

# Disney Pixar flies high on brand tie-ups

The studio reaps the fruits of a brand rush for animation movies in India as it finds support from Hamley's, Myntra, First Cry and others for its latest release

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For Hollywood animation movies in India, 2016 is already turning out to be a blockbuster year in terms of brand associations. Finding Dory, the latest Disney Pixar release, has struck gold with a record 16 brands partnering with the movie for promotions, marketing and merchandising relationships.

The associations account for about ₹20 crore worth of media value for the studio. Fox Star's Kung Fu Panda had roped in seven and Sony Pictures Entertainment's The Angry Birds Movie, four brand partners. With the growing popularity of the genre among Indian audiences, brands are increasingly turning to animated movies and the studios, in turn, are cranking up the volume on promotions, licensing and merchandising opportunities in the country.

"Animated films have a direct affinity with kids and families worldwide and India is no different. For Finding Dory, this is the first time that 16 brands have associated with an animated film in the country, which goes to show the potential in the licensing and merchandising (L&M) space," says Abhishek Maheshwari, VP and head, Consumer Products, Disney India.

While brand associations and in-film placements are commonplace in Bollywood, many brands say that they are left without enough opportunities to associate with movies targeted at children. The Indian film industry is geared more towards providing family fare rather than specifically targeting children as an audience.

With as many as six animated films slated to release in 2016, four of them part of popular franchises, brands seem to be eager to exploit this opportunity. This year, Kung Fu Panda 3 and The Angry Birds Movie have already hit the screen, and Finding Dory and Ice Age 5 are coming up soon.

For many, the enthusiasm shown for Finding Dory has come as a surprise. To put



things in perspective, some of the big Hollywood releases in recent months such as Star Wars: The Force Awakens, Captain America: Winter Soldier, Captain America: Civil War, Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice and Avengers: Age of Ultron, all attracted brand associations with media value estimated at ₹25-30 crore. Disney's latest release stands in the same league, thereby knocking down the popular perception that animation films draw a weaker response as compared to live-action movies in India.

For studios such as Disney what has also worked in their favour is the lack of a robust Indian animation movies list. For brands looking for Indian animation platforms/properties, the only options are television shows on channels like Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, Pogo and Disney. Broadcasters have managed to cash in on this trend to an extent. Viacom18's kids' cluster, which comprises of Nickelodeon, Sonic and Nick Junior, claims that the revenue growth has been helped by non-commercial time realisation, mainly through brand integrations in shows like Motu Patlu and more recently, Shiva. On the big screen however, the options are close to none.

Hollywood studios are making the most of this. Brands looking to target children are therefore rushing in to exploit opportunities with Hollywood animation films, especially those that are part of a franchise. Associating

with a franchise helps brands tap into the cult fan following that these movies have, besides developing a long association with the studios. In 2014, when Disney released Big Hero Six, there were hardly any brand associations. Same was the case with the 2015 release Inside Out, even though both the movies did well within the target group. This year, however, has been a different story altogether.

Experts believe that franchise-led brand associations allow companies to exploit the characters' popularity for a long period of time. For Finding Dory, brands such as Hamley's, Myntra and others are hoping to cash in on the huge following that many of the characters have among children, through sustained licensing and merchandising opportunities. Similarly, with Kung Fu Panda, brand partners like Britannia featured various characters from the trilogy on their popular products; Po the Panda, Tigress, Monkey and Master Shifu were used to develop uniquely packaged products.

A similar strategy was adopted by Mondelez for The Angry Birds Movie. McDonalds has also been associated with animated films for a long time. The QSR brand usually uses its Happy Meal product to offer toys from a particular franchise in the meal. But it went beyond the 'Happy Meal' association for The Angry Birds Movie; McDonalds innovated with summer drinks and the home delivery experience. For Kung Fu Panda, it introduced a limited edition Chinese themed menu in India.

Disney has widened the scope of brand categories with Finding Dory. So while there are the usual suspects like toys (My Baby Excel, Frank and Rowan), frames and mugs (Essfil) and retail (Hamley's, Gingercrush and First Cry), it has also explored publishing (Parragon, India) and tech accessories (Macmerise makes power banks, laptop skins and phone covers).

Maheshwari adds, "Working with the right partner is the key to successful products in the L&M space. We look at partners who bring their wealth of knowledge in the specific product domain and help us translate our characters and stories into compelling products."

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QSR

Happy Meal

McDonalds

Mondelez

Britannia

Horlicks

ICICI

Expressions Debit Cards

and others

Franchise

Characters

Animation

Brands

Licensing

Merchandising

Partnerships

Associations

Partners

Brands

Companies

Associations

Partnerships

Brands

Partners

Associations

Partnerships

Brands