



Ajit Andhare

COO, Viacom18 Studios

Ajit Andhare helms Viacom18 Studios, one of India's premier full-service film studios, widely regarded for its brand of new age Indian cinema. He is a senior leader in Indian Media & Entertainment with 25 years of experience across consumer & media sectors building factories, brands, companies, TV series & films. Ajit has led Viacom18 Studios to become a force to reckon with in the Indian film ecosystem with unparalleled commercial & critical success winning 6 Best film National awards over the last 7 years.

His current role spans film development, greenlighting, production, marketing, distribution and syndication of all Viacom18 Studios films worldwide as well as marketing & distribution of all Paramount Pictures Hollywood films in the Indian Subcontinent. In addition to the film portfolio, Ajit launched Tipping Point – a young digital content brand that creates cutting-edge digital content. Under Tipping Point, Ajit has led the creation of multiple high-rated web series such as 'Jamtara – Sabka Number Aayega', 'Taj Mahal 1989' and 'She', amongst others. A result-oriented business leader, Ajit has pioneered many industry firsts ranging from bringing India's first Imax 3D Hindi blockbuster Padmaavat to making an unusual film like Andhadhun, a box office success in India & China.

As Chief Operating Officer, his vision for the studio is founded on the belief that script & budget are the Queen & Kingpin of every film. This ethos honed over 13 years of experience in content development & production in Media as well as his insights in consumer behaviour & brands with 12 years at Unilever, have yielded some of the most enduring TV franchises & iconic films.

Under his leadership, the studio broke new grounds first with the biopic 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag' in 2013, 'Queen' & 'Mary Kom' in 2014, followed by 'Drishyam' & 'Maanjihi' in 2015. Female-protagonist led films like 'Queen' & 'Mary Kom' besides succeeding at box office, won prestigious National awards, making it three National awards in a row for the studio. These films set industry trend for heroine led films, biopics & a new breed of content led modern Indian cinema. With blockbusters 'Toilet- Ek Prem Katha' in 2017, 'Padmaavat' in 2018, widely feted releases like 'Andhadhun' and 'Manto' selected for 'Uncertain Regard' at Cannes, he has steered the Studio to unparalleled highs of commercial & critical success.

Ajit has created a body of work for the studio that is diverse in genres, scale & ideas ranging from socially relevant 'Toilet Ek Prem Katha' to one of its kind thrillers like 'Drishyam' & 'Andhadhun'. He is currently developing inspiring Biopics like 'Kalpana Chawla' & 'Mithali Raj' and a first of its kind Hollywood remake of cult classic Forrest Gump as 'Laal Singh Chaddha' with Aamir Khan.

He has successfully collaborated with India's leading creative talent & marquee directors such as Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Vishal Bharadwaj, Sriram Raghavan, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, Ketan Mehta as well as new directors like Omang Kumar, Sri Narayan Singh & Robbie Garewal.

His mandate was expanded to include development of all regional films and digital series for Voot & Jio platforms under the new digital content brand Tipping point. This has resulted in landmark Marathi films like 'Kashinath Ghanekar', 'Bhai' & 'Thackrey' with Viacom18 creating a new standing in Marathi cinema in past 18 months & making forays in South Indian Cinema with 'Devdas', 'Balan Vakeel' and 'Manmadhudu 2'.

Before assuming his present role, Ajit founded a television production start-up, Colosseum Media Pvt. Ltd. raising venture capital from Raghav Bahl's Capital18. He developed a primetime Game show, Wheel Smart Srimati aired on National Network as the start-up's first break. Scaling up rapidly Colosseum produced several franchise television properties such as MTV Roadies, MTV Splitsvilla (Reality), Jai Shri Krishna (Scripted) for Colors and Master Chef India (Reality) series for Star Network. He also developed a yet to be commissioned scripted series 'God Parayee' a surrogacy-based drama set in a contemporary Royal family in Rajasthan with writer Vipul Mayank. Having built Colosseum Media into a successful multi-genre production company he sold his stake & exited the venture in 2013 to pursue his passion for Cinema taking charge of Viacom18 Studios, then known as Viacom18 Motion pictures.

Ajit's entrepreneurial journey forms part of a published book – The Start-Up Diaries featuring his story & Colosseum alongside those of Red Bus, Pay TM, One 97 & their founders. The book covers personal life journeys of these professionals-turned-first generation entrepreneurs who created enduring businesses from scratch. His entrepreneurial journey was also featured on the cover page of Outlook money in January 2011.

Before Ajit took to entrepreneurship, he was among Unilever Plc.'s distinguished marketers in India and the Asia Pacific region. Through his Unilever career, besides business accomplishments, he was known for his conviction & creativity to develop ideas into successful & award-winning marketing campaigns. He ploughed back these qualities as the founder of Colosseum and in his current role as Studio Head.

Prior to moving into marketing and general management Ajit started off in the Engineering function at Hindustan Lever and led several Engineering projects, setting up green field factories and developed innovative engineering solutions like Shift bin system for the division.

Ajit is a Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) from National Institute of Technology Rourkela and holds an MBA in Marketing & Technology from the prestigious Indian School of Business-Hyderabad. He wrote & directed plays in College, pursued product design on the side developing automatic chapati maker and a beverage dispenser. A mythology & history buff, trained Tabla player and a music aficionado who loves to fiddle his piano playing unplugged Bollywood numbers from the sixties, he pens poems occasionally. He is a recreational runner with 15 half marathons & a full marathon under his belt.

From a practicing Engineer who dreamt of inventing a roti maker to a marketer, general manager, entrepreneur, show developer and now leading a film studio making path breaking films, his unusual journey makes for an interesting tale.