Kolaveri di – The Marketing virus

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Abstract - Dhanush was the special invitee at the dinner hosted by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for his Japanese counterpart, Yoshihiko Noda. “Why this Kolaveri di?” is an Indian song from the soundtrack of the upcoming Tamil film 3, which was released in 2012. The track is changing the landscape of how music is shared in India. It has signaled a new era in Indian music and that is bridging the gaps between regional and international musical differences. Sustaining innovation of blending of two languages along with the funky music is what did wonders for the number. Written and sung by Dhanush. The song adopts a new concept that transcends the language boundaries and the audience has accepted the experiment that is different from traditional genre of music. Tanglish bug having made most of the youth in the country dance to its tune, I stop and wonder what makes this song so popular? It has become famous in many parts of the world and has smashed records on YouTube and was even aired on CNN in the US. It has become a rage in Japan too, where the song is played in parties and clubs. In this paper I try to analyze its marketing strategy. The paper will summarize some facts about Kolaveri di’s successful Viral marketing which held the network environment and accumulated the power of masses.

Keywords: Kolaveri di, Viral Marketing, Hook music, You Tube, song.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Why this murderous rage, girl?” has become the rage of the nation. It is the ultimate song for the youth and almost everybody below 20 has made it their anthem. Come to think of it, the lyrics are ridiculously funny, the tune is very simple and yet this ‘soup song’ (meaning, a heartbreak song) just gets on you. Sony Music India has created a viral phenomenon, the likes of which has never been seen before in India, for the cross cultural Tamil-English musical hit Why this Kolaveri Di. Reaching over 20million hits and counting on YouTube, 3.6 million Facebook shares and #Kolaveri hash tag trending on Twitter amongst media, fans, journalists, celebrities and industry barons in just over two short weeks, Why This Kolaveri Di has become an overnight hit that has now crossed over into the international markets.

The video received 83,000 YouTube views within 24hours when it was first released to now become the most viewed video on YouTube. The track is sung by Tamil superstar and now singer Dhanush. Usually used as a popular slang term amongst Tamil youth, the term Kolaveri, meaning ‘murderous rage’, is now being picked up by marketers and brands alike and people in other parts of the work as a form of expression. The track is also the first regional language (Tamil) song ever to see a high rotation on Mainstream Music Channels - play listed on 43 Radio Stations Pan-India and gaining an audience as far afield as Australia and Czechoslovakia.
The simplicity and originality of the viral has also deeply engaged its audience and is the first viral video to be replicated with fans re-creating their own versions of the viral video. Since the video hit YouTube just over two weeks ago the number of responses has been steadily growing; even renowned Indian playback singer Sonu Nigam's four year old son has made his own viral which has already notched up over 1 million hits. It’s so easy to remember and so hummable that you can’t stop singing after hearing it! But most importantly, it’s a song that every music company would want in their kitty today, it’s a viral campaign that every marketer dreams of making, it has such crazy levels of popularity that would be a dream for any celebrity and, it has reached an iconic status that every brand would die for. It is an excellent example of how to establish a name, an idea, in today’s crowded market place, filled with consumers who understand all marketing gimmicks; who hate being marketed to.

II. HOOK MUSIC

Just like in the elections we vote for the lowest common denominator that appeals to the largest number of people, in music as well, the simplicity cuts across various boundaries to reach the most. The song could not have been simpler. Take the conjunction and the verb way and what is left is something that will appeal to anyone with average IQ and that is what is most palpable. Just the natural, almost untutored, uncensored, un-stylized song appeals to a large number of people who are on the web. Those with deeper sensitivities who are offended by it can create something profound. In the move from the structural to the casual kolaveri di is a milestone for others.

The words of the song are in a simple form of Tanglish - a mixture of Tamil and English. A hook is a musical idea, often a short riff, passage, or phrase, that is used in popular music to make a song appealing and to ”catch the ear of the listener”. The lyrics “White skin-u girl-u girl-u, girl-u heart-u black-u” and “empty life-u, girl-u come-u, life reverse gear-u,” all seem so funny and hilarious that one could laugh at it. The singer is presented as an Indian boy whose girlfriend has rejected him. He is drunk as he sings, asking why she hurt him this way. The words have been described as "nonsensical" and an evocation of "Tamil street humor". For Kolaveri di, a listener would influence their acquaintances more than they usually influence them. Those acquaintances in turn influenced other people, and so on recursively until potentially the entire network was reached. These acquaintances in turn had many other people they influence. The high network value of its listeners helped it spread like a virus.
III. VIRAL MARKETING

Viral marketing consists of any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message’s exposure and influence[14]. Like viruses, such strategies take advantage of rapid multiplication to explode the message to thousands, to millions. Off the Internet, viral marketing has been referred to as “word-of-mouth,” “creating a buzz,” “leveraging the media,” “network marketing.” Upon release, the hash tag #kolaveri topped the Indian trends in Twitter on the evening of 21 November 2011. Within a week of the official release of the video, it received more than 1.3 million views on YouTube, more than 1 million shares on Facebook, while trending in India on Twitter the whole time. The song is also a hit among non-Tamil, apparently due to the Tanglish lyrics. By 30th November 2011 it had more than 10,500,000 YouTube views.

The song became the top downloaded song on mobile with 2,10,000 downloads within the first 18 days of release. On 24 November 2011, this song became the first Tamil film song to be premiered on a national music channel, MTV India. The song had achieved 16 million hits on YouTube as of 5 December 2011.

There are a lot of things that go viral today. However, most of these are not managed but simply take off and then acquire a life of their own. Even in the case of Kolaveri Di, while people have gone so far as to call it India’s first viral marketing campaign. The ultimate goal of marketers interested in creating successful viral marketing programs is to create viral messages that appeal to individuals with high social networking potential (SNP) and that have a high probability of being presented and spread by these individuals and their competitors in their communications with others in a short period of time. An Internet release alone doesn’t guarantee anything. Nor do the other components such as simplicity, catchiness or the entertainment factor. So what helps then? The influencers propelled by the interconnected nature of social media. For instance, Indian Superstar Amitabh Bachchan tweeted about the song as did other celebrities. Even influencers within smaller groups can ignite the spark. And then, it spreads like a virus, reaching other influencers, taking on a life of its own as it zooms through networks and multiplies exponentially.
Imitations and parodies of this song have been created, including versions in different Indian languages, a female version. The popularity of the song was also reported by international media like BBC and Time magazine. Top business schools like Indian Institutes of Management conducted studies to figure out the popularity of this song. There have been many other songs in the past that were similar in nature but haven’t reached even close to the kind of adulation this song has received. In fact, this song has become so popular that at least twelve clones of this song have sprung up from different parts of the country which clearly indicates its national appeal despite the language barrier.

While viral campaigns are not at all common in India, this is a first rate example of the sheer power and reach that this new marketing technique holds. The song has won the YouTube Gold Award, which is presented to videos that have gone viral. An article on the song "Why This Kolaveri Di ?", has featured in the Time magazine.

IV. PERFECT PLANNING

The web can make you famous instantly, and it can make your brand the most talked about. After all, the most powerful tool of marketing is word-of-mouth. Nowadays, of course, it’s the word-of-mouse with the web gaining importance. It is a tool that is being used by marketers across the globe. You could be selling any product; if you have a great viral also in place, it will help your brand in becoming more popular and talked about. The song is about a guy who has been dumped by the girlfriend; he is drunk and starts singing. Any youngster can relate to the concept. He can use it to make fun of his friend or even himself! “Why this Kolaveri di ?” includes some basic elements of viral marketing[14]-

- Provides for effortless transfer to others
- Scales easily from small to very large
- Exploits common motivations and behaviors
- Utilizes existing communication networks

The video of “Why this Kolaveri di ?” was shot by the Sony Music team and has a raw feel to it, similar to any making-of or unplugged recording. The natural un-staged set-up of the video allows the viewer to connect with the track, creating a deeper level of engagement that sets it apart from other Indian videos.
V. CONCLUSION

“Why This Kolevari Di?” is a track that is changing the landscape of how music is shared in India. It has signaled a new era in Indian music and that is bridging the gaps between regional and international musical differences. The blend of two languages along with the funky music is what did wonders for the number. The simple words made the song something people relate to adding the quality of a great product. Viral marketing is an upcoming area and companies have to be serious about it. This paper uses the example of nonsensical song to show the importance of viral marketing.

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