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TO IDENTIFY THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POSTER EXPOSURE, SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION, AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT WITH MALAYALAM FILMS

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Abstract

This study seeks to explore the associations between exposure to film posters, social media promotions, and audience engagement in Malayalam films. Responses were gathered through a one-time quantitative survey of 200 participants who regularly watch Malayalam films and had been exposed to film promotions. Poster exposure and social media promotion were treated as independent variables, while audience engagement was measured in terms of attention, information search, online interaction, recommendation intent, and viewing intent. The proposed links were tested through descriptive and reliability analysis, followed by Pearson's r and a two-predictor regression model. The findings showed a significant positive association between poster exposure, social media promotions, and audience engagement. Moreover, social media promotion made a greater unique contribution to audience engagement than poster exposure, and the two variables together explained a large percentage of the variance in engagement. The study results reveal that despite the increasing importance of social media in promotion, visual poster communication remains crucial in the process of awareness and recall. Social media communication complements poster communication in the area of participation, interaction, and behavioral intentions.

Keywords: Malayalam cinema; film posters; social media promotion; audience engagement; digital marketing; film marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

The Malayalam film industry has created a unique promotional culture where the traditional visual promotional practices of films and the digital networking of communications co-exist. The posters are visible in theatres, public places, entertainment sections, and digital channels, but Facebook and

YouTube distribute first look poster, teaser, trailer, music, interviews, short video clips, memes, reviews, and fan-produced videos related to the film. Earlier literature about the Malayalam film industry indicated that Facebook and YouTube had changed film promotion, as viewers could now respond to and re-distribute the promotional content rather than just receiving it. Recent industry literature suggests that posters and social media presence are increasingly becoming associated with Malayalam films.

1.1.Background of the Study

Film promotion becomes not an individual advertisement but rather a series of engagements with the audience. A viewer may be exposed to a poster, be introduced to the film via Instagram or YouTube, look at comments, see a teaser, engage with the content and friends and eventually make the decision to learn about the movie or watch it. Social media thus brings interactive and electronic word-of-mouth functions that used to be provided by the traditional role of posters as the awareness tools. Academic research on social media marketing point out that organizations using digital media are capable of generating, distributing, tracking and reacting to consumer engagement – something impossible in case of one-way media.

This is particularly important for movies as pre-release consumer engagement may manifest itself through curiosity, likes, comments, shares, searching of the trailer, discussion, recommendations and even watching or buying intention. In movie studies it was revealed that social media engagement behavior could correlate with the market results, while posters were widely researched to show the significance of visual elements of catching viewers' attention and transmitting genre, stars, mood and story expectation.

1.2.Research Problem

While the use of poster promotions and social media promotions have been very common in current day Malayalam films, their inter-relationship with audience engagement has not been studied at the same time. Poster creation helps in creating an immediate visual effect, yet it does not provide much interaction on the other hand; while social media helps in repeated contact with the film and also allows for engagement to be measured by way of comments, sharing, and content searches. The research question here is that whether higher exposure to these two promotional methods leads to higher audience engagement.

1.3.Research Objectives

- The central objective is to identify the relationship between poster exposure, social media promotion, and audience engagement with Malayalam films.
- Specifically, the study seeks to measure audience exposure to Malayalam film posters, assess perceived intensity and effectiveness of social media promotion, evaluate audience engagement, test the bivariate relationships among the three constructs, and estimate the combined influence of poster exposure and social media promotion on audience engagement.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The study tests three hypotheses:

- **H1:** Poster exposure is significantly and positively associated with the engagement of audiences with Malayalam films.
- **H2:** Social media promotion is significantly and positively associated with the engagement of audiences with Malayalam films.
- **H3:** Poster exposure and social media promotion jointly make a significant contribution to predicting audience engagement with Malayalam films.

1.5 Significance and Scope

This research is pertinent to the producers, distributors, publicity designers, digital marketing team and media scholars as the research tries to relate the two very common methods of promotion and the reaction of the audience towards them. The scope of this research is confined to the audiences who know about Malayalam movies and concentrates on the promotion and participation of audiences and not the actual box office collection.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on film marketing, social media, visual communication, and consumer engagement forms the theoretical foundation for analyzing film posters and digital promotion together. Six studies were selected for their relevance to the research problem, while other works in the reference list provide broader support.

Nithin and Raj (2016) studied practices of social media previewing and reviewing in Malayalam cinema and explained the shift from centrally managed promotions to more interactive online dissemination. In particular, this source is especially valuable due to the way posters, teasers, Facebook, and YouTube are perceived by the authors as related aspects of film promotion. It has been

demonstrated how likes, comments, and audience sharing make it possible for the filmmaker to observe audience reaction prior to the release of the movie. The current study is informed by this work in terms of regional context and social media promotion as a tool to produce engagement.

Oh, Roumani, Nwankpa, and Hu (2017) analyzed consumer engagement behaviors in movie-related social media and defined different types of social media engagement that takes place online. The article provides an example of empirical research that links social media engagement indicators to movie box-office success showing that consumer activities in the social media realm can affect market outcomes. Engagement behavior approach to measuring social media is utilized in the current work by defining active measures such as searching, discussing, sharing, recommending, and intention to watch as engagement.

Voorveld et al. (2018) revealed differences in social media and advertising engagement across platforms and use contexts. This aspect is highly relevant for film promotion since Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and any other platform cannot necessarily create identical experience for the audience. Instead of limiting social media promotion to one platform, the current study measures the level of respondents' overall engagement with film-related materials promoted in commonly used social platforms.

Appel et al. (2020) defined social media as the environment increasingly becoming essential for consumer interactions, information exchange, and marketing communication. In this case, the authors underline the fact that social media does not constitute mere means of information delivery; instead, it is the environment where consumers produce and disseminate information. Thus, the current study is based on the expectation that frequent Malayalam films promotion on social media will lead to higher engagement levels due to the ability to participate and engage in electronic word-of-mouth.

Li et al. (2021) provided the conceptual framework for social media marketing as including content, interaction, monitoring, and customer relationship management activities. Thus, this article supports the hypothesis that success of social media promotion is dependent on more factors than just posting frequency. In particular, for film campaign, engaging trailers, posters, reels, cast interactions, behind the scenes information, and responsive reactions will influence the level of consumer engagement. Social media promotion is thus operationalized through its visibility, attractiveness, frequency, informativeness, and interaction.

Yang (2023) researched movie-poster marketing and emphasized the role of movie poster design features in promotion. Despite different context of movie marketing, the study helps to ground the hypothesis regarding strategic character of poster visuals capable of affecting the attention and effectiveness of publicity. Current research builds upon this idea in regard to audience exposure to Malayalam films posters and their impact on engagement.

2.1.Research Gap

Previous studies have shown that the visual elements of marketing may be used to attract the audiences' attention, while the use of social media allows for interactions with the potential viewers. However, there are not many studies that combine these two promotional methods in relation to a Malayalam film audience.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since the aim was to measure how strongly, and in which direction, promotional exposure and engagement move together, a numerical (quantitative) approach suited this research.

3.1.Research Design and Sample

A single-point, descriptive-correlational survey was carried out with 200 participants. To qualify, a person had to be at least 18, view Malayalam films at least now and then, and have come across promotional content for Malayalam movies within the preceding six months. Participants were reached through a mix of convenience and purposive sampling.

3.2.Instrument and Measurement

The survey instrument was a four-part questionnaire. The first section recorded the demographics and the viewing profile of the respondents. Poster Exposure was measured using five items capturing the respondents' perceptions concerning the frequency of poster notices, recollection, attention paid, visual appearance, and information obtained from posters. Social Media Promotion was measured using six items capturing the frequency of promotions, attractiveness of posts/reels, trailer/teasers' exposure, information content, interaction, and motivation to share/post. Audience Engagement was measured using seven items covering the respondents' curiosity, information search, interaction online, discussion, recommendation, viewing intention, and sustained attention. Every statement was scored on a five-point agreement scale, where 1 indicated strong disagreement and 5 indicated strong agreement.

3.3.Reliability, Validity and Analysis Plan

The internal consistency of each scale was checked with Cronbach's alpha, and a coefficient of at least .70 was treated as adequate. Content validity was supported by drawing the questionnaire items from earlier work on film promotion and social media activity. SPSS was used for the statistical work: frequencies and percentages described the respondent profile, means and standard deviations summarized the constructs, Cronbach's alpha tested reliability, Pearson's r examined pairwise associations, and multiple linear regression estimated the joint effect of the predictors. A significance level of .05 was applied throughout.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The final dataset contained 200 valid cases. The tables below report the outcome of each analytical step.

The demographic make-up of the participants is shown in Table 1. The sample consists of varied age groups and both genders, whereas majority of the respondents watch Malayalam movies on a regular basis. Such a sample is appropriate for the study on promotions as the respondents interact regularly with movie promotions.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	104	52.0
	Female	92	46.0
	Other / prefer not to say	4	2.0
Age	18-24 years	72	36.0
	25-34 years	68	34.0
	35-44 years	38	19.0
	45 years and above	22	11.0
	Weekly	62	31.0

Malayalam film viewing	2-3 times a month	79	39.5
	About once a month	41	20.5
	Less often	18	9.0

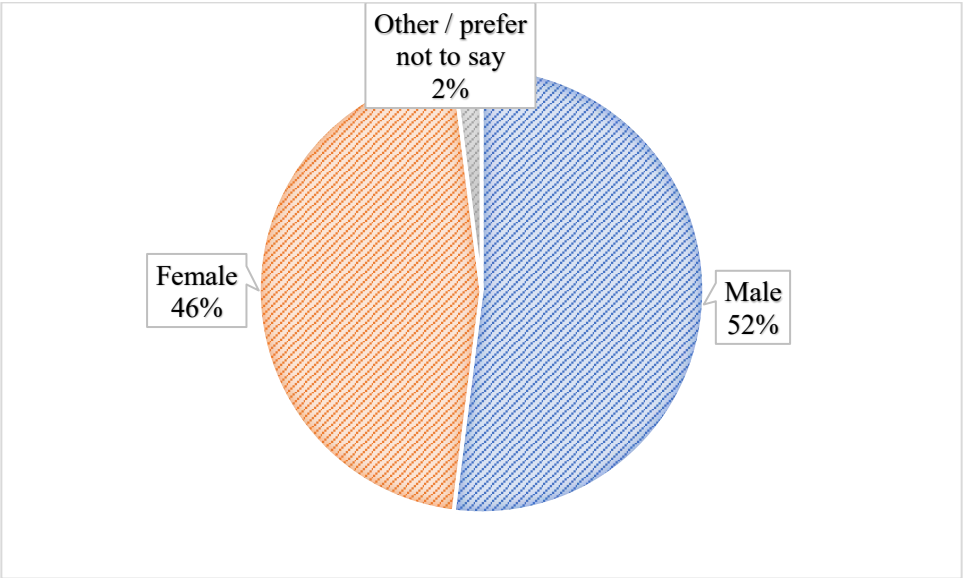


Figure 1: Visual Representation of Gender Distribution

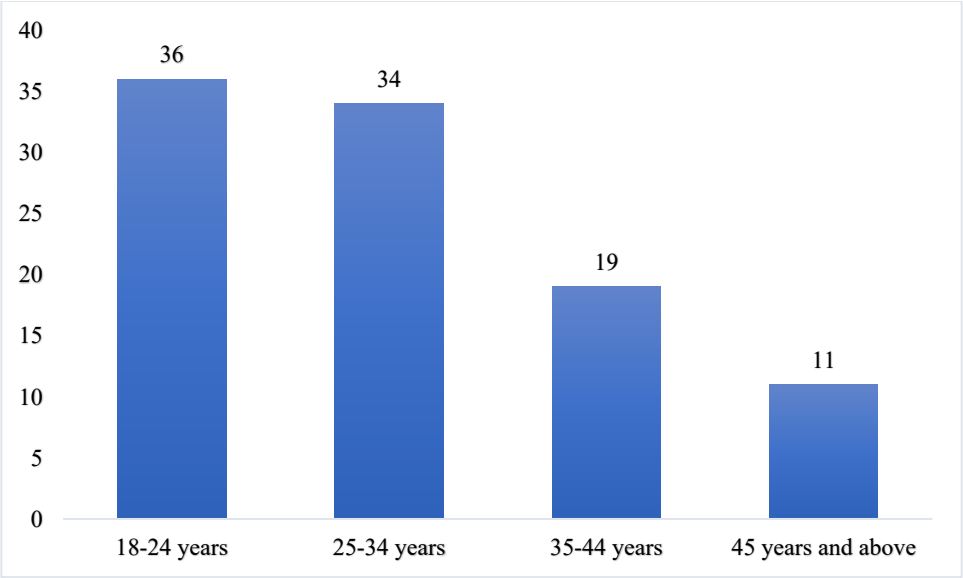


Figure 2: Visual Representation of Age Distribution

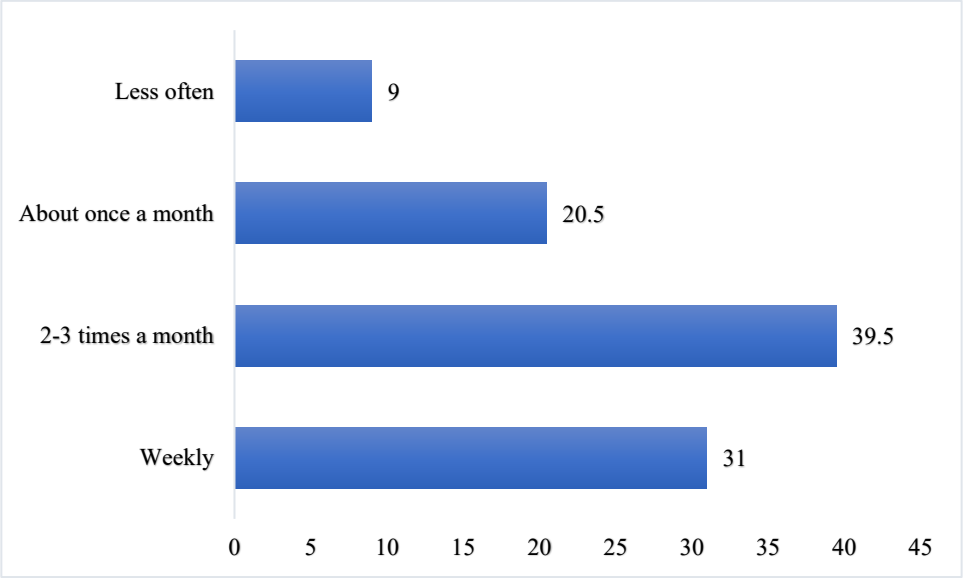


Figure 3: Visual Representation of Malayalam film viewing

Largest age categories consist of 18-24 years (36.0%) and 25-34 years (34.0%), suggesting a rather young demographic with a reasonable possibility of frequent use of social media. Meanwhile, 30.0% belong to the category aged 35 years and older, making sure that the analysis does not focus only on younger respondents. Overall, 70.5% watch movies in Malayalam language on weekly or two-three times a month basis.

Construct-level descriptive statistics and reliability were calculated prior to the hypotheses testing. For every construct, Table 2 lists the item count, average score, spread (SD), and alpha coefficient.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Study Constructs

Construct	No. of Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Poster Exposure	5	3.72	.68	.824
Social Media Promotion	6	3.89	.71	.881
Audience Engagement	7	3.81	.66	.893

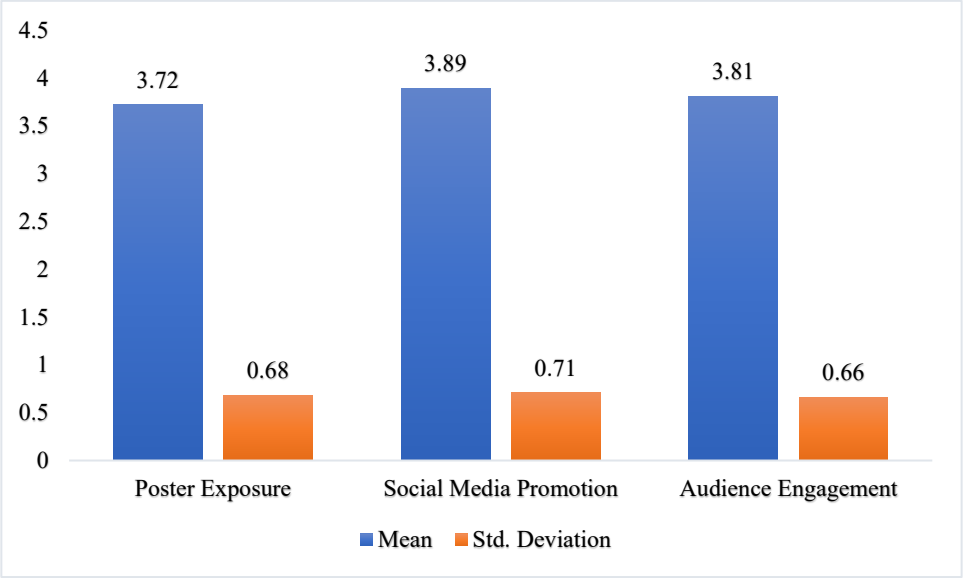


Figure 4: Mean and Standard deviation of Study Constructs

Each of the three constructs averaged higher than 3.00, the neutral point of the scale, which implies relatively higher promotion exposure and involvement in the sample. The Cronbach's alpha values range between .824 and .893, which are above the conventional value of .70 and imply satisfactory internal consistency. The audience engagement variable is highly reliable (alpha = .893).

Pearson's r was computed to gauge how closely the key variables move together; Table 3 displays these coefficients.

Table 3. Pearson Correlations among Poster Exposure, Social Media Promotion and Audience Engagement

Variable	Poster Exposure	Social Media Promotion	Audience Engagement
Poster Exposure	1		
Social Media Promotion	.521**	1	
Audience Engagement	.586**	.681**	1

*Note. ** All marked coefficients are significant at p < .01 (two-tailed); N = 200.*

Poster Exposure and Audience Engagement are positively linked ($r = .586$, $p < .001$), which supports H1 at the bivariate level. An even stronger link appears for Social Media Promotion and Audience Engagement ($r = .681$, $p < .001$), supporting H2. Poster Exposure and Social Media Promotion themselves share a moderate association ($r = .521$). This overlap is expected, since posters are frequently reposted online, yet the value is not large enough to suggest that the two measures capture the same thing.

A multiple regression was then run to find out how much of the variation in Audience Engagement the two promotional variables could jointly explain; its summary appears in Table 4.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.736	.542	.537	.449	1.91

Predictors: (Constant), Poster Exposure, Social Media Promotion. Dependent Variable: Audience Engagement.

The model produced $R = .736$ and $R^2 = .542$, meaning that poster exposure and social media promotion together explain 54.2% of the differences observed in engagement. Adjusted R^2 is calculated at .537, which implies a minor adjustment for the number of independent variables. The value of the Durbin-Watson coefficient is equal to 1.91, and it approaches 2.00.

Table 5 reports the ANOVA used to check whether the model as a whole is significant.

Table 5. ANOVA for Multiple Regression Model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	46.92	2	23.460	116.35	<.001
Residual	39.72	197	.202		
Total	86.64	199			

It can be seen from the model that it is significant (F(2,197) = 116.35; p <.001). Thus, it can be said that both Poster Exposure and Social Media Promotion significantly influence Audience Engagement. Hence, H3 is supported.

In order to find out which variable has the most impact, the coefficients of the regression were analyzed.

Table 6. Coefficients Predicting Audience Engagement

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.721	.171		4.22	<.001		
Poster Exposure	.263	.047	.271	5.60	<.001	.729	1.372
Social Media Promotion	.543	.045	.584	12.06	<.001	.729	1.372

Both the variables have highly significant positive unique contributions. Poster exposure has a standardized beta value of .271 (t=5.60, p<.001), while social media promotion has a standardized beta value of .584 (t=12.06, p<.001). Thus, social media promotion makes the greater statistical contribution among these two in this model. The VIF values of 1.372 are very low in comparison to commonly accepted levels of concern, indicating that there is no significant problem of multicollinearity here.

4.1.Hypothesis-wise Interpretation

H1 is supported since the relationship between poster viewing and audience engagement is highly positively correlated, and still significant in the regression equation. This suggests that multiple interactions with memorable posters might increase audience awareness, curiosity, memory and interest in gathering more information about the movies. H2 is also supported since the use of social media in promoting movies has the highest positive correlation and the largest standardized regression coefficient. This suggests that interactive and repeated digital material can increase awareness into actions such as discussion, comment, sharing, search and recommendation of films. H3 is supported

since the regression equation is statistically significant, suggesting that the two promotional methods are together able to explain the variation in engagement.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on responses from 200 viewers, this paper looked at how poster and social media promotion connect with engagement towards Malayalam films. In this regard, it was found that both the promotional forms had a significant and positive correlation with audience engagement and collectively explained 54.2 percent of the variance in engagement. However, the role played by social media promotion was greater than that of poster exposure. Thus, the result reveals that posters and social media are complementary in nature rather than being substitutes. This is because posters help create recognition, whereas social media helps spread it through interactive media messages.

From the above conclusions, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Filmmakers should maintain a consistent visual identity across posters and online promotion to strengthen audience recognition.
- Social media teams should use teaser clips, short videos, cast interactions, behind-the-scenes footage, and discussion prompts to convert awareness into participation, rather than repeating the same posts.
- Posters should be evaluated on recall, clarity of genre and mood, and their ability to trigger information seeking, not only on visual appeal.
- Producers and distributors should track engagement through comments, shares, saves, trailer searches, and recommendations, rather than follower counts and likes.
- Further research should include stratified sampling and longitudinal designs, as well as separate analyses of each platform.

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