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Contact Us:
K.C College,
D.W Road, Churchgate, Mumbai 20
HSNC University, Mumbai
email: massmedia@kccollege.org.in
Contact no.: 8451926799

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Tel: 022-2266507/ 9619195151
realoffice96@gmail.com

Table of Contents

Foreword

My efforts have always been towards understanding the interplay between technological progress and its broader implications for humanity and the environment. Today, the boundaries between disciplines blur, and the challenges we face demand innovative, interdisciplinary solutions. The role of media becomes even more crucial in shaping narratives, fostering awareness, and ensuring accountability. The rise of digital communication and citizen journalism has democratized information, enabling powerful grassroots movements and global collaborations. Through traditional news platforms, social media, and documentary filmmaking, the media has the power to bring Sustainable Development Goals to the forefront, making sustainability a shared priority for governments, industries, and individuals alike.

This edition of MRCSJ journal brings together a diverse array of topics—ranging from sustainability and artificial intelligence to caste, class, and gender analysis—reflecting the complexity of our contemporary world. Each contribution underscores the importance of addressing these issues through a lens that recognizes their interconnectedness.

From the ethical implications of fast fashion marketing to the role of media in shaping narratives around inequality, the research presented here highlights the need for systemic change. The discussions on citizen journalism and political communication emphasize the power of digital platforms to democratize information, while also addressing the risks of misinformation and polarization. These studies remind us of the media's profound influence in both reflecting and challenging the status quo. Media organizations, content creators, and journalists must leverage data-driven storytelling, responsible reporting, and strategic partnerships to create a just society.

I extend my gratitude to the contributors for their insightful work. Let this journal inspire collaboration, innovation, and a renewed commitment to building a more equitable and sustainable future.

Col. Prof (Dr) Hemlata K. Bagla
Vice-Chancellor, HSNC University, Mumbai

From Principal's Desk

It is with great pleasure that I extend my warm greetings on the release of this edition of the Media Research and Communication Studies Journal. This journal manifests the hard work, dedication, and intellectual curiosity of our students, faculty, and contributors who continue to push the boundaries of knowledge in the ever-evolving field of media and communication.

The ever-increasing accessibility to information, the rise of social media platforms, and the influence of digital storytelling have transformed the ways in which people consume, interpret, and react to information. Institutions across the world need to blend their organizational processes with the Sustainable Development Goals. Media's role is crucial in leading others along this path by spreading awareness about technology and innovations. However, all media platforms too need to set the example themselves by adopting Sustainable practices and technologies.

Given these shifts, the need for in-depth research, scholarly discussions, and critical analyses has never been greater. It is essential that we, as scholars and communicators, stay informed and critically engaged with these shifts. I am happy that this journal presents rich knowledge in this critical field through its diverse research papers. This journal provides a platform for sharing innovative research and spark discourse that will contribute to the growth and understanding of communication processes.

I commend the editorial board, researchers, and contributors for their commitment to producing high-quality work. I am confident that the research and articles published in this journal will add serve as a resource for those interested in the impact of media in shaping society.

<div align="right">

Prof Dr Tejashree Shanbhag
I/C Principal, KC College
Dean, Faculty of Science & Technology
HSNC University, Mumbai

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Editorial

The Volume IX, Issue 1, of the Media Research and Communication Studies Journal (MRCSJ) covers a diverse array of topics that intersect across disciplines. This edition brings together research and critical analyses on sustainability, consumption, media, social structures, and technological advancements, reflecting the complexity and interconnectedness of our world.

The relationship between media and language is scrutinized, with a focus on how language shapes media narratives and vice versa. This section highlights the role of linguistic choices in constructing meaning and reinforcing or challenging cultural norms. Sustainability remains a critical theme, as scholars examine innovative approaches to addressing environmental challenges and the role of businesses and individuals in fostering a sustainable future. Movies as a cultural artifact are examined through the lens of social critique, with papers analysing how films reflect and influence societal norms, identities, and power dynamics. These studies shed light on how media representations perpetuate or challenge social hierarchies and inequalities, offering pathways for more inclusive storytelling.

Finally, citizen journalism and political communication are explored as powerful tools for democratizing information and engaging publics. Scholars investigate how digital platforms empower individuals to participate in political discourse, while also examining the challenges of misinformation and legal action faced by journalists, and its effect on journalism.

Together, these contributions provide a comprehensive and interdisciplinary perspective on the complexities of our world. We hope this issue sparks further dialogue and inspires innovative approaches to addressing the challenges and opportunities we face.

Thank you to the contributors, reviewers, and readers for making this edition possible.

Warm regards,

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Ms Sneha Subhedar (Assistant Prof., Dept. of Mass Media KC College HSNCU Mumbai)

1. The Impact of Gen Z Slang on Language Dynamics and Communication: A Study of Millennial Awareness

Rashmi Mishra, Research Scholar, Somaiya Vidyavihar University

Dr Gayatri Indrakanti, Assistant Professor, Somaiya Vidyavihar University

Abstract

The present paper investigates the impact of Gen Z slang on language dynamics and communication, underlining the significance of Millennial awareness. To measure Millennials' familiarity with the phrases in question and how they impact their communication style, a mixed-method approach is utilised involving convenient sampling and descriptive content analysis of Gen Z slang use. More specifically, the team obtained a digital data body from the most popular sites among Generation Z to identify frequently used slang and their typical employment. However, surveys have been conducted with fifty Millennials and fifty representatives of Generation Z to determine their degree of familiarity with Gen Z slang and its effect on their language dynamics. The findings provide valuable information on the familiarity and frequency of Gen Z slang phrases employed by Millennials, as well as the platforms on which such occurrences are observed most often or rarely. Furthermore, considering the role of slang as a defining factor of intergenerational communication patterns in the digital era, the research contributes to the understanding of current trends in linguistic practices among digital natives.

Keywords: Slangs. Language and Communication, Gen Z, Millennials.

Introduction

Some terms in a language are referred to as slang. Slang, according to Hutabarat et al. (2020), is the non-standard language used in informal settings. One of the driving elements is the rapid advancement of technology and knowledge (Muliawati & Murfi, 2017). They also said that slang typically deviates from the accepted usage of language in both pronunciation and grammar. Positive or negative information can therefore be easily gathered. Since slang is defined by linguistic codes unique to a generation or group, it is a prevalent form of language. It is a language that members of a certain community use to express themselves to one another and to one another in informal contexts. The advancement of science and technology in the present day is one of the reasons contributing to the spread of slang. Furthermore,

language proficiency frequently exerts pressure on linguistic knowledge to impact vocabulary acquisition. Vocabulary is therefore an essential component of language activities that enhance the presentation of ideas. Furthermore, because every child born in the 2000s understands what the speaker and the other person mean, slang is said to be the language of the younger generation.

The young age groups born after 1996 are referred to as Generation Z (Gen Z). This generation, according to Parker (2020), is a digital native. They grew up at a time of strong economic growth and rapid technological advancement. Slang is evolving quickly because social media is now an easy way for Generation Z to spread the word. One phenomenon that has been passed on to the generation is the advancement of technology and globalisation. This generation makes extensive use of technology for communication and information. Communication tools including email, SMS, instant messaging, and social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are often used. This generation is the only ones that speak their language, which goes beyond convention.

Those born roughly between 1981 and 1996 are referred to as millennials, or Generation Y (Dimock, 2019). This generation stands out due to its extensive early exposure to technology and the internet, which produced distinctive viewpoints on societal values, the workplace, and communication. Millennials, in contrast to earlier generations, frequently place a high value on flexibility and work-life balance. They also embrace diversity and inclusiveness. Their proclivity for technology has enabled them to be very responsive to digital settings, influencing their interactions with politics, brands, and international issues.

Review of Literature

The study "The intelligibility of internet slangs between millennials and Gen Zers: A comparative study," by sophomore Talle Vacalares, Angel Faith R. Salas, Bherna Jane S. Babac, Analyn L. Cagalawan, and Christine D. Calimpong, examines the linguistic gap between Millennials and Gen Z using internet slang in social media and everyday conversations. The study, which was carried out at a college in Opol, Misamis Oriental, with 100 respondents chosen by quota sampling, discovers a noteworthy positive association in the two generations' grasp of slang. On the other hand, Gen Z is more adept at hiding syntactical elements via word metathesis. For future research on neologisms in these age ranges, the study is a useful resource.

The forms and origins of slang used by Balinese Gen Z on Instagram are identified in "Slang Words Used by Balinese Generation Z in Instagram Communication," by Kadek Adyatna

Wedananta, Ni Nyoman Padmadewi, Luh Putu Artini, and I Gede Budasi. The study uses content analysis and selective selection to examine Instagram comments using Allan and Burridge's slang classifications. According to research, acronyms are the most often used slang, followed by original and innovative slang—which frequently involves letter reversals. Thai, Balinese, Indonesian, and Indonesian-English hybrids are among the slang words.

The study "Expressions of the use of slang among millennial youth on social media and its impact on the extension of Indonesia in society," by Dedi Saputra, Vismaia S. Damayanti, Yeti Mulyati, and Wahyudi Rahmat, looks at slang usage among millennial youth on social media. Using qualitative techniques, such as content analysis of social media postings and interviews, the study discovers that slang is derived from foreign languages, Indonesian, regional languages, and their combinations. Word reversals, acronyms, and abbreviations are examples of patterns. The study demonstrates how standard Indonesian is impacted by the widespread usage of slang among millennials, which may compromise its integrity by contaminating it with foreign words.

Methodology

This section gives an overview of the research design, respondents to the study and the research method use for collecting and analysis data.

Research Design

To acquire quantitative data for statistical analysis of the sampled population, the descriptive research approach was used in this study. Notable observations were made based on the data collected. Surveys and in-person interviews were used by the researchers to gauge how well Generation Z and Millennials understood each other's language and internet slang.

Respondents

Individuals in the Mumbai region with backgrounds in information technology, business administration, and education participated in the study. The easy sampling approach was utilised by the researchers to pick participants based on preset parameters, such as age and birthday. Specifically, 50 Millennials and 50 Generation Z individuals were targeted for the study.

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H0): The distribution of responses does not significantly differ from a uniform distribution, indicating that the use of Gen Z slang has no significant impact on communication dynamics.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): The distribution of responses significantly differs from a uniform distribution, suggesting that the use of Gen Z slang has a significant impact on communication dynamics.

Analysis and Data Interpretation:

The current study examined Millennial awareness and perceptions of these new linguistic trends to examine the effects of Gen Z slang on language dynamics and communication. To look into this, a survey was done with 100 participants, 50 of whom were from Generation Z and 50 of whom were Millennials. Age and Qualifications were the primary questions to establish a respondent profile. We were able to investigate how generational variations in slang usage, interpretation, and comprehension can affect communication dynamics thanks to our well-balanced approach.

To gather information for the poll, a series of questions about respondents' opinions towards Gen Z slang were posed. These questions included whether they thought it helped or hindered communication between Millennials and Generation Z, as well as whether it depended on the context. We seek to offer a thorough grasp of the interactions between Millennials and Generation Z as well as the wider consequences for language dynamics by evaluating comments from both of these groups.

The analysis and interpretation of the data are presented in the parts that follow, with an emphasis on important trends, noteworthy patterns, and distinctions between the two age groups. This analysis sheds light on how slang patterns impact communication, as well as the implications for language dynamics in society and generational understanding.

In the end, these results can direct future investigations and suggest approaches to enhance intergenerational dialogue and cultural fusion.

Findings:

Impact of Gen Z Slang on Language Dynamics and Communication

The questionnaire consisted of fifteen questions that addressed a range of topics related to Millennial and Generation Z communication, including slang understanding and perceptions. Question 13: "In your opinion, how does the use of slang affect communication dynamics between Millennials and Gen Z?" served as the main focal point for the hypothesis testing.

The purpose of this inquiry was to ascertain whether Gen Z slang significantly affects intergenerational communication. The variety of viewpoints expressed by the respondents revealed differing opinions regarding the function of slang in communication dynamics.

In your opinion, how does the use of slang affect communication dynamics between Millennials and Gen Z?

13. In your opinion, how does the use of slangs affect communication dynamics between Millennials and Gen Z?
100 responses

- (a) It facilitates better understanding and connection
- (b) It creates barriers and miscommunication
- (c) It depends on the context
- This is ruining english....
- Useless and unimportant

47%
18%
33%

Fig: 5.1.1

Impact Dependent on Context: Among Millennials, almost half (47%) said that the way Gen Z slang affected communication dynamics relied on the context, implying that important variables like the environment or the rapport between communicators come into play.

Perceived Barriers: A significant percentage (33%) said that slang could impede clear communication because of its unusual terminology, which could result in miscommunications.

Encourages Interaction: A smaller subset (18%) thought that Gen Z slang might improve communication and understanding between Gen Z and Millennials.

Negative Sentiment: Only a small percentage (2%) said Gen Z slang was harmful, claiming it "ruins language" or is "useless."

Hypothesis Testing:

Step 1: Define Your Null and Alternate Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis (H0): The distribution of responses does not significantly differ from a uniform distribution, indicating that the use of Gen Z slang has no significant impact on communication dynamics.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): The distribution of responses significantly differs from a uniform distribution, suggesting that the use of Gen Z slang has a significant impact on communication dynamics.

Step 2: Define Expected Values

Since we don't have control or specific expected outcomes from previous studies, let's consider an equal distribution among the four response categories as the expected outcome. This is a reasonable assumption if there's no prior knowledge about what the results "should" look like.

Given 100 responses, if the responses were distributed uniformly across four categories, each category would have 25 expected responses. Here are the expected values:

- Facilitates better understanding and connection: 25
- Creates barrier: 25
- Depends on the context: 25
- Ruins language/is useless: 25

Step 3: Calculate Observed Values

Given the data provided:

- Facilitates better understanding and connection: 18
- Creates barrier: 33
- Depends on the context: 47
- Ruins language/is useless: 2

Step 4: Perform Chi-Square Test

The chi-square test formula is:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{O-E^2}{E}$$

 where O represents observed values, E represents expected values.

1. **Calculate the Chi-Square Statistic**

- **For "Facilitates better understanding and connection":**

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{18-25^2}{25} = \frac{-7^2}{25} = \frac{49}{25} = \mathbf{1.96}$$

- **For "Creates barrier":**

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{33-25^2}{25} = \frac{8^2}{25} = \frac{64}{25} = \mathbf{2.56}$$

- **For "Depends on the context":**

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{47-25^2}{25} = \frac{22^2}{25} = \frac{484}{25} = \mathbf{19.36}$$

- **For "Ruins language/is useless":**

$\chi 2 = \sum$ 2-25225 = -23225 = 52925 = **21.16**

2. **Calculate the Total Chi-Square Statistic**

$\chi 2$ = 1.96+2.56+19.36+21.16=45.04

Step 5: Determine Degrees of Freedom and Critical Value

Degrees of freedom (df) is calculated as the number of categories minus one:

Degrees of Freedom (df): 4 – 1 = 3

Using a chi-square table, find the critical value at a common significance level, such as 0.05 (95% confidence level). For 3 degrees of freedom at 0.05 significance, the critical chi-square value is approximately 7.815.

Step 6: Compare Chi-Square Statistic with Critical Value

Since the calculated chi-square statistic (45.04) is much higher than the critical value (7.815), we reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that the distribution of responses is significantly different from a uniform distribution, indicating that the use of Gen Z slang does have a significant impact on communication dynamics. The alternate hypothesis is supported by these results.

Conclusion

This study aimed to evaluate how Gen Z slang impacts language dynamics and communication, with a focus on Millennial awareness. The study included hypothesis testing and survey data analysis to try to understand how Millennials perceive Gen Z slang and how it impacts communication with Generation Z.

Summary of Results

The results of our study showed that Millennials had differing opinions about how Gen Z slang affects communication dynamics:

Impact Dependent on Context: About 47% of Millennial respondents mentioned that the use of Gen Z slang in communication varies depending on the context. This shows that there is a complex link between slang and its practical application, suggesting that the effective use of slang changes depending on situational conditions (Smith et al., 2022).

Perceived Barriers: Citing a generational communication gap and the possibility of miscommunication, a significant percentage of Millennials (33%) see Gen Z slang as a barrier (Johnson & Lewis, 2022).

Facilitates Connection: According to a smaller group (18%), some Millennials see Gen Z slang as a tool for bridging the generational divide, and it helps them connect with Generation Z (Brown et al., 2023).

Significant unfavourable Sentiment: A small percentage of people (2%) had significant unfavourable feelings about Gen Z slang, claiming that it interferes with language structure and communication (Harris & Nguyen, 2022).

The alternate hypothesis that Gen Z slang affects language dynamics and communication was confirmed by the chi-square test results, which revealed a significant discrepancy between the observed and expected uniform answer distributions. According to Parker et al. (2023), this research implies that slang affects generational interactions and Millennial awareness.

Consequences and Suggestions

These results demonstrate that Gen Z slang significantly affects language dynamics, even though Millennials' perceptions of this impact differ. The impact of slang is context-dependent, meaning that its meaning can change based on the situation, suggesting that communication needs to be flexible. In order to better address these divergent perspectives and foster intergenerational contact, the following suggestions are put forth:

Foster Cross-Generational Understanding: To promote a better understanding of changing linguistic trends, open discussions between Millennials and Generation Z should be encouraged. This might facilitate more peaceful intergenerational interactions and lower obstacles to communication (Williams & Thompson, 2023).

Stress Context: When utilising slang, be aware of its significance. It is recommended that organisations and educational institutions adopt flexible policies for language use, permitting the use of slang in appropriate contexts but upholding professionalism and clarity in others (O'Neill & Richards, 2023).

It is proposed that more research be conducted to investigate the sociolinguistic elements influencing these beliefs and how they affect communication in broader societal contexts, professional settings, and education (Davis et al., 2023).

To sum up, Gen Z slang has a major impact on communication and language dynamics. The differing viewpoints of Millennials underscore the necessity of flexibility in cross-

generational dialogue within a linguistic context that is changing quickly. The good things about these developments can be maximised while reducing probable communication obstacles by encouraging comprehension and placing a strong emphasis on context.

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2. Comparative Study on Consumer Preferences Between Organic and Inorganic Foods in Mumbai

Krisha Doshi, Student, Master of Arts (Entertainment Media and Advertising)

Kishinchand Chellaram College, HSNC University, Mumbai

Abstract

The research paper is based on Comparative Study on Consumer Preferences Between Organic and Inorganic Foods in Mumbai, the criteria for the selection of foods they buy such as price, availability, external factors (advertisements, reviews and recommendations, friends and family), internal factors (personal health goals and beliefs) and health consciousness/benefits, environmental concerns, socio-economic class (income, age, gender), trust in certification, purchasing habits, safety, and quality, consumer buying behaviour and motivation. The study uses primary data gathered from a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers and administered through Google Forms and targeted respondents with diverse demographics within Mumbai. Participants shared information about their knowledge, attitude, and buying behaviour about organic and inorganic foods. To assess the level of importance of different factors affecting consumer decisions, descriptive and comparative analysis tools were employed.

The findings reveal that price and availability are the major factors that influences people to buy organic as well as inorganic foods, the findings reveal that Consumers associate organic foods with higher health benefits compared to inorganic foods. Consumers are willing to pay more for organic foods. Organic foods are preferred if priced similarly to inorganic foods. Purchasing organic foods contributes to long-term sustainability and Consumers believe inorganic foods have negative long-term impacts on health and the environment. Such findings offer specific and practical policy implications that can be of interest to policymakers and marketers intending to increase the consumption of organic foods in Mumbai.

Introduction

In the food market, the consumers' choice has changed frequently in the last few years mainly due to increasing health and ecological consciousness. Places like Mumbai, cities that have a high population density and a mix of both social economic backgrounds, have seen this change. Consumer awareness that pesticides or chemical additives and industrial forms of

production affect the quality of foods has enhanced the demand for organic foods. Organic products are considered to be healthier, safer and more sustainable than inorganic foods that are cheap, and readily available but criticized for being associated with health hazards and environmental depletion (Guru et al., 2024; Srivastava, 2021). These two perception modes form a discouragement that makes a precise study of the consumer environment essential.

The use of organic foods in the Mumbai area could be attributed to the trend of dietary change in diets that is taking the world into more healthy and sustainable diets. Srivastava, 2021 noted that today's consumers of organic food have taken to viewing the food items as chem-free, nutrition-improved specimens with reduced health dangers in the consumers' future health. Kattige and Patil (2022) also observe that from consumers 'perspective, organic foods are associated with sustainable practices like low-carbon diets and sustainable agriculture practices. This growing awareness has not only influenced the individual market of food but also the market trends affecting organic products, especially in urban centres and in online shops. However, strong consumer interest does not mean that the consumption of organic food today is high and available to everyone because the formal structures of pricing, availability, and distrust in certification labels remain barriers for middle- and lower-income consumers (Patil, 2020; Gupta & Rajvaidya, 2020).

Thus, the socio-economic of the consumer type makes Mumbai a better case to understand such behaviour. The targets are all people of various age, income, educational level, and cultural background from or visiting this city on consumer knowledge of organic and inorganic products. From the findings of different research, it has been found that there are two important factors that are responsible for the consumers' behavioural changes these are health conscious and environmentally friendly. For example, Tuteja & Khan (2022) and Guru et al. (2024) note that organic food consumers have factors such as health and environmental quality of the food as influential decision-making attributes. However, these preferences are not homogenously grouped; especially, a cross-sectional social survey reveals that middle- and lower-income groups consider organic foods as gourmet products, to be out of their reach because they are rather expensive, and not widely available in local markets (Patil, 2020; Bhowmick, 2023).

Another important systematically tested factor in Mumbai consumer behaviour is the trust in certificates and labels. Certification is supposed to provide assurance with regard to the genuineness and quality of organic products, yet doubt over the reliability of such labels affects consumer confidence. A literature review that has been conducted by Bhowmick (2023) and Gupta and Rajvaidya (2020) shows that many consumers do not want to spend

extra money on purchasing organic foods if they do not know that it is original. These challenges are accompanied by low awareness campaigns and supply chains that only cover a small market hence limiting the market for organic products. Many such problems lie in the system that underlies the different aspects and are major reasons why programs should be aimed at addressing issues with pricing, accessibility and trust.

This paper continues from this understanding by giving first-hand data collected from the residents of Mumbai from a Google Forms structured questionnaire, a synthesis of which is coupled with the understandings arrived in prior research studies. The survey includes various kinds of data related to the general awareness of consumers, purchasing decisions, trust in certification logos, and perceived factors affecting the consumption of organic foods. From the analysis of the socio-economic and cultural divide of Mumbai, the granularity of the paper is useful to understand the consumers and their decisions. For instance, an area that can attract high-income groups is the health quality of organic foods and willingness to pay a higher price to get those foods while middle and low-income groups will be more inclined to factors such as prices and the availability of foods.

The conceptual model for this work is quite clear, aligning the intrinsic incentives which include health awareness and environment consciousness with extrinsic constraints which include price and credibility. This double approach mitigates flaws of prior studies and fills gaps in the analysis of factors that influence consumer behaviour. The study also focuses on practical recommendations, including supply chain arrangements and communicating measures connected to cutting costs through subsidies and retail promotions. By integrating the primary empirical data with the existing academic literature, the research enhances the existing knowledge on sustainable food consumption in urban India and provides practical recommendations for policymakers, businesses and marketers for implementing various strategies to develop the market for organic food in Mumbai.

The research locates itself in the socio-economic and cultural context of Mumbai and fills important gaps in the current body of knowledge by mapping a way forward for a more inclusive food system.

Literature Review

The research paper synthesizes the data derived from twelve relevant studies on consumer knowledge, perceptions, and purchasing behaviour regarding organic and inorganic foods in Mumbai and related geographic areas. These research explore different factors that may affect the consumers' choice, including health concerns, environmental concerns, consumers'

classification, access to products, and the credibility of seals. Therefore, this literature allows for the identification of various dimensions that comprise the incentives for adopting organic foods and the disincentives towards them. In addition, the review presents important knowledge gaps that will help frame subsequent research undertaken to rectify these shortcomings and develop a broader organic food market in India.

Background Rationale

Consumption of healthy and eco-friendly foods and beverages has gradually become a global phenomenon, and that is evident in India mainly among the urban populations of Mumbai. Due to the current rapidly growing focus on healthier and organic foods, inorganic foods are being criticized for the use of dangerous chemical pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, and additives (Guru et al., 2024; Srivastava, 2021). Mumbai was chosen for the study because it is, firstly, one of the most socio-economically diverse and, being the financial capital of India, the chosen city could offer a unique perspective on the subject. Its population distribution covers almost all classes, income groups and education levels representing different zones of typical urban Indian consumption.

The literature review reveals the following as the key factors for purchasing organic food: Health consciousness and Nutrition considerations take a central position when consumers decide to buy organic foods. For example, Srivastava (2021) notes that the perception of consumers in urban areas that organic foods can decrease the health risks, chemical content, and quality are indeed low. Similar observations can be made with Kattige and Patil (2022) who state that regard to the health benefits of organic foods are perceived as highly important among middle to upper-income individuals living in Mumbai. Likewise, environmental consciousness has become influential in the consumption of organic food for people to understand that organic farming prevents soil erosion, water depletion, climate change, etc., (Tuteja & Khan, 2022). Subsequent research by Bhowmick (2023) and Guru et al. (2024) also support these results revealing that consumers willing to be environment friendly are readily willing to pay a higher price for organic foods that will help support sustainability goals.

Nonetheless, while the people in Mumbai are gradually raising consciousness about the goal, it is still apparent that the consumption of organic foods is regulated severely by various barriers. The slightly higher price of organic products remains the primary reason that consumers avoid such products, particularly individuals with middle and low-income levels (Patil, 2020; Gupta & Rajvaidya, 2020). These consumers normally view organic foods as specialty goods, which are not within the budget of ordinary consumption. Moreover, limited availability and the distribution problem are even worse since organic products are scarce and

can be purchased mostly in specialized stores and occasionally in supermarkets (Guru et al., 2024). Another important factor is the limitation of the perceived legitimacy of certification programs. Consumers are skeptical when buying commodities with 'organic' labels, and whether these follow organic farming practices, this leads to them avoiding spending their money on high-priced goods (Bhowmick, 2023).

As to the reasons for undertaking this research, they derive from these periodic gaps in the literature as identified above. Thus, the previous research in the domain of consumer behaviour, which has been informative and insightful, fails to embrace consumers and is not as localized. For instance, most of the conducted research uses secondary data; other researchers only sampled the elite population, thus, the findings cannot be generalized to the Mumbai community with diverse socio-economic status (Gupta & Rajvaidya, 2020, Patil, 2020). Furthermore, methodical developments, including Fuzzy TOPSIS utilized by Guru et al. (2024) and SEM utilized by Srivastava (2021), demonstrate that consumers' preference inclinations are dynamic but still overlook the cross-relationships with factors such as cost, availability, and credibility. While the data was collected only from Mumbai, cross-verification of such local data with data from these foundational studies will enhance the depth of understanding of consumers' preferences to a significant extent.

Relationship to Previous Research

Therefore, the current study contributes to the research done by other scholars by considering both intrinsic and extrinsic attributes affecting consumer preferences for organic foods. One of the bases for the work is Srivastava (2021), which used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in continuation of the suggested model to empirically confirm that health consciousness and product quality have a significant impact on purchase intentions. Srivastava's work also posits that consumers perceive foods labelled as organic as being healthier and safer than the non-organic foods in urban areas. Similarly, Guru et al. (2024) leverage Multi-Criteria Decision-Making (MCDM) techniques, including Fuzzy TOPSIS and Fuzzy SAW, to prioritize consumer preferences across three critical dimensions: such as environmentally friendly production, improved health standards and quality food production. Their work also emphasizes that the aspect of 'no chemicals used', or lack of artificial preservatives are crucial components driving organic consumers.

Despite offering valuable data, such approaches mostly focus to individual variables or specific categories of people. For example, Kattige and Patil (2022) also examine the consumer awareness campaign for organic foods, but they largely base their conclusions on secondary data and narratives and therefore lack the theoretical richness of an empirical

study. Similarly, Tuteja and Khan (2022) employ this narrative strategy to recommend wellness centres as advocacy outlets for organic food, but they provide no proof of their arguments from first-hand studies. Pinning down the issue of a general methodological failure to capture the socio-economic and cultural heterogeneity of urban consumers even in methodologically heavy papers such as Guru et al. (2024) highlights the sensitivity of the problem.

To fill these gaps the present study aims to use primary data collected through samples of Mumbai inhabitants and secondary data collected from prior studies. It analyses how price, availability, external factors (advertisements, reviews and recommendations, friends and family), internal factors (personal health goals and beliefs) and health consciousness/benefits, environmental concerns, socio-economic class (income, age, gender), trust in certification, purchasing habits, safety, and quality, consumer buying behaviour and motivation. As opposed to prior research that centres on one or just a few factors, or targets well-off consumers, this research incorporates several dimensions to explain consumer decision-making. In addition to contributing to the existing literature, the positioning of the study within Mumbai allows for an understanding of the realities of the evolving and diverse consumers while providing direct applicability to stakeholders in a bid to extend the organic food market.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to compare consumer preferences between organic and inorganic foods in Mumbai and identify the key factors influencing these choices. It aims to assess the impact of price, availability, external factors (advertisements, reviews and recommendations, friends and family), internal factors (personal health goals and beliefs) and health consciousness/benefits, environmental concerns, socio-economic class (income, age, gender), trust in certification, purchasing habits, safety, and quality, consumer buying behaviour and motivation. By integrating empirical data with insights from prior research, the study seeks to provide actionable recommendations for policymakers, retailers, and marketers.

Research Objectives

- Compare consumer preferences for organic and inorganic foods in Mumbai.

- Identify the key factors influencing consumer choices between organic and inorganic foods.

- Understand the barriers hindering organic food adoption and propose strategies to overcome them.

Research Questions

- What are the preferences of consumers in Mumbai regarding organic and inorganic foods?

- What key factors influence consumer choices between organic and inorganic foods in Mumbai?

Research Hypotheses

H1: Health consciousness significantly influences consumer preferences for organic foods over inorganic foods.

H2: Trust in certification positively influences consumer preferences for organic foods.

H3: Socio-economic factors (e.g., income) significantly affect consumer choices between organic and inorganic foods.

H4: There is a significant difference in consumer preferences for organic and inorganic foods in Mumbai.

H5: Price is a major barrier to the adoption of organic foods compared to inorganic foods.

Methodology

This section details the research methodology adopted by the study.

Participants

The participants were selected from different parts of Mumbai, belonging to different socio-economic classes and belonging from different areas such as North, South, Central and Western parts of Mumbai. The participants selected were through the convenience sampling technique, and the responses were through the Google Forms questionnaire. The inclusion criteria for participants were to have at least some prior knowledge about organic or inorganic foods, so as to be related to the objectives of the study. The demographic information gathered was age, gender, estimated monthly income, and areas of residence, and was sufficient to examine the drivers of consumer behaviour.

Materials

The key data collection tool used in the study was a structured questionnaire that would help elicit a variety of factors. To measure awareness about organic foods and inorganic foods, participants were required to fill in a 5-point Likert scale where they had to rate how much aware they were regarding organic and inorganic foods. The questionnaire also asked the

participants to rate the importance of different factors concerning health benefits, environmental impacts, safety and quality checks, external factors (such as advertisements, recommendations, reviews and inputs from friends and family members), and internal factors (such as individual's health goals and beliefs) as well as the trust in certification they received on a 5-point Likert scale. They were asked about their impressions of organic and inorganic foods, which included values like health benefits and costs. Questions concerning their purchasing habits, their willingness to buy products that are more expensive with labels such as organic foods as well as perceived differences in the price of organic foods and inorganic foods were used to measure behavioral aspects. To avoid any ambiguity and minimize the level of errors the questionnaire was pilot tested on a few respondents.

Procedures

With the help of social media platforms, email, personal contacts, and community networks the Google Forms survey was shared with individuals across Mumbai. The participants were told the purpose of the study along with the fact that their responses would be anonymous. Since the respondents could complete the survey at their convenience the questions were answered under standardised conditions uncontaminated by external influence from the Google Forms platform. Manual data entry errors were also prevented when the entered data was automatically fed into an analysis spreadsheet. As for technical equipment, standard Internet survey tools were employed only.

Analyses

The collected data was cleaned and organized into relevant categories for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and percentages, were calculated to summarize the demographic and preference-related variables. Comparative analyses were conducted to identify significant differences in preferences between demographic groups (e.g., income, age) and their association with factors like health consciousness and environmental awareness.

Key analyses included:

- Cross-tabulations to identify patterns in consumer behaviour.

- Factor analysis to group related variables influencing purchasing decisions.

- Comparative analysis to assess differences in attitudes toward organic versus inorganic foods.

Analysis & Results

1) Age
100 responses

Legend:
- 20-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 50 & above

58%, 19%, 10%, 13%
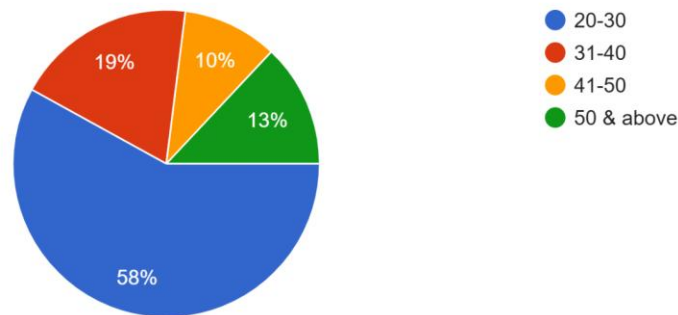
The age distribution shows that a majority (58%) of respondents are in the 20–30 age group, followed by smaller representations across 31–40 (19%), 41–50 (13%), and 50 & above (10%). This means that younger people have the largest participation in the survey, this can be because the younger age group of people may have better awareness and be more inclined towards choosing healthier lifestyle choices.

2) Gender
100 responses

Legend:
- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

53%, 46%
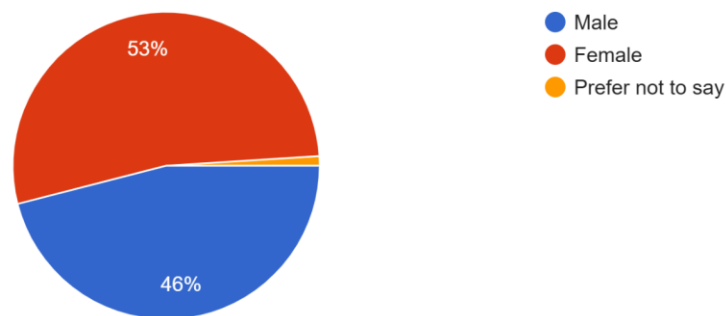
The gender distribution is nearly balanced, with 53% female and 46% male respondents, and 1% preferring not to disclose their gender. This balance, hence, the data is gathered from multi-faceted angles thus it is made possible to identify possible divergences in purchasing behaviors with the added factor of the difference in awareness along with gender.

3) Income (per month)
100 responses
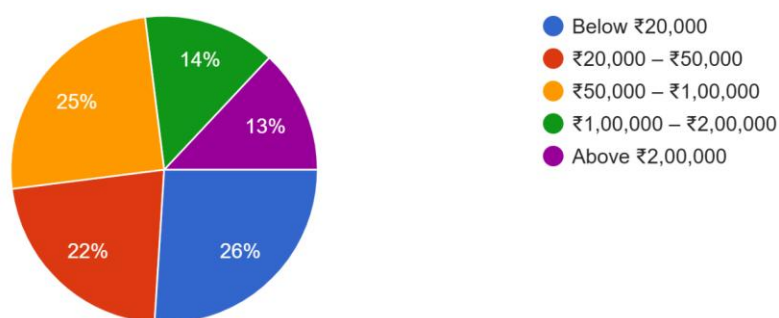
The income levels of respondents show diversity: 26% earn below ₹20,000, 22% fall in the ₹20,000–₹50,000 range, 25% earn ₹50,000–₹1,00,000, and 13% and 14% represent higher income brackets (₹1,00,000–₹2,00,000 and above ₹2,00,000, respectively). This distribution is a good example of the range of socioeconomic statuses that should be covered in order to know how disposable income affects food choices. Higher-income individuals, despite the high prices, may choose organic food because of health benefits associated with this type of food or might also not have a preference at the same time as they would not care about the label, whereas the lower income group may select the cheaper foods due to affordability issues or might choose organic foods as they might be conscious about their health or be influenced by some factor.

4) Area
100 responses
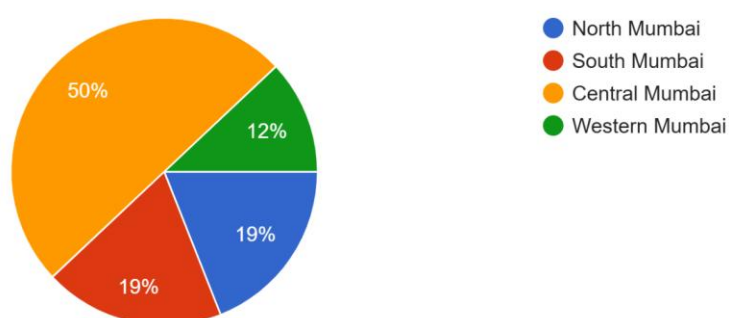
The geographic representation of the sample shows that 50% of them live in Central Mumbai; North Mumbai (19%), South Mumbai (19%), and Western Mumbai (12%). Central Mumbai's population dominance may be linked to the fact that it has a variety of people and is also a

hub for both organic and non-organic food. This area-based distribution allows getting details of the relativity among locations with different socioeconomic situations in terms of accessibility, awareness, and preferences.

5) Rate your awareness for the following (1-Very unaware, 5- Very aware)

The awareness levels for organic and inorganic foods were measured on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing "very unaware" and 5 indicating "very aware." The responses highlight the fact that many the surveyed people believe they are well-informed about both organic and inorganic foods, which is an important factor for understanding consumer behaviour in Mumbai.
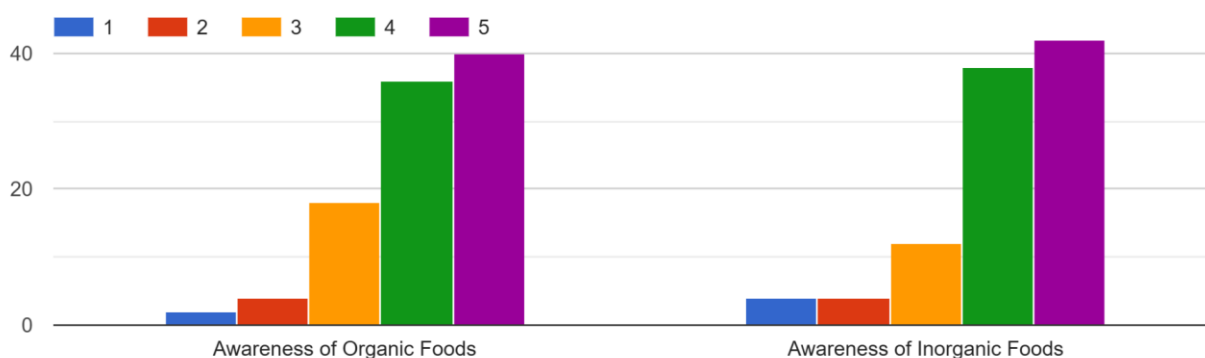
Awareness of Organic Foods
About 40 people who were aware of organic foods selected "very aware" (5th on the scale) as their level of awareness. This high degree of awareness suggests that organic foods are heavily marketed, most likely because of marketing campaigns that highlight their advantages as well as environmental consciousness and health concerns. This information may be amplified by the growth of online retail shops and organic food marketplaces. Because organic foods are linked to healthier lifestyles, those who place a high value on their diet, health, and environment may also feel more attached to them. They might also have similar opinions about sustainability.

Awareness of Inorganic Foods
Awareness of inorganic foods also leans higher, with several people describing themselves as "very aware." This is explained by the fact that inorganic meals are still widely accessible and reasonably priced, making them a mainstay for many customers. Because they are more readily available, inorganic foods predominate in conventional retail markets and supermarkets. This increased awareness may also be attributed to the belief that inorganic

foods are convenient and affordable. However, people may easily identify the phrase "inorganic foods" with routinely produced food goods that lack organic certifications.

6) How important are the following factors when choosing foods? (1 - Very Unimportant, 5 - Very Important)
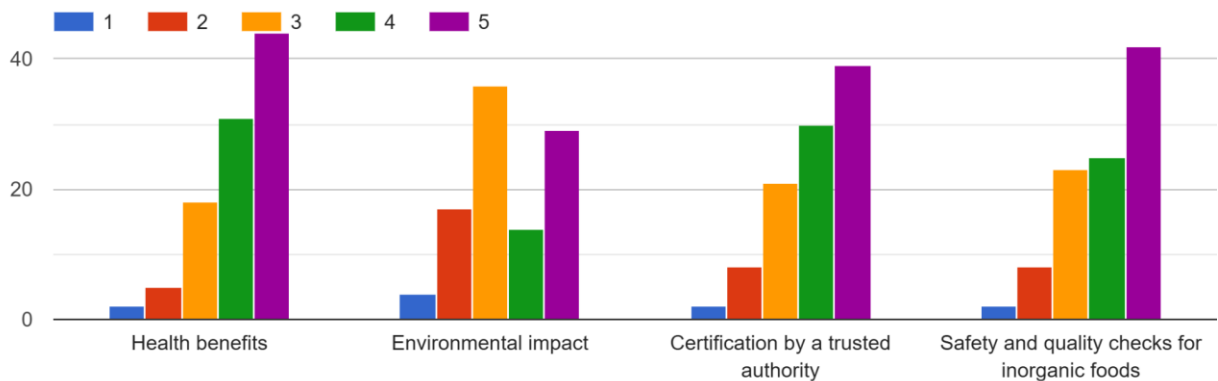
According to the survey, health benefits is the most important factor among consumers regarding foods this could be because of the increasing consciousness about life-threatening diseases and the impacts of food on health. Another factor that also measures high is certification by the trusted authority which is further enhanced due to increasing cases of fake organic labels as there are many brands in the market which guarantee the authenticity of the product but when tested the outcome is not the same as promised. Of course, environmental impact is also considered to be a vital factor, but not of utmost concern maybe because of some practical issues such as price and access. On the other hand, safety and quality checks for inorganic foods is also large, pointing out that the consumer is concerned about the use of pesticides and pesticide residue on food and food adulteration. This means, that although health benefits and trust are the key motivators for choosing food, factors like environment and food safety are significant yet submissive factors.

As per the responses gathered majority of the people have associated both organic foods as well as inorganic foods on the same level with each other across various factors such as Health benefits and a sense of security this could be because organic people might think it is fresher and free of any pesticides and chemicals so ot would be healthy for the body and for inorganic it could be because even though they are not as fresh as organic they do still provide some nutritional benefits to the body. At the same time, people also feel that both organic and inorganic foods give better value for money based on taste and quality as organic

29

food though expensive provides much better quality than inorganic and inorganic foods though not having the quality as good as organic foods it still is more affordable to people.

Many people from the survey agree with both i.e. organic and inorganic foods have a positive environmental impact still a healthy amount of people feel that neither organic nor inorganic foods have a positive impact on the environment maybe because all the food waste that's accumulating is having an adverse effect on the environment. Health benefits is the major factor that people tend to keep in mind while purchasing groceries and as justified above people feel both organic and inorganic foods equally have some kind of health benefits for the body and other factors such as positive environmental impact, better quality and gives a sense of security, better value for money based on taste and quality do have an impact but not as much health.

8) Have you experienced a noticeable difference in the quality of organic foods compared to inorganic foods?
100 responses
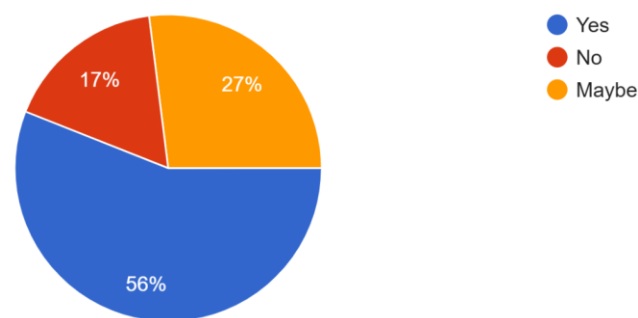
A major chunk of respondents (56 %), acknowledged that there is a significant difference between organic and inorganic foods this could be because they might find organic foods to be fresher and healthier than inorganic foods and also could be because of brand and certification as they add a sense of trust and responsibility by the brands which could add to this perception and make the organic foods to be easily recognizable. But, 27% were still not sure, possibly due to poor familiarization with the products or skepticism over their health benefits. At the same time, 17% responded that there is no difference, this is understandable, since inorganic products, due to preservatives, are homogeneous and long-lasting on the shelves and are also cheaper than organic foods. Such findings suggest that marketing communications and the actual experience of using products play an important role in informing people's perceptions regarding quality disparities.

9) How often do you purchase the following types of food?
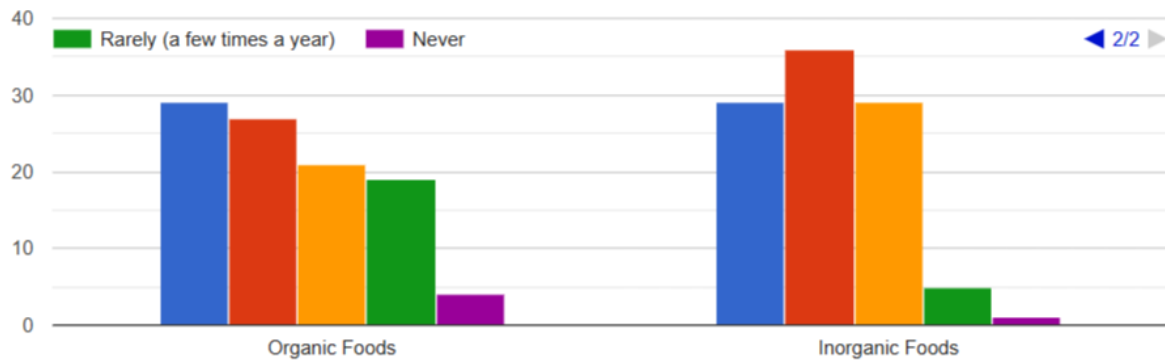
The frequency of the purchase of organic food is not constant, some customers buy them every time they go shopping due to consideration of the aspects of health and sustainability. However, organic products are relatively expensive and hard to come by, which limits others to infrequent or selective consumption. Organic on the other hand is still a preserve of a few households because it is relatively expensive and hard to come by. That is why those who occasionally buy inorganic foods with organic products may still be using those inorganic foods for some items that they believe do not easily meet pesticides such as packaged products or staple foods. These findings show that as consumers become more conscious, there is an increasing shift towards organic foods, however, more people are still able to afford and conveniently buy inorganic foods.

10) Please rate your trust and confidence in the following statements: (1 - No Trust/Confidence, 5 - Complete Trust/Confidence)
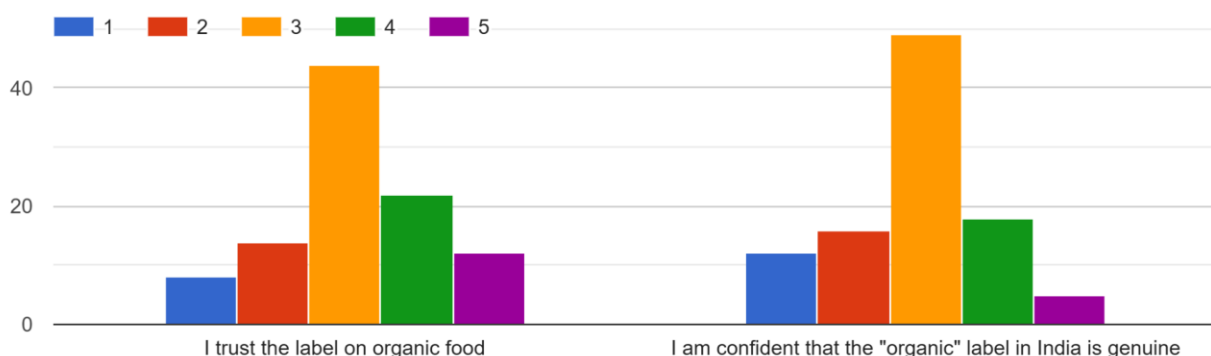
The result shows that many of the participants have a moderate level of trust (average of 4 on a 5-point Likert scale) in the labels on organic food. But there is a little downswing of

confidence when it comes to the authenticity of the organic label in India as seen in the graph as most people have rated 3 out 5 on the 5-point Likert scale, and specifically, fewer persons are fully confident as rated in 5 in the scale. This implies that there is a lack of trust with labelling initiatives, probably because of inadequate information on certification procedures in India. These results suggest that regulation needs to be improved while labelling and awareness campaigns should be developed to ensure that consumers understand the genuine nature of organic foods.

11) To what extent do the following factors influence your decision to purchase organic food? (1 - No Influence, 5 - Complete Influence)
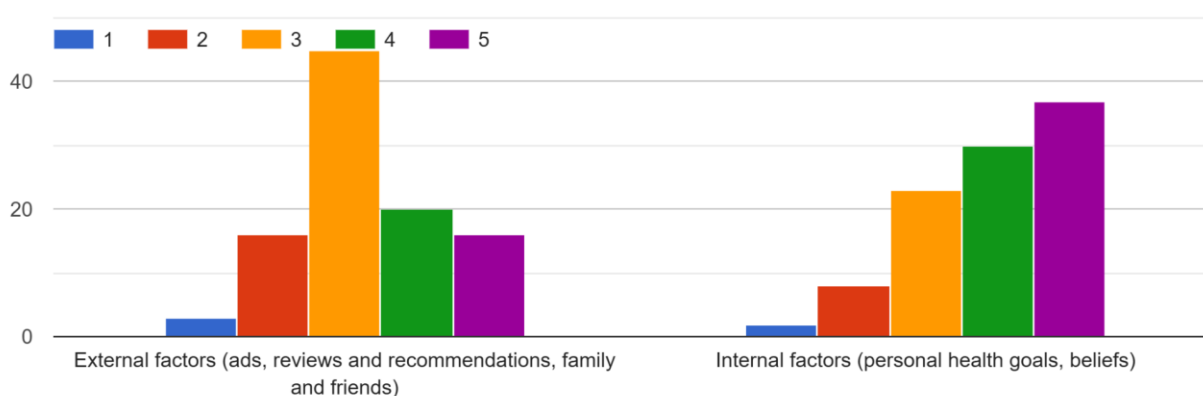
As seen in the graph of internal factors there has been a steady incline in the level of influence internal factors have on people while purchasing food and groceries with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest with the majority of the respondents placing it in the 4 or 5 effectiveness score mainly due to the influence of internal factors that may include personal health goals and beliefs that may affect their purchasing decisions, this could be because the major responses have been gathered from the age group of 20-30 and 30-40 years and they tend to be more healthy and aspire to live a healthy lifestyle with body and health goals in mind. However, exposures such as adverts and recommendations were ranked lower influences with more respondents rating low influence levels. Thus, this result implies that consumers are concerned with the personal benefit of health rather than marketing strategy when considering organic products. This supports the argument that organic food marketing approaches should more frequently demonstrate the healthy benefits of organic foods and appeal less to extrinsic incentives.

12) Primary source of purchase for of food

In the case of organic foods, respondents get it from supermarkets, local markets, online stores and local supermarkets most frequently; on the other hand, local markets and local supermarkets have received the highest frequency rating for inorganic foods. This goes hand in hand with the fact that people appreciate organic products as something that can only be bought in worthy outlets or specific categories where counterfeiting is impossible. On the other hand, the price and market availability of inorganic foods are cheaper than that of organic foods sold in local markets.

13) How often do you switch between organic and inorganic foods?
100 responses
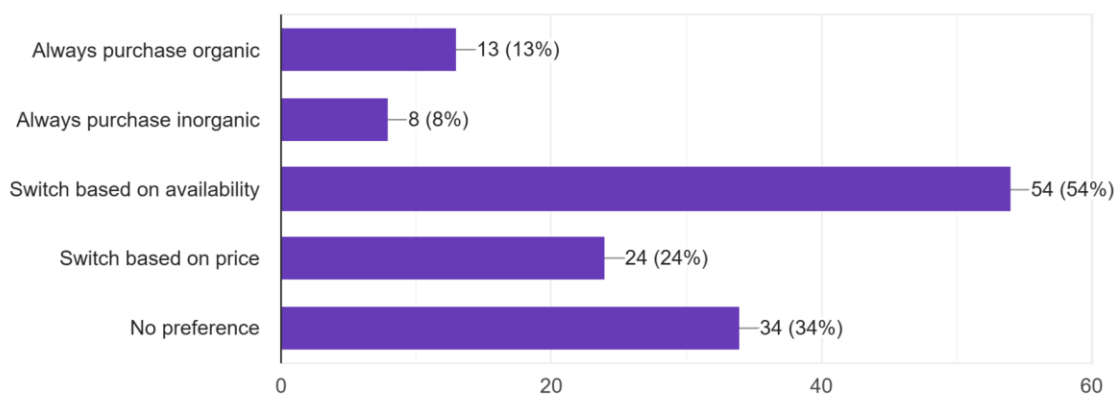
These two factors have shown that, out of the total respondents, 54% change their food choice between organic and inorganic foods according to availability whilst 34% have no preference at all they will buy whatever is made available to them during the time of their need and if possible, at a lower price, and 24% according to the price. However, only 13% confessed to buying only organic produce as there are issues with the cost and availability of

organically produced foods. Such behaviour makes it high time for the authorities to focus on supply chain issues and work on the pricing strategy to make people consume more organic food.

14) How frequently do you buy organic foods compared to inorganic foods?
100 responses

- More frequently buy organic foods
- More frequently buy inorganic foods
- Equally buy both
- I never buy organic foods
- I never buy inorganic foods
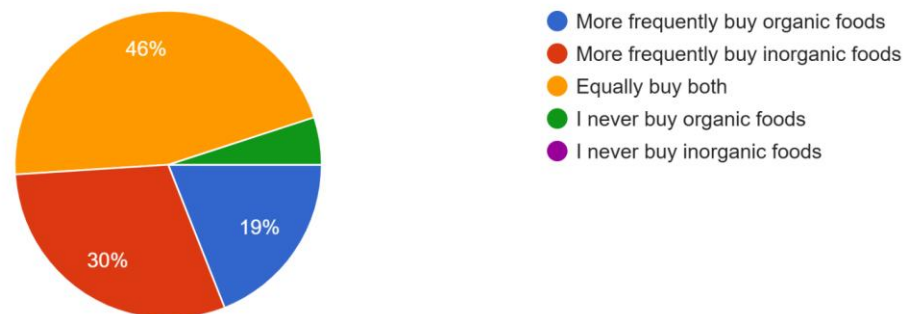
Comparing the results, it was found that the majority (46%) of the respondents often purchase both organic and inorganic foods and 19% of the respondents were found to purchase more of the organic foods. This suggests that the segment had evenly distributed consumers who were inclined to buy the product for various reasons such as affordability, availability, health reasons, etc. However, opportunities to increase the organic share in consumer purchases are located in the further discussion of price sensitivity and trust, which were mentioned in the previous questions because as seen in the pie chart above there is not even a single person who does not buy inorganic foods and also 30% frequently choose to buy inorganic foods as compared to organic foods.

15) Do you feel organic food is more expensive than inorganic foods?
100 responses

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
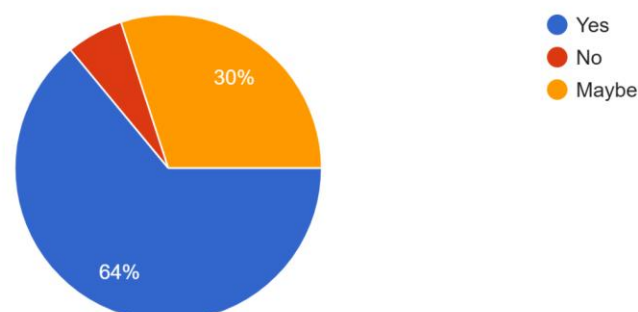
More than half of the respondents, 64% believe that organic food is more expensive than organic food, 30% are still not sure and are on the edge but very few respondents i.e. 6% feel

that organic food is not expensive compared to inorganic food. The customer perception that organic products are expensive is a major challenge in the increased use of the products. This could be due to the mentality that since organic foods are usually chemical and pesticides free they are more expensive to grow and make and hence are more expensive. To resolve this the brands, need to aim at making the consumer understand the overall health benefits and the environmental impact that comes with the consumption of organic food in the long run by ensuring that they work hard to ensure that the cost is eased further through the achievement of higher economies of scale and government subsidies.

16) Would you be willing to pay extra for organic food?
100 responses
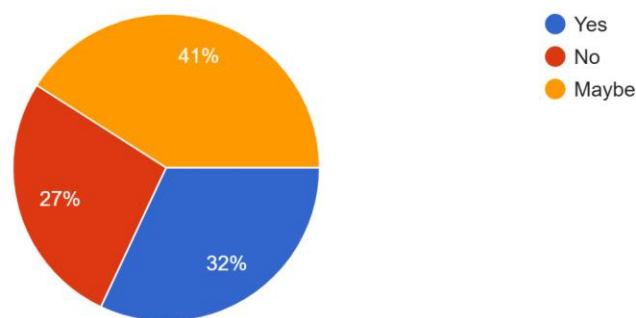
The responses to this question reveal a great variety of consumer's perceptions regarding the willingness to pay a price premium for organic food. Among 32% of the respondents who made a positive intention to pay higher price for organic food, recognizing the perceived health quality, and environmental gains of organic foods, a negative 27% said no. This group probably consists of those consumers who still are not ready to pay higher prices for organic foods due to the lower perceived benefits. More curiously, the biggest portion, 41%, was still under the 'Maybe' category, which perhaps represents a category that is swayed by factors like income, price, or availability of accurate information concerning the merits of organic foods. Such a mixed response goes to show that while there is an appreciation of the need to make organic foods more affordable.

17) If organic food were of the same price as inorganic food would you purchase them
100 responses
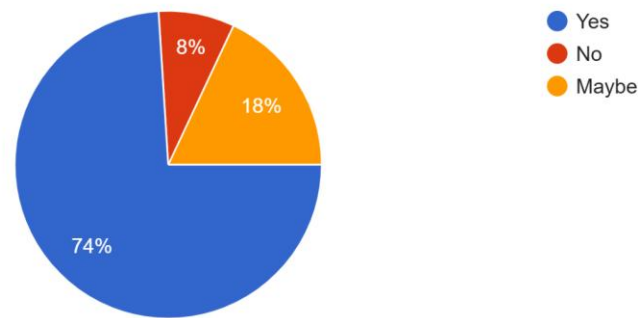
As many as 74% of the respondents agreed with the statement, reflecting a positive interest in the consumption of organic foods when prices are on par with those of non-organic foods. The responses were positive for 45% of the participants, 8% said "No, while 18% were on the "Maybe" list. This is a strong indication that the main reason consumers avoid buying organic foods is its relatively higher price as compared to its potential advantages and quality. The data supports the claim that price is a major determinant in consumers' decision-making process, and if cost is however eliminated, organic foods would prevail over other foods.

18) Do you believe purchasing organic foods contributes to long-term sustainability?
100 responses
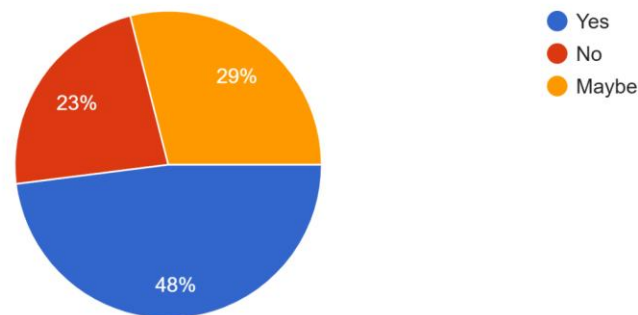
Of the total, 48% of the respondents answered 'Yes' to the statement supporting the above impression that organically produced foods reflect sustainable practices that include minimal use of chemicals and environmentally friendly practices of farming. However, 23% responded "No" and 29% said "Maybe" therefore; there are disparities in customers' perception of the sustainability advantage that is realized from organic agriculture. Based on this data it can be concluded that although sustainability is another aspect of organic food, an emphasis should be made on education and communication among the remaining consumers.

19) Do you believe inorganic foods have any long-term negative effects on health or the environment?

100 responses

- Yes, significant negative effects
- Yes, but minor negative effects
- No, there are no negative effects
- Unsure
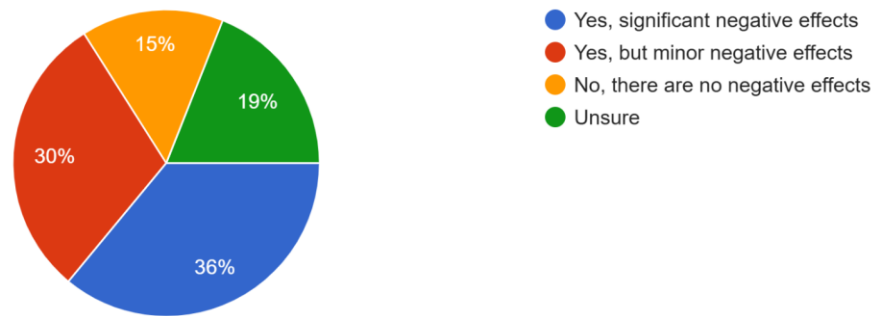
From this question, the response shows that the perception of consumers regarding the risks of inorganic foods is rather divided. An interesting 36% of the respondents said that inorganic foods cause serious long-term harm, possibly because of pesticide chemicals, inorganic fertilizers, and their impacts on the community. Another 30% are of the opinion that the effects are minor, this may be due to the belief that risk is contained by regulation. However, 15% of the respondents do not agree that inorganic foods have any negatives on health, reflecting possibly confidence in food safety measures or a complete ignorance of the likely dangers. Finally, 19% were neutral attributing to lack of information or education on the health and environmental impact of inorganic food production. Some of these risks are presented in the following table; From this data, it is now clear that there is increased awareness of risks but still, there is a need for increased access to risk information.

Conclusion

The objective of this research paper was to examine the consumers' preferences on organic and inorganic foods in Mumbai; factors of price, availability, external factors (advertisements, reviews and recommendations, friends and family), internal factors (personal health goals and beliefs) and health consciousness/benefits, environmental concerns, socio-economic class (income, age, gender), trust in certification, purchasing habits, safety, and quality, consumer buying behaviour and motivation. The study outcomes give a considerable understanding of consumer perceptions and behaviours within this socio-geographical scenario.

The hypotheses proposed in the study yielded mixed outcomes:

- **H1 (Organic foods provide better health benefits):** Supported, as most respondents associated organic foods with better health outcomes.

37

- **H2 (Willingness to pay a premium for organic foods):** Partially supported, as only 32% were willing to pay extra, while 41% were undecided.

- **H3 (Preference for organic foods if priced the same as inorganic):** Strongly supported, with 74% favouring organic foods under equal pricing conditions.

- **H4 (Inorganic foods have negative long-term impacts):** Supported, with a majority expressing concern about the health and environmental impacts of inorganic foods.

- **Hypothesis 5 (Purchasing organic foods contributes to sustainability):** Partially supported, as 48% agreed, but significant uncertainty (29%) points to a lack of awareness.

To a certain extent, the research questions were answered by the study, and it was found that health benefits driven by environmental factors, and affordability were the most important factors that affected consumers' choice. Consumers associated organically produced foods with better health values and better effects on the environment, as well as seen by the survey results. However, the food cost is still an issue, and lots of the participants are still not willing to pay the extra ten cents to buy organic brands. In fact, the research unveiled that in a situation where organic foods could be found to cost the same as inorganic foods, 74% of the consumers preferred organic foods and this is where the managers need to focus on the prices that influence the intake of organic foods.

This is evidenced by increased awareness of health and environmental concerns; however, cost barriers and knowledge constraints are key challenges to the increased adoption of organic foods. While some buyer-seller relationship consumers are willing to buy products based on price and convenience rather than perceived benefit; others are hampered due to the high price of organic foods subsequent to which they have become less attainable.

This study may have some inherent methodological limitations including a relatively small subject sample (n=100), and the research was conducted in a single large metropolitan city – Mumbai. Furthermore, some response biases could distort the indications of actual consumer preferences given in the survey as the sample size was selected through convenience sampling. Subsequent studies should rectify these drawbacks by extending the analysis to cover a wide range of demography and geographic locations and using enormous study samples. It also means that longitudinal studies could also examine shifts in consumer sentiment over time given the dynamics involved in the sector, the organic food market included.

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3. Exploring how Films and Series Spark Audience Engagement and Conversations on Forests

Khushi Shah, Student, Master of Arts (Entertainment Media and Advertising)
Kishinchand Chellaram College, HSNC University, Mumbai

Abstract

Roughly quoting a dialogue from the film Bhediya, it says how people nowadays only care about one kind of greenery, green coloured notes of money and not the true forested greenery of nature and landscapes of various kinds. This is just one of the many points of view people have of forests and nature. This research aims to look at how audiences get engaged to films, web series of various other kinds of entertainments and filmmaking around the themes centralised around forests and nature and aims to draw attention towards the importance of portraying nature to spark a conversation in favour of mother earth through a captivating lens.

Moreover, this research, through qualitative methods, observes how the current audience especially across 2 generations consume media of these genres and if this genre has a positive future in terms of its audience and how it can impact audiences minds and thoughts alongside watching experiences.

Keywords: Forests, Nature, Media Influence, Filmmaking, Audience Engagement, Media, Bollywood, Films, Web Series

Introduction

In an era where the environment is in crisis and forests are hardly being spoken to and of, the power of cinema to shape public attitudes towards nature has never been more profound. As stories unfold on screen, they have the potential to do more than entertain—they can awaken a collective consciousness, inspiring change and fostering a deeper connection with the world around us. This research embarks on a journey to explore the role of films and series in driving conversations about forests, examining the emotional and intellectual responses they provoke in audiences and whether they actually get the audience engaged for the right reasons or not. It also addresses the notion that forests in film are no longer just scenic

backdrops; they are characters in their own right, offering a lens through which societal values, environmental challenges, and cultural beliefs are reflected.

Films like *Kantara*, *Bhediya* and *Sherni* serve as powerful examples, blending the beauty of nature with poignant narratives that address indigenous knowledge, environmental justice, and gendered perspectives alongside being extremely entertaining. Yet, despite the growing influence of eco-cinema, there is still much to be understood about how these stories emotionally engage viewers and move them towards action.

While recognizing the vast potential of eco-cinema, the research also addresses the challenges of inclusivity and representation in the industry. It highlights the need for diverse voices and perspectives in environmental storytelling, ensuring that the narratives of marginalized communities and women are heard intertwined with nature. Through a mixed-methods approach, this study will explore how forest-themed media influences public opinion, using both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to capture a wide range of viewer experiences. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing conversation about the role of cinema in promoting ecological sustainability, advocating for a more responsible and inclusive cinematic landscape.

Review of Literature & Research Gap

There are plenty of videos stating how one should always preserve our forests, wildlife and the environment overall. Little do "Greening Media" explores the intersection of media studies and environmental awareness, emphasising the need for critical examination of the environmental impact of media production and consumption. The authors highlight the limitations of current studies that claim data centres are carbon neutral and video streaming has minimal environmental impact, pointing out the offshoring of environmental damage and neglect of factors like water consumption and biodiversity loss. They caution against the quantification of environmental sustainability, as it can lead to a rebound effect by promoting increased production and consumption of goods and services under the guise of sustainability.

The article discusses the challenges of integrating eco-critical thinking into media studies curricula, advocating for interdisciplinary collaboration with environmental sciences and economics. Furthermore, the author addresses the analytical challenge of calculating the environmental footprint of media, noting the lack of accessible data on energy consumption, raw material extraction, and waste generation in media production and distribution. They call

for a shift towards a more environmentally aware media studies discipline, urging scholars to consider their role in contributing to the destruction of the planet and to critically analyse the ecological impact of media products and technologies. Overall, the paper underscores the importance of reorienting media studies towards environmental consciousness and promoting sustainable practices within the industry.

The Indian film Kantara highlights indigenous knowledge systems, local customs, demigods, and forest sacredness. It highlights the marginalisation of these systems, vulnerability to epistemic and environmental injustices, and the importance of land sacredness and community activism. The film also promotes environmental activism. Speaking of the significance of forests represented in entertainment, films about forests can be significant for several reasons, including:

- Raising awareness: Films can help raise awareness of environmental issues like deforestation and climate change. For example, environmental films can highlight wildlife trafficking, habitat threats, and human-wildlife interactions.
- Changing narratives: Films can help change the narrative around nature and biodiversity loss.
- Inspiring conservation: Films can inspire people to support conservation work.
- Bringing nature into homes: Films can bring the beauty of forests and wildlife into people's homes.
- Influencing society: Films can influence society and reach large audiences.
- Exploring themes: Films can explore themes like disorientation, darkness, and sanctuary. For example, in The Blair Witch Project, the forest is a landscape of disorientation where modern gadgets don't work. In Robin Hood, Sherwood Forest provides cover for the archer.

We have observed Bollywood being negligent in interpreting wildlife whether it is female leads dancing on the tunes of snake charmer or the Hero of the movie fighting with nauseated tigers and lions. The early movies on Naagin, cobras and others of such type have hyped the absurd saga of these venomous creatures where they are taking revenge for the killing of their male-counterparts. The movie, Roar (2014) produced by AA Films takes the audience along the Sunderbans, the largest tiger reserve. The movie discusses the man-wildlife conflicts and highlights the message of respecting nature and wildlife. The movie begins with the case of the killing of a photographer by white tiger as it catches its cub although for rescue. Man animal conflict has been explained with the help of visuals. However, at certain places, it

becomes clear that eco cinema without doing concrete research may not do much justice and remains just a piece of entertainment. The movie shows that the man eaters are handled with armed platoons and 'special action forces' with AK-47s and automatic guns which is not the correct practice. The white tigers are trapped in the wire which is not a good practice. Such insensitive films make the real scene situation difficult. One character in the movie talks sense and says all tigers are not man-eaters and that there is a need to protect not facilitate their killing.

Ecofeminism is a theory and movement that explores the interconnected forces that oppress women and the environment. The movie Sherni depicts the exploitation of nature and the environmental implications of human actions. The study focuses on how the film exposes the link between the subjugation of women and the degradation of the environment while also criticising the capitalist structures that fuel this exploitation. It provides an insight into the representation of women and nature in the film. By examining these aspects, it can contribute to a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, and environmental implications of Bollywood cinema.

Forest Tales explores the ecologies of the moving image, advocating for a cinema that challenges market-driven ideologies and emphasises a relational state of becoming and descriptive ecology. Forest Tales presents a narrative involving sentient forests, human forms, and the impact of progress, offering a unique and thought-provoking journey. The performance of Forest Tales integrates ecology, technology, and social justice, highlighting the interconnectedness of material and metaphorical elements in cinema. The eco-cinema approach in Forest Tales urges a rethinking of cinema as a method, emphasising nature's agency and the need to consider environmental implications.

It serves as a platform for exploring deep ecology within the cinematic realm, promoting a shift towards a more inclusive and environmentally conscious narrative. The text emphasises the reciprocity between cinema and nature, stressing the importance of acknowledging the environmental and social costs of cinematic practices. It discusses the transformation from shallow ecology to deep ecology, focusing on raising consciousness about the consequences of human actions.

Forest Tales challenges traditional narratives of power consolidation in cinema and the Ramayana, advocating for a more diverse and inclusive storytelling approach. It critiques the digital divide and lack of diversity in the motion picture industry, highlighting the need for equitable access and representation. Overall, Forest Tales presents a compelling argument for

a more environmentally conscious and socially responsible approach to cinema, urging a shift towards a more inclusive and diverse cinematic landscape.

When in discussion regarding the *'Research Gap'* for this topic, the observations lie in the realm of the fact that the research reveals several gaps in the study of eco-cinema and its impact. While films of various language industries like Tollywood or Bollywood have highlighted environmental issues, there is limited exploration of how storytelling techniques engage audiences emotionally and spark conversations about forest conservation.

Their genuine involvement as a community watching eco cinema for a variety of purposes is not exploited yet. Indigenous knowledge, as seen in films like *Kantara*, remains underrepresented in mainstream narratives, and Bollywood's often inaccurate portrayals of wildlife and forests lack comprehensive eco-critical analysis. Gendered perspectives, as depicted in *Sherni*, highlight the intersection of feminist environmentalism and storytelling, but their integration into mainstream cinema is under-explored and has opportunities to be portrayed as overstimulated or melodramatic. Additionally, there is insufficient data on audience perceptions of forest-based narratives and how they inspire conservation efforts or even tourism efforts. The balance between realism and exaggeration in forest portrayals remains a challenge, with little research on its influence on public attitudes.

Theoretical Framework

Grounded in ecocriticism and media studies, this research provides a lens through which we can analyze the relationship between visual narratives and environmental consciousness. Eco-criticism examines the representation of nature in various forms of entertainment media, emphasizing the cultural, authentic and ideological implications of these portrayals. It submits that narratives shape our understanding of the environment and can either reinforce or challenge dominant paradigms of exploitation and conservation.

Additionally, the framework incorporates theories of audience reception and engagement, recognizing Structuralism in Cinema where a film's Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic elements are also spoken of keeping in mind the multifaceted genre like forests of nature. In the context of cinema, the framework draws on the concept of "eco-cinema," which refers to films that engage with ecological themes and promote environmental awareness. This approach critiques traditional cinematic narratives that often prioritize human interests over ecological considerations, advocating for a more balanced representation of nature that acknowledges its intrinsic value and showcasing nature's POV in a way. By analyzing films

and series through this lens, the research seeks to uncover the underlying messages and values that inform audience engagement with forest narratives.

Furthermore, the framework acknowledges the role of digital media in shaping contemporary narratives about nature. As streaming platforms and social media become increasingly influential, the research explores how these mediums facilitate discussions about environmental issues and foster community engagement. By situating the study within this broader context, the theoretical framework underscores the significance of storytelling in promoting ecological awareness and inspiring collective action.

Methodology

An online Google Form questionnaire was created to collect primary data on audience impressions, engagement and interaction with forest-themed films and television programs. The questionnaire asked both closed-ended and open-ended questions and opinions, offering a balance of quantitative insights and qualitative depth. Secondary data was gathered from online databases, scholarly publications, industry reports, and related articles to help contextualise the findings.

This research project has used a quantitative research methodology to investigate how films, web series and entertainment overall engages viewers and stimulates conversations about forests and nature. It uses descriptive analysis to investigate patterns and themes that emerge from audience responses to environmental narratives in visual media.

To gather responses, the sample of 60 individuals were from a variety of backgrounds and strata of life instead of having a very specific TG as the aim was to understand the general audience engagement with this particular genre of entertainment. This sampling design was created keeping in mind the sole purpose of entertainment, "Mass communication and engagement".

Results

The data collection for this research was executed with the help of an online form by the application of Google Forms. https://forms.gle/nqRBQsNxE9PCcBpt5

There were a variety of questions asked from the likes of descriptive (short and long answer), MCQ's and Checkbox Q & A's so that a diversified range of answers and opinions could be attended to. Following were the questions for the research with the analysed results-

- **Name**
- **Profession**
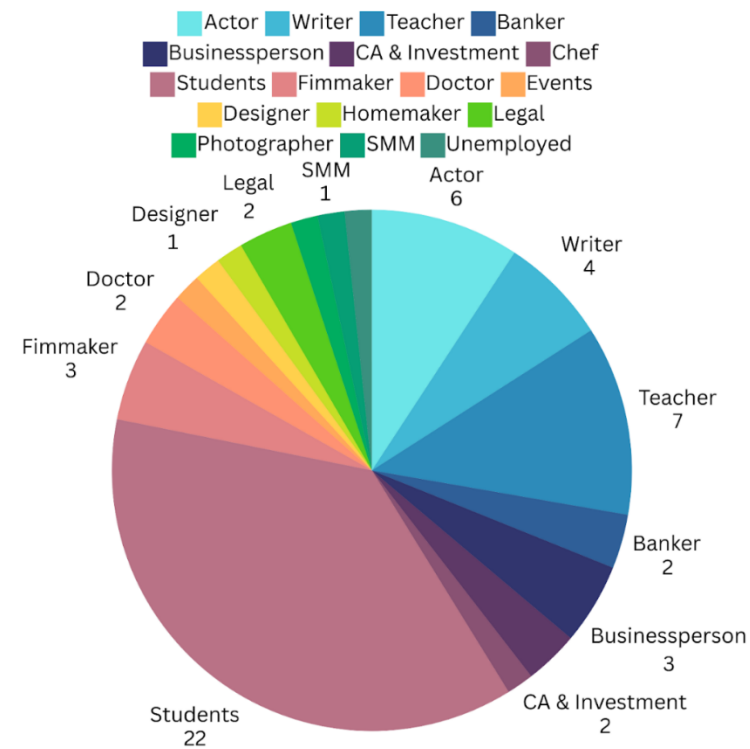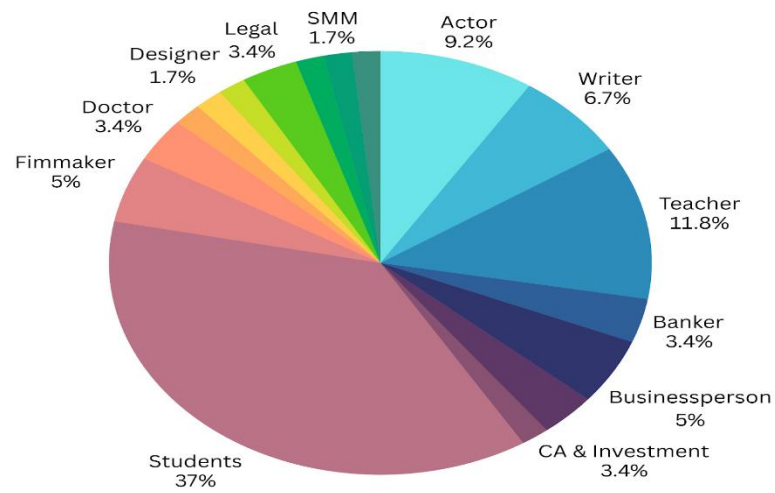
- **Age Group**

Age Group
60 responses

- 15 to 25 yrs
- 25 to 35 yrs
- 35 to 45 yrs
- 45 to 55 yrs
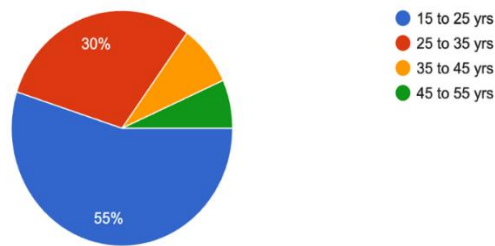
How often do you watch films or web series that feature forests or natural environments?

How often do you watch films or web series that feature forests or natural environments?
60 responses

- Rarely (once in a while)
- Occasionally (a few times a year)
- Frequently (at least once a month)
- Very frequently (several times a month)
- Almost always (whenever available)

The above graphical representation through a pie chart signifies that the audience in general is not extremely inclined towards particularly consuming entertainment in relation to forests or the environment (the said genre) as opined by the 33% of the respondents. While an alarming 21% rarely seem to be interested in watching content of the mentioned, which is a larger amount than the population who are genuinely interested and inclined towards consuming the said genre. Not only does this state that the need for forest and nature conversations need to be enhanced upon in more interesting ways, but also state how there isn't a variety of content that actually compels the audience to watch and consume that kind of content.

- **Can you recall any recent films or web series that made you think about forests or environmental conservation? If yes, which ones?**

The answers indicated a varied recollection of documentaries, web series and films about conversations and topics relating to forests and environmental preservation. Due to their content being of higher value of not only authenticity but also entertainment, Bhediya, Sherni, The Elephant Whisperers and Our Planet are frequently mentioned and appear to have struck a deep chord with respondents. Other noteworthy inclusions are of Paani, Kantara and Kaala Pani, highlighting culturally and regionally distinct work that tackles environmental

47

challenges. Diverse influences were demonstrated by the fact that some respondents brought up highly regarded films like Green Inferno, The Lorax, and The Revenant, which are also international works. Some participants were unable to name any titles, indicating a possible lack of familiarity with environmental themes in the media. This demonstrates the power of skilfully written environmental narratives and indicates areas where these topics could be further incorporated into popular and localised programming.

- **On a scale of 1-10, how much do you enjoy stories set in forested or natural environments? (1 being least enjoyed and 10 being most enjoyed)**

On a scale of 1-10, how much do you enjoy stories set in forested or natural environments?
60 responses
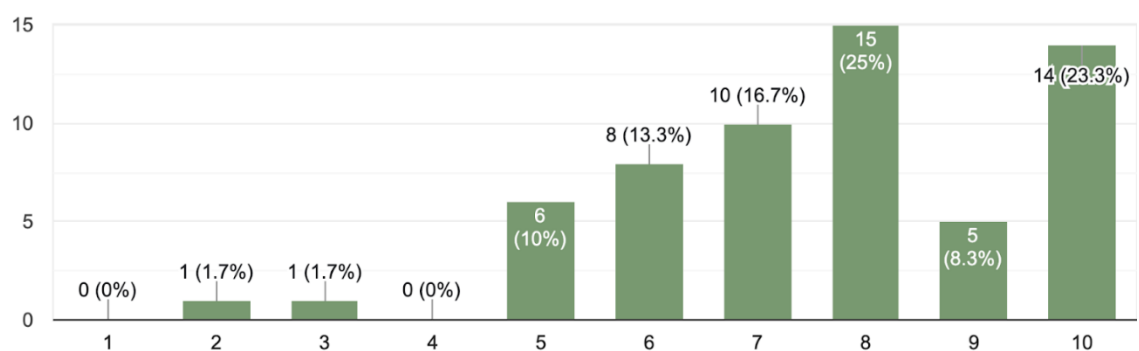
The responses to how much the respondents enjoy watching stories set in forested or natural environments reveal a largely positive angle, with most ratings clustering between 7 and 10. A significant number of participants rated their enjoyment at the highest level (10), showcasing a strong appreciation for such narratives. Ratings between 6 and 8 formed a substantial portion, indicating moderate to high enjoyment among respondents. A smaller segment provided lower ratings (2-5), suggesting limited interest in such settings for some individuals. Overall, the data reflects a generally strong affinity for stories and narratives rooted in natural environments, highlighting their potential appeal and impact in engaging audiences for a cause of genre that does deserve and need dire attention.

- **Do you believe that entertainment mediums like films or series can influence public opinion on forest conservation? Why or why not?**

Most respondents positively believe that entertainment mediums like films and web series significantly influence public opinion on forest conservation. It is highlighted that various kinds of platforms and mediums of storytelling, with their wide reach and powerful methods,

can effectively raise awareness, inspire empathy and motivate action. Many emphasize on a very basic audience pulling factor that visual media can simplify complex environmental issues, making them relatable, fun, entertaining and impactful. Respondents also note the influence of celebrities and engaging content in shaping societal attitudes, especially among younger generations. While a few dissenting opinions suggest that audiences may view such content purely for entertainment like one of the recent films released and used as an opportunity for an outing, the consensus underscores the potential of films and series to drive meaningful conversations and awareness about forest conservation.

- **Do you feel more connected to nature after watching films or series set in forest environments?**

Do you feel more connected to nature after watching films or series set in forest environments?
60 responses
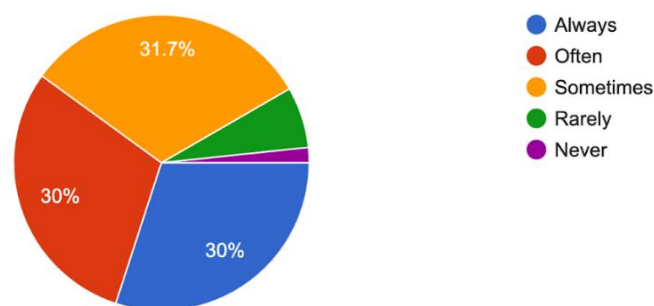
It is indicated that a strong sense of connection to nature among viewers is experienced after watching content set in forest environments, with "always" and "often" being the most frequent answers. This suggests that visual storytelling in natural settings has a powerful impact on fostering emotional ties with nature. A significant number of respondents reported feeling connected only "sometimes," indicating that the effect may depend on the quality, relatability or presentation of the content. A smaller segment, marked by "rarely" and "never," highlights the variability in individual engagement levels. Overall, the findings suggest that while most viewers feel more connected to nature, the extent of this connection varies based on personal and narrative factors.

- **Have any characters or plot lines in such media changed your views about forests or nature?**

A sizable percentage of individuals could not recollect any important influences, despite the fact that several gave particular instances such as Kadvi Hawa, Sherni, Bhediya, Kantara, and

Extrapolations that increased their knowledge of environmental concerns or enhanced their sensitivity to nature. Pre-existing awareness or a connection to nature was cited by a few people, suggesting that media was more of a reinforcement than a transformational influence. Others emphasised powerful narratives that provoke strong feelings and critical thought about environmental preservation, like Into the Wild or real conservation anecdotes. Hence, media may successfully mould or improve viewpoints, but its impact is dependent upon personal preferences and the story's resonance.

- **Do you think forests and nature elements are portrayed realistically in films and web series? Why or why not?**

A significant number of participants feel that these elements in entertainment are portrayed realistically, emphasizing the authenticity of many depictions. However, many respondents highlight that the portrayal is often a mix of realism and exaggeration, suggesting that while some aspects accurately reflect nature, others are dramatized for cinematic effect which can also seem to dilute the purpose of a genre that demands the least amount of fabrication. A smaller segment believes that these portrayals are frequently exaggerated, potentially prioritizing visual spectacle over authenticity. Overall, while there is recognition of realistic depictions, the consensus leans toward acknowledging a blend of realism and artistic license in how nature is represented on screen.
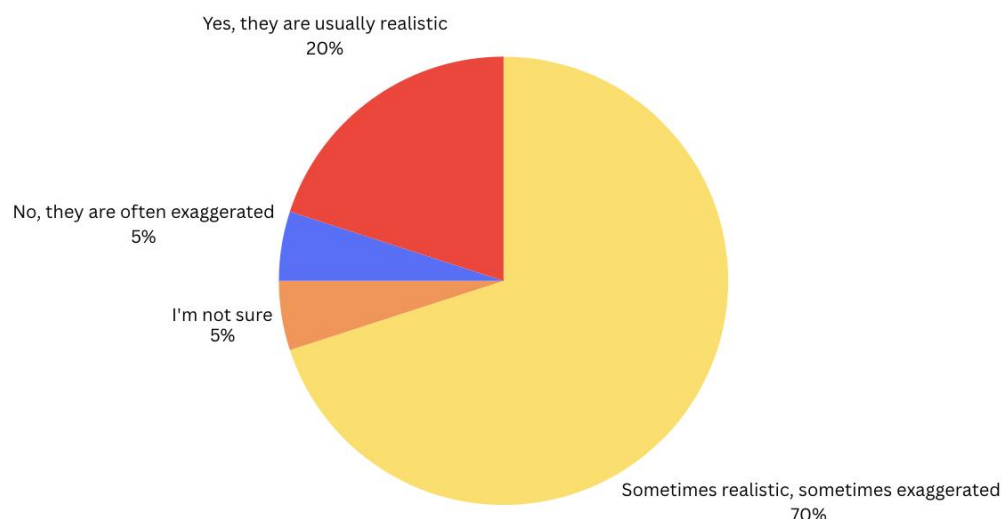
Yes, they are usually realistic
20%

No, they are often exaggerated
5%

I'm not sure
5%

Sometimes realistic, sometimes exaggerated
70%

Which narrative elements (e.g., characters, plot, cinematography) engage you most in stories about forests or nature?

Which narrative elements (e.g., characters, plot, cinematography) engage you most in stories about forests or nature ? (Check all that apply)
60 responses
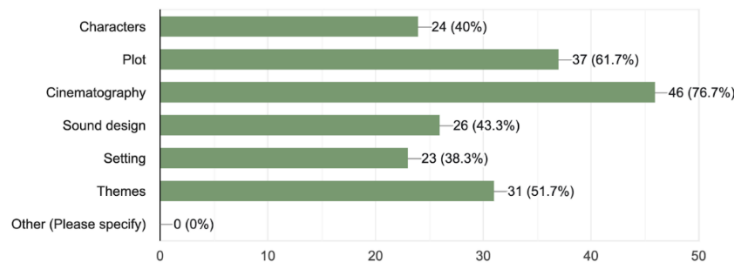
The responses reveal that multiple narrative elements engage viewers in stories about forests or nature, with cinematography emerging as the most frequently mentioned factor. It suggests that the visual representation of nature plays a crucial role in capturing the audience's attention with aspects as simple as how the camera is tracked along the forest routes or how the filmmakers introduce the forest to the viewers. The plot and characters are also significant, often intertwined with themes of survival, conservation and the natural world. Sound design and setting are additionally highlighted as important, contributing to the overall atmosphere and immersion with elements like ruffling of the leaves or sounds of wildlife.

Discussion & Conclusion

On a conclusive note, this study emphasises the essential role that mediums of entertainment have in moulding public perceptions of forests and environmental concerns. Eco-cinema has the potential to spark important debates about conservation and sustainability by engaging audiences both emotionally, intellectually and maybe even dramatically! However, the study also identifies major gaps in the inclusion of various voices and viewpoints in mainstream narratives, emphasising the importance of a more inclusive and extensive approach to storytelling that compels viewers for better inclination towards this cinema.

Finally, as the globe faces increasing environmental issues, cinema's ability to impact public attitudes and behaviours cannot be ignored. This study recommends a coordinated effort to exploit eco-cinema's potential as an environmental advocacy tool, encouraging filmmakers and viewers to interact with storylines that increase ecological consciousness and motivate action.

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4. Evolution of Bollywood Item Songs: A Study on the Sexualisation of Women Across Five Decades

Antora Chakraborty, Student, Master of Arts (Communication & Journalism)
Kishinchand Chellaram College, HSNC University, Mumbai

Abstract

This study explores the evolution of Bollywood item songs over the past five decades, with a particular focus on the portrayal and sexualization of women. The research aims to uncover the underlying messages about gender representation in Indian cinema, through a mix of lyrics, choreography, and visual aesthetic analysis. The study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and focus group discussions to explore how item songs have influenced societal perceptions of femininity and sexuality, reflecting broader cultural shifts.

The research traces the transformation of item songs from the classical mujra performances of the 1960s to contemporary dance numbers, highlighting key trends and developments in the depiction of women in these performances. It addresses how globalization, changing audience preferences, and industry regulations have shaped these portrayals, revealing a complex interplay between entertainment and societal attitudes. The combination of CDA and focus group discussions provides a comprehensive understanding of the impact of item songs on gender representation, showcasing moments where female performers challenge traditional stereotypes and assert their agency.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender representation in Bollywood and underscores the importance of critical engagement with media portrayals of women. By illuminating the evolving dynamics of item songs, this research aims to foster awareness and encourage more inclusive representations within Indian cinema, highlighting the potential for cultural change through popular media.

Keywords: Bollywood, item songs, sexualization, women, gender representation, Indian cinema, patriarchy.

Introduction

Bollywood has always been a source of fascination for me, captivating my imagination since childhood with its rich narratives, vibrant dance sequences, and unforgettable melodies. However, amidst the glitz and glamour of this cinematic world lies a deeper narrative that demands attention—the portrayal of women, particularly within the realm of item songs. Item songs, renowned for their infectious beats and dazzling choreography, have long been a staple of Bollywood's entertainment repertoire, enchanting audiences worldwide. Yet, in recent years, they have also become the subject of intense scrutiny and debate. Discussions surrounding their impact on societal norms and gender dynamics have prompted reflection and analysis. As someone deeply invested in both the enjoyment and critical analysis of Indian cinema, I am driven by a profound curiosity to unravel the complexities surrounding the depiction of women in these cultural artifacts. Through in-depth research and analysis, this paper aims to shed light on the evolution of item songs, their significance within the broader context of Indian cinema, and their implications for gender representation and societal attitudes.

With a blend of passion and scholarly rigor, I aim to delve into the multifaceted layers of Bollywood's portrayal of women in item songs, striving to contribute to a deeper understanding of this complex aspect of popular culture. This journey is not merely an intellectual pursuit but a deeply personal exploration of a phenomenon that lies at the intersection of art, culture, and social change.

Contextual Background

Bollywood, often hailed as the world's largest film industry in terms of output and global reach, serves as a mirror reflecting the ethos, aspirations, and societal norms prevalent in Indian society. Its influence transcends geographical boundaries, captivating audiences worldwide with its blend of drama, romance, and music. However, within this grand spectacle lies a narrative thread that warrants closer examination—the portrayal of women, particularly in the context of item songs.

Item songs, characterized by their pulsating beats, catchy lyrics, and provocative choreography, have emerged as a quintessential component of Bollywood films. Originally conceived as standalone musical sequences featuring a guest dancer or actress, these songs have evolved into powerful marketing tools, often serving as promotional vehicles for films and contributing significantly to their commercial success. Despite their entertainment value, item songs have increasingly come under scrutiny for their portrayal of women, often

objectifying and commodifying them for the male gaze. These songs have played a pivotal role in shaping the aesthetic and narrative landscape of Indian cinema. From the classical mujra performances of the 1950s to the contemporary, high-energy dance numbers of the present day, item songs have evolved significantly, reflecting changing societal norms, cultural attitudes, and cinematic trends.

Item dancing in Bollywood has undergone a fascinating evolution over the decades, reflecting changes in as stated before cultural influences, societal norms, and majorly audience tastes. The early days of Bollywood saw the prominence of mujra, a classical dance form originating from the Mughal courts. Mujra performances, characterized by their graceful and sensual nature, often featured courtesans in traditional attire, captivating audiences with their elegant movements. This classical form of item dancing was prevalent in iconic films like "Mughal-e-Azam" (1960) and "Pakeezah" (1972), establishing a timeless allure in Bollywood's cinematic landscape.

As Western culture made its mark on Indian society, the cabaret emerged as a popular form of item dancing during the 1960s and 1970s. Cabaret sequences introduced an energetic and provocative vibe to Bollywood films, featuring flashy costumes, dynamic choreography, and vibrant settings reminiscent of nightclubs. Helen, known as the "queen of cabaret," became synonymous with this style, mesmerizing audiences with her electrifying performances in films like "Howrah Bridge" (1958) and "Caravan" (1971).

The disco era of the 1970s and 1980s brought a new wave of item dancing to Bollywood, characterized by fast-paced rhythms and pulsating beats. Disco-themed item songs captured the spirit of the global disco craze, infusing Bollywood films with a sense of glamour and excitement. Songs like 'Laila O Laila' from Qurbani (1980), which featured Zeenat Aman, exemplify the era's fusion of Western influences with Indian cinema's signature style.

With the dawn of the 1990s and 2000s, Bollywood item numbers began incorporating elements of hip-hop and other Western dance styles, reflecting the evolving tastes of a globalized audience. These songs featured modern choreography, showcasing the agility and versatility of dancers while maintaining Bollywood's distinctive flair. Examples such as "Chaiyya Chaiyya" from "Dil Se.." (1998) and "Munni Badnaam Hui" from "Dabangg" (2010) demonstrated the industry's willingness to adapt to changing trends while staying true to its roots.

In the contemporary era, Bollywood item songs have embraced a fusion of various dance styles, blending traditional Indian moves with modern choreography to create visually

stunning spectacles. There's been a noticeable shift towards more inclusive and diverse representations of women, with a focus on empowerment and agency. Songs like "Sheila Ki Jawani" from "Tees Maar Khan" (2010) and "Ghagra" from "Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani" (2013) exemplify this trend, showcasing women in roles that defy stereotypes and celebrate their strength and individuality. Throughout its history, item dancing in Bollywood has evolved as a reflection of the industry's dynamic nature, continuously reinventing itself to resonate with audiences and capture the spirit of the times.

Over the years, Bollywood item songs have garnered both acclaim and criticism. While some view them as vibrant expressions of artistic freedom and cultural identity, others critique them for perpetuating stereotypes, objectifying women, and promoting a culture of misogyny. This dichotomy has sparked intense debates within academia, the media, and society at large, prompting scholars and researchers to delve deeper into the phenomenon of item songs and their portrayal of gender and sexuality.

Review of Literature

Over the years, Bollywood item songs and cinema have been the subject of extensive scholarly inquiry, with researchers from diverse disciplines seeking to examine various aspects such as cultural significance, gender representation, and societal impact. However, the exploration of sexualization is a multifaceted endeavour, encompassing global perspectives and region-specific studies. Scholars from diverse disciplines, including film studies, gender studies, and cultural studies, have examined various aspects of sexualization, including the objectification of female characters, industry practices, audience reception, and the portrayal of sexuality in cinematic narratives. This comprehensive review aims to synthesize significant findings and emerging trends in research on sexualization through cinema.

Global Perspectives on Sexualization in Cinema

Renowned scholars such as Laura Mulvey in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" and bell hooks in "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" have laid foundational frameworks for understanding sexualization in cinema from a global perspective. Mulvey's seminal work introduced the concept of the male gaze, elucidating how cinematic techniques and narrative structures contribute to the objectification and sexualization of female characters. Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" explores the concept of scopophilia and the voyeuristic pleasure derived from viewing the female body on screen. She argues that traditional cinematic techniques, such as close-ups and framing, reinforce the

male gaze and perpetuate the sexualization of women as objects of desire. This framework has been instrumental in feminist film criticism, prompting scholars to interrogate the power dynamics inherent in cinematic representation and challenge dominant narratives of sexuality.

Similarly, bell hooks' critical examination in "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" highlights the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality in cinematic representations, emphasizing how women of colour experience distinct forms of sexualization and marginalization in film. It examines the ways in which black female audiences resist and subvert the gaze imposed upon them by mainstream cinema. She argues that black women develop an oppositional gaze, a critical mode of viewing that challenges dominant representations and asserts agency over their own bodies and identities. Through analyses of popular films and media, hooks demonstrates how black female spectators actively engage with and reinterpret cinematic imagery, disrupting hegemonic narratives of sexualization and objectification.

Cinema and Sexualization

In the context of cinema, researchers have embarked on nuanced explorations of sexualization within cultural, historical, and industrial contexts. Research by Ian Kunsey, "Representations of Women in Popular Film: A Study of Gender Inequality in 2018" explores the influence of gender dynamics behind the scenes on the portrayal of women in popular films. It finds that movies directed by women tend to feature more positive depictions of women and pass the Bechdel test more frequently than those directed by men. However, successful films like "Black Panther" demonstrate that male directors can also champion inclusivity.

The study underscores the importance of critical actors in promoting gender equality in Hollywood, suggesting that financial success can drive industry change. Yet, it highlights a persistent gender gap, with few women in key roles behind the scenes and limited female agency on screen. The research calls for further investigation into gender representation in film and suggests the need for qualitative analysis and expanded sample sizes to deepen our understanding of this issue.

Another interesting research which specifically focused on James Bond movies for analysing the sexualization aspect, "Representations of Women in Popular Film: A Study of Gender Inequality in 2018" by Ian Kunsey. This research paper aims to examine changes in gender representation in the media industry, focusing on the portrayal of female characters in the James Bond series of movies. Through discourse analysis, critical literature review, and

interviews, the study seeks to explore the evolution of sexual objectification and the influence of societal norms and feminist movements on gender portrayal over time.

Findings suggest that while there have been some improvements in the depiction of women in James Bond films, they continue to be often sexualized, albeit transitioning from passive displays to more active roles. Despite advancements, female characters remain subject to the "male gaze" and perpetuation of gender stereotypes, emphasizing the ongoing need for more equal representation to challenge traditional patriarchal ideologies in popular culture. Linda Williams, a distinguished scholar in film studies and feminist theory, has made significant contributions to the exploration of sexuality in cinema.

In her seminal work "Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'," she illuminates how representations of sexuality in cinema are not merely about titillation but also about power dynamics, pleasure, and the construction of identity. Similarly, Anneke Smelik, another influential figure in film and gender studies, has explored the embodiment of sexuality in cinema in "And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory ". Through her research, Smelik delves into the ways in which the body is represented and experienced in film, particularly in relation to gender, sexuality, and identity. Her work sheds light on the intersections of visual culture, corporeality, and subjectivity, offering nuanced insights into the ways in which cinematic representations shape our understanding of sexuality and the self. By examining the body as a site of meaning-making and contestation, Smelik's research expands our understanding of sexualization in cinema beyond surface-level imagery to encompass deeper socio-cultural and psychological dimensions.

Global Songs and Music Videos

In addition to Bollywood, the sexualization of women in Asian songs and music videos extends globally, spanning Western and Eastern markets. South Korean pop music, or K-pop, has garnered international fame, with groups like BTS and BLACKPINK featuring highly sexualized imagery and choreography in their music videos. Similarly, in the American music industry, artists like Beyoncé, Rihanna, and Cardi B often incorporate sexual themes and imagery to assert their sexuality and appeal to audiences.

UK artists such as Dua Lipa and Little Mix also embrace sexualized content in their music videos, challenging traditional notions of femininity. Despite empowering intentions, these representations risk reinforcing harmful stereotypes and objectifying women. Critical analysis of sexualization in music videos is crucial for understanding its cultural impact and implications for gender equality in media.

In addition to comprehensive global research, Indian scholars have actively contributed in studying the broad spectrum of sexualization of women through cinema and songs. But, despite numerous studies exploring the broader themes of gender dynamics and representation in Bollywood cinema, few have delved into the nuanced changes and trends in the depiction of female sexuality within the context of item songs.

One notable study by S. Sharma (2021) "Content Analysis of Item Songs: Reflections of A Toxic Socio-Cultural Milieu" examines the cultural significance of item songs in Bollywood, highlighting their role in shaping perceptions of femininity and masculinity. While Sharma provides valuable insights into the socio-cultural implications of these songs, the specific evolution of sexualization of women remains largely unexplored. Similarly, Kamble and Biswal (2022) in "Portrayal of Women in Bollywood Item Songs" discuss the commodification of female bodies in Bollywood cinema, shedding light on the objectification of women in item songs. However, their analysis focuses more on the contemporary landscape and lacks a historical perspective on how these portrayals have evolved over time.

Scholars such as Rachel Dwyer ("Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema") and M.K. Raghavendra ("Seduced by the Familiar: Narration and Meaning in Indian Popular Cinema") provided valuable insights into the origins of item songs and their role in shaping cinematic narratives. However, while these studies shed light on the emergence of item songs as a genre, they often overlooked their implications for gender representation and sexualization.

Subsequent research delved deeper into the gender dynamics inherent in Bollywood item songs, with a particular focus on power structures and patriarchal ideologies. Studies by scholars like Sangita Gopal ("Conjugations: Marriage and Form in New Bollywood Cinema") and Gunjan Sharma ("Portrayal of Women in Hindi Cinema") explored how item songs perpetuate traditional gender roles and reinforce male dominance within the cinematic gaze. While these analyses provided valuable insights into the intersection of gender, power, and representation, they often lacked a nuanced examination of the sexualization of women in item songs.

Furthermore, a study by Dr Salima Jan (2018) "Depiction of Female Sexuality in Bollywood Cinema: A Study of Selected Hindi Films." explores the representation of women in Indian cinema, emphasizing the patriarchal structures that underpin Bollywood narratives. While Jan's research offers valuable insights into the power dynamics at play within the industry, there is a notable absence of discussion on the temporal shifts in the sexualization of women, particularly within the realm of item songs.

Indian Perspective on Sexualisation of women in Bollywood

A growing body of literature has employed feminist theory to critique the sexualization of women in Bollywood item songs and its implications for female agency and empowerment. Works by scholars such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak ("In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics") and bell hooks ("Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies") offered provocative critiques of the patriarchal underpinnings of Indian cinema, calling attention to the commodification of female bodies and the erasure of female subjectivity in item songs. While these analyses highlighted the oppressive nature of patriarchal norms in Bollywood, they often lacked empirical evidence and quantitative analysis to support their claims.

Recent years have seen a rise in empirical studies and content analyses aimed at quantifying the extent of sexualization in Bollywood item songs and and audience perceptions. Research by scholars such as Rachel Dwyer ("Bollywood's India: Hindi Cinema as a Guide to Contemporary India") and Rajinder Dudrah ("Bollywood Travels: Culture, Diaspora, and Border Crossings") employed quantitative methods to analyse the prevalence of sexualized imagery, lyrics, and choreography in item songs.

Understanding the evolution of sexualization of women in Bollywood item songs is crucial for contextualizing contemporary debates surrounding gender representation and empowerment in Indian cinema. By tracing historical trends and patterns, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural factors that have shaped these portrayals over time.

Secondly, examining this evolution provides valuable insights into broader societal changes and attitudes towards female sexuality in India. As the country undergoes rapid socio-economic transformation, it is imperative to analyse how cultural norms and values have influenced the portrayal of women in popular media forms such as Bollywood cinema. Moreover, addressing this gap in the literature can contribute to ongoing discussions on gender equality and women's rights in India. By highlighting the historical trajectories of sexualization in Bollywood item songs, researchers can identify areas for intervention and advocacy aimed at promoting more inclusive and empowering representations of women in the media.

Research Gap

Despite the wealth of literature on the sexualization of women in Bollywood item songs, several gaps and unexplored avenues remain. There is a need for longitudinal studies that

trace the evolution of item songs over time and assess changes in representation and sexualization across different eras and socio-political contexts.

While existing research on Bollywood item songs has shed light on various aspects of gender representation, there remains a notable gap in understanding the evolution of sexualization of women within these songs over five decades. This gap presents an important opportunity for future research to delve deeper into the temporal dynamics of gender portrayal in Indian cinema and its implications for broader societal attitudes towards women and sexuality.

Theoretical Framework

To understand the evolution of Bollywood item songs and their impact on the sexualization of women, this research draws upon various theoretical frameworks from cultural studies, feminist theory, and representation studies. Cultural studies provide insights into how cultural artifacts such as films and music reflect and shape societal norms and values. Feminist theory offers critical perspectives on gender, power dynamics, and representation, emphasizing the importance of deconstructing patriarchal narratives and challenging oppressive structures. Media studies provide tools for analyzing the production, distribution, and reception of media texts, shedding light on the complex interplay between media, culture, and society.

By synthesizing these theoretical perspectives, this research aims to explore how Bollywood item songs have evolved over time, the cultural and social contexts that have influenced their production and reception, and the ways in which they contribute to the sexualization and objectification of women on screen.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-method approach to examine the evolution of women's portrayal in Bollywood item songs, integrating **Content Analysis**, **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**, and a **Focus Group Discussion**. Each method provided unique insights into the cinematic and cultural shifts over time.

Content Analysis

Content analysis was the primary method used to analyse the selected item songs in a systematic manner. Content analysis is a qualitative research technique that involves objectively and systematically evaluating visual and textual content to identify specific patterns or themes.

In this study, six item songs were chosen by stratified sampling, from different time periods, ranging from 1976 to 2023. The following songs were analysed:

- **"Mehbooba Mehbooba"** from *Sholay* (1976)

- **"Jawan-e-Jaaneman"** from *Namak Halal* (1982)

- **"Gup Chup Gup Chup"** from *Karan Arjun* (1995)

- **"Maiyaa Maiyaa"** from *Guru* (2007)

- **"Chikni Chameli"** from *Agneepath* (2012)

- **"Besharam Rang"** from *Pathan* (2023)

Each song was evaluated based on a set of parameters to provide a comparative analysis over the decades. These parameters include:

- **Platform**: Analyzing the release platforms of these songs (theaters, television, digital platforms) to understand their reach and cultural impact.

- **Length:** Examining the duration of the songs and whether longer sequences provided more elaborate storytelling or objectification.

- **Cast/Dancer:** Identifying the primary performers (female dancers), often leading actresses, and how their roles evolved from supporting entertainers to central, empowered figures.

- **Dance Form:** Analysing the choreography and its cultural references to assess whether the dance forms contribute to the sexualization or celebration of women.

- **Ambience & Costume:** These factors were crucial in reflecting how external elements like setting and attire either reinforce or subvert objectified tropes of women.

- **Demonstration through Lyrics:** Lyrics were analyzed to explore the role of verbal messaging in portraying women, whether it is sexualized, romanticized, or empowering.

- **Background Dancers & Camera Coverage:** How background dancers and camera angles emphasize or challenge the focus on women's bodies, providing clues on gender dynamics.

- **Closed-Up Shots & Male Gaze:** The presence of close-up shots, particularly on body parts, was examined as a direct indicator of the male gaze, a concept that objectifies women for male viewers.

- **Intentions through Gaze:** Assessing how women are portrayed through the gazes of male actors, reflecting power imbalances or female agency in the narrative.

This method allowed for a structured breakdown of the evolving themes and patterns in the portrayal of women in Bollywood item songs, giving insight into how different eras approached gender representation.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The second method, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), was applied to go beyond the surface of visual and lyrical content and delve into the underlying power structures and ideologies at play. CDA is a valuable tool in examining how media, including music videos, perpetuates or challenges societal norms.

Through CDA, I analyzed how the lyrics and imagery in these item songs reflect the changing gender discourse in India over the decades. This method was particularly useful for deconstructing the layers of meaning embedded in the lyrics and visual choices—whether women are portrayed as subjects with agency or mere objects for the male gaze. For example, analyzing songs like Mehbooba Mehbooba (1976) through this lens reveals how early item numbers objectified women for the pleasure of male viewers, whereas more recent songs like Besharam Rang (2023) display more complex narratives around female agency, despite retaining certain objectifying elements.

CDA helps explore whether these item songs reinforce or challenge the patriarchal ideologies in Indian cinema. It was crucial in identifying shifts in the representation of women from passive figures to active agents, as well as the role of Westernization and cultural shifts influencing these depictions.

Focus Group Discussion

To supplement the textual analysis, a focus group discussion was conducted with participants aged 16 to 25. Due to limited outreach, participants were primarily friends from my social circle, but they represented diverse academic backgrounds, including MBA, MBBS, Engineering, Literature, B. Pharm, and Media. The focus group aimed to explore the younger generation's perceptions of how Bollywood item songs have evolved and how the portrayal of women has changed over time. Participants were asked to watch two video songs, one from the 1982, "Jawan-e-Janemaan" and another from the 2010, Sheila ki Jawani. Then share their thoughts on themes such as objectification, representation of sexuality, and overall shifts in the industry's portrayal of women. This approach ensured a varied range of viewpoints, reflecting different disciplines and their intersection with media consumption.

The discussion was structured around questions such as:

- "How do you think item songs have evolved over time?"

- "What changes do you notice in the portrayal of women between the older and newer songs?"

- "Do you feel that these songs objectify women or give them more power?"

This method provided qualitative data on how young audiences interpret these songs today, allowing for a generational comparison of attitudes towards gender portrayal in Bollywood. The younger generation's feedback gave a contemporary viewpoint on the objectification and empowerment of women in cinema, highlighting the tensions between tradition and modernity. Their opinions shed light on whether the audience perceives a shift from passive objectification to more empowered portrayals or if the male gaze still dominates. By integrating the focus group discussion into the study, I was able to juxtapose academic analysis with real-world audience perspectives, offering a more well-rounded conclusion.

The combination of Qualitative Content Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Focus Group Discussion allows for a comprehensive exploration of Bollywood item songs across decades. While the content and discourse analyses provide a deep dive into the structural and ideological aspects of these songs, the focus group offers an audience-centered perspective, enriching the overall findings. This mixed-method approach captures both the historical evolution and the contemporary impact of gender representation in item songs, highlighting both progress and ongoing challenges.

Results

The content analysis of Bollywood item songs, spanning from 1976 to 2023, provides insights into the evolving portrayal of women and the dynamics of male gaze across these decades. As mentioned before, six iconic item songs were selected, and several aspects such as dance forms, costumes, ambience, lyrics, and camera focus were analysed. The findings are summarized below:

1. **Male Gaze and Intentions**: Across all videos, male gaze was present but varied in its intensity. In older songs like *Mehbooba Mehbooba* (1976) and *Gup Chup Gup Chup* (1995), the gaze was predominantly lustful, objectifying the female lead. The male characters looked down on the female dancer with disrespectful and sexual intentions. In more recent examples like *Besharam Rang* (2023), although the gaze remains sexualized, there is a shift toward portraying women as more in control of their

sexuality, especially in *Chikni Chameli* (2012), where the dancer exudes a sense of empowerment.

2. **Dance Form and Ambience**: The dance forms range from Cabaret in earlier videos like *Jawan-e-Jaaneman* (1982) to Marathi folk in *Chikni Chameli* and exotic mixes in *Besharam Rang*. The ambience also varies: village settings in earlier videos portray women entertaining male crowds, while modern videos like *Besharam Rang* are set in contemporary, liberated party environments. However, irrespective of the settings, the male attendees are often depicted as sexually objectifying the female dancer.

3. **Costume and Sexualization**: Costumes play a crucial role in emphasizing the sexualization of the female leads. Songs from earlier decades like *Mehbooba Mehbooba* and *Jawan-e-Jaaneman* show women in revealing, sequined attire, designed to enhance their curves and cleavage. This trend persists through the years, with modern songs like *Maiyaa Maiyaa* (2007) and *Besharam Rang* featuring plunging necklines, deep cuts, and form-fitting designs, with the intent to attract the gaze and objectify the dancer's body.

4. **Lyrics and Demonstration of Sexuality**: The lyrical content also demonstrates varying degrees of sexualization. In *Gup Chup Gup Chup*, playful lyrics are underlined by sexual innuendos, while in *Chikni Chameli*, the lyrics openly acknowledge and even celebrate the lead's sexual power. Songs like *Besharam Rang* takes it further, using provocative language that aligns with the contemporary image of women as sexually liberated yet still under the lens of the male gaze. The lyrics reflect society's evolving attitudes toward female sexuality. Earlier songs employed poetic metaphors to veil the sexual undertones, while contemporary songs like *Besharam Rang* adopt a more explicit approach, embracing a liberated, carefree attitude toward relationships and attraction.

5. **Camera Focus and Close-Ups**: Camera angles consistently focuses on the female body, with close-up shots of cleavage, hips, and other body parts to direct the audience's attention to her sexuality. Songs like *Mehbooba Mehbooba* and *Maiyaa Maiyaa* frequently use such close-ups, with an average focus time on the dancer's body of 20-40 seconds. While the camera focus in modern songs like *Besharam Rang* shows women in bikinis, it's noteworthy that the dancer's autonomy over her body is emphasized, marking a subtle shift in the portrayal of female characters.

6.   **Empowerment vs Objectification**: An intriguing trend observed in modern videos is the shift toward presenting women as both objectified and empowered. For instance, *Chikni Chameli* shows the lead dancer using her sexuality as a tool for empowerment in a male-dominated environment. Similarly, *Besharam Rang* presents the female lead as confident, free, and owning her desires, although the male gaze remains integral to the song's presentation.

And then results of the content analysis, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), reveal how language, visual representation, and symbolic codes in Bollywood item songs have shifted over the years. The older songs examined, such as "Jawaan-e-Janemann" from "Namak Halal" (1982), present women in a graceful and subtle light. The lyrics in these songs often narrate a story, and while the female characters are sensual, their expressions of femininity are more nuanced. The outfits, covers more of the body, and the choreography complements this by focusing on facial expressions, charm, and slow, deliberate movements. The camera work, notably, captures full-body shots with wider angles that include both the setting and the background, making the character a part of the larger narrative rather than the sole object of focus. The discourse here places women in a space where they retain agency, seducing with elegance rather than overt physicality.

However, in more modern item songs like "Chikni Chameli" from "Agneepath" (2012), there is a dramatic shift in discourse. These songs use bolder, more provocative language, with a focus on sexual appeal. The lyrics often revolve around themes of lust and desire, and the female characters are positioned as objects of male fantasy. The camera angles focus on body parts like the midriff, legs, or cleavage, zooming in to emphasize physical attributes rather than the character as a whole.

Costume choices also play a significant role in this shift—modern item songs feature skimpy, revealing outfits designed to accentuate the body, aligning with the choreography that is more suggestive and physical, relying on hip movements and sexualized dance styles like belly dancing or twerking. The symbolic codes of modern songs present women not as agents of desire but as the embodiment of it, reducing them to mere visual and sexual spectacles.

In terms of ideology, these modern item songs perpetuate a narrative where women's worth and power are tied to their ability to seduce through their physicality. This contrasts sharply with the older representations, where, while still engaging in performance, women maintained more agency and control over their sexuality, commanding attention through elegance rather than explicitness. This transformation in the discourse surrounding women

reflects broader societal changes in how femininity, agency, and sexuality are constructed in popular culture.

Whereas, if we shift to the focus group discussions, it must be noted that it highlighted a significant evolution in Bollywood item songs, but also offered varied perspectives. Most participants said that older item songs featured a classic, more graceful portrayal of women, focusing on their charm and elegance rather than overt sexualization. Women were seen wearing traditional attire, with restrained dance forms that had an element of storytelling. The camera work was broader, capturing full stages or performances, and not overly focused on the female body.

The atmosphere was respectful, and while sensuality existed, it was subtle and non-exploitative. Aditya Mazumdar a, a painter, for instance, noted that in older songs, women still demanded attention with grace and feminine energy, while Afra Khan, a student of Psychology, emphasized that the focus was more on expressions and subtlety rather than physicality. Anu Pookatill, a media student added that these older songs did not feel sexualized in any awkward or uncomfortable way, with both the dance moves and camera angles being more dignified.

However, some participants like Sornali Ganguly (literature student) and Adarsh Gaurav (MBBS) acknowledged that while the technology, camera quality, and choreography in modern songs have improved, the shift has also resulted in more bold and provocative representations of women. Modern item songs, as per Aditya and Aditi Mazumdar (MBA), embrace a more confident portrayal of femininity, with women expressing their sexuality through revealing costumes, seductive dance moves, and direct, often lustful lyrics. The focus has shifted from storytelling to spectacle, with more emphasis on body parts through zoomed-in camera angles, objectifying women as symbols of desire. Songs are now infused with sensuality, often showing women in a close-knit dance with men, creating a more suggestive atmosphere. Anu also pointed out that in contrast to older songs, modern songs like *Sheila Ki Jawani* are sexualized in every aspect, from dressing to lyrics, focusing more on the physicality of women.

Interestingly, a contrasting viewpoint came from Sonampi Dawn, a botanist, who argued that the new generation of item songs has become more vulgar, emphasizing objectification and sexuality over any form of storytelling or artistic expression. On the other hand, Tahir Shaikh (media student), while agreeing with the rise of boldness in modern songs, expressed that the focus on hip dance and reduced musical intros has made these songs more impactful and energetic, without necessarily needing to be explicit all the time. These varying perspectives

reflected how the portrayal of women in Bollywood has both modernized and, in some cases, crossed into more provocative territory.

Discussions

So, based on my research, the methods I employed, and the results I obtained, it seems evident that there has been a significant evolution in the portrayal of women in Bollywood item songs from 1976 to 2023. The analysis revealed a stark contrast between older songs, such as "Mehbooba Mehbooba" and "Jawaan-e-Jaaneman," and more contemporary tracks like "Besharam Rang" and "Chikni Chameli." In the earlier representations, women were depicted with grace and elegance, allowing for a nuanced exploration of their femininity. The male gaze was present but not overwhelmingly explicit, enabling female characters to maintain a sense of agency and autonomy within their narratives. The camera work focused on storytelling, showcasing women as multidimensional characters rather than reducing them to mere objects of desire.

However, the findings of my research also indicate a troubling shift toward the sexualization and objectification of women in modern item songs. The evolution in lyrical content, dance forms, and camera angles suggests that modern portrayals increasingly emphasize physical attributes, often sidelining narrative complexity. While songs like "Besharam Rang" and "Chikni Chameli" do provide a platform for women to express their sexuality, this empowerment often exists within a framework still heavily influenced by the male gaze. The juxtaposition of empowerment and objectification emerges as a dominant theme in these modern portrayals, reflecting broader societal changes regarding female sexuality and agency.

The focus group discussions further underscored these findings, revealing a range of opinions on the portrayal of women in item songs. Many participants expressed a nostalgia for the charm and elegance of older songs, emphasizing their ability to convey sensuality without overt exploitation. They noted that women in these earlier tracks were presented as complex characters, inviting deeper engagement from the audience. Conversely, some participants acknowledged the empowering aspects of modern portrayals, recognizing that contemporary item songs often celebrate women's confidence and sexuality in a way that resonates with today's audiences. This dichotomy reveals the ongoing tension within Bollywood, as it navigates the line between empowering representation and reductive objectification.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the content analysis and critical discourse analysis of Bollywood item songs from 1976 to 2023 reveal a significant evolution in the representation of women, mirroring societal changes in attitudes toward femininity, sexuality, and agency. Older item songs tend to embody a more respectful and elegant portrayal of women, allowing for emotional depth and a sense of agency. Conversely, contemporary item songs have embraced a bolder, more sexualized representation, often placing women in a position of objectification within a framework that is still under the influence of the male gaze. "This duality between empowerment and objectification reflects the complexities of modern femininity and media portrayal, highlighting the need for continued dialogue about the implications of such representations in popular culture. As the industry evolves, it remains crucial to navigate the balance between celebrating female sexuality and ensuring that such portrayals do not reduce women to mere objects of desire, thereby fostering a more nuanced and respectful representation in the future.

As Bollywood continues to shape public opinion, the industry holds significant power in influencing societal perceptions of gender. Future research could further examine how the evolving portrayal of women impacts the youth's understanding of empowerment and identity. Additionally, engaging with filmmakers to balance the fine line between artistic freedom and responsible representation could pave the way for more nuanced portrayals. By fostering positive change in these portrayals, Bollywood can contribute to a media landscape that champions respect, empowerment, and equality for all women.

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5. Negotiating Gender and Class: A Critical Analysis of Power Dynamics in the Film *Naach Ga Ghuma*

Neha Kulkarni, PhD Scholar, Somaiya Vidyavihar University, Mumbai

Abstract

This paper offers a comprehensive analysis of *Naach Ga Ghuma (2024)*, a Marathi film directed by Paresh Mokashi, focusing on its depiction of the intricate relationship between two women: Rani, a middle-class urban housewife, and Asha, her domestic worker. The film acts as a microcosm for broader societal tensions in metropolitan India, where the intersection of class, gender, and labor creates complex dynamics between women of different social strata.

The research delves into the emotional labor that domestic workers like Asha perform, which is often invisible but deeply embedded in the households they serve. It also examines the complexities of motherhood as portrayed in the film, revealing how Rani's privileged position grants her power over Asha, while Asha's vulnerable economic status limits her agency. Through key narrative events, such as the altercation that leads to Asha's dismissal, the film underscores the fragile boundary between personal and professional identities, and how these boundaries become further strained by the stark economic and social divide. The study emphasizes the moral, emotional, and financial hierarchies that shape the relationship between these two women, reflecting broader class dynamics in urban Indian households.

The paper concludes that *Naach Ga Ghuma* offers a nuanced critique of class disparities in urban life, challenging viewers to reflect on the power imbalances that underpin domestic work. The film calls attention to the often-exploitative relationships within middle-class homes, highlighting the need for empathy and social awareness in recognizing domestic labor as a critical, though undervalued, aspect of modern society.

Introduction

Marathi cinema has long established itself as a powerful medium that reflects and critiques societal norms, often holding a mirror up to the complexities of contemporary life. Known for its nuanced portrayal of inter-relationship dynamics and deep emotional undercurrents, it frequently delves into the raw and unfiltered aspects of human nature, particularly in times of adversity. Such films resonate with audiences not only because they entertain but also because they provoke thoughtful self-reflection.

This paper seeks to explore one such Marathi film, *Naach Ga Ghuma*, written and directed by Paresh Mokashi and produced by Swapnil Joshi under the banner of Hiranyagarbha Manoranjan (Wikipedia Contributors, 2024) which, although packaged as a humorous and light-hearted narrative, offers a deeper commentary on the everyday relationships we maintain with our domestic workers—relationships that are often fraught with both dependence and imbalance. Released in theatres on May 1, 2024—Labor Day in India—the film's timing underscores its emphasis on labor, especially the often-invisible labor of domestic workers. It was later released on Over the Top media platform of Amazon Prime.

At the heart of *Naach Ga Ghuma* is the relationship between Rani, an urban, middle-class working woman, and her maid, Asha, who works at a 12-hour shift. Rani, caught in the endless juggling act between her professional responsibilities and her duties at home, relies heavily on Asha's labor, highlighting a common dynamic in urban households. The film traces the evolution of their relationship, portraying both the humorous and occasionally tense moments that arise in their daily interactions (Wikipedia Contributors, 2024). Through the contrasting lives of these two women—one a homeowner managing her work and home, the other a domestic worker laboring for survival—the film explores not only the class divide but also the shared emotional burdens they carry.

While Rani and Asha come from markedly different socioeconomic backgrounds, the film unites them through a common struggle: the relentless balancing act of being a mother, wife, daughter-in-law, and, in Rani's case, a professional. In doing so, *Naach Ga Ghuma* raises larger questions about labor rights, gender roles, and the challenges of modern life. It compels the audience to reflect on the often-overlooked emotional and physical toll domestic work takes, not just on the maids but also on the women who employ them. Through its subtle yet powerful commentary, the film emerges as more than just a light-hearted comedy, offering instead a layered exploration of the invisible labor and intricate personal dynamics that define urban life today.

Background

The history of Marathi cinema is often traced back to 1932 with the production of *Ayodhyecha Raja*, the first Marathi talkie, marking the end of the silent film era in Maharashtra. Over the decades, Marathi films have represented a wide spectrum of political ideologies, from Marxism to Hindu nationalism, reflecting the diversity of thought among the filmmakers of the time. However, despite these varying political views, most filmmakers operated within a middle-class narrative framework, often delivering stories imbued with optimism and hope. (Kale, 1949). This tradition of capturing societal issues through relatable, everyday characters continues in contemporary Marathi cinema.

The Marathi film industry has long grappled with the tension between glamor and content. While advancements in technology have enhanced the production quality of films, creativity has often taken a backseat. Up until the 1960s, the Marathi film industry was marked by the entry of numerous filmmakers, though most operated with modest budgets due to the limited financial returns of the nascent industry. A pivotal moment occurred in 1952 with the release of *Sangte Aika*, a film that pioneered the genre of gramin (rural) cinema. By authentically portraying the rural lifestyle of Maharashtra, *Sangte Aika* resonated deeply with audiences and achieved remarkable commercial success, running for an unprecedented 135 weeks. Its popularity set a trend, inspiring many subsequent films centred on rural life. Additionally, Marathi cinema boasts a rich tradition of comedy, with the genre continuing to be a mainstay and one of the most beloved forms of entertainment even today (Deshpande, 2022).

A notable characteristic of contemporary Marathi cinema is its ability to blend entertainment with thought-provoking content. Filmmakers in this industry have increasingly ventured into exploring previously overlooked issues such as farmer suicides, student-related challenges, fundamentalism, and mental health. Unlike the Bollywood-influenced formula centred on 'song, dance, romance, and comedy', Marathi films have shifted their focus toward more socially relevant narratives. These films frequently draw their themes from everyday life, addressing concerns that resonate with a broad audience (Gokhale & Shirsat, n.d.). In *Naach Ga Ghuma,* the makers take a humorous yet reflective approach, focusing on the complexities of domestic labor and the socioeconomic divide within the middle class, while still maintaining a light, optimistic tone that invites both laughter and introspection.

Objective

This analysis offers a fresh perspective, diverging from the well-known narrative of the Indian 'culture of servitude', a mindset still prevalent among younger progressives. The figure of 'the

maid' is central to this examination, as she represents and bears the burden of class-based inequalities, illustrating the interconnectedness of concepts often viewed in isolation (Harju, 2017). In the Indian context, domestic work is a highly personalized and informal sector, where workers from economically disadvantaged backgrounds struggle to challenge their working conditions (Neetha, N. 2013).

The researcher explores the dichotomy between the labor class and the urban middle class as depicted in Mokashi's film. In doing so, he highlights several commonalities between the women, such as their shared struggle to arrive at work on time while navigating public transport, the reprimands they face from their employers when late, and their efforts to sustain personal passions while balancing work and home responsibilities. While both share a complex love-hate relationship, there exists an unspoken understanding between them, emerging from a dynamic of female companionship that resembles a mentor-like bond.

Portrayal of househelp in Indian cinema

The debate surrounding domestic labor gained significant attention in Western feminist academia during the 1960s and 1970s. Various feminist schools have interpreted the impact of domestic labor on women's emancipation and the transformation of gender roles in differing ways. A domestic worker refers to an individual employed either part-time or full-time in household services, receiving regular compensation, either in cash or in kind, over a specified period from their employer (Chandramouli, 2018).

The Indian cinema has often associated the character of a servant as a side character whose job is to uplift the doings of the lead actor. They will be portrayed as a sidekick who will have punches or do limericks of the employer to add humor to an otherwise serious concept of the movie. Be it Gangubai from the movie *Sansar (1987),* who provided comic relief to the otherwise melodramatic concept of a joint family tearing apart on account of the rife between the father and son; or *Lalloo Prasad* in crowd favorite *Hum Aapke Hain Koun (1994)* who has to support the lead character Prem in his efforts to woo the lead actress. The movie also touches upon the unsaid privilege and feeling of superiority faced by the employer where, the character of Bhagwanti demeans and insults Lalloo for extorting money from the employer in the name of medical treatment. Their portrayal of house-help or service caretakers has received a welcome change only recently, with films like *Jalsa (2022) or Is Love enough? Sir (2018)* where the character who portrays the role of house-help has an important role to play with the employer.

In Marathi cinema, house-helps were often considered given humorous roles like in the movie *Aayatya Gharat Gharoba (1991)* where the owners of the housework as house-help in their own home to test whether the guy his sister adores is worth for her. Researchers Niyathi R Krishna and P Sivakumar have argued that in India, the home has long served as a site of both economic and non-economic labor. Before colonization, primary occupations like agriculture, livestock management, and home-based production were household-centered, with men and women contributing through distinct gendered roles. However, with the rise of the capitalist economy, there emerged a sharper public–private divide, as economic labor shifted outside the domestic sphere. This change reinforced a more rigid gendered division of labor, where men's work became associated with the external world, while women were confined to domestic duties, primarily care work (Krishna & Sivakumar, 2024).

Following the economic liberalization of India in 1991, an increasing number of women began to pursue employment outside the home, stepping beyond traditional domestic roles. As a result, they sought assistance from other women to take on tasks traditionally deemed the responsibility of the 'lady of the house'. The women employed for these tasks predominantly came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, motivated by the need to contribute financially to their own households. This work primarily included cooking, washing dishes, laundering clothes, cleaning, childcare, and other household duties in the absence of the parents.

According to an estimate by the World Bank, approximately 90% of women employed in the informal sector are excluded from official statistics. Their work remains undocumented and is often classified as disguised wage labor, characterized by low pay, lack of skills, and absence of benefits for the workers (Singh, 2024). Since the 1990s, paid domestic work has become a significant sector of employment due to structural shifts in the economy. These changes have led to rising incomes for certain segments of the population while depriving vulnerable rural communities of opportunities.

As a result, there has been an increase in the feminisation of domestic work, with rural women migrants from marginalized backgrounds entering the households of the elite and middle class in large numbers to perform household tasks. This feminisation is complicated by the fact that many women turn to domestic work due to the unavailability or unsuitability of other jobs. For years, these women remained unrecognized, working in varied employment arrangements with distinct roles, largely invisible and unaccounted for (N, 2023).

The rise in domestic workers in India can be attributed to several factors, including the growing participation of women in the workforce, increased income and purchasing power among urban

populations, and the emergence of nuclear family units in urban areas. Currently, there are over 4 million domestic workers in India. The demand for domestic help in Indian cities has surged over time, particularly in the era of economic liberalization (Chandramouli, 2018).

Dichotomy of cultures

The title *Naach Ga Ghuma* is an ode to working women, symbolizing the internal conflict between their dreams and the daily demands of life. The title of the film takes reference from a popular Marathi song, with the lyrics *"My mind says to dance, but how can I dance?"* (Marathi Geet Tadka, 2024). The film's writer, Madhugandha Kulkarni, highlights how women, particularly working women, experience constant pressure to manage work, home, and personal life. This pressure, she explains, often leads them to neglect their own aspirations, and the title encapsulates this inner struggle (Maharashtra Times Correspondent, 2024).

The character of Asha embodies the perseverance and dignity of domestic laborers. Despite enduring physical abuse at home, her inner strength is reflected in her commitment to work. Contrasting this, Rani, a middle-class working woman, juggles the responsibilities of home and office. Rani is portrayed as both empathetic and demanding, often oscillating between moments of care for Asha and reinforcing the power imbalance inherent in their relationship. The evolving dynamic between Rani and Asha highlights the complex intersection of class, labor, and personal dependency. As the story unfolds, we witness how Rani's increasing recognition of Asha's significance in her life coincides with Asha's own growing sense of self-worth. This interrelationship exemplifies the broader socioeconomic divide between urban employers and their domestic workers, exposing the cultural and labor-driven disparities between the two classes.

The film begins by immersing the audience in Rani's fast-paced urban life, revealing the pressures she faces balancing her domestic responsibilities with her professional duties. From the start, Rani is preoccupied with her maid Asha's punctuality, as her own schedule hinges on Asha's ability to arrive on time. When Asha arrives late, Rani's frustration surfaces, and a verbal confrontation ensues. This moment encapsulates the employer's reliance on her domestic worker, while also exposing the worker's vulnerability to external circumstances beyond her control. Rani's complains that maids lack "work culture," hinting the class divide and the systemic expectations placed on domestic workers, who are often held to standards that do not account for their personal struggles, such as unreliable public transport.

Throughout the narrative, the recurring conflict over Asha's tardiness becomes a metaphor for the imbalance in power and privilege. Rani's ability to make excuses for her own lateness at work contrasts sharply with her inability to extend the same understanding to Asha. This double standard reinforces the societal structures that favor employers while marginalizing domestic workers. The film deftly captures how Rani's carefully constructed balance between her work and home life unravels in Asha's absence, revealing Rani's dependence on a support system that she routinely undervalues. This crisis in Rani's life, triggered by Asha's dismissal, serves as a reminder of the critical yet underappreciated role of domestic labor in urban households.

One of the pivotal moments in the film is when Rani defends Asha in front of the police during a robbery investigation. Rani vouches for Asha's integrity, stating that she trusts her completely. Her defense of Asha stems not from an intrinsic understanding of her integrity but from the fear of losing the domestic support that sustains her own lifestyle. The scene underscores the precarious position of domestic workers, who are frequently suspected and marginalized. It also reflects the broader societal dependency on domestic labor, wherein trust is established not purely on moral grounds but on the personal convenience and necessity that domestic help provides.

The stark class divide between Rani and Asha becomes even more evident in a scene where Rani visits Asha's home in the slums. Determined to convince Asha to participate in a Yog competition with her, Rani ventures into Asha's world, witnessing firsthand the challenges Asha faces. The scene portrays Asha's husband, who belittles her work as menial, reinforcing societal attitudes that diminish the value of domestic labor. Asha's husband's dismissal of her as a "slave" encapsulates the societal perception of domestic workers as subordinate, both within their homes and in the broader social structure. This moment further drives home the film's message about the exploitation and invisibility of domestic workers, and the limited recognition they receive for their labor.

As Rani experiences the daily struggles of commuting and navigating the public spaces that Asha traverses every day, the film attempts to bridge the gap between the two women's lives. Rani's journey from privilege to empathy is marked by her firsthand exposure to the hardships that Asha endures, illustrating the wider disconnect between employer and employee in domestic settings. The film questions the fairness of holding domestic workers to standards that do not reflect the harsh realities of their lives. It is a poignant commentary on how metropolitan societies often overlook the humanity of the very people who sustain them.

The climax of the film features a symbolic duet between Rani and Asha as they perform Yog poses together. This act represents a mutual reliance, requiring both women to trust and accommodate each other's physical limitations and strengths. The duet serves as a metaphor for the delicate balance that defines the employer-domestic worker relationship, where both parties depend on each other, albeit unequally. Without domestic help, Rani's professional and personal life would falter, and without the employment, Asha would lack financial stability. The film thus highlights the inextricable link between the two women's lives and underscores the broader theme of class dependency and labor inequity.

By the conclusion of the film, both characters come to acknowledge their interdependence. Rani openly expresses her gratitude for Asha's hard work, while Asha, in turn, appreciates Rani's support in helping her navigate life beyond domestic labor, such as opening a bank account or learning about insurance. This acknowledgment reflects the nuanced power dynamics that characterise domestic labor in urban households. As noted by scholars, domestic labor is unique in its blurring of personal and professional boundaries, creating a space where the employer often holds the upper hand, but personal rapport significantly influences the conditions of employment (N, 2023).

Domestic labor and the invisible economy

In their research titled "Work Conditions of Women Workers in the Unorganised Sector: A Review of Literature," Singh and Gupta (2016) conclude that women in the unorganized sector represent some of the most oppressed groups in society. These women endure challenging conditions with their families and children, often lacking adequate working and living standards. Common issues reported by women in this sector include gender discrimination, poor working environments, the burden of dual responsibilities, limited access to training and education, job insecurity, and health problems. Additionally, they typically possess minimal skills, training, and education relevant to the work they perform (Shubh Ashish Singh & Kumari, 2024).

In most states, domestic work is predominantly classified as unskilled labor, with minimum wages set significantly lower than those of other informal sector jobs. This raises a deeper issue: the lack of recognition of the skills involved in domestic labor, a perspective even reflected in state policies. This undervaluation is rooted in the nature of domestic work itself, which includes household chores and caregiving. The prevailing notion that domestic work is merely an extension of traditional household duties perpetuates the misconception that it

requires little to no specialized skill, thereby reinforcing its marginalization in the labor market (N, 2023).

For Asha, her daily commute is a challenge, requiring her to report to work at 7:30 a.m. after completing her responsibilities at home - in the slums. The film realistically portrays the struggles of working-class individuals in metropolitan cities, particularly the difficulties they face navigating public transportation and adhering to demanding schedules. Asha's personal background is also explored, revealing her struggles with an abusive husband who expects her to contribute financially while neglecting his parental responsibilities.

A study by Paul et al. (2011) further highlight the vulnerabilities of women in this sector. Job insecurity, susceptibility to illness, low wages, and various forms of exploitation, including sexual harassment—both at home and in the workplace—are pervasive issues faced by domestic workers. Despite these challenges, Asha is portrayed as a woman of integrity, remaining loyal to her employer, Rani. Even after enduring mistreatment, she returns to support Rani in her competition, demonstrating her resilience and commitment. Additionally, when Rani's daughter is stranded at school, it is Asha who steps in to collect her, reflecting the deep trust and reliance between the employer and domestic worker. This portrayal contrasts with the stereotypical depictions of maids in popular media, where they are often shown as vengeful, ill-tempered, and prone to gossip about their employers. In particular, the language typically associated with maids in films is often depicted as coarse, brash, and loud, reinforcing negative stereotypes. However, *Naach Ga Ghuma* subverts this narrative, portraying Asha as a compassionate and dependable figure, challenging conventional portrayals of domestic workers as resentful or spiteful when dismissed from their jobs.

Shared struggles and power dynamics

In *Naach Ga Ghuma*, the power dynamics between Rani, the urban middle-class woman, and Asha, the domestic worker from a less privileged background, are subtly reinforced through various interactions that highlight their respective social positions -

- ▪ *Economic dependency and power*: Rani, despite her moments of vulnerability, holds the economic power in the relationship. Her ability to dictate Asha's working hours, wages, and even her presence in the household reflects the employer's control over the domestic worker. Asha's financial dependence on Rani symbolises the broader social structure where wealthier individuals maintain power through economic means. Despite her economic power, Rani's reliance on Asha reveals her vulnerability and the

implicit acknowledgment that her life would be unmanageable without Asha's help. This dependency complicates the power dynamic, showing how Rani, in her upper-class position, is not entirely autonomous.

- ▪ **Personal vs. professional boundaries**: Although Asha is seen as essential for running Rani's household smoothly, their relationship is not of equals. Rani's need to juggle both her professional and personal life forces her to depend on Asha, but she still holds the upper hand as the employer. The blurring of personal and professional lines (such as Asha taking care of Rani's daughter) reinforces the hierarchy where Asha's personal contributions are undervalued, and she is expected to serve beyond her job description.

- ▪ **Control over labor and respect**: The film highlights how Rani occasionally undermines Asha's contributions by belittling her, throwing her out when she doesn't conform to expectations. This behaviour emphasizes the imbalance of respect and acknowledgment of the labor Asha provides. You could argue that Rani's ability to dismiss Asha when unsatisfied reinforces traditional class-based authority, reflecting the systemic issue of domestic work being undervalued.

A Tale of Two Mothers: Unequal Stakes in Motherhood:

In *Naach Ga Ghuma*, the film intricately weaves the theme of motherhood into the power dynamics between Rani and Asha, portraying two mothers who are both caught in the struggle to manage their domestic and professional lives. However, the emphasis on Rani's authority over Asha reinforces the class distinctions between them, even as they share similar maternal concerns.

The movie portrays an incident where Rani's daughter and husband are involved in a minor accident after Asha fails to arrive on time is a pivotal moment. Rani's immediate reaction—to throw Asha out of the house—demonstrates how her position of power allows her to act with anger and disregard for Asha's circumstances. From Rani's perspective, the well-being of her daughter takes precedence, and she holds Asha accountable without understanding the full situation. This emphasizes the privilege that Rani has, being able to act on impulse without questioning the domestic worker's personal struggles.

Asha, on the other hand, is dealing with her own maternal crisis—her son was injured by her abusive husband the previous night, leaving her to stay in the hospital. This event mirrors Rani's maternal worries, yet Asha does not have the same luxury to express her distress. Her role as both a mother and a domestic worker demands that she prioritise her job, even at the

expense of her personal life, thus highlighting the emotional and physical burden that working-class mothers face.

The scene presents a tale of two mothers, but it is Rani's narrative that takes precedence, reflecting the societal hierarchy that privileges the concerns of middle-class women over those of their domestic help. While both women face crises as mothers, the film subtly critiques how Rani's class position allows her to command power over Asha, whose struggles are invisible to her employer. Asha's situation, while equally fraught with emotional strain, is overshadowed by Rani's ability to enforce immediate consequences, further reinforcing the imbalance in their relationship.

This incident underscores the unequal stakes in their respective roles as mothers: Rani can afford to react with anger and exercise authority, while Asha, even in the face of personal tragedy, has no room for error. This imbalance serves as a poignant commentary on how class structures influence the experiences of motherhood, where the middle-class mother has the power to protect her family's needs at the expense of those who serve her.

Societal perceptions of female friendship across class lines

In the film, Rani's relationship with Asha is seen that of love and hate. In fact, her colleagues in her office often joke about the bond that they share – 'a teenager love story which has more break ups than love'. Interestingly, the men in the film also casually pass a remark saying – The saddest breakup is that of between a wife and her maid.

Scholars have argued that female friendships have largely been restricted to adolescence, and once they marry, family ties consume their complete focus. Kirin Narayan adds that married women do not enjoy the intimacy as other friends do (Pintchman, 2024). The film takes a complete turn on this subject as we see Rani having significant friends at her workplace with whom she shares her joys and sorrows. She has her set group of female colleagues with whom she shares the joys and anguish of her life- importance of a maid largely.

Parallel to this, she shares a friendship with Asha, confiding in her about life's ups and downs. Rani discusses Asha's struggles at home with her husband while Asha encourages Rani to learn driving. A caring Rani is also seen remembering to buy a cake for Asha for her son's birthday and giving her a gift like a compassionate friend. In a sense, placing women's friendships at the centre of social change is an act of resistance, and a validation of women's individual and collective power (Tummala-Narra, 2013). *Naach Ga Ghuma* urges its audience to reconsider

the classist assumptions that often underpin the treatment of domestic workers, thus engaging with a broader discourse on gender and class oppression in contemporary urban spaces.

Commentary on labor issues and modern life

In *Naach Ga Ghuma,* the film delivers a poignant commentary on the intersection of gendered labor, economic disparities, and the challenges faced by working women in modern urban India. The relationship between Rani, a middle-class professional woman, and Asha, her domestic worker, reflects the larger socioeconomic dynamics at play in households across urban India. Through their interactions, the film explores how domestic labor, often invisible and undervalued, is crucial for the functioning of middle-class households, yet the individuals performing this labor remain marginalized.

The film critically examines the Informal nature of domestic work, Ih, despite being essential, is often seen as unskilled and unworthy of formal recognition. Domestic workers often live and work in deplorable conditions, leaving them highly vulnerable to various forms of abuse. Prolonged mistreatment, abuse, and humiliation significantly harm their self-esteem, leading to feelings of inadequacy, powerlessness, and worthlessness (Chandramouli, 2018). Asha's struggles with her abusive husband, long working hours, and financial dependence are indicative of the precarious conditions faced by domestic workers, many of whom come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

In metropolitan cities, the numbers of domestic workers are increasing but their living conditions are precarious in the urban slums (Chandramouli, 2018). The film's portrayal highlights the vulnerabilities of women engaged in domestic work, where the lines between personal and professional boundaries are blurred, leading to exploitation and unequal treatment. Despite this, Asha's loyalty and resilience in navigating her personal and professional life reveal the dignity and strength often overlooked in discussions about labor rights.

On the other hand, Rani's reliance on Asha underscores the deep dependence middle-class women have on their domestic workers, without which they would struggle to manage their dual roles at work and home. However, even as Rani depends on Asha for support, the film shows how the former maintains control and authority, symbolizing the inherent power imbalance between employer and domestic worker.

By bringing to light the emotional and physical toll of both paid and unpaid labor, *Naach Ga Ghuma* contributes to ongoing conversations about gendered labor and the economic disparities that define urban life. The film critiques the normalization of exploitative conditions for domestic workers while also showing the shared struggles of working women across class lines, offering a nuanced exploration of labor rights and class dynamics in contemporary India.

The film's narrative aligns with broader societal concerns regarding the formal recognition of domestic labor. In urban India, domestic work ranks as the second-largest sector for female employment, highlighting the urgent need for cities to recognise and safeguard the rights of domestic workers. To enhance the working conditions for these urban domestic workers, various legislative measures are essential. The 2020 Labor Codes should include private homes as 'workplaces', extending legal coverage to domestic workers (Parizad Sirwalla, 2024). An inclusive, bottom-up consultative approach that engages domestic workers and their supporting non-governmental organizations is essential for developing urban policies that effectively address their needs. Collaborative initiatives involving government agencies, non-governmental organizations, labor unions, and private sector and civil society organizations can facilitate customized formalization and improved representation for domestic workers (Empowering Domestic Workers in Urban India, 2024).

Declaration of conflicting interests

As the author, I wish to clarify that there are no potential conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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6. Empowering Women in Sports: Analysing the Impact and Challenges of Female Coaches in Mumbai

Pranita Nimkar, Student, B.VOC (Sports & Entertainment Management),
Kishinchand Chellaram College, HSNC University, Mumbai

Anjuman Sharma, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Media
Kishinchand Chellaram College, HSNC University, Mumbai

Abstract

Despite the fast expansion of women's sport in Mumbai, women coaches are still largely underrepresented because of social stereotypes, limited access to professional training, and institutional limits within the sporting industry. In this study, the difficulties and possibilities of gender equality among coaching are examined based on structural and cultural constraints preventing women from working in leadership positions. It analyses the effect of female coaches on athlete development, welfare, and general sporting performance as well as gauging institutional attempts at encouraging gender equity among coaches. With a mixed-methods design, the study involves statistical analysis of online surveys, and qualitative interviews with coaches, athletes, and sports administrators. The results underscore how gender disparities in coaching influence the development and professionalization of women's sport. From analysis of data and interviews with coaches and athletes, the study draws attention to how gender imbalances affect women's sports development and assesses female leadership promotion efforts. The results indicate that expanding female coaches has the potential to improve participation, performance, and athlete safety. The results presents suggestions for policymakers and sports institutions to promote inclusivity and enable women in coaching positions.

Keywords: Female Coaches, Gender Equity, Women's Sports, Mumbai, Coaching Barriers, Athlete Development, Inclusivity in Sports, Sports Leadership

Introduction

Women's representation in sports is growing, but barriers to equal opportunities and leadership roles still persist. Notwithstanding the increased involvement of women in sport, female coaches are still very much underrepresented in Mumbai sports. This does not provide sufficient avenues for female players to get mentorship from their peers who appreciate their peculiar challenges. A survey conducted by the Simply Sport Foundation revealed that women occupy merely a third of the coaching and sports science posts throughout India and fewer than 1% as head coaches. In Mumbai, although top teams like the Mumbai Indians' Women's Premier League team have taken steps to recruit women coaches, grassroots and mid-level sports levels are still dominated by men. In addition, women players still experience gender discrimination and safety issues in coaching settings, as shown by studies in Mumbai sports academies and clubs. These differences reflect the need for an urgent examination of the hindrances to women assuming leadership in coaching and searching for possible resolutions to the accomplishment of gender balance in sports coaching.

Lack of females in coaching jobs adds to the problem, where male-dominated staff may not constantly be able to offer the type of support that women need to succeed and protect them from an unsafe environment. The aim of this research is to examine the challenges and prospects of female coaches in the sports system of Mumbai. The research seeks to investigate the obstacles facing women working as coaches, such as social stereotypes, being barred from training and resource utilization, and restricted working opportunities. In addition, the research aims to shed light on efforts that foster gender inclusivity in coaching and how women coaches can help develop women's sports. Through the identification of major challenges and opportunities, the research hopes to offer insights that can be used to inform policies and programs to facilitate the inclusion and development of women coaches in Mumbai.

Review of Literature

According to Kirtsen Rasmussen (2021), the field of sports has historically been considered a masculine realm that women were excluded from and is still identified as one of the most male dominated institutions in the United States; these patterns are even more prominent in some other parts of the world. As a result, while women are increasingly enjoying the health benefits of sports participation, gendered barriers that define sports and its benefits as the realm of men are still prominent. The world of sports therefore operates as an institution that teaches hegemonic masculine values to male athletes and reinforces a strict definition of masculinity and heterosexuality. Masculine hegemony refers to the "culturally idealized form

of masculine character", which includes a focus on competition, physical force, heterosexuality, and the subordination of women. This form of masculinity reinforces gender stereotypes, producing a narrow definition of "what it means to be a man," and what sort of masculine behaviour is acceptable. Individuals who do not embrace traditional masculine ideals may feel discouraged from participating in athletic activities due to this focus on hegemonic masculinity in sport.

Fasting (et. al) studies reveal that women in performance coaching stagnated or declined in numbers at the international level. Concerning sport participation, there exists a double standard in the way girls and boys are socialized into sport. As a result, sport has never played an important part in many women's lives. This is illustrated by data from different empirical studies that have been done in Norway during recent years.

Acosta and Carpenter (2012) discovered that in the United States, women make up only 20% of head coaches in college sports, with only 3% coaching men's teams. When reflecting on the growth of women's sports over the years, it is also important to realize that the number of schools offering women's sports has increased markedly. Thus, the real level of growth is not just from 2.5 to 8.73 teams per school, but 8.73 teams at many more schools, schools that didn't have any teams for women when Title IX was enacted 35 years ago. However, data from a number of other studies show that the number of males participating, both on the high school and college levels, has consistently increased over the years.

Increased participation in interscholastic as well and intercollegiate sport for both females and males continues to be the norm. The rate of increase varies, and the menu of sports being offered changes. Such changes have been taking place over decades, but the number of individual athletes participating, both males and females, continues to increase. The opportunity to gain from the sport experience is of value to all participants and we are happy to report that the number of females, and males, who participate is increasing

Demers (2009) and Donnelly & Kidd (2011) found that only 33% of women's teams are coached by women, with only 20% of university head coaches being women. Women and girls, who account for more than 50 percent of the population of Canada, continue to be underrepresented in the sport and physical activity system. Awareness about biomechanical and physiological considerations unique to women and girls has increased, providing a foundation to improve training methods and competition programs for athletes. However, large gaps persist in knowledge and practice relating to the psycho-social factors that influence women and girls as participants, athletes, coaches, officials, leaders or administrators. For all women and girls to live healthy lives and have the chance to make

meaningful contributions, a system of sport and physical activity must be established. Acknowledging the significance of treating individuals as opposed to equally. Programs and services for one group are frequently made available to another under the guise of "equality." On the other hand, "equity" calls for considering a target group's particular needs, interests, and experiences when creating, providing, and allocating resources.

Significant gender differences persist in participation and leadership in the Canadian sport and physical activity system. Women and girls typically report more barriers to sport and physical activity participation across the lifespan than men and boys, affecting their involvement as participants, athletes, coaches, officials and leaders (Tucker Centre, 2007; Werthner, Culver & Mercier, 2010).

In spite of these difficulties, attempts are being made to enhance gender balance in coaching. International studies indicate that professionalizing coaching by instituting formal employment policies, mentorship schemes, and flexible working conditions can close the gender gap (North et al., 2019). Adopting similar initiatives in Mumbai—policy-based programs to train and hire women coaches, establishing secure environments for women athletes, and providing leadership roles—can result in sustained development in women's sports.

These results complement UK Coaching (2019) statistics, which indicate a decline in female coaches from 46% in 2017 to 43% in 2019, with the majority of the women coaching only in schools and not in professional sports.

Research Methodology

The objective of this investigation is to ascertain the trials and challenges faced by women football coaches in Mumbai. The study highlights the significant challenges female coaches' face in Mumbai's sports industry, including gender biases, lack of opportunities, and limited access to resources The research investigates the impact of gender disparity amongst football athletes. The research utilizes a mixed-methods study design, merging qualitative and quantitative methods to study the challenges and opportunities for female coaches in the sports system in Mumbai. Using this mix of methods, we can have a proper analysis of the gender-based discrepancies and possible methods of improvement.

A qualitative strategy was used by conducting semi-structured interviews with female officials, sportswomen, and female coaches at different levels such as grassroots academies, school and college sports, and professional clubs. A quantitative strategy was also used through surveys among athletes to quantify their experiences in mentorship and coaching.

The survey instrument was specially developed to record qualitative views as well as statistical tendencies. Open questions were posed on gender bias, budgetary limits, and work challenges, whereas closed questions covered trends in the mentorship process, accessibility to coaching, and professional development. The survey instrument was pretested among a preliminary set of participants to make certain it was lucid and trustworthy prior to dissemination.

The researcher studied Primary Data obtained from semi-structured interviews with women coaches, sportswomen, and sports administrators and questionnaires among 18- to 30-year-old female athletes. Online quantitative survey collected from to 148 athletes aged 18 to 30, representing various sports disciplines. The responses were analysed to identify trends in female coaching participation

Limitations

This research focuses mainly on individual experiences of Mumbai-based female coaches, which do not necessarily hold true for experiences of women across geographical locations or sports categories. The research relies on qualitative evidence, which although rich in yielding personal perspectives may carry subjective preconceptions. A more encompassing study covering quantitative evidence with a larger number of participants can yield more representative results. Female Coaches are few in number and most are limited to big league teams. The researcher is limiting herself to only Mumbai based football teams due to time constraint.

Findings

There were 10 survey-based questions shared with respondents. All the respondents have multiple sporting experience and the results were collected from both genders to avoid bias.

1. Do you think female coaches are adequately represented in women's sports in Mumbai?
148 responses

Legend:
- Yes
- No

70.3%

29.7%
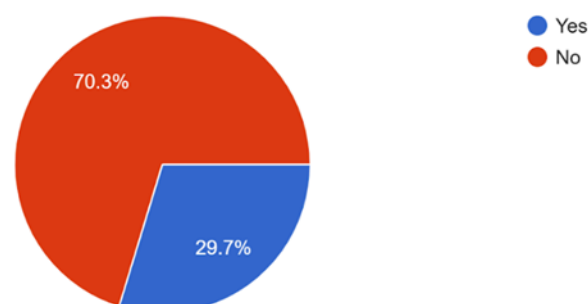
Representation of Female Coaches

The survey findings studies that 70.3% of the respondents are of the opinion that women coaches are not well represented in women's sports in Mumbai. A mere 29.7% are of the view that they are. This indicates a broad gender disparity in coaching positions indicating that women continue to encounter difficulties in penetrating and succeeding in coaching professions. The explanation for this under representation most likely involves restricted opportunities, entrenched gender prejudices and an absence of sponsorship and economic resources.

2. Have you personally experienced or observed positive changes in women's sports due to the presence of female coaches?

148 responses

- Yes
- No

24.3%

75.7%
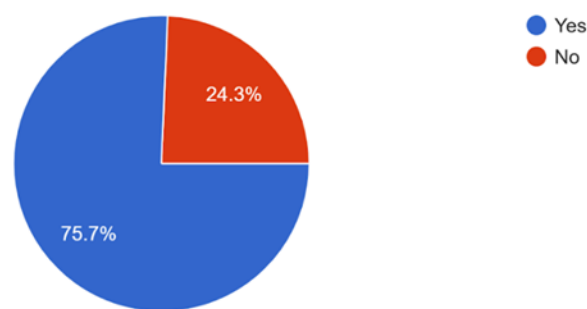
Impact of Female Coaches on Women's Sports in Mumbai

The survey findings reveal a high positive view of women coaches, as 75.7% of the respondents said they have witnessed or experienced personally favourable developments in women's sports with their presence. 24.3% did not see any appreciable effect. This overwhelming support highlights the significant impact female coaches have on women's sport. Several athletes and sport professionals know that female coaches introduce an alternative way of thinking, provide a more diverse environment, and tend to focus on the wellbeing and development of the players. Their coaching may make places safe for women athletes to be better understood, supported, and enabled to reach their best.

3. Are female coaches more likely to prioritise overall well-being of players in their teams?
148 responses

Yes
No

8.8%
91.2%
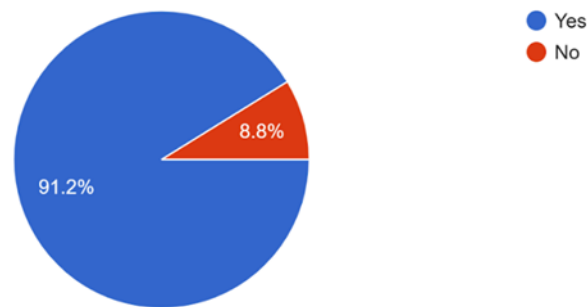
Prioritizing Athlete Well-being

An overwhelming 91.2% of the respondents feel that female coaches would be more likely to consider the overall mental health of players, with a mere 8.8% in disagreement. This broad consensus suggests that there is a perception that female coaches have a more holistic and player-oriented philosophy of coaching, focusing not only on performance but also mental, emotional, and physical health. Most women athletes prefer to talk about issues-like injuries, mental problems, or personal concerns, with female coaches, who are perceived as more friendly and understanding. This provides a supportive setting where players can excel without being stressed by performance demands alone.

4. Do you believe there is gender equity in the opportunities provided to female coaches in Sports?
148 responses

Yes
No

61.5%
38.5%
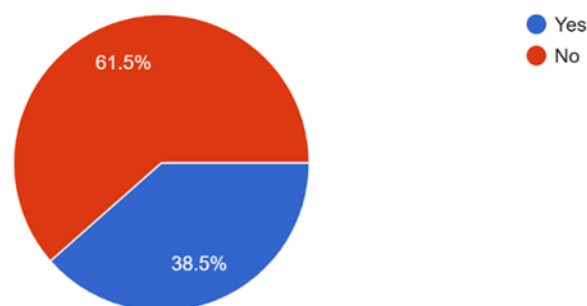
Gender Equity in Coaching

The findings of the survey show a wide gap in gender fairness in sports coaching—61.5% of the respondents feel that women coaches are not being given equal chances, whereas 38.5% think they are. This indicates that despite advancements in women's sports, women coaches are still being prevented from getting equal opportunities compared to men. The lack of gender equity may stem from discrimination in hiring, limited elite coaching positions,

91

restricted coaching advancement, and societal norms favouring males at leadership positions. Furthermore, difficulties such as lower compensation, employment insecurity, and pressures concerning work-life balance may make it even more difficult for women to seek long-term careers as coaches.

5. Have you noticed any gender-based differences in how male and female coaches are treated by players, staff, or management?
148 responses
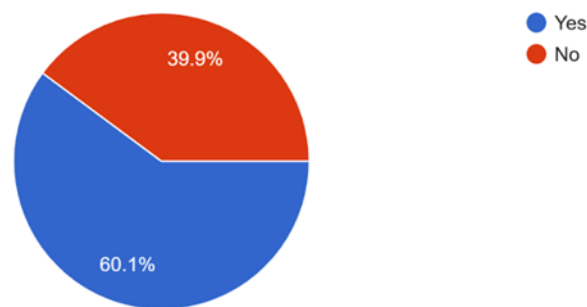
Gender-Based Treatment Differences

Almost 60.1% of the participants have experienced gender-based differences in how male and female coaches are treated by players, personnel, or administrators. 39.9% of them believe that there is no distinction. This signifies that gender discrimination still exists in the way the coaches are perceived and respected within the sports industry. Female coaches may be criticized more, must prove their credibility more often, or struggle to achieve the same authority and respect as men. Players may respond differently to male and female coaching, and management may overlook women coaches for leadership and decision-making roles.

6. Do female coaches inspire younger generations of women to engage with sports as a career?
148 responses
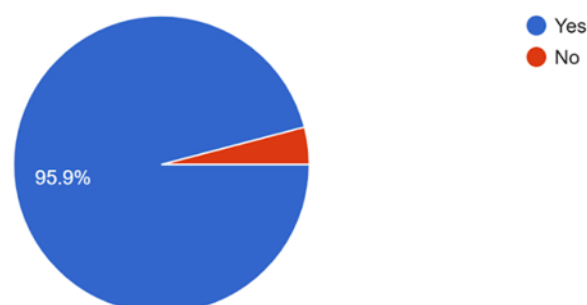
Inspiration for Future Generations:

A total of 95.9% of the participants are of the view that women coaches encourage future generations of women to make careers out of sports, whereas 4.1% disagree. This strong support is testimony to the influential position that woman coaches occupy as role models and mentors in the sport industry.

When young girls are exposed to women as leaders in sport, it helps reinforce the message that coaching, playing professionally, and being in the sports business are potential career options for them. Female coaches not only contribute their knowledge but also provide a positive and identifiable environment that promotes more young women to remain in sport long-term.

7. Do you feel that female coaches are underrepresented in top-tier leagues or teams?
148 responses
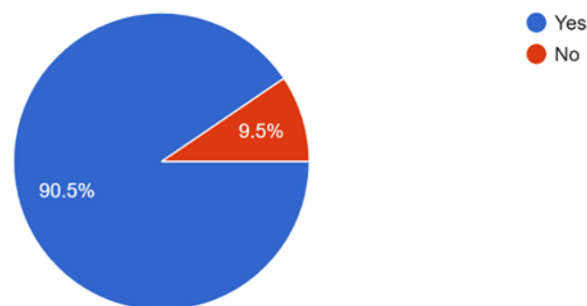
Underrepresentation in Top-Tier Leagues

A large majority, around 90.5%, think that women's coaching roles are not enough in the top leagues or teams, with just 9.5% going against this view. This substantial response signifies that despite progress in women's sports, women's coaches still face challenges in securing top coaching roles within Mumbai's demanding sports environment. Underrepresentation stems from systemic obstacles like gender bias in employment selection, restricted chances for ascending to helm positions, and male-centric inclinations in high-stake coaching appointments. Due to a lack of elite coaching access, many talented women remain at the lower tiers of contests, jeopardizing the advancement and influence on the progression of female athletics.

Gender Equity through More Female Coaches

The data clearly reflects that 92.6% of the respondents believe having more female coaches would help significantly in achieving gender equity in sports, while just 7.4% oppose. This data also illustrates how having more female participants would enable a more balanced approach to sports owing to the invaluable role female coaches would play.Having more female coaches enables greater representation and more leadership positions which helps in changing social constructs pertaining to gender and sports. These female coaches would help more women to break into an otherwise male domain as well as serves as a reminder to the sports structures to give all teams equal resources and support to help grow the sport, instead of solely focusing on the men's game.

8. Do you believe gender equity in sports can be achieved by increasing the number of female coaches?

148 responses

9. Should governing bodies implement quotas to ensure a minimum number of female coaches in teams and leagues?

148 responses

- Yes
- No

74.3%

25.7%
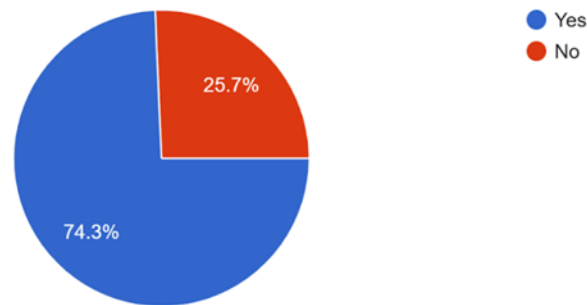
Support for Quotas

A considerable 74.3% of those polled agree that quotas should be applied to guarantee a minimum quota of female coaches across teams and leagues, but 25.7% disagree. This indicates that most feel intervention through policy is required to close the gender gap in coaching positions. Quotas can also provide immediate opportunities for women coaches, guaranteeing them a fair share at every level of competition. With the historical underrepresentation and systemic prejudices that have prevented women from being placed in high-profile coaching jobs, mandatory quotas could be used as a balancing measure to correct the imbalance. Nevertheless, others point out that merit and not quotas should be the principle of employment, stressing that female coaches need to be chosen for their competences and expertise instead of for achieving a goal. To compensate, quotas might be introduced alongside leadership training, mentorship schemes, and monetary support to develop and establish female coaches in their jobs.

10. Is financial support (such as scholarships or funding) important to encourage more women to pursue coaching certifications?

148 responses

- Yes
- No

94.6%
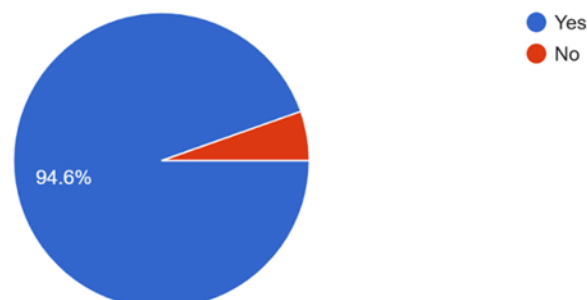
Financial Support for Women in Coaching

An overwhelming 94.6% of the respondents agree that funding—be it in the form of scholarships or grants—is essential to motivate more women to take up coaching certifications, while a mere 5.4% do not agree. This points towards the economic hurdles that discourage women from taking up and progressing in coaching professions.A career as a certified coach entails training, licensing, and ongoing learning, all of which are prohibitively expensive. Most female future coaches will lack the financial capabilities to meet the costs, let alone when there are no consistent sources of earnings or sponsorship deals. Furthermore, women working in sports receive low salaries and minimal job offers and thus will be less inclined towards investing in highly priced certifications. Offering financial assistance, government grants, and sponsorship schemes can eliminate these obstacles and make more women enter coaching positions. It would also enable a more diverse range of women—including those from disadvantaged backgrounds—to take up coaching as a viable career option.

Discussions

Through a set of online surveys, researcher sheds light on the challenges that female coaches are faced with in the sporting world, as well as the role they play in creating inclusivity and inspiring future generations. Even with increasing awareness of gender equality, women coaches still face issues of societal prejudice, poor mentorship, unequal access to resources, and limited leadership roles. Most of the survey respondents mentioned resistance from players, parents, and management, which made it more difficult for women coaches to gain authority and credibility. Moreover, management interference and stereotypical beliefs about women's ability to coach also impede their professional development.

The study also showed, however, the positive impact of female coaches, especially on young female athletes. Most young athletes feel more at ease and encouraged under the management of a female coach, perceiving them as role models who transcend gender stereotyping in sports. The poll also revealed that teams coached by women enjoy diversified coaching approaches, improved communication, and comprehensive athlete development. In order to enhance women's representation, the research recommends an increase access to coaching certifications by providing subsidies, scholarships, or financial assistance for women seeking coaching certifications.

Providing sole certification programs and workshops for female coaches to improve mentorship and networking opportunities. The survey also highlights the need to implement

mentorship schemes matching aspiring female coaches with seasoned professionals. Organizing local and national networking forums for women in coaching to share information and support each other to ensure equal access to facilities and resources. By implementing these recommendations, Mumbai's sports ecosystem can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for female coaches, leading to greater gender diversity and improved opportunities in the industry.

Conclusion

The findings and observations in this study underline the pressing need for transformational change within the realm of sports coaching. Female coaches, despite their potential and contributions, continue to face numerous systemic barriers stemming from gender disparities, cultural biases, and lack of institutional support. The challenges presented herein emphasize the importance of expanding research to evaluate the sustained impact of female coaches on team cohesion, player performance, and gender diversity in football, while also examining similar dynamics across varying cultural and competitive landscapes.

Future research and interventions, such as mentorship initiatives, scholarships, and targeted policy reforms, are pivotal to addressing these issues. Such actions not only serve to increase the representation of women in coaching but also create environments where their presence fosters greater innovation, inclusivity, and equity within sports. By shining a light on the necessity of gender equity in coaching, this study calls for robust policy reforms, cultural evolution, and institutional frameworks that collectively support the empowerment of women.

Ultimately, fostering gender equity in coaching transcends the realm of sports—it is a step toward building a more equitable society. Creating pathways that prioritize talent, passion, and merit over gender can inspire a new generation of athletes and coaches who champion diversity and inclusion, ensuring that the future of sports is as dynamic and inclusive as the players and leaders within it. This evolution not only empowers women but also strengthens the fabric of sport and society.

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7. The Sound of Change: An Investigation into the Role of Commentary for the Promotion of Gender Equality in India through World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE)

Sagar Karande, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Media
Kishinchand Chellaram College, HSNC University, Mumbai

Dr. Saranya Thaloor, Associate Professor, Department of Mass Media
SK Somaiya College, Somaiya Vidyavihar University, Mumbai

Abstract

Commentary is crucial in influencing viewer perceptions and interpretations of sports and entertainment content. This study analyzes the influence of localized commentary on WWE's (World Wrestling Entertainment) women's wrestling matches aired in India, emphasizing the way commentators portray female wrestlers and their narratives. This research examines whether localized commentary in Hindi and English during significant women's matches maintains or contests established gender stereotypes by assessing the vocabulary, tone, and topics employed. The study examines if commentary highlights themes of empowerment, equality, and resilience, therefore contributing to wider discussions on gender equality in India. This research employs a qualitative content analysis approach using 5 female championship matches to emphasize the influence of localized media on cultural attitudes and provides insights on how WWE's commentary might be utilized to advance gender equality in a culturally pertinent way. The results highlight the significance of media representation in promoting social change and offer suggestions for cultivating inclusive narratives in sports entertainment.

Keywords: WWE, Gender, Commentary, Representation, Language

Introduction

According to Stuart Hall (1997), a cultural theorist; representation is the mechanism by which meaning is generated and communicated among individuals within a culture. This can be accomplished through the utilization of language, symbols, and images that signify or represent objects. He examined three distinct methodologies for the depiction of language. The Intentional Approach examines the speaker, the author who imparts their distinctive meaning to the world via their use of language. The words convey a meaning intended by the

author. Hall asserts that humans cannot be the singular individual or a distinctive source of meanings in languages. The fundamental nature of language is communication, reliant on linguistic rules and shared codes. Language functions as a social system, necessitating that our personal intended meanings conform to its codes, conventions, and regulations for effective sharing and comprehension. Consequently, our inner thoughts must engage with alternative interpretations of words or images that are encoded in language, ultimately influencing our actions within the linguistic system.

Throughout history, the representation of women in media has been the subject of critical analysis, as researchers have sought to understand the impact of these representations on societal perceptions of gender roles and equality. World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) has emerged as a significant cultural entity in recent years, serving as both a platform for sports entertainment and a platform for challenging and redefining traditional gender stereotypes. The "Women's Revolution" in WWE, which was launched in the mid-2010s, represented a significant shift in the organization's approach to women's wrestling. This revolution elevated female athletes from marginalized positions to main-event prominence. WWE has become an intriguing case study for the examination of the convergence of media, athletics, and social transformation, as this transition has occurred in conjunction with a global dialogue on gender equality.

The interpretation and engagement of viewers with women's wrestling are substantially influenced by the localization of content, particularly through commentary, in India, where WWE has a substantial and devoted fan base. Commentary, as a narrating mechanism, contextualizes the significance of the performers and their narratives while elucidating the action in the ring. Localized commentary in Hindi and English for Indian audiences serves as a cultural conduit, customizing global narratives to accommodate local sensibilities. The extent to which this criticism either confirms or challenges established gender stereotypes has not been adequately investigated. The purpose of this study is to address this gap by investigating the impact of localized commentary on the perceptions of gender equality that are conveyed through WWE's women's wrestling matches that are broadcast in India.

Review of Literature

Robles (2019), studied the differences between men and women seen in social practices that have been culturally constructed as part of our society. She saw that masculinity and femininity had clearly defined and differentiated characteristics. The masculine figure needed to be strong, aggressive and egotistical while the feminine figure was considered fragile, weak and quiet. Society is based on social norms; each individual is consequently expected to

act according to their gender or they may be subject to stigmas and/or inequality. She looks at sports such as athletics, martial arts and wrestling itself, traits that are considered 'masculine' are mixed in with the 'femininity' that is assigned, in this case, to the female figure. A contradiction appears here because, if a woman presents herself in a 'feminine' way, she will not be accepted due to the lack of attributes required to participate in the sport, thus being sexually objectified or discriminated on the lines of gender stereotypes.

However, if she decides to project more 'masculine' characteristics that are demanded in a sporting context like toughness and strength, she will be considered too 'masculine' and will also be stigmatized because of her corporal and aesthetic expression. This image is being transformed by athletes seeking 'balance' in terms of their image, trying thus, to move away from 'hegemonic femininity' without completely abandoning it, thereby seeking a balance between 'feminine' and less 'feminine' characteristics. Consequently, not conforming to the idea of 'hegemonic femininity' when appearing in the ring may be useful in breaking down barriers and transforming the image associated with female wrestlers: Generally, women who appear heterosexually feminine are privileged over women perceived as masculine. However, in less traditional sport settings, females are resisting, challenging, and transforming expectations of hegemonic femininity.

Those unacquainted with World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) may perceive it as peculiar due to its incorporation of pyrotechnics, music, personas, and engaging commentators. Conversely, professional wrestling mostly revolves around captivating narrative construction. The motifs of good versus evil, viewed through the lens of masculinity, are often evident in these narratives, which draw upon ancient folktales of love, betrayal, justice, and greed. Wrestling is sometimes described as a "male soap opera" because of its focus on masculinity and its use of serialized drama that progresses from one episode to the next. The televised wrestling narratives depict virtue as embodying attributes such as honor, freedom, patriotism, and chivalry, whereas evil is characterized by deficiencies in fortitude, narcissism, rebelliousness, and roughness. Enthusiastic speeches, interviews, disputes in the locker room, humiliations, recaps of recent bouts, and dynamic ring announcers who present the matches all add to the creation of these intricate narratives. (Smith 2014)

The WWE Ruthless Aggression Era, spanning from the late 1980s to the early 2000s, transformed the representation of women in the industry. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, WWE women primarily served as valets or decorative figures, with little opportunity to compete in the ring. Narratives emphasizing beauty or romance rather than athletics in brief contests. Sable and Chyna transcended boundaries during the late 1990s Attitude Era.

Sable emerged as a mainstream phenomenon characterized by her allure and personality, whilst Chyna secured the Intercontinental Championship by competing against male opponents. This period emphasized sexualized content, such as bra-and-panty matches and objectification, rather than wrestling.

The period of Ruthless Aggression (2002–2005) marked a pivotal transition. Trish Stratus and Lita spearheaded WWE's promotion of female athletes. Their 2004 Raw main-event battle demonstrated that women could attract audiences without relying on sexualized gimmicks, instead highlighting their technical proficiency and narrative ability. Stratus achieved the title of Women's Champion seven times, while Lita's aerial techniques revolutionized women's wrestling. Notwithstanding these advancements, the division remained underdeveloped relative to the men's roster, characterized by diminished screen time and fewer opportunities for female wrestlers. The transitional phase harmonized growth with stereotypes and established the foundation for the Women's Revolution. From the late 1980s until 2005, the women's revolution transformed WWE from objectification to an emphasis on female athleticism, with Stratus and Lita paving the way for future generations. The division could only attain its full potential following the Ruthless Aggression Era.

In early 2015, the hashtag #GiveDivasaChance gained traction on Twitter as fans advocated for increased visibility of contemporary female wrestlers. The trend accelerated as advocates emphasized the skill, charisma, and commitment of female wrestlers sometimes marginalized in favor of male-centric narratives. This grassroots campaign compelled wrestling companies to reevaluate their strategies and signified a pivotal moment in the business, resulting in enhanced possibilities for women to headline significant events and demonstrate their skills on par with their male counterparts. The hashtag became a symbol of empowerment and a catalyst for change, demonstrating that fan voices could effect significant improvement in the realm of sports entertainment. (Laprade & Murphy, 2017)

Research Methodology

The objective of this investigation is to ascertain whether the language, tone, and subjects employed by commentators promote empowerment and equality or exacerbate existing preconceived notions. The research investigates the way commentary contextualizes the accomplishments and challenges of female wrestlers, thereby making their narratives more relatable to Indian viewers. Using representation theory, this emphasizes the potential of sports entertainment to act as a catalyst for social change, particularly in a country where gender equality is a significant issue.

This research is noteworthy for its emphasis on the occasionally overlooked role of commentary in media portrayal. The auditory dimension of women's wrestling has not received sufficient scholarly attention, particularly in localized contexts, despite the significant emphasis on the visual and performative components. By emphasizing commentary analysis, this investigation offers a distinctive perspective on the impact of media on cultural perspectives and its involvement in broader discourses regarding gender equality. It contributes to our understanding of WWE's cultural impact and provides media professionals with practical advice for promoting inclusive and impactful narratives.

This study analyzes WWE's commentary of women's wrestling in Hindi qualitatively. The aim of the study is to look how commentators' vocabulary, tone, and topics affect gender equality perceptions.

The researcher shall study 5 WWE women's matches in 2025 that have been broadcasted on Netflix since WWE have moved to a digital area which will lay a groundwork to the process. Cultural differences will be reflected in Hindi and English commentary tracks. The researcher shall study the commentary based on the various codes assigned by the commentators on the female characters during matches. Themes reveal how commentary portrays female wrestlers and their stories. The study shall focus on whether criticism supports or challenges gender norms.

Limitations

Color and play by play are not clearly defined in the Hindi commentary unlike English commentary owning to television exposure. The researcher is limiting himself to only 5 matches due to time constraints.

Findings

There were 5 matches taken since January 6th, 2025.All the matches were taken from the WWE's flagship show, WWE RAW.

Case Study 1: Rhea Ripley vs Liv Morgan (WWE Women's Championship: January 7th, 2025

Both the female superstars in their respective roles are presented as worthy champions where Liv who portrays as the heel or the villain is shown to be a dominant champion despite her size against the challenger in English commentary. The long term storytelling focusses on betrayal and redemption. The commentators emphasize on the story and discuss the characters from the point of view of their stories.

The Hindi commentary presents a lot of excitement and entertainment and aims to include humor to add to the character storytelling. The strength of rhea as a dominant character is accurate and accomplishes the character outline. The use of a male valet changes the perspective of looking at characters from a one-dimensional masculine feminine perspective to a more gender neutral outline. There are certain moments where the use of certain moves are complimented with hindi words such as dardnaak backstabber, khoobsurat suplexes thereby maintaining the character strengths. Added elements of humor are used such as calling Liv's Morgan's suplexes so impressive that she should have been the bahu of the wrestler who perfected it.

Case study 2: Bayley vs Nia Jax (January 20th, 2025)

A brief history is provided in the english commentary looking at the past records the athletes hold to form an outline of the match. A lot of focus is built up on Bayley's record performances and Nia's victories over her builds up the momentum and the strategies are explained during the process.

On the Hindi side of the commentary, the past year's performance of Bayley is mentioned however there is a disconnect when going back to past records. The hunger to challenge for the championship is explained. The history of Nia is explained with words using *gusse mein pagal* when she lost her championship. *Unhone abhi abhi swaad chaka hai* and *bhook and talap* are used to signify championship hunger of Nia Jax. Her use of one move of strength is referred to as *sapno ko bhiker dena* (crushing of dreams). Heavy use of idioms are used although they equally balance out a match.

Case study 3: Raquel Rodrigues vs Roxanne Perez (February 18th, 2025)

Roxanne Perez's records are mentioned to create the significance of the character. A lot of focus is put into her accolades. However, on the Hindi commentary, the match does not focus on the English structure and rather focuses on the David vs Goliath approach and Roxanne's height being a challenge. The commentary picks up the pace with her every move and focuses on the in-ring action all the time. Very few idioms are used, one specifically being 'Gayi bhains paani mein' when she fails to topple Raquel. There are no stereotypical mentions made by the Hindi commentators thereby providing a different take from the one in English with them building a character with the in-ring action.

Case study 4: Lyra Valkyria vs Dakota Kai (Intercontinental Championship: February 25th, 2025)

A lot of emphasis is provided on the strengths and the core strength of the characters. The story is kept simple with the moves of the players forming a major chunk of the commentary outline.

The Hindi commentary teams use certain ways to keep the Hindi audiences entertained by using words like *teen tigada kaam bigada* to explain the strategy of the match. The intercontinental championship is clearly explained by providing the meaning and the women's journey in the match. In one instance, one of the move is called as *avishkaari* pronouncing excitement. The body impacts are expressed by saying *sangharsh, dus guna zyada* for the championship.

Case study 5: Liv Morgan and Raquel Rodrigues vs Io Sky and Dakota Kai

The English commentary mostly focuses on the athleticism of the women in the tag team match. The commentary team outlines the group dynamism and the output of the match. This is looked upon from strictly a wrestling match. Women play a dominant part in showcasing toughness which is clearly mentioned when Liv Morgan accidentally hurts herself and bleeds in the match.

In the Hindi commentary, it is equally as dominant as the english commentary in terms of in ring action. All the women are portrayed in a dominant fashion highlighting their in ring abilities. They are consistent in their overall representation of females.

Discussions

The research showed that Hindi commentary often makes use of culturally particular metaphors and idioms, which enrich the stories of female wrestlers by making them more relatable and emotive. For example, Hindi expressions were employed to place the challenges and triumphs of female wrestlers in the larger context of social transformation. Not only does this improve the matches, but it also connects the wrestlers' personal narratives to broader concepts of strength and perseverance. The English commentator, on the other hand, stuck to a more objective and technical style, highlighting the matches' athleticism and strategy. This method does not perpetuate preconceptions, but it is not as engaging or culturally relevant as Hindi commentary. The commentary in Hindi and English focused on equality and resilience, although in different ways. The in-ring technical skills are the main focus of the Hindi commentary, which builds upon the levels given by the English commentator. However, the English commentators paid more attention to the technical elements of the matches, including

how the wrestlers executed their maneuvers and how athletic they were. Although this method further establishes women's wrestling as a legitimate sport, it fails to directly relate the contests to larger social concerns.

When it came to making international stories more relatable to Indian consumers, Hindi commentary really shone. The experiences of female wrestlers became more relevant and effective by using cultural references and idioms. For example, describing American-origin wrestlers to a Hindi-speaking audience using phrases like yah tu bahu ho sakti thi brought a touch of humor while preserving the seriousness of the maneuvers. Although the English commentary was well-crafted and expert, it failed to incorporate cultural adaptation, leading to a story that was more accessible to a wider audience but failed to evoke strong emotions. Given that Hindi commentary closely follows English commentary while simultaneously creating an environment where the emphasis is on the abilities of numerous women from diverse countries and cultures, the results imply that Hindi commentary actively challenges established gender standards. It reimagines women's wrestling as a vehicle for self-determination by highlighting the tenacity, determination, and positive influence of the sport's female competitors.

Although English commentary refrains from promoting prejudice, it also fails to dispel preconceptions. While technical aspects and athleticism are crucial, they do not have the same impact in changing cultural views about gender roles. The research shows that localized commentary could make a difference in society. Not only does Hindi commentary provide entertainment, but it also teaches and motivates by using women's wrestling as a symbol for larger social concerns. That fits well with representation theory, which states that the media have the power to influence public opinion by presenting counter-narratives to the dominant narratives. The importance of commentary in fostering inclusive narratives is crucial in the Indian context, where gender equality is being witnessed to be evolving across all domains of sports and entertainment.

Conclusion

The impact of localized commentary on viewers' views of gender equality in WWE women's wrestling matches in India is emphasized in this research. Findings from the study's analysis of Hindi and English commentary show that the former does a better job of crafting culturally relevant storylines that give female wrestlers more prominence. Hindi commentary elevates the entertainment value and connects the wrestlers' stories to themes of empowerment, resilience, and societal change using idioms, humor, and cultural references. Elements of relatability and emotional depth, such as phrases enhance the narratives' effect for Indian

viewers. English commentary, on the other hand, sticks to a more objective and technical style, with an emphasis on tactics and athleticism while maintaining the consistency of storytelling.

However, the English commentary can't compare to Hindi commentary in terms of cultural and emotional connection. Representation theory is crucial to study the ways in which media can impact cultural attitudes, as the results show. Hindi commentary, irrespective of cultural or national origins, aggressively combats conventional gender roles by highlighting the resiliency, power, and approaching female wrestlers in terms of their abilities and performance. As a result, discussions around gender equality in India are being reframed through the lens of women's wrestling in WWE as a means of empowerment. Localized commentary is a potent channel for social transformation, as the study shows, not just an entertainment tool.

Paradubbing international stories into Hindi allows commentators to connect sports enjoyment with real-world issues. This is especially important in India, where the portrayal of gender roles in the media greatly influences how the public views these roles. The importance of commentary in fostering inclusive narratives will be paramount as WWE keeps growing its online presence. Actionable insights are offered by the findings for media practitioners. Enhancing the influence of women's wrestling and contributing to greater societal change can be achieved by incorporating culturally relevant narratives and emphasizing themes of empowerment. Expanding the analysis to cover a wider sample of matches and investigating audience perceptions could be potential directions for future research on the impact of commentary on spectator sentiments. Ultimately, this study highlights how sports entertainment may have a positive impact on society, particularly using localized commentary, which can help promote inclusivity and gender equality.

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8. Ritwik Ghatak's *Meghe Dhaka Tara (The Cloud-Capped Star):* A Comprehensive Analysis from a Feminist Perspective

Ananya Behera, Writer and Independent Researcher

Abstract

This conceptual essay revisits the classic Indian New Wave film 'Meghe Dhaka Tara' (The Cloud-Capped Star), directed by the seminal Bengali filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak, through a feminist lens to explore the nuanced portrayal of female identity, aspirations, and societal constraints in a post-partition India. The film, released in 1960, is often celebrated for its artistic achievements and poignant narrative, yet its representation of the female protagonist holds untapped potential for further exploration in a feminist discourse. This study examines the protagonist, Neeta, as a symbol of self-sacrifice and resilience in a patriarchal society, highlighting her struggle against familial obligations and socio-economic hardships. By analyzing key scenes and dialogues, the paper discusses how Ghatak's work critiques traditional gender roles while simultaneously discussing associated characters and their personal arcs comprehensively. Additionally, the research situates the film within the broader context of feminist theory, considering intersections of the subjects of gender disparity, personal relations, cultural structure and the collective of womanhood. Through this multidimensional analysis, the paper aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on women's representation in cinema and the feminist implications of the director's film narratives on the eve of the centenary year of Ritwik Ghatak's birth. Thus, the article advocates for a deeper understanding of feminism in cinema as a critical lens for deconstructing the lives of generations of Indian women.

Keywords: Indian Cinema, Feminism, Film Analysis, Screen Media, Ritwik Ghatak, *Meghe Dhaka Tara.*

Meghe Dhaka Tara. **Source**: MUBI (all images used for reference only)

Characterization of Women in the Indian New Wave Cinema

The 1960s Indian New Wave embarked on a monumental era in the history of cinema that introduced us to avant-garde visuality and cinematic ideologies beyond the periphery of the conventional, primarily led by pioneering Bengali filmmakers like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, and Tapan Sinha (Bhattacharya, 2024). However, one of the salient attributes of the Indian New Wave's vision was the crafting of plots around female protagonists beyond supporting roles - the introduction of a feminist perspective in Indian cinema. The feminist perspective in films denotes the unwavering dedication of a woman to establish a distinct identity with an interesting conundrum of 'balancing yet reaching beyond' the societal relations that she is defined within the conventional society. The counter cinema of feminism expresses the world through the eyes of a female character while discussing her various pursuits to bridge the gender disparity that she experiences in her story - exploration of identity, sexuality, and inner monologue; recognizing her potential to become 'independent' intellectually, economically and socially; and an eventual journey to overcome the hurdles in a patriarchal society to achieve the desired outcome of an independent identity and thus, representing the collective pursuit of modern womanhood (Dartmouth Libraries, 2024).

Bengali cinema can be considered a prime contributor to establishing the criticality and distinctly curating the discourse of feminist films in Indian cinema; the native film industry of West Bengal adorns a history of over a century. Among the many filmmakers who have meticulously painted the distinctly recognizable storytelling and narration style of Indian films in global perception, the name of 'Ritwik Ghatak' echoes as a filmmaker whose vision

110

refined the on-screen depiction of realism, feminism, and the crass consequences of partition in the 20th century. *Meghe Dhaka Tara* is considered the magnum opus film of Ghatak's career as it embarks on the start of his Partition Trilogy, followed by the films *Komal Gandhar* (1961), and *Subarnarekha* (1965) (Arttective, 2021).

On a traditional note, films with the characterization of women as protagonists generally lean on a portrayal that is glorified beyond any ordinary human's capacity - an emblem of selflessness, with a perfect balance of maternal instincts and valiance. Many on-screen works with 'feminist leads' paint stories of the intellectual yet self-sacrificing protagonists against all odds of life, who manage to accomplish all their ambitions while simultaneously aiding the ambitions of their close ones. Unfortunately, the happiness of this female archetype is far from the truth in this twisted society. The classic Bengali-language film *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), which translates to 'a star obscured by clouds', is a compelling piece by one of the pioneers of Bengali cinema tells the story of a feminist female character *Neeta* whose intelligence and kindness nurture the ones around her but her endless sacrifices eventually suck the dreams out of her existence.

Storyline of the Film: The Roots of Neeta

The film takes place in the aftermath of the Partition of Bengal in 1947, where Neeta's family of Bengali refugees is trying to survive in Calcutta against the complexities of their recent social upheaval and an unstable economy. Interestingly, the film's grave storyline and narration contrast with the poetic texture of its cinematography, also accompanied by the serene ambiance of Rabindra-sangeet (Rabindranath Tagore's music) inspired soundtracks and sound design (Arttective, 2021). The visuality of this film is akin to a moving painting, thanks to its scenes' composition that constantly highlights the characters in the foreground against the scenes' background, with a unique positioning to conduct specific visual messages. Such technique helps to provide a distinct aesthetic value to Neeta's story, not adhering to a strictly realistic perspective, but from the sentiments and rose-colored perception of Neeta (Martin, 2013).

Neeta's introduction scene. **Source**: Film at Lincoln Center

The opening scene introduces us to the protagonist Neeta walking towards her home in the soft sunlight of a fresh morning, against the backdrop of an enormous tree that provides shade to an expansive area of land beneath it. The first scene itself introduces us to the symbolism of Neeta's presence as rooted support to the ones around her, as she is the primary breadwinner of her family of six including her parents and three dependent siblings. This sequence also introduces us to her elder brother, Shankar, who is an undiscovered yet ingenious musician who is completely dependent on the kindness of her sister. Shankar, under the symbolic shade of the enormous tree, is lost in his *Riyaaz* (musical practice), as Neeta passes by him and faintly smiles at him, indicating that she is the only one in the family to support his artistry without humiliating him for not earning money. The juxtaposition of subjects in this scene creates a rare poetic symphony on-screen without the use of any opulent technique, effectively hinting at the importance of her relationship with her brother as the only consistently positive relationship she will ever have with a character in her story.

The unique juxtaposition of the subjects Neeta and Shankar. **Source**: Film at Lincoln Center

Hidden Metaphors in Neeta's Life Representing the Collective of Womanhood

The surroundings of Neeta depict a humble state of living as the refugees are trying to survive amidst the hard times. Neeta's father is a teacher who loves quoting English poet John Keats's lines in his regular life and is devoted to art, literature, and theater to the extent of being careless about his money. The only one who follows in his footsteps in terms of education is Neeta as she pursues a Master's Degree degree and also tutors children for two shifts a day. Her usual routine involves teaching children and studying, where we can interestingly note that several young women like Neeta play the part of teachers to local refugee children. This insinuates a state of new-found empowerment for women like Neeta during the times of partition, through imparting education and at the same time becoming a financial pillar to sustain their families, but at a strenuous cost.

In the initial sequence, we come across a metaphorical scene where Neeta's sandals tear apart and her father complains as to why she is not buying a new pair. She calmly insists that she wants to fulfill the demands of her siblings first and then she will buy herself a new pair of sandals, as she proceeds to walk. This scene will play a strong motif to insinuate the trajectory of Neeta's life and many like her.

Neeta as an independent working woman. **Source**: Film at Lincoln Center

The cloud-capped star - Neeta

(the obscured star in the clouds is metaphorical to the obscurity of Neeta's identity and her talents against her dire circumstances in the film)

"When we first met, I didn't really see you. I thought you were quite ordinary. Now I can see you are a cloud-capped star veiled by circumstance, your brilliance dimmed by a clouded sky."

(*Meghe Dhaka Tara,* 1960)

These are the phrases from the love letter that Neeta received and is teased for by her brother Shankar. A former student of her father with an excellent scope in science research, Sanat courts Neeta and sends her letters. Along with supporting her family, Neeta also supports Sanat's regular expenses as he prepares to pursue a Doctoral program through a scholarship. This blooming relationship threatens Neeta's mother with the possibility of losing the only source of survival of her family to marriage. An excellent technique by Ghatak to hint at the brimming anxiousness of the mother is by incorporating the sound of boiling food in the background. The consistent accompaniment of the violent boiling sound hints at her mother's discomfort with the prospects of her daughter's marriage. Neeta's oblivion to her surroundings' true intentions and conditioning of self-sacrifice categorizes her as a 'hopeless optimist' whose personal prospects are at risk, even though she has been depicted as a 'metaphorical mother' and superior in capabilities and temperament compared to the people around her. The entanglement of Neeta with the needs and diabolical temperament of her family members and the society transcends her own character arc; Ghatak's tragic protagonist reflects the lives of a collective of women in the post-partition era of India and further insinuates for generations of women.

Neeta supporting her brother Shankar

The Role of Male Characters in the Course of Neeta's Character Arc

The two characters who truly see the light in Neeta are her father and older brother Shankar. Her relationship with Shankar can be considered the primary relationship in the film, as Shankar is the one who recognizes her strength and also her childlike innocence veiled in her maturity, induced by her circumstances. A core memory that both of them share as kids is that of a strenuous climb to a hilltop to witness sunrise. Her brother and her father are the male characters that signify the potential for becoming the conduits of feminist perspective and empowerment in Neeta's narrative. Thus, Neeta yearns for such an authentic and rejuvenating experience with her father and brother and searches for that only moment of solace in her adult life, but alas she finds that moment later in the film in a tragic manner.

The family reads a letter informing Mantu's accident

Source: Boloji

In the second half of the film, the weight of struggles intensified on Neeta with a series of misfortunes, the first as paralysis of her father, and the second as an accident of her younger brother Mantu while working at a factory. The lack of income for the sustenance of her family led her to drop out of her studies and opt for an office job in the city. On the other hand, Sanat was losing his patience while trying for PhD and looking forward to marriage

with Neeta. But, Neeta suggests he wait due to her burden of responsibilities, as she expresses that 'the one who truly loves her will wait for her'.

Neeta, sister Geeta, and Sanat. **Source:** Boloji

A tragedy strikes upon Neeta as she discovers that Sanat and her younger sister Geeta are getting married, with his aspirations of research in science laying cold for a high-paying corporate job. Further, her only emotional support, Shankar leaves home to pursue his career as a musician in Bombay, also warning of her sacrifices amounting to nothing against the selfishness of other family members. All this agony starts Neeta's descent into madness. Towards the finale of the film, Neeta completely secluded herself in a corner of the house as her health deteriorated. She discovers that she is suffering from tuberculosis but decides to hide her disease from everyone so as to not cause concern. A realization starts dawning upon her as she expresses to Sanat, "I never protested the wrongs done to me. That's my sin. I shouldn't have been so ordinary."

Neeta's painful realization **Source**: Boloji

Two Opposing Sides of Womanhood: A Regressive Mother & a Progressive Daughter

The relationship between Neeta and her mother is representative of a significant attribute of Neeta's storyline. Neeta's mother contrasts her in many aspects, as she is defied by poverty, stagnant in beliefs, judgemental, and tends to self-victimize (portraying the narrative of an anti-feminist), in contrast to her daughter's calm, intellectual, and independent demeanor. As it can be observed from one of the initial sequences, the mother complains about Neeta's dark skin as a constraint to her marriage and eventual happiness to the father, but he shuts her down seeing the worth in Neeta's education and a clear sense of conviction. Her young sister Geeta is portrayed as the fairer one of the sisters and her character's value in the film is solely placed on the privilege of her beauty, as her introduction in the film occurs through her admiring her reflection in the mirror.

Geeta's vanity and disinterest in sharing crucial responsibilities are condoned by her mother, whereas Neeta's maturity and grounded demeanor are taken for granted. This negative relationship costs Neeta her peace and unfortunately makes her a victim of the exploitation of her conservative mother as she perceives her daughter as the 'selfless sole breadwinner' that she does not want to let go of. Her father's passive stance in the situation worsens the impact of her mother's decisions for her, which makes her father die in guilt. As he soullessly states in one of the later sequences,

118

"People used to marry a daughter off to a dying man. They were barbarians."

"But now we are educated and civilized. So, we educate her to wring her dry and destroy her future!"

(*Meghe Dhaka Tara,* 1960)

The Final Play of Neeta's Story: The Tragedy

You'll see the hills at last

Shankar tries to rescue Neeta from her misery. Source: Let's Talk About Bollywood

Finally, Shankar returns home as a successful musician who starts getting treated quite respectfully in his neighborhood, representing a stark contrast in human behavior due to the element of fame. Mother and Geeta start making demands from the newly wealthy Shankar, but Neeta calmly waits in her room for him. Shankar eventually discovers his sister's illness and is heartbroken.

In the end, Neeta fulfills her dream of going to the hilltop again as she did as a kid, but the cause this time was to be admitted to a sanatorium in the Shillong Hills rather than a sunrise. Shankar narrates to her the now-fulfilled lives of other family members to make her happy, as she is the reason they survived. But, she starts screaming frantically as she utters her last words on the hills, "Brother, I want to survive." The camera pans back to Shankar, but now in their own neighborhood, as the main motif scene arrives where Shankar observes a woman,

metaphorically 'another Neeta', who accidentally tears her sandal apart while walking and alas continues to go on.
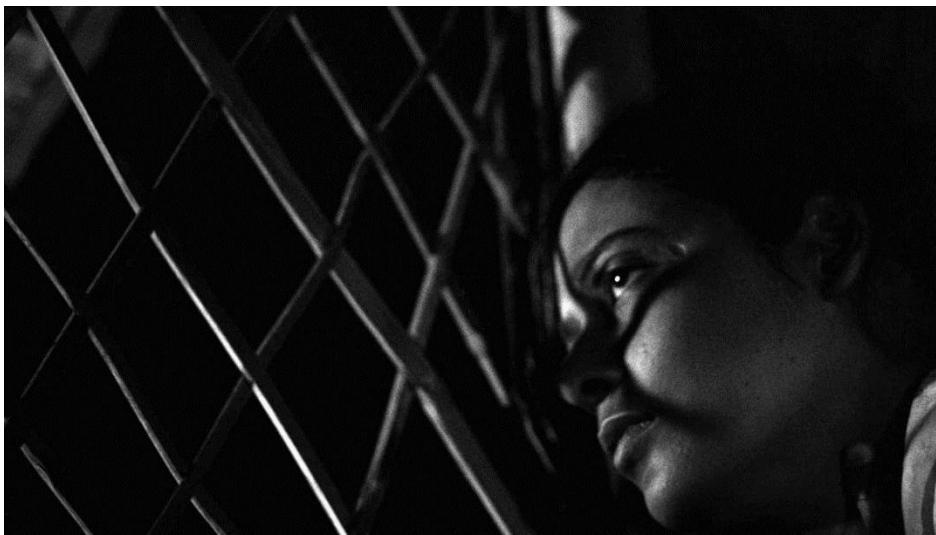
Neeta in a sanatorium at the end. Source: Film at Lincoln Center, and Bright Wall/Dark Room

"Then make a glass case and place me inside like a wax doll."

(*Meghe Dhaka Tara,* 1960)

This signature dialogue by Neeta defines her identity and ideologies as a character. Her conviction and unconditional love for her family defined her firm sense of responsibility, as she saw a pristine dream of being fulfilled along with her loved ones. Unfortunately, the self-empowered Neeta met her tragedy at the hands of humans who saw her as a great nurturing goddess, but less than a human. This cinematic tale by Ritwik Ghatak is alas a story that remains relevant beyond generations, depicting the tragic lives of many feminist women whose souls are crushed, time and again, by a patriarchal society.

100 Years of the Revolutionary Ritwik Ghatak and his Timeless Film

A 2007 Indian Stamp Dedicated to Ritwik Ghatak. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Ritwik Ghatak was a multi-hyphenated artist with finesse in conducting sentimental storytelling with a purpose. His acclaimed creation, *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, transcended beyond a drama film but a poignant social-economic and gender commentary on how far the sacrifice of a woman can take society yet shorten her life and aspirations. The centenary year of Ghatak's birth serves as a recall of the societal and gender issues that he insinuated 64 years prior on-screen through *Meghe Dhaka Tara,* however, the story of Neeta unfortunately doesn't appear of the past (Bhattacharya, 2024). Neeta's story, the tragedy of a feminist in the patriarchy of a post-partition society, is quintessential in the feminist discourse in Indian cinema due to its multi-layered characterizations, accuracy in portrayal of social and familial delicacies and strong defiance of commercial dramatization. Thus, the timeless feminist film, 'The Cloud-Capped Star', crafted by Ritwik Ghatak remains timeless, as its somber colors deny to fade in relevancy amidst the transforming dunes of time.

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9. Mise-en-scene and Character Transformation in the film 777 Charlie: A cinematic Analysis

Varnica Sharma, Research Scholar, Doon University

Abstract

The study of character development in the film 777 Charlie examines the substantial role of Mise-en-scène in the protagonist's transformation. This study analyses the impact of Mise-en-scène on main character development through Harymawan's three-dimensional character theory, Bordwell and Thompson's cinematic theory, and Lajos Egri's character change theory. The qualitative descriptive analysis examines the significant transformations of the protagonist, particularly evaluating how the visual and environmental elements of the film either reinforce or contest these changes. The study examines whether the Mise-en-scène effectively emphasizes the transformation of the protagonist's character from a reclusive, antagonist-like individual to an emotionally invested, protagonist-like figure with the introduction of Charlie, the dog, in his life. The data gathering method include content analysis of the film, with critical scenes examined to elucidate the function of Mise-en-scène in depicting the protagonist's internal metamorphosis.

Keywords: 777 Charlie, Main Character, Mise-en-scene, Character Change

Introduction

777 Charlie is a 2022 Indian Kannada film directed by Kiranraj K, with Rakshit Shetty in the lead role of Dharma, accompanied by a dog named Charlie. The film was awarded the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Kannada in 2023. The film portrays the deep connection between a man and a stray dog, emphasizing themes of compassion, nurturing, and the transformative power of human-animal connections

The protagonist, Dharma, is an isolated, emotionally detached individual leading a life lacking significance or connection. His life is disrupted upon meeting Charlie, a stray dog characterized by a playful and friendly disposition. Ultimately, this improbable connection serves as the impetus for Dharma's emotional and ethical metamorphosis.

The film examines issues of solitude, camaraderie, and healing via the relationship between Dharma and Charlie. Dharma's journey in the film can be comprehended not alone through his actions or conversation but also through the mise-en-scène, a cinematic term denoting all visual components within the frame. This study analyzes three-dimensional main character the evolution of Dharma through an examination of physiological, sociological, and psychological changes occurring before and after his interaction with Charlie (Harymawan, 1988), complemented by a mise-en-scène analysis that elucidates these transitions. This method provides a comprehensive understanding of characters' traits and motivations.

Main Character, according to Gill, is figures who hold an important role, dominant and high intensity in each conflict that builds a story, and they will also usually be complex and fully developed (Gill, 1995). The study suggests that Mise-en-scène is crucial in illustrating the character's development, reinforcing the process of Dharma-driven transformation as the protagonist experiences a profound emotional and moral transition, aided by the relationship with the dog Charlie (Oliver Chandra Kurniawan, 2023).

Mis-en-secene; the disposition of the scene, camera movement and placement and editing-directors could shape the anonymous material chosen by the studios, creating their original works of art (Pezzota, 2010)

Theoretical Framework

The Cinematic Theory of Bordwell and Thompson
Bordwell and Thompson underscore the significance of visual aspects in transmitting narrative meaning. Their theory posits that the mise-en-scène in cinema influences the psychological growth of characters by changing the viewer's impression of their environment.

Most basically, our visual system is attuned to perceiving change, both in time and space. Our eyes and brains are better suited for noticing differences than for concentrating on uniform, prolonged stimuli. Thus, aspects of mise-en-scene will attract our attention by means of changes in light, shape, movement, and other aspects of the image (Thompson, 2000).

 In 777 Charlie, the backdrop, lighting, and scene composition serve as visual metaphors for the protagonist's emotional and psychological condition, harmonizing the exterior surroundings with the character's internal conflicts.

Theory of Character Transformation by Lajos Egri

Egri's thesis posits that character development arises from conflict, necessitating decisions that signify inward alteration. ″Growth″ is a character's reaction to a conflict in which he is involved. A character can grow through making the correct move, as well as the incorrect one-but he must grow, if he is a real character. (Egiri, 1972)

In 777 Charlie, the protagonist transforms from a solitary, antagonistic figure to an emotionally engaged and caring individual, shaped by the tension between their previous solitude and the bond formed with Charlie. The introduction of the dog serves as a catalyst for transformation, with the protagonist's responses to their surroundings becoming pivotal to their moral and emotional development.

The Three-Dimensional Character Theory of Harymawan

Harymawan's thesis asserts that personalities are dynamic entities that develop across three dimensions: psychological, sociological, and physiological. The study initiates by evaluating the protagonist's metamorphosis through Harymawan's three-dimensional framework, which scrutinizes the psychological, sociological, and physiological dimensions of character development. The research examines how the protagonist's internal and exterior experiences facilitate his overall metamorphosis throughout the film by analyzing these variables.

Research methods

This study used a qualitative descriptive analytic method to examine the correlation between Mise-en-scène and character development in the film 777 Charlie.
Primary Data: The film 777 Charlie serves as the primary data source. Scenes were meticulously examined to discern essential visual and environmental factors that facilitate the protagonist's metamorphosis.

Secondary Data: Academic literature about character development theory, cinema analysis, and Mise-en-scène was examined to substantiate the theoretical framework and deepen the comprehension of the impact of visual aspects on character arcs.

The study concluded by summarizing the principal findings and providing insights into how 777 Charlie adeptly employs cinematic techniques to portray the protagonist's metamorphosis in a subtle and visually captivating manner. The conclusion also addresses the broader implications of how mise-en-scène can function as a crucial instrument in character development within cinematic storylines.

Analysis

Main Character in 777 Charlie:

a) Physiological Dimension

Physiological changes denote the physical modifications or conditions experienced by the protagonist during the film. Dharma's transformation is apparent in both his look and the actual surroundings in which he is situated.
Prior to Charlie- Dharma presents with a dishevelled beard, untidy hair, and tattered clothing. His appearance symbolizes his internal state of carelessness and apathy towards himself. The setting of Dharma is bleak and dreary, marked by disorganized and dimly illuminated areas. This indicates his declining health and emotional condition. The lighting employed in his images is frequently dim and frigid, highlighting his alone and physical disregard.

After Charlie - As Dharma's relationship with Charlie develops, he enhances his grooming habits, and his attire becomes more organized and intentional. His physical appearance progressively evolves into a more self-aware and healthy iteration.
The settings he occupies, including his residence and the outdoor areas he shares with Charlie, are more luminous, lively, and expansive, mirroring his revitalized sense of energy. The lighting shifts to warmer hues, particularly in sequences featuring Charlie, symbolizing the warmth and healing he imparts to Dharma's life.

Sociological Transformations

Sociological changes denote the alterations in Dharma's interactions with society, encompassing family, friends, and his overall engagement with the surrounding world.
Prior to Charlie- Dharma is alienated from society. He eschews social connections, displaying no care for people and favouring solitude. Dharma's garments are drab and tattered, representing his disconnection from societal conventions. His residence is equally secluded, detached from the surrounding social environment. Dharma is frequently depicted in alone, separated from others, with empty space accentuating his social isolation.

Subsequent to Charlie:

Charlie's presence alters Dharma's social dynamics. Dharma continues to confide in Charlie and, consequently, starts to reestablish connections with others. He becomes increasingly empathic and emotionally accessible.
Dharma's costume becomes more vibrant and reflective of his newfound openness. The environments transition from dim, enclosed areas to more expansive and dynamic places.

Scenes between Dharma and Charlie frequently have more balanced compositions, illustrating Dharma's assimilation into his environment and his readiness to interact with others.

Psychological Transformations

The psychological changes pertain to the emotional and cognitive evolution of the protagonist, particularly with Dharma's perception of the world and himself following his encounter with Charlie.

Prior to Charlie:

Dharma's facial expressions are frequently devoid of emotion or reflect fatigue. His posture is hunched, signifying despondency and a feeling of failure. The camera often isolates Dharma, utilizing close-ups that reflect his mental conflicts and emotional suppression.
The sound design is modest, including sparse, sad music. This illustrates Dharma's emotional disconnection and absence of optimism.

Subsequent to Charlie:

Dharma's facial expressions transition from sorrow to elation. He becomes increasingly engaged, his posture straightens, and his body language conveys involvement and affection. The cinematography features numerous broad shots depicting Dharma in various settings, frequently alongside Charlie. This illustrates his psychological transition from imprisonment to liberation.
The music and sound design transition from minimalism to more upbeat tones. Charlie's presence is frequently accentuated by natural noises and uplifting tunes, signifying Dharma's psychological restoration.

Physiological	Sociological	Psychological
Male, adult age	Middle class, but isolated and withdrawn.	Negative, rude and lonely
Masculine	Orphaned	Initially detached, cynical, and emotionally closed off.
Wears a typical casual outfit, scruffy hair, unhygienic and a beard indicating a rough, troubled life.	Not good relations with anyone in his society and surroundings	Nightmares dreams,
Physically healthy but emotionally worn down.	Works a monotonous job, lacks personal fulfillment.	Struggling with depression, grief, and trauma from the death of a loved one.
Expressive, showcasing the turmoil and sadness of his life.	Limited connections, with most relationships either non-existent or strained.	Often temperamental due to unresolved pain, but becomes more stable through the relationship with Charlie.
	Disillusioned, with a pessimistic perspective on life before meeting Charlie.	Withdrawn, but develops more compassion and warmth after connecting with the dog Charlie.
Wears a typical casual outfit, scruffy hair, and a beard indicating a rough, troubled life.	Doesn't want to interact or make relationship with anyone	Introverted, emotionally distant,

Table 1: Three-dimensional Character of Dharma

Main Character Transformation analyzing the role of Mise-en-scene

Prior to Charlie's Entrance into Dharma's Existence

At the outset of 777 Charlie, Dharma is a reclusive and emotionally detached character. He resides in solitude, estranged from society, and sustains a grim and secluded life. The mise-en-scène in these initial images conveys emotional devastation through a frigid and unwelcoming color palette, characterized by subdued tones and stark lighting frequently prevailing in the frame. The environment, generally dim and minimalistic, highlights Dharma's inner conflict and isolation. The room arrangement is dismal and disorderly. Even the portrait of Charlie Chaplin on the wall appears melancholic.

The camera often captures Dharma in broad angles, isolating him within his surroundings, highlighting his sense of isolation. His contacts with others are limited, and the absence of warmth in his personal environment and relationships underscores his incapacity to emotionally engage with his surroundings. The mise-en-scène establishes the context for Dharma's eventual metamorphosis, depicting a figure profoundly immersed in sorrow and emotional detachment.

128

Subsequent to Charlie's Entry into Dharma's Existence

The emergence of Charlie, the stray canine, signifies a pivotal moment in Dharma's existence. Charlie's presence promptly alters the emotional landscape, with the Mise-en-scène visually reflecting this transition that parallels Dharma's evolution.

The color pallet commences its transition. Warm hues, including gentle yellows and browns, supplant the previous cool tones, representing the warmth that Charlie introduces into Dharma's existence. The lighting gets softer and more natural, symbolizing the opening of Dharma's heart to companionship and emotional connection. As Charlie increasingly integrates into Dharma's life, the composition of shots alters, frequently positioning Dharma nearer to the camera, indicating his escalating emotional involvement and the diminishing of his physical and emotional separation. The portrait of Charlie Chaplin on the wall is suddenly smiling.

The environment that Dharma occupies become increasingly welcoming. The bare, desolate surroundings that previously characterized his existence now incorporate more personal elements, such as Charlie's toys and alcohol in the refrigerator, replacing the milk.

 This alteration in the Mise-en-scène visually emphasizes the emotional connection developing between Dharma and the dog. The dog's playful demeanour motivates Dharma to assume responsibility, convey affection, and progressively reconnect with his surroundings. These visual indicators show Dharma's psychological development and his burgeoning moral obligation to another sentient entity.

Following Charlie's Demise Charlie's death signifies the culmination of Dharma's change. This sad incident compels Dharma to confront the emotional intensity of his bond with the dog and catalyzes a deeper moral and emotional awakening. The mise-en-scène in these sequences is dark and introspective, graphically depicting Dharma's loss and the irrevocable transformation of his character.

The color palette transitions to subdued, bleak hues—grays and light blues—reflecting Dharma's grief and the absence of his emotional foundation. The illumination diminishes, casting shadows that accentuate the protagonist's grief and the emptiness created by Charlie's disappearance. The areas that previously exuded warmth now seem vacant and expansive, representing the emotional emptiness caused by the dog's demise. In certain sequences, the camera concentrates on Dharma's visage, portraying his profound sorrow through intimate close-ups that highlight the intensity of his emotional metamorphosis.

Nonetheless, amongst this sorrow, the Mise-en-scène indicates that Dharma's metamorphosis beyond ordinary loss; it encompasses acceptance and comprehension. The composition, frequently featuring Dharma in expansive, open environments, signifies his substantial learning from Charlie. Additionally, he established a dog shelter and shown increased responsibility towards nature and society by inviting all his neighbors to the facility's inauguration. Despite his attempts to move forward, the memories of Charlie will remain indelibly etched in his heart, along with the lessons of love and responsibility associated with him. Ultimately, we observe that his residence is tidy, vibrant, and orderly, reflecting his total transformation as an individual.

Phase of Transformation	Lighting	Color Palette	Set Design	Camera
Before Charlie Enters Dharma's Life	Harsh, cold lighting with shadows creating a sense of isolation. Often dim, emphasizing loneliness.	Muted, desaturated tones (gray, blue) symbolizing emotional desolation and isolation.	Sparse, unorganized, untidy, unhygienic dark, beer bottles minimalistic things that mirror Dharma's emotional void.	Static, distant camera angles, reflecting Dharma's detachment and lack of engagement with his environment.
After Charlie Enters Dharma's Life	Softer, warmer lighting, highlighting the emerging bond between Dharma and Charlie.	Warmer colors (yellow, brown, soft reds) representing emotional connection and warmth	More personalized spaces; Charlie's toys, food packets &bowls, milk bottles other personal items appear in the home, reflecting growing attachment.	More dynamic camera movements, such as tracking shots or close-ups of the characters, to show emotional closeness and intimacy.

Table 2: Mise-en-scene Analysis of Character Transformation

Conclusion

The entire film illustrates that Dharma underwent three-character transformations prior to Charlie's entrance into his life, following Charlie's arrival, and ultimately after Charlie's demise. He was unpleasant, lonely, and antisocial, yet empathetic; nonetheless, he was unwilling to assume any obligations or form attachments with others.

At first, the lighting in the protagonist's surroundings is severe, frigid, and inhospitable,

frequently creating elongated shadows and highlighting solitude. The employment of subdued, muted hues in first scenes visually underscores his emotional and ethical disconnection. As Charlie enters his life, the lighting softens and warms, indicating a transformation in the protagonist's emotional state and his growing receptiveness to compassion and connection. The warmth of natural light signifies the development of empathy; in the film's initial segment, the color palette is subdued with earthy tones, reflecting the protagonist's inner conflict and absence of vigor. As his connection with Charlie intensifies, the hues in the Mise-en-scène get more saturated and vivid, representing his emotional awakening and the revival of hope. Charlie's presence confronts the protagonist's egocentric and reclusive conduct, progressively imparting lessons on responsibility, loyalty, and emotional connection.

The dog's impact is artistically expressed through depictions of care and affection, illustrating the protagonist's transition from self-interest to concern for another creature, highlighting his evolution into a more compassionate and ethically conscious. Initially, the protagonist's moral framework centers on self-preservation and emotional detachment. He maintains distance from people and evades confronting the profound emotional difficulties in his life. Charlie's presence enables him to rediscover his ability to love and provide compassion, however his death compels the protagonist to face the unavoidable transience of existence and the anguish of connection.

Mise-en-scène is crucial here—utilizing somber lighting, subdued colors, and intimate clarity to signify a move towards a more ethically engaged and outward-facing individual. The protagonist's moral evolution, before to Charlie's demise, is propelled by the dog's company and the responsibilities he perceives towards it. The dog's demise compels him to contemplate his emotional journey and recognize that love and responsibility extend beyond the presence of another. Charlie's death instills in the protagonist a sense of responsibility toward others that surpasses his bond with the dog. Initially, the protagonist's metamorphosis centered on his emotional bond with Charlie; however, after the dog's demise, his focus alters. He now acknowledges his responsibility to others—not only to those in his immediate vicinity but also to the wider environment and community, prompting him to establish a dog shelter.

The protagonist of 777 Charlie, Dharma, experiences a significant shift during the film. Through the analysis of the mise-en-scène, one can discern the visual representation of his physiological, sociological, and psychological transformations. The film employs visual components like as lighting, costume design, and frame to illustrate Dharma's progression

from isolation and despair to connection and healing. Charlie functions as both a tangible and metaphorical stimulus for Dharma's development, embodying the strength of companionship in surmounting emotional and psychological obstacles. This mise-en-scène analysis demonstrates that 777 Charlie conveys a narrative of healing while physically and representing this transformation through its careful cinematic design.

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10. Use of UAPA on Media Persons: A Study of Jurisprudence and Media Defining Journalism and Terrorism in Media

Mohak Gandhi, Student, Master of Arts (Communication & Journalism)

Department of Mass Media, Kishinchand Chellaram College, HSNC University, Mumbai

Abstract

Taking forward the conversation about freedom of the press in India, the research looks at the subject at an intersection of journalism and terrorism. Both the terms have been studied extensively, but their intersection creates a new topic to be analysed. Studying the cases of Siddique Kappan and Rupesh Kumar Singh, the paper explores the meaning of the terms 'journalism' and 'terrorism' in the eyes of the Indian state. Amid the rising use of UAPA on media persons, the paper tries to conclude the subject of dissent in India by studying the above-mentioned cases for their media and legal representations.

Introduction

In 1943, after several definitions of the term 'journalism', Bryant Kearl tried redefining the term. In this paper, after critically examining several definitions of journalism given by academicians and scholars, Kearl concluded with the following definition: "Journalism is the conveyance of timely information, ideas, counsel, guidance, emotional attitudes and advertising to a varying audience by means of organised media and written, oral or pictorial symbols." (Kearl, 1943) With changing times, the meaning of the terms 'journalism' and 'journalist' changed drastically. The change in technology, ideas of professionalism and medium, have transformed the media sector and age-old terms revolving around it need to be re-looked.

Press in India does not have a special provision for the protection of expression and liberty; it derives them from the Article 19 of the Constitution. However, there are media laws governing press and censorship.

Apart from the press laws, one of the tools of the political threat to the security of journalists has been the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019. (hereafter UAPA). The 2004 amendment to UAPA included terrorist activities in its ambit while the 2019 amendment to the law, apart from other changes, brought a major amendment to Section 35 of UAPA, including the individuals under its ambit. Now, the Central Government can categorise

individuals, along with associations, as terrorists under Schedule 4 of the Act (Nair & Brunner, 2020).

The intent of the law, as stated after the 2008 amendment, is to prevent certain unlawful activities and deal with terrorist activities. The inclusion of terrorist activities in the law was a result of UN Security COuncil resolutions, especially after the 9/11 attack in the USA. Section 15 of the law defines a 'Terrorist Act' as "any act with intent to threaten or likely to threaten the unity, integrity, security, economic security, or sovereignty of India or with intent to strike terror or likely to strike terror in the people or any section of the people in India or in any foreign country." (The Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967) Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who brought the UAPA 2019 amendment bill into the Parliament spoke about the intent of including individuals under Schedule 4 and took the Hyderabad blast's convict and Indian Mujahideen's leader Yasin Bhatkal's name to back his argument (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019). However, apart from violent militants, UAPA has been used against dissenters also.

UAPA, especially after the 2019 amendment, has been called "draconian" by scholars, media persons and human rights activists. Media scholars call out the law for violating Article 19(1)(a) (Freedom of Speech) and Article 21 (Right to Life) of the Constitution. Anti-terror laws across the globe have a tendency to be stringent and addressing the issue, Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud said that anti-terror legislation should not be misused against dissent. He added, as he noted in the judgement in Arnab Ranjan Goswami V. Union of India, that courts must ensure that they continue to remain the first line of defence against the deprivation of liberty (Staff S. 2021).

As early as Romesh Thappar V. State of Madras in (1950), the Indian judiciary has upheld both the freedom of expression and the reasonable restrictions to it, meanwhile, the courts have not pronounced the amendments to UAPA to be unconstitutional.

The recent cases of Siddique Kappan (Desk, 2023) and Rupesh Kumar Singh (Pal, 2022) have been instances of journalists being arrested under UAPA for having a connection with banned groups. Understanding these cases in the light of legal and ethical definitions of journalists and terrorists become important to understand the functioning of the press in India.

Review of Literature

UAPA has not been out of the scope of analysis and scholarship revolving around security and terror laws. With the amendment in 2019, the global criticism against the statute became stronger with media houses time-to-time publishing news of UAPA curbing dissent in India. Al Jazeera, taking up examples of UAPA cases on Mohammed Irrfan, Father Stan Swamy and Asif Iqbal Tanha used Justice Madan B Lokur's arguments where he called the provisions to be vague and called for a reform against "frivolous arrests" and denial of bail (AlJazeera, 2021). British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has also been critical of the law in their articles on the cases of Umar Khalid, journalist Asif Sultan and activists Natasha Narwal and Divyanga Kallita. For an article about the use of UAPA (Limaye, 2023), BBC was *"strongly objected"* by Jammu and Kashmir Police (Staff A., 2023).

Amritanshu Pushkar in his 'Examining the Constitutional Validity of The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019', finds the 2019 amendment to UAPA to be against the Supreme Court's judgement in Sri Indra Das V. State of Assam and Arup Bhuyan V. State of Assam where the court read down Section 10 of UAPA, 1967 and Section 3(5) of TADA, 1987 and upheld that mere membership of a banned organisation does not make an individual a terrorist (however, in 2023, the Supreme Court overturned the Arup Bhuyan judgement and upheld the Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA). Pushkar argues that the law goes against Article 20 of the Indian Constitution stating the presumption of innocence as that is not the case with a designated terrorist under UAPA.

The paper compares the detention period of 180 days for designated terrorists to that in the USA only 7 days and in Australia, a mere 24 hours for the Investigative Agencies to prove substantial claims to demand further custody (Pushkar, 2021) The definitions of unlawful activities and terrorist activities use phrases such as 'dissatisfaction against India' and 'any other means of whatsoever nature which are vague and can be interpreted to curb dissent. The Delhi High Court in the Asif Iqbal Tanha V. State of NCT of Delhi, observed that the term 'terrorist activities' cannot include ordinary penal laws within its ambit (Singh, Mishra, & Pandey, 2022). Pushkar states that the purpose of the law was to legalise the idea of 'preventive detention' with *"no time bar and infinite powers in the hands of the government to curtail the alleged terrorism."* An arrested individual can file an appeal before the Central Government for review under Section 36(1) of UAPA and once the Central Government refuses to delist them from the Fourth Schedule of UAPA, the individual may choose to file a review petition to the Review Committee constituted by the Central Government under Section 36 (4) of the Parent Act which goes against the concept of a free and fair judicial

review. Pushkar concludes that the law has become more arbitrary after the 2019 amendment which comes with intent to suppress dissent. In conclusion, the paper takes a stand for fundamental rights stating, *"It is indubitably correct that the Sovereignty and Integrity of the country is foremost but the same cannot stand on the corpse of laws promoting infringement of Fundamental Rights."* (Pushkar, 2021)

The 2019 amendment allowing the Central Government to notify an individual as a 'terrorist was challenged in the Sajal Awasthi V. Union of India and apart from the questions of violation of Articles 19(1)(a), 14 and 21 of the Constitution, the questions were raised on Executive's power to categorise anyone as terrorist without any judicial process. Similar challenges to legislative competence have been raised in Kartar Singh V. State of Punjab (challenging TADA) and PUCL V. Union of India (challenging POTA). The bench of CJI Ranjan Gogoi and Justice Ashok Bhushan issued a notice to the Union Government in Sajal Awasthi, while the case still stands pending (Constitutionality of UAPA Amendment, 2022). After the use of UAPA against the civil society members, journalists and advocates of the fact-finding team in Tripura, during the riots, a petition challenging Sections 2(o) (Definition of Unlawful Activities), 13 and 43(d)(5) was filed by Mukesh, Ansar Indori and Shyaam Meera Singh A special Bench comprising CJI Ramana and Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Surya Kant ordered the Tripura police to not take any coercive action against the petitioners (UAPA Charges Related to Tripura Violence, 2024).

People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) published a report analysing data regarding the cases involving UAPA on the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) website and the National Crimes Record Bureau's (NCRB) reports. As of 12th August 2022, NIA's website lists a total of 456 cases out of which 357 cases involve UAPA. The report highlights that 41 cases of UAPA were registered Suo motu by the NIA whereas 316 cases were transferred from state investigating agencies to the NIA. Citing the data and the example of the transfer of the Bhima Koregaon case from the Maharashtra police to the NIA shortly after the change in government in Maharashtra from the BJP-led government to the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA)-led government, PUCL argues that UAPA and the NIA Act, 2008 are threats to federalism in the nation. As per the report, most of the cases under NIA are for Section 18 of UAPA (conspiracy, etc.). "Conspiracy" in UAPA is defined as given in Section 120A of IPC, which PUCL finds to be 'broad' and 'loosely worded'. The report divides Section 18 offences into two categories, 'incident having been reported' and 'no incident reported' and finds that 152 of 238 cases fall into the second category (Suresh, SB, & Sujatha, 2022).

Analysing the data given under the NCRB reports (2015-20) and the reply to Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2486 dated 09.03.2021, PUCL's report finds that a total of 5924 UAPA cases were registered and 8371 persons were arrested under UAPA charges between 2015 and 2020. In the same reply, the Union Home Ministry said that out of 4690 persons arrested from 2018-2020, 1080 received bail. The report also presents conviction rates in UAPA cases to be 27.57% when calculated based on the number of cases and 2.80% when calculated based on the number of arrests from 2015-2020. In the qualitative analysis, the report looks at various cases accusing Muslim minorities, Dalit-Bahujan-Adivasis, journalists and human rights defenders. In conclusion, PUCL demands the repeal of UAPA and the NIA Act, 2008, release of political prisoners on bail and reparations to wrongfully accused persons (Suresh, SB, & Sujatha, 2022).

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), in its 2023 prison census, noted that seven journalists have been incarcerated in India. While three journalists were released in 2022, three more were arrested, keeping the number at a record high for a third consecutive year. Four out of these seven journalists are from Jammu and Kashmir, and five out of these seven have been charged under the UAPA. Journalists arrested under the UAPA, on this list, include Aasif Sultan, Rupesh Kumar Singh, Gautam Navlakha, Prabir Purkayastha and Irfan Mehraj (Getz, 2023). The 2019 amendment to the UAPA enabled the arrest of journalists under the "terror law'. Scholars and the census by CPJ have noted the condition of media in Jammu and Kashmir and journalists being arrested under the UAPA and the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, 1978 in the state.

Ishan Fouzdar identifies Burhan Wani's assassination in 2016 as the 'tipping point for the use of UAPA against journalists in Jammu and Kashmir (Fouzdar, 2021). The paper mentions Aasif Sultan, an Assistant Editor at Kashmir Narrator, who wrote an article titled 'Rise of Burhan and Masrat Zahra, a photojournalist who shared a photo portraying a protest of Shia Muslims holding the picture of Burhan Wani. In Zahra's FIR, she has been mentioned as a social media user while she argues to be a journalist who has worked for the Washington Post and Al Jazeera (Kanth, Pandow, & Idrees, 2021). Fouzdar noted that the journalists writing on separatist or militant leaders have been charged under UAPA for "use of vague terms such as 'conspiracy', 'support to a terrorist organisation', etc (Fouzdar, 2021)." Bilal Ahmad Pandow and Idrees Kanth, analyzing press freedom in Kashmir, argue that UAPA has been used to intimidate journalists and propagate the state's narrative regarding the abrogation of Article 370. The paper cites Zahra, Gowhar Geelani, Ashiq Peerzada, and Sultan's cases to back the argument (Kanth, Pandow, & Idrees, 2021).

UAPA can be seen as one of the reasons for India's falling rankings in the World Press Freedom Index. Pankaj Singh, Shubham Mishra and Sunidhi Pandey use Gowhar Geelani and Siddique Kappan, who was arrested by the UP Police when he was heading to Hathras to cover the rape and murder case of a Dalit woman, to back their claim (Singh, Mishra, & Pandey, 2022).

The use of UAPA against journalists brings back the question, "Who is a terrorist?" and "Who is a journalist?" Erik Ugland and Jennifer Henderson look at the question of defining the term 'journalist' from an ethical and legal point-of-view. Analysing the Constitutional law and courts interpretation of it in the USA, the paper highlights a reporter's privilege in addition to the *"constitutionally established role"* of news media, based on Justice Potter. Stewart's framework However, Ugland and Henderson point out that the Court in Branzburg V. Hayes took a different view and included a "lonely pamphleteer who uses carbon paper or a mimeograph," also under the liberty of the press. The Court opined that the *"informative function asserted by representatives of the press... is also performed by lecturers, political pollsters, novelists, academic researchers, and dramatists."*

On the statutory level, the research finds that several states have passed laws to extend protection to journalists and reduce the media's liability in defamation claims. These laws contain the definitions of a 'journalist and the 'press' but are most of the time limited to the traditional media. Some journalists do have 'informal privileges whereas some Members of Congress only invite credentialed journalists. More than a criterion to define journalists, Ugland and Henderson look at it as a matter of fairness. In the ethics domain, the paper categorises media persons into Public Communicators, Second-level Journalists and Top-level Journalists. They define public communicators as *"people who disseminate newsworthy information....but in a sporadic and unregimented way,"* and second-level journalists as people *"who gather and disseminate news more deliberately, regularly and conspicuously."* They conceptualise the idea of top-level journalists as people who are *"concerned with... honoring the ethical canons of traditional American journalism, such as independence, proportionality, comprehensiveness, and accountability."* The paper concludes that 'Who is a journalist? is rather several definitional questions than one (Ugland & Henderson, 2007).

Boaz Ganor presents their view that an internationally accepted definition of 'terrorism' is a feasible goal by taking up the question, "Is one man's terrorist another man's freedom fighter?" The paper picks up the issue of terrorism vs. guerilla warfare and picks up scholarly work to get close to defining terrorism. Ganor differentiates between terrorism and guerilla warfare on the basis of the party of the intended attack. If the attack is intended towards

civilians, it is classified as terrorism, if the attack is intended towards a military organisation, it is classified as guerilla warfare. The paper presents the view that 'one man's terrorist is not another man's freedom fighter and also that 'the end justifies the means is untrue. While proposing a definition of terrorism, Ganor writes that it is a political activity involving the use or threat to use violence where civilians are the targets (Ganor, 2002).

The existing research dealing with the questions of defining a 'journalist' and a 'terrorist' lacks the Indian perspective especially, in the context of persons affiliated with media being charged under UAPA. The research around journalism looks to redefine the term on the basis of change in technology and the medium to report where blogging and citizen journalism have taken a prominent space, however, there is no prominent framework around the legal and legislative perspectives on journalism. With terrorism, the existing philosophy dealing with legal and ethical sides of the term does not address the ideas of terrorism in India.

When a journalist or a media person is accused of terrorism, the intersection of media and legal domains raises the following questions:

1. Who is a journalist in the eyes of the Indian state?

2. Who is a terrorist in the eyes of the Indian state?

Methodology

The research takes a qualitative approach to understand the philosophy at the intersection of journalism and terrorism. Taking up the cases of Siddique Kappan and Rupesh Kumar Singh the research analyses legal documents and media reports to examine the alleged terror links. The cases are looked to examine the jurisprudence laid regarding the questions of journalism and terrorism.

The question of journalism and terrorism became prominent in Siddique Kappan's case where a section of the media labelled him as a 'said' or 'alleged' journalist while the state linked him to the banned organisation PFI. To analyse Kappan's case, the research also takes a look at the money laundering charges on Kappan under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 as he was granted bail in the UAPA case but remained in jail for alleged money laundering. The research looks at this phenomenon of pushing non-bailable charges if the accused gets bail in one.

The research aims to explore the questions of definitions of a 'journalist' and a 'terrorist' when read together about UAPA.

The Siddique Kappan Case

Siddique Kappan was travelling to Hathras to report on the rape case, when he was arrested in October 2020 and charged under IPC Sections 153A (promoting enmity between different groups), 295A (outraging religious feelings) and 124 (restraining any lawful power), Sections 17 and 19 of UAPA and Sections 65, 72 and 76 of the IT Act, 2000. He allegedly had links with the Popular Front of India (PFI), which was banned in September 2022 under the UAPA.

Media representation and the question of who is a journalist?

OpIndia in their multiple news stories and articles on Kappan's case, referred to him as a 'journalist' (OpIndian Staff, 2021), using these inverted commas. Since the case came into the light, OpIndia has done multiple stories on Kappan's alleged link with PFI. Even after Kappan was released on bail in both UAPA and money laundering cases, OpIndia published a story on March 19, 2024 based on a report by Malayalam outlet Janmabhumi, alleging Kappan plotted to kill Kapil Mishra and Parvesh Verma in 2020 (OpIndia Staff, 2024).

OpIndia published a story on Newslaundry allegedly misquoting Sreedathan (Mohta, 2021) the founder of Indus Scrolls. Newslaundry's series of stories about Kappan's 5000-page charge- sheet included a story on UP Police citing Indus Scroll's news stories as a basis of the case against Kappan. The story also claimed that Kappan has filed a defamation case against Sreedathan, to which he refutes and said that Kappan has filed no case against Sreedathan or Indus Scrolls (Mohta, 2021).

Newslaundry did a series on 11 news stories dating from October 13, 2021 to September 9, 2022 The series titled 'Siddique Kappan Chargesheet analyses and comments on reasonings and attachments in the charge sheet including the website hhttps://justiceforhathrasvictim card.co Kappan and co-accused's social media posts, media stories about Kappan and PFI and WhatsApp chats (Kumar, 2021).

After Kappan came out of the jail, Newslaundry interviewed him, where he talked about the episode of his arrest, his time in jail and what he feels about the case against him. He said that initially he was not questioned about Hathras but rather about his alleged links with Pakistan and UAPA was slammed later, it was not part of the initial charges. He said that later ED appeared in the case and questioned him about 'justiceforhathrasvictim' website and his bank transactions (NL Team, 2023).

The Quint, The Wire, BBC Hindi and several other news organisations interviewed Kappan upon his release while The Indian Express published an article by Kappan himself.

Courts on Siddique Kappan

A Supreme Court bench headed by CJI UU Lalit granted bail to Siddique Kappan in the UAPA case after taking into consideration the length of the custody (Siddique Kappan Vs State of Uttar Pradesh, 2022). In the order, the court refrained from commenting on the investigation as it was still at a stage of framing the charges (Siddique Kappan Vs State of Uttar Pradesh, 2022).

The bail order in the ED case, penned by Justice Dinesh Kumar Singh, mentioned that Kappan was accused of a criminal conspiracy along with KA Rauf Sherif. Kappan was accused of travelling to Hathras for disturbing communal harmony and instigating riots and for this purpose, the funds were transferred to co-accused Atikur Rahman on instructions of Sherif. The bail orders says that only Rs 5,000 were transferred to Rahman and except for that, there were no transactions found in the bank accounts of both Kappan and Rahman. The court concluded that it is not "sufficient to prove that the accused-applicant has dealt with the proceeds of crime amounting to Rs 1,36,14,291 which was allegedly received by KA Rauf Sherif." (CRIMINAL MISC BAIL APPLICATION, 2022)

In his bail order in the ED case, Siddique Kappan is referred to as a press reporter duly accredited by the Press Council of India and was travelling to Hathras on the direction given by Sasidharan, manager of AZHIMUKHAM.COM, where Kappan was working at the time of the arrest (CRIMINAL MISC BAIL APPLICATION, 2022).

The Rupesh Kumar Singh Case

Rupesh Kumar Singh was arrested by Jharkhand police due to his alleged links to the banned organisation Communist Party of India (Maoist) (Staff, 2022). The police arrested him in a nine-hour long raid and seized two mobile phones, two laptops, a hard drive and a notebook. He was charged under the UAPA and later, the case was transferred to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

Media representation and the question of who is a journalist?

In an interview with Newslaundry, on the backdrop of Bihar police accusing him of links with banned left-wing organisations in 2019, Rupesh Kumar Singh said that he was targeted for reporting on an alleged extrajudicial killing of a tribal worker. In that case, he was released on bail as the police failed to file a charge sheet in 180 days (Team, 2022).

Media reports say that Singh is a freelance journalist from Jharkhand, who reports on tribal communities. He has been affiliated with the websites Janchowk and Media Vigil.

While he is accused of being affiliated with banned left-wing organisation CPI (Maoist), Organiser Weekly, the mouthpiece of the right-wing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), also recognised him as a Jharkhand-based journalist (Desk, 2023).

Writ Petition for Pegasus Spyware Probe

Singh and his partner Ipsa Shaktakshi filed a petition on July 31, 2021, alleging that they were a target of the Pegasus spyware. The petition asked the Supreme Court to declare the use of Pegasus unconstitutional and a direction for the Union government to disclose data material regarding the use of the spyware (Observer, 2022).

While their case was heard, the Supreme Court in another case, namely Manohar Lal Sharma V. Union of India, gave an interim order, forming a technical committee supervised by Justice R.V. Raveendran. In the order, the court observed that despite repeated reassurances, the respondent, the Indian government only came up with a limited affidavit, not giving clarity on the facts of the matter on the pretext of national security. The apex court also expressed a fear of self-censorship among journalists and wrote, "Protection of journalistic sources is one of the basic conditions for the freedom of the press." (Manohar Lal Sharma V. Union of India, 2021)

The technical committee headed by Justice R.V. Raveendran submitted a report which found malware in five out of 29 phones submitted to it, but the malware was not Pegasus.

Conclusion

The questions 'Who is a journalist' and 'Who is a terrorist' are two paradigms in themselves where there may not be one objective definition. With time the definitions have only expanded and even the definitions and philosophies available in the Indian legal system provide a vague sense of what these terms mean.

The intersection of terrorism and journalism can be seen with charges of terrorism on journalists. While a person can be a journalist and terrorist at the same time, the cases of Siddique Kappan and Rupesh Kumar Singh hint at journalists dissenting against the state being charged with terrorism. Both Kappan and Singh have been noted as journalists even though there were attempts to discredit their professional identity after they were charged under the UAPA.

India needs legislative steps to reach closer to the definitions of a journalist and a terrorist. The lack of Central legislation governing journalism and UAPA providing an umbrella definition of terrorism using vague terms is just giving rise to cases like that of Kappan and

Singh. Further research in these subjects requires policy examination and recommendation for development in legislative and judicial domains.

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11. The Influence of Political Ad Campaigns on the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Population

Swarali Tamhane, Student, Master of Arts (Communication & Journalism),
Kishinchand Chellaram College, HSNC University, Mumbai

Abstract

When the elections are round the corner all that one can see on TV, newspapers, listen to on radio and now see trending on social media are political ad campaigns. Ad campaigns have the power to propagate ideas and influence consumers to buy a product. Similarly, political ad campaigns have the power to influence the masses and convince them to vote for the party. Propaganda is a very common tool used in this process. This research tries to find what influence political ad campaigns have on the Mumbai Metropolitan region population. This study uses the quantitative approach and uses experiments and survey to collect data. This research aims to identify the spread of propaganda and the role that media literacy plays in it. In conclusion, the study emphasises the reasons why the population in the Mumbai Metropolitan region is not much affected by political ad campaigns.

Keywords

Political ad campaign, propaganda, media literacy, elections, Mumbai Metropolitan region.

Introduction

With over 1.4 billion people residing within the territory, India is the most populated country in the world. The constitution of India in its preamble constitutes the nation as a democracy, therefore making it the world's largest democracy. A democratic government means a system of government in which the power lies with its citizens, who exercise their rights by directly participating in the working of the government or by casting their valuable vote and electing a representative. The role of elections becomes crucial in this system as it decides various factors in the development of the country.

Holding elections in the most populated and the largest democracy in the world is a task. Often regarded as a grand civic festival, the central elections take place for over 2 months. For the political parties to gain popularity amongst the masses, the biggest tool they make use

of is advertising. An advertising campaign is a carefully thought-out plan that is implemented across a variety of media with the goal of achieving outcomes, like increased sales, better brand recognition, and enhanced market communication (Advertising Campaign, 2023). All of this is made possible by advertising. Political ad campaigns aim at increasing their political popularity. Political advertising campaigns are effective means for candidates to engage with the public, forge their own identity, and persuade the public to support their ideas and programmes (Examples of Political Ad Campaigns That Shaped Elections, n.d.).

Throughout history, political campaigns have experienced a significant change as they have adjusted to shifts in communication, culture, and technology. From the grassroot level of covering walls with the party symbols and handing party flyers amongst the citizens, audio announcements on radio to printing advertorials in newspapers and engaging the target audience in curated data driven PR campaigns, the evolution of political campaigning is significant. Along with newspapers and radio, television become an active medium of advertising. It was the only medium to have an overall impact with both audio and visuals included which were later proved to be more effective for the audience to retain what was presented.

The social media algorithm plays a major role in the dissemination of any information. It caters to the audiences likes and only shows them the content they are interested in. This creates a 'Filter Bubble' for the masses, a phenomenon where an internet user encounters information and opinions that conform and reinforce their own beliefs, caused by algorithms that personalize an individual's online experience (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.). The algorithm shifts through a pile of content and aligns it according to the user's priorities. In the political scenario, users tend to only see content that is aligned with their political ideology and cancels out content opposing to that belief. This curated feed satisfies the users as they fail understand that the algorithm is rigged.

In this study, the researcher wants to identify if political ad campaigns have an impact on the voting patterns of the voters and if these campaigns are successful in influencing and creating a vote bank. The researcher's focus is on the population living in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR). The study will begin with an overview of elections in India, the integration of ad campaigns and will explain the propaganda theories. The study will introduce the aspect of lack of media literacy in the conclusion. Using the quantitative means, the researcher has conducted experiments and a survey. This study is based on the following aim and will follow the below objectives.

Aim

The aim of the study is to examine the influence of political ad campaigns on the Mumbai Metropolitan Region population with quantitative measures, focusing on the spread of propaganda by political parties and the role of media literacy.

Objectives

1. To identify how political ad campaigns influence the political opinions and voting behaviour of the Mumbai Metropolitan region population.
2. To find what types of propaganda are commonly used in political ad campaigns.
3. To evaluate if media literacy influences the ability of population to critically analyse political ad campaigns.
4. To determine who qualifies as media literate in the modern media landscape.

Review of Literature

An Overview of Elections in India

Elections can be defined as 'the formal process by which citizens of a country or other political entity, such as a State or Local Government, choose their representatives or leaders through voting.' For the democratic societies, elections are as fundamental as they incorporate the important feature of selecting a government and keep the sovereignty intact. At a five years interval, both the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly have elections. Once the candidates file their nomination, they are allowed to start campaigning by the Election commission. Political parties during the election campaigning put forward their candidates to make their arguments and persuade the people to vote for them. The official campaigning begins two weeks from the nomination filed and ends 48 hours prior to the polling i.e. election day. During the entire political campaign, the candidates, and the party they belong to need to abide by the Model of Code of Conduct (Team, 2024).

Political Campaigning and New Media

Political campaigning underwent a significant transformation with the advent of the digital revolution in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. With the ability to share information, interact with people, and raise money online, the internet in turn become a new platform in the political battleground. The emergence of the internet had a profound impact, enabling new avenues for socioeconomic development and empowering people, companies, and

147

communities. The way individuals interact, exchange information, conduct business, and engage in public discourse has changed dramatically as a result of the social media revolution. (Palmer, 2023).

According to S. Arulchelvan in the New Media Communication Strategies for Election Campaigns: Experiences of Indian Political Parties paper, Arulchelvan has explained how new media technologies such as websites, blogs, SMS, and social media are being used by the political parties to expand their reach during elections. The author described how digital tools have impacted political communication and voter engagement. According to the author, campaign effectiveness and political engagement get enhanced when diverse voter segments, especially youth and urban population directly connects with the parties due to various media strategies implemented (Arulchelvan, 2014).

It was the Bhartiya Janta Party's (BJP) success in the Lok Sabha elections of 2014 as their online campaign gained popularity and proved to be a game changer in the field of politics in India. They made effective use of all digital platforms including social media and deployed efficient analytical engines which provided them with an edge above Congress. The gap can be well gauged by the fact that while in 2014 Twitter published an article on the influence of Narendra Modi on their platform, Rahul Gandhi had just joined the microblogging platform only in 2015. BJP had modelled Modi's 2014 campaign on the lines of Barack Obama's US Presidential campaign in 2009. (Majumdar, 2019).

Social Media as a Tool to Spread Propaganda

Social media is fast becoming one of the most crucial instruments of varied communications. It can be used to exchange information, shape the public opinion, link the people and groups, and encourage active participation among others. The term "social media" describes the way through which people communicate with each other through the creation, sharing, and exchange of ideas and information on online groups and networks. Estimates vary, but Dr Kiran Bala puts this at about 66 million in India, but it is growing faster with the availability of cheaper broadband connection and internet enabled handsets at very low prices. Forms of social connection change due to social media (Bala, June, 2014).

In a paper named Politics of Fake News: How WhatsApp Became a Potent Propaganda Tool in India, it is discussed how an everyday used social media platform has become a the easiest medium to spread fake news. According to Gowhar Farooq, the social media platform has been well harnessed by political parties in India. With an example given from the 2017 Uttar

148

Pradesh elections, the author says that WhatsApp was used for massive mobilization where BJP created a number of WhatsApp groups to disseminate party related updates constantly. In Uttar Pradesh, WhatsApp was has been significant in spreading misinformation and disinformation along with fake news at a large scale. Right from the trigger for Muzaffarnagar riots, the fake hoax of Gita Press all originated from WhatsApp (Farooq, 2018).

Propaganda is defined as 'information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.).' As social media inspires a wave of optimism amongst the users, it too has a negative shade to it as well. After several discussions social media is now also termed as an incubator of fake news and propaganda. Social media networks like Facebook, Twitter wherein the issue is being discussed on a wide range, these sites more than a tool empower voices and bring social change, and have now become tools of propaganda. The three terms-misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda-are often used interchangeably with shifting and overlapping meanings. The common denominator for all three is the existence of false or misleading messages that circulate under the guise of true informative content-like elite communication, online messages, advertising, or published articles (Lyons, 2020).

The Lack of Media Literacy

The Paper on Media Literacy and Education in India During Times of Communication Abundance by Jesna Jayachandran covers key concerns raised about India. Media ownership in the country is skewed toward the elites often aligning with the political and corporate interests. Monopolization this way leaves less room for diverse voices, particularly those from lower socioeconomic classes, from participating within democratic discourse. India may observe rapid media growth, but one finds a lack of formal media education and programs which help the population to remain less naive about communication. Lack of media literacy exposes many people to one sided information and propaganda. There is a lack of media education in India and it includes very few school programs and no systematic curriculum. (Jayachandran, 2018).

According the United Nations, *'The purpose of media and information literacy (MIL) is to empower the users of technology through continuous learning and knowledge acquisition about the functions of media; the mechanisms for content creation and distribution; media effects; the rights of persons to information and expression; the responsibilities of those who*

use, mediate and control media; and the ethical design and use of new and emerging technologies.'

In India, there is lack of media literacy. Very few people are able to identify the hidden messages in advertisements, movies, news, etc. Media illiterates fall prey to the propaganda that is spread, especially in the political ad campaigns. Due to their vulnerability, they are unable to decode the messages and perceive it as first-hand news. This lack of media literacy acts as a power for the political parties to influence the masses to gain votes, benefits and create a vote bank. This study aims to find out what influence do political ad campaigns have on the Mumbai Metropolitan region population, keeping the in mind the research gap stated below.

Research Gap

In the existing research it is established that media literacy exists in India and media takes advantage of this phenomena. This study would identify if the political ad campaigns have any influence on individuals that lack to understand the spread of propaganda via campaigns and perceive it as first-hand news due to media illiteracy.

Research Questions

This study tries to find the importance of media literacy in today's day and age and the influence of political ad campaigns and propaganda on media illiterate population by trying to answer the following questions.

1. What influence does political ad campaigns have on the Mumbai Metropolitan Region population?
2. Do political ad campaigns have an influence in spreading propaganda?
3. Is the population able to distinguish between an ad campaign and a political propaganda?
4. Does media illiteracy help political parties in attracting supporters and gain a vote bank?

Theoretical Framework

- **Magic Bullet Theory (Hypodermic Needle Theory):** This theory was propounded by Harold Laswell in 1927. The key idea of this theory is that media injects its message into passive audience like a 'magic bullet' or 'hypodermic needle.' Here it is

assumed that the audience is easy to manipulate and therefore the media uses this as an opportunity to propagate their ideas and beliefs and ingrain it in the minds of the audience. This theory is used in the research as the researcher believes that political ad campaigns have hidden political propaganda that the audience receives and takes immediate action without critically analysing the advertisement (Gabunia, 2023).

- **Cultivation Theory:** George Gerbner proposed the idea of cultivation theory in 1969. This theory suggests that if there is a long-term consumption of media constantly especially consuming media from television, it shapes the consumers perception of reality. Constant exposure to media leads to cultivating an individual's worldview only restricted to what media portrays and considers it as accurate without critically analysing or questioning the discrepancies and biasedness of media. This theory is used the research as constant viewing and consumption of political agenda through political ad campaigns can cultivate an individual's perception towards that political party. Political messaging via television over a long period of time can shape a voter's perception of reality and can instil positive affirmation towards that party or hatred towards the opposition party (Vinney, 2019).

Methodology

This research takes a quantitative approach and uses experiment and survey to collect data. Two experiments were conducted for this research. This experiment was divided into two parameters: Media Literacy & Political Communication. It was to analyse and study the responses of the participants and prove the assumptions.

1. The experiment was conducted on 10 members of the Mumbai Metropolitan region belonging from different age groups, gender, educational backgrounds, different occupations to identify if they critically analyse the advertisements they watch and understand the hidden messages in advertisements.

2. The experiment was conducted on two controlled groups with the aim to identify and establish the assumption: Individuals with a Media background qualify more as Media Literates over other professionals. This was conducted on 10 media students and 10 non-media students belonging from Mumbai Metropolitan region.
The Survey conducted was a structured survey with 100 sample collections from samples belonging to various professional backgrounds, ages, and gender. The researcher used Simple random sampling under Probability sampling for this survey and data collection.

Analysis and Results

Experiment 1: 10 participants were a part of this experiment out of which 6 were male and 4 were female. These were all from various educational background and age groups. None of these participants were media students or were working in the field of media. It was noticed by the researcher that the participants were able to identify the hidden messages in the generic ads presented to them under the Media literacy parameter. In a question when they were asked to identify if a message circulating on WhatsApp was spreading fake news, the participants were on able to identify the nuances and 7 on 10 agreed with the message being false news while remaining 3 said it was misinformation. It was noticed that under the Political communication parameter, that the participants struggled to read between the lines and not understand exactly what message the political ad campaigns were giving. They got confused with certain similar ideas and were not able to critically think and decode, analyse the exact message. Through this experiment it was inferred that the participants are media literate but at times are unable to understand the hidden messages and motives of the political parties behind political campaigns.

Experiment 2: 10 media students and 10 non-media students participated in the experiment. Out of 10 media students, 7 were female and 3 were male. When analysing the media literacy parameter, it was noticed that these participants could notice many the elements of ad. The participants were able understand the hidden messages in the generic advertisements. When analysing the political communication parameter, it was noticed that participants were able to understand the message, but not all were able to decode it aptly even when they had their former training as media students.

Out of 10 non-media students, 7 were female and 3 were male. When analysing the media literacy parameter, it was noticed that these participants could not notice various aspects of generic ads. With regards to the WhatsApp forward message 2 called it as misinformation and 1 called it as an urgent alert. When analysing the political communication parameter, it was noticed that not all participants were not able to identify the messages given out in political ads. They lacked to read between the lines and could not decode the message aptly.

Through this experiment conducted on 2 control groups it was noticed that media students have an edge over non media students when it comes to analysing and decoding the hidden messages presented to the masses as advertisement. But this does not infer that media students or people with media training understand the agenda behind everything advertise. But when in comparison between the two, the experiment proves the assumption that

'Individuals with a Media background qualify more as Media Literates over other professionals.

Survey Analysis: The data below is interpreted on the basis of these 100 responses.
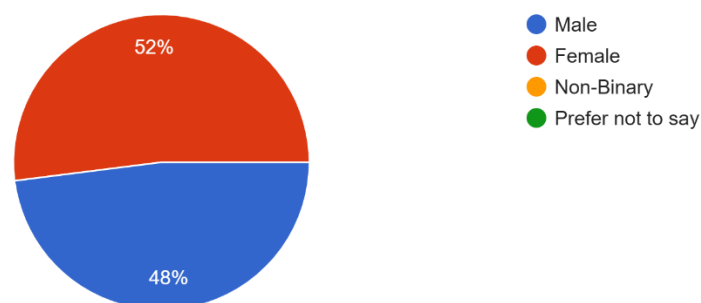
1. Age

Age
100 responses
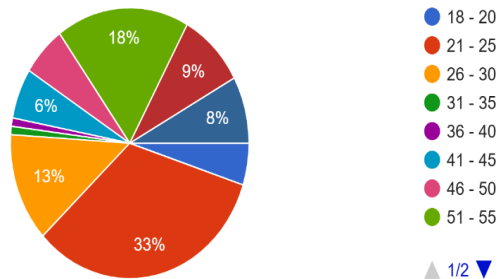
Out of 100 respondents, the maximum population i.e. 33 people were from the 21 - 25 age group. Followed by 51 -55 age with 18 respondents, 26 – 30 age with 13 respondents, 9 respondents of the 56 – 60 age group and so on.

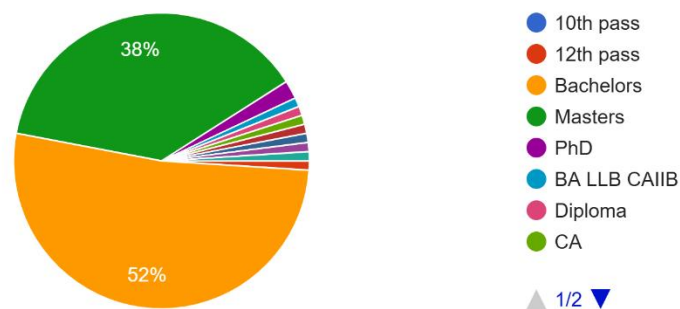2.   Gender

Gender
100 responses

Out of the 100 respondents, 52 were female and 48 were male.

3.   Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification
100 responses

- 10th pass
- 12th pass
- Bachelors
- Masters
- PhD
- BA LLB CAIIB
- Diploma
- CA

1/2

Out of the 100 respondents, 52 have a Bachelor's degree, 38 respondents have a Master's degree and the rest can be seen in the above-mentioned pie chart.

4.   Occupation

Several respondents were students, some were at a service, some respondents were working as professionals in various fields and some were retired.

5.   Region

As this survey is based on the population belonging to the Mumbai metropolitan region, the respondents are from the same region. Most respondents are from Borivali, Vile Parle, Andheri, etc.
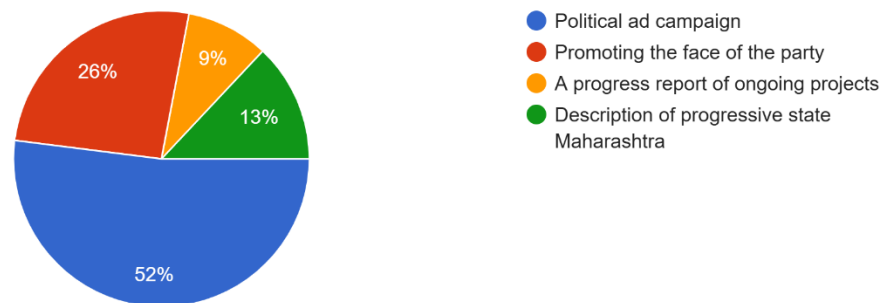
Survey on Political Communication

1. What would you classify the following post as?

bjp4maharashtra

कोस्टल रोड

मेट्रो सेवा

समृद्धी महामार्ग

अटल सेतू

गतिमान महाराष्ट्र वेगवान महायुती सरकार

1. What would you classify the following post as?

100 responses

- Political ad campaign
- Promoting the face of the party
- A progress report of ongoing projects
- Description of progressive state Maharashtra

To understand if the respondents can decode the ad and classify it, this question was asked. Out of the 100 respondents, 52% people classified the ad as a political ad campaign, 26 % people classified it as promoting the face of the party, 13% people classified it as description of progressive state Maharashtra and 9% people classified it as a progress report of ongoing projects.

2.   Does the ad above influence your political stance?

2. Does the ad above influence your political stance?
100 responses
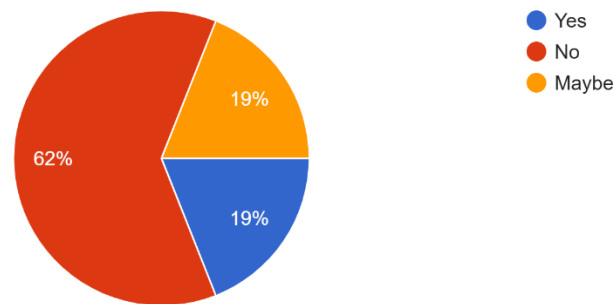
This question was asked to find out if political posters influence the political stance of the respondents. It was inferred that 62% people responded No, 19% people said Yes and 19% people said Maybe.

3.   Would you consider discussing the topics mentioned in the ad with others? Explain your reason.

This question was asked to find if respondents were wiling to discuss the idea presented in the political ad posters. It was noticed that majority of the respondents wanted to discuss the ideas presented in the poster as they were related to their everyday life and mattered to them. Some mentioned that it was important to discuss it as it involves a lot of money for infrastructure development and citizens are tax payers.

On the scale of 1 – 5, rate the forwarded messages' authenticity. 1: Fake News – 5: Factual News
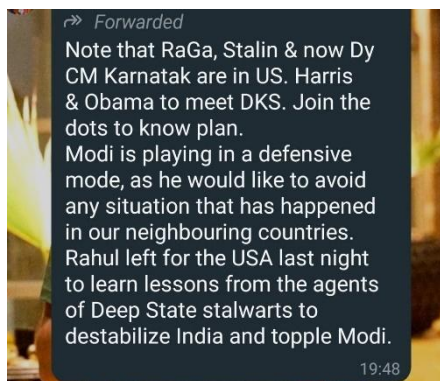
4. On the scale of 1 - 5, rate the forwarded messages' authenticity.
100 responses
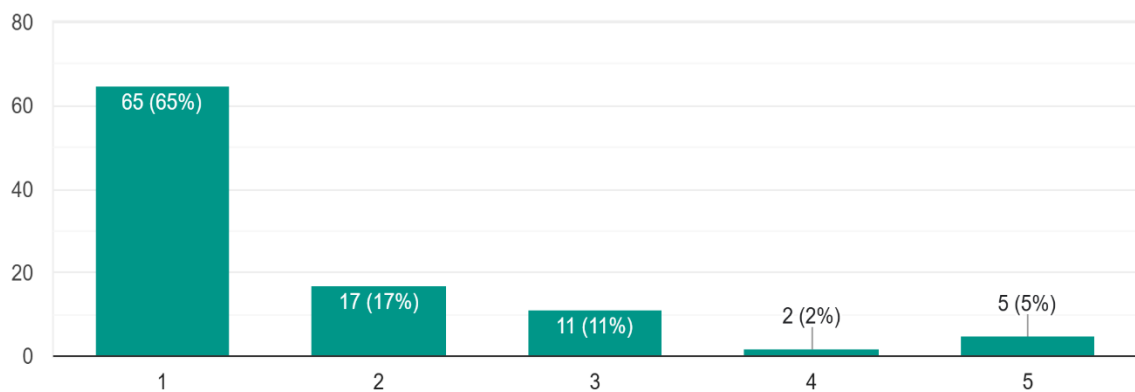
To understand how respondents decode the forwarded message, this question was asked. It can be seen that 65 people have chosen the option 1 which was Fake news, 17 people have chosen option 2, 11 people have chosen option 3 which was neutral, 2 people chose option 4 and 5 people called the above-mentioned forwarded message as Factual news.

5.   According to you, is this forwarded message politically inclined? Explain your reason.

This question was asked to find if people get influenced by forwarded messages. Majority of the respondents said yes. Some said the message was a fake news spread to create unnecessary chaos. Some people denied that the forward was not politically inclined at all.

6.   Do you verify the authenticity of the forwarded message before forwarding it to others?

6. Do you verify the authenticity of the forwarded message before forwarding it to others?
100 responses

157
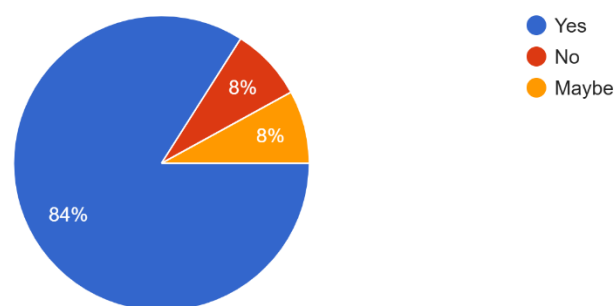
This question was asked to check if respondents use media thoughtfully and contentiously. It was inferred that 84% respondents said Yes they verify a forwarded message before sending it, 8% respondents said No and 8% respondents answered Maybe.
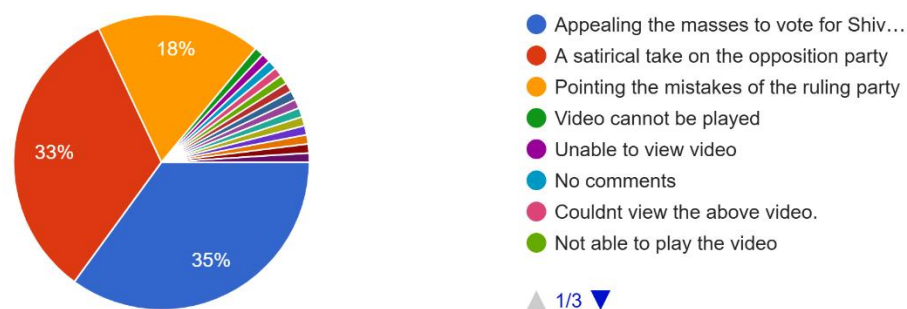
7.   What message does the ad want to portray in this ad according to you?

Link of the You Tube ad given below for reference:

https://youtu.be/f-2q8Yv25_Q?si=mHW_0h_hWr8WQ0tT

7. What message does the ad want to portray in this ad according to you?
100 responses

- Appealing the masses to vote for Shiv…
- A satirical take on the opposition party
- Pointing the mistakes of the ruling party
- Video cannot be played
- Unable to view video
- No comments
- Couldnt view the above video.
- Not able to play the video

△ 1/3 ▽

This question was asked to find if respondents can decode political ads shown on TV. The responses show that 35% people said the ad was appealing the masses to vote for Shiv sena party. 33% people said the ad was a satirical take on the opposition party. 18% people inferred the ad to be pointing the mistakes of the ruling party. Unfortunately, 14% people could not watch the ad due to technical glitch.

8.   Would this ad influence your preconceived political affiliation? Explain the reason.

This question was asked to find if political ad campaigns have an influence on respondents' thoughts, feeling, and behaviour. Majority of the respondents said that the ad would not have any influence on them or their political affiliation. Some respondents said yes as the satire used in the ad made them think from all perspectives.

9.   Would you consider sharing the above ad with others?

9. Would you consider sharing the above ad with others?
100 responses

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

26%
59%
15%
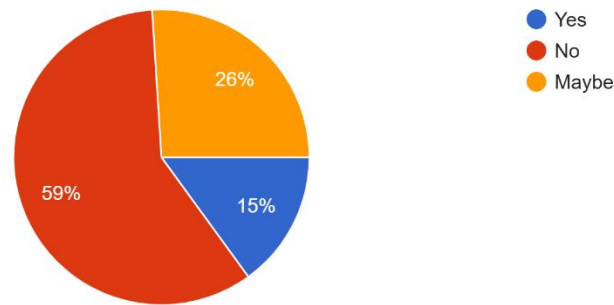
This question was asked to see if respondents share media thoughtfully. It can be noticed that 59% people said No to sharing the ad. 26% people said maybe whereas 15% people said yes.

10.   How would you identify the following ad as?

10. How would you identify the following ad as?
100 responses

- Fake Ad
- Authorized Ad
- Misleading Ad
- Factual News
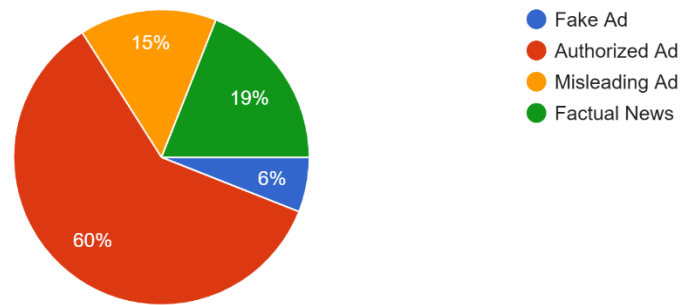
This question was asked to see how respondents decode the presented ad. 60% of the respondents called the above-mentioned ad as Authorized ad. 19% respondents called it factual news. 15% respondents said it was a misleading ad and 6% respondents called it fake news.

11.   Would you classify the above ad as an Advertorial?

11. Would you classify the above ad as an Advertorial?
100 responses

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
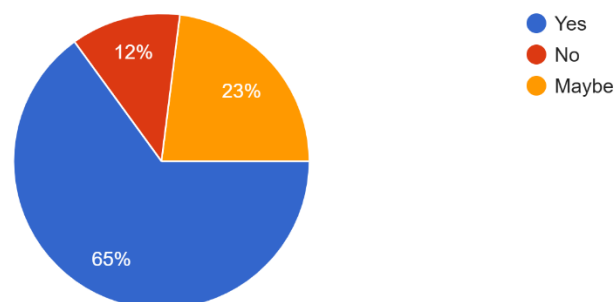
This question was asked to find how the respondents classify the government ad as an advertorial. 65% respondents said yes. 12% respondents said no whereas 23% respondents said maybe.

12.   What elements in the following ad would influence you in sharing the ad with other? (Example: Statistical data)

This question was asked to find if the respondents can notice the elements mentioned in the ad. Many of the respondents responded saying statistical data in the ad. Some said popular faces, some said schemes.

13. What is the following ad poster according to you?

13. What is the following ad poster according to you?
100 responses

- A campaign poster for the upcoming elections
- Promoting the party leader
- Emphasizing on the introduced scheme
- Making above figure about the God
- This ad covers all 3 above option points
- I would like to go with all of the above options.
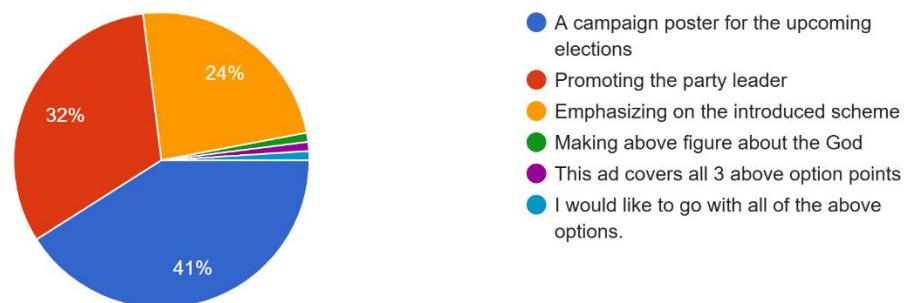
This question was asked to find ow respondents decode the above-mentioned poster. 41% people called the poster as a campaign poster for the upcoming elections. 32% people called the poster to be promoting the party leader. 24% people said it was emphasizing on the introduced schemes. The other responses can be seen in the above-mentioned pie chart.

14.   Which element in the above ad would grab your attention and influence you the most? (Example: Pictures of prominent people)

This question was asked to see if the political poster has an influence on the respondents. Many people responded saying that Devendra Fadnavis' image was the most prominent element of the ad. Some said that the wordings were eye catchy. Some mentioned the emphasis of the scheme on the poster.

15. Would you consider sharing the ad poster with others?

15. Would you consider sharing the ad poster with others?
100 responses

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
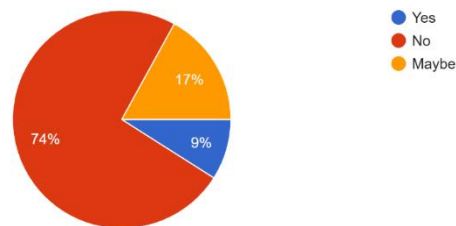
This question was asked to see if respondents share media thoughtfully. It was noticed that 74% respondents would not consider sharing the poster. 9% respondents said yes and 17% respondents said maybe.

Findings & Result

The survey questionnaire was constructed on the 3 parameters of Media Literacy (What's in a name: Defining media literacy, 2024):

1. Decode media messages (including the systems in which they exist)
2. Assess the influence of those messages on thoughts, feelings, and behaviours
3. Create media thoughtfully and conscientiously

Based on these parameters, the survey was critically analysed. The survey was segmented based on the above-mentioned parameters along and were divided into 5 parts: Political ad campaign on Instagram, politically inclined WhatsApp forward, TV ad by a regional political party, Government authorised ad in Newspaper and Political ad campaign poster/ banner. All the above were further categorized under all three media literacy parameters.

- The first ad campaign poster from Instagram i.e. question 1 – 3, the respondents were able to decode the message according to their knowledge. They after critically analysing the ad denied sharing it with others. They all had their own opinions when asked about discussing the topics mentioned in the ad. The most common answer was: Yes, as development affects our daily life and infrastructure building involves money and as tax payers, we have the right to discuss. There were a few with a cynical approach stating that it was a promotional campaign by the ruling government.

- The WhatsApp forward i.e. question 4 – 6, most of the respondents were able to decode the message as fake news. Some had a neutral take, but 5 respondents believed the forwarded message saying it was factual news. This highlighted the lack of media literacy as the respondents were unable to decode the message clearly. When asked about if the ad was politically inclined majority of the respondents said yes and mentioned how the message was directed to malign the reputation of the opposition party and opposition leader. Majority of the respondents said that they would verify such a message before forwarding it but 8 people said no as they would without critically analysing the message forward it to others.

- The TV ad about a regional political party Shiv Sena i.e. question 7 – 9, respondents could not clearly decode the message. The ad was an appeal to masses to vote for the party but only 35 people could decode it. Majority of the respondents said No as the ad would have no influence on their preconceived political affiliation. But some respondents pointed out how the sarcastic and satirical approach of the ad would influence them to look at the ruling party from a different lens. But a majority of people denied sharing the ad with others.

- The Newspaper government authorised ad i.e. question 10 – 12, when respondents were asked to identify and decode the ad and classify it in the categories presented to them 60 people described the ad as an authorized ad. But 19 people described the ad as factual news which means they could not distinguish the difference between news an advertisement. 65 people called the ad as an advertorial. Very few people could identify all or even some elements mentioned in the ad. The most popular answer was statistical data and prominent faces. This highlights how respondents are not familiar with different types of elements that are used in an ad.

- The political campaign poster/ banner ad i.e. questions 13 – 15, the 41 respondents described the poster as a campaign poster for the upcoming elections. This question got a very scattered response as 32 people felt that the ad was promoting the party leader and 24 people that the ad was emphasizing on the introduced scheme. Many described how the tagline and picture of Devendra Fadnavis were the most prominent elements in the ad. When asked if the respondents would be willing to share this ad with others 74 people said no.

The overall findings describe that the population living in Mumbai Metropolitan region can distinguish well between political ad campaigns and very few perceive the ads as first-hand

news. As the population within which the survey was conducted belongs to a city, due to easy accessibility of information and forums available for open discussion, the population is a media literate. But it can be noticed that not every person regardless of living in the region is a media literate.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to find if political ad campaigns have an influence on the people living in the Mumbai Metropolitan region. The study also looked at the aspect of propaganda spread by the political parties in the ad campaigns. The research critically looked at ad campaigns and respondents' opinion from the lens of Media Literacy. After the research it can be noticed that the population living in the Mumbai Metropolitan region is media literate to a certain extent. The population that participated in the research belongs to a working-class category and was educated. As there is a basic level of education and literacy, the participants had the knowledge to critically analyse the political campaigns. We cannot consider the respondents to be fully aware of the hidden messages in the media and ad campaigns as they do lack in certain areas like identifying the key elements in campaigns. Some participants had their preconceived affiliation adjoined to a certain political party and it was visible through their responses. One major reason for the respondents critical thinking can also be the impact of Maharashtra elections that are round the corner. The researcher would like to highlight that there is a need of media literacy in the Mumbai Metropolitan region but not as much as there would be in the rural villages and areas. In conclusion, the political ad campaigns do influence the population who lack literacy along with media literacy and at times fall prey to the political propaganda.

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12. Recording Raw Memory: The Potential of Citizen Journalism in Filling the Gaps

Amrita Das, Independent Researcher

Abstract

Traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, and television, have been the primary sources of news and information for many years. The emergence of digital technologies has facilitated the rise of citizen journalism, wherein ordinary individuals disseminate news and information through social media, blogs, and other online mediums. Citizen journalism has emerged as a powerful force in the media landscape, driven by the proliferation of digital technologies and social media platforms.

This study examines how citizen journalism fills the gaps created by news avoidance, and its implications for the condition of citizen journalism in India, looking at the elements that have spurred its development, the difficulties it has encountered, and how it has altered the landscape of traditional news media. The study utilizes a qualitative method to formulate research conclusions by analysing specific initiatives in India. The study also ponders on how citizen journalism can be considered as a revolutionary force that provides a potent remedy for the historical biases and constraints of traditional media, in the field of inclusive communication.

Keywords: *citizen journalism, traditional media, web 2.0, news avoidance, social media, India, inclusive communication, digital technologies*

Introduction

An informed society depends on news to keep people acquainted and engaged. It covers a broad range of subjects, from local developments and human-interest stories to international events and politics. In addition to providing us with up-to-date information on current events, news is essential for forming public opinion and influencing social discourse. News offers a glimpse into the ever-changing global setting, whether it is disseminated through contemporary digital platforms or more conventional media channels (television and newspapers). It operates as a catalyst for public discourse and a watchdog, holding people and institutions accountable. News mainly has an impact on society viewpoints, policy choices, and public opinion in addition to just reporting.

The historical biases and limitations ingrained in traditional media are effectively addressed by citizen journalism, which is a revolutionary force in the field of communication. The public, equipped with smartphones and social media accounts, is now an active participant in the news transmission process where information is shared quickly and freely. The world we live in today is no longer defined by mass media under the control of governments and businesses, with a limited number of centralized points of control and a handful of editors in charge. The emergence of a radically transformed information and attention landscape has empowered ordinary individuals to generate ideas based on their own perspectives, distribute news, and engage with media content (Tufekci, 2017: 29).

This paper focuses on how citizen journalism plays an important role in filling the gaps due to news avoidance. The paper will also examine initiatives such as *We the Young* and *Mariwala Health*, which have utilized inclusive communication to engage marginalized groups within the broader population. The concept of 'happiness' will be the central focus, owing to its necessity in our current societal context.

Citizen Journalism

The communication and media sector has benefited from the emergence of the second generation of the Web (Web 2.0). This embodied the features of the network society, characterized by democracy and the ability to provide everyone with the opportunity to participate in its structure and content. The notion of citizen journalism was formed by the second generation of the Web, which provided a broad platform for expression and technological vulnerability (Wall, 2015:797-813). Citizen journalism is an inclusive media project that involves group citizenship and collaboration (Harcup, 2016: 680- 696).

The term citizen-journalism emerged in the 1990s to describe the press's interest in public concerns. As a result, the media became a forum for citizens to voice their issues in public. The two most prominent examples of such experiences in the past century were, the articles written by Paul Melamin for the American news agency and the opinion polls carried out by the American magazine *The Register* in 1993. People cherish freedom of thought, speech and their responsibility to uphold and preserve their ideals.

Citizen journalism was an approach taken by media organisations to engage the public in conversation. The term citizen journalism has expanded to open journalism, alternative media, participatory journalism, community journalism etc. These terms reflect a new paradigm in media practice that no longer represents the media establishment but rather the

power of citizens to create and disseminate news. People can now express a wide range of viewpoints due to the democratization of the media by giving voice to those who are neglected or marginalized by the majority.

Through the removal of conventional entrance barriers, citizen journalism promotes a rich tapestry of narratives and a more inclusive communication landscape. This decentralized strategy, challenges the historical inequities that traditional media has been promoting by allowing a wider representation of people, cultures, and point of view. In doing so citizen journalism fosters a more thorough and equitable awareness of the world by as a check of possible biases and limitations of traditional media channels as well as acting as a catalyst for social change. News is shared in the modern digital era through several platforms, including print, radio, television, and mostly the internet. The increasing demand for fast and relevant information is highlighted by the quick pace of news production and consumption, which is driven by social media platforms and 24- hour news cycles.

The article "Inclusive Communication Model Supporting the Employment Cycle of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders" discusses how an inclusive communication model supports the employment cycle of individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD)(Tomczak, 2021: 1). Individuals with autism often have communication and social interaction needs that are not addressed by typical workplace strategies. Through interviews and in dept analysis the paper aimed to understand the employment experiences of autistic individuals and practices that promote inclusion and success in the workplace. Promoting understanding, empathy and harmony in one's life requires inclusive communication more than it does. It ensures that each person feels respected and heard by bridging gaps in language, culture and viewpoint. In a diverse environment, inclusive communication is essential to establishing lasting bonds in social settings, professional settings and personal interactions.

When it comes to an individual's personal space, social media plays a huge role in expressing their emotions and needs. Instagram's features such as stories, reels and IGTV, allow users to share personal narratives and celebrate cultural traditions. It is also a platform to highlight their abilities and contribute to the promotion of diversity and representation. By giving underrepresented voices a platform, these features help make the internet a more welcoming place overall by increasing their visibility and recognition. It's crucial to understand that Instagram influence on inclusive communication is not without its difficulties though. Biases can occasionally be reinforced by the platform's algorithms and content moderation

guidelines. It also makes marginalised voices less visible. Furthermore, problems like harassment, cyberbullying, and the dissemination of false information can sabotage initiatives aimed at promoting diversity. With the ability to follow accounts from many cultures, nations and groups, Instagram fosters global connectivity. Viewpoints are widened, prejudices are contested, and empathy is fostered by this exposure to a variety of perspectives and life experiences.

Initiatives

Some prominent initiatives that will be dealt with are *We The Young* and *Mariwala Health*. *We The Young* promotes youth leadership and empowerment by providing platforms for young people to voice their opinions and ideas. It is a youth media platform founded by Charit Jaggi revolving around youth culture, their passion, mental health and life stories. They interact with communities face-to-face to learn about their communication needs and preferences. They detect obstacles to inclusion and take proactive measures to overcome them through needs assessments and active listening. Furthermore, these programmes place a high priority on producing inclusive and accessible content—whether it be using assistive technologies, a variety of languages, or visual aids.

Mariwala Health is a non-profit organization focused on promoting mental health and well-being in India. The organizers collaborate with various stakeholders including government agencies, NGOs and mental health professionals to drive positive change. Prithi Srindhar is the CEO of Mariwala Health Initiative which reduces the stigma surrounding mental health and improves access to quality care for individuals across the country.

The article "Citizen Journalism" shows how the rise of citizen journalism has forced academics and the journalistic community to reconsider what journalism is and who qualifies as a journalist. The credibility and representativeness of the material coming out of major media outlets has been questioned by citizen journalists, upending news media ecosystems (Miller, 2019: 1). The question over the appropriate degree of public participation in the news process is a long-standing issue that predates the rise of citizen journalism.

By democratizing the information flow and giving a platform to a variety of views, citizen journalism is a potent kind of inclusive communication. While viewpoints may be underrepresented or ignored in traditional journalism, citizen journalism enables people from diverse communities and backgrounds to offer their narratives, experiences, and ideas. Information becomes a collaborative and interactive process when viewed through the prism

of citizen journalism, fostering discussion and teamwork. By adhering to the inclusive principles, citizen journalism contributes significantly to social justice advocacy, personal experience validation, and community building in addition to enriching the media industry. Moreover, traditional journalism is the outside looking in and the inside looking out is citizen journalism (Dooley, 2008: 83). Having both points of view aids in telling the whole narrative.

According to his reasoning, there is a place for both the long-standing profession known as traditional journalism and the emerging phenomenon known as citizen journalism. Both can sustain individually but when combined creates something quite wonderful. Through these initiatives, citizen journalism can create an atmosphere for those in need. But can be put to greater use with the help of traditional journalism. A noteworthy instance would be the reporting on Kerala's destructive floods in 2018. When the state experienced catastrophic floods due to severe rains, ordinary citizens used social media to provide updates, videos, and images of the disaster as it happened. Often quicker than traditional media, these citizen journalists resumed operations and relief efforts while also providing vital information about the devastated areas. Sharing one's own story is always better than being delivered by a third person. Citizen journalism is a way to share our thoughts to the outside world. These stories can vary from one's personal issues to that of showing some other's situation through platforms like Instagram or Facebook.

Many journalists have mistrust and dislike those who defend the truth and work to maintain morally absolute ethical and legal norms (Lowry, 1999). This usually happens within traditional journalism, where news gets filtered due to the authorities within the frame. These left-out news can be made to reach the needed authorities through citizen journalism. It would not be practical for traditional news forms to cover every news happening around the globe as India being a diverse country. There is a need for these citizen journalists to provide information from their side to make everyone aware of the whole situation of what is happening around them. In addition to traditional media, citizen journalism is essential for enhancing public dialogue, increasing transparency and creating a more diverse and democratic media environment. The state of citizen journalism in India has profound implications for democracy, media dynamics and public opinion. Digital technology and social media platforms are widely available. This has led to the rise of citizen journalism as a major force for grassroots reporting allowing them to share their own stories. Because of this, the media environment has become more democratic, giving marginalised groups more voice and ability to stand up for their rights and interests. The rise of citizen journalism has brought up questions regarding privacy and ethics.

Few issues that have spurred the development of citizen journalism are as follows. Firstly, the process of creating and disseminating news has become more democratic due to the widespread availability of digital technology. By getting over traditional media gatekeepers, accessibility enables anyone to report on events in real-time and share their thoughts with a worldwide audience. Second, social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter have given people easy ways to share videos, images, and news articles, expanding the scope of citizen journalism and supporting grassroots movements. Furthermore, the need for citizen journalism has increased due to a growing desire for authenticity and diversity in news coverage. This is because citizen journalism provides a platform for alternative opinions and exposes topics that are not always covered by mainstream media.

Happiness

Across cultural, geographic, and personal boundaries, happiness is a multifaceted subjective feeling. It is frequently defined as a joyful, contented and well-being state. Though everyone's source of happiness is different, many people share pleasant relationships, meaningful connections, personal successes and a feeling of purpose. Happiness is a dynamic, ever-evolving experience that is impacted by the highs and lows of life rather than a static one. The search for happiness frequently motivates people to work towards their own development. The word happiness refers to a complex and highly personal concept that people of many ages, cultures and backgrounds may relate to. Basically, happiness is commonly understood to be a state of well-being symbolized by emotions of joy, contentment, and life satisfaction. The pursuit of happiness is a common objective but achieving it can be difficult and dependent on a variety of factors. This includes personal circumstances, social conventions and expectations from the community.

The 'need' for happiness is a subject that has to be looked into in today's world. The article framed by G. S. Bajpal titled "The quest for 'happiness' in the Viksit Bharat odyssey" (2023) demands a rethinking of India's development strategy, moving away from an economic - centric approach and reaching towards a focus on happiness and well-being. It challenges the GDP-centric narrative that is now dominant and emphasizes the necessity of including comprehensive social indicators in the development narrative. The main concept is to imagine a "Happy India-Developed India" by 2047. Here, pursuing 'happiness' becomes the primary goal and goes beyond traditional 'economic metrics.' The path ahead entails rewriting the narrative of development, emphasizing happiness measures and utilizing a wider range of indicators including the Human Development Index, Green Index And others.

Integrating social ties, happiness and well-being into development methods would help create a more sustainable and all-encompassing vision for Viksit Bharat @2047. This provides a pathway that needs to be obtained for a better future in 2024 and afterwards.

When happiness is fostered through open communication, it has the capacity to bring people and communities together. Embracing diversity, respecting individual differences, and making sure that everyone feels heard and appreciated are all part of inclusive communication practices. We foster an atmosphere where people from all walks of life may participate in discussions without fear of marginalization or judgment by actively listening to different points of view, promoting open communication, and refraining from using language that excludes others. Barriers can be broken down and a sense of connection and belonging can be fostered among people with different identities, experiences and origins through inclusive communication. People are more likely to feel deeply happy and well-being when they feel understood and included.

Initiatives like *We The Young* and *Mariwala Health* put forward certain ideas that focus on 'happiness'. The lyric "When you are young they assume you know nothing" from *Cardigan* by Taylor Swift demonstrates how society perceives today's young generation. However, Jane Goodall (2005) states that if young people are informed and empowered they realize that what they do truly makes a difference and can indeed change the world. Youth activities are essential to the promotion of inclusive communication, by bringing new ideas, enthusiasm and views to the upfront. A shift towards more inclusive discourse is sparked by young people, who are frequently distinguished by a sharp awareness of diversity and social justice issues. By means of programmes like community service, social media campaigns and advocacy, young people actively confront prejudices, give voice to underrepresented groups and foster understanding among people of different identities. Through their use of social media and technology, they can unite disparate groups by distributing inclusive messages globally. Furthermore, youth-driven projects frequently place an emphasis on collaborations, establishing forums where people from all backgrounds may have honest and beneficial discussions. Youth programmes have a key role in promoting inclusive communication, tearing down barriers, debunking stereotypes, and fostering a more harmonious and understanding community. One such initiative is *We The Young,* which amplifies voices of young change makers connecting them with opportunities by documenting stories of struggle and strength.

Conclusion

The news creates a common understanding of issues that impact the entire world's population by acting as a bridge between individuals living in different countries. Technology's essential importance in promoting an informed and involved populace has not altered, despite the manner we consume news having evolved throughout its growth. In the end, news serves as an interface linking people to the outside world, encouraging participation, awareness, and a shared comprehension of the happenings that influence our reality. The transforming ability of inclusive communication to build a more harmonious and supportive society where diversity's richness enhances people's individual and community well-being is the reason it is so essential for happiness. Together, people discover common ground and recognise the richness that varying viewpoints provide to the human experience, making the celebration of variety in this communicative space a source of joy. Happiness therefore develops out of the inclusive exchange of ideas, stories and understanding.

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13. Promoting Peace Journalism through Citizen Journalism in Conflict Zones

Ethan Fortes, Independent Researcher

Abstract

The research article studies the potential of peace journalism practices within citizen journalism to foster a more empathetic and constructive approach to war coverage in the Indian subcontinent. Through case studies of the Naxalite movement, the conflicts in Northeast India, and the Kashmir unrest, the study investigates the underlying causes of violence and the role of media in aggravating or mitigating tensions. It also argues that citizen journalism, when practiced ethically, can serve as a powerful tool for peace journalism, providing a platform for marginalized voices and promoting dialogue over violence. The research concludes that cultivating a culture of peace journalism, through citizen-led initiatives and media literacy, is essential for addressing the complex challenges faced by the region and for fostering a more peaceful future.

Keywords: Citizen journalism, Peace journalism, war coverage, Indian subcontinent, Kashmir violence, Northeast conflicts, Naxalite movement, media literacy, human rights,

Introduction

The beginnings of war coverage have been prevalent throughout history with records of ancient battle of different kingdoms written on stone tablets or cave paintings. It can be said that humankind has been reporting on wars almost as long as they have been fighting them. However, after World War II, modern technology has aided and surpassed the individual war correspondent. Motion pictures, television, radio and the internet have made it possible for the instant transmission of vivid images of conflict zones from any place in the globe. However, after the coverage of the Vietnam War and the horrors that emerged, military and governmental control of war time images had tightened dramatically. Inspite of this, advancement in technology has given rise to citizen journalism.

Citizen Journalism can be understood as the journalistic practice of the nonprofessional community within the society to collect information for reporting by analyzing it through public perception for spreading the news. Using modern technologies, the local community

established its own networking society wherein incidents are reported through the lens of the public. Citizen journalism has enabled citizens to raise their voice on matters they feel need greater attention. Because of the participatory involvement of citizens in the practice of journalism, citizen journalism is also known as participatory and democratic journalism, civic journalism and collaborative journalism among others. The intent of citizen Journalism is to provide independent, reliable and wide-ranging information to the public. On the digital platform there are several citizen journalism websites that give a platform for the people to report and express their opinion on situations around them. This growth in citizen journalism websites continues as the number of Internet users and new media writers continues to rise.

Parallel to the development of citizen journalism, mainstream media also began to get more commercial - focusing on presenting news favouring the elites while also promoting military action as a means towards attaining peace. This led to the emergence of peace journalism promulgated by Johan Galtung. Galtung's approach towards promoting peace journalism was in response to the growing spread of news coverage focusing on violence and destruction. For Galtung and his supporters, peace journalism acts contrary to war journalism, covering all sides and focusing more on ordinary people with the intention of resolving conflicts and spreading peace. Aware of the power of media in influencing the minds of people, Galtung stressed on bringing peace discourses to life by engaging the emotional public sphere. This could be advocated through the coverage of soft stories.

Journalist Bel Trew, in a TEDx Talk in Berlin, spoke of her experiences as a war journalist. She highlighted the fact that it was the coverage of the people's state that brought on a feeling of empathy. Stressing on how mainstream media propagates coverage of violence and destruction in every war-torn or conflict-riddled area, the real news of a conflict zone lay in the effects it had on the citizens of the place. This itself showed how Trew, in a way, promoted peace journalism by emphasizing the need to spread peace discourse rooted in empathy. Reiterating Galtung, Trew also mentioned that a war journalism rooted in empathy will bring in more change in a conflict zone that one rooted in violence.

As seen the two new approaches, citizen journalism and peace journalism, helps bring out a different perspective towards conflict-riddled zones basing its values on empathy and non-violence. The two approaches are like two parallel lines running along to bring in a different perspective to war coverage in general. This paper attempts to bridge the gap between citizen journalism and peace journalism while contextualizing it within the Indian subcontinent that has been riddled with conflicts, wars and terror attacks.

Literature Review

The concept of peace journalism as proposed by Johan Galtung, despite its critics has had a lot of scholarly research done coupling it with theoretical and empirical surveys conducted by researchers. Consequently, even citizen journalism has undergone extensive scholarly research to prove its relevance post the emergence of the internet. A large amount of the study on citizen journalism focusses on its relevance within the largely dominant mainstream news agencies.

The book LikeWar: The Weaponization of Social Media by P.W. Singer and Emerson T. Brooking (2018) explored how social media is used to spread ideologies and gain people's sympathy and attention to worldwide events. The books states that the new battlefield is fought in the cyber world wherein every party involved tries to make their policy more popular. It is through the means of digital discourses that ideologies are spread that influence the general audience. This leads to the ever-growing risk of the spread fake news spread. Conversely, the freedom of speech on social media also brought a positive change in which the power of reporting was handed over to the general public. This entailed that anyone who could navigate on a social media platform could also aid in reporting news event, specifically in war-torn areas. With the public reporting on news events, it would also help curb the manipulation of news reports by power-hungry agencies.

However, censorship rules in various countries become a sort of roadblock to determine the difference between fake news and real news. Introducing the idea of manufacturing consent, David Katiambo (2019) reiterated Herman and Chomsky (1988) in saying that institutional news reporting was earlier credited with advancing democracy and good governance until it was accused of manufacturing consent by spreading propaganda on behalf of the elites.

Through the process of war journalism, the mainstream media would promote military action towards promoting peace. With mainstream media considering terror attacks as newsworthy, terror groups would also gain an advantage of intimidating the public through horrific killings. Due to this, news agencies are wedged in between motivating military solutions to terrorism and acting as a voice for terrorists to intimidate the public. Furthermore, war journalism legitimizes war, pushing journalists to frame wars and conflicts from a friend/enemy perspective resulting in public enemy's being defined as those classified as enemies by the state. Thus, mainstream media manufactures consent by converting the government's agenda into the people's agenda.

Social media on the other hand, provides a platform for people to moderate traditional news sources better than the previous means of audience participation. As mentioned by Rabia Noor (2017) this opens the platform for citizen journalism and further brings out its significance. The citizen journalist, who is not a trained professional, reports on his or her neighbourhood or community on topics that could not make it to traditional media. The news reports from citizen journalists can be published on citizen journalism sources, especially news portals and blogs. In the midst of mainstream media's dominance of war journalism, a new approach by Johan Galtung focused on promoting peace through audience oppositional reading of terrorism news online.

To understand this, the study by Burak Ercoşkun (2021) on Galtung's approach to Peace Studies is very beneficial. The research article explores how Galtung goes on to define peace by first defining violence. For Galtung, there are 3 forms of violence: direct, structural and cultural. Structural violence is caused by political mechanisms, processes and institutions that ensure the satisfaction of identity, reputation and security needs. Cultural violence, on the other hand, is fed by anger, fear and hatred that arise from a misunderstanding between different sides. Countering this, Galtung describes two types of peace: negative peace and positive peace. Galtung describes negative peace as the absence of violence and war while positive peace is the absence of structural violence and the presence of cooperation and integration between human societies. Before the stage of violence is the stage of conflict that can be resolved with empathy, creativity and non- violence. This sort of conflict transformation aims to change the differences of individuals and communities through collaborative problem-solving.

Yanwen Wang's Review on War and Peace Journalism Paradigm (2022) further explores the role of journalists in promoting peace through the practice of peace journalism. Peace journalism is nonpartisan, covering all sides and focusing more on ordinary people, intending to solve conflicts and call for peace. Peace coverage is seen as the 'high road' as it focusses on the peaceful transformation of the conflict. It is claimed to be superior to war journalism as it requires the news media to be more proactive and non-violent in conflict reporting to reduce it rather than escalate it or act as observers.

Furthermore, peace journalism advocates a more comprehensive and complex way to cover stories. Kalfeli and Frangonikolopoulos (2019) reinstate that from a peace journalism perspective, journalists are required to play a more active role when reporting conflict and crises, providing a platform for dialogue and a vehicle for understanding between conflicting

parties. Further, through a study on other research done with regard to peace journalism, the article also focusses on the importance of training both journalists and the audience to recognize the virtues of peace journalism and on shaping a connection between peace journalism and media literacy. Pointing out the uniqueness of peace journalism, a study by Gouse et al. (2019) expanded Galtung's (1998) standpoint that a good war reporter would find 'a clear opportunity' for human progress and assist in transforming the conflict creatively so that violence can be replaced by opportunities for development.

The literature reviewed provides a deep understanding about the concept of peace journalism proposed by Johan Galtung. Further, the articles also bring to light the emergence, significance, and importance of citizen journalism with the coming of the internet. This foundation helps build a bridge between the two forms of journalism incorporating peace journalism within citizen journalism.

Research Gap and Rationale

With the existing literature extensively exploring the scope of peace journalism and citizen journalism in the present age, there is a gap between the two which when bridged would aid in effectively promoting peace while seeing it through the lens of citizen journalism. Most of the scholarly works deals with either peace journalism or citizen journalism. However, there is a lot of scope for peace journalism when expressed through citizen journalism. Exploring this dimension of citizen journalism can help further the path of peace journalism chalked out by Johan Galtung and his supporters.

Citizen journalism already holds a lot of importance as it aims to report news that would not otherwise be covered by mainstream media. Similarly, peace journalism also attempts to provide a different perspective to war coverage as compared to the commonly practiced war journalism by mainstream media outlets.

Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following questions:

- How does the practice of peace journalism and citizen journalism support each other?
- What are the basis behind the emergence of violence in conflict zones, and how can it be resolved using peaceful measures?

- In what ways can peace journalism be practiced within the framework of citizen journalism especially amidst the context of violence-affected areas?

Research Methodology

To address the research questions pertaining to bridging the gap between peace journalism and citizen journalism, a multi-faceted methodology was employed. The research relayed on a qualitative approach providing insights by way of case studies of different events of war, terrorism and violence within the Indian subcontinent. First, an extensive literature review was conducted to establish a theoretical framework and to identify a few real-world instances wherein citizen journalism and peace journalism has featured. These real-world instances were then taken up as cases on which the study is based. The sources for each of the cases are research papers, journal articles, and online news articles that have been published as lessons and observations from the conflict riddled zones.

The case studies help in exploring the practices of citizen journalism and peace journalism at the time of conflict and terror. What has been observed is how the citizens rallied on social media to report the scenes being witnessed and what were the news reports that garnered the most attention by those in the digital space. Furthermore, a few of the case studies also explore the reasons behind conflicts and violence in a region and the ways by which peace can be brought about. By adopting this comprehensive methodology, the research aimed to contribute valuable insights into the means by which peace journalism and citizen journalism can go hand-in-hand in paving the way towards a more empathetic approach towards covering violence, thereby harbouring peace rather than promoting conflict.

Findings of Case Studies

The Naxalite movement began in the late 20th century at a local level but soon grew into a national movement with many viewing it as an internal security threat of the country. Growing along the path of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, the movement focusses on a peasant revolution that aims to overthrow a 'semi-feudal and semi-colonial' state into a people's democratic under the leadership of the proletariat.

Charu Mazumdar, the founder of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) or CPI (ML), inspired by Chinese leader Mao Tse-tung prepared himself in a revolutionary manner. Emphasizing the theory of 'annihilation of class enemies', the Naxalites went on a violence spree causing an upheaval in Calcutta in 1970. After a brief stint of suppression, violence

ensued again but this time in Chhattisgarh wherein the Central Reserve Police Forces (CRPF) was attacked.

The CPI (Maoists) expressed the view to create a people's democratic state, led by the proletariat, that would provide equal rights to all the people where the tribals would have a right to water, forest, and land, thus emerging as a socialist state. The problem lay in the fact that the Naxal-affected zones had consisted of many minerals of which the tribals had no access to the benefits resulting from its production. The demand of the Naxalites was towards access to irrigation, medical facilities, minimum wages and minimum support price of the produce.

While the Chhattisgarh government treated the Naxalite violence as a law-and-order problem resorting to violent measures and restrictions to curb violence, the Andra Pradesh government dealt with the violence viewing it as a socio-economic problem. In this regard, the state emphasized on the development aspect to develop the region, effectively implementing the Integrated Action Plan (IAP), set up by the central government, in most affected regions of the state. This resulted in a reduction of violent incidents from 54 in 2011 to 17 in 2016. In comparison, in states like Chhattisgarh where violent measures were taken saw a destruction of the socio-economic life of the tribes.

While the Naxalites are constantly being perceived as a threat, the situation generally centers around basic human rights and prevention of economic degradation. Responding to this situation and raising awareness of the causes of the problems are a number of human rights activists and environmentalists. Addressing the issue, these activists act as citizen journalists reporting the situation in these affected areas while also providing ways in which the situation can be controlled while avoiding a violent response to violence.

Another sensitive part of India that is prone to violence is northeast India. Consisting of diverse tribal communities, linguistic and ethnic identities, the region is a hotbed for violence facing law and order problems, human rights issue and inter and intra tribal conflicts. In the pursuit of protecting their tribal identity, a violent ethnic assertion is undertaken leading to conflict. This ethnic assertion is seen from two standpoints. Firstly, the tribal communities' subjective consciousness of being excluded and subjected leads to a feeling of alienation and marginalization. Secondly, the development process undertaken by the government fails to address the legitimate concerns of the people as dominant communities allied with state power tend to exclude certain groups from the access of resources, institutions and

opportunities. The unequal distribution of resources with both, economic and non-economic factors, created a sense of exclusion among some of the ethnic communities.

The sense of social exclusion was further heightened with the emergence of social forces like the educated elite. This was a modernization process with the washing away of the traditional values, norms and practices that were part of the tribal communities. While India's constitutional democracy aimed at addressing these issues in a confrontational approach that focused on accommodation, the indulgence of human rights violation by the State further aggravated the issue. Due to low numeric strength and low-bargaining power with the power structure, a few tribal communities were left out in the nation-building process. To resolve this, a few policies were set up ensuring inclusiveness for the discontented communities. However, this didn't yield much result with the discontentment shifting from a peaceful manner of expression to an extremist form of expression. A study suggested that this turn of expression was a result of the state imposing its will and authority on the people.

This is evidently seen in the disregard of the tribal communities' cultural and economic specificities. Thus, the development process undertaken led to a more intense conflict instead of generating peace. With the rise in extremist activities, because of the unbalanced development process, the state became more repressive often invoking the Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958. This state repression, in the name of counter insurgency, led to many human rights violations as the laws invoked seemed draconian to the innocent civilians, most of whom belonged to tribal communities. And so, ethnic mobilization began as a counter measure to the unbalanced development process and as a point of ethnic assertion of specific ethnic communities. However, such exclusionary practices cannot be tackled by mobilization, as it leads to more violence; rather, it needs to be responded to through a recognition of the specificities and material needs of the communities. This can be expressed well when the citizens themselves are given a chance to express their opinions thus opening the path towards dialogue and peaceful discourse.

Since India's Independence, local press of the state of Jammu and Kashmir acted as the mainstream media for the citizens. After the partition, India and Pakistan have been in dispute as to which parts of the state of Jammu and Kashmir are theirs. This conflict has resulted in three wars between the two nations. The roots of the Kashmir conflict have imperial roots with British India setting a buffer zone between the state and the Tsarist Empire. During the British rule, Kashmir wasn't considered as part of British India though the colonial rulers established a boundary with China and Afghanistan. However, this demarcation wasn't fully

clear thereby continuing to cause issues between India and Pakistan especially in the conflict over the Siachin Glacier in the high Himalayas. Furthermore, with China and Pakistan forming an agreement over the border of Kashmir, India is left to contest it over it being part of the state. Apart from the conflict over boundaries between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, there also lies conflicts within the state especially about water disputes, trades, etc.

The local press of Jammu and Kashmir, which act as the mainstream media for the citizens, has largely focused on providing war frames favouring militant actions, violence and casualties in the Indian Occupied Kashmir and terrorist attacks on the Indian Parliament while ignoring news regarding human rights issues and aspects promoting dialogue over violence. In a study by Yousaf et al. (2018) observing how media portrays the India-Pakistan conflict, it was seen that war frames were dominant in the elite press of Pakistan and India with the dispute being considered as an important issue. This favouring of war frames has a powerful influence on citizen's perception and opinion further aggravating the conflict.

The rising conflict had further implications on journalists reporting on the dispute. By the early 1990s journalists were being killed due to regional disputes. The escalating threat to the lives of professional journalists led to the rise of citizen journalism in the state. The rising citizen journalism focused on reporting on violation of human rights within the state through the eyes of its citizens.

To empower citizen journalists and give them a platform to report on issues within Kashmir, a newspaper Kashmir Walla was introduced in 2009. However, the hope for independent citizen journalism was slowly being curbed when in 2017, the Ministry of electronic and technology imposed digital censorship within the state. Freedom of press was further curbed in 2019 after the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. The government enforced strict control over mainstream media while shutting down internet services to stop the practice of independent journalism. Furthermore, a crackdown on media was proposed so as to silence the voice of the local press. Support to Kashmiri media was removed by the government by stopping advertisements. This brought in roadblocks for citizen journalists to express their opinions and share it with a wider audience.

A study showed that citizen journalists in Kashmir generally reported through texts accompanied by simple photos and videos. However, from January 2022 onwards, every kind of journalism in India occupied Kashmir was almost blocked fully. Yet, the same study also identifies that citizen journalists covered more on violence, human rights, surveillance and victim's stories. Due to the restrictions imposed by the government, many journalists and

citizen journalists hide their identity while also carefully using their sources due to the life threats they face.

To stifle dissent in the region, the Indian government has suspended many social media platforms, news sites and the passports of several Kashmiris. A study showed that a perceptible assault on freedom of expression within Jammu and Kashmir continues. However, it was also noticed that the news stories of citizen journalists were more interactive and objective, giving a voice for the local community covering human rights, violence, killing and harassment issues among others from a journalistic point of view to gain a wider audience.

Citizen journalism boomed to prominence in India in 2008 when Mumbai witnessed a series of terror attacks on prominent and iconic places within the city. When the terrorists attacked the city on 26th November 2008, Twitter and Flickr came alive with many citizens capturing scenes and giving minute-by-minute updates as the attacks carried on.

Flickr was filled with a series of photos showing the dramatic scenes of the aftermaths of the attacks in the district of Colaba. Twitter, on the other hand, also provided a constant stream of information through its search function. The most popular tag #mumbai became a source of information. And so, it was noted that the first notes of the attacks came from the Indian users of Twitter. The amount of information being spread by the citizens of Mumbai was so overwhelming that the Indian government had to be temporarily blocked. However, on the positive side, news of the attacks in Mumbai were disseminated quicker on Twitter than on mainstream media. Even the victims of the attacks were able to share their fears and experiences on to the Internet as it took place. A group of Mumbai-based bloggers turned their blog into a news wire service documentation what was taking place while some other blogs offered to help users get through to their families and friends in the city or at least to get information about them.

Apart from this, Indian users also helped share information about the attacks by retweeting news headlines broadcasted by mainstream media. Despite this, the general audience were more concerned with the state of the victims of the attack leading to attention being focused on human stories. While this proved a milestone in the emergence of citizen journalism, the extent to which it went had no gatekeepers. This had its drawbacks as the terrorists within the affected areas were getting live updates of the movement of the defence forces through the tweets by the citizens. And so, the Indian government had to temporarily block Twitter

services so as not to make public the secret movements of the defence forces in capturing the terrorists.

Conclusion

Every nation has had its history of conflicts, either internal or external. Some of these have arisen out of colonial reasons while others due to negligence of indigenous communities. Being diverse and large, the Indian subcontinent faces multiple conflicts in different regions. While covering these conflicts, the mainstream media largely focusses on the attack or the conflict and the minute-by-minute updates about it. However, many of the conflicts had arisen due to a feeling of isolation and alienation. Research studies on the Naxalite unrest and Northeast India violence show that with the government's development process favouring capitalists, the tribal communities feel isolated. The lack of access to resources and a rising sense of exclusion led to violent eruptions in these regions by the tribal communities. While this could be curbed through dialogue, it was the ignorance of the community's sentiments and a suppression of the tribal movements by use of force that further aggravated the problem.

In Kashmir, the rise of citizen journalism helps understand its importance when the lives of mainstream journalists are at risk and the news covered by mainstream media focusses on impressing on the mind of people that violence is the only key towards resolving conflict. Moreover, the citizen journalism practiced in Kashmir focused on highlighting violations of human rights issues within the state. While steady advancements were made in the field of citizen journalism, the roadblocks set up by the state almost completely stopped anyone from freely expressing their opinion.

Observing the situation of the Naxal affected regions and the Northeast region, the violence has erupted from the fact that the tribals have felt neglected and sidelined due to the development work of the government that tended to favour the elite capitalists. The natural resources, which the indigenous communities considered an integral part of their communities, was given over to the bigger corporations with the tribals feeling left out of what was theirs. While it has been noticed that the state of Andhra Pradesh worked towards development while also taking into consideration the sentiments of the Naxalites in the region, many of the other states resorted to violence as a response to the unrest created by the Naxalite groups. A similar situation tends to arise even in Northeast India with violence on the brink of eruption over the slightest problems.

184

However, the situation in Kashmir has provided a ray of hope towards the practice of peace journalism within the Indian subcontinent. With citizen journalists reporting and raising issues related to human rights, the violence has brought in a dimension of empathy and concern over the living conditions and problems faced by the local citizens. This has led to a shift of focus in the reporting of conflict and war in the region, focusing on the human issues rather than the destruction caused by machinery and artillery. While the developing citizen journalism has faced problems from the local government by way of censorship, the case of Kashmir provides insights into how citizen journalism can be practiced in the country to promote peace without highlighting violent measures and military action. It seems quite possible that peace journalism can be practiced through citizen journalism in conflict zones as it will help bring out the citizens' perspective towards the conflict rather than promoting military action which as seen before results in further violence and destruction, causing further problems to the local society.

Citizen journalism, while focusing on the human stories, can also be biased and, like mainstream media, tend to instigate violence over the atrocities faced by the civilians. This a concern that also needs to be focused on when promoting peace journalism within citizen journalism. In order to practice peace journalism through the voice of the citizens, it is necessary that the citizens are educated towards understanding the workings of peace journalism and the various methods one can incorporate to promote peace and dialogue. The start towards promoting the practice of peace journalism in conflict zones through the voice of the citizens begins with an orientation into different, non-violent approaches towards resolving conflict. With that becoming a priority for the citizens, the very approach towards reporting conflicts, violence and terror will be geared towards seeking measures, means and ways to seek peace non-violently. With the fact that citizen journalists face far less restrictions when it comes to gatekeepers filtering the news reports, the practice of peace journalism becomes highly probable and feasible, thus becoming a ray of light shedding in a different take on the conflicts and wars that take place around.

Similarly, in the case of Mumbai, it is observed that the practice of peace journalism within citizen journalism helped in easing the tensions of the public who feared for their relatives. But the lack of ethics in the reporting of news led to the temporary ban on social media services. What is required is an orientation towards media ethics and literacy for regular citizens to help promote good citizen journalism. Peace studies coupled with media ethics can help the citizens discern where to draw the line between the oversharing of news reports and

the sharing of news. This would also further help citizens to look for ways to promote peace over violence when faced with conflicts.

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14. An Analysis of Blogs by the Dalits as a Tool of Empowerment and an Alternative Media Space

Utkarsha Kesarkar, Student, Master of Arts (Communication & Journalism, Batch 2019-21), Kishinchand Chellaram College.

Introduction

The academic exploration of Dalit experiences has evolved through critical investigations of caste-based discrimination and resistance strategies. Seminal works by Thorat and Newman (2007) comprehensively documented systemic exclusions in urban employment, housing, and education, revealing persistent discrimination against even highly qualified Dalits. Pai's (2013) research further illuminated the political mobilization of Dalit communities, analyzing the complex dynamics of challenging caste hierarchies through democratic processes and highlighting both the potential and limitations of political representation.

The emergence of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed opportunities for marginalized communities to challenge dominant narratives. Scholars like Jackson et al. (2020) and Kumar (2015) demonstrated how digital platforms enable minorities to create alternative discourse spaces, providing unprecedented opportunities for self-representation. Nayar (2011) and Rawat (2020) specifically examined Dalit digital activism, revealing how online platforms facilitate new forms of protest, solidarity building, and message amplification across geographical boundaries. While these digital spaces offer transformative potential, researchers also acknowledged persistent challenges such as digital divides and language constraints that continue to reproduce existing social barriers. Despite significant scholarly contributions, critical gaps remain in understanding how Dalit blogs specifically construct narratives, challenge caste-based oppression, and foster community solidarity. This study addresses these research limitations by conducting an in-depth analysis of Dalit blogs, examining their themes, reach, and impact on both online and offline activism.

Dr Misrahi - Barack argued that, "The online presence, generally speaking, is empowering for Dalits because it goes against the usual borders and limitations, it can reach out beyond the casteist context within India, it is theoretically caste-blind, it is theoretically open to all, when associated with English, it becomes a global language that is caste-blind"

Dr Sagar Bhalerao posits that, "We are reading and writing blogs as a part of 'Community Communication'. This is the second or third generation of that marginalised community who face social, economic and political discrimination. People from that community are still unable to contest elections, unable to express their views (Spiral of Silence). So they look up to this media (Blogs) as a tool of expression"

Literature Review

The scholarly exploration of Dalit experiences and digital activism has emerged as a critical area of interdisciplinary research, revealing complex interactions between technology and social justice. Foundational works by Thorat and Newman (2007) documented systemic discrimination against Dalits in urban employment, housing, and education, while Pai (2013) analyzed political mobilization efforts to challenge caste hierarchies. These early studies provided essential insights into the structural barriers and political challenges faced by Dalit communities, establishing a framework for understanding social exclusion and resistance strategies.

Digital technologies have transformed Dalit activism by creating alternative spaces for narrative construction and community engagement. Kumar (2015) and Nayar (2011) demonstrated how online platforms enable marginalized groups to share experiences beyond traditional social constraints, providing unprecedented opportunities for protest and solidarity building. Comparative research by Jackson et al. (2020) on African American blogging communities further illuminated how digital platforms serve as crucial spaces for counter-narrative construction, revealing similar patterns of resistance across different marginalized communities. Rawat's (2020) research specifically examined how Dalit organizations leverage digital platforms to amplify messages and coordinate actions across geographical boundaries, while also acknowledging persistent challenges like digital divides and language constraints.

Despite significant scholarly contributions, critical gaps remain in understanding the comprehensive role of Dalit blogs in shaping public discourse. Existing literature predominantly focuses on social media activism and general digital advocacy, leaving limited exploration of how Dalit bloggers construct narratives, challenge caste-based oppression, and foster community solidarity. Intersectional perspectives, particularly those examining the relationship between caste, gender, and digital representation, have begun to complicate understanding of Dalit experiences. This study seeks to address these research gaps by conducting an in-depth analysis of Dalit blogs, examining their themes, reach, and impact on

189

both online and offline activism, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced understanding of digital platforms as instruments of social transformation.

Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to analyze the use of blogs by the Dalit community in India as an alternative media space and a tool of empowerment. By examining the content, themes, and narratives of Dalit blogs, this research seeks to understand how these digital platforms serve as a means of resistance, identity assertion, and community building. The study also explores how Dalit blogs challenge mainstream media narratives and contribute to the broader discourse on caste-based discrimination and social justice.

Methodology

This study employs **thematic analysis** to examine blogs administered by members of the Dalit community as a means of empowerment and alternative media representation. The research follows a qualitative approach, systematically identifying and interpreting recurring themes in Dalit blogs. Thematic analysis, as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), is used to identify and interpret patterns of meaning within the blog content. This method allows for an in-depth exploration of how Dalit bloggers construct narratives, challenge dominant discourses, and create a sense of collective identity.

The analysis follows six key phases: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Blog entries are read multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of their content. Key phrases and recurring topics related to Dalit empowerment, resistance, and identity formation are coded. The coded data is then examined for overarching themes such as "digital activism," "caste-based discrimination," and "self-assertion through writing." Themes are refined and checked against the entire dataset to ensure coherence and relevance. Each theme is clearly defined, capturing its significance within the broader discourse of Dalit digital empowerment. Finally, findings are contextualized with existing literature, demonstrating how Dalit blogs function as tools of resistance and empowerment.

Theoretical Framework

This research integrates multiple theoretical perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of Dalit digital activism. Social identity theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner, forms the foundational framework for examining how marginalized communities

construct collective identities and resist systemic oppression. By elucidating the psychological mechanisms of group membership, this theory reveals how intergroup dynamics reinforce social hierarchies. Complementing this approach, Spivak's concept of subaltern counter-publics offers critical insights into representation power dynamics. The blogs emerge as strategic interventions that allow marginalized groups to reconstruct their historical and contemporary experiences, challenging dominant narratives through digital platforms.

Reicher's expansion of social identity theory and Goffman's frame analysis further enrich the theoretical approach. Reicher's perspective emphasizes collective action's role in challenging systemic inequalities, transforming individual experiences into collective narratives of resistance. Goffman's frame analysis provides a lens for understanding how Dalit bloggers strategically construct and present their narratives, actively reshaping societal understandings of caste, identity, and social justice. Post-colonial communication theory additionally reveals how these digital platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for self-representation, bypassing traditional media gatekeeping. By synthesizing these theoretical perspectives, the research moves beyond simple documentation, offering a complex analysis of how digital technologies become powerful tools for challenging systemic oppression, constructing collective identities, and advocating for social change.

Selection of Blogs

The blogs selected for this study are curated based on the following criteria: Dalit authorship, social and political engagement, frequency of updates, and diverse perspectives. Blogs authored by individuals who identify as Dalit are prioritized to ensure an insider perspective on caste-based discrimination, identity, and activism. Blogs that actively discuss caste oppression, social movements, and Dalit identity formation are included. Additionally, blogs that have been consistently active over the past few years are chosen to ensure the relevance and contemporaneity of the content. To capture a broad spectrum of experiences, blogs representing different regions, languages, and intersections of Dalit identity (such as gender, class, and urban-rural divides) are included.

Some of the blogs analyzed include **Dalitweb.org**, which focuses on caste-related socio-political issues, activism, and resistance; **Swachchakar.blogspot.com**, which highlights caste-based labor discrimination, particularly manual scavenging; **Out-caste.blogspot.com**, which discusses casteism in education and academia; and **Chamaar-today.blogspot.com**, which explores everyday discrimination and Dalit identity struggles. Other blogs

191

include **Reservationfacts.blogspot.com**, which counters anti-reservation narratives and advocates for affirmative action; **Dalitliberation.blogspot.com,** which examines caste oppression in South Asian diaspora communities; and **MeenaKandasamy.blogspot.com**, which features reflections on caste, gender, and literature from a Dalit feminist perspective.

Thematic Analysis

Exposing Discrimination

Dalit blogs serve as crucial platforms for documenting caste-based injustices. These online spaces provide first-hand testimonies that mainstream media often neglects, allowing marginalized voices to narrate their own realities. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) posits that individuals derive a sense of self from group membership, and intergroup discrimination arises when dominant groups seek to maintain status hierarchies. The persistence of caste-based oppression, as detailed in blogs like Swachchakar.blogspot.com, exemplifies how systemic exclusion reinforces social stratification. One excerpt states:

> "Manual scavenging is a crime against humanity and yet the nation has failed
> to resolve it so far. It looks that it does not attract us anymore and except for
> lip service we have left it to be resolved by the victims themselves."

While Thorat and Newman (2010) documented systemic discrimination in formal employment sectors, the blog narratives reveal additional dimensions of discrimination in informal spaces and daily interactions. Where Thorat and Newman focused on quantitative evidence of employment discrimination, these blogs provide rich qualitative insights into the psychological and social impacts of such discrimination.

Government initiatives like the mid-day meal scheme, intended to promote social equality, have inadvertently highlighted the persistence of caste-based segregation in schools. Dalitweb.org states:

> "Dalit children are subjected to caste discrimination while being served mid-
> day meals in government schools. They are forced to sit in separate rows,
> bring utensils from home, or given food in plates marked boldly with
> permanent ink to distinguish them from the rest."

While Gorringe and Rafanell (2007) conceptualized caste discrimination through the lens of symbolic and structural violence in physical spaces, the digital testimonies in Dalit blogs reveal both parallels and important departures from their findings. Where Gorringe and

Rafanell documented how traditional power structures maintain caste hierarchies through institutional mechanisms, these blogs demonstrate how such violence has evolved in the digital age. For instance, Dalitweb.org's documentation of mid-day meal segregation illustrates not just the persistence of structural violence, but also how digital platforms transform the documentation and resistance to such practices.

The blogs extend beyond Gorringe and Rafanell's framework by demonstrating how digital spaces enable new forms of identity construction and resistance. Unlike traditional documentation of caste violence, which often reinforced narratives of victimhood, these digital archives serve a dual purpose: they simultaneously expose oppression while showcasing active resistance and community mobilization. This transformation aligns more closely with Spivak's (1988) concept of subaltern agency, where marginalized groups actively reshape their narrative positioning.

Furthermore, these blogs' function as digital archives represents a significant departure from traditional documentation methods studied by previous researchers. Their permanence and accessibility create what could be termed 'collective memory repositories,' enabling inter-generational transmission of both trauma and resistance strategies. This digital preservation challenges the historical erasure of Dalit experiences from mainstream narratives, while simultaneously providing tools for contemporary activism and community building.

Building Awareness

Dalit blogs play a crucial role in deconstructing caste-based inequalities by providing an unfiltered platform for Dalits to voice their struggles and experiences. These blogs serve as an educational bridge, both for the Dalit community and for non-Dalits who may remain unaware of the systemic nature of caste oppression. Meena Kandasamy's reflections on caste and suffering, for instance, challenge traditional beliefs that equate caste to divine will or fate:

> "Caste was there, why people suffered because of their karmas. I questioned the Gods, and the learned sages there. I asked them what would happen if a high-born did manual work just like the low-born."

By presenting caste as a social construct rather than a divine decree, these platforms open space for critical dialogue about social justice and human rights. Blogs such as **chamaar-today.blogspot.com** reinforce the urgency of addressing these issues through statistical evidence. One post highlights:

"Globally, more than 250,000,000 people suffer discrimination based on descent or work and occupation (UN, 12 August 2004). Of these, about 160,000,000 to 180,000,000 are in India."

Jodhka (2012) highlights how caste narratives in mainstream discourse frequently obscure the lived realities of Dalit communities, a phenomenon that persists in contemporary dialogue. However, Dalit blogs provide a counter-narrative that not only illuminates these obscured realities but also challenges the dominant discourse that perpetuates them. By amplifying personal experiences and collective struggles, platforms like chamaar-today.blogspot.com offer nuanced insights into caste identity and discrimination, presenting voices that are often absent in mainstream discussions.

These blogs serve as crucial sites of resistance against the deletion of Dalit experiences, directly confronting the sanitized narratives prevalent in academic and media portrayals. In contrast to Jodhka's findings, which emphasize systemic neglect within public discourse, Dalit blogs actively reconstruct these narratives by foregrounding lived experiences and fostering critical dialogue about caste oppression. This shift from passive representation to active engagement not only empowers the Dalit community but also enriches the broader conversation on social justice and equality, ensuring that the realities of caste-based discrimination remain visible and urgent.

Promoting Solidarity

Dalit blogs create digital spaces where marginalized voices across regions can share experiences and build solidarity. Social identity theory emphasizes the significance of in-group cohesion in resisting oppression (Reicher, 2004). These blogs allow Dalits to see their struggles as part of a larger systemic issue, fostering a stronger collective identity. **DalitWeb.org** contributor Pradnya Jadhav writes:

"Labour for all purposes is different Dalit Bahujan castes who toil in the fields... For them, the ground of commonness is their identity as 'women', their solidarity could be formed on how they are treated in the fields, how much they earn."

These reflections parallel Spivak's (1988) concept of "subaltern counter-publics," wherein marginalized groups construct alternative narratives to resist dominant ideologies. By amplifying Dalit voices, these digital platforms become catalysts for mobilization and advocacy.

Resisting Oppression

Research by Deshpande (2013) suggests that affirmative action remains essential due to deeply embedded caste biases in employment and education. Dalits use blogging as a tool for political discourse, challenging policies that hinder their progress. **Reservationfacts.blogspot.com** actively counters dominant caste narratives that oppose affirmative action. One post states:

> "Even if we remove reservation from the constitution, the words like SC/ST, Dalits, castes would never be removed, and for the society, Dalits would remain Dalits."

Dalit bloggers highlight the contradictions within anti-reservation rhetoric, illustrating how opposition to affirmative action perpetuates historical inequalities:

> "Anti-reservationists who are trying to isolate SC/STs are using a new tool called 'anti-reservation'. They are able to create a general consensus against specific communities by isolating caste-based reservations in India from other forms of reservation favouring them."

These arguments reflect social identity theory's principle of social competition, where marginalized groups reshape their standing through policy advocacy (Turner & Reynolds, 2001). By providing data, legal analysis, and personal testimonies, such blogs counter misinformation and offer a factual basis for the necessity of affirmative action. The resistant stance of these blogs challenges the status quo and ensures that Dalit voices are part of crucial conversations about policy and representation.

Global Dalit Discrimination

Caste-based discrimination and atrocities against Dalits are not confined to India. As dalitliberation.blogspot.com recounts, caste oppression is prevalent in South Asian diaspora communities and neighboring countries like Pakistan:

> "The incidents of atrocities and caste-based discrimination on Dalits are increasing day by day in Tharparkar -- a district where 35 per cent people belong to different Dalit communities -- because of growing awareness and assertiveness of the Dalits."

Mosse's (2018) research on caste-based exclusion in global labor markets provides a valuable foundation, but Dalit blogs reveal more complex dynamics of transnational discrimination.

195

Where Mosse primarily documented formal labor market exclusion through institutional ethnography, blogs like dalitliberation.blogspot.com expose the intimate, everyday manifestations of caste discrimination within diaspora communities. These digital narratives expand our understanding beyond economic exclusion to reveal how caste hierarchies are reproduced and reinforced through social networks, cultural practices, and even religious institutions in host countries.

The blogs' transnational reach transforms what Mosse characterized as localized resistance into global activism networks. Through digital platforms, Dalit activists connect disparate experiences of discrimination across continents, creating what could be termed 'digital solidarity networks.' This marks a significant departure from Mosse's findings by demonstrating how digital spaces enable marginalized communities to bypass traditional power structures and directly influence international human rights discourse. The blogs thus serve not only as documentation of transnational oppression but as active catalysts for global policy advocacy and cross-border coalition building.

Conclusion

Dalit blogs in India have emerged as powerful tools of empowerment and alternative media representation. By documenting caste-based injustices, building awareness, promoting solidarity, and resisting oppression, these blogs challenge dominant narratives and create spaces for marginalized voices to be heard. The thematic analysis of Dalit blogs reveals how these digital platforms serve as crucial sites of resistance, identity assertion, and community building. They not only expose the systemic nature of caste-based discrimination but also foster a sense of collective identity and solidarity among Dalits across regions and borders.

The findings of this study contribute to the broader discourse on digital activism and social justice, highlighting the transformative potential of blogs as alternative media spaces. By reclaiming agency and challenging dominant caste narratives, Dalit bloggers are reshaping the discourse on caste and social inequality in India and beyond. This research underscores the importance of digital platforms in empowering marginalized communities and advocating for social change.

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List of Contributors

Rashmi Mishra

Dr Gayatri Indrakanti

Krisha Doshi

Khushi Shah

Antora Chakraborty

Neha Kulkarni

Pranita Nimkar

Anjuman Sharma

Sagar Karande

Dr Sharanya Thaloor

Ananya Behra

Varnica Sharma

Mohak Gandhi

Swarali Tamhane

Amrita Das

Ethan Fortes

Utkarsha Kesarkar