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ROLE OF BOLLYWOOD CINEMA IN PROMOTING TOURISM, BUSINESS AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN ARAB WORLD: A STUDY WITH OMAN

Sangeeta Tripathi

College of Applied Sciences, Salalah, Ministry of Higher Education, Sultanate of Oman
sangeetakapil.234@gmail.com

Abstract

Bollywood cinema is the replica of Indian culture purely produced for the sake of entertainment. Indian movies seem promoting intercultural communication as it shows reflection of cultural exchange from language to realm of food, music to architecture, geographical beauty to film canvas. Due to the inclusion of different countries' cultures, Indian movies reduce the cultural shock and create a sense of closeness and warmth even in small conversations with strangers. Displayed marvelous sight scenes on big canvas of Hindi cinema attract audience and compel them to plan their vacations to that particular destination. In this way, it promotes tourism and other business in the country. The purpose of this study is to explore the threads which are vital in promoting tourism, business and intercultural communication in Arab countries. It will also examine how Bollywood cinema is influencing international audience's subliminal mind to attract tourism and business. The paper will also discover the impact of Bollywood cinema on Omani youth and their living style. For research findings, observation and survey methods are applied. Samples are collected from different age group for variation of data to test hypotheses and get scientific result.

Keywords

Bollywood, Intercultural Communication, Culture, Cinema, Business, Tourism.

1. Introduction

Indian Film Industry, notably, Bollywood is considered as the biggest film industry in the world. (Mitter Sohini, 2012)(Stephen Follows, 2015)In term of film production, box office collection and employment, Bollywood has higher position than Hollywood. Indian Film Industry produces approximately 1500 small and full length movies in a year. Box office collection, as on year 2014, indicates that Bollywood is representing 43% of its share among all while Tamil films industry share 36%, and other regional cinema share 21%(Indian Forbes)(Film Data and Education). (The statistics Portal, 2016)The value of Indian Cinema is increasing every year. In 2012, it was 112.4 billion Indian Rupees which became 125.3 billion in 2013. It is estimated nearly 158.7 billion in 2016 and 227.3 billion by 2020 (The statistics Portal© Statista). Bollywood movies, which are famous across the globe, are increasing as vast economic empire. It has been turned into multi- pronged such as production, finance, infrastructure, marketing and distribution. It has also been seen in recent years that the craze of Indian movies travelled overseas and made export sale higher than domestic sale. That's why the collection of Hindi movies cross 200, 300, 400 crores easily. Australia, Africa, China, Pakistan, European and Arabic countries are prominent audience for Bollywood movies. (The National, 2014)It increases the craze of Indian cine stars and inroad them to Hollywood. Deepika Padukone, Priyanka Chopara, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Irrfan Khan like stars have started working in Hollywood movies (The National, UAE). (Planet Bollywood)Another reason of Indian movies' popularity is wide spread Indian Diaspora. They influence other nationals and attract them towards Hindi cinema and its popular culture. That's why India has been established as brand of culture across the globe. Indian movies also offer effective communication skills and strategies to welcome cross cultural issues. It helps to improve tourism and business as it offers a big canvas and sight scene to understand geographical beauty and culture diversity of India. A huge influence of different countries' culture can be seen on Indian movies too. Ali Baba Chalis Chor, Hatim Tai, Alif Laila (Tele- Series) and Laila Majnu, EkTha Tiger are some Bollywood productions which were hugely inspired by Arabic Culture and seemed bridging the gap between India and Arabic countries to manage overseas relations. In line to intercultural communication, it shows reflection of cultural exchange from language to realm of food, array of music to architecture, geographical beauty to film canvas. These films reduce cultural shocks and create a sense of closeness even in small conversation with strangers. (Bhaswati Mukherjee,

2015)(Jose K Antony, 2015) Displayed sight scenes in Hindi movies attract audience and compel them to plan that destination for their upcoming holidays. In this way, it promotes tourism and other business (Jose K. Antony and Rashmi, 2015) (Doris Blaha, 2012).

1.1. Significance of Present Study

The present study facilitates understanding regarding an emerging trend in selection of holiday destination which is hugely influenced by movies. On the other hand, it sheds light upon the impact of Indian movies in enhancing intercultural communication between India and Oman.

1.2. Objective

Major objectives of the paper are-

1. To explore the thread in promoting Tourism, Business and Intercultural Communication between India and Arab Countries
2. To discover the impact of Bollywood Cinema on Omani youth and their living style.

2. Literature Review- India and Oman Relations Now and Then

India and Oman both countries are sharing trade and business relations from ancient period.(Port Services Corporation) Since then, Omani people were travelling to India and other Asian countries through sea for trading magnificent vessels; valuable commodities like Frankincense and Copper. They used to bring spices, tea, gold, silk and ivory in exchange. During their business travel, these Sailors used to meet, interact and display their product to different country's people and get influenced by their culture too (Port Service Corporation, S.A.O.G). During 15th century, Ahmed Bin Majid had become so famous for sea trading. He was considered as the master of sea and got credit also to guide Vasco De Gama. Many literature writers got inspired with this Arabian Sailor and wrote many famous imaginary characters in their literature. The stories of Sindbad the sailor had become very famous in Asian and Arabian countries. This imaginary character is also well portrayed in Indian TV serial Alif Laila produced by Ramanand Sagar. 2D animation movie produced by Afzal Ahmed Khan is also very famous among children.

(Times of Oman, 2016)At present, Oman and India both the countries are focusing on expanding their bilateral trade and investment in many ways. India is having cost-effective and labour-intensive economy. Its strong manufacturing and export oriented industrial framework makes it an attractive destination for investors. Along with this, Oman is also an attractive market and India's largest trade and investment partner with exports worth \$2.37 billion in 2014-15 (The Times of Oman, 2016).

2.1 Bollywood as entwining culture of India and Arabic Countries

(Bhaswati Mukherjee, 2015) (Live Sciences, 2015) India is a culturally wealthier country with graceful living pattern and sharing its heritage with near about 1440 dialects and 18 official languages, various styles of arts, architecture, literature, music, dance and splendid rituals (Bhaswati Mukherjee, 2015) (Live Sciences, 2015 @ livescience.com). Several of the world best known festivals exist in India and all Indians are celebrating it with social cohesion which encourage and establish a sense of identity and kind of inter-relation to one another. It makes India a nation of unity in diversity. These same cultural values are being demonstrated in Bollywood movies and transmitting wealth of knowledge from one generation to other generation. Bollywood popular cultures have become binding elements not only among diasporic Indians but other International communities. Indian immigrants, living across the globe are sharing similarity of experiences while watching Indian movies which contributes in construction global popular culture.

(Port Services Corporation) Middle East has always connected to India with business and trade reason. Due to trading connection, Indian and Arabic people are enough exposed to each other. They find it inter-related in terms of family values, festival celebration and a few rituals. Cultural similarity like patriarchal society, hospitality, inequality between men and women, highly religious attitude, considering women as honor of the family, respect aged people, leaving parents' house after marriage of a girl and staying with husband, women attire- aabaya, Salwar Kameez, Shela are some similarity of India and Arabic societies which connect them with Bollywood strongly and make Dubai, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Omani audience a great fan to Bollywood movies.

The other reason to connect with Indian movies is Music. Spectacle of Indian movies are based on stories, accompanied by songs, grand scenes and beautiful dance sequence which always endure a popular culture to appeal its audience in terms of social values and context whether they are Indian origin or International audience. "Music has no boundaries", this saying becomes approved when audience shake on Hindi beats without understanding meaning of songs. Shahrukh Khan Movies' love songs are enough famous in the Middle East. Bollywood seems enough lenient towards different local traditional sources like Ramleela, folklore, Tamasha, Nautanki and Parsitheater, Western music, Pakistani, Baluchi tune and music. It offers an array of different cultural shades which attract international audience. Along with this, it also includes different words from different languages like Marathi, Punjabi, Hariyanvi, Bhojpuri,

Awadhi, Braj and Bangali which approves the richness of Indian culture and appeal to create a sub culture to the International audience.

Another trend of Hindi Film producers seemed inclining towards Arabic words, tune to appeal Arabic audience. Some famous Hindi song numbers like “Mahbooba O Mahbooba.... Gulshanmein Gul Khiltehai” from film Sholay, “Mashah’allahMashah’allahChehrahaiMashah’allah” from film EkTha Tiger, “Shukran Allah waAlhamdulillah” song from film Kurbaan have established a great inter relation with Indian and Arabic audience and force them to dance on the Arabic beat.

2.2. Bollywood Removing Intercultural Barriers

Though India and Arab countries are sharing a few cultural similarities but there are some significance and visible elements which create cultural differences between both the societies. Indian Culture is a magnanimous culture which includes different elements of several other religions and world culture. Due to this, Indian society is more open than Arabic society. So, some cross cultural issues like different peripheral attitude and belief, cultural sensitivity, difficulties in encoding pictures, codes, sign, symbols, language, referential distance and biological differences can create problems in understanding level. In such situation, Bollywood movies as a prominent window offer a great exposure to international audience and remove maximum intercultural barriers. These movies provide information about Indian societies which reduce cultural shocks and increase the preparedness among the Arab and overseas audience while visiting each other’s country.

2.3. Bollywood Inducing Tourism and other Business

(Ramis Salam) Bollywood movies have a very strong relation with tourism. According to the demand of the story and script, Bollywood producers use to shoot their movies in different locations to depict rich color of culture, diversity of tradition and beautiful sight scenes. It works an effective marketing tool to motivate its national and International audience to select that destination for their upcoming holidays (Ramis, Salam, P., 2015).

(Yu-Jen Chiang, 2011)(Beverley, 2009)Very first time, a well-known film producer, Late Mr. Yash Chopra had shot one song of his most famous film “Silsile” in Switzerland. Since then, It has become a trend to shoot a film in abroad (Beverley, S. and Niki, M.) (Yu-Jen Chiang and Shih-ShuoYeh). It has been noticed that box office hit and popular movies seem promoting unexplored destinations and bring them into limelight. This trend of Bollywood helps to boost up national and International tourism. London, Paris, Australia, Canada, Singapore, Malaysia, UAE, Dubai and Oman have become wonderful locations for Indian film producers to shoot their films. After release of Hindi films, it has been marked a substantial increase of tourists

flow to the featured destinations. (Grihault, 2003) (Impact of films on tourism)After release of film “Dil Wale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge” and “Zindagi Na MilegiDobaara”, Switzerland witnessed 15% increase and Spain received 65% of rise of Indian tourists. After release of “3Idiots”, Laddakh recorded 1.25 lakhs tourist just in six months (Newsflicks, 2011) Grihault, N., 2003).

3. Methodology

The study is based on survey and observation methods. Primary data has been collected through a well-designed questionnaire which consists of nine questions related to different variables - liking of Bollywood film story, sight scene, songs, culture tourism, Omani youth, intercultural communication, future aspects movies in promoting tourism and potential to expand business etc. The random sampling technique is applied to collect data from Salalah, Dhofar. Total 100 respondents from South and north part of Oman has participated. The age group of respondent are between - 18 to 25, 26 to 35 and above 36. They belong to different group like house wives teacher, students and taxi drivers. Online News, Video content and other portals have been chosen for the study under observation method. ZeeAflam (Bella Al Arabia) serials and movies have been reviewed under the criteria of Omani viewership, its impact on youngsters' life style and their language.

4. Findings and Discussion

The data analysis is done by using descriptive method inpercentage of frequency for the responses. Each question receives the values which have been discussed with the help of graph. Most of them seem inter-related with each other. For example- Sight scene utilize in movies promoting cultural tourism and its co-relation to impact on Omani Youth. Cultural differences and it's co-relation to create desire to explore new things. These variables can also be counted as a factor to promote cultural tourism and business rapidly

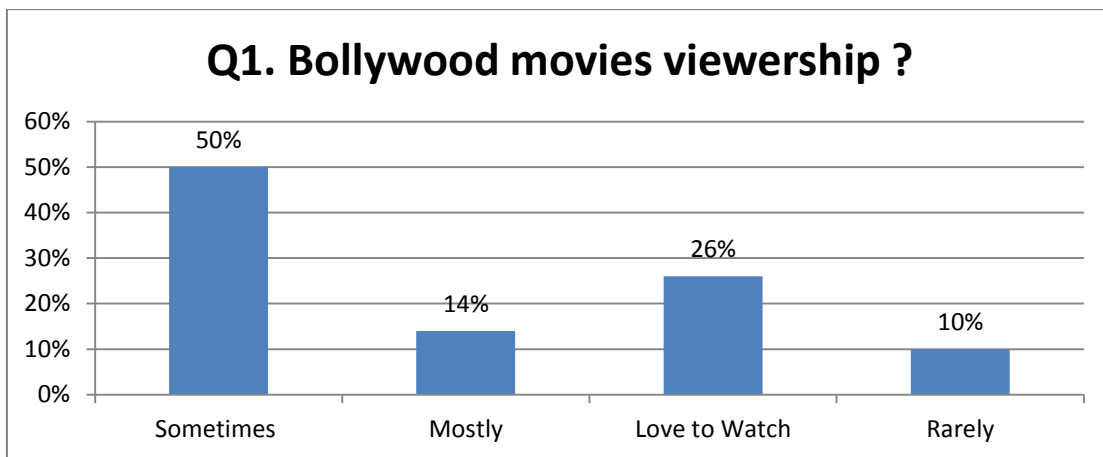


Figure 1: Presenting the popularity of Bollywood movies in the Sultanate

Figure 1 shows popularity of Bollywood movies in the Sultanate. An Omani girl, who is studying in a nursing school, said that we are surrounded by Indians and it seems that we are inter-related to each other. She has never been to India but feels that their culture is close to her society. After watching Bollywood movies, she got this idea that Indian society is similar society like Arab. Girls leave their parents’ house and live with her husband. Girls are considered as the prestige of the family. Boys are living with their parents even after marriage. They leave their home only if they have job at other places. She said that she compares always these two societies through Bollywood window. Oman has more than ten cinema complexes in Ruwi, Muscat Grand Mall, Shatti, Panorama Mall, Sohar, Sur Salalah and Buraimi. These innovative theaters are fully equipped with latest cinematic technologies and facilitated with online booking, food and beverage like services to enrich the entertainment experience. Availability of such theaters support above fact that Bollywood movies craze has been increased in passing years.

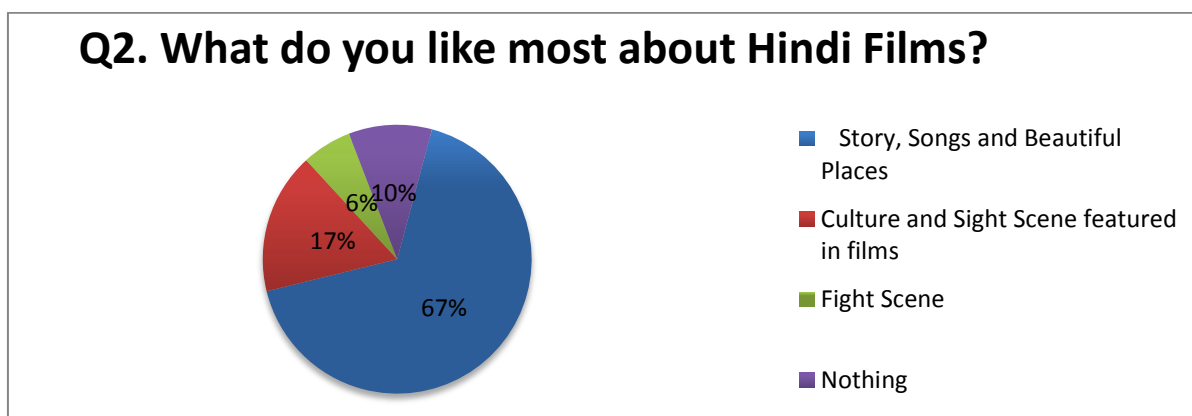


Figure 2: Reason to like Bollywood than Hollywood

Figure 2 show that 67% respondents like Indian movies because of storyline, Song and beautiful location. 6% like fighting and 17% like culture. Only 10% said that don't like anything.

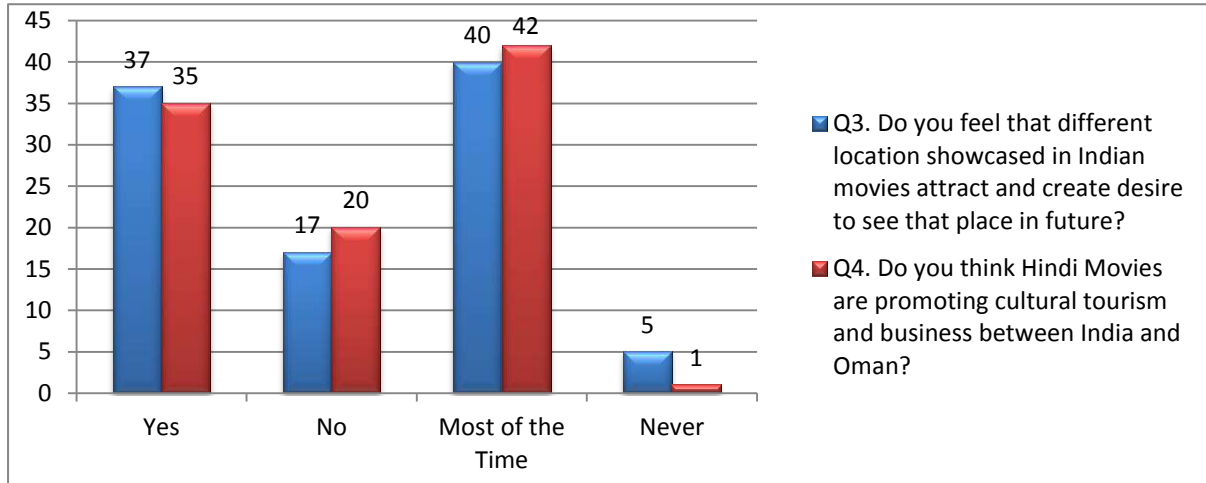


Figure 3: Indian movies Co-relation between attracting and promoting tourism and business

Figure 3 shows inter-relation between different location pictured in films promoting business and tourism. It shows how Indian movies are attracting people and promoting different kind of business, cultural heritage and craft.

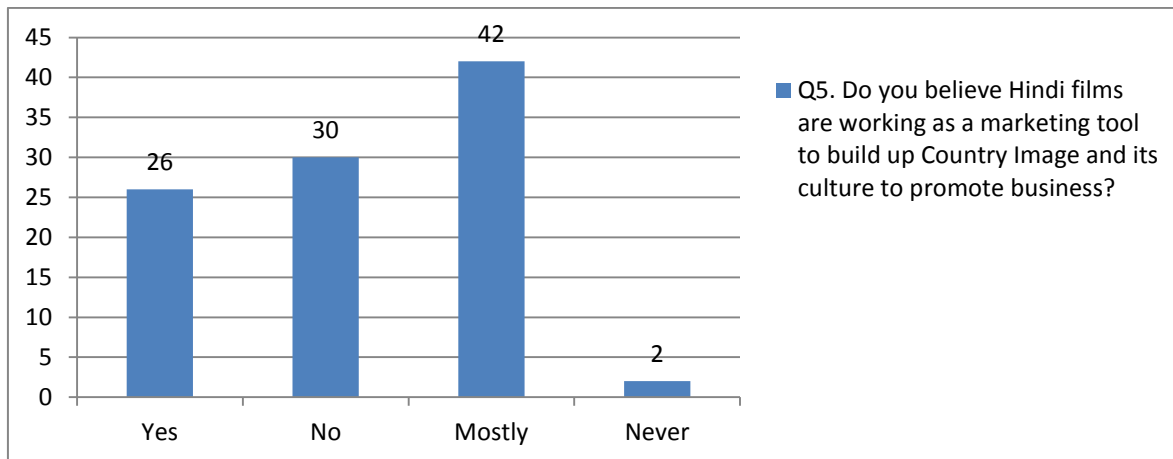


Figure 4: Indian Movies as a Tool

Figure 4 shows that 26% and 42% respondent believe that Indian movies are working as a promotional tool. Only 32% do not agree to this point.

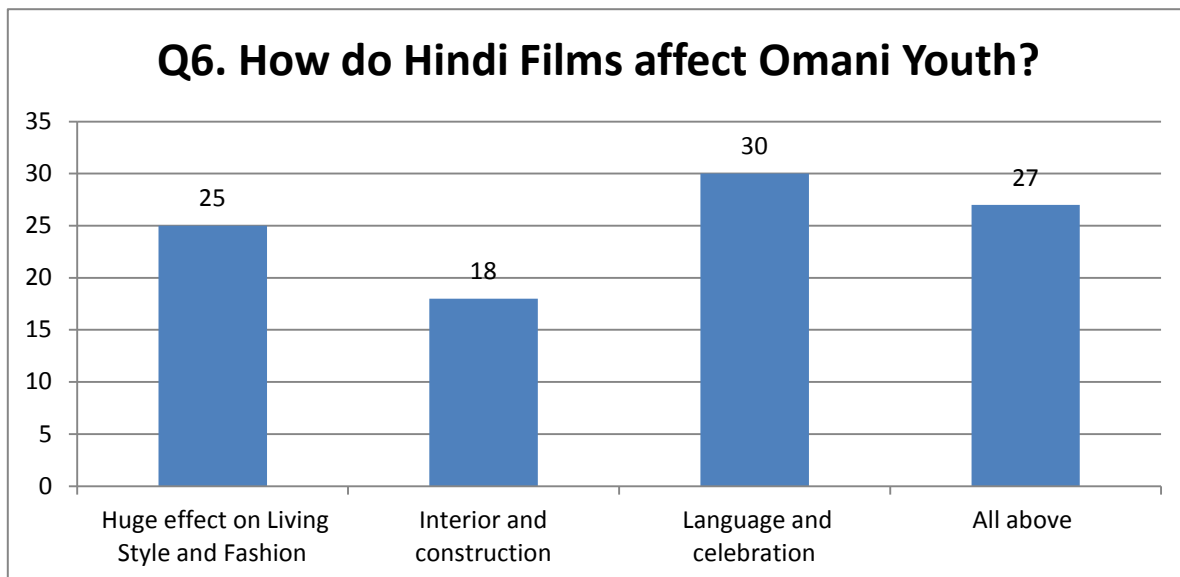


Figure 5: *Impact of Indian Movies on Omani Youth*

Figure 5 shows that impact of Indian movies can be seen on Omani youth. A teacher who is working in College of Applied Sciences says that impact can be noticed in term of fashion and life style of Omani Youth. Whether they are girls or boys, they imitate fashion and life style during their leisure time. Hina has become an integral part of Omani weddings. Present Omani Bride look can be counted as an impact of movies. A group of girls said that they love to speak Hindi. During conversation with them, I have found that they have never been to India. They love to watch Indian movies and they learn Hindi from films. A taxi driver started talking to me in fluent Hindi and discussing Indian weddings and Indian Culture. I asked surprisingly from where he got all information. He mentioned Indian movies as his source. Indian food, especially Puri Sabji, Dosa, Utapam, Upama, is also very popular among Omani People. That's the reason Omanis are also visiting Indian restaurants frequently here in Oman.

In response to a question regarding cultural difference between India and Oman, 22% respondents said that India is having more open society than Arab. 48% respondents said that India is a country of diverse culture. Different languages and traditions enrich it and make it as brand of culture. 30% people said that Indian culture is different from Arab in many ways like language, diversity of religion and practices.

It is strongly believed that Indian movies are succeeding in removing inter cultural barriers. Though, there are many cultural and language barriers between India and Arab but these Hindi movies are giving base to connect each other. 28% of respondents believe that Bollywood films give them prior information and preparing their mind to understand these differences. Again 20% respondents believe that it helps only sometimes. Other 23% said that

Hindi movies are succeeding to remove up to a limit. 29% respondents said that Indian movies are not that much effective in removing any barriers.

In response to a question regarding cultural tourism support other business, 52% respondents said that tourism bring not only economic gain but it also brings work to the market like travel business, hotel and restaurant Industry. It also flourishes small market and promotes sell of traditional and handcraft items. They said that they have many desire to visit India like different showcased location in different movies, meeting film stars, experience the culture. They said that Omanis are frequently visiting India for education and medical purposes too, which can be called education and medical tourism. 18% respondents said that they do not know about such tourism and business. 30% respondents said that this type of tourism is helping business to bloom but to some extent.

5. Conclusion

Due to different popular culture, Bollywood movies are hugely influencing to other country culture and promoting business, cultural tourism and intercultural communication. Its popularity has increased in Arab and overseas during last eight years. Digital prints of film, growth of multiplexes, wider release have changed the dynamics of the films business and helped to bring more popularity and craze among the audiences. It has been noticed that some films which failed to recover even its production cost at their domestic theaters, had done very good collection in international market. Because of growing popularity, these Indian films are easily achieving 100 crore, 200 crore and 300 crore business. Same happened with Ra. One. Shahrukh Khan is more popular in Arab countries. His “Ra One” did not do well at domestic theaters but earned more than its production cost from Arab and European countries. After seeing domestic and overseas collection, it can be estimated that Indian film industry will cross 227.3 billion by year 2020. Popularity of the movies bring spotlight to the showcase destination and creates great desire among the audience to visit the place and meet to film stars which can be counted as huge reason to promote tourism and business in country as well as across the globe. Cultural similarity inter-relates these two societies but at the same time offers great understanding to address issues of cross culture. Now, Indian movies have become an integral part of entertainment for Omani and other Arab countries’ people. Due to increasing popularity of Indian movies and culture, Indian TV industry also seems enthusiastic. They have offered several TV channels like Zee Aflam and Zee Alwanfor Arabic societies. Along with this, rising numbers of cinema theaters support the fact that Bollywood movies craze has been increased in

passing years which has given new dimension to Indian and Arab relations by promoting tourism, business and facilitate understanding about different inter- cultural issues.

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