


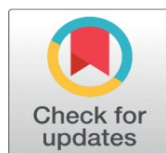


FILMS AND YOUTH: A STUDY TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF CONTEMPORARY MYTHOLOGICAL HINDI FILMS

Sakshi Pundir ¹, Dr. Rashi Mishra ¹ 

¹ Research Scholar, School of Media and Communication Studies, Doon University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

² Assistant Professor, School of Media and Communication Studies, Doon University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India



Corresponding Author

Dr. Rashi Mishra, rashidoon@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Mythology has always been a significant part of Indian cinema. Technological advancements and filmmakers' artistic freedom have changed how mythology is presented in Hindi cinema. This exploratory research aims to analyze the influence of contemporary mythology-inspired Hindi films on youths. It also examines the role of Social Networking Sites (SNS) in influencing youth's interest in mythological films. This paper examines the motivation to explore the Indian epics further among youth as a result of perceiving the incorporation of mythological elements in today's cinema. To fulfil the objectives, primary data was collected using a random sampling method of 50 respondents who were between the ages of 15 and 45. The survey findings revealed a strong interest and engagement among young people in modern mythological Hindi movies. These films not only provide entertainment but also inspire viewers to explore and connect with their cultural heritage. These films inspire intellectual curiosity and research intent among viewers. Social networking sites play a pivotal role in shaping preferences and understanding of mythological cinema.

Keywords: Hindi Films, Mythology, Youth, Survey, Social Networking Sites

1. INTRODUCTION

'Mythology connects India from Guwahati in the east to Gujarat in the west, from Srinagar at the northern tip to Sriperumbudur in the south' the statement given by (Sengupta, 2018). Her article well explains the strong association of mythology with the Land of India. Since the beginning of the ancient history of India, mythology has been a part of its glory. Since ancient times, knowledge has been passed down through stories from generation to generation, to which Mythology has made an important contribution. According to Pattanaik, Mythology is a map of the human mind. It helps you understand the world, life and culture. It is a subjective truth based on memory (Sudevan, 2019). Mythology tells people how they should see the world. Mythology constitutes stories, symbols, and rituals that make a myth tangible. Myth is an idea, mythology is the vehicle of that idea. Stories, symbols, and

rituals are languages heard, seen, and performed (Pattanaik, 2014). From the beginning of storytelling to the development of film, television, theatre, and other performing arts, mythology laid the way for all of this and the ability to present stories in new ways (Miller, 2011). Mythology originated in Indian cinema after Dadasaheb Phalke's oft-quoted account of his 1911 viewing of a film called *The Life of Christ*, which caused him to mentally visualize 'the gods, Shri Krishna, Shri Ramchandra,' and to ponder the question, "Could we, the sons of India, ever be able to see Indian images on the screen?". This desire of Dadasaheb Phalke laid the foundation of Mythology in Indian Cinema, starting with the 1913 movie *Raja Harishchandra* (Lutgendorf, 2021).

Mythological, the founding genre of Indian cinema, and one of the most productive genres of its early cinema, depicts tales of gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines mostly from the large repository of Hindu myths, which are largely found in the Sanskrit Puranas, and the Sanskrit epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana (Dwyer, 2006). Taking this sequence forward, films like *Lanka Dahan*, *Shri Krishna Janma*, *Kaliya Mardan*, and *Mohini Bhasmasur* were produced. Not only in the Pre-Independence era but also in the Post-Independence era films such as *Ramayana* (1954), *Sampoorna Ramayana* (1961), *Mahabharat* (1965) and *Har Gange* (1978) took this trend forward. Time changed, technology changed, the audience changed, and the perspective of filmmakers changed, but even today the substructure of story or plot is still Mythology. Contemporary Indian cinema has witnessed a resurgence of mythology-inspired movies that draw from ancient epics such as Mahabharat and Ramayan. From Shyam Benegal's *Kalyug* (1980), and Sooraj Barjatya's *Hum Saath Saath Hain* (1999) to Mani Ratnam's *Raavan* (2010), Prakash Jha's *Rajneeti* (2010) and S.S. Rajamouli's *Baahubali* (2015 & 2017) are perfect examples of this. These films blend traditional narratives with modern storytelling techniques, engaging a wide audience, particularly the youth.

The present research delves into the impact of mythology movies in today's cinema on the young generation, examining their motivations to further explore the Indian epics and the role of social media in shaping their cinematic preferences. The impact of Contemporary Mythological Hindi movies on youths has been investigated using a quantitative analysis answering questions related to the influence of Contemporary mythological cinema, motivation to explore the Indian epics as an aftereffect and the role of SNS (Social Networking Sites) and their influence on movie preferences.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. FILMS AND YOUTH

Cinema plays a significant role in shaping the lifestyle and behaviour patterns of the youth, leading to various social and moral implications. It acts as a powerful medium for information, education, and entertainment, influencing emotional responses and social changes among different social groups. Research emphasizes that young individuals are particularly susceptible to the influence of films, undergoing psychological, social, and sociological transformations that significantly impact their lifestyle and behaviour. (Basha, M., 2023). Uses and gratifications theorists consider how and why individuals use the media. The uses and gratifications theory proposes that audience members actively choose media channels and content to suit their own needs at a particular moment. (Sullivan, 2012). The uses and gratifications theory argues that individuals actively participate in the media consumption process and use movies to meet a variety of needs, including informational, entertainment, social interaction, personal identity, and

psychological or emotional needs. According to the theory, people watch movies for a variety of reasons depending on their personalities, demographics, and social circumstances.

Myth originates from the word *muthos* which translates as 'anything uttered by word of mouth. A myth in popular understanding is looked at as a story which is not true, which generally involves supernatural beings or supra-human beings that give it fictitious proportions or mythicity (Chatterji, 2015).

In his book "Myth = Mithya," Devdutt Patnaik explains how ancient Hindu seers differentiated between myth and truth. To them, "mithya" referred to myth, as opposed to "Satya," which means truth. They believed that if mithya could be considered truth, it could only be achieved by placing it within a specific frame of reference. Mithya, therefore, is a limited form of reality or a distorted view of reality.

In Devdutt Patnaik's words, "Myth is essentially a cultural construct, a common understanding of the world that binds individuals and communities together (Pattanaik, 2014). Myth is one unit of the larger lattice called mythology, which has descended through an oral tradition which is a legacy of a particular cultural group that undergoes change through hybridity (Chatterji, 2015).

India is a land steeped in mythology, with a rich tapestry of stories, deities, and legends that form an integral part of its cultural and religious heritage. The mythology of India is one of the oldest and most diverse in the world, encompassing a vast array of gods, goddesses, epics, and folklore that have been passed down through generations. Indian mythology is not just a collection of isolated stories but a complex web of interconnected narratives that explore themes of duty, righteousness, karma, and the eternal struggle between good and evil.

Mythology in cinema has become a popular genre for storytelling, depicting tales in a highly dramatic and fictitious way. The portrayal of mythology began with the birth of cinema in India, notably with the release of "Raja Harishchandra" in 1913, marking it as the founding genre of Indian cinema. The genre's popularity has grown massively due to advancements in film production technology.

Previously the Hindus had seen their trinity and pantheon in their minds and images of earth and stone. Now they saw them walking, flying in space, throwing flaming discuses (Vishnu's Sudarshana-Chakra), setting offenders aflame with a burning look, making the dead come alive, appearing out of and vanishing into nowhere (Dasgupta, 1989). While the source and the story remain the same, the style and the approach have changed, with characteristics unique to our time.

In contemporary cinema, filmmakers are taking inspiration from the Indian scriptures and epics like – Ramayan and Mahabharat. Indian drama and cinema have drawn extensively from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the two best-known and most widely distributed epics in South Asia. The tales, both central scriptures of the Hindu religion, offer endless patterns that are taken full advantage of in Hindi films. Together with other pan-Indian tales, they offer primary connective links between contemporary films and audiences on one side, and a centuries-old tradition of religious and social concepts, character types, and themes on the other (Booth, 1995). Mythological filmmakers became increasingly creative by recycling themes and characters in unacceptable ways. As the genre evolved, the constraints of providing well-known mythic and epic adventures gave way to tales of unknown characters. Favourite characters were pressed into service to enhance stories that were later-day fabrications.

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are a collection of applications such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram. The use of the Internet is increasing

worldwide at a high rate. It has linked people together, allowing them to share information, be aware of other people's viewpoints, and take part in social networking. Shrestha Lucky (2013) described social media as a means of connection among people, allowing them to exchange, create, and share information and thoughts in virtual communities and networks. Social media has many advantages, including communication, texting, image sharing, audio and video sharing, fast publishing, and global connectivity. As the youth's use of social media is increasing, so is its impact on their lives. The extensive involvement of social media in youths' lives is affecting human behaviours and lifestyles (Rabia, M., Adnan, S., Misbah, N., Nawaz, H., Gillani, M. and Arshad, A., 2020). Researchers have concluded that the majority of college students regularly use the internet and computers in their daily lives.

The main purpose of this usage is to communicate with others, and the primary reason for this preference is that the Internet and social media platforms are much more convenient and faster than traditional methods. Social networking sites offer a convenient and accessible way to connect with others, providing positive information and matters to college students. As a result, college students are not only using social media, but they are also conscious and informed about its use (Neelamalar, M., & Chitra, P., 2009). There are multiple reasons why people are motivated to use and engage in social media (Safko, L., & Brake, D. K., 2009). Many researchers have used the uses and gratifications theory to explain these motivations. This theory is useful for evaluating the use of social media because it is well-suited for studying the usage of new forms of media, such as the Internet (Muntinga, D.G., Moorman, M., and Smith, E.G., 2011).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Although there have been several studies on Hindi cinema, there is still a considerable gap in understanding the impact of mythology movies on the youth. A study done by Ormax Media narrates that in India, the highest number of cinema viewers falls between the age group of 15-30 years, with the median age of a theatre-goer being 27.5 years. This age group is the most frequent cinema-goers, contributing to most of the theatrical audience in India. The study also shows that the contribution of the age group above 41 years is sizeable at 26%, due to their high proportion in the population. (Ormaxmedia, 2020)

The influence of SNS on young people's movie selection is an important subject of research in the movie industry. A recent study titled 'Social Media Activities Impact on the Decision of watching films in Cinema' discovered that SNS had significant impacts on young people's decision-making process when selecting a film to watch at the cinema. Furthermore, the study revealed that social media activities such as word of mouth, online reviews, and movie trailers had a major impact on young people's way of making decisions (Suvattanadilok, M., & Foroudi, P., 2021)

This research examines the impact of contemporary mythological Hindi films on young people, in addition to the role of Social Networking Sites (SNS) in this phenomenon. For this purpose, we explored the following research objectives:

- 1) To analyse the influence of contemporary mythology-inspired Hindi movies on youths.
- 2) To examine the motivation to explore the Indian epics further among the youth as an aftereffect of watching mythological cinema.

- 3) To explore the role of Social Networking Sites (SNS) in motivating youth's inclination towards mythological films.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a qualitative research design with an exploratory research approach that relied primarily on Primary data. Secondary data was used as a prop for the research methodology. Primary data for this study was collected through an online survey administered to the target audience using a structured questionnaire. To complement this, secondary data was gathered from a comprehensive review of relevant books, academic journals, and media reports.

Participants: The online survey questionnaire received 50 responses and was administered randomly to diverse youths, encompassing various age groups, educational backgrounds, and professions including 31 females, 18 males, and one with an undisclosed identity.

Table 1

Table 1 Profile of Survey Respondents		
Age group	Number of Respondents	% of respondents
15-25	24	48%
25-35	23	46%
35-45	3	6%
Gender	Number of Respondents	% of respondents
Male	18	62%
Female	31	36%
Others	1	2%
Educational / Professional Background	Number of Respondents	% of respondents
Undergraduate	4	8%
Graduate	8	16%
Post Graduate	21	42%
Researcher	11	22%
Employed/Self-Employed	6	12%

The research instrument was made up of three sections and subsections, as follows:

- 1) Influence of Contemporary Mythological Cinema
 - Familiarity with Indian Epics
 - Frequency of watching Mythology-inspired Movies
 - Motivations for watching
 - Influence on reading Indian epics
 - Accuracy of Portrayal
 - Participation in group discussions
- 2) Motivation to explore the Indian epics
 - Response to blending Mythology with modern narratives
 - Inspiration for further research
 - Connection with traditional roots
 - Opinions on traditional values

3) Role of Social Networking Sites

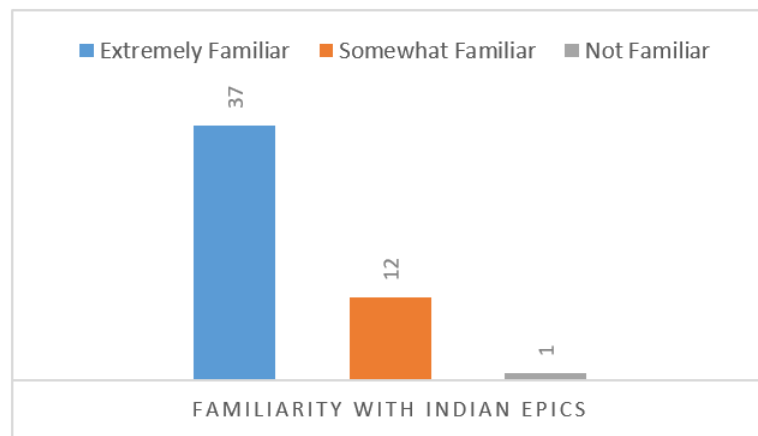
- Usage of SNS
- Engagement with Mythology-related Content on SNS
- Influence of SNS Discussions
- Influence on movie preferences
- Influence on understanding mythological elements
- Impact of Social Media on Desire to Watch Contemporary Mythological Cinema

We utilized both single and multiple-choice questions for these three sections and included one descriptive answer question.

5. RESULT

5.1. INFLUENCE OF CONTEMPORARY MYTHOLOGICAL CINEMA

The survey data provides valuable insights into the influence of modern mythological-based Hindi films on the youth demographic.

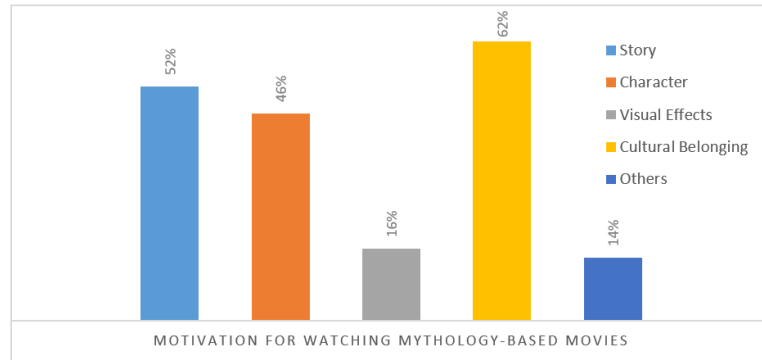


The graph above indicates that out of 50 respondents, 74% of the total population showed varying levels of familiarity with Indian epics, reflecting a widespread awareness of these cultural narratives among the youth.

Table 2

Table 2 Frequency of Watching Mythology-Inspired Hindi Movies					
Statement	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
I watch mythology-inspired Hindi movies.	22%	32%	28%	14%	4%

In terms of movie-watching habits, Table 2 shows that more than half of the respondents (54%) indicated that they watch mythology-inspired movies very often. This indicates a significant interest and engagement with this genre of cinema among the youth.



The motivations for watching such movies are diverse and complex. While the majority cited cultural belonging (62%) as a significant factor, story (52%) and character (46%) were also prominent motivators. This indicates that youths are drawn not only to the cultural heritage aspect but also to the narrative and character development within these movies. Additionally, other factors such as visual effects and historical, moral and religious aspects contribute to the appeal of these films.

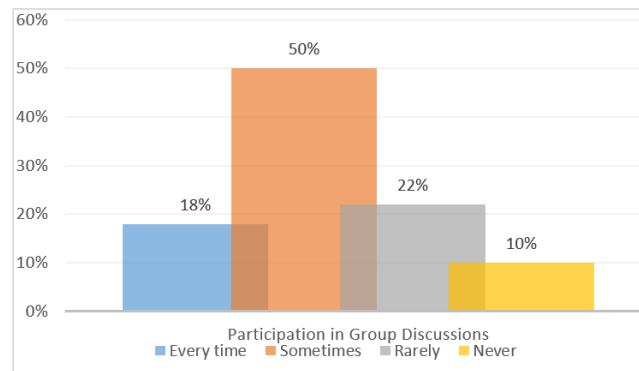
Table 3

Table 3 Influence on Reading Indian Epics and Accuracy of Portrayal

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
These movies have increased my interest in traditional mythological stories.	34%	40%	18%	4%	4%
I believe that the stories from the mythologies are always accurately portrayed in these films.	0%	10%	46%	34%	10%

Table 3 reflects the influence of these movies on reading or exploring Indian mythological epics is noteworthy, with approximately 74% of respondents indicating that these movies have motivated them to delve into the original texts. This suggests that contemporary cinema serves as a gateway to deeper cultural exploration and understanding.

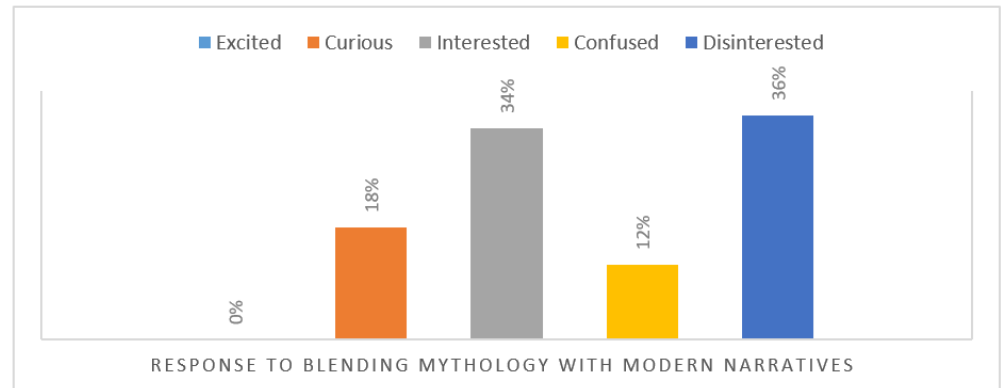
In terms of the accuracy of portrayal, opinions varied. While a significant portion (46%) remained neutral on the topic, a notable 34% disagreed that mythological characters were portrayed accurately in contemporary cinema. This indicates a potential area for improvement in how these characters are depicted, reflecting a discerning audience that values authenticity.



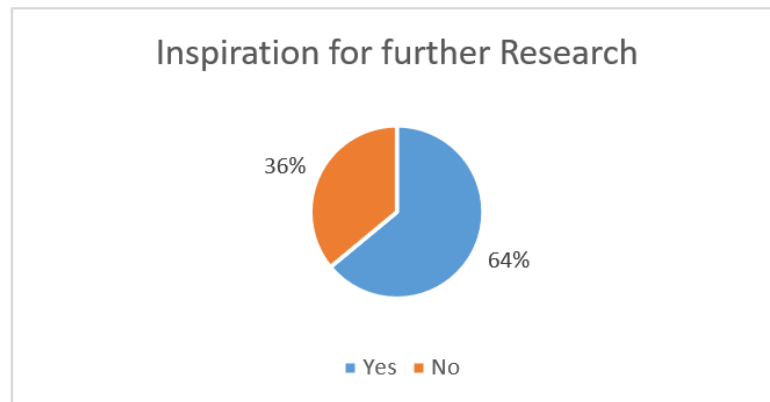
Regarding group discussions, a substantial number of respondents (50%) reported sometimes participating in such discussions after watching contemporary mythological films. Additionally, 18% reported engaging in group discussions every time. This highlights the social and communal aspect of cinema, where it serves as a facilitator for conversations and shared experiences.

5.2. MOTIVATION TO EXPLORE THE INDIAN EPICS

The data provides compelling evidence of the positive influence that contemporary mythological-based Hindi movies have on the youth demographic.

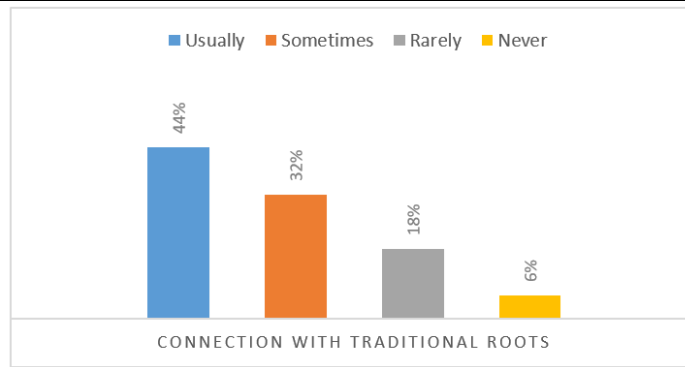


The survey results indicate that 34% of respondents expressed genuine interest in blending mythology with modern narratives, while 18% conveyed curiosity. This implies that the fusion of ancient mythology with current storytelling techniques appeals to a significant segment of the audience, implying that these two aspects are effectively combined in film.

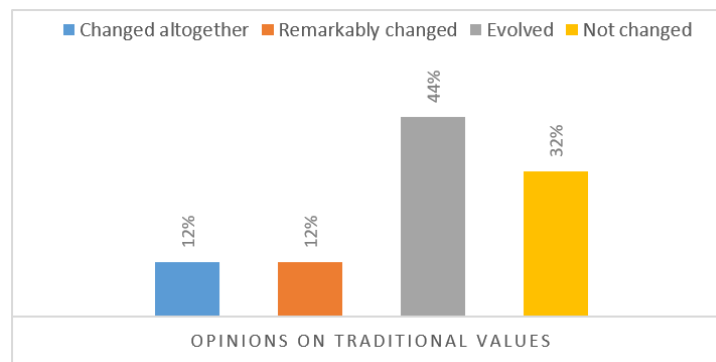


Furthermore, the impact on knowledge acquisition and curiosity is significant. Approximately 64% of respondents stated that these films motivated them to learn more about related issues.

This generated several responses, including a renewed interest in reading, a desire to study, an attempt to comprehend the scientific underpinning of mythology, and a stronger desire to visualise individuals in the mythological narrative. This suggests that contemporary mythological films promote curiosity and research among young people.



43% of the respondents felt that after watching these films they became more in touch with their cultural identity. This shows how through films, mythology exists as a bridge between what is current and traditional, thus giving the audience a feeling of connection.



Moreover, 44% of respondents have noted a positive shift in their attitude toward traditional values indicating that mythological films of the modern world assist in altering perception towards cultural and traditional values. This means that these films are cultural reflection arenas, which could likely result in a natural appreciation of cultural wisdom.

5.3. ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS)

Taking from the data obtained, it is also possible to conclude that SNS serve as the primary source of interest in mythology, among the youth, with contemporary mythological cinema.

Table 4

Table 4 Usage of SNS					
Statement	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
I use social networking sites frequently.	38%	40%	16%	4%	2%

As demonstrated in Table 4, all forms of SNS that were described by the participants appear to be frequently used. In this regard, 40% selected the option of often while 38% of the respondents highlighted very often. This implies that SNS are one of the features which the users engage in while on the internet.

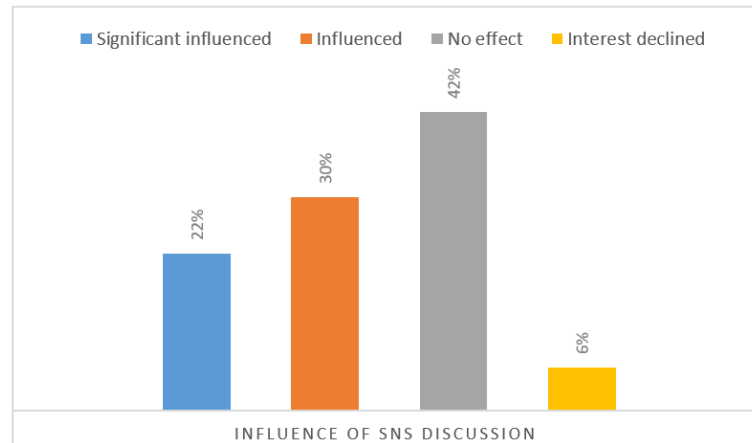
Table 5

Table 5 SNS Interaction with Mythology-Related Material and Its Impact on Movie Preferences			
Statement	Yes	No	Maybe

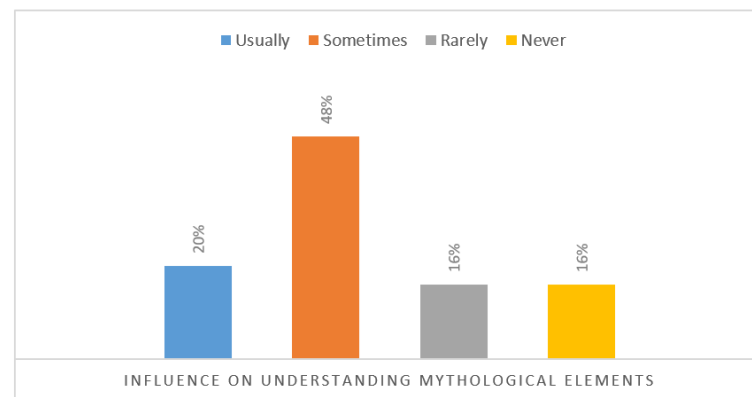
I follow pages and groups related to mythology and mythology-based movies on social networking sites.	40%	52%	8%
I change my movie preferences based on recommendations and discussions of movie reviews available on social networking platforms.	42%	36%	22%

Table 5 also highlights that the audience interacts with mythology-related content on SNS as more than half of the respondents indicated that they follow pages or groups devoted to mythology or mythology movies. This indicates a keen interest in exploring cultural and cinematic content within the digital realm.

The findings reveal that 42% of individuals adjust their movie preferences based on recommendations and discussions of movie reviews found on social networking platforms. This indicates that almost half of the participants are swayed by social media when selecting movies. In contrast, 36% do not allow social media discussions to impact their movie choices, demonstrating that a significant portion of people rely on other sources or their preferences. The remaining 22% are undecided, suggesting a degree of receptiveness to influence, but without a definitive stance. Overall, social media plays a noteworthy role in shaping movie preferences for a considerable segment of the population.



SNS discussions wield notable influence over the respondents' decision to watch contemporary mythological movies. A combined 52% of respondents acknowledged that discussions on these platforms, whether significant (22%) or influential (30%), played a pivotal role in shaping their viewing choices.



Approximately 68% of respondents believed that SNS discussions aided in their understanding of the mythological elements portrayed in the movies. This underlines the educational and informative potential of social media in enhancing cultural awareness and comprehension.

The qualitative responses provide insight into how social networking sites influence engagement with contemporary mythological cinema:

Table 6

Table 6 Impact of Social Media on Desire to Watch Contemporary Mythological Cinema	
Positive influence through Clips and Reels	Short video clips, reels, and trailers on social media platforms serve as effective teasers, generating curiosity and motivating respondents to watch the full movies.
Audio-Visual Advancements	Advanced audio-visual techniques were appreciated for providing a more immersive viewing experience, expanding mental horizons and deepening engagement.
Critical Reception and Reviews	Reviews and ratings on social media platforms exert a significant influence on the decision-making process. Positive feedback encourages viewership, while negative feedback can deter it.
Advertisement and Hype	Advertisement campaigns and the buzz surrounding a movie on social media platforms create awareness and generate interest.
Connection to Roots and Culture	Respondents use contemporary mythological cinema as a means to connect with their cultural and religious heritage, especially in the context of the ongoing scenario in the world.
Awareness and Derivation of Metaphysical Meanings	Social media serves as a source of information for understanding mythological stories on a deeper level and deriving metaphysical meanings, contributing to intellectual engagement.
Diverse Influences	While social media influence many, some respondents rely on alternative sources for recommendations, citing a lack of interest in or influence from SNS.
Caution against Distorted Portrayals	Some respondents exercise caution in discerning authentic and exaggerated portrayals, highlighting the potential for contemporary mythological cinema to present fanciful interpretations.

The data highlights the diverse and influential role of social media platforms in shaping young people's interest in modern mythological cinema. It provides a space for exploration, conversation, and critical assessment of cultural and film material.

6. DISCUSSION

In this context, the study concerns the impact of the contemporary mythology incorporated in Hindi films focusing on young people, stressing the importance of Indian epics. The study revealed that 74% of respondents were aware of these stories; 54% often tuned in to mythological movies. As for the why, 62% of viewers said it was because they wanted to feel like they were part of the represented culture and 52% said it was to enjoy the narrative. Notably, as far as the issue of authenticity is concerned, 74 % reported a desire to chase the originals out of these films. The second aim targeted at analysing the possible reason that can encourage youths to read Indian epics after experiencing mythological cinema. The study in question proves the fact that desperation towards these films encourages people to read the original folklore works with a higher percentage, namely 74% of the participants reported a wish to explore the tales more.

Also, 64% of the participants noted that watching these movies made them want to know more about the related topics and undertook more reading and research in this area. This implies that mythological films produced and presented in modern society can fit into the role of cultural probes and intellectual stimuli to young people. This in turn breeds some sort of cultural compromise hence enhancing appreciation of their past stories. Regarding the use of social networking sites in sharing mythology content, it was established that 78% of the respondents

are involved in sharing mythology-related content which impacts their choice of movies to watch. This proves that the current generation is equally in touch with tradition through the cinema which in turn has provoked them to renew their interest in traditional tools like storytelling among the youth.

From the data, it is inferred that there is high curiosity as well as interaction among the youths in Contemporary mythological Hindi movies. Thus, apart from being entertaining, these films make the viewers think about the origins and the possibility of finding a connection with their roots. Despite the controversy over the portrayal of the accuracy, the general outcome depicting the youth and their cultural sensitivity is evident. Moreover, the group discussions of the films demonstrate that cinema is a social platform since people gather and discuss things, which indicates that these films have the potential to promote social connections among the viewers. Thus, the result goes on to give a tremendous indication of how modern mythology-based Hindi movies affect the youth. These movies incorporate in a way ancient myths with modern productions, thus creating actual curiosity among the audience. Besides, such movies assist in stimulating intellectual curiosity, and research work which in turn helps people learn more about their culture. They also contribute to strengthening the connection with traditional roots and assist in changing attitudes toward traditional values in India. On the whole, it is possible and necessary to view today's mythological cinema as a tool and means of culture, dissemination of knowledge as well as the definition of youth's identity.

7. CONCLUSION

The survey results analysed in this study exhibit a deep impact of modern mythology-based Hindi films on the young generation and increasing curiosity towards mythology. SNS have a significant role in defining the preferences and perception level of mythological cinema. The findings of this study provide a useful understanding of the impact of contemporary mythological Hindi movies on the youth demographic. The results raise awareness of the concerns regarding eradicating the role of cinema and social media regarding culturally sensitive representation among the young generation. Further research can be done on the more detailed aspects of these movies that resonate with the youths by exploring possible effects on the communities' culture and young people's sense of belonging.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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