2016

The production of Ek Tha Tiger: A marriage of convenience between Bollywood and the Irish film and tourist industries

Giovanna Rampazzo

Technological University Dublin, giovanna.rampazzo@tudublin.ie

Follow this and additional works at: https://arrow.tudublin.ie/aaschmedart

Part of the Communication Commons, Film and Media Studies Commons, and the Tourism and Travel Commons

Recommended Citation


This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Media at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact arrow.admin@tudublin.ie, aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie, gerard.connolly@tudublin.ie, vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License.
The production of *Ek Tha Tiger*: A marriage of convenience between Bollywood and the Irish film and tourist industries

Giovanna Rampazzo

Centre for Transcultural Research and Media Practice, Dublin Institute of Technology, Dublin, Ireland

**ABSTRACT**

This article examines a collaboration between the Irish and Hindi film industries, adopting the production of Kabir Khan’s *Ek Tha Tiger* (2012) in Dublin as a case study. It critically narrates the arc of the film’s production, foregrounding the intersecting concerns of Yash Raj Films and Irish creative and cultural institutions. *Ek Tha Tiger* represents Ireland through constructed idyllic images which proved to be successful in attracting tourists. Tracing the links between the production of the film and the promotion of tourism to Ireland, this article explains how the film was used to construct a ‘tourist gaze’ for audiences in a process reminiscent of Foucault’s notions of the power of surveillance (See “Discipline and Punish” and “Power/Knowledge”) as it acts through institutions of tourism. Drawing on participant observation in the film’s production, alongside interviews with the film’s producers and representatives of Irish institutions, the discussion explores how transnational marketing strategies influenced the production of *Ek Tha Tiger*.

**Introduction**

*Ek Tha Tiger* (Once There was a Tiger; 2012), directed by Kabir Khan and produced by Aditya Chopra of the renowned Indian production company Yash Raj Films, is to date the first big budget Bollywood film to make extensive use of an Irish urban location. While the film was shot in several other countries including India, Turkey, Cuba and Thailand, a critical component of its storyline is set in Dublin. This article critically narrates the arc of the film’s production, demonstrating how the genesis of the film is linked with national policies and strategies aimed at attracting tourism and investments to Ireland through film. Foregrounding the connections between the making of *Ek Tha Tiger* and the advertisement of Ireland as a tourist destination, this article outlines how the showcasing of institutionally constructed images of Dublin resulted in the creation of a ‘tourist gaze’ for prospective spectators and potential tourists, which can arguably be described as an organised and controlled mode of viewing comparable to Foucault’s ‘medical gaze’ (17). In so doing, the author argues that by promoting and cultivating the anticipation of a collective viewing experience of a country or in this case, an Irish urban location, cinematic representations can be mobilised in the service of ‘cultural tourism’, resulting in the creation of simplified,
stereotyped and spectacular imagery constructions. Such images actually provide only a partial view of Irish culture and society, erasing its complexities and limiting the viewers’ knowledge of Ireland to only few salient dimensions presented as if they were the whole picture. Additionally, this article expands on the way Trinity College Dublin, Ireland’s oldest and most reputable university, significantly featured in the film, strategically used *Ek Tha Tiger* to raise its profile among prospective Indian students. This discussion also refers to insights from Freeman’s stakeholder theory which acknowledges that organisations should be managed in the interest of all their stakeholders in order to succeed (Freeman, 25). Significantly, the following exploration foregrounds the intersecting concerns between the production of *Ek Tha Tiger* and Irish cultural and national institutions, which benefited from the choice of Dublin as a location for the film.

**Methodology**

The filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* in Dublin occurred over five weeks between 10 September and 14 October 2011. During this period, participant observation was conducted by working on set as a film extra and as a location trainee, and by observing the filming along with crowds of Bollywood fans gathered around the sets. Additionally, interviews were conducted with audience members, representatives of the *Ek Tha Tiger* production team, Trinity College Dublin and Yash Raj Films executives, and the Irish Film Commissioner. A case study approach was employed in the examination of the production of the film, since, according to Creswell such a research method allows the exploration and understanding of complex social phenomena, providing holistic and in-depth explanations of the events in question (186). Yin further argues that ‘a case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident’ (2). Significantly, the salience of the urban context of Dublin in the making of the film called for a method of enquiry which enabled the researcher to focus on a specific event whilst retaining a real-world perspective and simultaneously analysing the contextual conditions in relation to that phenomenon.

**Hindi films and non-Indian locations: A mutually beneficial relationship**

The use of locations outside India is not uncommon in Hindi films. Since the 1960s, Bollywood films have incorporated sequences shot in faraway locations. A famous example is *Sangam* (Confluence; 1964), which was filmed in Italy, Switzerland and France, establishing a trend for films set in Europe. This tendency has intensified in contemporary films targeting Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and middle-class South Asians, which often showcase tourist landmarks and transnational lifestyles. At present, it is customary for Hindi films to be set in the UK, America or Australia among other countries. This is usually done to enhance Indian audiences’ enjoyment of the film through the display of landscapes remote from their everyday experiences. As Grimaud explains in his ethnography of filmmaking in Bombay: ‘the viewer takes pleasure in identifying places, but forgets them as it becomes clear why they were chosen: a bit of exoticism’ (227). Exoticisation and ‘tourist gaze’ are terms that often arise in discussion regarding western representations of other cultures. When elements of Indian culture and landscapes are portrayed in non-Indian film productions, they are likely to raise academic debates that negatively highlight their ‘exoticism,’ which
makes them appealing to Western audiences not familiar with Indian culture. This often applies to films made by South Asian migrant filmmakers resident in Western Europe and North America such as Mira Nair, Deepa Mehta and Gurinder Chadha.2

Shohini Chaudhuri, in response to the accusation of exoticism levelled at Deepa Mehta’s Water (2005), contends that ‘exoticisation is a common aesthetic strategy in world cinema and needs to be addressed without the customary moral condemnation’ (8). She further argues that these practices are not exclusively employed by Western film industries, as ‘catering to a taste for spectacle and exotica has been a long-standing strategy of Indian popular films’ (10). In fact, even if aesthetics of exoticism are usually discussed as appealing to Western audiences, Indian popular films have always employed production strategies that in turn allow Indian audiences to see faraway countries as exotic. For according to Chaudhuri:

While the ‘tourist gaze’ might be characterised as a particular mode of vision signalling aspiration and access to the privileges of modernity and globalization, it is neither exclusively ‘white’ nor ‘Western’ … the so-called ‘tourist gaze’ is returned in Bollywood sequences in Western metropolises. (10)

The notion of ‘tourist gaze’ as a socially organised way of seeing typical of contemporary societies, can be linked to Foucauldian theories of surveillance. Notably, Foucault argues that ‘the gaze has had great importance among the techniques of power developed in the modern era’ (155). John Urry examined the social and cultural implications of the ‘tourist gaze’, emphasising its plurality and ever-changing nature (173). According to Hollinshead, ‘while the tourist gaze approximates to Foucault’s institutional gaze of the medic and the professional, it tends to be rather broader in its occurrence and force across society’ (9). The power dynamics related to the tourist gaze are arguably fluid rather than fixed and
unchangeable. This is motivated by the fact that, ‘as patterns of tourism change, so the tourist gaze(s) alter: they are significantly connected to the broader cultural changes of postmodernity’ (ibid.).

Significantly, Bollywood sequences set abroad allow Indian audiences to ‘return the tourist gaze’ to recognisable tourist landmarks that represent dream holiday destinations and suggest the appeal of glossy, consumerist lifestyles. London and Switzerland in Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (The Brave Hearted Will Take Away the Bride; 1995), New York in Kal Ho Naa Ho (There May or May Not Be a Tomorrow; 2003) and Sydney in Dil Chahta Hai (The Heart Desires; 2001) are illustrative examples of the way Western locations are portrayed as desirable holiday destinations for Indian audiences. Jigna Desai argues that these representations are linked to ‘the rising dominance of Bollywood and the new urban middle class in India engendered by liberalization’ (347), suggesting that wealth and consumerism are not just the privilege of white Western people and neither is the mobilisation of the ‘tourist gaze’.

Notably, exploring new locations hitherto not seen in Indian film is a deliberate choice of Bollywood film producers. As Aman Agrawal, a production executive of Yash Raj Films explained in an interview, ‘this strategy allows the film to become international and encourages people outside India to get connected to Bollywood.’ Significantly, he further pointed out that their films are mainly geared to Indian audiences, so overseas locations are primarily meant to ‘appeal to audiences in India who love to see new and unusual places.’ The links between travel and cinema have been explored by Amy Corbin in her article Travelling through Cinema Space (2014), where she develops the notion of cinema spectatorship as a travel experience. Corbin argues that ‘film spectatorship is specifically touristic, and not just a generalized virtual travel experience, because of its entertainment value and its status as an experience you pay for’ (316). The following section outlines the links between virtual travel in the form of film spectatorship, allied to the promotion of traditional tourism.

Yash Chopra, founder of Yash Raj Films, is renowned for using Swiss locations characterised by idyllic green valleys and snow-capped mountains, as a backdrop for love scenes in his films. Indian films have a history of setting romantic scenes in mountainous areas and for many years the region of Kashmir, located in the north-west of South Asia, served that purpose. Since the late 1980s, however, Kashmir could no longer be used as a production location due to an ongoing territorial conflict between India and Pakistan. As Qureshi explains, ‘Kashmir’s scenery and landscape became so popular that lakes, trees and mountains became synonymous with romance in Bollywood.’ For this reason, filmmakers resorted to similar landscapes located overseas to effectively convey the romantic feel in their films. Initially, just a few song sequences were set abroad, while the plot was set in India. In the 1990s, however, due to economic liberalisation policies, wealthy Indians living both in and outside the Indian subcontinent started to be seen as potential consumers and investors in the Indian national economy. During those years, Hindi films began setting entire storylines in overseas locations to target growing communities of middle-class South Asians and NRIs. One such example is Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, a romantic comedy about two NRIs living in London who meet and fall in love during a rail trip across Europe. The film was also produced by Yash Chopra and filmed in London, Switzerland and India, becoming one of the most successful productions of Hindi cinema. Films such as Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge boosted tourism to Switzerland to a great extent and Swiss tourism bodies capitalised on the keen interest of Bollywood fans to visit film locations. Switzerland
so far has provided locations for over 200 Hindi films, attracting hundreds of thousands of tourists every year. Switzerland does not have historical ties to India nor does it host large Indian communities, suggesting that the vast majority of the Indians visiting the country are tourists attracted by the lush locations appearing in Hindi films.

Over the years it became apparent that Bollywood productions set abroad played an important role in increasing the influx of Indian tourists to the countries featured in the films. By hosting Hindi film productions, governments had the opportunity to use cinema to promote tourism to their countries among wealthy Indian audiences. This notion was reinforced by the constant growth of Indian middle classes since the 1990s. According to Kaur in her essay on representations of the West in Bollywood films: ‘economic liberalisation saw the emergence of a globalised Indian middle class. Their conspicuous consumption patterns revealed a highly materialistic and uninhibited urban middle class, constantly fuelled by growing capitalist ambitions’ (205).

Irish Government agencies soon became aware of India’s rapid economic growth and of the potential of Hindi films to attract Indian tourists to Ireland. The Irish Film Commissioner, Naoise Barry, explained in an interview that since 2004 the Irish Film Board and Tourism Ireland have been trying to build relationships with leading producers of Bollywood films with limited success until *Ek Tha Tiger* was secured. Thus, when Kabir Khan expressed an interest in filming *Ek Tha Tiger* in Dublin, the Irish Government was eager to capitalise on the high profile of the film to promote Ireland as a tourist destination and as a location for more Bollywood films. Since *Ek Tha Tiger* is the first big budget Bollywood production to make extensive use of Dublin locations to date, it is particularly interesting to study the way it was used to promote investments and tourism to Ireland. An important part of the activity of the Irish Film Board is actually to promote Ireland as a location for international film and television productions. This strategy, however, has been criticised as a way to exploit the country for mere financial gain rather than nurturing indigenous Irish filmmaking talent. According to Pettitt, ‘Ireland presented and exploited itself as a picturesque location-base (despite the weather) for US and British productions to send over visiting directors and crew enticed by favourable tax relief’ (39, 40). Significant tax incentives are in place to attract international film industries and Section 481 of the Irish Taxes Consolidation Act offers up to 28% tax relief on Irish expenditure for international TV and film ventures co-produced with Ireland. As a result, Ireland has a long history of hosting Hollywood and UK productions, providing locations for large-budget productions such as *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), *Braveheart* (1995) and *Far and Away* (1992). Although these films provided employment for Irish crews and brought investment into the economy, in most cases they merely used Irish locations as doubles for other countries. When Hollywood productions have been filmed in Ireland, it has been argued that the locations are commonly reduced to a series of nostalgic and idyllic images, which does not reflect the sociocultural complexities of the country. As Ging contends, ‘many of the films produced represent American notions of Irishness rather than articulating the realities of Irish existence, past or present’ (190). These problematic representations of Irishness have dominated Irish cinema from its beginnings through well-known international productions such as *The Man of Aran* (1934) and *The Quiet Man* (1952). According to Luke Gibbons, themes such as ‘the idealization of the landscape, the persistence of the past, the lure of violence and its ominous association with female sexuality’ (117) have characterised Irish cinema since the beginning of 1900. Themes identified by Gibbons have arguably influenced the way the country has been perceived.
internationally and consequently boosted tourism in some measure. In his seminal work *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault introduces the idea of the ‘medical gaze’, characterised by the dehumanising separation of the patient’s body from the patient’s identity, as a novel way of producing relevant medical knowledge (109). This concept can arguably be linked with the way the gaze of Irish creative and cultural institutions intentionally promoted superficial and partial notions of Ireland in order to benefit the local tourism industry. The following sections outline how this strategy was employed in the production of *Ek Tha Tiger* to create an appealing imagery aimed at attracting tourists to Ireland (Figure 1).

### The relevance of stakeholders in the production of *Ek Tha Tiger*

The Irish Film Commissioner explained that Tourism Ireland worked with the Irish Film Board and Dublin City Council to secure *Ek Tha Tiger* for Ireland, in addition to Trinity College and other agencies to help facilitate filming in the city at reduced costs since the film involved complex and expensive scenes, yet did not have the budget of a Hollywood film. Everybody came on board and waived their fees as they saw the potential of what the film could do in terms of publicity, even if they could not imagine that it would be so successful. The cooperation between the Irish creative, cultural and national institutions who joined forces to facilitate the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* in Dublin can arguably be described with the aid of stakeholder theory. Freeman’s definition of stakeholder is ‘any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives’ (46). The different government agencies and institutions that collaborated in making the production of *Ek Tha Tiger* in Dublin possible can thus be seen as stakeholders in the enterprise of making the film, since they could contribute to the creation of *Ek Tha Tiger* and at the same time benefit from its success. Before hosting *Ek Tha Tiger*, the Irish Film Board and Tourism Ireland had limited success in attracting high-profile Indian film productions to Ireland. As Barry explains:

> It became clear that India was, and continues to be, an important emerging market for Irish tourism … that film was an important medium by which Indians decide where they are going to go on vacation. So we began working eight years ago with Tourism Ireland office in Mumbai to try to identify the leading producers of Bollywood feature films and we began working to build relationships with those companies. And in the intervening years we had limited success and that success was limited to small elements from bigger movies. It was never the whole movie, only a song and dance sequence … and the movies those song and dance sequences were in would be smaller movies, not necessarily made by Mumbai based companies, but actually companies based in the south of India, in Chennai. (Interview 13 April 2012)

Having *Ek Tha Tiger* set in Ireland thus represented a big leap forward in the country’s attempts to secure Hindi film industry investments, providing a unique opportunity to showcase the beauty of Ireland to a vast number of potential Indian tourists. For this reason, the film became part of an advertising campaign aimed at raising awareness of Ireland as a tourist destination among Indians. Even if India is home to a third of the world’s poor, tourism authorities are aware of the presence of affluent Indian audiences with high levels of disposable income, which are also the most sought after clientele for Indian multiplex movie theatres. Athique and Hill analysed the links between the emergence of multiplexes in India and the increasing purchasing power of India’s middle classes: ‘according to the multiplexes chain, their clientele represents a much more select segment of the
middle classes – a segment that can afford to spend above the odds and on non-essentials’ (163). Characterised by ticket prices that are ‘usually more than triple the rate charged in single-screens theatres’ (Ganti 48), multiplexes initially appeared to be mainly vehicles for non-commercial films appealing to educated, middle-class urban audiences. However, multiplexes proved to be instrumental for the domestic success of many recent Hindi blockbusters: ‘Bodyguard (2011), Agneepath (Path of Fire; 2012) and Rowdy Rathore (2012) have each generated more than one billion rupees at the domestic box office’ (Ganti 51). For this reason, a Hindi blockbuster set in Ireland was guaranteed to advertise the country among wealthy audiences who had the financial means to visit the country.

Kabir Khan, the film’s director, was instrumental in choosing Dublin as a location for *Ek Tha Tiger*. In an interview, he explained that he needed a unique location, a prestigious college with impressive buildings as a backdrop for the storyline and preferred not to use a British university, since they had appeared many times before in Hindi cinema. Kabir Khan commented: ‘when I was writing the script of *Ek Tha Tiger*, I needed a university of repute to set a character in, that’s how Trinity College came about’. The director had been to Trinity College in 1995 to interview then President Mary Robinson and was impressed by the architecture of the place, so he decided to use it as a location for the film. As Barry recalls: ‘it was very good luck on our part in that the first third of the movie takes place in a university … in this case Kabir knew about Trinity College Dublin, so he called me and asked if we could host a visit for him and his creative team’. However, the decision to use Dublin as a location was motivated by the script and by the director’s choice rather than by effective advertising campaigns or incentives offered by government agencies. As Avtar Panesar, Vice President of International Operations at Yash Raj Films, confirmed in an interview: ‘everything is really driven by the script and what the director wants to do with it; so it’s never the case that we always want to shoot at a particular place; if it fits the script, if it works, we then make use of the country as a location’.

When Yash Raj Films contacted Trinity College enquiring about the possibility to film *Ek Tha Tiger* on campus, the university had been closed to film crews for almost 20 years. However, Vice-Provost Michael Marsh agreed to the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger*, seeing the potential of this project as an advertising tool for the university. In fact, the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* was included in a Trinity College promotional video and delegations from Trinity College went to India upon the film’s release to conduct a promotional campaign aimed at attracting prospective Indian students. Details on how the film was used as a promotional tool for Trinity College are addressed later in this article.

**Advertising Ireland through Bollywood: *Ek Tha Tiger* as a promotional vehicle**

The Irish Government worked closely with Yash Raj Films who supported Ireland’s advertising campaign as part of their production agreement to shoot the film in Ireland (Figure 2). As Panesar noted ‘we came up with many promos which highlighted Ireland as part of the campaign here, and the Irish Tourism Board actually played these promos out here in India, because that’s the market they wanted to target’. Yash Raj Films agreed to the film being used to promote Ireland in order to benefit from reduced fees for filming on location. These dynamics remind us that the production of the film depended on establishing a mutually advantageous relationship between Yash Raj Films and Irish tourism agencies, making sure
that the needs of the latter were effectively met. This is in line with tenets of stakeholder theory, since ‘a fundamental thesis of stakeholder-based arguments is that organizations should be managed in the interest of all their constituents, not only in the interest of shareholders’ (Laplume et al. 1153). Barry stated in an interview that the production benefited from tax incentives, complimentary visas and reduced location fees, but did not receive any direct funding from Ireland.16

The collaboration between Tourism Ireland and Yash Raj Films in the creation of imagery designed to cultivate curiosity among Indian viewers by portraying Ireland in an alluring way, suggests that the construction and development of people’s gaze as tourists depends on specific marketing and communication strategies. To this end, Urry and Larsen argue that ‘the concept of the gaze highlights that looking is a learned ability and that the pure and innocent eye is a myth’ (Urry and Larsen 1). Urry discusses how people are encouraged to look at new environments using a tourist gaze similar to Foucault's ‘medical gaze’ (1). According to Urry, the tourist gaze is also professionally crafted and controlled: ‘this gaze is as socially organised and systematised as is the gaze of the medic’ (Ibid.). The images of Ireland associated with *Ek Tha Tiger* mobilise a superficial view of the city as charming, colourful and cosmopolitan, encouraging the viewer/tourist to focus on these aspects of the place rather than delving into the complexities of Irish history and society. These images were subsequently circulated across the internet by Tourism Ireland upon the film’s release to advertise the country. A few days before the release of the film, Tourism Ireland Chief, Niall Gibbons stated that:

There is tremendous excitement in India, and among the Indian Diaspora, about this week’s release of *Ek Tha Tiger* and we are confident that it will help increase awareness of the island of Ireland among Indian travellers who are always on the look-out for new destinations to explore.17

Irish Tourism authorities are aware that carefully crafted images of Ireland can potentially lure tourists to visit the country. To this end, the imagery of Ireland promoted by *Ek Tha
Tiger points to the power of institutions that influence what the viewer should see and know about a country. Urry and Larsen examine these dynamics using Foucauldian notions of surveillance and power relations: ‘following Foucault, we can see this making of seductive images and destinations as an institutional mediation by ‘expert gazes’ within which spectacle and surveillance intersect and power-knowledge relations are played out’ (Urry and Larsen 173). The way Dublin is framed in Ek Tha Tiger reveals how the ‘expert gaze’ of filmmakers can be complicit in constructing a tourist gaze for audiences. In fact, overt advertisement for Dublin was discernible across action sequences set in Dublin city centre, showcasing Dublin’s most touristic areas including the Luas train.18

In one chase sequence, the protagonist follows a Pakistani secret agent across the Temple Bar area; a close up of the sign of the Temple Bar Trading Company™ helps locate this scene within the city, suggesting the importance of the location, even if this shot has no real relevance in the narrative of the film. This was clearly a way to highlight the shopping opportunities offered by the area and to justify the disruption to businesses caused by the film sets. ‘Dublin shop owners in general had a positive attitude towards the filming and were happy to come on board as they saw the potential of what the film could do,’ explained Dermot Cleary, the film’s Location Manager.20 A run down area at risk of demolition until the 1980s, Temple Bar is now one of Dublin’s main tourist attractions and is widely advertised as ‘Dublin’s cultural and entertainment quarter’ and as a site of cultural and historical significance. Temple Bar, however, is what Maeve Connolly defines as ‘a large scale example of staged-authenticity’ (2). Notably, the colourful shop fronts and impressive facades that characterise the area are actually visible material remnants of the sets of a big budget Hollywood production, Far and Away (1992). Thus, film sets belonging to an American filmic representation of Ireland are actually advertised as authentic and quintessentially Irish. Connolly explains that even if the film ‘was received as highly ‘unauthentic’, the sets were retained by popular demand and became part of the scenery of Temple Bar’ (2). This can be linked to an attempt of the locals to control and direct the tourist gaze in order to prevent tourists from knowing aspects of Irish life and society perceived as irrelevant to outsiders: apparently authentic back-stages may be artificially created by local people and entrepreneurs to redirect the gaze and hence reduce the degree of intrusion’ (Crawshaw and Urry 178). These notions recall Foucauldian theories surrounding the interrelation of power and knowledge and the pervasive nature of power, which is not prerogative of few repressive institutions, but rather it is omnipresent and in constant flux. According to Foucault, power ‘induces pleasures, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body’ (119).

The exteriors and interiors of traditional pubs are shown during the film’s chase sequence; here signs advertising Guinness beer and a medium shot of a gentleman sipping a pint of the same beverage suggest that drinking alcohol is a distinctive element of Irish social life and culture. Across Temple Bar, the constant advertisement of beer and spirits encourages tourists to consume these beverages to participate in an authentic experience of Irishness. These representations, however, are not unproblematic given that they are linked to negative Irish stereotypes widespread in England. Stereotypes are overgeneralisations of the characteristics of a cultural or social group and ‘negative stereotyping is seen as a method of reiterating a binaristic contrast as a negative group difference’ (Bowe et al. 8). Notably, Mary J. Hickman in her analysis of the experience of Irish migrants in Britain during the twentieth century contends that ‘English people continued to associate the Irish with drink,
fighting and dirt’ (298). Moreover, ‘drunkenness has provided one of the core stereotypes of Irishness; its addiction being linked to the supposed frail control which Irish people have over their bodies’ (Nagle 118). Therefore, it can be argued that the touristic promotion of Ireland is organised around derogatory representations of Irish culture.

Determined to exploit the film to advertise Ireland among South Asian communities in and outside India, Tourism Ireland teamed up with Yash Raj Films and Ethiad airlines, organising an extensive advertising campaign aimed at audiences in India and in the Gulf countries. They used dinner events upon the release of the film, television and digital advertising and organised competitions through social media such as Facebook and online booking platforms such as Yatra.com. Some six days following the launch of the film on 15 August 2012, Tourism Ireland’s Indian Facebook page had gained over 23,000 fans, up from 10,000 before the release; and over one year later the page had about 90,000 fans. In the months following the release of *Ek Tha Tiger* in 2012, the Irish Central Statistics Office recorded an increase in tourism from long-haul destinations – visits to the Tourism Ireland website further increased since the release of the film. Irish tourism authorities, however, were determined to continue targeting Indian tourists and to further capitalise on the success of the finished film. For example, in January 2014 Tourism Ireland organised their first-ever India seminar aimed at Irish tourism enterprises interested in welcoming Indian tourists. During the seminar Irish agencies declared their aim of increasing the numbers of Indian tourists visiting Ireland. Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar, commented: ‘India is one of the fastest-growing tourism markets in the world. Although the numbers visiting Ireland are relatively small, the Indian market has significant potential for growth.’ Tourism Ireland confirmed their intention to continue their collaboration with the Irish Film Board and Northern Ireland Screen, targeting top Bollywood producers and highlighting the locations available around the island of Ireland. Even if no other major Hindi production has to date made use of locations in the Republic of Ireland since *Ek Tha Tiger*, the film definitely established a foundation for future collaboration between Indian entertainment industries and Irish creative and cultural industries.

**Promoting Trinity College Dublin in India**

Trinity College was founded in 1592 by Queen Elizabeth I and chosen as a location for the film, especially for its monumental historic buildings. The university has long-standing links to South Asia, first established with the inauguration of the chair of Oriental Languages in 1762. It has been regularly hosting international students from India since the nineteenth century, and in 2009, the Trinity College South Asia initiative was launched to strengthen the university’s relationship with India. The prominent role of Trinity College in *Ek Tha Tiger*’s storyline was crucially part of a promotional campaign already in place at Trinity College and linked to government agencies eager to attract Indian students. As Olivia Waters of the Trinity College Global Relations Office noted:

> India has taken on a new level, not just here in Trinity but in Ireland: Education in Ireland, the brand that is run by Enterprise Ireland, see India as a huge marketplace for Ireland. Activity has really ramped up in this area. So we have been working in India but *Ek Tha Tiger* gave us a platform to improve our visibility and raise our profile around the country. (Interview 4 October 2012)
For this reason, the university’s office for Global Relations arranged for the making of a promotional video for Trinity College including interviews with South Asian students, lecturers, crew members, featuring scenes of the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* around campus and highlighting the way students had the opportunity to interact with the film’s production. Several other internationally renowned films have included scenes shot around campus: for example, the Jedi Library in *Star Wars Episode II* (2002) is the Long Room, the main chamber of the Trinity College Old Library; *Educating Rita* (1983) was filmed in Trinity College; in *Michael Collins* (1996) the Dail debate was filmed in the 1937 Reading Room. As Trinity College’s Vice-Provost for Global Relations, Jane Olhmeyer, explained in an interview: ‘we always use a film as a point of reference for prospective students’. However, *Ek Tha Tiger* was the first film with an overt Trinity College storyline, so it had the potential to be more effective in granting visibility to the university (Figure 3). Upon the release of the film, delegations from Trinity College went to India to conduct a promotional campaign aimed at attracting prospective students; special screenings of *Ek Tha Tiger* were hosted in five Indian cities Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Calcutta and Delhi. Information on the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* was also included on the university’s website. As Olhmeyer recalls: ‘we worked very closely with Yash Raj Films. They said, ‘we will give you access to clips for student recruitment purposes’ and then we came up with this idea of actually holding screenings across India.’ In August 2012, Yash Chopra, founder of Yash Raj Films, also received a Trinity College honorary professorship for his significant contribution to Indian cinema. A special screening of *Ek Tha Tiger* was held at Trinity College in September 2012; on that occasion Kabir Khan also gave a master class to several Trinity College film and drama students. The filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* proved to be beneficial in raising the profile of the university; as Waters confirmed: ‘we have seen an increase in activity on the website from India, an increase in applications for our postgraduate scholarships, an increase in interest from schools that we would have had relationships with.’

Figure 3. Still from *Ek Tha Tiger* – The dance sequence at Trinity College.
The reception of \textit{Ek Tha Tiger}: Dublin and worldwide

The film opened worldwide on 15 August 2012 and its Dublin premiere at the Irish Film Institute marked the launch of the first Mela festival of Dublin.\textsuperscript{34} This event was used by Yash Raj Films to promote the film among Irish-based audiences. According to Panesar, ‘upon the release of \textit{Ek Tha Tiger}, on 15 August, we used the event to drive the campaign, and we worked closely with the cinema, as well as the Mela to try and garner as much attention as we possibly could.’\textsuperscript{35} On the other hand, collaborating with Yash Raj Films and hosting the premiere of a film which promised to be an international success was also advantageous for the Irish Film Institute and for the Indian cultural organisation behind the Mela in terms of raising their public profile and improving awareness about their activities. This mutually beneficial collaboration between an internationally renowned film production company and local Irish cultural associations confirms the validity of Freeman's stakeholder management principles as he cautioned managers to ‘take into account all of those groups and individuals that can affect, or are affected by, the accomplishment of the business enterprise’ (25). Notably, tickets to the \textit{Ek That Tiger} premiere were sold out and it unfolded as a high-profile event introduced by then Minister for Culture Jimmy Deenihan and Film Commissioner Naoise Barry.

\textit{Ek Tha Tiger} was screened at Cineworld Dublin\textsuperscript{36} between 15 August and 3 September 2012 and was well received by audiences. Several viewers were disappointed by its storyline comparing it with Kabir Khan's previous features – the thought-provoking political dramas \textit{Kabul Express} (2006) and \textit{New York} (2009). However, they enjoyed the film's song and action sequences, especially the one involving the Luas, and liked the way Dublin was portrayed in it. A Bollywood fan commented, ‘I was disappointed by the story: I was expecting something like \textit{New York} … But I love the tram scene in Dublin! And I love the song where they dance in Trinity College.' ‘I really enjoyed the film,' said Bharath Kumar, founder of Unitas Isac and organiser of the Mela festival. Members of the film's crew also appreciated the finished film: ‘the film was really good, well directed and Dublin looks really good in it,’ said Dermot Cleary, the film's Location Manager. Olivia Waters was also pleasantly surprised: ‘I loved the film! I was surprised by the humour in it, I didn't think it followed the usual Bollywood format … I thought Dublin came across as a fun, young city'. The makers of the \textit{Ek Tha Tiger} wanted the locales portrayed in the film to be part of the spectacle expected from a blockbuster and they were clearly successful in their intent to show Dublin as a vibrant and exciting city. This upbeat and modern representation is in line with a new image of Ireland promoted since the 1990s, when the economic boom prompted the media to refashion an appealing portrayal of the country, which denied its problematic past and social struggles in order to raise its international appeal. ‘The reinvented Ireland of the Celtic Tiger is based on the creation of a ‘modern, liberal, progressive, multicultural’ image fashioned according to the need for international acceptance’ (Kirby et al. 197). Irish films of the late 1990s and early 2000s moved away from the gritty social realism that characterised productions of the 1970s and 1980s, aiming instead to portray Ireland as liberal, urban and successful. Films such as \textit{About Adam} (1999) and \textit{When Brendan Met Trudy} (2001) focus on young and lively urbanites, highlighting the newfound cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism of Dublin, deliberately ignoring any of the social problems that afflict contemporary Ireland such as crime, alcoholism, poverty, homelessness and drug abuse. As Ging contends, ‘our national cinema is moving steadily toward easy, globally digestible
narratives’ (185). *Waking Ned* (1999) and *The Closer You Get* (2000) present an idyllic view of rural Ireland aimed at the American market. According to Ging, these films deny ‘that Ireland is a complex and changing nation with a troubled sense of self-identity, pandering instead to a largely mainstream American understanding of Irishness’ (187). In a similar way, it can be argued that *Ek Tha Tiger* carefully avoided representing any kind of complexity or social issues present in the underbelly of the charming and cosmopolitan Irish capital, constructing instead a simplistic image of Ireland that requires a minimum of cross-cultural understanding or critical engagement on the part of the viewer. This kind of representation is in line with long-standing strategies supported by government agencies to promote the country internationally and create a marketable version of Irishness. Representing Ireland through stereotypes, however, is problematic since it promotes unrealistic cognitive associations and expectations about Irish society by presenting limited and partial notions of the country and its culture. To this end, Bowe et al. argue that ‘stereotypes, whether positive or negative, limit our understanding of human behaviour and can lead to miscommunications in intercultural discourse’ (10).

Although questionable, the cultural representations showcased in *Ek Tha Tiger* were extremely well received by audiences, as the film has been hugely successful breaking several box office records in India and achieving worldwide gross of 3.25 billion Rupees (39 million Euro). It became the second highest grossing Bollywood film of all time, surpassed only by *3 Idiots* (2009). The film’s box office success was later exceeded by blockbusters such as *Chennai Express* (2013) and *Dhoom 3* (Blast 3; 2013). Kabir Khan’s third feature film received positive to mixed reviews from Indian critics. Taran Adarsh of *Bollywood Hungama* rated the film 4.5 stars out of 5, calling it a ‘high octane thriller that works big time. This one has style and substance, both, besides dazzling action, stunning international locales and stylish execution.’ Anupama Chopra of *Hindustan Times* gave it 3 stars out of 5 and said that the film was Salman Khan’s best since *Dabangg*; it had more story coherence and emotions than Khan’s recent films. In the Irish press, the film was praised mainly for its potential to attract tourists to Ireland confirming the notion that the most significant Irish–Indian coproduction to date was considered mainly a vehicle for Irish national promotion.

This discussion has endeavoured to demonstrate how both the underlying production concerns of *Ek Tha Tiger* and audience participation and engagement with the film are intricately imbricated in Dublin’s urban life—a deliberately chosen context for the film characterised by the nationally iconic appearance of established and stereotyped markers of ‘Ireland’ and ‘Irishness’. By way of narrating the arc of the film’s production, this article has outlined how Irish Government agencies and Bollywood collaborated in the making of a blockbuster, ostensibly used as an advertising tool to attract Indian tourists, students and investments to Ireland. This discussion further indicates how *Ek Tha Tiger* produced a ‘tourist gaze’ for audiences, shaping their perception of Dublin and Irish culture according to institutionally choreographed images of charm and cosmopolitanism. In so doing, the film plays on existing clichés and stereotypes surrounding Irish culture and identity, showcasing postcard-like views of Dublin thus far featured in commercial Irish films and international productions set in Ireland. These representations of Irishness were well received by audiences both in Ireland and abroad and proved to be effective in boosting tourism to Ireland. The production of *Ek Tha Tiger* in Dublin thus confirmed the effectiveness of Bollywood cinema in constructing spectacular and appealing, albeit partial and potentially misleading, notions of Irish urban life.
Research interests

Globalisation of Indian cinema; transnational reception of popular Hindi films; ethnography of Hindi film audiences; Indian film festivals and cinephilia; practices of Hindi films exhibition and consumption in the Irish context; Irish Indian co-productions and diasporic films.

Notes

1. Narratives displaced from the Indian national context can also enable the representations of liminal fantasies in a non-threatening manner, suggesting that morally questionable behaviours can happen in other places but not in India.

2. As Adrian Athique explains, the works of these directors of Indian origin have frequently been conflated with Bollywood in the Western media. Both Indian and expatriate directors have benefited from this fallacy: mainstream Indian films have been associated, for example, with the success of Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), whilst the ‘colour as culture’ connotations of Bollywood branding have been used to market the films of non-resident Indian (or NRI) directors, such as Chadha’s *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) (Athique 301).

3. These films showcasing the life of NRIs arguably serve the function of discouraging diasporic groups from adopting Western moral standards through the display of themes promoting traditional Indian values. This strategy is in line with middle-class ideologies focused on preserving morality and tradition against Western influences. As Kaur contends, these themes are ‘specifically family values, moral superiority, true (unpolluted) love, the sacrifice of individual desires for greater good of the family/community, and the struggle and victory of the Indian Diaspora in preserving their cultural universe through Indian rites of passages in an alien environment (Kaur 200, 201).’


5. Ibid.


10. For more on Irish film locations used to promote tourism see O’Connor and Bolan (1–12).


15. Ibid.


18. Luas means ‘speed’ in Irish and is a tram (or light rail system) serving Dublin.

19. Temple Bar is a designated cultural quarter in Dublin situated on the south bank of the river Liffey. It is known for its lively nightlife and its popularity among tourists.
25. Ibid.
26. The Hindi production *Teraa Surroor* (Your Passion; Shawn Arranha, 2016) featuring Bollywood actor and music composer Himesh Reshammiya, was filmed in Dublin in September 2015. *Teraa Surroor* had a much smaller budget compared to *Ek Tha Tiger* and it did not include spectacular dance sequences or major Bollywood stars. For such reasons it did not attract as much attention from the media or from fans and was not actively used to promote Ireland as a tourist destination.
32. Yash Chopra was also supposed to give a master class at Trinity College later in 2012, but he sadly passed away on 21 October 2012.
34. Mela means large gathering in Sanskrit and Mela festivals are South Asian cultural fairs organised in various countries hosting Indian communities such as the UK, but they had never been organised in Ireland before August 2012. Dublin Mela was organised by Unitas Isac, a not for profit organisation set up by members of the Indian Diaspora in Ireland with the aim of promoting community integration through sport, arts and culture. The festival took place between 15 and 19 August, including events such as an art exhibition, Indian dance and sports workshops and a day-long family event centred on performances of South Asian dance and music.
36. Cineworld Dublin is a 17-screen multiplex located in Dublin city centre. Since 2006 Cineworld Dublin has been the only cinema in the Irish capital which regularly screens popular Indian films.
At the time of writing the highest grossing Bollywood film ever is PK (Rajkumar Hirani, 2014).


Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge my supervisors and colleagues at the Centre for Transcultural Research and Media Practice, Dublin Institute of Technology, for their ongoing support and guidance. I am grateful to the peer reviewers whose comments helped improve and clarify this article.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Giovanna Rampazzo recently completed her PhD at the Centre for Transcultural Research and Media Practice, Dublin Institute of Technology. Her thesis, titled ‘Formations of Indian Cinema in Dublin: A Participatory Researcher-Fan Ethnography’, explores the emergent and globalising Bollywood film culture in Dublin, offering a timely analysis of the presence of Hindi cinema in the Irish capital in terms of consumption, circulation and production. She received her BA in Film Studies from the University of Wolverhampton and in 2009 was awarded an MPhil in Film Theory and History by Trinity College Dublin. She has presented her work across numerous film studies conferences in both Ireland and the UK.

ORCID

Giovanna Rampazzo http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8653-991X

References


Filmography

Dabangg 2 (Fearless 2). Dir. Arbaaz Khan, 2012.
Dhoom 3 (Blast 3). Dir. Vijay Krishna Acharya, 2013.
Kal Ho Naa Ho (There May or May Not Be a Tomorrow). Dirs. Nikhil Advani, Ron Reid Jr., 2003.
Star Wars Episode II. Dir. George Lucas, 2002.