

Hollywood and bollywood similarities and differences media essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

With a study of the similitude and divergence of culture, film genres, and marketing media between Hollywood and Bollywood, it is easier to comprehend the real idea behind the particular filmmaking strategies and approach to success. Hollywood and Bollywood both have evolved over the past century with unique and distinct characteristics while being comparable in a few aspects.

Hollywood and Bollywood are two words that describe the \$80 billion world cinema industry. Hollywood being the largest in terms of revenue with 90% of total industry revenue to its name, while Bollywood being able to capture only 3% of the industry total (4). Alternatively, Bollywood leads with over 1000 film productions a year catering to a global audience of 3 billion.

Hollywood produces more than 500 movies annually and has nearly 2.6 billion viewers (3).

The first thought that strikes one's mind when you hear the word Hollywood is the American film Industry, rather than the district that is situated North West of Downtown Los Angeles in the state of California. Hollywood became famous since the early 1900s for the birth and development of the American Cinema Industry (1). Today, Hollywood is known as the heart of movie studios with the world's four largest production houses situated in that area and Beverley Hills, the residential neighborhood of the district, housing the multi million dollar mansions of cinema celebrities.

Bollywood originally a more casual but extensively used name for the Hindi Cinema industry was officially entered in the Oxford English Dictionary in 2007 (1). Unlike Hollywood, Bollywood does not represent an area or a

district, the name was extracted from a blend of Bombay, the historic name of Mumbai, the home of Indian Cinema and Hollywood(2). The origin of the Indian film industry dates back to the 1890's but the time period after the partition of the subcontinent is the known as the ' Golden Age' of Indian Cinema (2).

Extreme technological progress helped cinema to become one of the most preferred mass medium in a very short span of time since its origin. It was considered vital by many, as a creative input of art and a source of entertainment, education, enlightenment and inspiration for its viewers (6).

It is this definition where the divergence of filmmaking approach of Hollywood and Bollywood becomes evident. It is the cultural differences between the West and the subcontinent that create the divide between Indian and Western cinema. Bollywood caters to an audience that is culturally stronger. Firm religious beliefs, low exposure to the western world, lack of entertainment options and a more family oriented culture means that generally an Indian movie has to draw interest from several different demographics such as from grand parents to grand children, rich as well as the poor, educated as well as those who cannot read or write(5). It is for the diverse audience that a typical Bollywood film encompasses romance, comedy, family drama and action (5). On the contrary, the American cinema which caters to a more liberal, educated, western and segmented audience has evolved more into science fiction and a greater amount of sexual content. This has forced Hollywood writers to update there script writing styles and include more nudity, violence and coarse language. Majority of new movies coming up include sexuality and intimacy to make them more

<https://assignbuster.com/hollywood-and-bollywood-similarities-and-differences-media-essay/>

attractive to watch. Most of the famous blockbusters have explicit sexual scenes and there are some movies which became successful, only because of explicit sexual scenes. Director James Cameron's 'Titanic' which was the highest ever sold movie (until 'Avatar 2009') with gross revenues more than \$1.8 billion had scenes of nudity and sexuality (7). On the other hand, Kambakht Ishq (2009) a recent Bollywood production featuring famous actors Akshay Kumar and Kareena Kapoor received severe criticism for vulgarity and coarse language (8). The social differences between India and the West create a wide gap between the content of movies from Bollywood. Indian audience views sexual content, vulgarity and drugs as degrading and hence it is avoided by film producers. This is so because to date the typical Indian younger generation values good grades and living with their parents more and seldom engage in sex or drugs. Conventional Indian movies were dramatic narratives typically with a greater emphasis on family and societal values. Movies based on stories where poor orphans who follow the advice of their mothers, end up becoming the most successful in life portray such values (5). The definition of good and evil in the Indian society was also well illustrated in Hindi movies. Scripts based on heroes and villains and how the heroes always bring the bad guys to justice were quite popular. Also, a greater sense of nationalism in the Indian society tends to give headway to movies based on history and national heroes to become box office blockbusters- Lagan (2000), Jodha Akbar (2004) and Umrao Jaan (2006).

It is due to the inspiration that Bollywood draws from Hollywood, that it is simple enough to understand the structure of Bollywood, when contrasted with the structure of Hollywood. But this resemblance is only limited to

inspiration and goes no further. It is the story and the plot that is inspired the most and there are many instances where complete story lines have been drawn from Hollywood movies – Well-known Bollywood Hero Aamir Khan's film Ghajini (2008) was the Indian reproduction of Memento (2000) by Christopher Nolan. Indian super hero Salman Khan's Partner (2007) was the Bollywood remake of Will Smith's Hitch (2005). Famous Bollywood director Nikhil Advani's Salaam-e-Ishq (2007) is quite similar to Hollywood's Love Actually (2003) with six different stories in a single movie. At several occasions, there has also been a transformation of character sketches from Hollywood to Bollywood. Prominent Indian director and actor Raj Kapoor was well known for copying the character of famous Charlie Chaplin in his films (9).

The basis of such transformations and imitations is the fact that producers and directors have realized that the plot and storyline is not the driving force of the movie. The story is usually predictable and tends to be similar to films produced in the past. The originality of the plot is secondary in regards to other important features and aspects of the movie. In the western cinema industry, filmmaking has always been a director's medium. Whereas, in Bollywood the main focus is on glamour, extravagance, music, choreography forcing the direction to act as a secondary medium. It is names of the lead actors that allure large audiences to the cinema and not the director's. Movies are sold on the basis of who is acting in them rather than who has directed and produced the movie. More emphasis is on how much money is spent on the costumes and dresses rather than the quality of direction and cinematography. Hence, the film industry prefers going with what is popular

and does not feel the need to spend resources on a new creative and unique plot but rather on a branded, famous cast (10). It is the laughing, singing, dancing, fighting, crying, melodrama and superficial stunts that makes Bollywood movies truly Indian, and hence nicknamed as 'masala' films (9).

The recipe for these Bollywood narrative 'masala' films contain a mix several genres and elements of filmmaking including melodrama, exaggerated humor, music, dance, stunts, extravagance, glamour, fantasy and culture. It is this typical recipe that allures large audiences to watch these films and enjoy the cliché plot and how things happen in the movie with greater emphasis on the detailing and other decorative aspects of true Indian cinematography (9).

Such a segmented approach by Hollywood to target different demographics is where it differs from Bollywood completely. Generally, Hollywood movies target one or a few demographics; on the contrary Bollywood movies target most of the different audience demographics. In Hollywood, genres become an important part of the narrative resulting in a further targeted audience with certain films targeted towards high school students, certain towards middle aged females and certain towards the older and mature audience etc. Movies have been nicknamed according to their respective plots. Movies such as the American Pie series are known as 'teen movies', whereas romantic comedies are known as 'chick flicks'. On the other hand, genres never attracted real attention in Bollywood. The Indian film industry prospered with a more musical and emotional narrative with a great variety of genres included in a single film. Bollywood movies have always revolved around love stories, action films and family drama without any defined

<https://assignbuster.com/hollywood-and-bollywood-similarities-and-differences-media-essay/>

boundaries between each other. Moreover, every Indian movie is usually a mix of all three of the principal genres with elements of exaggerated comedy, a romantic feel and society (10). In the past, critics have compared Bollywood films with Hollywood musicals. The large number of songs with extravagant and lavish costumes and well choreographed dances make them similar to the musicals with highly decorative set ups and attire (9).

Another major point of divergence between Hollywood and Bollywood is the choice of marketing and publicity media used to attract viewers to the cinemas, as at the end of the day, it is on the discretion of these viewers whether a film becomes a blockbuster or flop. Bollywood has always depended significantly on publicizing its movies through billboards and film trailers. Billboards have always been a very vital medium of advertising in the subcontinent. Traditionally, these billboards were hand painted by artists specializing in this field. These billboards would be set up on major roads, intersections and outside cinemas showing images of the major actors in the movie to attract large audiences. Trailers are a very popular medium of marketing in the film industry worldwide. These trailers show short clips of part of a movie as a preview of what viewers should expect helping them to decide whether a movie is worth spending time and money on or not.

Bollywood trailers usually show clips of the songs and dances in the movie to make the movie seem more attractive to the masses. It is a usual practice in Indian cinema industry that the songs of the movie are made public once the trailers are issued. This creates excitement in the audiences as they anticipate the launch of the movie. Direct marketing techniques are also used to promote the upcoming movie. Lead actors of the movie attend talk

shows and press conferences in an attempt to promote the movie further (11). Marketing media used by Hollywood is somewhat similar to that of Bollywood. Billboards in famous areas of metropolitan cities such as the Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles, Times Square in Manhattan, Dundas Square in Toronto and the Las Vegas strip are an attempt to attract attention. Celebrities attend talk shows and movie premiers to attract greater attention and promote their movies (12).

As both Hollywood and Bollywood tend to market their movies to an entirely different audience marketing media and methods, filmmaking techniques, storylines and plots tend to differ considerably. Famous Hollywood actress, Megan Fox has said

“ I think all women in Hollywood are known as sex symbols. That’s what our purpose is in this business. You’re merchandised, you’re a product. You’re sold and it’s based on sex. But that’s okay. I think women should be empowered by that, not degraded.” (13)

To conclude, Hollywood is no doubt more materialistic and focuses on what sells, whereas, Bollywood has focused more on quality entertainment with a consideration of the values and beliefs of its masses. However, both these mega institutions continue to grow and prosper, and entertain the world.