



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF ACADEMY AWARDS: A STUDY

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Abstract

The paper aims at understanding the Academy awards also known as Oscar awards given annually by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) based in Beverly Hills, California, USA. For the study, a secondary database is used to analyse the nature of awards for the 2010-2020 decade for the nomination and winning of the award over the top eight categories across different races and genders. The study has found that almost 89% of nominations were bagged by the white people, whereas only 6.3% Black artists got nominated. The share of Latinx and Asian people are very low at 2.6% and 1.4% respectively. In terms of win, 91% account for the White category, while the Black, Latinx and Asian have wave the winning share at just 9%, 8% and 6% respectively. In terms of Gender, men have claimed almost 71% nominations across the top 8 categories, which is more than double the women nominations. Moreover, men have won almost three times the women in the top 8 categories. So, it is evident that the Academy award has been historically biased towards white population in terms of both nominations and wins. Also, historically the award has shown high gender-biasness towards the men awardees.

Keywords

History, Oscars. Academy Awards, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

Objectives

- To study the historical background of the academy awards.
- To study the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and its branches.
- To study the different categories of the awards.
- To analyze the award of statistics in nurturing arts and culture for society.

Methodology

The study uses a secondary study conducted by INSIDER to analyze the nature of awards for the 2010-2020 decade. The data of the nomination and winning of the award have been compiled over the top eight categories across different races and genders.

A diagrammatic representation of the number of awardees spread over different categories is used to understand the racial and gender-based composition of the award.



History

In July 1928, The Academy first invited Award nominations in twelve categories from 1 August 1927 through 31 July 1928. The inaugural award ceremony was dated back on 16th May 1929 to honour the excellent performances of the film industry for the 1927-1928 time span. A total of 15 awards were bestowed on the selected persons for their achievements in different segments of filming. The announcement of the name of the winners in the inaugural session was made 3 months earlier. However, in the upcoming 10 years, the custom of intimating the name of awardees to the media on the same night of the award ceremony was followed. Since the year of 1940, a sealed envelope was used to announce the name of the awardees at the event.

Emil Jennings was selected as the best actor for the films “The Last Command” and “The way of all Flesh” at the inaugural award ceremony. For the initial few years, the actors were chosen for the award for the total films they have acted in. The 4th ceremony had marked a change in the system and the awardees were examined on the basis of a particular film henceforth. In the year 1957, the award on Foreign language film was introduced. Since 2002 the animation movies were included in the consideration Academy Award in different categories. The year span of 1973-2010 was traditionally marked by the ending of the ceremony with the announcement of the name of the best movie. However, the year 2021 has seen the ending of the ceremony with the naming of the best actor. In 2020, Parasite was selected as the only international movie for the best movie category. For 2021, Those movies that were not released and in the cinema hall were also considered for the nomination due to the covid-stricken situation.

The Gold Statuette

Cedric Gibbons, a founding member of the Academy, developed the Oscars statuette, which is still in use today. The design of Cedric Gibbons had taken form with the sculpting of George Stanley. The statuette was made with gold-plated bronze on a black base. Its design is based on the art deco style having 5 spokes showing the five segments of the film industry: writers, producers, directors, actors, technicians. Later bronze was replaced with the Britannia metal which is an alloy of copper, silver, nickel, and gold. During the Second World War the statuette was made of painted plaster and the post-war time had seen the recovery of gold-plated Oscar statuette. Initially, the statuette was made at the factory of C.W. Shumway & Sons Foundry, then it was transferred to R.S. Owens & Company from the year 1983 to 2015. The year 2016 has seen the revival of the bronze as the elementary component of the statuette and the production was transferred to Walden, a New York-based company. The modern statuette is built on a digital scanning of the initial one in a 3D ceramic mold and electroplated with 24-carat gold.

Governor Awards

Apart from the competitive Academy award, there are 9 awards that have been provided year-on-year. Among those, Governor Award is notable.

- The Academy Honorary Award (annual)
- The Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award (since 1938)
- The Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award (since 1957)



Academy Award for Technical and Scientific

These awards come under the following categories:

- Academy Award of Merit (non-competitive)
- Scientific and Engineering Award
- Technical Achievement Award (annual)
- The John A. Bonner Medal of Commendation (since 1978)
- The Gordon E. Sawyer Award (since 1982)

Student Academy Awards

This was initially known as Student Film Awards and started from 1973. From 1975, this award had been presented each year. It has got its present name in 1991. The award is given to encourage filmmaking among the college and university students.

There are 4 segments of the Student Awards:

- Animation
- Documentary
- Narrative
- Alternative

Membership

The membership of the academy can be obtained by sponsoring, not through application. 2 existing members of a particular stream should sponsor the entrant for the entry to the same. However, the nominees by default gain membership and need not be sponsored.

The management of the respective streams review the nominees and sponsored entrants following the recommendation is sent to the board for scrutiny. The list of prospective members is finalized by the board. The review of the existing members is conducted annually.

Award Categories

The Academy Award of Merit is currently conferred under 23 categories:

1. Best Director
2. Best Actor
3. Best Picture
4. Best Actress
5. Best Animated Feature Film
6. Best Cinematography
7. Best Supporting Actor
8. Best Animated Short Film
9. Best Supporting Actress
10. Best Documentary Short Subject

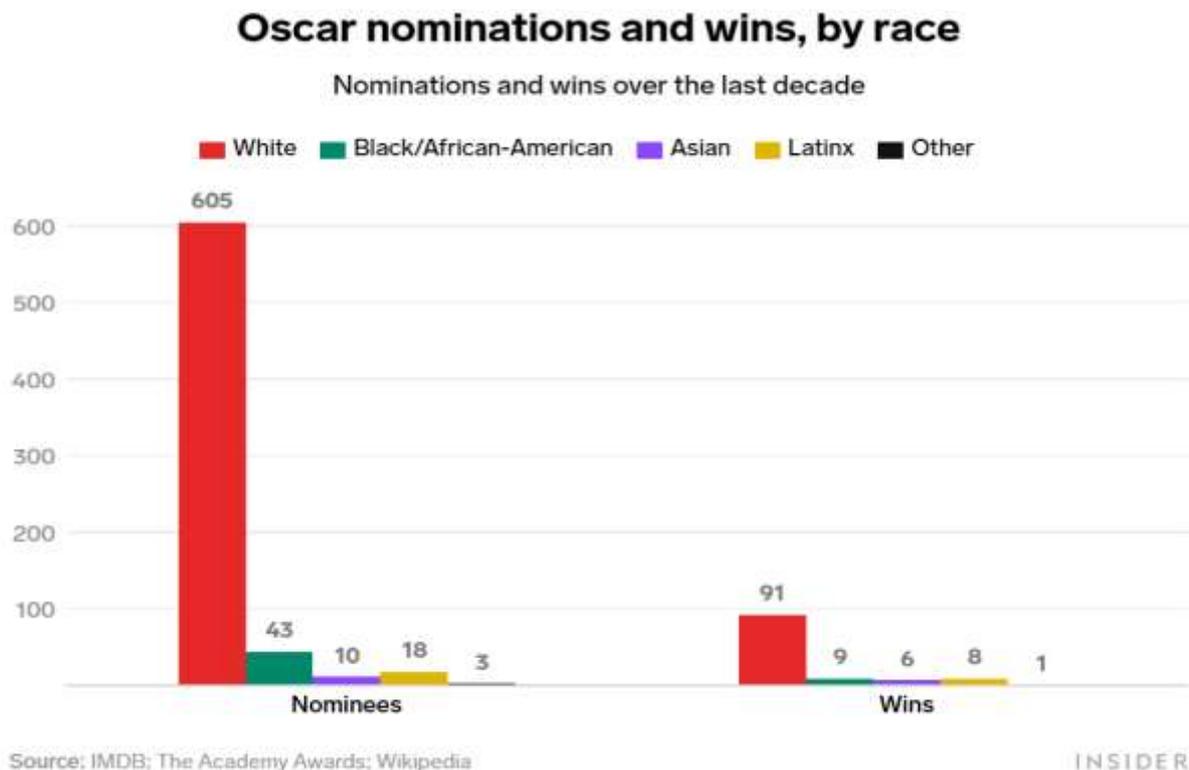


11. Best Film Editing
12. Best Costume Design
13. Best Documentary Feature
14. Best Live Action Short Film
15. Best Original Score
16. Best International Feature Film
17. Best Original Song
18. Best Makeup and Hairstyling
19. Best Visual Effects
20. Best Production Design
21. Best Adapted Screenplay
22. Best Original Screenplay
23. Best Sound

Analysis of the Award Statistics

Here we analyze the historical data on the race and gender of the award recipients and examine the composition of the awardees across categories over the last decade.

Nominations and Wins by Race:



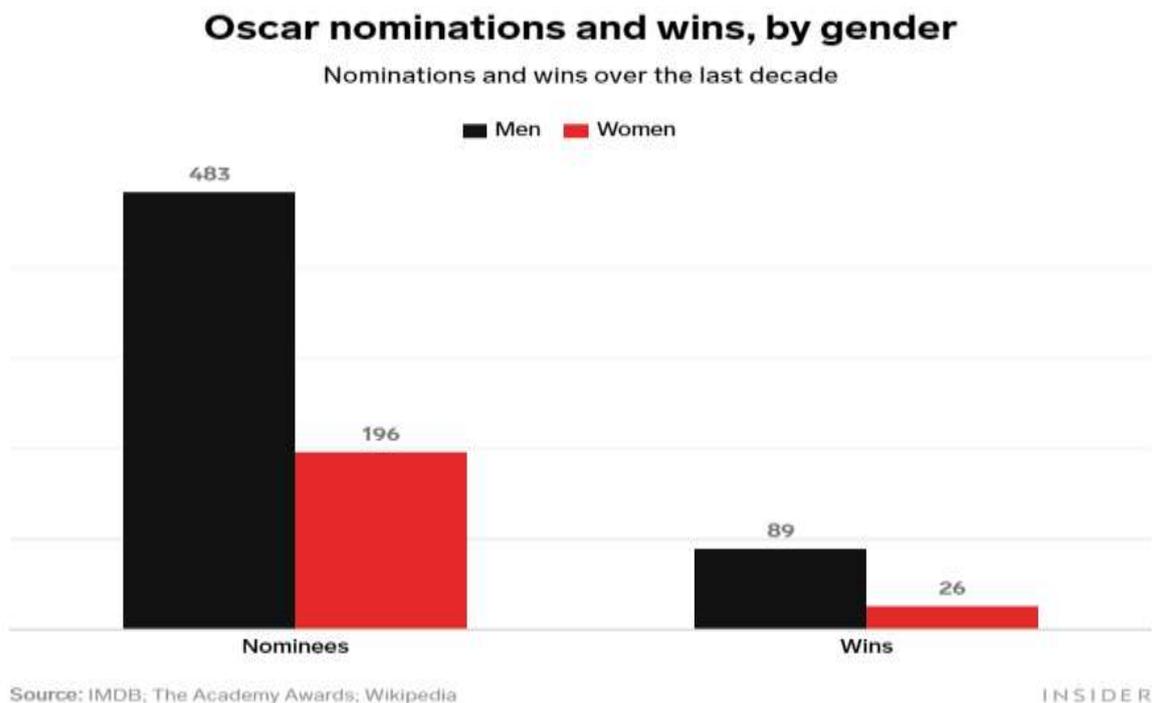
Over the last decade, almost 89% of nominations were bagged by the white people, whereas only 6.3% Black artists got nominated. The share of Latinx and Asian people are very low at 2.6% and 1.4% respectively.



In terms of win, 91% account for the White category, while the Black, Latinx and Asian have wave the winning share at just 9%, 8% and 6% respectively.

So, it is evident that the Academy award has been historically biased towards white population in terms of both nominations and wins.

Nominations and Wins by Gender:



Over the last decade, men have claimed almost 71% nominations across the top 8 categories, which is more than double the women nominations.

The winning statistics also suggest that the men have won almost three times the women in the top 8 categories.

So, historically the award has shown high gender-biasness towards the men awardees.

Conclusion

The Academy award or ‘Oscar’ has undoubtedly been the most prestigious award over the world in the field of motion picture for almost a century. It has been constantly evolving and recognizing newer categories with the everchanging social and technological scenario. The award has a paramount importance in nurturing arts and culture and the exhibition of socio-psychological, moral and behavioral aspects. However, the award is highly criticized for being monopolized by the white block and male dominance. This things need to be changed in the near future to transform it into a comprehensive and holistic standards of film appreciation.



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