Abstract

Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication, Bengaluru, SIMC-B, aims to serve the multi-faceted needs of the Media and Communication Industry in particular and the Society in general, through events, education, training and research. SIMC-B encourages creative pursuits in order to sensitize its students to culture, heritage, literature, fine arts and the performing arts. Events such as the Bangalore Literature Festival, BLF, unravelled exciting facets of Communication and its various nuances through literature, fine arts and the performing arts, theatre as well as films. The Event proved to be the perfect learning ground for the SIMC-B students who are pursuing their MBA in Communication Management, the specializations being Advertising and Public Relations. In Event Management It was an important platform for providing hands-on learning value to the students in terms of their presentation skills, writing ability, brand awareness, PR and Event Management from concept to commissioning. SIMC-B as the Event Partner was involved in the entire gamut of activities right from hospitality, guest relations, venue management, compering, session co-ordination, providing research and background material for deliberations and discussions, media relations, videography and photography, amongst such other activities.

The BLF, is an annual flagship event in the Cultural Calendar of the City, celebrating its creative spirit and commemorating the literary diversity it offers, in conversation with the best minds in the world of literature. This was an entirely community-funded and inspired one that kept away commercial interests of large corporate houses and sponsorships. The brain child of Bangalore based Authors Vikram Sampath and Shinie Antony with Srikrishna Ramamoorthy, the objective of the BLF was to put together a literary experience that brought writers - both established and aspiring, readers, publishers, students and young professionals and other stakeholders of the City together on a common platform, creating a compelling space for engaging and thought-provoking discussions on literature and life. The BLF has firmly put Bangalore on the International Literature map of the Country, on the lines of the Jaipur Litfest and other such events.

Introduction

Bangalore Literature Festival, BLF, is a festival celebrating the spirit of Literature in Bengaluru. The Second Edition was conducted in the latter half of 2013 at Hotel Crowne Plaza, Velankani Park in Electronics City, Bangalore. Building on the successful 2012 debut edition, this year BLF featured 125 authors and speakers, including several distinguished literary names such as Gulzar, Dr UR Ananthamurthy, Chandrashekhara Kambara, Nabaneeta Dev Sen, Ramachandra Guha, William Dalrymple, Rajmohan Gandhi, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, Farhan Akhtar, Munni Kabir, Shobhaa De, David Davidar amongst others.

BLF witnessed authors interacting with the audiences on diverse themes. The highlight was the Exhibition commemorating 100 years of Indian Cinema. Discussions on the adaptation of biographies to bio-pics featuring one of India’s most critically acclaimed actors Farhan Akhtar, Director Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra and Lyricist-Writer Prasoon Joshi, besides deliberations on Cinema Writing
featured veterans in the field such as Baradwaj Rangan, Sidharth Bhatia, Sharmishta Gooptu, MK Raghavendra, Kishwar Desai, Bhawana Somaaya, and others.

A special mention has to be made of Lyricist Gulzar who wowed the audiences through his presentation and the launch of his two books 'Hindi for Heart' and 'I swallowed the moon' launched at the Festival. The Festival had sessions planned on Kannada Literature featuring stalwarts. Another unique and interesting element of BLF was the emphasis on oral literary languages of Karnataka including Beary, Tulu, Kodava and Konkani, as also a special panel on the Village of Mathoor and its success in making Sanskrit all pervasive there.

Other interesting features of the BLF included a mesmerizing Carnatic Violin recital by the Mysore Brothers - Dr Manjunath and Shri Nagaraj, the famous Veeragase Folk Dance form of Karnataka, a Soul rendering Flute recital by Pt Hariprasad Chaurasia and Kabir Poetry recitals by Shabnam Virmani and Vipul Rikki. Other key attractions were sessions on Spirituality and Writing by renowned Spiritual Leader Sri Sri Ravishankar, interesting presentations and lectures by eminent historians Ramachandra Guha and William Dalrymple, nuances of fashion writing with Wendell Rodricks and much more.

Support and Association

BLF 2013 was a largely successful event without any sponsorship of Corporates, driving home the fact that Literature is an enduring domain and has not lost its place in people’s minds and hearts, despite the advent of the social media and other new age platforms. Some interesting and meaningful collaborations need special mention.

- BLF 2013 collaborated with the Goethe-Institute/Max Mueller Bhavan Bangalore to feature Germany as a focus Country. Authors from Germany, including the celebrated Slam poet Bas Botcher, Tilman Rammstedt, Christopher Kloebel, Saskya Jain and Abbas Khider participated.

- BLF 2013 associated with South Asian Writing with HIMAL, featuring authors from the SAARC region - Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

- BLF 2013 was also supported by the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters, which brought together many stalwarts and upcoming Indian language authors, some of them for the first time, to Bangalore.

- True to the Festival's spirit, several city authors supported the Event and participated in the Festival. BLF 2013 was bigger and better for children and young adults as well. In association with Pratham Books, Bookalore and Amar Chitra Katha, several children's sessions and activity corners were organized as well.

Communication Strategy

Entry was free and open to all, via registration on the BLF official website. Social Media was widely used to inform, create hype and attract footfalls to the Event. Twitter and Facebook pages had maximum hits. Pre-registration was highly recommended. The detailed list of events, schedule, participating authors’ bios and other information were made available on the website. Living up to the reputation of Bangalore being the Silicon Valley of India, BLF took advantage of technology and all sessions were streamed live through partnerships with AuthorTV and Radiowalla.
Work Methodology of SIMC B

The students were assigned the following roles and activities:

a) **Author’s Lounge**: Volunteers had to look after guest relations, co-ordination and media relations at the Author’s Lounge, besides giving logistic support to the Speakers for their presentations. Various renowned personalities such as Shobhaa De, His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Shashi Deshpande, Ashwin Sanghi, Ravi Subramanian, Nissar Ahmed, Madhu Kishwar, HS Venkatesh Murthy, Prasad Bidapa, Ashokamitran, K Satchidanandan, Nilanjana Roy, Kishwar Desai, Anita Nair, Ian Jack, Karthika VK, Kapish Mehra, Gulzar, Farhan Akhtar, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, Prasoon Joshi, Bhavana Sommayya, Munni Kabir amongst others participated.

b) **Book Signing sessions**: Facilitated orderly and well-orchestrated book signing sessions by the Authors.

c) **Help/Registration Desk**: Served as the Information Centre for delegates and public attending the sessions at the Venue.

d) **Compering**: This particular job required not only announcing various personalities on the dais but also some scripting and creating video clips/presentations on various esteemed authors and their work.

e) **Logistics**: Maintaining the backstage activities. Coordinating with people at the Author’s Lounge at all times.

f) **Curators**: Two Curators were appointed for providing all the requisite details regarding commemoration of 100 years of Indian cinema.

g) **Videography and Photography** were totally handled by our students.

**Evaluation**

SIMC-B compiled feedback that the experience of volunteering for this Event was a very enriching one and a golden opportunity to meet many distinguished authors and celebrities. The Festival also gave them glimpses into the World of literature and the mind space of sensitive artists. They learnt the art of time management and people skills, presence of mind and trouble shooting abilities that a mega event such as this, with its several parallel sessions, could pose.

And as far as the Organisers’ feedback was concerned, they expressed the desire of building a deeper relationship with the SIMC-B by allowing the students to participate in the Core Organizing Committee of the Event in the coming year. SIMC-B has been retained as the Event Partner for BLF 2014 to be held in September. Areas of focus, apart from others, would be:

- Media Relations and Publicity
- Author Relations/Guest Relations
- Event Organization
- Program Curating
- Author Profiling
- Content & Design
- Photography and News Bulletin
Future Analysis

Following a brief introduction of the 2014 Festival, SIMC-B has made a few suggestions

a) Keep a buffer time between two panel discussions for a smoother flow of the events and parallel sessions.

b) Budding authors find a perfect opportunity to interact with publishers at these events. A suggestion was thus made to organize a separate networking session between publishers and budding authors so that authors did not go back disappointed.

c) Keeping all the volunteers well informed about last minute changes in the schedule.

d) To ensure that the author profiles were proof - read by the respective authors before the comperes got on to the dais.

e) Adding a more regional flavour to the Event by focusing more on local talent.

f) Promoting the Art Exhibition in a more structured manner in order to avoid confusion.

Mr. Vikram Sampath and Ms. Shinie Antony acknowledged the suggestions made by SIMC-B and endorsed that partnership with SIMC-B would take the Event to even greater heights.

Conclusion

The Bangalore Literature Festival was a successful event. The turnout proved that the average public still loves Literature, Fine Arts and the Performing Arts. According to the analysis, one major factor that contributed to the success of this Festival was technology. With Bangalore being a technological hub, the Festival too reflected that advantage. Statistics show that a lot of people also ‘attended’ virtually as well, as many sessions got streamed through Radiowallah and through Social Media Partner Koan Metrics who provided live updates on a minute to minute basis. A huge mass of people heard Gulzar and Pavan Varma directly through the online radio as they were stuck in traffic and could not reach the Venue in time.

The Festival also reached out to the younger audience through Twitter and Facebook so that they could come to the Venue, listen to some lively sessions and finally inculcate the habit of reading. This was regarded as a gradual process of nurturing the reading habit and catching them young. Thus it would not be wrong to presume that the efforts made by the BLF in terms of visibility and outreach could only result in increased popularity, making the Festival a much looked forward to cerebral event. And the forthcoming event could only be vaster as far as exposure is concerned with the help and support of SIMC-B.
Shobaa De with this paper’s Authors Prof Maya Chakravarti V, Director SIMC-B (3rd from right) and Dr Shashikala Patil (extreme right).

Celebrated Lyricist Gulzar with Prof Maya Chakravarti V, Director SIMC-B