

Challenges Faced by Regional Indian Cinema: A Study in context of Marathi Cinema

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Abstract: India is a hub known for films and its tremendous influence on people. Countries other than India with a huge fan following for a galaxy of Indian actors and directors are currently on the rise. India being a country of diversity in every sphere of life has its share of diversity in cinemas too. Be it Language, State, Culture, Belief, Actors, Technique, Themes, Taste and Attitude, we are obliged to allow a diversity of thought-provoking subjects, views, opinions depending upon the language and the region of the country the film is made.

Regional films make a great impact on people of the same community and the region as a whole. People at large support their own regional film industry and find it easy to get connected with the actors, themes and their culture. Films in various Indian Languages like Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Punjabi, Marathi, Hindi and Bengali are made regionally, in their own film industry. One of the popular regional film industries in India is The Hindi/Urdu film industry that is based in Mumbai, formerly Bombay known as "Bollywood". Similar neologisms have been coined so as to identify the films region wise like Tollywood, Kollywood that identifies with the language of the film like Telugu films and Kannada films. Undoubtedly, the impact of the regional Cinema is tremendous on our psychology as we not only get connected with the roots but also are comfortable when it comes to understanding the core of the subject matter in the film. It is a fact that message conveyed in our own language is more impressive and wide spread and holds the mass as one unit!

However, Bollywood industry is seen to have caught the bull's eye making the largest number of films hit the box office records. National Language Hindi has outnumbered regional language speakers of other Indian languages. In spite of being well established in regional language films, actors, producers, writers, directors, singers, choreographers end up venturing in Bollywood. It has also been noted that there is a steep decrease in number of viewers for regional language films.

This paper is an attempt to find the root-cause of problems highlighting the challenges faced by Regional Indian Cinema. A Study in context of Marathi Cinema in a five-year span from 2013 to 2018 is made for thorough understanding of the root cause of the challenges faced by Regional Indian Cinema

Key Words: Indian Cinema, Regional Cinema, Marathi, Community

Introduction

Film Industry is one of the best-known and widely appreciated attractions of India. Indian film industry is the oldest and largest in the world with over 1000 movies released annually. Indian

cinema is a galaxy of films produced across India that includes cinematic culture of every state to cater to its regional audience. India being a diversified country, regional cinema is equally important to reach to its core.

Speaking of Marathi language one cannot deny the fact that Marathi represents a unique cultural perspective. Regional culture and craving to see-hear a film in one's own language gave birth to the regional film industry and Marathi film alike. Marathi Cinema refers to films produced in Marathi language in Maharashtra. It in itself is as old as Indian Cinema.

Review of Literature

India Today (12th April, 2015) in an article titled 'Marathi Cinema and its Struggle for Success', reports that Multiplex owners focus more on Bollywood cinema. It is not only movie that generates revenue but also the popcorn and other refreshments help multiplex owners produce huge profit. Business Standard (19 March, 2019) notes that Distribution Challenges makes it harder for regional cinemas. State policies hinder the distribution of regional films including Marathi. This lacks the investment in films to maintain the quality.

Objectives

Objectives reflect the cause-effect identified in the problem. The main aim is to understand the difficulties faced by Marathi films in terms of economic, social, technical and overall to make a mark as a Regional Indian Cinema.

Challenges in Marathi Cinema: *Economic Challenges*

1. Proximity to Bollywood

Survival of Marathi film industry based in Mumbai has its set of challenges. The fact that Bollywood is based in Mumbai is in itself a challenge for Marathi cinema. Competition against Bollywood for resources makes it arduous for Marathi film industry. Fact that Mumbai is the center for both industries has an adverse effect on the Marathi film industry. It has to experience the Bollywood hangover.

2. Producers are First Timers

Major weakness of Marathi film industry is the situation where most of the producers are first timers. Irony is that builders, jewelers who have black money and no place to hide is producing films. They invest a huge amount, incur losses and vanish. Thus the bureaucrats, people

with black money enter film industry and invest especially in small budget films. Producing Regional cinemas fit the bill. Moreover they come with a dream of making name and fame in the society. Hand in hand they focus on converting their black money into white money. Glamour, reputation, subsidies from the government etc. too keeps them engaged for some time .They quit after a short span creating a vacuum due to the absence of consistency and lack of experience in the chosen field.

3. **Box Office Sales**

The success or failure of any industry depends on its capacity to grow and sustain in itself. Since Marathi films commercial success is mostly based on the box office revenue collections, they become easy to fleece in case the movie does not do well at the theatre. Eg: **Natsamrat** and **Mohar** were released on the same date: 1st January, 2016. Natsamrat, a film with budget of 7 crore, hit the box office marking the record of Rs. 50 crores and Mohar tasted altogether a different palate at box office.

4. **Dominance of Bollywood**

Bollywood has a negative impact on Marathi movies when it comes to release of the films. It has to compete with Hindi film releases due to massive Hindi film promotion. Availability of screen becomes a problem since major prime locations are booked for Hindi films. As a result, Marathi films are left with venues which are not commercially viable. This leads to huge losses for the producers. They find it difficult to recover their investment made.

Social Challenges

1. **Fails to relate with Indian Diaspora excluding Marathi people**

Major weakness of Marathi film industry is its regional character which makes it difficult for the non-Marathi people to understand. There can be critical acclaim for the film but there cannot be a massive appreciation in terms of commercial gains if the language is not understood. The overseas market which has lots of potential is therefore completely untapped for Marathi films.

2. **Stereotype Portrayal**

Marathi film industry currently falls in the Rural Film Making category pertaining to the fact that most of the themes are related to village life referring to Patils and Subedars. The folk

culture of Maharashtra, *Lavani* and *Tamasha* drew the attention of the film critics and experts to categorize Marathi films into rural film making.

3. **Lack of Content**

It is seen that Marathi films are related to Marathi speaking people. Theme and the entire film revolve round the culture, state, system & beliefs of Marathi people. Wherein Bollywood experiments and explores with almost everything in the making of cinema. Be it content, theme, technical part or the actors, they reach huge masses. When it comes to Marathi films, the content is seen that suits best to a specific crowd that speaks Marathi or at the most understands Marathi. Focus of most of the films is the stereotype formula for commercial gains. This has led to its downfall in comparison with Bollywood. For example take the film *Time Please*, released in 2013 as an example. It is a movie with typical characters like a couple with a villain intruding. It had to fail! This shows that Marathi films do not rank in high order on the scale of content.

4. **Rural /Urban**

Most of the Marathi movies are based on rural subjects. This trend has been going for many years in Marathi film industry. But, with urbanization, there is an urgent need for Marathi films to address urban topics, matters of concern, interest and taste. Lack of urban culture based movies makes the urban audience lose interest and thus they move to the Bollywood Cinema or other forms of entertainment.

Technological Challenges

1. **VFX adaptation**

Marathi films somehow are trying to pace with Bollywood films in terms of VFX. It is in 2019, movies like *Once More*, began with using Chrome Screens. Visual effect, the technical part, graphics in particular adds spice to the theme and makes the movie appealing.

2. **Piracy**

Piracy has become a major problem for regional film industry. It is the theft that leads to massive damage of commercial viability of the movie. Piracy literally kills the hard work put by the entire team involved in the production process. Piracy is on the rise making the access to it very easy on internet. This leads to great loss not only to the producers but also to the entire film industry.

Other Challenges

1. Lucrative offers from Bollywood

Weakness of Marathi film industry is its bargaining power with the exhibitors who prefer Bollywood films to regional cinema. Exhibitors go for lucrative offers from Hindi film industry since the response to Bollywood movies is more than the regional cinema. This leads to problems of exhibition deals between the distributors and the exhibitors.

2. Game of Luck

Marathi films suffer due to lack of market analysis study. There is no scientific methodology derived to have an assessment of the market or the success potential of the product. Lack of authentic methodology makes it a game of toss. Revenue generation becomes a matter of fortune than any well calculated plan of action.

3. Time to Investigate

Market research is fundamental for survival and growth of any business today. Absence of market research is a major weakness of the Marathi film industry. It asks for planned approach during the conceptualization of a film or during the initial process of a film. Interest of the audience is not taken in to consideration using a buying behavior analysis.

A Think Tank

1. Catch the Audience by their pulse

Marathi film industry calls for focus on event marketing as a mode of promotion. The events in comparison to the Hindi film industry are very less. It is time to catch the audience by the nerve through various promotional techniques. This will make the film business appear glamorous for the audience at least to the Ones who take the glamour quotient of the entertainment industry seriously.

2. Diversity in Topics for Diversified Audience

Despite the fact that Marathi film industry is based in Mumbai, the capital of Maharashtra, we find it has been sidelined in comparison with the mainstream Bollywood. If Marathi movies have to rule the box office, they will have to wear a creative thinking hat.

Conclusions

Shwaas (2004) had pumped in oxygen in Marathi film industry which was about to die. We have very few films in Marathi that has given a 'Houseful' tag in theatres. Considering five years time from 2013 to 2018, we find that only a hand full of films made it to box office collection . Approximately 13 Marathi movies paved their way to success. Regional Indian Cinema has to overcome all the challenges tactfully to regain its charm.

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