Regional Indian Movies in Rs.100 Crore Club:
A Semiotic Analysis of the Movie Posters

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ABSTRACT

The movie industry in India has a distinctive effect on their audience, which is rather unique when compared to the various influencing kinds of messages that are portrayed through different forms of media. Perceptual immediacy is often viewed in the audiences while they watch a movie or even when a spark is formed in their psyche just by the visuals that they see on a movie poster. And so, while creating a movie or even constructing a movie poster, the ability to make it relevant to the viewers is carefully considered by the creators of this medium. This paper aims to study whether Malayalam movie posters visually construct meaning and whether they can influence the financial success of a film. The sample for this research was three Malayalam movie posters: Pulimurugan, Kayamkulam Kochunni, *and* Lucifer. *The methodological approach for this study was conducted by using Kress and van Leeuwen's visual social semiotic method.*

KEYWORDS

Indian Movies, Malayalam, Movie Posters, Rs.100 Crore Club, Visual Social Semiotics

INTRODUCTION

On the bustling streets of Kottayam, also known as the land of alphabets in Kerala, India, movie posters can be seen stuck to different walls as a well-thought-out representation to garner the audience attention towards a movie. This common sight can be seen in any city in India and is given sublime importance than politics, which is generally perceived as the central theme all around the country.

Movie posters are the primary mouthpiece that informs the audience about an upcoming film. They are considered as a piece of history that transcends time to convey the story of an epoch to the mass. It can be studied as cultural icons that can be frameable and also collectable works of art (Hart & Moyer, 2019). A movie poster's objective – advertisement – is to attract audience attention towards a movie so that it can be distributed in many locations. The content on a movie poster can be viewed as simple or complex, informal or formal, short and interactive words as it then encourages audience

to understand the message of the poster and decide accordingly (Oglivy, 1988). Movie posters are generally observed as a public urban icon that provides an ocular experience of altering societal and poignant standards to its spectators (Haggard, 1988).

In India too, film posters are given due prominence by the producers and the consumers equally as it promotes the movie for the makers and is observed as a piece of revered art for the audience because of the message that it conveys. Bollywood is viewed as the indispensable part of the Indian filmdom with its roots in the financial capital of India – Mumbai. Bollywood is viewed as one of the largest film-making industries in the world generating a 27% share of revenue to the entire Indian entertainment sector (Jones, 2010). And some of these Bollywood movies have a specialty of producing the top-grossing hits every year and some of them reaching and going beyond the 100 crore box-office hits.

Similarly, the Malayalam cinema industry (aka Mollywood) is seen with around 150-200 films every year and is perceived as the most exciting, progressive movie space in India (Jha, 2019). Some of the movies that have been churned out in Mollywood in recent years have been labelled under the New Wave renaissance movement for its simple formula, which is to let the story rule the movie than the actors who are in it (Nath, 2015). Although Malayalam movies do have a considerable depth to their story (Jha, 2019; Donmez-Colin, 2007), they were never a part, until very recently, of the 100 crore club, unlike the Bollywood movies.

Even though Malayalam movies do not follow the minimalistic approach towards the designing of a poster, the content piques curiosity in the audience' minds. Malayalam movie posters are generally featured with either the main character containing the entire poster or some mysterious or minimalistic or artistic design that would urge the audience to watch the movie. The current study aims to analyze the visual text by observing the underlying message of each Malayalam movie poster that has entered the Rs. 100 crore club using the visual social semiotic approach. The semiotic study is generally used to analyze visual representations that are present in an advertisement or even a painting (Gilgun, 1999; Freire, 2014). The visual portrayal is accepted by researchers as a way to influence the public perception of the world (Jewitt, 1997). One of the much-acclaimed approach to study visual communication is the use of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual semiotic theory. As an extension to the works of Haliday and Hasan's (1985) systemic functional approach to language, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) suggested that pictures like words have grammatical structures which could be studied for meaning.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The theoretical groundworks of Kress and van Leeuwen's background in visual social semiotic approach comes from the ground-breaking research work of linguist Michael Halliday. He proposed in his book 'Language a social semiotic' (1978) that language is a semiotic structure that uses semiotic codes to produce value. In his book, Halliday explained that language is an arrangement with three structures that perform concurrently where each structure depicts a different function or 'metafunction' in generating meaning. First metafunction of Halliday is ideational function which states the presenter's worldly knowledge (Halliday, 1978). Kress and van Lueewen extended this function into being representational when visuals are involved. The second metafunction by Halliday is the interpersonal function of language which describes the relationship between individuals in a social environment and this metafunction was ideated as Interactive in visual semiotics. The third metafunction is textual, which means it is the structural and contextual formation of lexis. This third metafunction was extended by Kress and van Lueewn as compositional or how a visual is framed or composed for an individual to understand the importance of the structural placements of each components that are present in the visual. Jewitt and Oyama (2001) describe Kress and van Lueewen's framework as something that alone does not "offer all that is needed for the sociological interpretation

of images" (p.154). They opine that "it can only ever be one element of an interdisciplinary equation which must also involve relevant theories and histories" (p.138).

Visual social semiotics support that linguistic and visual grammatical forms are proper systems that do not separate itself from meaning (Halliday, 1985 cited in Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). The method unequivocally states how individuals generate and convey meaning through the given surroundings of pictorial components in western societies. Meaning is encrypted in various forms of visuals through the method of portrayal, the appearance of people, objects and landscape; the composition; and its modality and medium. The depiction and construal of these frameworks constructs the base of the social semiotic approach to study visual texts.

The meaning of visual texts can be perceived by an individual in their own way, which produces multiple ways in which a visual text can be interpreted. Aiello (2006) recommends that when an image is observed for analysis, its "necessary to account not only for their cultural norms but also for their perceptual qualities. Visual texts differ from verbal texts because they are communicative across cultural codes while also carrying culturally specific meanings" (pp. 89-90). Visual texts include cultural codes that need to be comprehended before understanding the actual meaning of the same. Creation and understanding of visual texts these days have been changed due to globalization and digitalization. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) states that "the dominant visual language is now controlled by the global cultural/technological empires of the mass media, which disseminate the examples set by exemplary designers, and, through the spread of image banks and computer-imaging technology, exert a 'normalizing' rather than explicitly 'normative' influence on visual communication across the world. (pp.4)"

Movie posters are the primary messengers that spark an interest in the minds of the audience. It enables the movie goer to decide whether they need to watch a movie based on the visual text they see on the poster. It also happens to be the face of the movie especially during advertising and promoting the movie. A trigger is produced in the minds of an individual when perceiving the composition and combination of icons, color and various other semiotic signs that are present on a movie poster. An internal relation between the represented participant, things, the action they perform as well the background is evident in terms of representations in visual texts (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Movie posters are that form of visual texts that are viewed by public for a limited time and it is within this time that a movie goer has to decide to buy a ticket for the same. The marketing side of the movie production has to put a lot of thought into designing a poster just to garner the attention of a common man within this gap of time. Film journalist and critic Adam Smith (n.d.) mentions that the combination of color schemes for different movies according to the genre are done in such a way so that the blend of these colors triggers a memory in the viewer's mind making them realize the genre without wasting the limited gap of time to convey the rest of the message through the posters.

The importance of posters in India was traced back in Bombay since the first movie 'Raja Harishchandra' to the present age and was described well with famous Bollywood movies such as 'Sholay', 'Mother India', etc. (Dwyer & Patel, 2002). The significance of movie posters has not been lost even in the transition of movie posters from print to digital. With the change in time the content and the visual text in these movie posters have underwent the transformation of socio-economic situations, art, culture, techniques and technology (Goswami, 2017). Film studies researchers in India have observed the movie's universality and existence of it outside the theatre, citing the influence of film music, fashion statements and the movie posters that are seen cluttering the public sphere (Dickey, 2005). The colorful movie posters which are the primary intermediaries between the makers and the common man have been intensely studied as forms of art (Dwyer & Patel, 2002).

This form of art is perceived as a vital format of persuasive visual representation of a film which can be rendered in two dimensions that will summarize the essence and theme of a movie in a distinct fixed level (Mazumdar, 2003 & Uberoi, 2005). These posters provide texts and visuals to the audience with an initial experience that opens as an early portal to the movie. Indian movie posters have always aimed at echoing the diversity of its viewers in terms of culture, caste, religion, class

and even language (Haggard, 2003). According to Goswami (2017), posters of Bollywood films can provide an understanding of different times – posters of movies such as *Raja Harishchandra, Pundalik, Alam Ara* used to be textual and there used to be a dearth of visuals in those posters, while posters of the recent decades keep a minimum of text while portraying visuals and colors more to the audience.

Bollywood movies have represented the transitioning of time essentially by displaying variety visuals so that content of the movies could be identified by the audience in its first appearance itself. Be it with a damsel who is helpless or even looking wistfully into the distance (*Adalat* – 1950; *Sujata* – 1960; *Mughal-E-Azam* – 1960; *Sholay* – 1975) or be it objectifying women (*Mujhse Shaadi Karoge* – 2004; *Great Grand Masti* – 2016; *Mastizaade* – 2016) or be it with posters that showcased strong female characters (*Kahani – 2012; Queen* – 2013; *Neerja* – 2016) (Prasad, 2017). The highest selling movie posters in Bollywood were *Mughal-e-Azam, Awara, Guide, Sholay, Mahal, Mother India, Kismat, Kaagaz Ke Phool, Don* and the some of the movie posters that featured some of the famous actors were Amitabh Bachchan, Dev Anand, Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar (Dubey, 2022). Visual representation in Bollywood movie posters have depicted the change in trends and the effect that it can have on the viewers as well. Similarly when one focuses into regional movie posters such as Mollywood, Tollywood, the tendency to follow the narrative of a hegemonic industry like the Bollywood can be visualized through the posters in the regional movie industries too (*Raasaleela* – 1975; *Sammanam* – 1975; *Prayanam* – 1975; *Nayakan* – 1985; *Yathra* – 1985; *Thaskaraveeran* – 2005; *Naran* – 2005; *Thanmathra* – 2005; *Virus* – 2019; *Love* – 2020; *Trance* – 2020).

According to Edachira (2020), the saga of Malayalam cinema begins from social movies unlike the allegorical creations of other regional language films in India. The first silent Malayalam movie *"Vigathakumaran"* (1928 – Lost Child) was directed by J.C. Daniel also known as the father of Malayalam cinema. After its release, Malayalam film industry soared on heights with the introduction of different themes and approaches to its movies. With the release of the movie '*Neelakuyil*' (Blue Cuckoo directed by P. Bhaskaran & Ramu Kairat, 1954), the Malayalam film industry rose to a new level as it was the first film that was recognized in India with a national award. Even though the movie is known as a social realist film it is still attributed for its 'melodramatic realism' (Muhammed, 2017). The classic movie *"Chemmeen"* (1965 – The Prawn) directed by Ramu Kairat, that still has a special place in the hearts of Keralaites, was the first South Indian film to be awarded the best with an honor of gold medal from the Indian president (The New Indian Express [TNIE], 2019). After *"Chemmeen"* was recognized for its sheer intensity in the 60's, the parallel stream of films marked the launch of remarkable directors such as Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Aravindan and K.G. George. With talented directors, the Mollywood saw the birth of two new superstars – Mohanlal and Mammootty. The movie *"Yavanika"* (1982 – Curtain), directed by K.G. George introduced Mammootty as an exceptional actor and he attained the superstardom with the movie *"Rajamanikyam"* (2005 – King of Gem), directed by Anwar Rasheed. It was the success of *"Manjil virinja pookkal"* (1980 – Flowers that bloomed in the snow), directed by Fazil, that gave birth to Mohanlal as a lead actor and his superstardom was sealed by the box office hit movie *"Rajavinte Makan"* (1986 – The King's Son), directed by Thambi Kannanthanam (TNIE, 2019).

Even though there was a cult following for superstars such as Mohanlal and Mammootty, the success and fame of Malayalam movies were measured by the financial profit that it made in the box office, which was how the Bollywood movies were making its name from the 2000's onwards. However, Malayalam films entered the Rs. 100 crore club rather later – in 2016 – despite the good script and a casting that could easily challenge the other movie industries.

In 2016, the Malayalam cinema *"Pulimurugan"* (The Wild Hunter) directed by Vysakh with the main character's role adorned by actor Mohanlal was released. It was the first movie that made Rs 152 crores in the box office. This movie was about a wild hunter who was an expert in hunting man-eating tigers to save an entire village. The second movie to make a grossing hit was *"Kayamkulam Kochunni"* in 2018 directed by Rosshan Andrews and starred actors such as Nivin Pauly, Mohanlal in significant roles. It was an epic period movie that narrated the tale of a Robinhood in Kerala who

used to rob people in the highway and give the money to the poor. And the third and only Malayalam movie to make it beyond Rs.200 crores was *"Lucifer"* that was released in 2019 and directed by Prithviraj Sukumaran with many actors playing crucial roles in the movie including Mohanlal, Tovino Thomas, Sai Kumar, Manju Warrier, Prithviraj Sukumaran. It is a political satire with the subtle involvement of mafia with an unending message that is to clean out corruption in politics by handing over the apex throne to the right heir.

Therefore, this study explores the visual messages that are portrayed in the only three Malayalam movie posters – *"Lucifer"*, *"Pulimurugan"* and *"Kayamkulam Kochunni"* that have entered the Rs 100 crore club (The Indian Wire, 2020) by using Kress and van Leeuwen's theoretical framework as cited in C. Jewitt's work (1997). A visual social semiotic analysis will be conducted to examine the visual grammar of the posters and decode their potential meaning. The paper aims to answer the following objectives:

a) To study how Malayalam movie posters visually construct meaning.
b) To analyze whether a visual message in a poster can influence the financial success of a Malayalam movie.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to find out the underlying visual semiotics in the movie posters of Malayalam movies *"Lucifer", "Pulimurugan"* and *"Kayamkulam Kochunni"* that paved their way into the Rs 100 crore club and whether a visual message in a poster can influence the financial success in a regional language such as Malayalam. The two research questions are solved by using visual semiotics to decode how images visually construct meanings to influence the success of the movie.

Visual social semiotics is a practical method that allows to see the visual resources as a source to perform the definite set of semiotic analysis. Researchers use images to analyze in the most systematic manner according to the three metafunctions – representational, interactive and compositional functions that have been developed in visual social semiotics (Aiello, 2006; Iedema, 2001; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001; Kress & van Lueewen, 1996). According to Iedema (2001), the methodical analysis of visuals "provides the possibility for renegotiating the meanings inherent in such constructs rather than seeing these fixed, irrevocable and natural" (p. 201). It forms a explanatory structure of multimodality, assigning representational, interpersonal and compositional significances to images. Therefore, any image, apart from portraying the public sphere whether in intellectual or evidential means, it also participates in some form of interface and creates a decipherable kind of text (Guijarro & Sanz, 2008).

The first representational metafunction under Kress and van Lueewen's visual social semiotic method is categorized into two: narrative and conceptual structures. Narrative is the method of trying to analyse the representational meaning in the visuals given. It represents the actions, events, and processes in which the portrayed actor(s) are dynamic participants. Narrative has features that 'form oblique lines (vectors) that indicate directionality'(Kress & van Lueewen, 2006). They could also be transactive (which means the actors are interacting with any other actor in the image) or non-transactive (which means the actors will be looking out of the frame and not connecting with any other actor in the image) (van Lueewen & Jewitt, 2004). On the other hand, conceptual structures are those that do not portray the actor but the beings and the meanings of the visuals. These structures talk about the background elements of the actors such as category, class or some special characteristics that makes the actor's composition as the main participant in the picture (van Lueewen & Jewitt, 2004).

The second metafunction is the Interactive meaning which conveys "the way the image interacts with the viewer and defines the relations between the world inside the frame and the outside world" (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). This structure is classified into three: contact, distance and point of view. Contact is identified in a visual when the actor is making eye contact with the viewer (also known as demand) or something else in the visual (also known as offer). Distance is identified by the way the

image is captured, which means if it is a long shot, a medium or a close shot. Point of view is identified when the angle at which the actors are looking at. These angles can be horizontal or vertical in nature.

The third metafunction is compositional that is classified into four: information value, framing, salience and modality. Information value talks about the message in the visual is extended throughout the image with how the different features in the visual are positioned. Information value itself has three visual areas that constitute different messages: left & right, top & bottom and center & margin. If a visual contains left & right information value, then the image is said to be extended within the horizontal axis while the top & bottom information value shows that it is spread out on the vertical axis and the center & margin information value is very little as it is spread across the center (Kress & van Lueewen, 2006). The top of the image symbolizes 'promise' while the bottom signifies the product presented by providing the viewer with useful information about the product itself (Kress & van Lueewen, 2006). The second element that comes under compositional is framing which describes the compositional meaning and relations in the visual. It includes frame lines, discontinuity of certain shapes, the pulse of color and even empty spaces which can determine whether the observer feels connected or disconnected with the visual. The third element is salience which conveys about a feature that stands out in the image. It will be considered as an obvious feature that a viewer's eye will not miss. The fourth element is modality that talks about how real the image presents itself to be to the viewer. This feature is generally assessed by color saturation, color differentiation, color modulation, contextualization, representation (from abstract to detailed images), depth, illumination, brightness (black and white or the brightness of a color). Visuals are generally considered natural when they present themselves true and scientific when they appear unrealistic.

In this study, the researcher aims to study the three Malayalam movie posters by using the visual social semiotics method to analyze the underlying message in the three posters that contributed towards the success of the movie and to analyze whether a visual message in the poster can influence the financial success of a Malayalam movie.

Analysis of Posters

1. Representational

Under representational structure, the narrative element in this poster shows a vector that can be seen along the movement of the actor's legs and arms. The actor's eye contact with the viewer and his darting action within the image shows that it is transactive in nature. The action of his right hand bend at 90 degree angle and his left hand swinging with a gun displays a movement directly towards the viewer. In this poster, the viewer is said to be the phenomenon and the actor is considered as the reactor as a vector is formed from the eyeline to the viewer that creates a reaction rather than an action (Kress & van Lueewen, 2006). On the other hand, the conceptual structure in the poster depicts the actor's gun and knife and his attire which is a turban on his head and tight-clad shirt with a dhoti.

2. Interactive meaning

Contextual information

Title of the Poster	Kayamkulam Kochunni
Type	Digital/Print Poster
Year of creation	2018
Image/URL	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7231546/mediaindex?ref_=tt_pv_mi_sm_

Figure 1. Visual social semiotic analysis of Malayalam movie poster "Kayamkulam Kochunni"

There is eye contact made with the viewer and therefore a demand is made with the viewer, which establishes an imaginary relationship with the observer. In the poster, the actor is positioned in a long shot from the viewer's perspective which implies a social relation between the actor and the viewer. The viewer's perspective of the poster is at a vertical angle when focusing the point of view that comes under the interactive meaning.

3. Compositional

The poster is framed in a way where the actor is seen to be spread out on three-quarters of the space. The most salient object that stands out to a viewer is the actor in himself and his facial expression. It attracts the viewer to the front-center of the composition. The movie poster is a collage which has a color composition of blue and yellow on the left and right respectively. The poster appears unrealistic with a composition of different elements that does not substantiate with the actual history of '*Kayamkulam Kochunni'*.

1. Representational

In Fig 2, there is only represented participant: the actor. He appears to be debarking from the jeep which would be considered as 'doing something' that fits into Kress and van Lueewen's (2006) description of narrative process. The actor's eyes appears to be looking diagonally towards the right

Contextual information

Title of the Poster	Lucifer
Type	Digital/Print Poster
Year of creation	2019
Image/URL	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6067752/mediaindex?ref_=tt_mv_close_

Figure 2. Visual social semiotic analysis of Malayalam movie poster 'Lucifer'

to an unknown object and so can be termed as non-transactive in nature. The eye-line formed is a vector originating from the actor to an unknown object and therefore the participant can be termed as a reacter but the absence of a phenomenon makes this a non-transactional reactional process. The conceptual structures in the poster that describes the participant is attire (white shirt & wrap-around) and the enormity of the jeep from which he is disembarking.

2.   Interactive meaning

In fig. 2 the participant is not making an eye contact with the viewer which means there is absence of demand but an offer of information is made to the observer instead. In the movie poster, the actor is placed in a full shot from the viewer's perspective which indicates a social relation between the actor and the viewer. The Point of view that comes under the interactive meaning is at a horizontal angle from the viewer's perspective.

3. Compositional

The poster is framed in a way where the actor and his jeep is given more focus than anything else. The most salient object that stands-out to the viewer is the participant's facial expression, which informs the viewer that the actor is quite displeased and the object or individual the person's glare is directed at can be in trouble. The participant's jeep and the inscription on it –'*Nedumballi'*(it depicts that the house name has some significant value in the movie) can also be considered as the salient features in the poster. It attracts the viewer to the front-center of the composition. The movie poster is a photograph which has been taken during afternoon and so the shades of grey mixed with yellow and white colours can be seen in the poster. The poster appears realistic with just the participant, his jeep and the sky.

1. Representational

In Fig. 3 too there is only one represented participant: the actor. He appears to be landing on his feet from a fall supposedly from the trees based on the surroundings that are depicted in the movie poster. The actor's landing on his own feet can be considered as the action that comes under the narrative process. The actor's eyes appears to be looking directly at the viewer and so can be considered as transactive in nature. The eye-line formed is a vector originating from the actor to the viewer and so the participant is the reacter and the viewer is the phenomenon, which makes it a transactive process. The conceptual structures in the poster is mainly the background which looks like a forest and the participant's attire which constitutes of a brownish green shirt and green wraparound with gladiator sandals.

2. Interactive meaning

Fig. 3 shows the participant in the poster making an eye contact with the viewer, which means demand is made with the viewer. It means that the participant in the poster is symbolically demanding admiration from the viewer as the participant's angle from which the eye contact is made with the viewer is an upward look. In the poster, the participant is placed in a full shot distance which implies a social relationship between the actor and the viewer. The viewer's perspective of the poster is at vertical angle.
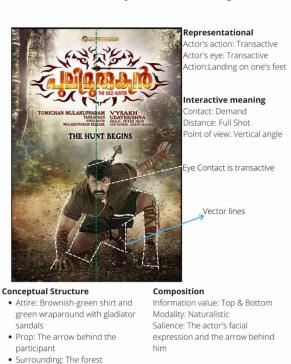
3. Compositional

The poster is framed in a way where the actor and his landing technique is given more focus apart from the background forest. The most salient object that stands out to the viewer is the participant's arrow and the way his legs and hands are directed on to the ground and in the air. His facial expression informs the viewer that the actor is quite dangerous and that he has to be either revered or be feared of. The information value of the poster is that the visuals are placed in the top and bottom format which

Contextual information

Title of the Poster	Pulimurugan
Type	Digital/Print Poster
Year of creation	2016
Image/URL	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5297256/mediaindex?ref_=tt_mv_close_

Figure 3. Visual social semiotic analysis of Malayalam movie poster 'Pulimurugan'

implies that the information placed on top are ideal and the visuals in the bottom can be considered ideal. The movie poster is a photograph which has been shot in the noon and so the shades of yellow with hues of brown and green colors can be seen mixed in the poster. The poster appears realistic with just the participant and the forest behind him.

DISCUSSION

The analysis was conducted to find how Malayalam movie posters are visually constructed and to observe whether a visual message in a poster can influence the financial success of a Malayalam movie.

All three movie posters consist of visuals where the participant is either interacting with the viewer or with someone unknown. According to Ching et al., (2012), a visual enables a viewer to come to their own conclusion based on how they interpret the visuals. In the three Malayalam movie posters, the narrative process features the main participant of the movie through which it tries to garner the attention of the viewer. The narrative process that are obvious in the posters are constructed from an actor and a plot from the movie (Chang, 2008). In fig.1 the participant is representing the actor and the viewer is represented as the goal. In fig.2 the goal is not identified as it is not obvious to the viewer from the poster whereas the participant can be termed as a reacter. It can be observed that he is looking at someone as his facial expression seems to be displeased. This process leaves the viewer to imagine what the reacter is looking at or thinking about and "this can create a powerful sense of empathy or identification with the represented participant" (Kress & van Lueewen, 2006). In fig. 3,

the participant is represented as the actor and the viewer as the goal. Therefore it can be understood that it is the actors, reacters, goals and phenomenon put together that construct the narrative plot in the movie posters.

The classical formulation of the Causality Principle as cited by Rubi (2009) suggests that "all real events necessarily have a cause". It directs the presence of rational connection between two events, the cause and the effect, and it is imperative that cause always comes before the effect (Rubi, 2009). Comprehending the cause and effect in static images is complex when compared to dynamic video content. Yet, the movie posters can be evaluated for its common aspects which can be understood as the cause. The common factor in all the three movie posters is the participant (the Malayalam movie actor Mohanlal) and his presence in them can be deduced as one of the main reasons for the huge financial success of the movie, which is the effect. In the three movie posters, his facial expressions (displeasing glare, excited, swagger) are given fitting importance which is a factor that viewers look forward to. Some of the other common factors are his attire, the distance (full shot) on the poster with which his presence is made known to the viewers (Kumar, 2020). The participant is portrayed like a savior in the three movie posters that makes many viewers to watch the movie allowing it to enter the Rs.100 crore club.

According to Zaltman and Coulter (1995), the narrative plots are constructed to educe memory from the visuals on the movie posters. Symbolism is utilized mainly through the backgrounds and props in the posters to evoke connections in the minds of the viewers especially the Keralites. The use of medieval time weapons, the attire of the participant and even the color composition with some hut like structures in the background in fig.1 suggests that the viewers will be able to relate the *'Kayamkulam Kochunni'* movie poster to a period that dates back from their current time. In fig.2, the use of a jeep with the inscription *'Nedumballi'*, the participant's attire in *'Lucifer'* movie poster will enable the observer to deduce that it is related to a political story of which the participant plays an important role. In fig.3, the forest, the participant's attire and the prop – arrow allows the viewer to understand that the movie poster is conveying a story about a person who is daring and is not afraid of the wild. The distance is used as an advantage in the three posters to establish a particular kind of control and strategy relation between the visual and the viewer.

Therefore the visual construction in the selected Malayalam movie posters *"Kayamkulam Kochunni", "Lucifer"* and *"Pulimurugan"* represent a social relation between the viewer and the poster that creates a curiosity in the minds of the audience. This in turn leads the viewers to go watch the movie which paved the way for these Malayalam films to enter the Rs.100 crore club which was previously monopolized by the Bollywood.

CONCLUSION

Visual social semiotic approach by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) offers a systematic method to understand how pictures are visually created. The approach extended from Halliday's method to understand text talks about understanding visuals using three metafunctions: representational, interactive and compositional meanings. The approach created by Kress and van Leeuwen was applied to analyze the three Malayalam movie posters that consisted of traditionally coded properties of nonverbal message.

The posters had traditional codes that had multiple connotations to it. These traditional codes were utilized in the movie posters to make the viewers relate to the movie. These posters also evoked a cultural meaning within a particular culture especially the viewers who are Keralites to share feelings to the visuals when they view it for the first time and thereby encouraging them to watch the movie. This was the objective which the movie makers banked on when they included the actor (Mohanlal) in all the three movie posters. They aimed to play on an emotional memory with which they have watched the actor from their early age and use his aura to play on the psyche of the viewers. Even though all the posters had culturally coded meanings in the visuals presented, the interactive process

between the viewer and the poster showed that the actor was kept at a far distance with the camera shot being full view so as to maintain a social and not a personal relationship. The financial success of the movie not only depends on the visuals created in the movie posters but the other marketing strategies that were utilized during the promotion of the movie. However, movie posters being the primary intermediary to communicate the arrival of a movie to a viewer, the makers of the films have carefully constructed their visuals in such a manner that audiences would be mesmerized by the posters thereby piquing their interest to wait for more information about the release of the movie.

The researcher could observe that the creators of Bollywood movies banked on actors in the early 70's and 80's and could not depend on this promotional tool in the future years. There has been evidently more Bollywood movies that have gone into the 100 crore club and beyond but they depended on various other marketing gimmicks and not just the poster (Mitter, 2012). Therefore, it could be understood from the study that the posters created in the Malayalam film industry was created with a lot of precision and the creators did depend on the superstardom of actors such as Mohanlal, Mamootty, and various others in placing their characters in the movie posters in order to promote the movie so that it could be a top grosser and be a part of the 100 crore club. This does explain that both the audience and the creators in Kerala still do hold a great respect and preference towards the actors and the roles that they portray in the poster and the movie alike. It was also observed that even though the success of a movie could heavily rely on the plot of the story, the posters analyzed in the study did point out that the actor and his role positioned prominently in the movie poster also created a hype and hoopla among the viewers to watch the movie.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

As for the shortcoming of this study, a limitation was that more movie posters could not be analyzed due to the lack of Malayalam movies that have made into the Rs.100 crore club unlike the Bollywood movies. This research focuses on analyzing the visuals in the three Malayalam movie posters that entered the Rs.100 crore club which gave a fundamental comprehension of the entire approach proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen. However, if more regional languages apart from English and Hindi can be included in the further studies to come, then the cultural codes and the functioning of the entire trend of analyzing visuals that are constructed on movie posters can be better understood using the visual social semiotic approach. The researcher has limited the study to regional movies specifically Indian Malayalam language movies. The movies that are selected for the study have been chosen until the year 2020.

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