

Conference track «20.11 The Global South: its Position and Role in the English-Speaking World»

"Cultural Exchange: Bollywood vs. Hollywood"

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Hollywood has long dominated international cinema, but it is no longer the only big player in global culture. With giants like Bollywood rising, the film world has become multipolar - there are now several centers of influence, not just one.

Bollywood is the largest film producer in the world in terms of both the number of films released (over 1,000 per year)^{[4] [8]} and the volume of tickets sold, successfully competing for the attention of viewers not only in India but also in the countries of the Global South and among the vast diaspora. Although Hollywood maintains financial hegemony, controlling a significant portion of the global market, Bollywood challenges Western cultural expansion through a "contra-flow" of information^[4]. At the same time, the economic gap between the industries remains enormous: the budgets of Hollywood blockbusters and their marketing expenses are dozens of times higher than the costs of the most expensive Indian projects^[3].

Despite this, Bollywood actively integrates Western narratives into its projects. This interaction demonstrates the process of «glocalization»^[5], wherein global standards of film production are adapted to the local context. For example, the process of «Bollywoodization»^[6] of Western genres (such as horror or science fiction) shows how a national industry can borrow foreign elements without losing its identity.

The economic side matters too. As film drives tourism, movies turn real locations into must-see destinations, bringing in billions^{[1] [4]}. Both industries also shape how people consume. Through product placement and lifestyles shown on screen, they influence what audiences around the world want to buy and how they want to live.

Interestingly, the transition from competition to an era of co-production opens new horizons for the exchange of technology and talent. Major American studios (Disney, Warner Bros.) are investing in the Indian market, recognizing its potential, which leads to the creation of hybrid narratives understandable to viewers around the world^[1]. This trend makes the topic important for understanding the future of world cinema as a unified, yet diverse, space.

Bollywood may have smaller budgets and less tech, but it succeeds in spreading Indian identity. It shows that Indian values, music, and emotion can win on the world stage. Meanwhile, Hollywood is adapting as well. It's letting in "foreign" cultural elements, which enrich its storytelling and help it reach new viewers.

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