

Bollywood: selling indian movies in the west assignment

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BOLLYWOOD Selling Indian Movies in the West INTRODUCTION India's most prominent movie industry is known by the name of Bollywood. It recently became the largest movie industry in the world (Jones, Arora, Mishra and Lefort, 2005; Srinivas, 2002). The name Bollywood is a reference to Hollywood, in which the " B" stands for Bombai, the city in which Bollywood originated. Bollywood is making thousands of movies every year with one of the world's largest audiences.

Bollywood has always exported their movies to the exSoviet Union, the Middle East, parts of Africa, South-East Asia, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and wherever there are Indian immigrants in for instance North America, Australia, Hong Kong and the U. K. (Srinivas, 2002). However, in addition to selling tons of movies to Indian people all over the world, Bollywood is now attempting to show its movies to all the other people all over the world. Nico Rogosky, account executive for Pentagram Asian films North America, was asked by Bollywood producer Anjali Kumar to market and distribute two new Bollywood movies.

However, it is debatable if Bollywood movies will become a success in Western countries. **BOLLYWOOD: AN ALAYSIS** One of the things we have to take into account is that there are various culture specific elements to Bollywood movies that may have implications for their potential success in Western countries. It is in our best interest to find out what these cultural elements are and how they might influence the adaptation of Bollywood movies in the West. One of the most typical characteristics of Bollywood movies is the role of music in all the movies.

Hindi movie songs are commonly discussed as an independent tradition of popular music that has little to do with movies (Morcom, 2001). However, movie songs help sell new movies and contribute to the formation of India's national identity (Hoffheimer, 2006). Even though Indian and Western music are usually thought of as completely different, interestingly there is a considerable amount of mutual compatibility between the usage of certain musical techniques in both Indian and Western movie music (Morcom, 2001).

When questioning if Western audiences like this kind of music, one can refer to the success of the in 2002 launched musical Bombay dreams 1. Moreover, Indian movie music was recently being remixed and used in American music. For instance, the 1970s Hindi song, Kaliyon Ka Chaman was remixed in 2003 into the platinum selling Hip Hop track, Addictive by Truth Hurts (Jones et al. , 2005). Thus, it seems that Indian music and musicals like Bombay dreams are quite popular in Western Europe and the U. S. Furthermore, it seems that Hollywood is getting a lot of inspiration from Bollywood nowadays (Jones et al. 2005). As a result, Indian movies are being remade into American movies. What is more, Hollywood is also literally copying elements from Bollywood movies. For instance, in Bollywood movies the narrative often shifts between reality and fantasy and in time and space. Recently, Hollywood movies are experimenting with these devices such as flashbacks and ' flash-forwards' that were characteristically used by Indian moviemakers (Srinivas, 2002). A next characteristic of Bollywood movies, which can be considered a culture specific element, is language.

This is because most Bollywood movies are Hindi (language) movies. However, according to Srinivas (2002) language is no barrier to the Bollywood movies' reach. Hindi (language) movies are also popular in non-Hindi speaking areas of India. Additionally, with present day technology, a lot of Bollywood movies are already available on DVD and those that are marketed in the West have optional English subtitles (Hoffmeijer, 2006). 1 Bombay dreams is a Western Bollywood-themed musical which ran for several years in London and on Broadway.

One of the universal elements of Bollywood movies is emotion. Emotions play a key role in all movies and are obviously universal. However, the way of expressing them can be quite different. For instance, Ganti (2004) states that Hindi moviemakers find that Hollywood movies "lack emotion". When Hindi moviemakers remake Hollywood movies they "add emotions". However, instead of referring to internal states, moviemakers refer to social life in their discussions about emotion. "Adding emotions" then means adding characters to make a broader network of social relations (Ganti, 2004).

Another universal element of Indian cinema is its audience. Bollywood movies cater to a diverse audience (Srinivas, 2002). They have a very broad appeal, attracting viewers from different classes, religious and educational background, age and gender (Srinivas, 2002). Due to diaspora, in 2000, there lived nearly 2 million Indian people in the U. S. alone according to estimates by U. S. Census. This large amount of Indian-American people

living in the U. S. implies that there is a huge potential target market for selling the Bollywood movies in the U. S.

Movie themes are the same in Indian movies as in all other movies, therefore they can be considered universal. In addition, although Indian movie plots are often inspired by religious epics (Hogan, 2005), religious elements in social Hindi movies tend to be noncontroversial given government censorship and a market with all type of religious backgrounds (Babb and Wadley, 1997). One specific feature regarding themes in Bollywood movies is that they usually contain all elements: romance, comedy, drama, and action. These are themes that are also very often used in Hollywood movies.

However, in Bollywood movies all the elements come together in one movie, therefore the movies are also referred to as 'masala', a term meaning 'spice mixture', which describes a product that is a mix of ingredients (Srinivas 2002). So, although the movie themes are universal, its use can be very cultural specific like in the case in Bollywood movies. Obviously, one can conclude that Bollywood movies differ a lot from Hollywood movies. The most striking differences between the movies are due to cultural differences.

As previously stated, one can think here of language use, the use of music, and religious elements of Bollywood movies that might not fit the Western audiences. What is more, Indian cinema is constantly criticised for its lack of creativity and for the fact that they use the same plot line over and over again ("Cloning Hollywood", 2003). On the other hand, Bollywood movies are often inspired by Hollywood movies and vice versa. In accordance, one

could argue that Bollywood and Hollywood movies are becoming more alike to a certain extent.

However, although the movies are becoming increasingly alike, it remains a fact that in a lot of ways the movies and the industries are still incomparable.

BOLLYWOOD: GOING TO THE WEST?! Times are changing, and Bollywood directors are more and more exploring opportunities to sell their movies in the West. However, previous successes are no guaranty for successes in the future. In fact, selling Indian movies to Indian people is remarkably different from selling Indian movies to non-Indian people.

Bollywood executives believe in the magic of Bollywood movies, and therefore they believe that there is a continuously growing demand for Bollywood movies. This is validated by the fact that in 2001 Bollywood movies had an annual growth of 12, 6% (Anonymous, 2002). As a matter of fact, Indian people love to go to the cinema. It is known that 14 million Indian people go to the cinema every day (Torgovnik, 2004). Furthermore, Indians attach great importance to their culture, and they believe that the way in which their culture is expressed in the Bollywood movies keeps their culture alive.

This is one of the most important reasons for the success of Bollywood movies. However, when assessing the possibilities to sell Bollywood movies in the West several things need to be taken into account. Firstly, people in the U. S. have a lot of knowledge about filmmaking. Their Hollywood movies are world known and well respected. Therefore it is likely that citizens of the U. S. and Europe will be very critical towards the, maybe lower standard,

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Bollywood movies, as they are already known for their critical view at Hollywood movies.

Secondly, India is considered a collectivist culture on Hofstede's IndividualismCollectivism dimension (Chavan, 2005; Nelson and Devanathan, 2006). This means that opinions are always collective in nature and individuals usually express the opinion that they think the collective holds (Chavan, 2005). Thus, even when viewers dislike a movie, they will adjust their opinion to the groups' opinion, the opinion of the collective. On the contrary, Western countries are very individualistic (Keegan and Green, 2011). This can be viewed as another reason that Bollywood movies are likely to be more harshly judged in these countries than in India.

A related topic is the importance of going to the cinema in the U. S. and Europe compared to India. Going to the cinema is a way of living for Indian people. For them, it is an important social experience; cinema theatres are centres of group experience (Srinivas, 2002). In fact, in accordance with the previously stated collectivist culture, which holds in India, people in India go to the movies mostly in groups. As Srinivas (2002, p. 161) describes his experience from his fieldwork: " It appeared that movie-going was never constructed as a solitary act. I found that asking people questions about going to the movies alone created awkwardness. The experience of going to the cinema is thus completely different in India than in the West.

Furthermore, as stated before, Bollywood movies have a lot of culture specific elements characteristic to the movies. These culture specific elements are thought of as a barrier to entry the Western market with

Bollywood movies. However, merely due to the melting pot, it is not very likely that Western audiences will negatively judge culture specific elements immediately. Another argument in favour of this line of reasoning is that the effect of the culture specific elements in selling Bollywood movies in the West is dependent on interpretation.

One could for instance argue that many of the previously mentioned differences have somehow already been overcome in the past. One such an example is the most well known feature of Bollywood movies, the music, which has been introduced in the U. S. before. Furthermore, the Bollywood inspired musical “ Bombay” has been a great success, also in the U. K. This implies that the acceptance of Bollywood has already been initiated by Western people themselves, by introducing Bollywood music remixes and Bollywood inspired musicals. However, there still are culture specific characteristics that eventually could be a problem.

The fact that we are increasingly exposed to, and acceptant of, Bollywood music does not imply that we are used to such a ‘ music overload’ in movies, as is the case in Bollywood movies. We should take this music overload into serious consideration, because we expect that it can have major consequences for the success of selling Bollywood movies in the West. A more general issue that has to be taken into account is that the adoption of new foreign products follows a different pattern than the adoption of new homecountry products. It has been found that the diffusion of products in the U.

S. takes place more slowly than in Asia (Takada and Jain, 1991). Europeans however, tend to adapt foreign products 'as easily' as Asians do (Farley and Lehmann, 1994). Kumar and Krishnan (2002) explain this tendency by employing Hofstede's multi-dimensional framework in which they have shown that country specific cultural factors play a key role in product diffusion. Aside from these cultural issues, other aspects also play a role in considering entering the Western market. One of these aspects is piracy: the unauthorized use or reproduction of copyrighted or patented material.

People download movies from the Internet or copy DVDs. Piracy is one of the largest problems that the movie industry is currently facing, and Bollywood is no exception. It was estimated that pirated movies caused the Indian movie industry to lose at least 50% of their revenue each year (Jones et al. , 2005). What is more, Bollywood's growing popularity abroad has caused an increase in piracy; bootlegged videos and DVDs of Indian movies are already widely available in the U. S. , the U. K. and Pakistan (Jones et al. , 2005). Unfortunately, there is not much the movie industry can do about this.

But what we do have to consider is if it is even profitable to enter Western markets, when a large proportion of the sales will likely be lost due to illegal copies and Internet downloads. After evaluating the cultural and universal characteristics of Bollywood movies it is important to determine if there is a market in the West to sell these movies. As previously stated, nearly 2 million Indian people are living in the U. S. which is clearly the main target audience in this case. However, not only Indian people in the U. S. are going

to the cinema: it is known that approximately 5 cinema tickets per capita are sold to U.

S. citizens (Motion Pictures Association of America, 2009). These people could possibly be included in the target audience. This relatively high amount of people going to the cinema is also important in respect to the previously mentioned problem regarding piracy. Obviously, going to the cinema has stayed popular over the years. In addition, because Hollywood and Bollywood are displaying more and more similarities nowadays, one could argue that U. S. citizens are open to Bollywood movies. Thus, we would expect that at least some proportion of U. S. cinema visitors would also be interested in going to Bollywood movies. However, what should be noticed here, is that these viewers should be treated differently than Indian viewers. What is more, since we know that Europeans adapt foreign products more easily than citizens of the U. S. , we expect that the European market is more open to the introduction of Bollywood movies than the U. S. market.

RECOMMENDATIONS The significant differences that have come up in the analysis can have some major implications when entering U. S. and European markets with Bollywood movies. For instance, U.

S. citizens have a very different way of assessing movies on various levels. This may imply that Bollywood movies need to be modified when launching them either in the U. S. or in Western countries. With respect to the adoption of products one should then take into account that when selling products in the West, people in the U. S. are less likely to adapt the product due to their slower diffusion of adaptation. This implies that you need to put a lot of time,

money and effort in promoting and improving the Bollywood movies in order to let them be successful in the West.

As a result, the most important recommendation would be to adjust Bollywood movies to Western countries' standards, in order to be able to sell the movies in these countries. However, one should be aware that one should not lose the Indian identity in the Bollywood movies, as this is what distinguishes the movies the most. For instance, we would suggest that Bollywood movies distributed to the West should not contain that much music as the amount that is normally used. This is simply because Western audiences have very different expectations with respect to music in movies than Indian audiences have.

Thus, to Nico Rogosky the advice of the Marketing Board would be to take on the challenge to market and distribute the Bollywood movies. The main reason of this is the large population of Indian people living in the U. S. , and as a result we know that there will be an audience for the movies. However, because Kumar also wants to crossover to other ethnic groups and the general audience, we would suggest in accordance with the previously stated information that Rogosky asks for the movies to be adapted for Western audiences.

In this case, a differentiated global marketing strategy, also called multi-segment targeting, should be adopted. This enables for the distinct market segments to be targeted with different marketing mix offers (Keegan and Green, 2011). In this way, the risk of failure can be minimized. The movies that will be targeted to the general audience in Western countries should

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contain less music and naturally, the movies should be provided with subtitles in the corresponding languages. Finally, Rogosky should promote and advertise the Bollywood movies intensively.

This holds especially for the U. S. because the diffusion of foreign products takes place relatively slowly there. Therefore, Rogosky has to negotiate with Kumar about who is bearing these costs of advertising and promotion.

Otherwise, he takes the risk of incurring a lot of costs to make the movies a success while ending up with a low return on investment. REFERENCE LIST

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