

THE INFLUENCE OF BOLLYWOOD FILMS ON PUNJABI SIKH YOUTHS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE SIKH IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

Minority religion gets very less coverage, be it at school teachings or local media. With less than one percent population to represent themselves, the Sikhs in Malaysia, being a double minority in ethnic categorization often gets very limited media coverage and representation, let alone, an accurate portrayal. Bollywood movies are often time deduced to a cultural product of the Sikhs to non-Sikh Malaysians. With a severely lacking representation of Sikhs in local media and the inaccurate portrayal in Bollywood movies, the Sikh community tries to preserve as much of their religious identity as they can. This article is a humble attempt to analyze the influence of Bollywood films on Malaysian Punjabi Sikh youths' perception on their religious identity. The study uses Hall's encoding and decoding (1980) model to look at how does the Malaysian Punjabi Sikh youth interpret Bollywood films and its portrayal of Sikh characters which in return, influences their religious identity. By utilizing on one-on-one in-depth interviews, the researcher interviewed 15 Punjabi Sikh youth, age from 16-23 years consisting of eight males and seven females from Klang Valley until the data saturated. The study showed Sikh youth deduced turban as a vital factor in maintaining their religious identity. However, Bollywood movies cannot be considered as an influential or the only factor that affects the identity of a Sikh. Primary and secondary agent of socialization such as family members through daily life experiences, peer group and social media does play a vital role in changing youths' perceptions about their idealistic and practical religious identity.

Keywords: *Bollywood Films, Sikh Youth, Religious Identity, Perception and Media*

ABSTRAK

Agama minoriti mendapat liputan yang sangat kurang, sama ada di sekolah atau media tempatan. Dengan kurang daripada satu peratus penduduk untuk mewakili diri mereka, orang Sikh di Malaysia menjadi minoriti berganda dalam kategori etnik yang sering mendapat liputan media yang sangat terhad dan perwakilan, apatah lagi untuk gambaran yang tepat. Filem-filem Bollywood sering kali disimpulkan kepada produk budaya Sikh kepada kaum bukan Sikh di Malaysia. Dengan perwakilan yang sangat kurang mengenai orang Sikh dalam media tempatan dan gambaran yang tidak tepat dalam filem-filem Bollywood, masyarakat Sikh berusaha untuk mengekalkan seberapa banyak yang boleh mengenai identiti agama mereka. Artikel ini adalah satu percubaan murni untuk menganalisis persepsi belia Punjabi Sikh Malaysia terhadap pengaruh filem-filem Bollywood ke atas pada identiti agama mereka. Kajian ini menggunakan model pengekodan dan penyahkodan Hall (1980) untuk melihat bagaimana belia Punjabi Sikh Malaysia mentafsir filem-

filem Bollywood dan gambaran karakteristik Sikh yang seterusnya mempengaruhi identiti agama mereka. Dengan menggunakan teknik wawancara satu-persatu secara mendalam, penyelidik telah menemuramah 15 orang belia Punjabi Sikh belia, berumur di antara 16-23 tahun yang terdiri daripada lapan orang lelaki dan tujuh orang perempuan dari Lembah Klang sehingga data menjadi tepu. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa belia Sikh menyimpulkan serban sebagai faktor penting dalam mengekalkan identiti agama mereka. Walau bagaimanapun, filem-filem Bollywood tidak boleh dianggap sebagai berpengaruh atau satu-satunya faktor yang menjejaskan identiti seseorang Sikh. Ejen sosialisasi primer dan sekunder seperti ahli keluarga menerusi pengalaman hidup harian, rakan sebaya dan media sosial sememangnya memainkan peranan penting dalam mengubah persepsi belia mengenai identiti agama mereka yang bersifat idealistik dan praktikal.

Kata Kunci: *Filem Bollywood, Belia Sikh, Identiti Agama, Persepsi dan Media*

INTRODUCTION

Bollywood movie, Son of Sardar which was released in November 2012 starring Ajay Devgan, portrayed Devgan as a turbaned Sikh character. His character in the movie has been said to contain dialogue that depicts the Sikh community in a negative manner. Ajay Devgan himself has been seen sporting a tattoo of Lord Shiva³ on his chest, which is not in accordance to the tenets of Sikhism. Sikh political activist and lawyer, Bhai Harpal Singh Cheema, who also happens to be the Senior Vice President of Akali Dal Panch Pardhani (ADPP)⁴ as well as by Karnail Singh Peermohamad, President of All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF)⁵ sent legal notices to the producers of the film as well as Ajay Devgan. In their justification, they said an expert was brought to the set of the film more than 20 times just to tie the turban properly without any mistakes, as “in Bollywood films the turbans don’t reflect the original style”. Everyone in attendance accepted and agreed with his justification⁶.

SIKHS THROUGH MEDIA

The Indian cinema industry today, also called Bollywood, is the world’s largest film industry in terms of employees and number of films produced; an average of 1000

³ Lord Shiva is a Hindu deity known for His many benevolent and fearsome forms, but He is not worshipped in Sikhism nor has a foothold in Sikhism.

⁴ The Shiromani Akali Dal, also known as Supreme Akali Party is a collection of Sikh political parties based in Punjab, India. Akali Dal is ideally recognized as a religio-political party and professes as the principle representative of Sikhs. The current practice of Akali Dal consists several break away factions, Akali Dal Panch Pardhani (ADPP) being one of it. The ADPP was founded on 30th November, 2007 at Alamgir Convention which was held at Gurdwara Sahib Alamgir, Ludhiana Punjab.

⁵ All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) is Socio-political and advocacy organization that practice and follow the teachings of Shri Guru Granth Sahib and which strives to promote the heritage and future of Sikhism.

⁶ Refer to <http://www.sikhsiyasat.net/2012/11/14/son-of-sardar-sikhs-have-lost-it-again-hs-baw>

feature films a year (Dwyer, 2006). Sikhs, a diasporic community in Malaysia, is acknowledged as a minority group (Gill and Gopal, 2010, Zain et al, 2011). The researcher is currently a fourth or fifth generation that has been born and bred in Malaysia. And it does not help by not only being a minority, but also the fact that the minority religion gets very less coverage, be it at school teachings or local media. With less than 1 percent population to represent themselves, the government television stations are normally seen making an effort to air Punjabi movies⁷ during Vaisakhi Day (holy day for the Sikhs all across the world), that too movies which were produced in 1960's-1970's.

The local media however never forgets to air Bollywood movies. Government owned channel air a Bollywood movie every Saturday night, while a privately owned terrestrial channel airs Bollywood movie every Saturday afternoon. During festive season such as Deepavali or Hari Raya, the local media generally airs a couple of it, as Bollywood movies have quite an aesthetic appeal on the Muslims in Malaysia. In other words, Bollywood movies are showcased every week on the local media without failure. Speaking of cable television, Malaysian cable television has an Indian channel, Zee as a part of the free channels that comes with the cable subscription. Zee channel is known for its Hindi content, be it songs, movies, dramas, lifestyle or and religious shows. The only Sikh program on Zee is the daily twenty minutes prayer shown live from a temple in Delhi from 7-7.25am and the once in a while songs sung by a local Sikh group, Goldkartz. The cable subscription however does have more than one Malay, Chinese, and Indian channel to cater to the other dominating races in Malaysia⁸.

The Misconception About Sikhs

With almost zilch information of Sikh religion and culture in learning institutions and an extremely less coverage of them in the local media, Bollywood movies, which comes from India are often deduced to a cultural product of the Sikhs. What further enhances the prejudice of Bollywood so called representing Sikhs is the fact that famous Bollywood actors such as Akshay Kumar, Saif Ali Khan and Ranbir Kapoor have all worn dastar⁹ to play a Sikh character in their respective movies.

Dastar is a visible manifestation of Sikh identity. Dastar has historically been regarded as a product of high culture in the east and Middle Eastern countries. It is hence viewed as a marker of royalty and dignity. Dastar was brought into Sikhism by its tenth and last Guru, Gobind Singh as a religious article of faith, providing Sikhs' a sense of high self esteem. What differentiates the Sikhs' from other religious followers with long hair is the fact that Sikhs' dastar cannot be covered by any other head gear or cap or hat, unlike others who can wear cap or keep

⁷ The Punjabi movies aired also do not portray the ideal identity of Sikhs'.

⁸ Other Indian minorities such as Sindhis' or Bengalis' are also given a very less coverage in the local media

⁹ Dastar is a more accurate word for Sikhs' who wears turban as turban in general is also worn by other communities such as Muslims or Rajputs'.

matted hair. Dastar is deemed must for Sikh males and optional for its women¹⁰.

Dastar is also to be worn at all times by the Sikhs' as suggested by the Sikh Holy book, Granth Sahib, unlike certain communities where it is acceptable to remove it and wear it as one wishes. The dastar's significance is interwoven in a Sikh's faith, as a Sikh is seen carrying Gurmukh (Godly personality) if he or she wears Dastar. Therefore, a Dastar for the Sikhs' holds significance historically, adds Gurmukh personality and an undying representation of faith. The organized head dressing is not a part of the 5K ideology, but never the less, it is included in the Rehat Maryada booklet as "a codification of the rules of proper Sikh conduct that were promulgated by the Gurus" (Singh, 1997 as cited in Gohil and Singh, 2008, p.12). Scholars have highlighted several points as to why turban is considered as a vital part of the Sikh religion. Scholars have underlined some points as to why the turban is an integral part of a Sikh's "religious and cultural personality."

First, is the relation to Kesh; one of the 5K elements. Dastar is considered as an essential tool in guarding the hair by keeping it tidy. Dastar also is a form of common outward identity for Sikhs. Dastar represents a form of equality as it can be worn by anyone and not just the social elites or aristocracy like in the olden days (Gohil and Singh, 2008). Dastar allows Sikhs to be identified as ambassadors' of the religion. Dastar is easily recognized and added with Sikhs' distinct appearance serve as "helpful deterrents against undesirable acts and behaviour [sic] and keep [Sikhs] on the right path". Dastar serves as a reminder to a Sikh that he is suppose to be following the Guru's path and teachings and avoid any misconduct. Sikhs wear Dastar for any of these stated reasons or simply to be in accordance with their faith.

It is important to note the philosophy and history of Dastar in Sikhism itself in order to understand why Dastar is important for Sikhs. Hair is an integral part of the Sikh faith. Sikhs believe that hair, including bodily hair should be respected as it is provided by the Guru. The act of trimming or shaving only highlights the futile efforts of humans to go against natural law. Hair maintenance is a part of the Sikh faith. It is "regarded as the seal of the Guru" (Singh, 1997, p.264). Not only that, but "head of a devout Sikh is also an offering to the Guru as a proof of his devotion" (Singh, 1997, p.264). Also, a Khalsa (Sikh) "should look like his Guru and wear a natural uniform which is both inexpensive and dignified, i.e., to keep the Guru's form. Thus, the keeping of uncut hair and wearing a turban are both necessary" (Singh, 1997, p.264)¹¹.

With a severely lacking representation of Sikhs in local media and the inaccurate portrayal of Sikhs in Bollywood movies, the Malaysian Sikh community

¹⁰ Recent times have revealed that there is a rise in Malaysian Sikh women wearing a Dastar.

¹¹ It is said that in the past, the Mughal ruled Punjab and offered remunerations for those who would bring them back the head of a Sikh. Due to this, the Sikhs had to resort to jungles, but always kept their hair intact. Some examples were people like Bhai Taru Singh, who accepted death easily rather than letting them cut his hair. While Sardar Mehtab Singh allowed himself to be sawn alive, but never allowed them to cut his hair as it was seen as an act of going out of faith.

tries to preserve as much of their religious and or cultural identity as they can. However, the younger Sikh generation often tends to take the significance of Sikhism values lightly.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

“I try my level best to gear up the youngsters,” Mr. Bai said in an interview, absent-mindedly pulling a pin from his turban to dig out the battery from his cellphone. “They’ve adopted bad European habits: fast food, pubs and clubs. They want to show they are modern. They are forgetting their own culture” (Punjabi pop star Pammi Bai, *New York Times*, 2007). The day Jugraj Singh, at age 14, abandoned his turban and had a lifetime’s growth of hair cut off, he collected the tresses from the barbershop floor and packed them into a plastic bag. Then he threw the bag into a river flowing out of Amritsar, the spiritual home of the Sikhs. Jugraj Singh, 18, cut his hair four years ago to be stylish. His parents did not object. “It was my parents’ idea to float it down the river,” they thought it would be a display of respect to the hair I had cut off. For me it wasn’t an emotional moment” (Jugraj Singh, now an 18-year-old business student, *New York Times*, 2007)

According to *New York Times* (2007) like many young Sikhs, Jugraj Singh found the turban a bother. It got in the way when he took judo classes. Washing his long hair was time-consuming, as was the morning ritual of winding seven yards of cloth around his head. It was hot and uncomfortable. “In the end,” he said, “it was a question of fashion. I felt smarter without it” (Jugraj Singh, 2007).

“It’s usually college-going students who are more worried about looking good than about their spiritual identity,” Ms. Saluja said. “It’s a thrilling moment for them. You can see a flush on their faces. Taking eight or nine meters of cloth off your head releases a certain amount of pressure. But while it is good for business, as a religious Sikh she feels ambivalent about the trend. “At the end of the day, it is a bit hurtful,” she said. “It means one more identifiable Sikh is missing” (Namrata Saluja, manager of the Color Lounge hairdressers in central Amritsar, 2007)

A similar scenario has seen to be taking place in Malaysia too, where the Sikh younger generation is seen to be abandoning the practice of their faith by cutting their hair and removing their organized head dressing or Dastar for good. It is sad to see an act of faith which has been preserved for thousands of years being treated so insignificantly.

AIM OF STUDY

Therefore, this paper aims to find out the kind of religious values that are being communicated to Sikh youth through Bollywood films. This paper also aims to discover what aspect/s of Sikhism are deemed important by the Sikh youth and how Bollywood films influence their religious identity. This would indirectly contribute to a larger audience reception domain from a Southeast Asia perspective.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This sort of study that looks at the Sikh religious identity through Bollywood movies consumption is important as academically, the Malaysian Sikh youth, a minority within the minority is clearly an understudied group when it comes to consumption of media. Upon looking for information and read up on Bollywood movies consumption by the diasporic Indian youth from various Western countries (Gillispie 1995, Maira 2002, Durham 2004, Desai 2005, Hirji 2007, Tirumala 2008, Chacko 2010,) it was realized that nothing that talks about Bollywood movies consumption by South East Asian countries, let alone, Malaysian Sikh youth. Hence, it is significant to study the relationship of audience-media and find out if the Bollywood films effects are directly mixed into the youths' perception of their religious identity or it is sieved carefully to only take in what would strengthen and enhance their existing perception of their religious identity.

LIMITATION

One of the main limitations faced during this study was terminology. The word culture and religion has proven to be so overlapped with one another. During each interview, whenever the word 'religion' was used, quite a number of the interviewees' paused, and were unsure about how to answer certain questions. The interviewees' replaced the word religion with 'culture' to answer the same question. The same question would yield two different answers based on the choice of word used. Hence, to ensure that the interviewees' are able to answer accordingly, the researcher actively made a mental note on the words they used. For example, if an interviewee has from the beginning used the word religion and answered well, and then the researcher would continue to pose questions and interact with her or him using the word religion. However, if an interviewee finds it difficult to answer when the researcher uses the word religion, then the researcher quickly utilize the word culture from then onwards till the end of the interview.

The researcher initially tried to look for possible respondents' by going to a Sikh youth gathering, but it did not work out as many of them were either reluctant for an interview or busy. The researcher then tried going to Gurdwara more often to build a rapport with the Sikh youth and at the same time, illuminate them about researcher's study. This was indeed a fruitful effort as the researcher managed to conduct two interviews in Gurdwara Tatt Khalsa.

The researcher began each interview session by illuminating the respondents' about the study, and how all information shared will be of top notch private and confidential matter as well as signing of a letter of consent. In the beginning, a few respondents' answered a number of questions in relation to Sikhism rules of conduct in a blanket manner. Keeping in mind that the researcher is dealing with a group of young people and a topic involving identity, the researcher realized that rapport needs to be established between the researcher and the respondents'.

Building a rapport can be seen as a way to facilitate smoother interview sessions as the Malaysian Punjabi Sikh youth would feel more relaxed and comfortable sharing their personal thoughts.

As the researcher continued to seek a deeper understanding of the participants' social reality one interview after another, the researcher came to the realization that building rapport seemed much easier once the participants felt assured that the researcher would not judge them. These assurances came often time as a result of the researcher's continuous smile, nod to each of their answers as well as a serious wanting to know more look. Once the researcher managed to build a rapport, the researcher noticed how quickly the interviewees' body language and tone of talking changed from being alarmed and rigid, to more relaxed and comfortable. They then started talking to the researcher in a relaxed manner, somehow indicating that they expected the researcher to know whenever they talked about certain religious information. This led to disclosure of essential information for the current study.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted a one on one, in depth interview method to conduct this study. 15 Punjabi Sikh youth was interviewed, comprising of eight males and seven females until the data saturated. The interviewees were between the ages of 16 and 23 from urban area, namely Klang Valley. The reason the researcher chose such an age group is simply because the youngsters are likely to watch more Bollywood films in comparison to their elders. Not only that, but unlike their elders, who might straight elicit a yes or no response based on a higher level of maturity, these age groups are still in the midst of figuring their place and identity in the world while having media access in abundance, thanks to the advancement of technology (Hirji, 2007).

The selection of urban area was also in relation to a greater access of media, with more multiplexes airing Bollywood films. However, it is to be noted that the interviewees in current study are not originally from the urban area, Klang Valley. Some of them hail from different states such as Selangor and Perak. They are all however currently residing in Klang Valley in order to further their tertiary education. Therefore, the choice of urban area is more suited as more youngsters are to be found in urban areas due to greater number of higher institutions. With each interviewee; the researcher enquired their individual exposure to Bollywood movies. All respondents are exposed to Bollywood movies from a very young age which makes them ideal candidates for interview.

The researcher filtered the interviewees by their frequency of watching Bollywood movies. All respondents in general watch a minimum of one Bollywood movie per week. The researcher also asked if the respondents have consumed Bollywood films such as *Singh is Kinng* , *Love Aaj Kal* and or *Rocket Singh* since

these movies featured central turbaned Punjabi Sikh characters in them. All 15 respondents answered that they have watched *Singh is Kinng* and *Love Aaj Kal*.

DISCUSSION

Finding No.1: Stereotyping of Sikhs

In the study, when respondents' were asked about their awareness of Sikh characters portrayal in Bollywood, both male and female respondents were able to identify how Bollywood films often stereotype a Sikh character. The male interviewees however, have all pointed out Bollywood's common way of portraying the Sikhs' from specific perspectives, namely religious related areas: praying, identification, alcohol, and beard. These rules of dastar with beard, and alcohol consumption pointed by the male interviewees clearly shows that they are aware of what is commonly expected out of a Sikh. The male interviewees have clearly all pointed out the lack of accuracy in terms of visual markers alone, instead of the characters personality or values. This shows that for Malaysian Punjabi Sikh males, visual markers in Sikhism are quite essential and carries with it certain caliber which can reflect a person's values. For example, when one sees a man with a dastar and beard, one forms a quick first impression of the person most probably being a pious person. Hence, when the male youth see a dastar wearing character in Bollywood films, most of them are able to recognize and state the stereotype of Sikhs' presented by Bollywood.

While the female interviewees pointed at a more generic misrepresentation of Sikhs' in Bollywood films. Most of them find that Bollywood do not portray Sikhs' wedding related functions accurately as they are normally infused with Hindu culture. Based on the interviewees' answers, Sikhs' misrepresentation in Bollywood can be categorized by inaccurate understanding of Sikhs or dastar and using dastar to identify someone as Sikh and then portraying that particular person negatively, mainly doing criminal activities. It is understandable why the male interviewees have pointed out at dastar and beard as it is normally worn and kept by them. Whereas the female interviewees have pointed at a lack of cultural inaccuracy when it comes to portraying the Sikhs' as it is easier for them to relate themselves with cultural perspective compared to beard or dastar.

The awareness shown by interviewees support both previous studies of Hirji (2007) and Menon (2009) who claimed Bollywood movies fail to represent the various cultures that are also a part of India and how interviewees were able to identify the inaccurate representation of their culture depicted in Bollywood while reflecting on their own personal experience of being born and raised in the particular religion (Hirji, 2007).

Finding No. 2: Dastar as an Important Religious Value

Respondents used words such as 'symbolizes' and 'really good person' when it comes to a person wearing dastar. This reflects a very clear understanding of the dastar: outside and inside symbol. Dastar is clearly an external symbol for the Sikhs', but it

is at the same viewed as representation of piousness, which is why the Punjabi Sikh males are against Bollywood's representation of dastar wearing men consuming alcohol. Despite associating positive elements to the dastar, both male and female interviewees decode the dastar differently. The male youth associated dastar with hair. This is mainly because dastar is a male dominant product and therefore the specific interpretation of maintaining the gift of hair with a dastar is easily made by Sikh males, who are affected by it directly at a physical level. What is important is not the dastar itself, but the act of keeping the hair, as it is the hair that is seen as a gift from God, and dastar in this sense then is merely a tool that assists in protecting the actual gift: hair. In this manner, the dastar then becomes the outer or exterior shell that protects the inner religious marker, the hair.

While only 1 out of the 7 female interviewees associated the maintenance of hair with dastar, the remaining 6 associated dastar with pride, identity and respect. Whereas the females make a generic interpretation of associating the dastar with pride, identity and respect because they experience the dastar indirectly from a secondary level.

Finding No. 3: Dastar's Significance to The 5 Kaakars' (5K)

Dastar is often time decoded in relation to 5K as it is intertwined with hair, and all the interviewees are aware of the ideal ideology the 5K presents. The male respondents clearly approach the 5K principles as a standard of defining a true Sikh. From their words 'makes us different and defines us as Sikhs', it is obvious that in their understanding, 5K is an important concept for Sikhs' that should ideally be adhere by all Sikhs'. The male interviewees' specific interpretation of associating the maintenance of hair with dastar can also be seen as a part of their larger understanding of the 5K principles. Hence, the male interviewees' in the current study can be seen as quite knowledgeable about their own religion.

The Sikh females understanding of a true Sikh in current study pretty much boils down to a very practical and functional definition. For the female youth, 5K in today's time is no longer a practical approach to make and define a true Sikh, unlike their male counterparts. Dastar represents unshorn hair, as it is one of the 5K elements and is commonly tied by the Sikh male community. Hence the Sikh females often take a back seat in terms of visible recognition of being identified as Sikhs' as the dastar mainly are a male dominant product. It's common for the female interviewees to lack direct attachment to the dastar and beard as they do not need to adorn it upon themselves. Therefore, they seem to take on a more laid back attitude when it comes to seeing a character with dastar in the movie without beard.

Finding No. 4: Dastar as Pride and Identity

Ideally, interviewees have associated dastar to something extremely sacred and positive such as God, identity, and pride and it is at the same time decoded by the interviewees on a very external level, relating it to physical appearance and very intriguingly by some as a depiction of modern lifestyle (dastar equals to not cool).

The interviewees' understanding of separating both dastar and beard (ideally, it goes together) and be fine with seeing a dastar character without beard in Bollywood films is subtly understandable.

All of the respondents' pointed that a majority of today's Sikh females are no longer interested in a dastar wearing Sikh male. One then might wonder what do the Malaysian Punjabi Sikh youth mean by cool and why is dastar viewed as not cool, despite being noted as an evident visual religious marker. The Malaysian Sikh youth are well informed about the 5K's and its importance to an idealistic extent. The female respondents' in current study vocalized their perception of dastar being not cool and traditional and not wanting to be with a dastar adorning man.

This re-affirms the current study's findings that the Malaysian Sikh youth, especially females are drawn to visually appealing elements. The need for an attractive visual emphasis amongst the youth is driven indirectly by Sikhism teachings itself, where one is able to see it's emphasize on an external outlook, such as the 5K and dastar as a form of identification. The irony lies between 5K and dastar being external elements of Sikhism; however it still does not appeal to the Malaysian Sikh females who are drawn to visually appealing elements.

Clearly, words utilized by the interviewees' such as "seen, don't look neat, doesn't know how to dress well, don't set their beard, and appearance" are an indication as to how dastar is visually decoded, and hence deduce to being not so cool. Not only that, but all the interviewees' have also pointed out that girls today are no longer interested in guys with dastar. Pressed for a reason to answer such, all the interviewees associated dastar in today's time as not stylish, not modern, traditional, and wanting to be with a crop guy.

The dastar is decoded by interviewees on 2 different levels: ideal and realistically. Hence, despite noting the ideal significance of dastar in Sikhism, the Malaysian Punjabi Sikh youth also reflects on their modern day practice of maintaining an enhanced physical appearance, while being exposed to Bollywood movies. Bollywood films provide them a total form of visual pleasure in terms of actor, actress, clothes, and body built, places and many others. Therefore, dastar and beard are merely noticed by many Malaysian Sikh youth as a form of inaccuracy and not a primary deal breaker in making or defining a Sikh. This is because although majority of the respondents' pointed out keywords such as traditional, not stylish, and not modern for the century's long religious product, they were still able to identify the dastar as a crucial element that makes up Sikhism. This very disjuncture of the interviewees view reveals a form of compromises and contradiction between what is ideally stated and realistically practiced.

The revelation of females' wanting to be with a crop guy (without dastar) by both male and female interviewees further affirms that Bollywood's lack of Sikhs' representation in terms of dastar and beard will clearly not be a major

concern for the Malaysian Sikh youth. Based on their social reality, interviewees' draw their perception of things around. Outer appearance clearly seems to be a primary force that drives their thinking while being mashed with their own diverse personal experiences that forms a more modern Sikh diasporic identity. This is a very crucial finding for the current study as it foreshadows a change of thinking in the current Malaysian Sikh youth when it comes to their visible visual marker. However, it is also to be noted that Bollywood films have never really portrayed a central Sikh character until lately (late 2000). Even if they have started to portray a dastar wearing Sikh character these days, it is rather on a superficial note where it seems sufficient to merely show a Sikh character with dastar.

The fact that Bollywood is media and media is visually consumed, added together with the enjoyment aspects of Bollywood films by the Malaysian Punjabi Sikh youth, which are highly driven by visual elements such as actor and actress and body built, it then makes sense how dastar is easily viewed as a fashionable product. This is because dastar, despite having significant internal values for the Sikhs', is still very much a visual symbol. Hence, there is a clear link between Bollywood films and dastar: visual consumption. It is based on this visual consumption that dastar gets decoded as product of unfavorable fashion.

CONCLUSION

Depending on the importance and their personal understanding of a particular issue, their primary influential factors would continue to change. Despite acknowledging the importance of wearing dastar ideally, some of them continue to have a less favorable outlook on someone with dastar. Hence these people look upon their own thinking, parents and peers together with their social experiences, to justify their view on the need or importance of maintaining the ideally professed religious elements in today's time. Hence, the influence of Bollywood films on Malaysian Sikh Punjabi youth seems to narrow down to specifically physical appearance preference and fashion choice and not their understanding of the visual marker or the maintenance of it.

The Malaysian Sikh youth views Bollywood films with different intentions and expectations out of the Indian film industry, depending on how rigid or open their understanding is when it comes to Sikhism. Some has a clear understanding of Sikhism and therefore while viewing Bollywood movies that portray Sikh characters; they form an expectation of Bollywood having to carry an accurate or ideal representation of Sikhism. Some of the interviewees' view Bollywood films primarily from a realistic perspective. They then form an expectation of Bollywood having to merely portray a realistic representation of their religion. This group of interviewees' showcases a form of navigation process. Some of the male interviewees' in this group wears a dastar and express the importance of wearing a dastar in reality but at the same time, do not mind or expect to see a dastar wearing character in Bollywood films with beard.

Respondents are aware of their religious identity, however they all decode Bollywood films representation of Sikhs' based on their personal experience and social surrounding, which in return, forms a compromised form of reality for each of them. Dastar representation tends to touch a more serious cord amongst the Malaysian Punjabi Sikh youth because dastar is viewed as a form of identification for the Sikhs' globally. Their social reality also reflects on the importance of dastar in Sikhism with most of the people in their social reality wearing dastar. In other words, a Sikh character in Bollywood would be identified primarily from his dastar. Whatever Bollywood portrays him doing, be it consuming tobacco or alcohol or naïve or funny with an accent, it will be seen as "the dastar guy, who..."

The negotiation of the Sikh youths' "true self" religious identity and the "minimal self" religious identity while viewing Bollywood movies, whose annual output of over 400 films a year with 3.6 billion audiences across the world, is worth to be noted. Interviewees' answer reflects a clear negotiated stance of their "minimal self" when it comes to seeing a dastar Sikh in Bollywood movies portrayed with trimmed beard. The interviewees are aware of their religious identity, but they relate what they see on screen with their personal opinions and experiences of coming across Sikhs' that carries a similar outlook like shown in Bollywood films. Thus, they are able to accept a Sikh man on screen with dastar, but without beard to justify and suit their own needs and thinking.

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