

FINANCING PATTERNS OF FILM INDUSTRY IN MANIPUR: A SWAY FOR SURVIVAL

Sunil Koijam
Assistant Professor
Department of Mass Communication
Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh.

Abstract: Since Manipuri films turns digital and the affordability of film making is getting cheaper, financing is taking a new turn. Compared to the celluloid era, where even thinking of a new script is scared upon with the amount to be spent, the contemporary digital ones are building film makers and its associates a creative freedom. With more than one lakh people directly and indirectly dependent on the film economy, financing pattern in Manipuri films has also come a long way. The present paper will explore the changing pattern of film financing and its sway for survival. Approximately 60 films are commercially produced in Manipur with some 20 screens only to showcase, the survival limit for a film is less. But producers are today coming up with new initiatives and innovations which are making them profit happy. The content, form and execution of narratives are taking a new turn owing to the availability of finance. The paper also explores the films makers' unique way of survival in the time of crisis.

Keywords: Manipuri films, film finance, film narratives, crisis management in filmmaking

I. INTRODUCTION

Films and filmmaking in the state of Manipur, one of the sister state of the Northeast of India has come a long way. The art and the craft has been now in the mainstream of the society. It's becoming a creative way of narrating stories of social and political relevance of this tiny state. The state is born with many other forms of media which includes many traditional ones also. "Shumang Leela" or the courtyard drama/theatre is still a popular form of entertainment and mass dissemination of ideas and stories. Songs, Drama, plays, various musical instrument recitals both in traditional and folk form as well as in modern and fusion form are also liked by many of the newer generations.

The first Manipuri film was released in 1972, *Matamgi Manipur* directed by Debkumar Bose and received the best feature film in Manipuri language in the 20th National film awards. The film is produced by Karam Manmohan under the banner of K.T Films private Ltd. Most of the film made in that period in India has turn colours but surprisingly the film was make in Black and white. The film showcases some of the unique culture of the state. Some of the other films worth mentioning after the first film are *Lamja Parshuram*, *Imagi Ningthem*, *Olangthagee*, *Wangmadasu*, *Sanakeithel* etc.etc. *Lamja Pashuram* becomes the first Manipuri film to run for 100 days in the box office. Aribam Syam Sharma's *Imagi Ningthem* was awarded the Grand Prix in the Nantes International Film Festival in France in 1982. Growth of cinema can also be attributed to the formation of film society. The first film society called the Film Society of Manipur was formed in 1966 which was instrumental in bringing out the first film. Imphal Cine Club was formed in 1979 which also contributed a lot in the growth history of cinemas of Manipur. This small state has bagged more than 57 National awards in both feature and non-feature sections making Manipur the most awarded state among the Northeast states of India. Films from the state are popular among the audience because of its beautiful depiction of its rich culture and heritage. Some of the films are though provoking that leads many scholars and researchers to continue studies on the stories that are unfolded in the big screen.

Table 1: celluloid films produced in manipur

1972	<i>Matamgi Manipur</i>	First Manipuri feature film. Received regional award for Best Feature Film in Manipuri Language at the 20th National Film Awards.	Debkumar Bose	
1976	<i>Saphabee</i>	Received regional award for Best Feature Film in Manipuri Language at the 24th National Film Awards.	Aribam Sharma	Syam
1979	<i>Olangthagee Wangmadasoo</i>	Received regional award for Best Feature Film in Manipuri Language at the 27th National Film Awards.	Aribam Sharma	Syam
1981	<i>Imagi Ningthem</i>	Received award for National Film Award for Best Child Artist (Master Leikhendra) and regional award for Best Feature Film in Manipuri Language at the 29th National Film Awards.	Aribam Sharma	Syam
1983	<i>Sanakeithel</i>	Received regional award for Best Feature Film in Manipuri Language at the 31st National Film Awards.	M.A. Singh	
1984	<i>Langlen Thadoi</i>	First Manipru i colour film	M.A. Singh	
1990	<i>Ishanou</i>	Screened in the Un Certain Regard section at the 1991 Cannes International Film Festival	Aribam Sharma	Syam
2007	<i>Yenning Amadi Likla</i>	Got entry into the feature film section of the Indian Panorama of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) 2007. It was among 21 selected feature films.	Mankhonmani Mongsaba	
2011	<i>Phijjee Mani</i>	Received award for Best Supporting Actress (Leishangthem Tonhoingambi Devi) and the regional award for Best Feature Film in Manipuri Language at the 59th National Film Awards. Selected for Indian Panorama 2011.	Oinam Singh	Gautam
2012	<i>Leipaklei</i>	Selected for Jeonju International Film Festival 2012 held in South Korea, 18th Kolkata International Film Festival and 5th Guwahati	Aribam Sharma	Syam

		Film Festival	
2013	<i>Nangna Kappa Pakchade</i>	Screened at 3rd Delhi International Film Festival	Mankhonmani Mongsaba
2014	<i>Pallepfam</i>	Got entry at the 10th edition of Habitat Film Festival 2015. The film also opened at the 2nd edition of 'Fragrances from the Northeast', a three-day festival of cinema from the Northeast	Wanglen Khundongbam
2014	<i>Nongmatang</i>	Screened at 3rd Delhi International Film Festival	Suvas E.

Courtesy: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinema_of_Manipur

II. PRODUCING A FILM

There are different reasons for producing a film. Many people consider it is necessary for gratifying a creative form. The medium is itself so exiting that many are drawn to this profession of producing a film. As we are all aware that it's not only about money but also involves all kinds of technical and logistic support, the knowhow of producing a film has been more or less institutionalised in the west. In India also we can see the professionalism of producers doing their work. As at the end of the day, it's a business for all and needs dividend.

If we come closer and look at the Northeast of India and particularly in the state of Manipur, it's all over a different story. Though the art is new, it has taken into an all new levels. There is no systematic way one can start producing a movie but anyone can. There is no exact criterion to become a film producer. If you have enough money in your pool, you can start thinking of producing one. Some script writer becomes producers as no other producer is ready to take on their story. So they ultimately have to convince one and end up producing it. There are also many other people who wants themselves included into the fame of Manipuri film industry, they produce films. To gain popularity among the masses is also one driving force to produce films. The wannabe actors who are inspired by many other films who may not possess the right kind of acting skills produces films for their own sake. In the process many producer are born in the state. There are also many who love this creative art of filmmaking, this particular medium of storytelling which they believe can bring changes to the society also produce films. There are many things which can be inspired from this small state in producing a film. Issues like culture, arts, folks and contemporary issues like corruption, insurgency, unemployment and many others are also widely explored by budding producers. With large amount of films being produced in a year, the need for stories and the ability to come out with very new ideas is quite commendable for the industry.

III. DIRECTOR AND FINANCING PATTERNS

It's interesting to find out that in Manipuri films, mostly Directors have the say. For any project to kick-start, producers have to first find a director, preferably an established one. The amount of money a producer has to put in and the expected amount of profit will mostly depend on the director. The director is almost the one who is not only going to direct the content of the film but also going to do all the necessary elements of filmmaking. Right from casting to scheduling, shooting to editing, dubbing to mixing till promotion to release. As the film market is too crowded with more than 60 films being produced in a year. The chances of losing money are so high. The producers have to have full faith in his director and actors. *Hector Langlojam*, a scriptwriter has the opinion that lack of professional production houses is the main causes of it. Normally producers can't go to a production house which normally handles all this functions; they mostly depend on the director. The director in turn, most of them has an editing cum sound studio which is their earning venue apart from their directorial fees. The studios are mostly not well furnished and the equipment is mostly assembled using low cost hardware. Most of the software is not genuine but it can pull off their work well.

Necessary equipment starting from camera to costumes, lights to makeups and logistics to stationary are all available on hire basis. The producers with the help of the director books in advance for the whole film and payments are done in advance. One thing worthy to find out in Manipuri films is the role of a production manager. There are many production managers who are working simultaneously working on many films at a time, and they are one who are operating the workable schedule of shooting. In short the master plan of every film and many films which are on the floor at the same time smoothly runs because of them. The actors have their diary recording their entire schedule almost up to one year ahead. As there are very few popular actors, and all producers knew that without any one of them in the film, the success is bleak, so they end up waiting in that long list of queue.

IV. SOCIAL INSTABILITY AND FINANCING

Manipur has been known to the outside state for its frequent bandhs, blockades and many other anti-social elements blocking the proper functioning of the government in particular and civilian at large. This also widely affects the film industry. It is estimated that more than one lakh people are directly or directly strive their livelihood from this industry.

As the state has few numbers of cinema halls, it's difficult to accommodate all the films that are produced in the state. With some 60 to 70 films produced in a year, the life span of a film screening in the big screen is very less. This affects the profit margin to a producer. A producer normally waits up to one year or more for his film to get its turn screening in a cinema hall. One good alternative is showcasing the film in public places or in big grounds with certain amount fixed as a ticket. "BOAT or Bhaighachandra Open Air Theatre" is a chosen place for most of the producer to premier their film. The tickets are sold in advance. "Donors ticket" are printed which are sold to well-known people of the state which includes politicians and

high ranking officers and gets good amount of money. As the sitting capacity of the theatre is big, producers always end up smiling to the bank after the show. Then the films are distributed to all the cinema halls in the capital and to different district. Clubs, associations and other civil society organisations also approaches the producer to take the rights of the film to be screened in their respective public places. The profits are shared among the associations and the producer.

Ample amount of unorganised street vendors can be found in and around the main market selling DVDs of recently released films. Most of them do their business with trunk filled with those films and place their counter at any empty street corner. This is in addition to many established films parlour who are also distributing films. The established ones take hold of film distribution rights from the producer. The normal rate starts from 3 to 4 lakhs and can go beyond. They then print multiple amounts of prints and distribute throughout the state and beyond. This are picked up by local film parlour and small shop.

When all this form of business is going on smoothly, it is quite often disturbed by bandhs and other social boycotting. The little amount of window which is available to the producer are often disoriented. One major hindrance caused is during filmmaking. The actors which are hard to get their schedule at the first place, because of this sudden announcement of bandh or other had to be postponed. The producer has to wait ample amount of time going up to months to reschedule his shoot day. This amounted to huge loses.

Problems like this and many more are addressed to the Film Forum, which is the apex body of filmmakers of the state. The forum in turn tries to resolve issues regarding the quality of contents, message design and others so that films screened have a quality output. All filmmakers co-operate to the forum for all round protection and welfare.

V. PROMOTION OF FILMS

Manipuri films are widely promoted using various medium of media. The two cable channel namely ISTV and IMPACT TV has different time slots for promotion of films in which the producers has to pay. Interesting packages are offered by the channels to the producers and vice versa. "Film News Update" is one such popular programme in ISTV. One scheme which IMPACT TV offers is promotion of a film for 30 days without charging anything to the producer with a rider that the film will be screed in their movies channel free after all the screening are done in cinema halls and the DVDs are out in the parlours. Many such innovative means which are gain-gain situations are worked out. Youtube channel is quite well channelized in promotion of films. Tantha is a popular youtube channel with some odd 38 thousand and still counting subscribers. Videos and films promoted in these channels crosses more than 100 thousands hits. There is another popular top 10 format running in ISTV based on this hits and which encourages both the mediums.

Piracy again is a big problem in Manipuri films. But it's not that big as it used to be in the beginning. With the application of technology, the pirated copy can be traced back to the main culprit and appropriate actions are taken. The concerned producer and the Film Forum takes over the quantum of punishment. Duplication of unauthorised copies after the DVDs are released after taking the rights by a

distributor is also another point of worry. Nowadays only DVD player specific coding is done so that the films cannot be played in a computer or any other application which can be copied and duplicated.

VI. METHOD IN THE DISORDER

Manipuri films are not totally run by professional. On a day to day basis, people working behind the scene keep on changing their roles. Cameraman goes for multiple works at any given point of time. If there is some issues in the film, he will go for some other assignments like marriage ceremony, parties, picnic and other various programmes. Likewise video editors, sound dubbing artist and others. Interesting part is most the workforce takes up multiple assignments at one go. Say an editor will have some 4-5 films at any given point of time. Likewise directors, cameraman and many others. Prominent actors are on the higher side, they have around 20-30 films always in hand. But the best part is whenever they have the call of duty; they are all available in their respective roles. It's only when the method goes haywire, the disorder happen otherwise there is method in this disorder.

VII. DISCONNECT IN THE POLICIES

Even though the government has the “Manipur film Development Society” and the state film policy, there seems to be a disconnect with the filmmakers. There is a huge gap between the so called commercial digital film which are more of mainstream compared to the ones who are doing good in the national and international film festival circuit. The later ones seem to have more connected with the government policies of filmmaking. The financing and production part are seen supported by various government agencies like the NFDC (national film development cooperation), Film division etc. The other seems to have the disconnect. Most of them have not much of knowledge about government agencies funding films.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Finance, no doubt is an integral part of filmmaking. If a producer has invested certain amount of money into a film, they are obviously looking for a handsome return. The larger number of film produced in year is not a problem. It only creates more competition among them. It makes one break even quickly and counts the profit. It's only those bandh and others social disturbances which is hampering their growth. Most the producers agreed upon the idea that films should be graded like giving star rating. Some critique should come up with certain rating which will gradually phase out certain numbers of films which are produced very meaninglessly. This will give a change to the producer and director to concentrate more on their quality and the competition is taken head on.

Many other producers also agreed on the idea of turning more professional. The starting of technicians and other people involved in filmmaking should have a proper shift system so that the

payments can be uniform. This uniformity will encourage working hard and quality inputs can be expected from them. Otherwise, they end up in buying time which is going to earn the same amount. The grading of the technicians according to their experience and expertise can be in cooperated. This will create a job market which the eligible and deserved candidate will be benefited. This in all will bring the cinema more creative and powerful medium of mass communication.

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