



LOST OPPORTUNITIES: IMPACT OF MEDIA STEREOTYPING ON INDUSTRIAL GROWTH IN SOUTHERN DISTRICTS OF TAMIL NADU

KEYWORDS

Image Stereotyping, Stereotyping in Tamil Cinema-Industrial Growth–Southern Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT *Cinema was the most popular entertainment media. It provided the people with escape from the miseries of daily life and the heroes and heroines of cinema turned into legendary figures. It is known fact that, over the period of time the cinema had great impact on the social and political status of Tamil Nadu. The most celebrated and loved Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu i.e., M.G. Ramachandran, Kalaingar M.Karunanidhi and current honorable Chief Minister J.Jayalalitha were the gift of cinemas to Tamil fraternity. There is no difference of opinion that cinema is a powerful media that reaches each individual and positively influenced the Tamil society. But, unfortunately the same cinema becomes villain to the industrial development of southern district of Tamil Nadu. This article throws the light on the impact of stereotyping in cinema and its impact in industrial growth in drought ridden southern districts of Tamil Nadu.*

Introduction

How we are seen determines in part how we are treated; How we treat others is based on how we see them. Such seeing comes from representation.

-Richard Dyer

Author of "The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation"

Films are considered as a pivotal source of entertainment and gossip. Cinema is considered as an important communication media which has been an integral part of the modern social and political life of Tamilians. It is necessary here to quote the words of eminent film historian Theodore Baskaran that "over the seventy-nine years of its existence, Tamil cinema has grown to become the most domineering influence in the cultural and political life in Tamil Nadu". Movie stars are considered as celebrities and visible gods. The impact of films not only influenced the minds of individual but also the industrial growth especially in southern districts of Tamil Nadu. The most affected southern districts were Madurai, Paramakkudi, Ram-anathapuram and Tirunelveli. The image projected by the cinema in Tamil Nadu towards Madurai and other southern district of Tamil Nadu taken toll on industrial growth of this area. The glorified Tamil cinema now turned as a villain in the industrial growth of southern districts in Tamil Nadu.

Reviews

Belief in the media's ability to influence behavior is evidenced by the amounts spent on global advertising—totaling about \$503 billion in 2010, according to Nielson. This large sum is targeted at influencing behavior, so it is safe to assume that the behavioral influence is valid. The storyline is simple: the media can contribute to development by bringing about beneficial changes in the behavior of individuals, groups, and organizations. There is a large body of evidence on the media's ability—or inability—to change opinions (Bryant and Zillmann 2002; and Hornik 2002). Gerbner et al. (1979) have shown that the reception of media programs can lead to fear and anxiety. They proved this with an experiment. They named this effect as cultivation effect. Wirth and Shramm (2005) elaborately stud-

ied the relationships between media and emotions. They found that media not only creates positive moods but also creates the states of anxiety in the minds of audience towards objects or events or on individuals.

Ravindran (1999) opined that the media were able to shape public opinion and able to sway masses towards almost any point of view desired by the communicator. Abdallay and Rane (2006) argues that the image of Muslim Community is often distorted or misunderstood by the wider society because of the media stereotyping with their extensive study of media stereotyping by media. Relations between Muslims and the wider society have been strained over the past decades and particularly since 2001. They believed that media coverage of domestic issues and international events involving Muslims is considered to be the central factor in the perpetuation of negative perceptions of Islam. They narrate that the reason for misunderstanding as "in the absence of direct or first-hand experience of people, places, or events, the mass media generally becomes the primary source of information".

In the perception of society, cinema appears as imitation of real life. The existence of this perception may be proved by the fondness of people towards cine actors, even taking an extreme step of making cinema heroes and heroines to decide their own fate by making them chief ministers of states. The basis for this behaviour of masses is attributed to the effect of sublime, effect of repetition and stereotyping.

The mainstream meaning of the word "subliminal" is any effect that influences our perception from outside of our awareness. The constant effort of actors and directors of cinema making the masses exposed to subliminal effect of goodness, made the masses mad on cinema personalities. It is proved empirically by many researchers. Repetition is used to reinforce a theme or idea in the minds of viewer. Repetitive projection of cinema heroes as good and ideal man, the masses believed of the goodness on cine actors. Belch and Belch (2009) proved the effect of repetition by an experiment. A laboratory experiment is used to examine the effects of three levels of exposure on cognitive and affective reactions to humorous and serious television com-

mericals. The results indicate differences in the pattern of effects due to repetition for the two types of messages.

A stereotype is a belief that may be adopted about specific types of individuals or objects or certain ways of doing things, but that belief may or may not accurately reflect reality. Early studies believed that stereotypes were only used by rigid, repressed, and authoritarian people. This idea has been overturned by more recent studies that suggested that stereotypes are commonplace. Stereotyping can serve cognitive functions on an interpersonal level, and social functions on an intergroup level. It is used for explanation, justification, self categorization and consensus.

New York Times articles were used to examine how Cubans and Haitians were framed from January 1, 1994, through December 31, 2004 by Celeste (2005). The analysis was comparative, looking at differences and similarities in the coverage. A sample of 177 articles was analyzed for frequently occurring themes, catchphrases, and figures of speech. The sample included 81 articles for Cubans and 96 for Haitians. Overall both groups were framed negatively by New York Times. Cookie Fischer, professor at the Woodbury University in California, said in Havana that she has personally seen during her visit to Cuba that the reality here is quite different from what her country's media portrays. It is a history that US willfully disgraced the image of Cuba using Hollywood movies i.e. *Thirteen Days* by Roger Donaldson.

The same propaganda also carried towards Russians and Arabs as "petty, dishonest and lecherous in films". Egyptian film critic Samir Farid observed that "*The image of the Arab and of the petrodollar in Egyptian films is even worse than in American films*". Egyptian film critic Samir Farid points out that Egyptian cinema is cruel to Arabs as well. Farid is Egypt's most senior film critic and the author of more than a dozen books on film.

From the review it is very clear that cinema is an important media that shapes the behaviour of masses. It uses various psychological concepts to influence the behaviour of people i.e., effect of sublime, repetition and stereotyping. The authors of this article narrates the negative impact of stereotyping in cinema towards the industrial growth in the drought ridden Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu

Industrial Development Scenario in Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu

Madurai has long been a laggard in industrial development as compared to other parts of Tamil Nadu. The only major industries that are in Madurai are TVS, TVS Srichakra, Madura Coats and Honeywell. During the 2006 to 2010, the Tamil Nadu had investments from around 34 MNC's with around Rs.2,84,000 Crores. Except few industries, most of the organizations were occupied the area located in and around Chennai. There are various reasons for neglecting southern districts of Tamil Nadu, i.e: Political, Infrastructure and non availability of skilled workforce. The reason of non availability of skilled labour is invalid, because 21% of employees working in Chennai MNC's were from southern districts of Tamil Nadu. Related to infrastructure, Madurai is continuously neglected by the government. But for last 10 years, there is a growth in the infrastructure such as Road, Housing, Power and Air Transportation.

At the mercy of Government of Tamil Nadu, the special economic zone is created in Uranganpatty of Madurai.

Former Madurai District Collector Mr.Udayachandran has promised to establish a Tidel Park to remove the stagnation in industrial growth in this area. Former DMK regime had allotted lands to the top IT companies, such as HCL, Sathyam, Sutherland, Scope, Tessolve and Honeywell in Madurai IT Park in Vadapalanji. Government granted allotment orders for 160 acres in Madurai, Tirunelveli, Tiruchi and in Chennai, to top 8 companies that have come forward to set up shop in IT Parks being set up by the state owned Electronics Corporation of Tamil Nadu (ELCOT). Initially the IT companies have surely realised that they stand to gain by moving to the IT SEZs in Tier II cities, like the ones in Madurai, Tirunelveli (Nanguneri SEZs) and Tiruchi. As the STPI (Software Technology Parks of India) benefits will last only till 2010, the IT SEZs are the preferred destinations as companies can enjoy benefits for 10 more years.

ELCOT is establishing two SEZs In Madurai, one at Ilandhaikulam Village and another at Vadapalanji Village in 28.91 acres and 239.58 acres of land respectively. The Government of India accorded SEZ status for both the IT SEZs and duly notified in the Gazette on 30th April 2008. Major IT Companies such as HCL-60 acres, Satyam-50 acres and Sutherland-5 acres were allotted in Vadapalanji. In Ilandhaikulam lands have been allotted to HCL-5 acres, Honeywell-5 acres and Tessolve-2.5 acres. On the completion of the Ilandhaikulam IT Park, it is expected to provide employment to 20,000 candidates directly and to 45,000 candidates indirectly. In the case of Vadapalanji, it is expected to provide employment to 40,000 candidates directly and to 1,20,000 candidates indirectly.

ELCOT has leased 500 acres of land from SIPCOT in Gangaikondan Village, Tirunelveli Taluk, Tirunelveli to establish this IT / ITES SEZ. The Government of India issued approval to an extent of 100 Acres of land in Tirunelveli. On the completion of this IT Park, it is expected to provide employment to 30,000 candidates directly and to 90,000 candidates indirectly. ELCOT with Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode will invest Rs.180 crores in this IT Park. According to reports in 2009, the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu, the government agency which allots land for industrial projects, has allotted around 70 acres to Videocon to set up the plant in Manamadurai. The cost of the project is Rs 1,600 crore.

But, unfortunately nothing happened except Ilandaikulam SEZ till date. Tamil Nadu Government's ambitious programme to promote Information Technology SEZs in tier-II cities has hit a roadblock that several firms opted to pull out. IT majors like HCL Technologies, Satyam Ltd and Sutherland Global services, who were allotted land at two SEZs near Madurai and near Tiruchirapalli have cried off and asked for return of the lease amount, citing infrastructure and transport bottle necks. The IT policy note tabled in the Assembly in the year 2013 said HCL Technologies has asked ELCOT for refund. It said the company, along with Satyam Ltd, Syntel Ltd and Sutherland Global Services had been allotted 140 acres at Vadapalanji but has asked ELCOT to refund the lease amount saying they were not interested in starting units in the SEZ.

In same time, Cognizant vice-chairman Lakshmi Narayanan said, "*with education infrastructure and entrepreneurial spirit, the Coimbatore city is all set to become a top destination for IT companies*". NASSCOM opined that the growth of the IT sector in India has also outlined and brought into prominence cities with great potential. Exponential growth, coupled with zealous businesses expand-

ing in Coimbatore, has catapulted the city as the growing hub of IT-BPO industry in India. Coimbatore is a strategic location amid the cluster of other IT destinations of Salem, Trichy and Madurai, have made it a foremost choice for multiple industrial centers and an environment also conducive to IT entrepreneurs. Coimbatore is the second largest location of Tamil Nadu and one of the seven where the Government wants to develop the IT-BPO sector.

Now, it very critical to question, "What happened to this projects? Or Are the investors were not aware about the infrastructure when they have been allotted the land?". The author of this article tried to find out the reasons. The researchers found that one of the major reasons is media stereo typing that scared away the investors from these regions.

Evidences of Stereotyping

There is lot of movies which has come out with stories based on Madurai lately and in very large quantity recently. These cinemas projected Madurai and its people are all hard, rough, uneducated, aggressive, angry, sentimental and illiterate. The films based in Madurai are increasingly defined by the glorification of 'Aruval' (the sickle shaped machete) and a corresponding mythology of a society based on martial pride and honour. In the perception Tamil people, who live away from southern Tamil Nadu, Madurai is remembered for Murder, Mayhem and Sickle.

Rajan Krishnan, PhD scholar in Film Studies from Columbia University, narrates that it was Kamal Hassan who brought that sickle bearing genre. He says, "*I would like to propose that in recent times, it is a Kamal Hassan film of high authenticity markers called Thevar Magan (1992) — meaning "Son of Thevar" — that can be said to have inaugurated the era of the south being represented as primarily a sickle bearing space.*"

Films which came later like Kathal, Gilli, Thiruppachi, Paruthiveeran, Sanda Kozhi, Thimiru, Subramaniapuram, Goripalayam, Madurai Sambavam, Thittakudi, Maathiyosi, Milaga, and the recent hit Aadukalam all have references to

Madurai and are full of violence. This stereotype was further strengthened in films like 'Gilli', where the images of lorry loads of sickle-bearing, country bomb-throwing men chasing the young couple as they drive towards Chennai lend a mythical dimension to the violent south. These Madurai based films portrayed people of Madurai as "normally wear Lungi, have long beard and mush with ugly shirt and were less civic".

Unfortunately, these images were created largely by movie directors who had come from the southern part especially in and around Madurai rather than from the north which is seen as the modern. In fact, most of the filmmakers at the helm of these movies are from Madurai and down south and they bring the small town cultural and caste/class discourse into the narrative centre piece. The continuous portrayal of Madurai in dark side spoiled the perception of investors. It image stereotyping by cinema towards Madurai scared the investor, who actually looking for a friendly, soft spoken, amicable and highly civic locals.

Conclusion

Madurai once remembered for its strong culture, literature and religious adherence. Once upon a time Madurai is remembered for Lordess Meenakshi Amman, bull fight and beautiful villages. The most popular films like "Thiruvilayadal", 'Adhi Parasakthi' 'Veerapandiya Kattabomman' and 'Madurai Veeran' were highlighted spirituality, valour and love of Southern Tamil Nadu. It is a right time to the people of south Tamil Nadu to remove the image stereotyping. It is the responsibility of filmmakers to set right the images of southern districts. They must use same Tamil Cinema to regain the confidence of investors. It is possible by the film directors to retain the lost glory of Southern Tamil Nadu. Practically it is very difficult to change image stereotyping. But continuous efforts of communication over a period of time do the magic to remove image stereotyping.

"In some sense all cinema is a special effect"- Christian Metz

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