

# SMART STREAMING

HOW TO FIND YOUR DIGITAL AUDIENCE

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# INTRO

These are exciting times for filmmakers. Content is king once again. As the Hollywood battle rages on, and streaming wars escalate, filmmakers have more outlets available for their content than ever before.

Streaming platforms are in vogue. While Amazon and Netflix duke it out, Disney and Apple have joined the mix. HBO Max and the Peacock will enter soon. The AVOD platforms like Tubi and Xumo are proving the ad model can still work, for those seeking a fix for free. Roku now has over 2,000 streaming channels. Apple and Amazon Fire have robust content menus, and Smart TVs have channel apps of their own. Welcome to the Wild, wild, west.

As the landscape continues to evolve, along with the number of independent filmmakers, it has become increasingly important to develop a modern blueprint.

In ***SMART Streaming: How to Find Your Audience***, you will find 5 key areas necessary to boost sales: **S**trategy. **M**arketing. **A**dvertising. **R**esearch. **T**eam.

**CONTENT IS KING ONCE AGAIN. THE TRICK IS TO HAVE THE RIGHT STRATEGY.**

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## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- The Q3 Global TV Demand Report (courtesy of [Parrot Analytics](#))
  - 2019 Social Media Marketing Report (courtesy of [Social Media Examiner](#))
  - Winning Your Audiences (courtesy of [Gruvi.tv](#))
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# STRATEGY

**Start with your Goal.** This may seem obvious, but it's important to start knowing what you want. Are you looking to make short term money, or long term gains? Are you looking to reach the widest audience or a niche group? What is your timeline?

Netflix or Hulu, for example, could offer you an MG (minimum guarantee) up front for exclusive rights, but that may be the last penny you see.

## **Consider your timeline.**

Are you looking to play traditional windows, do pre sales and TVOD first? Or do you go to multiple SVOD and/or AVOD platforms, on a non-exclusive basis?

If you want to go to iTunes, GooglePlay and Fandango, are you willing to pay an aggregator from 1-2k to handle encoding, ingestion and payment processing?

# AGGREGATORS

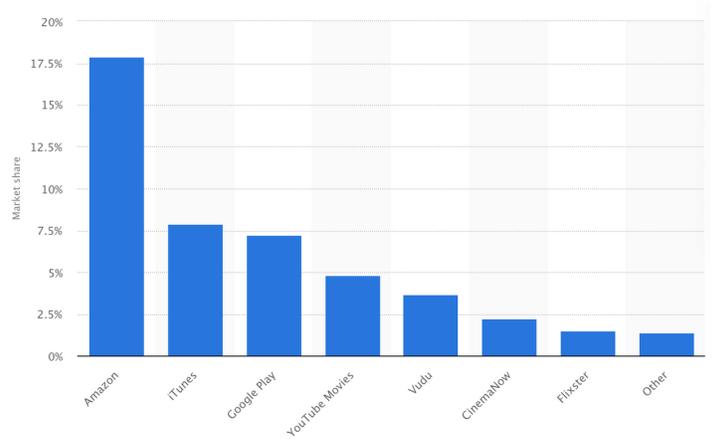
**Quiver** - iTunes \$1,395. \$1,620 for iTunes and Amazon;\$ 1,845 for iTunes, Amazon & GooglePlay. There is no Revenue share.

**Walla** - iTunes \$999 and \$199 to add other platforms, ie Amazon, Xbox and GooglePlay. PLUS 15% Revenue share.

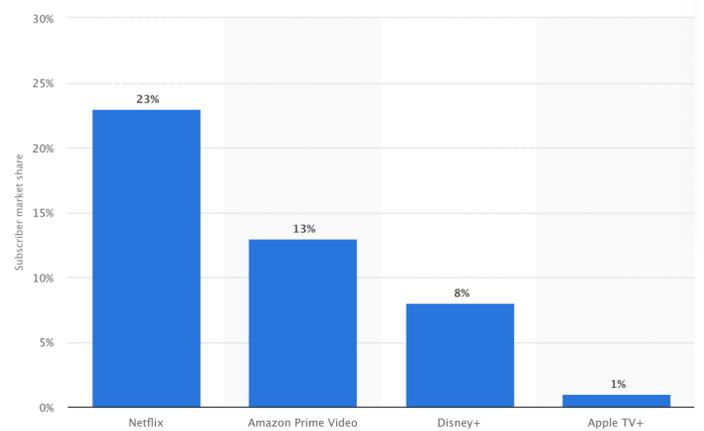
**BitMax** - Custom price, based on platform choices.

**Exclusive vs Non Exclusive**

There are pros and cons here. Back to your goals. If number one is to reach the widest audience possible, you are likely to have a better chance with **SVOD** players Netflix and Amazon Prime. Netflix is a bit more focused on curation, and created original TV. Amazon has a more massive library, and their TVOD platform requires more marketing, which we'll get to next.



The **TVOD** platforms are typically non-exclusive, which means you can have your film on a number of platforms at the same time. For example, you could be on GooglePlay, Fandango, Amazon, Xbox and Vudu (and a few hundred, which we'll cover in the Research section) simultaneously. These companies all work on a revenue share, so there will not be any money up front, Many, like Amazon, will require marketing support to drive awareness in a crowded space.



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# MARKETING



The sad truth about making sales is you need to create awareness. It's all about **Marketing**. Too many of us fall into the *Field of Dreams* syndrome - "if you build it, he will come." There are too many movies and shows, on too many platforms. You have to develop a Marketing plan to be successful, supported by a branded website, that is capturing emails for future outreach.

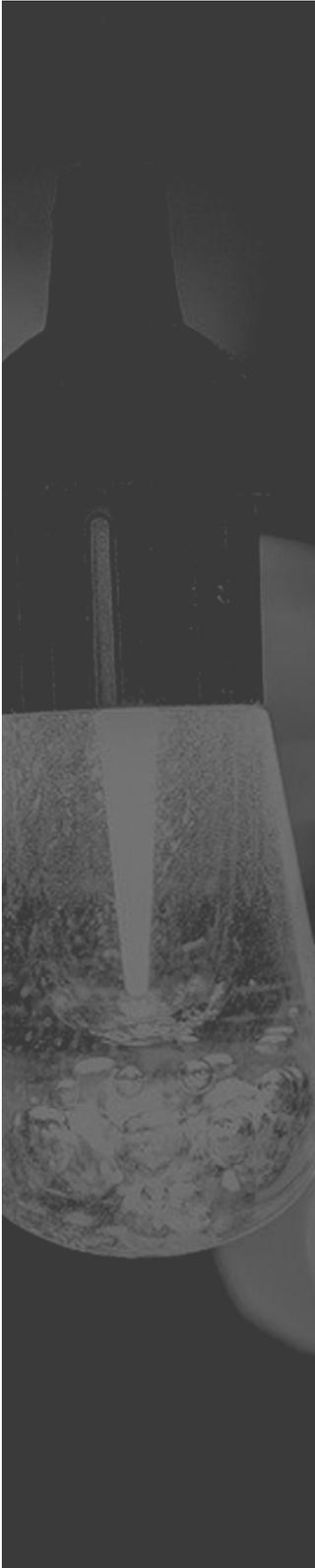
A successful plan includes a combination of actions, from packaging to differentiation, from PR outreach to social media. Break down each of these categories and give yourself the best chance to drive traffic to your respective VOD platforms

Before you dig in, know your audience, and their persona, which helps you target websites and platforms where they live and play.

What tags work? What are their preferences? Start there and connect. If you have a niche, spend time engaging in that online community.

When we think of differentiation, it starts with your look and feel. Think of your movie as a brand. Accept the fact that not all filmmakers are designers. I'm a big fan of [99 designs](#) if you don't have affordable designers in your circle. They create a competition to win your gig, so you get multiple designers presenting designs to consider. Integrate a killer tagline or hook and let them get creative.

This key art will set the tone for your website. You will have stills, but you will also need your trailer, poster, thumbnail and other graphics to meet spec requirements for each of your sales platforms. Even your press kit is a branding opportunity.



When it comes to **PR**, not everyone can afford a publicist, so you will likely have to cover this base. It's easy to write a press release and put it out on on [PR Newswire](#), and there are a number of indie film sites and bloggers looking for movies to cover.

Reach out. [Film Threat](#), for example, does over 100 reviews per month! If you want to get a Rotten Tomatoes score, or have a few more high profile reviews, [Bunker 15](#) can make that happen.

Yes, you want to drive audiences to your streaming platforms, but remember your branded website is your window to the world, where you have been collecting emails. When you're ready, do a drip campaign, directly to your email list.

**Social Media** is obviously a key piece of your PR campaign. You probably have a Facebook account, and likely Instagram and Twitter. Whether you are an active user, with thousands of friends or still building a base, you can still creatively leverage these platforms by engaging with your target audience. Again, go connect with your tribe, in their world. Think personas, genres and tags. We'll cover this more in the Advertising section, but think of these buckets as homes for the audiences you need to reach.

Sean Mannion wrote a helpful [article](#) that shares more insights on the value of social media and PR. I tend to agree with his assessment that Instagram is the most filmmaker friendly, being a visual platform, and one filmmakers are spending more time on than Facebook these days.

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# ADVERTISING

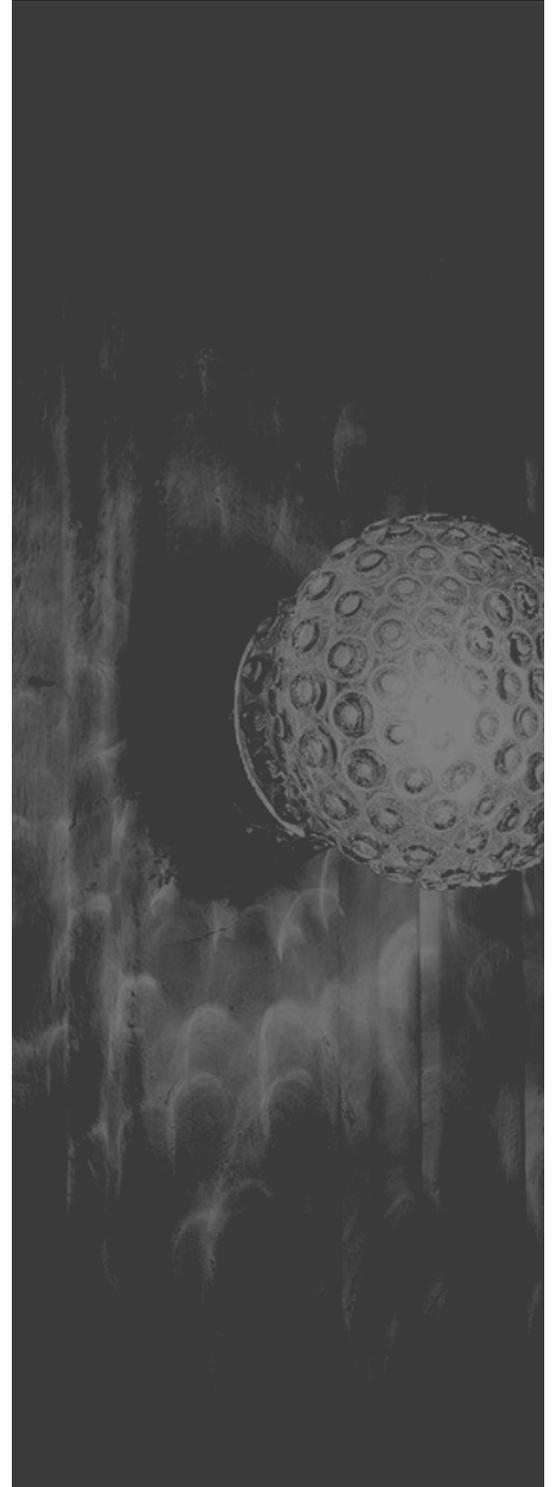
When it comes to Advertising for indie films, **Social Media** is the anchor. You don't need to buy billboards, or pay thousands to be in newspapers or magazines. Leverage the tools created by Facebook, Google and Twitter, to really target your outreach.

You don't have to be a pro on any of these. You just have to know your target audience, and key words. Think of your genre, subgenre, primary demo and age group. **Facebook** (and sister company **Instagram**) makes it easy to reach many eyeballs, for little money. [Click here to learn more about their programs.](#)

If your movie lives on **Amazon**, they have a [Social Media Guide](#) for best practices, as well as more general [marketing guidelines](#). Rally the troops (see Team) to get calculated reviews and drive their complex algorithms.

**Google** is another reliable ad platform. It was once the most popular choice, but Facebook and Instagram are now a better play per dollar spent. For a deeper dive, [here is a link](#) to their programs. It's worth a small spend, just to cover your bases. Then analyze the data and pivot as appropriate.

This [article](#) from Social Media Examiner is targets brands, but that's the mindset you need to have. I recommend, you read their Marketing Report as well, which you can find in the Resources section at [FilmmakerConsulting.com](#).



# RESEARCH

In this new streaming world, there are many OTT platforms (OTT stands for over-the-top) where content is delivered via an internet connection rather than through a traditional cable/broadcast provider.

It's important to **Research** the playing field, know which platforms have broader vs. niche audiences. Typically, a platform will favor one of the models below, but there are some that combine services, where audiences pay more to avoid ads. With virtually thousands of options available, it's important to weigh the subscriber volume option, versus a more curated approach with less eyeballs. It also helps to analyze other films in your genre and category, and where they live.

## SVOD

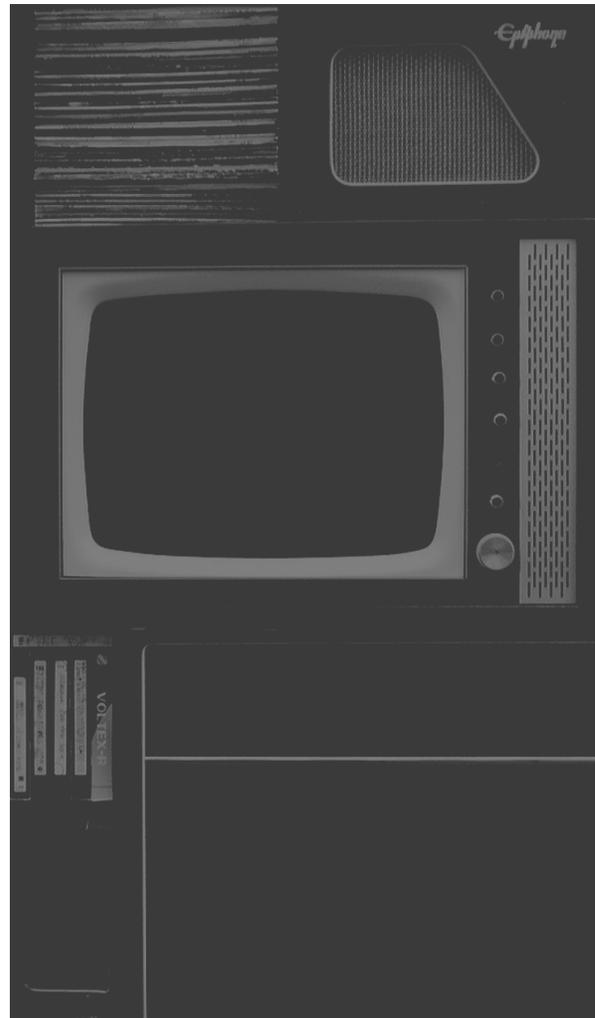
Subscription VOD (SVOD) services use a subscription business model in which subscribers are charged a monthly fee to access unlimited content. Examples of these services include Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, Apple+ and Disney+.

## TVOD

Transactional video demand (TVOD) is a distribution method by which customers pay for each piece of video-on-demand content. Examples of these services include: iTunes, GooglePlay, Amazon and Fandango.

## AVOD

Ad-Supported Video on Demand (AVOD) is referred to monetization of video services that are made available to the end-user at no charge but are Ad-supported by adding advertisement in any manner to the video on demand. Examples of these services include: Pluto, Xumo, Tubi, and Hulu.



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The **payment structure** for these models is all over the map. The TVOD, for example is pretty standard. The AVOD is as well, but with those platforms, the rev share only pays off if there is substantial traffic. It's the SVOD that gets really complicated. See a few examples of payment structures below, and know that they fluctuate from time to time. Be sure to read the fine print to be sure you're clear about the license deal in front of you.

The **TVOD** platforms, such as iTunes and GooglePlay offer a profit split at 70% to filmmakers/content owners and 30% to Apple. For example, if your film sells for \$9.99 on iTunes, you will receive \$7 from that sale.

**AVOD** is typically a 50/50 split, between the content creators and the platforms. Some platforms want 60%.

The **SVOD** platforms are typically curated and will pay a license fee to have the exclusive rights to play the film or series on that platform. There is quite a range, from 4 figures to 6 figures, depending on many variables, such as name cast, festival awards and previous theatrical release.

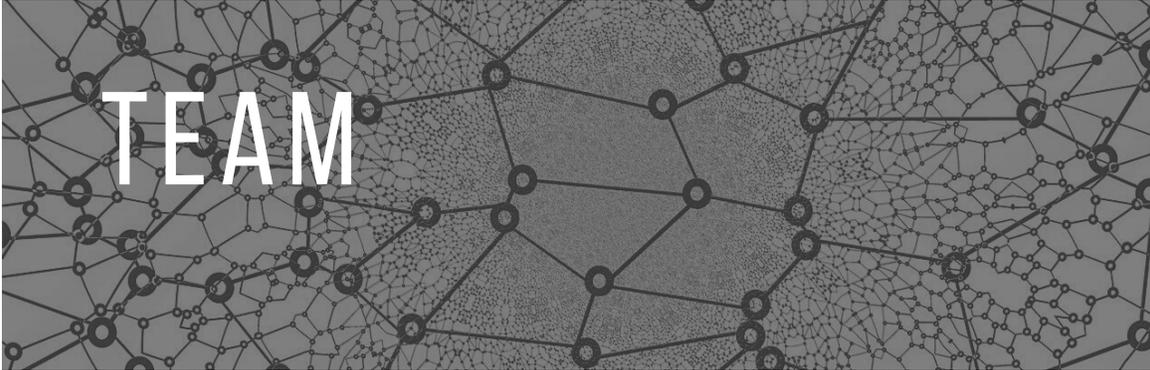
The Amazon Prime **SVOD** model is confusing, to say the least. Broadly speaking, it rewards the top performers with more revenues and more exposure in their recommendation engines. Click [here](#) to see a Variety article with the breakdown, but know that it changes frequently.

Learn more about the top platforms via their links below. As mentioned, there are many more, but these are the top players, [Roku](#) is a good resource as well.

SVOD	TVOD	AVOD
<a href="#">Netflix</a>	<a href="#">iTunes</a>	<a href="#">Pluto</a>
<a href="#">Amazon</a>	<a href="#">Fandango</a>	<a href="#">Xumo</a>
<a href="#">Hulu</a>	<a href="#">Crackle</a>	<a href="#">Tubi</a>
<a href="#">Epix</a>	<a href="#">XBox</a>	<a href="#">Filmocracy.</a>
<a href="#">HBO</a>	<a href="#">GooglePlay.</a>	<a href="#">FilmRise</a>
<a href="#">Showtime</a>	<a href="#">Vudu</a>	<a href="#">Facebook</a>
<a href="#">Starz</a>	<a href="#">YouTube</a>	<a href="#">SciFiGo</a>
<a href="#">CBS AllAccess</a>	<a href="#">Vimeo</a>	<a href="#">Stirr</a>
<a href="#">Disney+</a>	<a href="#">Skoot.tv</a>	<a href="#">RokuChannel</a>
<a href="#">Apple+</a>		<a href="#">Stadium</a>
<a href="#">Curiosity Stream</a>		<a href="#">Dove</a>
<a href="#">IndieFlix</a>		<a href="#">ConTV</a>
<a href="#">PureFlix</a>		
<a href="#">Mubi</a>		
<a href="#">MyOutdoorTV</a>		
<a href="#">BritBox</a>		
<a href="#">Gaia</a>		
<a href="#">FMTV</a>		
<a href="#">Flix Premiere</a>		
<a href="#">Screambox</a>		
<a href="#">Shudder</a>		
<a href="#">Sundance</a>		

***New AVOD opportunities are forecast to lift US revenue for online video advertising to \$27 billion by 2023, a compound annual growth rate of 11% from 2018 to 2023.***

*(Report courtesy of Informa Tech 2019)*



Your **Team** means than you think. Whether you land on multiple platforms, or settle on iTunes or Amazon, you really need to plan outreach to your production team, family and friends. People take this Team outreach for granted. Everyone associated with your movie WANTS you to succeed. They want the film or show to succeed; and of course, so does your extended family.

It's not just the cast and crew, who should certainly support your outreach. I'm talking about family, friends, associates, connections and the parents on your kid's soccer team. They are all ready to support. All you have to do is ask. If you can get everyone to promise to share your link with 3-5 people, it really adds up and leads to organic growth.

Your goal with Amazon is to get factored into their referral algorithm. The more reviews and ratings you get, the more you are recommended. It's just that simple.

Yes, we covered social media, in terms of consistent posts and engagement, but don't underestimate the power of direct outreach. You must have LinkedIn connections, for example. Did you know you can export those connections? Drop those emails into a marketing program, like [Aweber](#), [Mailchimp](#), or use [Mixmax](#), and do a drip campaign.

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**OPEN RATES FOR DRIP CAMPAIGNS AVERAGE 80 PERCENT HIGHER THAN SINGLE SEND EMAILS, AND AVERAGE CLICK THROUGH RATES ARE THREE X HIGHER.**

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# SUMMARY

Producing independent content is hard work, and unless you're just making art for art's sake, you want your project to be seen, to share your vision with the world. Develop a SMART Streaming program to give you the best chance to maximize success.

Take the time to develop a SMART Streaming program to give you the best chance for success.

Have a strategy, with a goal in mind. Create your marketing campaign and take the time to do some homework on the platforms and audiences suited to your project. It will pay off. Once your Blueprint is ready, rally the team, and finish strong.

Stream smart. Your audience is waiting...