

# Identifying Social Media Platforms in the Promotion of Sri Lankan Buddhist Films (2020–2025)

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## ABSTRACT

The digital transformation of film promotion has introduced new imperatives for culturally embedded cinematic traditions, none more consequential than the Buddhist film genre in Sri Lanka a form deeply entangled with national identity, devotional practice, and vernacular aesthetics. This study investigates the role and relative effectiveness of social media platforms in the promotional campaigns of Sri Lankan Buddhist films produced and distributed between 2020 and 2025, a period shaped by pandemic-induced disruptions to theatrical release and a consequent acceleration of digital mediation. Drawing on a purposively constructed dataset of one hundred promotional campaign units ( $n=100$ ), sourced from production houses, digital archives, and distribution networks, the research employs a mixed-methods design integrating systematic content analysis with structured stakeholder interviews. Quantitative findings indicate that Facebook constituted the primary promotional medium in 82% of sampled campaigns, followed by YouTube (74%), Instagram (63%), TikTok (41%), WhatsApp (38%), and Twitter/X (19%). Multi-platform deployment was observed in 67% of campaigns, with Facebook advertising absorbing an average of 34% of digital marketing budgets. Qualitative analysis of eight structured interviews yielded six thematic clusters: platform–community alignment; devotional tone versus algorithmic pressure; the role of community gatekeepers and informal networks; intergenerational platform divergence; the Buddhist religious calendar as promotional architecture; and infrastructural and digital literacy constraints. These patterns are interpreted through the theoretical lenses of platform affordances, digital religion, and postcolonial media theory. The study argues that promotional effectiveness is not reducible to platform reach alone, but is conditioned by the intersection of audience demographics, content vernacularisation, and the spiritual registers through which Buddhist cinematic texts are received and shared. Findings carry significant implications for filmmakers, cultural institutions, and media policy stakeholders operating at the intersection of religion, heritage cinema, and digital communication in South Asia.

**Keywords:** Sri Lankan Buddhist cinema, social media promotion, platform affordances, digital religion, Theravāda media studies

## INTRODUCTION

The convergence of digital platforms and religious media production has generated considerable scholarly interest in recent years, yet the specific intersection of Buddhist cinema and social media promotion in South Asian contexts remains a substantially underexplored domain. Sri Lanka presents a compelling case study: a nation in which Theravāda Buddhism constitutes not merely a religious tradition but a central structuring logic of cultural life, and in which the cinematic representation of Buddhist themes, figures, and narratives has historically commanded both popular audiences and state patronage (Dissanayake, 1996). The period between 2020 and 2025 is of particular analytical significance, as the COVID-19 pandemic precipitated an abrupt and lasting realignment in film distribution and promotional practice, accelerating the migration of marketing activity from conventional press and broadcast media to digital social platforms (Lim, 2021).

Despite these structural shifts, no systematic empirical study has examined which social media platforms have most effectively served the promotional needs of Sri Lankan Buddhist films during this transitional period, nor

how practitioners understand and navigate the tensions between platform logics and the devotional character of their content. This research addresses that lacuna. It does so by bringing together quantitative content analysis, which maps the distribution and frequency of platform usage across a sample of one hundred promotional campaigns, and qualitative interview data, which illuminates the interpretive frameworks, strategic calculations, and structural constraints that shape practitioners' platform choices. The study is thus positioned at the intersection of Buddhist media studies, platform theory (Van Dijck et al., 2018), and South Asian digital communication research.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative content analysis with qualitative structured interviewing. The dataset comprised one hundred promotional campaign units ( $n=100$ ), assembled through purposive sampling across three principal source domains: digital archives maintained by Sri Lankan production companies; publicly accessible promotional content on social media platforms; and documentation provided by eight film distributors and producers who participated in semi-structured interviews of approximately sixty to ninety minutes each. Campaign units were defined as the complete ensemble of social media promotional materials including posts, trailers, short-form video clips, livestreams, stories, and documented audience engagement metrics associated with a single Buddhist-themed film release.

Inclusion criteria stipulated that each film must have been produced and theatrically or digitally released within Sri Lanka between January 2020 and December 2025, and must be classifiable as a Buddhist film according to the thematic taxonomy developed by, which encompasses devotional narratives, hagiographic accounts of the Buddha or historical monks, and films centring on monastic life or Buddhist ethical philosophy. Content analysis was conducted for this research (Piyumali & Sandaruwan, 2025). Using an adapted coding framework drawing on Bucher and Helmond's (2018) affordance theory, with codes capturing platform type, posting frequency, content format, estimated audience demographic, promotional function (awareness, engagement, or conversion), and qualitative sentiment. Explicitly defined how the coding was operationalized. "Qualitative sentiment" was coded via targeted keyword analysis of public comments, and "promotional function" was categorized based on direct calls-to-action. Intercoder reliability was established at Cohen's kappa = 0.83, indicating strong agreement. Qualitative data from the eight interviews were thematically analysed using the six-phase reflexive approach articulated by Braun and Clarke (2006), with member-checking conducted across all participants to ensure analytical credibility. Clarified that participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique (Piyumali & Sandaruwan, 2024), starting from public industry directories, with a prerequisite of at least three years of active involvement in Sri Lankan film promotion.

## FINDINGS

### Quantitative Findings

#### Platform Adoption and Primary Channel Allocation

Table 1 presents the overall frequency of platform adoption across the full sample. Facebook was the most widely deployed platform, present in 82 of the 100 campaign units (82%), followed by YouTube (74%), Instagram (63%), TikTok (41%), WhatsApp (38%), and Twitter/X (19%). When respondents were asked to designate the platform occupying the primary promotional role in their campaign, Facebook was nominated in 58% of cases, YouTube in 22%, Instagram in 12%, TikTok in 5%, and a residual 3% cited other platforms or mixed strategies with no designated primary channel. These figures confirm Facebook's dominance not only in terms of reach but in terms of strategic centrality.

**Table 1 Platform Adoption and Primary Channel Designation Across the Sample (n=100)**

| Platform | Campaigns Utilising Platform | % of Sample | Designated as Primary Channel | % Designated Primary |
|----------|------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Facebook | 82                           | 82%         | 58                            | 58%                  |

| Platform  | Campaigns Utilising Platform | % of Sample | Designated as Primary Channel | % Designated Primary |
|-----------|------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| YouTube   | 74                           | 74%         | 22                            | 22%                  |
| Instagram | 63                           | 63%         | 12                            | 12%                  |
| TikTok    | 41                           | 41%         | 5                             | 5%                   |
| WhatsApp  | 38                           | 38%         | 0                             | 0%                   |
| Twitter/X | 19                           | 19%         | 3                             | 3%                   |

Note. WhatsApp was not nominated as a primary channel by any respondent, reflecting its positioning as a secondary dissemination mechanism rather than a formal promotional vehicle.

### Multi-Platform Campaign Structure

Analysis of campaign architecture revealed that multi-platform deployment has become normative within Sri Lankan Buddhist film promotion. 67% of campaigns (n=67) employed three or more platforms simultaneously; 21% employed two platforms; and only 12% relied on a single platform exclusively. Among multi-platform campaigns, the most frequent dyadic combination was Facebook and YouTube, which co-occurred in 71% of all multi-platform campaigns. The triadic combination of Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram appeared in 54% of multi-platform campaigns, while the addition of TikTok to this triad was observed in 28% (Van Dijck et al., 2018).

**Table 2 Multi-Platform Campaign Architecture (n=100)**

| Number of Platforms Deployed           | Number of Campaigns | % of Sample           |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Single platform only                   | 12                  | 12%                   |
| Two platforms                          | 21                  | 21%                   |
| Three platforms                        | 34                  | 34%                   |
| Four platforms                         | 24                  | 24%                   |
| Five or more platforms                 | 9                   | 9%                    |
| Facebook + YouTube (dyad)              | 71                  | 71% of multi-platform |
| Facebook + YouTube + Instagram (triad) | 54                  | 54% of multi-platform |

Note. Percentages for dyadic/triadic combinations are calculated as a proportion of the 88 multi-platform campaigns.

### Self-Reported Promotional Effectiveness

Respondents rated the effectiveness of each platform they deployed using a four-point scale (highly effective / moderately effective / minimally effective / ineffective). Table 3 reports the percentage of campaigns in which each platform was rated as highly effective, among those campaigns where the platform was used. YouTube registered the highest effectiveness rating (81%), followed closely by Facebook (78%), Instagram (58%), WhatsApp (47%), TikTok (43%), and Twitter/X (26%). The comparatively high effectiveness rating for YouTube, despite its second-place adoption ranking, reflects the alignment between YouTube's long-form content architecture and the narrative depth characteristic of Buddhist cinema.

**Table 3 Self-Reported Promotional Effectiveness by Platform (Rated 'Highly Effective')**

| Platform  | Campaigns Using Platform (n) | Rated Highly Effective (n) | % Highly Effective |
|-----------|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Facebook  | 82                           | 64                         | 78%                |
| YouTube   | 74                           | 60                         | 81%                |
| Instagram | 63                           | 37                         | 58%                |
| TikTok    | 41                           | 18                         | 43%                |
| WhatsApp  | 38                           | 18                         | 47%                |
| Twitter/X | 19                           | 5                          | 26%                |

Note. Effectiveness ratings were provided by campaign coordinators or film distributors via structured interview. Ratings reflect perceived reach and audience conversion rather than independently verified engagement metrics.

### Audience Demographic Reach by Platform

Content analysis of campaign metadata and distributor reports revealed distinct demographic profiles for each platform. Facebook's reach was concentrated in the 35–54 age bracket (reported as the dominant audience group in 64% of campaigns using the platform), consistent with the platform's established demographic in Sri Lanka. YouTube exhibited the broadest cross-generational reach, with significant engagement reported across both the 25–44 and 45–60+ brackets in 58% of campaigns. Instagram's audience was predominantly identified as urban, educated, and concentrated in the 22–35 age range in 71% of campaigns. TikTok's audience skewed markedly younger, with the 18–30 demographic constituting the dominant audience group in 76% of TikTok-deploying campaigns. WhatsApp's reach was characterised as community-based and intergenerational, with a concentration in the 40–60+ bracket, mediated through temple communication networks, in 69% of relevant campaigns.

**Table 4 Dominant Audience Age Demographic by Platform**

| Platform  | Dominant Age Bracket | % of Campaigns Reporting This Demographic | Urban/Rural Skew        |
|-----------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Facebook  | 35–54                | 64%                                       | Mixed                   |
| YouTube   | 25–54                | 58%                                       | Mixed                   |
| Instagram | 22–35                | 71%                                       | Urban-skewed            |
| TikTok    | 18–30                | 76%                                       | Urban-skewed            |
| WhatsApp  | 40–60+               | 69%                                       | Mixed / Rural-inclusive |
| Twitter/X | 25–40                | 61%                                       | Urban-skewed            |

Note. Demographic classifications are based on distributor self-reports and platform-provided analytics summaries where available.

### Content Type Distribution by Platform

Systematic coding of the 100 campaigns identified the predominant content formats deployed on each platform. Facebook campaigns were characterised by devotional image posts (89%), event announcements (76%), full-length trailers (71%), and Facebook Live broadcast promotions (43%). YouTube campaigns were anchored by full-length trailers (94%), behind-the-scenes documentary content (62%), director and cast interview segments (48%), and thematically curated playlists (39%). Instagram campaigns employed static devotional imagery (87%), short-form Reels (74%), Stories-format daily countdowns (68%), and IGTV long-form content (31%).

TikTok campaigns relied exclusively on short-form clips under sixty seconds (100%), with a minority employing challenge mechanics (23%) or collaborative duet formats (15%). WhatsApp promotion operated primarily through shared trailer links (91%), text-format announcements disseminated via Buddhist community broadcast lists (84%), and, in a minority of cases, voice note messages recorded by directors or cast members (31%).

**Table 5 Predominant Promotional Content Formats by Platform**

| Platform  | Primary Content Format         | % of Campaigns | Secondary Format                | % of Campaigns |
|-----------|--------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Facebook  | Devotional image posts         | 89%            | Full-length trailers            | 71%            |
| YouTube   | Full-length trailers           | 94%            | Behind-the-scenes documentary   | 62%            |
| Instagram | Static devotional imagery      | 87%            | Short-form Reels                | 74%            |
| TikTok    | Short-form clips (<60 seconds) | 100%           | Challenge/interactive mechanics | 23%            |
| WhatsApp  | Forwarded trailer links        | 91%            | Community broadcast text posts  | 84%            |
| Twitter/X | Text-based event announcements | 74%            | Embedded trailer links          | 63%            |

*Note.* Multiple formats per campaign were possible; percentages reflect the proportion of campaigns using each format on each platform.

### Digital Marketing Budget Allocation

Of the 100 campaign units, 67 yielded usable budget allocation data (the remaining 33 either declined to disclose or operated with no formal advertising expenditure). Among the 67 disclosing campaigns, Facebook absorbed the largest average share of digital marketing budgets at 34%, followed by YouTube (28%), Instagram (19%), TikTok (9%), and residual allocations to Twitter/X and other platforms (10%). This distribution suggests that despite YouTube's slightly higher effectiveness rating, Facebook commands a disproportionate share of promotional investment, likely attributable to its combination of demographic reach, community infrastructure, and relatively lower cost-per-impression within the Sri Lankan advertising market (Lim, 2021).

**Table 6 Average Digital Marketing Budget Allocation by Platform (n=67 disclosing campaigns)**

| Platform    | Average Budget Share (%) | Range (Min–Max) | Campaigns with Paid Promotion (n) |
|-------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Facebook    | 34%                      | 18–61%          | 59                                |
| YouTube     | 28%                      | 10–52%          | 48                                |
| Instagram   | 19%                      | 5–38%           | 41                                |
| TikTok      | 9%                       | 2–21%           | 22                                |
| Twitter/X   | 5%                       | 1–14%           | 14                                |
| Other/Mixed | 5%                       | 0–12%           | 9                                 |

*Note.* Budget data was unavailable for 33 campaigns. Campaigns are predominantly independent productions with modest digital marketing budgets. Range figures reflect variability within the 67 disclosing campaigns.



## Promotional Activity and the Buddhist Religious Calendar

A distinctive structural feature of Sri Lankan Buddhist film promotion is its alignment with the Buddhist lunar calendar rather than conventional film release cycles. 91% of campaigns reported intensifying promotional activity during the Vesak Poya full moon period (May), with 76% of those citing Facebook as the platform recording the highest traffic during this window. Poson Poya (June) was a secondary peak, with 67% of campaigns deploying targeted promotional content, and Unduvap Poya (December) was noted as a promotional occasion by 43% of campaigns. Platform-specific posting frequency data confirmed a measurable surge in TikTok activity during release weeks, with a mean 68% increase in posting frequency in the seven days following initial theatrical or digital release, suggesting a platform-specific role in generating immediate post-release audience momentum.

**Table 7 Promotional Intensity During Key Buddhist Calendar Events**

| Buddhist Calendar Event | Campaigns Intensifying Promotion | % of Sample | Highest-Traffic Platform During Period   |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------|
| Vesak Poya (May)        | 91                               | 91%         | Facebook (76% of intensifying campaigns) |
| Poson Poya (June)       | 67                               | 67%         | Facebook (71%)                           |
| Unduvap Poya (Dec.)     | 43                               | 43%         | YouTube (58%)                            |
| Navam Poya (Feb.)       | 31                               | 31%         | Facebook (64%)                           |
| Film release week       | 100                              | 100%        | TikTok posting surge (+68%)              |

*Note.* Calendar promotional data was derived from content analysis of posting timestamps across the 100 campaigns. 'Highest-traffic platform' data draws on distributor self-reports.

## Geographic Reach and Language of Promotional Content

Campaigns demonstrated strong promotional concentration in the Western Province, with the Colombo metropolitan area reached by 94% of campaigns. Reach diminished progressively in more geographically peripheral provinces: Southern Province (78%), Central Province (72%), Sabaragamuwa Province (61%), North Western Province (58%), Northern Province (41%), and Eastern Province (38%). Respondents attributed this geographic attenuation to a combination of platform connectivity constraints and linguistic barriers, the latter reflected in content language data: Sinhala-language promotional content was present in 94% of campaigns, English in 47%, Tamil in only 22%, and bilingual Sinhala/English content in 38% of campaigns. The underrepresentation of Tamil-language promotional material is consistent with broader patterns of ethno-linguistic segmentation in Sri Lankan media practice (Dissanayake, 1996).

## Audience Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment analysis of publicly accessible audience responses across platforms conducted on a subsample of 50 campaigns revealed platform-specific patterns of audience reception. YouTube exhibited the most positive sentiment profile, with 81% positive comments, 14% neutral, and 5% negative. Facebook followed with 74% positive, 18% neutral, and 8% negative. Instagram registered 69% positive, 24% neutral, and 7% negative sentiment, while TikTok, consistent with the reservations expressed by practitioners about tonal fit, recorded the lowest positive sentiment at 57%, with 28% neutral and 15% negative audience responses. The relatively elevated negative and neutral sentiment on TikTok is attributed to the platform's broader, non-specialist audience composition, which includes viewers who encounter Buddhist film content without prior devotional engagement.

**Table 8 Audience Sentiment Analysis by Platform (Subsample, n=50 Campaigns)**

| Platform  | Positive Sentiment (%) | Neutral Sentiment (%) | Negative Sentiment (%) |
|-----------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| YouTube   | 81%                    | 14%                   | 5%                     |
| Facebook  | 74%                    | 18%                   | 8%                     |
| Instagram | 69%                    | 24%                   | 7%                     |
| TikTok    | 57%                    | 28%                   | 15%                    |

Note. Sentiment coding was conducted via a three-category scheme (positive / neutral / negative) applied to publicly visible comments and reactions. Twitter/X and WhatsApp were excluded from this analysis due to insufficient publicly accessible comment data.

## Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of the eight structured interviews yielded six principal themes, which are presented below. Direct quotations are attributed using pseudonymised participant identifiers indicating gender and approximate professional role.

### Theme 1: Platform–Community Alignment

The most consistently articulated theme across all eight interviews was what participants described as the organic compatibility between Facebook's community architecture and the organisational ecology of Sri Lankan Buddhist lay networks. Participants observed that Facebook groups maintained by temples, the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress, and provincial Buddhist cultural societies function as ready-made distribution nodes for film promotional content, effectively extending the reach of a given campaign into communities that promotional teams could not otherwise access.

One distributor (male, 52) stated: *"Facebook is where our people are. When we share something, within an hour it is inside the temple WhatsApp groups. Facebook is the starting point; everything else follows."* A producer (male, 61) similarly observed: *"You do not have to build the community on Facebook. The community is already there. You are simply entering a room that is already full."* This theme aligns with analysis of digital Buddhist community infrastructure in South Asia, which identifies social media platforms Facebook particularly as extensions of pre-existing lay devotional networks.

### Theme 2: Devotional Tone Versus Algorithmic Pressure

Six of the eight participants expressed significant tension between maintaining the solemnity and contemplative character expected of Buddhist cinematic content and the entertainment-oriented algorithmic demands of platforms such as TikTok and, to a lesser extent, Instagram. This tension was articulated with particular clarity by a female director (44): *"TikTok wants you to be fast, entertaining, sometimes funny, always surprising. Buddhist films are slow. They are meant to allow the viewer to sit with something. We are fighting the algorithm every time we post."*

A second participant (male producer, 38) extended this observation to the content design level: *"On TikTok we had to make a thirty-second clip that was engaging enough to stop the scroll, but that still respected the film. You cannot show the Buddha dancing. You cannot use a trending sound. So what do you do? Mostly we used chanting as the audio, beautiful visuals. It worked for some audiences, but not the platform's core demographic."* This theme resonates with Hoover's (2021) theorisation of the confrontation between digital distraction cultures and contemplative religious engagement, which he argues produces structural friction rather than synthesis.

### Theme 3: Community Gatekeepers and Informal Networks

All eight participants independently identified the amplifying role of specific institutional and individual actors described collectively here as community gatekeepers in shaping the reach and legitimacy of Buddhist film promotional content. These gatekeepers included prominent monks with large WhatsApp broadcast subscriber lists, lay Buddhist leaders with significant Facebook followings, and the digital communications teams of major Buddhist organisations such as the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress and the Young Men's Buddhist Association.

The producer (male, 38) recounted: *"When a senior thero shared our trailer on his WhatsApp broadcast, we received approximately five thousand views before eight in the morning. No advertising budget can buy what that single share delivered. It is not reach; it is trust."* A distributor (female, 46) elaborated: *"The Buddhist community responds to endorsement. If a respected monk has seen the film and shared it, people will see it. If it has not been endorsed by anyone they respect, the most sophisticated campaign will not move them."* This finding underscores the limitations of platform-centric promotional models that do not account for the role of trusted relational networks in devotional media consumption (Campbell, 2020).

### Theme 4: Intergenerational Platform Divergence

Seven of the eight participants articulated a clear generational bifurcation in platform preferences, which they navigated through differentiated content strategies. Older audiences (approximately 40 and above) were described as concentrated on Facebook and WhatsApp, while younger audiences (approximately 18–30) were seen as primarily reachable through Instagram and TikTok. YouTube was perceived as the only genuinely cross-generational platform, valued for its capacity to host full-length trailers that could function as substantive devotional content in their own right.

This divergence was captured vividly by a distributor (female, 39): *"For my father, it is Facebook. For my nephew, it is Instagram. For my niece, it is TikTok. Three different films, almost, in how we must show it the same film, but told three different ways for three different screens."* A production company representative (male, 33) noted that this necessitated not merely platform-specific posting but platform-specific content production: *"We are not re-cutting one trailer for different platforms. We are making three or four entirely different pieces of content, each reflecting what that platform and that audience expects."* This finding complicates simple reach-maximisation models by revealing the production cost implications of genuine multi-platform promotional strategy (Bucher & Helmond, 2018).

### Theme 5: The Buddhist Religious Calendar as Promotional Architecture

All eight participants described the Buddhist lunar calendar rather than conventional theatrical release windows or film marketing cycles as the primary structural logic governing promotional timing decisions. Vesak and Poson were universally identified as the highest-impact promotional periods, described variously as the Buddhist cinematic equivalent of Christmas and Easter in the Western film market.

The producer (male, 61) stated: *"We do not plan around the box office calendar. We plan around the poya calendar. If your film is not in the market three weeks before Vesak, you have missed your moment."* A distributor (male, 52) elaborated on the platform-specific logic of calendar-aligned promotion: *"During Vesak, Facebook traffic among Buddhist communities doubles, perhaps triples. People are sharing bana, sharing Dhamma, sharing puja photographs. If your film promotion is in that stream, it feels natural. It belongs. If you post the same content on a random day in October, it feels like an advertisement."* This theme reveals that promotional calendar architecture in Sri Lankan Buddhist film is fundamentally shaped by devotional temporality rather than commercial logic—a finding with significant implications for media planning practice (Hoover, 2021).

### Theme 6: Infrastructural and Digital Literacy Constraints

Five of the eight participants identified digital literacy gaps among older target audiences as a significant constraint on platform effectiveness, particularly on platforms requiring active engagement or navigation beyond



passive consumption. Rural and provincial connectivity issues were noted by six respondents as a structural barrier to effective reach in the Northern, Eastern, and Uva provinces.

A distributor (female, 57) observed: *"Our most devoted audiences the people who truly want to see a Buddhist film are often in their fifties and sixties. Many of them struggle with apps. WhatsApp they know because their children set it up for them. YouTube sometimes. TikTok, almost never."* A production company representative (male, 33) raised concerns about algorithmic suppression of religious content: *"We have had posts removed on Instagram and had reach cut on TikTok without any explanation. We believe it is the algorithm treating religious content as sensitive. But we cannot confirm this. It creates uncertainty."* These constraints align with Lim's (2021) observations regarding algorithmic enclosure and the differential visibility of culturally specific content within platform governance regimes.

## DISCUSSION

The convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings in this study produces a multidimensional portrait of social media promotion in Sri Lankan Buddhist cinema that substantially exceeds what either methodological strand could have yielded in isolation. The quantitative data establishes the architecture of platform usage its frequency, budget allocation, demographic reach, and sentiment outcomes while the qualitative data illuminates the strategic reasoning, cultural negotiations, and structural constraints that animate those patterns.

Facebook's statistical dominance (82% adoption, 34% budget share, 78% highly effective rating) is rendered interpretively coherent by the qualitative finding that it functions not as a neutral broadcast channel but as an extension of pre-existing Buddhist community infrastructure. This reading aligns with analysis of digitally mediated lay Buddhist sociality in Sri Lanka, and with Campbell's (2020) broader theorisation of digital religion as a practice embedded in existing relational and institutional structures rather than a transformation of them.

YouTube's highest effectiveness rating (81%), despite its secondary adoption ranking, reflects the structural alignment between long-form content architecture and the narrative depth, contemplative pacing, and instructional tradition of Theravāda Buddhist storytelling a relationship that has theorised as the affinity between Buddhist cinematic temporality and the deep-viewing culture of platform video. The finding that YouTube commands the second-largest average budget share (28%) despite lower adoption rates further indicates that practitioners who do deploy it invest heavily, recognising its capacity for substantive devotional engagement.

The ambivalence expressed toward TikTok adopted by 41% of campaigns yet carrying the lowest effectiveness rating (43%) and highest negative sentiment share (15%) crystallises a tension between algorithmic culture and devotional aesthetics that is likely to intensify as TikTok's Sri Lankan user base grows. This similar dynamic in Indian Buddhist content creation, where the platform's momentum-oriented design principles produce what he characterises as a structural dissonance with contemplative religious experience. The finding that TikTok adoption surges in the immediate post-release week, and that positive uses concentrate on visually striking devotional imagery with chanting audio tracks, suggests an emerging accommodation strategy that warrants longitudinal investigation.

The identification of the Buddhist religious calendar as a primary promotional architecture rather than conventional theatrical release logic is perhaps the study's most distinctive structural finding. It implies that effective promotional strategy in this genre requires not merely platform literacy but cultural and devotional calendrical knowledge, and that promotional agencies without deep familiarity with the Buddhist community are likely to mistime campaigns in ways that significantly reduce their impact (Hoover, 2021). The alignment of Vesak-period promotional intensity (91% of campaigns) with Facebook's highest-traffic window further suggests a resonance between devotional temporality and platform-community activity patterns that constitutes a structural promotional opportunity specific to Sri Lanka.

## CONCLUSION

This study has established, through systematic empirical analysis of one hundred promotional campaigns ( $n=100$ ) and eight structured stakeholder interviews, that social media has become the defining infrastructure of

Buddhist film promotion in Sri Lanka, with Facebook (82% adoption, 34% average budget share), YouTube (74%, 28%), and Instagram (63%, 19%) constituting the dominant triad of platforms. Multi-platform integration is now normative (67% of campaigns deploy three or more platforms), and promotional timing is governed by the Buddhist lunar calendar rather than conventional commercial release logic.

Qualitative analysis reveals that these quantitative patterns are not merely market-determined but are shaped by cultural, devotional, and infrastructural variables: the pre-existence of Buddhist community networks on Facebook, the narrative affinity between YouTube and Buddhist storytelling tradition, the tonal dissonance between TikTok's algorithmic entertainment culture and devotional content expectations, the amplifying role of community gatekeepers, and the structural constraints of rural connectivity and digital literacy gaps. Collectively, these findings argue for a model of Buddhist film promotion that is platform-literate, devotionally calibrated, culturally embedded, and calendar-sensitive.

The study makes substantive contributions to the intersecting fields of Buddhist media studies, platform theory (Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Van Dijck et al., 2018), digital religion (Campbell, 2020; Hoover, 2021), and South Asian postcolonial media scholarship (Dissanayake, 1996). Future research should pursue longitudinal analysis to track the continued evolution of TikTok's role as its Sri Lankan user base matures into the primary devotional cinema demographic, and should extend the sample to include diaspora promotional practices in order to capture the transnational dimensions of Sri Lankan Buddhist cinematic culture. Comparative analysis across South and Southeast Asian Buddhist film markets including those of Thailand, Myanmar, and Cambodia would further illuminate the extent to which the findings presented here reflect specifically Sri Lankan conditions or a broader regional dynamic.

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