The KGF Effect on Sandalwood: A Comparative Study on Audience Perception In Karnataka and Tamilnadu

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Abstract - The movie KGF assisted in the increase of publicity of the kannada movie industry and made it to come into the eyes of a greater audience popularly referred to as Sandalwood. The movie has a good storyline, big budget production and visual effects and attracted audiences not only in Karnataka but also in other regions of India. It also gave rise to the debate on whether one film can actually make a difference on how the people perceive a regional film industry. The comparative approach of Sandalwood viewers between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu is the primary consideration of the research question in this study because KGF had an effect on audience perception of Sandalwood. Google Forms were used to create a quantitative survey and respondents who had already watched the film. The purpose was to know how their perceptions regarding the Kannada cinema were transformed prior to and after watching KGF. This paper relies on the Reception Theory by Stuart Hall which is used to explain the various ways audiences interpret media depending on their background and experiences. The results indicate that the KGF caused the awareness and interest in Kannada films. The reaction of the audience was however not uniform across all regions, and this fact indicates that cultural context does matter in the perception.

Keywords: KGF, Sandalwood, Audience Perception, Regional cinema, Film Impact

INTRODUCTION

Indian film industry is a very large and diverse industry in the world and it makes movies in several languages that represent cultural as well as social diversity of the country. Indian cinema is made up of a number of regional industries as opposed to one centralized industry, that is, the Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada industries which represent different cultural identities. Cinema in India plays not only the entertainment role but is also a form of cultural expression and social communication. The cinema especially the regional cinema is of great importance when it comes to the presentation of local traditions, stories and social facts. Nevertheless, the notoriety of not every regional film industry has been equal in history. Languages such as Kannada film industry (Sandalwood) were mostly stuck in the region because of language barrier, fewer distribution and lower profile compared to other industries such as Bollywood and Tamil cinema. Over the recent years, it has started shifting with the technological improvements, online platform, and the emergence of multilingual film releases. Such advancements have facilitated the access of regional movies to more people in India. Amidst this new situation, KGF Chapter 1 and KGF Chapter 2 have become landmark achievements of the Kannada film industry. These movies became extremely popular in various parts including the Tamil Nadu region thus making Sandalwood more visible outside Karnataka. The high performance of KGF franchise has generated some critical questions about the ability of one blockbuster movie to impact the image of regional film industry. Some people see it as a turning point of Sandalwood, others believe that it is not a sign of steady development of the industry, but it is a special instance. To have a look at these varying opinions, it is necessary to take a look at the interpretation of the audience.

This analysis is informed by the Reception Theory which posits that viewers construct media texts depending on their cultures and social contexts. And this theory suggests that the viewers can create dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings of a movie. Thus, the study aims at examining the perceptions of the audiences in terms of the influence of KGF on the Kannada film industry. Through comparing answers concerning the audience in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the research will be able to comprehend how regionalism affects the perception of viewers and how it adds to the changing role of Sandalwood in the Indian cinematic industry.,

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Radhika C. A. and Poorani A. (2020) analyze how the Kannada cinema has changed in the post-2006 era by using qualitative content analysis. Their work is aimed at the theme shifts, narrative forms and the cultural representations in the modern films. The authors claim that the contemporary Kannada film industry can be considered an indication of the changing social identities and shows the change in both the image of urban and rural. They conclude that the new generation of Kannada movies plays a great role in renegotiating the cinematic identity of the regions.

Rithieshvar R. (2022) applies semiotic analysis to the purpose of interpreting how the meaning is created by using visual symbols, narrative framework, and characterization. The paper lays emphasis on the characterization of the lead character Rocky and his attraction to the young population. The author concludes that the symbols and the narration style of the film made significant contributions to the growth of the viewing audience and popularity.

Akash M. R. (2024) examines the possible adverse effects of the movie KGF Chapter 1 by using the qualitative analysis of reactions and reviews of viewers. The research has found that violence, hyper-masculinity, and materialistic success are some of the themes that can drive the behaviour of the audience, especially the young audience. The author highlights the importance of responsible narration in commercial cinematography as a result of its high level of social influence.

Sundarararajan V. (2023) applies psychoanalytic film theory, especially based on Jungian principles of archetypal and collective unconscious. In the study, both content analysis and focus group discussions are used in analyzing psychological responses of the viewers. The results are that these scenes are capable of forming behavioural perceptions and emotional reactions among the viewers.

METHODOLOGY

The research paper shall use a quantitative research approach to study the KGF Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 as perceived by the audience towards the Kannada film industry (Sandalwood). The analysis is conducted on the viewers in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu to compare the differences between the regions in terms of interpretation. The data obtained as primary data were collected through online survey through the use of Google forms. Most of the questions in the questionnaire were close ended and intended to elicit a know-how of how the audience thought about the movie and how they thought about it after watching it. The questionnaire was administered by the means of snowballing and certain participants could pass the questionnaire to their respective groups. The number of obtained responses was. The respondents had an opportunity to watch the film so the answers are informed opinions. The data was analyzed with the help of the percentage analysis and the descriptive techniques because they were necessary to identify the trends and patterns of perception of the audience.

It is also informed by Reception Theory that explains how various audiences interpret media differently based on their cultural backgrounds and social backgrounds. Responses in this structure were provided in the dominating, negotiating and opposing readings to have a clearer understanding of the various meanings of audiences. This type of a methodological approach would result in the systematic and trustworthy analysis of the influence that KGF has exerted on the audience perception of Sandalwood in a range of regional settings.

Research objectives

RO1: To examine how the success of the film brought about awareness and interest of the viewers towards Kannada cinema.

RO2: To examine the perception of the viewers in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu in relation to the impacts of the movie to Sandalwood.

RO3: To use the theoretical framework of Reception Theory by Stuart Hall to use it in order to categorize the audience responses as dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings.

Research questions

RQ1: In what ways has the movie K.G.F: Chapter 1 affected the way the audience perceives the Kannada film industry?

RQ2: What do the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu audiences make out of the success of the film?

RQ3: What is the Reception Theory by Stuart Hall that is applicable in explaining the various interpretations of the film by the audience?

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this work, the theory applied is the theory on Reception by Stuart Hall (1973), the theory explains how media can be viewed by various audiences. Hall shows that communication in the media is not a one-way process. Instead it is a conglomeration of a sender of the message and recipients. Hall developed the Encoding and Decoding Model. Some of these meanings and messages are encoded to film or media text by the media producers under this model. However, viewers are able to decode, or derive meanings of those messages differently, according to their cultural backgrounds, social experiences, language, and inner convictions.

- Dominant Reading- This is where the audience gets to get the message in the way the creator would like them to.

- Negotiated Reading - The viewer agrees somehow with the message but adapts it to his or her perspective.

- Oppositional Reading - The audience fails to agree or accept the message that is intended and interprets it in a different one.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The quantitative comparative research design that has been implemented in this study is aimed at investigating the effects of KGF Chapter 1 and KGF Chapter 2 on the audience perception of the Kannada film industry (Sandalwood). The study targets the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu audiences in order to understand the impact of regional and cultural disparities on interpretation. Primary data is collected to determine the status of 72 respondents using a structured questionnaire through a cross-sectional survey through the use of snowball sampling in Google Forms. The questionnaire will primarily include close-ended questions that will gauge the audience awareness, interest and perception of Sandalwood before and after watching of the film. The article is informed by the Reception Theory that aids the classification of audience reactions into dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings. The analysis of data is conducted on the basis of percentages and comparative technique to confirm the patterns and differences in the audience perception.

Reception Theory

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Stuart Hall's Model 1973

↓

Encoding and Decoding

↓

Dominant/Negotiated/oppositional

↓

Karnataka/Tamil nadu
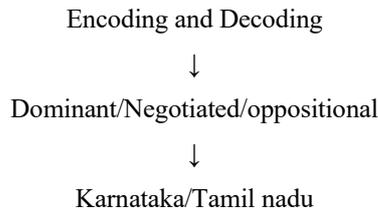
FILM CHOICE AND JUSTIFICATION

Selection and rationale of film. The reason behind the choice of KGF Chapter 1 and KGF Chapter 2 in this study is because they caused a massive influence to the visibility and perception of the Kannada film industry (Sandalwood). The movies were popular not only in Karnataka but also in other states like Tamil Nadu thus they can be easily used in comparison. The KGF series is regarded as the turning point in the regional cinema because it broadened the scope of the Kannada movies to the wider country audience.

The commercial success, large scale production and effective narrative made Sandalwood more aware and a topic of interest. Hence, the film is selected as a case study to discuss how one movie text can impact viewers and reinvent the image of a regional film industry in the various cultural settings.

AIM OF THE STUDY

To examine how the film KGF impacted the audience in regards to how they perceived the Kannada film industry in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The article relates to the way this type of cinematic art is perceived by the audience who is the residents of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu after watching KGF. It is oriented on awareness, interest and perception change and consideration of the regional and cultural differences

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The descriptive analysis of the 72 interviews shows that there exists a clear direction on the perception of the audience concerning the impact of KGF on the Kannada film industry. The percentage of the respondents who expressed positive sentiments on the perception change surpassed 50 percent and this implies that the movie contributed significantly towards boosting the visibility and awareness of Sandalwood. A balanced or negotiated perception was shown by an average percentage (around 25-35) of the respondents. Despite confession that the movie was a success, they were unaware of the long term impacts of the movie on the industry.

A smaller (approximately 10-20) part was the reflection of the contradicting sense, which meant that not all the observers were certain that one movie can form the overall image of the Kannada movie business. These differences also suggest that viewers cannot have a homogeneous perception and it depends on their own interpretation. The presence of the dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings proves the Reception Theory proposed by Stuart Hall according to which media texts

are perceived differently by the audience basing on their background and experience. Overall, the analysis shows a good upward trend and simultaneously denotes the variety of the opinions of the audience.
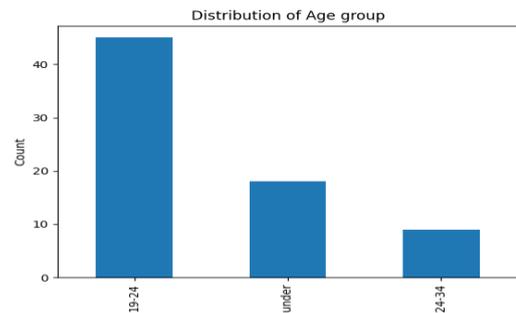

Chart 1 of Age Distribution

The age distribution shows that majority of the respondents are of younger age group particularly between 19-34 years. It is that it is quite biased towards the beliefs of younger generations, because younger generations have more of an interest in the contemporary cinematographic and pan-Indian films, like KGF.

Table 1. Gender Distribution

The table Gender representation in the table is very close to

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	37	51.39%
Male	35	48.61%

equal, and the number of Female and male respondents was 51.39 and 48.61 respectively. It is a balanced sample that implies the findings are not gender-biased and represent the opinion of the general audience.

Group-wise Analysis

Cross tabulation between the state and change of perception after watching KGF reveals a distinct A cross tabulation of the state and the change of perception after viewing KGF indicates that there is a clear difference in the way the regions perceive the audience. The respondents in Karnataka are very focused on positive perception category (the percentage is more than 50%), which implies that the audiences of this region have very positive perceptions that KGF has helped the image and recognition of the Kannada movie industry.

Quite the contrary, the distribution of respondents of Tamil Nadu between the positive, moderate and minimal perceptions is more dispersed (around 20%-40%). This means that there are spectators who are aware of the impact of the movie, yet, there are others who are neither ignorant about its impact with time nor a negative one.

The difference is that, a regional and cultural background is one of the primary contributors to the perception of the audience. The findings validate the Reception Theory that was forwarded by Stuart Hall where the Karnataka readers exhibit more dominant readings, but Tamil Nadu readers exhibited a mixture of dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings.
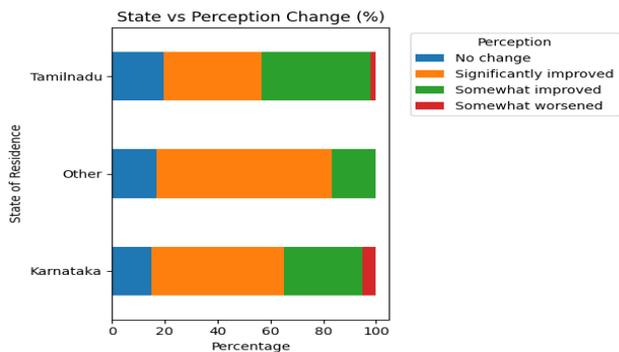
Chart 2 of sate vs perception change percent

According to the chart, the respondents of Karnataka are highly registered in the positive category, whereas the Tamil Nadu respondents are mixed in the diverse level of perceptions. This is more tolerant in Karnataka and broader in Tamil Nadu.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	37	51.39%
Male	35	48.61%

Table 2. Location Distribution

The table shows the distribution of the respondents regarding location. This is that it was answered in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu as well and enabled to compare the perceptions of the audience in the areas.

Comparative Analysis

The cross tabulation of state and increase in watching Kannada films after KGF has a definite regional tendency. The increased interest category is highly concentrated among the Karnataka respondents (a higher percentage than 60%), which means that the movie has been significant in their intention to watch more Kannada movies.

Quite the contrary, it is more dispersant among the respondents of Tamil Nadu (more increased, moderate and no change 20%-40%). This means that although some audiences were attracted by KGF, some have been choosy of the Kannada movies.

This contrast shows that regional and cultural familiarity plays an important role in the development of audience behaviour. Karnataka viewers would be more directed to behavioural change, but the Tamil Nadu viewers are more moderate and diversified.
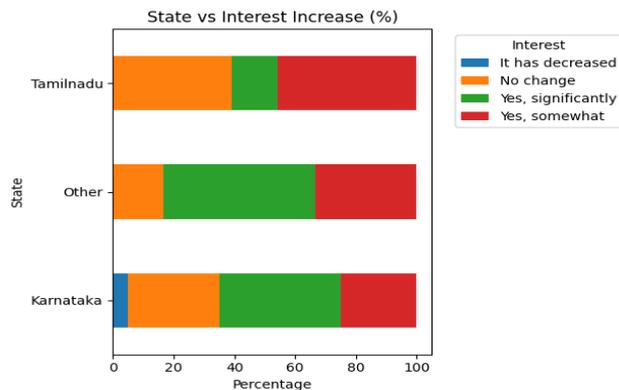

Chart 3 of sate vs interest increase percent

The chart shows that Karnataka respondents are very focused on the increased interest category as opposed to Tamil Nadu respondents which is founded on a number of categories. This indicates that Karnataka is greater in regard to behaviour as compared to Tamil Nadu.

Primary Language Spoken at Home	Frequency	Percentage
Tamil	40	55.56%
Telugu	21	29.17%
Kannada	7	9.72%
Other	4	5.56%

Table 3. Language Distribution

As it is shown in the table, the majority of the respondents speak Tamil (55.56%), then there are those who speak Telugu and Kannada. The linguistic diversity implies that the sample involves the representatives of different cultural backgrounds that may be manifested as the attitude and interest towards Kannada cinema.

Impact of Age on Perception Change

The cross tabulation of perception change following viewing KGF and age group is exhibiting a generational difference that is being felt. It is more concentration on the category of positive perception (about 55%-65%), which the younger respondents (under 30 years old) paid more attention to, that can be viewed as an indication that they were more receptive to the scale, visual effect, and pan-Indian quality of the film.

On the other hand, the older respondents speak more even when using positive, moderate and minimal categories of perception (approximately 20-40%). It means that older audiences are more skeptical and unwilling to evaluate how the film will have impact on the Kannada film industry in the long run.

These findings indicate that age plays a major role in the interpretation of audiences. Young viewers experience dominating readings whereas older viewers experience a mixture of dominant and negotiated ones.
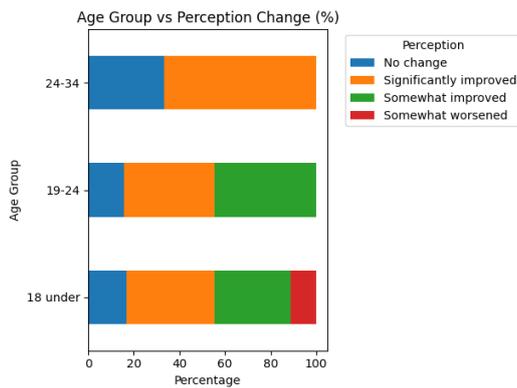

Chart 4 of Age group vs perception change percent

The chart shows that the younger age groups are towards the positive perception category but the old age groups belong to a more than one category. It implies that it is more acceptable among younger viewers, and has a more heterogeneous meaning of older viewers

Group 1	Group 2	T value	P value
Karnataka	Other	0.848231	0.409961
Karnataka	Tamilnadu	-0.4446	0.658928
Other	Tamilnadu	-1.37389	0.196883

Table 4. Age group perception

According to the table, the respondents were categorised under different age groups as indicated in the table. It indicates that younger age groups make a high percentage of the sample which influences the overall positive perception that can be observed in the study.

Two-Group Comparative Analysis

There were three categories (Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Other) of the data to make the pair-wise t-tests of independent variables applied so that the means of the perception scores of each of the groups can be compared. The aim of the analysis is to determine the existence of the statistical significance of the differences in perception between the regions. The results show that the overall score of the respondents on their perceptions is comparatively higher among the respondents of Karnataka and there is also a sign that the respondents have developed more positive perception regarding the impact of KGF on the Kannada film industry. Conversely, the mean scores of the respondents in Tamil Nadu show moderately good scores, which depicts a less biased/critical image. The second type results in mixed responses as per exposure and background.

However, the p-values of all the comparisons are larger than 0.05 and it indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean scores. This means that although one can observe the differences between the regions, it can never be generalized to apply statistically between the regions. In most cases, the findings show that the intensity of perception varies regionally, and this is not important to establish a statistical value. It is supporting the Reception Theory by Stuart Hall that focus on diversity in the audience meaning founded on cultural and regional specificity.
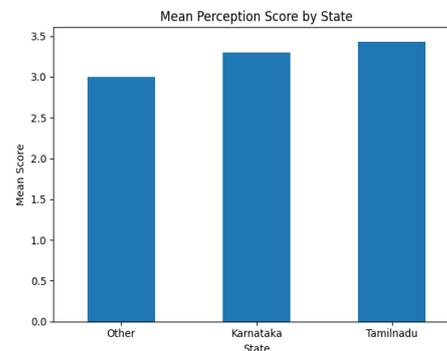

Chart 5 of Mean perception score by state

In the chart above, Karnataka is the highest followed by Tamil Nadu and lastly Other categories. This implies that the perception of Karnataka respondents towards it is more positive.

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18 & under	5	50%
19–24	3	40%
24–34	4	60%

Table 5. Independent t-test analysis

All the p-values of the comparisons are over 0.05 and this shows that none of the groups differ statistically significantly. The t-values are used to depict the level of difference between group means but in this case they are not very high implying that there is slight variation. This means that perception regional differences are there, but they are not so many that they can be generalized.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

RO1: To examine how the success of the film brought awareness and interest towards Kannada cinema

The findings indicate that the success of KGF Chapter 1 and KGF Chapter 2 significantly enhanced the visibility of the Kannada film industry (Sandalwood). A majority of respondents reported a noticeable shift from low awareness to

high awareness after watching the film, highlighting its role as a catalyst in expanding audience exposure. The results further show that the film not only increased awareness but also influenced viewing behaviour. A considerable proportion of respondents expressed a greater interest in watching Kannada films after experiencing KGF, indicating a transition from passive awareness to active engagement.

Key Finding:

The paper establishes that KGF played a crucial role in transforming Sandalwood from a regionally confined industry into a nationally recognized cinematic space. However, this impact is not entirely uniform, as some respondents remain uncertain about its long-term sustainability.

RO2: To examine audience perception in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu

The findings reveal clear regional variation in audience perception between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Respondents from Karnataka predominantly fall under the positive perception category, with more than half strongly agreeing that KGF improved the image and recognition of the Kannada film industry. This reflects a dominant reading influenced by regional pride and cultural proximity.

In contrast, respondents from Tamil Nadu demonstrate a more distributed pattern across positive, moderate, and minimal perception categories. While many acknowledge the film's success, a significant portion remains cautious about its long-term impact, reflecting a negotiated perspective.

Key Finding:

The analysis confirms that regional and cultural context plays a vital role in shaping audience perception. Karnataka audiences tend to internalize the film's success more strongly, whereas Tamil Nadu audiences exhibit a more critical and balanced interpretation.

RO3: Application of Reception Theory

The findings strongly support Stuart Hall's Reception Theory, as audience responses can be clearly categorized into dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings. The majority of respondents fall under the dominant reading category, where the film is interpreted as a transformative force that elevated the status of the Kannada film industry. This is especially evident among Karnataka respondents and younger audiences.

A significant portion of respondents demonstrate negotiated readings, where they acknowledge the film's success but express reservations regarding its broader or long-term impact on Sandalwood. A smaller group reflects oppositional readings, questioning whether a single film can redefine the identity and growth of an entire film industry.

Key Finding:

The presence of all three reading categories confirms that audience interpretation is not uniform but varies based on cultural background, regional identity, and individual experience.

CONCLUSION

The paper discussed how KGF Chapter 1 and KGF Chapter 2 changed how the audience perceives the Kannada film industry (Sandalwood) and has unequally put an emphasis on how Karnataka and Tamil Nadu audiences reacted to the film.

The results show that the KGF franchise played an important role in making Kannada cinema more visible, recognized, and perceived as a higher-quality film and establishing it in the context of the greater national film industry. The analysis also indicates that the film not only changed the perception but also audience desire to watch more Kannada movies especially among the Karnataka audience.

Nevertheless, the influence of the movie is not the same everywhere. Although the positive perception of Karnataka audiences showed a stronger impact on cultural proximity and regional pride, the Tamil Nadu audiences have a more balanced and critical interpretation. This difference emphasizes the role of regional and cultural background in influencing the reactions of the audience.

In addition, the paper confirms the Reception Theory by Stuart Hall, which shows the existence of dominant, negotiated, and oppositional reading between the audiences. The results prove the claims of non-homogenicity of media interpretation that depends on personal experience, cultural background, and regional identity.

Even though the statistical analysis allows noticing that differences between regions are not significant, the observed differences suggest that there is some practical meaningfulness in the perceptions differences that cannot be generalized. In general, the research finds that although one movie such as KGF can have the substantial effect on the perception of a local film industry, it affects diverse audiences and circumstances in different ways.

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