

CONTENT-RICH K'WOOD FILMS MAKE A MARK AT THE BO

In the first quarter of 2019, K'town has been closing the gap with Bollywood in terms of production, releases and revenue generation. A look at the numbers reveals that the content-rich Tamil films made on a tighter budger are proving to be more commercially viable than high-profile B'town releases

FIRST QUARTER NUMBERS

63
Hindi releases

6
commercially viable ones

40
Tamil releases

6
commercially viable ones

₹1,100
CRORE
Bollywood's revenue

₹400
CRORE
Kollywood's revenue

■ KAUSHIK RAJARAMAN

CHENNAI: For long, the Bollywood had a predominant role over the Indian film industry when it comes to raw numbers, both the number of releases, and more importantly, the money that these films raked in. But this is gradually changing in the recent past, and the first quarter of 2019 is witness to that transformation: in these three months, there were 63 releases in Bollywood, while 40 came out in Tamil. What makes all the difference is profitability. Only 10 per cent of Hindi films succeeded at the box-office among these, while 15 per cent of Tamil films were commercial-ly viable.

"There are two reasons for this. One is, regional films have been eating into Bollywood's space of late. Along with 63 films in Hindi, 45 Marathi films, too, have released so far this year. Mumbai is the hub of Bollywood but also home to the biggest Marathi audience. Secondly, the footfall in theatres in south is more when compared to Mumbai or up north. In south, the audience still prefer watching films in the theatre, whereas people prefer digital content in Mumbai," says Pankaj Jaysinh, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of UFO Moviez India Ltd, which is the digital distributor of films across lan-guages. Jaysinh adds that regional films dubbed in Hindi also

played spoilsport for Bollywood. Tamil films like *Thadam* and *Natpe Thunai* are exam-ples of films made on a medium-scale budget which have generated good profit ratios. For instance, *Thadam* was made on a budget of Rs 5.4 crore, but grossed Rs 24 crore. There were big ticket releases as well, like *Petta* and *Viswasam* that entered the Rs 200-crore club in January.

Leading distributor and president of Tamil Nadu Theatre Owners Association, Tirupur Subra-maniam, says, "Tamil cinema has performed better than Hindi because the num-ber films made here is lesser and the profit ratio of Tamil films are better. Otherwise, Tamil cinema has a long way to go. Films like Karthi's *Dev* and Nayanthara's *Airaa* were box office disasters. There are only a few big films releasing this year - *Kanchana 3*, *Ayogya*, *NGK*, *Mr Local* and *Nerkonda Paarvai*. *Darbar* and *Vijay 63*

are currently the only high-budget films that are in the making."

South or north, content is the key

Vishal Krishna, the general secretary of Tamil Nadu Film Producers' Council says, "Not only the first quarter of this year. Tamil cinema has been growing new heights in the last 15 months. The only reason behind it could be the content. Our filmmakers have played with variety to deliver the right content to the audience." A fine exam-ple for films that are thin on content failing is *Thugs of Hindostan*, which bombed at the box-of- fice. "The film

was made on a budget of Rs 240 crore. Due to the ensemble cast, the film received a good footfall in the opening weekend. However, people realised that the film lacked content and stopped coming to theatres. The film ended up taking in only Rs 117 crores and ended up being a disaster," reveals Pankaj Jaysinh of UFO Moviez.

The story is not different in Tamil cinema too, says Tirupur Subramaniam. "Though it had a well-known cast, *Thadam* wasn't a star-studded film. The Arun Vijay mov-ie, however, is the biggest hit of the year because of its content. These are the stories that we as financiers and theatre owners look forward to for funding."

However, writer-producer Dhananjayan does not agree to this view that Kollywood is stealing a march on its bigger sibling. "Tamil cinema is nowhere near Bollywood. It is a different ball game altogether. In three months, Tamil cinema has generated only Rs 420 crore, while Hindi cinema has already touched Rs 1,000 crore for the year," he argues.

