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A Study on the factors impacting the popularity of Indian animation production in the Global market

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Abstract: There is a growing increase in the demand for animated content across the globe, be it films, T.V. Shows, YouTube videos, etc. When we look and compare the statistics concerning the animation industries belonging specifically from the western and the north-eastern parts of the globe, Indian animation in general lacks far behind them in terms of popularity. This study aims to decipher the major causes behind the inability of Indian animation to garner worldwide recognition and also attempts to highlight strategies aimed at solving the above-mentioned problem. To explore the major factors impacting Indian animation's popularity in the global market and the probable strategies to expand the same, discussions were conducted with animations experts from academia. The discussions revealed that cultural relevance of the content and style renders uniqueness as well as cultural identity, with the potential of translating India's cultural grandeur and opulence onto the animation productions, creating an impact on the national as well as international audience. The designers emphasized the advocacy of cultural identity in animation productions and the strategies aimed at creating a collaborative atmosphere where the designers and artists collaborate to create what may be termed as "Indian" animation productions.

Keywords: Economy, Indian Animation, Cultural Identity, Global Animation industry.

1 Introduction

There has always been a significant lack of popularity whenever it has come to Indian animation within its own home country as well as globally because many different reasons. From our production houses being unable to market our films at a large scale to the story structure of our animated films being very repetitive and hence are not able to translate across our own diverse population. We broke down the causes effecting the popularity of Indian animation into 3 major sub-topics after having thorough discussions with industrial professionals, one of them being the business models adopted by the Indian animation studios and their marketing strategies to popularise their projects and find appropriate funding for the production.

Indian animation studios primarily operate by providing a number of services which include making 2D and 3D animation projects and venturing into the domain of visual effects hence dealing with the post-production part of a project, to a stratum of diverse clientele coming from both domestic and international grounds. Hence Indian animation studios majorly work as service providers for big international and national film production houses, OTT platforms, content creators and more. **[1]**

Indian animation studios are heavily dependent on outsourcing animation and VFX work from prominent production houses or studios working outside of India. Foreign production houses and studios like Technicolor Creative Studios, Disney, Warner Bros, DreamWorks, Fox, Ubisoft etc. outsource projects to Indian studios because of their cost-effective financial model plus a skilled workforce. Indian studios often offer 40-60% lower pricing range from their western counterparts making international clients want to invest in their services. **[10]** This heavy reliance on outsourcing projects hinders Indian studios from developing their own strong brand identity, IPs and generating their own original stories.

2 Importance of funding

Adequate and sustained funding plays a critical role in shaping the overall quality, originality, and global competitiveness of animation films. Higher financial investment enables studios to adopt advanced animation software and production pipelines, invest in skilled talent through training and capacity building, and allow creative teams greater autonomy to experiment with original narratives and innovative visual styles. In contrast, limited funding constrains technological adoption and narrative development, often forcing studios to rely on cost-cutting measures such as derivative content and compressed production timelines. This financial limitation not only affects aesthetic quality but also weakens storytelling depth, resulting in reduced audience engagement. Consequently, funding structures directly influence the long-term growth and credibility of the animation industry, particularly in emerging markets such as India.

The amount of funds being invested in the process of production determines the quality of an animation film. More funds mean access to advanced resources in terms of software, training and technology, creative autonomy and holistic skill development. **[5]**

Low monetary investment in writing strong screenplays, scripts, stories as well as latest technology and infrastructure becomes a major cause for the audience to not be able to connect with an Indian animated film. Less investment leads to poor quality of animation which does not appeal to the general public.

All these factors combined together with the shortsighted business mindset of profound production houses wanting to gain short term monetary gains from animated films and hence not properly investing in exploring originals narratives and just relying on recycled and derivative content to cut the cost and time of production ultimately leads to Indian animation films gaining no momentum in terms of popularity within their own country as well as globally. **[5]**

To understand how business models impact the growth of Indian animation, we also explored the differences between studios funded by

2.1 Self-Funded (Indie) Studios Vs Big Production House Studios

The trend of Indie animation studio is also taking over India as it is doing so over the rest of the world. Their motivation generally revolves around prioritizing and integrating unique storytelling, working with different mediums and experimentative stylization, into their projects which often leads to production of a very engaging and vibrant animation project. Indie studios usually work with a very small team which allows them to work in a very collaborative, flexible, innovative and cost-effective environment. **[6]**

Even though trying to adapt a unique narrative style for their projects, it is still very repetitive for the general public leading back to the argument of lack of original stories, because the stories are rehashed narratives which often target a very young audience making it boring for the adult viewers. **[12]**

A major issue faced by studios funded by mega production giants is of having limited creative liberty in order to cater to the commercial narrative which is ever present in the film industry.

2.2 Training young professionals to meet international standard production

To meet international production standards by understanding the process behind training young professionals, we need to understand the nuances between different educational backgrounds, the impact of funding sources on training quality and addressing communication gaps within the production teams.

2.3 Trained Vs Untrained Artists

Trained artists have a plethora of benefits starting, from having access to a structured comprehensive curriculum which covers theoretical and practical aspects of animation to having more opportunities at building an efficient network helping them in their careers. It also exposes them to industry-standard tools, storytelling techniques and collaborative projects. A formal education and holding a degree or certifications provide them with a strong basis to start out in the industry as beginners. **[2]**

Whereas untrained artists have more freedom and liberty to explore a much wider range of stylization for their animated stories and unique narratives. Being self-trained they are very resourceful as they have strong technical skills and a creative eye, as well as have a diverse portfolio**.[11]**

There are yet several different industry professionals throughout the country who express concern over the state of animation training institutes. Mr. Rahul Bakshi, founder of Phoebus Animation Studio Pvt. Ltd. noted that many young students from these institutes fail basic competency tests, indicating a gap between training and the expectations of the animation market.

2.4 Impact of Funding on Training Quality

The projects funded properly provides the young artists with an opportunity of expert mentorship as well as introduces them to standardized workflows and collaborative dynamics reflective of the global industry.

In India, animation studios face a challenge when it comes to funding because of high production costs and a relatively small domestic market with a demand-supply gap existing for skilled animators as well as piracy and copyright issues. This often hinders the studios from developing their own original narratives and making them focus on cost-effective content like mythology. **[9]**

2.5 Communication Gaps Between Directors & Animation Studios

Communication lapses become one of the biggest reasons why India is unable to produce a popular animated film.

Assigning professionals with unclear roles and responsibilities can lead to inefficiencies during the production, having inadequate pre-production planning, budgetary constraints, creative disconnect and delayed or vague feedback can hinder progress which ultimately leads to delays and budget overruns and compromised quality of the animation eroding team morale in the process.

Formal training offers structured learning and networking advantages while self-taught artists bring flexibility and unique perspectives. Addressing communication gaps through clear role definitions, open dialogue and effective management practices is crucial for aligning the director's vision with studio's output ensuring successful productions that meet international standards. **[8]**

2.6 Developing Effective & Unique Narratives

India is a land where rich mythological folklores and traditions are etched into every corner of this country. Indian animation that incorporates local stories and folktales resonate deeply with Indian audience fostering a sense of cultural identity. But mythology being a deeply ingrained part of Indian culture, this particular concept is overused in the industry creating a lack of unique animation characters, storylines, styles and techniques.

Indian animation films often do not explore complicated and diverse themes such as social issues, mundane lifestyle, complex emotions that if executed correctly can resonate not only with Indians but with the global community as well.

The amount of Indian traditional art forms, styles, visual aesthetics and storytelling traditions are enough to draw inspiration from and develop and distinct and unique animation art style that appeals to the diverse cultural backgrounds of the public.

According to Europeana, effective storytelling follows a structure: a clear beginning, conflict, and resolution. When cultural content is told using this narrative arc and supported by emotional storytelling, multimedia visuals, and sound, it becomes more relatable and impactful—especially in the digital age where engagement is crucial. [4]

Creating narratives rooted in cultural heritage is not just about telling stories—it's about building bridges between the past and the present. When storytellers combine emotion, structure, authenticity, and innovation, they craft narratives that do more than preserve culture—they bring it to life. [3] These strong narratives can further help studios to develop their own characters and give them a unique identity of their own inspired from our heritage.:

3 Discussions & Conclusions

This study showcases that the animation industry professionals need to bring significant reforms in the marketing strategies which are currently being used to promote films, in order to garner a wider pool of audience as well as gather appropriate funding for the film production.

A very huge portion of investment is also needed to be invested upon the training of young professionals looking to make a career in animation in India. They are required to be provided with better mentorship as well as infrastructure to refine their skills and for studios to use their skills to their highest potential. A skilled and well-trained workforce will contribute immensely in the production of a film with their technical, creative ideologies and skillset.

A strong storyline or story structure with well-developed characters and plot points is the basis of whether an animated film is going to resonate with the audience or not. India is filled with mythological stories and folklore which has been incorporated by

animation studios in India onto their films. But the narrative of mythological stories has also become very repetitive, following the same story arc every time. To break free from this narrative, animators need to start developing their own brand identity which is based of off our rich cultural heritage. Original characters and stories inspired and not rehashed from our holy scriptures in a way that also brings people in from all across the globe and not only India.

To develop a strong identity of Indian animation on global platform, studios need to market their films in a more effective manner. They need to invest more across all the phases of production of the films as well as bring originality and uniqueness into their narrative and story structures so that it translates to a much larger global audience as well.

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