

## ACADEMY AWARD FOR BEST INTERNATIONAL FEATURE FILM: A REVIEW

**Author's Name:** <sup>1</sup>Aditya Mohan, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Abid Ali

**Affiliation:** <sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Institute of Mass Communication & Media Technology, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Haryana, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Institute of Mass Communication & Media Technology, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Haryana, India

**Email:** [rishi.ali8@gmail.com](mailto:rishi.ali8@gmail.com)

**DOI No. – 08.2020-25662434**

### *Abstract*

*This study attempts to understand the nature and criterion for academy award given in the best international feature film category (Before 2020, it was known as Best Foreign Language Film) to the feature-length motion picture with the non-English dialogue track produced outside the United States. Earlier between 1947 to 1955, this award was given as a Special/Honorary Award to only one selected foreign film which was released in the United States. After 1956, nominations were invited and awards were given to the winning film. Italy and France have won the maximum number of Oscars in this category with a maximum number of nominations. To win an academy award, a country can only submit only one film to the academy and for that, some eligibility and submission criteria are fixed by the academy of motion picture arts and sciences which has also been discussed in this paper and this paper. Data from various secondary sources have been used in this research. This paper also includes a table with concise details of the country-wise list explaining the country's submission years, total submitted total submitted films, and nominated and winning films.*

**Keyword:** Films, Oscars, Academy Award, Best International Feature Film, Best Foreign Language Film

### INTRODUCTION

The Academy Awards, popularly known as Oscars, are a famous and prestigious award that acknowledges individuals with creative and technical achievements in the film industry. The award plays a significant role in the winner's career, as he or she receives better work offers, increases in income, and media recognition. It is presented annually by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences based in Beverly Hills, California, US.<sup>1</sup> It is a professional honorary organization with membership by invitation only, granted by its Board of Governors to notable contributors to motion picture arts and sciences.<sup>2</sup> The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) was established on May 4, 1927, as a combination of a union and a marketing organization, an idea driven by Louis B. Mayer of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM).<sup>3</sup>

The state approved the Academy's establishment as a non-profit organization in early May 1927. A week later, on May 11, 1927, the Biltmore Hotel hosted an official organizational luncheon. It was attended by 300 visitors, 230 of whom joined the Academy for a fee of \$100 apiece. The Academy also awarded its first honorary membership to Thomas Edison that night. At first, just five award categories were established: producers, actors, directors, writers, and technicians. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) was founded as a result of this. On May 16, 1929, the first Academy Awards were formally awarded at a black-tie ceremony.<sup>4</sup> The Academy Award for Best International Feature Film (known as Best Foreign Language Film before 2020) is one of the

Academy Awards presented annually by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. It is given to a feature-length motion picture made outside of the United States including a mostly non-English dialogue track.<sup>5</sup>

## OBJECTIVES

- To study the academy award for the best international feature film.
- To study the history of the best international feature film category.
- To study the eligibility criteria for the best international feature film category.
- To study the winners and nominations of the best international feature films.

## METHODOLOGY

- Case study method has been adopted in this research. Case study is an in-depth examination of a social unit of society, such as a person, family, institution, community, or event. It gives complete attention to one particular unit.
- The study uses secondary data from various sources.

## HISTORY

In July 1928, The Academy initially invited Award submissions in twelve categories from 1 August 1927 to 31 July 1928. The first award ceremony was held on May 16, 1929, to recognize the cinema industry's outstanding achievements from 1927 to 1928.<sup>6</sup> The event was held at a private dinner at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel in Los Angeles, California. Douglas Fairbanks, the AMPAS president, hosted the event.<sup>7</sup> The chosen people received a total of 15 prizes for their achievements in different areas of filmmaking. Three months ago, the winners of the first event were announced.<sup>6</sup> When the inaugural Academy Awards ceremony was held on May 16, 1929, to celebrate films made in 1927/28, there was no special category for foreign language films because the majority of the films released in 1927 and 1928 were silent films. Between 1947 and 1955, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented Special/Honorary Awards to the finest foreign language films released in the United States. However, these awards were not given regularly, and they were not competitive because there were no nominees and just one winning film every year.

For the first time, the Academy Award for Best Foreign-Language Film was presented in 1956. (Federico Fellini's *La Strada* won over four other films.) It's remained a staple of the event ever since, with minor adjustments. Winners are selected in the same manner as any other category, with Academy members watching the films and voting on their favorites.<sup>8</sup> Unlike other Academy Awards, the International Feature Film award is not given to a specific person (though it is acknowledged on stage by the film's director), but rather to the country that submitted the film.<sup>5</sup>

## ELIGIBILITY AND SUBMISSION CRITERIA

A feature-length motion picture (over 40 minutes) produced outside the United States of America and its territories with a mostly (more than 50%) non-English dialogue track is considered an international film. The original dialogue track, as well as the final film, must be recorded mostly (more than 50%) in a language or languages other than English. Subtitles in English must be accurate and legible.<sup>9</sup>

Before 2006, a country's submission required to be in one of the country's official languages. This restriction has been repealed, allowing filmmakers to make films in languages that are not native to

the country in which the film is made. As a result, primarily English-speaking countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, and Ireland have been able to enter films in a variety of languages.<sup>10</sup>

The country-selected film must be first publicly exhibited for at least seven consecutive days in a commercial motion picture theatre for the benefit of the producer and exhibitor no earlier than January 1, 2022, and no later than November 30, 2022. Submissions must be in 35mm or 70mm film, or a 24- or 48-frame progressive scan Digital Cinema format with a minimum projector resolution of 2048 by 1080 pixels.

During its qualifying theatrical release, the film must be marketed and exploited in a manner considered regular and customary to theatrical feature distribution procedures. The picture was not authorized to be released in the United States.

The submitting country must confirm that the majority of creative control over the film was maintained by citizens or residents of the submitting country.

A film shall be declared disqualified if a selection committee fails to reveal current and/or accurate information about its citizenship, business-related affiliation or credit on a selected film, designated credits, production details, and release information.

Each country will be invited to send the Academy its best film. The film will be chosen by a single approved organization, jury, or committee consisting of artists and/or craftspeople from the area of motion pictures. A list of the selection committee members must be submitted to the Academy by its advertised submission date.

As the official selection, only one film from each country will be approved. When a film is chosen, it should be submitted to the Academy as soon as possible.<sup>9</sup>

## VOTING

Nominations for International Feature Films will be determined in two rounds of voting:

- a. The International Feature Film Preliminary Committee will review the category's qualifying applications and vote by secret ballot to create a shortlist of fifteen films.
- b. To choose the category's five nominees, the International Feature Film Nominating Committee must watch the fifteen shortlisted films and vote by secret ballot.

The International Feature Film award will be decided by active and life Academy members who have seen all five nominated films.

The Academy statuette (Oscar) will be awarded to the film and accepted on behalf of the picture's creative talents by the director. The country will be recognized as a nominee for the Academy Awards. The director's name will appear after the country and film title on the statuette plaque.<sup>9</sup>

## DOMINANCE OF EUROPE AND OTHER WINNERS

This has undoubtedly been dominated by European films, with Italy winning 11 Oscars, followed by France with 9 as the two most successful countries. These two countries have contributed to Europe winning 80% of the awards, with the Americas winning 8% and Africa contributing 5% of the winning films. After winning '*Parasite*' the Best Foreign Language Film, Asia has now tied the Americas with 5 victories. Beginning with Asia's first award-winning film, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden*

*Dragon*, in 2000, a new trend emerges. In the last twenty years, non-European winners have made up half of the winners, with *Parasite* confirming this remarkable level of diversity in this category.<sup>11</sup> International films may qualify for Best Picture. In 2020, Bong Joon-ho's film *Parasite* became the first non-English film to win Best Picture at the Oscars. There have been thirteen non-English films nominated for Best Picture in the history of Academy Awards: *Grand Illusion* (1937, France); *Z* (1969, France); *The Emigrants* (1971, Sweden); *Cries and Whispers* (1972, Sweden); *Il Postino: The Postman* (1994, Italy); *Life is Beautiful* (1997, Italy); *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000, China); *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006, Japan); *Amour* (2012, Austria, France, Germany); *Roma* (2018, Mexico); *Parasite* (2019, South Korea); *Minari* (2020, United States); *Drive My Car* (2021, Japan).<sup>8</sup>

Country	Total Submissions	Total Wins	Total Nominations	First Submitted	Last Submitted
Italy	68	14	32	1947	2021
France	69	12	40	1948	2021
Japan	68	5	17	1951	2021
Spain	64	4	20	1956	2021
Denmark	59	4	14	1956	2021
Sweden	60	3	16	1956	2021
Soviet Union	24	3	9	1963	1991
Netherlands	54	3	7	1959	2021
Germany	31	2	11	1990	2021
Hungary	57	2	10	1965	2021
Argentina	48	2	7	1961	2021
Czechoslovakia	23	2	6	1964	1991
Switzerland	49	2	5	1961	2021
Austria	45	2	4	1961	2021
Iran	27	2	3	1977	2021
Poland	53	1	12	1963	2021
Mexico	54	1	9	1957	2021
West Germany	29	1	8	1956	1989
Canada	47	1	7	1971	2021
Russia	29	1	7	1992	2021
Algeria	22	1	5	1969	2021
Taiwan	47	1	3	1957	2021
Czech Republic	28	1	3	1994	2021
Chile	26	1	2	1990	2021
Bosnia & Herzegovina	21	1	2	1994	2021
South Africa	18	1	2	1989	2021
South Korea	33	1	1	1962	2021
Ivory Coast	3	1	1	1976	2020
Israel	54	0	10	1964	2021
Belgium	46	0	7	1967	2021
Norway	43	0	6	1957	2021
Yugoslavia	29	0	6	1958	1991
Greece	41	0	5	1957	2021
Brazil	49	0	4	1960	2021
India	54	0	3	1957	2021
Hong Kong	40	0	3	1959	2021

China	35	0	2	1979	2021
Lebanon	18	0	2	1998	2021
North Macedonia	18	0	2	1994	2021
United Kingdom	18	0	2	1991	2021
Palestine	14	0	2	2003	2021
Iceland	42	0	1	1980	2021
Romania	37	0	1	1966	2021
Finland	35	0	1	1973	2021
Colombia	30	0	1	1980	2021
Peru	20	0	1	1967	2021
Cuba	22	0	1	1978	2020
Uruguay	21	0	1	1992	2021
Georgia	20	0	1	1996	2021
Estonia	19	0	1	1992	2021
Vietnam	17	0	1	1993	2021
Australia	14	0	1	1996	2021
Puerto Rico	12	0	1	1986	2011
Cambodia	10	0	1	1994	2021
Nepal	10	0	1	1999	2019
Tunisia	8	0	1	1995	2021
East Germany	5	0	1	1973	1983
Jordan	5	0	1	2008	2021
Nicaragua	3	0	1	1982	2010
Bhutan	2	0	1	1999	2021
Mauritania	1	0	1	2014	2014
Portugal	38	0	0	1980	2021
Egypt	36	0	0	1958	2021
Bulgaria	32	0	0	1971	2021
Philippines	32	0	0	1953	2020
Venezuela	31	0	0	1978	2021
Croatia	30	0	0	1992	2021
Serbia	28	0	0	1994	2021
Thailand	28	0	0	1984	2021
Turkey	28	0	0	1964	2021
Slovakia	25	0	0	1993	2021
Slovenia	25	0	0	1993	2021
Indonesia	23	0	0	1987	2021
Luxembourg	18	0	0	1997	2021
Bangladesh	17	0	0	2002	2021
Morocco	17	0	0	1977	2021
Singapore	15	0	0	1959	2021
Afghanistan	14	0	0	2002	2019
Albania	14	0	0	1996	2021
Dominican Republic	14	0	0	1983	2021
Kyrgyzstan	14	0	0	1998	2021
Lithuania	14	0	0	2006	2021
Ukraine	14	0	0	1997	2021
Bolivia	13	0	0	1995	2021
Latvia	13	0	0	1992	2021

Armenia	10	0	0	2001	2021
Costa Rica	10	0	0	2005	2021
Ecuador	10	0	0	2000	2021
Iraq	10	0	0	2005	2021
Pakistan	10	0	0	1959	2020
Azerbaijan	8	0	0	2007	2021
Ireland	8	0	0	2007	2021
Kosovo	8	0	0	2014	2021
Montenegro	8	0	0	2013	2021
Panama	8	0	0	2014	2021
Malaysia	7	0	0	2004	2021
Kenya	6	0	0	2012	2021
Mongolia	6	0	0	2003	2020
New Zealand	6	0	0	2011	2018
Belarus	5	0	0	1994	2020
Paraguay	5	0	0	2015	2021
Saudi Arabia	5	0	0	2013	2021
Cameroon	4	0	0	1980	2021
Ethiopia	4	0	0	2010	2019
Chad	3	0	0	2002	2021
Guatemala	3	0	0	1994	2020
Honduras	3	0	0	2017	2020
Senegal	3	0	0	2017	2020
Greenland	2	0	0	2010	2012
Haiti	2	0	0	2017	2021
Kuwait	2	0	0	1972	1978
Malawi	2	0	0	2018	2021
Malta	2	0	0	2014	2021
Moldova	2	0	0	2013	2014
Nigeria	2	0	0	2019	2020
Sri Lanka	2	0	0	2003	2009
Tajikistan	2	0	0	1999	2005
Uzbekistan	2	0	0	2019	2021
Yemen	2	0	0	2016	2018
Burkina Faso	1	0	0	1989	1989
DR Congo	1	0	0	1997	1997
Fiji	1	0	0	2005	2005
Ghana	1	0	0	2019	2019
Laos	1	0	0	2017	2017
Lesotho	1	0	0	2020	2020
Mozambique	1	0	0	2017	2017
Niger	1	0	0	2018	2018
Somalia	1	0	0	2021	2021
Sudan	1	0	0	2020	2020
Suriname	1	0	0	2020	2020
Syria	1	0	0	2017	2017
Tanzania	1	0	0	2001	2001

\* Statistics are valid through the 2022 (94th) Academy Awards.<sup>12</sup>

\* Italy, Japan and France have won 3 Special/Honorary Awards are added in above table.

- \* Europe is the only continent which is having a maximum number of wins and nominations with 54 and 189.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that in this category, Italy has the maximum number of winning and nominations followed by France. These two countries are the most successful in this category and then followed by Japan, Spain, Sweden, and Denmark. Somewhere we got to see the dominance of European films in this category with a maximum number of wins and nominations. In Asia, Japan is the only country with the highest wins and nominations. The country has to fulfill all the rules and regulations and eligibility criteria to survive in this category. Countries like Tanzania, Syria, Suriname, Sudan, and others have not performed well and they have submitted their films only one time to the academy. A country like India, which produces the maximum number of films in the world has also had poor performance in this category with 54 submissions and only 3 nominations. Bong Joon-ho's film *Parasite* creates the history and became the first non-English film to win Best Picture at the Oscars in 2020 and the first South Korean film to win Best International Feature Film Award.

## REFERENCES

1. Standard, B. (n.d.). Academy Awards or Oscars: Category, rules, history and facts. Business Standard. <https://www.business-standard.com/about/what-is-academy-awards#collapse>
2. Grant, B. K. (2007). *Schirmer encyclopedia of film*. Detroit: Schirmer Reference. (p.1)
3. Atkinson, J. (2005). *The Oscars*. Pocket Essentials. (p.10)
4. Academy of motion picture arts and sciences. (n.d.). Awards - Popular Film Awards, Music Awards, Prizes. <https://www.awardsandshows.com/features/academy-of-motion-picture-arts-and-48.html>
5. Academy award for best international feature film. (2001, April 23). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academy\\_Award\\_for\\_Best\\_International\\_Feature\\_Film](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academy_Award_for_Best_International_Feature_Film)
6. Mohan, A., & Ali, A. (2022). HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF ACADEMY AWARDS: A STUDY. *International Journal of Economics and Social Sciences*, 12(4), 87-92.
7. 1st Academy Awards. (2005, March 20). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st\\_Academy\\_Awards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Academy_Awards)
8. GmbH, L. N. (n.d.). A brief history of the Academy award for best international feature film. Babel Magazine. <https://www.babel.com/en/magazine/foreign-language-academy-awards>
9. Rules & eligibility. (2021, February 9). Oscars.org | Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/rules-eligibility>
10. How does a film qualify for the best foreign language film Oscar? (2016, February 2). Live About. <https://www.liveabout.com/qualifying-best-foreign-language-film-oscar-2421430>
11. Carrington, O. (2020, February 11). Crunching the data of the foreign language Oscar. Medium. <https://towardsdatascience.com/crunching-the-data-of-the-foreign-language-oscar-fe435716b66>
12. List of countries by number of Academy Awards for best international feature film. (2008, September 1). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_number\\_of\\_Academy\\_Awards\\_for\\_Best\\_International\\_Feature\\_Film](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_Academy_Awards_for_Best_International_Feature_Film).