

A Blending of Spices: Knowledge Integration in Bollywood Film Production

Jamal Shamsie

Michigan State University

Knowledge as a Resource

- Knowledge is one of the key resources that can allow a firm to establish strong and sustainable advantages
- Clearly, it is more likely that such knowledge would be tacit
- Tacit knowledge can be valuable, rare, be difficult to imitate and have few substitutes

Utilizing Knowledge

- Tacit knowledge resides mostly in individuals who may specialize in particular activities or tasks
- A key challenge therefore lies in the integration of the tacit knowledge that is possessed by the different individuals that work together as a team

Knowledge Integration

- How are teams able to combine or integrate the specialized knowledge that is possessed by its different members?

Facilitating Integration

- Knowledge integration is partly accomplished by the use of rules and routines that are well known and understood by the individual members of the group
- Real basis of knowledge integration lies in the common knowledge or shared understanding that allows individuals to become loosely coupled with each other

Evaluating Integration

- The extent to which a team has been able to combine or integrate the knowledge of its members should be reflected in the success that is achieved by the product of their efforts

Drivers of Integration

- H1: Teams with a smaller number of members performing key roles are more likely to create a successful product

Drivers of Integration

- H2a: Teams that include members who have greater experience within their own specialty are more likely to create a successful product
- H2b: Teams that include members with greater experience working with other members who have greater experience are more likely to create a successful product

Drivers of Integration

- H3a: Teams that include members who have had greater exposure across specialties are more likely to create a successful product
- H3b: Teams that include members with greater exposure working with other members with greater exposure are more likely to create a successful product

Studying Bollywood

- The term “Bollywood” has become a shorthand reference not only to a specific industry, but also to a specific style of filmmaking that combines various genres to produce entertainment for the broadest possible audience

Bollywood Films

- Most Bollywood films combine various genres, creating a 'masala' or a blend of spices
- They are mostly dramas, but also contain elements of comedy, romance, action and music

Bollywood Production

- Production firms, referred to as ‘banners’ are largely associated with specific individuals who usually start out as actors or directors before they become producers
- These production firms assemble the talent that is required to work together on each individual film project

Bollywood Production

- The idea for a new film can come from a screenwriter, director, actor or even the producer
- Key members of the production team are recruited through a series of 'narratives' where they are gathered to hear the screenwriter or director relay the key elements of the film's plot

Bollywood Production

- All of the work on the film, including script development occurs after the 'mahurat', a ceremony that is designed to announce the commencement of work
- Completion of this ceremony allows the producers to raise funds from various sources, such as the selling of distribution rights in various territories

Bollywood Teams

- Even in the early stages, individuals work with each other in small teams with the close involvement of the director in every aspect of the project
- A great deal of discussion or brainstorming occurs between the director and key members of the team as various aspects of the film's plot, dialogue, sets, locations, music and songs are worked out

Knowledge Integration

- Consequently, these production teams offer an ideal opportunity to study the effects of knowledge integration
- Members of these teams acquire considerable common or shared knowledge by working closely with each other on each individual film project

Knowledge Integration

- Furthermore, many of the members manage to develop their shared knowledge through their exposure to various specialties through their work as a producer, director, actor or screenwriter during their career

Methodology

- Sample consists of 200 films released over three years from 2004 to 2006
- Look at producers, directors, actors, screenwriters, composers and lyricists
- Performance based on domestic box office revenue for opening weekend and at end of theatrical run