

Tourism - the new character in Bollywood!

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Abstract: Tourism and Bollywood go hand in hand. If you wonder how then let me explain. From shooting films in exotic locations like Switzerland and Spain to conducting award shows in places like Madrid, Tampa Bay, Singapore and others, Tourism has got immense boost from Bollywood. So much that many Bollywood celebrities have been signed up as the brand ambassador for a particular state or country's tourism board. While Ranveer Singh is the ambassador for Switzerland, Shah Rukh Khan is for Dubai. Priyanka Chopra endorses Arunachal Pradesh whereas Amitabh Bachchan has been the face of Gujarati for years. With Bollywood spreading its wings globally, there are many nations that are willing to offer subsidies, only to put themselves on the global map. Films like Zindagi Milegi Naa Dobara, Befikre, Happy New Year are some of the recent examples of how Bollywood has ventured into the foreign lands and made a mark for themselves by making countries like Spain, Paris and Dubai a character in their film. It has made the audience aware about the country and its culture and boosted tourism growth immensely.

Keywords: Bollywood, Tourism, Shah Rukh Khan, Amitabh Bachchan, Priyanka Chopra, Tourism ambassadors

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I. INTRODUCTION:

If there is one industry that has gained immense boost in the past few years then it is surely Tourism. A boom in the tourism world has been observed in the past decade and there are various factors responsible for it. Be it the in the financial capacity or be it the urge to explore new places or be it the drop in rates for tours, there are factors which have instigated more tourists over the years. Other factor, which is responsible for the growth in tourism is Bollywood! Bollywood films and celebrities have created awareness amongst the audience and have influenced them and their choices for travel. There is no space in tourism that Bollywood hasn't explored. The stars have romanced in the snow-capped mountains of Switzerland, they have kissed and got drunk at the Eiffel tower in Paris, they have sung Hindi songs and danced to its tunes in Europe, they have celebrated friendship in Spain and they have shot for some high-on-action stunts in places like Bulgaria and Austria.

Not just global, but Bollywood has been hugely responsible for promoting tourism within India too. There have been many films and filmmakers who have scouted for unheard locations and captured its beauty on camera, making people eager to visit the particular place. The way *DilChahta Hai* explores Goa, no other film does. Shoojit Sircar's film *Piku* or Mani Ratnam's *Yuva* explores Kolkata while Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra's *Rang De Basanti* takes us through Delhi and Punjab and Imtiaz Ali has made us sit and take notice of Shimla, Manali in *Jab We Met* and the rawness of Haryana in *Highway*.

With Bollywood stars becoming the brand ambassadors of various states in India and also different nations in the world, it only goes on to show how Bollywood is soon becoming the new face of the Tourism industry.

In this article, we are trying to explain how Tourism has become a character in Bollywood films and how it has resulted in a great boom for many.

II. BOLLYWOOD AND ITS IMPACT ON TOURISM:

Bollywood, is undoubtedly the second biggest industry in the world, after Hollywood and enjoys a massive fan following. It has a significant influence on the minds of the audience and has often given rise to trends. Be it in terms of clothes, hairstyle or now tourism. Given that an approximate of 14 million people enjoy Bollywood films on a daily basis, one cannot imagine the extent of its mass appeal. Lately, movies have been affecting the choices of the travelers, not just Indian but also global. While Indians are influenced with the portrayal of foreign locations in movies, there are many foreigners, who are Bollywood buffs, and have been attracted to the heritage culture and not-so-known locations of India, that have been explored in the films.

Bollywood has solely brought about remarkable changes in the Tourism industry. When Shami Kapoor's *Kashmir Ki Kali* released in 1964, it created a massive boom in the tourism in Kashmir. Rajesh Khanna and Sharmila Tagore starrer *Aradhana* popularized Darjeeling, making it one of the most preferred romantic destination of its time. Films like *Dil Chahta Hai*, *Yuva*, *Kahaani*, *Delhi 6*, *Kai Po Che!* and now *Rangoon* have influenced the total demand of the packages for places like Goa, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Delhi, Arunachal Pradesh respectively.

Not just the famous locations, but Bollywood has discovered some lesser heard locations and world heritage sites too, in a need to bring about fresh and refreshing locations for the viewers. Apart from the usual studios in Mumbai, films like *Lagaan*, *Lootera*, *Swades*, *Rang De Basanti* have explored the untapped locations of Kanuriya, Wai, Khaanyaan and Barna respectively. And it is not just restricted to India. Movies like *Zindagi Na MilegiDobara*, *Befikre*, *DlwaleDulhania Le Jayenge*, *KabhiKhushiKabhiGham*, *New York*, *Queen* and the recently released *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil* managed to win the audience's hearts by promoting tourism about countries like Spain, Paris, Europe, London, New York and Austria among others.

When Hrithik Roshan, Farhan Akhtar and AbhayDeol zoomed off for a bachelors' trip to Spain, it influenced the Indian viewers to an extent that the tourism there experienced a boom as people demanded packages for the country's visit. *DilDhadakne Do* promoted cruise liners and the tourism in Istanbul and their heritage hamam baths. Ranveer Singh and Vaani Kapoor romancing in *Paris* and exploring the city's hottest hang out places in *Befikre* surely made for a great sight. Who wouldn't want to be proposed at the iconic Eiffel Tower? That's exactly the emotion the filmmaker has explained through the movie. And it just doesn't work in the favour of the movie. It also is advantageous to the country and its tourism business. Despite Paris being a hot spot with the tourists, there was a lull they experienced after the terror attacks which happened recently. That is when *Befikre* came to their rescue and the French government is hoping that the tourism will be restored soon.

Surveys suggest that Spain Tourism received around 600,000 inquiries from India after the release of *ZindagiNaMilegiDobara*. One of the film's sequences was shot at the famous Tomatino festival, which prompted travellers from India to visit Spain. The Spain Tourism Board spent about half a million on marketing campaigns using *Zindagi...* clips. According to the Board, the number of visas issued to Indians, after the movie, went up 50-60%. Till June that year (before the movie was released in July), 46,000 Indians had visited Spain. "That number has multiplied after ZNMD," said MadhuSalyankar, marketing head of Spain Tourism Board. "We offer facilitation with visas, discounts for hotel stays and travel, VAT refund of about 18% as well as faster approvals and other such sops," he added.

According to a popular Bollywood portal, Mayor Paris Anne Hidalgo, said, "Paris is a unique and magical city for so many reasons, whether because of its culture, fashion, gastronomy ... We are resolutely determined to reaffirm Paris's vocation to welcome visitors from all over the world. Paris, a resilient city, has known how to bounce back and today invites you to come and discover an innovative and vibrant city. Paris will always be Paris."

When director Imtiaz Ali explored Czech and Prague in his film *Rockstar*, he managed to tempt travelers to try the destination for the next holiday trip. And not only did it work in favour of the country, but also for the filmmaker as the Czech Tourism Board was offering them tax reduction if the film was shot there. According to a report in Economic Times, Indian director of Czeck Tourism stressed on the fact that how they offer a rebate to Indian filmmakers for shooting there. "We offer up to 20% rebate to filmmakers on their payments, to both individuals and companies," said Radka Neumannova, India director of Czech Tourism, adding, "In India, cinema is such a strong media and communication platform..."

Filmmaker Vipul Shah, who had once shot in London for his movie *Namaste London* said in an interview, "Foreign tourism boards in India are increasingly pitching for locations to producers and directors in India offering incentives ranging from tax rebate, free stays, visa facilitation, and in certain cases, they even bear the cost of production."

Box Office India, a popular trade site in Bollywood, quotes Fox Star Studios CEO Vijay Singh, "Film tourism is considered a powerful tool to promote tourism destinations and locations in a country. India needs to adopt a globally recognised standard to introduce production benefits to boost film production across various locations. Production incentives, timely permits, availability of local talent, production resources and infrastructure are key ingredients to attract foreign and local productions to shoot in a country. This will ensure retention of local productions within the country and help position India as an international filming destination globally."

Happy New Year was one more such film which received rebate for shooting in Dubai. The movie highlighted Dubai tourism through the film - The Burj-Al-Khalifa, the Palm Beach Jumeirah and other major tourist attractions were captured in the film, tempting the audience to visit it. A major plus for HNY was that it starred Shah Rukh Khan, who enjoys a crazy fan following in the country. He is also the brand ambassador for Dubai tourism and hence it worked as a dual advantage for both the movie and the Dubai Tourism Board.

Dil Se was the first movie to be shot at the picturesque locations of Pangong Lake in Ladakh. This was later on picked up by films like *3 Idiots*, *Jab Tak Hai Jaan*, *Waqt* among others. Today, Ladakh is one of the most preferred tourist spots in India. Bollywood films have often covered sites which people don't know about. *Guru* features a song *Ek Lo Ek Muft* which was shot at the famous Badami Cave Temples. Aishwarya Rai Bachchan's house in *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* features the Vijay Vilas Palace in Mandvi, Gujarat. Amer fort of Rajasthan has featured in films like *Jodha Akbar*, *Bajirao Mastani*, *Veer* etc. Obviously, it will make the viewers curious to go and visit the same in person. That is the impact of films on tourism.

III. BOLLYWOOD AWARD SHOWS AND TOURISM:

When award shows like International Indian Film Awards (IIFA), TOIFA among others started, it provided lot of boost to the tourism of that particular country. IIFA, which has been held in places like Tampa Bay, Singapore, Mauritius, Spain among others, offers great discounts and tax rebates in return of promotion and marketing at the show. With hoards of Bollywood celebrities attending the show, it is a win-win situation for the tourism boards.

The country's culture, traditions, festivals and tourist attractions are visited by the popular celebs, who in turn promote them on their social media pages, thus getting the country the much needed publicity. For instance, when IIFA was held in Spain last year, not only the celebrities but also the Indian media and the teams of various celebrities traveled to Spain, thus experiencing a new destination. Naturally, it resulted in a boost for Spain, which is already on a high post the release of *Zindagi Naa Milegi Dobaara*.

IV. ROPING IN BOLLYWOOD STARS TO PROMOTE TOURISM:

When a Shah Rukh Khan invites you to 'his Dubai' and takes you around the country, its impact is undescrivable. When he launched a campaign called #BeMyGuest, it went viral within hours of its launch. The video shows SRK meeting tourists who have visited Dubai and treats them as he is the host of the country (read brand ambassador).

Amitabh Bachchan has been promoting Gujarat tourism for years now. He is the face of Gujarat and has been urging his fans and ardent travelers to explore the state which is famous for many things - Kite Festival, Navratri, Wild Ass Sanctuary, Rannotsav etc. *Kuch Din Guzaro Gujarat Main* became a trend with many and was marketed widely by the Tourism Board with hoardings of Big B donning the walls.

Similarly, stars like Sidharth Malhotra, Ranveer Singh, Parineeti Chopra, Priyanka Chopra are few other celebrities who promote tourism in India and globally. While Sidharth is the brand ambassador for New Zealand, Ranveer is greatly promoting Switzerland. Parineeti Chopra on the other hand recently explored and promoted Australia and Egypt, whereas Priyanka Chopra is endorsing Arunachal Pradesh.

V. DANCE TOURS, MUSIC CONCERTS AND LIVE SHOWS!

Not many would be aware but organizing Bollywood dance tours with popular celebrities gives a great boost to tourism. When *Happy New Year* was about to release, SRK and his team opted for a SLAM tour which was a massive hit. While it worked as a great strategy to promote the movie, it also brought in immense popularity for the respective countries.

Similarly, Salman is soon going to take off for the Da-Bangg tour which will happen in Australia. With Khan sharing about the same on social media and publicising it all over, it will make a great impact for its tourism, thus reflecting in its numbers.

VI. CONCLUSION

On a concluding note, it wouldn't be wrong to say that both Bollywood and Tourism go hand-in-hand. Their equation is directly proportional to each other i.e. if one increases, the other will definitely increase. More the number of movies that highlight a particular country/state, more number of tourists that place will enjoy. Be it the rise in the number of tourists in Corsica after the release of Deepika Padukone and Ranbir Kapoor's *Tamasha* or the hike in the number of people wanting to visit London or Paris after Karan Johar explored it further in *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil*, Bollywood surely influences tourism and is responsible the massive boost that has been experienced in the tourism industry.

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