

A CASE STUDY OF IMPACTS OF PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING PRACTICES ON PERFORMANCE OF BOLLYWOOD FILMS IN INDIA

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Abstract

The “Rationality Behaviour of the Film Producers” as defined in the economic theories and management practices i.e. with the optimum allocation of available resources the producer tries to maximize the profit and/or minimize the loss, as the case may be. It is therefore, crystal clear that the film producer also has to manage the income sources as well as the cost aspects, at each and every stages of the film production. Considering the publicity and the advertising cost, mostly followed by the production cost, remuneration of actors and post production expenses, “A CASE STUDY OF IMPACTS OF PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING PRACTICES ON PERFORMANCE OF BOLLYWOOD FILMS IN INDIA”, topic is selected with the ultimate objectives of analysing and evaluating the importance of production management and marketing strategies in the commercial success of Bollywood Films, under the limitations of the secondary information available related to the research topic selected. The present paper thus, examines whether managerial planning, execution, and marketing decisions played a decisive role in shaping box-office outcomes.

The analysis confirms that effective production management, strategic allocation of resources, and marketing communication aligned with film content are decisive factors in shaping box-office results. Conversely, production inefficiencies, misaligned budgeting, and misleading marketing practices significantly increase the likelihood of commercial failure. By reinforcing the central argument of this paper—that commercial outcomes in Bollywood cinema are largely managerial rather than accidental—the present paper fulfils the objectives as set out.

Keywords: Commercial Success and Failure, recurring practices, strategic strengths, managerial weaknesses, Box Office Revenue, Scale of Operations, Annual Production Volume, Distribution Networks, OTT platforms, Financial Metrics, Revenue Growth, EBITDA Growth Rate, Market Capitalization, Return on Investment (ROI), Return on Equity (ROE), Creative & Critical Success, Audience Engagement Metrics, Industry Reputation and Brand Value, Awards and Accolades, Ability to Nurture Talent, Diversification, Ancillary Revenue Streams, Satellite and Digital Rights, Music Rights, Merchandising and Brand Tie-ins.

INTRODUCTION

Bollywood films in India, are multi-million dollar productions, with the most expensive productions costing up to ₹ 1 billion (about US\$20 million). Bollywood films realities in the year 2022 and 2023 is given in below table – 1 and 2, as;

Table - 1
Bollywood Films Realities

No. of screens	8,700
Produced feature films (2022)	
Total	42
Animated	0
Documentary	0
Gross box office (2022)	
Total	₹2400 Cr (net earnings)

Source: Central Board of Film Certification by languages (2022, 2023).

Table 2.
The ultimate success story of Hindi Cinema in recent years:

No. of screens	9,742 (2023)
• Per capita	6 per million (2021)
Produced feature films (2021–2022)	
Total	2886
Number of admissions (2016)	
Total	2,020,000,000
• Per capita	1.69
National films	1,713,600,000
Gross box office (2024)	
Total	₹11,833 crore (\$1.36 billion)

Source: Central Board of Film Certification by languages (2022, 2023).

The above tables reveals the success story of Bollywood Cinema, which implies the “Rationality Behaviour of the Film Producers” as defined in the economic theories and management practices i.e. with the optimum allocation of available resources the producer tries to maximize the profit and/or minimize the loss, as the case may be. It is therefore, crystal clear that the film producer also has to manage the income sources as well as the cost aspects, at each and every stages.

The film project costs in India vary drastically, from a few thousand rupees for ultra-low budget short films (₹5k-₹50k) to crores for features (₹20-₹100 Cr+), depending on scale, stars, and production quality, with major Bollywood films costing ₹20-₹100+ Crores (production/P&A) while regional films and indie projects find budgets in lakhs or tens of lakhs, with incentives available from state governments like Maharashtra and central schemes for foreign productions.

Based upon the standard practice prevalent in Bollywood industry as worked out by AIMA (2012), the break-up of the total estimated project cost of INR 75 million is given in below table - 3.

Table 3.
Estimated Film Project Cost

S.No.	Cost Head	Percentage Break-up of Expenses	Expenditure in INR
1	Story	0.5	375,000
2	Screenplay and Dialogues	0.5	375,000
3	Pre-production expense	0.5	375,000
4	Remuneration of Actors	24	18,000,000
5	Remuneration of Director	0.5	375,000
6	Production cost	25	18,750,000
7	Post production expenses	15	11,250,000
8	Music	0.5	375,000
9	Editing cost	0.5	375,000
10	Publicity & Advertising	30	22,500,000
11	Distribution cost	3.0	2,250,000

Source: The standard practice prevalent in Bollywood industry as worked out by AIMA (2012)

It is revealed from the above table that the proposed expenses of the film making is highest in the publicity and the advertising cost, mostly followed by the production cost, remuneration of actors and post production expenses. Considering these facts, the topic “A CASE STUDY OF IMPACTS OF PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING PRACTICES ON PERFORMANCE OF BOLLYWOOD FILMS IN INDIA”, is selected, with the ultimate objectives of analysing and evaluating the importance of production management and marketing strategies in the commercial success of Bollywood Films, taking the Bollywood films as case study, under the limitations of the secondary information available related to the research topic selected.

The present paper thus, examines whether managerial planning, execution, and marketing decisions played a decisive role in shaping box-office outcomes.

IMPACTS OF PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND MARKETING STRATEGIES ON COMMERCIAL PERFORMANCE IN BOLLYWOOD FILMS IN INDIA:

The central question addressed here is; *how do production management practices and marketing strategies contribute to the commercial success or failure of Bollywood films?*

To answer this question, the paper adopts a descriptive and comparative approach. For the very purpose, some successful Bollywood Films are selected randomly and examined to identify recurring practices, strategic strengths, and managerial weaknesses, as the case study. This approach allows the study to move beyond individual examples and develop broader insights into how the Bollywood film industry functions as both a creative and commercial system.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT PAPER

By examining real film outcomes in relation to the core objectives, the paper ensures that the analysis remains focused and relevant, more specifically, to one or more of the following sets of some objectives:

- To study and understand the role of production management in Hindi cinema.
- To study the marketing strategies used by Hindi film production houses.
- To compare commercially successful and unsuccessful Hindi films.
- To assess how managerial decisions influence box-office performance.

As a matter of fact, the present paper does not treat production management or marketing as abstract concepts; instead, it evaluates how these elements operate in practice and how their effectiveness (or lack thereof) is reflected in commercial results in Bollywood Films in India.

OVERVIEW OF FILMS SELECTED AS THE CASE STUDY FOR ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION:

Commercial success for Bollywood films is primarily measured by Return on Investment (ROI) and overall profitability across multiple revenue streams, not just raw box office collections. Key indicators include box office performance, the sale of ancillary rights, audience reception, and marketing effectiveness.

Key Indicators of Commercial Success

- **Box Office Revenue:** This remains the most significant indicator, historically accounting for the majority of a film's revenue. Success is often judged by benchmarks like crossing specific financial milestones (e.g., the ₹50 crore or ₹100 crore club, though these benchmarks shift over time). The opening weekend collection is particularly crucial as it heavily influences a film's total sales and perceived success.
- **Return on Investment (ROI) and Profitability:** A film is commercially successful if it is profitable for its producers and distributors. A film with a low budget that makes a reasonable profit may be considered a bigger success than a high-budget film that barely breaks even.
- **Ancillary Revenue Streams:** In the modern era, revenue from sources other than traditional box office is vital for profitability. These include:
 - **Satellite and Digital Rights:** Selling broadcasting rights to television channels and streaming platforms (OTT) is a major income source that can help de-risk the initial investment.
 - **Music Rights:** The soundtrack and songs have long been a key part of film promotion and a separate revenue stream.
 - **Merchandising and Brand Tie-ins:** Product placements and branded merchandise can generate significant additional revenue.
 - **International Box Office:** Collections from overseas markets contribute to overall global success.

Factors Influencing Success:

Several factors influence these indicators before and during a film's release:

- **Star Power and Cast:** The lead actors' and director's brand equity and past performance are strong predictors of a film's initial draw and box office performance.
- **Content and Storytelling:** The quality of the narrative, engaging plot, and ability to resonate with the audience are increasingly important, sometimes overriding star power.
- **Marketing and Promotion:** Aggressive and innovative marketing strategies across various platforms (social media, TV, print ads, etc.) are essential to generate buzz, create brand awareness, and ensure a strong opening.
- **Release Strategy:** Key factors include the timing of the release (e.g., during festivals or holidays), the number of screens, and the power of the distributor.
- **Audience and Critic Reviews:** Positive word-of-mouth and high user ratings (on platforms like IMDb or Bollywood Hungama) can significantly impact the film's long-term success.
- **Production Budget:** While a large budget is often associated with high production quality and star cast, it does not guarantee success, and the budget's efficiency is crucial for actual profitability.

COMMERCIAL SUCCESSFUL BOLLYWOOD FILMS IN INDIA

The present paper analysed ten commercially successful Bollywood films produced by established popular production houses such as Yash Raj Films, Red Chillies Entertainment, Dharma Productions, Balaji Motion Pictures, Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, Sanjay Leela Bhansali Films, and Aamir Khan Productions. These production houses represent different working styles and creative philosophies within mainstream Hindi cinema.

As seen hereinabove, the ultimate objective of the present paper, is to demonstrate how effective production management, strategic budgeting, and aligned marketing practices contribute to predictable and sustained commercial success.

The films selected—Dangal, Bajrangi Bhaijaan, Pathaan, Jawan, Andhadhun, The Surgical Strike, Drishyam, Badhai Ho and Tanhaji—represent different genres and periods, yet display common managerial characteristics, as follows:

Dangal (2016): Content-Led Production Management and Long-Term Revenue Strategy:

Produced by Aamir Khan Productions and Walt Disney India, Dangal is frequently cited as one of the most commercially successful Hindi films in global markets. Trade sources widely reported its production budget at approximately ₹70–85 crore, while its worldwide gross exceeded ₹2,000 crore, largely driven by international markets, particularly China.

From a production management perspective, Dangal demonstrates the importance of content stability and disciplined execution. The film underwent extensive pre-production, including actor training and script development, which reduced the need for costly revisions during shooting. Production schedules were tightly controlled, and creative decisions were finalised early in the process.

Marketing strategies for Dangal were deliberately restrained, focusing on narrative strength and emotional appeal rather than spectacle. This approach allowed positive word-of-mouth to drive sustained box-office performance over an extended theatrical run.

Managerial insight: The case confirms that strong production planning combined with content-led marketing can generate exceptional long-term returns without excessive promotional expenditure.

Bajrangi Bhaijaan (2015): Emotional Positioning and Audience-Centric Marketing:

Bajrangi Bhaijaan, produced by Salman Khan Films and Eros International, was made on a reported budget of approximately ₹90 crore and achieved worldwide box-office collections exceeding ₹900 crore, according to trade reports.

The film's production management emphasised narrative clarity and emotional accessibility, ensuring that the storyline appealed across age groups and regions. Shooting schedules were managed efficiently, with minimal reports of production overruns or post-production delays.

Marketing communication for Bajrangi Bhaijaan accurately reflected the film's emotional tone and social message. Promotional material avoided overemphasis on action or spectacle and instead positioned the film as a family-oriented, emotionally resonant experience.

Managerial insight: This case illustrates how alignment between content, production planning, and marketing communication can broaden audience reach and sustain box-office momentum.

Pathaan (2023): Strategic Release Planning and Controlled Production Scale:

Pathaan, produced by Yash Raj Films, marked a significant commercial milestone for mainstream Hindi cinema in the post-pandemic period. Trade sources reported its production budget in the range of ₹225–250 crore, while worldwide box-office collections were reported at over ₹1,000 crore.

The film's production management benefited from Yash Raj Films' studio-driven model, which emphasises tight scheduling, pre-negotiated distribution arrangements, and controlled cost structures. Despite its scale, Pathaan avoided prolonged production delays and maintained release discipline.

Marketing strategy played a critical role in the film's success. Promotions were deliberately limited prior to release, reducing audience fatigue and creating curiosity. Post-release, marketing emphasis shifted toward audience reaction and celebratory narratives, reinforcing positive word-of-mouth.

Managerial insight: Pathaan demonstrates how strategic restraint in marketing and disciplined production control can enhance impact in high-budget projects.

Jawan (2023): Integrated Production-Marketing Synergy:

This movie produced by Red Chillies Entertainment, Jawan was reported to have a production budget of approximately ₹300 crore and achieved worldwide box-office collections exceeding ₹1,100 crore, according to multiple trade tracking platforms.

The film exemplifies vertical integration in production management, with Red Chillies handling production, visual effects, and post-production internally. This integration reduced dependency on external vendors, improved coordination, and ensured consistency across creative and technical stages.

Marketing for Jawan was tightly aligned with its narrative and thematic positioning. Promotional material highlighted the film's emotional core, social messaging, and mass appeal rather than focusing solely on star presence or scale.

Managerial insight: The case illustrates how integrated production ecosystems and cohesive marketing communication enhance operational efficiency and commercial predictability.

Andhadhun (2018): Controlled Scale and Strategic Positioning

The film was produced by Viacom18 Motion Pictures and Matchbox Pictures, Andhadhun was developed as a mid-budget film with strong emphasis on screenplay discipline and genre clarity. Production management focused on tight scheduling, limited locations, and narrative precision, ensuring cost control without creative compromise.

Marketing adopted a curiosity-driven strategy, deliberately withholding plot details and positioning the film as an unpredictable thriller. This alignment between content and promotion generated strong word-of-mouth, driving sustained box-office performance.

Managerial Insight: Strong script control enables marketing to rely on intrigue rather than scale.

Uri: The Surgical Strike (2019): Thematic Clarity and National Sentiment:

The film produced by RSVP Movies, Uri benefited from clearly defined production objectives and disciplined execution. The film avoided excessive dramatization and maintained narrative focus, reducing creative ambiguity during production.

Marketing strategically aligned with national sentiment without over-sensationalising the subject. Promotional messaging emphasised realism and restraint, leading to strong audience identification and repeat viewership.

Managerial Insight: Thematic clarity strengthens both production focus and marketing credibility.

Drishyam (2015): Narrative Strength over Star Dependency

The film produced by Panorama Studios, Drishyam followed a lean production model prioritising storytelling and performance. Managerial efficiency was achieved through minimalistic production design and controlled timelines.

Marketing highlighted suspense and narrative intelligence rather than spectacle or star power. Audience engagement grew steadily through positive word-of-mouth.

Managerial Insight: Narrative-driven films reduce marketing risk and enhance longevity.

Badhaai Ho (2018): Relatable Content with Honest Promotion

The film produced by Junglee Pictures, Badhaai Ho demonstrates how modestly scaled productions can achieve strong commercial success through precise audience understanding. Production planning remained simple and cost-efficient.

Marketing positioned the film around everyday family humour, accurately reflecting the viewing experience. This transparency generated trust and widespread acceptance.

Managerial Insight: Honest marketing amplifies relatability in content-driven cinema.

Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior (2020): Scale Managed with Cultural Framing

Produced by Ajay Devgn FFilms and T-Series, Tanhaji combined scale with structured production management. Use of technology was balanced with narrative clarity and historical framing.

Marketing focused on cultural pride and emotional resonance rather than technical spectacle alone. This alignment helped convert opening interest into sustained footfalls.

Managerial Insight: Cultural framing enhances acceptance of large-scale historical films.

Interpretative Analysis of Successful Film Case Studies:

A comparative interpretation of these successful films reveals several recurring managerial patterns. First, all cases demonstrate early-stage clarity in script development and production planning, which reduced uncertainty during execution. Second, budgeting decisions were aligned with narrative requirements rather than scale for its own sake.

From a marketing perspective, successful films avoided misleading promotion. Instead, marketing strategies were designed to accurately reflect the film's emotional and thematic content, enabling realistic audience expectations and positive post-release word-of-mouth.

Audience response patterns indicate that sustained success is driven less by opening-day performance and more by trust in content and brand credibility of production houses. These Cases collectively reinforce the argument that structured management practices play a decisive role in commercial success.

Additional Dimensions Enhancing Study Depth:

Beyond production management and marketing strategies, the analysis also reveals certain broader industry-level shifts that have a direct bearing on commercial outcomes in Hindi cinema. These dimensions do not function independently; rather, they influence how production and marketing decisions are conceived and executed.

Changing Audience Behaviour:

One of the most significant contextual factors identified in this research is the change in audience behaviour over time. Commercially successful films demonstrated an awareness of evolving viewer preferences, including greater selectivity, exposure to global content, and reduced dependence on star-driven appeal alone.

In contrast, many commercially unsuccessful films appeared to rely on outdated assumptions—particularly the belief that star power or familiar genres would automatically guarantee audience turnout. The findings suggest

that contemporary audiences evaluate films more critically, placing increasing importance on narrative coherence, emotional engagement, and value for time and money.

From an analytical standpoint, this shift implies that production management and marketing strategies must be grounded in current audience intelligence rather than legacy formulas. Failure to recognise this transition increases the risk of misaligned content and ineffective promotion.

Evolution of the Producer's Role:

The research also indicates a notable transformation in the role of the Hindi film producer. Traditionally viewed primarily as a financier or facilitator, the modern producer increasingly functions as a central managerial authority within the filmmaking process.

In successful projects, producers were observed to perform multiple interconnected roles: overseeing production schedules, coordinating between creative and operational teams, guiding marketing positioning, and assessing financial risk across different revenue streams. This expanded role reflects a shift towards professionalised, studio-driven models of filmmaking.

This evolution is significant because it places managerial competence at the core of commercial decision-making. Films that benefited from strong producer oversight displayed greater coherence across production and marketing stages, while those lacking such leadership often suffered from fragmentation and inefficiency.

The selected successful films varied in terms of genre, budget size, and audience base. Some were large-scale action films, others were content-driven dramas or historical narratives. The budgets ranged from moderate to high, and the target audience included mass domestic viewers as well as international audiences.

Despite these differences, the films shared several common features. They demonstrated clarity in production planning, disciplined execution, and marketing strategies that were broadly aligned with the nature of the film. These shared characteristics make them useful case studies for understanding how structured management and strategic marketing contribute to sustained commercial performance.

THE FUTURE SCOPE OF RESEARCH: MANAGERIAL LESSONS FROM COMMERCIAL FAILURE

The failed-film case studies reinforce the central argument of this research that commercial outcomes in Hindi cinema are fundamentally managerial outcomes. Production management that lacks early-stage clarity, strategic budgeting, and audience awareness significantly increases the probability of failure. Similarly, marketing strategies that prioritise spectacle over honest positioning undermine long-term commercial viability.

These cases collectively demonstrate that effective production management and aligned marketing strategies are not optional enhancements but structural necessities in contemporary Hindi cinema. Their absence exposes films to heightened financial risk, reputational damage, and accelerated market rejection.

Table: 4

High Budget Hindi Films with Commercial Under performance
(Budget and gross figures from industry tracking sources)

Film Title	Production Budget (Est.)	Domestic / Global Gross (Est.)	Critical/Market Cause
Thugs of Hindostan (2018)	₹300 crore	₹322.07 crore gross	Weak story, negative word-of-mouth
Zero (2018)	₹200–270 crore	₹178–186 crore gross	Novelty not matched by narrative appeal
Ra.One (2011)	₹130 crore	₹113–120 crore net long run	Tech focus over content
Laal Singh Chaddha (2022)	₹180 crore	₹129 crore total	Adaptation not positioned well
Bombay Velvet (2015)	₹118–120 crore	₹23–43 crore gross	Style over storytelling
Kalank (2019)	₹150 crore	₹80–146 crore gross	Ensemble poor narrative fit
Adipurush (2023)	₹500 crore	₹389 crore gross	Screenplay & execution weaknesses
Samrat Prithviraj (2022)	₹200 crore	₹65 crore gross	Story & market positioning

It reflects that many of these films faced issues related to production delays, rising costs, unclear creative direction, or marketing strategies that did not match the film's content. In several cases, promotional campaigns created expectations that the films were unable to fulfil, resulting in negative word-of-mouth and a rapid decline in audience interest. Under these very facts the present Author suggests the research scholar to

enhance the impacts of the production management and marketing strategies on the unsuccessful Bollywood films in India, including regional films and rest of the world too.

FINDINGS OF THE PRESENT PAPER

By analysing the present paper helps to establish that commercial outcomes in Bollywood cinema are closely linked to managerial effectiveness rather than solely to star power or scale.

FINDINGS RELATED TO PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT:

Production Planning in Commercially Successful Films:

Commercially successful Hindi films reveal a clear pattern in the way production is managed. These films treat production not as an open-ended creative journey, but as a carefully structured process in which most critical decisions are made before the camera starts rolling. Scripts are largely locked, budgets are defined with realistic margins, and schedules are designed to minimise uncertainty.

Once production begins, these films display a strong resistance to frequent creative changes. This does not imply rigidity, but rather managerial clarity. By maintaining control over revisions, producers are able to prevent delays and cost overruns that often disrupt less disciplined projects. The result is a smoother production cycle that allows marketing activities to be planned and executed with confidence.

What emerges from these cases is the understanding that effective production management does not limit creativity; instead, it provides the stability within which creativity can be translated into a commercially viable product.

FINDINGS RELATED TO BUDGETING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION:

Budget Prioritisation in Commercially Successful Films:

The study indicates that commercially successful films adopted a strategic approach to budgeting, where financial decisions were guided by narrative and audience considerations rather than scale alone. Instead of distributing resources evenly across departments, producers prioritised areas that directly influenced viewer engagement.

Investments in casting, production design, music, and technical quality were closely aligned with the film's genre and storytelling needs. This selective allocation ensured that expenditure contributed meaningfully to the cinematic experience. The emphasis, therefore, was not on spending more, but on spending wisely.

Analytically, this reflects a shift towards value-based budgeting in Hindi cinema, where commercial success is linked to how effectively resources enhance audience perception rather than how visibly they are displayed.

FINDINGS RELATED TO MARKETING STRATEGIES:

Marketing Alignment in Commercially Successful Films:

Marketing strategies in commercially successful films were marked by clarity and consistency. Promotional campaigns accurately reflected the film's genre, tone, and emotional core, enabling audiences to develop realistic expectations prior to release.

This alignment played a key role in sustaining audience interest beyond the opening weekend. When promotional promises matched the on-screen experience, positive word-of-mouth followed, reinforcing the film's commercial performance. Over time, such consistency also strengthened the credibility of production houses, creating a cumulative advantage for future releases.

CONCLUSION

The present paper derived the findings from the analysis of commercially successful Bollywood films, with specific reference to production management and marketing strategies, as above. Rather than treating success and failure as isolated outcomes, the paper has demonstrated how managerial planning, execution, and strategic alignment consistently influence commercial performance.

The analysis confirms that effective production management, strategic allocation of resources, and marketing communication aligned with film content are decisive factors in shaping box-office results. Conversely, production inefficiencies, misaligned budgeting, and misleading marketing practices significantly increase the likelihood of commercial failure.

By reinforcing the central argument of this paper—that commercial outcomes in Bollywood cinema are largely managerial rather than accidental—the present paper establishes a strong analytical foundation for the fullness of the objectives.

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