



Exploring Youth Reception of Distinct *Ramayana* Film Adaptations: "Legend of Prince Rama" and "Adipurush"

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Abstract: In creative filmmaking, *Ramayana* has evolved as a captivating subject explored through various cinematic adaptations. However, navigating the delicate balance between innovation and reverence poses a challenge, as audiences swiftly embrace or dismiss films based on their adherence to expectations, which often hold cultural and sentimental values. A comparative analysis was conducted on two *Ramayana*-themed films, Japanese producer Yugo Sako's "*Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama*" (1991) and *Om Raut's* adaptation "*Adipurush*" (2024) by applying the "Diffusion of Innovation theory" of E.M. Rogers to examine the factors influencing the reception of two distinct film adaptations of *Ramayana* among young audiences. Subjective interviews were conducted with young adult audiences who watched both movies to explore the impact of cultural influences and nostalgia on their decision-making processes. Additionally, the study categorized respondents into the five adopter stages of innovation to derive comprehensive conclusions regarding audience perceptions and preferences regarding cinematic adaptations of the *Ramayana*. The research concludes that audience perception of sensitive themes is prejudiced, and fixated on childhood nostalgia, thus any bold contemporary experimentation results in cultural shock, filmmakers should understand the audience's pulse associated with mythological epics to avoid commercial failure in the movie-making business.

Index Terms- *Ramayana*, Cultural influence, *Adipurush*, Legend of Prince Rama, Cinema, Innovation

I. INTRODUCTION

Ramayana is the coveted Indian epic of overcoming evil with courage, tracing back to the 5th century BCE, it is the story of Prince Rama, the seventh reincarnation of Lord *Vishnu*, and his journey as a young prince inculcated with virtues stronger than any worldly pleasure, it was originally scripted by sage *Valmiki*, thereafter translated by many great storytellers all over the world. The *Ramayana* has been adapted and interpreted in hundreds of ways to suit the modern era, one would find numerous series, illustrated literary works, and cinematic interpretations, that state the importance of the epic being a moral compass to rightful living and *dharma* by the *Hindus*. (Subiraj, 2023) The popular storyline of *Ramayana* is divided into several stages that describe the life of the *Ayodhya* prince *Rama*, the timeline followed by every media adaptation starts with King *Dashrath* of *Ayodhya* yearning for an heir from his 3 wives, *Kaushalya*, *Kaikeyi*, and *Sumitra* for a long time and eventually being blessed with 4 sons, *Rama*, *Lakshmana*, *Bharat*, and *Shatrughana*. (Tominberg, 1997) *Rama*, the eldest son, was supposed to become the successor of King *Dashrath*, Queen *Kaikeyi* plotted against her step-son *Rama* and lured King *Dashrath* to make her biological son *Bharat* the next king of *Ayodhya*, right before the coronation ceremony. (Subiraj, 2023) To dignify his father's promise, *Rama* willingly went for 14 years of exile accompanied by his wife *Sita* and brother *Lakshmana*, after his son *Rama* left, *Dashrath* died of grief, and *Bharat* attempted to persuade his brother to return to *Ayodhya* and become king, still, *Rama*, also bound not to go back on his word, refused, *Bharat* pledged to rule in *Rama's* name until his return. (Murphy, 2024) While in the forest, *Rama*, *Sita*, and *Lakshmana* blissfully spend their lives as hermits despite the challenges until right at the end juncture of

their exile, the demon king of *Lanka*, *Ravana*, is smitten by *Sita* and abducts her. The story proceeds to *Rama*'s struggle to get *Sita* back from the clutches of *Raavan* in *Lanka*, with the help of monkey King *Sugriva*'s army and his army general *Hanuman*. (Tominberg, 1997) After a long war, *Rama* kills *Ravana* and his entire clan except for his brother *Vibhishana*, who succeeds in the throne after the deceased king, then *Rama*, *Sita*, *Lakshmana*, and *Hanuman* proceed toward *Ayodhya* as their exile ends where *Sita* faces the test of fire to prove her sanctity because she stayed in the vicinity of another man. (Murphy, 2024)

1.1 Cinematic Adaptations of Ramayana in Indian Film History

Ramayana has evolved as a captivating subject explored through various cinematic adaptations; some popular film adaptations of the spiritually awakening epic are discussed here.

i) *Lanka Dahan*

Indian cinema's tryst with the epics began during the silent film era, which lasted from 1913 to 1931, this period was marked by the absence of sound in movies, relying on intertitles to convey dialogues and narrative details. (R. Sharma, 2024) *Lanka Dahan*, in 1917, was one of the first silent films based on *Ramayana*, directed by *Dadasaheb Phalke*, and actor *Anna Salunke* portrayed the double role of *Ram-Sita* as women were prohibited from participating in commercial performing arts during that time, the film used trick photography and special effects that amazed the audience. (Halve, 2023)

ii) *Ram Rajya*

The first prominent non-silent film made was *Ram Rajya* in 1943, directed by *Vijay Bhatt*, with *Prem Adib* portraying the role of Lord *Rama* and *Shobhna Samarth* as *Sita*, the film was based on *Uttar Kand* and was a major success for using special effects in its war sequences, *Ram Rajya* is also remembered as the only film ever seen by *Mahatma Gandhi*, notes *Freek L Bakker* in his book 'The Challenge of the Silver'. (R. Sharma, 2024)

iii) *Sampoorna Ramyanam*

NT Rama Rao, also known as *NTR*, was one of the biggest stars of the Telugu film industry, his portrayal of Lord *Rama* in '*Sampoorna Ramayanam*' in 1958, remains one of the best renditions of the Hindu deity on the big screen, the film was a colossal hit, and it was made thrice with the same title in the years 1958, 1961, and 1971 in Tamil and Hindi. (R. Sharma, 2024)

iv) *Luv Kush*

Luv Kush is based on the twin sons of *Rama-Sita*, the cast includes popular Hindi film actors like *Jeetendra* for *Rama* while *Sita* was portrayed by *Jaya Prada* and *Laxman* was donned by *Arun Govil*. (Halve, 2023)

v) *Raavan*

Raavan, released in 2010, was directed and co-produced by *Mani Ratnam*, and featured *Abhishek Bachchan*, *Aishwarya Rai Bachchan*, *Vikram*, and *Priyamani* in pivotal roles, it marked the Hindi film debut of *Vikram* and *Priyamani*, the film's storyline, while rooted in the epic *Ramayana*, offered a modernized perspective from *Ravana*'s point of view, despite its underwhelming performance in Hindi version, the film's music, composed by *AR Rahman* and featuring lyrics by *Gulzar*, achieved significant popularity with the audience. (IE, 2023)

1.2 Legend of Prince Rama and Adipurush: Overview of the cinematic journey of the Ramayana adaptations

a) Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama (1993)

In the 1990s, when the epic of Lord Rama had reached every Indian household via television, India also witnessed the destruction of the Babri masjid and demands for the Ram temple in Ayodhya, amidst the turmoil a Japanese film 'Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama' was trying to find its feet in the country, it was directed by Koichi Sasaki and Ram Mohan, and conceived by Yugo Sako, made by the Nippon Ramayana Film Company Ltd in Japan, the film's budget was a whopping \$6.7 million, a huge amount at that time, the film released in Japanese theatres in 1993 and had a rather tough time in India in the earlier part of that decade. (Sharma, S. 2023) As per the film's official website, 450 artists would communicate with Sako, and submit hand-drawn art, the Indian artists were in charge of art settings, dialogue writing, and music while the Japanese animators came up with the storyboards, coloring, photography, and editing, the music was composed by the Indian composer Vanraj Bhatia. (ET, 2023) The English version of the film features a voice cast that includes Nikhil Kapoor, Raell Padamsee, Rahul Bose, Pearl Padamsee, Denzil Smith, and Cyrus Broacha, among others, the Hindi dubbed version roped in actor Arun Govil, famed for portraying the television adaptation of 'Ram' in Ramanand Sagar's Ramayana, to lend voice to Lord Rama in the anime film, and late actor Amrish Puri, with his villainous baritone, voiced Raavan. (Sudhakaran, 2023) 'Legend of Prince Rama' failed commercially due to limited screens after its release in India in 1997, but when the movie was permitted to broadcast on television, overtime it went on to become a classic loved by the audience especially 90s kids, who popularly referred to it as the 'Cartoon Network Ramayana'. (S. Sharma, 2023) The film returned to the limelight in 2022 when Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, mentioned "Legend of Prince Rama" during an episode of his weekly radio show 'Mann Ki Baat' he stated that people who live thousands of kilometers away from India, who don't know our language, who don't know much about our traditions, their dedication to our culture, this reverence, this respect, is very commendable, every Indian should be proud of that, Modi told his audience, the Prime Minister also met Atsushi Matsuo the executive producer and Kenji Yoshii the assistant producer on a visit to Japan. (ET, 2023)

b) Adipurush (2023)

Adipurush is a 2023 Indian mythological action film based on the Hindu epic Ramayana, the film is directed and co-written by Om Raut, and produced by T-Series and Retrophiles, shot simultaneously in Hindi and Telugu, with actor Prabhas as Ram, Kriti Sanon as Sita, Saif Ali Khan as Raavan among others, the music album was composed by Ajay-Atul Gogavale and Sanchit-Parampara. (Raut, 2023) The movie had become the center of controversy when the first teaser was dropped in 2022, the teaser was slammed for the poor VFX and inappropriate depiction of the characters of Ramayana, which forced the makers to postpone the release from January 2023 to June 2023, however, these efforts didn't prove enough as the characterization and the basic plot of the film, which invited controversy, couldn't have been replaced, the film was made on a budget of over 400 crores, making it one of the costliest films ever in Indian cinema, and it finished below 400 crores at the global box office. (Jangir, 2023) After the film was released in June 2023, it was largely attacked for inappropriate representation of the lead characters - Raghav aka Ram, Janaki aka Sita, and Raavan, many factions filed cases against the film for allegedly hurting their religious sentiments, Manoj Muntashir, the co-writer of 'Adipurush', issued an apology and the filmmakers had to make a few changes to the dialogues of the film, the writer later confessed that he felt his apology added fuel to the fire after Adipurush's release as the audience was infuriated with the defamation of Lord Ram, Hanuman, and Sanatan Dharm. (HT, 2023)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Does innovation mean the exploitation of creative liberties while dealing with mythological characters?
- How does the audience accept change while consuming content that holds cultural and religious values?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the threshold of creative liberty that filmmakers are allowed according to audience expectations.
- To explore the factors that affect the reaction of the youth audience to new cinematic adaptations of *Ramayana*.
- To investigate what influences the decision-making and attitude of the audience about expressing cinematic choices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed methodology. An online survey was conducted to scout for respondents who had watched both films, further, subjective interviews were conducted among young adult respondents to explore the impact of cultural influences and nostalgia on their decision-making processes. Additionally, the study categorized respondents into the five adopter stages of innovation to derive comprehensive conclusions regarding audience perceptions and preferences regarding cinematic adaptations of the *Ramayana*.

DATA COLLECTION

In April 2024, a survey was conducted through the online distribution of Google Forms to find participants who had watched both 'Legend of Prince Rama' and 'Adipurush'. A total of 80 responses were collected. The responses showed that 31.2% of young adult respondents watched 'Legend of Prince Rama' and 'Adipurush'.

Figure 1

The average respondent age who watched both films was a minimum of 18 years to a maximum of 45 years
Source: Google Forms

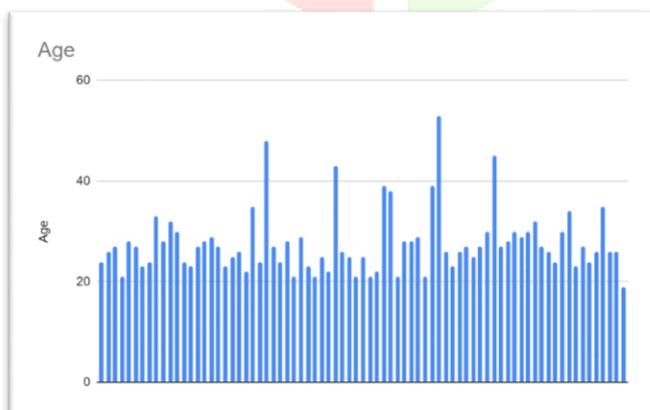
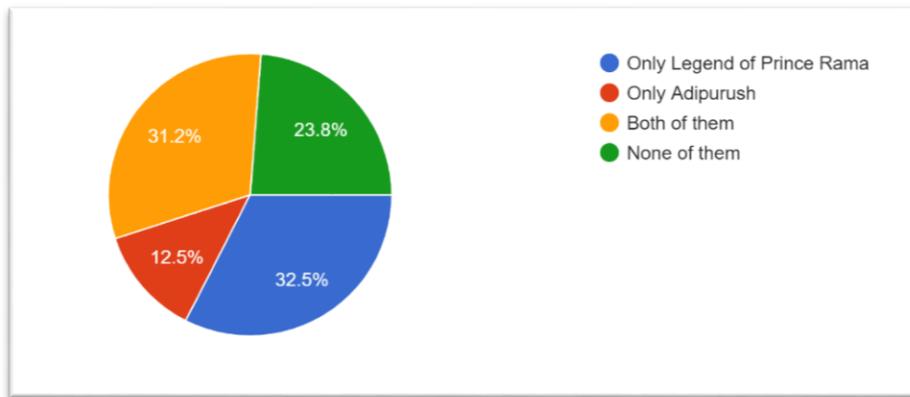


Figure 2

Respondents who have watched both “Legend of Prince Rama” and “Adipurush”

Source: Google Forms

**Subjective Interviews**

A subjective interview is a qualitative research method that captures the interviewee's perspectives, feelings, and experiences. (Fiveable, 2024) Subjective interviews were conducted among the respondents, who had watched both films, through brief telephonic conversations. Before the interview, the participants were made to watch selected short video clippings from the movies “Adipurush” and “Legend of Prince Rama” to explore the impact of cultural influences and nostalgia on their tendency to adapt to the creative experimentations of cinematic *Ramayana* adaptations. The following open-ended interview questions were framed according to the requirements of the research objectives, and the answers were transcribed, the ($n=12$) responses were collected among participants until data saturation was achieved.

- Thoughts regarding the costume look, songs, and dialogues of the mythological characters in both movies
- Thoughts on the screenplay, special effects, and action performed in the two films
- Preferred on-screen Ramayana adaptation with reason.
- Opinions on the cause for the critical and commercial failure of *Adipurush*?
- Familiarity with the works of Japanese animation studios, along with preferred movies, if any.
- Thoughts on filmmakers experimenting with the language and storyline in the name of creative liberties when dealing with mythological stories
- Thoughts on criteria that creators need to adhere to while producing new cinematic adaptations of *Ramayana* so they do not face the same critical and commercial failure of *Adipurush*.

RESULTS**Respondent 1**

They stated that the storyline of “Adipurush” distorted the actual events of *Ramayana*, the costume of *Sita* was inappropriate, the dialogues assigned to the character of Lord *Hanuman* were distasteful, and the music album was praised for evoking devotion in both films. They claimed to like other works of the studio that produced “Adipurush” but lauded “Legend of Prince Rama” as accurate with historical facts, thus creators who would stick with historical and traditional accuracy were trusted with future projects of similar mythological themes.

Respondent 2

They were critical of the VFX, screenplay, costumes, and looks created for individual characters in “*Adipurush*”, the respondent expressed disappointment with the color palette of “*Adipurush*” not being vibrant enough whereas “*Legend of Prince Rama*” was praised for being accurate to the original story and using the vibrant palette for animation, but the music album was praised for being devotional in both films. They showed faith in future projects of similar theme as long as the sanctity of *Ramayana* is not distorted.

Respondent 3

The CGI and costumes were stated to be questionable, and the dialogues were era-inappropriate in “*Adipurush*”. At the same time “*Legend of Prince Rama*” was lauded due to upholding the popular storyline and being easy to comprehend even for those not aware of “*Ramayana*”. They have emphasized the need for future projects on a similar theme to stick to the historical facts available on *Ramayana* and deliver content that does not hurt the audience's sentiments.

Respondent 4

They were critical of the dialogues, costumes, and looks created for individual characters inspired by *Ramayana* in “*Adipurush*”, the music album of “*Legend of Prince Rama*” which was mentioned to be more melodious than “*Adipurush*”. They showed a liking for a different on-screen adaptation of *Ramayana* produced by *Ramanand Sagar* for television audiences, the adaptation was praised for simplicity in terms of costumes, dialogues, and story development.

Respondent 5

They stated that the makers of “*Adipurush*” made a decent effort, while “*Legend of Prince Rama*” was satisfactory in terms of costumes and looks of each character. They believed that the Indian audience is sensitive when it comes to themes thus, they felt that everyone is more inclined to the traditional adaptations like the *Ramayana* produced by *Ramanand Sagar*, but they would like experimentation in the storyline that does not glorify or project *Rama* as a god, and a narrative that is inspired by the good vs evil of *Ramayana*.

Respondent 6

They felt the costumes were era-inappropriate and the dialogues too unconventional in “*Adipurush*” as compared to “*Legend of Prince Rama*” because the latter was lauded for upholding the traditional details of *Ramayana*, they too showed a liking for the television adaptation of *Ramayana* by *Ramanand Sagar*, they emphasized on the necessity of having simple storyline with traditional costumes and dialogues that take care of the audience's sentiments for sensitive mythological themes.

Respondent 7

A stark dissatisfaction was expressed by the respondent for using unnecessary VFX, and contemporary dialogues for the mythological characters of “*Adipurush*”, while “*Legend of Prince Rama*” was termed to be appropriate in terms of story execution, they too liked the television adaptation of *Ramayana* produced by *Ramanand Sagar*.

Respondent 8

They felt that the characters in “*Adipurush*” had visually striking clothes and appearances that combined classic representations with a contemporary edge, the excessive use of bizarre CGI, they emphasized that although the film reimagines *Ramayana* in a modern setting with graphic fight

Respondent 9

They felt the makers of “*Adipurush*” took the wrong call by settling for boho costumes, hairstyles, and extra make-up for characters. The dialogues of “*Adipurush*” did not evoke the cultural sentiments associated with *Ramayana* for them, on the other hand, “*Legend of Prince Rama*” had brilliant articulation, and the makers of the film were appreciated for respecting the nostalgia and emotions of the audience, the respondent asserted.

Respondent 10

They stated that the costumes and picturization of scenes in “*Adipurush*” were modernized which distorted the simplicity and childhood nostalgia they associate with *Ramayana*. They lauded the animation of “*Legend of Prince Rama*” as they felt that it stuck to the authenticity and simplicity of the storyline by beautifully capturing the essence of each character in *Ramayana*.

Respondent 11

They felt that the costumes should be designed to suit the temperament of the mythological storylines, but in “*Adipurush*” it was experimental. The respondent stated that though the graphics team worked hard to adapt to Hollywood grey culture, they failed to understand what the audience would appreciate. As storyline execution is important, the respondent felt that *Ramanand Sagar’s Ramayana* and “*Legend of Prince Rama*” were beautifully portrayed on-screen thus it created a deep cultural impact on the audiences who watched it.

Respondent 12

The respondent expressed that mythological characters are generally considered to be larger-than-life however, “*Adipurush*” depicted the muscular body of “*Hanuman*”, the “*macho-man*” qualities of the menfolk, and the women as “*damsel in distress*” which, according to them, contradicted the traditional representation of the characters in previously written scriptures of *Ramayana* by authors like *Valmiki* and *Keertibas Ojha*. The respondent found *The Legend of Prince Rama* as a better film adaptation of the mythological story, they stated that future makers should acknowledge the sentiments and nostalgia of the audience associated with *Ramayana* and do better research in terms of CGI, costumes, and dialogues.

ANALYSIS

Criteria derived from the subjective interviews for comparative analysis of both movies are depicted below:

Figure 3

Here are the 6 criteria that came up based on the responses during data collection



Table 1

Respondent remarks on the various criteria derived from “*Legend of Prince Rama*” and “*Adipurush*” are codified.

Remarks	Code
Horrible, mismatch, bogus, inappropriate, distortion, vulgar, cheap, disgusting, distasteful insensitive, wrong, lacks authenticity	
Average, below-average, could have been better, not so awesome, offbeat, unconventional.	
Great effort, appropriate, nice, perfect, good, liked, decent, authentic, beautifully portrayed, masterpiece	

Table 2

Respondent assessment of various criteria associated with the film “Adipurush”

Adipurush	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12
Dialogues	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow
Costumes and looks	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Red	Yellow	Yellow
Music	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green
VFX and animation	Red	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Storyline	Red	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Cultural Nostalgia	Red	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red

Table 3

Respondent assessment of various criteria associated with the film “Legend of Prince Rama”

Ramayana: Legend of Prince Rama	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12
Dialogues	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Costumes and looks	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Music	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
VFX and animation	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Storyline	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Cultural Nostalgia	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

DISCUSSIONS

This study employs E.M. Rogers’ Diffusion of innovation theory to examine the factors influencing the reception of two distinct film adaptations of *Ramayana*, “Legend of Prince Rama” and “Adipurush”, among young adult audiences.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory, developed by E.M. Rogers in 1962, states that people, as part of a social system, may adopt a new idea, behavior, or product, however, the adaptation does not happen simultaneously in a social system; rather, it is a gradual process subject to cultural norms. (LaMorte, 2022) The study derived themes from the subjective interviews and categorized the respondents into the five adopter stages of innovation, to analyze audience perception and preference between, the cinematic adaptations of *Ramayana*, “Legend of Prince Rama” and “Adipurush”.

Diverse perceptions of a polarized media adaptation

Innovators are individuals who adopt new technology or ideas simply because they are new, they are the ones who tend to take risks more and are the most venturesome. (Ganti, 2024) The creators of ‘Legend of Prince Rama’ and ‘Adipurush’ fall into this category for conceiving different storylines with dialogues, music, and special effects to suit their perspective on the scenes, and designing the frames with unique looks for each of the mythological characters of *Ramayana*. The Japanese-Indian joint venture, “Legend of Prince Rama” combined two distinct Asian styles of visual arts, which were influenced by the Indian classical dance form *Kathakali* and Japanese manga. (ET, 2023) *Om Raut*, the director of *Adipurush*, defended *Raavan*’s look in the film when the first teaser was released, *Manoj Muntashir*, the co-writer, mentioned that the actor’s look was not intended to have similarity with historic tyrant *Alauddin Khilji*, as claimed by some viewers, and further stated that *Raavan* shown in “Adipurush” was inspired by abusers who are demonic and cruel in contemporary times. (HT, 2022)

Audience attitude towards cinematic game-changers

Early adopters, like innovators, adopt an innovation because it is new and they like to watch fresh content before anyone else, they are also known as lighthouse customers. (Awati, 2023) Responses were gathered to determine who is likely to adapt to innovative perspectives of on-screen adaptations of *Ramayana*. The respondents who appreciated the effort of filmmakers to emulate the Western pattern of advanced film editing and attempted to sketch characters of “*Ramayana*” to suit the good-bad context in contemporary times shall be placed in the category of early adopters as they have shown interest in new film stories inspired by *Ramayana* and its characters to suit modern age and not be completely submerged in devotional themes. These respondents have expressed faith in creative experimentations by filmmakers for producing movies from the perspective of *Ramayana* characters like Ra.one, released in 2011, produced by Red Chilies Entertainment, was a film on a cryptic robotic character based on *Raavan* was created to assert that villains might seem powerful but who fights for good always win.

Impact of Cultural Norms on the Decision-making of Cinema Audiences

- a) The early majority will watch a new film if the filmmakers are popular for delivering good content. (Cambridge, 2024a) It has been observed that respondents were familiar with the works of the Japanese animation studio Ghibli and their films were popular, but Bollywood films produced by T-Series are popular among respondents who have not watched any Japanese animation movies. The most popular on-screen adaptation of *Ramayana* was observed to be the show produced by *Ramanand Sagar*, which aired on DD National television channel for evoking devotion, and culturally appropriate. *Ramanand Sagar's Ramayana* also inspired Yuko Sago when he visited India and found every household immersing themselves in devotion and worshipping the actors shown portraying the mythological characters, this motivated Yuko Sago to produce “*Legend of Prince Rama*” as an animated film because he asserted that Ram is god and no human actor could do justice to the characterization of god. (Sharma, R. 2024) Respondents who prefer cultural accuracy, upholding of tradition, sentiments, and simplicity associated with *Ramayana* and its various cinematic adaptations, will be placed in the early majority, so it can be asserted that these respondents are likely to show faith in the new mythological ventures of Japanese animation studios due to their positive reputation acquired from ‘*Legend of Prince Rama*’.
- b) The late majority is similar to the early majority, they tend to avoid fact-checking by themselves to find whether a movie is good or bad rather than get influenced by societal norms and opinions from friends while judging any movie. (Cambridge, 2024b) The respondents who, irrespective of individual fact-checking about the comparison between “*Legend of Prince Rama*” and “*Adipurush*”, have formed their opinion based on public reviews and found the online trolls on social media platforms on ‘*Adipurush*’ justified as they watched the movie with a pre-conceived notion formed due to negative word-of-mouth regarding the actors, script, and dialogues. They formed their opinion with the idea enforced by the society that the film has distorted the original story, infused poor dialogues, and shoddy special effects, and insulted Lord Ram, thus the late majority were of the view that “*Adipurush*” is bad because it did not cater to the traditional notions of the screen adaptation of *Ramayana*, in comparison of “*Legend of Prince Rama*” as it stuck to the conventional screen adaptation that is widely popular among audience.

Societal prejudice against experimental cinema affecting culture

Unlike innovators and early adopters who thrive on new perspectives and ideas, laggards are a stringent group of people who abstain from adopting innovation, they like to preserve and abide by pre-conceived norms. Respondents who have emphasized the need for simplicity, acknowledgment of sensitivity, emotions, and nostalgia associated with each mythological character, maintaining the popular storyline with ethnic costumes and makeup, appropriate dialogues, and overall concept that should be followed without giving any quirky or modern-day twist in *Ramayana* adaptations, so they will prefer to invest time to watch *Ramayana* on-screen

adaptations that adhere to the popular storyline, like *Ramanand Sagar's* adaptation, as popular choice noticed during data collection and *Legend of Prince Rama*, they are unlikely to watch new *Ramayana*-based cinema if it does not cater to audience sentiments and cultural appropriation of the mythological characters and incorporates a contemporary twist instead.

CONCLUSION

Reimagining epics is not a crime, film director *Mani Ratnam's Raavan* was designed in a modern-day setup from the perspective of *Raavan*, diverse forms of art are supposed to push conventional boundaries and portray different perspectives. (Bharadwaj, 2023) Mythology-based cinematic adaptations hold sentimental, cultural, and religious values, the cinema audience was found to be rigid in their choices to adapt to modernity associated with religious epics. Respondents highlighted that "*Adipurush*" distorted the popular storyline of *Ramayana* and input of colloquial language as dialogue and modernized looks of the lead characters were stated to be era-inappropriate. *Ramanand Sagar's* television show "*Ramayana*" was found to be an all-time popular choice for being culturally appropriate thus another traditional take on the epic "*Legend of Prince Rama*", was lauded by respondents as an appropriate cinematic adaptation of *Ramayana* for upholding simplicity and evoking devotion among the audience without mocking any character. The study asserts that filmmakers need to understand the pulse of the audience and strike a balance between creative liberties and protecting the sanctity of stories associated with religion, and culture in highlighting contemporary issues by drawing parallels with the mythological epics to avoid public apathy and controversies affecting the filmmaking business.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This theme can be further studied to investigate how factors like peer pressure in social media and fear of ostracization affect an individual's decision-making about cinematic choices.

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