

# Bollywood earnings swell on content-driven money-spinners, big-ticket hits

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The Hindi film industry is set to end 2018 with a 15-20% increase in business over the previous year.

Although the lifetime collections of Shah Rukh Khan's *Zero* will spill over into 2019 and Ranveer Singh-starrer *Simmba* has just hit the screens, trade experts say box office collections will see a definite jump over 2017.

Trade website Box Office India pegs the gross earnings of 2015, 2016 and 2017 at ₹3,780 crore, ₹3,808 crore and ₹4,096 crore. Industry experts say

2018 figures should touch ₹4,800 crore. Gross earnings are collections made by a film before entertainment tax is deducted. They are used for comparison because of recent tax changes.

Film distributor and exhibitor Akshay Rath said 2017 had been shocking for film business as the war epic *Baahubali 2: The*

*Conclusion* with ₹708.99 crore had single-handedly driven the year's cumulative earnings. In contrast, 2018 has seen a few big-ticket blockbusters—San-

**Bollywood's gross earnings this year may grow 15-20% over the previous year to touch ₹4,800 crore, say industry experts**

jay Leela Bhansali's period saga *Padmaavat* (₹360.89 crore), Rajinikanth's science fiction flick *2.0* (₹183.39 crore for its Hindi version alone) and Rajkumar Hirani's biographical drama *Sanju* (₹430.84 crore). However, the year belongs to small-budget, content-driven money-spinners. "There have just been so many surprise

hits," said Atul Mohan, editor of trade magazine *Complete Cinema*, referring to non-star casted outings like *Soni Ke Titu Ki Sweets* (₹100.80 crore), *Stree*



This year has seen a few big-ticket blockbusters such as Rajkumar Hirani's biographical drama *Sanju*, which raked in ₹430.84 crore.

(₹124.56 crore), *Andhadhun* (₹73.37 crore) and *Badhaai Ho* (₹134.44 crore), all of which have more than doubled their investment. *Raazi*, a film centred around a female protagon-

ist and without a mainstream male actor, was expected in the trade circuit to generate around ₹70 crore, but notched up ₹122 crore. Mohan said the earnings of 2017 had been

crossed by October this year.

"The key takeaway from 2018 has been that only good content works, everything else has to play second fiddle," Rath said. "By that, I don't mean content necessarily appreciated by critics but one that appeals to universal audiences and bypasses barriers of mass and class. A *Sanju* or *2.0* is good content just the way *Stree* or *Badhaai Ho* is."

The other key trend that has emerged is that people wait for the review of a movie to be published before making a decision to watch it, said Devang Sampat, director, strategic alliances at multiplex chain Cinepolis India. What this means is the

dependency on the top five stars has reduced and, in effect, the box office could perform 52 weeks in a year if the content is right and not necessarily be dictated by the festive or holiday releases. Cinepolis saw its highest growth in the past four years in 2018 with its overall growth standing at 15%, and like-to-like growth at 7%.

There are other reasons for growth, too. Pankaj Jaysinh, chief operating officer, Indian Operations, UFO Moviez, said the year had seen close to 20% rise in footfalls. "A lot more screens have been added to offer more value and a good platform to good content. In fact, the increase in footfalls

holds true not just for Bollywood but non-Hindi language films too," Jaysinh said.

The other reason, Mohan said, is the rise in ticket prices. Big-ticket films *Sanju* and *Padmaavat* have helped take average rates higher, morning shows that were valued at ₹100-120 two to three years back now come for ₹150-180 while premium seats have gone up to ₹600-700 from ₹300.

To be sure, the coming year has much lined up even though the only Khan to announce a release is Salman for his Eid offering *Bharat*. "The learnings from a bad 2017 and a good 2018 should now be put into practice," Rath said.