Indian investment company, Vistaar, has invested £20 million in the UK’s film industry. The company’s new post-production facility in Manchester is now its global film centre, employing a local staff of 4 and making several films. All this since March 2015, with help from UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) and its local partners.

When Indian entrepreneur Sheetal Talwar started Vistaar Investment Advisors Pvt. Ltd. in 2003, his aim was to invest in businesses that positively impact society and help them to grow in a professional and structured way. As well as working in real estate, hospitality and national projects, the company has seeded, funded and created various film companies. Its films tackle social issues such as communal harmony (Dharm), sensationalism in the media (Rann) and excessive consumerism (The Joneses, starring Demi Moore and David Duchovny).

Headquartered in Mumbai, Vistaar now has offices in the UK, Dubai and Singapore. The company has 107 permanent employees overall, with up to 250 contractors brought in as required for specific projects. The turnover of the group is £25 million and its new investment in the UK is set to double this figure in the coming year.

“We make films that are based on socially relevant issues and have the potential to positively impact the audience,” says Sheetal. “We are proud that our initiatives have helped infuse professionalism into the burgeoning Indian film market. We have also always seen ourselves as a global player and have invested in films in other markets, such as the US and South Africa. When the opportunity arose to set up in the UK, we were excited to see how this would both complement and enhance our business in India.”

**UK investment**

During a UKTI Trade Mission to Mumbai in June 2014, the Deputy High Commissioner for India and the UKTI Mission Lead initiated a meeting with Vistaar to discuss the prospect of the company investing in the UK. They set out the advantages and provided information about government support and tax incentives available to film businesses. Sheetal had already considered opening in the UK, but had not decided what the nature of such an operation would be. He had also focussed his thinking on London, but UKTI advised on other locations, in particular the North West and introduced the company to its regional partner MIDAS.

When Sheetal visited the UK, he attended a match at Old Trafford between India and England, and MIDAS took the opportunity to give him an overview of the benefits of setting up in Manchester.

MIDAS, in conjunction with UKTI, then arranged a visit for the company to MediaCity UK, one of the most innovative creative hubs in the UK and home to major BBC and ITV departments, the University of Salford and over 80 businesses across the creative and digital sectors.
“The logic behind our decision to come to the UK is very simple,” says Sheetal. “The UK is the creative hub of the world, offering a large pool of talent. Positioning ourselves here, we are also geographically central, equidistant between the US and Asia. The time zones work better for keeping in touch with global markets. What’s more, the UK government offers significant and meaningful incentives that support the film industry. The ecosystem and infrastructure are simply fabulous. In MediaCity, for example, we have everything we need to complete a film in one place. It’s a no-brainer to come and take advantage of everything the UK has to offer.”

Vistaar was impressed by what it saw and decided to move its film headquarters from Mumbai to a new facility at MediaCity.

“We’re quite a cautious investor, but working with the likes of UKTI gave us confidence to move forward in the UK,” says Sheetal. “They and their partners have such a broad knowledge base which, as newcomers to the market, we have found invaluable in overcoming potential challenges. We really feel that the government has created an environment that has made investing and filming in the UK highly efficient and investor-friendly. Our British investment is already playing a pivotal role in growing our business and helping us to achieve market leadership in our sector of socially responsible cinema.”

The UK - Springboard into Europe

The UK is a fantastic place to do business, and an ideal springboard into the rest of Europe. It provides a unique gateway of international connections, is a recognised leader in the fields of creativity and innovation and is the 6th largest economy in the world.

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UKTI was delighted to support Vistaar Investment Advisors in their investment in the UK.

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