

VISUAL PERCEPTION AND STORYTELLING IN MALAYALAM CINEMA: A CASE STUDY OF NANPAKAL NERATHU MAYAKKAM

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ABSTRACT

Visual storytelling, an effective narrative technique utilized to elicit emotions and convey information to the audience through various facets. Cinematography is a key medium for visual storytelling. The acclaimed Indian film director Mani Rathinam enables the portrayal of emotions and meanings through each shot. This study delves into the Malayalam film "Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam," directed by Lijo Jose Pellisserry and cinematography by Theni Eswar. The film has garnered critical acclaim for its immersive narrative techniques, camera shots, and angles. The research focuses on gauging the audience's perception and involves an in-depth analysis of framing, composition, color utilization, and lighting techniques employed in the film during the production stage to narrate the story naturally to the audience.

Keywords: Visual Storytelling, Visual Perception, Framing, Cinematography, Narratives, Malayalam Cinema

1. INTRODUCTION

Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam (2022), a Malayalam – Tamil bilingual drama film directed by Lijo Jose Pellisery, who has influenced Indian cinema with his experimental themes and directional style. He received Silver Peacock for the best director at the 53rd Kerala State film Award in India for his film Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam, and Best Director Award at International Film Festival of Kerala. The story of Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam is written by S.Hareesh.

According to the commended Indian film director Mani Rathinam, in the production process there is one stage where visual story telling plays a key role to portray the emotions, meanings and feelings through the shots.

In the World of Cinema, there are many components to complete a good cinema; the most important is visuals and sound. Visual form is to communicate different ideas and stories, perspectives, emotions, and feelings to the audience. The moving picture was introduced in the 19th century by Louis le Prince.

The film visuals includes the visual elements such as Mise-en-scene, color, light, costume, which are composed in a frame edited and arranged for the particular scene and sequence in the film. The Visual storytelling is a technique used

by filmmakers to convey their stories using action rather than dialogue. The characters explaining what they are thinking might be quite dull for the audience; instead it is easier for the audience to deliver the information through the character's actions and movements.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mena M (2021) The study focuses on the visual storytelling techniques of Maniratnam movies, specifically analyzing the cinematography and mise-en-scène elements in selected films. It looks into the significance of cinematic elements in the narration process. The film is meticulously examined in terms of cinematography, lighting, color, costumes, makeup, and settings. The research emphasizes the pivotal role of these elements in enriching the visual storytelling and narrative depth of Maniratnam's movies. The study reveals the director's innovative and experimental use of these elements to effectively communicate emotions, and themes.

Babak Jani. BA (2015) studies the role of cinematography in film, the importance of storytelling techniques, Cinematography contributes to the development of narratives in films by visually elaborating the narration and the field of narrativity for the audience. The cinematographer employs cinematographic techniques such as composition, lighting, color, perspective, movement, and angles to tell a story visually. These techniques help in creating visual metaphors that anticipate communication with the audience, evoke emotions, and provide necessary information in a visual format. The cinematographer's role as a visual storyteller involves creating a field of narrativity, allowing the audience to experience new phenomena or emotional connections. The cinematographer plays a crucial role in supporting the director's vision by visually elaborating the narration and the field of narrativity for the audience. They work closely with the director to develop the visual storytelling aspects of the film. The cinematographer employs cinematographic techniques such as composition, lighting, color, perspective, movement, and angles to bring the director's vision to life visually. The cinematographer's role as a visual storyteller involves creating a field of narrativity, allowing the audience to experience new phenomena or emotional connections based on the director's vision.

P.V.Balasubramanian(2018) studied the Narrative Structure and Visual style of Lijo Jose Pellissery, His films have broken away from the traditional norms of Malayalam cinema and have focused on telling stories that are modern in terms of content and technique. Lijo's films have been known for their multi-layered narratives, use of wide lenses, distinct color treatment, and unconventional framing. His movies have depicted the lives of ordinary men and women, reflecting the society and culture of Kerala. Lijo Jose Pellissery's films have played a crucial role in redefining the narrative and visual style of Malayalam cinema, contributing to the emergence of the Malayalam New Wave movement.

Mohd Rosli Arshad (2020) The research paper discusses the visual perception of Malaysian animation audiences towards animated film characters. It explores how the visual design and individual characteristics of animated film characters influence the emotions and perceptions of the audience. The study found that there is a significant correlation between the appealing design of the characters and the pleasantness experienced by Malaysian audiences. The research also indicates that the character's theme, personality, and role in the story play a significant role in influencing the audience's perception and enjoyment of the animated characters. researcher provides insights into how visual perception impacts the emotions and experiences of Malaysian animation audiences. The study concluded that the visual design and individual characteristics of Malaysian animated film characters have a significant impact on the emotions and perceptions of the audience.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher follows qualitative approach that combines Content analysis and In-depth group discussion. Researchers attempt to analyze the elements of cinematography and the importance of visual storytelling and visual perception through a combination of semiotic analysis and film text and to investigate how the director created meaning through cinematography techniques.

4. ELEMENTS OF VISUAL STORYTELLING

Mise-en-scène

"Mise-en-scène" is a French term used in filmmaking and theatre, which means "placing on stage." It refers to the arrangement of properties and anything that appears within the frame of the shot, including actors, lighting, set design,

costumes, and props. Mise-en-scène surrounds the visual elements that contribute to the overall aesthetic and storytelling of a scene. It is a crucial aspect of visual storytelling in both film and theatre.

Cinematography

Cinematography is a tool for visual storytelling in filmmaking, empowering directors and cinematographers to communicate narrative, emotion, and atmosphere through visuals. It follows various techniques such as framing, camera movement, lighting, and composition for visual narrative. Camera movements including pans, tilts, dollies, and tracking shots which depicts the emotions. Lighting plays a pivotal role in setting the overall tone, crafting the atmosphere and accentuating essential elements within the frame. Cinematography integrates the use of color, contrast, and depth of field to induce particular moods and themes. The selection of lenses and aspect ratios which shapes the visual storytelling and influencing the audience perspective.

Colors

Colors plays an crucial role in visual storytelling, they contribute to convey emotions, setting the tone, and establishing themes within a narrative. The particular use of colors in filmmaking is a deliberate and artistic choice made by directors and cinematographers to enhance the viewer's experience and evoke the emotions, and each color gives a different meaning and perception to the audience.

Lighting

Lighting is an important element in visual storytelling; it helps in shaping the mood, atmosphere, and narrative of a film. Cinematographers and directors use various lighting techniques to convey emotions. Different lighting techniques guide the audience perception of the narrative. Thoughtful and intentional use of lighting adds layers of meaning to the visual elements on screen, enhancing the entire storytelling experience.

Costumes

The appearance of each character should communicate the story demands. Costumes convey information about characters and their worlds without the need for explicit exposition. This will communicate a lot of background information about the character to the audience.

Settings

Settings are powerful components of visual storytelling that go beyond providing a backdrop; they actively contribute to the narrative, convey meaning, and enhance the audience engagement with the story. The directors and cinematographers carefully select and craft settings to align with the stories themes, genres and emotional impact by creating a visually rich and immersive experience to the audience.

5. ANALYSIS OF VISUAL STORY TELLING IN NANPAKAL NERATHU MAYAKKAM:

In Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam. the camera was static for the audience. The Director Lijo Jose Pellisserry and the Cinematographer Theni Eswar set the color tone which is familiar to the rural village of Tamil Nadu. The color tone and settings plays a vital role in the nanpakal nerathu mayakkam visual storytelling. The camera captures the events from the distance like the stage play. In the Stage drama, every properties are static and characters are into the frame and perform the story. So, the viewers can recognise based on their own perspective.



Image 1 Use of symmetrical shot



Image 2 Lighting technique used to differ the charaters



Image 3 Extreme wide shot inside the Bus.

In the entire movie, the camera moves only a couple of times and camera zooms only in one scene. At the 91st minute of duration one close-up shot appear and another close-up at 99th minute. The first close-up shot was one of the most iconic scenes in the Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam movie, i.e., Mammooty's character realize the reflection in the mirror. This is the only shot where the camera moves towards close-up. The second shot is after mammooty awake from sleep and realising the original character as James.



Image 4 First Close – up Shot



Image 5 Second Close – up Shot

In the movie, the cinematographer expertly constructs the film's visual style by using various techniques to strengthen the narratives. The majority of scene in the film was captured by 'Frame with in the frame' concept and most of the frames are composed of symmetrical framing. The depth of field used in the particular shots for covering the crowd surrounding the character and also the narrow aperture used to show the two wives of Mammootty's looking together and one extreme wide angle shot used in the film is of the Bus stopping in the particular place and Mammootty getting down from the bus and going to the village. The cinematic techniques strengthen the narratives and each shot gives the unique and aesthetic appeal to the film.



Image 6&7 Using Frame in the Frame Technique.



Image 6&7 Using Frame in the Frame Technique.



Image 8 Only Movement shot used in the film.

The cinematographer Theni Eswar masterfully captured the emotions and atmosphere of the movie. The lighting techniques used in most of the shots are natural light and only two shots were artificial lighting, one in the hotel reception and the other in tasmac, where Mammooty is performing the dance with two different colours of lighting. The particular use of shadows and hues developed the emotional impact of scenes. The director Lijo Jose Pellissery and Theni Eswar conveys the S Harresh Verbal Vocabulary to Visual Meaning.

6. VISUAL PERCEPTION OF THE AUDIENCE:

In discussion with the audience they consider visual storytelling to be one of the key factors in the Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam movie narrative. Visuals play a crucial role in influencing the audience to interpret and understand the content of the film. By analysing the visual elements of the movie, such as cinematography, color, light and visual effects gives valuable insight to the audience. In the visual effects the particular scene such as, when Mammooty leaves the home his shadow will freeze at the wall and character only will walk out. The visual appeal and the use of symbolism give a deeper understanding to the audience. The colors that represent the rural village of Tamil Nadu are clear to the audience and the lighting in the Tasmac scene represents the dual tone of green which indicates the heroism and red indicates the villainism of the character.

The camera angles, editing, art direction and music are also contributed to shape the audience perception of the film. The camera placement and lighting attract the audience focus to the screen and the static shot gives the feel of a stage play. Overall the visuals make the aesthetic perception, breaking the traditional boundaries of visual appreciation.

7. CONCLUSION

The Visual storytelling and visual perception of the movie “Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam” have been analysed using the visual elements. Visual elements create the audience interpretations and emotional response of the film. The placement of camera angles allows the cinematographer and director to convey the meaning to the audience easily. The Visual perception of audience can vary depending on their characters and mood. In the Nutshell, “Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam” visual story telling technique influenced the audience and was the backbone of narrative in the movie. The film “Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam” is the wholesome eye treat to the audience.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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