

# Star dominance and Movie acceptance by consumers in Malayalam film Industry

<sup>1</sup>P S Sreethamol & <sup>2</sup>L Anu (Dr)

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor on Contract, Post Graduate & Research Department of Commerce , The Cochin College, Kochi (India)

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Post Graduate & Research Department of Commerce, The Cochin College, Kochi (India)

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### Corresponding Author

Email: sreethaanil5[at]gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

Star Dominance is one of the hot crises in today's Malayalam movie world. Its existence makes many issues in the Kerala Film Industry sector. Thousands of people with creative roles are employed in the film industry in Kerala alone, and most of them work for low salaries. However, an extremely small group is able to command much higher salaries – superstars may receive crores of rupees as salaries for a movie. In some instances, stars are even demanding a percentage of the gross profits also. Such salaries lead to the increase in overall production budgets. Several researchers have studied the effect of star power. Most studies in Hollywood uses star power and box office performance as the variables (e.g. Litman 1983; Litman & Kohl 1989; Litman & Ahn 1998; Wallace et al 1993). Focusing solely on the role of stars, Albert (1998) shows that stars are the most factors for success of movies which, he explains their influence in Hollywood. Most of these studies are based on Hollywood. But today's issues in Malayalam movie world demand this type of study. This study aimed to identify the star dominance in Malayalam movies world and its acceptance by consumers. Its relevance in Malayalam movies industry is very important in this present situation. The study employs both primary and secondary data. Primary data is proposed to be collected through structured questionnaire using Likert scale (Likert, 1932). Both descriptive and inferential statistics shall be applied to support the study.

## 1. Introduction

The film industry sector in Kerala has grown by leaps and bounds in the last decade. In recent years there arises a question, is the involvement of star actors critical to the success of a movie? Film producers are regularly paying crores of money to star actors, appears to be driven by the belief that star actors are the key to success of a movie. Thereby the image of stars started having more influence over the film industry. Even though there are hundreds of talented actors and actresses, a small bunch of artists has risen to the top and started to command and bargain their fees in crores per movie in salaries, perks, and profit participation deals. Profit sharing arrangements, so-called back-end deals, is amounting to additional higher fees to stars. This has led to a situation where high profile stars have a powerful influence on movie development by interfering the producers, distributors, and exhibitors. Is the involvement of star actors critical to the success of a movie; are they worth the star treatment? In today's world the producers are spending heavily on high profile stars which are causing abrupt rising production cost of a movie to a gigantic figure. This is a very bad trend in the industry which is putting producers under tremendous pressure. This issue is to be addressed at the earliest for the benefit of the industry. There lies the scope of having a study on this hot topic to assess the realistic data. Opinion of consumers are being analysed here to come into a conclusion whether star dominance has the same value in the success of a movie.

### 1.1 Literature Review

A **Forbes (2004)** article entitled "The Myth of Brad Pitt", which compared more than 200 holly wood films, revealed that fewer than half of the highest-grossing hits featured an actor

who had top billing in at least one hit movie previously. The top three movies—Star Wars, E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial and Titanic—had no stars. This shows, some insiders claim, that "it is the movie itself—not the star—that makes the hit" (Forbes 2002).

**Suman Basuroy, Subimal Chatterjee, S. Abraham Ravid (2003)** article titled 'How Critical are Critical Reviews? The Box Office Effects of Film Critics, Star Power, and Budgets' the study examined two key moderators of critical reviews, stars and budgets, and find that popular stars and big budgets enhance box office revenue for films that receive more negative critical reviews than positive critical reviews but do little for films that receive more positive reviews than negative reviews. The study offers insight into how film studios can strategically manage the review process to enhance box office revenue.

**Catherine Griff (2012)** Film audience testing in Australia: Capturing the audience before it bites, Studies in Australasian Cinema- This article investigates the role of audience test screenings as a tool for anticipating and interpreting the audience. The primary focus was on 'test' or 'preview screenings'—a process whereby a selected audience provides feedback to the producers of a film prior to its completion

**Arthur De Vany, W. David Walls (1999)** "Uncertainty in the Movie Industry: Does Star Power Reduce the Terror of the Box Office?" In their study they conclude: (1) the studio model of risk management lacks a foundation in theory or evidence and revenue forecasts have zero precision. In other words, "Anything can happen." (2) Movies are complex products and the cascade of information among film-goers during the course of a film's run can evolve along so many paths that it is

impossible to attribute the success of a movie to individual causal factors. In other words, "No one knows anything." (3) The audience makes a movie a hit and no amount of "star power" or marketing can alter that. In other words, the real star is the movie.

**Banaji, Shakuntala (2006)** "Young people viewing Hindi films: ideology, pleasure and meaning" Based on a three-year study of Hindi films and their audiences in India and the UK, the research pulls together a wide range of ideas and theories on Hindi film and audiences put forward in the last few decades and connects these to the socio political contexts in which the films are watched and to the individual interpretations of young viewers in India and the UK. At a practical level, it explores the connections between film consumption in India and the UK diaspora, representations of sexuality and desire in Hindi films, with a special focus on constructions of gender and ethnicity, and their significance for young viewers.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Is the involvement of stars critical to the success of a movie? Is the viewer accepting a movie with respect to the profile of a star? Producers are regularly paying high amount of fees to stars. This has led to a huge increase in production cost. Many studies are conducted in Hollywood level to find answers to this question. But in Malayalam movie industry hardly any attempt is being made to find the answers to these questions. Thereby the present situation necessitates a study to find out the facts on influence of star dominance in the success of a movie. This study is an attempt to analyse the facts to conclude the star dominance in Malayalam film Industry.

### 1.3 Objectives

- To identify and analysis the socio economic factors which influence the selection of movie
- To identify the respondents opinion regarding star dominance while accepting movies

### 1.4 Hypothesis

- There is no significant association between socio economics variables and star based selection of movie
- There is no significant association between socio economics variables and movie acceptance
- There is no significant difference in the opinion of respondent regarding different aspects of star Dominance

### 1.5 Research Methodology

The study is empirical in nature based on primary data collected from 46 sample respondents and secondary data from published sources. Primary data for this study was collected by using structured questionnaire. Secondary data from published materials was collected from various journals, reports, and magazines.

Instrument: For Present study, structured questionnaires were used

Analysis: Consumers opinion was assessed adapting the **Likert's Opinion Scale (Likert, 1932)**. Both descriptive and inferential statistics have been applied to arrive at the conclusions based on the study.

## 2. Results

**Table 1**  
**Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	18	39.1
	Female	28	60.9
	Total	46	100.0
Age	Below 20	7	15.2
	20 to 40	29	63.0
	40 to 60	9	19.6
	Above 60	1	2.2
	Total	46	100.0
Occupation	Self Employed	8	17.4
	Salaried-Govt/Public Sector	18	39.1
	Salaried-Private Sector	7	15.2
	Unemployed	13	28.3
Total	46	100.0	
Highest Educational Qualification	SSLC or Below	2	4.3
	+2/Diploma	14	30.4
	Graduate	11	23.9
	Post Graduate	19	41.3
Total	46	100.0	
Region	Rural	20	43.5
	Urban	26	56.5
	Total	46	100.0
Marital Status	Single	18	39.1
	Married	27	58.7
	Widow/Widower	1	2.2
	Total	46	100.0
Monthly Income	Below Rs 10000	8	17.4
	Rs 10000 to Rs 25000	14	30.4
	Rs 25000 to Rs 50000	12	26.1
	Above Rs 50000	12	26.1
	Total	46	100.0
Religion	Hindu	32	69.6
	Christian	11	23.9
	Muslim	3	6.5
	Total	46	100.0
Type of Family	Nuclear	32	69.6
	Joint	14	30.4
	Total	46	100.0

Source: Survey Data

**Table 2**  
**Association of Socio Economic Variables and Movie Acceptance**

Variable	Movie Acceptance P value <sup>#</sup>	Inference @ 5% Level of Significance
Gender	0.527	Not Significant
Region	0.384	Not Significant
Type of Family	0.561	Not Significant
Age	0.182	Not Significant
Education	0.433	Not Significant
Marital Status	0.816	Not Significant

Monthly Income	0.933	Not Significant
Religion	0.588	Not Significant
Occupation	0.864	Not Significant

Source: Compiled from Survey Data  
#Mann-Whitney U Test/Kruskal-Wallis Test

Since all the variables are found to be not significant, the null hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 3**  
**Association of Socio Economic Variables and Actor/Actress based movie selection**

Variable	Chi Square Value	P value#	Inference @ 5% Level of Significance
Gender	0.46	0.829	Not Significant
Age	1.875	0.599	Not Significant

Region	0.023	0.880	Not Significant
Education	1.054	0.788	Not Significant
Occupation	4.138	0.247	Not Significant
Marital Status	3.761	0.172	Not Significant
Monthly Income	2.685	0.443	Not Significant
Religion	4.160	0.125	Not Significant
Type of Family	0.068	0.794	Not Significant

Source: Compiled from Survey Data  
#Chi Square Test

Table 3 shows that there is no significant association between socio economic variables and star based Movie Selection. Therefore we accept the null hypothesis that there is no association between socio economic variables and actor/actress based movie selection.

**Table 4**  
**Opinion regarding different aspects of Star Dominance**

Variable	Mean	Z value#	P value#	Inference @ 5% Level of Significance
1 - Superstars are the important influencing factor in the success of a movie	2.26	-3.343	0.001**	Significant
2 - Success of a movie depends on its Main Actor	2.48	-2.298	0.022*	Significant
3 - Selection of the movie based on its Main Actor	2.61	-1.486	0.137	Not Significant
4 - Main Actor can demand high salary because he is the Centre of a movie	2.83	.000	1.000	Not Significant
5 - Main Actor is superior than a movie Director, its Story, its Co-stars and its other factors	1.70	-4.704	< 0.001**	Significant
6 - Main Actor can control all other factors of movie making	1.65	-5.218	< 0.001**	Significant

Source: Compiled from Survey Data  
#Sign test  
\*\*Significant @ 1% level of significance

Statement 1, 5 and 6 are highly significant with P Value < 0.001, Statement 2 is significant at 5% level and Statement 3&4 are not significant. But all mean values are lower than 3 it means respondents disagree to statements. So according to consumers opinion they are not considering the stars while accepting movies.

The mean rank of all the factors in movie acceptance by using Friedman test is presented in Table5. Among the factors in movie acceptance Director possess first rank (2.09) then Music (2.61) third position goes to Actor/Actress(3.61) then Producer(4.09) and so on. From this analysis it is clear that there is a difference in the factors preferred by the consumers in movie acceptance.

**Table 5**  
**Factors in Movie Acceptance according to Consumers Preference**

Investment Avenues	Mean Rank	P Value#	Inference @ 5% Level of Significance
Producer	4.09	< 0.001**	Significant
Actor/Actress	3.61		
Director	2.09		
Story/ Message	6.87		
Distributors	7.24		
Music	2.61		
Theatre	6.22		
Sound effects	6.46		
Visual effects	6.59		
Other factors	9.24		

Source: Compiled from Survey Data  
#Friedman Test  
\*\*Significant @ 1% level of significance

### 3. Conclusion and discussion

The involvement of star actors is critical or not in the success of a movie is one of the hot topics discussing today. This study was an attempt to find a conclusion to this question. This study reveals that there is no association between socio economic variables and movie acceptance. In the case of star based movie selection also there is no association with socio economic variables. In film consumers opinion they are not considering the star dominance and admitted the fact that there is a difference in the factors preferred by the consumers in movie acceptance. So this study reveals that the success of a movie depend on many other factors than stars. This study examined the factors of movie. It shows that the stronger a cast already is, the greater is the impact. But at the same time success of a movie is not fully depends on its star. So this Study providing insufficient grounds to conclude that stars add more value to the movie.

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