Product Update: Theatrical Content Testing

To account for evolution in audience taste because of the pandemic, engagement drivers used in Ormax Moviescope and Ormax First Draft have been updated in September 2022

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Summary

- The pandemic has had a significant impact on audience's taste and performances, especially when it comes to theatrical content consumption
- In this context, we have updated our tools Ormax Moviescope and Ormax First Draft, used for testing theatrical content (scripts and films), to capture the audience reality of 2022 more accurately
- The driver Production Scale has grown in importance, and is now the top-ranked driver for theatrical engagement
- Four new drivers – Swag, Optimism, Rooted In Culture & Authenticity – have been introduced in this update

To say that the pandemic has had a defining impact on the Indian Media & Entertainment industry, especially the theatrical business, would be an understatement. Much has been spoken about the need for the film industry to evolve and adapt to the dynamic, post-pandemic landscape. But how has the pandemic influenced the theatre-going audience's taste and preferences? And how does one account for evolving consumer preferences while making key business decisions, such green-lighting a script, assigning budgets to a film project, deciding on a theatrical vs. OTT release, etc.?

In our theatrical content testing tools **Ormax Moviescope** and **Ormax First Draft**, we use **Ormax Power Rating (OPR)** as a metric to capture the likability and engagement of the audience with the script or the film being tested. This rating, on a 0-100 scale, encapsulates the audience approval or rejection of the content, e.g., a score of 70+ suggests the audience have whole-heartedly accepted the content, while a score below 40 suggests outright rejection.

To arrive at the OPR for any test script or film, we use **'OPR Drivers'**, i.e., factors (or benefits) that can have a positive influence on a film's audience engagement, once they have stepped into a theatre to watch it. OPR Drivers are identified through extensive ongoing qualitative research. These drivers are then assigned weights to reflect their relative importance, based on statistical modeling of high-OPR films released in the last 12 months.

While weights are updated every six months, updating drivers is a less-frequent exercise. After all, we don't expect consumer benefits from a category to fundamentally change more than once in a few years. But given the watershed impact of the pandemic on the content landscape in India, a drivers update seemed imperative, so that OPR Drivers accurately reflect consumer expectations from theatrical content in 2022. For this, extensive qualitative research was conducted between May and July this year, followed by large-

sample quantitative research to validate the new drivers, and assign weights to them. This research was conducted across India, covering all the major theatrical languages. The drivers selected are 'universal' (same across languages), but their weights vary by language, capturing the taste nuances each language audience bring with them.

You can download a product update deck [here](#), which details all the drivers. A summary of important changes in the update follows:

An intuitive outcome of this update is that the driver **Production Scale** has moved up from seventh to first rank in its weightage (for Hindi theatrical). We define this driver as follows: Big-scale production, as apparent through sets & locations, leading to visual escapism and a theatrical-worthy viewing experience. With the emergence of streaming as an alternative, scale has emerged as a primary enabler of theatrical viewing experience, as has been evident in how films like K.G.F: Chapter 2 and RRR have been received by the audience. Absence of scale makes a film a strong candidate for a direct-to-OTT release. Production Scale is a low-ranked driver for direct-to-OTT films, ranking no. 13 (out of the 14 drivers applicable to that category).

In addition to the increase importance of the driver Production Scale, four new drivers have been added in this update:

1. Swag

Definition: Depiction of characters that display style, confidence and irreverence, portrayed through their looks, mannerisms, actions & dialogues

The success of larger-than-life characters who exude confidence, and display their irreverence in an assertive manner, like Rocky in K.G.F: Chapter 2, or Pushpa in Pushpa: The

Rise, is best explained by the emergence of Swag as one of the top-rated drivers in a theatrical context. Swag symbolises a style and attitude that denounces subservience, and instills a sense of empowerment, along with coolness, in the viewer's mind.

2. Optimism

Definition: Positive tonality delivered through characters, situations and messages, leading to a promise of feel-good, and an uplifting after

While there is a strong and emerging need for escapist content, parallelly, there is also a growing audience expectation to watch stories that are grounded in the larger ethos of our culture. Movies like Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior, which emphasizes elements of Maratha culture, underline this benefit. And while it's an aberration at large from a box office perspective (read here), The Kashmir Files too benefited from strong presence of this driver.

3. Authenticity

Definition: Accurate and realistic depiction of locations, setting, characters, etc., in a way that comes across as real and credible

While not conducive to all genres (e.g., fantasy fiction like Brahmāstra), accurate depiction, especially in the case of historicals, period dramas, or biopics, has emerged as an important expectation from theatrical content. With greater exposure to content from various geographies, Indian or abroad, audiences are more aware, than ever before, about the importance of meticulous detailing that goes into getting characters and their worlds, for a film to come across as genuine, and not 'fake' or synthetic.

Click here to download the 2022 product update deck for Ormax Moviescope and

OrmaxFirst Draft.

To read our comprehensive explainer on Content Testing, click here