

Baahubali –A Milestone of Indian Cinema: Digital Marketing Case Study



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Baahubali, advertised as the most expensive film that the country has ever produced. That it has clocked in 300crores (\$48 million) worldwide in barely nine days at the box office. What's more interesting, apart from the film itself, is that to achieve this feat without going overboard with aggressive marketing campaigns – yeah, no shoving down of paid-and-planted news down our throats, no nauseatingly incessant promotional tours by the cast on every other channel. What the makers did leverage, however, is the power of social media — not just around the release but also before it even went on floors. The result – Much like the meaning of its title – Baahubali – one with strong arms, the film created an organic hype, riding on its own shoulders. Thus, Baahubali is a great example of the power of digital marketing. For almost more than two years, the question 'Why did Kattappa kill Baahubali?' became a household topic of conversation and flooded social media with memes and fan theories. Interestingly, two years before the release of the first part, a digital marketing team worked tirelessly to build its online presence and generate interest around the film since 2013. It went on to create the first Telugu hash tag on Twitter. Today, Baahubali has over 36 lakh likes on the Facebook page, 2.54 lakh followers on Twitter, 4.52 lakh subscribers on YouTube and still increasing day by day. It has become a classic case study that highlights how innovative digital marketing campaigns can enhance a product's market success. In the last two years since the release of the first part, the film was in the collective memory of people. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter played a big part in this. Startups and business enterprises can take a leaf out of Baahubali's marketing strategy to tap into the immense potential of digital marketing space. Keeping this in view, present paper highlights a few innovative ways through which Baahubali used social media to set the box office on fire.

Keywords: Baahubali, Baahubali 2, Social Media, Digital Marketing, Twitter, Face book, Innovative Marketing Campaigns, etc.

1. Introduction of Indian Cinemas

The Cinema of India consists of films produced across India. Cinema has immense popularity in the country. As many as 1,600 films in various languages are produced every year. In terms of the number of films produced and the number of tickets sold, Indian cinema is the largest film industry in the world; in 2011, over 3.5 billion tickets were sold across the globe, which is 900,000 tickets more than Hollywood. Indian films have a wide following throughout Southern Asia, and are available in mainstream cinemas across other parts of Asia, Europe, the Greater Middle East, North America, Eastern Africa, and elsewhere. Dadasaheb Phalke is known as the "Father of Indian cinema". The Dadasaheb Phalke Award, for lifetime contribution to cinema, was instituted in his honour, by the Government of India in 1969, and is the most prestigious and coveted award in Indian cinema.

In the 20th century, Indian cinema, along with the Hollywood and Chinese film industries, became a global enterprise. As of 2013, in terms of annual film output, India ranks first, followed by Nollywood, Hollywood and China. In 2012, India produced 1,602 feature films. The Indian film industry reached overall revenues of \$1.86 billion (93 billion) in 2011. This is projected to rise to \$3 billion (200 billion) in 2016. In 2015, India had a total box office gross of US\$2.1 billion, one of the largest in the world. Enhanced technology paved the way for upgrading from established cinematic norms of delivering product, altering the manner in which content reached the target audience. Biopics like Dangal emerged as transnational blockbusters grossing over \$300 million worldwide in the early 21st century. Indian cinema found markets in over 90 countries where films from India are screened. The Indian government extended film delegations to foreign countries such as the United States of America and Japan while the country's Film Producers Guild sent similar missions through Europe.

The provision of foreign direct investment has made the Indian film market attractive for foreign enterprises such as 20th Century Fox, Sony Pictures, Walt Disney Pictures and Warner Bros. Indian enterprises such as AVM Productions, Prasad's Group, Sun Pictures, PVP Cinemas, Zee, UTV, Suresh Productions, Eros Films, Ayngaran International, Pyramid Saimira, Aascar Films and Adlabsalso participated in producing and distributing films. Tax incentives to multiplexes have aided the multiplex boom in India. By 2003 as many as 30 film production companies had been listed in the National Stock Exchange of India, making the commercial presence of the medium felt.

Bollywood refers to the Hindi language film industry based in Mumbai (formerly Bombay), which is the largest Indian film industry, representing 43% of Indian net box office revenue. The South Indian film industry defines the four film cultures of South India as a single entity: Tamil cinema (Kollywood), the second largest Indian film industry; Telugu cinema (Tollywood), the third largest Indian film industry; Kannada cinema (Sandalwood); and Malayalam cinema (Mollywood). Telugu and Tamil cinema represent 36% of Indian net box office revenue. In the early decades of Indian cinema, the largest Indian film industry was Bengali cinema (Tollywood, based in Tollygunge). Although developed independently over a long period, gross exchange of film performers and technicians as well as globalisation has helped to shape a new identity for Indian cinema.

The Indian diaspora consists of millions of Indians overseas for which films are made available both through media such as DVDs and by screening of films in their country of residence wherever commercially feasible. These earnings, accounting for some 12% of the revenue generated by a mainstream film, contribute substantially to the overall revenue of Indian cinema, the net worth of which was found to be US\$1.3 billion in 2000. Music in Indian cinema is another substantial revenue generator with the music rights alone accounting for 4–5% of the net revenues generated by a film in India.

2. Historical Genre in Indian Cinema

Themes in Indian cinema – Early Indian cinema in the 1920s was founded on specific genres, such as the mythological or the devotional film. The sum and substance of the mythological theme is the fight between good and evil, and the importance of sacrifice in the name of truth. The retelling of stories known through an oral tradition was an important element in the success of the mythological film: The Ram Leela (a celebration and re – enactment of the exploits and adventures of Ram) and the RasLeela (episodes from Krishna’s life) are said to be of particular influence in Indian cinema. Such reconfirmation has always been an element of Indian culture. As Arundhati Roy says in her novel, *The God of Small Things*, ‘The Great stories are the ones you have heard and want to hear again.’

In almost all the languages of India, during the silent as well as the talkie era, themes and episodes from the PURANAS, THE RAMAYANA and MAHABHARATA were treated cinematically. Some folk tales and legends also became cinematic themes. A change in this trend came about in the 1950s, particularly in Malayalam, Tamil and Bengali movies. JEEVITA NAUKA (The Boat of life) introduced social and domestic theme, family life in Kerala and social humor, and it was among the earliest Indian movies to run for more than six months at a stretch.

A bolder theme of socio – economic disparities and indication of prospective social revolution was expressed in NAVALOKAM. But among the socially relevant movies of the early 1950s in Malayalam, NEELAKKUYIL (Blue Koel) of 1954 depicted the story of powerful love breaking caste barriers but yielding finally to social pressures and the leading characters coming to grief in the face of social ostracism. This period also saw big spectacles like CHANDRALEKHA in Tamil and the beautiful celluloid portrayal in the trilogy of Satyajit Ray starting with PATHER PANCHALI. PARAASAKTI, the Tamil movie which took Sivaji Ganesan to the heights of fame was a strong and defiant portrayal of the collusion between religious and economic forces in the suppression of the poor. DO BIGHA ZAMIN questioned landlordism. Later on, Social themes were portrayed. Stories were based on the life of ordinary families. Most films were produced in the Bombay and Madras studios. The largest number of movies came out in Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam, Kannada and Bengali- in that order. Among the social movies, *Andaz* and *Mela* stand out. The production of movies in all languages has dwindled in the closing years of the 20th century, but the reduction has been more in Malayalam than in the other five languages in which production was consistently high in the 1970s and 1980s.

Of the Historical movies of those days, the first choice falls on ANARKALI. Then come MUGHAL – E – AZAM and MOTHER INDIA. To the credit of Raj Kapoor and his R.K. Studios, a series of mild but poignant criticism of the oddities in social life of the 1950s and 1960s came, that were also great entertainers and pieces of artistic attainments.

3. Baahubali

Bahubali is an Indian bilingual epic historical fiction movie directed by S.S. Rajamouli, produced by ShobuYarlagadda and Prasad Devineni, in the two cinematic parts (first release in 2015 as *Bahubali: The Beginning* and second release as *Bahubali: The Conclusion* in April 2017). Originally shot in South Indian languages i.e. Telugu and Tamil, it has also become a great hit in North India when Dharma Production released this monumental movie in Hindi.

The film released on 10 July 2015 in 4,000 screens worldwide in Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Malayalam languages. A record number of 1600 screens in Telugu, 1500 screens in Hindi, 350 in Tamil and 225 screens in Malayalam were booked for the release. The film was released in USA a day earlier by BlueSky Cinemas in 135 screens. A premier show was also held on 9 July at Prasads IMAX Hyderabad. The film's release in Kerala was hindered amidst a close down by a section of theatres over the piracy issue of Malayalm film *Premam* and released only in few theatres. The Telugu version of the film was presented by K. Raghavendra Rao, Tamil version by K.E. Gnanavel Raja, Sri Thenandal Films and UV Creations, Karan Johar presented the Hindi version and Global United Media presented the Malayalam theatrical version. International version of the film which is 20 minutes shorter than the original one, done by Vincent Tabailon was screened at Busan International Film Festival. Producers of the film had planned to release the film in China in over 5000 screens in November 2015 by E Stars Films.

Baahubali is the biggest release in China for an Indian film; beating PK which was released on 22 May 2015. The film is also set to release in Japan. Twin Co which is a leading distributor for international films in Japan has acquired the rights for

screening of the film. The producer Shobu Yarlagadda who struck the deal at Busan Asian Film Market also revealed his plans to release the movie in Latin America, Germany and European countries. MVP Entertainment is set to release the movie in Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Timor-Leste countries. Sun Distribution acquired the distribution rights of the movie in Latin American countries while Creative Century Entertainment got the rights for Taiwan. In Korea, the movie is scheduled to be released via Enter mode Corp. Arka International, which is the sales arm for International release has made arrangements to release the movie in Germany and 70 other territories.

4. Social Media in India

According to a report published by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) there were 300 million number of mobile Internet users in India by 2017.

Though India has low Internet penetration at 19% compared with other developed and developing economies that have up to 90% penetration, the country has the third-largest Internet user base in the world, with more than 300 million users, of which more than 50% are mobile-only Internet users. The number of active mobile Internet users in India grew to 314 million by the year 2017 with a CAGR (compounded annual growth rate) of around 28% for the period 2013- 2017.

This impressive growth which has driven India to become one of the leading Internet/Social media markets in the world with more than 50% of Internet user base being mobile-only Internet users.” The growth will be led by the government’s Digital India initiative, collaboration among mobile Internet ecosystem stakeholders and innovative content and service offerings from mobile-based services players.

Indian mobile content usage is dominated by email, *social networking*, chat, games and news. While these categories gained popularity because they fulfill multiple needs of consumers, the positive social and economic impact of the Internet is probably manifold,” said the report.

5. Baahubali -Social Media Campaigns

Baahubali had popularly used the *Social Media Marketing* as a tool in a best possible way. Baahubali had also used all the tactics of *Digital Marketing* to maintain its dignity with severity. Baahubali had utilized social media with a purpose that has been refreshed, grabbed the attention of the viewers eagerly to see something new on *Social Mediums*, which has also helped in the promotion of their first as well as second part release. Baahubali has made a remarkable history in showing what they exactly wanted and stood out unique with their *Digital Marketing Campaigns*.

5.1 Social Media Campaign Execution

Baahubali wisely used social media. Baahubali made use of every possible platform. Amongst all social media plays a key role: ‘Baahubali’ appears to be quite a hit 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*

5.2 Baahubali on Facebook

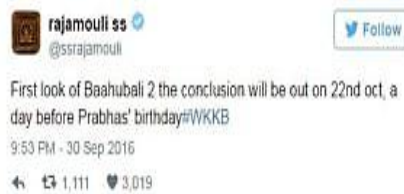


- The makers of “Baahubali: The beginning” had used Facebook to the fullest extent for its promoting. Director SS Rajamouli used it right from its announcement in 2013 to its released dates. Apart from building up curiosity degree, the director accrued a bulk number of followers for the movie.
- The cast of this film had kept updates during their long shoot. The Facebook pages of lead cast of Baahubali movie that keep us updated are Prabhas, Rana Daggubati, Anushka Shetty, Tamannaah and few others.
- Months earlier than its release, “Baahubali: The beginning” began trending on Facebook with many individuals talking about it. The hype grew noticeably as the release date neared. After its release, the movie became probably the most talked about subject not only in India, but additionally throughout the globe. Baahubali: The beginning also stands in 4th place among the many top 10 most discussed topics on Facebook in 2015 after Hon’ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi, E-commerce Boom and late President and scientist APJ Abdul Kalam.

5.3 Baahubali on Twitter



- Social media platform Twitter performed a key role in the advertising of the movie; a process that started on January 17, 2013 with the construction of the movie's professional Twitter handle as @Baahubali Movie.
- The exact promotions started a month afterwards- February 17, 2013 when the first Telugu hash tag (#) ever was created for the film and tweeted by the director. SS Rajamouli Launched First Telugu Hashtag #బాహుబలివస్తున్నాడు on Twitter for 'Baahubali' advertising. Telugu hash tag (#) launched on February 2013 was trended nationally, which offers a concept of the reach it received.



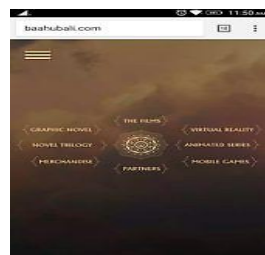
- The official film account had 1.48 lakh followers with 2,474 tweets. Some of the hash tags used on twitter for Baahubali: The Beginning that gone viral and trended on twitter are: # Live The Epic, #బాహుబలివస్తున్నాడు, #BaahubaliTeaser,#BaahubaliTrailer,#BaahubaliisComing,#BaahubaliRelease, #Baahubali Storm, # Baahubali On Maa, #Baahubali On Max, #Baahubali.

5.4 Baahubali on YouTube



- The official trailer of Telugu version crossed 4 million views just within two weeks on YouTube, now it gone more than 1.26 crore(12.6 million) views.
- The teasers released on YouTube on the occasion of the Birthdays of lead roles played in this movie, paid a great attention and curiosity from the viewers and gone viral on Facebook, Twitter and many other social media through sharing.
- From the starting of Baahubali: The beginning, it used Social media and mainly used YouTube channel to share the video post, on YouTube as "Casting Call for Baahubali with SS Rajamouli and Prabhas" on Jan 16th, 2013 to select the interested and eligible individuals to perform in war sequence of the film.

5.5 Baahubali Website



This Movie had an Official Website "Baahubali.com". Having gallery, videos, blogs & shop categories.

5.6 Baahubali on Shopping Site



Bahubali.com has a special category as “Shop” where anyone can buy stuff related to Bahubali movie as *Bahubali Merchandise*. This has created a hush among fan following and money for charity too.

6. Facts of Baahubali: The Beginning

- The movie took more than 3 years to get completed.
- The pre-production part and scripting took 1 year.
- Live action shooting took 2 years.
- Post production, VFX, Editing, Sound matching and correcting took more than six months.
- Internet is flooded with Bahubali VFX shots before and after images and videos.
- Baahubali: The Beginning is the biggest VFX film in Indian film history.
- Baahubali poster entered into *Guinness Book of World Records* and *Limca Book of World Records*. The production team held an event in Kerala where they revealed Baahubali movie poster measuring 51,968 sqft and got entry as the biggest poster of motion picture in both the books.
- Only film that has been featured on BBC documentary
- The music album became the best seller on iTunes.
- On *IMDB*, it got the rating 8.7 / 10.
- Used the Latest Technology: VFX, Dolby Atmos and advanced CGI.
- On the very first day of the release, it generated profit of around 50 Crores which is the highest first day collection in the history of Indian cinema.
- This is first Indian war movie which stood in the category of Hollywood war movies such as *Troy* and *300*.
- This is the first time when any regional movie from India is getting outstanding applause in the world market.
- It became the first south Indian film to gross over Rs.600 crores worldwide and the first non-Hindi film to gross over 100 crores in dubbed Hindi version in India. It is also the highest-grossing Telugu film of all time.
- The film when aired on television got the highest TRP ever both in Telugu and Hindi.
- The filmmakers have also created history by making it available on YouTube in 4K resolution, making it the first Indian film in YouTube with 4K resolution.
- Thus *Baahubali* became a landmark movie in Indian cinema.
- Baahubali (Bahubali) Hindi version wins 5th position in *Google Play Movies*. While the top 4 are “Jurassic World” claims the first slot, followed by “Mission Impossible”, “Southpaw” and “The Hunger Games”.
- “Baahubali: The Beginning” has become the fourth *facebook’s Top Topics of 2015* after Prime Minister Narendra Modi, E-commerce Boom, and late President and scientist APJ Abdul Kalam.
- “Baahubali: The Beginning” has landed in the second place in Google(India) in the list of the trending searches of 2015 & First place in Google(India) in the list of trending movies of the year 2015

7. The Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Projections

Overall Industry Size (billion)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 P	2018 P	2019 P	2020 P	CAGR (2015-2020-2020)
T.V	417.2	154.9	542.2	617	709.6	823.3	956.8	1097.6	15.1%
Print	243.1	263.4	283.4	305.2	329.6	355.9	383.6	412.5	7.8%
Films	125.3	126.4	138.2	158.7	174.1	190	383.6	412.5	10.5%
Radio	14	17	19	23.4	28.4	32.7	37.8	43.3	16.9%
Music	9.6	9.8	10.8	12.1	14	16.1	18.4	20.6	13.8%
OOH	19.3	22	24.4	28.3	31.6	35.4	40	45.2	13.1%
Animation and VFX	39.7	44.9	51.1	58.3	67.1	78.1	91.3	108	16.1%
Gaming	19.2	23.5	26.5	30.8	34.4	39	45.4	50.7	13.9
Digital Advertising	30.1	43.5	60.1	81.1	113.6	153.3	199.3	255.2	33.5

(Source: KPMG in INDIA Analysis 2016)

8. Revenue of Baahubali

Country	Revenue
India	6378000 US \$
China	900000 US \$
Australia	162333 US \$
United kingdom	49778 US \$
New Zealand	4916 US \$
Worldwide Box Office	26736665 US\$

(Source: Times of India)

9. Use of Social Media as a Tool for Promotion

Social Media (Platforms)	Likes or shares
Facebook	36 lakh likes
Twitter	2.54 lakh followers
Youtube	4.54 lakh subscribers

(Source: Times of India)

10. Conclusion

India beholds the title of possessing one of the largest film industries across the world and S.S. Rajamouli's Baahubali has made Indian film industry proud beyond words. Thus, through this paper it is tried to explore few innovative ways to promote Baahubali through social media and also to explore promotional strategies that has made it a grand success. The most impressive aspect of the movie and its inexplicable success is that it has been successful in transcending all limits of regional boundaries and showcasing a Pan-India appeal on the whole.

Thus Baahubali had utilized social media in a way that was refreshed, grabbed the attention of the viewers eagerly to see something new on *Facebook, Twitter and YouTube*. Baahubali gave them exactly what they wanted in way they did not expect, and that's where they stood out with their *digital marketing campaign*. There was positive buzz online, with hash tags populated most 'Trends' lists during the months leading up to the movie's release and the Facebook feed was never at a loss for promotion.

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