It was a balmy April morning in Tampa Bay, Florida, as I sauntered along the promenade to attend the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry–International Indian Film Academy Awards (FICCI–IIFA) business forum hosted by the University of South Florida’s Muma College of Business. There was nervous energy and general anticipatory chaos in the conference room, where a panel on Bollywood’s global collaborations was about to start. As we were waiting for things to commence, I cornered Santiago Corrada, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of Visit Tampa Bay and a host of this panel, for a conversation. He smiled at me and fidgeted with his hands as he produced brief responses to my questions about the event, which I pegged to a general American nonchalance towards Bollywood. It had been twenty minutes since the designated start time for the event, and the impatience was showing. People shuffled in their seats and paced in and out of the conference room. A sudden collective clamour in the room alerted me to the arrival of an important speaker. Bollywood star Anil Kapoor walked in with his usual swagger, and Corrada’s nonchalance vanished. Swiftly angling through the chairs, he zealously shook Kapoor’s hands. He was, it appeared, star-struck.

The panel comprised the who’s who of corporate India, the Indian film and entertainment industry, and its US collaborators. The panellists included the director of the global consultancy firm EY, the executive director of the Tampa Hillsborough Film and Digital Media Commission, the president of the Confederation of Indian Industry, the CEO of the Film & Television Producers Guild of India Limited, film producers, and, of course, Anil

INTRODUCTION
Star Switching Power in Networked Bollywood
Kapoor. These business forums featured a range of topics from ‘opportunities in Indo-US commerce’ to ‘healthcare and technology partnerships’ anchored around the 2014 IIFA Awards, Bollywood’s Oscar-style award show celebrating 100 years of Indian cinema. The IIFA forums were a spectacular and particularly generative space of global flows where all major stakeholders in India’s industrial landscape and beyond were amply represented. The attendees included Indian and American diplomats, key figures from the Indian-American diaspora, as well as individuals from the Indian and US film and entertainment businesses. But it was the presence of Kapoor that transformed what might have been a routine industrial business forum into, simultaneously, a Bollywoodized spectacle, where the interests of financial and political stakeholders combined with the enthusiasm of fans to promote a global Indian entertainment brand.

Significantly, Kapoor was present at the panel not as a mere actor but in his capacity as an entrepreneur and producer. His United Kingdom (UK)-based production company, Antila Ventures, had just been launched. Under its aegis, Kapoor hoped to produce content across multiple platforms, he told the Indian Express, proclaiming his company to be a ‘gateway to international markets’. Kapoor’s global vision and organization had found backers in a Dubai-based investment-banking firm, MAS ClearSight, and Antila’s first production venture was to be an Indian adaptation of the American drama series 24. Having appeared in the original US version of 24, Kapoor understood its nuances and how it could be adapted for a South Asian audience. During his company’s official launch a week earlier, Kapoor noted in an interview with the Hollywood Reporter that he had ‘long nurtured a dream of creating a global entertainment company. Given [his] vast experience in the Indian film industry and exposure in recent years in Hollywood, [he] felt the time was right to give shape and structure to this vision’. The Indian film industry is in ‘dire need of good infrastructure’, and Kapoor intended to ‘plug the gap … by collaborating with studios of international repute to bring the best studio infrastructure to Bollywood’, which could propel its further expansion at home and abroad.

As a researcher of popular Indian cinema’s globalization, I was brimming with questions about Bollywood’s latest international collaborations. During the Q&A, however, my enthusiastic hand-raising proved futile, and the mic was handed to a sari-clad, middle-aged Indian lady. Visibly moved by the experience of seeing the star in person, she began with an anecdote that expressed how much she adored Kapoor and how many of his movies
she had watched as a teenager. In an affective moment where she sought affirmation for both her fandom and youth, she asked Kapoor: ‘We have all changed so much, but you still look the same. Still so handsome. How do you maintain such beautiful hair?’ Warmed by the adulation, Kapoor regaled the audience with his haircare routine. Follow-up questions similarly complimented Kapoor’s looks and fitness. A conversation ostensibly about industry transformations had quickly been transposed onto the star’s body and affect—and hardly anyone but some panellists and I were still interested in Kapoor’s production company or the global collaboration he was there to announce.

This FICCI–IIFA event in Tampa, held far from Bollywood’s national home in Mumbai, illustrates Hindi cinema’s globe-spanning networks. It also foregrounds the transnational mobility and significance of the star—in this case Kapoor, who prominently anchored the event—bringing together and bridging diverse stakeholders in Bollywood’s global collaborations. In Bollywood, the star’s power in enabling globalization, and shaping its directions, is paramount because, in the Indian cinema context, stars are more than stars; they are both the deal and the dealmaker. Whereas in Hollywood and other film industries, stars have predominantly been charismatic commodities constructed and sold by conglomerate industrial business networks, stars in the Indian Hindi film industry constitute the industry’s business network in literal terms. As the heads and proprietors of some of Indian film and entertainment’s most prominent corporations, Bollywood megastars combine overwhelming charismatic affect with unparalleled industrial power. Just as Kapoor positioned himself as Hindi cinema’s ‘gateway to the world’ (and vice versa) at the FICCI–IIFA event, the star has long been the central catalyst for making international connections that have propelled the Bollywood behemoth’s seemingly ever-expanding industrial trajectory.

Networked Bollywood delineates this trajectory, providing a new historical account of the expansion of Hindi cinema from its early twentieth-century roots to its current industry formation, theorizing the role of the star in Bollywood’s globalization. Tracing the film industry’s organizational and business structure, from small family-led film production clusters to a corporatized global entertainment network, this book argues that stars exerted a uniquely significant influence on Bollywood’s business and globalization due to the historically fraught relationship between the Indian state and the mainstream film industry, which evolved without state support until
In this context, individual stars became the most invested catalysts of Hindi cinema’s transnational dissemination, which they advanced primarily to further the expansionist goals of individual production companies and the broader industry rather than the priorities of the state. Through their affective personas, business practices, and personal relationships with other stakeholders, Bollywood stars served as the key architects of India’s most profitable cultural sector and what is now the world’s largest film and entertainment industry.

While casting the star in the lead role in the story of Bollywood’s globalization, this book departs from traditional approaches to cinema and star studies based on US or European film histories, which depict stars as commodities whose position and power depended on larger industrial and government structures. In the case of Hindi cinema, as we will see, an internationally interconnected agglomeration of differently positioned individual and institutional participants and stakeholders cohered around the star businessmen (and sparingly few businesswomen) who became the primary drivers that shaped the industry’s business and its global expansion. The reasons why the star came to be so centrally situated and uniquely influential flow from Hindi cinema’s industrial history, as this book will elaborate. A crucial factor that shaped this dynamic over the long term was the predominance of star-driven films, where star salaries made up most of a film’s budget. The stars’ sociocultural power in Indian society, which came not only from fans propelling them into demigods but their typically elite class and familial background, was another primal factor. To capture the dynamics of star power, I consider stars as actors within sociocultural, industrial, and geopolitical networks. Foregrounding networks allows me to conceptualize the star’s positionality, role, and power in broader systems while also analysing how stars used their power to influence these systems. This relational sociological approach helps explicate how Hindi cinema stars acted (literally and figuratively) to catalyse growth into new economic, cultural, and geographic realms, propelling patterns of expansion that sustained them, their companies, and their ability to make new connections at home and abroad. In this way, an industry that was already transnational from the start became more intensely and extensively globally networked, with key star nodes influencing this network’s trajectories of globalization more powerfully than other stakeholders.

By emphasizing Hindi cinema’s transnationally networked industrial formation and identifying stars as the primary catalysing nodes driving its
INTRODUCTION

expansion, this study offers an innovative conceptualization of star power, one that I argue is necessary to understand how Hindi cinema became Bollywood. Star switching power, it theorizes, is the ability of some stars to exceed the confines of the networks they belong to and act as 'switches' that illuminate new pathways and turn on connections with other networks that did not exist before.11 Star switching power, and the abilities it confers to structurally transform the networks that produce it, emanates from a combination of affective and effective power—that is, it derives from a star's charisma on- and off-screen as well as the star's abilities, as a business owner, to directly effect industrial change.

Across the history of the Hindi film industry, effective and affective influence coalesced most potently in stars whose gender and social class positioned them at the centre of sociocultural, industrial, and political realms, thereby intensifying the impact certain male megastars exerted on Indian film and entertainment networks and their globalization. Theorizing star switching power, especially by analysing who possesses it and how they have used it to enact specific industry transformations, deepens our understanding of historical and contemporary relationships of power within globalized Bollywood while elucidating how and in what ways the Hindi cinema industry became so globally powerful. It also offers new ways to explore what Bollywood's global power means today and in the future for India and the world.

Networked Bollywood unfolds chronologically, with each chapter of the book focusing on a different era of Hindi cinema history through case studies of how prominent star figures and their specific business ventures contributed to the industry's globalization. As we will see, Hindi cinema's network has transformed across different historical eras. It evolved from a veritable studio system during British rule (a proto network) to a nascent global network formation dominated by family-led production clusters during the middle of the twentieth century (an emergent network) to the intensely interconnected global entertainment network whose corporatized structural coalescence in the 1990s led to the networked Bollywood behemoth of today (an agglomerated network).12 Rather than seeking to impose a rigid periodization schema, I categorize these phases as proto, emergent, and agglomerated in order to mark important industry transformations, which always unfolded in relation to other historical changes—for instance, colonialism and independence, the Cold War, the liberalization of the Indian economy, or the rise of India as a world power. Each phase of Hindi cinema history I analyse
contains certain residual characteristics from previous phases, and, in turn, each phase influences what will come to evolve because history, to borrow from Raymond Williams, is mixed and layered.¹³

Throughout all these periods, key stars created new business products, processes, and routines, cultivated national and transnational relationships, and developed novel industrial arrangements that helped the industry surmount border barriers and reach international markets that hitherto had been inaccessible. Star power varied in relation to different eras of globalization, yet overall, as the speed and intensity of globalization accelerated, star power also intensified. Just as importantly, however, this relational valence, as this book will reveal, throws into sharp relief an element of continuity: the power of star nodes and their consistent centrality in Hindi cinema’s evolution. Across all these eras, it was stars and their switching power that most consistently and directly shaped these industrial, geographic, cultural, and political network transformations, intensifying over time the scale and speed of Bollywood’s globalization.¹⁴

This book deploys history as method by integrating historical data and analysis to theorize structural and organizational change within Indian Hindi film and entertainment and situate stars as agentic actors within these processes of transformation.¹⁵ It links institutional agency to specific historical conditions and foregrounds the relational embedded agency of stars as key actors within these processes. In doing so, it addresses the historical question of how stars, a group of centrally situated actors within Hindi film and entertainment institutions, gained the agency required to successfully define an industry’s global trajectory. This book also foregrounds the relationality of this industrial context. Historical circumstances are outcomes of sociocultural processes; as such, they do not simply determine the constituent actors in the network at different moments in time; rather, history also plays the role of an agent. Using history as method thus helps me trace an epistemological and ontological correspondence between business history, organizational theory about structural changes, and sociocultural and geopolitical resonances that informed the Hindi film industry’s expansion from small family-led production clusters to an expansive global industry.¹⁶

Thus, in telling this century-spanning story, this book offers critical insights into the significance of star power to the expansion of Bollywood from cinema to a global culture industry, a process that has been usefully described as ‘Bollywoodization’.¹⁷ Typical accounts of Bollywoodization periodize Hindi cinema’s ubiquity as springing forth from the Indian state’s
INTRODUCTION

legitimization of film-making as an industry equal to other industries and eligible for foreign direct investment at the turn of the twenty-first century. Immediately following this, the early 2000s were a moment when Bollywood became synonymous with India. Bollywood, hitherto a common sobriquet for the Indian Hindi film industry, swiftly evolved into a global moniker for all things Indian. Apart from capitalistic and materialistic circuits, the term also began circulating as an emblem of national cultural pride and a marker of diasporic Indian identity. Suddenly, the Bollywood industry itself acquired a ubiquitous and malleable quality, with Bollywood films being celebrated throughout India and the world. With the arrival of Hindi films on the world stage, and as the industry revelled in its first Oscar-style IIFA Awards in London at the turn of the millennium, the term ‘Bollywood’ concretized as a signifier of the moment, marking the global arrival of the industry and culture. This was also the moment when scholarship about global Bollywood took off. Tethered to the temporal arrival of Hindi cinema as a global industry which was also deeply connected to India’s changing role in the world, much of this scholarship explained the industry’s rise and interpreted its significance by centring industrial structures connected to twenty-first-century formations of state power and globalization.

In contrast, this book asserts that Bollywood’s globality was not a singular moment of rupture in the 2000s but a historical continuum whose origins stretch back through many decades of Hindi cinema history. Offering an alternative narrative, this book defines Bollywood’s globalization as the decades-long process through which multivalent global flows have made the Hindi entertainment industry’s structure globally expansive and ubiquitous in terms of geography, industry, and influence. From the early Indo-German collaborations in the 1930s to the ubiquitous Bollywoodization of today, Hindi cinema’s global flows and influence have been a continual factor in its development. It is in this vein that the term ‘Bollywood’ is deployed in this book, where I use it as a non-period-specific conceptual moniker that represents Indian Hindi cinema’s industry’s expansion, which, I argue, was driven primarily by the star. ‘Bollywood’, as a term, because of its transnational purchase, inherently epitomizes the push, pull, and squeeze of the global, which extends and intensifies in celerity and impact over time, thus capturing the Hindi film industry’s encounters across a historical continuum. While tracing how the proto, emergent, and agglomerated networks of Bollywood bleed into each other, coexist, overlap, leak, and residually accumulate new features, Networked Bollywood explains and historicizes this global percolation.
and cultural influence of the Hindi film industry along a continual spectrum on which its power increased incrementally as the extensiveness, speed, and impact of globalization intensified. Moreover, in doing so, it illuminates, through its relational sociological approach and focus on the star and star switching power, different mechanisms and operations of structural power that, I argue, have long shaped Hindi cinema's globalizing industrial formation and remain central to Bollywood's global operations today.

It may at first seem counter-intuitive that it is through focusing on the star and star power that larger patterns and relationships of power come into view, which can help us more deeply explain Hindi cinema's globalization, conceptualize the relationships between its historical and contemporary structures, and theorize these structures as ones of power. However, as noted earlier, this book is not arguing for an individual-driven history but rather a relational one that helps theorize when and why certain individuals catalyse power and effect structural transformations. An individual's power in a network, as I discussed earlier, is not atomistical; it operates in relation to other nodes. Therefore, while this book focuses conceptually on the star, it emphasizes that star switching power does not operate in a vacuum. It operates within an industrial structure wherein star power, in turn, constitutes and is constituted by the industrial structure. Moreover, both star power and the industry are interconnected with global politics, culture, and state policy. This book, therefore, narrates a much larger story about star power in the Hindi film industry, told against the backdrop of contemporary economic globalization, cultural diplomacy, and post–World War II geopolitics. It illustrates how megastars buoyed by their switching power have been central to Bollywood's flows across lateral geographies and political blocs in regions as diverse as Egypt, the former Soviet Union, Germany, Afghanistan, and China. These diverse cultural contexts provide an understanding of Bollywood's cinematic exchange that was critical in galvanizing non-Anglocentric geo-cultural flows. *Networked Bollywood* thereby contributes to de-colonizing the history of cultural and cinematic influence by unravelling a lateral cultural and industrial history emanating from the Global South and its stars, predominantly across non-anglophone spaces.

This deep narrative engagement with the broad sociocultural and geopolitical structure of star power in a networked media industry necessitates an explication of industrial structure and the relational interdependence between star power and industry structure. It requires a new approach to understanding an industry's structural evolution and globalization in relation...
to stars as centrally situated nodal actors deeply and powerfully embedded within the industry and sociopolitical ecology. My interdisciplinary approach and framework of star switching power create a relational sociological lens that converges organizational, institutional, and sociopolitical networks to reveal a new way of looking at an industry’s structural evolution and its globalization in relation to powerful individual actors—here, Bollywood’s megastars. This sociological lens also brings into focus the deeply gendered nature of this structural power that was consistently leveraged by male megastars.

To better understand this approach and its implications, in the remainder of this chapter, I will further explain why the Hindi film industry is best conceptualized as networked and elaborate on how the theory of star switching power explains key elements of networked Bollywood’s structural evolution. Following a discussion of methodology, I end with an overview of the remaining chapters, whose case studies evidence the workings of star switching power in networked Bollywood.

NETWORKED BOLLYWOOD

Networks, in the simplest terms, are a set of interconnected nodes. They are an agglomeration of global and local institutional and individual nodes, adjustable in scale and connected to other networks. While scholars have used different metaphors to talk about Bollywood’s global–local stakeholders, using terms like ‘assemblages’, ‘corporatization’, or ‘convergence’, the sociological and structural, and organizational framework of networks is most befitting to address the questions this book sets out to answer about Bollywood’s globalization. Sociological networks deal with individuals or collective human actors that could be a range of things from firms and organizations to political parties or informal groups. Nodes and ties represent anything that has or builds some sort of connection. A node is the first basic element of a network and represents a primary unit of analysis. In our story, the megastar is the key node, and this book traces the industry’s relationship with the critical and powerful star nodes and their contingent impact in shaping the industry’s organizational structure, business practices, and access to global markets.

Networks are deployed in this history of Bollywood’s globalization using a dual perspective. They are articulated as sociological networks of power.
whereby some individuals, usually male megastars from elite backgrounds, attain and leverage their centrality in variegated sociocultural, political, and industrial structures towards specific goals, often at the expense of women and other liminal groups. I also conceptualize networks as an industrial formation that is structurally flexible and geo-temporally mutable and possesses a configurational multiplicity. In these instances, networks are deployed as business networks whose globalization impacts business products, practices, and processes.24

A network ontology is generative for this project because it presents multiplicities that are organized around the principle of perpetual inclusion and expansion.25 Networks are reconfigurable, are constantly transforming, and they present an interconnected, multidimensional perspective that can bring together the political, the sociocultural, and the industrial in multiple valences of the local and the global. For instance, this book illustrates that as Bollywood’s industrial network expanded and changed over time in relation to other nodes and networks, the industry was structurally altered in critical ways. It helps me narrativize how the industry transformed from small production clusters that dominated in the early decades after independence, later got mired in criminal economy networks in the 1980s, and were eventually corporatized a decade later as a transforming economy in the 1990s, which led to greater connections with cinema-adjacent industries and vertically integrated entertainment companies headquartered in India and abroad. A network framing helps me pose and answer multiple interconnected questions about Bollywood’s evolving industrial structure, its globalization, and the working of star power within this structure.26 Networks as a heuristic device are also central to this book because the temporal multiplicity and flexible transformation that characterize networks are instrumental to illustrating a three-part narrative about, first, how Bollywood’s (primarily male) mega stars’ social power and embeddedness in relations of power are connected to industrial structure and business; second, how businesses and organizations were changing; and, finally, in parallel, how all of these interconnected processes, in turn, were being impacted by politics and governmental policy.

Moreover, the flexible and transformative characteristic of networks can account for new technological connectivity in the informatics age and its impact on the various critical vectors in the story of Hindi cinema’s globalization. This includes the impact of technologies like peer-to-peer file-sharing networks on film and media distribution or the influence of mediated digital fan networks on global star power and their consequent