

An Empirical Study on Music Marketing – South Indian Classical Music Industry

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ABSTRACT

Music Marketing comprises of four fronts: Artist & Product Development, Promotion, Publicity and Performance fronts. The South Indian classical music (Carnatic music) industry is confined to a few locations and its promotion requires a professional touch in all aspects. The product and service aspects of music industry are required to be analyzed in marketing of music.

Key words: Carnatic Music, Music Marketing, Artist & Product Development, Promotion & Publicity fronts, Performance front

1. South Indian Classical Music

India has a marvelous musical tradition. As per Indian mythology, the laws of music were revealed known to 'Narada' the first sage. The scholars opine that Indian music has its origin in the Samaveda. The South Indian classical music is popularly known as Carnatic music or "Karnataka Sangeetham". The exact source of the name Karnataka Sangeetham is difficult to pronounce. Some scholars opine that the form of music developed in the region south of the

'Vindhayas' was referred to as Karnatakam and hence the name. Another interpretation is 'that which is very old' is Carnatic music. Yet another version is that the name derived from 'Karna' (the ear) and 'Ata' (hang around in) which makes Karnataka or Carnatic music. Carnatic music is regarded as one of the oldest systems of music in the world. The history of Carnatic music tradition may be traced back to about 2500 years. The depth and richness of Carnatic music is unique and it requires much thought, both artistically and technically. Carnatic music is commonly

associated with the southern part of the Indian sub-continent, particularly the four states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Many genres of Indian music like devotional, bhajans etc. have developed from Classical music as a base and this laid foundation to a strong music market in South India.

2. Background of the study

Music, when recorded for the purpose of listening in future, becomes a full-fledged product. A live performance by an artist is essentially a service. Thus, music is a product and service as far as the industry is concerned. Any study on marketing of Carnatic music requires analyzing the product and service aspects. The present work is intended to explore the various facets of music marketing in South Indian classical music segment. Carnatic Music industry or music business conjures up the images of artists (vocalists and instrumentalists), agents, producers and cultural organizations – popularly known as ‘Sabhas’ where music concerts are being organized. The Indian music market is about 770-800 crores of which the contribution of south is 15-25% in 2010. Carnatic music contributes 5-10% of the total turnover as per industry sources. The Indian music industry is over a century old. The last few years have been a dismayed for the industry for many reasons. The pattern of music consumption and distribution has shifted radically in recent times. Music buying has reduced and the number of units being sold is falling, the prices of CDs is falling, thus leading to spiraling decline in revenues.

Carnatic music segment is no exception to this trend. Most of the record labels in the south tend to release a few new albums by popular artists every year as a strategy of bringing long term attention to higher value products. The albums are produced on decades old format and there is a definite lack of innovation in the design part. The R&D departments of major companies could not make use the depth and richness of Carnatic music to bring out new innovative musical albums which can contribute much to enhance revenue generation. The Artist & Repertoire (A&R) managers of music companies in India need to acquaint themselves with the basic nuances of music marketing. It is in the light of above facts, the present study is conducted.

3. Literature review

Christopher Knab, an independent music business consultant based in Seattle, Washington in his book ‘Music is your Business’ discussed the four fronts of music marketing. According to Knab, the four fronts of music marketing are Artist & Product Development, Promotion, Publicity and Performance fronts. In his book, Christopher Knab explained in detail the entire music business and the model is relevant to all forms of music.

3.1 Artist development

The term artist development encompasses all “Pre-release” issues – the jobs, tasks, and other considerations that an artist or band must do to create, protect and prepare a recording for the market place. According

to Christopher Knab, till 1980s most of the record labels had Artist Development department with the job profile of supporting Artist's creative side. Of late 1990s and during last decade, most of the companies changed their emphasis from nurturing the growth of Artists and their music to hard core sales strategies. Making music and making a living from music is not the same thing. So many people want to rush off and get an A&R representative from some record label to listen to the recording and make them the next popular artiste. The point is that music should always come first, followed close behind by music business.

3.2 Product development

When the music is recorded for the purpose of sale, it becomes a product. Product development focuses on all the business arrangements involved with selling recordings. This front is concerned with all activities that must be done to get the music into the market. The sequential activities are the following:

- 3.2.1 Plan to produce the album
- 3.2.2 Designing of the album, i.e. song selection, composition
- 3.2.3 Recording of music
- 3.2.4 Packaging of end product, i.e. ACDs / VCDs / DVDs / MP3 CDs etc.

Thus, "Artist development is a combination of creative and business issues that must be dealt with to make your music, and the

business surrounding your music, run smoothly". "Product Development is about preparing your music product for the marketplace, and finding ways to sell it". Artist and Product Development must go hand in hand for any music business to flourish. The planning and implementation of Artist and Product development activities will make or break the chances of doing business with music.

3.3 Promotion of music

Promotion front constitute how record labels and broadcast media work together. In the music industry, the term promotion usually means radio, TV "airplay" of music. Radio airplay is the most effective exposure for music, yet the most difficult to get.

3.3 Publicity front

The support of media is very much essential for the success of the music business. Learning how to work with magazines, news papers and fanzines, and how they choose music to review can make or break a new release.

3.4 Performance of artists

The performances given by the artists have ramifications on the success of musical product in the market. In fact, the emotional convergence of consumers and the artists take place during the performances. The role of cultural organizations in the locality and abroad is vital to the success of performance / concerts given by the artists.

4. Objectives of the study

The present study is expected to accomplish twin objectives. The main objective is to have a detailed study of music marketing activities in the Carnatic music industry within the framework of the four fronts discussed above. The study also attempts to analyze the marketing mix of Carnatic music live performances as a service. The researcher wanted to explore the various avenues related to the four fronts of music marketing.

5. Methodology

The study was empirical in nature making use of primary and secondary data. It was decided to collect the required data from the city of Chennai during the 'Margazhi December Music festival (2011) for obvious reasons. Historically, Chennai is known as the cradle of south Indian music and dance after the temple city, Thanjavur. Margazhi music festival is an annual event hosted by cultural organizations in December through January. A number of 'Kutcheris' (Carnatic music concerts) are performed by talented artists in various time slots from morning to evening. The morning and evening prime slots are given to senior artists while the afternoon slots are allocated to upcoming junior artists. The music and dance extravaganza is considered unparalleled and attracts audience and artists from across India and abroad. The performances get sponsorship from the various sources in Chennai.

The primary data was collected from six cultural organizations in three

representative areas (RAs) in Chennai city – Alwarpet, Mylapore and T Nagar. Convenience sampling method was used to collect data. Structured questionnaires were distributed at the door step of auditoria before the concerts and the response from the experienced Chennai audience was valid and reliable. Music retailers were selected from different parts of Chennai city. In order to analyze and interpret data, observation method, percentages, averages, and expert opinion method were applied. The secondary data was collected from various cultural organizations, news papers, websites, souvenirs, and schedules. Attitude measurement of music consumers was made through Likert type 5 point scale. A total of three hundred (300) samples were collected for the study. The vibrant expert opinion given by selected artists, music company representatives, intermediaries, and representatives of cultural organizations helped the researcher to draw meaningful inferences pertaining to different aspects of music marketing.

6. Findings and discussion

The empirical study revealed characteristics of music marketing pertaining to four fronts in Carnatic music industry. The south Indian classical music was inherited through generations from 5th century AD. In order to promote Carnatic music among the masses, a professional approach is required from the stakeholders which are lagging at present. This great form of art has been

confined to a few locations in the name of religion, caste and other aspects. The lack of coordination between artists and music record labels is evident in this industry and that affects the content richness of albums.

The survey highlighted the need for professional artist and product development fronts to form a strong base to the Carnatic music market. The Artists & Repertoire (A&R) representatives of record labels need to acquire a basic knowledge about the variety and depth of Carnatic music. A better coordination between the talented artists and music companies can do wonders in album designing. At present only a few artists venture into novel areas like thematic albums and artistic video presentations. A variety of products in a wide price range can be developed both in vocal and instrumental categories, seventy two percent (72%) of the respondents remarked. The established record labels shall provide an opportunity to young talented artists to release their albums, majority of the respondents, both consumers and intermediaries remarked. Forty six percent (46%) of the respondents feels that the efforts put forward by 'Sabhas' is not up to mark in promoting young talents. The entire effort of cultural organizations is being concentrated during the December music festival and that hinders the long term growth of the industry. During the afternoon slots in music festival, many young talented, upcoming artists perform in front of blank chairs due to the existing pattern of the conduct of concerts.

At present most of the companies follow a uniform pricing pattern of Carnatic music albums. A wide range of price is required to attract non-habitual buyers, according to sixty seven (67%) percent of end-users and seventy three (73%) percent of intermediaries. Sixty five percent (65%) of the consumers felt that the comparative high price of Carnatic music albums chase out the customer from buying legitimate albums. The various activities in artist and product development fronts need to be coordinated effectively, so that unique and variety albums can be produced in the market. The packaging of the end products does have an impact on the consumers, according to fifty five percent of respondents (55%). There is good demand for meditation and music therapy albums in the market and the artists and record labels should consider this as an opportunity, according to sixty one (61%) of the respondents. The content of the album matters most in the buying of Carnatic music albums according to majority – seventy percent (70%) of the respondents. The demand for Carnatic music albums is growing to the global level, thanks to our talented artists who enthrall the audience across international borders. A well planned and coordinated artist and product development activities can lead to higher legitimate sales and revenue generation.

The industry, so far, have not been able to make use of digital cable revolution – Television – for promoting Carnatic music, sixty one percent of the respondents agreed (61%). Some respondents went to the extent

of suggesting the launch of a music channel under the aegis of Music Academy exclusively for the promotion of Carnatic music and the upcoming talents. The presence of large number of private FM Radio channels provides another opportunity for the industry to airplay the new recordings. Majority – sixty one percent (61%) of the respondents agreed to the concept of customization with classical music albums of selected artists. The listeners should be given the opportunity to select their favourite compositions from a pool of artists. The survey revealed that the publicity front in Carnatic music industry is not up to the mark. For instance, the regional news papers in Chennai give little coverage to the December music festival as it is confined to the elite class of the society. Also, the TV channels and news papers in the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu – Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh – are not focused towards the coverage of the music season in December. The live airplay of selected music concerts during the festival can promote the art, many respondents opined. The service aspect of live performances during the December music festival is required to be analyzed within the service marketing mix (7Ps – Product, Price, Place, Promotion, Process, People and Physical evidence) framework. The cultural organizations called ‘Sabhas’ have a major role in conducting successful concerts with good participation from the general public. The depth of Carnatic music provides our talented artists good opportunity to learn and present beautiful compositions which

comprise the service product part. The Sabhas need to adopt competitive pricing strategies for various artists and time slots. The artists are not satisfied with the remuneration given to them for the concerts by different Sabhas. The experts pointed out the need to outsource management experts’ service in this regard. The ambience of the auditoria or concert hall is another major factor. Majority – seventy percent (70%) – of the respondents are not satisfied with the quality of auditoriums except a few in Chennai. The quality of sound systems inside the hall is another area of concern for the audience and performing artists. The study pointed out that promotion front may be improved with proper coordination of Sabhas and media. The easy process of service delivery and the dedication of people associated with cultural organizations are largely acceptable to the respondents. The creation of physical evidence in the form of allied services – most evident factor is catering service attached to Sabhas during the season – is satisfactory to the respondents. However, thirty two percent (32 percent) of the audience opined that the pricing of tickets is too high for the common man to attend the concerts.

The study was confined to Chennai city and the findings may not be applicable to all States. The resources, time and other constraints, particularly the busy artists and other participants, may affect the reliability of the study to a minimum extent. Despite of all these limitations, every effort were made to make this study meaningful.

7. Conclusion

A professional and proactive approach is required in marketing efforts of this industry, which is a part of larger entertainment industry. The four fronts of music marketing provides a good platform to develop a unique model and framework for the marketing and promotion of Carnatic music. The professional touch given to the activities will enhance the growth prospects of all elements – artists, music companies, dealers and cultural organizations – besides preserving this unique and wonderful tradition of music which is an indispensable part of our Motherland's culture.

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