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RESEARCH PAPER

Portrayal of Pakistani Culture in Hollywood Movies: Pre and Post 9/11

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ABSTRACT

Movies have a tremendous impact on how people think and feel about various subjects, the portrayal of other cultures in film has been a topic worthy of critical study for a long time. This research aims to investigate the portrayal of Pakistani Culture in Hollywood films before the tragic events of September 11, 2001, by conducting a qualitative content analysis of Hollywood films. Before and after 9/11, two movies were selected through a purposive sampling technique. The results showed that Hollywood films frequently incorporate stereotyped depictions of Pakistani Culture and vigorously spread Orientalist generalizations about the country's people and their history. The researchers developed six themes after reviewing the extensive literature where gender inequity is pervasive, and individuals confront the ever-present threat of terrorist attacks. This image contributes to perpetuating negative generalizations about Pakistan and its people. Extremism and terrorism are the most prevalent issues in this study's pre-9/11 segment. Moreover, espionage and intrigue is the most prevalent theme in selected movies.

Introduction

Examining the cultural portrayal of Pakistan in Hollywood films is a complex and intriguing topic that extends beyond cinema. In Hollywood's expensive and prominent realm, the depiction of Pakistan's culturally diversified and affluent heritage has developed as a medium through which we can examine intricate linkages involving art, identity, diplomacy, and societal perspectives. This research explores the realm of Hollywood movies to examine the portrayal of Pakistan and its cultural fabric through cinematic productions.

The film business can exert influence on individuals that extends beyond mere entertainment. The pictures possess the ability to transform into the stereotypes that are embraced by cultures. Cinema emerged as one of the most socially important advancements of the twentieth century. They saw the movies as without any significant value, save, maybe, as a negative influence on those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Films have the potential to influence society by altering images, presenting moral dilemmas, and reshaping spectators' perspectives. Therefore, several films have the potential to play a significant role in shaping one's sense of self, including portraying Pakistani Culture in stereotypical ways. The concept of 'Otherness' and diversity has consistently captivated cinema creators, and it may be said that film has often faced criticism for endorsing a certain perspective and depicting ethnic minorities, in particular, in an unfavorable manner. The concept of the "Other" in films belonging to this particular genre serves to emphasize the perspectives of the prevailing social classes, who seek to

influence the subordinate class into compliance, asserting that their portrayals are representative of the norm, mundane, and morally justifiable (Sjö & Häger, 2015).

Hollywood has consistently portrayed images of the East more negatively throughout its existence. The entities above are often understood to represent capitalism's societal, political, and economic concerns. (Alalawi 2015; Eijaz (2018). The significant increase in Islamophobia may be attributed to the media's portrayal of certain pictures. It is often acknowledged that Muslims and Islam often face stereotyping. Most of these films include depictions of bombing incidents involving individuals of Arab and Muslim backgrounds. There is a contention that the media perpetuates the portrayal of Muslims and Islam as "Other." However, during the period spanning from September 11, 2001, to 2018, two distinct political frameworks have assumed control. The objective of this study is to analyze the impact of these developments on the portrayal of Muslims in the context of the Hollywood film industry. The film industry played a significant role in the establishment of discriminatory attitudes against Muslims before the events of 9/11.(Fawa (2013; Youssef 2020).

Before September 11, 2001, Hollywood films frequently reflected Orientalist stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings in their depictions of Pakistani Culture. Pakistani characters were frequently portrayed as exotic, barbaric, and violent. These portrayals contributed to perpetuating negative stereotypes and hindered a nuanced understanding of Pakistani Culture. "The Beast" (1988) is a notable example of such stereotyping. During the Soviet-Afghan War, the film depicted Pakistanis as hostile and fanatical, reinforcing the notion that Pakistan is a breeding ground for terrorism. In the 1998 film "The Siege," Pakistani characters were similarly associated with terrorist acts, reflecting the prevalent anxieties and prejudices of the time (Shaheen, 2001).

The present research examines the portrayal of anti-Pakistan sentiment in cinema media, focusing on Hollywood movies. This notion suggests that Hollywood films portray Pakistan as unfriendly and discriminatory. Under the pretense of entertainment, film industries have been used as propaganda weapons by entrenched interests to disparage Pakistan and provide a poor portrayal of the nation. Films that portray Pakistan in a negative light are being discussed in this research.

Literature Review

The cinema significantly impacts cultural identity formation by portraying a specific culture or group's norms, customs, and history. This is accomplished via one of cinema's most essential functions: the molding of cultural identities. Films have the potential to either uphold or subvert pre-existing cultural conventions and stereotypes, so shaping the public's perspectives. For instance, conversations on race and representation in society have been aided by movies like "Do the Right Thing" (1989) and "Black Panther" (2018), which include depictions of African-American people and topics.

Before September 11, 2001, the portrayal of Pakistani Culture in Hollywood films was restricted and frequently characterized by oversimplified and generalized depictions. (Benshoff., & Griffin. ,2004). It is imperative to acknowledge that the image mentioned above manifests the dominant perspectives and preconceived notions of the era, and it may not accurately depict the multifaceted and intricate nature of Pakistani Culture and society. This is a matter that warrants consideration. (Malik, R.,2012). The representation of Pakistani Culture has often been exposed to exoticization and Orientalist viewpoints,

highlighting the differences between cultures and reinforcing preconceived conceptions. (Gopal, S. 2011). The representation of Pakistani characters in popular media has repeatedly maintained an image of them as mysterious, intriguing, and extremely conservative. This has contributed to strengthening a gap between the current ideals of the West and the traditional traditions of the East. (Naficy.,2001).

Before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, members of the Pakistani people were often portrayed as villains or terrorists in Hollywood films that relied on espionage, political intrigue, or global problems. These films were typically set in Pakistan. The images at issue have played a role in perpetuating adverse stereotypes and strengthening preconceived beliefs towards people of Pakistani ancestry. (Shohat, & Stam ,2014).

Most of the time, Pakistani characters in Hollywood films are shown behaving in stereotypically conservative ways, such as holding traditional values and engaging in traditional religious observances. Some cliched depictions of Pakistani society include depictions of harsh patriarchal rules, honor murders, and arranged marriages. Other examples of this kind of portrayal include arranged weddings and honor killings. (Sayyid, S.,1997. The film industry in Hollywood has been criticized for its lack of authenticity in representing Pakistani Culture. This lack of authenticity may be linked to the industry's limited exposure to Pakistani Culture and its dependence on superficial depictions of the country. The accents of Pakistani people were exaggerated, and the complexities of Pakistani Culture were usually oversimplified or misunderstood. (Gupta, & Nayar,,2012).

Characters of Pakistani descent who appear in Hollywood films are typically relegated to secondary or supporting parts or are shown to play a role on the periphery of the narrative. (Voll, D. 2004). A lack of nuanced characterization and complex qualities marks these portrayals. The inaccuracy of the image made it difficult to investigate the many different Pakistani identities and narratives. (Shachar,2006).

Chambers, (2011) The writing of the work that Mohsin Hamid would later publish was begun before the terrorist atrocities of September 11 and did not appear in print until 2007. After that, in 2012, Mira Nair directed a cinematic version of the book, which was shown for the first time at the Venice Cinematic Festival as the opening feature. After that, it was shown at the Toronto Feature Festival. In comparison to Hamid's book, the attitude that Nair takes in his adaptation of the story looks to be more conciliatory. (Sial, Arafat, & Zafar, (2019).

The researcher briefly explained the pre and post -9/11 movies selected based on purposive technique. The era was under the twenty years of period. Many movies came under the theme of terrorism; most movies do not reflect Pakistan in general or specific. Mentioned below fulfilled the criteria of the researcher.

The acts of terrorism that took place on September 11, 2001 had a significant impact on many different aspects of American culture, including the film industry. The decade that followed the terrorist attacks is referred to as "Post-9/11 Hollywood." During this time, movie producers and studios responded to the changed socio-political scene by producing films that echoed apprehensions over national security, terrorism, and the war against terrorism. The name "Post-9/11 Hollywood" was used to describe this period. These films were absorbed into the larger conversations on national security that were taking place during that time period. (Powers, 2010).

The Hollywood depiction of Pakistani culture following the 9/11 attacks served to perpetuate a discourse of cultural underdevelopment. The portrayal of Pakistani society has often been characterised as exhibiting a lack of progressiveness, modernity, or being culturally stagnant. The representations in question demonstrate a disregard for the complex history, intellectual traditions, and cultural accomplishments of Pakistan. This reductionist approach oversimplifies and homogenises the multifaceted nature of Pakistani culture. The discourse in question has contributed to a skewed and incomplete comprehension of the Pakistani social fabric, thereby reinforcing hegemonic structures and perpetuating prejudiced notions (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009).

Social Construction Theory

The interplay between Orientalism and social construction theory in depicting Pakistani Culture in Hollywood films is intricate and interrelated. The convergence of these two frameworks manifests in various manners, contributing to a more holistic comprehension of the processes involved in constructing, disseminating, and perpetuating cultural representations. The interrelationship between these concepts within the context of this subject matter is as follows: Both Orientalism and social construction theory emphasize the significance of stereotypes and prevailing narratives in constructing cultural representations. The concept of Orientalism sheds light on the historical tendency of the Western world to create and perpetuate a collection of preconceptions regarding the "Orient," which encompasses regions such as South Asia. Concurrently, social construction theory emphasizes the socially created nature of these stereotypes and their continued existence. The portrayal and perpetuation of Orientalist prejudices about Pakistani Culture are evident and actively reinforced within the narratives depicted in Hollywood films. Sociologists Peter L. Berger, Jr. and Thomas Luckman presented the idea of social Constructionism for the first time in their book The Social Construction of Reality, published in 1966. Many different philosophers, including Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and philosopher George Herbert Mead, were a source of motivation for the theories that Berger and Luckman developed. In particular, Mead's symbolic interactionism theory had a significant impact.

According to the social construction theory, the conceptions, beliefs, and norms that are prevalent in society are not objective realities that have always been there; rather, they are formed and produced by the cultural situations in which people find themselves and the interactions they have with one another. (Berger, & Luckmann ,1966). The dynamic development and sustained maintenance of collective interpretations, social identities, and comprehensions by means of the interpersonal interactions of both people and groups is the primary focus of attention. (Gergen, 1985).

Material and Methods

The study strategy for qualitative content analysis of cinema involves using a systematic approach to analyzing the content of films to get insights and a better understanding of particular themes, storylines, or messages communicated via the medium of film. Purposive sampling enables researchers to collect targeted and comprehensive data from participants with specific attributes or knowledge that align with the research objectives. This approach facilitates a more profound comprehension of the research topic.

Purposive sampling is utilized when the researcher seeks comprehensive and profound insights from specific participants who can offer substantial and pertinent

information about the research objectives. The researcher chose Hollywood films that showed Pakistani Culture.

Movies before 9/11   True Lies 1994 and after 9/11 The Might heart 2007

Operationalization of Themes

Extremism And Terrorism   Pakistan is a center for terrorist activity or a fertile environment for terrorist organizations. Such representations help perpetuate cultural stereotypes and add to the country's marginalization.(Shohat, & Stam, 2003).Scenes that show violence and act of violence is considered in this theme.

Gender and Oppression

Hollywood films often portray women in a confined and oppressive manner due to their conventional gender norms. They are consistently depicted in a manner that reinforces the gender stereotype that women in Pakistani Culture are helpless and subservient. (Said, 1978).

Scenes that show women's oppression are considered in this theme.

Cultural Backwardness

Compared with Western cultural standards, Pakistani society is often depicted as antiquated or primal.

Cultural Clash and Identity Crisis.

Cultural conflict is a common experience among Pakistani individuals who have settled in Western societies, particularly in the context of Hollywood films.

Exoticization and Orientalism

 The phenomenon of exoticization observed reinforces a reductionist and idealized perception of the country, disengaged from the multifaceted and heterogeneous nature of its social and cultural fabric. (Hooks, 1992).

Geopolitical Intrigue and Espionage

Films released before September 11 commonly have plot lines involving spies, intelligence agencies, or international power plays. Pakistan ISI, army, or any other scenes depicted included in this theme.

Results and Discussion

One research question number one was about the content of Hollywood films featuring Pakistani characters or settings. The content and scenes show the Pakistani setting and characters differently through their clothes, places, food, and music. The study found that characters with Pakistani roots may have an accent or use a few Urdu words to show how many different languages are spoken in the country.

The film "True Lies," primarily emphasizes action and comedy, with a plot centered around spying and secret agent operations. The movie features situations in

the Middle East where individuals engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds. The representation of cultural components, specifically in the Pakistan setting, is frequently modified and condensed to create a more visually appealing and enjoyable experience for the audience.

Likewise, the film does not thoroughly explore Pakistani music or poetry. The film's primary focus on developing suspenseful thriller elements is restricted, including musical and poetic expressions within its narrative framework. The film lacks the inclusion of conventional Pakistani musical genres, such as nasheeds, qawwali, and other culturally significant kinds of music. It is imperative to examine the wider framework encompassing the portrayal of Pakistani personalities and Culture in Hollywood films. The film reinforces negative stereotypes by portraying Middle Eastern or Pakistani characters as menacing or adversarial figures, a prevalent tendency often observed in Hollywood productions. The second most prevalent theme colored in the research is espionage.

Considering the implications of the discussion, Geopolitical intrigue and espionage related to Pakistan have been frequently depicted in Hollywood movies. Pakistan is a prominent participant in global politics, primarily attributed to its strategic geographical position and active engagement in numerous regional matters.

The film "True Lies," showcases a range of scenes that revolve around espionage, covert operations, and counterterrorism endeavors. Tasker, the protagonist, embarks on a mission to uncover and prevent a terrorist plot."True Lies" is a 1994 action-comedy film helmed by acclaimed director James Cameron. The movie primarily centers around the action, humor, and spy genre, although it also incorporates elements related to espionage and counterterrorism. The film does not thoroughly examine geopolitical intrigue themes, a characteristic often found in more serious espionage thrillers.

The primary focus of "A Mighty Heart" centers on the meticulous inquiry surrounding the abduction and subsequent homicide of Daniel Pearl. The phrases "Cultural Exoticization" and "Orientalism" are employed to delineate the representation of non-Western societies as being exotic, enigmatic, and often too simplified when viewed through a Western lens.

The film primarily centers on the events surrounding journalist Daniel Pearl's abduction and subsequent demise in Pakistan. However, it is important to note that the film predominantly adopts the perspective of Mariane Pearl, a Western individual. Consequently, there is a possibility that the portrayal of Pakistani culture in the film may inadvertently be influenced by a Western perspective. The film accentuates Mariane's Western identity juxtaposed against the setting of Pakistan, thereby perpetuating an outsider's perception of Pakistani society as being exotic or otherworldly and few scenes of this theme be associated in this movie.

The main focus of "Mighty Heart" lies in the events related to the kidnapping and murder of Daniel Pearl. Additionally, the film indirectly explores themes of clash and identity crisis within the specific context of Pakistani society. Mariane Pearl assumes the role of a journalist with a Western background, thereby situating herself within a cultural context that prioritizes the principles of freedom of expression and the relentless pursuit of truth. This phenomenon conflicts with the factors present in Pakistani society that restrict the freedom of the press and discourage dissent. The dual identity of Mariane Pearl, encompassing her French-Cuban heritage and her status as a journalist's spouse, gives rise to intricate inquiries regarding her societal role and position within Pakistani society. The

protagonist's quest to locate her spouse and her subsequent encounters with the local law enforcement compel her to confront the duality of her identity. The process of cultural adaptation is evident in Mariane's interactions with individuals from Pakistan, as she strives to navigate cultural norms and practices while also grappling with her identity as an outsider in an unfamiliar environment.

In a film "Mighty Heart" The role of Mariane Pearl as a journalist exemplifies the potential difficulties that women may encounter when working in professions that are predominantly male-dominated. The user's assertiveness and determination in gathering information and pursuing the truth challenge conventional gender norms. The manner in which she engages in Pakistani officials and reporters demonstrates her steadfast determination to resist marginalization based on her gender. The film highlights the significance of Mariane's interpersonal connections with fellow women in the community. The interactions between the user and Asra Nomani, a fellow journalist, serve as a testament to the significance of solidarity and the unwavering support that women offer each other, even in the face of societal limitations. The strength and resilience demonstrated by Mariane challenges prevailing stereotypes regarding the roles of women in both Western and Pakistani societies.

The adaptability, determination, and interactions of women serve as notable examples of how they actively challenge conventional gender roles and navigate intricate societal expectations, particularly during periods of crisis. The film's portrayal provides a poignant reminder of the resilience and empowerment that women can exhibit, even in the face of formidable challenges. (Jeffords, 2012). this gave the indication of the Jeffords masculinity in the nineties that hold after 9/11 in Pakistan I society.

Conclusion

The analysis of the portrayal of Pakistan in these films reveals a diverse range of perspectives, encompassing personal stories and geopolitical complexities. Certain films exhibit complex and real portrayals that effectively challenge stereotypes, whereas others tend to oversimplify complex issues. To enhance Pakistani depiction in cinema, it is crucial for future filmmakers to persistently delve into a wide range of narratives, placing a strong emphasis on portraying authenticity and actively promoting cross-cultural comprehension (Fawa, 2013 & Yousaf, 2020). Through its powerful storytelling and visual representation, cinema has the potential to significantly contribute to the deconstruction of stereotypes and the cultivation of a more inclusive and truthful perception of Pakistan and its diverse population. The pre-9/11 movies prevailed the Geopolitical Intrigue, Espionage, and terrorism. The most prevalent theme is Extremism and terrorism in most movies, portraying the stereotypical image of Eastern society from the reflection of Western society(Said,1998).

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