

# Study on coping strategies for the film industry under the challenge of multiculturalism

-- Taking Skirt Day as an example

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**Abstract.** In the modern day, films are used in various ways in the society. The films play an important role in the society as they attempt to pass a message to the audience. A successful film is said to have conveyed the intended message to its audience. A film can be interpreted in various ways depending on the viewer's beliefs and values based on the subject of the film. In the post-WWII European films, multi-cultural interaction makes all kinds of film producers and actors transcend national boundaries in film creation and theme expression, which promotes the film itself to some extent, but at the same time they are faced with multi-cultural challenges. This essay will take study on the coping strategies for the film industry under the challenge of multiculturalism and the film of Skirt Day is selected as an example.

**Keywords:** Film industry; Multi-cultural challenge; The Skirt Day.

## 1. Introduction

With the development of society, films play a very important role in society by spreading information and culture to the audience. A great film should be interpreted in various ways according to the values and beliefs of different audiences, thus successfully conveying different messages. Additionally, with the creation of multicultural interchange and challenges, the mission of film to convey culture becomes even more important. The film industry should create appropriate response strategies to meet the cultural needs of different audience groups.

This essay will take study on the coping strategies for the film industry under the challenge of multiculturalism and the film of Skirt Day is selected as an example. In the first part, a brief introduction to the story of Skirt Day will be made, and the core concept, environment and background of the film will be analyzed. Meanwhile, the concept of culture and the national border is put forward, and the cultural conflicts caused by the multicultural problems in the film are analyzed. Finally, this essay discusses the relationship between multiculturalism and the producing process, and puts forward suggestions and reasonable analysis for how the film industry should cope with the challenges of multiculturalism.

## 2. Plot analysis of Skirt Day

### 2.1 Brief introduction of the film

### 2.2 Theme and background of the film

The film takes on a scenario in which themes of cultural and racial mistrust are placed under questions many of which have been taken for granted in the liberal society in France. In particular, Sonia insists wearing skirts which makes her vulnerable to accusations from different angles. Her students think of her as being sexually loose, while the female colleague teachers complain that she is setting back the cause of feminism. The film's use of skirt is cleverly presented as a metaphor in expressing the controversial banning of the Muslim veil in the French secular school system (Joan, 2010). The film portrays various issues that are present in the modern world and affect various individuals. The existence of multi-cultural societies has raised many thematic issues that affect the

way people lead their lives. In the film, various aspects of cultural, religion, and the defunct existing systems in the society are portrayed. The film uses the cinematic stage to express the issues affecting the society and how deep they have been integrated (The New York Times, 2010).

From a historical perspective, the film did not give much to portray apart from the changing roles of women in the society. This depiction of women in the post-WWII European films is different from the way they were depicted in the earlier times. The role of women in the society had changed considerably from the era of WWII to the present times. During the WWII era, women played a significant role in taking care of their families as the husband took various job positions so as to fend for their families. The same roles were well depicted in films of that time as they reflected on the events of the society at that time. However, in the films of post-WWII era, they portray women differently and their roles in history. The production of European films is keenly looked at historically as the producers tend to impart some historical knowledge of the specific theme depicted. This is usually common in films that are meant to add value of the knowledge of the audience.

### **3. Multicultural challenge and national borders**

Culturally, the film is set on a multi-cultural society as it is depicted in Sonia's class. Existence of various cultures in the society usually brings up the differences that are practiced by the different cultures. The beliefs, values and morals of one culture may differ significantly with that of the other culture hence causing cultural conflicts in the society. In the film, the Muslim culture does not allow the wearing of skirt by the females as it depicts them as morally loose. It is evident of the results that be caused by the cultural differences hence the need to learn on how to approach issues concerning cultural practices (Joan, 2010).

The concept of cultural appropriation is well illustrated as the environment in which Sonia finds herself in demands her to do events according to their known ways and beliefs. This concept of a dominant group in the society forcing its views and values to the minority groups in the society regardless of the differences of their own culture and practices is an element that is affecting the modern society. On the other hand, the aspect of cultural re-inscription is the art of telling stories and events concerning a culture that shapes up the characters, beliefs, and values of a society. The element of culture takes a center stage in the film as it proceeds and depicts the various scenarios in which culture is portrayed.

Another scene of the film in which the theme of culture conflict is depicted is that when Sonia takes the gun and holds the class hostage and forcefully teaches them the concept of culture and how it affects the individuals in the society differently. This indicates the extent to which the cultural differences had gone in which Sonia was left with no option rather than take her own students' hostage. The film is an important reference in the cultural teachings and the effects of a multicultural society (Screen Daily, 2009).

The film also portrays significantly the concept of national borders. The film is set in France, which is not a Muslim dominated country, however, majority of students in Sonia's class are Muslims hence indicating that most of the students had crossed the national borders to enter into France. It illustrates the concepts of film produced that transcends national borders: The theme of the film is not restricted to the borders of nation of France but to the worldwide concept of cultural impact on the multicultural societies. The availability of different cultures in the film is used to portray the modern society that is characterized by the existence of the different cultures that acquire different perceptions regarding a similar subject. The concept of border crossing is well illustrated in European films, actors and actress have transcended the national borders as film production has become more international, most of the modern European films have been produced in several parts of the continents. This is in the wake of the fact that most of the societal issues affecting one region are replicated elsewhere in another different region setting.

The film is an illustration of producers and actors who are courageous and not afraid to tackle sensitive issues in the society that everyone is avoiding. The film handles the delicate matter in a way

that elaborates the view of the producer in regard to some of the cultural issues affecting the societies. The Skirt Day has a provocative and complex script and it is handled with delicacy. Director allows actors in overplaying the histrionic intensity that encourages the young co-stars raise the volume accordingly. The film casts play their roles amicably hence being able to portray the significant message that was intended to be depicted. The plot flows along smoothly as each event follows the other in an easy to grasp manner. Objectively speaking, this film is successful to some extent in facing multicultural challenges.

#### **4. Ways to deal with the multicultural challenges of the film industry**

Based on the above analysis, over the years, facing the challenges of multicultural challenge, the film industry has been revolutionized to become a source of entertainment as well as used an education platform. Based on the modern technologies of media, films are screened and watched all over the world. Due to the worldwide viewing of these films by people from different regions and cultures, the aspect of culture has been integrated in the film production process. Culture is an important aspect in any community and the need to preserve it is even greater. Therefore, producers and actors need to look at the target audience of their films and ensure that the content that they show them are culturally appropriate (Wakeland, 1995). One of the increasing challenges in the modern film industry is coping up with the different cultural needs of people. The strategies designed by the film industry to meet the multicultural challenges can be roughly divided into two types, which are restricting the audience and making different versions of films respectively.

##### **4.1 Restricting the audience**

One of the ways that producers have adapted to bypass the cultural challenge is restricting their audience. By doing this, the film producers will only be concerned with the cultural standards of the limited audience and not on a global-scale. One of the ways that this has been made possible is through the use of native language in films. Language is among the key cultural identity of any given community (Barbash & Taylor, 1997). Therefore, by using a specific language in a film, this will restrict the audience to only those that understand the language used. In this case, it would have been made clear that the film was intended for a specific group of people and, therefore, anyone outside of that group cannot be offended by the content shown.

##### **4.2 Making different versions of films**

Another method that the film industry has devised of dealing with the cultural challenge is producing of different versions of the same films for different audiences. Due to the vast differences of belief in audiences, producers can opt for an expensive method of meeting these cultural needs. A single film can be produced in more than one version and each of the target audience with the appropriate content for that specific audience. This option is not normally used as it would be an expensive affair which many producers would enjoy to avoid. However, when it is required, the film can be redone according to the cultural context (Roel, 2010). One of the famous adaptations is of Romeo and Juliet play which has been produced in different films around the world. Though the storyline is the same, one will realize the films will differ from one region to another as they are based on the cultural context of that region.

#### **5. Summary**

In conclusion, as the film industry grows, so do more challenges arise. For producers, the culture aspect is as the most key part in production. As seen from the Skirt Day, the film was banned in some regions due to some contents that were considered inappropriate for their audiences. Several other films have been banned in different parts of the world that due to the content they contain that does not align with the culture of that part of the world. Therefore, the task is left for the producers and

scriptwriters to produce a film that will be globally accepted on the cultural grounds. Most of the successful producers are using this strategy to attract more audiences to their films produced. The Skirt Day is an example of how multicultural issues are being tackled by the use of the film industry and how the multicultural aspects affect viewing of films.

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