Significance of Typography and Composites in Hindi Film Posters: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

A poster is a very important part of visual communication design and it's also very important for the Film industry. The history of the Indian film poster is very rich, where it originated with hand drawn/ handmade posters in the early 50s. But by the time the Indian film poster has developed drastically and like commercial posters, in the Indian film poster, the development of technologies, digital photography, and other things also can be seen. The implementation of colors, typography, and visuals of actors or characters has been modified. The minimalistic approaches have been developed in the modern film poster which are very limited in the early 80s or 90s. The study focuses on the comparison between two Indian film posters of two different timelines to understand the development and the importance of typography & composites in Indian film posters in the past and in the present era. Along with that, the study also highlighted the executions of various elements like color, visuals, and the synchronization of the entire compositions with the story of the film.

Keywords: Bollywood, Indian movie, Film, Typography, Color, Graphic Design

INTRODUCTION

In the initial stages of Hindi films, in most cases, the typography does not go with the meaning of the title (Thoraval, 2000). There was not much provision of incorporating special fonts, mainly due to technological constraints. The typographic elements of the Bollywood film posters were barely explored till the 1960s (Kureshi, n.d). This period features a trend of simplicity and plainness in the making of film posters. The elements of the posters were explored in terms of orientation, texture, forms, and couture of the letters. Sometimes, tinges of 3D typographic style could be seen in them. External typographic elements like 'image as a type' could be seen in use by the beginning of the 60-70s decade. For instance, Nasir Hussain's *Teesar iManzil* (1966) features a poster that has used a heart-shaped icon as the dot of the letter *I*. Images were seen in use in terms of type, quite intriguingly, in the movies like *Do Jasoos, Fauladi Mukka, MeraNaam Joker, Khiladi, Door, Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, LOC, Iqbal, Mr. and Mrs. Iyer, Parineeta, Azuba, Raja Hindustani, Zanjeer, Ghulami, Metro, No Smoking, Do Dooni Chaar* and many more. (Shahid, Bokil, & Kumar, 2015). Mera Naam Joker (1970) is a good example of this, where the typography of the poster is written in a unique style. Each alphabet is written in bold capital letters, two primary colors red and

yellow are used in the typography even the 'O' alphabet of the word JOKER which is replaced by a juggling ball. Another example is Khiladi (1992) where the letter 'A' is represented by a human figure holding a gun which reflects the genre of the movie. This introduction of images as typography plays an important role in making posters more persuasive, powerful, and passionate in terms of conveying the message of the film (Mazumdar, 2003).

This introduction of the image as a type plays an important role in making posters interesting and more powerful in terms of conveying the message behind the film. And the late 90s saw more professional and sophisticated poster designing studios. The artists effectively used a semiotic approach in terms of texture, color, and typography to convey the theme. (Shahid &r. Kumar, 2014). A closer look at the title design in Hindi Cinema reveals that very less exploration has been done in the period between 1930 and 1950 in the form of shape, color, and texts.

Most of the alphabets are plain and mono color, basically, bright colors like yellow, green, and red have been used for the body and darker tone has been used for outline and shadowing purposes. Letters are often decorated with shadow for a clear emphasis as well as to provide a three-dimensional look. At the beginning of 1970, a dramatic increase in the use of expressive typography in the title design has been seen. Film posters like Mera Nam Joker (1970), Bobby (1973), Aandhi (1975), Sholay (1975), and Shatranj Ke Khiladi (1977) are some examples of this trend. In the film poster, Mera Naam Joker the form of letters has been designed to give a sense of comical and jovial mood. The chess board-like appearance in Shatranj Ke Khiladi is an interesting display of letterform which complemented the theme of the movie. Similar creative displays can be seen in the flame-colored letters in Sholay, flowing strokes in Aandhi, and the fluffy letters in Bobby where the letterforms reflected the soul and message of the movie.

Before the digital revolution, hands-painted lettering used to be the most characteristic feature of film publicity. Handmade techniques of poster making have contributed to developing a unique visual language with lots of variations. (Shahid, n.d). This was due to the involvement of different styles and techniques. The title design in the film poster was done either by lettering or calligraphy.

The title design in the film poster has been featured in different shapes. It seems that the use of different shapes is guided by the theme of the film like in Footpath (1953) where the shape and look of the title itself give a sense of footpath. Similarly, the firm structure with perspective in Muqaddar Ka Sikandar (1978), Aandhi Toofan (1985), and Dharmatma (1975) went well with the storyline and theme of the film. Different letterform attributes have been used to depict different moods. Flat rectangular is more popular for art and social drama films, rounded shape for comedy films like Garam Masala, All the Best, Angoor, and decorative for films like Anand, Anarkali, Bol Radha Bol etc. When the title is long and casual, a calligraphic style is more prominent like Dil Toh Pagal Hai (1997) and Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge (1995). Calligraphic style is also used in the romantic drama movies like Mausam (2011), Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (1998), Mohabbatein (2000) etc.

The different design variables and their major significance in designing the title and typography of film posters can be noticed and these all are.

Shadow and Outline - Shadow and outline help in making the title vivid and attractive. The title stands out in the poster layout with the shadowing and outlining. It aims at making the movie title easily readable from quite a distance (Heggard, 1988).

Weight - Weight in the title of a movie poster adds to its emphasis and loudness. The titles of a movie poster with bold font are more flashy and glaring. Heavy weighing typography is largely evident in most Hindi film posters.

Contrast - Contrast works in enhancing the vividness of the title in movie posters. It helps in increasing the readability of the title to a great extent.

Height - Height adds to the accentuation of the text and increases its legibility from a distance. The font in most cases is used in larger x-height as it adds to the loudness of its appeal.

Style - The styling of the title determines the depiction of the mood of the movie. It exemplifies the disposition of emotions attached to the content in it. It can be comic, romantic etc.

Letter case - The letter case used in the title enhances the emphasis of the text. It also helps in the legibility of the title from a far. Uppercase letters are most evident in the titles of the film because it increases the loudness of the title.

Visual Texture – The visual texture delineates the allusive meanings associated with the mood of the movie. If studied closely, it highlights the suggestive themes incorporated in the movie.

Letterform Structure - The letterform structure projects the suggestive mood of the movie. It highlights the essence in which the movie is supposed to be portrayed. For instance, title fonts illustrated in sharp-edged typography are mostly associated with action and adventure movies, whereas rounded typography projects a movie with comic intent.

Perspective - Perspective helps create a magnanimous impact on the audience. It is mostly helpful in portraying the genre of the film. It reflects the disposition of movies in genres such as action and adventure, comedy, historical, etc.

Title Shape - The title shape helps in contributing to the impression or apprehension of the movie. It adds to the subject directly and without any vagueness, making the aim of the movie crystal clear.

Letter as image – The letter to image technique vastly contributes to reflecting the direct symbolic meaning of the movie. In the field of graphic design it is popularly known as Rebus The most useful of technique lies in its ability to appeal to both literate and illiterate audiences. It conveys the themes enveloped in the movie to both sets of audiences in a single attempt.

Word as image - Word as image acts much like the letter in the imaging technique. It rather creates a wholesome effect of clearing out the symbolic implications of the movie in a direct and efficient manner (Dwyer & Patel, 2002).

The juxtaposition of Type and Image - The juxtaposition of type and image helps in escalating the expansive and communicative power of both the letters involved in the poster as well as the words in it. It demonstrates the sturdiness in the exhibitory property of the poster, thus making it more vivid and attractive.

KHILADI (1992)
The film Khiladi (*the word means 'Player'*) is an Indian suspense thriller film that came out in 1992. The movie was critically acclaimed for its success at the box office and was eventually deemed the tenth highest-grossing film of 1992 in Indian cinema. The classic drama was directed and produced by Abbas Mustan and Girish Jain. The movie runs surround a group of four college friends. The poster of this movie has a very interesting space division qulity. The poster is divided horizontally into two segments and each segment has something to contribute to the frame of the movie. This has been done deliberately to compliment the movie's storyline which gets a major shift in the second half. The first part of the movie is all about the carefree and fun life of college-going youths portrayed in the upper section of the poster. That portion has a white background that depicts the bright side of four friends who are very happy and are having the time of their lives. However, at a glance at the lower portion of the poster, a portrait of Akshay Kumar (the main lead character) is seen in a serious mood which reflects the turn of events that intensifies the story eventually. Akshay, the main hero of the film wears a decorative hat with a dark black background which shows something mysterious. The poster portrays that his gloomy eyes attempt to conceal something. Here the presence of only one friend denotes the dark situation regarding the rest of the friends of the group. So, the entire composition of the poster indirectly reveals the main storyline of the film. Apart from that, the typography of the title of the film is also very creative, where the remarkable usage of rebus can be seen. The word Khiladi means a player, a kind of bossy personality.

Fig. 1: Poster of Khiladi (1992)
Source: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0104605/

The typography used in this poster is very expressive. It is written in a unique style, in which the letter 'A' is replaced by a human figure holding a gun in hand to reflect the action in the film irrespective of the literal meaning of the title i.e player. The title font summarizes the key ingredients of the movie which are bloodshed, action, and gun battle.

The color used in the typography is written in red and black outer borders are applied. Broken glass or cracked effect can be seen in the typography in a zig-zag way which resembles gunshots, suspense, and thrill. The effect given in the typography '*Khiladi*' reflects that the film is covered with thrill and action which makes the poster suited aptly to the overall theme of the film.

ANDHADHUN (2018)

Andhadhun is an Indian dark comedy crime thriller film of 2018, co-written and directed by Sriram Raghavan. The poster of this film is also very creative, modern, and minimal from the perspective of the arrangement of the composites. The movie portrays Ayushmann Khurrana, Radhika Apte, Tabu, and many others as different eccentric characters. Inspired by 2010 released French short film L'Accordeur (The Piano Tuner), Andhadhun revolves around a series of mysterious events that change the life of a pianist in real life who act as a blind man in the movie and who finds himself in a very complicated situation where he has to report a crime that was never really witnessed by him. The film was critically acclaimed due to its top-notch execution by presenting a complicated tale of betrayal, lust, and treachery in a light manner backed up by sensible humor. The film won four awards at the screen awards ceremony and five film fare awards.

Fig 2: Poster of Andhadhun (2018)
Source: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8108198/

The title of the movie 'Andhadhun' literally means blindly or something has done hastily. In the poster, the lead character of a pianist, played by Ayushman Khurana wearing black glasses and holding a white cane. The use of typography, color, characters, and other attributes is so creative that the entire poster denotes some criminal occurrences in the movie. Where a blind man is crossing a path that is executed with red bloodedly topography as the title of the film 'Andhadhun' gives a clear hint regarding a crime and murder in the movie. And through the posture and execution of the blind man in the poster reveals that unknowingly he gets involved in such type unwanted criminal offense. Along with that scattered red wine bottle, red rose, and broken wine glass in the foreground also denotes the angle of a love story, romance, and dinner that takes a wrong turn.

The title of the movie is executed as a narrow trail full of blood spills that also represent a murder or accident. But here in this poster, the use of typography is very different from modern concepts. Where the designer Raj Khatri (Sharma, 2018.) maintained the minimalism and a fresh look after consisting of so many elements in the poster's composites. In the poster, Ayushman Khurana (playing the character of a blind pianist) wearing casual outfits that indicate the character is a regular youth. In Indian cinema cat always represent as negative, unhealthy, evil approaches, here in this film poster also a cat symbolizes some daily life beliefs of Indian society where he can be seen walking over the blood trail, unperturbedly (Mathur, 2005). The entire composition of the poster carries so many pockets that consist and create so many theories regarding the film. And that creates huge curiosity in the viewers reading the movies. The poster is filled with yellow background and foreground where the entire composition is executed, bling man with blue jeans and shirt and the tile of the film as a trail with thick red color with dragged marks, these all elements together give very creative approaches to the poster. It also denotes some Indian social lives through the use of cat crossing the road, narrow trail, and the casual outfits of the lead character. According to time and era, the taste of the viewers regarding Indian films have been changed very drastically and this also can be seen through the design concept of Mr. Khatri in this poster. Ultimately, the poster displayed a certain taste that is seen emerging among the Indian audience with the new ages.

Findings: So, through this analysis of these two posters, it can be understood that according to the time, the emergence of technologies, and Indian movies many thing things have been changed in the film poster. In these two posters, there are huge differences that can be seen, majorly the execution of typography, both movies follow the common genre of thrill and suspense, but the execution and the visual language of storytelling are very different from each other. Moreover, in the poster of *Andhadhun* the minimalistic approaches are very high, even the implementation of the characters is also very unique and relevant to the characters of the film. In these two posters, the differences in technical approaches can be seen in both posters. Where in the poster of *Khiladi* the quality of the color is also not rich and bright as the poster of *Andhadhun.* Overall, the design ideas of the poster are very limited the *Andhadhun's* one. On the other hand, the development of thinking and creative approaches can be seen in every small element of Andhadhun's poster those aspects are very limited in Khaldi's poster.

Conclusion: In Indian film poster visuals, typography and composition are the major elements, but the storytelling or the entire execution related to the story is very much important. And it can be noticed in both posters. In the 90s and 20s, the implementation of typography changed a lot, and typography also became a part of composites in modern film posters. Additionally, it cannot ignore the fact of using the technologies in the modern era, that provide numerous features, and advantages in the field of graphic design that was not available at this level in the 80s and 90s. Digital technology is a huge breakthrough for the changes in Indian film posters. Also, digital photography gives a huge scope to provide stunning visuals and images that provide the appearances of the characters more vivid through the photoshoot. These features of digital technologies like using image editing software Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Lightroom; graphic design software Adobe Illustrator, Adobe InDesign, and other so many things are game changers for the film poster. Collectively these all features offer a dynamic range scope to the designer. So, through this huge scope and features, the designer can think out of the box and create spectacular designs for film posters.

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