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MOVIE PIRACY AT CLICK OF A MOUSE

❑ 'UFO Moviez taking various steps to curb this growing menace'

M BALASUBRAMANI

Chennai, Nov 8:

First there was the pirated film CDs. Then came downloading on the Net. Now you don't even have to download, for it is available on your friendly Facebook Live.

With loads of movies lined up for release, piracy of movies has reached great heights.

In earlier days, it used to take at least two weeks for a movie to reach the grey market and the quality of the pirated movie would not be that good. But, in the present scenario, all it takes is one show for the pirated copy - mind

you, of good quality - to reach the market.

Despite the film industry and government taking action to curb this problem, piracy is still rampant and has reached new heights with movies being played in FB live which is the recent trend.

News Today spoke to UFO Moviez chief executive officer (India Operations) Rajesh Mishra about piracy and its effect on the cinema industry. UFO Moviez is the largest digital cinema distribution network in India.

Q: How much is piracy affecting cinema?

A: Piracy has always been a huge concern for the film industry. It eats up a major portion of the revenue from films; as a result the growth of the industry is hampered. As per recent market estimates, the film industry losses due to piracy is approximately \$2.7 billion annually, which is a huge amount. This is a guesstimate and the actual amount could be higher.

Q: What are the causes and how can it be curbed?

A: Piracy has also significantly reduced due to UFO Moviez's secure technology, as the movie is fully encrypted and there is



Rajesh Mishra

A: I think we can curb piracy only if we have stringent implementation of anti-piracy laws right up to the consumer level. With the rise of digital cinema, piracy has been curtailed to a large extent. UFO Moviez's widespread delivery of first day, first show films across geographies has helped curb piracy as inaccessibility of the films was the major reason which made piracy flourish. Therefore, the accessibility of film content at a theatre near the audience is bringing them back to the theatres, which, in turn, has increased box-office collections.

Q: How is UFO Moviez handling piracy?

A: Piracy has also significantly reduced due to UFO Moviez's secure technology, as the movie is fully encrypted and there is

manual handling: the films are delivered directly via satellite to cinemas across the country. Our technology also provides exact and secure reporting of details to make sure that there are no unauthorised screenings. Another measure of anti-piracy that we have pioneered in is the concept of invisible watermarking. Each theatre-server displays a unique invisible fingerprint while screening the movie in a non-intrusive manner. Using this feature, we can trace the theatre from where a movie is pirated, the name and location of the theatre where the film was illegally videographed and other co-ordinates like time, date, etc., which help to crack down on piracy.

Q: Why are people more inclined towards watching pirated movies than going to the theatre?

A: India is a highly under-screened country, and people, at times, don't get to see their favourite movies and, hence, they resort to piracy. With the advent of digitisation, this huge demand-supply gap has been significantly reduced and the audiences are flocking back to the theatres. Also, technology abets piracy, since films are available online and can be easily downloaded on all devices, including smartphones. It is also necessary to create awareness about piracy. The fact that piracy is a theft - pure and simple - needs to be taught at school levels. All these steps will go a long way in eliminating it.

Q: With the festival season around what steps are being taken against piracy?



A: Typically, during the weekends of festive seasons, including Deepavali, we see two major film releases which is the case this time too. Piracy eats into the box office revenues, which is leading to severe losses for the film industry. The entire film industry should come together and try to make the movie experience affordable, and deploy more screens across the length and breadth of the country.

Q: Is the high ticket rate the prime reason for people switching to pirated movies?

A: Inaccessibility to their favourite movies at a theatre nearest to them is compelling the audience to watch pirated movies.

Q: Can the cost of the ticket be reduced if the producers spent less on promotional activities?

A: It is very important to create awareness about the movie to entice the audience to watch it. Increasing or decreasing the budget for promotional activities doesn't affect the ticket cost. The cost of

the ticket is decided by the exhibitor / theatre owner. To make the movie experience affordable, there should be significant reduction in taxes, which will definitely bring down the ticket cost.

Q: what are the future schemes of UFO Moviez?

A: We at UFO Moviez have identified the demand-supply gap in the local cinema business and have come up with NOVA Cinemas, an asset-light franchisee model. UFO Moviez intends to create a franchisee network of NOVA Screens in tier-2 and 3 cities, where there is a pressing need for good theatres. The aim of NOVA Cinemas is to make the movie-going experience affordable, entertaining and accessible. NOVA Cinemas will encourage local entrepreneurs to own and operate Nova branded theatres in various parts of the country. We have also come up with Caravan Talkies, a movie-on-wheels concept, wherein sundown non-ticketed shows are played in villages for India's rural population in the media dark areas.