

Heroism, Race, and Minority Lead Roles in Global Cinema Blockbusters

Kayla A. Hart

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## Abstract

The purpose of my research is to determine whether race primarily affects the overall success of a movie across genres if the lead role or hero of the movie is of racial minority status. Factors such as racial stereotypes and colorism are discussed as well as the influence of Hollywood on global movie markets.

Based on the worldwide success of the 2018 blockbuster *Black Panther* with an all-black cast, I aim to discern and sort through its factors of success to determine if those same factors were present in other minority lead roles in top-selling movies across different genres spread over an eight-year timeline. Total movie sales, marketing and promotion initiatives, and published movie reviews are used to conclude if race really is a determining factor as are other factors. These other factors include overall popularity of a particular genre with a particular audience of movie market, or overall branding of the movie when connected to a big franchise or major studio name in comparison to the status of an independent film. Research was also conducted on why certain top-selling domestic movies are not popular or marketed at all overseas.

My opinion is that race is indeed a primary factor as to why certain movies are both domestically and globally well-received and others are not. The trends reveal that while the race of the lead role or hero in the movie is indeed a factor, it is most often times not the primary or even secondary reason behind a movie's failure or general unpopularity.

## Table of Contents

Chapter I.	Introduction.....	1
Chapter II.	Research Methodology .....	5
	Film Choice Process .....	7
	Data Abstraction .....	8
	Thematic Analysis .....	9
	Research Limitations .....	10
Chapter III.	Film Analyses: Race & Genres.....	12
	African American Superhero: <i>Black Panther</i> .....	12
	United States .....	16
	Nigeria.....	18
	India .....	18
	China .....	20
	South Korea .....	22
	Conclusion .....	22
	African American Comedy .....	24
	Movie Ticket Sales .....	27
	Marketing and Promotion .....	28
	Critics’ and Fans’ Reviews .....	31
	African American Historical Film Genre .....	33
	Movie Ticket Sales .....	34

Marketing and Promotion .....	34
Critics’ and Fans’ Reviews .....	36
Asian Dramas.....	38
Movie Ticket Sales .....	39
Marketing and Promotion .....	39
Critics’ and Fans’ Reviews .....	41
Multiracial Action and Comedy.....	41
Movie Ticket Sales .....	42
Marketing and Promotion .....	44
Critics’ and Fans’ Reviews .....	50
Chapter IV. Conclusion .....	54
Appendix A. Global Movie Sales, by country, 2012–2019.....	56
Appendix B. Minority Lead Role Segmentation Across All Genres, 2012-2019.....	65
Bibliography .....	66

## Chapter I

### Introduction

It is important to mention that I began with 2012 as the starting point for researching movies. I believe this year was highly significant as racial tensions in the United States came to what felt like an all-time high during the second presidential campaign of Barack Obama, an African American president, and the case of Trayvon Martin, a 12-year-old unarmed African American boy who was shot while visiting his father in an upper-class neighborhood. The Martin event spurred the start of the Black Lives Matter movement across the United States and eventually across the world, with alarming protests that at times disrupted cities and shut down major highways. This movement kicked off a national, even global, discussion about the worth of black lives around the world and the perspective of blackness in the media and the real world. Some people began to display their lack of support for such a movement in claiming All Lives Matter.

While it might initially appear that African Americans are placing more worth on their lives, the movement is actually meant to be interpreted that black lives do matter, just as much as the lives of everyone else; not necessarily that black lives hold more value than everyone else. With the increasing number of African Americans and other minorities receiving harsher prison sentences for petty crimes, as well as suffering deadly, unarmed run-ins with police, it began to appear as if black lives really did not matter in the eyes of the public at large.

In 2014, discussions between director Ryan Coogler and Marvel Studios became official as they negotiated the creation of the *Black Panther* superhero film starring an African American in the lead role. In 2015, the #Oscars-so-white hashtag went viral as many people protested about the lack of minorities in lead roles and the overall lack of diversity in a white Hollywood, which appeared to be shunning a broad array of diverse characters on the silver screen.

In 2016, Donald Trump was elected President of the United States using rhetoric filled with racial division. In spite of that, he won election through the support of the majority racial group. Trump's philosophy stands in stark contrast to his predecessor, former President Barack Obama and his rhetoric of unity.

In August 2017, a protest in Charlottesville, Virginia became international news when white supporters of racial integration at a "Unite the Right" rally were assaulted by white supremacists. During the massive confusion, one protester was rammed with a vehicle and died, while 28 others were injured.

All of these events mark flashpoints in the ongoing discussion of racial identity in the United States, while also serving as a catalyst for other nations to dissect and possibly divide their opinions based on differing racial and ethnic backgrounds. This was visible in the United Kingdom recently with a candidate who spewed similar conservative, race-baiting rhetoric as Donald Trump.

My travels around the world between 2016 and 2019 resulted in many experiences during the time I resided in Malaysia for two years, France for three months, and South Africa for six months. Through this lens, I listened to narratives provided by Chinese Uber drivers in Malaysia who claimed to be discriminated against for not being

part of the Malay population and were probably thus overlooked for higher-paying jobs in many sectors. While in France, I heard the complaints of generational descendants regarding an influx of many foreigners that were crowding their schools and overextending their national health insurance system. In South Africa, it was obvious that racial tensions have risen to an all-time high through the continuing murders of white Afrikaans farmers committed by mainland blacks. Many blacks were united in their angry desire to “repay” the white population for hostilities committed against black ancestors during the era of apartheid. While simply touring through Myanmar, many local news outlets highlighted the racial and religious struggles between the Myanmar Buddhist majority population and the Rohingya Muslim minority sect.

These examples of racial dissension are microcosms of the larger struggle that exists between racial groups in countries throughout the world. Adding the Hollywood component to this view, with its history of whitewashing and lack of racial minority representation, I wanted to know if much has truly changed over the last decade, and to what specific factors did the *Black Panther* movie owe its success. It is a true phenomenon that a movie with an all-black cast would exist—one led by a black man as its sole protagonist and hero—much less easily outshine its superhero predecessors and colossal record-setters. James Cameron’s *Titanic*, released in 1997, is a competitor: after its opening, it reached unimaginable attendance heights and revenues. It was also the first feature film to be displayed in movie theaters in Saudi Arabia after a 35-year ban on cinema.

The significance of *Black Panther*’s success as an international blockbuster had a highly positive impact on the Black community in the sense that it helped people feel



validated in their culture, their identity, and their ancestral origins. Research has shown time and time again that positive self-image increases if one is able to see himself/herself reflected on a macro-scale such as the silver screen.

Conversely, the pervasive and exaggerated whiteness and lightness of global movies sometimes makes certain racial groups feel alienated and under-represented in mainstream media while also creating demanding and unattainable expectations of a physical and socio-cultural nature. It is evident that media can shape and influence the way societies interpret certain characters, races, and racial stereotypes based on what people see on television and on the silver screen.

Minorities have always felt left out of the conversation in the context of Hollywood movies and being represented as heroes or lead roles, believing it is Hollywood's agenda to always uplift the white race and downplay the presence of other racial classes that make up the melting pot of America.

My research seeks to answer just how much race and its inclusive elements of colorism and stereotypes play into the success or lack thereof for blockbuster movies. I will also address the interpretation of these racial elements across global movie markets, and consider other factors that could play into how a movie is received regardless of the color or race of the lead character or heroic figure.

## Chapter II

### Research Methodology

It should be noted that I may have a biased and overly sensitive perception toward Hollywood and its general lack of diversity, which has plagued the industry since its birth. To always see what appears to be the status quo race continually being cast as the hero and lead role in movies across all genres, without consideration of minority races, sends a clear message that minorities simply are not good enough to be cast as fictional, nonfictional, super, or even simple everyday heroes. What I have observed over the years in American cinema is that Hollywood is generally unreceptive to changing this cycle. Furthermore, it appears that the darker the skin of the lead character, the more disinterest grows in not supporting the success of the movie. I believe that Hollywood's influence on other global movie markets almost encourages them to adopt these same attitudes and stereotypes, thus making it more and more impossible for all racial minorities to garner a reliable fan base that will loyally support their media projects.

My hypothesis is that the movie *Black Panther* had so many unique qualities that it was inevitable that it would become a global blockbuster unlike its minority lead-role movie counterparts. I believe that due to its nature within a popular movie segment of superhero action genre protected by the Marvel/Disney brands, in addition to its massive budget and niche marketing strategies, it was destined to succeed. However, I do not believe that this movie will begin a trend nor will it ever be easily replicated by other movies with minority race heroes, for the simple reason that very few movies will contain

the same traits. I, of course, believe that movies with minoritarian heroes can be marketable and successful, but they will never amass the same global admiration as the *Black Panther* movie. I am not necessarily stating that marketability is the most significant factor for making a movie successful. However, it must be noted that a high majority of culturally defining and prolific movies did indeed have marketability as a dominant feature.

My research process centered on bibliographic evidence from many primary and secondary sources in the literature. The primary sources were used mostly for research on over-arching themes and supporting ideological ideas; also a bank of data that provided statistics and figures about global sales of movies per year, specifically from each global movie market, cast and directors, and budgets. The secondary sources were used to review and document movie critics' opinions, also promotional marketing campaigns used to increase profitability and maximum audience outreach. Gilles Deleuze, a French philosopher, writer and art critic said:

When advertising people explain that advertisements are the poetry of the modern world, this shameless proposition forgets that there is no art which aims to compose or reveal a product which corresponds to public expectations. . . . There is no commercial art. (Deleuze, 1998, p. 51).

Most of the research was performed at the surface because the detailed storylines of movies are less important to proving my hypothesis. However, it should be noted that empirical research, including watching several films across several categories and years, helped me gain an understanding of deeper contextual material that supported and contrasted arguments I sought to prove. When watching these movies, I wanted to know not only the overarching theme and principles of the movie but also the motivational pursuits of the main protagonist/hero of each movie. Historically, many minoritarian hero

movies have been criticized for not having significant or diverse story plots, resulting in the main protagonist not being taken as seriously as white cinema protagonists. This information was most useful when considering both positive and negative reactions and reviews of the movie and its protagonist across all of global movie markets. This information also helped me determine whether films with minority-lead roles receive harsher criticism than their white-lead counterparts.

### Film Choice Process

Singling out a particular timeframe, beginning with 2012 (as I noted earlier) when racial tensions were beginning to rise at an all-time high in the United States and the questionable hate crime committed against Trayvon Martin, it was easy to establish the endpoint as the *Black Panther* movie released in 2018.

Within that period, I created a timeline of films, intending to discover if there was an increase or decrease in the number of minority lead roles among top-selling movies for each year within that window of time up to the present day.

The films I analyzed were all ranked as one of the two top-selling movies of each genre in the U.S. To determine the top-selling movies of each year, I used IMDBPro, a movie sales website that displays the sales generated in all movie global markets, thus consolidating all of the information in a single site.

The movies are divided by genre: top-selling comedy, action/adventure, drama, and sci-fi; I did not include children's movies, although they also draw in high revenues. However, since most children's movies are depicted in cartoon style, it was not possible to analyze the marketability of these movies based on race.

As mentioned in my thesis proposal, my plan was to identify top-selling movies in each movie market, whether foreign or international, which meant that even films geared solely toward each movie market could also be analyzed. However, there were limitations surrounding the scope of movies that would then have to be segmented, which I will discuss in the Research Limitations section.

### Data Abstraction

Starting with an analysis of the pivotal *Black Panther* movie, I decided to first divide the movies into a combination of race and genre due to the fact that all the movies could be easily grouped together across the board and therefore introduced and discussed alongside movies of the same nature without any differing characteristics. I then analyzed the movies based on the following elements: movie sales, marketing & promotion strategies, and critics/fans reviews.

In collecting data on movie sales for the top-selling movies of each genre, I could comment on the overall marketability of each movie and contrast it to other movies within its own genre or on the basis of global sales. It is well known that a high majority of minority-lead roles are typically have much smaller budgets than their white counterparts across all genres. Therefore I also examined the various ways Hollywood studios market these films to see if marketing changes appealed to more international crowds overseas.

Also, with the *Black Panther* movie serving as the “perfect” formula of a blockbuster hit with a minority lead playing a superhero, I sought to discover if there are elements missing from the other genres which might help to formulate a clear answer as

to whether minority-lead movies have more limited sales due to the racial makeup of the cast or for other unknown and often not discussed factors.

The last element I used for analysis were the collective reviews from fans and critics, particularly reviews that pertain to race as either a factor that helps sell the movie or hinders its success in some way. Each of these elements were easily researched due to their qualitative nature, the abundance of movie discussions, and the overall depth surrounding the nature of Hollywood.

### Thematic Analysis

After segmenting the films into different genres and races, that produced the following analysis sections: African American Comedy, African American Historical, Asian Dramas, and Multiracial Cast Action & Comedy. In addition to the aforementioned questions such data would answer, these sections also helped determine if different categories of race also play a factor in the way an audience receives them domestically and internationally. Taking terms such as “race shifters” and “color-conscious casting,” it hoped to determine if even certain races have more appeal than others within these genres, and if so, reveal the reasons.

Collection of this data also brought up the question of how current perceptions and stereotypes of different racial groups affect the sales and marketability of movies, and whether certain genres are less marketable than others. Looking at movies across my specified timeline, did Hollywood shift its overall strategy for marketing and supporting minority lead role films since 2012?

Finally, is the element of heroism truly present in each genre? Do genres with no clear definition of a typical hero as the lead character suffer more than genres that do? *Black Panther* was heralded and praised for its superhero status with an African American male as the protagonist. But then again, superhero movies have historically always performed well at the box office, ensuring a certain guaranteed level of success. This element is usually missing or not as pronounced as in other movie genres.

### Research Limitations

There were many limitations that came with this original research method. My initial plan of research was to dissect movies (including foreign films) if they were one of the two top-selling movies of each genre in each global movie market. However, the sales of foreign movies were often recorded in each country's native currency making it not only time-consuming but also not completely reliable since currency conversions change every day.

Second, the dialogue and even the story lines of foreign movies are most often delivered in a native language, making it difficult to understand what the movie was about even before I could begin dissecting the element of heroism in the film.

It would be hard to discuss the element of race and prejudice in the casting and marketing of these foreign films because usually only native actors and actresses take the lead roles. Culturally and racially different actors are rarely welcomed into foreign movies as producers and studios prefer stars who reflect the local cultural, language, and race within their respective movie markets.

The phenomenon of colorism does exist in racially homogenous societies. My research seeks to compare and contrast different races and not just different skin colors within the same racial and cultural population.

The movie sales figures reported are not complete for each movie across all global movie markets—although they always exist for the U.S. market. These happens either from a lack of reporting by the country's official movie/media box office overseer, or the movie was not being released in that country so there were no sales numbers, or the overall sales resulted in such low numbers that they are not reported because they fell below the threshold for publishing. As a result, it was sometimes hard to gauge whether a movie was a blockbuster hit, a reject, or simply invisible in international movie markets.

Finally, critics' and fans' reviews could rarely be reported from the international movie markets for each film due to their lack of presence in the international movie markets when based on films with minority lead roles.



### Chapter III

#### Film Analyses: Race and Genres

The in-depth analysis of each movie within its respective dual race/genre category begins with the African American Superhero genre. This category focuses solely on the success of *Black Panther* in the global cinema context and delves into elements such as total movie sales, marketing and promotion, and critics and fans reviews. To avoid making repetitive statements and conclusions for each movie in the event they share all of the same characteristics on the surface, I will group movies together by race and genre to create a more effective research process. This system of grouping the selected movies made it easier to dissect each movie without having to stretch the data found and force it to fit in with secondary questions and conclusions. The remaining categories for analysis are: African American Comedy, African American Historical, Asian Dramas, and Multiracial Cast Action and Comedy.

#### African American Superhero: *Black Panther*

“Bucking the long-standing convention of Caucasian-dominant casts in superhero films, *Black Panther* is a film created by blacks, starring blacks, marketed by blacks, revolving around a story set in alternate-reality Africa” (Shutt, 2018). Brandon Shutt, writing in an online article commenting on *Black Panther*, mentions that every element—from the Super Bowl ad to the soundtrack to the animated novel adaptation—was created by black artists. He claims that since *Black Panther* was the first of its kind in this

particular regard, the movie should expect results that would be different from the results of movies within its same superhero action genre and beyond. However, what Shutt failed to mention is whether he believes those results would sway in a positive or negative way. The movie was far more successful than a great majority of movie analysts and critics expected, resulting in becoming an unequalled contender among historic sales of Hollywood films.

My research centers around several elements: the history of minority versus non-minority lead roles since the political race uprising in the USA; factors behind the success of *Black Panther* in a global environment of political tension; the trajectory of minority lead roles in films, and whether more opportunities and successes such as *Black Panther* are set to arise in the future. I hypothesize that the media shapes people's perceptions of race, color, and culture worldwide. When a particular subgroup of race is not glorified as the main characters or protagonists in a movie, it subconsciously or consciously sends a message that the particular racial subgroup does not have appeal and is ultimately not worthy to be deemed as a hero or the main protagonist. As this cycle progresses, with no alterations being made, the collective human psyche, on a global scale, then starts believing that certain colors and races deserve to be represented more than others, simply because they are deemed more worthy. The public becomes accustomed to this system and only makes exceptions for artistic creations and other avenues initiated and displayed by people within their same racial subgroup. Stereotypes that have long been adopted become more embedded with the outright exclusion of the unpreferred and unrelatable "others."

This has a significant impact on the historical and consistent uplifting of whites as the status quo principal characters due to the strong resonance of always being a savior or hero. This has been the legacy of Hollywood since it first began. In his book *Cinema Against Spectacle*, Jean-Louis Comolli (2015) said: “Paradoxically, in fact, it is through the triumph of sound cinema that Hollywood’s global hegemony was assured: the process of the internationalization of profits was stronger than the priority given to national cultural values” (p. 239). In other words, Hollywood has always deemed it acceptable to exclude the “others” for the sake of making more profits. Minority characters usually have to settle for secondary roles, often those lacking morals and ethics, or no roles at all.

Furthermore, while whites are able to continuously perpetuate the notion that they alone can solve all of man’s problems through their wide-ranging film portrayals, minorities are often left with a submissive role in which they are forced to rely on the white protagonist to save them. While white actors are able to dodge the stereotypes that plague minority groups, minorities suffer from their associated stereotypes within the real world. This plays a large part in whether audiences around the world are willing to support a movie that features minorities as the heroic lead role.

The power of cinema, especially within the conversation of racial stereotypes and preferences, should not be dismissed as

the cinema thus owes its existence to the reciprocal reinforcement of an ideological demand (“to see life as it is”) and an economic demand (to make it a source of profits). It is no different to the majority of technologies, which tend toward the realization of an objective assigned by and constituted in both of these two demands... the fact that it is under the effects of an economic demand – that is, within ideology and as an instrument of ideology – that the cinema is progressively imagined, made and purchased. (Comolli, 2015, pp. 168-169)

Thus, the ideology, in this case, would center around whiteness being used as an effective tool to represent racial superiority and thus undermine the relevance of minorities within cinema. My research addresses to what extent moviegoers have accepted this as a reality and whether the world has already begun accepting alternate conceptions of what is a hero. It is incumbent upon the public to look beyond factors such as color, race and creed.

I have analyzed the overall success of *Black Panther* based on several factors, in order to understand what made the movie a success, as well as the general acceptance of an African-American male as a screen superhero. As noted in the Methodology section, the first factor to be considered is sales volume across five global movie markets: U.S., Nigeria, India, China, and South Korea. I will first discuss those sales numbers to showcase how the film fared in its own genre and across all other movies of the same year in different movie markets.

In the 2018 movie sales revenues shown in Appendix A, it is evident that *Black Panther* outpaced its competitor in the same genre and with the same Marvel origins. What is not evident is that while the BoxOfficeMojo.com website states that *Black Panther* received 48% of its revenues domestically, it also shows that *Avengers: Infinity War* garnered only 33% of its revenues domestically, implying *Avengers* had more success with international audiences than did *Black Panther* overall. While hailed as a clear winner in the domestic market, *Black Panther's* results in the international market showed a second-place standing in India, third-place standing in China, and fourth-place standing in South Korea compared to other movies of the same year across all genres. As all data has not been considered for movies across all of years and genres in my research, it is unfair to judge why *Black Panther* did not fare as well internationally. I could

speculate that perhaps the international market still does not accept a minority and especially a black superhero, I also note that the *Avengers* movies attract more moviegoers because of their inclusion of all of the popular Marvel characters combined in one film. I will state, however, that these sales numbers indicate that the success or lack thereof of any movie in the domestic US market does not always dictate the reaction or approval of other global audiences.

The second factor to be considered is the movie's use of marketing and promotion to discover whether the movie was marketed differently domestically than in other countries; also a consideration of whether the movie was marketed differently than non-minority lead role movies within its same year of release. To distinguish among the different markets, I divided them into separate countries: United States, Nigeria, India, China, and South Korea. In addition, I also highlight the general reaction and reviews of the movie in each country to reveal both positive and negative feedback, particularly based on the color or culture of the film's cast.

#### United States

The most important aspect of the marketing for *Black Panther* is that it tapped into a target audience that had long been waiting the arrival of a black superhero, namely, African American moviegoers. Surprisingly, "In spite of its central emphasis on attracting black audiences, the film opened to wide attendance: early audiences were 37% African-American, 35% Caucasian and 18% Hispanic" (Shutt, 2018). It is commendable that the attendance of the white status quo racial group supported the movie, showing that they were able to welcome a minority superhero despite their customary embrace of

white superheroes. It is also worth mentioning that other racial groups in America strongly supported the movie. Thus a consensus was formed that accepted superheroes of all ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, Shutt (2018) noted: “Disney also noticed a spike in interest from the female demographic under 25 . . . and organized the ‘Welcome to Wakanda: Fashion for the *Black Panther* Era’ timed to coincide with New York Fashion week.”

This movie had widespread influence across different sectors of society. This is illustrated by its partnerships in the corporate world, ranging from Lexus to nationwide charities and foundations, all helping to raise money to provide free movie tickets or Hasbro toys to economically disadvantaged youth of color, shown on a highly engaging online homepage. The marketing strategy took full advantage of special times of the year by promoting the movie with ads during heavily watched TV events such as the NBA basketball finals and Super Bowl (Shutt, 2018) To top it all off, this movie created and directed by black Americans was marketed with a release date during the month of February, referred to in the U.S. as Black History Month.

In terms of reviews, one of the most popular and highly regarded movie critics is Rotten Tomatoes, which currently rewards *Black Panther* with a superb 97% rating, which in this case, foils any argument about unfair or biased reviews toward the blackness or story of the movie. However, “alt-right groups are being foiled in their attempts to sabotage a superhero film with an all-black cast,” forcing Facebook, among others, to shut down forums and groups in support of plastering the movie’s own Facebook page with negative comments and Rotten Tomatoes to ban hate speech toward *Black Panther*. What is most interesting is that these comments were actually posted

before the release of the movie, serving as evidence that their comments are clearly solely geared towards insulting the race and color of the cast (Walker, 2018).

## Nigeria

While never pulling in as much revenue through movie sales as the other global movie markets addressed in my research, “Nollywood” (as it is known colloquially) still reigns as Africa’s largest movie market. It seemed to welcome *Black Panther* with open arms, with many Africans sharing the same sentiments of finally seeing themselves reflected on the big screen in a positive heroic light. A Reuters article states that Nigerian filmgoers were delighted to witness the fictional land of Wakanda “depicted as a verdant land with stunning waterfalls where spacecraft designed like tribal masks soar over a modern metropolis...and also as a futuristic, wealth-laden nation” (Akwagyiram, 2018).

## India

The marketing strategy here was carried out in a more subtle, less flashy tone, attracting viewers through Bollywood outlets. In fact, Nishant Radia, CMO and co-founder of Vidooly stated that “organic promotion” and building connections with the audience long before the release date of the movie helped to win the loyalty of many Indian fans of Marvel, and the movie benefitted from astonishing movie sales results (Mansuri, 2018). Even conceptually, small things like clothing influenced Indian moviegoers’ connection to this movie, with an apparent blend of highly intricate Indian and African designs (Tripathi, 2018).

Regarding reviews, it is worth noting that India is known for its harsh treatment of dark-skinned characters in Bollywood and within society at large. Light skin is most preferred, which is evidenced by fact that the majority of their lead roles are filled with light-skinned actors. Of course, I expected that *Black Panther* would have a smaller fan base in India as the movie touts its theme of blackness and black pride. Surprisingly, I could not find any negative reviews based on color or race from Indian outlets or even Indian public forums. What actually came from critics and fans was a deep reflection on the overall similarities between Africa and India and how this fictional story served as an example of unity within an entire nation. For instance, many fans went to Twitter to share their takeaways from the movie through comments such as “Watched #BlackPanther, perhaps the first film in which Blacks are not shown as victims or primitive. I hope there comes a day when we can see a film like this about #Adivasis of India.” Another Twitter comment stated: “Is there a version of #Wakanda in India? What would an India look like without invasions, conversions and colonization?” Other fans highlighted how the movie reminded them of their own Indian culture, with one saying how she was “so sad about the anti-blackness in our own communities and how much work there is to be done!” (Prasad, 2018).

The only negative reviews and feedback originated from the Central Board of Film Certification which requested muting a religious reference to the Indian monkey god Hanuman. This reference in the movie came when the fictional Jabari tribe delivered an ode to the god as their principal deity. While this did not directly impact sales in any way that could be seriously accounted for, it is clear that “the snipping has not gone down too well with the Indian audience” (Trends Desk, 2018).



## China

It would be absurd to say that *Black Panther* was not a success in China as “it earned \$20.7 million on its opening day, the second-highest debut for a Marvel movie in China” (Ho, 2018). Despite this number, the fact is that *Black Panther* still had fewer movie sales than *Mission Impossible: Fallout* starring Tom Cruise. Interestingly enough, *Black Panther* outperformed that movie by over three times as much in domestic sales.

In marketing the movie to the Chinese moviegoers, the *Black Panther* movie trailer added appearances of Iron Man and Captain America, both of whom were missing in the American trailer. The trailer for China was augmented to ensure that moviegoers understood that the *Black Panther* character, although a minority, was still very much a legitimate character within the Marvel realm and not some random offshoot of the brand. He was further validated by the white superhero counterparts to appeal to the Chinese audiences (Brzeski, 2018).

The movie poster released in China differed greatly from the American poster “as the movie’s star Chadwick Boseman, [was shown] in his *Black Panther* suit with his face covered by his mask,” while the Western release showed Boseman’s face without his headgear. This disparity created an flood of Twitter comments slamming both Disney and China with forceful accusations of racism (Arnold, 2018). Disney later claimed that the poster was actually fan art submitted in a competition held by a Taiwanese media agency (Brzeski, 2018).

The movie did not receive absolutely positive criticisms in the Chinese movie market as it did in the U.S. and other movie markets, which could relate more to the struggles of the character and his culture. China’s largest movie critic reviews website

Douban gave the film a 6.7 score, “one of the lowest among all Marvel Universe films” (Ho, 2018). The Douban reviews complained about the blackness of the movie, both in terms of the majority black cast as well as the numerous night scenes which made it an experience one reviewer described as “a torture to the eyes.” Chinese media outlets shielded such comments by stating that Marvel movies do not normally become mega-hits, and therefore *Black Panther* should not feel slighted by such remarks. Furthermore, the plot line of *Black Panther* was quite common to Chinese viewers who are accustomed storylines of family dynasties, internal struggles, and fights for control (Ho, 2018).

It is worth noting that Marvel’s *Avengers: Infinity War* movie raked in nearly half a billion dollars at the Chinese box office, which most people would label as mega-blockbuster. A popular Chinese film critic, Chu Mufeng, commented on social media that the film’s global success “seems to suggest the film’s social significance is greater than its content.”

Other commenters went on to accuse African American audiences of receiving special treatment within Hollywood, especially the Marvel movie series: “Countless black people have won their status for several generations. Asian people have not yet even entered mainstream society,” one anonymous Douban user said. Another user wrote, “Why have Marvel and DC ignored the Asians and other ethnic groups?” (Walsh & Xiao, 2018). An official film critic commented on how most Marvel films are slightly humorous and overall light-hearted, with jam-packed action in a mission to rescue the world. *Black Panther* is different because its struggles are internal, and it challenges American values and politics based on topics such as colonialism, cultural pride, and waging wars against less-defenseless nations. For Chinese moviegoers, *Black Panther*

simply does not resonate in this discussion as much as with Americans, especially African Americans (Walsh & Xiao, 2018).

## South Korea

In contrast with its Asian counterpart China, South Korea embraced the film in nearly the same manner that it embraces its own Hollywood movies—in fact, even more so considering that “the film tallied the biggest February opening day total in the country’s history—and seventh-highest of all-time—with \$4.7 million” (Fuster, 2018). It is important to note, however, that South Korea has a different relationship with the *Black Panther* franchise because part of the movie was filmed in Busan, the second-largest city in South Korea. For this reason, Korean audience are more loyal to the movie because of the opportunities it opened for future Western films to scout South Korea as a viable filming location. The film helped to not only boost Busan’s economy during production of the movie, but also gave the city a marketing tool to draw in more international visitors. In fact, upon release of the movie trailer, “the name of the dental clinic that was in the frame topped the trending keywords on Naver, one of Korea’s biggest internet portal sites. Some restaurants promoted themselves as ‘the shop that was destroyed in *Black Panther*’” (Horst, 2018).

## Conclusion

At this point, these results fall in line with my expectations in the sense that I predicted that each movie market would have different reactions and reasons for their support of *Black Panther* or lack thereof. What I did not foresee was that the reasons for

not showing full favoritism to this movie with a black man as its lead role may have more to do with external factors beyond race, including issues like muting the monkey god for Indian filmgoers.

A few takeaways from the results thus far are:

- how it starts is how it ends, meaning that the film's success in America started on a positive note across all audiences, with Marvel and Disney promoting widespread pandemonium about the movie's release and committing high marketing budgets as they do with any other Marvel film.
- In China, the poster had already begun conversations about subtle racism and the need to validate the *Black Panther* character by including other Marvel superheroes. Thus it was almost certain that the results in China would not match those in the United States.
- Building connections with an audience before release matters, especially if showcasing part of that audience's culture in the film. Indians seemed delighted to have Indian print fabrics included in the African costumes of the characters. Koreans were delighted with the overnight fame of having one of their largest cities portrayed as a prime setting in the movie.
- Finally, while historical events relating to race have plagued America for centuries, it should not be expected that moviegoers from international audiences will be as tuned in with America's past, and therefore they might not understand the significance of these American societal issues on screen.
- In the light of heroism, most Marvel superheroes are relatable with nearly all audiences because of their fantasy, high-action appeal. Supporting a black superhero

to this degree worldwide probably would not have been possible without the backing of a major studio like Disney and a brand such as Marvel.

- As the hero, the main character T'Challa, played by Chadwick Boseman, portrays values such as protecting family, humility, forgiveness, and using resources to help others instead of for personal gain. T'Challa is proud of his legacy, his family name, and his people from all tribes. He portrays confidence and fortitude while protecting and uplifting all that is dear to him without excessive use of power or pride. I believe this character, although black, is highly relatable with most individuals; it should not be overlooked as one more reason why so many people felt they could support a minority lead role as a superhero.

As I move to a discussion of other genres, I will analyze those with minority lead roles to discover how all of the elements discussed above differ when portrayed in other movie genres, and/or with different color race casting from solely African American to Asian to multiracial. I aim to discover if there is a formula for a minority lead role movie which, when implemented, is expected to result in a global box office success.

### African American Comedy

This analysis focuses on three movies: *Girls Trip*, *Ride Along*, and *Central Intelligence*. I begin by presenting arguments on the history and marketability of this genre along with its general benefits and flaws to various audiences. I then study these movies across the same elements as earlier: movie sales, marketing and promotion, and critic/fan reviews centered around the aspect of race.

African American comedies have generally succeeded in entertaining targeted black audiences but have failed to gain the interest of international audiences or even audiences of other races within the domestic U.S. market. Before assuming that it is simply race or skin color that pushes away audiences, it is worth analyzing other factors that may help prove or disprove this theory.

African American comedies are widely known for a heightened inclusion of more aggressive and cursory language, physical violence, and many cultural inside jokes that probably do not relate to other audiences. Harriett Margolis (1999) explains:

These jokes were not merely an exercise in self-deprecation but a class phenomenon and perhaps an attempt at social control, as indicated by the nature of the stereotypes contained in what was called anti-Negro humor: uninhibited sexual behavior, cowardice, the tendency to fight with knives and razors, dishonesty, verbal difficulties and deviant behavior in general. (p. 53)

While African Americans tend to accuse white Hollywood of portraying them in a way that is vile, uneducated, and of secondary importance to their white counterparts, African Americans must first address their own tendency to degrade their perceived status in society by learning to uplift the overall message of their creative projects. The idea that other races must automatically accept blacks' preferred communication style in African American comedies to show their acceptance of black culture, is slightly absurd—in the same way that Latin or Asian humor in a movie would most likely be dismissed by African Americans due to a sense of cultural dissociation and inability to relate.

Comedy as a genre, especially with a single-race cast, is more difficult to attract multicultural audiences because such movies normally include internal jokes in which other races simply would not understand, thereby not serving its purpose of comedic

entertainment for all to enjoy. Many black comedies still tend to be directed and created by African Americans. Therefore, the real issue may be that African Americans are displaying themselves in a way that reflects the commonly pushed stereotypes of blacks during the era of slavery and Jim Crow laws. Given the frequent use of vulgar language and Ebonics, often partnered with immature storylines filled with self-degrading humor, it is no surprise that other races overlook this genre. Many African Americans claim this is unfair because white comedies are not judged as harshly but still receive the backing of major studios despite numerous failures at the box office.

It might be useful for African Americans to remember that the world exists in terms of reality and not what is ideal. Factually, whiteness in the world of media has been and still is more marketable, therefore white comedies do not suffer from the same racial stereotypes that repel international audiences. Thus Margolis (1999) explains:

The critical challenge for black folks has been to expand the discussion of race and representation beyond debates about good and bad imagery. Often what is thought to be good is merely a reaction against representations created by white people that were blatantly stereotypical. Currently, however, we are bombarded by black folks creating and marketing similar stereotypical images. It is not an issue of “us” and “them.” (p. 50)

It is imperative that African Americans learn to promote themselves in ways that command respect while still providing entertainment in various genres.

This does not take away from the fact that African American films are usually allocated small to medium budgets compared to their white counterparts, nor do they garner the same respect and attention as do white films. In fact, “besides an occasional push to gain more Latino/a audiences, there is little effort on behalf of Hollywood to market Black-cast films for wider audience reception” (Erigha, 2019, p. 57). It is still up

to Hollywood to start marketing and budgeting films with all-black casts and black directors with the same fervor they do with white films and white directors across genres. The well-respected African American movie director Lee Daniels, known for making mature biopics of the black community, commented on how difficult it is to secure funding for movies in black Hollywood unless they include one of the tried-and-true elements of comedy, action, or violence (Erigha, 2019, p. 115) While it can be assumed that African American comedies can still be successful when targeted to its primary audience, “they can be more financially successful, more aesthetically prestigious, and more culturally influential if they cross over to mainstream audiences as well” (Margolis, 1999, p. 59).

#### Movie Ticket Sales

I will first present summary information about overall ticket sales across the five global movie markets that are included in this research: U.S., Nigeria, India, China, and South Korea, for three movies that will be analyzed for this genre, followed by my general findings and conclusions. Movie sales figures are shown in Appendix A.

*Girls Trip*, released in 2017, was the second place top-selling comedy of the year, with U.S. domestic sales of \$115.2 million, and no sales in any international movie market. *Ride Along*, released in 2014, was also the second-place winner in that year with domestic sales of \$134.9 million and very limited sales in Nigeria. The movie *Central Intelligence*, released in 2016, placed first in its genre with domestic sales of \$127.4 million and limited sales in India.



The most important takeaway from these figures compared to another genre such as multiracial cast lead role movies (which I will discuss later) is that they were not marketed to international audiences, thereby limiting their success to support from American and African American audiences. These results bring up the question: Do Hollywood distributors and producers truly feel as if black comedies or generally black-cast movies are simply not marketable overseas, especially without any white lead roles or supporting roles? It is important to note that even outside of Hollywood, in the realm of independent film festivals,

even as more films are being made by and about minorities, ownership and profits are still held by all-white studios and production companies, and they, Wala points out, make the decisions about what films will be made and how they will be marketed. Dr Clive Nwonka of the London School of Economics and Political Science described a study of all UK films made since 2016... and discovered over half of these films cited ‘diversity’ or the presence of minorities, choosing to include more women as a solution to the demand for diversity, over and above race.” (Reid, 2020)

## Marketing and Promotion

Because the decision-makers at movie studios don’t expect a “black movie” to do well, they’re less likely to allocate the kind of resources that can help a film become a hit. Then, when the film doesn’t perform well overseas, it’s taken as a sign that their expectations were well-founded, and that myth is true. (Wilkinson, 2018).

Many people look at movie sales as a telling sign of how black comedies are not prepared to succeed in the international arena, overlooking the fact that they were never truly supported in the way they should have been.

*Girls Trip* is a movie about four African American women, college roommates, who reunite for a weekend of fun at a New Orleans festival. Directed by and co-starring

Jada Pinkett Smith, this movie was heralded as one of the funniest and raunchiest movies of the summer by many major media outlets. The movie was not marketed to international audiences, especially since it was restricted to a \$19 million budget. However, all of its female stars are well known and revered by the African American community, including Regina Hall and Queen Latifah, who have been successful in past multiracial big-screen movies alongside white co-stars. The film's promotion was not unique in any way, simply relying on running online and television marketing promo trailers; all of its stars conducted fun, light-hearted, nationally televised interviews with late-night hosts and daytime panels. It appeared that Smith was conscious of the typical black woman stereotypes of being angry, insecure, and dramatic so instead she portrayed all of its characters as fun-loving, confident career women.

*Ride Along* is about two brothers-in-law, one a veteran cop and one a rookie cop, forced to partner up to take down a major mafia-style drug kingpin. When presenting this story line, it is obvious there have been many similar movies to which moviegoers worldwide have grown accustomed. When already in a niche market such as African American comedies, one wonders if such movies would have more success if they had more creative storylines.

Like *Girls Trip*, *Ride Along* did not target international audiences. Its marketing and promotion strategy featured the same elements of daytime and late-night interviews and funny movie trailer ads. However, in one unique promotion strategy, Universal Pictures decided that breakout star Kevin Hart would be “the very first celebrity voice featured in U.S. versions of [Waze] . . . hoping to promote an upcoming film in which

Hart is starring, called *Ride Along*” (Sterling, 2013). The movie benefitted from Hart’s up-and-coming rise in Hollywood as a comedic standup and genius.

*Central Intelligence* is a movie about two men who attended high school together—one was the most popular and the other socially awkward and unaccepted. However, as time moved on, one became an undercover agent and partners up with his old high school classmate in attempts to clear his name when he was wrongfully framed for crimes he did not commit. Starring Kevin Hart and Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, the movie succeeds through the use of unique details that set it apart from most buddy cop cliché movies: one character suffers from past weight insecurities, the other copes with a midlife crisis when realizing he never fulfilled his lifelong dreams.

When analyzing the promotion for this movie, several factors were considered. The first is that Kevin Hart’s comedy is well-known and accepted by all races across the U.S. This makes him a sought-after actor. Second is the strategic use of wide-ranging social media outreach and interviews featuring both stars together to showcase their brotherhood in real life. The third factor is that most buddy cop movies historically have succeeded at the box office, so there is little risk with the story plot. Last but not least, the presence of Dwayne Johnson as a co-star was also strategic as he is a highly marketable actor famous for his *Fast & Furious* brand as well as top-grossing movies across all genres. Furthermore, due to his mixed-race appearance, Mims (2017) noted:

He has become a “race shifter” for lack of a better word. Through his obviously ethnic, but not clearly defined looks (he’s black Canadian/Samoan), he has managed to become “identified” as it were, by different audiences, as different things. . . . Johnson can smoothly switch from “white” to “black” to even “other,” without any reaction from audiences.

This observation is noteworthy because it definitely makes one ponder if “race shifters” will one day become the racial strategy among Hollywood studios when casting individuals who are not clearly white or black. Is this being more inclusive of other races, especially mixed-race populations, or is this a sly manner in which to pivot away from casting more physically pronounced homogenous races as lead roles?

### Critics’ and Fans’ Reviews

Many reviews by movie critics and fans genuinely uplifted *Girls Trip* as a movie filled with genuine humor and highly talented actresses showcasing veteran acting skills.

*Rolling Stone*, in an overall positive review, said:

Yes, it’s stale stuff, but in the next minute these four actresses spin us back to the funny and with a warmth and appeal that Hollywood, try as it might, can’t manufacture. Latifah, Hall, Pinkett Smith, and Haddish are the real deal, side-splitting dynamos who are also women of heart and mind. They make naughty feel like a trip to comedy heaven. (Travers, 2017)

The movie centers on the importance of sisterhood and friendship and allows each character to assume a lead role despite their different personality types. It is difficult for comedies to cast characters in a hero’s light as we commonly relate to the word.

However, in my opinion, each character was a hero through her display of values such as self-accountability, self-respect, and the importance of being a support system for family and friends.

Despite its success at the box office, with earnings some eight times that of its budget, it was completely disregarded by Screen Actors Guild awards, Golden Globes, and foreign film critics. As the movie’s director, Jada Pinkett Smith stated:

*Girls Trip* was one of the most successful films this summer & Tiff was hands down the funniest person on screen in 2017 and we couldn’t get

eyes on the film or a press conference. How much more critical acclaim must a movie have to simply get a screening? (quoted in Hornaday, 2017)

Bowen (2017), writing about Pinkett Smith later, suggested that Hollywood needed to

learn to expand its concepts of race, gender equality and inclusion in regard to its perceptions of art across the board. She concluded that black art is still art and should not be so segmented that it is always invisible to non-black audiences and blacks and other minorities should not be viewed as the “others” when they are just as present in American and global cultures. (Bowen, 2017)

With African American comedies considered by Hollywood as a niche market, “films like *Girls Trip* seem to be excluded on the principle that they appeal to a different audience” (Bowen, 2017).

*Central Intelligence* received many reviews which signaled that while the movie was definitely not an award contender, it served its purpose of making the audience laugh. Both actors, if I may add, showed an incredible amount of talent and unforced humor.

One review, by a movie critic affiliated with *Times of India*, stated: “Speaking of comedy, the punches and the Black guy jokes are silly. The action scenes are decent and work to a certain extent but the film is avoidable on the whole as it lacks ‘intelligence’ (Vyavahare, 2017). This review was intriguing for two reasons. First, the critic is of Indian background and he states that a movie starring two black men essentially equated to a film with no intelligence. As the entire nation of India deals with extreme cases of colorism, it makes one ask if the critic was suffering from racial and color bias when posting his comment. Second, the mention of “Black guy jokes” is questionable, since a high percent of the verbiage is actually standard English and not the typical Ebonics often tied to African Americans.

Despite this review, the movie performed well and exceeded expectations. Like its film counterparts in the African American comedy genre, it probably could have been marketed overseas if it had been given the opportunity to branch out to global audiences.

### African American Historical Film Genre

“Hollywood executives are eager to fund Black movies with comedy, action or violence but are reluctant to finance films without these elements.” (Erigha, 2019, p. 115) This comments illustrates the fact that other genres with all-black casts simply are not welcome or are deemed unable to succeed at the box office, and Hollywood studios are unwilling to risk funding such projects. Director Lee Daniels said: “Hollywood executives have constrained Black movies and directors to a narrow range of genres” (Erigha, 2019, p. 215). However, it is important to note that many of the top awarded films actually originate from the historical genre, whether fiction or nonfiction, from *The Help* to *Hidden Figures*, with cast members receiving Oscar nods for their roles.

It also happens that “whites direct the most commercially lucrative movies and oversee high-concept crossover movies that feature Black stars such as the movie *Hidden Figures*” (Erigha, 2019, p. 100). It is apparent in this instance that black directors are not trusted by Hollywood studios to step beyond their normal genre boundaries and experiment across all types of storylines and genres. Furthermore, the idea that Black actors and actresses are presented with the most award nods only when mostly starring in white-directed films, also perpetuates the idea that only white-directed movies, even when the subject content is culturally black in nature, are worthy of receiving awards for their depiction of the African American diaspora.

The two films I analyzed in this category are *Django Unchained* and *Hidden Figures*, the former a fictional tale and the latter a nonfiction narrative.

#### Movie Ticket Sales

For this category, the results were truly mixed for both movies in terms of global movie markets. *Hidden Figures*, released in 2016, raked in domestic sales of nearly \$170 million, along with limited sales of nearly \$200,000 in India and a little more than \$3 million in South Korea. *Django Unchained*, released in 2012, had domestic revenues of \$163 million, but less than \$500,000 in India and Nigeria, and less than \$3 million each in China and South Korea.

It is worth noting that while Hollywood claims to not want to fund and market Black-cast movies in genres other than action and comedy, movies in this genre actually gained considerably more traction than the African American comedy genre, despite the minimal revenues received. This disparity indicates that markets overseas do show more interest in serious subject matter rather than the foolish clown depictions of blacks in comedies. In fact, when compared to its Tarantino-produced counterpart titled *Inglourious Basterds*, with whites depicted as the heroes, Erigha (2019) wrote:

*Django Unchained* is the highest-grossing Tarantino film of all time, 33% bigger than *Inglourious Basterds* and amassing the same ratio of 62% of worldwide gross coming from overseas . . . proving that Black stars can make money overseas. (p. 78)

#### Marketing and Promotion

The marketing push for Tarantino's *Django* resulted in a unique promotional strategy, as described in this comment from Williams (2013):

The release of action-figure slave and slaver dolls to help promote *Django* was an especially offensive decision because selling slave figurines falls directly in line with the centuries-old American tradition of desensitizing us to the horrors of slavery with cute, palatable commodities.

Despite this marketing blunder, fans were eager to see the movie by Tarantino, who is known for his gory, quick-witted, and revenge-laden storylines that usually end in the antagonist finally receiving the karma they deserve.

Well-known, multi-talented, and award winning actor Jamie Foxx, and his leading lady Kerry Washington, who was simultaneously the star of the biggest network television show “Scandal,” coupled with the help of Marvel movie brand fixture Samuel L. Jackson, secured the attention of the African American audience as well as outlying audiences with its promise to entertain and shock in ways that exceeded their expectations.

There were no international screenings for the movie, and sales results would almost cause one to assume that very little budget was put toward to convince overseas crowds. “Viewers purchased *Django* and felt safe rooting for the outlaw because of the studio’s investment in a credible director, cast, and story” (Satchel, 2016).

*Hidden Figures* did not go beyond the ordinary in its marketing campaign, although it did benefit from having a mixed black/white cast that could then carry out interviews with more white-targeted panels, with black cast members doing the same with their relatable audience. The movie also benefited from being a nonfiction story about American heroes who withstood racial prejudice, limited opportunities, and numerous hurdles to become essential components who helped launch NASA’s spacecraft missions, thereby drawing in many Americans ready to watch unsung heroes on the silver screen. What is fascinating about this movie is its ability to portray African



American female protagonists as classy, educated, hard-working, and steadfast in their beliefs and values.

At its release, many people did not know anything about the real-life characters who inspired the movie, despite their major contributions to society, once again sparking the conversation about why African American culture, art, and other contributions to American society go unnoticed.

### Critics' and Fans' Reviews

Oddly enough, the primary criticism of both films presented itself as “whitewashing” the narratives, that is, assigning their white cast counterparts a significant role in “saving” the blacks from their present struggles. As Smith (2013) commented:

As some critics of the film have pointed out, the protagonist for the first two-thirds of the film is not Django himself, but his German mentor and benefactor, King Schultz, a German portrayed by Christoph Waltz, who sacrifices his life in the pursuit of freedom and justice for the black man.

Schultz not only leads Django to the plantation where they rescue Django's damsel-in-distress, but he also teaches Django how to survive winters and eventually even kills the main antagonist Kandy. This should not, however, take away from the fact that Django still brought retribution in his own cunning way and lived to escape with his lady as freed slaves. “Django changes how audiences and filmmakers see heroism. This movie rightfully returns the world's gaze to America's original sin of slavery. Tarantino challenges American history and indexes contemporary fears and fantasies about Black empowerment” (Satchel, 2016). A secondary criticism of this movie was that there was

too much gore and nudity. In particular, the nudity resulted in many global movie markets such as China and India editing the film before releasing it to local audiences.

*Hidden Figures* was also criticized for whitewashing the narrative and sometimes giving dominance to white actor Kevin Costner as the main hero, rather than the three African American characters, the major characters who portrayed unknown American heroes and for whom the movie was created. Entman and Rojecki (2000) stated:

White actors who star or co-star in films with black actors are also more likely to be at the center of focalization. Additionally, blacks are depicted in more menial roles, such as cab drivers, cashiers, street vendors, etc. in many films, even those that had them at the center of the story line. (p. 200)

This phenomenon of type-casting is essentially what happened in the storyline of this film, with Costner's character often coming to save the black characters from segregated bathrooms, from not being given due credit for their work, and from being denied entry into all-white-male settings. In a way, his character helps the African American female protagonist to find confidence within herself and her work and to begin feeling accepted by white society, especially her white coworkers. There is a scene in the movie where one of the three main African American women frantically breaks down at work because she had to walk across campus to use the "blacks-only" restrooms. In truth, the real-life individual claimed she only used the white bathrooms, and refused to use segregated facilities when working at NASA. When director Theodore Melfi was asked about including a fabricated scene, he admitted he saw no problem with it as long as the "right" results were achieved in the end, i.e., the white lead role "saved the day" by knocking down the "whites-only" sign and announcing that everyone would be treated equally under his supervision.

It is worth mentioning that the movie has been heralded as one of the best films of the year, empowering the present-day African American community with a reminder that they are indeed capable of greatness equal to their predecessors and are not subordinates to their white counterparts. Furthermore, they can be everyday heroes in their own right based on their own merits and hard work.

### Asian Dramas

All minorities in Hollywood have problems being depicted as they really are in a real-world context. Asians are wrongly stereotyped just like African Americans, except perhaps their roles are a bit less vile in nature. Too often they are portrayed as nerds, gas and station owners, usually of a docile and subservient nature. Most important, they are known for their martial arts mastery; Jackie Chan and Jet Li are perhaps the most well-known Asian stars in Hollywood. Asian Americans are equally as frustrated by not seeing themselves depicted on the silver screen in a way that is an authentic representation of their cultural identity.

It is the Asian markets overseas where targeted audiences are usually drawn to action and drama films (the film analyzed in this category falls in the drama category). More focus in this category is placed on *Crazy Rich Asians*. Although there are two other films that technically fall into this category, *Jungle Book* and *Aladdin*, they had no risk of failing at the box office due to their Disney affiliation, branding, and marketing. Therefore, I believe it is most useful to provide an in-depth analysis into the highly touted independent film titled *Crazy Rich Asians*.

## Movie Ticket Sales

Within 12 days of its release, *Crazy Rich Asians* exceeded \$80 million in ticket sales for cinema screenings (Ching, 2018), and through the influence of social media the film gathered millions of viewers. Both white and black audiences supported the movie, an indication that they were ready to welcome an all-Asian-cast movie. No film release was made in India or Nigeria. Total sales were below \$2 million each in China and South Korea.

## Marketing and Promotion

*Crazy Rich Asians*, adapted from Kelvin Kwan's best-selling novel, topped box offices around the world. It generated more than \$101 million in its first 17 days, which places the movie among top contenders like *Black Panther* and *Avengers: Infinity Wars*. The film broke numerous records for an Asian-cast Hollywood movie and put Singapore on the global tourism map (Tan, Tan, Baskaran, & Chong, 2019). With its marketing strategy and its target market demonstrating unmatched loyalty, *Crazy Rich Asians* became the most tweeted film in August 2018 with more than 350,000 tweets in its opening week (Rifah, & Fauzia, 2019).

Upon releasing the film, director Jon Chu stated that *Crazy Rich Asians* was not just a movie but a movement that aimed at all people in America. However, it specifically targeted American Asians, who responded by booking movie theaters and halls in the United States to which they invited their colleagues, family members, clients, and partners to partake in a significant cinema movement (Liu, 2019). With the mobilization

of American Asians, the movie obtained considerable numbers at the box office during its initial days.

One marketing strategy for penetrating the market was the creation of a new sub-genre, which went on to become the only Hollywood movie to feature an English-speaking cast composed of Asians (Sio, 2019). Notably, it portrays an Asian super-wealthy cast, which is marketed internationally to make the movie thrive and trend in the market (Sio, 2019). As a way of dominating the film industry, *Crazy Rich Asians* create a sub-genre with zero competition by leveraging diversity in race (Liu, 2019). Additionally, to thrive in Hollywood, which is already saturated with romantic movies, *Crazy Rich Asians* captures the dialogue and cultural idiosyncrasies of the Asian American community while still maintaining its mainstream draw as a romantic comedy.

After being neglected for years, the Asian American community gladly accepted the arrival of the film and turned out to greet it in large numbers. In the opening week of the film, 40% of the viewers were Asian Americans (Sio, 2019). Many Asian Americans came out strongly to support the film as they bought out entire theaters and gave away free tickets with the hashtag #GoldOpen movement (Arsi, & Sobur, 2019).

Additionally, the movie had a clear brand and purpose, as the producers rejected a massive payday from Netflix so they could instead bring diversity to theater screens. The film led people from different races and backgrounds to view the movie in the hope that moviegoers would become more aware and supportive of Asian American culture.

## Critics' and Fans' Reviews

*Crazy Rich Asians* captured the pain of being first-generation Americans and the plight that Asian Americans face at home and abroad. Rachel is a Chinese American college professor who is looked down upon in the US due to her color and race. While she back at home, she is introduced to her future mother-in-law by her fiancé Nick. The mother-in-law views her as a “banana,” a derogatory term that implies Rachel is yellow on the outside and white on the inside (Tan, et al., 2019). The film captures some of the challenges American Asians face: cross-cultural identity crises, and direct/indirect racism.

Outside of America, the movie did not fare well in the two Asian markets in which it was released. As highlighted in the movie, Americans Asians are simply not viewed as “real” Asians by their counterparts living in the Far East, who tend to punish them for “faking” to be something they are not culturally. A key takeaway is that Asian markets do not seem to support one race over another, as illustrated by their lack of support for this all-Asian cast film.

## Multiracial Action and Comedy

With a significant percentage of the American population becoming mixed-race, it is no surprise that mixed-race characters or multiracial casts are becoming generally well-received by both domestic and international markets. As mentioned in the African American comedy section, actors like Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson definitely benefit from having a physical appearance that allows them to blend into a role. When the actor or actress is not technically mixed-race, then what is called “color-conscious casting” is

strategically used to avoid all-out whitewashing or one-color casting in a movie, which in turn allows any actor of any race to play any character without being typecast.

That strategy worked well in the 1997 television rendition of “Cinderella” played by African-American singer Brandy; she had a white stepmother, an Asian prince, and a black fairy godmother as part of the storyline. Two of the biggest movie franchises, Marvel’s *Avengers* and *Fast & Furious*, gained international appeal with their sizable multiracial casts and films shot in recognizable locations all over the globe. Some of the top-earning movies of all time reside within this category. As a result, every race can resonate with or personally admire many of the lead characters, who transport them into movie-in high-action, full-throttle type movies. While most of these movies fall into the action genre, there are two features that fall into the comedy genre. The movies I analyze in the thesis are: *Fate of the Furious*, *Jumanji*, *Oceans Eight*, *Hustlers*, *Hobbs & Shaw*, and *Avengers: Endgame*.

## Movie Ticket Sales

*Fate of the Furious* secured its place in the record books as the fourth-highest grossing film in 2017, with a \$534 million domestic opening and \$440 million overseas opening (Saputro, 2019). Such sales records are attributed to the film’s marketing strategy, including release of a trailer in Times Square, and exposure by the characters on their social media platforms. Most of the characters are world famous, which also helped to attract substantial global revenues. In particular, the inclusion of an Asian role in the film helped to tap into the Asian market, hence increasing the sales volume (Saputro, 2019).

The action, comedy, and adventure film titled *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* earned \$16.4 million in its first month. Domestically, it pulled in \$962 million (Andres, 2019). Film sales were boosted by its lead actors Dwayne Johnson and Kevin Hart, who used their social media to pull huge numbers of people to come and watch the film.

*Oceans Eight* premiered in June 2018 and scored box office sales of \$297.7 million against its budget of \$70 million. In North America, ticket sales reached \$41.5 million on its premier day (Ahmed, Waqas, & Afzal, 2019). On its debut day in the U.S., the film sold \$41.1 million worth of tickets—more than the three previous male-fronted *Ocean* movies. The film focused on a heist plan dominated by women—one of a kind in itself—so during the premiere weekend theaters were filled with women, 69% of them over 25 years of age (Ahmed, et al., 2019).

*Hustlers* enjoyed box office sales of \$105 million in the United States primarily due to the characters in the movie, including Ramona, played by a well-known artist and celebrity, which therefore attracted a large number of viewers (Singh & Goyal, 2019). The star power in the movie—Jennifer Lopez, rapper Cardi B, *Crazy Rich Asians* star Constance Wu, and singer Lizzo—definitely helped propel it to blockbuster status. However, it had only minimal attention overseas, with only South Korea bringing in sales of just under \$500,000.

On its premiere day, the film *Hobbs and Shaw* had sales of \$60.8 million in domestic ticket sales, primarily owing to the presence of Dwayne Johnson and Idris Elba as part of the well-connected *Fast & Furious* franchise. In China, the film had total sales of more than \$200 million. In other overseas markets, it performed at an average level. In



total, the domestic box office gathered \$174 million in ticket sales, while globally the film had sales of more than \$500 million (Singh & Goyal, 2019).

Finally, *Avengers Endgame* amassed \$852 million at the box office, ranking it as the second-highest grossing movie in North America; in fact it grossed more than \$1.4 billion globally in its first week (Handayanto, Setiyadi, & Retnoningsih, 2019). Later it became the highest grossing film of all time and broke historic records in several overseas movie markets.

### Marketing and Promotion

In just one weekend, *Fate of the Furious* gathered a half-million views across the world, which can be attributed to its marketing strategy. The film capitalized on the worldwide popularity of the franchise, on its topics of family and unity where the main characters are black (Edwards, 2019). The movie appeals to all Black American families in the U.S. and across the world as it illustrates unity and how black people can unite to rescue their own. With a central theme of family, and a multiracial cast that includes several black individuals, the film attracted huge crowds of black Americans families with virtues they connect with and hold close (Ulin, 2019). The film's first trailers, which were launched in Times Square with many of the movie's stars, sparked considerable interest from fans. The trailer soon became a viral sensation and gathered 129 million views on YouTube in 24 hours (Liatiyani, 2018).

According to Ulin (2019), *Fate of the Furious* also used the release date to maximum effect. Family films were dominating the box office at the time, and since the central film theme was family, Universal Studios had a ten-day window in which they

were to release the film, and it would be the only blockbuster in a theater for adults only. In addition to release dates, the film exploited rumors about a clash between Vin Diesel and Dwayne Johnson. In an Instagram post posted after he filmed the movie, Johnson voiced his frustration over working with one of the stars in the film. Many speculated the problematic star to be Vin Diesel which aroused interest in individuals who were eager to view the movie (Pusumakeja, 2017). He stated after viewing the film which was to be released in April, that in some scenes, he was not acting and that in fact his “blood was boiling.” Such statements attracted an even more massive crowd of people who hoped to see the feud portrayed in the film (Edwards, 2019).

The film also focused on diversity. It had a rather famous multicultural cast that included Vin Diesel, Dwayne Johnson, Mel Gibson, and Michelle Rodriguez. Sung Kang’s performance as Han tapped into the Korean and Asian markets as hardcore fans of the character mobilized people to view the film (Song, 2018). The presence of Johnson was enough to tap into the African American market, considering that he has a massive following on his social media accounts as well as die-hard fans from his days of wrestling.

*Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* is about four teenagers who are sucked into a magical video game, and the only way to escape is if they work together. Inside the game, the kids take on different characters and physical forms.

As part of its marketing strategy, *Jumanji* was supposed to be a family movie filled with thrill and humor. This was made possible by popular actors Kevin Hart and Dwayne Johnson. To tap into the domestic and international markets, the team included white and black individuals as main characters.

Additionally, Spencer and Fridge, the main characters of the movie, ensured that the film also attracted Black American families to view the film. The fact that the film was screened in the jungle and the characters in many cases had to interact with natives, appealed to people of color, hence increasing the number of individuals who attended screenings (Ulin, 2019).

The fact that the film was not sold to Netflix and instead opted for live screening was a way of marketing it to families to enable them to watch the movie together as a family (Edwards, 2019). Targeted to black Americans, the film also maximized the use of social media when its lead stars tweeted about the movie and received 140 retweets and 12,000 likes (Singh, Goya & Gupta, 2019). Each character had their own promotional poster, which aroused even more interest from black, white, and other racial communities in the U.S.

*Oceans Eight* focuses on women seeking to complete a mission to steal the largest amount of money in recorded history. In the heist, superstar Sandra Bullock is joined by other superstars such as Rihanna and Cate Blanchett. Through women who are well known in the film industry, and the inclusion of Rihanna, the film attracted a considerable number of viewers from the African American community (Gaenssle & Budzinski, 2019). Notably, the fact that the film involves women from different races organizing and working together in a heist also creates curiosity among women across the globe who are eager to see their own reflection in any one of the lead roles (Yu & Yushan, 2019). The idea of using women as a marketing strategy to attract more women and even families to view the movie was a clear indication of the power women have when united. People across the globe were eager to see a heist conducted by women alone. High couture

fashion among the female characters was another tool used to market the film. Rihanna, an artist and fashion icon, was one of the main women marketing the film. This led to many people in the United States, including white audiences, to wait eagerly for the movie. With over 62 million followers in her Instagram account, Rihanna could reach a mass audience in promoting the film (Ahmed, Waqas, & Afzal, 2019). With Ann Hathaway also in the movie—a celebrity with more than 11 million followers of her Instagram account—her social media posts about the film were hard to ignore, helping to gather a huge audience and increase the number of viewers (Ahmed, Waqas, & Afzal, 2019).

Official trailers for the movie garnered an impressive number of views on social media, with Facebook leading with 122 million views and 68 million views on YouTube (Ahmed, Waqas, & Afzal, 2019). To reach an even more significant market as do other movies in Hollywood, *Oceans Eight* partnered with a number of publishers to maximize the established fan base. The film partnered with BuzzFeed for the game titled “Never Have I Ever,” which generated over 1.1 million views for the movie (Ahmed, Waqas, & Afzal, 2019).

*Hustlers* is a movie that revolves around a group of strippers who are just trying to survive during harsh economic times. The film’s stars include megastar Jennifer Lopez and Constance Wu as the main characters. The movie portrays the importance of women’s solidarity despite the women being from different races, including African Americans, whites, Latinos, Asian Americans . . . all of them having a similar goal which is to survive and thrive (Karpinski, 2019).

To market the movie, the team showcased some of the problems faced by young single women in America and the paths they have to take, such as being a stripper, in order to survive (Lee, 2019). With Lopez as the main character in the film, the movie taps Latino and black audiences—and whites as well, with the inclusion of white strippers (Adilah & Alamsyah, 2019). Destiny, as the main Asian character, helps the movie tap into the Asian American market, hence attracting a huge crowd of viewers (Gaenssle & Budzinski, 2019). The characters in the film are out to exploit men and their patriarchal nature, which shows the power and importance of unity among women. In the chaos of economic recession in America and gender inequality, the film attracts a considerable crowd that relates to the characters' problems, especially those faced by women of color and immigrants in the US (Singh & Goyal, 2019).

*Hobbs and Shaw* is a film supported by the highly marketable *Fast & Furious* franchise, which has attracted a considerable viewership primarily because of its star characters, Dwayne Johnson and Idris Elba. Together they attract a considerable viewership among Black American families in the US as well as Africans, especially Nigerians (Nanda, Pattnaik, & Lu, 2018). Elba has a reliable fan base as he is also a major character in the Marvel *Thor* movies. He could also attract viewers in the African American market as he was branded “Sexist Man Alive” by *People* magazine (Saputro, 2019). The inclusion of Dwayne Johnson is a marketing strategy aimed at his loyal fans since his days in wrestling (Gaenssle & Budzinski, 2019). No unique marketing strategies were used, notably because its affiliation with the *Fast & Furious* series was sure to help garner enough attention from fans worldwide without the need for a hefty marketing campaign.

The marketing campaign for *Avengers Endgame* was, according to Marvel Studios, the most expensive of all the movies it has ever released, with Marvel spending \$200 million to promote the movie. One strategy was to showcase the use of fans' emotions as years had been spent building on the characters as well as countless superhero battles (Walker, 2019).

For the previous Marvel film, *Avengers Infinity*, which had sales of \$2 billion, the marketing team thought most people had seen enough in the trailers and hence were not curious about what would take place in the film. However, with *Avengers Endgame*, the marketing team took the theory of "less is more" to create suspense in the publicity campaign, with trailers including only the first 20 minutes of the film (Wessel, 2019). That move took away the spoilers and created eagerness among the film series' fans, which encouraged the public to purchase tickets. In another key move, the *Avenger Infinity* marketing also included *Black Panther* characters, which created even more curiosity and attracted more African American viewers (Walker, 2019).

Social media marketing was also a useful tool for marketing the movie, which had over 35.5 million followers on Instagram, 32 million likes on Facebook, and 12 million subscribers on YouTube (Wessel, 2019). Throughout Marvel's social media platforms, the *#AvengersEndgame* hashtag was trending (Saputra, & Candraningrum, 2019).

One of the primary reasons why both white and black audiences were eager for the film was the power of its inclusivity. Previously, most *Avenger* characters were white, which attracted a considerable number of white viewers in the theater and only a few other races, primarily black Americans. However, under the leadership of Lee who has since taken over Marvel, there is strong character diversification in the *Avengers*

*Endgame* with the inclusion of Wakanda characters which pulled a massive crowd of black Americans and viewers from African nations (Handayanto, Setiyadi, & Retnoningsih, 2019).

To market the film, Marvel studios shifted the narrative from the old days of nearly all white casts in *Iron Man* to show more sensitivity toward gender equality and ethnic diversity (Saputra, & Candraningrum, 2019). *Avengers Endgame* indicated that popular *Black Panther* characters would be an integral part of the movie. This inclusion was positively received by Black Americans. However, given primary roles, characters *Black Panther* and Okoye barely appeared in the movie and were given minor roles.

#### Critics' and Fans' Reviews

Among white audiences, some felt the movie was incomplete without the presence of Paul Walker, the white lead role actor who had passed away a year prior. But other fans felt Vin Diesel made up for the missing Walker by giving an optimal performance. Other audiences were happy that the character Han was played by an Asian.

Critics thought the plot of the film was predictable, especially with the hacking of cars which most saw as an everyday plot and not really a unique storyline. The movie is filled with high-octane action, guns, shooting, violence, explosions, and exotic speed cars and manages to deliver to its fans exactly what they are anticipating.

According to some viewers, *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* is “garbage,” as it involves high school kids who get sucked into a video game in which the rules are never explained, leaving viewers to follow along blindly. The film received some flack for portraying the African American character Spencer as lacking confidence when it came

to asking white female character Martha out, which some critics saw as an illustration of how black men lack self-esteem, while others interpreted the scene as symbolic of racism (Sreelakshmi, 2019). Therefore, some level of racial inferiority was assumed by the audience.

Another instance of racism is evidenced by African American cast character Fridge as the one who is not smart enough to tackle his homework, again interpreted by some critics align with a perceived notion that blacks are less intelligent (Andres, 2019). Other viewers thought the script was all-inclusive as it contains humor, adventure, tension, and entertainment. Actors Jack Black and Kevin Hart bring fun and laughter to the film, while Dwayne Johnson is a perfect example of the body swap.

For most viewers who watched *Oceans Eight*, many walked out after the showing feeling less satisfied. As everyone watched Debbie Ocean bring her team together to organize the heist, viewers were eager to see something going wrong with the plan: maybe someone would mess it up, talk in between the plan, wait for the mark to catch on, or even for a character to betray the whole squad. For many fans of heist movies, the movie was not especially satisfying because the heist plan appeared too perfect to garner genuine reactions.

However, this film was created not for the strength of its plot but to showcase the strength of women unified, specifically a multiracial group of women working together in harmony. Overall, the film was reviewed as entertaining and was successful in creating national discussions about how women of all colors should seek collaboration among themselves.



*Hustlers* is entertaining and shows the power of women when they unite to survive. On one hand, Lopez's performance was generally praised, as well as the overall theme of femininity. The film portrays a confident and assertive image of women who are willing to work hard and "hustle" to achieve their dreams. On the other hand, the film portrays women of color and immigrants as indecent women who cannot get decent jobs, instead choosing to be strippers who rob innocent men—a long-standing image of black and Latina women in the U.S., further perpetuating the stereotype that minority women need men or schemes to survive and get ahead in this world.

*Hobbs and Shaw* contains nonstop action that cause an adrenaline rush, thus satisfying viewers' expectations. The film was edited in several overseas movie markets for its use of "adult" humor. On the other hand, some viewers gave the film a 10-star rating, as both black and white Americans are well represented in the movie, allowing both types of audiences to resonate with the characters and not feel slighted for screen time. Although not containing a clear-cut hero role in the movie, both characters do ultimately accomplish their missions and in that sense promote virtues of focus and determination.

According to some of the Rotten Tomato reviews online, *Avengers Endgame* might have set the bar a bit too high in the sense that there may never be any superhero movie that will match it in the future. However, others claim that the film is overdone with its effects and storyline and has a fitting ending, which sometimes results in people not watching the entire movie but instead waiting until the climactic scenes (Crewe, 2019). Although the marketing team did an excellent job of creating suspense as a way to encourage people to go see the film, *Avengers Endgame* lacks suspense because it is easy

to predict the film's ending. However, the images and the lighting in the film are perfect as well as the costumes.

The cast of actors is diverse, including men and women of all colors and races. Women feature prominently in the movie and play crucial roles when it comes to battles. Characters of color are also present and similarly challenged. However, the film lacks imaginative freedom because it reduces personal identity to pictorial representation (Havard, Ryan, & Grieve, 2019). During the film, Wakanda troops enter a battle, and they are the only troops allied with the Avengers at large. However, the suffering of the Wakanda soldiers in the battle is ignored, which some interpreted as the film lacking empathy when it comes to black suffering in the fighting since little attention is paid to that (Havard, Ryan, & Grieve, 2019). Additionally, while the film focuses on Wakanda soldiers who are injured and crushed, this same portrayal is not shown with non-minority soldiers. Instead of being given individual-specific roles, the Wakanda warriors are grouped where they perish in the battle, and their story is forgotten in the film.

In its defense, the movie certainly got many other factors right, like the presence of a multiracial cast in the first place, with each hero's storyline depicted in an empathetic tone, making it easy for moviegoers to resonate with characters of the same or different racial and cultural backgrounds, due to the film's grounding in emotional relatability from the beginning.

## Chapter IV

### Conclusion

There are numerous major takeaways from my research into the combination of movie genres with race. These are enumerated below.

- The biggest takeaway is that race actually did not play much of a role in the overall success of each movie that was analyzed for this thesis. If one considers other factors, such as limited marketing budgets and/or poorly written or unrelatable dialogue, it is understandable why there could be many other reasons why viewers would rather watch alternatives.
- Overseas markets were just as eager to denounce films with lead roles who appeared the same as the viewers. The truth is that multiracial cast movies are taking in much of the global revenues each year because they tantalize audiences with the idea that everyone is represented on screen.
- Minority film directors and studios need to change their approach about how movies are marketed; they should always discuss the inclusion of global outreach if opting for maximum sales and success on an international scale.
- Although *Black Panther* is rare in its status as a blockbuster, African Americans should not be disappointed when African American films appear to be less marketable as this does not necessarily reflect the acceptance or lack of acceptance of Black race and culture.

- Movies of all genres, even those filled with white casts, have their hardships at box offices around the world. I believe that from this point on, all minority lead role movies should follow the blueprint set out by the *Black Panther* Marvel movies.
- Minorities need to understand that if they want to be better represented, they need to actively support their own demographic market's creative projects by buying tickets and sharing the word online. There is a link between race and heroism, but this link changes according to which audience is addressed, and even then the link does not appear to be sufficiently pronounced for viewers to only support movies that feature lead heroes who resemble their same physical appearance.
- Overall, Hollywood and other global movie markets offer promising tides for the future with their slow but gradual acceptance of minority race actors who more accurately depict their narratives on screen.

## Appendix A

### Global Movie Sales, by country, 2012–2019

2012	USA	Nigeria	India	China	South Korea
<i>Drama</i>	1. Lincoln \$182,207,973 2. Django Unchained \$162,805,434	1. Lincoln -- 2. Django Unchained \$249,139	1. Lincoln \$268,541 2. Django Unchained \$555,705	1. Lincoln -- 2. Django Unchained \$2,650,000	1. Lincoln \$768,7993 2. Django Unchained \$1,735,782
<i>Sci-fi/ Superhero</i>	1. Avengers \$623,357,910 2. Hunger Games \$408,010,692	1. Avengers \$202,368 2. Hunger Games \$65,379	1. Avengers \$12,616,061 2. Hunger Games \$732,355	1. Avengers \$86,300,000 2. Hunger Games \$27,049,819	1. Avengers \$50,683,851 2. Hunger Games \$3,951,587
<i>Action/ Adventure</i>	1. Dark Knight Rises \$448,139,099 2. Skyfall \$304,360,277	1. Dark Knight Rises \$367,180 2. Skyfall \$520,651	1. Dark Knight Rises \$9,223,966 2. Skyfall \$10,949,569	1. Dark Knight Rises \$52,785,334 2. Skyfall \$59,330,000	1. Dark Knight Rises \$42,019,762 2. Skyfall \$16,050,743
<i>Comedy</i>	1. Ted \$218,815,487 2. 21 Jump Street \$138,447,667	1. Ted \$12,325 2. 21 Jump Street \$86,760	1. Ted \$122,933 2. 21 Jump Street \$224,230	1. Ted \$-- 2. 21 Jump Street \$--	1. Ted \$1,759,436 2. 21 Jump Street \$--

2013	USA	Nigeria	India	China	South Korea
<i>Drama</i>	1. Gravity \$274,094,705 2.American Hustle \$150,117,807	1. Gravity \$18,411 2.American Hustle \$--	1. Gravity \$6,186,250 2.American Hustle \$704,479	1. Gravity \$70,680,000 2.American Hustle \$2,810,000	1. Gravity \$29,129,707 2.American Hustle \$619,959
<i>Sci-fi/ Superhero</i>	1.The Hunger Games: Catching Fire \$424,668,047 2. Iron Man 3 \$409,013,994	1.The Hunger Games: Catching Fire \$194,450 2. Iron Man 3 \$--	1.The Hunger Games: Catching Fire \$-- 2. Iron Man 3 \$12,209,244	1.The Hunger Games: Catching Fire \$27,920,000 2. Iron Man 3 \$121,200,000	1.The Hunger Games: Catching Fire \$7,347,573 2. Iron Man 3 \$64,211,513
<i>Action/ Adventure</i>	1. Fast & Furious 6 \$238,679,850 2. Lone Survivor \$125,095,601	1. Fast & Furious 6 \$187,041 2. Lone Survivor	1. Fast & Furious 6 \$10,197,500 2. Lone Survivor	1. Fast & Furious 6 \$66,490,000 2. Lone Survivor	1. Fast & Furious 6 \$11,621,107 2. Lone Survivor \$1,294,960
<i>Comedy</i>	1. The Heat \$159,582,188 2.We're the Millers \$150,394,119	1. The Heat \$156,038 2.We're the Millers \$126,805	1. The Heat  2.We're the Millers \$394,828	1. The Heat  2.We're the Millers	1. The Heat  2.We're the Millers

2014	USA	Nigeria	India	China	South Korea
<i>Drama</i>	1.American Sniper \$340,126,372 2. Gone Girl \$167,767,189	1.American Sniper  2. Gone Girl \$19,167	1.American Sniper \$602,924 2. Gone Girl \$1,722,361	1.American Sniper  2. Gone Girl	1.American Sniper \$1,922,403 2. Gone Girl \$12,322,085
<i>Sci-fi/ Superhero</i>	1.Hunger Games: Mockingjay \$337,135,885 2.Guardians of the Galaxy \$333,176,600	1.Hunger Games: Mockingjay  2.Guardians of the Galaxy \$116,524	1.Hunger Games: Mockingjay \$669,276 2.Guardians of the Galaxy \$2,365,347	1.Hunger Games: Mockingjay \$36,512,218 2.Guardians of the Galaxy \$86,346,366	1.Hunger Games: Mockingjay \$5,804,110 2.Guardians of the Galaxy \$10,129,673
<i>Action/ Adventure</i>	1.22 Jump Street \$191,719,337 2. Kingsman: The Secret Service \$128,261,724	1.22 Jump Street \$146,439 2. Kingsman: The Secret Service \$	1.22 Jump Street \$475,,922 2. Kingsman: The Secret Service \$2,448,229	1.22 Jump Street  2. Kingsman: The Secret Service \$74,667,000	1.22 Jump Street  2. Kingsman: The Secret Service \$46,885,360
<i>Comedy</i>	1.Neighbors \$150,157,400 2.Ride Along \$134,938,200	1.Neighbors \$12,358 2.Ride Along \$25,370	1.Neighbors  2.Ride Along	1.Neighbors  2.Ride Along	1.Neighbors \$215,659 2.Ride Along



2015	USA	Nigeria	India	China	South Korea
<i>Drama</i>	1.The Martian \$228,433,663 2.Cinderella \$201,151,353	1.The Martian \$64,657 2.Cinderella \$18,676	1.The Martian \$4,794,800 2.Cinderella \$1,650,320	1.The Martian \$94,932,731 2.Cinderella \$71,570,000	1.The Martian \$32,104,580 2.Cinderella \$5,064,161
<i>Sci-fi/ Superhero</i>	1.Star Wars Episode VII \$936.662,225 2.Jurassic World \$652,270,625	1.Star Wars Episode VII \$ 2.Jurassic World \$80,725	1.Star Wars Episode VII \$4,571,351 2.Jurassic World \$22,212,557	1.Star Wars Episode VII \$124,159,000 2.Jurassic World \$228,740,000	1.Star Wars Episode VII \$24,142,352 2.Jurassic World \$42,836,759
<i>Action/ Adventure</i>	1. Furious 7 \$353,007,020 2. Spectre I \$200,074,609	1. Furious 7 \$520,229 2. Spectre I \$477,173	1. Furious 7 \$24,714,209 2. Spectre I \$8,350,274	1. Furious 7 \$390,910,000 2. Spectre I \$83,509,789	1. Furious 7 \$24,037,905 2. Spectre I \$12,053,239
<i>Comedy</i>	1.Pitch Perfect 2 \$184,296,230 2.Daddy's Home \$150,357,137	1.Pitch Perfect 2 \$32,263 2.Daddy's Home	1.Pitch Perfect 2 \$47,616 2.Daddy's Home	1.Pitch Perfect 2 2.Daddy's Home	1.Pitch Perfect 2 \$395,314 2.Daddy's Home

2016	USA	Nigeria	India	China	South Korea
<i>Drama</i>	1.The Jungle Book \$364,001,123 2.Hidden Figures \$169,607,287	1.The Jungle Book \$ 2.Hidden Figures	1.The Jungle Book \$38,835,000 2.Hidden Figures \$181,341	1.The Jungle Book \$150,431,684 2.Hidden Figures	1.The Jungle Book \$18,901,624 2.Hidden Figures \$3,152,987
<i>Sci-fi/ Superhero</i>	1.Rogue One: A Star Wars Story \$532,177,324 2. Captain America: Civil War \$408,084,349	1.Rogue One: A Star Wars Story \$ 2. Captain America: Civil War	1.Rogue One: A Star Wars Story \$1,143,293 2. Captain America: Civil War \$12,094,000	1.Rogue One: A Star Wars Story \$7,512,870 2. Captain America: Civil War \$180,794,517	1.Rogue One: A Star Wars Story \$69,484,899 2. Captain America: Civil War \$62,859,896
<i>Action/ Adventure</i>	1.Jason Bourne I \$162,434,410 2. The Legend of Tarzan \$126,643,061	1.Jason Bourne I  2. The Legend of Tarzan \$	1.Jason Bourne I \$1,634,346 2. The Legend of Tarzan \$	1.Jason Bourne I \$66,904,818 2. The Legend of Tarzan \$46,152,613	1.Jason Bourne I \$19,102,134 2. The Legend of Tarzan \$6,297,340
<i>Comedy</i>	1.Central Intelligence \$127,440,871 2. Bad Moms \$113,257,297	1.Central Intelligence \$ 2. Bad Moms	1.Central Intelligence \$277,000 2. Bad Moms \$262,000	1.Central Intelligence \$ 2. Bad Moms	1.Central Intelligence \$ 2. Bad Moms

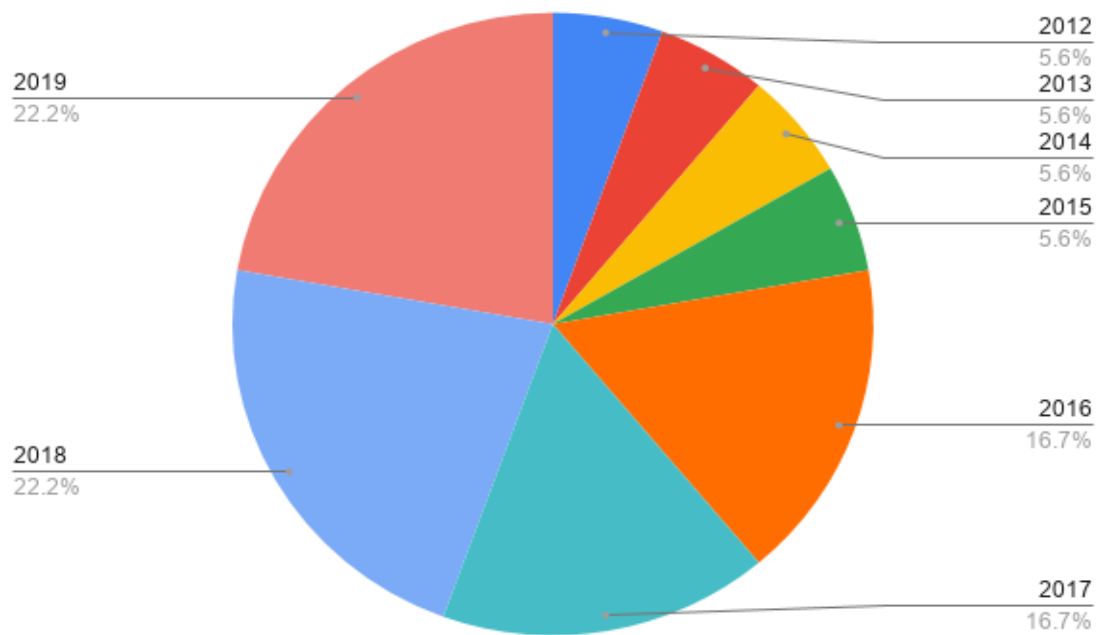
2017	USA	Nigeria	India	China	South Korea
<i>Drama</i>	1.Beauty and the Beast \$504,014,165 2.Dunkirk \$188,045,546	1.Beauty and the Beast \$ 2.Dunkirk \$	1.Beauty and the Beast \$4,149,628 2.Dunkirk \$3,144,854	1.Beauty and the Beast \$85,763,002 2.Dunkirk \$50,970,494	1.Beauty and the Beast \$37,531,148 2.Dunkirk \$22,949,201
<i>Sci-fi/ Superhero</i>	1.Star Wars VIII \$620,181,382 2. Wonder Woman \$412,563,408	1.Star Wars VIII \$ 2. Wonder Woman	1.Star Wars VIII \$2,462,280 2. Wonder Woman \$2,563,510	1.Star Wars VIII \$42,577,974 2. Wonder Woman \$90,498,909	1.Star Wars VIII \$7,981,958 2. Wonder Woman \$15,500,000
<i>Action/ Adventure</i>	1. The Fate of the Furious \$226,008,385 2.Baby Driver \$107,825,862	1. The Fate of the Furious \$91,748 2.Baby Driver	1. The Fate of the Furious \$19,771,148 2.Baby Driver \$774,654	1. The Fate of the Furious \$392,807,017 2.Baby Driver \$16,576,214	1. The Fate of the Furious \$26,671,587 2.Baby Driver \$5,913,726
<i>Comedy</i>	1. Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle \$404,515,480 2.Girls Trip \$115,171,585	1. Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle \$425,175 2.Girls Trip	1. Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle \$11,239,936 2.Girls Trip	1. Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle \$77,946,567 2.Girls Trip	1. Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle \$12,992,117 2.Girls Trip

2018	USA	Nigeria	India	China	South Korea
<i>Drama</i>	1.Bohemian Rhapsody \$216,428,042 2.A Star Is Born \$215,288,866	1.Bohemian Rhapsody 2.A Star Is Born	1.Bohemian Rhapsody \$1,072,200 2.A Star Is Born	1.Bohemian Rhapsody \$13,980,037 2.A Star Is Born	1.Bohemian Rhapsody \$74,187,520 2.A Star Is Born \$3,800,000
<i>Sci fi/ Superhero</i>	1. <i>Black Panther</i> \$700,059,566 2.Avengers: Infinity War \$678,815,482	1. <i>Black Panther</i> 2.Avengers: Infinity War	1. <i>Black Panther</i> \$10,668,490 2.Avengers: Infinity War \$43,594,456	1. <i>Black Panther</i> \$105,062,459 2.Avengers: Infinity War \$359,543,153	1. <i>Black Panther</i> \$42,859,368 2.Avengers: Infinity War \$88,506,046
<i>Action/ Adventure</i>	1.Mission Impossible Fallout \$220,159,104 2. Ocean's Eight \$140,218,711	1.Mission Impossible Fallout 2. Ocean's Eight	1.Mission Impossible Fallout \$15,852,933 2. Ocean's Eight	1.Mission Impossible Fallout \$181,184,137 2. Ocean's Eight	1.Mission Impossible Fallout \$49,794,614 2. Ocean's Eight \$10,800,000
<i>Comedy</i>	1.Crazy Rich Asians \$174,532,921 2. Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again \$120,634,935	1.Crazy Rich Asians 2. Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again	1.Crazy Rich Asians 2. Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again \$373,822	1.Crazy Rich Asians \$1,650,573 2. Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again \$601,894	1.Crazy Rich Asians \$1,168,179 2. Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again \$17,491,037

2019 Tentative as of 10/19	USA	Nigeria	India	China	South Korea
<i>Drama</i>	1.Aladdin \$355,559,216 2.Joker \$335,251,773	1.Aladdin  2.Joker	1.Aladdin \$9,076,831 2.Joker \$11,800,000	1.Aladdin \$53,481,575 2.Joker	1.Aladdin \$92,471,458 2.Joker \$38,000,000
<i>Sci Fi/ Superhero</i>	1.Avengers: Endgame \$858,373,000 2. Captain Marvel \$426,829,839	1.Avengers: Endgame \$1,360,313 2. Captain Marvel \$662,502	1.Avengers: Endgame \$62,678,476 2. Captain Marvel \$14,407,369	1.Avengers: Endgame \$614,316,021 2. Captain Marvel \$154,070,663	1.Avengers: Endgame \$105,229,503 2. Captain Marvel \$42,920,725
<i>Action/ Adventure</i>	1. Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw \$173,956,935 2.John Wick Chapter 3 - Parabellum \$171,015,687	1. Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw  2.John Wick Chapter 3 - Parabellum \$75,898	1. Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw \$13,660,920 2.John Wick Chapter 3 - Parabellum \$1,889,514	1. Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw \$201,000,988 2.John Wick Chapter 3 - Parabellum	1. Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw \$27,270,259 2.John Wick Chapter 3 - Parabellum \$6,887,905
<i>Comedy</i>	1.Shazam! \$140,371,656 2. Hustlers \$104,963,598	1.Shazam! \$313,696 2. Hustlers	1.Shazam! \$3,800,000 2. Hustlers	1.Shazam! \$43,800,000 2. Hustlers	1.Shazam! \$5,000,000 2. Hustlers \$243,615

## Appendix B

### Minority Lead Role Segmentation Across All Genres, 2012-2019



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