

# INDIAN HINDI FILM INDUSTRY USING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM FOR PROMOTIONS AND MARKETING: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

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**Abstract:** Film promotion has been now considered as important as actual making of the film. Although the history of the film marketing can be traced back from the days of the inception of the film itself, it has reshaped its periphery time and often. It has gone through the age of posters, wall papers, print ads etc. New Media is the latest addition to this arena. Film has also started utilising the potential of new media completely in terms of marketing and promotions. Indian Hindi film industry is too not far behind. It has also used new media as well as social media forum to make people aware of the film and to drive them towards theatre. This paper shows how Indian Hindi movie industry has undergone various changes in terms of promotion and finally it harps on how contemporary movies use social media platform to promote their work successfully. It has undergone a detailed analysis of social media promotional strategy of current hits and simultaneously comes in to conclusion that despite various restrictions and limitations, social media can able to revitalise the entire process of film promotions and marketing and can have effective result on audience on making them engaged about a particular film.

**Keywords:** Film promotion, Four P's of film marketing, Bollywood, Youtube, Facebook, Twitter

*“There is no formula for success. You cannot play safe by mixing two parts of sex, two parts of violence, a few tears and two dozen laughs. Even when a film is finished and acclaimed by the critics it is impossible to predict its success at the box office.”*

Otto Preminger in An Autobiography (1977)

Film as the most popular visual art form has proved to be undoubtedly universal. Although young in comparison to other conventional mass medium, the powerful combination of moving images finely blended with sound helps to create direct and deepest impact on mass. The circumstances in which people have watched film has undergone significant changes over time but interest in film has remained constant. Films are designed to have an effect on audience. Film industry makes film and needs audience to pay and watch them. (David Bordwell, Film Art, An Introduction, 2008) In a dynamic competitive entertainment environment, movies always find it difficult to stay afloat and consequently jostle for screen space. . Unlike other forms of creativity, it is difficult to predict trends in movie industry. As film business is highly volatile, the process of distributing and exhibiting film has increasingly become as significant as the actual film making process.

Marketing as a field of practice, though contentious, is always considered as significant as the actual making of the product. Like every other sector, movie industry is also

embracing marketing as its integral component like the actual film making process. Promotion is important part of any release as it involves high financial risk. Without proper marketing of a film, a film with fantastic plots, characters, sets fail to attract audience.

Marketing in a nutshell, is selling and advertising. With the passage of time it has reshaped its periphery to include satisfying customer needs, promoting products efficiently and creating value laden exchange with customers. Marketing thus, is to put right product at right place and at right time. The term ‘marketing mix’ and the ‘4 P’s’ of marketing are often used as synonyms for each other. The ‘4 P’s’ are the elements of marketing mix and probably the best known way of devising a marketing plan. They are product, price, promotion, and place. (Anonymous, 2010)

## 4Ps concept applied on the movie industry

### I. PRODUCT

Film is considered as a product that is needed to satisfy its takers i.e. audiences. A successful promotion and marketing plan of the movie should start with the idea of creating the content i.e. making the film. A well organised script supported by an innovative screenplay is in the heart of film promotion as it decides the definitive audience who is going to watch the film in theatres. Although other elements are important in marketing strategy, the product film should be considered as most significant in drawing attention of the audience (Kumar, 2012).

### II. PRICE

For an audience the pricing structure is what he pays in the theatre for a ticket. According to Kumar, in his article ‘E Marketing of Bollywood Movies: A Case Study of Movies with Earning Above INR 100 Crore’, there are other elements too which results in different returns for the producer, the distributor, and even the key creative talent. Elements include:

- Theatrical release schedules
- Territories and market segments
- Revenue splits, percentages and order of payment
- Promotion and Advertisement budgets

Besides there are a wide range of pricing structures such as theatrical tickets, group 4-wall rentals, title rentals, title sales, special releases, subscription services, festivals, DVD writes, downloads, delayed broadcasts, pay-per-view, licenses, bundled deals, cable channels and now movies and games on cell phones, on iPods, on electronic billboards etc. (Kumar, 2012).

### III. PROMOTION

Promotion for films takes many forms:

- Print advertising (posters and ads in newspapers & magazines)
- Trailers (screened at cinemas and on Television/radio)
- Internet sites (including facebook 'fan' pages)
- Viral Videos
- Merchandising —books, t-shirts, food, soundtrack CDs, computer games, toys, cars, mobile phones, anything that can be associated with the brand of the movie (Kumar, 2012).

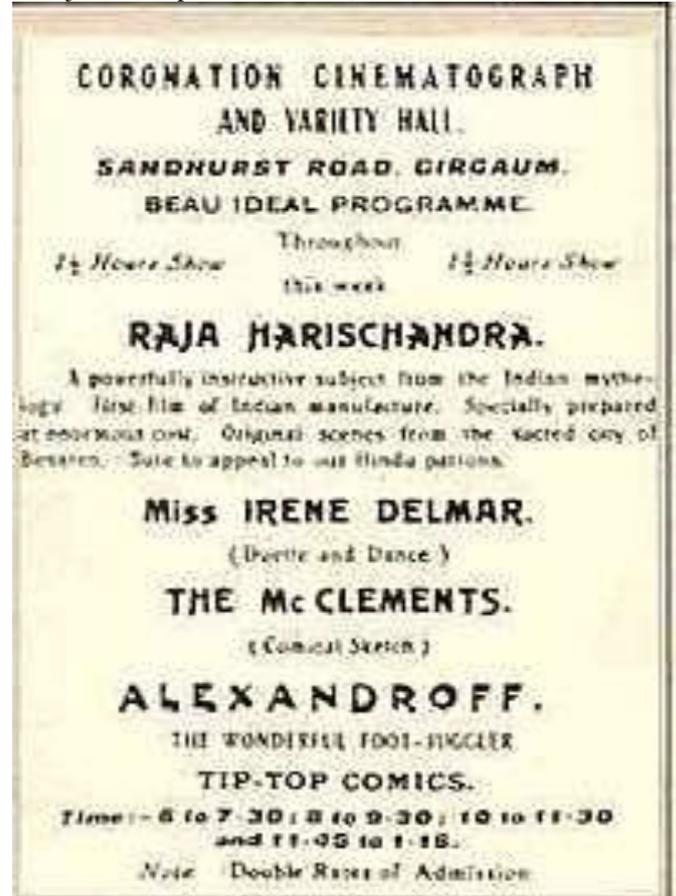
### IV. PLACE

The marketing 'Place' simply defines where and how the prospects find the movie 'Product'. With the advent of new technology the 'Place' is not limited to theatre or traditional television broadcast. Now it is accessible easily through variety of modes like pay per view through direct-to-home (DTH) broadcast, over the internet, through social networking sites, cell phones and other hand held devices, co-branding and merchandising, music CDs and DVDs and so on and so forth. The digital renaissance has opened a plethora of platform, strategies and formats than ever like RSS feeds, Blogs, dedicated websites, game sites, mobile apps etc to receive the movie 'Product' as and when required (Kumar, 2012).

India is the world's largest producer of films by volume. It produces almost thousand films a year. Bollywood, a portmanteau of Mumbai, is the largest contributor in the industry followed by regional cinemas. The 2005 edition of Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "a name for the Indian popular film industry, based in Bombay. It's origin is on 1970s and it is a blend of Bombay and Hollywood." The term Bollywood is an invention of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, after Bombay cinema got the imagination of the West, Nasreen Rehman, a historian of South Asian Cinema, told BBC (Ghosh, 2013).

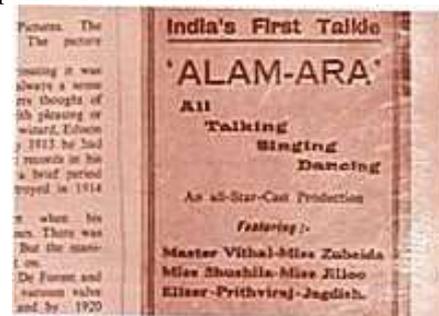
With 1000 films produced annually, Bollywood is the world's most prolific cinema industry. According to DI International Business Development, a consulting unit of Confederation of Danish Industry, Bollywood generated revenues of \$3 billion in 2011; the figure has been growing 10% a year. By 2016 revenue it is expected to reach \$4.5 billion. (Ghosh, 2013)

In India, the history of film promotion and marketing runs in fascinating parallel since the inception of film making. *Raja Harishchandra*, directed by Dadasaheb Phalke, (1913) is the first full length Indian feature film. The film revolves around the noble and righteous king Raja HarishChandra who sacrificed his kingdom and followed by his wife and children to honour his promise to sage Visvamitra. As the first full length feature film, it used publicity poster to market the movie. The poster contains the venue and time of the screening. It also depicts the story of the film in short. The film was premiered in the month of April to selective audience which included famous personalities of Bombay. On 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1913 it was screened for the public at Coronation Cinema, Girgaon, where crowds thronged outside the hall.



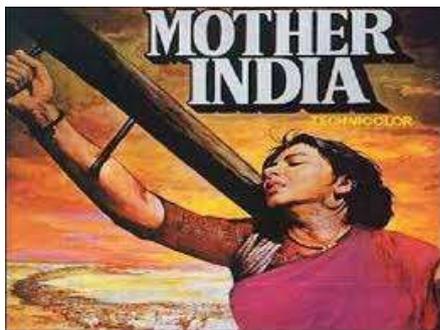
Poster of Raja Harishchandra

(Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raja\\_Harishchandra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raja_Harishchandra))  
*Alam Ara*, the first Indian talkie directed by Ardeshir Irani in the year 1931 used newspaper advertisement along with theatrical release poster. The catchword of the newspaper advertisement is "all talking, singing, dancing" to establish the significance of the emergence of sound system in Indian cinema. The audience turnout of the film is so huge that it requires police aid to control the crowd.



Newspaper Advertisement of Alam Ara

(Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alam\\_Ara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alam_Ara))  
Post independence movie industry gained momentum and scholars termed 1950's as golden age of Indian cinema industry. The major hits of 1950s are *Awara*, *Pyasa*, *Mother India* and many others. The movies of that time mainly depend on hand printed posters which were used for Out of Home publicity like wallpapers and billboards. Mother India earned maximum box office revenue at that point of time.



**Wallpaper of Mother India**

Source: (<http://wallpapers-junction.com/Movie%20Wallpapers/Bollywood%20Movies/Images/Mother-India-Wallpapers.jpg>)

In radio sector too, slots were sold for commercial purpose. Radio jingles were first used for the film *Pati Patni Aur Woh* (1978). Statistics suggest that there are 260 radio stations on air across 91 cities. There are 250-300 million radio users in the current scenario. Also, in regard to the consumption time radio has moved much ahead of television. It is 145-150 minutes per day as compared to the television, which is approximately 140 minutes per day according to L V Krishnan, CEO at TAM Media Research. Mobile users have radio access too. This new trend of radio accessibility in mobile phone has given radio a better position for film promotion. (Kumar, 2012)

Radio has number of roles to play in film marketing. The frequent promotional activities include on-air contests, interviews with film stars and music composers, selling out complementary movie tickets, an option to meet the stars in person, music and movie premiere coverage, etc.

The International film festival of India has become an annual event since 1974 which from then acts as a platform to exhibit nationally and internationally acclaimed films.

With the emergence of television and ushering in of satellite channels, Bollywood has started fully utilising the slots to promote the movies. Movie songs and clippings are shown repeatedly in television to cast an effect on audience.

Trailers, promotional tours, star interviews, music launch, reality shows are used as different medium of movie marketing.

With the constant change in entertainment environment, marketing options are also escalating leading to generate confusion among audiences. Although marketing is an age old practise, it is bound to change with the demand of audience and industry situation. The producers too are in search of innovative marketing strategies to attract audience to their projects. Social media is the latest addition in the arena of movie promotions and marketing medium.

A revolution in communication technologies, resulting in the emergence of new media, has changed the entire scenario, casting an impact in every sector of our society. Social media has now become a rage among those who have an access to the internet. It has become ubiquitous part of our life. According to the report of Internet and Mobile Association of India, by June 2014 there are 243 million internet users in the country amongst which 168.7 million people are social media users. Facebook, in India, itself, has crossed 100 million active users. (IAMAI, 2013)

Social media is an online platform which allows users to have an on demand access to any content and at any point of time. It also provides a platform for the users to participate in content creation, content generation and content sharing.

Movies always reflect contemporary culture and society. Moreover the young generation of the day always want equal participation in everything they would like to consume. Similarly in case of movie promotion audiences too also want a share of their choice in the final product. As a result, social media takes the foreground. The emergence of social media has generated a scope to build its own media content. Audiences themselves use social media to campaign their favourite movies. Facebook official film pages, online contests, creating fan clubs; forums are the recent activities of the younger demographics in social networking sites.

Bollywood has also started spending heavily on digital promotion and marketing. Total marketing budgets of a Bollywood movie comprise almost 30-40 percent of entire production cost of which 20-30 percent is spent on digital marketing. Around 81 per cent of the online Indian population, according to a report by Hungama Digital Media, engages in some kind of social interactivity on the web, making it an ideal place for the film marketers to draw young crowds. Jyoti Deshpande, Chief Operating Officer and Commercial Director, Eros International, says: "Internet viral marketing is less about how much you spend and more about how effectively you spend." (Kumar, 2012) Today it's almost a norm to launch the website as well facebook fan page of a movie simultaneously. Promoting movies through social networking sites such as facebook, Orkut, blogs like blogger and micro-blogging sites like twitter etc. helps to build a reputation, create real time conversations, connect and at the same time engage the target audiences in the online world.

Bollywood movies, right from launching trailers online and movie stars posting gushing tweets embraces social media in all its form. Gone are the times when cinema buffs waited eagerly for their favourite magazines to browse for industry gossips, now social media users can easily check minutest details of the upcoming films through particular movie websites, facebook pages, and following star posts on twitter.

It has become a major trend in Bollywood to use digital platform for its easy accessibility, user friendliness and greatest reach beyond geographical barriers. Most of the production houses set up official communities for movie before its release. These communities have promo clippings, song previews, wallpapers etc. It provides a dais to talk and share opinions regarding the movie.

*Ghajini*, a 2008 much awaited film had used number of marketing strategies to promote. Other than one official website it had launched two more websites to raise curiosity about the content of the story. Other viral pages in facebook have also created hypes for the movie. The exclusive pictures, clippings, official trailer in YouTube created buzz about the movie. *Ghajini* holds the notable distinction of being the first movie to break the ₹1 billion (US\$17 million) barrier in Hindi cinema. *Ghajini's* paid preview collections were ₹27 million (US\$450,000). (Kanupriya, 2008)

*3 Idiots*, a 2009 comedy drama film broke all opening box office records at that point of time in India. It has also highest opening day collection in Bollywood. The movie promotes heavily using social media. Most part of the movie has released online instead of any location. After the release the fans were invited for a video chat with the cast and crew of the movie. Several exclusive pictures, curiosity raising dialogues were posted in facebook pages. The first look of the trailer is portrayed in a very interesting manner.



Official Trailer of 3 idiots in YouTube

Source: (Kumar, 2012)

*Dabangg*, a 2010 action Hindi film breaks box office records of 3 idiots to become the highest opening day grosser as well as weekend grosser. Other than reducing the prices of the ticket to prevent piracy and draw more audiences towards theatre, it promotes heavily through social media. Post release promotion played significant role for this film. The huge fan base of Salman Khan tweeted, posted status updates to connect to more people.



Twitter Profile of Chulbul Pandey

Source: (Kumar, 2012)

Chulbul Pandey's profile was exclusively created before the release to promote the movie.

*Ra One* a 2011 Indian science fiction spent Rs.520 million for film marketing out of which Rs.120 million was exclusively used for internet promotion. Other than release of official websites and uploading it on YouTube, fan pages

are created to make people aware of the movie. Sharukh Khan and Anuvab Sinha made a promotional multi city tour during which they unveiled 3600 feet of fan mail to YouTube collect audience messages. For the promotion of *Ra One*, producers has tied up with Google + and YouTube. This is an innovative marketing policy. Shah Rukh Khan the actor producer of *Ra. One* participated in live chats and the

movie was promoted through search engines, AdWords and YouTube. Apart from that, a website for the movie and a graphic novel / digital comic book and online / mobile games were created. These games were made available on iPhone and android. Producers also came out with a merchandising strategy. The G.One store dealt in action figure toys, stationery and more. The movie also pulled off a successful co-branding effort with 23 brands.

*Rowdy Rathore* is an action film directed by Prabhu Deva and produced by Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Ronnie Screwvala. The film features Akshay Kumar in double roles opposite Sonakshi Sinha. According to the website 'http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rowdy\_Rathore', the film took a bumper opening at single screens at occupancy of around 95%-100%. It collected around ₹15.06 crore net domestic in the opening day. Rowdy Rathore has the fourth biggest opening weekend of all time with collection of ₹47.50 Crore. The trailer of the film was launched in an open stadium in Worli, Mumbai on 2 April 2012, and received over 2,295,756 views in just less than one month on YouTube. (Anonymous, Rowdy Rathore)



Digital poster of Krrish 3

Source: (http://cdn.koimoi.com/wp-content/new-galleries/2013/06/Krrish-3-Official-Motion-Poster-Pic-1.jpg)

The major hits of 2014 includes *Gunday*, *Chennai Express*, *Gulaab Gang*, *Queen* depend heavily on social media promotions. According to the website 'eMee: http://emee.co.in/eMeeMyForresterGroundswellAwards.htm', the social media promotion for *Chennai Express* has started months before the release of the movie. At the foremost, initial teaser campaign and trailer was launched. Then sentiment analysis was carried out on the marketing message, based on demographic, geographical and other criteria. This was designed to get feedback from audiences across nation. One example of this analysis was that in the early pre-launch days, an overwhelming positive sentiment to *Chennai Express* was seen from people in South India, but the sentiment from North India was less positive. Future campaigns bore this into mind and benefitted from the insight.

*Chennai Express* had made a Twitter history as it was a first film to be listed in the top trends for more than 10 consecutive days with hash tags and multiple campaigns. In the words of Shailja Gupta, Chief Architect for Chennai Express digital marketing, "The overall buzz unswervingly augmented results in terms of unprecedented collections and a huge fan base, beating all prevailing Bollywood records nationally and overseas. We have set a huge benchmark. In fact with some of our strategies we reached out globally enough to compete with a few Hollywood film buzz this year". (Anonymous, Social Media strategy that significantly increased social reach and buzz contributing to the success of Chennai Express)

Chennai Express received mixed reviews from both India and abroad. While Rachel Saltz of The New York Times wrote, "Chennai Express' feels like a sumptuous meal with carefully chosen wine and tasty appetizers but a botched main course. Money and visual care have been lavished on this Bollywood action-comedy-romance and glossy stars engaged (Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone) but the movie chugs along for most of its 2 hours and 20 minutes searching for comedy and characters in a frantically over plotted story, while Taran Adarsh of Bollywood Hungama gave the movie 4/5 stars and wrote, "On the whole, 'Chennai Express' has the trademark Rohit Shetty stamp all over. You seek entertainment, entertainment and entertainment in a film like 'Chennai Express' and the movie lives up to the hype and hoopla surrounding it. Despite of diverse reviews, *Chennai Express* became the highest grossing Bollywood film in



YouTube page of Rowdy Rathore

Source: (Kumar, 2012)

*Barfi* a 2012 romcom movie went a gross of 1.75 billion worldwide. It was declared as super hit after running of 3 weeks. The official trailer was launched featuring all the characters. It included no dialogue, only gestures were portrayed. Chopra's character was wrapped under cover and was not revealed in the trailer to raise curiosity of the audience.

*Kaahani*, a 2012 Indian thriller immensely used social network sites to create hype. Its promotional technique is very unique in nature. Vidya came out in public with a prosthetic belly and mingled with public carrying a onscreen picture of her missing husband. This typical picture of Vidya had a number of facebook shares at that point of time. It launched its official trailer in the first week of January and release on the day after International Women's Day. Social-networking website Ibibio.com developed an online game, *The Great Indian Parking Wars*, which required players to park Vidya's taxi on a street. The game was well accepted reaching 50,000 hits in 10 days.

*Krrish 3* 2013 science fiction film had also took social route for its promotion. The makers of the movie had tied up with Hungama to release digital poster. Video chat was held with cast and crew of the movie. The movie was promoted through facebook pages, Hungama pages, and actor's own official page. The film had an interesting concept to unveil first look in twitter. The makers were urging fans to use hash tag # in microblogging platform. This wall will break as

India and around the world, collecting ₹3.95 billion approx (US\$64 million) by the end of its run. (Anonymous, Chennai Express)

*Gulaab Gang*, 2014 crime drama film revolves around pink dressed activists of UP and MP who take up issues like dowry, domestic violence etc. According to the website '<http://www.socialsamosa.com/2014/03/social-media-case-study-gulaab-gangs/>', before the launch of the trailer, the number of likes on facebook was 18,457 which has increased to 29,905 once the trailer was launched, showing a growth of 62%. Official facebook page for the movie was launched on December 11, 2012 (<https://www.facebook.com/JoinGulaabGang/timeline>)

during the time of production of the movie. Interesting comments and updates of location and pictures of shooting stills were posted from that time only. Before its release, facebook numbers were at 39,000 and increased by 8,000 during the week of the release.

After the release of the trailer, dialogues were shared on the pages, which helped to create hype and engagements on the movie. These post images got more than 40 shares and highest engagement.

Two apps were created for *Gulaab Gang*- *Create my own Gulaab Gang* was based on the idea of 'Become a part of the revolution and join Rajjo.' This was to make users part of the gang and join the revolution with Rajjo.

A contest which has used #GulaabGang as hashtags has also been launched on twitter. The number of followers in twitter has soon became around 3,842 A contest was run post release using #LoveGulaabGang as a hashtag wherein the users were asked to share feedback and their opinions on the film. #LoveGulaabGang trended in India at the time of the contest. (Anonymous, Social Media Case Study: How Gulaab Gangs Power of Pink Campaign Hit 1 Million Views in 3 Days, 2014)



Source: <http://www.socialsamosa.com/2014/03/social-media-case-study-gulaab-gangs/>

The very recent film *Kick* by Salman Khan used facebook and twitter heavily as its marketing strategy. New gaming application was launched in Android. Sharing photographs, tweets of Salman fans help film to reach more people. The teaser poster was released on 9<sup>th</sup> of June, 2014. As Khan finds single screen theatre lucky, the actor had decided to release the theatrical trailer of the film in a single screen theatre, Gaiety Galaxy, in Mumbai with his fans on 15 June. The theatre cancelled shows from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. for

the release of the trailer. The trailer is one of the most-watched Indian film trailers on YouTube. It has crossed seven million views on five days of its release.

*Bang Bang*, released on October 2, 2014, has the most watched trailer in first 24 hours in Bollywood in the year 2014. The teaser trailer of *Bang Bang* has garnered as many as 10 million hits since its launch in July 22, 2014.

Marketing is seen as the most powerful route to reach the target audience since long. Several marketing techniques are used and experimented since the inception of movie making process itself. Rather than posing threat to the older technologies, the new marketing medium always try to act parallel and invigorate the whole system to achieve audience attention, which is the ultimate goal of marketing and promotions. Social media is not an exception to that. Along with other conventional medium, it just only stimulates the movie marketing process by expanding its scope through providing a wider, user friendly platform. From the recent hits it is easily assumed that social media promotions act as an important catalyst in creating awareness about every detail of a movie and helps users themselves to generate buzz among their social network friends which ultimately leads them to grab the ticket. Earlier the movie's success depends on the number of days a movie is running in a theatre, now it is a matter of first week. Today films are released with almost 3000 prints and collection in weekend decides the fate of the movie. The social media buzz, updates, discussion on a particular film simultaneously helps in predicting box office revenues in reality.

Fake reviews and paid likes are the recurrent fall out of social network which comes hand in hand with the benefit of social media film promotions. As per recent report by Gartner, by 2014 end 10% and 15% ratings and reviews will be fake and paid ones as against current percentage of 1% to 2%. (Kanupriya, Buying Facebook Likes? Paying for Positive reviews? Purchasing Twitter Followers?, 2012)

Facebook was designed as an interactive online forum that encourages members to share information via photos, video clips, links and written posts. While account owners ultimately have control of what remains on their public profile, there is little control over who posts information or what those posts contain. In case of movies there is high chance to create anti group forum and post negative comments on a film which may bring negative response.

Marketing platforms executed via facebook are open to easy duplication by competitors. Rival business owners can easily pose as "friends" or "fans" to gain access to one's content. Photos, artwork and other images posted to the site are easily accessed and reused by visitors and can show up in other places you may not approve of.

The facebook pages generally lack official content and in most of the times are covered with official pictures of the casts. It may be useful for those who are already aware of the movie but not to those who wants to know the real content of the movie.

As limitation is very much part of a creation, social media should also be utilised in proper channel to overcome its barriers. Despite of fake fan pages, negative tweets and posts, it should be said that social media platform has only given the chance to film lovers to interact regarding a movie in such a huge manner. Post release promotion may even sometimes help a movie to raise its revenue. The more

people like a particular movie page, more the chance of their friends to view the page.

Social media, in the recent scenario, is seen as a game changer rather than passing trend because of its interactive power. Converging of different sectors of media is a current trend in the field of communication. Combining so called traditional media with new digital communication helps to get more effective result on the audience. Digitalization has provided impulse and possibility for many new initiatives to send exchange and seek across previously restricting physical boundaries. The key feature is diversification in communication activity. The range of communication technology is so large that to predict its future in regard to film marketing medium is an uphill task at this point of time. Still, in the fag end it is worth mentioning that social media of course has revitalised the field of film marketing scenario in India in tune with the advancement of technology.

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