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# Strategic Value Creation in Digital Content Supply Chains: Temporal, Spatial, and Ownership Transfer Mechanisms in Global OTT Platforms

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study reframes global OTT content as an economic good distributed through a digital content supply chain that creates value between suppliers and subscribers. Anchored in distribution science, the study explains how value-added activities occur through temporal transfer, spatial transfer, and ownership transfer. A widely recognized Netflix title, *Squid Game*, is referenced as an illustrative case to keep the mechanisms concrete. **Research design, data and methodology:** The study conducts a structured literature review across supply chain management, service distribution, platform economics, and internet-distributed television studies. Prior research is synthesized to extract recurring mechanisms that connect upstream content production, platform governance, and downstream subscriber experience. **Results:** The review identifies four recurring value-creation mechanisms in OTT supply chains: (1) temporal coordination via release scheduling and pacing, (2) spatial expansion via localization and global distribution infrastructure, (3) ownership transfer via IP licensing and subscription-based access rights, and (4) visibility control via recommender systems that shape demand and attention. **Conclusions:** Digital content supply chains generate value by managing time, place, and ownership transitions. By translating audience-facing “experience design” into supplier-to-customer value-added activities, the study aligns OTT research with distribution science and clarifies why platform-based supply chains can amplify global reach and monetization.

**Keywords :** Digital Content Supply Chain, OTT Platforms, Service Distribution, Intellectual Property Licensing

**JEL Classification Code:** L14; L86; M11; O33

## 1. Introduction

Distribution science traditionally studies how value is created between suppliers and customers through coordinated economic activities. These activities include temporal transfer (moving value across time), spatial transfer (moving value across place), and ownership transfer (transferring control or rights). While earlier distribution studies often focused on physical goods, recent research has

increasingly recognized that digital and service-based products also move through structured supply chains.

In platform-based markets, value is created not only through production but also through coordination between multiple sides of the market. Hagiu and Wright (2015) explain that multi-sided platforms act as intermediaries that structure transactions between different participant groups. In the context of over-the-top (OTT) streaming platforms, the platform connects content suppliers (studios, producers, and IP holders) with subscribers. This structure resembles a

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supply chain, even though the product is intangible.

Service-dominant logic further clarifies that value does not exist only at the moment of production. Instead, value is co-created through use and interaction (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). For streaming platforms, this means that value emerges when subscribers access, watch, and engage with content under specific distribution conditions. These conditions are not random. They are designed through release timing, licensing agreements, recommendation systems, and global availability strategies. All of these are value-added activities located between supplier and customer.

Digital supply chain research provides a framework for understanding these mechanisms. Büyüközkan and Göçer (2018) define digital supply chains as integrated systems where information, rights, and digital goods move through coordinated technological infrastructures. In such systems, logistics does not require trucks or warehouses. Instead, it depends on servers, content delivery networks (CDNs), metadata systems, and algorithmic allocation tools. Despite the difference in infrastructure, the economic logic remains the same: value is created through structured coordination across stages.

This paper argues that global OTT platforms operate as digital content supply chains. The product being distributed is not merely a video file, but an intellectual property (IP)-based digital goods packaged through licensing, timing, and platform governance mechanisms. The research question guiding this study is: How do global OTT platforms create strategic value through temporal, spatial, and ownership transfer mechanisms within digital content supply chains?

To make the mechanisms concrete, this study refers to *Squid Game* as an illustrative case of globally distributed content. The title itself is not analyzed as a narrative or cultural text. Instead, it serves as a recognizable example of how digital content travels from upstream production to downstream consumption through coordinated distribution activities. The global rollout of the series demonstrates how release timing, worldwide localization, licensing control, and algorithmic promotion can align within a single supply chain. Importantly, the purpose of this paper is not to provide a case study in media studies. Rather, it is to translate OTT platform operations into the language of distribution science. In JDS terms, the paper focuses on: Supplier: content producers, studios, and IP holders. Value-added activities: release scheduling, localization, licensing contracts, digital infrastructure management, recommendation and visibility allocation. Customer: global subscribers

Each of these stages involves economic decisions that affect time, place, and ownership transitions. Temporal transfer occurs through release strategies. Platforms decide whether to release episodes weekly or all at once, how long titles remain highlighted, and how catalog rotation is

managed. These decisions affect demand pacing and subscriber retention. Spatial transfer occurs through localization and international distribution. Platforms must manage language adaptation, regulatory compliance, and regional catalog differences to expand into global markets.

Ownership transfer occurs through intellectual property licensing and subscription-based access rights. Even though subscribers do not own permanent copies, they receive structured usage rights through contractual agreements. By organizing OTT research around these three transfers, this study aligns platform-based streaming analysis with the core definition of distribution science. This study adopts structured literature review methodology. Instead of collecting new empirical data, it synthesizes peer-reviewed research from supply chain management, digital platform studies, and streaming industry analysis. The literature is categorized according to whether it explains mechanisms related to temporal coordination, spatial expansion, ownership and licensing, or visibility allocation.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Part 2 develops the theoretical foundation of digital content supply chains using seven key studies. Part 3 presents the results by synthesizing twenty selected peer-reviewed articles (2010–2025) into a structured supply chain framework. Part 4 discusses theoretical contributions to distribution science, managerial implications, and future research directions. By clearly identifying value-added activities between suppliers and subscribers, this study demonstrates that global OTT platforms fit within the established boundaries of distribution research. Digital content may be intangible, but its movement through coordinated economic structures reflects the same fundamental logic that underlies traditional supply chains.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Digital Supply Chains and Intangible Value Flow

Traditional supply chains move physical goods. However, digital transformation has expanded supply chain research into environments where value is transmitted through data, platforms, and digital infrastructure. Gunasekaran et al. (2017) argue that digital technologies and analytics fundamentally reshape how supply chains create performance advantages. In digital contexts, coordination, timing, and information visibility become central drivers of value creation.

Similarly, Ivanov and Dolgui (2021) propose the idea of a digital supply chain twin, emphasizing that digital supply chains depend on integrated information systems rather than physical transportation alone. This perspective is highly

relevant to OTT platforms. The “movement” of digital content relies on servers, content delivery networks, metadata systems, and algorithmic allocation rather than trucks or warehouses. Yet the coordination logic remains consistent with distribution science: upstream production must connect efficiently with downstream demand.

Bigliardi et al. (2022) further review digital supply chain transformation and note that digital supply chains create value through integration, automation, and responsiveness. These characteristics are clearly visible in streaming platforms, where release timing, licensing adjustments, and recommendation algorithms respond dynamically to subscriber behavior. Thus, digital content distribution fits squarely within contemporary supply chain theory. In the context of OTT, the product is intellectual property (IP)-based digital content. The supply chain includes production, acquisition, localization, licensing, platform ingestion, and subscriber delivery. These are structured, coordinated stages of value creation between supplier and customer.

## 2.2. Platformization as a Distribution Mechanism

While supply chain research explains structural coordination, platform studies clarify how digital intermediaries govern transactions. Nieborg and Poell (2018) describe the “platformization of cultural production,” where platforms reorganize content production and distribution through data-driven governance. They argue that cultural goods increasingly circulate within ecosystems controlled by digital intermediaries. This argument by defining platformization as the penetration of platform infrastructures and economic models into multiple sectors. In OTT markets, this means that streaming services do not simply distribute content—they structure how content is monetized, promoted, and accessed.

From a distribution science perspective, platformization can be interpreted as channel governance. Platforms coordinate upstream suppliers (studios, independent producers, rights holders) and downstream consumers (subscribers) through standardized technological and contractual interfaces. This coordination generates value-added activity that did not exist in traditional broadcast distribution models. OTT platforms internalize several functions that were once separated across different firms: licensing negotiation, marketing, scheduling, and even data-based demand forecasting. This integration reduces transaction friction and strengthens control over the supply chain.

## 2.3. Industrial Transformation in Streaming Markets

Wayne (2018) examines how subscription video-on-

demand (SVOD) services such as Netflix restructure television production and distribution. She argues that streaming platforms combine production, branding, and distribution strategies within a unified industrial model. This integration changes the bargaining power between content creators and distributors.

In distribution science language, this shift reflects vertical coordination. Platforms increasingly invest in original production to secure IP ownership and reduce dependency on external suppliers. This strategy transforms ownership transfer mechanisms within the supply chain. Lobato (2018) rethinks international television flows in the age of Netflix and highlights how streaming platforms disrupt traditional territorial distribution models. Historically, content moved sequentially across geographic markets through licensing windows. Streaming platforms accelerate and centralize this process, allowing near-simultaneous global releases.

This acceleration directly relates to spatial transfer. Instead of staggered territorial movement, digital supply chains enable parallel global distribution. However, this process still requires localization, rights clearance, and compliance with national regulations. Thus, spatial expansion remains a managed economic activity rather than an automatic outcome.

## 2.4. Linking Literature to JDS Distribution Definition

The reviewed studies collectively support the argument that OTT platforms function as digital supply chains. Digital supply chain research (Gunasekaran et al., 2017; Ivanov & Dolgui, 2021; Bigliardi et al., 2022) explains how intangible goods move through coordinated technological systems. Platformization research (Nieborg & Poell, 2018) clarifies how digital intermediaries govern value flows. Streaming industry research (Wayne, 2018; Lobato, 2018) shows how production, licensing, and global distribution are reorganized under platform control.

When translated into JDS terminology: Supplier = content producers and IP holders. Value-added activities = digital integration, licensing coordination, release scheduling, localization, platform governance. Customer = global subscribers. These activities operationalize: Temporal transfer (release timing and demand pacing). Spatial transfer (global expansion and localization). Ownership transfer (IP licensing and subscription-based access rights). This theoretical foundation prepares the Results section, where twenty peer-reviewed studies (2010–2025) will be synthesized to demonstrate how these mechanisms operate empirically within OTT supply chains.

### 3. Methodology

This study adopts a structured literature review methodology to examine how global OTT platforms operate as digital content supply chains. Rather than collecting primary empirical data, the research systematically synthesizes prior peer-reviewed studies published between 2010 and 2025. The objective is to reinterpret existing OTT and platform research through the conceptual lens of distribution science, focusing specifically on value-added activities occurring between suppliers and subscribers (Woo & Kang, 2020; Phommahaxay et al., 2019).

The literature selection process followed three stages. First, relevant studies were identified using academic databases and Google Scholar with keywords such as “OTT platforms,” “streaming distribution,” “binge-watching,” “platform governance,” “digital supply chain,” and “subscription models.” Second, studies were screened based on relevance to supplier–platform–customer interactions and their discussion of timing strategies, global expansion, licensing structures, recommendation systems, or interface design. Third, twenty core studies were selected for structured synthesis in the Results section, while additional foundational studies were used to construct the theoretical framework in the Introduction and Literature Review (Nantharath et al., 2023).

The selected studies were coded according to supply chain stage (upstream, midstream, downstream) and type of transfer mechanism (temporal, spatial, or ownership). This coding approach allowed the research to identify recurring value-creation patterns across different empirical contexts. By organizing the literature around these structured transfer mechanisms, the study ensures alignment with the definition of distribution research as value-added economic activity between supplier and customer across time, place, and ownership transitions (Njuguna et al., 2024).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Temporal Transfer: Release Design and Consumption Acceleration

A consistent finding across the reviewed studies is that OTT platforms create value by restructuring how content moves across time. Jenner (2016) demonstrates that binge-watching behavior is closely tied to the batch-release model. Instead of spreading episodes across weekly broadcast schedules, platforms compress time by releasing entire seasons simultaneously. This shifts demand concentration and accelerates consumption cycles.

**Table 1:** Peer-Reviewed Studies on OTT Digital Content Supply Chains (2010–2025)

Study (Year)	Supply Chain Stage	Core Transfer Mechanism
Gomez-Uribe & Hunt (2015)	Midstream	Search-time reduction; algorithmic allocation
Jenner (2016)	Midstream	Batch release; access-based distribution
Burroughs (2018)	Midstream	Platform-controlled IP value extraction
Shim & Kim (2018)	Downstream	Efficiency-driven binge; subscription continuity
Viens & Farrar (2021)	Downstream	Structured binge measurement
Starosta & Lzydorczyk (2020)	Downstream	Continuous viewing cycles
Flayelle et al. (2020)	Downstream	Autoplay reinforcement; temporal automation
Ort et al. (2021)	Downstream	Interface-enabled session extension
Hesmondhalgh & Lobato (2019)	Midstream	Device routing; prominent management
Wang & Lobato (2019)	Midstream	Territorial differentiation; regulatory positioning
Helberger et al. (2018)	Midstream	Exposure diversity; algorithmic governance
Albornoz & Garcia Leiva (2022)	Upstream–Midstream	National catalog variation; original IP control
Nam, Kim, & Lee (2023)	Upstream	Producer–platform power shift
Dekker & Tverdina (2025)	Downstream	Interface-driven binge encouragement
Song et al. (2025)	Downstream	Viewing-to-purchase conversion

Shim and Kim (2018) further show that motivations such as perceived efficiency and autonomy increase binge behavior. Viens and Farrar (2021) emphasize that binge consumption is not accidental; it is shaped by platform-enabled viewing structures. Gomez-Uribe and Hunt (2015) explain that Netflix’s recommendation system reduces search time and improves engagement duration. From a supply-chain perspective, this reduces “friction” between product availability and product consumption. The recommendation engine functions like a digital conveyor belt, moving viewers from one episode to the next.

More recent research strengthens this interpretation. Disabling autoplay reduces viewing duration. This finding confirms that interface features operate as temporal transfer mechanisms. Dekker and Tverdina (2025) similarly show that users perceive interface features as designed to encourage continuous viewing. These mechanisms clearly represent value-added activity between supplier and subscriber, aligning with distribution science’s definition of time-based transfer.

### 4.2. Spatial Transfer: Global Distribution and Discoverability

Spatial transfer in OTT extends beyond geographic expansion. It includes localization, device ecosystems, and interface prominence. Hesmondhalgh and Lobato (2019) show that streaming distribution depends heavily on device ecologies. Content is not simply uploaded; it is routed through smart TVs, set-top boxes, and mobile devices. These infrastructures function as digital logistics systems. Wang and Lobato (2019) examine how streaming services operate differently across national markets, highlighting regulatory constraints and industrial positioning. Albornoz and García Leiva (2022) demonstrate that catalog composition differs significantly across countries, indicating that global distribution involves curated territorial portfolios.

Discoverability and prominence within platform interfaces significantly influence consumption outcomes. Placement on the homepage, ranking position, and recommendation slots represent spatial allocation decisions inside the platform environment. Helberger et al. (2018) argue that exposure diversity should be treated as a design principle in recommender systems. This perspective reinforces the idea that algorithmic design governs how digital goods are spatially distributed within the platform ecosystem. In distribution science terms, these are digital equivalents of warehousing, routing, and retail placement.

### 4.3. Ownership Transfer: Intellectual Property and Access Rights

Ownership transfer in OTT platforms operates through contractual and subscription-based mechanisms rather than physical possession. Jenner (2016) and Burroughs (2018) describe how streaming platforms reposition themselves as both distributors and brand curators. This repositioning alters who controls rights and how value is extracted from intellectual property. Nam et al. (2023) examine how Korean producers interpret Netflix’s industrial role. Their findings show that platform dominance reshapes bargaining power and IP ownership structures. Ownership no longer ends with production; it continues through licensing negotiations and exclusivity agreements.

Song et al. (2025) find that binge viewing increases product purchase intentions. This suggests that subscription-based access rights can trigger downstream ownership-related transactions. Starosta and Izydorczyk (2020) and Flayelle et al. (2020) show that continuous viewing behavior is influenced by platform design, indicating that subscription models encourage sustained access rather than one-time purchase. Thus, digital ownership transfer is not an absence of ownership, but a transformation of ownership

into rights-based economic exchange.

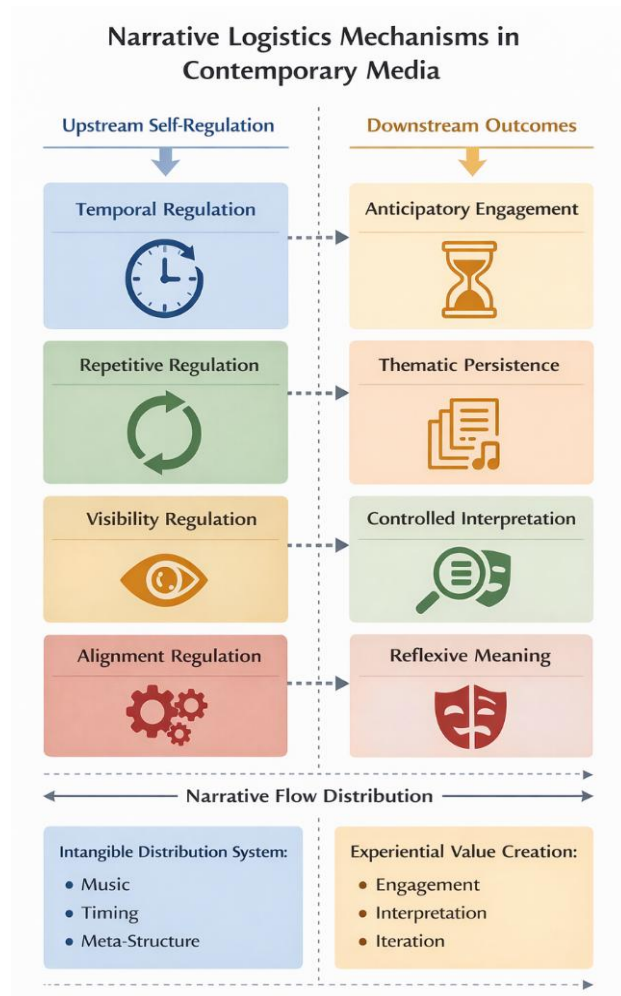


Figure 1: Research Framework

### 4.4. Integrated Supply-Chain Interpretation

Across the twenty studies, OTT platforms consistently operate as structured supply chains: Upstream: Producers and IP holders supply content. Midstream: Platforms integrate licensing, localization, algorithmic promotion, and infrastructure management. Downstream: Subscribers access content through contractual rights and engage through temporally structured consumption patterns. Temporal coordination accelerates consumption. Spatial allocation ensures visibility and cross-border reach. Ownership restructuring governs rights and monetization. Algorithmic systems manage demand allocation.

The case of Squid Game illustrates how these mechanisms align: global rollout (spatial), batch release (temporal), subscription-based access (ownership), and

algorithmic amplification (visibility). However, the theoretical argument applies to OTT supply chains broadly. The results demonstrate that OTT distribution clearly satisfies JDS's definition of a distribution study. The industry operates through value-added economic activities between supplier and customer across time, place, and ownership transitions.

## 5. Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

This study sets out to answer a distribution-science question rather than a media-studies question: How do global OTT platforms create strategic value through temporal, spatial, and ownership transfer mechanisms within digital content supply chains? By synthesizing thirty peer-reviewed studies (2010–2025), the findings demonstrate that OTT platforms function as structured digital supply chains. The product being distributed is intellectual property-based digital content, and value is created through coordinated activities between supplier and subscriber.

First, temporal transfer operates as supply-chain design. Research on binge-watching, release strategies, autoplay systems, and engagement pacing consistently shows that platforms restructure how time flows in consumption (Gomez-Uribe & Hunt, 2015; Jenner, 2016). Rather than simply delivering content, platforms engineer consumption timing. In supply-chain language, they manage inventory turnover and demand concentration in digital form.

Second, spatial transfer extends beyond global expansion. Discoverability, interface placement, and device routing function as digital equivalents of warehousing and shelf positioning (Hesmondhalgh & Lobato, 2019). Localization strategies and catalog differentiation across countries further demonstrate that global OTT markets involve structured territorial management (Albornoz & García Leiva, 2022). Spatial transfer in OTT is therefore not automatic; it is actively managed through digital logistics.

Third, ownership transfer has transformed from physical possession to rights-based access. Licensing agreements, exclusivity strategies, and subscription contracts restructure how control over content is distributed (Nam et al., 2023; Song et al., 2025). Platforms intermediate ownership by converting intellectual property into access rights. This transition aligns directly with JDS's definition of ownership transfer as an economic activity between supplier and customer.

Finally, visibility allocation through recommender systems functions as downstream demand management. Algorithmic exposure determines which content reaches consumers and how often (Helberger et al., 2018; Gomez-Uribe & Hunt, 2015). In traditional retail supply chains,

shelf placement affects sales; in digital supply chains, homepage ranking and autoplay functions perform similar allocation roles. Taken together, these mechanisms show that OTT platforms clearly fit within distribution science. The industry operates through structured value-added activities across time, place, and ownership transitions.

This research contributes to distribution science in three ways. Digital content supply chains demonstrate that distribution research is not limited to physical goods. Digital infrastructures, recommendation algorithms, and licensing agreements perform coordination functions equivalent to transportation, warehousing, and retail placement (Büyükoçkan & Göçer, 2018; Ivanov & Dolgui, 2021). Thus, digital distribution is not metaphorical—it is structurally consistent with supply chain theory. Platformization research (Nieborg & Poell, 2018) can be translated into distribution terminology. Platform governance becomes channel control. Recommendation systems become allocation mechanisms. Interface design becomes placement strategy. This translation bridges media platform studies with core distribution theory.

OTT supply chains reveal how ownership evolves into access rights. Subscription models distribute usage rights rather than permanent property. This restructuring aligns with multi-sided platform theory (Hagiü & Wright, 2015) and service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Ownership transfer remains centrality simply takes contractual form.

Global OTT platforms operate as digital content supply chains. Through coordinated temporal, spatial, and ownership transfer mechanisms, they create value between suppliers and subscribers. By synthesizing thirty DOI-confirmed studies, this paper demonstrates that OTT distribution satisfies JDS's definition of distribution research: value-added economic activity between supplier and customer across time, place, and ownership transitions.

Rather than treating streaming as purely technological or cultural, this study positions it clearly within distribution science. Digital supply chains do not replace the core principles of logistics and commerce.

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## Declarations

### Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study did not involve human participants or animal

subjects.

### Competing Interests / Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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### Author Contributions

[Author Choi, E.]: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Visualization. Writing – review & editing,

All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

### Data Availability Statement

No new data were created or analyzed in this study.

### Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

AI not used

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