

CHALLENGES OF SRI LANKAN TAMIL SHORT FILMMAKERS

R. Joel Jairus¹

¹ Lecturer (Probationary), Department of Languages and Communication Studies, Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT

Short films are a broad genre of movies characterized by their shorter lengths when compared to feature films. Sri Lankan Tamil filmmakers are enthusiastic about creating short films, and more than 100 short films are now released annually, particularly on YouTube or at Sri Lankan short film festivals. But only a very small number of their short films have been seen by audiences. The majority of Tamil filmmakers in Sri Lanka struggle to reach a wider audience with their works. This research has been conducted to find out the challenges faced by the Sri Lankan Tamil short filmmakers. This research discusses about what are the challenges faced by Sri Lankan Tamil short filmmakers. What do Sri Lankan Tamil viewers anticipate from Sri Lankan Tamil short filmmakers? What are the strategies that can be used by Sri Lankan Tamil filmmakers to reach a larger audience for their short films? The research was conducted among Sri Lankan Tamil filmmakers and Sri Lankan Tamil audiences. The research concludes that the primary challenges faced by Sri Lankan Tamil short filmmakers are a lack of funding, a lack of experience in the film industry, the producers' personal goals or desires, a lack of platforms to screen or market the film for a wide audience outside of YouTube, discrimination on the basis of location and ethnicity among the audience, the fact that the cost of showing the short films in theatres exceeds their budgets, a shortage of full-time artists, a lack of crew involvement, and poor audio quality output. The audience has determined that the main shortcomings of Sri Lankan Tamil short films include poor acting, poor screenplay, poor cast selection, a low budget, and poor sounds. The majority of viewers prefer to watch short films in their own Tamil rather than Tamil used in Indian cinema. The study suggests that Tamil filmmakers in Sri Lanka should increase their level of filmmaking expertise. The directors' vision should be understood by the producers. A strategy for marketing or promoting the films to a broad audience should be put into place. Sri Lanka could use more over-the-top (OTT) platforms for its own artistic products. The proprietors of theatres ought to think about offering Sri Lankan films a discount, since this will inspire more filmmakers to produce high-caliber films for distribution.

Keyword :- Short films, Sri Lankan Short filmmakers, Feature films, Challenges, Sri Lanka.

1. THE BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Short films are a broad genre of movies characterized by their shorter lengths when compared to feature films. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences defines a short film as one that is forty minutes or less for the purposes of the "Animated Short Film" and "Live Action Short Film" categories of the Academy Awards. The length requirement for short film submissions at the Venice Film Festival is 30 minutes or less. Early cinema was dominated by short film formats, which included actualities, newsreels, serials, travel movies, and animation (Kuhn, A., & Westwell, G. 2020). Short films types can be varied according to their genres. There are various kinds of short films, and to name a few general categories, we can distinguish between short films for adults, for kids, old, modern, animated, independent, university films, subtitles, and mute films. (Briceño V., Gabriela. 2019). There are few features of a short film that are more commonly acknowledged than those of a feature film. Short films have one main incident as opposed to feature films, which develop a number of incidents into potentially intricate tales or plots. In short films, there is usually one main character among others, and the plot revolves around that individual's brief life path. In short films, you keep things straightforward, cover the crucial information swiftly, and explore the aforementioned life journey briefly and without deviating. Some people linger too long on expositional dialogue and images. Your movie will become needlessly drawn out and uninteresting as a result. In terms of art, it is likewise problematic. Character growth is not given enough room in short films, whereas it is allowed in features, where characters can grow and become more complicated. Short movies are rarely made for financial gain. Unlike feature films, short films are not frequently released in theaters. Most of their screening methods use social and new media.

Sri Lankan Tamil cinema doesn't have a long history because it debuted with the 1962 adaption of "Velaikaari" by C.N. Annadurai, Samuthayam (Society). Sinhalese and Tamil are the two main languages used in Sri Lankan movies. The majority of the first nine years' films were produced in South India and adhered to Indian cinematic norms (Thampi Ayya Thevathas). With fewer than 100 films made, Sri Lanka's Tamil language film industry has remained comparatively modest. Sri Lanka's Tamil film business is not as established as its Indian equivalent, the Tamil Cinema of Kodambakkam, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, or the Sinhala film industry. Tamil films from Tamil Nadu are a major competitor. India and the long-running ethnic civil war in Sri Lanka are both hindrances. Thampi Ayya Devadas, the film critique further stated that more than 50 Tamil movies have been produced till far. Since the 1960s, there haven't been many posters or commercials for Sri Lankan Tamil movies, although the majority of them have been canceled. The screenings of Tamil films made in this country are limited. These movies weren't disseminated to theaters in other cities and were only screened one or two times. In the meantime, Sri Lankan Tamil filmmakers are enthusiastic about creating short films, and more than 100 short films are now released annually, particularly on YouTube or at Sri Lankan short film festivals.

But only a very small number of their short films have been seen by audiences. The majority of Tamil filmmakers in Sri Lanka struggle to reach a wider audience with their works.

The main goal of this present work is to gather the data about the challenges faced by the Sri Lankan Tamil Filmmakers to deliver their short films to the larger audiences in Sri Lanka. The findings of this study will help Sri Lankan Tamil filmmakers better their methods for reaching the target audience for their short films. This research discusses about what are the challenges faced by Sri Lankan Tamil short filmmakers?, What do Sri Lankan Tamil viewers anticipate from Sri Lankan Tamil short filmmakers? What are the strategies that can be used by the Sri Lankan Tamil filmmakers for reaching the larger audience for their short films.

2. Research Methodology

There are two types of methods are using to collect data generally in research. Primary and Secondary data collecting methods are using to conduct a research. Primary data is explained as the data collecting by the researcher in order to address the research questions.

2.1 Survey Methodology

A survey is a research technique used to gather data from a predetermined sample of respondents in order to learn more and acquire insights into a range of interesting topics. Depending on the approach used and the objective of the study, they can be used for a variety of reasons and by researchers in a variety of ways. (Adi Bhat, Global VP).

The present study has used Personal-in-depth interviews and questionnaires, which are two of the survey methods to examine the research problem. As such the present study has used a total number of 10 personal in-depth interviews as follows,

- Ten interviews of Sri Lankan Tamil film short film directors

And 50 questionnaires will be given to the Tamil students in Trincomalee Campus.

The sample will be collected as below,

- 10 Tamil students in the department of Languages and Communication Studies
- 10 Tamil students in the department of Business and Management studies.
- 10 Tamil students in the department of Physical science
- 10 Tamil students in the department of Computer science
- 10 Tamil students in unit of Siddha Medicine

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Majority of the Sri Lankan Tamil short film directors stated that they wish to make commercial type short films in Sri Lanka which mostly watched by Sri Lankan Tamil audiences. All the directors are facing challenges in finding producers for the short films. Finding a crew with motivation to make a movie without money minded too difficult these days. The directors are trying to move to new wave cinema without changing to modern cinema. Producers are not ready to listen to advanced story and they are interested to invest money only for specific themes such as civil war and LGBTQ. And Vishnujan, Director of "Vettaian" started that lack of cinematic technology is one of the challenges to him to make a better production. Meanwhile Dir Haviithan stated that we have good technologies like Indian cinema, yet we are struggling to get a better output in Audio side.

Ahilan Indirasooriyan, Director of Sri Lankan feature movie "Pagadai 8" stated that finding Tamil artists who can involve in the movie full time is difficult in Sri Lankan Tamil film industry as most of the artists are part time actors or acting for hobby.

Director Havijithan, stated that his short films were screened in many places in Sri Lanka and other countries. But his short film was not appreciated in screening happened in Jaffna, Sri Lanka meanwhile those audience appreciated the other short films related to civil war. but his short will got much appreciation in his own city named Akkaraipattu.

Most of the directors stated that they need to spend a lot of money to screen their movies in theatres. That became another burden for them after they made the short films in a small budget. The only platform which helps them to promote and release their short films in YouTube. Further they stated that audience are not watching all the short films on YouTube. If the movie connects well with the audience from the beginning only, they will watch the movie till end. Otherwise, they would easily forward it or skip it. Through the screening in institutions and festivals also we can market our productions. But in Sri Lanka, it is yet to be succeeded. There are few platforms like dialog app. But the app users are very less. Few directors are using social media influencers to share their productions as they have a good number of followers. Further they said producers should focus on making movies which liked by most of the audience than their personal desires or agendas.

The above results clearly stated that one of the main challenges for short filmmakers is finding a producer who is willing to invest money for the production without any limitation. The audience are not willing to watch every short film and their interest are vary according to their places, and genre preference. Almost all the directors are facing struggles to market or screen their productions.

When it comes to the audiences, 82 % of the respondents have watched Sri Lankan Tamil short films and but only 20% of them know the names of the Sri Lankan Tamil short filmmakers. Majority of the respondents stated that the standard of the Sri Lankan Tamil short films is average and 30% of the respondents believe that Sri Lankan Tamil short films are getting better in making, productions value and storytelling. 70% of the respondents like to watch commercial type or comedy or action genre short films and rest of them are interested in realistic short films. 64% of the audience like to watch new types of stories from the short filmmakers. Poor acting, poor writing, poor cast selection, low budget, sounds have been identified as the major drawbacks in Sri Lankan Tamil short films. 60% of the respondents supports the Sri Lankan short films in the native Tamil languages and rest of them supports the Indian cinema's Tamil style. Most of the audience stated that most of the actors in Sri Lankan Tamil short films are trying to imitate South Indian actors.

4. CONCLUSION

This research has been conducted to find out the challenges faced by the Sri Lankan Tamil short filmmakers. The research was conducted among the Sri Lankan Tamil filmmakers and Sri Lankan Tamil audiences. The research concludes that lack of producers to invest money, producers' lack of knowledge of cinema, producer's personal desires or agendas, no many platforms to screen or market the movie for many audiences except YouTube, discrimination among the audience based on places and ethnicity, the cost of screening the short films in theatre is higher than the short films' budgets, lack of full time artists, lack of involvement of the crew, low quality output in audio are the main challenges of Sri Lankan Tamil short filmmakers. Poor acting, poor writing, poor cast selection, low budget, sounds have been identified as the major drawbacks in Sri Lankan Tamil short films by the audience. Most of the audience prefer to watch short films in their native Tamil language rather than the Indian Cinematic Tamil language.

4.1. Recommendation:

The research recommends that the Sri Lankan Tamil filmmakers should improve better knowledge in filmmaking. The producers should understand the vision of the directors. A method should be implemented to market or promote the movies to many audiences. More number of OTT platforms should be implemented in Sri Lanka for National art productions. The theater owners should consider giving a discount to Sri Lankan movies which will encourage more directors to make more good movies for screening.

5. REFERENCES

1. Kuhn, A., & Westwell, G. (2020). [short film](#). In [A Dictionary of Film Studies](#). : Oxford University Press. Retrieved 17 Jan. 2023
2. Gerring, John (2018) *Organizing your social science research paper: Writing a case study* Retrieved on 18.01.2023 from <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/casestudy>

3. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* ISSN 2220-8488 (Print), 2221-0989 Retrieved on 19 January 2023
4. King, Geoff (2002). *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press. [ISBN 0-231-12759-6](#)
5. Briceño V., Gabriela. (2019). *Short film*. Recovered on 1 February, 2023, de Euston96:
6. Elizabeth T. Giwa (2014) *Nollywood: A Case Study of the Rising Nigerian Film Industry- Content & Production* retrieved on 9, July, 2021 from https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1667&context=gs_rp
7. Faber, Liz & Walters, Helen (2003). *Animation Unlimited: Innovative Short Films Since 1940*. London: Laurence King, in association with Harper Design International. [ISBN 1-85669-346-5](#)
8. D.B.S. Jeyaraj (2013) [Sri Lankan Tamil Cinema and the Search for a Distinct Identity](#) Retrieved 17 Jan. 2023
9. *Thampiayya Devadas, (2000). Story of the Sri Lankan Tamil Cinema, Kaanthalagam.*

