Cultural Bridges: Navigating The Transcultural Adaptation of Laal Singh Chaddha

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ABSTRACT

Transcultural adaptation in the film industry is a dynamic process that involves reshaping narratives to suit diverse cultural audiences. This study delves into the adaptation of the Bollywood film *Laal Singh Chaddha*, a reinterpretation of the American classic *Forrest Gump*, to explore how cultural elements are transformed to resonate with the Indian audience. Through a qualitative content analysis, this research uncovers the nuanced changes made in the adaptation, focusing on themes such as cultural context, character adaptation, and plot development.

The findings reveal the intricate strategies filmmakers employ to navigate cultural differences and negotiate historical events in *Laal Singh Chaddha*. By examining how the film reimagines key moments in Indian history and social issues, this analysis highlights the creative approaches used to localize the narrative for Indian viewers. This study also underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in adapting foreign narratives, emphasizing the need to align storytelling with the cultural preferences and values of the target audience.

Drawing upon insights from adaptation theory and globalization studies, this research contributes to the understanding of transcultural adaptation in the Bollywood industry. By integrating theoretical perspectives from scholars like Stam (2000) , Hutcheon (2012) and Smith (2016), it offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing how cultural elements are reinterpreted to appeal to local audiences. The findings provide valuable insights into the complexities of adapting narratives across cultural boundaries, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities inherent in the process of transcultural adaptation in the global film industry.

KEYWORDS: : Bollywood remake, Bollywood adaptation, Transcultural film adaptation, Adaptation, Globalization of Bollywood.

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Introduction

In an era of rapid globalization, the film industry has transcended national boundaries by producing, distributing, and exhibiting its products overseas. Film industries from around the world follow these phases of production, not only Hollywood but also the second largest film industry in the world: namely Bollywood, referring to the Hindi language film industry based in Mumbai, India (Bozlar, 2023). Bollywood is the central and most prominent film industry in this country: however, it must be noted that India has a diverse and multi-lingual film industry with several regional industries producing movies in their own distinct style and language such as in Tamil, Telugu, and Bengali (Tiwari, 2023).

When linking the topic of Bollywood to Globalization, we notice that the global circulation of Hollywood films had an influence on the filmmakers in Bollywood as their influence on narratives and storytelling techniques can be observed in the remakes and adaptations of the Hindi film industry. Hence, one can find countless examples of Bollywood film adaptations, including cult classics such as *Sangharsh* (1999) / *The Silence of Lambs* (1992), *Sarkar* (2005) / *The Godfather (*1972), as well as *Forrest Gump* (1994) / *Laal Singh Chaddha* (2022) (Mukherjee, 2023). These adaptations can be seen as an example of the so-called transcultural film adaptations; thus, the cultural transformation of source material and its subsequent modification to suit the Indian cultural context by connecting and integrating different cultural elements to create a new cultural product (Wang et. al., 2024). Since the latter represents the most recent example of this phenomenon, this research will focus on the transcultural film adaptation of *Laal Singh Chaddha* by investigating the following research question:

> *How does Laal Singh Chaddha (2022) navigate the process of transcultural adaptation to make the storyline and characters culturally appropriate for the Indian audience?*

However, before doing so the following sub-question needs to be answered first: *what changes were made in Laal Singh Chaddha compared to the original film Forrest Gump?* To answer these questions, a qualitative content analysis will be used to allow for an in-dept analysis of the material while focusing on the cultural changes made in the adaptation.

This adaptation was selected not only for its cultural and historical significance, as its original counterpart is included among the "100 greatest American films of all time" and has made a substantial impact on American film studies, but also for its portrayal as a quintessential American movie. It incorporates significant cultural and historical events of the United States, including the Vietnam War, the Watergate Scandal, and the Civil Rights Movement (American Film Institute, n.d.).

Previous studies on transcultural film adaptations of Bollywood span a range of interdisciplinary fields, focusing on how culturally specific elements, historical narratives, and national identities are negotiated and transformed to fit new cultural contexts, the effectiveness of

adaptation strategies in altering foreign conventions, and how filmmakers navigate between fidelity to the original text and creative reinterpretation to appeal to local audiences (Wright, 2009; Heinze and Krämer, 2015; Smith, 2017). However, this research aims to contribute to this academic discourse by integrating insights from globalization, cultural studies, adaptation theory, and film studies into a comprehensive framework. This framework aims to provide a unified approach to studying how culturally specific references—such as storylines, themes, and characters—are substituted and reinterpreted to resonate with the Indian audience and its diverse cultural milieu (Aronofsky, 2023). Additionally, this particular adaptation serves as a platform to engage with and reflect upon contemporary social and political issues.

In terms of the study's social and academic significance, it addresses cultural disparities between the U.S. and India, focusing on adaptation strategies tailored to local audience preferences. Socially, the study deepens understanding of India's cultural diversity, religious pluralism, contemporary social issues, and the ongoing India-Pakistan dispute. Academically, it illuminates the process of cultural product adaptation across different cultural contexts.

To respond to the above-mentioned research questions, this study will consist of five chapters. The first chapter will provide a concise outline of the object of this study by introducing the topic of this research, presenting the research questions, and discussing the topic's scientific and academic relevance. The second chapter will outline the theoretical framework used for this study. Therefore, the topics of globalization and transcultural adaptation will be touched upon and put into relation with Bollywood. The third chapter will discuss the research design of this study, providing a description of the methodology used, namely the qualitative content analysis, in order to analyze the process of the transcultural adaptation of *Laal Singh Chaddha.* The fourth chapter will present the results of this study and include an interpretation of the qualitative results, focusing on the cultural changes of the adaptation. Lastly, the fifth and final chapter will focus on answering the sub- and research question by drawing upon the results of this study and discussing the theoretical implications as well as the study's limitations and suggestions for future research.

Theoretical framework

This chapter will introduce the current state of the art behind the topic of this study. Here, relevant academic sources on the topic of globalization and transcultural adaptation will be introduced and subsequently brought into relation with Bollywood.

Globalization

During the second half of the 1980s, the term globalization became a commonly used label in academic fields such as cultural or media studies. However, each field discipline drafted their own definition of this term which led to the issue of not having a strict and unified interpretation of this idiom. Nevertheless, it can broadly be understood as a process of unifying the world.

Sociologist Roland Robertson (1990) has dealt with the topic of globalization and considered it as a rather recent phenomenon, noting the time between 1880-1925 as the crucial take-off period for globalization and arguing that this period marks a "concrete structuring of the world as a whole"; thus, where the world slowly becoming a "single place". (Robertson, 1990, p. 20).

Cultural theorist Arjun Appadurai (1996) expanded on this topic by introducing the idea of the so-called global cultural flows, proposing that globalization is driven by the interconnectedness and the flow of five distinct scapes (ethnoscapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes) which influence and shaping one another as cultures intersect and globally overlap. Coming to the description of each flow, he summarized these as follows: ethnoscape referring to the movement of people across boundaries, technoscape to the flow of technology, ideoscape to the flow of ideas, finanscape to the flow of money across political borders and lastly mediascape and its idea of media moving across borders. Therefore, this theory underscores the cultural diversity of the global flows and rejects the idea of homogenization.

In a later publication, Robertson (2007), in collaboration with scholar Kathleen E. White, returned to this subject and continues to state that it is a rather complex phenomenon, causing various disputes in academia and therefore leading to various definitions of this term. According to both scholars, the idea of globalization and its global recognition only started, as mentioned earlier, in the late 80s and early 90s or more specifically after the fall of the Berlin Wall. This event has commenced the idea that the world has become a "single place". However, they dismiss the conception that increased connectivity and interconnectedness are the sole features of globalization and therefore introduce three additional dimensions of globalization, namely economic, political, and cultural, with a specific focus on the latter. Consequently, Robertson and White (2007) refer to Ritzer's (2000) concept of "McDonaldinization', meaning the spread and domination of American brands, as a form of cultural globalization. Yet, instead of labelling it as a process of Westernizing, the world they state that these brands need to simultaneously incorporate global and local aspects in order to fit into the local market; therefore, coining the term glocalization and thus rejecting the intent action of naming

our current society as a globalized world since the process of glocalization makes it inevitable, taking into consideration that all ideas and practices must be adapted to local conditions.

In accordance with Robertson and White (2007) along with Appadurai (1996), cultural sociologist John Tomlinson (2007) sympathizes with the statement that the phenomenon of globalization is a complicated matter and, therefore in need of future research. He supports the idea of globalization referring to a network of global interconnections and interdependencies as well as the so-called flows which increase the level of global connectivity. However, Tomlinson (2007) upholds the claim that globalization does not lead to a unified world but instead to an uneven state where some areas experience a higher degree of flow than others; thus, being neglected or excluded from the global cultural flow. Previous assumptions that cultural globalization would lead to a form of cultural imperialism and a loss of culture, namely to the Westernization of the world, have been debunked by Tomlinson (2007), as well as Robertson and White (2007), since brands when talking about McDonaldization, do not carry Western cultural values; for that reason, globalization does not replace other cultures but instead brings them closer together, a process also referred to as "deterritorialization". Tomlinson (2007) states that this term refers to the erudition of geographical and social boundaries, leading to the "(…) integration of distant events, processes, and relationships into our everyday lives (…)" (Tomlinson, 2007, p. 361). Therefore, it not only transforms the local culture but also widens its horizon and promotes cultural openness and sensibility therefore exemplifying a new way of approaching cultural globalization.

In the following years, international communication scholar Daya Kishan Thussu (2007) picked up on the topic of media flows and stated that there is indeed an increase in network and formation in the global society. In his work *Media on the Move – Global flow and Contra-Flow* he expanded on Appadurai's approach by mapping the media flows and dividing these into two main streams, namely the dominant-, and contra (subaltern) flows, followed by a subcategorization into global, transnational, and geo-cultural flows (see Table 1).

Dominate flows	*Contra- (subaltern) flows*	
Global	Transnational	Geo-cultural
Hollywood	Bollywood	Phoenix
MTV	Al-Jazeera	Zee TV
Disney	Telenovelas	TRT-International
CNN	TV5	Al-Hayat
Discovery	Telesur	Baidu.com
BBC	Radio France Internationale	MBC
ESPN	CCTV-9	NHK World TV
Google	RTTV	Islamonline.net
CNBC	Euronews	Roj TV
Wall Street Journal	M-Net	
Japanese animation	Korean films	

Table 1: A typology of media flows (Thussu, 2007, p. 12)

According to Thussu (2007), media industries from central countries, such as the U.S and U.K, prove to be dominant flows whereas the media industries from peripheral countries, meaning the less developed countries such as India and Latin America, are regarded as transnational flows or subaltern flows. The third subcategory however is more specifically aimed at diasporic communities; thus, the dispersion of people from a single nation or common culture to various locations around the world. In this regard, he uses the example of the Indian television program Zee TV which is specifically aimed at the British Asian community due to their limited knowledge of Hindi. The two reasons which led to new opportunities for these media flows are, according to Thussu (2007), the increase of migration and its resulting process of deterritorialization as well as the expansion of digital technology and online communication, as these gave media companies the chance to expand their reach by operating transnationally rather than solely nationally. As a result, Western companies started to localize their content to create global popularity, in accordance with Robertson and White's (2007) notion of glocalization, while at the same time, southern media companies (India and Latin America) benefited from this development through the possibilities to collaborate, expand, and contribute with their own companies, also called "Easternization" or southern flows. Furthermore, Thussu (2007) addresses the assumption that the rise of subaltern flows would lead to more diversity in media which is, unfortunately, not the case. Instead, the imbalance between those flows still prevails as the dominant flows become increasingly stronger while the subaltern flows, and their global impact, are still restricted in their geo-cultural market; thus, the "soft" media powers continue to stay in an inferior position when compared to the 'hard" media powers from the Western market.

Lastly, scholars Enrique Uribe-Jongbloed and Espinosa-Media (2014) contributed to this discussion by stating that Thussu's (2007) division between dominant-, and contraflows could be seen as troublesome due to the issue of not having a clear distinction within the contraflow category, namely the transnational-, and geo-cultural flows. Therefore, he advocates for a further distinction of the contraflows into four distinctive types (see Table 2).

Type of flow	Source of Production	Destination of production
Core Markets	Hegemonic Audiovisual Production country (US, Western Europe, Japan)	Western Europe, Canada, US, Japan
Core to Peripheral Markets	Hegemonic Audiovisual Production country (US, Canada, Western Europe, Japan)	Any country (or countries) not belonging to the Core Market
Peripheral to Core Markets	Small or Regional Production Country (Latin-America, Asia, Eastern Europe)	Western Europe, Canada, US, Japan
Peripheral Markets	Small or Regional Production Country (Latin-America, Asia, Eastern Europe)	Any country (or countries) not belonging to the Core Markets

Table 2: Types of flow (Uribe-Jongbloed and Espinosa-Medina, 2013, p.5)

As seen in the illustration above, Uribe-Jongbloed and Espinosa-Medina (2014) demonstrate the complex dynamics of audiovisual media exchange on a global scale by highlighting the interactions between different markets and the circulation of cultural products across various regions. The first type of core markets describes the flow of audiovisual products within various dominant markets such as the US or Western Europe. The second type of core to periphery market delineates the exchange of media products from the core-, to peripheral markets such as movies from the US to smaller or less dominant markets such as Latin America and Asia. The third category of peripheral to core markets outlines the exchange of media products from small or less dominant markets to dominant market such as India's Bollywood movies to the US, for instance. Lastly, the fourth category of the peripheral markets represents the flow of regional products within the peripheral market itself such as the success of Bollywood movies in India.

Globalization and Bollywood

"It's the start of a revolution if you ask me… Indian films are going global."
(Chopra, 2006, as cited in Lorenzen, 2009, p.21)

Bollywood, India's vibrant film industry, exemplifies the profound impact of globalization on cinema. It is aesthetically and culturally distinct from Hollywood as they are characterized by their frequent song-dance sequences, melodrama, dramatic storylines, lavish production values and their emphasis upon stars and spectacle, resulting in the transcend of their national border and conquering the hearts of audiences worldwide. (Ganti, 2013). Therefore, its global reach exemplifies the dynamic interplay between cultural expression and the forces of globalization.

The topic of how globalization has aided the Hindi film industry has been widely discussed in academia with various scholars sharing the same arguments. Technological advancements such as the arrival of international TV in 1991, and the rapid and dramatic expansion of cable TV, satellite, and the digital platform market have increased the reach of Hindi movies beyond their borders. However, there are several other reasons why globalization has impacted the industry.

The first key factor for the expansion of Bollywood to its global scale is the Indian diasporic community. Scholar Mark Lorenzen (2000), states that after India's Independence in 1947, a great number of citizens relocated to other countries such as the US, UK, or Canada; thus, creating large areas of Indian diasporas. From the 90s onwards, Bollywood experienced an increase in their export numbers due to technological advancements and the boost of demand by Indian diasporic communities, which constituted a large chunk of their financial profits. Academics John Sinclair and Stuart Cunningham (2000) underpin the argument of migration and the flow of communication being

an integral part of Bollywood's success due to globalization. In accordance with Appadurai (1990), they too state that the various global flows, such as among the media-, techno-, ethnoscape, influence and shape one another; thus, correspondingly to Lorenzen (2000), the media flow has been set in motion by the demand of diasporic communities. They can be seen as the agent of the process due to their desire to stay connected to the culture of their homeland. Furthermore, owing to the fact that the diasporic community have to negotiate between their two identities, namely the cultural identity of their host-, and home country, they experience the struggle to retain strong links to both cultures; therefore, they can be seen as products of the so-called hybrid culture (Sinclair and Cunningham, 2000). The second factor for Bollywood's success is the key event of 1998 where Bollywood officially received the "industry" status from the Indian government. By being granted this status, filmmakers and companies were able to apply for grants and financial support from official rather than illegal sources, such as the underworld (Lorenzen, 2000). Additionally, this also led to an increase in funds and investments in film productions from international companies such as Sony or Walt Disney (Thussu, 2008). The third factor is the industry's competence of rapid adaptability. Conforming to Lorenzen (2000), India's film producers successfully managed to adapt to their diasporic audience by changing their well-known "masala" film formula, referring to the style of their movies by being a combination of various genres, to a so-called *global masala*, incorporating Western narrative and aesthetics to the original mix such as simpler narratives as well as new perceptions of modernity in terms of gender roles. Next to the local investments, as previously stated by Thussu (2008), Western companies also actively participated in film productions by developing so-called "cross-over" films, such as the movie *Bridge and Prejudice* (2004) or *Slumdog Millionaire* (2018) which exemplify Bollywood's storytelling prowess to a global audience due to the perfect blend of Bollywood and Western elements (Matusitz and Payano, 2012). Doing so, allowed film producers and makers to accommodate their audiences' tastes by "localizing, appropriating, and Indianizing (their content)" (Ganti, 2002, p.281, as cited in Rao, 2010). Additionally, scholar Shakuntala Rao (2010) claims that the industry has always been a so-called hybrid product, meaning that their movies have always mixed local and global attributes to please the Indian audience, referring back to Robertson's (1997) term of glocalization. By adapting and incorporating new aspects while maintaining their distinct Hindi film structure with their traditional culture and religious values, it ultimately gives these movies the final "Indian touch". Additionally, Hindi movies are also adjusted on the aspect of clothing (actors shall wear a mix of Western and traditional Indian clothes), locations (foreign stages shall be Indianized; namely; Indian actors shall be depicted in exotic locations), songs and dance (Bollywood's unique character, songs express the hidden feelings of the characters, lyrics displays a mix of English and Hindi as well as influences of genres like pop), and lastly the aspect of emotions (putting an emphasizes in depicting family emotion). Lastly, the aspect of foreign investments plays a crucial role in the industry's "rise to fame". On the one hand, wealthy members of the diasporic community (such as businessmen from the US or UK) provide funding to the various production houses (Lorenzen,

2000). On the other hand, due to the low penetration of US products in the Indian market as a result of their strong local industry, Bollywood has welcomed international film companies (e.g.: Walt Disney) to invest and encourage co-productions for their international audience which will equally result to enhanced accessibility of their content; thus, those practices are received as necessary to enable a strong Asian contraflow (Schäfer, 2012). However, Thussu (2008) states that this foreign interference could also lead to the loss of India's cultural distinctiveness. Ultimately, another form of investment comes in the form of several "talent pipelines", namely due to the influx of actors, producers, and talents from diasporic countries into the industry; therefore, contributing to Bollywood's strength in external scale economy and the aim to counteract the global expansion of American popular culture (Lorenzen, 2000; Schäfer, 2012).

In conclusion, the diverse perspectives offered by scholars like Robertson (2007), Appadurai (1996), Tomlinson (2007), Thussu (2007), and Uribe-Jongbloed and Espinosa-Medina (2014) shed light on the complex and multifaceted nature of globalization and its impact on cultural flows, media dynamics, and societal transformations. As we live in a globalized world, it becomes increasingly important to recognize the nuances and complexities inherent in these processes, fostering dialogue, understanding, and collaboration across diverse cultures and communities. This understanding is particularly relevant when analyzing the transcultural adaptation of films like *Laal Singh Chaddha*, where the interplay between global and local dynamics, the influence of diasporic communities, and the negotiation of cultural identities are essential factors in shaping the film's reception and success across different cultural contexts. Drawing from these scholars' insights enables us to gain a deeper understanding of how films such as *Laal Singh Chaddha* navigate the complexities of globalization while retaining their cultural authenticity and resonating with audiences worldwide.

Transcultural Adaptation

Transcultural adaption is a relatively niche area within adaptation studies; thus, having led to limited research in this field. However, it emerges as a captivating phenomenon where narratives travel across geographical, linguistic, and cultural boundaries to forge new paths of creative expression. Therefore, this chapter embarks on a nuanced exploration of this intricate landscape, delving into the complexities of adaptation as it navigates the interplay between fidelity to source material and cultural resonance with diverse audiences.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), the phenomenon of transcultural adaptation is describing a "process of chang(e) to suit (…) different conditions". When looking for a definition in academia, we can refer to English and American Studies Professor Margarida Esteves Pereira (2021) as she characterizes this phenomenon as "a relocat(ion of a) narrative (into a new) geographical and historical setting" (Pereira, 2021, p.423). In this form of adaptation, the degree of change can be more significant as it requires special attention towards the cultural traditions, customs, and audience

preferences of the new environment where both cultures must interact with each other to create a new product.

As the field of transcultural adaptation is a mere cornerstone within the broader field of adaptation studies it might be wise to get a broad view of the overarching field. American academic and film scholar Thomas Leitch (2017) categorized the field of adaptation studies into four phases, starting with the first phase, also referred to as adaptation studies 0.0, dating from the late 19th to 1950s. Here, the focus is set on the "possibility and advisability of turning novels or plays into movies" (Leitch, 2017, p.2). The second phase, namely adaptation 1.0, dates from 1957 to 1988 and "establishes adaption studies as a methodology and a field" (Leitch, 2017, p.3). The third phase, adaptation studies 2.0, spans from 1999-2010 and is marked by its focus on the principle of intertextuality; thus, it centres on the relationship and co-presence between two texts. Here, authors such as Stam (2000) and Hutcheon (2012) are of great importance. Additionally, scholars of this area became "more emphatic (towards the rejection) of fidelity criticism" (Leitch, 2017, p.5). The fourth and final phase, namely adaptation 3.0, started in 2011 is still ongoing. This period is marked by "an embrace in digital technology (and) an increasing pervasive suspicion of the limits of intertextuality as a methodological framework" (Leitch, 2017, p.5). At last, he states that there are four fundamental questions regarding adaptation studies; namely, the question of what counts as an adaption, the issue of fidelity, whether it should be analytical and evaluative, and the value of case studies within this field. Yet, even with its existing history, it remains rather insignificant within the realm of adaptation studies.

Numerous scholars contributed to this field by publishing various books and articles on this matter. One of the earlier works on transcultural adaptation originates from American film theorist Dudley Andrew (1984). He contributes to the field by mapping out three modes of adaptation, namely the mode of borrowing, intersecting, and fidelity of transformation. The first mode describes the 1:1 adaptation of a work where elements from the source material are directly incorporated into the adapted version, such as the dialogue, plot, or themes of the original source. The second mode exemplifies a form of intersecting where the adapted work intersects with the source material but also diverges it in significant ways. Therefore, certain elements align with the source material, but new aspects can be integrated such as the introduction of new characters of subplots. The third mode of fidelity refers to the degree to which the adapted film is faithful to the core theme, messages and spirit of the original source while undergoing the transformation from one culture to another. Starting from the 1990s to the 2000s, scholars moved away from the topic of fidelity and instead focused on the aspect of intertextuality dealing with the relationship and co-presence between two texts.

American film theorist Robert Stam (2000) represents one example from this group of scholars who deals with the aspect of intertextuality in his work *Beyond fidelity: The Dialogic of Adaptation.* He states that adaptations are not just mere copies and that each medium has its own specificity, implying that a story cannot be 100% adapted from one medium or another and is

therefore in need of change. On that account, this argument is also valid in regard to transcultural adaptations as stories, when moving across geographical and cultural boundaries, have to adapt to local circumstances such as cultural differences. Consequently, Stam (2000) advocates looking at this phenomenon from a new perspective; namely, seeing adaptations as translations and an ongoing dialogical process. Furthermore, he refers to scholar Gerade Genette (1982) and his concept of the five textualities, focusing on the aspect of hypertextuality. In this light, film adaptations can be seen as hypertexts as they are being transformed and modified; for instance, by changing the plot or characters from the prior source. Lastly, Stam (2000) affirms the argument that adaptation studies suffer from being narrowly focused on the aspect of fidelity.

Gary R. Bortolotti and Linda Hutcheon (2007) are some of the first scholars to draw an analogy to the field of biology. According to them, previous discussions in the field of transcultural adaptations stated that the success of an adaptation can be measured in whether the new product stayed faithful to the source material; however, Borlotti and Hutcheon (2007) introduced a new perspective to look at this argumentation, namely by seeing stories equivalent to organisms which can replicate and change countless times to create something new. Adjustments can be on several levels such as regarding the cultural references within the movie in order to fit into the new environment. Ultimately, seeing the new product as independent work rather than a mere copy it will further assist in silencing the debate on fidelity. Several years later, Hutcheon (2012) published an independent work to continue the conversation at hand by moving it to a more productive and critical territory by seeing adaptations as cultural artefacts and original art forms; therefore, rejecting the discourse surrounding fidelity as it creates a false hierarchy within the arts. Hence, she refers to stories as "palimpsectic", meaning that they can change and repeat over time, as mentioned before. Furthermore, she states that adaptations must meet three criteria's, namely acknowledging the status of being an adaptation in the first place, being creative in their interpretation of the work, and that they must have some sort of intertextual engagement with the original source material. She considers adaptations as a "double vision", being a product and process alike. Therefore, the adaptation must differ from the original source to some extent while at the same time keeping its essence and it must appropriate the material while giving it a new meaning. Furthermore, Hutcheon (2012) encourages us to ask four important questions when talking about this topic: first, what kind of adaptation is it, meaning in which medium? Who adapted the source material and what were their motives? How did the audience react to the final product? Where and when was it created and received? These questions play a pivotal role when evaluating the adaptation of a work. The question of the motives behind making adaptations in the first place has been already answered by this scholar in her earlier work. Based on Hutcheon (2006), the motivations behind producing adaptations include: "economic incentives, legal constrains, cultural capital, and personal and policy drives" (as cited in Wang, 2023, p. 9).

The last scholar included in this chapter is Timothy Corrigan (2017). As specified by him and the previously mentioned scholars, adaptation studies had three primary motives throughout history, being seen "as an evolutionary process, as a product whose elation to a source is fidelity and infidelity, and as intertextual relations engaged through reception" (Corrigan, 2017, p.1). In agreement with Hutcheon (2012), Corrigan (2017) sees adaptations as a process and a product alike but adds a third layer to it, namely the act of reception where the audience actively adapts their experience as a means of enjoyment and comprehension. He too brings up the talks about fidelity being a cornerstone in the field of adaptation studies which, in his opinion, does not refer to the commitment to the source material but instead to the authors "personal and textual commitment to faithful change, personal passion, and continual transformation" (Corrigan, 2017, p.2). Here, we can see an alignment with Margarida Esteves Pereira's (2021) work which defines it as the act of retelling a story in a different context as a process of transformation. On that account, she states that globalization enhances this process by a vast amount. Additionally, he joins the likes of Robert Stam (2000) and Linda Hutcheon (2021) by supporting their arguments of using terms and metaphors such as "hybrid" and "mutation" to talk about adaptations and precedes by stressing the fact that perceptions in this field are in constant flow which makes it difficult to set one fixed definition of the term of adaptation.

Transcultural Adaptation and Bollywood

"The impulse to repeat, adapt, or remake might be as old as the movies themselves."

(Richards, 2011, p. 343)

Transcultural film adaptation in Bollywood is a relatively niche but growing research field which involves the reimagining of global narratives within the rich cultural landscape of India, resulting in films that blend familiar stories with local traditions and values. This showcases how Bollywood integrates the essence of international works into the Indian socio-cultural context. By doing so, Bollywood not only broadens its cinematic repertoire but also creates films that resonate deeply with Indian audiences.

When looking at the area of research, there are only a handful of scholars who have dealt with this topic such as independent academic researcher Neelam Sidhar Wright (2009) who contributed to the discussion by stating that arguments surrounding fidelity and loyalty of the adaptations have been a constant in this field, taking away the notion of seeing these movies as a form of artistic interpretation (McFarlane, 1996, as cited in Wright, 2009). However, this has changed within the last years due to the meaningful contributions of scholars such as Stam (2000) and Borlotti and Hutcheon (2007), shifting the focus towards interpretation (see previous chapter). Doing so offers remakes and adaptations the possibility to "produce new identities" in order to resist original texts; therefore, creating movies which are a fusion of Western and Indian culture (Mazdon, 2000, as cited in Wright,

2009). Contrary to the common belief that the industry experiences a lack of creativity or talent, the motives behind adopting foreign narratives lie in the process of globalization, the progress of rapid modernization, as well as experimentation. Additionally, Wright (2009) stresses the fact that changes in adaptations and remakes must be done so that Indian audiences can access and enjoy these foreign works, which subsequently leads to a reduction of foreign conventions. This could also be seen as an impulse to rewrite the past and blur existing cultural boundaries; thus, a reverse colonialism. Furthermore, the "Indianization" of foreign movies could lead, on the one hand, to the loss of the Indian identity as traditional conventions are sacrificed to appeal to a global audience but on the one hand, we can see in many examples that Hindi cinema does not forget its roots as they incorporate various cultural elements when adapting foreign narratives such as, of instance, through the inclusion of a religious element. Therefore, Bollywood remakes and adaptations can be seen as either the collapse of the Indian identity or the beginning of something new. Scholar Ally Ostrowski (2007) supports the argument of seeing religion as an important part of the adaptation process since it plays an essential role in the life of Indians. Moreover, she brings forwardd the argument to see adaptations of American movies as translations rather than 1:1 replication; moreover, foreign narratives should be used as a framework in which cultural references can be included in the adaptations.

Scholar Rashna Wadia Richards (2011) represents another scholar who explored the topic of Bollywood remakes. By using the critical lens of transculturalism, she examines how adaptations and remakes navigate the twofold of borrowing elements from Western cinema and asserting their unique Indian touch on it; thus, focusing on transcultural film adaptations. According to Richards (2011), Bollywood remakes involve the translation of American movies into the Indian cultural-, and social context to suit the local audience, implying a reconstruction of the narrative as supported by Stam (2000) and Ostrowski (2007). He states that in the last couple of years, the process of "Indianizing" foreign content has accelerated due to globalization and the contribution of the younger generation of filmmakers who grew up with Western movies and therefore let themselves be inspired by borrowing or adapting these narratives into their local productions; yet this has been mostly neglected in adaptation studies. For that reason, as stated by Richards (2011), it is crucial to study how movies cross borders and "how cultures embrace and resist, borrow from and interact with each other"; thus, proposing the term glocal masala film (Richards, 2011, p. 344).

In 2013, Indian anthropological and film scholar Tejaswini Ganti published her book titled *Bollywood – A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema* which she dedicated to the Hindi film's history and development to this day. Here, she touches on several topics one of them being the phenomenon of remakes and adaptations within the industry. According to Ganti (2013), India is well known for copying Hollywood movies and their directors being open about their sources of inspiration. However, they do not choose the movies based on their success but on their plots and the ease of "Indianizing" their narratives, as previously implied by Richards (2011). Therefore, three main elements are used: namely, the addition of emotions, the insertion of songs, and the expansion of their

narratives. Hollywood's single-track narratives are expanded upon to match local audiences' tastes and overall allow for greater complexity. Furthermore, Ganti (2013) uses the term "masala", in accordance with the previously mentioned scholar Lorenzen (2000), to refer to the Hindi film industry as their movies are usually a blend of a multitude of genres in order to appeal to a vast variety of spectators. Although many critics argue that the use of the masala recipe is driven by economical reasons (namely, to make their content available to a broader audience), this is not the sole reason as filmmakers' main objective is to offer an emotional roller coaster for their audiences through the depiction of diverse feelings.

Following the work of Ganti (2013) and her approach to the so-called "Indianization" strategies, scholars Heinze and Krämer (2015) extended this avenue by contributing three potential new additions to this scheme, namely the role of the star, the references to Indian politics, and the references to multiple sources. First, stars play an important factor in the local industry, be it in whether a film gets made or how many people will buy a ticket to go to the cinema. Ultimately, it is just as important to have a well-known start play in a movie as it is to have a captivating storyline. Second, since the 90s movies do not deploy their famous "masala" recipe anymore when producing new movies; instead, universal themes such as gender relations and family relationships or political relations are put into the focus. Lastly, in addition to extending the original narratives, Bollywood movies also borrow multiple scenes or references from various works to create a new overall story. Heinze and Krämer (2013) explain that the multitude of remakes and adaptations is mainly possible due to Hollywood's low penetration into the Indian market and the audiences' affection towards their domestic celebrities. Owing to the relatively unfamiliarity of foreign movies, Bollywood filmmakers appropriate their content and manage to avoid the hassle of obtaining official remake or adaptation rights. Furthermore, they support the argument that "(a) remake in Bollywood (…) can never literally imply a remake, for the popular Hindi film is heavily circumscribed by the expectations and demands of its audience" (Nayar, 2013, as cited in Heinze and Krämer (2015). Ultimately, it is because of the industry's poor image that filmmakers decide to make the effort to secure the official rights for their adaptations.

Lastly, film studies lecturer Iain Robert Smith (2016) and his work "The Hollywood Meme" investigates the phenomenon of transnational adaptations of Hollywood movies around the world, one of them being the Bollywood industry in India. He details the extent of their impact and introduces a new model of interrogating transnational flows and exchange, namely the theoretical framework of the "meme". Just like the previously mentioned scholars Stam (2000) and Hutcheon (2007), Smith (2016) draws a comparison to the field of biology which defines this term the meme as a "unit of culture which spreads and replicates, (and ultimately transforms) itself" to fit into a new habitat (Smith 2016, p. 31). When applied to the field of transnational and/or transcultural adaptation, the focus is set on "how characters, plots, and textual forms (…) are appropriated and re-used in films around the world" (Smith, 2016, p.14). Therefore, this allows us to examine the reasons why and how

films are adopted in the first place. In the fourth chapter of his book, he focuses on the film industry in Mumbai as they have a long tradition of adapting and remaking foreign movies. Additionally, since American texts are considered to be "narrative transparent", meaning that they rarely entail historical or cultural elements, it makes it easier to be adapted by other cultures (Olson, 19999, as cited in Smith, 2016). Therefore, the foreign content is being Indianized by the local culture to suit the audience's preferences. For that reason, Bollywood, and many other industries, find it easier to localized pre-existing movies instead of creating new narratives since this is seen to be less risky in terms of revenues. Even so, considering that the number of remakes and adaptations have increased within the last couple of years and the fact that dubbing has been prohibited in India, many US companies started to settle in India to get actively involved in the production processes. Ever since then, the industry has felt the pressure to acknowledge the sources used for their adaptations in fear of potential legal actions, as previously stated by Heinze and Krämer (2015).

In conclusion, transcultural adaptation offers valuable insights into the complexities of storytelling across cultural boundaries. From foundational phases outlined by Leitch (2017) to nuanced perspectives of scholars like Stam (2000) and Hutcheon (2012), the field has evolved to embrace the dynamic nature of globalized narratives. Analyzing *Laal Singh Chaddha* within this framework illuminates how Bollywood navigates the translation of foreign narratives into the Indian cultural landscape. Insights from scholars like Richards (2011), Ganti (2013), and Heinze and Krämer (2015) highlight the fusion of global and local elements in adaptations. Moreover, Smith's concept of the "meme" sheds light on how films like *Laal Singh Chaddha* appropriately transform foreign texts to suit Indian audiences.

Methodology

This research will use qualitative content analysis to examine how Bollywood culturally adapted the foreign movie *Forrest Gump* to make it suitable for their Indian audience. Choosing this method will allow for an in-depth analysis of the movie by examining themes such as the cultural context and setting, character adaptation, and plot adaptation. Doing so will ultimately lead to the answer to the question of how the adaptation navigates the cultural differences to resonate with their target audience.

Content analysis

Qualitative content analysis is being used to examine the following research question:

What changes were made in Laal Singh Chaddha compared to the original film Forrest Gump?

According to Schreier (2013) as well as Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), this research method involves "the subjective interpretation of (data) through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns", whose main features include the reduction of data, a systematic analysis, and a high level of flexibility (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1278, as cited in Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009, p.1). Developing a coding frame entails the concentration of data into categories or themes based on the interpretation of the researcher by using either an inductive approach (data-driven), a deductive approach (concept-driven) or a combination of both (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). The former makes use of codes which are developed while reviewing the data; thus, emerging from the data set itself. This method is beneficial when little to no research has been done on a specific topic. The latter, however, uses a set of predetermined codes which are developed before reviewing the data and based on the research question itself or the theoretical framework. Even though this method allows for a more focused analysis of the content it must be noted that one can also miss out on key insights due to the narrow focus of this practice (Grad Coach, 2022). By using a codebook for this type of analysis aids the process of verifying conclusions and providing a clear, effective, and constant guideline when examining the data (Delve and Limpaecher, 2024).

This study used qualitative content analysis to investigate the transcultural adaptation of *Laal Singh Chaddha* by developing a tailored codebook to systematically explore how cultural elements and themes were adapted and reinterpreted to resonate with the Indian cultural context. Therefore, an inductive approach was carried out while integrating the insights provided by the theoretical framework.

The initial approach started by getting familiarized with the content itself by watching the original *Forrest Gump* and its adaptation of *Laal Singh Chaddha* while taking detailed notes on key scenes, characters, dialogues, and cultural elements. Next, the initial coding began by identifying codes which captured elements related to the topic of transcultural adaptation such as the cultural context, narrative changes, and character portrayals; here, the focus was set on diverse aspects of the cultural adaptation observed in *Laal Singh Chaddha.* Consequently, one looked for patterns and connections within the coded data to analyze how different scenes and narrative choices reflect the adaptation strategies which aimed to make the storyline and character culturally appropriate for the Indian audience. The insights of the theoretical framework were used to guide the interpretation of the patterns. Integrating the concepts into the analyses, allowed for a deeper understanding of why these choices were made and how they contributed to making the adaptation culturally appropriate for the

Indian audience. Subsequently, the analysis was refined by collapsing or expanding certain codes to get organized into broader themes and categories which served as overarching patterns of the transcultural adaptation of *Laal Singh Chaddha*, followed by a discussion of how the concepts support the observed patterns and how they explain the changes (Table 3.)

Categories	Codes	Sub-codes
Cultural context and setting	Historical and social context	Depiction of historical events
		Reflection to contemporary social issues
	Cultural references	Themes of family and community
		Societal challenges and solutions
Character adaptation	Character background	Socio-economic status
		Educational and professional background
	Behavior and interaction	Gender roles and expectations
Plot adaptation	Storyline changes	Major plot division from the original
	Key events	Adaptation of iconic scenes

Table 3: Self-developed codebook for analyzing the transcultural adaptation of *Laal Singh Chaddha*

Sampling

The purpose of this section is to outline the process and criteria used to select the sources for analyzing the transcultural adaptation of *Laal Singh Chaddha*. The focus has been set on this movie since it proves to be the most recent example of a transcultural film adaptation in Bollywood.

The sampling for this study includes the original film of *Forrest Gump* and its Indian counterpart. The original version follows the story of Forrest Gump, a man with a low IQ, experiencing key historical events in the United States from the 50s to the 80s. Despite his limitations, Forrest leads an extraordinary life as he becomes a college football star, a Vietnam War hero, a successful business owner, and a devoted father. context by portraying significant events of Indian history, such as the anti-Sikh riots from 1984, and spanning the time the 70s to the 2010s. The main character Laal is a Sikh from Punjab, integrating Punjabi culture and Sikh identity, unlike Forrest's Southern American background. His love interest Rupa reflects the societal challenges faced by Indian women, paralleling Jenny's troubled life in the original movie. Supporting characters are reimagined within Indian contexts, and iconic scenes are adapted with local flavours; therefore, keeping the essence of the original source but infusing it with Indian cultural references and an

emotional tone to ensure that it resonates with its Indian audience. Consequently, this movie has been chosen due to the high degree of recognition and its significance to American film studies obtained through its cinematic achievement, as it successfully integrated the American actor Tom Hanks and his character into various historical footage, as well as its cultural impact, through its reflection on America's history by addressing the Vietnam War, the Watergate Scandal, and the Civil Rights Movement; thus, resulting in a discussion of the country's cultural identity.

To gather relevant sources for the theoretical framework, various search engines such as Google Scholar, Scopus and Jstor have been used with the associated keywords of Bollywood remake, Bollywood adaptation, Transcultural film adaptation, Adaptation, and Globalization of Bollywood. Subsequently, various scholars from the field of adaptation-, film-, and cultural studies and their work have been chosen to gain a theoretical foundation for this research, namely the works of Stam (2000), Wright (2009), Ostrowski (2007), Hutcheon (2007), Richards, (2011), Ganti, (2013), Heinze and Krämer (2015), as well as Smith (2016). Here, only works relevant to the above-mentioned research question and its cultural focus were selected and used to develop the codebook for the analysis of the movies.

Operationalization

The purpose of this section is to define how the concepts and codes were measured and interpreted to study the transcultural adaptation of *Laal Singh Chaddha*; thus, the process of culturally transforming and modifying the source material to fit into the Indian cultural context. Herefore, qualitative content analysis has been used, while focusing on an inductive approach, with the integration of the theoretical framework. Therefore, the following measurements were used:

Categories	Codes	Sub-codes	Description
Cultural context and setting	Historical and social context	Depiction of historical events	Identify and analyze scenes depicting significant historical events relevant to the Indian cultural context
		Reflection to contemporary social issues	Examine scenes addressing contemporary social issues relevant to the Indian cultural context, such as religious discrimination
	Cultural references	Themes of family and community	Analyze scenes illustrating the importance of family and community in the Indian cultural context
		Societal challenges and solutions	Identify how the film addresses societal challenges in the Indian cultural context and proposes solutions.
Character adaptation	Character background	Socio-economic status	Describe characters' socio-economic backgrounds as adapted to the Indian cultural context, and how these backgrounds influence their roles and actions.
		Educational and professional background	Examine characters' educational journeys and professional lives, detailing how these aspects are portrayed in the Indian cultural context.
	Behavior and interaction	Gender roles and expectations	Analyze scenes depicting traditional gender roles and expectations in the Indian cultural context, and how these roles influence characters' behavior and interactions.
Plot adaptation	Storyline changes	Major plot division from the original	Compare major plot points, like the introduction of new characters or events specific to the Indian cultural context and analyze how these changes impact the overall narrative.
	Key events	Adaptation of iconic scenes	Identify iconic scenes from the original film and analyze their adaptations, focusing on how these scenes are localized to make it significant to the Indian cultural context

Table 4: Self-developed codebook for analyzing the transcultural adaptation of *Laal Singh Chaddha*

Steps of analysis

The research aims to study how Laal Singh Chaddha navigates the process of transcultural adaptation to make the storyline and characters appropriate for the Indian audience. The first step of the analysis was to get familiar with the content itself by watching movies and noting certain key elements to start the initial codding process on themes related to transcultural adaptation. The second step was to analyze the chosen scenes and identify the adaptation strategies used to transform the narrative for the Indian audience while using the insight from the theoretical framework. Lastly, the codes were refined, adjusted, and organized into themes and the theory used to explain the observed changes. This method allowed us to answer the sub-question of what changes were made in the adaptation, leading us to the conclusion of the main research question of this study.

Validity and reliability

This section will address the important aspects of validity and reliability when conducting this research, as both aspects are important to ensure the collection of 'trustworthy" findings. Before diving into the specificities regarding this research's case study, it is important to outline the definition of both terms. While the notion of validity refers to the "precisions in which findings accurately reflect the data" the notion of reliability refers to the "consistency of the analytical procedures, including accounting for personal and research method biases that may have influenced the findings" (Noble and Smith, 215, p.2).

Regarding the analysis of *Laal Singh Chaddha*, validity was ensured by modelling the research design with the insights provided by the theoretical framework to align with the research questions of this study. Furthermore, drawing on the theoretical framework of cultural transduction, it aimed to capture the complex interplay of cultural elements and negotiation processes which are inherent in the adaptation process. When looking at the aspect of reliability, this has been ensured by the fact that this research was developed in a clear and standardized protocol for data collection, coding, and analysis. Furthermore, regular coder checks were conducted to assess the consistency of interpretations and minimize individual biases. Besides, the analytical process has been documented in detail, including any deviations which may have been found. This transparency allows for the possibility of replicating this study with the included framework by future researchers. However, potential biases might affect the validity and reliability of the analysis; thus, Noble and Smith (2015) suggested several strategies to prevent this from happening. As proposed by the authors, research bias was mitigated through reflexivity and awareness of own cultural background and perspectives. Second, confirmation bias was minimized by actively seeking out alternative interpretations and considering contradictory evidence; thus, using a triangulation of data. Third, cultural bias was addressed by engaging with diverse perspectives and consulting members of the relevant cultural

community to ensure cultural sensitivity and accuracy during the analysis. Finally, selection bias was minimized by employing a comprehensive and inclusive approach to data collection, incorporating a diverse range of primary and secondary sources.

Results

This section presents the findings of the qualitative content analysis of *Laal Singh Chaddha* in comparison to its source material and will focus on themes identified within the categories of cultural context and setting, character adaptation, and plot adaptation, which subsequently leads to the answer of the sub-and research question.

Cultural context and setting

Historical and social context

Depiction of historical events

Forrest Gump and Laal Singh Chaddha are cinematic gems which incorporate their fictional character into real historical events. Whereas the former displays Forrest's journey through iconic moments of American history, the latter reimagines the narrative lens to the perspective of Indian history. This section explores how these films depict and present three specific historical events and the underlying contemporary social and political issues of their countries.

The first historical reference depicted in *Forrest Gump* is the assassination of John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963. After winning the game for his college football team, Forrest was invited to the White House to meet President J.F.K and receive the honorific title of an all-American athlete, which is being awarded to outstanding U.S. athletes. Shortly after meeting the president, Forrest runs to the bathroom which is followed by a scene showing archive footage of J.F. K's assassination and Forrest saying that "somebody has shot that nice president when he was riding his car" (Forrest Gump, 1992, 00:29:42-00:31:08). America's President J.F.K was assassinated in 1963 while touring through the state of Texas with his wife Lady Jackie Onassis and the Texas Governor John Connally. Even though one man has been arrested for his potential murder there was no clear evidence against him: therefore, leading to his release and a mystery of his death (Waxman, 2023). This event was of great significance for the U.S which explains its inclusion in the movie. Not only did it lead to a state of national mourning with its population being saddened and shocked by the news of his death, but also to a state of political instability as well as a cultural shift in the public's perception and opinion towards the authority and government, fueling a "climate of mistrust" (Waxman, 2023; Sheatsley and Feldman, 1964).

In *Laal Singh Chaddha* this reference has been replaced with the event of Operation Blue Star and the resulting anti-Sikh riots of 1984 in India as it parallels the significance of J.F.K's assassination. During a flashback scene, we see a young Laal and his family witnessing the bombing of the Golden Temple in Amritsar. His mom takes him inside their house where they hide for the next four days, telling her son that they can't go out due to a dangerous "malaria" epidemic which is spreading across the country. A few months later, Laal and his mother moved to Delhi to stay with their relatives. One day, the whole family decided to take a tour through the city and take some pictures in front of the house of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi from where they suddenly heard gunshots coming. This scene is followed by archive footage presented on the TV broadcast announcing the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her two Sikh bodyguards as an act of revenge on the invasion of their holy Sikh shrine, namely the Golden Temple in Amritsar in June 1984. Following this news, Mrs. Singh grabs her son and calls a rickshaw to hurry home. However, on their way they meet a mob of angry men attacking a Sikh in front of their eyes by beating him up and burning him alive. Being spotted by the mob, mother and son run away to hide with Laal's mother taking off his turban to cut his hair to not be recognized as a Sikh. Moments later we observe Laal and his mother watching the archive footage of Ghandi's funeral on TV, followed by the flash-forward scene of Laal sitting in the train and telling this story to fellow travellers as one of them says that these were "terrible days" for their people (Laal Singh Chaddha, 2022, 00:21:00-00:28:25). As the movie already alludes to, prime minister Indira Ghandi has been indeed assassinated by her two Sikh bodyguards who wanted to avenge the violent removal of their people from the holy temple. These episodes of events led to widespread outrage and unrest across the country as well as mistrust towards the Sikh community, giving rise to a humanitarian crisis with thousands of Sikhs being killed and their houses and shops burned down to ashes, ultimately leading to a long-lasting scar on the collective memory of the community (SikhNet, n.d.).

The second historical reference made in *Forrest Gump* is the inclusion of the Vietnam War, which took place from 1955-1975. After his graduation we see Forrest being approached by a soldier who asks him whether he thought of his future while handing him a flyer of the U.S. recruiting centre, leading him to join the army and being sent to fight in Vietnam (Forrest Gump, 1992, 00:31:33-00:36:12, 00:40:41-00:56:25). This war took place between the North and South Vietnam with the former wanting the country's unification to a communist regime. During the war, the North was supported by other communist countries such as the Soviet Union and China whilst the South was supported by the U.S and anti-communist allies with the aim to stop communism from spreading, eventually leading to a proxy war between the U.S and Soviet Union (History.com Editors, 2024). This event exemplifies a significant and defining moment in U.S history as it left a cultural and social mark on America's society as well as the nation's psyche and culture. It not only caused the death of millions of Americans, leading to the country's second most violent war in relation to the number of

deaths, but also to the physical and psychological scars of their soldiers (TimeWarp Chronicles, 2023).

To parallel the experience of the Vietnam War, *Laal Sign Chaddha* replaced the event with the Kargil War of 1999. Unlink the original movie, Laal decides to go to the army by himself since his father and grandfathers also served in the Indian army. After going through four years of basic training, he is posted to Kargil with the mission to "eliminate the enemies" who set up bunkers on Indian territory (Laal Singh Chaddha, 2022, 00:44:46–00:45:25, 00:57:10-01:10:00). The Kargil War of 1999 took place between India and Pakistan with each side wanting to claim the territory of Kashmir for themselves, eventually leading to a war among nations and an enhanced rivalry between Hindus and Muslims (Fareed, 2019). This war represents the most recent emotionally charged incident in India's history, leading to changes in diplomatic relations with Pakistan as the international community condemned their action of starting the fire. Additionally, this conflict led to further instability in the region, relying on the need for dialogue between both nations (Bharati, 2022; Vox, 2019).

The third reference touches upon the incident of the desegregation of the University of Alabama on June 11, 1963. On his way to university, Forrest seems to be confused of the big crowd standing in front of his class, leading to him approaching another student to ask for the cause of this run up. The student, seemingly hostile about this incident, replies that "coons are trying to get into school", referring to two Afro-American students. A few minutes later, we see archive footage of Governor Wallace and several state troopers standing at the doorway of the building while the two students are entering the building (Forrest Gump, 1994, 00:22:41- 00:24:20). In 1963, U.S. President John F. Kennedy mobilized national guard troops and dispatched them to the University of Alabama to ensure its desegregation as it was the last all-white university of the state. However, Governor George Wallace was firmly against the idea of desegregation and promised in his election period to prevent this from happening by, if necessary, standing in front of the doorway himself. Yet, Wallace was powerless against the order of the president who instructed him, through a messenger, to step aside; therefore, deliberately making way for the two students (History.com Editors, 2024). This occasion was a pivotal moment for the Civil Rights Moment whose aim was to end racial discrimination in the states and fight for equal rights of Black American citizens. This incident represents the power of the government over federal law as it aggressively enforced this rule by sending National Guard troops to Alabama to ensure the execution of their order, leading to a nationwide increase in the support of the civil rights reform and its public awareness of the injustice faced by Black Americans; therefore, paving the way for greater diversity and integration of African Americans within the United States (History.com Editors, 2024; History.com Editors, 2024).

In *Laal Singh Chaddha*, this reference was replaced with the Mandal Commission of 1990 as it mirrors the aspect of fighting against inequality. While attending college, we see Laal passing through a corridor with the walls being vandalized and embellished with the slogan of "Mandal is

Bundal" while hearing students yelling "VP Singh, step down!' in the background (Laal Singh Chaddha, 2022, 00:39:15- 00:39:30). On August 7, 1990, the Indian government accepted the Mandal Commission report which aimed to improve the status of socially and educationally backwarded classes (SEBC) by reserving them 27% of governmental and educational institution seats. The commission had a significant impact on India's society as it provided access and opportunities for SEBC's which were previously only reserved for upper caste classes.; therefore, promoting social justice and to a reduce of inequality. However, this mandate led to political realignments as it mobilized upper caste communities who fought for the abolition of this commission since, according to them, it led to a new form of discrimination which would discern the upper classes (Indian Express, 2015). Consequently, this development proves that caste-based discrimination still prevails in India's society.

The adaptation of Laal Singh Chaddha underwent several changes when it came to the historical references made in the movie. While relocating the story to an Indian context, deliberate choices have been made to localize the narrative to make it resonate with its audience and reflect the cultural and historical context of India since it reflects the geopolitical realties and concurs of their country. (Smith, 2016; Richards, 2011). The relocation of the story can be seen as an interpretation of the original source and as a somewhat creative challenge for the movie maker. According to Wright (2009) and Richards (2011), changes have to be made so that the Indian audience can enjoy the foreign work as they might not be familiar with the specific geopolitical context of the original source, leading to a reduced engagement with the story. Noting that most of the changed historical references are related to the topic of religion, this supports the argument this aspect is important when it comes to adapting a foreign convention to an Indian context (Wright, 2009; Richards, 2011; Ostrowski, 2007).

Reflection on contemporary social and political issues

Forrest Gump touches upon numerous historical references related to the racial discrimination of African Americans. References are made upon Forrest being named after General Nathan Bedford Forrest, an early member of the Ku Klux Klan which is a white-supremacist and far-right group from the U.S, the depiction of the desegregation of the University of Alabama and the attempted blockade by Governor George Wallace, as well as Jenny becoming a part of the Black Panthers,

Looking at contemporary examples of social injustice in the U.S, we can see the prevailing racism towards the Black community on several levels. First, the subject of segregation and unequal access to education is still prevalent in present-day society, impacting potential opportunities for African American students. Furthermore, one can observe the disparities in school funding and resources, causing a lack of educational quality for these communities. Second, one can observe a disparity in the healthcare system in terms of its service and quality as the budgets are significantly lower for African Americans when compared to other races. Third, Black and African Americans have to consciously endure racial profiling and brutality which shows a difference in law enforcement, causing a great wave of protests and calls for reforms with the most recent one being the

Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) (Soken-Huberty, n.d.). The BLM movement fights against racism, discrimination, and inequality towards African Americans in the states which began with the death of the 17-year-old Black American Trayvon Martin at the hands of a white neighborhood volunteer George Zimmerman in Florida, in 2012 and further accelerated through the deaths of African American women Breonna Taylor and the Black American George Floyd, both through the hands of white police officers (Asmelash, 2020).

In contrast, *Laal Singh Chaddha* touches upon the discrimination of the Sikh community and the long-lasting conflict between the Hindus and Muslims within India. The former is referred to through the inclusion of the anti-Sikh riots from 1985, fuelled by Gandhi's assassination, and the latter through the addition of the Kargil War from 1999, examining the conflict between the Muslims and Hindus.

Referring to the social issues of contemporary India, both disputes still prevail. After the Partition of India in 1947 the British divided the state of Punjab into two by assigning one part to India, with. a majority Hindu population, and the other part to Pakistan, a majority Muslim population (History with Hilbert, 2023). Punjab is the home of the religious minority group of the Sikhs which currently make up only 1,7% of the Indian total population (Pew Research, 2021). During the continuous tension between India and Pakistan, the Sikh population suffered the most as did not see themselves as belonging to either of them, leading to several independent movements with the effort to emancipate themselves from both parties in order to become their own independent state of Khalistan (DW Documentary, 2020). These political revolts continue to this day with demonstrations happening within the country as well as outside, such as the recent demonstrations in front of the Indian consulate in Toronto, Canada, orchestrated by the Sikh diaspora (BBC, 2023). Discrimination against the Sikh community can be seen in terms of their limited access to education, fewer employment opportunities, and Sikhs being victimized through violence and hate crimes (Khalid, 2013). On the other hand, we can see the continuation of the Hindu/Muslim conflict within India which has been present over centuries but accelerated after the Partition of India in 1947 when British India was divided into Pakistan and India with Muslim moving to the former and Hindus staying in India. However, a small minority of the Muslims population stayed in India which led to sporadic tensions between both parties. Key events include the demolition of the Muslim temple Babri Masjid by Hindu nationalists who wanted to build a temple in its place and the Kashmir conflict with both countries claiming the region for themselves (Lazaro, 2002).

By replacing the American historical and contemporary social issues with implications related to India, as described in the previous section, it can be perceived as a translation of the material (Stam 2000, Borlotti and Hutcheon, 2007). Core themes such as the impact of the events experienced by the U.S have been preserved by translating these into contexts which are meaningful to the Indian audience, and which have a connection to their own history and current challenges. When reconstructing the story into an Indian context, changes have been made by replacing the issue of

racism towards Black Americans with the dispute between Hindus and Muslims as well as towards the Sikh community (Stam, 2000; Borlotti and Hutcheon, 2007). The strong emphasis on the dilemma between religious communities is depicted in the reference to India's history, politics, and contemporary issues, leading to an Indianization of the original work (Ostrowski, 2007; Richards, 2011; Heine and Krämer, 2015). Overall, these aspects lead to steer the adaptation to be culturally relevant and authentic in order to match the viewer's preferences and resonate with their audience as it relates to their cultural framework, resulting in a deeper connection to the movie and therefore turning something "essentially American into something quintessentially Indian and very relevant to (the Indian culture)" (Kulkarni, 2022, as cited in Fox, 2022).

Cultural references

Themes of family and community

Forrest Gump and Laal Singh Chaddha explores the themes of family, community, reconciliation and healing while incorporating American and Indian cultural nuances to resonate with their respective audience. This section will address these themes by focusing on the characters of Forrest and Laal themselves, their childhood friend and later wives Jenny and Rupa, as well as Lieutenant Dan and the Pakistani soldier Mohammad.

The theme of family includes the relationship between Forrest and Laal's mother as well as their love interest. Starting with their mothers, both women love their sons very deeply and are very supportive of them throughout the movie. Mrs. Gump tells his son from a very young age that he should not let anybody tell him that they are better than him and "if God has intended (for) everybody to be the same, he had have given us all braces in out legs" (Forrest Gump, 1994, 00:06:32-00:06:39). By using the word "having" in her sentence we can see the level of dedication to her son as she is "willing to rewrite basic biological facts (…) in order to make him feel better (Shmoop, n.d.). Her devotion and care are also shown by her agreeing to sleep with the principal so that Forrest can go to a normal school; thus, providing that she will do anything to gran her son a good education. Furthermore, Mrs. Gump teaches him an important life by telling him that "Life is like a box of chocolate; you never know what you are gonna get", signifying that life is unpredictable and full of surprises; providing him with an important teaching to remember (Forrest Gump, 1994, 00:03:34-00:03:48).

In *Laal Singh Chaddha,* we see Laal's mother showing an equal amount of support towards her son by encouraging him to believe in himself and face life's challenges. However, she does so in a different way by saying "there is no task in this world you can't do. You don't need anyone's help whatsoever. If Waheguru wanted to make all of us just the same, then tell me why he would make so many different people in this world?' (Laal Singh Chaddha, 2022, 00:10:36- 00:10:48). A few minutes

later we see mother and son arriving at the principal's home with Mrs. Singh trying to convince him to accept Laal to his school. Initially, he refuses to do so but after Mrs. Singh offers to help in his household by cooking and doing the laundry for him he accepts. Also, Laal's mother gives him a life lesson by telling him "life is like a Golgappas, your stomach gets full, but your heard desires more", expressing that humans' desire for more experiences, achievements, or moments of joy never fully goes away as humans in nature always seek more (Laal Singh Chaddha, 2022, 00:06:50-00:06:55).

By replacing Mrs. Gump's statement with a reference to the religion of Sikhism and mentioning their God Waheguru, it confirms Ostrowski's (2007) and Wright's (2009) statement that religion is being put into the focus of Indian adaptations. Furthermore, the scene where Mrs. Gump agrees to have sexual intercourse with the principal has been replaced with Mrs. Singh's offering to become his housekeeper. This scene in particular shows that adaptations are regarded as translations as since this reference has been adjusted to conform to the cultural sensibilities of India and comply with the expectations of the local audience (Stam, 2000; Borlotti and Hutcheon 2007, Richards, 2011). Even though these changes have been made, the core meanings or values have prevailed which can be seen in the depiction of their mother's love which knows no limits (Hutcheon, 2012). Lastly, by changing the famous quote of the movie with the metaphor to Golgappa (an Indian sweet) it helps to resonate with the cultural context of India.

Coming to the relationship between Forrest and Jenny as well as Laal and Rupa, both men show unconditional love, support, and loyalty towards their childhood crushes. Forrest shows Jenny his unwavering love by standing by her regardless of any external circumstances or her personal flaws. He stays loyal to her during the hardships of her childhood when she experienced physical and sexual abuse by her father her drug abuse and abusive relationships when trying to pursue her dream of becoming a singer. Additionally, we see his constant urge to protect her as he continuously comes to her aid such as the instance where he thought that she was harassed by a boy in his car while singing naked in the bar, or the instance where she got hit by her boyfriend Wesley during the preparations of the Black Panthers demonstration. His love and support stay constant and overcome all obstacles up to the day she dies.

Laal's love for Rupa is equally unwavering, starting from their childhood with her mom being abused by her father leading to his arrest and Rupa's being brought up by her grandmother as her mom left the family. While pursuing her dream of a leading glamorous life by becoming a model and actress in Bollywood, she faces several hardships of working in this industry such as an abusive relationship with a don who promises Rupa to make her famous. Laal stands by her and supports her unconditionally. Just as Forrest, he comes to her aid whenever she faces any sort of abuse or injustice. Additionally, he provides her strength and willingness to seek a better life through his emotional support and guidance throughout her life until the day she dies.

The drug abuse and sexual harassment references have been adjusted to conform to the cultural and social context of India and their cultural sensibilities as these subjects are seen as rather

sensitive for an Indian audience. Therefore, cultural differences make it necessary to transform and modify certain scenes in order to fit into the new environment, a process also known as hypertextuality (Stam, 2000). Regarding Jenny's drug abuse, this aspect has been taken out completely and instead, a great focus was placed on Rupa's dream of making it big in Bollywood. Expanding the Rupa's narrative, it displays one of the three Indianization strategies as introduced by scholar Tejaswini Ganti (2013). Since the Hindi film industry is an integral part of India's culture and society, this narrative has been included to make her storyline more relatable and engaging for the Indian audience. Her dreams of pursuing a better life by perhaps joining the film industry reflects a common trope in Indian storytelling as does the depiction of her struggles within the industry which makes the story more accessible within an Indian cultural framework. At the same time, it provides a commentary on the allure and challenges of the film industry, namely the difficulties which come in the pursuit of stardom, serving as a social critique of the film industry and Indian society.

The reference to Jenny's sexual harassment has been replaced with the story of domestic violence and her mother facing physical abuse by her father. This narrative has been included as this issue is still prevalent in India's society which therefore makes it more relatable to an Indian audience, leading to a stronger emotional connection towards Rupa's story and ultimately the movie itself. By providing a realistic and culturally relevant framework it provides a culturally appropriate way to depict Rupa's hardships as it preserves the themes of the original work but changes it to the context of the Indian society.

The theme of community includes the aspect of cultural identity as well as the facet of reconciliation and healing. Forrest's cultural identity is tied to his Southern American roots as he is brought up in Alabama which ultimately shapes his worldview, behaviour, and interactions with others (Rogers, 2013). His upbringing instilled in him values of kindness and simplicity, which are commonly part of the Southern culture. Using simple wisdoms such as the "life is like a box of chocolate" slogan reflects his grounded worldview which in turn helps him to approach life with acceptance and resilience. During his college days, Forrest became the star player of his college football team, marking its cultural significance as it serves as a metaphor for unification and fosters a community bond which reflects societal values and traditions, particularly in Southern regions. (Hammontree, 2011). Forrest's interactions with historical events such as his enlistment to the army and his participation in the Vietnam War, saving his comrades, and fulfilling Bubba's dream of the shrimp business prove his characterises of loyalty and camaraderie, also common traits for Southern Americans. Lastly, his dedication to fulfilling his friend's wish proves the Southern value of hard work which aligns with the American Dream and the Southern culture.

Laal's cultural context and identity arre intertwined with his Punjabi background and being part of the Sikh minority in India. By wearing a turban (dastaar) and maintaining his uncut hair towards the end of the movie he adhered to the principles of equality (saving the Pakistani soldier), as well as service and justice (seva and dharm) which displays his pride towards his identity. These

aspects are central to his character and reflect his resilience, integrity, and a strong sense of community which are also depicted in the movie (Anand, n.d.). Lastly, by portraying Laal's a Sikh and depicting historical references related to the Sikh community it further enriches the storytelling and depts of the character's background.

Through the adaptation of the story to a local context it presents as a given to also change the characters' identity, which contributes to a better fit in the narrative arc and the overall story. Doing so allows for an exploration of a storyline with aligns with the Indian storytelling traditions and audience expectations and ensures a greater authenticity and reliability within an Indian cultural context. As Wright (200) stated, the reduction of foreign conventions will lead to greater enjoyment of foreign works as the audience will feel a stronger connection with the character Laal as he experiences social norms, cultural traditions, and challenges with are familiar and relevant to the Indian audience. Lastly, the decision to have the Indian actor Aamir Khan portray the character of Laal enhances the film's appearance and marketability as it capitalizes on his so-called "star power", also supported by Heinze and Krämer (2015).

The last theme of reconciliation and healing is illustrated through the events of the Vietnam War from 1955-1975 as well as the Kargil War from 1999. Looking at the movie *Forrest Gump,* one key moment of reconciliation can be seen during his experience in the War. Forrest saves his lieutenant's life who insists on dying on the battlefield with his comrades. After being involuntarily saved by Forrest, he feels anger and resentment towards him as he has to deal not only with the deaths of his comrades but also with the loss of his legs. However, through Forrest's friendship and support, he finds new strength as well as a new meaning for his life, namely by working together in the shrimp business and therefore finding peace and gratitude towards Forrest for saving his life.

In *Laal Singh Chaddha* we see a somehow different perspective as Laal saves a wounded Pakistani soldier; thus, the enemy he was supposed to fight against. Throughout the story, his initial resentment also turns into a meaningful friendship and gratefulness towards Laal. By saving the soldier's life the movie depicts a significant sign of reconciliation, given the hostile relationship between both countries. By doing so the movie demonstrated that humanity can transcend deep-seated conflicts and hatred, underscoring the possibility for a brighter future. Therefore, this act serves as a metaphor for healing international relationships.

All in all, by choosing religion and therefore the Hindu/Muslim conflict as the focus of not only the War scene but also the movie itself it makes the narrative more relatable and thus easier to resonate with the Indian audience (Ostrowski, 2001; Heinze and Krämer, 2015). Moreover, it highlights the impact of individual acts of compassion to promote peace between two nations.

Societal challenges and solutions

This section explores how Laal Singh Chaddha and its original work address the societal challenges present in the Indian and American cultural context while also proposing possible solutions.

Forest Gump addresses the challenges of returning Veterans and their difficulties in returning to normal life, the overarching issue of racial discrimination, and the difficulties of individuals with a disability. First, the experience of the Vietnam War left Lieutenant Dan struggling with his physical as well as emotional wounds; depicting his difficulty in returning to society and dealing with PTSD as he becomes depressed, jobless, and develops a drinking problem, leaving him in a state of anger towards the world. This portrayal truthfully illustrates the burdens of veterans in coping with their experiences from the war which leads to many falling into a vicious cycle. Nevertheless, Forrest's kindness, empathy, loyalty, and friendship help Dan to overcome his rage and overcome his misery. Second, Forrest's encounter with racial desegregation in the U.A depicts the deep-seated social division and struggle for equality during this time in history and exemplifies the ever-lasting racial discrimination towards Black people. However, Forrest's friendship with Bubba and his overlooking social prejudice towards Black people contributes to the mission of social change. Third, Forrest being a man with a low IQ and limited intellectual led him to be ridiculed or underestimated throughout his life. From a young age, he got harassed and made fun of by his classmates due to his disability which continued throughout his college years as well as his military service. Despite that, he challenges social perceptions by getting a university degree, serving in the army, and leading a successful shrimp business; thus, archiving several milestones despite his disability. This promotes the theme of inclusion of haandicapped individuals in taking part in social life and challenges the social perceptions and stereotypes of individuals with disabilities by depicting them leading a successful and normal life.

Laal Singh Chaddha, on the other hand, depicts the societal challenges of communal tension and interreligious relations, gender inequality, and the lack of education. First, since India is officially a secular state with people belonging to various religions, tensions are bound to happen. On the one hand, the movie depicts the religious tension between the Sikhs and Hindus by depicting the anti-Sikh riots and Laal's poor treatment in society due to belonging to this religious minority. Yet, embracing his religion towards the end of the movie (by wearing a turban and maintaining his beard) it depicts his acceptance and pride towards his religion. On the other hand, the movie also illustrates the tension between Hindus and Muslims through the portrayal of the Kargil War as well as the Babri Demolition. By saving a Pakistani soldier and becoming friends with the "enemy", it promotes the themes of religious harmony and act of kindness beyond cultural boundaries. Second, the topic of gender inequality is explored by illustrating the instance where Rupa's mom is being harassed by her husband and by Rupa's abusive relationship with her boyfriend; therefore, painting a clear picture of the prevailing societal challenge of violence against women in India. Nonetheless, through Rupa's

decision to leave him and go to the police to confess his crimes as well as her role of being an accomplice, she displays the act of empowerment as she decides to bring justice on both ends. Moreover, by finding a job, an apartment, and raising Laal and her son towards the end, she further reinforces the attribute of women empowerment. Third, the societal challenge of the lack of education can be seen through the glimpse of the Mandal slogans on the university's wall, which is a reference to the anti-Mandal protest of 1990 and its fight against the mandate to reserve places for the lower classes of the society.

While Forrest Gump portrays the struggle of individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds within the American context, such as African Americans, *Laal Singh Chaddha*, on the other hand, addresses these challenges from the perspective of an Indian cultural context by depicting the caste dynamics and religious tensions in India, which leads to intensified emotions sides the audience since it proves to be culturally relevant but sensitive topic (Ostrowski, 2007; Ganti, 2013; Heinze and Krämer, 2015). By depicting these challenges as part of the narrative and journey of the protagonist, it proposes the solution of fostering a mutual understanding and conquering the social divisions which ultimately illustrates that the actions of single individuals can contribute to a societal change.

Character adaptation

Character background

Socio-economic status

The socioeconomic status and character backgrounds of *Laal Singh Chaddha* and *Forrest Gump r*eflect the diverse societal context in which their narratives takes place and present their respective upbringing and economic circumstances.

Forrest Gump is set against a backdrop of social turmoil and economic inequality. Raised in a middle-class family in rural Alabama during the 1950s, Forrest's father is absent from his life. In contrast to his ancestors, some of whom were associated with the white supremacist KKK, Forrest does not hold discriminatory views towards African Americans or Black people. This divergence may be attributed to his disability, which imbues him with a unique and innocent perspective on life. His socioeconomic background and disability shape his outlook, allowing him to view the world through a lens free of judgment. Despite low societal expectations, Forrest defies prejudice by achieving academic and military success and eventually establishing a thriving business with the support of his loved ones. Jenny faces a starkly different upbringing. Her father's physical and mental abuse creates a harsh environment of poverty and neglect, contrasting sharply with Forrest's stable upbringing.

Jenny's troubled background influences her decisions as she navigates a path seeking self-worth and a career as a singer. Her journey is marked by struggles with drug abuse, tumultuous relationships, unstable jobs, and periods working as a singer in a strip club, which ultimately lead her to attempt suicide.

Laal, on the other hand, comes from a rural Sikh family and resides with his mother on a farm in Karoli, Punjab, a region known for its Sikh minority population. Due to their religious affiliation, both mother and son face societal victimization, exacerbated by the assassination of the prime minister, which triggers political unrest and anti-Sikh riots nationwide. They were forced to stay out of the public eye with Laal changing his appearance to recognition as a Sikh. Despite these adversities, Laal's identity and disability do not hinder him from pursuing education, serving in the army, and ultimately leading a thriving business, paralleling Forrest Gump's journey of overcoming obstacles. In contrast, Rupa grows up in an abusive household where her father is physically aggressive towards the family, although she does not suffer sexual abuse as Jenny did. Following her father's arrest, Rupa's mother left the family to start a new life, leaving Rupa in her grandmother's care. Raised in this environment and facing challenging life choices, Rupa endeavors to establish a career in Bollywood. However, her pursuit leads her into a detrimental relationship with a mafia boss who offers to jumpstart her career, further complicating her path to success.

As previously mentioned, incorporating religion into the storyline is an integral part of Hindi cinema, resonating deeply with Indian audiences as it mirrors essential aspects of their lives (Ostrowski, 2007). Extending Rupa's narrative exemplifies one of the three strategies identified by scholar Tejaswini Ganti (2019) to localize foreign content for Indian audiences. This approach deepens the movie's connection with viewers by portraying common themes of abuse and aspirations within the Bollywood industry. Additionally, casting Aamir Khan in the lead role of Laal Singh Chaddha leverages his star power to attract audiences, given his status as one of the "three Khans" alongside Salman and Shah Rukh Khan, renowned for their immense success and influence in the industry (Kumar, 2021; Heinze and Krämer, 2015). Lastly, by openly depicting Rupa's struggles with abuse and her pursuit of stardom, the film aims to shed light on issues of gender-based discrimination and violence prevalent in society, while also exploring the aspirations associated with the film industry.

Educational and professional background

When Forrest was young, he experienced various difficulties due to his disability, particularly when entering primary school. To ensure Forrest received a proper education, Mrs. Gump accepted the principal's offer to have sexual intercourse with him. In high school, Forrest's exceptional running abilities caught the attention of the football coach, leading to a scholarship at the University of Alabama where he excelled on the football team, winning multiple competitions and eventually becoming an All-American player. After graduation, he enlisted in the army, underwent basic training, and was deployed to Vietnam. Following an injury in combat, Forrest transitioned to table tennis where his remarkable talent was noticed, leading to being assigned to special services to assist wounded veterans across the country. Years later, he represented the U.S. in the 1971 World Table Tennis Championship in China, marking a significant milestone in international relations after two decades of diplomatic isolation. Upon returning, Forrest fulfilled Bubba's dream by successfully establishing a shrimp business despite initial challenges. His academic achievements, resilience, and entrepreneurial success challenged societal perceptions of disabilities. Unlike Forrest, Jenny's detailed educational and professional background is scarce. After attending high school with Forrest, she pursued a singing career which did not materialize. She later became an activist, advocating against the Vietnam War and championing civil rights causes such as the Black Panthers movement. However, she fell into a destructive social circle, experimenting with drugs and experiencing a period of personal turmoil that included a suicide attempt. Jenny subsequently withdrew from public life for several years, presumably to reflect and rebuild her life.

Similar to Forrest, Laal would have been unable to attend a public school if weren't for his mother. However, instead of offering sexual services, Mrs. Singh proposed to become the principal's housekeeper in exchange for a school place. During college, Laal joined the university's running team and the national cadet corps where he achieved significant success. After graduating, Laal chose to follow family tradition by enlisting in the army. Following basic training, he deployed to Kargil where he sustained injuries, resulting in a medical discharge. Instead of returning to active duty, he accepted a role as assistant coach for the army's running team. Like Forrest, Laal realized Bubba's dream of establishing a successful business, in this case, an undergarment business In contrast to Jenny, Rupa had a more prominent role in the adaptation. After attending primary and high school with Laal, she pursued a career in modelling and acting in Bollywood. However, after compromising photos of her were leaked and published in a magazine, she was charged with obscenity and imprisoned for several weeks. Upon release, she fled to Bombay (now Mumbai), where she became involved with the underworld, entering into an abusive relationship with a crime boss who promised her a career in film. Realizing she was being exploited, Rupa, like Jenny, attempted suicide to escape her circumstances. After reuniting with Forrest, she was taken into police custody in the middle of the night. As the story progressed, it was revealed she had been involved in illegal activities but

cooperated with the police to bring down the crime boss. Despite being implicated in his crimes, her cooperation resulted in a relatively short six-month prison sentence. After serving her time, she found work as a secretary while raising her and Forrest's son.

Several adjustments were made to align with the Indian cultural context. For example: Mrs. Gump's offer to have sexual intercourse with the principal was replaced with Mrs. Singh's proposal of becoming his housekeeper. This subtle yet significant change aimed to respect the cultural sensitivities of Indian society, avoiding content that might be considered too explicit for the audience. Additionally, depicting Laal's voluntary decision to join the army reflects the common pride among Indian citizens in serving their country, thereby enhancing the audience's connection to the character. Incorporating references to the Hindu-Muslim conflict and integrating the historical event of the Kargil War into the storyline further deepened the movie's resonance with viewers. Moreover, as previously mentioned, expanding Rupa's storyline added complexity to the film, a strategy identified by Ganti (2013) as one of the Indianization strategies. Finally, by shifting her career aspirations to pursue a modeling and acting career in Bollywood, the adaptation capitalized on the cultural significance of the Indian film industry, making Rupa's career trajectory more relatable to the audience.

Behavior and interaction

Gender roles and expectations

Despite Forrest's low IQ, he defies societal expectations by achieving academic and professional earnings as he earns a university degree, serves in the army, and establishes a successful business named "Bubba Gum Shrimp' 'In doing so, he fulfilled the traditional societal norms where men were expected to be providers for their families. These traditional roles emphasized qualities of independence, strength, and competitiveness (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman, 2011; Browner, 1996). In contrast, Jenny challenged the prevailing gender roles of her time by rejecting the role of becoming a housewife and mother and instead focusing on her professional career as a singer and becoming politically active in advocating for equal rights for Black people and opposing the war. Her progressive stance represented a shift towards gender equality that gained momentum in the latter part of the 20th century, influenced by international human rights organizations and the women's rights movement (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman, 2011; Browner, 1996).

During the early 20th century, India's traditional norms resembled those of America, where men were expected to be the primary breadwinners and providers for their families (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman, 2011; Browner, 1996). Laal complies with these expectations by obtaining a degree, joining the army, and successfully launching a business. Rupa, in contrast, challenged India's existing gender norms by forging her own path to success as a model and actress, though her career did not prosper. When revealing photos of her were made public, she faced public and legal scrutiny, as these

were considered culturally inappropriate and violated the country's obscenity laws, designed to regulate the distribution of obscene material to uphold societal morals and values (Drishti Judiciary, 2023). The public outcry and legal repercussions underscored deeper issues of gender inequality within India, where despite shifting gender roles, discrimination and stereotypes persist due to entrenched traditional beliefs, patriarchal mindsets, and regressive attitudes (By Shree, 2014).

In the adaptation, a significant alteration concerning gender roles and expectations revolves around Rupa. By expanding her storyline, the filmmakers aimed to add greater complexity to the narrative which aligns with the Indianization strategies proposed by Richards (2011) and Heinze and Krämer (2015).

Plot adaptation
Storyline changes
Major plot divisions from the original

This section will analyze three significant plot changes made in the adaptation to align with the socio-cultural context of India and deepen its narrative impact.

In the original version, Forrest's portrayal as a Southern American adds authenticity and depth to the narrative. Set in the 60s, the American South holds significant importance due to the Civil Rights Movement and the struggle for racial equality. By depicting Forrest as a Southern American, the character engages with the political tensions of the era and intersects with pivotal historical events like the desegregation of the University of Alabama. Similarly, the depiction of Laal as a member of the Sikh community in *Laal Singh Chaddha* was deliberate. Set against the socio-political backdrop of 1988 and 1984, which marked significant periods for the Sikh community, the character's identity resonates with the audience's involvement. This portrayal also serves as a commentary on the nation's progress and the challenges faced during that time (Sharma, 2022; Galatta Plus, 2023)

The second significant alteration involves replacing the lieutenant character with a Pakistani soldier. Upon returning to the battlefield to search for Bubbaa, Forrest discovers his injured lieutenant and decides to evacuate him to safety. Initially met with resentment, the lieutenant eventually expresses his gratitude for saving his life, leading to the development of a supportive friendship that highlights themes of forgiveness and camaraderie. On the contrary, Laal chooses to save a Pakistani soldier from the opposing side, whom he is supposed to eliminate. Unaware or indifferent to the implications, he remains determined to protect him. This portrayal conveys an important social commentary, with the filmmakers utilizing their platform to address pertinent social issues within their country. By depicting Laal's act of saving the soldier, the film aims to advocate for religious and communal harmony.

The third and final adaptation involves expanding Jenny's storyline through the character of

Rupa. While Jenny's narrative in the original is somewhat limited, focusing on snippets of her life marked by childhood trauma, additional, and a quest for meaning, Rupa's story in the adaptation delves deeper into the challenges. Similar to Jenny, Rupa faces a troubled childhood and aspires to become a Bollywood actress, an industry deeply embedded in Indiana society and cultural significance. This inclusion makes Rupa's ambitions more relatable to the Indian audience and enriches the overall narrative. Moreover, Rupa's storyline addresses sensitive issues such as imprisonment for obscenity and involvement in illegal activities, reflecting real-life challenges within the film industry. Thus, the film both celebrates and critiques the influence of Bollywood cinema by depicting its pitfalls and societal impact.

Key events

Adaptation of iconic scenes

Adapting iconic scenes from Forrest Gump to Laal Singh Chaddha involves translating beloved moments into an Indian cultural context. This section explores how specific scenes are reimagined to resonate with a new audience while preserving the essence of the original narrative.

"Run, Forrest, Run!'

One of *Forrest Gump's* most memorable scenes occurs early in the story, when Forrest escapes from bullies and sheds his leg braces while running. This scene serves as a metaphor that echoes through the film, symbolizing his initial triumph over physical limitations and societal barriers, ultimately becoming a symbol of independence and defiance against social expectations, leading to a successful life despite his disability.

In keeping with the essence of the adaptation, Laal Singh Chaddha recreates this scene to emphasize Laal's own physical challenges and societal constraints, depicting his journey to overcome these obstacles and societal prejudices. The scene is contextualized within a culturally relevant setting, specifically in rural India, to resonate more deeply with its audience.

Figure 1: Forrest Gump vs. Laal Singh Chaddha.

Note. From "Forrest Gump (1994) & Laal Singh Chaddha (2022) side-by-side comparison [Video]. ". Matt Skuta. 2024. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BaHvYsA4QMk&t=25s&ab_channel=MattSkuta

Meeting historical figures – Elvis Presley and Shah Rukh Khan

Throughout his life, Forrest encounters carious iconic figures that serve not only as comedic elements but also as opportunities to reflect on America's broader historical and sociocultural context. He interacts with Presidents like J.F.K. and Nixon, as well as cultural icons such as Elvis Presley. In one notable moment, Forrest teaches Presley a dance move that later becomes synonymous with the singer. Elvis Presley rose to fame during the racially segregated 1950s America., crediting his success to black artists and the blues, which originated form the African Americans in the South. He advocated for racial equality by collaborating with African American talents like songwriter Claude Demetrius (Chalmers, 2017).

Similarly, while Forrest encounters American presidents and icons, Laal interacts with figures significant to India's historical and cultural landscape, such as actor Shah Rukh Khan (SRK). Like Forrest with Presley, Laal teaches SRK a move that becomes closely associated with the actor. This adaptation to Indian cultural norms replaces Presley with SRK, who holds similar cultural significance in India as Presley does in America (Times of India, 2022)

Figure 2: Forrest Gump vs. Laal Singh Chaddha

Note. From "Forrest Gump (1994) & Laal Singh Chaddha (2022) side-by-side comparison [Video]. ". Matt Skuta. 2024. YouTube.

<center>**"Life is like a box of chocolate"**</center>

The most renowned quote from *Forrest Gump* is: "My momma always said, 'Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get'." This statement serves as a metaphor for life's unpredictability and the surprises it brings, encapsulating the diverse experiences and moments one encounters throughout life.

In the adaptation of *Laal Singh Chaddha*, this quote has been thoughtfully adjusted to convey the same metaphorical essence while incorporating cultural nuances that resonate with an Indian audience. Thus, the Indian version reads: "Life is like Golgappas, your tummy may be full but your heart always craves more." This adaptation maintains the metaphor of life's unpredictability and surprises, replacing the reference to chocolates with "Golgappa," a popular Indian street food known for its cultural significance in celebrations and special occasions. This modification ensures the quote is culturally relevant and relatable to Indian viewers.

Figure 3: Forrest Gump vs. Laal Singh Chaddha.

Note. From "Forrest Gump (1994) & Laal Singh Chaddha (2022) side-by-side comparison [Video]. ". Matt Skuta. 2024. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BaHvYsA4QMk&t=25s&ab_channel=MattSkuta

Running across America

After Forrest discovers that Jenny has left him in the middle of the night, he decides "for no particular reason, (…) to go for a little run," which unexpectedly turns into a cross-country journey lasting for three long years. The significance of his cross-country running scene can be interpreted from several angles. Firstly, it can symbolize life itself, with its unpredictability and unforeseen challenges, akin to the sentiment of "Life is like a box of chocolates." Secondly, it portrays Forrest's simple and genuine approach to life, where he runs not for competition but for the pure joy of it. Lastly, his enduring run reflects the American spirit of resilience and determination, embodying qualities of strength and optimism synonymous with the American Dream.

In the case of *Laal Singh Chaddha,* this scene has been adapted to resonate with India's cultural and narrative context. It serves as a representation of India's rich cultural diversity and unity. India, known for its diverse traditions and regional differences, is showcased through Laal's cross-country run, which highlights the country's multifaceted cultural tapestry. Additionally, as Laal is joined by people from various walks of life during his run, it underscores the power of human connection and the positive impact one individual can have on society. On another level, the scene serves as a social commentary, as Laal encounters individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds, including various castes and religions, thus shedding light on India's existing societal challenges. Overall, this adaptation aims to explore and celebrate India's cultural richness and navigate its social complexities within the film's narrative framework.

Figure 4: Forrest Gump vs. Laal Singh Chaddha.

Note. From "Forrest Gump (1994) & Laal Singh Chaddha (2022) side-by-side comparison [Video]. ". Matt Skuta. 2024. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BaHvYsA4QMk&t=25s&ab_channel=MattSkuta

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to find out how adaptation Laal Singh Chaddha navigates the process of transcultural adaptation in order to make the storyline and characters appropriate for the Indian audience. Here, a qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the movies, using an inductive approach while integrating the insights from the theoretical framework which were used to guide the interpretation of the emerging patterns. Yet, before answering this research question, a sub-question was used to analyze the initial changes made in the adaptation when compared to its original source.

While relocating the story to an Indian social and cultural context, several historical changes were made to enhance the familiarity with the context and resonate with its audience. A few of these changes include the replacement of J.F. K's assassination with the murder of India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the Kargil War as a replacement for the Vietnam War, and lastly Mandal Commission replacing the desegregation of the University of Alabama. Contemporary social and political issues were changed to reflect India's own context and challenges and thus relate to their own cultural framework. Therefore, the social issue of racial discrimination of Forrest Gump has been replaced with the religious discrimination against Sikhs and the dispute between Hindus and Muslims, noting that a strong emphasis was set on the religious aspects as this plays a crucial part in India's society (Ostrowski, 2007). Furthermore, multiple scenes were seen as culturally inappropriate and thus adjusted to suit the cultural sensibilities such as the themes related to sex, drugs, or nudity. The meaning of the famous quote "life is like a box of chocolate" has been preserved butt adjusted to firm into the Indian cultural context as to better resonate with its audience. Another iconic scene such as the running scene from the start of the movie where Forrest loses with leg braces, young Forrest meeting the cultural icon Elvis Presley, or him running across America have been directly borrowed from the source material yet slightly changed or "spiced up" conform to the cultural context of its audience. Moreover, Rupa's storyline has been extended to allow for greater complexity as it represents one of the ways to Indianize foreign content (Ganti, 2013). References to Bollywood were added to make the narrative culturally significant and the storyline more relatable and engaging as this also aligns with the Indian storytelling traditions which makes the adaptation more authentic. Lastly, by depicting various societal challenges related to the Indian perspective, such as the still excising caste dynamics and religious tensions, it reinforced the emotional reaction of the audience as they proved to be culturally relevant for the audience.

As established in the theoretical framework, transcultural adaption describes the process where cultural products are modified and adjusted to fit into a new cultural context when crossing geographical and cultural boundaries (Wang, 2024). Bollywood exemplifies the process of transcultural adaptation by Indianizing global narratives and incorporating local elements to resonate with the Indian audiences (Ganti, 2013; Heinze and Krämer, 2015). The global expansion of

Bollywood is attributed to several factors such as the Indian diaspora (as their migration led to higher demands of Bollywood movies abroad), their newly gained industry status (allowing the industry to obtain funds in legal ways such as through loans or international investments), and through their rapid adaptability (by integration Wester narrative elements to movies to appeal to international audiences) (Lorenzen, 2000). Most importantly, it is crucial to emphasize that religion plays a pivotal role in all Bollywood adaptations as it proves to be a significant part of India's society (Ostrowski, 2007). All things considered, this development let many scholars refer to adaptation as translations since their stories are adapted to local circumstances and adjusted to their cultural differences (Stam, 2000; Ostrowski, 2007; Richards, 2011).

When looking at the possible limitations of this study, a generalization of these findings is rather restricted as it focuses on a single adaptation; therefore, a broader sample could provide more insight into the topic of transcultural adaptation. Furthermore, this study analyzes one adaptation in depth, sacrificing breath by not including other adaptations in this process. The qualitative content analysis proves to be somewhat limited as it focuses on the interpretation of textual data; thus, limiting the capture of quantitative data which might be relevant for this research such as box office performance or audience reception.

Lastly, this research has gained significant insight in understanding how global narratives are localized to resonate with specific cultural audiences, navigating cultural boundaries in storytelling by using creative strategies to be employed on foreign content. Most importantly, this research emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity when adapting foreign narratives for local audiences.

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Appendix A

Appendix B

<div align="center">**Declaration Page: Use of Generative AI Tools in Thesis**</div>

Student Information
Name: Despina Omourli
Student ID: 700098
Course Name: Master Thesis CM5000
Supervisor Name: Dr. Marlen Komorowski
Date: 27.06.2024

Declaration:

Acknowledgment of Generative AI Tools
I acknowledge that I am aware of the existence and functionality of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, which are capable of producing content such as text, images, and other creative works autonomously.

GenAI use would include, but not limited to:
-   Generated content (e.g., ChatGPT, Quillbot) limited strictly to content that is not assessed (e.g., thesis title).
-   ~~Writing improvements, including~~ grammar and spelling corrections (e.g., Grammarly)
-   Language translation (e.g., DeepL), without generative AI alterations/improvements.
-   Research task assistance (e.g., finding survey scales, qualitative coding verification, debugging code)
-   Using GenAI as a search engine tool to find academic articles or books (e.g.,

☒ I declare that I have used generative AI tools, specifically [Name of the AI Tool(s) or Framework(s) Used], in the process of creating parts or components of my thesis. The purpose of using these tools was to aid in generating content or assisting with specific aspects of thesis work.

☐ I declare that I have NOT used any generative AI tools and that the assignment concerned is my original work.

Signature: [digital signature]
Date of Signature: [Date of Submission]

Extent of AI Usage
☒ I confirm that while I utilized generative AI tools to aid in content creation, the majority of the intellectual effort, creative input, and decision-making involved in completing the thesis were undertaken by me. I have enclosed the prompts/logging of the GenAI tool use in an appendix.

Ethical and Academic Integrity
☒ I understand the ethical implications and academic integrity concerns related to the use of AI tools in coursework. I assure that the AI-generated content was used responsibly, and any content derived from these tools has been appropriately cited and attributed according to the guidelines provided by the instructor

and the course. I have taken necessary steps to distinguish between my original work and the AI-generated contributions. Any direct quotations, paraphrased content, or other forms of AI-generated material have been properly referenced in accordance with academic conventions.

By signing this declaration, I affirm that this declaration is accurate and truthful. I take full responsibility for the integrity of my assignment and am prepared to discuss and explain the role of generative AI tools in my creative process if required by the instructor or the Examination Board. I further affirm that I have used generative AI tools in accordance with ethical standards and academic integrity expectations.

Signature: Despina Omourli
Date of Signature: 27.06.2024

Appendix C

Prompts used in ChatGPT:
1. I used ChatGPT for summaries of several articles and theoretical frameworks to decide whether they would be relevant to thesis.
2. I used ChatGPT to help me with drafting samples of various chapters, drafting me a potential table of content, rephrasing sentences, and paragraphs, as well as for correcting grammar.
3. I used ChatGPT to brainstorm ideas for a potential topic for my research and formulate a potential questions.