

Social Media's Role In Tamil Film Promotion: A Case Study of Twitter

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Abstract- Design/Methodology/Approach: A mixed-method approach was used in this study. The survey was prepared and sent to 30 respondents who use Twitter and also follow Tamil cinema. The method of promotion manages to catch the focus of the users while scrolling through and if they would tweet about their experience after watching it. A content analysis on how the blockbusters Mersal and Darbar were promoted on Twitter.

Purpose: The main purpose of this study is to show forth the effectiveness of social media in communicating business strategies. Today's film studio's use different innovative strategies to reach out to their audiences. one such innovative strategy was used to communicate to the audience using Social Media(Twitter). In this study, the researchers analyzed the film Mersal and Darbar to understand their effectiveness in promoting through Twitter.

Findings: It was discovered that Twitter had suggested the majority of participants, watch a film as well as recommending it to others, which indicates it is an effective strategy. The findings show forth that even after promoting films through conventional form, social media platform is an effective way to promote Tamil films.

Research Limitations/Implications: The research is limited to Tamil Film promotion, and the survey was conducted only among those who have twitter account and follow the tweets and also follow Tamil films regularly.

Practical Implications: Social media promotions is an effective way to promote a Tamil film and this can also be applied for other film industries.

Originality/Value: This paper shows forth the effectiveness of social media in promoting Tamil film. The findings show that it is an effective way of promotion. The researchers have provided the research gap that can be worked on further

Keywords: Tamil Film, Tamil Film Promotions, Twitter, Mersal, Darbar

INTRODUCTION

The changing scenario of the entertainment industry has provided advertisers with both obstacles and opportunities. The goal of capturing a fan's interest and taking them to the cinema remains the primary task, so how does a film succeed in doing so? To meet their target demographic. Films were formerly sold by posters on walls, advertisements in radio, television, newspapers, and theatres, but the way movies are marketed in the present scenario has evolved as a result of social media to maximize profit and reach a broader audience. Twitter is indeed one of the most widely used social networking platforms. However, with 500 million tweets sent every day, one must be strategic and creative to capture (and keep) the attention of their followers. Over-the-top film advertisements are nothing new in the Tamil film industry. The craze for cinema has always been a part of the state's mass culture, from massive cut-outs of stars dominating the skyline to the construction of temples. However, in recent years, this fervor has spread to the virtual universe. In Tamil Nadu, 57.8% of youngsters prefer Twitter to express themselves. This industry started slowly, but due to its flexibility to cope with the internet and media, it is progressing. "Today, however, an actor's quality is reliant on maintaining a very engaging or active virtual media presence," says Dhananjayan (Film Producer). So, to determine how important Twitter is for promoting Tamil films is the objective of this study and to ascertain the role and the importance of Twitter in the promotion of Tamil films.

The survey conducted with a sample size of 30 who use Twitter and also follow Tamil cinema to understand whether it has influenced their decision to watch a movie. A content analysis on how the blockbusters Mersal and Darbar were promoted on Twitter. It was discovered that Twitter had suggested the majority of participants, watch a film as well as recommending it to others, which indicates it is an effective strategy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mahesh & Rani (2019) concluded through the survey that television commercials, movie trailers, posters, and print advertising, social networking sites, in-house movie theatres, word-of-mouth, and movie attributes (movie posters, and social networking sites) all forecast the impact of promotional campaigns with moviegoers being most aware of the innovative aspects of product placements (Mahesh and Rani, 2019).

Kaplan (2013), stated the importance of runtime, production budget, and social media promotion via Twitter through the research. The content released earlier to the release of the film plays a vital role in guessing the approximate domestic gross for the film. Twitter's prominence also introduces a different outlet for information gathering, and its simulation process provides studios with a powerful method for assessing film output.

Tejada (2015) analyze the social media film promotion and the way it affected the relationship between the users and the production studios, made it clear that most people use social media for interacting with users, by developing a utilizing relationship between audiences, movies, and production studios. The survey discovered that even though individuals on social media were aware of movies through the medium, they did not necessarily interact with the production studio setup.

Ravinder (2017) substantiated that social media platforms will also help to make promotion more appealing without having to spend a lot of money on it, which is the reason why filmmakers use social media platforms to promote their films. They build

social media content in the same way as a movie in a theatre does.

Prabakaran (2018) also observed that film technicians and production companies are promoting and also engage the audience about their films through online platforms like Twitter, Youtube, Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram it is the most cost-effective approach of promoting a film. Nowadays, the film isn't considered a hit until it earns profits. A great script, a massive production company, and a famous star cast that can draw a crowd to the theatre would not be enough to guarantee a film's box office success. Before even spending money on watching a film, the audience wants to know about everything about the film, its box office performance, and reviews.

Manavalan (2016), revealed that recent Kollywood blockbusters are an example of how promotional strategies are being used in South Indian cinema to generate publicity among fans all while raising the bar among films released during the period. Since its inception, Kollywood has been a booming business, but with the evolution of entertainment into a business and a corporate structure, marketing and advertising have become an essential part of its existence. Given the ever-increasing competition from the country's other language film industries, there's a risk of losing the larger target audience. The majority of today's manufacturers and production houses believe in maximizing benefits and reviews for the least amount of money.

Gigi G.S. (2019) discusses recent promotional aspects of the Tamil film industry and advertising tactics used as they play a major role on moviegoers. To spread out their innovative effort to the public, proper regard should be provided to certain creative methods of promotion. The film fans are drawn to more experimental approaches due to the lack of mismatched promotional activity there are chances of withholding moviegoers away from the theatre, movie promoters and producers must specifically decide on the method of promotion and medium to reach their target audience. It generally requires close coordination of human resources with technology, resources, procedures, and time, though the

approaches vary depending on the film nevertheless, the goal remains the same.

Ajmeri (2019) has studied the promotion on Twitter, examined eight major motion picture releases from 2018 that initiated their promotion four weeks before their launch date to check whether it impacted awareness. A survey was conducted by dividing the sample into three groups i.e., those who didn't watch it, those who saw it on their feed but didn't watch it, and those who did watch it. The respondents stated that they were exposed to a maximum of three seconds of video in their Twitter feeds and their attitude was different to that of those who did not view the feed. This three seconds video is the minimum time needed to inject some information into the minds of the users about the films and attract as the users run through rapidly through the tweets. The movie is watched in the theatre by the Twitter users on the opening weekend is 31%. They also spend 32% more on movies at the theatre over a year.

Wilcox (2012), explained the disadvantages of using Facebook as a marketing tool, according to participants, was that the uniform and enforced structure restricts the page's organization, design, interactivity, and navigation. The timeline wasn't suitable for promotional movie pages because posts used to get lost, and the ability to hunt for old posts wasn't. The Facebook movie pages were largely opposed by the survey respondents, but a substantial percentage of that dislike was directed at the layout. The material's efficacy is almost entirely dependent on the site's functionality.

Kaushik (2012) on the drawbacks of social media were regarding the traditional campaigning methods, which have been overtaken not only by the internet and social media but also by the increasing challenge of creating an outstanding campaign in a fiercely competitive market. The issue stems from a changing consumer attitude. Social media has spawned a community of active participation, instant access to everything and everyone, and continuous connectivity. If comments and tweets are made rashly, they can end in promotional disasters that damage the client's and their agency's reputations. Buyers are lost the moment they find a brand's social networking behavior distracting

or irritating. There have been several occurrences where brands have attempted to exploit the system by posting false comments. Since advertisers communicate directly with the public, they can no longer hide behind the scenes and must take greater responsibility for the brand. Other social media risks include stalkers, child predators, and privacy issues.

METHODOLOGY

The majority of movies promotions nowadays are using social media platform to expand their marketing strategies. It's almost impossible to find a movie or a TV show without promotion on social media sites with an official Twitter handle or hashtag. The goal of this study is to determine the effectiveness of promoting a Tamil film through Twitter. Both quantitative and qualitative approach was used, for a deeper analysis. As a part of quantitative analysis a questionnaire was given to active participants of twitter and as a part of qualitative analysis the films, Mersal and Darbar promotional strategies on twitter are analyzed by following the method of content analysis. A questionnaire was given to 30 individuals who were active on Twitter and the users are not friends or family members of the researcher and they also follow Tamil films. The sample size taken was from different age groups. The questionnaire consisted of 8 questions that were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, 3 multiple choice questions, and 1 open-ended question. It was created in Google Forms and sent as a link to everyone through WhatsApp. The study was done in a single phase and will continue further. To obtain an impartial understanding, all respondents were asked the same questions. A content analysis of the promotional strategies by Mersal and Darbar on Twitter were analyzed.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

The method used to analyse the use of social media market promotions for a upcoming or a released Tamil film are derived by a questionnaire and also analyzes the film Darbar and Mersal film promotions in twitter. A questionnaire was given to 30 individuals those actively use twitter. According to the respondents reply more than 2/3rd of them always go through the reviews, implying that they have some preconceived notions

about the film before watching it. 5 of the participants felt that they do not necessarily need reviews for them to watch a movie. 33.3% also view reaction videos on Twitter which may affect their decision before they watch a movie. Here, the majority of the participants completely understand language and some can cope up with the dialogues. Only 3 of the participants use subtitles to understand the movie. One also doesn't certainly need to understand Tamil to watch a Tamil movie.

Almost 15 people tweeted about the movie review moments after seeing it, which may have influenced the people who have read it. If one tweets a review, it will affect whether or not one's followers continue to watch the film. Almost all of the respondents preferred going to the theatre to watch a movie more than streaming it online. It also increases the theatre's revenues by persuading them to spend their money on amenities like travel, food, and entertainment. The other half of the participants agreed that they were most likely to learn about movies through Twitter, which gave evidence that this medium does have an impact on the number of movie-goers.

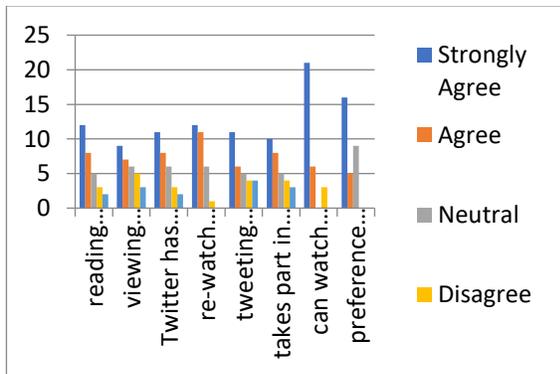


Fig.No.1 This gives the responses received by the respondents.

Around 23 participants re-watch movies frequently, indicating that they will endorse them to others, leading to an increase in film sales. Only 3.3% disagreed with the statement, which could denote that they only ever watched it once or that they are dissatisfied, which can lead to adverse feedback.

When asked about being part of movie-discussion groups, almost more than 18 of those respondents are part of a group/ groups, or they listen to everyone else's opinion before or after watching a movie. Like-minded movie fans interact about upcoming movies, latest trailers, checking what their favorite stars are up to, in a conversation, can very much affect their decision making in watching a film.

If one wants to make an impactful tweet, they have to have at least a few followers who will read their tweets, keeping in mind the responder questioned about the number of followers they have on Twitter and found that the common count was 0- 100. 16.7% of them even had somewhere around 401 and 700. Just 6.7 percent of the participants seem to spend more than four hours on Twitter. The most common response for the number of hours per day appears to be 1-3 hours a day. Since Twitter is such a big forum, the more time you spend on it, the more news and information you could get.

The most effective form of film advertisement that entices the participants to watch is the trailer with 86.7%. This emphasizes the significance of focusing on the trailer and carefully creating it to garner the desired reactions from the viewer. Involvement of actor/ director was the second most common selection with 70%, since most of them accumulate a fan base as a result of their participation in previous films, and these fans check out any other films in which they would be involved. Although using trailers and cast to market a film is crucial, it's also vital to recognize that other forms of advertising such as posters, work effectively too, and a combination of different types of advertising is much more likely to catch someone's attention and induce them to watch it.

Even though advertisements aid in the promotion of films, not everyone finds these compelling or impactful. According to 1/5th of the participants, advertisements give out too much information about the film's narration. While 1/6th felt there was nothing about the advertisements that they disliked and they genuinely enjoyed watching them. 6 of the 30 individuals, raised the argument that commercials take up a lot of time and appear across as spam, which has a negative impact on people. Paid advertising and false

marketing by studios who show overrated ratings for below-average movies were also mentioned by 13.3% of the respondents as an issue. Due to the unnecessary publicity, 5 of them indicated that it destroys viewers' expectations when they consider it unworthy of publicity, and it was also found misleading by 2 of the participants. There is sometimes so much emphasis on the male lead that 6.6 percent of them admit to using their male privilege and tend to objectify women.

When one promoter posts a tweet on a famous Twitter account, they hit almost all that account's followers. This is one of the best ways for people to learn about certain products or experiences. The promotion of Mersal and Darbar on Twitter was focused on in the study.



Fig. 1, Image of “Mersal Twitter Emojis” Taken from <https://shanmugavelondigital.com/top-10-marketing-strategies-followed-by-tamil-movies/>

Mersal used other promotional strategies on Twitter 72 days before its release besides twitter emojis and hashtags, such as the film poster, teaser trailers, singles before the release date, a well-known cast, director, and singers. The deliberate use of taglines and anthems by Thenandal Films (Movie Distributor) was a big treat for Vijay's fans. However, these implementations were not chosen at random but every step was made to make them appear organic. Even some of the cast like Samantha, Kajal Agarwal, Vadivelu, S. J. Suryah, Sathyaraj and A. R. Rahman, one of the best-selling music artists in India announced on Twitter which caught the attention of the viewers in watching the film. The movie teaser was released on September 21st, which happened to be director Atlee's birthday, which increased views because of Atlee's huge fan base. The audio launch event was held on 20 August 2017 in Chennai. Vijay chose Nehru Indoor Stadium because it could hold thousands of his fans and the event was broadcast live on Twitter, allowing fans from all over the world to experience the event.

Rahman had also put on a live performance of the tracks, which roused fans' interest in watching the movie. "Aalaporaan Thamizhan", was the first single to be released was sung by Kailash Kher, Sathya Prakash, Deepak, and Pooja Vaidyanath. Instead of uplifting the hero, grabbed many since the song spoke about the pride of "Tamizhians". "Neethanae," sung by Shreya Ghoshal and Rahman, was its second single. The album includes other songs sung by Sid Sriram, Shweta Mohan, and G. V. Prakash Kumar. As a result, the film's audience grew even faster.



Fig. 2, Image of “Darbar Twitter Emojis” Taken from <https://shanmugavelondigital.com/top-10-marketing-strategies-followed-by-tamil-movies/>

Darbar movie also joined in creating an emoji of the actor, Rajinikanth to promote the movie. Normally, a major star's movie would have an iconic line of dialogue that will go viral on the internet. Such kinds of hashtags that trended immediately were; **#mersalarasan**, **#aalaporanthamizhan**, **#chummakizhi**, **#getrajinified**. These hashtags were adored and used often by fans in their tweets. It also supported the film's contents to a large degree, making the film widely known. As a result, any tweet that is posted on someone's account is an indirect marketing tactic used by movies and businesses to promote their industry. **#DarbarMotionPoster** was already trending on Twitter, two days before the poster is set to release. Several fans used the hashtag in their Tweets, ensuring Darbar to become one of the key stories on Twitter. They used various marketing techniques to attract viewers' attention to the film, such as a Twitter emoji of Rajinikanth, a teaser trailer, movie poster, cast, director, singles. The female lead in Rajinikanth's film was played by Nayanthara. This was her third collaboration with the actor. It was produced by Lyca Productions. Anirudh Ravichander composed the film's soundtrack and score, and it was directed A.R. Murugadoss. The presence of these star celebrities including S. P. Balasubrahmanyam enticed the fans to

watch the film. On November 7, 2019, the first look of the film was launched. Famous film celebrities released the poster in their respective Twitter handles to garner more attention to the movie. The Darbar producers devised a promotional strategy for the film's poster. In a tweet, the director challenged Rajinikanth fans to create creative poster designs based on two stills, promising that the best designs will be chosen and used for official film promotion. The theme song for the film was released alongside the motion poster. The Cast and crew released the album. On the same day, it was simultaneously live streamed on Twitter and made available to download via Gaana.

According to Mahesh & Rani (2019) films are promoted through television commercials, movie trailers, posters, and print advertising, social networking sites, (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), in-house movie theatres, word-of-mouth considering this twitter promotion is being analyzed. Ajmeri (2019) expresses that people exposed to a minimum of three seconds of video in their Twitter feed had a more benevolent attitude compared to those who haven't watched it. With the majority of people scrolling swiftly through their feeds, three seconds might be the minimum time needed for making an impact on them and enticing them to watch the movie. Even through this study, it is clear that in this present age, Twitter has a positive effect on the promotion of Tamil films and has an impact on the users' attitudes toward watching a particular film.

CONCLUSION

Since Twitter is one of the best mass social media platforms for broadcasting a message, the Tamil film industry is making the most of it by coming up with innovative ideas to increase the audience. According to the survey, Twitter has a massive influence on audiences by recommending similar movies to what they watched so they'd be more interested in it and also by encouraging them to express their opinions about the movies after they have seen them through tweets. The Twitter advertising tactics used by Mersal and Darbar movies were examined to see if it increased the percentage of members who watched the movies. The content analysis revealed that the production studios' used innovative methods to understand if the film

became more successful and users more interested in watching it. Despite extravagantly promoting films in conventional forms, the Tamil film industry has begun to adapt to the virtual world to widen its demographic. Users are also enthusiastic towards aiding the movies to go viral. This implies that fans should be involved in the promotion process as they're the only ones who understand what other fans to increase awareness of Tamil films.

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