Innovation in Public Relation Strategies in Film Promotion - A Study

Mou Mukherjee-Das

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
Aliah University, Salt Lake, Kolkata, West Bengal, India.

Abstract

Bollywood, as the Hindi film industry is popularly known, is the largest contributor to the industry’s revenue, followed by the other regional language cinema industries such as south India, Bengali, Bhojpuri, Marathi and Gujarati. The Indian movie industry (including Bollywood) is said to produce twice the number of films produced by Hollywood or the American film industry. Fourteen million Indians go to the movies on a daily basis (about 1.4% of the population of 1 billion) and pay the equivalent to the average Indian's day's wages (US $1-3) to see any of the over 800 films churned out by Bollywood each year. India boasts of about 13,000 theatres enjoying a weekly admission of about 100 million people or 5000+ million per year. Such a scenario has prompted the producers to go for heavy promotion of the films, in order to catch the attention of the audiences. Film promotion has become a very important part of the film industry with film directors and producers not only investing heavily on it but also trying various innovative public relations strategies to reach out to the masses and creating an everlasting impact in the minds and pockets of the cinema goers. Public relations specialist Dale Bhagwagar believes that public relation campaigns will soon be the way that many clients will go instead of marketing and advertising, especially in the financial climate today. "As more and more people realize the cost-effectiveness of PR campaigns, their attention will shift from the expensive ad campaigns to PR strategies and placements." In this paper the researcher aims to study the emergence of public relations in films and the viability of it in context of the advertising effectiveness. Also she intends to do a research on the various innovative public relations strategies.
strategies the producers are embarking on and its effectiveness in garnering revenues and footfalls.

**Keyword**: Films, promotion, public relations, bollywood, directors, producers.

1. **Introduction**

Bollywood, as the Hindi film industry is popularly known, is the largest contributor to the industry’s revenue, followed by the other regional language cinema industries. The Indian movie industry (including Bollywood) is said to produce twice the number of films produced by Hollywood or the American film industry. From makeshift white curtains to cinema screens to multiplexes and from black and white classics to multi-starrer extravaganzas, one cannot afford to ignore the gala celebrations of life that is represented in form of movies on screen. Indians view cinema as an important part of their lives. For them it is not a distant two to three hour distraction, but a vicarious lifestyle. Cinema with its universal appeal provides an alternative from the monotony and the hustle and bustle of their daily lives. The actors thus turn into cult figures, the hero is applauded, the virtuous are worshipped and the villain is condemned. There is no escape from the glaring omnipresence of cinema in India today as everybody from the hapless roadside vendor to the most eminent and powerful politician is drawn towards the larger than life presence of the big screen personalities, and thus yields to the magic wand of the medium that showcases it to them. Indians love their cinema which is why India is the world’s largest producer of films. “Every three months an audience as large as India’s entire population flocks to the cinema halls.” Fourteen million Indians go to the movies on a daily basis (about 1.4% of the population of 1 billion) and pay the equivalent to the average Indian's day's wages (US $1-3) to see any of the over 800 films churned out by Bollywood each year. India boasts of about 13,000 theatres enjoying a weekly admission of about 100 million people or 5000+ million per year. Distributors are the last link in the movie chain which take films to the people. Although the country’s filmed entertainment industry is the largest in the world in terms of the number of films it produces (around 900) and its theatrical admissions (around 3 billion), it continues to be small in size in terms of revenue, mainly due to hiccups in low ticket realization and occupancy levels. Moreover, lack of quality content and rising competition from Hollywood films continue to affect it. However with the rise of some good directors, there has been an increasing trend in producing films having quality content. This change in trend is mainly due to many factors like emergence of new revenue sources, rise of 3D cinema, resurgence of regional cinema, rationalizing the movie slate i.e in the number of movies released every year, focus on niche movies, advent of digital cinema and growth of multiplexes, implementations of innovative campaigns regarding a particular film and collaboration with international studios, and to a certain extent the rise of a new class of consumers who are ready to shed that extra penny for a good film, and to the young generation
directors who also are ready to walk that extra mile to do an experimental film with a bold theme; all these gave the required impetus to the producers.

2. Innovative Film Promotions of Bollywood

Gone are the days when film promotion in Bollywood was limited to trailers, posters and hoardings. Filmmakers and actors have given up outdated methods to try something new. Filmmakers are using different mediums to have customized marketing strategies for their films.

Today the producers besides investing in bold and experimental themes, they are also going for innovative promotions to capture the attention of the audiences. With superstars Aamir Khan and Akshay Kumar turning a barber and undergoing tattooing, respectively, to promote their upcoming films, marketing and publicity campaigns have come of age in tinsel-town. "Ghajini"-makers have also collaborated with multiplexes and food chains across the nation to give all waiters, ushers and ticket-sellers the popular cut. "The audiences of today have a limited attention span. A movie has to make an impact on the first day of release. Its fortune is decided in three-four days," says film marketer Tarun Tripathi.

Public relations specialist Dale Bhagwagar believes that public relation campaigns will soon be the way that many clients will go instead of marketing and advertising, especially in the financial climate today. "As more and more people realize the cost-effectiveness of PR campaigns, their attention will shift from the expensive ad campaigns to PR strategies and placements." Film critic Omar Qureshi said that such marketing tactics are also indispensible for a movie to work.

"This is actually a Hollywood trend where the marketing of a movie costs almost the same as its budget. It's everything for a movie. Such activities (celebrity participation, etc) are going to get your initial hype and initial footfalls. Then the audience in the first week will decide whether the movie is a rocket or a dud," Qureshi told IANS. "Tweet, Demolish, Win" was the latest buzz in Twitter, an unique way to see the superhero of the film in 'Krish 3'. The rule of the game is to keep tweeting #Krrish3firstlook to break the wall to get the first look of the movie and also a chance to win Lava Iris 50q smartphones and then they will be able to see their favourite hero. UTV Motion Pictures promoted their film Ghanchakkar by announcing a nationwide treasure hunt that gave fans a chance to win Rs 1 lakh. As part of the game, money was hidden in 16 cities across the country, which the contestants have to find out. Contestants were given clues to find it and the winner was promised to take the prize money in cash. Ritesh Sidhwani, Filmmaker of Fukrey also came up with an interesting jingle to promote his film. The jingle was used as a promotional strategy and according to Sidhwani it 'gave the recipe of a fukra to audience.' The idea was to create lot of buzz around the film which was youth-centric with a mass appeal.

Successful cinema is built upon several elements: content, technology, marketing strategy and human resource. The HR factor is where expertise in distribution and marketing comes in. The central business function includes product definition,
designing and refinement, packaging, promotion, and communication through message making and distribution. In the movie biz, it's usually relegated to creating "buzz". Balan appeared in public with a prosthetic pregnant belly during every promotional events of the film. She mingled with people in various cities across the country, including railway stations, bus stands and BEST buses in Mumbai, shopping malls in Ahmedabad, and a metro station in Kolkata. Along with a baby bump, she often carried a sketch of her missing husband to show people asking for help finding him. On 8 March 2012, she appeared on Indian channel Colors' daily soap Uttaran to promote the film. On the show, Balan dressed as her character Vidya Bagchi was seen sticking posters of her husband Arnab Bagchi as part of her relentless search for her missing husband and then interacting with the female lead of the show. The identity of the actor who played the role of Arnab Bagchi, was also not revealed to keep the mystery element alive. Vikram Malhotra, chief operating officer of Viacom 18 Motion Pictures (distributors of the movie, along with Pen India and Boundscript Motion Pictures) tells afqaas! that the marketing strategy emerges from the core of the film, and how it could engage and connect with the audience. Malhotra says that communication was designed to contain elements of suspense as well as a sense of warmth, so as to make the audience aware and keen, and at the same time, genuinely feel for the missing person. Touted as a movie different from the rest, the Vidya Balan-starrer Kahaani is being marketed in a non-conventional manner making optimum use of social media and staying true to the movie's core concept. Says Ratan Ginwalla, director, Digit 9.0 (the agency handling the digital promotions of the movie), "To work on a film that is unique, your strategy has to be different. The digital medium is the best space to engage and communicate with the audience because of the immediate real time feedback that one gets. And, digital is the primary medium in this campaign because the communication had to be interactive." The campaign does not end with Facebook and the posters. It has been followed up with text messages and BBM (BlackBerry Messenger) messages, all of which directed people back to the Facebook page. Ibibio introduced Vidya's yellow taxi from the movie Kahaani, inside the game – "The Great Indian ParkingWars".

In the game also, Vidya's taxi moves from street to street, looking for her missing husband. The actors of the film ‘Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara’ truly lived up to the concept of their film. Actors Hrithik Roshan, Farhan Akhar, Abhay Deol, Katrina Kaif and Kalki Koechlin decided to go on an adventure trip in Mumbai and Delhi as part of their promotions. The road trip started from Mumbai- Bandra, and they drove through various cities stopping at different spots. The first of its kind, this was one rocking trip. Amir khan too joined the bandwagon by travelling across India in disguise as part of his unique strategy promoting 3 idiots. Even non-conventional films like SHIP OF THESEUS by kiran rao, went for innovative film promotions. Kiran apparently feels that digital medium holds the key to the future and is the right way to go forward. In one of the marketing brain storming sessions she came up with an alternate solution that she will put all her promos even paid promotions on internet. She would put all her monies on promotions on internet versus on television. Even SRK, is way ahead in
Innovation in Public Relation Strategies in Film Promotion- A Study

promoting his film Chennai express with several promotional campaigns like tie up with products, launching of special designer sarees worn by deepika, devising computer games, designing posters in different languages, and so on.

3. Conclusion
With innovative public relations campaign, bollywood has provided interesting case studies for the marketing strategists, which can be seen in the promotions of the films in near future. Bollywood has learnt the lessons on marketing strategy fast so as to garner profits in this highly competitive market.

References
