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Tech and content power small-budget Bollywood movies into the big league

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Movies without a big star cast, made on a small budget and with good content dominated the Hindi film industry, Bollywood, as it is popularly known, in 2018. And it seems the trend will continue.

The year 2019 has seen a great start for such movies with *Uri – The Surgical Strike* grossing over ₹100 crore in just two weeks in January.

More small-budget movies without an 'A' list star cast entered the ₹100-crore club in 2018, implying that movie goers are looking for fresh themes.

A small-budget film can be defined as one that would typically cost under ₹20 crore to produce and market. Generally, such movies are made either by new-comers or young film enthusiast. However, in the



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last two years, many established producers have also ventured into small-budget movies.

According to the latest EY media and entertainment report, in 2018, 13 movies entered the ₹100-crore club, of which five were small-budget films. Compared with this, in 2017 four small-budget movies made it to the ₹100-crore club and just one in 2016.

Movies such as *Badhaai Ho*, *Stree*, *Raazi*, *Andhaadhun*

and *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweeti* had some fresh content and cast along with some strong social message. For example, the movie *Badhaai Ho*, a comedy-drama, highlighted the struggles of middle-age pregnancy and stigma attached to it.

The EY report, titled "A billion screens of opportunity", says that 2018 was also the first time in the last 12 years that none of the big Bollywood stars found a place in the top three box-of-

ice collections. Though there were some big star cast movies such as the Aamir Khan and Amitabh Bachchan starrer – *The Thugs of Hindostan* – Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh's *Padmaavat* and Shah Rukh Khan's *Zero*.

"Contribution of big star cast films to the box office collections of the top 25 movies dropped to 23 per cent in 2018, compared with 50 per cent three years ago," said Ashish Pherwani, M&E sector leader at EY.

Revolutionary stage

Rajesh Mishra, CEO – Indian Operations, UFO Moviez India, told *BusinessLine* that "The year 2018 has been a golden year for small-budget movies. Some even managed to get into the ₹100-crore club as against general perception that only big budget movies

enter this club." While the industry rejoices the success of these movies, what has actually helped them get into the ₹100-crore club is a success measurement tool used by the cinema industry. Experts believe that innovative thinking clubbed with revolutionary ideas backed by digital connectivity has helped take such movies to a larger audience.

"The cinema industry has gone through a revolutionary stage where technology and content have taken precedence over traditional approach. In addition, it has opened up a huge market for years to come. Technological innovation has taken precedence over manual distribution of cinema and satellite connectivity has given reach and scale for such products," Mishra added.