



PRELIMINARY ROUND 2

SCREENS BEYOND BOUNDARIES: BOLLYWOOD ON OTT

-Dr. Deevanshu Shrivastava

For over two decades, Galaxy Sports and Entertainment Network (GSEN) has been one of India's most influential broadcasters. Known for securing exclusive sports rights and curating major entertainment spectacles, GSEN has long positioned itself as the guardian of glamour and grandeur on television. Among its crown jewels is the Bollywood Awards of Dance and Screen (BADs), an annual celebration of Indian cinema, often described as the “Oscars of Bollywood.” With celebrity red carpets, elaborate stage performances, and star-studded award ceremonies, BADs has traditionally drawn millions of television viewers across South Asia and beyond.

In 2018, GSEN renewed its exclusive broadcasting agreement with the BADs Organizing Committee for five years, ensuring that only GSEN's television channels could air the event live. Recognizing the growing influence of digital media, GSEN cautiously experimented with licensing certain **non-exclusive digital clip rights** in 2021. These licenses permitted online platforms to showcase short highlights — defined as clips no longer than five minutes and uploaded at least ten minutes after the live action. One such license was acquired by **Streamify**, a leading global OTT platform with a fast-expanding Indian subscriber base, eager to expand its Bollywood offerings.

Initially, the collaboration between GSEN and Streamify seemed mutually beneficial. GSEN retained its dominance over live broadcasting, while Streamify gained the ability to attract younger, mobile-first audiences with curated snippets. However, during the 2023 BADs ceremony, tensions came to a head. Streamify's algorithms began pushing out AI-curated reels almost instantly after performances, interviews, and red-carpet moments. While technically compliant with clip duration limits, some of these highlights reached users within five minutes of live events. These “near-live” snippets spread rapidly across social media, often trending before the live performances on television concluded.

The consequences were immediate and severe. Advertisers, who once flocked to GSEN's prime-time slots, began shifting their budgets toward digital campaigns on Streamify. GSEN reported a 25% decline in advertising revenue compared to the previous year, while Streamify's ad revenue from Bollywood-related content soared by 40%. GSEN accused Streamify of violating the “spirit” of their agreement, calling its actions a form of “digital ambush” that undermined television exclusivity. Streamify countered that it had adhered to the terms, pointing out that the contract never expressly



prohibited five-minute delays and that the definition of “highlights” had never been properly clarified.

This disagreement has created deep fault lines. GSEN fears that if near-live clips continue unchecked, the very basis of paying enormous sums for exclusivity will collapse, not only in relation to BADS but also in its sports and entertainment portfolio. It worries that if Streamify sets a precedent here, other OTT platforms will demand similar latitude. Streamify, in contrast, views digital dominance as inevitable. Its internal surveys suggest that 70% of young viewers between 18–34 no longer watch live award shows on television but consume only short digital reels. For Streamify, near-live clips are not a breach but the future of entertainment.

Both companies also face pressures outside the BADS dispute. GSEN is contending with falling satellite subscriptions, which dropped 15% last year, as viewers migrate to online content. Several sponsors, once loyal to television, have warned that unless GSEN guarantees digital exposure, they may cut or withdraw contracts altogether. Streamify, meanwhile, has its own vulnerabilities. While it appears to be thriving in India, it is under increasing global scrutiny, particularly in Europe, where regulators are investigating it for monopolistic practices. A high-profile legal battle in India could damage its carefully cultivated reputation as an innovator rather than a disruptor.

The stakes surrounding BADS 2024 are especially high. This year’s ceremony is expected to feature some of Bollywood’s biggest names, with two of the industry’s most bankable stars set to perform live for the first time in years. Sponsorship deals worth hundreds of crores depend on maximizing audience reach. GSEN is desperate to protect its exclusivity for the live broadcast, while Streamify wants to cement its position as the premier destination for digital Bollywood content. Both parties know that if the dispute spirals into litigation, they could lose not just revenue but also credibility with advertisers, sponsors, and the BADS Organizing Committee itself.

Recognizing these risks, Streamify has formally initiated mediation in an effort to find a workable solution. GSEN, though reluctant, has agreed to participate, knowing that walking away might alienate sponsors and leave it exposed to market shifts. GSEN will be represented by Mr. Arvind Kapoor, Chief Legal Counsel, who was instrumental in drafting the original licensing agreement, and Ms. Rhea Malhotra, Head of Business Strategy, who is under intense pressure to reassure advertisers. Streamify will be represented by Mr. Kabir Mehta, Vice President for South Asia Operations, responsible for driving Streamify’s expansion in India, and Ms. Alisha Verghese, General Counsel, who oversees licensing negotiations globally.



With the clock ticking and the Bollywood spotlight intensifying, both sides now sit across the mediation table. The future of BADS — and perhaps the model of Bollywood broadcasting itself — may be determined by the outcome of these negotiations.