

A Critical analysis of Sources of Finance to Marathi Cinema

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Abstract: The Marathi film industry produces close to 120 movies per year. These include the excitement kind like Lai Bhaari and Timepass, and the offbeat, such as Fandry, Tingya and Court. Of these, not more than a dozen actually reach audiences from this lot, maybe two or three are offbeat, quality films. These are the ones that get talked about for every Court and Fandry. There are several that go unnoticed or they win awards, but can't draw audiences due to inadequate marketing budgets.

Marathi cinema is on a roll with the films getting increasingly bigger and better. Big studios are pumping in more money, new awards are being launched and even Bollywood stars are eyeing the industry with renewed interest.

This paper highlights the various aspects of Marathi Cinema with respect to its nature, budget, its marketability, sources of finance, whether it is from private film houses or government loan or subsidy thereon. Further it also focuses on the impact of non availability of structured financial schemes for production and marketing to extend help to the producers of Marathi cinema.

Keywords: Marathi, Cinema, finance, private financier, studios, production houses, government subsidy.

Introduction:

The Marathi film industry produces close to 120 movies every year. These include the excitement kind like Lai Bhaari and Timepass, and the offbeat, such as Fandry, Tingya and the just-released Court. Of these, not more than a dozen actually reach audiences. From this lot, maybe two or three are offbeat, quality films. These are the ones that get talked about. There are several that go unnoticed, or they win awards, but can't draw audiences due to insufficient marketing budgets. Financial support is relatively easier to get for middle of-the-road films like Coffee Ani Barach Kahi. **For the more serious, darker subjects production houses are hesitant to finance.** The budget tends to be a safe one of Rs 1.5 to 2 crore, so that the returns are assured. Some films requires a larger budget that producers were unwilling to provide. Some of the producers have to sell their agricultural Land like Bhaurao Nanasaheb Karhade, at the age of 30, was well aware of the challenges.

Earlier a farmer in Ahmednagar's Gawadewadi and then a communications student in Pune, he sold his five-acre plot of land back home to finance his film.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. The primary goal of this study is to examine the difficulties of Marathi Cinema to source finance for their films.
2. The secondary objectives are
 - a. To study the need for structured financial assistance from Banks or State Government for the promotion of regional films.
 - b. To create awareness amongst various stakeholders about the financial struggle of the regional film producers.

LIMITATIONS:

This is a conceptual study. It is supported more by facts than by numerical data. The study is further limited to the discussion of the need of private and public financial support system for the regional cinema.

HYPOTHESIS

The regional cinema can produce fantastic results if structured financial support is provided to them from various private Cinema Houses, Banks and State Government at affordable rate of interest.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on secondary data's. The information has been collected from books, journals, magazines, newspaper and websites.

Statement and Significance

There is acute shortage of finance and financial assistance to the regional films especially in Marathi. This can be well explained from the following case studies :-

1. **Raja Harishchandra** : After stay in London, Mr. Dadasaheb Phalke came to India on 1.04.1912, with the idea and technology with Williamson Camera for making feature film. Many of the financiers rejected his idea of making regional film with an advice of giving second thought to his venture. After first test short of his film, one of the financer agreed to finance against security. The wife of Mr. Phalke offered the security of her ornaments for the loan. This has given rise to this legend which is quoted even today in film industry circles.
2. **KHWADA** : One of the Marathi film producer had approached close to 40 producers for his film “**Khwada**”, which is about a shepherd family that moves to the city . No one helped. But one of the friend Karhade's family stood firm behind him, and the film, made on a budget of Rs 2 crore.**This film snapped up two National Awards.**
2. **Dahavi Fa and Astu** :-Directors Sunil Sukhtankar and Sumitra Bhawe, makers of critically acclaimed films like Dahavi Fa and Astu, had approached production houses for five projects. It's always been the same case, says Sukhtankar. The artistic committee has refused to finance and they are moved to tears. With difficulties the film was ready and thereafter it reached the marketing department, again things come to a grinding halt.

APPROACH OF PRIVATE FINANCERS:

1. There are many private financiers in the industry. But the first thing the companies think is business. But if the finance is not made available , the film would never been made. Mr. Nikhil Sane, Business Head at Zee's Essel Vision, a leading producer and distributor of Marathi films, feels **it's unfair to generalize the rules of financing films**. How much support a production house gives its filmmakers and believes in the project, depends on the stability of the producing company.
2. There are no enough financiers. The well known financer Everest entertainment finances 2 -3 films per year. There are about three main players who has a capacity to finance about 2 or 3 films in a year. The Marathi regional cinema don't have the bandwidth to take on more.
3. Marathi cinema is on a roll with the films getting increasingly bigger and better. Big studios have now started pumping in more money, new awards are being launched and

even Bollywood stars are eyeing the industry with renewed interest. Big aspirations seem to be synonymous with the Marathi film industry too.

The films are getting bigger and better. At the 65th National Film Awards announced recently, Marathi film Dhappa won the award for Best Feature Film on National Integration. Also, of the 26 films screened under the Indian Panorama section last year at the International Film Festival of India, seven were Marathi. Great cinema is being produced and people are appreciating what's on offer. Regional cinema is no longer confined to a region.

Till about a decade ago, the Marathi film industry struggled to produce even 20 films a year. Today, it releases close to 125 films. And many of these are mega hits. Some even star big Bollywood actors and make mega bucks in the overseas market. Applause for Marathi cinema isn't something new. After all, India's first full-length feature film was a Marathi film—Raja Harishchandra—directed by Dadasahab Phalke. The 1960s and 70s was the golden period, but then came a period of decline, which started in the late 80s and continued till the early 2000s due to poor scripts, lack of funding and a direct threat from Bollywood, as Marathi cinema was competing in the same Hindi-medium domain.

SUCCESS STORIES

Industry insiders believe that the secret of this success lies in Marathi cinema's strong scripts, great actors and relatively small budgets as compared to the big brother, Bollywood. Marathi films are also known for their minimalistic approach. Unlike the Hindi or south Indian film industry, they are till date not star-driven. Here script is the hero. One of such film Aapla Manus, which clocked in `20 crore in the first 50 days of its release this year. Some of the mega film success stories are as follows:-

SAIRAT

This film was made with a budget of Rs 4 crore and went on to become the highest-grossing Marathi film till date, with box-office collections of close to Rs 110 crore. Many in the industry term Sairat as the turning point for Marathi cinema, one which reposed faith in distributors that regional cinema, too, can aspire for the Rs 100-crore club. Sairat director Nagraj Manjule, whose earlier film Fandry (2013) had won the National Award for Best Child Artiste and was also

selected for the Abu Dhabi Film Festival and London Film Festival. After Sairat, more doors opened up for him in terms of availability finance.

Lai Bhaari

One of the biggest success stories, is that of Riteish Deshmukh, who is continuing to produce and star in Marathi films after the success of Lai Bhaari. Cinematographer-director Mahesh Limaye believes that the new breed of actors and producers from Bollywood will further help in taking Marathi cinema to uncharted territories. A Bollywood name attached to a Marathi film garners more eyeballs. It creates the right kind of buzz to get more audience into the theatre. This film won the National Award under the Special Jury Award category in 2014.

Ringan :

Mrs. Vidhi Kasliwal, founder, Landmarc Films, produced Ringan, in 2017. It was a National Award-winning tale of a father and son's pursuit of love and happiness. The trend set by this film that the bigger names are taking in the Marathi space is helping regional films to spread their work to a larger and more diverse number of people.

Other Success stories

A new generation of Marathi filmmakers have been exploring unusual and hard-hitting subjects through films like Fandry, an exploration of the caste system, and Dombivali Fast (2005), a realistic take on a common man's fight against the system. Then there was the critically-acclaimed Killa. The 2014 movie was a coming-of-age story of an 11-year-old boy, struggling to cope with his father's death, while trying to make friends in an unfamiliar place after his mother gets transferred. Further Gulabjaam, on the other hand, is the story of a man who travels to Pune, where a short-tempered woman teaches him how to cook. There are many more success stories.

NEED FOR FINANCE:

New filmmakers and producers are also bringing with them big budgets and extensive marketing campaigns. And their films, which are targeted at millennials, are being shot in foreign locations such as London, Dubai, Malaysia, Bangkok, Mauritius, etc. Earlier, the budgets were under Rs 1 crore wherein top Marathi actors charge anywhere between Rs 25 and Rs 40 lakh, and the rest of the movie could be wrapped up in an equal amount. But today, a Marathi movie with decent

production values will cost anywhere between Rs 1 and Rs 1.5 crore, and the same amount will be required for the film's marketing and publicity.

Not just budgets, the returns are expanding too. Take, for instance, *Lai Bhaari* (2014). Produced by actor Riteish Deshmukh, it was made with a whopping budget of Rs 7 crore. A significant part of the film was shot in Dubai. Starring Deshmukh himself, *Lai Bhaari* was an action film that earned box-office collections upwards of Rs 40 crore, a great feat, considering that most shows run in single-screen theatres where ticket prices are between Rs 40 and Rs 125. Another film, *Timepass* (2014), enjoyed a Rs 5-crore opening weekend, a first for Marathi cinema at that time. Made with a budget of Rs 2 crore, it went on to do business of Rs 33 crore. It was so successful that even a sequel was made, which also was a roaring success.

Looking at the success stories, there is immediate need to come out with the structured financial schemes from the banking and financing companies along with the subsidies from the government.

Government Initiatives:

What has also helped the cause of Marathi cinema is the state government's subsidy plan, which has been in effect for the past few years. Under this, a Marathi film is entitled to receive Rs 40 lakh as subsidy, provided it stays true to its regional identity. Moreover, all Marathi films are tax-free in Maharashtra.

Besides declaring films tax-free and offering Rs 15,00,000 (approximately US \$32,000) to those who have produced three films, it has done little to save the industry.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, Marathi cinema is on a revival mode. "The past four-five years can be called the era of rebirth of Marathi cinema. Strong scripts, new-age filmmakers, big studios backing projects have all helped in the revival. Many small-budget films fall flat, or they are out of multiplexes within a week, as there is no promotion or lack of marketing strategies.

There are many more success stories in Marathi regional film industry but at the back end of all these success stories there are financial crises, lack of financial support from the production houses, banks and government agencies. The directors have strived hard for financing their films or arranging finance for their films, rather all the personal assets of some of the directors and their

families are taken at stake. Some have to mortgage their ornaments, sell their agricultural land or even their residential house to finance their films. This evolves lifetime risk and bad patches in the history of regional cinema. Looking at this scenario, there is urgent need for structured financial schemes from Government, financial institutions, banks and production houses to stand tall with the producers or directors and promote the regional films at local, national and even international level.

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