

## *The Impact of India-UK Co-Production agreement: A perspective of Transmedia Story- telling and Business models in films*

AMRITHA SUBHAYAN KRISHNAN, MA  
VIVEK MOHAN, PHD

**KEYWORDS** Business models, co-production treaties, film and media, systematic review, transmedia storytelling

**DATE** 2015

**ABSTRACT** The concept of transmedia storytelling is unique in the sense that it entails telling different portions of a story on separate media platforms. Furthermore, it varies from other forms of cross-platform distribution. The adaptation of transmedia storytelling perspectives and business models in creative co-production ventures is an evolving phenomenon, which presents scarce evidence in extant studies. In the light of the recent India-UK co-production treaty, this paper is aimed at offering a thematic analysis of evidence concerning the transmedia storytelling and business models in films and co-production ventures. The paper reviews existing studies and published work over the past fifty years to suggest a thematic map of research for future research ventures in this fairly under-researched area. Along with several crucial findings, the study confirms that more focused studies in the area will help to form clear assertions about the cultural, artistic, and economical possibilities of the film co-production agreement between the Republic of India and the United Kingdom and bilateral impacts of the same in creative agendas. The study offers crucial practical and theoretical implications for future analysis of the creative progression of co-production elements, which will also map the developmental graph of transmedia evolution, and also the variables involved in the exchange of practice facilities and infrastructure between the two countries.

### INTRODUCTION

According to Jenkins (2006), a transmedia story can be defined as one that “unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole.”<sup>1</sup> Although transmedia



FIGURE 1: Representation of a Transmedia Narrative

storytelling has amassed great interest in the fields of media, entertainment, and communication in recent years, existing knowledge on the impact and implications of the aspect of transmedia storytelling and business models in creative co-production ventures remain relatively limited. It is clear from De Vinck, Sophie and Lindmark (2014) that co-production agreements in film and media between countries invariably underline the mutual constructive usage of a wide variety of creative and innovative elements such as transmedia storytelling and structured business models.<sup>2</sup> The recent India-UK co-production agreement has helped the appreciation of Indian films by a wider range of European audience and the fact that India produces the largest number of films per year and is home to fourteen hugely successful international animation studios, immensely increases the prospect of incorporating transmedia elements and business models in films irrespective of the high demand of visual effects or animation.<sup>3</sup> In view of this crucial research gap, this study reviews existing studies over the past fifty years based on thematic mapping of four crucial elements in the genre of co-production in films between UK and India: Transmedia Storytelling and Business Models in terms of movies, Outsourcing between India and United Kingdom, and Transnational Films between India and United Kingdom. The study concludes with a discussion on the creative progression of co-production elements that will help future researchers in mapping the developmental graph of transmedia evolution and also the variables involved in the exchange of practice facilities and infrastructure between the two countries.

The following sections details the methodology used to conduct the study.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In order to accurately map the crucial themes involved in the study, all existing studies and publications over the past fifty years were reviewed with keywords “Transmedia Storytelling in films,” “Business models in films,” and “Co-production agreements in films.” The searches were conducted using electronic databases such as EBESCO, Google Scholar, Web of Science, Communication and Mass Media Complete, Film and Television Literature Index, and Taylor and Francis online. Moreover, in an effort to apply more focus, these searches were also cross-referenced using the EMERALD database of journals. The searches returned a total of 151 studies published in academic journals. These studies were then subject to analysis and mapping to further develop a thematic database for future research implications on transmedia storytelling and business models in films. In this regard, two important research questions justify our purpose of inquiry:

- How are the concepts of “Transmedia Storytelling,” “Business models,” and Co-production” in films represented in the academic literature over the past fifty years?
- How can future research attain clarity and focus on case specific research on Transmedia Storytelling and Business models to aid co-production agreements?

**SYSTEMATIC REVIEW**

From an initial review, it was clear that although a variety of research questions are put forward due to the unique nature of Transmedia storytelling, the topic in itself remains highly under-researched.<sup>4</sup> Hence to work towards a systematic review, it was imperative to demonstrate the need for more conceptual clarity on this matter by dwelling into the existing studies in detail.

**HOW IS THE CONCEPT OF ‘TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING’, ‘BUSINESS MODELS’ AND ‘CO-PRODUCTION’ IN FILMS REPRESENTED IN THE ACADEMIC LITERATURE OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS?**

Figure 2 depicts the initial results of the review that would help in working towards a systematic review and thematic mapping of the results from the review. From a total of 151 articles and studies in the area, thirty-seven were identified in the area of co-production in films, of which nine majorly focus on European co-production strategies and the economic, artistic, and cultural implications of the same. Fifty-one studies have been identified that generally cover the narration, convergence, and cross-media nature

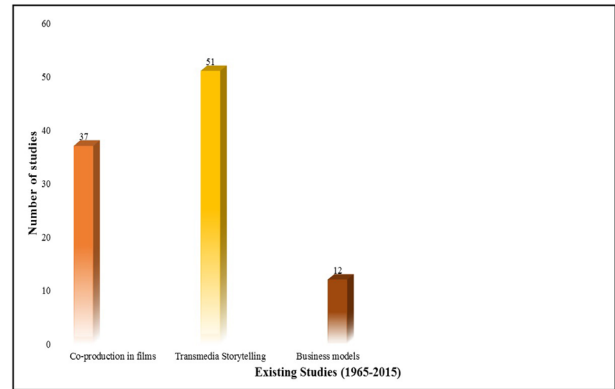


FIGURE 2: ‘Transmedia Storytelling’, ‘Business models’ and ‘Co-production’ over the past 50 years of literature

of transmedia storytelling. Twelve studies greatly focus on transmedia interventions on various films, documentaries, television, and the media evolution and viewer interaction associated with these themes. Twelve studies have been identified in the area of business models in films, while no major strides have been made in scholarship reviewing the offshore production and outsourcing dynamics between India and United Kingdom.

**TOWARDS A THEMATIC MAPPING**

Given the emergence of Transmedia Studies over the recent years, a wide variety of conceptual frameworks have been applied to narratives in the existing studies. Having reviewed the management literature over the past fifty years, the question of demography over the presentation of the concept in literature has been addressed. This initial review of management literature leads us to our second point of inquiry working towards a thematic mapping of literature findings.

**HOW CAN FUTURE RESEARCH ATTAIN CLARITY AND FOCUS ON CASE SPECIFIC RESEARCH ON TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING AND BUSINESS MODELS TO AID CO-PRODUCTION AGREEMENTS?**

As Figure 3 depicts, the four crucial themes under consideration in the study are co-production ventures in films, transmedia storytelling and business models in films, Outsourcing between India and UK and transnational films between India and UK. Each theme is dealt with in detail for a more focused analysis of the findings.

**CO-PRODUCTION VENTURES IN FILMS**

Co-production ventures between different countries have been found to have the potential to provide a mutual

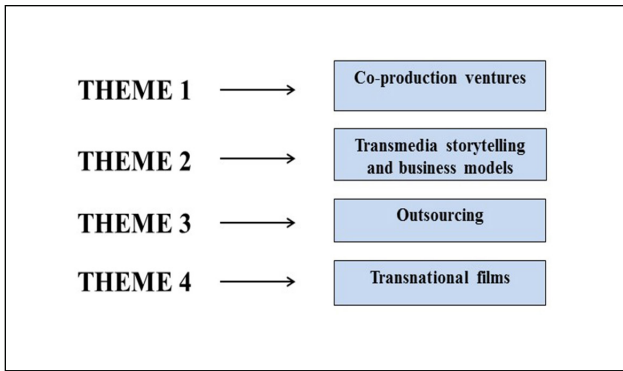


FIGURE 3: Themes involved in the study



FIGURE 4: Co-production venture between India and UK (Artistic interpretation by the authors)

advantage to each participating party with regard to the growth and competitiveness of their film industries and the enhancement of the film cultures.<sup>5</sup> Such co-production ventures are also aimed at encouraging the making of films which reflect and convey the diversity of culture and heritage of both countries.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, several benefits that would flow from the making of such mutual agreements and their increased availability in public has been critiqued upon in extant literature. One such notable film co-production agreement was between the governments of the United Kingdom and India, which came into force on October 15, 2008.<sup>7</sup>

As represented in Figure 3, with regard to existing studies, thirty-seven studies have focused on the area of co-production in films. It is interesting to note that nine studies majorly focus on European co-production strategies and the economic, artistic and cultural implications of the same. (e.g., Iordanova, 2002).<sup>8</sup> There are two exclusive studies on the Indian co-production ventures and one study each on Hollywood-Bollywood, UK-India and UK-China respectively.

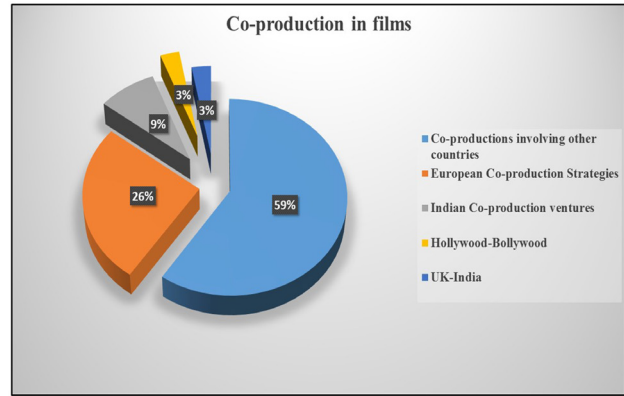


FIGURE 5: Demography of Co-production in films in extant literature

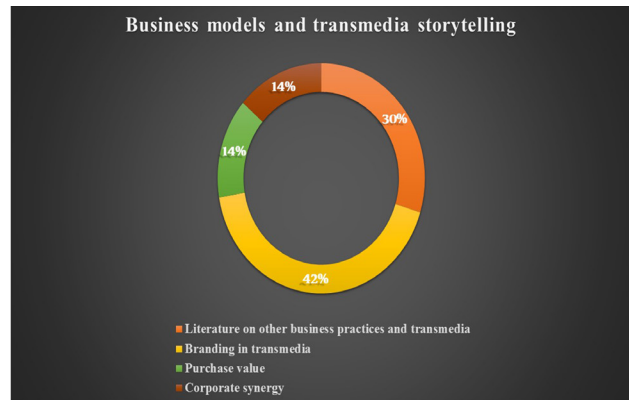


FIGURE 6: Transmedia Storytelling and Business models in films

A key finding from the review in this theme is that although extant literature has focused on the mutual cooperation of countries involved in co-production agreements, studies have not analyzed the implications of transmedia perspectives in co-production agreements.

### TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING AND BUSINESS MODELS IN FILMS

Transmedia storytelling involves developing a narrative across multiple platforms to expand learning and engagement.<sup>8</sup> Extant literature states that it works best for challenges involving strategic change management where the investment is justified. In this regard, transmedia storytelling and business models in films promote a resourceful and social learning platform for innovation and creativity.

In this theme, the study presents some key findings based on business models and transmedia storytelling in extant literature. Fifty-one studies have been identified

from literature that generally covers the narration, convergence and cross-media nature of transmedia storytelling. As represented in Figure 6, twelve studies greatly focus on transmedia interventions on various films, documentaries and television, and the media evolution and viewer interaction associated with these themes. A mere 14% of studies involve themes on the purchasing value involved in business models and transmedia storytelling. Forty-two percent of studies were based on the branding aspect of transmedia and storytelling in films, while 30% of the studies focused on literature on other business practices and transmedia.

**OUTSOURCING IN FILMS**

Lobato (2008) argues that outsourcing in films promote the aspect of international cultural division of labor.<sup>9</sup> The review offers interesting findings in terms of outsourcing in films in the extant literature. The study notes that Bollywood has capitalized on India’s status as a service powerhouse and has hence allowed it to increase its presence in the global markets. This scenario had a major impact on the idea of outsourcing and crossing over of boundaries in visual media and films. Lorenzen (2007) argues that although the films are inherently risky, the studios own their own distribution networks, which have invariably increased the process of outsourcing in films.<sup>10</sup> The primary finding from the review confirms that nine studies have been identified in the area of outsourcing in films, while no major strides has been made in scholar-

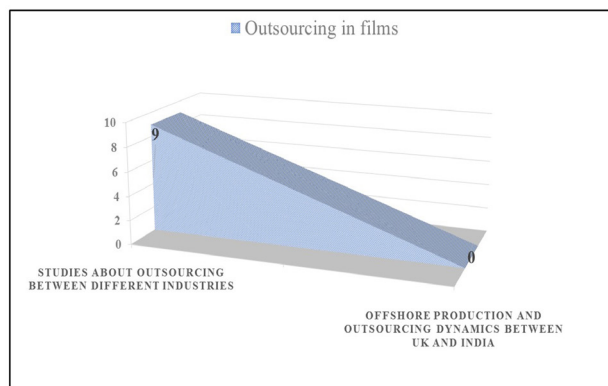


FIGURE 7: Representation of outsourcing in films in extant literature

ship to review the offshore production and outsourcing dynamics between India and United Kingdom.

**TRANSNATIONAL FILMS**

Extant studies suggest that transnational films entertain different types of relationships with the geographical

state and culture.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, research also argues that creative works of transnational nature do not challenge national sovereignty but face the challenge of transnationality.

A total of thirty studies have explored the aspect of transnational films involving the UK and India, with

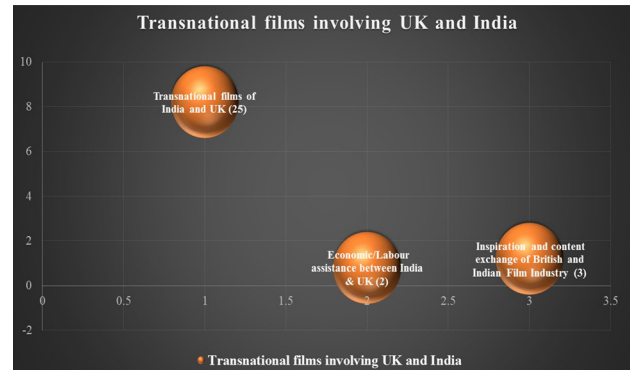


FIGURE 8: Depiction of Transnational films in literature

25 of those studies conducting an explicit analysis on the transnational films of India and UK. Two studies have critiqued the economic and labor aspect of assistance between India and UK, and three have contributed valuable research on the inspiration and content exchange of British and Indian film industry.

**DISCUSSION**

This paper has thematically mapped the findings from a systematic review of studies over the past fifty years. Through such a line of inquiry, the study has invariably analyzed the future role of transmedia storytelling and business models in co-production ventures, particularly in the light of India-UK co-production treaty. The graphically themed results that have been proposed differentiate the impact that integral elements such as economic labor assistance and inspiration of content exchange have had on the literature. For example, it was interesting to note that three studies have already been conducted on the inspiration and content exchange of the Indian and British Film industry. Such key findings provide valuable insights to future researchers who would aim to differentiate between such crucial elements involved within the transnational area of films.

In re-assessing the India–UK co-production agreement through the perspective of transmedia storytelling and business models in films, the study also identifies other crucial issues which could be the subject of future



research agenda. Rasul and Proffitt (2012) critique on the consequences of increasing co-production between Indian and US studios.<sup>12</sup> Such a study in the light of India-UK co-production treaty and its collaborative results would be ideal to add more focus on this unexplored area. It should be noted that although this study thematically maps the existing studies in the area, the study does not perform a comparative or critical review of the existing literature. However, this study can be viewed as a starting point for future researchers to get information and perform further research on the important dimensions and variables involved in the existing studies and the frequency of the existing studies as well.

Although the study notes that fifty-one studies have been conducted in relation to transmedia storytelling, it is surprising to note that very few studies (E.g., Scott, 2010) have performed critical studies on the effects of storytelling.<sup>14</sup> We propose that future studies should realize the effects of transmedia storytelling by conducting empirical studies and proposing innovative frameworks to contribute to existing knowledge on transmedia storytelling.

Finally, research has often addressed the impact of co-production agreements as being dependent on a large variety of factors, however no studies have analyzed the potential of such factors or the depth of impact of such factors. In this regard, we confirm that performing this review in the light of India-UK co-production treaty has helped to identify this crucial deficiency in research.

It is only logical to propose that the immediate step would be to start from the frequency of studies that have been depicted through the thematic maps in this paper. Although developing empirical or theoretical models on transmedia storytelling or co-production agreements is a highly challenging scenario due to the variety of study methods involved in this genre of research, we hope that future researchers can begin by treating singular results from each theme to avoid complexity in moving forward with future research.

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

*Amritha Subhayan Krishnan* is a Masters student in Filmmaking in the Northern Film School at Leeds Beckett University. She is also an experienced Film Editor with a keen interest and expertise in dealing with Transmedia narrative projects which has motivated her to pursue a PhD in Transmedia storytelling next year. As an editor, she has worked on various projects in the genre of documentaries and Films.

*Vivek Mohan* is a PhD candidate and Researcher in Organisational Behaviour at Leeds Beckett University. His research interests include various topics in Organisational Psychology and Learning in digital organisations that promote art. His experience in doing consulting for digital organisations has led to a keen interest in the aspects of Transmedia Narratives.

**NOTES**

- 1** Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. NYU press, 2006.
- 2** De Vinck, Sophie, and Sven Lindmark. "The Film Industry." In *Digital Media Worlds*, pp. 118-132. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014.
- 3** Fazal, Shehina. "London as a hub of Indian film and television networks." *Information, society and justice journal* 2, no. 1 (2008): 17-32.
- 4** Graves, Michael. "Lost in a Transmedia Storytelling Franchise: rethinking transmedia engagement." (2011).
- 5** See note 3
- 6** Walsh, Mike. "At the edge of Asia: The prospects for Australia-China film co-production." *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 6, no. 3 (2012): 301-316.
- 7** Skilton, Paul F. "Varieties of cooperative strategy in project based organizing: The case of international motion picture co-production." *Advances in Strategic Management* 28 (2011): 27.
- 8** Iordanova, Dina. "Feature filmmaking within the new Europe: moving funds and images across the East-West divide." *Media, Culture & Society* 24, no. 4 (2002): 517-536.
- 9** See note 3
- 10** Lobato, Ramon. "Secret lives of Asian Australian cinema: offshore labour in transnational film industries." *Studies in Australasian cinema* 2, no. 3 (2008): 213-227.
- 11** Lorenzen, Mark. "Internationalization vs. globalization of the film industry." *Industry and Innovation* 14, no. 4 (2007): 349-357.
- 12** Smith, Paul Julian. "Pan's Labyrinth (El laberinto del fauno)." (2007): 4-9.
- 13** Rasul, Azmat, and Jennifer M. Proffitt. "An Irresistible Market: A Critical Analysis of Hollywood-Bollywood Coproductions." *Communication, Culture & Critique* 5, no. 4 (2012): 563-583.

- 14** Scott, Suzanne. "The trouble with transmediation: Fandom's negotiation of transmedia storytelling systems." *Spectator* 30, no. 1 (2010): 30-34.

