

Development of Typography Design: Hindi Film Poster

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Abstract:

Graphic design is a form of visual art which conveys/ communicate the information and is used in many platforms for different purposes. Our world of communication is bombarded with tons of troll messages and designs in every single second by different mediums. Herewith posters distinguish itself among other media of communication in terms of the flexibility to convey the message to the audience. Posters are also a part of social and cultural life. Film posters are mostly used for advertising for over more than a century. Film posters are the main/ popular tool of film publicity from the beginning of cinema making and distribution, which is the blend of text and images. Text or typography in title designing, plays an important role to communicate the theme and the content of the Film. To successfully achieve this purpose the designers, use the different techniques, compositions, color and expressions in typography. In this research paper this researcher is trying to focus on the typography/ title design in Hindi cinema (Bollywood) posters in term of signification, in context of theme and the use of decorative element.

Key words: *Hindi cinema, typography, title design, film posters, Bollywood posters,*

1.0 Introduction

The cinema in Indian is a massive trade which is producing great numbers of films in different languages during the year. In terms of visual culture, the business of film production shows several patterns which is because of its diverse nature. For advertising and publicizing cinema industry using various advertising mediums. From the beginning of the cinema the main publicity was almost depend on printing related mediums like small lobby cards, newspaper commercials, flyers, publicity brochures, hoardings and posters. Wherever posters become the foremost vital and dominating medium. Posters are the

collage composition of still images which are created by the different designer from different tradition, popular culture and modernist art culturesⁱ.

In wordings of- “*The posters of Bollywood films are also emerged like a mass public symbol because of its symbolic visual representation of film in a design, where it condenses all the value and theme of a film in a single static plane*”ⁱⁱ”. Poster contains mainly images or collages of pictures and script to form primary pictorial knowledge to its viewers, targeting the mass viewers, the selection of script content is kept strategical, to counter the regional language problem and low literate viewer in the majority of the audience, posters contains minimal text matter to serve all type of audience. The text matter content typically, having film title, names of leading stars and credits. Title design plays a big role in publicity of the film.

The first Indian film which was produced and directed by Mr. Dadasaheb Phalke, he promoted his film *Raja Harishchandra*, by his hand-printed pamphlet and with the written poster mentioned the title of the film and names of the director, producer, author and the star cast. Poster of the film *Kalyan Khajina* (Baburao Painter: 1924) is perhaps the first known poster and one of the earliest which is on record, designed and painted by the director himself. It was printed on the cheap paper.

Due to the change in printing and design technology and different social and political factors, title design in film poster gradually changed in terms of typeface, coloring, font style, and in the term of composition, and the use of perspective. Hindi film posters are influenced by its audiences in terms of culture, geographical area, faith and believe, class, and regional/ area language. But still in general the titles of the films mainly remain in Hindi throughout time, we can see the variations in typography of film from the multilingual script like English and Urdu. English because of multiplex culture paradigmⁱⁱⁱ. As well, the changes in people literacy frequency has impacted the changes from ornamental title design to sophisticated and modern typography/ title design.

The title design is very important for any film because it is an identity of a film and many times act as a trademark also. It's commonly found that almost all of the promotional material is focused to highlight the feature film's title. With the help of technology and developed software the traditional typography/ title design has been explored in many

dimensions like letter's structure, color, and visual texture to convey the theme of the film to the viewers. Some times it shows different creative style, like the juxtaposition of image and text, use of the image as text and transformation of some sort into the image to make the title a lot more communicative and impressive.

Based on the basics of poster making, the history of Hindi film posters can be categorized into two parts: Pre-digital and digital. Pre-digital can be again subdivided into hand painted and cut-paste. (Fig. 1 illustrate the timeline with key features and examples).

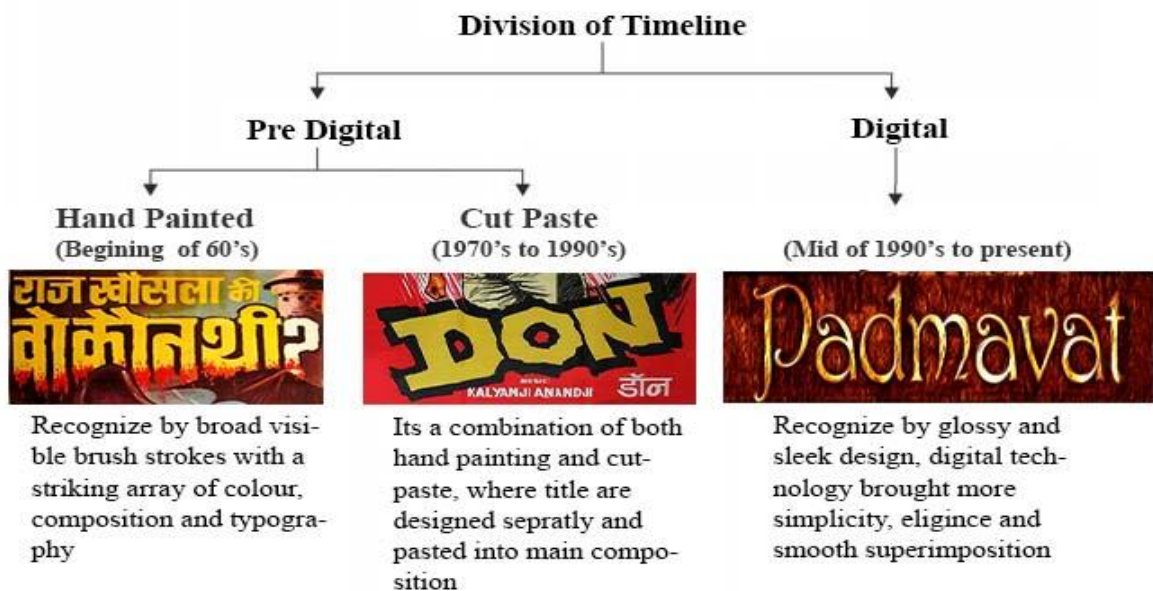


Figure 1, Poster timeline with key features

2.0 The Methodology of this study

For analyzing the typography in the cinema poster, a Barthian visual semiotic study has been followed. The main idea of this methodology is to structure the designing of layering where the main layer is the denotation layer, and the secondary layer is the layer of connotation, that analyze the quality of idea expressed over what and how it's represented^{iv}. This method has been applied to comprehend the meanings of the metaphor expressed by the typography of title design in cinema poster. The audience who are litrate or can understand the

language, it's simply by reading and understand the meaning conveyed. Sometime the message of title design on a movie poster depends on how different elements of film posters relate to each other. Here investigator focusing only on title design but it is impossible to ignore its connection with other compositional components used in the poster space.

For a typographer, it's very essential to possess the secondary thought which is thought behind his primary design is demonstrate the expression, by this the audience will be ready to decode the meaning hidden in design^v. In this fashion, audience need some clue to decode the representational sense. Here the second-order means that when an audience will see the cinema poster can understand exactly the same message what designer want to show in the cinema title of the poster. Almost every time designer is playing with hidden symbol/ message to convey the concept/genre of the film like horror, comedy, action, romantic etc. The typographer should suggest some hidden clue in his/ her design for the audience to understand those secondary meaning which ultimately lead them to watch the movie. For example, in Abbas Mastan's film Race (2008), illusion of speed in title design used as the symbolic meaning of speed which makes the title design more effective, in 'Rockstar' movie (Imtiaz Ali, 2011) fonts reflects the feature like electrified western Rock music bands (Fig. 2)



Figure 2

3.0 Semiotics Analysis

In Semiotics study is the study of signs and symbols and its meaning behind design. “Semiotic deals with uniformly coded meaning, and pragmatics, the meaning encoded by words which the audience interprets^{vi}”. It can be applied to entire text or to single word^{vii}. In this study researcher is trying to do a Semiotics study of the typography design in Hindi cinema (Bollywood) posters in term of the title designing based on sense behind of title, based on film story, title design with decorative elements, and title design of the particular genre of the cinema.

3.1 Significance of The Typography Design in Hindi Cinema Poster

By analyzing the typography design of title in the Hindi movies in the very beginning shows very less variations in letter forms of the title. Letters are used very casually, (ex- Film *Anmol-Ghadi* (1946), *Bandhan* (1940), *Ram-Rajya* (1943) (Fig.-3) showing specific creative ability and glory.



Figure 3, Casual design of films

But some unignorable title design from the same era were also there, like in Movie *Aan* (1952), *Aradhana* (1969) *Barassat* (1949), *Jewel Thief* (1967) and (Fig. 4). In the title of movie *Barasaat* the typographer has used diagonal strokes depicting the sensation of rain, where in the movie poster of *Aan* letterform is in daring, three-dimensional typeface was used with the background to stand out feeling of pride ('Aan'). Unfortunately, this kind of experimentation we can see very few until in 60s.



Figure 4, Based on theme of the movie

In the beginning of 70's, a dramatic rise in the use of expression in typography of the cinema title designing. Poster of films like *Mera Naam Joker* (1970), *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* (1977), *Bobby* 1975, *Sholay* (1975), *Andhi* (1973), and are some of the best example of this dramatic change. In the movie '*Mera Naam Joker*', the shape of alphabets has been planned to show the message of funny and non-serious story. In another movie '*Shatranj Ke Khiladi*' in this movie title design each alphabet planned like Chess coins. In similar approach the broad and colorful of letters in '*Bobby*' shows bubbly youth and fresh look, In the movie '*Andhi*' curving strokes of alphabets depicting the wind strokes, and the fire in alphabets with red and yellow which is fire color in the movie '*Sholay*' shows the concept of the film in very first look (Fig 5)



Figure 5, Film titles directly related with the meaning of the title

The same trend continuing throughout 80's and 90's with some unique movies like *Agneepath* (1990), *Coolie* (1983), *Disco Dancer* (1982), *Ghulami* (1985), *Tezaab* (1988), *1942 A love story* (1994), *Rangeela* (1995), *Razia Sultan* (1983), and *Satya* (1998). In the movie *Razia Sultan*'s typography design was created in such manner that its shape of a fort. This shows the heroic nature and power of Razia Sulta in the poster. In the ending of the decade of 90's and starting of 2000s was the time when design studios are emerging in the film industry and corporatization of Bollywood is happening, the cinema promotion was created by the Design Studios. Use of new technology, software, and new medium explores a lot of opportunities in making of film's titles design. Designers smartly start using these mediums to create title a lot more engaging inclusive, symbolic and meaningful in conveying the essence of the film (fig 6)



Figure 6, Title Design Relate directly to the title's meaning.

3.2 The Relation of Film Title Design with Content

According to the theme of the film story, it's very hard to transform the same message in title design, but still in lot of movies-titles the typographer was designed the movie title as per the theme of the story. To convey the story properly through title-design lot of experimentation were tried by the different typographer with typeface and color. In the movie *Mr. and Mrs. Khiladi* (1997) is one of the best examples where the alphabet 'A' is exchanged by a 'Man' figures to show the romance and action within the film. In Indian cinema, larger number of films are generally melodrama with full of sentiments, soft drama, and fighting. So, it's very tough for any designer to design a film title for any movie poster which may represent all moods exist within the film. Therefore mostly, the title design depicts dominating mood/ theme of the cinema. In the film *Disco Dancer* (1982) typography design depict the music and romance which is main plot of the story, the LED lights show that the story is the journey around stage, dance, and lights. (Fig 7)



Figure 7, title Design with central theme of the film

3.3 The External Semantic Elements in Title Design

Film posters are like an open invitation to the audience to come and watch the film. Thus, the highlights of the film must be shown on poster to attract the viewer same principal applies on film title-design also. From 70's we can see the use of external typographical elements which are like an ornament. Mostly before 70's the title design was flat and restricted to orientation, but after 70's designers started incorporating some external typographical ornaments or the forms look like alphabets, in some cases with the use of perspective also. An alternative communication language was used by the designers to speak/communicate with the illiterate viewer also. Title design of *Zanjeer* (1973) is the strong example of that era which showing the iron chain around alphabet 'Z' to imply the feel of fastening with string. The same practice casually repeated in several posters throughout. Use of Images was creatively used as an alphabet in a lot of movies like *Badhai ho*, *Coolie*, *Dilwale Dulhania le Jayenge*, *Ghulami*,

Hum, Khiladi, krodhi, LOC, Mera Naam Joker, Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi, and so on. Use of image as an alphabet/ font plays a very important/ creative role in creating title design and communicating the message more effectively in terms of conveying the message of the cinema.



Figure 8, title design extra decorative elements

3.4 Letterform: The face value of film content

In Hind cinema most of the movie stories are basically having exaggerated emotional in nature with comedy and action, so It's very hard to classify into a particular genre. Mostly Hindi movies can be categorized under romantic, thriller, action and comedy. In the beginning of the Hindi film industry movies starts with an epic and mythological background (*Raja Harishchandra -1913, Alam Ara -1931*) and afterwards slowly by changing its nature it starts producing romantic and action films. “*The Golden period of Bollywood (1940 to1960)*”^{viii} produced several films which are favorite of all time which includes the community themes addressing the common laborer of new urban city life of the country. The print technology was very limited in those eras because of that mostly the title design in that era were flat and easy with some exceptions like *Mughal-e-Azam*, in that designer is used 3-Dimensional perspective with followed by shadow to form a fort like structure, depicting a historic background. 1970's was the time of societal and economical changes and this changes also effected the Hindi cinema industry and film-making so the films publicity become professional. Mega Films like *Muquaddar ka Sikandar (1978), Sholay (1975), and Trishul (1975)* are the best samples of that era. In this time mostly, the title designs have followed a common design, like the use of outlines and 3D-perspective and dark-shadow to produce a more noticeable title of the film. The Genre of action films was mostly using the 3-

Dimensional style and long dark shadow with bold outline. This particular kind of title design dominated till 80's and showing the trend throughout the decade.



Figure 9, Title design related to genre of the film

4.1 Conclusion

In this study of typography in Hindi film title of the posters. Researchers results tells that the semantic and practical impacts are creating variation in title design. In 70's, titles having outlines and long shadows are grabbing more attraction. Were the usage of external ornamental/ decorative components becoming more common in 60's. Extra typo elements (like the symbols Coolie within the letter 'O' in film *Coolie* 1983) conveys the message clearer for illiterate audience to understand and perceive the message of the title. With the development of printing technology title design also has developed and created its impression on the cinema poster. The samples taken for this study isn't enough to generalize any opinions, but it offers without a doubt ample empirical understanding to predict the patterns and the causes associated with them. It will be interesting for future study to re- investigate these trends with more samples per decade.

4.2 Recommendation

In future research, the correlation of movie titles with various components can even be discussed within the film poster.

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