

Role of Digital Marketing Data Analytics in Film Industry: Telugu Cinema into Pan India Magnum Opus

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Abstract. The Indian film industry is at average growth rate of 11.5% year-on-year basis. After the Hindi film industry, regional cinema like the Telugu industry (popularly known as Tollywood) is the next big industry in the country in terms of both quantitative and qualitative values (Neway, 2020). Despite having limitations of language, nativity audience, market size, the Telugu film industry has emerged as synonyms for magnum opus with the help of digital marketing approaches in the 21st Century. S.S. Rajamouli's visually spectacular, Baahubali franchise garner incredible national appeal and emerged as the biggest box-office opener in the country. With INR 600 crore gross worldwide, Bahubali: The Beginning not only became a benchmark for technical and aesthetic values but also became a well-studied case for its marketing approaches which changed the entire style of film promotions in the digital era. Similar kind of strategy has been followed by Syraa and Saaho in the Telugu film industry. At this juncture, the researcher aims to study the film audience pulling marketing strategies that applied particularly in all three stages (pre, post & production stages) of film production in Telugu Cinema. Purposively the researcher selected Syraa and Saaho as samples to study the objectives of this research work and adopted the content analysis to interpret the secondary data to present the research findings.

Keywords. Regional Cinema, Telugu Cinema, Digital Marketing Strategies, Digital Marketing Analysis, Magnum opus.

1. Introduction

The Indian film industry is an expected growth rate of 11.5% year-on-year basis, reaching a total gross of INR 23,800 crore by 2020 (ET Bureau, 2017). After the Hindi film industry, regional cinema like the Telugu industry (popularly known as Tollywood) is the fore frontier as the second biggest industry in the country in terms of both quantitative and qualitative values (Neway, 2020). Despite having limitations of language, nativity audience, market size, the Telugu film industry has emerged as synonyms for magnum opus by adopting digital marketing approaches in the 21st Century. Earlier, regional cinema has treated differently from Hindi cinema which is popular as the Indian national cinema in one section of film audience and marketers due to the out-of-reach in other parts of India except in their region. In another side,

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Hindi cinema is accessible to all the northern region of India similarly Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam are limited to Southern part of India. After the 1990s, Globalization policies introduced in India enabled collaborations among all the stakeholders in the same industry through the investments. It resulted in the expansion of every sector in the business. The Indian film industry is not exceptional. It witnessed holistic growth in terms of expansion of Production, distribution exhibition and strengthening the theatre system even in small towns. During the year 2005-2006 saw the initial results of digital distribution in India. During the year 2008-2009 has taken up momentum noticeably. The year 2008 witnessed some prominent films taking the digital distribution route in a big way, Singh is King (2008) digital theatres or Ghajini (2008) which released the maximum number of prints in India (1200 digital & analogue versions) and made inroads to even some semi-urban places where films never released on the same day as the rest of the world. Corporations brought the changes in business perceptions; film talents have started to fly from one industry to another from Hindi cinema to regional cinema also from Indian Cinema to World cinema vice versa. Initially, it has considered as accommodating the talent for getting better and fresh results from technicians and artists as script demands. Later, filmmakers have realized that accommodation of star casting and technicians having the market value equally with the aesthetic value. It was greatly amplified by the Telugu film director S.S. Rajamouli. When he announced visual spectacular and highly narrated, periodical, and fictional drama with Tollywood actor Prabhas in February 2011. The script started accommodating the pan-India artists that resulted in the rise of on movie budget. Arka Media Works, the makers of Baahubali adopted innovative and cost-effective marketing strategies to create a buzz around the movie because of accessibility of internet facility in India. The country owns the world's second-largest internet population at over 483 million users in 2018 (Sandhya Keelery, 2020). In which, 390 million users accessed the internet via their mobile phones. These magical figures would reach over 500 million by 2023 estimated by the market experts (Statista, 2020). Size is not the only metric; demography is also a metric. According to KPMG in India Analysis April, 2017 there were 110 Million internet users in India out of which 68 million were English internet users and 42 million were Indian language internet users, in 2016 out of total 409 million internet users, 175 million were English internet users and 234 million were Indian language Internet users. It is also estimated that by 2021 there will be 735 million internet users of which 199 million will be English internet users and 536 million will be Indian language Internet users.

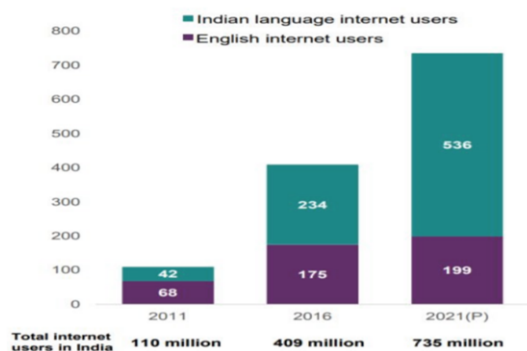


Figure 1. Internet user base in India (in million) 2011, 2016 & 2021.

The KPMG Survey report also says that 99% of Indian Language users accessing internet are accessing on their mobile devices.68% of Internet users consider local language digital content to be more reliable than English. The KPMG Survey report also Predicts that Digital Entertainment will have high adoption level from 2016 to 2021, projecting that user base of 167 million will increase more than 230% and is estimated to be used by 396 million.

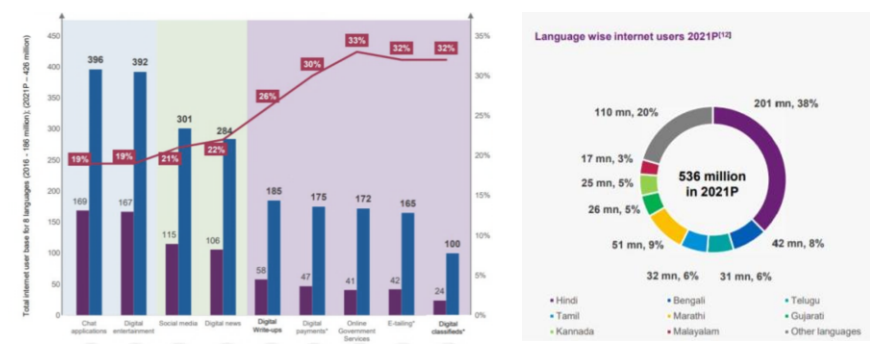


Figure 2. Category Wise Indian Language Internet Users and Telugu language users are in top three

It also estimates that Telugu language content internet users will be in the third top list in Indian Languages. During the raising period of Telecommunication in India, The Baahubali-franchise production house has made its online presence in 2013, that he announced the working title Baahubali. Releasing the first look of the lead actors in the movies and updates about the schedules, teasers, character promos, and release dates, etc. in digital platforms such as official Twitter, YouTube, and other social media accounts. With INR 600 crore gross earnings worldwide, Bahubali: The Beginning not only became a benchmark for technical and aesthetic potential but also became a well-studied case for its marketing strategies. As many industry experts and filmmakers point out, nearly 40% of Baahubali's commercial success can be endorsed to its aggressive and innovative marketing approaches (A.J.Swapna et al., 2016). Baahubali appeared on the social media having: 26.42 lakh likes (people) on Facebook Page, 1.48 lakh followers on Twitter Profile, 1.38 lakh subscribers on YouTube channel. Baahubali: The beginning also stands in 4th place among the many top 10 most discussed topics on Facebook in 2015 after Prime Minister Narendra Modi, E-commerce Boom and late President and scientist APJ Abdul Kalam (Sakshi Kotecha, et al., 2017). Baahubali style of marketing approaches such as pre-production, production, post-production and after release have become an ideal practice for making such a visual treated, high budget movie and make it as a pan-India magnum opus. These approaches changed the entire style of film promotions in the digital era. That proved with the immediate releases of Syraa (2019) and Saaho (2019) in the Telugu film industry.

2. Methodology

At this juncture, the researcher aims to study the film audience pulling marketing strategies that applied particularly in all three stages (pre, post & production stages) of

film production in Telugu Cinema. Purposively the researcher selected Syraa (2019), and Saaho (2019), as samples to study the objectives of this research work and adopted the content analysis methodology to interpret the secondary data to present the research findings.

3. Results & Discussion

Film promotion is a powerful marketing tool, not only during the premiere of a new movie but throughout its lifecycle. In 21st-century, the film promotion has completely changed with the reach of digital media that enabled to create new models for marketing a film in all the stages of its making. The film industry is most uncertain because of its complexity in nature. The reasons for that is its creativity, its diversity and its continual explosions of technological delivery options (Shashi Pande, 2017). During the pre-digitalization of Indian cinema, film promotions took place mainly at the production level and distribution level. It has predominantly transformed into 24X7 and 365 days due to its high budget and pan-India star casting. Every small occasion is also having promotional value and occupies space in Print media, Time in TV& Radio, data consumption in Digital Media. Therefore, with the inspiration of the makers of Baahubali-franchise, Regional filmmakers have adopted digital marketing approaches to bring their products into end-users via Social media platforms.

Sye Raa Narasimha Reddy (2019) Digital Marketing Approaches: Telugu Cinema Megastar, Chiranjeevi, the lead role portrayed as Sye Raa Narasimhareddy (2019) has openly said that Baahubali showed the way for making high budget movies with pan-India casting. Sye Raa is advertised as the next big project in Indian cinema after Saaho (2019). Starring an ensemble star cast such as Amitab Bachchan, Vijay Sethupathi, Tamannaah, Nayanthara, Sudeep, Jagapathi Babu and Ravi Kishan, the film tells the story of Uyyalawada Narasimha Reddy, the rebellion leader from Rayalaseema who fought valiantly against the British East India Company. Through announcing the Pan-India casting, the production house, Konidela Production Company created a movie buzz across the country. On 21st August 2017, Sye Raa makers have released first look motion poster in YouTube it accounted the 5, 209, 939 views within record time. Even after that Konidela Production Company has released first glims on 20th August 2018, that accounted 2,22,03, 901 views. Sye Raa team has planned to add voice overs with various stars in their respective language such as Pawan Kalyan for Telugu, Rajinikanth for Tamil and Mohanlal for Malayalam. Pawan Kalyan voice over for Sye Raa Teaser- Promo released on 18, August 2019 got the 36, 42, 556 views. Konidala Pro Company official Twitter account has been hitting by digital-savvy for searching the SYE RAA Lead roles first looks on their birthday occasions. Amitab Bacchan's first look as Gosayi Venkanna received 5.9 thousand likes on 10th October 2018, Nayanatara motion poster has got the 40,66, 601 views on 17th November 2018 for her first look as queen Siddhamma. On 1st September 2018, Kannada superstar Sudeep look as Avuku Raju first look has accounted over eight thousand likes in Konidala Pro Company official Twitter account. These number highlighted the positive side of digital media even two years before the release of its release in theatre on 2nd October 2019. Sye Raa Narasimha Reddy digital rights have sold for INR 40 crore before the release itself. It has reportedly done the table business of INR 110 crores as a pre-release business only because of its digital marketing

approaches (ToI, 2019). When the film is screening in theatres co-stars are tweeting about it and greeting the film crew influencing its performances at the box office. The gesture turns into a cordial and positive promotion and it has influenced some section of audiences during the first two weeks of its releases.

Table:1 SYE RAA NARASIMHAREDDY Movie Buzz in Digital Media

Digital Marketing Stages	SYE RAA Teaser/Promo/First Look	Medium	Digital Views
Pre-Production	First Look Motion Poster released in YouTube on 21 st August 2017	YouTube	5,209,939 views
Production	SYE RAA first glimpse released 20 th August, 2018	YouTube	2,22,03, 901 views
	Amitab Bacchan’s first look as ‘Gosayi Venkanna’ released on 10th October 2018	Twitter	5.9 thousand likes
	Nayanatara Motion Poster first look released as queen ‘Siddhamma’ on 17th November 2018	YouTube	40,66, 601 views
Post-Production	Pawan Kalyan voice over for Sye Raa Teaser-Promo released on 18, August 2019	YouTube	36, 42, 556 views
After release	Mahesh Babu greetings to SYE RAA team	Twitter	Influenced his followers

Saaho (2019) In Digital Media: The Baahubali-franchise fame Prabhas acted SAAHO (2019) turned as India’s largest action-thriller of the year. It has set the buzz across the social media world with a record of more than five million tweets before its theatrical release. SAAHO (2019) has several factors that became social media trending, a twenty-seven-year-old Sujeeth with two films directed experience launched this project with Prabhas immediately after Baahubli world success. The Soundtrack has done with a pool of talents Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, Tanishk Bagchi, Guru Randhawa and Badshah and background score has given by South Indian Music director Gibran. All these crazy combinations have become the reason for social media buzz. The makers of Saaho, UV Creations has completed 40 days long schedule for shooting action sequences with INR 90 crore budget. Mission: Impossible fame Stunt choreographer Kenny Bates supervised the action sequences in the movie. Prabhas tweeted about next schedule in Abudabi before he joined the crew. The post created more buzz in digital media also in all the film industries (Karthik Kumar, 2018). Strategic release of SAAHO teaser trailer on 13th, June 2019 received over twenty-five million digital views within the six hours and crossed thirty million views in just another six hours. #ShadesOfSaaho, Chapter-I teaser crossed 10 million+ views in just 24 hours. SAAHO trailer released on 13th August 2019, has set a new benchmark with 70 million+ views in various social media. SAAHO digital marketing has also released the first look of leading cast of the film. After the first week of its release SAAHO makers, UV Creations released a separate poster with box office collections that psychologically influenced the audiences to rush to watch it in theatres.

4. Conclusion

21st Century is the era of digital and marketing has become vital, so all the film industries in the country have also adapted to digital marketing approaches to promote films in a unique way where their product can reach millions of potential targeted people. Telecommunication revolution results have become an added factor to the film industry to connect with people in 24X7 and 365 days. The regional film industry, the Telugu film industry has also adopted and extensively applied the digital marketing approaches in all stages of its film projects. During the pre-production with announcing the pan-India castings, in the Production stage, updating the shooting schedules and releasing the first look of its casting and Post-production stage, targeting the digital media savvy by conducting the online competitions, involves the audience as part of promotions. Even after the film release in theatre, they are hitting the digital media with box office collections. These box-office figures are predominantly showing the psychological impact on the audience who has decided to watch the films in their idle time. These extensive box-office figures influence the audience to rush into theatres after a couple of weeks of its release. SAAHO (2019) and SYE RAA NARASIMHA REDDY (2019) stood as the best model for regional cinema became Pan-India Magnum Opus with digital marketing approaches in the same year from the same regional industry.

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