Virtual Production and its

impact on modern production workflows. The session also examined the collaborative dynamics between directors, VFX artists, and other key crew members, underscoring the importance of integrating Virtual Production into pre-production planning for optimized storytelling.

- **Key Contributions:**

- **Understanding Virtual Production** – Real-time rendering, motion capture, and virtual environments are enabling greater flexibility and creativity in filmmaking.
- **Technological Advancements** – Innovations such as LED volume stages and real-time compositing are streamlining production workflows, improving efficiency and visual quality.
- **Collaboration in Virtual Production** – Effective coordination between directors, VFX artists, and cinematographers is essential to achieving a seamless integration of virtual sets and practical effects.

- **Challenges and Concerns:**

- **Adapting to new production techniques** – Traditional filmmaking practices require adjustments to incorporate Virtual Production effectively.
- **Infrastructure and cost barriers** – Accessing high-end Virtual Production tools and facilities remains a challenge for smaller studios and independent creators.
- **IP protection and data security** – As Virtual Production relies heavily on digital platforms, securing intellectual property and safeguarding creators' work is increasingly vital.

## Audience Engagement

- **Technical** -What are the hardware and software requirements for a virtual production setup? How does virtual production differ from traditional green screen techniques? How do LED volumes impact lighting and reflections on set?
- **Creative & Workflow Questions**-How early should virtual production be integrated into pre-production planning? What are the limitations of using LED walls for location shooting? What are best practices for designing virtual sets that support storytelling?

- **Industry & Future Outlook**-How is virtual production changing roles in filmmaking (e.g., DPs, production designers)? What studios or projects are leading the way in virtual production?

## Key takeaways

- **Virtual Production is revolutionizing filmmaking** – Technologies like real-time rendering, LED volume stages, and motion capture are reshaping content creation.
- **Technological advancements enhance storytelling** – Improved production efficiency and immersive environments allow filmmakers to push creative boundaries.
- **Collaboration across disciplines is crucial** – Directors, VFX artists, and cinematographers must work together to optimize the integration of digital and practical effects.
- **Investment in training and infrastructure is necessary** – Industry leaders and policymakers must support education and accessible Virtual Production facilities.
- **IP protection and data security remain key concerns** – As production shifts to digital-first workflows, safeguarding content and creators' rights is critical.



## Session: Beyond Nostalgia – The Business of Restored Classics

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 1530– 1615 Hrs | **Venue:** Room: 205

### Speakers

- Kamal Gianchandani, CEO, PVR
- Shehzad Sippy, Filmmaker
- Jackky Bhagnani, Producer
- Prakash Magdum, ADG, PIB Ahmedabad

### Moderator

- Taran Adarsh, Film Critic



## Overview

The session aimed to explore the commercial resurgence of restored classics, the restoration process, and strategies to reintroduce these cinematic treasures to modern audiences through innovative distribution, exhibition, and policy support. It covered the emotional, technical, and economic dimensions of film restoration, discussing audience nostalgia and the future viability of restored classics as mainstream releases. Panelists explored how Indian cinema can monetize its legacy while preserving cultural memory.

## Key Themes & Highlights

- **Resurgence in Theatre Demand:**  
Kamal Gianchandani highlighted the growing enthusiasm for restored classics among audiences, especially as a shared multi-generational experience. The theatrical re-release of films like *Rajput*, *Filmsaab*, and Aamir Khan titles shows that demand is no longer limited to nostalgia-driven older audiences.
- **Emotional and Experiential Value:**  
Shehzad Sippy emphasized the timeless emotional pull of classics. Their storytelling simplicity and filmmaking purity offer post-pandemic viewers a sense of comfort and collective memory, distinct from today's fragmented digital consumption.
- **Cost Dynamics and Commercial Viability:**  
While restoration costs have dropped—film print fees now being as low as ₹2,000 per screen—Jackky Bhagnani stressed that audience engagement remains the true determinant of success. Films like *Tumbbad* performed like new releases due to effective marketing and strong word-of-mouth.
- **Restoration Challenges:**  
Prakash Magdum outlined the technical complexity involved: from damaged negatives to missing reels, the process of restoration involves collaboration between archivists, studios, and national institutions. Even partial restorations require meticulous work to honor the original aesthetic.
- **Global Comparisons and the Need for Cultural Advocacy:**  
Panelists urged the Indian film community to emulate Hollywood's proactive approach to restoration. Directors abroad often advocate for preserving their work—something lacking in India, where the urgency to digitally archive cinematic heritage is still growing.
- **Role of Policy and the Private Sector:**  
While institutions like the NFDC and Film Heritage Foundation have been instrumental, the panel called for expanded support through public-private partnerships. NGOs, private investors, and government incentives can catalyze a sustainable restoration ecosystem.
- **Restored Classics as Commercial Vehicles:**  
Restored films are finding new audiences and new revenues. Kamal concluded, "Exhibitors must curate cinematic experiences, and classics can deliver on that promise." Re-releases are no longer fringe events—they are an emerging mainstream trend.

## Audience Engagement

The audience—comprising producers, distributors, exhibitors, and cinephiles—raised thoughtful questions about the marketing and monetization of restored films. Discussions also touched on preserving India’s cinematic heritage and how younger generations can be drawn into the legacy of Indian cinema.

## Key Takeaways

- Restored classics offer a dual value: emotional connection and commercial potential.
- They are becoming viable mainstream offerings, not just niche nostalgia projects.
- A coordinated approach—combining technology, marketing, policy, and collaboration—is vital to sustain and scale restoration efforts.
- India must act with urgency to preserve its film heritage before it’s irreversibly lost.

## Session: Visual World Building: Blending Art and Design

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025 | **Time:** 1630-1715 hrs. | **Venue:** Room 203

### Speaker

■ Santanu Hazarika, Visual Artist

## Overview

The Masterclass aimed to deepen participants' understanding of visual design principles, tools, and storytelling techniques critical to creating impactful and immersive content across games, animation, and digital media. It provided hands-on exposure to industry workflows, design systems, and emerging trends, empowering creators to elevate their visual language. The session also fostered discussion around aesthetics, functionality, and user experience in a rapidly evolving, AI-enhanced design landscape.

The agenda included a brief introduction followed by an interactive icebreaker activity to engage participants. It showcased real-world case studies on the creative process behind compelling visual storytelling in music, explored essential tools and workflows used in contemporary visual design, and featured a live demonstration of visual design creation and execution in real time. Participants engaged with experts during an open Q&A session to gain deeper insights into design principles. The session concluded with an optional mini design challenge, allowing attendees to apply their learnings and receive direct feedback.

## Key Discussions and Deliberations

- **Summary of Discussion:**
  - The masterclass explored the evolution of virtual design and its growing impact on various industries, including gaming, architecture, and digital media. Discussions emphasized the importance of user-centered design, immersive storytelling, and accessibility in creating effective virtual environments. Experts highlighted the role of emerging technologies, such as AI and AR/VR, in enhancing design capabilities while addressing challenges related to technical limitations, cross-platform compatibility, and realism in digital spaces. The session underscored the significance of ethical considerations, sustainability, and intellectual property protection in the virtual design landscape.
- **Key Contributions:**
  - **Understanding Virtual Design** – Virtual design encompasses UX/UI,

3D modeling, and immersive experiences, enabling interactive digital environments.

- o **Evolution of Design Tools** – Advances in AI, real-time rendering, and photorealistic textures are revolutionizing design workflows and improving production efficiency.
- o **Industry-Specific Applications** – From gaming and marketing to architecture and simulation, virtual design plays a crucial role in shaping digital spaces.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**
  - o **Technical Limitations** – Performance optimization, hardware constraints, and rendering speed impact design quality.
  - o **Balancing Realism and Creativity** – Finding the right mix between artistic abstraction and functional realism remains a challenge.
  - o **Designing for Accessibility** – Ensuring inclusivity in virtual environments for diverse users requires thoughtful design approaches.

## Audience Engagement

The session concluded with an interactive Q&A, where attendees explored key industry challenges, including:

- **Optimizing virtual environments for low-end hardware** – Strategies to maintain visual quality while ensuring smooth performance.
- **Balancing aesthetics with usability** – Designing interfaces that are visually appealing yet functional and accessible.
- **Avoiding user discomfort in VR** – Best practices to mitigate motion sickness and enhance immersive experiences.
- **Leveraging virtual design for small businesses** – How solo creators can utilize virtual design tools with limited budgets.

## Key takeaways

- **Virtual design is transforming multiple industries** – From gaming and architecture to marketing and simulations, digital environments are redefining user experiences.
- **Advancements in AI and immersive technologies** – Real-time rendering, AI-driven tools, and photorealistic textures are revolutionizing creative workflows.
- **Balancing aesthetics with functionality** – Designing visually compelling yet interactive and accessible virtual environments is crucial.
- **Accessibility and inclusivity in design** – Ensuring virtual spaces accommodate diverse users enhances engagement and usability.
- **Future trends in virtual design** – AI-assisted design, sustainability, and the rise of interconnected digital spaces like the metaverse will shape the industry's future.



## Session: Redefining Soft Power – States Using Cinema as Cultural Diplomacy

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 1630–1715 Hrs | **Venue:** Room: 205

### Speakers

- Raghav Chandra, Former Civil Servant
- Nikhil Nanda, Film Producer
- Arushi Nishank, Producer (focused on Uttarakhand)
- Pooja Sharma, Filmmaker and Panelist

### Moderator

- Arfi Lamba

## Overview

The session aimed to explore the role of regional cinema in cultural diplomacy and economic development, highlighting how decentralization, state support, and streaming platforms are amplifying diverse Indian narratives and regional talent. It examined cinema's growing importance as a soft power tool for Indian states, showcasing how local policies, mythological storytelling, and female leadership are shaping the next era of Indian filmmaking.

## Key Themes & Highlights

- **Cultural Diplomacy through Indigenous Narratives:**  
The panel discussed how American cinema has long projected soft power globally, and how Indian cinema—especially through mythological characters like *Nagraj* and *Super Commando Dhruv*—has the potential to create globally recognized cultural icons. However, a lack of production support has limited this space.
- **State Support and Decentralization:**  
Arushi Nishank emphasized Uttarakhand's 35% film rebate as a major incentive drawing productions to the state. The panel underscored the benefits of decentralizing cinema from traditional hubs like Mumbai, with states providing both scenic landscapes and logistical support.
- **Scenic and Narrative Potential of Underrepresented Regions:**  
Films shot in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh were cited as examples of cinematic outreach. Regional stories from the North East are gaining visibility on OTT platforms, offering new dimensions to the national cinematic narrative.

- **Women Leading the Way:**

Pooja Sharma spoke about the increasing agency of women in all facets of filmmaking—from direction to production. This shift is helping reshape narratives and industry culture.

- **OTT as a Catalyst for Regional Growth:**

Multiple speakers pointed out how OTT platforms have democratized storytelling, enabling regional voices to bypass traditional gatekeeping and reach global audiences.

- **Policy Gaps and Challenges:**

The lack of structured support for mythological or superhero content, poor dissemination of government schemes, and insufficient mentorship for regional writers remain major barriers. Independent filmmakers still struggle to access grants or navigate red tape.

## Audience Engagement

The audience showed particular interest in state subsidies, filming logistics in remote areas, and the cinematic future of regions like the North East. There was also a lively discussion around adapting regional literature into films and tapping into India's rich mythological archive.

## Key Takeaways

- Decentralized cinema, backed by OTT and state policy, is reviving regional filmmaking.
- States like Uttarakhand and regions in the North East are becoming cultural and economic hubs for cinema.
- Cultural diplomacy through mythological and indigenous storytelling remains an untapped goldmine.
- Women are increasingly shaping the narratives and structures of Indian cinema.
- To unlock India's global cinematic potential, structured state support, better communication of policies, and industry-government collaboration are essential.

## Breakout Session: Old Ghost, New Generation – Portrayal of Colonial History in Indian Cinema and Its Relevance

**Date:** 3rd May 2025 | **Time:** 5:15–6:00 PM | **Venue:** Room: 205

**Speaker**

■ Karan Singh Tyagi, Filmmaker & Former Lawyer

**Moderator**

■ Alaka Sahani, Senior Journalist, *Indian Express*

### Overview

The session aimed to examine how Indian filmmakers are engaging with colonial history and rediscovering forgotten freedom fighters through emotionally rich, factually grounded narratives that resonate with younger audiences. It focused on how cinema can be a powerful medium to re-explore India's colonial past. Through Tyagi's debut film based on the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the court battle fought by Sir Chettur Sankaran Nair, the session unpacked the storytelling balance between historical accuracy and creative dramatization.

### Key Themes & Highlights

- **From Law to Lens:**  
Karan Singh Tyagi began by tracing his journey from a legal career to filmmaking, driven by a lifelong passion for cinema and a desire to narrate historical events with nuance and integrity.
- **Unpacking Colonial Narratives:**  
His debut film, inspired by the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, focuses on the lesser-known legal resistance mounted by Sankaran Nair. The screenplay, based on a non-fiction book by Nair's great-grandson, combines courtroom drama with broader historical truths.
- **Balancing Fact and Fiction:**  
Tyagi emphasized the fine line between factual fidelity and cinematic storytelling. "Cinema is not a photograph, but a painting," he remarked, explaining his approach to distilling complex legal proceedings into an engaging two-hour film.
- **Casting and Characterization:**  
The session highlighted the rationale behind casting Akshay Kumar and

Paresh Rawal for their ability to anchor the film emotionally and culturally. Tyagi shared insights into on-set improvisations that brought depth to key courtroom scenes.

- **Creating Fictional Anchors:**

Ananya Panday's character, inspired by India's first female lawyer Cornelia Sorabji, serves as a bridge between past and present, adding layers of gender representation and emotional nuance to the narrative.

- **Reaching Young Audiences:**

To appeal to a younger demographic, Tyagi deliberately employed rap music, contemporary idioms, and themes like protest and identity. These devices help underscore the relevance of colonial history in today's socio-political context.

- **Future Projects and Challenges:**

The session concluded with Tyagi expressing his interest in exploring the 1857 revolt and figures like Khudiram Bose. He also shared the challenges of recreating pivotal historical events like the Jallianwala Bagh massacre while maintaining authenticity.

## Audience Engagement

Attendees were intrigued by the storytelling choices in historical cinema and asked questions about maintaining authenticity, gender representation, and the commercial risks of history-based films. There was also curiosity about the creative liberties taken with fictional characters in true events.

## Key Takeaways

- Historical films can retain factual integrity while being emotionally resonant and accessible.
- Forgotten freedom fighters like Sankaran Nair deserve cinematic attention for their critical roles in India's independence.
- Modern storytelling tools—such as rap and hybrid characters—can make colonial narratives relatable to today's youth.
- Incorporating strong, historically rooted female characters is vital for connecting past struggles with contemporary gender narratives.

## Key Takeaways & Outcomes

India's creative economy stands at a pivotal moment, with the WAVES Summit 2025 charting a bold path for global leadership, technological transformation, and inclusive growth.

Based on the discussions in the Conference sessions, the following **action points emerged**, aligned with the vision of WAVES and its aim of making India a global creative economy powerhouse:

### I. Policy & Regulatory Reform

#### 1. Develop a Unified Regulatory Framework for Digital & Linear Platforms

- Address the regulatory asymmetry between traditional broadcasters and OTT/digital platforms.
- Establish coordination mechanisms between TRAI, MIB, and MeITY to streamline media governance.
- Establish a singular, agile regulatory body to ensure coherence across media segments and promote responsible innovation.

#### 2. Strengthen IP and Copyright Enforcement Mechanisms

- Implement robust frameworks for performers' rights, including royalties for digital reuse and dubbing.
- Promote creator awareness of IP rights and facilitate collective rights management systems.

#### 3. Adopt Global Best Practices for Media Oversight

- Study and consider adapting elements from the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA) for Indian context.

### II. Infrastructure & Industry Development

#### 4. Enable Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for Regional Production Hubs

- Build production and distribution infrastructure in underserved areas (e.g., Northeast, Ladakh) to nurture regional storytelling.

#### 5. Support Cross-Border Collaborations

- Facilitate legal templates, financial instruments, and creative ownership standards for international co-productions.

#### 6. Expand Access to AI and Emerging Technologies

- Incentivize the use of ethical AI tools for creators, and promote platforms like NVIDIA's and Adobe Firefly for content creation.



- 7. Strengthen Cultural & Tech Infrastructure:** Invest in archive digitization, training pipelines, and regional OTT ecosystems to democratize creative access.
- 8. Drive Cross-Sector Innovation Hubs:** Foster innovation zones that bring together creators, investors, and technologists to develop immersive and AI-powered content formats.

### III. Skilling, Education & Workforce Development

- 7. Revamp AVGC & VFX Curricula Nationwide & Reform Media Education**
  - Shift from tool-based training to narrative design, creative direction, and ethical AI usage in VFX and animation programs.
  - Integrate AI literacy, interdisciplinary learning, and hands-on industry collaborations into higher education programs.
- 8. Upskilling in AI & Virtual Production:**
  - Launch national missions to build capacity in AI-assisted creation, motion capture, and volumetric storytelling.
  - Focus on AI literacy, virtual production, digital monetization, and immersive storytelling (VR/AR).
- 9. Support Women, Rural & Diverse Creators**
  - Scale programs like Netflix's "Women Back to Work" VFX initiative.
  - Support content creators from Northeast, tribal, and regional backgrounds through grants and mentorship.

### IV. Cultural Strategy & Global Influence

- 10. Establish a Cultural Export Task Force**
  - Promote Indian IP (cinema, music, folklore, comics, etc.) globally through targeted campaigns and partnerships.
  - Incentivize platforms to distribute regional and multilingual Indian content overseas.
- 11. Advance India's Soft Power Diplomacy**
  - **Institutionalize Global Collaborations,** launch bilateral content festivals, co-production funds, and talent exchanges to elevate India's global storytelling footprint.
  - Leverage cinema, sports, and storytelling as tools for global cultural influence and partnerships (e.g., through G20 and BRICS).

### 12. Create a National Heritage-to-Screen Pipeline

- Encourage multimedia adaptations of Indian epics, folklore, and classical literature.
- Fund adaptations of Indian classics (e.g., Mahabharata, Panchatantra) across animation, gaming, and immersive formats.

## V. Data, Measurement & Monetization

### 13. Modernize Audience Measurement Standards

- Encourage integration of OTT and TV viewership with attention-based, multi-platform analytics to guide content strategy.
- Encourage integration of digital and linear metrics using models like Project Swan and Canada's Numeris.

### 14. Facilitate Equitable Monetization Models

- Provide training and platforms for rural and independent creators to earn through ad-sharing and micro-patronage.
- Ensure equitable access to ad revenue models for small and rural creators.
- **Creator Economy Fund:** Launch a government-backed fund for micro-grants, training, and incubation, especially for creators from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Extend support for platforms like YouTube India's ₹850 crore creator fund.

## VI. Emerging Strategic Action Areas

**15. AI-Ethics & Creativity Charter:** Develop a national framework to govern AI use in creative industries, ensuring transparency, fairness, and creative integrity.

**16. Strengthen Public Access to AI Tools:** Facilitate partnerships that allow creators access to AI and generative platforms like Adobe Firefly, Meta, and open-source alternatives.

**17. Promote India as Trusted Creative Market:** Build regulatory clarity and economic incentives to attract global studios, streamers, and talent to produce in India.

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