

In a first of its kind, Tamil director uses business analysis to enhance script



Mohan Raja (R) with Venkadesh Narayanan and Bharathi

Suganth.M@timesgroup.com

It is usual practice in our film industry for directors to have assistant directors help develop the script and do the background research for their film's setting. But in what is a novel move, director Mohan Raja roped in a business analysis firm, Fhysics Business Consultants, for the purpose. "This happened entirely by accident. In January 2013, I was in the basic stage of scripting. My closest childhood friend Mubarak is in the IFS and had told me about the rigorous training the IPS and IFS candidates are put through. I developed a huge admiration for them and decided that I would do a story around an IPS officer. Through him, Venkadesh Narayanan, his batchmate who belongs to a business analysis firm, approached me and wanted to explore if the concept could be used in films. I had heard of professional research firms helping Hollywood filmmakers. We met and realized this could be mutually beneficial," says Raja.

Talking about the concept, Venkadesh says, "Business analysis is a field that evolved in the 1980s. Our expertise lies in providing business analyses and solutions for organizations and products. We find out what the market expects and try to build those features into the product or service. We wanted to explore if this can also be applied to films."

Raja had a rough idea of what the story is about and how it will shape up. He had explained to Venkadesh's team who the hero is, how the villain should be and the conflict between these two characters. "With all his inputs, Venkadesh, his associate Bharathi and a team of five, researched and created a presentation for me. They also made an emotional graph for the two leads to give an idea of who will be undergoing what at any given point in the film. This helped me pack in the tension while editing the film," he says.

Venkadesh explains further, "In *Thani Oruvan*, the concept is that of how small cri-

mes are often fronts for larger crimes. We looked at crime records and media reports from 1990 and created a list of 22 fields (from which Raja chose three) most susceptible to crime action. Such detail can feel authentic and give a logical flow to the story. The data that is shown in the film is all authentic."

Raja adds, "Our films hardly distinguish between a normal cop and an IPS officer. I wanted to show the difference. My hero was someone who did not have a back story on his family or why he is so passionate about the society — there was no drama in his personal life for the audience to identify with him. So, I needed a detailed characterisation of him as an IPS officer to make the audience think highly of him."

He gives an example to illustrate this. "I knew that the hero and the villain should meet during the graduation ceremony. It is the home minister who pins the badge on the candidates, so I asked them to check if there was any other way in which these two characters could meet. They researched and found out that a gun is presented to the top rank-holder. I used that in the scene and had the villain presenting the gun to the hero. This way, the audience is primed to remember this moment when the gun plays a bigger role later in the movie," he says.

There were also times when the director could not use the information. "We found out that IPS officers change costumes five to six times on an average in a day. But in films, when you show a character in a different costume, the audience assumes that the event happens on another day. So, I had to be judicious in picking what will work best. I would say we have used only 5% of what they did, but that is the concentrated version of everything that we had discussed," he says.

Venkadesh concurs. "Every movie, barring maybe romantic films, can benefit from business analysis. But ultimately, it depends on the director to make sense of the all the data and use it effectively in the film and enhance it," he concludes.

M
S
A
int
Bo
bec
ure
tol
of
ha
bey
bo
not
the
gl
she
bec
sel
blo
the
ma
pin
"Th
we
I v
lat
"I v
ha

T
Ash
J
cousi
pin b
Wome
the ci
tions
ball o
ball c
fun ev
ing to
find a
the 20
likely
The
aroun
its na
enthu
this e
sport,
presid
Chenn
day ev
aware
reason
ment.
ented
profes
So,
ments
emplo
ment?
is a T