

Marketing Of Hollywood Films (Dubbed And Original) In India: A Case On Planning And Executing Marketing Strategy

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INTRODUCTION

Hollywood studios have had only a peripheral presence in India, sticking to the traditional business of distributing their own and sometimes, independently made films in the country. Hollywood share of the Indian film entertainment pie is a miniscule 3 - 4%, but the big money lies in producing and distributing local films and that is the path that some of the big boys of Hollywood are now taking. Hollywood has realized, for its own good, that the Asian markets are crucial to the success of its core business - movie making. India is its priority because India's media and entertainment industry will be worth \$22.5 billion by 2011 as reported recently by PricewaterhouseCoopers. Hollywood began testing the waters in the regional language market with dubbed versions of its English hits. The trend started with *Jurassic Park* in 1994. This was followed by *Titanic* in 1998. The success of these two films (dubbed versions) contributed as much as to 20-40% of their gross collections in India, highlighting the potential of the market. These were followed by *Spiderman*, *Spiderman 2*, *Godzilla*, and *Casino Royale*, all of which reported multi-million dollar collections, Thanks to the dubbed versions. According to SPRI (Sony Pictures Releasing International) figures, 50-60% of its revenues in India comes from dubbed versions of Hollywood movies (Asia Times, 2005). Hollywood movies are very famous and many of them have tasted success on the Indian soil. The genres preferred by Indians are Action, Thrillers, Comedy, Sci-fi, etc. Bollywood is only one part, albeit the largest and most famous of Indian Cinema, and accounts for 25-30% of the 1000 odd films produced in this country every year. The three large film production centers outside Mumbai city are cities like Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Kochi, which produce *Tamil*, *Telugu*, *Kannada* and *Malayalam* (South Indian languages) films. In fact, films in these four languages account for almost 80% of the 4400 crore INR (\$ 947.357 million) collections of non-Bollywood films in India. But Hollywood studios have not yet shown any inclination to tap this market. They have, instead, chosen to skim the surface by dubbing their English films in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and even *Bhojpuri* (a regional language spoken in parts of north-central and eastern India) and dubbed versions of *Spiderman 3* did business worth 66 crores INR (\$ 14.21 million). Incidentally, this was also the first step in Hollywood's tryst with Bollywood. So, does this mean that a Sony or a Disney may produce regional language films in India in future?

Liberalization of India in the 1990s and a huge and hungry market at its disposal, Hollywood entered India to get a toehold in the creative vacuum left by a then-muddled Bollywood. With increasing literacy levels, there is demand for international fare among English-educated Indians. With the dawn of globalization, well-bred urban Indians, particularly growing mid and high-income segments are rediscovering the magic of cinema in posh multiplexes. For them, Tom Cruise, Steven Spielberg and Julia Roberts are comparable with Shahrukh Khan, Karan Johar and Rani Mukherjee. To begin with, a movie product consists of intellectual property than can be ported to a variety of deliverables: theatrical exhibit, non-theatrical exhibit, video tapes, DVDs, CDs of the sound track, collectible editions, television and cable broadcast, internet-served, and then there is the split dimensions of domestic, foreign, and niche markets and ancillary products such as clothing, toys, games posters and even restaurants for successful franchises. Then, there are the franchise rights, endorsements, product placements - and a host of offshoots that are bought and sold leased and rented. Marketing a movie involves a roll-out calendar that first reaches out to industry channels: distributors, theatrical exhibitors, sales reps, producer's reps, and the industry media. Pre-production, and development stage marketing consists of research to identify the best niche markets, genre and cross-over strategies, product placements, star recruitment, and of course - a refined, marketable script. During production, marketing activities include on-set activities including the taking of production still photography for upcoming packaging, posters, and media illustrations, etc. Launch of a film is considered the high point of marketing.

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aims at studying how the Hollywood movies are marketed in India and the various strategies that are adopted by the distributors to create awareness about the movie and induce them to watch it on the big screen.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective is to plan, and implement the various promotional strategies for Hollywood movies, with special reference to the film, "*Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*" and "*White Horse: The Deep Legend*" by Sony Pictures Entertainment (SPE) in Indian Markets.

The **specific objectives of the study** are to:

1. Assess the effectiveness of the marketing strategies followed by Sony Pictures Entertainment (SPE) films.
2. Know the various competitors in the Hollywood movie distribution in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.
3. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of SPE films.
4. Provide suitable suggestions for improvement in the existing as well as future marketing strategies.

METHODOLOGY

✿ **Scope of Study:** The study is confined to Andhra and Karnataka region only (Nizam and Mysore territory, to be precise). The study covers the movies *Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian* and *White Horse: The Deep Legend*. These two movies were released in April-May, 2008.

✿ **Primary Data:** Interviews were conducted on viewers, theatre owners and managers of multiplexes and single screen theatres, interviewing the partners of the company such as ad agencies, poster printing press and merchandisers. Visiting various retail outlets, and studying the foot falls and visitor profiles of the outlets and talking to the store head as well as to the marketing manager of the outlets. A Schedule was prepared to interview/interact with the above mentioned respondents.

✿ **Secondary Data:** Box office collection reports, AD-Pub plan of previous movies, promotional campaign of competitors through newspapers, and websites, business performance through collection reports from theaters, newspapers, as well as websites.

✿ **Sampling:** A sample of 20 theater owners (multiplexes and single screen), 15 marketing heads of companies, with whom SPE is in talks for promotion, and 5 partners including SPE ad agency, printers etc. **Convenient sampling** was used.

HOLLYWOOD FILM MARKETING IN INDIA

Producers with a marketing attitude create a marketing calendar that parallels the production calendar. By planning for the launch and lifelong marketing needs of a movie, it is possible to save big bucks on marketing photography, testing for audience reaction that will create a satisfying experience and valuable word of mouth advertising. A marketing attitude is a collaboration that recognizes the complexity of the storytelling system and the need to provide quality content and communications every step along with the life cycle of the project. Distributors like to get into the movie marketing picture early so they can work with the producer in getting adequate coverage shots for their various niche markets, make sure they have quality images and stories for their marketing materials, and have adequate time to distribute the promotional energy through their market niches. Marketing teams consist of strategists, negotiators, publicists, photographers, graphic designers, sales reps, writers, media producers and announcers, editors, and many more specialists who move the product from a script through the industry system into the consumer system.

✿ **Marketing A Blockbuster Movie:** The purpose of marketing is to maximize the audience for a film and to, therefore, maximize its earnings, i.e., to make as much money as possible. Most blockbuster movies already have an audience. The studio has pumped millions of dollars into the movie because they already know people will go and see it because it is based on media text that already has an audience. This may be in the form of a previous film, for example, *Spiderman 2*'s audience will consist of many people who are fans of the first movie, or the source material, for instance, the first *Spiderman* movie was based on the comic book of the same name created by Stan Lee in 1962. However, the studios need a guarantee that the film is going to be make not just a small profit, but a comfortable one, and after

spending, say \$100 million dollars on a movie, they will usually spend around half as much again on marketing it.

✿ **Selling A Movie And Brand Loyalty:** Most cinema tickets are one-off purchases. You don't buy a cinema ticket in the same way as you might buy a particular brand of soft drink, knowing that you will go back to this brand again and again and again (i.e., you have brand loyalty). You base your decision to buy a ticket on the basis of the marketing you have seen for an individual movie. You might be quite loyal to that brand while it lasts (you might buy a T-shirt, a soundtrack CD and the DVD when it is released), but in most cases, it is a short-lived loyalty. And, that loyalty that is very expensive to purchase. With each new movie release, a studio has to create a new brand. This is why they like sequels and franchises so much - a string of movies all based around the same brand are easy to market as audiences already have had a taste of them. The Star Wars movies are perhaps the most successful example of this, with consumers demonstrating rabid brand loyalty, and the brand being associated with a whole range of merchandising from pillow cases to happy meals. Although, many fans of the first three movies had major issues with *The Phantom Menace*, they all felt compelled to see *Attack of the Clones* and no matter how many issues there are with *Attack of the Clones*, they will still all go and see whatever the third one is going to be called. They are loyal to the brand, and the marketing of the movie reflects that.

✿ **Shelf Life:** Films can only be marketed effectively prior to their release. Once they have been shown in cinemas, the cat is out of the bag and word-of-mouth takes over from the marketing department in persuading audiences to go and see a particular movie. Films have a limited distribution window, and therefore, a limited shelf-life. They may play in cinemas for as long as six months, sometimes only for a week. The marketing has to happen at absolutely the right time to get audiences into cinemas. A marketing campaign may build for as long as it takes to make a film, but its over once the movie has been released.

HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS IN INDIA

Just about every Hollywood studio is engaged in local productions in overseas markets, here is a sample of what some of them are doing:

✿ **Sony:** They co-produced its first Bollywood film, "*Sawariya*" with Indian Film Director, Mr. Sanjay Leela Bhansali. Sony-BMG is a well-established international music label in India. It does International, Indipop and Hindi film music. They have also entered Television Broadcasting. SET India has been in India for the last 10 years and broadcasts a large bouquet of channels. With respect to distribution, the distribution company is called Sony Pictures Releasing India (SPRI), earlier known as Columbia Tristar Films of India. It has a presence in visual effects and digital production too. Sony Pictures Imageworks has a subsidiary, Imageworks India. The company was formed after making equity investment in Chennai-based visual effect and animation studio- FrameFlow. FrameFlow was renamed Imageworks India. With reference to home video, they have set up their home video unit.

✿ **Disney:** Walt Disney Films in India is distributed by SPRI. They have no direct presence in music. They have three Television channels, viz., Disney channel, Toon Disney, and Hungama. ESPN is a part of Walt Disney Company in India and has a tie-up with Star India. They have a presence in consumer products like Disney jeans, Disney artist stores, and with respect to publishing, they have over 300 titles that are published. In September, 2006, they launched Disney Adventures, a kid's magazine. Disney ABC International Television (DAIT), broadcasted international content from ABC Networks like *Desperate Housewives* in India.

✿ **Warner Bros. :** They had a co-production partnership with Ramesh Sippy and Orion Pictures to make "*Chandni Chowk To China*", a main stream Hindi film starring Akshay Kumar and Deepika Padukone. They have an existing business to distribute Warner Brothers Films. They don't have a direct musical presence, but Warner Music Label is distributed by EMI-Virgin in India. With respect to home video, it has a licensing deal with Saregama for its movies. They have no Television presence.

✿ **Universal Studios:** It has not announced any plan for India. Universal pictures is distributed by Paramount Films in India. Universal Music India does international and Indian music albums. With respect to home videos, it has a licensing deal in the Indian market with Saregama for its movies. There is no television presence.

✿ **Viacom-Paramount:** The Viacom group which owns Paramount pictures, has formed a joint venture with TV18 called Viacom 8 to focus solely on entertainment mainly television. It has no music presence, but has a licensing deal in the Indian market with Saregama. Viacom owns MTV, VH1 and Nickelodeon.

PROFILE OF THE PRODUCTS (S):

✿ **Narnia Franchise:** Based on the classic children's books by C. S. Lewis, the Narnia series had first a movie called “*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*”, which follows the exploits of the four Pevensie siblings - Lucy, Edmund, Susan and Peter in World War II England who enter the world of Narnia through a magical wardrobe while playing a game of 'hide and seek' in the rural country home of an elderly professor. Once there, the children discover a charming, peaceful land inhabited by talking bears, dwarfs, fauns, centaurs and giants that has become a world cursed to eternal winter by the evil White Witch, Jadis. Under the guidance of a noble and mystical ruler, the lion Aslan, the children fight to overcome the White Witch's powerful hold over Narnia in a spectacular, climatic battle that will free Narnia from Jadis' icy spell forever.

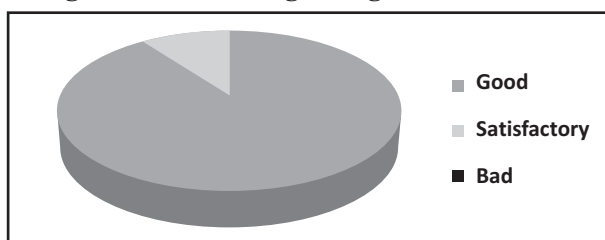
The first movie of the franchise was a success. The next to this is the movie, “*Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*”. had a world wide release on 16 May, 2008. Also, another movie was slated for release more or less at the same time with Narnia and that was *Water Horse: Legend of the Deep*. This is a kid movie that was released on 18th April, 2008 and it is a Walt Disney and Walden Media movie.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The responses of some managers of multiplexes and mall owners and single screen theater owners regarding trends in movie market in India, business of Hollywood movies in India, relevance of marketing for success of movie, degree of involvement of theater owners in promotion of movie, and future of movie industry is as follows:

✿ **Trends In Movie Market:** 90% said it is good and this set of respondents comprised of managers of multiplexes, mall owners, etc. 10% found it to be satisfactory and this set of respondents comprised of single screen theater owners as people prefer to watch movies in a multiplex, rather than in a single screen theater.

Figure 1 : Trend Regarding Movie Business



✿ **Hollywood Movie Business In India:** 80% said that it was good, while 20% said that it was satisfactory. The respondents who said that it was satisfactory, said so because though the business of Hollywood movies is growing in terms of admissions and ticket collections, but they are still far away behind the Bollywood industry in India.

✿ **Relevance of Marketing For Success Of Any Movie:** 60% said that it was very important, 25% said that it was important, 15% said that it was not important. However, none of the respondents denied the relevance of marketing for the success of a movie. The people who said that marketing was important were of the view that more than 75% success of the movie depends on marketing. However, the respondents who were of the view that marketing is not that important believed that it is the story and star case which determines the success of any movie.

Figure 2

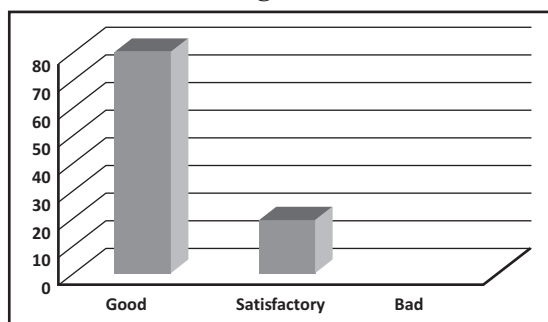
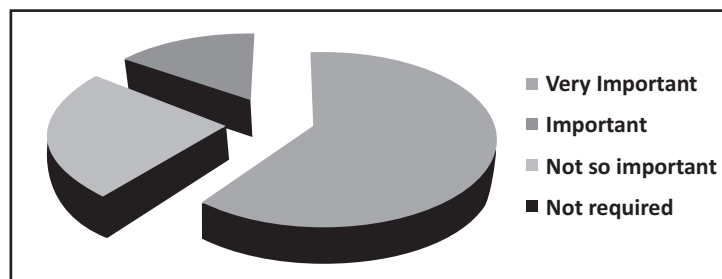
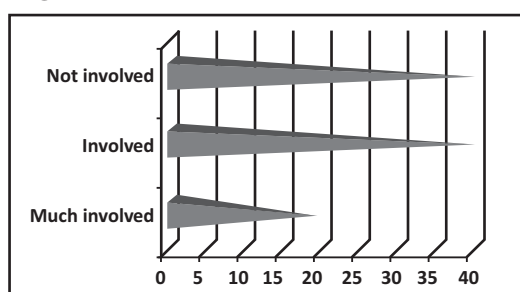


Figure 3 : Relevance of Marketing



❖ **Involvement Of Theater Owners In The Promotion Of A Movie:** 20% said that they were very much involved in the promotion. 40% said that they were not much involved in the promotion of the movie and 40% of the respondents said that they were not at all involved in the promotion.

Figure 4 : Involvement In The Promotion



❖ **Future Of Hollywood Movie Industry:** All the respondents were of the view that the future of the movie industry is very bright. They believed that the production, distribution as well as exhibition of the movies would increase with the advent of many Hollywood studios, opening up of many multiplexes, corporation of the film companies in India.

OTHER FINDINGS

❖ **Release of the Hollywood Movies:** Majority of the Hollywood movies are released in multiplexes only as they cater to the needs of the multiplex audience only. There are also some big movies with huge budget and a popular star cast and graphics, which is also released in single screen theatres. A movie is generally released in India after it is put down from theatres in some other countries as it is from them where the prints come from.

Movies are first shown in major towns and cities of the state (Segment A), then shown at cities with less population and then are shown to the small towns (Segment B & C).

❖ **Marketing Of Hollywood Movies:** According to Mr. Bijan Bose, South Head, PVR Cinemas, in this dynamic world today, marketing plays an important role for the success of any movie. Accordingly to him, 75% of the movie's success depends on the marketing and publicity. The marketing should be such that it creates awareness and induces the public to watch the movie.

❖ **Ad-Pub Plan:** An Ad-pub plan is prepared to have an idea of the budget as well as the allocation of it for the promotion of the movie.

❖ **In-Theater Publicity:** In-theater report contains the details of the publicity material given to the theaters as well as the multiplexes. It also includes the details of the number of trailers given for the movie, trailer code, the movie along with which the trailer is being played and the timing of play.

❖ **Strategy For Placement Of Materials And Trailers:** The theater owners generally display the publicity material received by the distributors. The placement of the publicity materials such as posters, banners, standees, danglers are executed by the theater owners. The theater owners can put additional publicity at no cost if requested and convinced by the distributors.

❖ **Promotional Events:** Contests were planned in association with INOX and other partners, where a *Prince Caspian* was selected from among the audience through lucky draw and contests and they were given freebies, movie

merchandise and also photographed in the Narnia Zone. Narnia zone was built up in the theater premises after talks with multiplex managers.

✿ **Business of the Regions:** The Nizam region is completely different from the Mysore region. While dubbed movies can be played in Andhra Pradesh, the same is not possible in Karnataka. Also, in Andhra Pradesh, majority of the business, i.e., 80% is dominated by the Telugu movies. The rest 20% is distributed among Hindi, (10%) English, Tamil, and Kannada languages having the rest.

According to Mr. Ramesh, Marketing Head-Fame Cinemas, the general trend in the movie distribution is that the Nizam market is twice the size of the Mysore region, therefore, the cost of buying the distribution rights of a movie in Nizam area is generally double than the amount paid for the Mysore territory.

CONTRACT WITH THEATER OWNERS

✿ **Rental:** The distributors generally pay the single screen theater owners the rent for playing the movie. The rent period is in weeks and the minimum period is one week from Friday to Thursday. The distributor has to give a grace period of four days to the theater owner before removing the movie.

✿ **Minimum Guarantee (MG):** Theaters which are not reputed are asked to pay a fixed sum to the distributor. This is known as minimum guarantee. The distributor may even demand MG if they think their movie is big. Theater owners give the amount so as to exhibit movies in their theatres, which may lead to its popularity. The exhibitor also has to pay percentage on collections above the minimum amount.

✿ **Revenue Sharing Multiplexes:** Multiplexes like PVR, Inox, etc., have a revenue sharing agreement with the distributor depending on the prospect of the movie. The deal for majority of the movies of SPE films are 50-40-30 i.e., 50% of first week collection are given to the distributor, for the second week, the distributor gets 40% and 30% from the third week. The percentage also works for popular single screen theatres also.

✿ **Fixed Hire:** The distributors also give the print to theatres for a certain amount. The exhibitor can play for the agreed duration and keeps all the collections to himself. The duration is called as '*week run*'. Generally, the fixed hire is for a two week run, whether the exhibitor can screen the movie for two weeks, but only for the number of shows that are agreed. Generally, the number of shows are 28 per week.

THIRD PARTY DISTRIBUTORS

For *Narnia-2*, Shri Lakshmi Venkateshwara Film had purchased the right to distribute the movie in the Nizam Territory for an undisclosed amount. The films are sold to third party distributors, so as to reduce the risk of uncertainty. It is now the responsibility of the new distributor to promote, publicize and market the movie in his area.

PROMOTIONS FOR THE MOVIE - *CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: PRINCE CASPIAN AND WATER HORSE: LEGEND OF THE DEEP*

A much awaited movie, the first part was a major hit, and the people were curious about the sequel. A movie with a good marketing budget has some good scope to crack some good deals for itself. Therefore, Sony pictures made some major tie-ups for the *Narnia* movie:

- 1) National tie-up with INOX for premier in three cities, Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore. INOX gave the theater for free and the movie was screened a day before its release.
- 2) CCD in Bangalore displayed the posters in major outlets, and in turn, they got tickets from Sony pictures.
- 3) Shopper's stop was used for the displays and contests for 15 days and in return, received free movie passes and merchandize.
- 4) Bangalore Mirror, a local English Newspaper had a contest in its newspaper and displayed the movie image and Sony Pictures, in turn, gave them Movie tickets as well as Movie Merchandize.
- 5) MSN.com promoted the movie by having a banner ad on its homepage for 15 days and it got free movie tickets for the weekend show along with free *Narnia* Merchandize.

The major tie-ups for *Water Horse* are worth a mention since it is a kid's movie.

- 1) National wide tie up with INOX theaters for pop corn tubs and the contest details on the tub.
- 2) Exclusive activity books were printed for the movie promotion, for e.g., in Bangalore, Crosswords conducted a

painting competition just a week before the release date of *Water Horse*, therefore, these activity books were distributed for free to the participants of the event. Also, these books were given with the purchase of more than two tickets for *Water Horse* in INOX theaters too.

3) Posters of *Water Horse* were given with purchase of more than two *Water Horse* tickets in FUN Cinemas. Placement of posters, standees, and banners in theaters is called In-theater publicity. In Hyderabad, multiplexes are PVR Cinema and Prasads. The placement of standees and posters are to be monitored on a weekly basis, and the visibility in theaters is the major source of communication with the audience. For a movie like, *Vantage Point*, the focus is on multiplex audience and thus, the tie-ups were with the liquor brand called FUEL. Every pub where Fuel was served, table tops of *Vantage Point* were displayed. Since, the marketing budget of the movie was low; the concentration was on word of mouth publicity. *Vantage Point* is a movie with an interesting plot and good performance but no famous star cast. But, it held the audience for the whole of two hours. It is a movie for the class audience and thus it was planned to release the English version in Multiplexes only, while the Telugu version was released in B and C class towns of Nizam Territory. The towns where the movie was to be released was decided on two basic grounds, viz., the prints available for the movie and the collections for previous movie from that town. As all things in this world, this business too has a flip side. Not all dubbed movies make money. When *Jurassic Park* was declared a major hit, there was a mad scramble to acquire its dubbing rights. The dubbed version also ran to packed houses. But, the sequels did not exactly set the box office on fire as the response was lukewarm. Dubbing is a big business. As long as the communication gap exists, there will be a huge scope for dubbed stuff. After all, who would not want to watch world class quality unfold on the celluloid? People don't mind spending even on multiplexes to watch a dubbed movie if it generates a positive talk. Promotion and publicity are the most vital elements here. In the grand scheme of the "*Spiderman 3*", massive global release, it may seem a small thing that poor villagers in central India were able to queue up the same day as audiences in Los Angeles to see the film, dubbed into a local dialect. But, to Hollywood and its Indian alter ego, Bollywood, it could signal the start of a new turf war between the world's two most popular and influential film industries. World wide, the film took in 230\$ million in its first weekend, breaking "*The DaVinci Code*" record by \$75 million. In India, the \$ 4.5 million opening set several records domestically as well. The success suggests that after years of tinkering, Hollywood has at last discovered a formula for more consistent success here: flooding Indian cinemas with nearly 600 copies and dubbing versions into Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and Bhojpuri. The tactic of simultaneously releasing several dubbed versions on the global release date is not unique to India, but it is new here and is yielding results. For generations, Hollywood films here have been overshadowed by India's own kitschy brand of cinema, based in Bombay (hence, Bollywood). But, "*Spiderman*" opens the market for greater Hollywood profits in India and marks a fresh challenge to Bollywood's virtual monopoly of the movie-obsessed nation's cinema.

CONCLUSION

The movie production, distribution, and exhibition business in India is different from the world and is also diverse in the regions. The movie exhibition is a retail industry. It has seen a rapid increase, thanks to the increase in the number of quality films, corporatization of film companies and the increase in the number of malls and multiplexes. In this dynamic world today, marketing plays an important role for the success of any movie. According to experts, 75% of the movie's success depends on the marketing and publicity. The marketing should be such that it creates awareness and induces the public to watch the movie. Therefore, we can say that the film distributors as well as exhibitors should try to increase the budget for the marketing of the movie. The marketing strategy should be formulated after in-depth research and feedback from targeted viewer groups on what kind of marketing initiatives would draw viewers to the cinema halls.

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EXHIBITS

Water Horse Pop Corn Tubs



Sony Pictures Visibility In Fame Lido, Bangalore



IN THEATER PUBLICITY FOR *NARNIA*

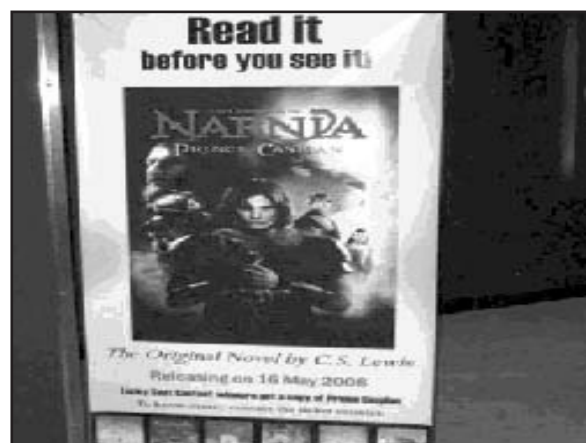
International Standee with Throne



Standee In PVR



Floor Stickers In Front Of Refreshment Counter At PVR



Narnia Zone In INOX, Bangalore



Promotional Event of Narnia in INOX



Floor Stickers in Front of Audis



Floor Stickers in Front of Audis



Banner in URVASHI-Road facing



Cross-Promotional tie up with Crosswords, Indiranagar

