

# What Explains the Viewership Preferences of Young Indian Adults Towards Hollywood or Indian Cinema? are the Two at Contest?

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## **Abstract**

In this paper, I have used qualitative research methods, including interview and expert opinion, to analyse viewership patterns in young adults in India towards Cinema of the country and Hollywood. Factors such as visual aesthetics, sociability, relatibility, and marketing, among others are few that find description, and how they influence preferences of young adults today. With the listed results, I aim to comment on the debate whether Indian audiences are moving away from Indian cinema to Hollywood. If any leaning is found towards Hollywood, I attempt to explore a possible connection of the same with the idea neo-colonial lineage of viewership in India. In addition to the research question, this paper will also answer: Do people watch Hollywood because they see Indian cinema as a copy? Is there a charm of ‘westernization and progressive thought’? How does the narrative tie to parallel cinema? I have studied a group of undergraduate students in Sonipat for this paper, which are not necessarily representative of the mass young adults in India. The differences, in relevance with my research question, also find description in this paper.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In an article by Kamalika Sarkar in 2021, I first came across the online debate around Hollywood and Indian cinema fighting for audience in the Indian subcontinent. While this is a generalized argument, overlooking aspects of accessibility, language barriers, population figures, et cetera the debate seemed interesting to me. When I observed conversations around me in school and college, I noticed certain praise for Hollywood and its quality over Indian cinema. I wanted to interrogate the factors which were driving young adults, of the age of 18-25, to make choices of cinema. I also wanted to question whether they prefer to watch one kind of cinema over the other and if colonization in India had anything to do with this perception towards Hollywood. My observations and findings are listed in later sections of this paper.

There are three aims of my paper. First, is to determine what influences the viewership preferences of young adults towards Indian cinema and Hollywood. Second is to comment on the debate around Indian cinema in contention with Hollywood. Finally, I wish to make a comment on the neo-colonial lineage of viewership found in Indian audiences today, for the purpose of which I will lay ground for the ideas of third cinema and parallel cinema in the world as well. This paper follows the given flow:

### 1. Setting the foundation: Literature Review

The existing debate around Hollywood versus Indian cinema finds mention here. I also produce contextual history of purpose of cinema in relation with viewership, parallel and third cinema in this section.

### 2. First Aim: What influences preferences of young adults towards Cinema?

Six markers are explained under this heading. These include visual aesthetics, sociability, marketing strategy, influence of parents, stardom pull and role of music and dance in films.

### 3. Second and Third Aim: Discussion

This section entails how my sample selection has resulted in the above six markers making it to the fore front, and the implications of the same with contrast to mass appealing markers. This section will then move on to discussing my comments on the existing debate and wrapping up the produced results of this paper with parallel cinema.

### 4. Wrapping Up: Conclusion and Scope for Further Research

**RESEARCH DESIGN:** I conducted 13 interviews of Ashoka students from the undergraduate batches of 2025 and 2024. I also conducted interviews of field experts such as Geetanjali Chanda, associate Professor of English Literature at Ashoka with research interests including Children's Literature, Bollywood, Sikh writings and films, Women's writings, Popular Culture, Feminist and Transcultural pedagogy, Masculinities and Religion; and Aakshi Magazine, Professor of Media Studies at Ashoka whose research interests include 1950s Hindi cinema, song sequences in the Hindi film form, film history, feminist production studies, and women's cinema. My secondary sources include books on cinema and online articles and interviews: debates and arguments regarding Indian cinema versus Hollywood.

Before I present my analysis, and in the spirit of self-reflexivity, I acknowledge my standpoint as an undergraduate student in Ashoka University—arguably one of the most expensive liberal arts university in India. I hail from Uttar Pradesh, a North Indian state and have loved watching Bollywood films. I am from an educated family and have had access to social media and to multiplexes and OTT from a young age. I have seen several English films as a child with my parents. I am not an avid viewer of regional cinema or Hollywood, and may not be aware of the politics around the same; but I have observed my family members and friends watch them and converse about them, trying my best to remain up to date with their references. My sample size includes undergraduate students from Ashoka University, affluent in English and has had access to social media and OTT from roughly 2016-2019. I acknowledge that my positionality may have influenced this project to some extent and my choice of sample size may have produced a certain narrative of results, details of which I will discuss further in the paper.

## SETTING THE FOUNDATION: LITERATURE REVIEW

### THE PURPOSE OF CINEMA

Cinema can be defined dynamically and contextually. Merleau-Ponty, a phenomenological philosopher, defines films as objects of perception rather than of thought. He says that films present men's actions rather than their thoughts, and its function is to consequently render not "inner landscapes" but "behavior". Annette Michelson agrees and claims that the constraints under which a film evolves in a particular culture, impacts its reach to the audience and their perception. This paper revolves around cinema and the viewership trends surrounding the same. It looks at cinema entailing films which release in single screens, multiplexes, and OTT platforms. The scope of study only covers films of Indian

cinema and Hollywood—a metonym for American Film Industry. The Indian film industry can be categorized as: Bollywood: The Hindi film industry, Pollywood: The Punjabi film industry, Chholywood: The Chhattisgarhi film industry, Tollywood: The Bengali film industry, Kollywood: The Tamil film industry, Mollywood: The Malayalam film industry, Sandlwood: The Kannada film industry, Jollywood: The Assamese film industry, Ollywood: The Oriya film industry, Sollywood : The Sindhi film industry, Dhollywood: The Gujarati film industry (Kamalika Sarkar). It is important to mention however that several interviewees have referred to Indian cinema as ‘Bollywood’, owing to the pre-dominance of the Hindi film industry in the early 2000s in terms of box office impact and access to Indian audiences; and Hollywood, as ‘English speaking Films’, including certain non-American films as examples too.

Looking at cinema history and the role it plays in society, Geraghty writes that ‘in its golden years, cinema was like selling a non-material good; a shared experience of seeing a film rather than the film itself, and the responses generated – the shared laughter and tears’. Cinema brought people together; it fostered sociability, and it was very common that people debated films in group discussions in public places. Practices of viewership differed slightly regarding the urban or rural environment but their common point was the promotion of socializing (Marusa 29). Professor Geetanjali Chanda at Ashoka University holds that ‘cinema provides a moral compass, defines family and gender roles, among other things’ for the society. Films today are not merely a source of entertainment, but also a source of socio-cultural education, creative exploration and reflection of reality and aspirations. It is important to consider what role a particular cinema aims to play in the society, to determine how its viewers might react to it and to evaluate the ‘why’ of their response.

## THE EXISTING DEBATE

Roughly beginning from 2011, the Indian media and social media platforms have been occupied with the relationship between Hollywood and Indian cinema. This conversation begins when the Bollywood industry, which had dominated Indian cinema box office for years, is beaten by Hollywood releases. Arguably, it was the release of ‘Spider-Man 3’ in 2007, which made approximately 151 million dollars in its opening weekend alone, becoming the Number One film in Box-Office Opening Weekend history to turn heads. The numbers have only grown till current day in 2023. Shailesh Kapoor, the CEO of Ormax Media noted, ‘English-language films have grossed about Rs 600 crore in the first half of 2023 in India, which is about 25 percent higher than the first half of 2022.’ Ashish Saxena, COO of BookMyShow, among others supported this line of thought. Since the early 2000s, Bollywood saw itself competing not simply with regional cinema but also Hollywood and the reasons for this were much deeply rooted.

Film experts such as Anupama Chopra and Rajeev Masand, have made open comments on ‘blatant copying of scripts and cinematography’ by Indian cinema from the west (Interview Anupama Chopra, 2011). Masand writes in an article for MarketPlace, “Easily 60 percent of the movies — almost one film that releases every week — is either blatantly copied or inspired by some fairly big American film.” He cited films such as ‘Welcome’, being a rip off of American film ‘Mickey Blue Eyes’ and ‘Partner’ being a copy of Hollywood film ‘Hitch’. The narrative has changed now with more access to international films, stronger cases for intellectual property and increased awareness on social media; however these facts are key in understanding how this narrative may have reached my sample population of young

adults to have shaped their perspectives towards both the cinemas. Plagiarism was also noted for songs, which are a pillar of celebration of Indian cinema.

There are other pushbacks to this argument too. Akshaye Rathi, Director of Aashirwad Theatres notes in an article in Business Today, in September 2023 that “Hollywood and regional films have picked up in a big way, adding that it’s almost a three-way split now between Hindi, regional languages and Hollywood in some multiplexes.” Tushar Dhingra, Founding CEO of Dhishoom Cinemas, agrees while commenting “Earlier, Malayalam, Kannada, Punjabi or Marathi films were only limited to their respective states and did not have a larger piece of the overall national box office pie. But now the Indian box office is gaining more width and depth.” All these indicate a growing appetite for regional cinema. However, the growth, experts say, is not coming at the cost of Hindi films; instead the overall consumption pie itself is increasing.

Uday Singh, CEO, Sony Pictures however differs and says, “It’s only the big films, that will receive huge marketing spends coupled with a large print release (...) The audience for Hollywood flicks still seems to be niche and is growing at a minimal rate.”

According to the quantitative study by Motivate Val Morgan, 71 per cent of these cinemagoers are in the age group of 15-24 years in India and 61 per cent of the total moviegoers come from the affluent class, NCCS A. This means that young adults are a major chunk of the cinema watching population in India, whose choices might be reflected at the box office. Exploring whether or not these young audiences are watching a particular kind of cinema over the other and what factors are guiding their choices is one of the objectives of this paper. This determination will enable me to make a comment on this existing debate around viewership in India.

### **THIRD CINEMA IN THE WORLD AND IN INDIA**

In order to trace back the fascination of Indians with Hollywood, if any at all, we need to look at cinema from the lens of neo-colonization and the struggle against it.

Third Cinema was a term coined in 1969 by the Argentinian film theorists and film-makers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in their manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema* in which they called for a ‘decolonisation of culture’ through a counter-cinema (Susan Hayward, 389). The concept Third Cinema was used to distinguish it from First cinema (Hollywood) and Second (European art cinema, and the cinema of auteurs). The Third Cinema was focused on addressing issues of class, race, culture, religion, sex, and national integrity. The preservation of popular indigenous cultures and the representation of them in opposition to the dominant colonial and imperialist values espoused by the ruling classes, constituted the ‘aesthetics of liberation’ (ibid.) in Third Cinema (Hayward, 392). This narrative however is a disservice to Hollywood as well, by generalizing their representation of genres and themes as ‘western and colonial.’

Indian cinema was believed to fall under the Third cinema category. However, it is interesting to note that only some films were eligible to come under this framework. Hayward looks at Indian cinema as ‘(...) a cinema of entertainment geared to promoting popular song, its stars and to the representation of an imagined mythical India (as, for example, in epic melodramas of self-sacrificing mothers and swashbuckling heroes).’ She makes a claim that Bollywood, based in Bombay, is an ‘imitation of Hollywood’ and hence against the movement (Hayward, 390). It is only the New Indian Cinema, referred to as ‘Parallel Cinema’ in India, which resisted against this western idea of movies.

The parallel cinema was a movement started in the 1950s. It began a new era of Indian films where social realism and humanism were the main themes. Auteurs like Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, and Ritwik Ghatak were pioneers of this movement. The directors associated with this movement emphasized on social realism. It attempted to break free from the clutches of mainstream Cinema, which was considered to be escapist entertainment by the critics of the time, targeting Bollywood.

There are several interesting links here. Firstly, the idea that Bollywood was based on the ‘capitalist, escapist’ genre theme of Hollywood, which is why Parallel Cinema emerged against it within India. This may translate to several ‘elite and patriarchal’ themes depicted in Bollywood until the 1990s. Evidence of plagiarism in storylines and music in Indian cinema today might also stem from this belief. Second, was the attempt to break away from this ‘western or colonial’ idea of films and themes which saw expression in Third Cinema. It is outstanding then, how the audience today has reverted in this direction and developed a liking for the same ‘western’ movie plots. This is evident by the box office numbers done by Hollywood films in India presently. Thirdly, is the evolution in the way ‘western’ themes are defined today. The themes that third cinema was categorized by, such as representation of caste, class, gender, et cetera is now being portrayed vibrantly both in mainstream Hollywood and Indian cinema. Does that explain the switch of audience taste back to Hollywood? If so, did it also happen for Indian cinema? Why is Indian cinema still accused to be ‘less believable’? These questions will be dealt with in the discussion part of the paper.

## **FIRST AIM: WHAT INFLUENCES THE PREFERENCES OF YOUNG ADULTS TOWARDS CINEMA?**

### ***THE CASE AND ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE***

Based on my data collection, I argue that young adults are more driven by certain content parameters than the region of origin of cinema. Some of these guiding factors include: technical proficiency, marketing strategy, sociability—representation of themes like gender, caste, class, love—relatability, educational background of the viewer, parental and peer influence, power of stardom of the actors, directors and production houses and role of music and dance. We shall deal with some of these factors in this section, and also consider how the introduction of OTT complicates the argument.

### **TECHNICAL QUALITY OF A FILM**

This includes cinematography, audio quality, proficiency of dubbing and VFX quality. In the existing debate, Indian filmmakers believe that Hollywood is superior in terms of technical quality of a film. My argument is that while the general visual aesthetics of a film do make a significant impact on the choices of young adults, they are not leaning towards one side of cinema rigidly because of visual aesthetics. Linguistic flexibility is also helping them explore rather than sticking to one kind of cinema.

Namit Malhotra, CEO of visual effects company DNEG mentioned in an interview with ETimes "Star Wars was the first to change the trajectory of visual effects in Hollywood. But in India we never really steered towards mega films. We ended up doing social drama, romantic storytelling formula films and that is why VFX became an afterthought." Aanand L Rai, an Indian film director agreed saying "The West started using VFX way before us, so it will be different. We are not very consistent with it, especially the directors." However, he also cites examples of S.Rajamouli with films like 'Makkhi', 'Baahubali' and 'RRR' which were against the tide and had high quality VFX depiction in the same interview.

In my interviews, while few students said that they do not gravitate towards VFX quality specifically, 5 out of 13 agreed with Namit Malhotra's opinion that Hollywood has an upper hand in the field. "Better VFX and good graphic quality makes the story more believable. Bollywood, despite high budgets for VFX has had major failures like 'Adipurush' where the VFX looked childish" (Bothra, Vansh. Interview. Conducted by Sania Bhargava. 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023). However, there is a third perspective. An interviewee said, "VFX matters more or less depending on the story being shown. If Hollywood does a bad job of showing 'time slipping' in a film like Loki from MCU, the film cannot stand. When Indian cinema explores similar plots, they do a pretty good job like the cases of 'JL50' or 'Robot' " (Chaudhary, Anshika. Interview. Conducted by Sania Bhargava. 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023).

Several students also emphasized on the camera shots, aspect ratio, color grading and dubbing quality of a film making or breaking a film experience. However, it is interesting to note that people cited both works of Marvel Cinematic Universe and Disney alongside films of Indian filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali, while asking for examples of good films in the technical sense.

The aspect of dubbing needs to be looked at more closely. Interviewees cited that regional cinema has improved in its dubbing quality and Bollywood is attempting multi-lingual release to broaden viewership base. This makes them want to explore Indian cinema more. The availability of OTT has hastened the process. Hollywood films are also available on OTT in some Indian languages or at least with subtitles, allowing people to watch their plots in a language they are most comfortable in. Aakshi Magazine also agreed with this idea saying "Language is less of a limitation in cinema now" (Interview, Magazine 2023). Hence, linguistic fluidity can be another example that young adults are focusing more on storylines and themes without facing barriers of language and comprehension. This maybe specifically true for people affluent in English or Hindi. This argument however, can be drawn back to the sample under study and we shall discuss this in the latter half of the paper.

## **SOCIABILITY AND RELATIBILITY**

This includes the plots and representation of themes in a film. Several interviewees said that they watch Indian cinema because it is 'relatable' while others said that they watch Hollywood because it is more 'believable.' This section aims to explore this dichotomy.

Let us look at 'relatability' in terms of storylines and characters. Several of my interviewees said that Indian cinema captures the essence of the culture very beautifully which makes the film appealing to watch. "I find films which depict career aspirations, adulthood complexities and relationship nuances more interesting than a random sci-fi film. Most of these films like '3 idiots' or 'Meenakshi Sunderashwar' carry a part of our Indian culture which makes it seem more real" (Mishra, Pranjal. Interview. Conducted by Sania Bhargava. 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023). "It is my weekly routine to watch a Telugu film with my roommate, simply to hear my language again because I live in a north Indian campus" (Radha. Interview. Conducted by Sania Bhargava. 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023).

Archita Kashyap, a film expert, in an article writes: 'Regional films appeal more to viewers because often, they can associate with characters and situations in their native language and in a particular region (...) Bollywood hasn't been able to fully get past their standard profile of films- a hero, a heroine, a villain, songs and a romance dominating the story line.' She further gives example of box office successes of Thyagarajan (Tamil), *Sairat* (Marathi), *Belasheshe* in Bengali, or *Mission China* in Assamese to prove her point.

Further, Aakshi Magazine mentioned that cinema is a reflection of the society and even some of its repressed aspirations (Interview, Magazine, 2023). Hence, young adults might be eager to watch Indian films because the setting feels familiar. Especially with more progressive films depicting marginalized communities in terms of gender and caste, people might be keen on watching them because it represents repressed aspirations of Indian society. Hayward would call this as ‘social realism’ in films, which was associated specifically with the Third Cinema and Parallel cinema back in time, however now finds expression in mainstream Indian cinema as well with films like ‘Article 15’ and ‘Badhai Do’.

Switching gears, let us look at people who find Hollywood films more relatable and believable. “American cinema has its own stories. People of color and marginalized genders find better expression and representation in their plot lines. Any social message to be communicated is integrated in the storyline rather than being presented as a monologue, like in Indian films” (Mathur, Aryan. Interview. Conducted by Sania Bhargava. 21st November 2023). Some people also shared their personal experiences of realizing their gender by impact of movies like ‘French Potrait of Lady on Fire’ in a time when gender fluidity was hardly represented in mainstream Indian cinema. They also acknowledge the patriarchal and misogynistic undertones in a lot of movies in India today. Geetanjali Chanda while commenting on representation of gender in Indian cinema says that ‘often the way gender is represented in films is reflective of the Indian society, even if it is a sad one’ (Interview, Chanda 2023). I argue that the reason why young adults may find a relatively progressive Hollywood cinema more appealing or ‘believable’ is because of their own progressive mindset and awareness credited to social media, parental or peer influence. My sample size is an educated group of young adults, from fairly well to do economical backgrounds, with access to social media which might influence the way they look at social themes in cinema. We shall return to this with a more detailed description of how these factors play a role in their preferences shall find mention in the ‘discussion’ part of the paper.

## MARKETING STRATEGY

An article of Financial Times mentions, ‘India’s young population, rising incomes and the spread of multiplex chains have encouraged US studios to invest more in the market. Studios like Paramount and Universal now dub their movies not only into Hindi but to other regional languages such as Tamil’. On similar lines, Amit Sharma, MD, Miraj Cinemas, in an interview with MoneyControl says, “Disney’s marketing is better than its competitor. They don’t translate, but rewrite the dialogues. Disney understands markets far better than its competitor.”

The marketing of a film strongly influences its reach to the audience. Social media, in addition to on-ground marketing plans such as song launches, first screening, and promotions by actors, is a big medium to market a film. My interviewees have listed: Netflix suggestions, Instagram reels, display panels of OTT platforms, and YouTube film review videos as major sources that guide their choices.

Aggressive marketing done by Barbie and Oppenheimer worldwide has yielded them humongous success. 8 out of my 13 interviewees had seen either Barbie or Oppenheimer this year, even if they were not keen Hollywood watchers. Considering all evidences, it will be fair to say that Hollywood has recently made a stronger global impact due to their marketing and even localized publicity approach and that has had a certain degree of impact on young adults in India as well.

## PARENTAL AND PEER INFLUENCE, ROLE OF MUSIC AND DANCE, POWER OF FANBASES

Some other findings from my interviews included that most students who watched Hollywood more than Indian cinema, had been exposed to international cinema with their parents from a young age. Harry

Potter, Disney Animation films and Comic book universe were the most cited examples. They also enjoyed watching Hollywood films with their parents when back home from college. Whereas, in most cases where the parents were either huge Bollywood buffs or invested in regional cinema, the interviewees seemed to either have a leaning towards Indian cinema or at least a deep seated respect for the industry. Despite having similar degree of access to English cinema, these people recall enjoying more watching nostalgic Indian films with their parents. Here, it is not simply the educational background of the student and their parents but also the impression of a certain kind of cinema (personal liking, lack of access to international cinema in the 1990s, et cetera) by the parents that has influenced their child's choices.

Another guiding factor is the music and dance in a particular type of cinema. Aakshi Magazine says that Indian cinema inherits its musicality from theatre, and notes that today music and dance is on the decline. Youngsters find the abrupt insertion of a dance sequence in the middle of scene jarring and say that it breaks the flow of the movie. Most of my interviewees, including those who watch more of Indian cinema, said that they appreciate the subtlety of music in Hollywood more. There were a few however, who disagreed and stuck with appreciating the 'vibrancy' which dance and music adds to a film. Overall though, we do notice a trend of disliking for abruption of a storyline by music among young adult viewers for a film.

As for the power of stardom, there has been a significant decline in influencing young adults. When asked about favorite actors, directors and producers, most interviewees took some time to think and while they did come up with names, there was no blind faith in someone's work. Contrasting to the stardom which specifically Indian actors held in the 1990s, young adults of today seem to judge a film by its storyline, trailer, promotions et cetera rather than simply the presence of an actor.

## **SECOND AND THIRD AIM: THE DISCUSSION SECTION**

I believe that my finding—young adults are more dependent on parameters like visual aesthetics of a film, sociability, relatibility, marketing, et cetera than the region of origin of that film—are heavily influenced by my choice of sample. My interviewees have had access to social media and OTT from a relatively young age than the rest of India, who got access to OTT as recent as 2020. (Business Insider India noted that from 2020 to 2022, there was a 20% growth in OTT audience in India). Social media made them more aware about the changing landscapes in the world in regards to gender, caste and careers. People without social media exposure may not be as aware or comfortable with progressive talks about structures of the society. This can be a push back against the critic that 'Indian films dealing with social issues need to spell out their message'. This might be the case because subtle messaging might not be as effective on people not exposed to ideas of homosexuality, caste equality, and feminism, among others.

Social media has also exposed my sample size to new marketing tactics by films around the world. They can compare and contrast among films showing more progressive themes, interesting plots and better visuals versus the others. The early access of OTT made this possible further by giving them access to lesser known films, independent productions and films from diverse languages. The feature of subtitles in most OTT platforms allowed people to watch diverse cinema more.

Second was the factor that my sample size was a homogenous group confident in English. Even if there were not very comfortable with the language, they could comprehend it with ease, allowing them to understand any Hollywood film from a relatively young age than the rest of India. (Most census show



that approximately 30% of young adults in India can speak English fluently) For young adults who may not be comfortable with the language, the factors influencing their choice of a film may differ than my sample population, for whom language doesn't act as a primary concern.

Finally, let me tie my argument to third cinema and the idea of neo-colonial lineage of viewership in India. Cinema, which began as a primarily entertainment industry, has evolved over time to also spread awareness, education and reflect new perspectives. With this the themes and representations have also evolved. Depictions of middle class lives, gender, caste and class which were attributed only to Third cinema got adopted by both Hollywood and Bollywood, owing to increased social awareness in the society. It will be a generalization to entail the entire journey of cinematic themes in short and hence that will lie outside the scope of this paper. However, after globalization and the research I have conducted, it will be wrong to say that young adults watching cinema carry a neo-colonial impression in their heads. This paper proves that whether it is Indian cinema or Hollywood, whichever of the two checks all boxes of preferences of young adults gets watched more. As per my research, I can safely say that the politics of neo-colonization impact young adults less than the features listed in this paper do.

An important theme that comes up through this analysis is the idea of progressivism in India and the distinctions between the 'masses' and the 'privileged'. In this context, the privilege being referred to is that of content access and education. The existing discourse on progressivism in sociology and political science says that the United States and India essentially have different starting points owing to the history of colonization and their respective cultures. Few examples stated include: the time when progressivist movements in USA were discussing hyper individualism, the progressivist Indians spoke of human and individual rights, but they did not conceive of such rights as the only or ultimate consideration. They invoked a person's choice by itself was often an insufficient moral consideration (Jensen, 11). Another example was in regards to the institution of marriage. In the time when Americans were defending divorce, progressive Indians were on the stage of shifting from the notion of marriage being a 'sacred' institution to a 'social' practice, which had scope for changes with the changing times. While the definitions of progressivism have vastly changed now, I do agree that both the countries and hence their respective cinemas have had different starting points. The way Indian cinema reflects on social themes draws on its own heritage and belief system. Despite several social values becoming global, there is a niche difference in the way Indian cinema would deal with topics of marriage, family, caste, et cetera in comparison to Hollywood. Whether or not this niche difference appeals to a person depends on their background and privilege. My sample size, having the access to international cinema, the US progressivist values, and the ability to comprehend that value system comfortably in English perhaps makes them better consumers of Hollywood than the rest of India. This is not to say that these people do not connect with the Indian progressivist ideology or are leaning towards watching Hollywood, it is simply a matter of them having the 'choice' in the first place to choose what cinema they wish to watch, which might or might not be the case for the rest of the population.

### **WRAPPING UP: CONCLUSION AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

In this paper, it was seen that educated young adults with a relatively privileged access to content do not lean towards either Indian cinema or Hollywood greatly. The colonial burden of 'better technology' outside India doesn't drive them. It is rather the six parameters listed in this paper which largely influence their choices. Visual aesthetics and VFX improve viewer experience, and good quality of dubbing increase range of choice for viewers. Representation of progressive social themes or even

repressed aspirations draws the audience to finding the film more relatable. The marketing strategy and publicity of a film, the social selling points chosen also impact whether a film aligns with a viewer's taste or not. Parental choices as well as like or dislike for traditional Indian music choreography in a film also come to play a determining role, though not as big as the former three. According to my chosen sample, whichever film ticks most of these signposts gets viewed by young adults in India.

This paper presents a wider commentary on the viewership patterns in cinema today which might be of use to people in the industry, film experts, critiques and cinema enthusiasts. The type of content a society wishes to say can be utilized to mark the evolution of culture in that society as well.

This paper presents not only what guides the preferences of young adults in India towards cinema but also the distinction between what influences the privileged versus the masses. It entailed the debate which based the tastes of the masses on box office numbers and produced results which strongly hold for my sample size, educated undergraduate students. However, the scope of this paper can be extended widely to produce more sizeable arguments. Several scholars argue that box office numbers might not be the true reflection of preferences of the masses. Qualitative methods and reaching out to people with backgrounds of less fluency in English, limited access to OTT and other limitations might be the first step in building the argument from the other end as well.

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