1Women's Representations on Indian OTT Platforms: An Examination of Gender Taboos

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment

for the Award of Degree

Doctor of

Philosophy

by

ANGANA BOSE

RAJIV GANDHI INSTITUTE OF PETROLEUM TECHNOLOGY

Jais, India - 229304

20BS0004   **2025**

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Dr. Saurabh Mishra

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Dr. Atul Sharma

Head of the Department
Department of Sciences and Humanities

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The Almighty and My Teachers

For their never-ending blessings

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ABSTRACT

Infotainment has a wider catchment that cuts across all margins and is accessible to all sections of society. With OTT's now ubiquitous nature, it has become an infotainment surrogate in contemporary times. India, one of the youth-dominated and pluralistic countries, is open to newness of thought, lingo and is more receptive with its acceptance of multifarious norms on the rise and OTT, like any other media service, is reflective of ever-dynamic socio-cultural concerns. With SDG Goal 5 bent on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls, women, an always center-staged and pervasive counterpart of civilizations, necessitates exploration. Additionally, with the immense outreach of new media and social media, storytelling has gone beyond entertainment and fantasy. Today, web series are known for its handling of conflicting forces of modernity and gender stereotypes, which in turn makes for a compelling viewing.

Chapter 1- This chapter, providing a background for the origin and popularity factors of OTT media theoretically examined how contemporary cinema, media, and digital platforms straddle the models of feminism. It is critical to problematize the trajectory of women's representations and social stigmas associated with taboos in Indian OTT spaces. A comprehensive comprehension of live streaming remains elusive until the intricate interplay of the unifying factor of gender is thoroughly examined. However, the contemporary audience has

witnessed increased diversity with the emergence of such platforms, with a noticeable rise in the portrayal of robust female protagonists, LGBTQIA+ characters, and narratives that question conventional gender roles or norms creating prospects for a transformative shift away from the traditional binary understanding of heteronormativity towards more gender-fluid identities in visual media. By placing emphasis on the creation and dissemination of inclusive content and actively engaging with audience feedback, over-the-top (OTT) platforms have the potential to play a significant role in fostering a media landscape that is more equitable and representative. Visible gender portrayals shape the formative youth's perception, making them learn, unlearn and relearn social nuances and norms. Though gender and film studies abound, the new formats and genres are unexplored. Their make-aware socio-cultural role in the gender mediascape, the relegation of interrogation on taboos and their subsequent, understated role in shaping societal transformation in the context of Indian OTT's women needed immediate address for the youth to be gender sensitive, responsible viewers of Indian OTT media and the stakeholders to observe corporate social/digital accountability.

Chapter 2- The background context of OTT landscape underscored the need for in-depth, qualitative investigations into the representation and conceptualized reception of gender taboos on Indian OTT platforms as well as examining OTT media's market dynamics quantitatively. The research objectives attempt to address these gaps that are to study how women representations occupy the sites of the Indian OTT mediascape and investigate the dynamics of consumption through Indian audience

perception. After knowing its recent trends and existing body of literature, which failed to provide a thorough examination of in-depth gender representations due to prevalent taboos underlying them, a combination of psychoanalytic feminism and abject theory was finalized to address the theoretical gap. Prior research was confined to aspects affecting consumers' views toward OTT media adoption and lacked theoretical and methodological advancements towards gender. They failed to include audience perception to representations of gender taboos. Research often neglected the ways in which viewers, especially women, perceive and internalize gender taboos shown in OTT content over time and has inadequately investigated the distinctions in their approach to women and implicit taboos in women's portrayals. Qualitative research on audience involvement with gender portrayals could address this deficiency. Existing research examined the competitive dynamics of OTT and the theoretical underpinnings of media consumption. The chapter also reveals that timely updating of segmentation studies also could help OTT service providers develop marketing strategies accordingly and deliver tailored services accountably.

Chapter 3- Rationalizing the usage of mixed methods, a wholesome examination is possible only through integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods, with a primary focus on qualitative and extending it to the second objective by following concurrent embedded design. To methodologically represent this, qualitative methods were opted through 64 semi-structured, in-depth personal interviews. For audience reception, OTT content was selected wherein each chosen filmic text is examined as a distinct unit, focusing on its portrayal of gender and

sensitive taboos. Audience members from varied backgrounds were selected to understand the interpretation and internalization of these representations and taboos using purposive sampling. For determining study units, a selection of 5 key OTT shows, *Panchayat* (2 seasons), *Gullak* (3 seasons), *Delhi Crime* (Season 1) among web series, *Devi* as the sole short film and *Period. End of Sentence* as the sole documentary were chosen based on the frequency of audience's recommendations during the interview and their engagement level variation. Psychoanalytic feminism for studying women's portrayals on OTT media and Abject theory for examining gender taboos and audience's responses to such depictions on Indian OTT platforms served as the theoretical foundation. The sample size was limited to 64 interviews to prevent analytical overload (Robinson, 2014) and to achieve thematic saturation in audience responses. NVivo was selected as the research tool as it could assist in coding procedures of thematic analysis and visualization of its findings. Additionally, a questionnaire was designed and administered to a sample of educated adults for this study. As OTT media is more prevalent in cities, Kolkata, Pune, Bangalore, Lucknow and Delhi, known for their substantially younger demographic, a sample of adults from the population of interest, including premier educational institutions, received 622 e-questionnaires. After receiving 403 responses and excluding incomplete replies, 343 valid responses were analyzed, yielding a response rate of 55.14%. The first section of the questionnaire focused on categorical variables, specifically demographics and psychographic variables measured on a nominal scale. The second section measured questions related to OTT perception such as value delivery, content quality, convenience, affordability, and

peer group influence, and personalization. The constructs in question were assessed using a five-point Likert scale. At the end, ethical considerations were enlisted in the chapter.

Chap 4: The data processing procedure entailed data familiarization, generation of preliminary codes; categorization and organization of the codes to identify initial themes; reorganization and evaluation of the themes; definition and designation of the themes; and elaboration and discourse on the themes. During an initial familiarization phase, each review was thoroughly read, comprehended, and then categorized by 5 researchers to ensure that the general sentiment was maintained in the following coding phases. Since, all interviews were audio recorded and manually transcripted, NVivo 12 enabled coding was conducted. First order codes were amalgamated to create a single category. Once the validity of codes was established, newly developed codes extracted from content analysis of 5 selected OTT shows were juxtaposed with those of the interviews as a validatory mechanism to avoid researcher's bias in coding. Condensing the input into 13 categories, the study integrated respondents' perspectives with theoretical foundations of psychoanalytic feminism and abject theory, providing profound interpretations of the data. However, while finalization of themes by the 5 coders, they seemed non mutually exclusive categories sharing an intricate causal relationship rather than standing out independently as themes. For the quantitative survey data, non-hierarchical clustering was used to identify customer clusters using factor scores of six variables. The K-means algorithm was used to determine cluster membership throughout the 6 variables. The five cluster memberships were estimated using mean scores and standard

deviation scores. Statistical tests were undertaken to examine if the five groups differed. The Walks' lambda test of multiple discriminant analysis was performed next. Multiple discriminant analysis was used to compare clusters. The study revealed significant differences in group averages for all six characteristics.

Chap 5: The 13 categorized codes and themes were interpreted on the lines of psychoanalytic feminism and abject theory. Keeping with the findings, a conceptual framework was also formulated on the gender taboos and solutions related to OTT content were discussed. By focusing on the repercussions of taboos and how viewers interpret them, this framework enables a deeper understanding of the stigma and observed taboos of menstruation, objectification and oversexualization, victimization of gender-based violence, hostile and benevolent sexism, narrow beauty standards related to body negativity all leading to socio-psychological consequences related to poor physical and mental health issues of mostly women or gender minorities. After elucidating all possible solutions of examined taboos, the themes were finalized and ratified by those of content analysis. Post finalization, theoretical interpretation of those themes followed. The research design framework was also revised after the last step of thematic analysis, which is finalization of themes. The visualization of findings was illustrated in the form of hierarchy charts, word clouds, sentiment graphs and sunburst diagrams. The findings revealed that there are many prevailing gender-based taboos in OTT content of Indian streaming platforms revolving around increasing instances of ideological misrepresentations of masculinity, feminism, and that femininity on OTT media favorably

differed from the mainstream cinema in a lot of respects. It has also become more gender fluid and diverse in representing alternative masculinities and femininities. However, there are spikes in instances where discriminatory gender taboos apply to all genders. The position of women with respect to their body and subjectivity in society and its relationship with such taboos in representation of OTT media carries ample weightage as they plagued women's positionalities in the OTT mediascape and in the young adults' conception of femininity in larger society. The final themes or broader outcomes of thematic analysis were neo femininity, gender taboos and the pressing need of gender sensitivity in content regulation models. For Objective no. 2, aiming to segment the Indian OTT audience based on the perception factors, this chapter revealed the clusters of the Indian audience based on their perception and profiled them according to their demographic and psychographic characteristics.

Chapter 6- After elucidating some additional conclusions like the 5 drivers of OTT viewership, the rise of alternative masculinities and faux girl feminism, research questions were answered. The implications included theoretical, managerial and policy interventions. It then included limitations of the research and scope for further studies. The chapter also provides a comprehensive framework by integrating the gender taboos, its immediate and long-term impact and its solutions thereby facilitating a strong foundation for future research. The theoretical combination of psychoanalysis, feminism and abject theories can extend the scope of applied interdisciplinary literature in media and gender studies. The quantitative research contributes to Indian OTT

media, marketing, and retail literature. This work emphasizing on application of clustering techniques to identify and define Indian customer segments more thoroughly facilitates comprehending the heterogeneity of the burgeoning OTT audience, enabling the derivation of more specific and targeted information that may fuel Indian business strategies. It offers media scholars significant research insights on the dynamic entertainment market, which may potentially update marketing tactics, content creation procedures, and customer retention endeavors. Imparting gender awareness can make an enormous difference and narrow the knowledge deficit leading to the attainment of SDG-5. Since the OTT media audience predominantly comprises the younger demographic, content curators should be cautious of not propagating gender taboos and instead focus on gender sensitivity in content regulation, to make OTT media an educational, sex-positive tool in shaping social transformation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

S. No.	Abbreviation	Description
1	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
2	VCR	Video Cassette Recorder
3	VCD	Video Compact Disc
4	DVD	Digital Versatile Disc
5	LCD	Liquid Crystal Display
6	TV	Television
7	OTT	Over-the-top services
8	COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
9	AD	Anno Domini
10	CD-ROM	Compact Disc Read-Only Memory
11	RAM	Random Access Memory
12	UK	United Kingdom
13	VHS	Video Home System
14	HD-DVD	High-Definition Digital Versatile Disc
15	IPTA	Indian People's Theatre Association
16	NFDC	National Film Development Corporation
17	CNN	Cable News Network
18	STAR	Satellite Television Asian Region
19	BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
20	DD	Doordarshan
21	SVOD	Subscription video-on-demand
22	TSP	Telecommunications service provider
23	ICT	Information Communication Technology
24	ISP	Internet service provider
25	CAGR	Compound annual growth rate
26	OVS	Online video streaming
27	LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and others
28	SRT	Social Representations Theory
29	TAM	Technology Acceptance Models
30	UTAUT	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology
31	LR	Literature review
32	WTP	Willingness to pay
33	CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility

34	AVE	Average variance extracted
35	VD	Value Delivery
36	CQ	Content Quality
37	CON	Convenience
38	AF	Affordability
39	PGI	Peer Group Influence
40	PR	Personalization
41	NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training
42	NFHS	National Family Health Survey
43	PMS	Premenstrual Syndrome
44	CDR	Corporate Digital Responsibility
45	AI	Artificial Intelligence
46	OUSP	OTT (Over-the-top services) unique selling proposition
47	CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
48	STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
49	IMDb	Internet Movie Database
50	TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior
51	UN	United Nations
52	SO	Self-objectification
53	SOE	Self-objectification environments
54	GBV	Gender-Based Violence
55	IP	Internet pornography
56	WHO	World Health Organization
57	ACOG	American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
58	CBFC	Central Board of Film Certification
59	US	United States
60	FTC	Federal Trade Commission
61	NRTA	National Radio and Television Administration
62	CDH	Countering Digital Hate
63	IAMAI	Internet and Mobile Association of India
64	DPCGC	Digital Publishers Content Grievances Council
65	MIB	Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
66	TRAI	Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
67	AIDCF	All India Digital Cable Federation
68	TDSAT	Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal
69	DMCRC	Digital Media Content Regulatory Council
70	DCP	Deputy Commissioner of Police
71	TVF	The Viral Fever
72	NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
73	IAS	Indian Administrative Service
74	BMI	Body mass index
75	AVE	Average variance extracted

76	LR	Literature reviews
77	UGT	User Gratifications Theory
78	ICT	Information and Communication Technology
79	PEOU	Perceived Ease of Use
80	PU	Perceived Usefulness
81	RUT	Random Utility Theory
82	IBM	International Business Machines Corporation

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Gender is a unifying factor among representations, be it in literature, cinema, books, or society. It is a social construct and a fundamental aspect of society, as it is deeply embedded in the social fabric and imbibed by individuals in their formative years. However, its dynamic configurations and reconfigurations depend on specific races, ethnicities, nationalities, cultures, religions, nationalities, regions, and classes. For several decades, scholarly examinations of mythology and religious texts have yielded substantial evidence regarding the presence of influential gender roles and the inadvertent manifestation of power imbalances within society. A comprehensive understanding of the human experience is unattainable if gender and sexuality are disregarded, and the discourse cannot be diverse, inclusive, or egalitarian if women, an always center-staged and pervasive counterpart, are approached with silence. With SDG Goal 5 bent on attaining women empowerment empowering women and girls, the contemporary alludes back to mythologies across the globe that have been a complex and varied representation of cultural narratives spanning history. Whether it be the archetypes of "mother goddess" of Gaia in Greek mythology and Devi in Hinduism to femme fatale (Cleopatra in Egyptian), creation and destruction symbolized by Goddess Kali, cosmic creatrix, or divine femininity, it is essential to approach representations of women

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with a nuanced perspective, recognizing the diversity of narratives and the cultural contexts that shape storytelling. The representation of women in the ancient Indian epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, is complex and multifaceted, be it the virtuous ideal Sita, ambiguous characters like Kaikeyi and Surpanakha, the purification and redemption epitome Ahalya, the Mahabharata's courageous and independent Draupadi, or the maternal incarnate Kunti. With the quest for justice and retribution, Satyavati's role in political intrigue, or Amba's quest for revenge, these epics contain instances of empowerment and agency, underscoring the constant flux of evolving women's representations in Indian society, making them an interrogative site for power relations pertaining to women and their portrayals.

Since the dawn of time, the media sphere has been rife with technological transformations, navigating through live performances, episodic entertainment, personalized screening, and live streaming of content availability. Be it the sound revolution, starting from mono speakers to two speakers followed by stereos, Dolby Atmos speakers that are omnipresent even beneath the ground, or the screening revolution churning good old single screens to multiplexes, now miniplexes; with only 75 seats and swanky recliners, and yet to come megaplexes that offer multiple formats under one roof, digitization has been indispensably incorporated in customizing and catering to an entertainment seeking audience. The technological Renaissance has been responsible for massive paradigm

shifts from ensuring personalization and individualism to convenience and audience autonomy. VCRs shifted to watching movies on tape, VCDs, DVDs and blue ray discs with the advent of digitization and broadband services. With industrialization, and privatization at their roots, the hunger for content variety took the upper hand. The shifts encompass Doordarshan to private channels, color televisions on satellite ones, cable run box television sets on LCDs, LEDs, and now fully automated smart TVs. The advent of online TV, wherein the traditional television set is converted into a device that is connected to the internet, due to its potential to permeate domestic spaces, paved the way for online streaming platforms. OTT media, also known as over-the-top media, pertains to the dissemination of audio, video, and various other forms of media content via the internet. Customers' internalization has opened their doors to both domestic and global behemoths like Netflix, Hotstar, and Amazon Prime Video today, their popularity being evident in viewer practices such as binge watching, chord cutting, and enigma webbing, notably during the COVID-19 pandemic. With players offering a rich variety of on-demand online content, consumer freedom, omnipresent unlimited access, and sanitized commercial access, OTT is ruling the roost with its one-stop-all-entertainment quality, and the surge in popularity of the emerging favorite has experienced a significant upward trajectory within a very short span of time. India has immense potential and is crucial to the expansion of OTT platforms in the Indian milieu, where nearly 50% of people are under 25.

This online revolution is predominantly affecting the younger demographic in a 1.25-billion-person population where libraries of content on portable mobile phones compete with TVs, movie theatres, and multiplexes. Their consumer-centricity, user-generated, on-demand content, and recommendation algorithms (which make societal attitudes feasible to translate, unlike in rigid entertainment formats) explain the crossover of television to OTT media and the rationale behind it, attracting scholarly attention and probe.

Infotainment has a wider catchment that cuts across all margins and is accessible to all sections of society. With the OTT's ubiquitous nature, which has become an infotainment surrogate in contemporary times, it is critical to problematize the trajectory of women's representations and social stigmas associated with taboos in Indian OTT spaces. The word "taboo" is so censured today that a social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or forbidding association with a particular person, place, or thing went beyond its mention or utterance, providing enough impetus to examine and reexamine its state of being. During the early years of Indian cinema, female characters embodying the idealized image of Indian womanhood then traversed its path to the Golden Era of Bollywood, gradually assuming more robust and multifaceted roles; to the Parallel Cinema Movement, facilitating more authentic and forward-thinking depictions of women; and to the era of liberalization and modernization, embracing career-driven professionals as well as

autonomous people. As analogue is charting its way to digital, OTT platforms have significantly contributed to the dissemination of thought-provoking video content as the primary source of amusement for the millennial generation. Although the argument of whether modern technology can topple old technology in redefining art is an age-old argument, OTT's make-aware socio-cultural role in the gender mediascape has been unexplored from a literary lens. Femininity and the nuances of women in a multicultural society like India have-not been explored; the heterogeneity of women's representation in the Indian context has remained unearthed on Indian OTT platforms. Though women's representation on OTT is substantial, the underlying societal taboos with conventional tropes pertaining to gender roles are under researched arenas. Research has been sufficiently done on content regulation and censorship, but the importance of gender sensitivity in OTT content regulation has been relegated. Overall, the role of Indian OTT in shaping societal transformation in the context of gender norms are understated. Proposing a feminist methodology to establish the determinants of the online climate with reference to women's representations on Indian OTT media, the study aims to study women's representations in the OTT mediascape; the general perception regarding the evolution and representation of women, the audience's perception of the societal taboos and stereotypes prevalent in women's portrayals in Indian OTT spaces and the role of OTT platforms in shaping societal

transformation. The study furthers its interrogation by taking note of the OTT industry as a market and aims to investigate the dynamics of content consumption through audience research as to what extent OTT has evolved and developed itself into a socially relevant information system, the considerable factors that measure consumer perception of OTT, and how the Indian audience can be segmented based on the demographic and psychographic characteristics of the consumers.

1.1 Background and context: The Analog is charting its way to the Digital in the Orient.

Since the dawn of time, the media sphere has been rife with transformations and reconfigurations. Since Ptolemy of Alexandria discovered visual persistence in 130 AD, a mass media culture of books, journals, and newspapers has emerged, increasing the threshold of general reading in Europe in the 1800s. Since then, the media has witnessed the creation of zoetropes, photographic magic lanterns, phonographs, praxinoscopes, kinetoscopes, and other devices. The beginning of patent disputes between film companies, Warner Bros.' production of films, the establishment of Fox Company and Universal, and the British Board of Film Sensors were all examples of the development of films in the 1900s. Silent films, radio, and sound films were all popular from 1916 until the 1930s. However, the World War years of 1931–1945 were dubbed "The

Great Age of Hollywood and Radio." The rise of television gradually separated 1946–1960 from earlier expansions. Experiments with content and media scholarship interfused between 1961 to 1980, blurring the lines between performance, viewing, and scholarship, followed by a dramatic takeoff between 1981 to 1999. The introduction of the audio CD format in Japan, Sony and Philips, among others, introducing the CD-ROM format for data storage, increases in storage capacities to 1MB in computer RAM chips, and Rupert Murdoch's Sky TV beginning with small-dish satellite-to-home broadcasting in the UK-all of these obviated the need for a large cable infrastructure. Meanwhile, Sony produced Minidisc players that used compact CDs, Voyager issued multimedia CDs, and digital broadcasting through satellite began in the United Kingdom and the United States in 1998. The new millennium saw significant mediascape developments- such as *Big Brother* and *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* ushering in a new wave of reality programming on the US network television, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone debuting and dominating the youth market for a decade, and Lord of the Rings firmly establishing the fantasy genre in 2001. On the one hand, smartphones surpassed landline phones in 2002, while revenue from DVD sales surpassed VHS revenue in 2003, and the Facebook site began in 2004. Documentary films were released on DVD and in theaters in 2006. In 2007, The Sopranos, the defining television series of the aughts, ended. Toshiba abandoned HD-DVD technology, re-releasing their archives on Blu-ray, and Disney

announced that all future animated films would be in 3D in 2008. In the years that followed, the United States switched from analog to digital television transmission, with Germany, Canada, France, and the European Union closely following suit. Conclusively, technology had enabled traversing a lengthy path from live performances (onstage or street plays) to episodic entertainment and personalized screening through digitization of content availability.

a) Digital is the new revolution for India

People's lifestyles and viewing habits have been altered by the evolution and revolution of information technology during the last few decades. In the vast field of entertainment, the digital revolution is unavoidable. That is why the media has also navigated and internalized changes in leaps and bounds. Be it the sound revolution, starting from mono speakers to two speakers followed by stereos, to the state-of-the-art era of Dolby Atmos speakers that are omnipresent even beneath the ground, or the screening revolution churning good old single screens to multiplexes, and now 'miniplexes' with only 75 seats and swanky recliners, and yet to come megaplexes that offer multiple formats under one roof, digitization has been indispensably incorporated in customizing and catering to an entertainment seeking audience. In the Indian context, with the advent of movies, cinematic texts initially manifested in the form of bioscopes.

Indian cinema, similar to its European and American counterparts, boasts a rich and extensive history spanning over a decade among large audiences well beyond the subcontinent and diaspora. Commencing with Pundalik, the first film based on a story, in 1912, Phalke's renowned film, *Raja Harishchandra* featured silent visuals and engrossing sequences before the introduction of synchronized sound. The films *Satyavaadi Harischandra* (1917) and *'Keechaka Vadham'* (1919) were silent films produced in Calcutta in that era. However, it is important to note that the Silent Era was not actually devoid of sound. The use of intertitles in both English and two or three Indian languages, accompanied by continuous background score, effectively facilitated the portrayal of conversations until 1927, when the film titled *Jazz Singer* by Al Jolson marked a significant milestone in the United States as it became the inaugural "talkie," effectively concluding the era of silent films. The practice of producing silent films persisted in India for a period of ten years subsequent to the introduction of the first Indian talkie, *Alam Ara* (The Light of the World) on March 14, 1931. During that period, Hindustani, commonly referred to as the Bazaar language (a mixture of Hindi and Urdu), was spoken by approximately 150 million individuals. When the city of Bombay pioneered the production of the first film incorporating synchronized sound, the decision was made to adopt Hindustani as the predominant lingua franca in mainstream Indian cinema, surpassing the utilization of India's fourteen official languages. The courtly love dramas performed by the Urdu Parsee Theatre potentially

exerted an influence on Indian cinema, leading to the emergence of romantic motifs and a tendency to interconnect themes of love, obstacles, and tragedy. During this period, there was a notable rise in the popularity of historical films with patriotic undertones that were inspired by real individuals or legendary figures. The significance of the historical film was heightened by the presence of patriotism. Conversely, proponents of cinema expressed their disapproval of the incorporation of sound, contending that it compromised the aesthetic appeal of the medium, leading to the birth of Parallel Cinema following mythological and social films. During this particular era, notable cinematic works emerged, such as the Tamil film *Chandralekha* and Satyajit Ray's visually captivating Apu trilogy, commencing with *Pather Panchali*. The subsequent discussion revolved around social issues. Subsequently, the historical films *Anarkali, Mughal-E-Azam*, and *Mother India* were released. During this period, scholars conducted an examination of a novel filmic aesthetic. The emerging trend has been labeled by critics as 'New Wave Cinema' rooted in in IPTA theatre, the realist novel, and European cinema (especially Russian, French and Italian) concerning real life issues of Indian society than with just entertainment. The 1950s in Indian cinema are commonly referred to as the golden period by film historians. The decline of the New Wave and Middle Cinema trends can be attributed to several factors, including the advent of multichannel television, the commercialization efforts of the NFDC (National Film Development

Corporation), and the scarcity of film exhibition venues. During the 1980s, there was a notable prevalence of romance films as well as films that focused on stunts or action. The emergence of the New Cinema and Parallel Movement has had a profound impact on both the production and aesthetics of film. These two artistic movements have significantly transformed the landscape of narrative construction and filmmaking. Mrinal Sen, played a pioneering role in the development of "New Wave" filmmaking. Mrinal Sen's cinematic creation witnessed lucrative success, all achieved without resorting to conventional strategies for commercial success. The New Wave filmmakers placed greater emphasis on artistic elements. The emergence of new films led to a popular trend of categorizing them into distinct classifications, namely "art films" and "commercial films" until the industry experienced significant advancements during the early 21st century, characterized by notable progress in animation, a heightened level of artistic maturity, and the proliferation of national film festivals and award ceremonies that mirrored these developments.

Since cutting edge technology has always borne the fruits of personalization and audience convergence, individualism in entertainment consumption has been a latent but welcome phenomenon among the audience. Television, then a luxury instrument with just DD channels, spread cinema to social communities initially. DD, operated by Prasar

Bharati, the Indian government's broadcasting body, was first broadcast in black-and-white format, from Delhi in 1959. With a makeshift studio, a low-power transmitter, and 21 community television sets, it began modestly. India adopted color programming with live color coverage of the Independence Day parade on August 15, 1982, and the Asian Games in Delhi. Doordarshan captivated millions in the 1980s with soaps like *Hum Log (1984), Buniyaad (1986–87*), and epic plays like *Ramayana (1987–88)* and *Mahabharata* (1988–89). *Chitrahaar, Rongoli, Karamchand, Byomkesh Bakshi,* and *Janki Jasoo*s were also popular. DD struggled throughout the 1990s. CNN, first, broadcast the Gulf War via satellite on most western and Asian national stations. Following the technology-generated fruits of personalization, audience-thinning, private television sets suited the individual needs of the Indian audience by occupying a place in the drawing rooms of homes apart from social community spaces for mass viewing. Convenience began to be closely associated with individualism. It allowed people to receive and watch international broadcasts through satellite, proving a boon to cable TV. Hong Kong-based firms founded STAR Television (Satellite Television Asian Region) in 1992, through which Star Plus, Prime Sports, BBC, and MTV (now V Channel) broadcast 24/7. Indian middle-class families now had a DD alternative. With the idea that satellite TV would stay in metros, DD initially improved its metro channel's programming.

b) The Television Now

The technological Renaissance has been responsible for massive paradigm shifts aside from ensuring personalization and individualism. Audience autonomy is one such value that came along with digitization. VCRs shifted to watching movies on tape, which enabled the convenience of watching the movie of your choice. VCDs and DVDs gave way to blue ray discs with the advent of digitization and broadband services. Besides this, television formats were not left behind. With globalization, industrialization, and privatization at their roots, audience autonomy was embraced, and the hunger for content variety took the upper hand. The audience looked for new content besides the televised retelling of mythological tales that originally had oral traditions. The shifts encompass DD, which had a few hours of programming to private channels, color televisions on satellite ones, cable run box television sets on LCDs, LEDs, and now fully automated Smart TVs. In terms of the functionality that 'infotainment' has to offer, it had become a commodity rather than a luxury because of the increasing demand for convenience and autonomy today. The presence of tension between traditional and contemporary elements, as well as the dichotomy between established modes and those on the periphery, reflects the inherent uncertainty surrounding television as a concept and the potential offered by the internet as an alternative medium. With the financial sector's fast computerization, the increasing

number of e-banking transactions, the internet became the future service paradigm for a variety of different apps, such as e-commerce and m-commerce, e-health, and e-education. With all these factors put together and then paired with affordability and portability, the increasing demand for internet run media platforms for media and entertainment purposes rose. The advent of online TV represents a technological transformation wherein the traditional television set is converted into a device that is connected to the internet, enabling it to facilitate both conventional linear television viewing as well as modern features such as on-demand content and interactive engagement on the go. The notion of online television encompasses both subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) providers and traditional broadcasters. These platforms work in closed environments where they curate and distribute content that editors have carefully chosen. The primary objective of these platforms is to facilitate the creation of immersive and engaging viewing experiences.

Due to its potential to permeate domestic spaces, technology can be considered a personal medium. The history of television has been characterized by continuous advancements in technology and cultural transformations. The perceived insufficiency of television has given rise to the potential for entrepreneurs to generate and disseminate online content in new formats and configurations thereby making way for online streaming platforms. Customers' internalization has opened their doors to both domestic and global behemoths like Netflix, Hotstar, and Amazon

Prime Video. The popularity of online streaming technology is evident in viewer practices such as binge watching, cord cutting, and enigma web, with players offering a rich variety of on-demand online content, consumer freedom, omnipresent unlimited access, and sanitized commercial access to expand their stouter positions and marketability. Voice, video, and OTT application services offered via cellular networks have proliferated rapidly due to their multi-cuisine-platter-like nature. OTTs have the potential to affect revenue in all three real-time application verticals: video, telephony, and messaging. The affordability of multimedia-enabled smartphones, smart TVs, and TSP upgrades to access networks fueled the proliferation of OTT media. The digitization of material has decreased the costs of conservation, replication, and distribution. The increased processing power, easily customizable user interface, and compatibility with high data rates make it simpler to innovate and implement OTT apps. High-speed internet access has created new opportunities for OTT apps. Cloud services are another important driver of OTT, with smartphone adoption rising. Through the service portability feature, customers may now access material from any device, anywhere, rather than leaving it on a hard drive.

1.2 Evolution of OTT: The television crossover to new screen media

In their study, Bury and Li (2015) examined the evolving patterns of

television consumption, which can be delineated into three distinct phases. The first phase involved the consumption of recorded programming through DVDs, with CDs being the predominant medium until the 1990s. The second phase witnessed the emergence of online viewing, facilitated by the internet and other nascent technologies, which persisted until the early 2000s. Finally, the third phase saw the rise of mobile viewing as the predominant mode for accessing and downloading online content. The advent of YouTube in February 2005 marked the initiation of the online video revolution, propelling it to become the primary platform for worldwide video dissemination at an unprecedented pace. In contemporary society, television has emerged as a highly influential medium for disseminating information and providing educational content. The audio-visual nature of this medium confers an advantage over traditional media forms, such as newspapers and radio.

The transition from broadcast television to web television can be traced back to the year 1995, when *The Spot* emerged as a pioneering example of episodic online storytelling. This concept, often likened to "Melrose Place-on-the-web," marked the initial foray into the realm of web-based narrative content. One additional trailblazer in the realm of online television was the series *Muscle Beach*, located in Santa Monica, which was broadcast in 1999. This series comprised episodes lasting 8 minutes each, encompassing elements of a sitcom, exercise program, and news. Between the years 2000 and 2005, notable progress in technology facilitated the

widespread distribution of online content through the emergence of enhanced streaming capabilities, as well as the establishment of prominent platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo.

The customization and personalization of television content is increasing as it is increasingly consumed through online platforms. Burroughs argues that streaming providers propagate the perspective that algorithms serve the sole purpose of delivering content to viewers based on their prior preferences communicated to the algorithm. Netflix has repositioned itself as "the future of television," aligning with the inherent and innate preferences of viewers. Service providers have constructed programmed pathways for the younger demographic through the creation of extensive online repositories encompassing various media formats, including films, documentaries, talk shows, and web series. Online streaming platforms utilize a combination of technological advancements and innovative programming strategies to effectively engage and immerse audiences. These platforms employ various methods such as control mechanisms, recommendation systems, audience autonomy, economic affordability, and the provision of high-quality content. Consequently, they have significantly transformed the television landscape by altering the way audiences choose, consume, distribute, and interpret television programming. The success of this phenomenon can be attributed to several factors, including the authors' ability to exercise their creative freedom within the confines of minor censorship restrictions and their

comparatively lower financial requirements. The dynamic landscape of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms has given rise to novel concepts within the field of television audience research, and the financial dynamics of the industry have experienced positive effects as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It subsequently emerged as a disruptive form of entertainment known as the "new at home" medium, which aligned with the increasing desire of its audience and solidified its position as a prevalent cultural presence within households.

1.2.1 OTT: Its Epistemology and Nomenclature

In contrast to its literary connotation of excess and exaggeration, the term "OTT" pertains to applications and services that operate outside the realm of traditional telecommunication, multichannel television, and broadcast platforms. Examples of such OTT platforms include social networks, streaming media services, search engines, amateur video aggregation sites, and various content distribution channels utilized by producers. Prominent instances of OTT platforms encompass popular applications: Telecommunications service providers (TSPs), who offer both fixed and mobile telephony services, are currently facing a significant influx of internet content commonly referred to as OTT services and applications. An OTT provider refers to a service provider that offers Information Communication Technology (ICT) services without the ownership or

leasing of network capacity from a network operator. In contrast, these video streaming services utilize global internet connectivity and access networks with varying speeds, typically ranging from 0.5 to 3 megabytes, to deliver their content directly to the end user, bypassing the underlying network infrastructure of a Telecommunications Service Provider (TSP). Consumers, especially those in younger age groups, exhibit a preference for connectedness that is perceived as a cohesive entity rather than a series of separate and interconnected networks.

OTT services possess certain characteristics whereby TSPs generate revenue solely through the augmentation of data consumption by internet-connected users across diverse applications. Conversely, OTT providers make use of the infrastructure provided by TSPs. OTT communications and OTT media are emerging as significant entities within the realm of the internet, alongside online content and social media platforms. One aspect to consider is that OTT communications encompass various forms such as voice/video calls and text messaging. On the other hand, OTT media encompasses a broader range of content, including user-generated material, professionally produced content, audio/video content, and gaming. OTT media, also known as Over-the-Top media, pertains to the dissemination of audio, video, and various other forms of media content via the internet. In comparison to conventional methods of delivery, services provided within the realm of OTT exhibit a tendency to be more

cost-effective or even complimentary. OTT players have two primary methods of reaching end consumers. The first method involves leveraging the existing telecom infrastructure, whereby they utilize mobile networks or fixed lines to establish a connection between the user device and their services. In addition to their primary function, TSPs also fulfill the role of ISPs, providing last-mile connectivity and bandwidth services.

1.2.2 Cultural Orientation and Implications of the OTT Import

Socio-cultural Impact

Edward B. Taylor described culture as the comprehensive sum of knowledge, religion, art, morality, conventions, and other skills and habits acquired by members of society. Human knowledge, values, and behaviors form it. Due to generational demands and experiences, culture constantly adapts and evolves. Dreler and Cams described cultural change as the modification or discontinuation of tried-and-true methods passed down from prior civilizations and the introduction of new ones. It has simultaneous continuity and change.

India is pluralistic and multicultural, and its long history of multilinear cultural processes, ethnic and religious diversity, differential exposure of various sections and segments of the population to foreign cultural influences, and the varied paths taken by modern India's renaissance make it difficult to identify its core traditions with the availability of such

multiplicity. India is now open to newness of thought, lingo and is more receptive with its acceptance of multifarious norms on the rise. In an amorphous society, Indian culture has always valued synthesis and fission. Mass culture is developing nowadays since societies, civilizations, and groups share subjective values. For instance, in the US, values may include materialism, competitiveness, individualism, and religion. Due to globalization, different sections of Indian society are heavily influenced by variable viewership and consumption patterns.

It is gradually becoming a popular dialogue because India has the largest number of youth, and OTT, like any other media service, is reflective of ever-dynamic socio-cultural concerns. Also, cheap internet connectivity and quick content delivery have the potential to dethrone multiplexes via mobile phones and Smart LEDs. Unlike traditional media, regulations are minimal. The new guidelines require OTT platforms to self-classify material into five age-based categories: U (Universal), U/A 7+, U/A 13+, U/A 16+, and A (Adult). Platforms must enable parental locks for U/A 13+ material and effective age verification for "A" content. The publisher of online curated content shall prominently display the classification rating specific to each content or program together with a content descriptor informing the user about the nature of the content and advising on viewer description (if applicable) at the beginning of every program enable the user to make an informed decision before watching the program.

Given the evolving demands of the audience and the multimodal supply

available to cater to those demands, achieving cultural equilibrium has become increasingly challenging. In response to this, the Indian audience has turned to literature as a means of navigating this trajectory. Earlier literature and its adaptations often draw upon original oral traditions and mythologies, which are subsequently retold in various multimedia formats. These adaptations serve as reflections of society. Previous literary works primarily focused on portraying society, including its values, vices, and cultural orientations, rather than transformations. However, upon closer examination of contemporary literature and society, it becomes evident that literature is not solely limited to its ability to reflect upon society but is also intricately connected to its transformative or reformative potential. Literature has the power to shape and reshape the very structure and fundamental fabric of societal functioning. Audience research also depicts segmentation and profiling based on socio-demographic variables like age groups, gender, employment status, and income groups being differently affected by OTT media in contemporary society.

a) **The economics of content**

The market for over-the-top (OTT) services, owing to its high adoption rate, exhibited a valuation of USD 101.42 billion in the year 2020. It is projected to witness substantial growth and attain a value of USD 223.07 Billion by the year 2026, reflecting a compound annual growth rate

(CAGR) of 13.87% over the forecast period from 2021 to 2026. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic had a favorable effect on the OTT landscape, as it led to an increase in content consumption by audiences within the confines of their homes through the utilization of OTT devices. The potential for OTT services is enhanced when considering the mobile-centric economy of the region, in conjunction with the increasing rate of OTT subscriptions. The prevalence of digital televisions being used by consumers is on the rise, thereby offering a promising prospect for media buyers seeking to capitalize on evolving consumer patterns. This shift is attributed to the evolving landscape of digital and television media, wherein marketers previously purchased digital content as an additional component. This is expected to contribute to the expansion of the Subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) sector.

The annual subscription sales for each platform are experiencing a consistent upward trend. Additionally, this platform provides an opportunity for emerging writers to exhibit their own original narratives encompassing various genres such as crime, thrillers, comedy, and horror. The overall strategy of OTT services is fundamentally straightforward. Initially, the theatrical production expends financial resources to create or acquire its content, subsequently offering said material to the audience and users in exchange for a monetary fee. The creation of an OTT stage involves a haptic cycle, while also serving as a detrimental revenue model within the business realm. In contrast, various platforms offer diverse

payment options, such as weekly, daily, and annual, to enhance user convenience.

The economic ramifications of over-the-top (OTT) platforms can be classified into three distinct categories. Direct impact refers to the quantifiable outcomes and job opportunities created by enterprises directly involved in the film, television, and online video streaming (OVS) sectors. Suppliers to the creative industries used the growth in output as a result of the indirect impact of the creative industries' economic activity. The heightened activity in the film industry is expected to stimulate demand for various services such as hotels, transportation, cameras, and other related sectors. Consequently, this surge in demand is anticipated to contribute to economic output and employment opportunities.

The potential for future growth in subscriptions to these platforms is anticipated, given the declining appeal of traditional media. In contemporary times, a number of high-budget films are increasingly choosing to forgo the traditional theatrical release in favor of releasing directly on OTT platforms. This shift is indicative of the notable growth in subscriber numbers on these platforms. Indian over-the-top (OTT) players have undertaken measures to seize the market by producing originals; however, there remains considerable work to be accomplished before the Indian OTT market attains comparable levels of market penetration as its western counterparts. The primary challenge lies in sustaining the user base and fostering their engagement with over-the-top (OTT) platforms in

the Indian market.

The Indian over-the-top (OTT) industry is currently witnessing the emergence of a novel business model wherein premium content is provided at no cost. JioCinema, the designated streaming platform for IPL 2023, granted complimentary access to the recently concluded T20 league. In a similar vein, Disney+ Hotstar has recently declared its intention to offer complimentary access to premium sports content. The emergence of free content within the OTT category is expected to intensify competition among industry participants, leading to additional disruptions within the sector. The potential effects of the lure on the subscriber base and revenue generation thereby intensify the demand for captivating content that effectively retains viewership. Companies are prioritizing product innovation as a strategic approach to attract consumer interest. In October 2020, a collaboration was established between Netflix Inc. and Microsoft with the aim of supporting programmers in their educational endeavors pertaining to the fields of Data Science, machine learning, and Artificial intelligence. The collaboration introduced novel modules that draw inspiration from the recently released Netflix original film, *Over the Moon.*

b) Psychological impact

The digital streaming platforms have provided a forum for narratives that

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simultaneously depict and caution against prominent issues in the world. These narratives skillfully address immediate concerns such as technological control, which plays a significant role in the context of mobility and segregation. OTT platforms provide several series and dramas with short episodes that can be watched in one sitting. Unlike television, these platforms distribute whole seasons at once. Binge-watching numerous episodes of a TV show or online series in a row—is becoming more common, especially among teens, due to enigma webbing like strategic factors of content delivery.

Following the advent of industrialization, society has undergone a transformation characterized by increased urbanization, materialism, and individualism in relation to consumption patterns. As the hedonistic factor gains momentum, the pleasure principle also manifests as a strong desire for immediate gratification among the OTT audience, leading to a transformation of culture into a hyperculture. In conclusion, the emergence of over-the-top (OTT) media has demonstrated the acceptance of customized content that is both pertinent and representative of the evolving nature of modern society. This allows the audience to actively engage with and examine their own agency, personal experiences, and provide critical analysis in order to surpass even prevailing depictions. In contemporary society, the audience, aided by technological advancements and a desire for diverse content, actively engages in the process of selecting and determining the content that is deemed relevant on their plate.

Consequently, they assume an indirect role as curators of the content in vogue.

1.3 Gender and OTT

The phenomenon of live streaming holds significant importance within the contemporary digital media landscape, serving as a fundamental catalyst for transformative shifts in the representation and consumption of culture, entertainment, and professional endeavors on the internet. OTT platforms have significantly contributed to the dissemination of taboo-breaking and thought-provoking video content, effectively circumventing the restrictions imposed by the heavily regulated film industry, thus serving as an educational tool for the audience. The aforementioned material has emerged as the primary source of amusement for individuals belonging to the millennial generation. The surge in popularity of the emerging favorite has experienced a significant upward trajectory in recent years, primarily attributed to advancements in its assortment, adaptability, and enhanced inclusivity within a noticeably short span of time.

Gender is a unifying factor among the various depictions. For several decades, scholarly examinations of mythology and religious texts have yielded substantial evidence regarding the presence of influential gender roles, and the inadvertent manifestation of patriarchy within society.

Crossdressing was a commonly observed practice in theatrical productions in England, particularly in the context of Shakespearean drama. An examination of the intersectionality between gender, sexuality, and live streaming can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of gender and sexuality within digital contexts, while also shedding light on the nature of live streaming as a phenomenon. Prominent academics, namely Taylor (2018), Senft (2008), and Jones (2020), have made substantial contributions to the scholarly discourse surrounding the historical, cultural, and commercial aspects of live streaming. A comprehensive understanding of human experience is unattainable if gender and sexuality are disregarded, and the discourse cannot be diverse, inclusive, or egalitarian if gender and sexuality are approached with silence. The portrayal of gender on OTT platforms, such as streaming services, can be shaped by a range of factors, including societal norms, audience preferences, and industry conventions. The correlation between gender portrayals and over-the-top (OTT) platforms is intricate and diverse in nature due to content curation, diversity of perspectives, and transformation of industry dynamics at play. The aforementioned components manifest in diverse forms within the extensive range of live streaming platforms, encompassing gendered performances, gender-based harassment, and the fostering of LGBTQIA+ community development. OTT streaming services serve as a medium for the display and exploration of these various aspects. A comprehensive comprehension of live

streaming remains elusive until the intricate interplay between sexuality and gender is thoroughly examined. However, the contemporary audience has witnessed increased diversity with the emergence of such platforms, with a noticeable rise in the portrayal of robust female protagonists, LGBTQIA+ characters, and narratives that question conventional gender roles and norms. The prevalence of explicit content is concurrently creating prospects for a transformative shift away from the traditional binary understanding of heteronormativity and towards a more inclusive recognition of non-binary gender identities in visual media. OTT platforms have emerged as a secure space for the representation of individuals and the potential incorporation of the third gender. Also, numerous OTT platforms have made substantial investments in original productions that place a high emphasis on inclusivity and gender diversity in the edifice of user feedback and social media activism.

The role of gender holds considerable importance for the audience of over-the-top (OTT) platforms across various dimensions. The identification and relatability of characters and narratives correspond to the viewer's personal gender identity or mirror their lived experiences, potentially strengthening their emotional and cognitive engagement with the content. The exposure of viewers to a diverse array of gender representations has the potential to effectively challenge prevailing stereotypes, expand their comprehension

of gender, and affirm their personal identities by cultivating a feeling of affiliation and establishing a media landscape that is more encompassing. The socio-cultural implications of gender representation can serve as a catalyst for a broader exploration of gender-related issues, enhance awareness, stimulate discourse, and facilitate societal transformation. Gender can influence individuals' viewing preferences, interests, and content choices and therefore media consumption patterns by frequently employing data analysis techniques to tailor recommendations to individual users, potentially incorporating gender-related variables in the process, which in turn can significantly impact industry practices in the overall entertainment industry.

The significance of inclusivity in OTT content is multifaceted in its ability to adequately ensure a broad spectrum of individuals and communities, encompassing visibility to diverse backgrounds and perspectives, confront stereotypes and biases, broaden audience engagement and market reach by generating positive word-of-mouth, thereby yielding mutual benefits for both the platform and its creators, generate social impact and representation, stimulate creative and storytelling prospects by incorporating inventive storylines and unexplored cultural concepts, contexts, and talent pools, and guarantee adherence to legal and ethical standards of a conscientious and moral approach to content generation.

In conclusion, although there have been notable advancements in gender representation on over-the-top (OTT) platforms, there remains a need for further progress in this area. Certain platforms may continue to depend on stereotypical representations or give preference to content that reinforces conventional gender norms. Certain marginalized populations, including transgender individuals, individuals with disabilities, and those with intersectional identities, may continue to experience insufficient representation, misrepresentation, and limited access to opportunities. There exists a persistent requirement for sustained endeavors aimed at questioning and contesting stereotypes, enhancing the visibility and influence of diverse perspectives, and delivering precise and genuine representations of gender. By placing emphasis on the creation and dissemination of inclusive content and actively engaging with audience feedback, over-the-top (OTT) platforms have the potential to play a significant role in fostering a media landscape that is more equitable and representative. It is imperative to acknowledge that the correlation between gender portrayals and OTT platforms is not consistent across all platforms or content. The practices and policies surrounding content prioritization can exhibit variability across different platforms, with certain platforms demonstrating a greater emphasis on inclusivity and diversity. Furthermore, the influence of societal attitudes and cultural norms is of considerable importance in shaping the gender portrayals observed on OTT platforms.

a) Representations of characters in OTT

Aristotle, the renowned ancient Greek philosopher and scholar, expounded upon the notion of character within the realm of drama in his seminal treatise on literary theory, "Poetics." Aristotle expounded upon his theories regarding the essential elements of a triumphant and impactful tragedy in his work "Poetics," with a particular emphasis on the significance of character within his examination. Aristotle posits that a proficiently crafted dramatic work ought to encompass three fundamental elements: plot, character, and thought, which is frequently interpreted as "theme" or "idea."

Aristotle emphasized the significance of character as a crucial element within the context of tragedy. According to the author, the characters' deeds and decisions drive the plot forward, and the audience's emotional investment is intricately related to their understanding of and affinity for the characters. Aristotle placed significant emphasis on the importance of maintaining unity of character, moral complexity, emotions, consistency, and probability. The reason he referred to these characters as "the best kind" is due to their heightened relatability and human-like qualities, which consequently facilitate the audience's ability to organically empathize with their transformative trajectory, making the plot a cathartic

encounter, more engaging and plausible. Aristotle's "Poetics" remains a seminal work in the field of storytelling and character representation in drama, exerting a lasting impact not only on literary theory and dramatic writing until the present day but also extending itself to cinematic texts on streaming media.

In the past ten years, the emergence of OTT platforms has brought about a significant transformation in the manner in which individuals engage with entertainment content. These platforms have emerged as a sanctuary for the art of storytelling, granting creators the liberty to delve into character representation in a more profound manner and to explore narratives that transcend the limitations of conventional media. The importance of character representation on over-the-top (OTT) platforms and its critical role in enhancing our viewing experience and promoting a more inclusive society lie in the depiction of a wide range of characters who possess multiple dimensions, mirroring the intricate nature of individuals in real-world scenarios. In contrast to conventional television or film mediums, which frequently impose time limitations that restrict the in-depth portrayal of supporting characters, OTT platforms afford content creators greater flexibility in crafting multi-dimensional personalities. Consequently, the portrayal of characters transcends conventional stereotypes and simplistic roles, instead presenting them as multifaceted individuals who possess distinct challenges, emotions, and ambitions,

thereby enhancing their relatability.

The portrayal of characters on OTT platforms plays a significant role in influencing our perspectives, cultivating empathy, and advancing inclusiveness through immersive storytelling. These platforms offer a means for writers and creators to explore the complexities of diverse characters, thereby facilitating the creation of compelling narratives that surpass the existing stereotypes, established gender roles, and constraints imposed by conventional media and attempt a multifaceted and inclusive portrayal of society by dismantling detrimental societal conventions. In a contemporary society that heavily relies on interconnectedness, the efficacy of character representation resides in its capacity to foster social cohesion, promote comprehension, and ultimately catalyze constructive transformations. It is imperative for consumers to persist in endorsing and fostering diverse character representation on OTT platforms, as this practice assumes a crucial function in accepting and validating the "otherness" of marginalized characters, thereby having a profound influence on society as a whole.

OTT platforms have the potential to initiate positive societal transformation by featuring robust, resilient, and multifaceted characters who surmount obstacles and actively pursue personal development. The portrayal of virtues and strengths on screen has the potential to inspire

audiences, prompting them to adopt similar qualities and behaviors. This, in turn, can contribute to the cultivation of a society that is characterized by compassion and proactive engagement.

b) Representation of Masculinity-

Over the years, media has been invoking 'hegemonic masculinity' and producing a one-tone representation of men, who are linear, flat, and in line with the traditional definition of manliness. Such unrealistic images of men lead to the reinforcement of prejudice against other genders, which also has damaging repercussions on men. However, there is a noticeable silver lining with the entry of OTT platforms as they are challenging such representations. These platforms chart out the basic premise of the theory of social construction of reality that helps construct new realities of masculinity, defying 'hegemonic masculinity.' Indian content on OTT platforms is blurring the one-tone representation of masculinity', challenging the patriarchal framework of gender and power for future development in the study. OTT platforms have taken a step towards bringing equality among and within genders through their representation to make a difference and build acceptance in society for heterogeneity within masculinity.

OTT platforms depict masculinity in diverse ways, frequently influenced by societal norms, cultural context, and narrative decisions. The prevalent depictions of masculinity observed within OTT platforms are traditional masculinity, encompassing characteristics such as robust physicality, assertiveness, traditional gender roles, and dominance, nuanced complex masculinity, encompassing the portrayal of vulnerability, emotional profundity, and introspection within male characters, the inclusion of characters who defy gender norms or exhibit behaviors that deviate from societal expectations of masculinity; and toxic masculinity. The examination of identity is a prominent theme on OTT platforms, wherein male characters embark on a transformative journey of comprehending and embracing their own sense of self, encompassing various facets such as gender, sexuality, and self-expression. This may encompass narrative arcs that explore the intricacies of masculinity and its interplay with various other identities. OTT platforms possess the capacity to exhibit positive male role models who exemplify qualities of healthy masculinity, empathy, and respect. These characters can function as exemplary that contest detrimental stereotypes and foster constructive behaviors and attitudes. The inclusion of diverse masculine experiences on OTT platforms encompasses a broad spectrum of representations, encompassing men from various cultural backgrounds, races, and socioeconomic statuses. The presence of diverse perspectives fosters a

more comprehensive comprehension of masculinity, thereby challenging the concept of a singular, homogeneous form of masculinity.

It is imperative to acknowledge that the portrayal of masculinity on over-the-top (OTT) platforms is not homogeneous and can exhibit substantial variations across television programs, genres, and the platforms themselves. Critical analysis and active engagement with these representations are of the utmost importance. It is essential to acknowledge the advancements made thus far, while also identifying the areas that necessitate additional enhancements in order to combat detrimental stereotypes and foster a wide range of positive and inclusive manifestations of masculinity.

c)   Representation of Femininity-

OTT platforms depict femininity and female characters through a range of methods that are shaped by decisions made in storytelling, cultural circumstances, and the preferences of the audience. The following analysis presents prevalent depictions of femininity and female characters on OTT platforms.

OTT platforms continue to portray female characters who adhere to conventional gender norms, highlighting attributes such as caregiving, physical attractiveness, and domestic responsibilities. These depictions

have the potential to conform to societal norms, yet they can also face scrutiny for reinforcing stereotypes.

Numerous OTT platforms endeavor to exhibit female characters who embody empowerment and strength, actively defying societal stereotypes and conventional gender norms. The individuals possess the capacity to assume leadership roles, engage in combat, pursue professional endeavors, and advocate for causes, thereby exemplifying qualities such as autonomy, perseverance, and efficacy.

OTT platforms strive to cultivate intricate and multifaceted female characters that transcend the limitations of gender-based definitions. The characters in question possess individual motivations, imperfections, and trajectories of personal development, thereby enabling the depiction of more intricate and authentic portrayals of women as flawed human beings rather than women only.

OTT platforms strive to incorporate a wide range of representations of women, encompassing various racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, in order to promote diversity. The recognition of diversity in this context acknowledges the complex and interconnected nature of women's experiences, thereby promoting narratives that are more nuanced and inclusive.

Certain OTT platforms aim to disrupt societal norms surrounding beauty by showcasing female characters who deviate from traditional expectations of physical appearance. This can encompass the promotion

of body positivity, the portrayal of characters representing a range of body shapes and sizes, and the advocacy for acceptance and self-love.

OTT platforms have the potential to engage in an examination of gender-related matters by utilizing female characters as a means to delve into subjects including but not limited to sexism, misogyny, gender inequality, and women's rights. The narratives presented have the potential to enhance consciousness, initiate dialogues, and facilitate societal transformation.

OTT platforms frequently portray robust relationships and a sense of unity among female characters. The text underscores the significance of female friendships, sisterhood, and support networks, presenting women as allies and partners who work together in solidarity.

OTT platforms possess the capacity to highlight female characters who assume the role of positive role models, thereby eliciting inspiration and empowerment among their audience. The characters have the ability to personify attributes such as intellectual acumen, tenacity, bravery, and empathy, thereby challenging preconceived notions and advocating for parity between genders.

d) The need to study women's representations

The standing of women in any culture and community determines its growth and helps rank a nation (Towns). The importance of women since Mother Eve is undeniable. Spencer believed that "increase of female

influence, would affect the advancement of society 'in a marked manner (Towns)". Marx and Engels (1956) (Reid) said the "transformation of a historical era can always be determined by the condition of progress of women towards liberty" (Towns). Through roles, status is understood. Thus, the best method to assess the status of women in any group or category is to investigate their roles and performance trends. India's rich culture worshipped women as goddesses. Women were the foundation of Indian culture (Sharma). Many ups and downs owing to prevalent situations in different times have been contentious for Indian women's standing. Indian women's path from ancient equality to medieval setback to social reformers' championing of equal rights has been thrilling. This confuses the status of women in India, as they are given equal power by the constitution but still have to silently tolerate social evils like dowry death, female infanticide, eve teasing, rape, domestic violence, low literacy rates, etc. Women are still submissive in patriarchal countries like India, characterized by their household roles rather than their personalities (Agarwal). Due to child marriage, Sati, widow harassment, the patriarchal joint-family structure, property ownership regulations, and other conventions, women's status and position in India gradually declined after the Vedic period. After the Vedic period, women lost their social rank. This time saw the patriarchal family become strong, restricting women's activities. Most women were "looked down upon as a temptation and hindrance in their march towards higher

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development" (K.M). Manu, the patriarch of the Hindu race, said girls should not want independence and should be raised by their fathers, spouses, and sons. Early legal writings consider status women equivalent to Sudras, the lowest caste (A. L. BASHAM). Women were portrayed as weak-minded, prone to all illnesses, and needing protection and discipline throughout their lives. Indian women's standing began to decline again in the medieval period. Middle-class Hindus and Muslim women practice Purdah. Polygamy, child marriage, and Sati spread. Women have little independence (A. L. BASHAM). A Muslim writer described an ideal lady as one who talks and laughs seldom and never without purpose. Even to visit neighbors and friends, she never leaves the house. She has no female friends, trusts no one, and relies only on her husband (Lerner and Bullough). Women's status in India changed again under British administration.

Various social reformers-initiated socio-religious campaigns against societal problems that subjugated women and resulted in changes. The liberation struggle of India under Gandhi empowered conventional housewives to take political action. After India gained independence in 1947, our constitution's many clauses gave women equal rights. Women's standing and place in society changed greatly. Women left the home to pursue careers. New Indian women are confident, independent, and financially independent. India has been independent for almost fifty years, but women are still seen as submissive to males. Arundhati Roy wrote, "as

Indian citizens we subsist on a regular diet of caste massacres and nuclear test, mosque breaking and fashion show, church burnings and expanding cell phone networks, bonded labor and digital revolution, female infanticide and the Nasdaq crash, husbands who continue to burn their wives for dowry, and our delectable pile of Miss World" (Schaffter Sharada   j).

It is crucial to acknowledge that the portrayal of femininity and female characters on over-the-top (OTT) platforms exhibits a wide range of variations and is subject to continuous development. Although there has been notable advancement in the depiction of female characters who possess agency and represent diverse backgrounds, it is important to acknowledge that there are still obstacles to overcome and opportunities for further enhancement in this domain. The critical examination and ongoing discourse surrounding these portrayals have the potential to enhance the inclusivity and representativeness of the media environment.

1.4. Women's Representations in Indian Media

With SDG Goal 5 bent on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls, the contemporary alludes back to mythologies across the globe that have been a complex and varied representation of cultural

narratives spanning history. Whether it be the archetypes of "mother goddess" of Gaia in Greek mythology and Devi in Hinduism to femme fatale (Cleopatra in Egyptian), creation and destruction symbolized by Goddess Kali, cosmic creatrix, or divine femininity, it is essential to approach representations of women with a nuanced perspective, recognizing the diversity of narratives and the cultural contexts that shape storytelling. The representation of women in the ancient Indian epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, is complex and multifaceted, be it the virtuous ideal Sita, ambiguous characters like Kaikeyi and Surpanakha, the purification and redemption epitome Ahalya, the Mahabharata's courageous and independent Draupadi, or maternal incarnate Kunti. With the quest for justice and retribution, Satyavati's role in political intrigue, or Amba's quest for revenge, these epics contain instances of empowerment and agency, underscoring the constant flux of evolving women's representations in Indian society, making them an interrogative site for power relations pertaining to women and their portrayals.

a) Female Archetypes in Mythology and Their Impact on Indian Cinema

Epics may have inspired ideas about women as emblems of purity, tenderness, submission, chastity, etc. The two epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata are essential to Indian culture, religion, and tradition and

substantially affect pop culture, which influences film, filmic events, scenes, and ideals. Indian epics inspired the screenplay and plot portrayal of women to a considerable extent. Films and novels often use epic templates, and the tremendous impressions epic figures leave on viewers. Sita's purity test or fire walk prevents Agni, the god of fire, from burning her, has inspired the Madonna complex, where women, mothers, and lineage restorers are expected to be as pure as Sita. This idea resonates with Indians. Internalization of epics develops epic-based concepts and imaginations in individuals, which influence cinematic character tropes in popular culture. E Prakash Jha's 2010 film *Rajneeti* adapts Mahabharata to current times. Prakash Jha, director of *Rajneeti*, stated in an interview that the Mahabharata has all types of characters and situations. This becomes our mental reference. One never leaves the Mahabharata. Every story is here (Sengupta)Indian movies routinely exploited women's vulnerability, like the mythological Draupadi in the Mahabharata being saved by Lord Krishna. The rape cinematic tool problematizes Indian cinema to profess the male heroism, who always saves the damsel in distress. The question is this recurring savior complex: Women may fancy being saved by the gorgeous prince, but that perspective is rarely portrayed. Female fantasy was rarely explored since it is not deemed proper in a patriarchy-ruled family system to show women's sexuality or dreams. Even women are deemed "not feminine enough," "immoral," by other women since they are so acclimated to this system. Women had legitimized patriarchy and

therefore, act accordingly.

Despite revering Goddess Durga and Goddess Kali, representing power and empowerment, aspiring to make women in society like Sita or Draupadi is a paradox. In mythology, the goddesses always destroy male demons. These goddesses may have symbolized empowerment, and independence in a male-dominated culture but popular Indian films never featured this representation. So, the patriarchs draw from epics' gender templates, imposing them on women, blocking actual empowerment. (Sengupta) says epics permeate ordinary discourse, as in how Ramayana adulteress Ahalya should be avoided by women. The Hindu epics are 'the blueprint of Indian thought', according to human resource management writer (Pattanaik) and this is how and why these epics subconsciously persist in storytelling and literature. They have shaped Indian classical and mainstream culture as well as popular story writing and narrative patterns. After epics and their prototypes enter popular culture the focus shifts to the mass audience, who determines popular culture, their content preferences, and their viewing choices. The audience's makeup is to be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

b) Women's representation in Indian films:

Over the past decade, Indian women have sought 33% parliamentary representation. Politicians and other women believe this will allow more women to speak up for women's issues with empathy and understanding. Current socio-political circumstances make Indian film portrayals of women crucial. Bollywood movie is a popular Indian mass media with impressionistic portrayals. The only concerns are how this impressionistic media conveys narratives, how it portrays women, and if Indian films reflect this socioeconomic transformation. The word "portrayal of women" includes performers and offscreen women professionals.

It is thought that a female presence in entertainment places is essential, hence women have been prominent in Indian film. Despite few exceptions, Indian film heroines have been stereotyped. Gunjan traces the progression of women's roles in Indian films from "*Raja Harishchandra*"s passive wife to *Mother India*'s heroic mother-figure to "*Mother 98*," revealing a long and difficult path for women in Hindi cinema. Laxmi covers Indian film history from *Raja Harishchand*ra in 1913 to *Mother 98* in 1999, navigating how women's roles changed significantly.

The Indian showbiz industry dominates global production. Women have

not been treated equally except in realistic films. Indian feminist cinema experts debate film portrayals of women. Regional cinema, producing a greater volume of films than Hindi cinema, also portrays women subjugated by patriarchy. The 2013 Geena Davis Institute on Gender and Media assessment of popular films from ten countries indicated that female characters constituted 24% of Indian cinema. The poll also indicated that the country has the most seductive (34%), nudity (35%), and attractive (25%), female characteristics. Female lyricists and composers are rare. They tried but haven't enjoyed men's commercial success. Neorealist film has been created in practically all languages and showcased actresses while supporting women's rights. Scholars have studied the female role in Indian cinema and believe that preconceptions and patriarchy cause the unrealistic and muted representation. Bollywood is   male   dominated.

In spite of films about women's difficulties, just one in 100 presents women as human beings, according to (Butalia). Most commercial films depict women as sex objects and inferior people. Male and female stereotypes and a patriarchal framework still dominate the film's plot. The male gaze, savior complex dominates movies. (Mulvey) noted in her important work, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" that the male character drives a film's plot while the female character entertains the male viewer. With rare exceptions, Mulvey's theory fits Indian films. Indian

films generally depict one-dimensional women without shades of gray. This contrast is accentuated in films that separate heroine and vamp. A perfect, virtuous Indian heroine was a staple for decades. The Bollywood vamp's attire and behavior distinguished him from the heroine.

The Jewish ladies took over from Kamlabai Kamat, the first Indian woman to appear in a feature film, and Sulochana—born Ruby Myers in 1907, who outearned the British viceroy, Zarina. Mehtab, and Shobhana Samarth were renowned 1930s heroines. They defied the idea that "respectable" women couldn't act. They were paid, prestigious, and positioned equally to males. Devika Rani, a famous actress, co-founded Bombay Talkies. The industry became patriarchal as women's salaries dropped behind men's. These films illustrated the perils of subjecting women to capitalist, "modern" culture and the apprehension around the erosion of tradition in the pursuit of female autonomy. Hindi films have featured various women each decade. In the 1980s action period, Bollywood girls lost power to heroes. She was cast in beautiful tree-dancing roles and abducted, raped, or killed. The 1990s emphasized the heroine's body above her face. 1990s Bollywood women changed women's position. This period believed educated, financially independent women were callous and uncaring since women are only good at nurturing. Bollywood's male-dominated ideas rule Indian movies. The serialized musical and choreographic performance of the item numbers promotes mainstream corporate gender wage

discrepancies and hypersexualized female body depictions.

Globalization necessitates an analysis of Western influence, advanced marketing techniques, music premieres, and stars endorsing films on reality shows when evaluating the portrayal of women in Hindi cinema. Globalization and liberalism have affected the portrayal of women in global Indian film, according to several researchers. Dat studies how ideology and market affect Indian cinema gender. 1980s satellite television objectified women and valorized men in conservative narrative movies. Indian cinema women are usually performers or playback singers. Women are now directors, choreographers, costume designers, editors, and screenwriters. Past films showed women as shy and meek, whereas recent films feature fearless, uninhibited, skimpily clad, and promiscuous heroines. The introduction of item songs is questioned. Modern-day item song stars are far from the naïve heroines of the past. Directors told stories about women's empowerment. But such possibilities were few. Hollywood-influenced films depicted Western-influenced ladies by 2000. Between East and West is her location. She seeks to modify her physique by losing and gaining weight, experimenting with new activities, developing muscle and abdominal definition, and engaging in performances both on and off screen. The transition in Bollywood's portrayal of women from sex objects, victims of male violence, and dependent, submissive, and peripheral figures may be ascribed to global

and transnational cultural and economic influences affecting Indian culture. How patriarchal concerns continue in Bollywood films with big female roles must be studied. The films help compare diverse femininities. Recent studies illustrate how the male cultural gaze mediates a new "assertive" and "confident" Indian femininity.

In her history of Indian films from *Raja Harishchandra* in 1913 to *Mother 98* in 1999, Laxmi notes that as patriarchal Indian society prioritizes women's issues, Indian film has included more diversified women's roles since the 1960s. Variety did not challenge role typicality. First, many films have tackled women's issues like dowry, widowhood, rape, etc., but none have been hits. Second, (Butalia) believes such films only briefly address women's issues. The movies focus on how the hero addresses women's social issues, not how they view them. Flat characters and moralistic slants render central ladies' puppets, creating dramatization for the filmmaker's morals. In commercial films, women played two major roles: motherly and wife like, which portray women as clichéd, unidimensional beings with no life goals other than marriage (p. 79). (Chakravarty) states that marriage shapes women's social and individual identities, yet traditional gender roles persist (p. 46-47). Through cinema form and pattern, society and the business have a preconceived concept of the starring female. The predominantly male-dominated public views women a particular way, the filmmakers give their

films what they think people want to see, solidifying prejudices and perpetuating the cycle. Female leads' roles follow a set pattern.

Ganti said Phalke's films made women hesitant to act for public shame. Theater, music, and dancing were associated with prostitutes and courtesans, making them low-class making it imperative for them to obey their socio-cultural realities and real-life semiotics (family values, community status, etc.) when playing in films. Indian women showed familial respect (K. Moti Gokulsing). According to (Davidson), few directors can show sexually active women without caricature or self-pity. Applying altercasting persuasion concept (Hogg and Terry) suggest social limitations ensure social roles are fulfilled. Society requires proper behavior and selected knowledge exposure. Alter-casting makes audiences think and act as desired. Popular movies cast women in similar positions due to their socio-cultural roles. The vamp differs from the ideal wife and mother. She opposes tradition, imitates Western women, drinks, smokes, frequents nightclubs, and is morally degraded, inappropriate, and punished (K. Moti Gokulsing). Despite having an affair, fling, or desire for another woman during his terrible time, the man returns to family values, which is appropriate. He is "good" and "moral," with some minor flaws. However, the "fling" lady is always "bad" and "immoral". (Ganti) asserts that courtesans executed songs and dances at royal courts, engaged in the study of poetry and literature, and had sophisticated conversational abilities. The

ruling elite condescended to them. They regulated their bodies and engaged in monogamous sexual relationships with customers, in contrast to prostitutes. Nevertheless, the British used courtesans as prostitutes for British troops in India to diminish their socio-cultural standing and subvert this elite (p. 13–14). Like in real life, courtesan dancers in renowned films seem to serve male heroes and have little value. *Mughal-E-Azam* 1960, the decade's highest-grossing Indian film, starred Anarkali, Akbar's courtesan dancer, and Salim, his son. Women have significant screen and performance time in these roles. says Indian women in films are not independent and self-defined despite their rising popularity. Since 90% of directors and producers are men, this is anticipated. Popular Indian films show women in different polarities. Only excellent mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives are kind and unselfish. Modern terrible women are widowed, single, or vamps. Though unconventional actresses were valued for their originality, both stances were objectified. Film vamps and star actresses were only contextually different in objectification demonstrations. Vamps voluntarily selected cabaret dancing, sexy clothes, open flirting with men, and other "bad" and "immoral" behaviors. The heroine exhibited these actions in proximity to the male protagonist amid his fervor and longing, which the public perceives as more acceptable than the immoral vamp's overt and unbridled sexuality. The heroine and vamp fluctuate, reflecting Indian civilization's Madonna-whore complex. Madonna is a chaste

girlfriend/wife/mother, while Vamp is immoral. A Western, globalized Indian man wants his partner to be like the heroine-vamp hybrid. Disappointingly, nothing has changed to help the female lead. The uses and gratification hypothesis applies (Katz et al.). (Haun Martha J.) says the theory favors customers. Customer preferences drive selection (p. 94). Indian commercials target men who seek to gratify their desires. The film industry, audience, and camera are largely male. To satisfy this male audience is vital. To make money, Indian films may have appealed to a large audience. Movies featuring boring female characters will persist as long as the imagery incorporates commercial elements (symbolic sexuality, musical performances, attractive romantic partners juxtaposed with less appealing spouses, etc.) to cater to the mostly male audience. Seeing a "modern" Indian woman in sensual attire and dancing fulfils the male desire of the librarian-stripper. This divergence is justified by a classic Festinger cognitive dissonance example. Many feel Indian men see women as Madonnas, moral models whose values must mirror Indian culture. Indian men exposed to Western culture must also find them fantasy. Madonnas must now be male fantasies. A solution must be found to satisfy the value system and reduce cognitive dissonance when both perspectives converge. Thus, Madonna becomes the alluring lady of imagination by the masculine gaze, which justifies his view of her. Discordant concepts are combined, and the female lead becomes eye candy. Thus, female characters enhance the film by supporting the male

protagonist. The audience sees them as eye candy and calls them the only female roles in Indian movies. That beauty produces a scopophilia-accepting stereotype. The male gaze, fantasy, and perspective persist. Merging Madonna and whore by explaining role synchronization is another way to gratify such needs within society. Merging heroine and vamp roles changed objectification, not women's roles. Even in Indian clothing, women were objectified. A certain societal value system dictates the portrayal of women on television, the expression of their sexuality, and the actions made by these characters to uphold the patriarchal power structure and fulfill mostly male desires from behind the screen. Cinema lets people escape social constraints and act out their imaginations without education. This leads to stereotypical positions for women emanating from a socio-cultural milieu since directors and producers don't see screenplays from their perspective so much so that the philosophy of women remained unchanged. Littlejohn, Stephen et al. (Littlejohn, Stephen et al.) assert that the uses and gratifications approach positions audience members as actively engaging with media content rather than being passively influenced". Thus, Indian commercial film and its representation of women target a willing audience. Her modernism and independence follow the "Taming of the Shrew" model. Films benefit from audience escapism and fantasy. Hindi films polish their blockbuster formula. All film companies, including state-owned ones, are commercial since they can't spend money on movies people don't want to watch, according

to (Dasgupta C.). It lacks John Ford Westerns, Milestone War films, Hitchcock, Minnelli, or Donen to fascinate us with music. This shows script authors and directors' total lack of inventiveness that choose not to change the successful blockbuster formula. In the intricate landscape of commercial filmmaking, which seeks to engage both urban and rural audiences, the significance of women and their roles, the possibilities of a 40-year-old woman as a principal character, and the nuanced portrayal of women in cinema are overlooked. These women lacked self-definition, strength, and autonomy in their choices. Family, culture, and society consistently influenced their actions. Therefore, a heroine clad in revealing attire, whom the hero sought to fulfill his wants, lacked virtue. This attitude neither endorses the objectification of women nor regards it as immoral. The representation of sexuality on screen subtly communicates signals to the audience, perpetuating social biases and exacerbating the cyclical relationship between films and socio-cultural preconceptions. The Madonna and whore complex is shaped by cultural influences.

(Srinivas) claims the hit film targets a habitual audience. Habitual Indian cinemagoers have developed associations with the flicks. Moviegoers' expectations and experiences affect cinema culture. (p. 157) This habitual movie audience is also exposed to other popular media, which may support their gender roles and beliefs. Ads and TV programs in India stereotype women. (Roy) claims that most domesticity ads portrayed Indian women as housewives, although a few sent an opposite message. These

commercials contrasted tradition with modernity. His 1998 Indian advertising study demonstrates patriarchy remains. The advertising portrays women as independent and autonomous; nonetheless, its inclusion does not need significant alterations to the prevailing sexist mentality (Roy). These commercials appeal to women because they identify with the idea. Television is another popular medium that may reinforce preconceptions every day. (Misra and Roychowdhury) say most programs are centered on middle-class notions of wives and mothers. In a nation with 36% female agricultural workers, women are still considered non-producers and confined indoors. Women are decorative and irrelevant to national progress. Most TV series are homegrown. This perpetuates linear gender stereotypes and duties of women. In India, too, television fails to represent independent women. Emerging narratives and representation tactics create an irreconcilable tension between the complete liberation of women and indigenous social and cultural norms and practices" (Misra and Roychowdhury). According to the debate, films depict social trends, but other media reinforce them, thus the cycle continues.

Digitization, digital convergence, and digitalization have changed media in the past two decades. Online TV libraries offer self-scheduling, which can change the experience. TV viewing balances solitary viewing. Few understand how new players have altered the media production chain's logic and rhythm. New studies try to identify media disruptors and digital

intermediaries theoretically. Live broadcasting transforms internet culture, entertainment, and employment. Gender and sexuality affect livestreaming. Gendered performances, gender-based harassment, LGBTQIA+ community development, and live streaming feature these elements. Live streaming must be culturally understood in terms of sexuality and gender. Nonetheless, the stage is prepared. Meghna Gulzar, Farah Khan, Zoya Akhtar, Gauri Shinde, and Kangana Ranaut are penetrating the male-dominated realm of filmmaking. Numerous filmmakers have examined women's perspectives outside conventional cinema. Satyajit Ray, Rituparno Ghosh, and Aparna Sen challenged the gender conventions of Bengali cinema. Anushka Sharma, Priyanka Chopra, and Deepika Padukone are film producers. Directors Reema Kagti, Kiran Rao, Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari, Nandita Das, and Alankrita Srivastava provide narratives centered on female protagonists. A movement is growing to redefine women on TV beyond sight candy or weaker sex needing a hero. Contemporary actresses also want to prove they can do more than amuse. They fulfill complex roles while rejecting the detrimental belief that society just values their body. Reality allowed the scopophilic camera travel from the woman's body to her identity. Vamp-heroine borders blurred with globalization. The 'F-Rating' promotes cinematic gender equality. A new subgenre has grown from several female-rated Hindi "indie" films (Devasundaram) .These films meet the F-Rating triune with female directors, actresses, and scriptwriters.

F-rated Hindi films' appeal at international film festivals and greater distribution show its glocal fusion, stimulating national and global discussions concerning gender inequity in India. This article's F-rated independent Hindi films focus on female representation and intersectional discourses. Film festivals for F-rated Indie films attract female creators and diverse audiences. This enables us to examine the transdiscursivity of F-rated Hindi films to emphasize nuanced gender concerns that are mostly endogenous and exclusive to India, but potentially relevant within a global relational framework. Recent independent F-rated films examine female autonomy and expression, akin to the groundbreaking female directors in Hindi cinema.

1.5. Gender Taboos:

Media portrayal may change society's views, especially on marginalized groups. The media's prominent impact is clear since most people worldwide use media to raise awareness, learn about global events, and stay informed. (McQuail) says that the media is responsible for highlighting and promoting systematic exposure, as well as shaping concepts and values.

When they behave and communicate online, the audience encounters and experiences. Despite civil rights advancements, discriminatory gender-based depictions persist in certain circumstances. Scientific study on media portrayals and gender stereotypes, objectification, and sexualization in culture is prevalent. Indian film is rapidly evolving due to new media (Singh). Instead of uplifting women or stressing their pain, stories now explore what women want. They show real individuals living real lives and coping with their consequences. Female-centered stories are real because of their complexity. If the content is to set the tone for the future and portray women as societal exemplars, OTT media may prove essential. Women in Indian culture are expected to do household duties and submit to males. Television, movies, and other traditional media have reinforced these gender norms. Indian film is rapidly evolving due to new media (Singh). Immoral performances may harm society since it is the most impactful media the public is attached to women. They are shown more authentically on OTT platforms than as either divine figures or seductresses. Stereotyping reinforces gender conventions, promotes sexism, harassment, and aggression in males, and hinders women's professional aspirations. Exposure to objectifying and sexualizing imagery may result in the internalization of conventional beauty standards, misogyny, maltreatment, and body shame. These representations may result in symptoms of eating disorders, increased body surveillance, and worse quality of life regarding body image. Nevertheless, Indian online

series often portray women's stereotypes, hate speech, including abrasive language, and gender-based biases. This research will attempt to examine how certain factors of Indian OTT content structure affect gender roles and women's streaming representation.

1.5.1 Origin and purpose of taboo

After learning about *abos* in Tonga in 1777, Captain James Cook transmitted it to European languages. Taboo comes from Tongan "tabu" and Polynesian "tapu". It means "marked off" bounds and may stem from *ta* (to mark) and *pu* (thoroughly or extremely). Taboos controlled people's lives morally and socially by making certain things, discourses, and behaviors undesirable differentiating between the "sacred" and "the unclean." Taboos may manifest in several ways, including behaviors. Fraser categorized taboos into behaviors (e.g., consumption), individuals (e.g., the deceased, women during menstruation and delivery), objects (e.g., blood, saliva, and certain meals), and language (e.g., names of the deceased and deities). This may include broad taboos applicable to a category of entities and particular taboos relevant to one or more clan members. Contemporary taboos have been examined in several research compilations (Browne) argues that some scholars prioritize "considering taboos as actions or practices and their societal and individual repercussions" above their intrinsic nature. A further crucial element of

taboo identified in preliminary study was that the prohibitions or constraints were either permanent, such as dietary restrictions, or temporary, like mourning practices. The time aspect of taboos is revealed. This interaction between behavior and belief is what makes taboos persist. One writer says, "Living out of taboo is a human product and remains important until demolished (Lambek). How can something become forbidden? Taboos are long-standing, not just ritualized. According to Thody, Philip Malcolm Waller, and Holden, sex and sexuality are forbidden in many societies because they symbolize the past and shape the future.

Taboos identify and preserve "the sacred" or appropriate social conduct, according to French sociologist (Isometsä). Others agreed, arguing that communities create taboos for their members for self-preservation and tradition-building. To explain taboo, these theories are structuralist (Douglas). Social institutions are responsible for managing and preserving society. A social gap exists between taboo practitioners and non-practitioners. Structure may also manifest as negation, prohibition, and limitation. Both Levi-Strauss and Freud assert that this forms the foundation of society (Lambek). It is imbibed as a social learning process (F~anz and Steiner) rather than a dictating behavior. Paradoxically, denial may be seen as affirmation, and taboos unite people who share them. They strengthen common interests, taboos, negative injunctions, and the lack of

specific practice. Taboos required compliance from those impacted by them and preserved the group's identity (Davies). It is clear why taboos can also be a resistive vehicle to external power (Lambek). Two-level negation is feasible. Taboos limit behaviors, but also thoughts and reflections on what is banned. Since taboos may highlight and hide banned actions and experiences, this overall constraint on thinking may explain our discomfort, if not resistance, in addressing them (Tetlock).

Taboo training encompasses "rites." Typical instances include advertisements, social media platforms, peer groups, celebrity endorsements, and complimentary samples. A taboo is very contagious. A study investigated if reminders of a woman's menstrual condition foster the objectification of women and negative views towards her. A female confederate discarded a tampon or hair clip from her handbag. Dropping the tampon reduced the confederate's competency and likelihood of avoiding proximity to her. To safeguard culturally sanitized views of femininity, gender schematic individuals objectified women more often at the mention of menstruation. Feminist theory and fear management examine how bodily ambivalence objectifies women. Thus, reproductive functions symbolize women's role as caretakers and their alleged inferiority. While women's reproductive processes are perceived as inferior, their bodies are beautiful and desired. The perceived link of women with nature may contribute to objectification of the female body, as suggested by (Goldenberg et al.). Sanitizing and idealizing the body to

become a cultural icon removes its physical features. Although sexual objectification has many debilitating psychological effects on women (Roberts, Goldenberg, et al.) suggest that it may serve the existential function of separating them from their earthly nature. Many anthropological studies show that women's menstruation was dreaded, nasty, and hidden. According to (Janice Delaney, Mary Jane Lupton), prehistoric males feared menstrual blood more than death, disgrace, or dismemberment. Many tribes compel women to reside in menstruation huts during their periods to prevent blood pollution. To avoid contamination, many societies have menstruation taboos, usually around food and sex. Menstruating women cannot cultivate, preserve, prepare, serve, or touch men's hunting gear. The medical consensus was that women were constructed around and ruled by their ovaries. In addition to disguising their contamination, society stigmatizes women and teenage girls from discussing menstruation in public, especially with males. Menstruation euphemisms like "the rag" and "the curse" are mostly unfavorable (Kissling). Parents typically postpone addressing menstruation because it's tough ("A Study of Attitudes toward Menarche in White Middle-Class American Adolescent Girls"). Some girls feel good about their periods, but shame and concealment prevail (Ussher, 1989). Both men and women seem disgusted by menstruation. Menstruation, like other disagreeable stimuli, is considered polluting or contagious (Rozin et al.).

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Body negativity is caused by unreasonable beauty standards and body image problems. Women invest a lot of time and money on cosmetics, clothes, dieting, and cosmetic surgery to achieve their ideal bodies. Objectification allows one to escape the biological, inferior body. A mother who breastfeeds her infant in public without "covering up" is considered obscene (Yalom), yet her breasts are acceptable for selling consumer items when sexually objectified. The commercialization of items that enable women to disguise their menstrual cycles promotes super femininity and commodifies breasts (Courts). Because women are taught to see themselves as a mirror image, objectification can impair their concentration and emotional experiences (Fredrickson et al.)In line with this concept, (Roberts, Calogero, et al.) found that women who objectify their bodies are more disgusted and ashamed of menstruation and poverty. According to (Rozin and Fallon), those who adhere more to social norms are more "disgust prone," meaning they respond negatively to breaches of cleanliness and decorum.

Proponents of traditional gender roles exhibit a stronger dedication to maintaining a rigid social standard of gender-specific behavior (Roberts, Calogero, et al.). Individuals who strictly conform to societal gender role ideology may protect against women's beauty shortcomings. Body feminists argue that in patriarchal societies, women's subordination is defined by their distinctions from men. Similar to ethnocentric views on cultural disparities, patriarchal interpretations of gender differences assert

that males, with the ability to name, define their own bodies and behaviors as "normal" and "good," whereas attributes that differentiate women from men are seen as negative. The reproductive systems of women differ from those of males. Consequently, the bodily functions of this system—menstruation, nursing, childbirth—serve as emblems of women's subordination and disparagement. Consequently, taboo reminders diminish perceptions of competence, affection, physical distance, and the objectification of women by emphasizing a critical distinction between genders.

Indian culture is seen as patriarchal and male-dominated (Ganesh and Paramasivam Ganesh). Despite Indians' commitment to equality and egalitarianism, many continue to adhere to traditional gender norms and roles (Evans et al.). Generation X espoused gender equality, although seldom implemented it. Even Generation X female participants had discomfort in advocating for media representations of powerful women combating cultural bias, while having faced limitations throughout their youth. The muted response of Gen X female participants to women's empowerment themes may be associated with historical gender inequities. Individuals may 'emulate' media representations, although they 'are more inclined to exhibit modeled behavior if it yields positive outcomes rather than if it results in negative or unproductive consequences' (Bandura). India remains far from becoming an egalitarian society unless its fundamental causes are understood. Work-family conflict and interference

disproportionately impact women compared to men (Bandura). A recent survey indicated that Indians hold the view that males should be prioritized for employment, particularly in situations of restricted job availability, and that women should consistently defer to their partners (Evans et al.) The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in job scarcity, adversely affecting women's employment (Datta), corroborating common belief. Liberalization enabled women to engage in external employment; yet this 'new woman' is constrained by 'new patriarchal dynamics' since she is not anticipated to transgress 'spiritual' and 'national limits'. Male participants from Generation X saw the protection of women as a valid justification for limiting their independence. Public restrooms and open defecation are significant locations of violence and sexual harassment directed at women (Koonan). Women are more esteemed in both professional and personal domains, as women are no longer portrayed in the media as commodities or sexual symbols and possess enhanced purchasing power. (Ganesh and Paramasivam Ganesh) see a stagnant balance between masculinity and femininity in urban areas. Women are increasingly participating in the workforce (Bharadwaj and Mehta)

Participants' perspectives indicate that Indians continue to possess colorism biases. Generation X exhibited a fascination with skin tone, resulting in the development of skin-whitening products. Ironically, despite India's mostly dark-skinned people, feminine beauty is predicated

on fair complexion (Kukreja). Indian culture has been notably affected by skin tone perceptions owing to the association of a fair complexion with power and beauty under British colonization (Shevde). The roots of colorism in Indian society are complex and rooted in psychological factors apart from colonial influencs. Comics and films depict Indian deities and demons with a variety of skin tones (Pattanaik). Colorism in India stigmatizes and induces guilt in women with dark complexions. Consequently, grandparents and parents evaluate children's skin tones and recommend home remedies for skin lightening, becoming skin-whitening cream a coveted product. Comparison and practice are essential elements of cultural indoctrination throughout development. Notably, Gen Z women acquiesce to the pervasive societal expectation for fair skin, despite their pronounced resistance to it. Generation Z was influenced by their parents, who favored the traditional 'fair is beautiful' perspective, to embrace social equity. Generation Z is recognized for their pursuit of truth (Francis and Hoefel); hence, they may dismiss anything that is impractical.

Psychoanalytic feminism holds that males have a psychological urge to oppress women. Men's need to dominate women and women's weak resistance stem from the human nature. The Indian cinema industry is phallocentric, with males dominating the plot and women playing minor roles to glamorize the hero. These films seldom depict women and their solitary worlds since it would hurt box office. Feminist cinema reviewers

have traditionally attacked this stereotypical portrayal of women. Laura Mulvey, a leading feminist film critic, used psychoanalytic theory to attack patriarchal control and for-profit filmmaking in her 1975 article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Caste, sexual vulgarity, gender role subversion, and other factors prevent "no contact" cultures like India from allowing opposite-gender interactions. The "no-touch taboo" between genders in India is utilized to explore how sexuality, patriarchy, and gender roles maintain society. These dynamics show that touch-averse culture underpinning Indian power networks (George). Modern "obscene" is the depiction or representation of sexual subjects, deemed obscene or repugnant by established norms of morality and decency (Nagar and Thakkar). The culture has redefined obscenity. The Internet in the 20th century allowed anybody with a computer or smartphone to see sexually explicit content. Obscenity has become "pornography". In "written texts" and "visual media," obscenity is sexual. Sexuality, like beauty, is subjective. System themes are generally sexualized. In modern India, embracing, kissing, or strolling and sitting together constitutes "cultural heritage" violation. Schools, legislation, and other institutions persuade residents that personal meetings are vulgar. The Indian Penal Code 292 defines "obscenity" as material that is lascivious, appeals to prurient interests, or has the potential to deprave and corrupt those who are likely, considering all the circumstances, to read, see, or hear the content therein (Gupta). Based on "sexuality," obscenity is penalized by "corruptive

content." Corruption, offense, and obsceneness involve sex. Sexuality offends national morals. Law mixes obscenity with sex. It should define, contextualize, and explain "sexuality." Young children should learn about sex to avoid discrimination, stigma, violence, and criminality. A lack of clarity permits law to be misinterpreted and misused. The criminal procedure emphasized "control" and endowed the law with "an infinitesimal power over the active body delineates the coercive influence of legislation on overt bodily gestures, actions, and behaviors. Disciplines regulated bodily functions, subdued its capabilities, and imposed compliance and usefulness. These alternative judicial systems establish and use their own sentencing frameworks when the conventional court is unable to clarify terms, such as the ambiguous term obscenity in the Indian Penal Code. (*Extract from Nivedita Menon*) asserts that "the question of gender-appropriate behavior is thus inextricably linked to legitimate procreative sexuality. Patriarchal societies need this familial structure. Consequently, the family emerges as a significant entity that cannot confront the system alone. Like educational institutions, families discipline those who fail to adhere to these prescribed qualities and behaviors (Menon). Classroom stereotypes in schools shape kids' identities more than families. For children, it supports the "differences" between gendered identities presented as normal. Most importantly, kids will learn that "gendered identities" are social constructions and gender does not affect behavior. Judith Butler writes that when the created nature of gender

is considered as entirely independent of sex, gender transforms into a free-floating fabrication, meaning "man" and "masculine" can refer to male or female bodies and "woman" and "feminine" to male (Hess). Girls and boys who form strong emotional attachments early on will not require "vigilante circulars" since solid relationships lower abuse risk. Our kids will be healthier physically and mentally if gender stereotypes change. If "sexuality" is permitted, platonic relationships will be "love." Berger's monitoring hypothesis should improve child morality. Media portrayals influence social forces. Despite civil rights advancements, discriminatory gender-based depictions persist in certain circumstances.

Stereotyping reinforces gender stereotypes and conventions, promotes sexism, harassment, and aggression in males, and hinders women's professional aspirations. Nonetheless, distinct populations possess specific pathways from exposure to adverse well-being effects that need more investigation. Asymmetrical, female-only taboos are not only symbolic reflections of a community's beliefs but is patriarchal control to secure women's full dependency on males. Examining analogous asymmetrical taboos in different countries to demonstrate that female-only taboos are linked to survival and constitute major handicaps for women, especially lone women. Taboos govern and exploit single women and their resources, which may be used to evict them. There is substantial research on women's studies on OTT platforms, but taboos are scarcely examined in the Indian context, which necessitates their implications for young viewers who are

cultural legacy bearers of the nation towards actualizing SDG 5.

1.6 Brief Overview of thesis structure:

Chapter 1- The chapter attempts to illustrate the digital revolution of Indian cinema providing the backdrop of entertainment and cinematic media, the transformations it underwent due to gradual advances of technology. Following the digitalization, it also aims to map the introduction of serialized storytelling and episodic formats of OTT media in India with gender being a unanimous unifying foundation of cinematic representations of Indian OTT platforms. Women being center staged in the gender framework since time immemorial, their portrayals could be both skewed and progressive. However, gender taboos are an indispensable part of filmic texts and the industry, irrespective of the entertainment medium. With online streaming being popularized in India post the Covid 19 pandemic and for numerous factors like convenience, affordability etc., the content reigned supreme with the presence of overt and covert taboos which plagued women's representations. Introducing those gender taboos individually, the thesis structure aims to lay the rubric of further examining research objectives furthering SDG 5, bent on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

Chapter 2- The literature review aims to reveal how new media

distinguishes itself from conventional media and communication technologies. An examination of digitization initiatives and new screen studies would advocate for a more comprehensive interpretation of new media defining the "digital era." It attempts to elucidate the epistemology of the term, over-the-top (OTT) that has shown remarkable worldwide expansion in recent years, bypassed traditional media distribution channels and has emerged as the preeminent independent digital multimedia platform, where viewers have total autonomy in selecting their favorite media content. It attempts to study the existing theories that studied the OTT phenomenon from a gendered lens rather than from managerial and mass media perspectives revealing theoretical gaps. When gender and women's representations are brought into the purview of OTT content, the literature review would assist in understanding audience perception of gender stereotypes by unearthing gaps related to its examination and types. Contingent upon identification of gaps, it would lay its scope and objective of studying women's representation on Indian OTT platforms and examination of taboos implicit in its content.

Chapter 3- Based on the research objectives, the chapter will focus on rationalizing the methods and methodologies, of which the primary is to frame the research design of mixed methods which involves, instrument selection, inclusion criteria, sample size and sampling strategy, theoretical framework, data collection techniques and research tools for the

subsequent analysis of both qualitative and quantitative studies. It will also enlist the ethical considerations, challenges and limitations of the methods and methodologies applied for the research framework.

Chapter 4- This chapter strives to extrapolate on the data collection, coding, assessment of validity and reliability and categorization of codes as part of the thematic analysis of qualitative data gathered through semi structured interviews. It further goes on to selectively study the instruments, that are 5 OTT shows through content analysis while reasoning their selection as a validity assessment of thematic analysis. From a quantitative approach, the chapter aims to identify the factors of OTT perception and hence the dynamics of audience consumption. Therefore, it plans to measure the reliability and validity of constructs through factor analysis on the data collected through responses from questionnaires. The data analysis reveals its descriptive statistical analysis and clustering aids in segmenting the audience into various categories.

Chapter 5- This chapter lays bare the findings of the thematic analysis of qualitative research, elaborates the already categorized themes, formulates a conceptual framework for the examination of gender taboos and its direct and indirect effects on the consumers of OTT content. By doing so, it attempts to suggest possible measures of combating taboos like the regulatory mechanism of the content. After enlisting the results of content

analysis of the selected OTT shows, it converges the code categories and finalizes its themes as an outcome of thematic analysis. It would then demonstrate the matured and revised research design's findings and provide a theoretical elaboration of finalized themes. From a quantitative standpoint, it would unveil the segmentation findings, the audience clusters further explaining each cluster's features based on their perception and lastly profiling them on the basis of their demographic and psychographic characteristics.

Chapter 6- The chapter finally elucidates a summary of key findings and answers the research questions posed earlier. It then aims to enlist the research implications from theoretical, managerial, and practical viewpoints and enumerates certain limitations of the study. It also enlists the scope for future research for certain unexplored arenas.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature reviews (LR) function as essential instruments for assessing contemporary knowledge, pinpointing deficiencies, and suggesting novel research trajectories, utilized in the synthesis and evaluation of existing scholarly work systematically (Agarwal et al.; Swain et al.; Kumar et al.; Jebarajakirthy et al.; Bodolica and Spraggon). The chapter approaches the literature review through a funnel approach based on relevance of theories and methodologies applicable to studying women's positionalities on the OTT media. Netflix introduces a novel convergence model as a 21st-century enterprise that has disrupted the traditional film and television industry via its strategic choices (Heredia-Ruiz et al.). The relationship between film and television has undergone significant transformation due to the promotion of conservative filmmaking in response to audacious and hazardous material. (Fernández) states that television programs are now considered literature or art after being dismissed as mass art. This redefining of popular television content quality has always been met with suspicion by viewers and cinema critics, who thought them inferior to art artistically and industrially. (Reviriego) said that cinephilia has transformed into 'telephilia', and its veneration has become mainstream, noting that "the longstanding relationship between cinema and its audience has encountered a challenging juncture," with television shows exhibiting

more narrative depth than films. Television now changes cinema, and vice versa. The chaotic influence is two-way. Filmmakers such as Martin Scorsese, Woody Allen, Amy Heckerling, and David Fincher were pursuing possibilities on television or transitioning to that medium. (Martin, 2018, p. 49). (Reviriego) asserts that acclaimed audiovisual programs such as *The Wire* (2002-2008), *The Sopranos* (1999-2007), *Treme* (2010-2013), and *Mad Men* (2007-2015) explore themes of power dynamics and the failures of institutions and politics in the post-industrial period. Thus, these mainstream hits include programs that aim to explore metaphysical problems without renouncing amusement. In an age of streaming films, the series offers viewers a fresh gateway to compelling narrative and audiovisual enjoyment. (Reviriego) accurately observed that film culture has evolved into "seriesphilia," indicating not merely a displacement of series in relation to cinema but a continuous interplay between both narrative forms, frequently traced back to postmodern cinema and the third golden age of television series.

2.1 Alteration in media consumption patterns:

The framework of digital cinema distinguishes cinema from the continuous evolution of media and communication technologies represented in the terminology of new media. An examination of digitization initiatives in theatrical exhibition contests the traditional

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timeline of old and new media, advocating for a more comprehensive interpretation of new media that focuses on the artifacts and practices defining the "digital era."

The term, over-the-top, denotes systems, which have shown remarkable worldwide expansion in recent years (Fernández; Sharma and Lulandala**).** OTT is a mechanism that circumvents conventional media distribution channels, such as cable and television, emphasizing the streaming of entertainment content, including web series and films. OTT content has emerged as the preeminent independent multimedia platform, giving consumers total autonomy over their media choices (Puthiyakath and Goswami). As to Statista Market Forecast, the number of OTT video users was 3.26 billion in 2022, increasing to 3.51 billion in 2023, and is anticipated to reach 4.22 billion by 2027. The OTT platform market is anticipated to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.01% from 2023 to 2027, culminating in an estimated market value of $462.90 billion by 2027 (*OTT Video—Worldwide. Statista Market Forecast, Statista,*). (Deloitte) indicated that OTT having grabbed supporters by having a significant effect and gaining traction due to their potential future, suggesting that OTT services would affect conventional media consumption. The proliferation of smart devices in the contemporary technological landscape has revolutionized consumption (Flayelle et al.; Dwivedi et al.; Sadana and Sharma; Walsh and Singh)

presenting opportunities for the digital sector and academic researchers to investigate its novelty (Modgil et al.).

OTT content gained prominence in contemporary society, facilitated by technology-driven surroundings (Kraus et al.). Prior research in media and entertainment has examined audience preferences regarding content selections, expenditure trends on entertainment (J. Shin et al., Y. Chen et al.; Hutchins et al.; Shin and Park; Walsh and Singh; J. Kim et al.), the inclination for innovative content among younger demographics (Sadana and Sharma) , patterns before and after the pandemic (Sharma and Lulandala),from conventional to OTT services, particularly during the pandemic (Sharma and Lulandala), has intensified competition for retention audience bases. (Walsh and Singh) describe the phenomenon of cord cutting, when consumers terminate cable or satellite subscriptions and choose to access media at leisure via internet. From the advent of digital breakthroughs, the propensity to view television has altered remarkably, with viewers increasingly depending on digital material, leading to a transition from conventional to OTT services (Castro et al.; Braun). Its emergence enables to access content at their convenience, thereby altering their cognitive processes, communication patterns, and internet utilization of a wide variety of content. Online and electronic media are gaining popularity owing to reasonable internet connection and costs, enhancing viewers' feelings of togetherness (Braun; Lu et al.). The quality and

accessibility enhance audience happiness and acceptability (J. Kim et al.; Lu et al.; Koenuma et al.). Attributes like mobility and superiority that provide content access in their desired vernacular and at their convenience, hence encouraged greater regular usage of OTT services (Flayelle et al.; Susanno et al.). (Lee et al.) emphasized audience adoption of OTT platforms attributes to personalization, content quality, cost-effectiveness, and individual choices.

(Kwak et al.) highlighted that OTT streaming provides distinct and superior content across several platforms, facilitating user convenience. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the behavior and lifestyle of the general populace (Iivari et al.). Restrictions on outdoor movement, social isolation, and compliance with social distancing measures (Sehgal et al.; Khanna et al.) led to a surge in digital media consumption, resulting in significant demand (Modgil et al.). (J. Shin et al.) indicated that while both streaming providers were competing for supremacy in the OTT service market, (Oyedele and Simpson) asserted that in order to sustain a competitive advantage, OTT providers must prioritize the variety of viewing alternatives available and develop tactics to address user preferences. OTT service providers must provide user-centric and tailored content according to users' preferences (Oyedele and Simpson). The increasing prevalence of OTT platforms has resulted in a notable transition from conventional television, highlighting OTT's competitive supremacy

(H.-C. Chen et al.). The transition from broadcast television to web television can be traced back to the year 1995, when *The Spot* emerged as a pioneering example of episodic online storytelling. This concept, often likened to "Melrose Place-on-the-web," marked the initial foray into the realm of web-based narrative content. One additional trailblazer in the realm of online television was the series *Muscle Beach*, located in Santa Monica, which was broadcast in 1999. This series comprised episodes lasting 8 minutes each, encompassing elements of a sitcom, an exercise program, and news. Between the years 2000 and 2005, notable progress in technology facilitated the widespread distribution of online content through the emergence of enhanced streaming capabilities as well as the establishment of prominent platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo.

Prior research about OTT examined adoption (Mulla), preference (Shin and Park), service (Koenuma et al.) and convenience (J. Shin et al.), consumption (Walsh and Singh). The customization and personalization of television content is increasing as it is increasingly consumed through online platforms. Burroughs argues that streaming providers propagate the perspective that algorithms serve the sole purpose of delivering content to viewers based on their prior preferences communicated to the algorithm. Netflix has repositioned itself as "the future of television," aligning with the inherent and innate preferences of viewers. Service providers have constructed programmed pathways for the younger demographic through

the creation of extensive online repositories encompassing various media formats, including films, documentaries, talk shows, and web series. Online streaming platforms utilize a combination of technological advancements and innovative programming strategies to effectively engage and immerse audiences. These platforms employ various methods such as control mechanisms, recommendation systems, audience autonomy, economic affordability, and the provision of high-quality content. Consequently, they have significantly transformed the television landscape by altering the way audiences choose, consume, distribute, and interpret television programming. The success of this phenomenon is due to authors' ability to exercise their creative freedom within the confines of minor censorship restrictions and their comparatively lower financial requirements. The dynamic landscape of OTT platforms been elevated to novel concepts within television audience research, and the financial dynamics of the industry have experienced positive effects since the pandemic. It subsequently emerged as a disruptive form of entertainment known as the "new at home" medium, which aligned with the increasing desire of its audience and solidified its position as a prevalent cultural presence within households.

So far, the portrayal of the "Digital Era" presented an incomplete narrative of digitization since it emphasized format and delivery. Likewise, scholarly investigations into digital cinema used a limited perspective that

neglected broader industrial dynamics. We examined the existing literature to comprehend the study trajectory and identify constraints from the user behavior and reception standpoint. Although existing research has enhanced comprehension of new media dissemination during the first phases of OTT's implementation, the mediascape evolved swiftly over the years and confronts novel circumstances (KISDI; Jang-won). Scholars have already examined the potential for OTT to be effectively integrated into the existing market ecosystem and investigated consumers' behavioral intentions by an invention diffusion framework due to OTT being seen as a breakthrough in the industry. Another issue was to assess its competitiveness in relation to traditional TV. These investigations focused on quantifying the battle between pay-TV and OTT providers to ascertain the potential of OTT services to replace pay-TV in the future. Numerous studies have used quantitative analysis to assess customers' willingness to pay (WTP) by mirroring consumer preferences and to provide the ideal setup for OTT services. The theoretical foundations of articles included the User Gratifications Theory (UGT) (Meng and Leung; Katherine Chen; Sadana and Sharma, Kim and Lee). Technology Acceptance Models (TAM) (Venkatasubramany Iyer and Siddhartha; Sharma and Kakkar; Ogbo et al.), and Diffusion of Innovation Theory. Theoretical frameworks such as Expectancy Value Theory, Platform Theory, Value-Based Theory, Dual Process Theory, Evolutionary Game Theory, Prospect Theory, Media Complementary Theory, and Media Displacement Theory have

been discussed. The Theory of Consumption Values (Chakraborty et al.), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology-UTAUT2 (Bhattacharyya et al.), and Psychological Ownership Theory (Soren and Chakraborty) are discussed.

This literature search shows how industrial conceptions of new media become participatory activities that redefine audiences as content makers and consumers. In the preliminary investigation, OTT was a result of ICT innovation. The foundation of these research is that technology advancement enables users to access video services that can seamlessly utilize any material on any device with an Internet connection (Yousaf et al.). From this viewpoint, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) were possibly used to comprehend over-the-top (OTT) user behavior (Leung and Chen; Malewar and Bajaj). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in information systems posits that perceived simplicity and perceived effectiveness influence technology use behavior (Davis). (Bhattacharyya et al.) used a modified UTAUT2 model to elucidate OTT usage, highlighting its robustness and reliability. (Basuki et al.) examined perceived ease of use and utility. The enjoyment and readiness to engage influence online movie-watching behavior during the COVID-19 epidemic. The TAM model elucidates customer behavior in digital video streaming. (Kim and Park) demonstrated the influence of innovativeness, subjective standards, and reputation incentives on

satisfaction. Dimmick's niche hypothesis (Dimmick) was used in secondary research on pay-TV and OTT services to examine competition. Dimmick's niche theory posits that consumers possess constrained time and financial resources. When enhanced materials are accessible, individuals will be more inclined to use them. This will decrease the time and financial resources allocated to obsolete media (Dimmick; Gaskins and Jerit). (Li) analyzed the competitive dynamics of three television firms via the lens of niche theory. Media, IPTV, and digital cable were analyzed, revealing that OTT was the most competitive. (J. Shin et al., "Strategic Management of Over-the-Top Services: Focusing on Korean Consumer Adoption Behavior") and (M. S. Kim et al.) performed a discrete choice experiment to analyze consumer preferences about various OTT service characteristics. (D. Shin et al.) assessed terrestrial television, real-time transmission, and emerging broadcasting technologies.

The quantity of VODs and the monthly subscription prices are crucial for OTT providers. A comparative analysis of OTT services in China and Korea revealed that Chinese consumers prioritized resolution, followed by recommendations and display choices. The most beneficial element was the recommendation system that analyzed the interests of Korean clients. In the absence of market data, research on customer preferences for OTT services used discrete choice experiments. Research facilitated the

assessment of the advantages of OTT services relative to conventional media and traditional television series providers upon their market introduction. Comprehensive descriptions enable researchers to reevaluate television studies with diverse techniques. (Katz and Lazarsfeld) Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is extensively used to elucidate media consumption. The UGT analyzes how individuals proactively pursue media and information to fulfill their requirements (Sahu et al.) This concept examines individuals' everyday media consumption (Ruggiero). Media consumption is purpose-driven, it asserts. This concept underscores the manner in which consumers use media to fulfill their wants, rather than the impact of media on them (Sadana and Sharma). OTT services prioritize the desires, motivations, and pleasure of media consumers (Sadana and Sharma). Two premises about media consumers form the foundation of UGT. It asserts that media consumers deliberately choose their content. Secondly, individuals comprehend their media selections and choose for those that fulfill their demands and objectives. Davis' 1989 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) forecasts consumer acceptance, uptake, and use of technology. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) employs Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Perceived Usefulness (PU) to examine the influence of technology on human behavior (Davis). TAM asserts that several variables influence viewers' acceptance of new technology. Camilleri and Falzon characterize PU as the use of over-the-top (OTT) services. PEOU refers to the effort necessary to proficiently navigate

technology. The perceived ease of use, usefulness, enjoyment, and content significantly impact video-on-demand consumption. Research on technology adoption has been extensively used. Consequently, TAM indicates that consumers exhibit more receptiveness to new technologies owing to their utility and user-friendliness.

Innovation Diffusion Theory: According to Rogers, individuals choose technology for its ease and social advantages. Technology is acknowledged for its social advantages, and lifestyle impacts this (Chan and Leung). Lifestyle forecasts purchasing behaviors for marketing analysts (Wei), aiding them in comprehending the psychological inclinations of their target audience (Leung and Chen). Rogers posits that the acceptance of technology depends on its alignment with people' wants and preferences. Rogers claimed that technological innovation is shaped by consumers' prior experiences with technology adoption. Consequently, researchers may accurately predict technology adoption by analyzing technological trends. Random Utility Theory (RUT) posits that individuals make choices depending on utility (Baltas and Doyle). OTT utility functions may include content quality, affordability, user-friendliness, content variety, and platform functionality. The probabilistic RUT posits that individuals choose the alternative that optimizes their utility (Shin et al.). Nonetheless, uncertainty affects decision-making. Consequently, while customers may choose an OTT service based on its attributes and

provisions, they may also opt for an alternative owing to arbitrary reasons (M. S. Kim et al.). Service providers can forecast the popularity and user acquisition of various OTT services by analyzing the utility functions of several consumer segments based on demographics and preferences. Suppliers may enhance revenue and market penetration by analyzing the impact of price fluctuations on the utility function and demand for OTT services (Shin et al.). When service providers provide tailored information, delighted clients are likely to exhibit reduced price sensitivity and a greater propensity to maintain their membership.

Niche Theory: This research by Dimmick and Rothenbuhler analyzes the competitiveness, cohabitation, and competitive dominance of OTT and television in relation to customer satisfaction. The research used niche theory to systematically evaluate the enjoyment, similarity, and competitive advantage of OTT and television across seven micro dimensions of satisfaction. They vie for limited resources to succeed in the Indian media landscape. In general, OTT surpasses television in satisfaction, except for social interaction. The least competitive parts of pleasure are ease and financial benefit, which are the strengths of OTT. Consequently, television is more prone to being partly replaced since it restricts its spectrum of enjoyment. Its emphasis on displacement in ancient and modern media neglects complementing relationships, which is one of its primary shortcomings. Despite academics studying OTT

platforms since 2012, few theories have been employed to support study. Few studies use a theoretical framework. Only 23 of the publications analyzed in this research applied a theoretical framework to validate their results. The OTT domain lacks hypotheses-focused attention. Many theoretical perspectives and contributing factors are present in literature, but no strong theoretical framework. Lack of dependency on a theoretical framework emphasizes the need for greater theoretical study in OTT. The development of OTT research is unclear notwithstanding the literature. Thus, combining the current study on OTT services would improve understanding of the domain's development and current state and uncover gaps in previous studies to influence future research.

Table 2.1: Topic wise literatures

Source: (Khanna et al.)

S.l. Number	Topic	Authors	No. of Articles
1	OTT infrastructure and technology development	(Abreu et al.), (Baladron and Rivero), (Braun), (De-Aguilera-Moyano et al.), (Hutchins et al.), (Prince and Greenstein), (Radosinska), (Shim and Shin), (Shin and Shim), (Van Esler), (Yu et al.), (Zhao)	12
2	OTT consumption behavior	(Amoroso et al.), (Bhattacharyya et al.),(Chakraborty et al), (Katherine Chen), (Gupta and Singharia), (Kwak), (Kwon et al.), Li (2020), (SHU-CHU SARRINA LI,)	9
3	Transitioning toward the OTT platform	(Chen), (Martínez-Sánchez et al.), (Koul et al.), (Puthiyakath and Goswami), (Sadana and Sharma,), (Shin and Park,)	6
4	Consumer engagement in modern media	(Fudurić, Malthouse, and Lee), (Lu et al.), (Meng and Leung), (Nagaraj et al.), (Neira et al.), (Pajkovic)	6
5	OTT in the global market	Fuduric et al. (2018), (Fudurić, Malthouse, and Viswanathan), (M. S. Kim et al.)	5
6	OTT Policies and Regulatory Mechanisms	(Iordache), (Kim), (Kostovska et al.), (Ramasoota and Kitikamdhorn), (Wayne and Castro)	5

2.2 Women's Portrayal in Indian Media

The portrayal of media has a pervasive and ubiquitous presence in contemporary society. The visual representations shown on billboards and the narratives we engage with through various displays demonstrate the influential capacity of media to shape our cognitive frameworks,

ideological convictions, and behavioral tendencies. These representations go beyond simple entertainment and function as mediums for communicating values, conventions, and ideas that have an impact on society's behavior. The impact of media portrayals on society emphasizes the dual effects they have, including both advantageous and detrimental consequences. The perpetuation of stereotypes via media portrayals may occur unintentionally, reinforcing preconceived notions about gender, race, ethnicity, and other social categories. The collection encourages scholars to rethink transmedia, seriality, and narrativity to productively study academic, aesthetic, and social phenomena. Marie-Laure Ryan, Henry Jenkins, and other academics characterize transmedia as expansive narratives and reinterpretations across several media, including "The Odyssey." Researchers can better understand transmedia extensions' marketing and narrative layers by comparing theoretical models to media forms' fluidity, like Bourdaa's typology does to accommodate transmedia producers' lived reality. They analyzed their perspectives and reactions to "online harms." The tales of gender taboos are meticulously examined to determine the intricate facets of online resilience, including digital skills and the socio-emotional elements of facing and addressing these challenges. It also pertains to youth-oriented "digital citizenship." The emergence of sophisticated narrative television series, a significant cultural phenomenon of the past five years, has demonstrated various trends in modern audiovisual culture: the narrativization of social issues,

the erosion of genre boundaries, the elevation of the artistic merit of popular cultural forms and overlooked creators, and the utilization of seriality to construct expansive, captivating fictional universes. The television series may have envied the book's exclusive focus on sociologically engaged mimesis; however, it has devised its own method to fulfill an ambitious critical objective without compromising entertainment value. We must now scrutinize television programs with the same vigilance as dystopian literature. Television shows may include artistic elements. Media Involvement Theories include several psychological processes related to television shows and personalities. A recent study by (Żerebecki et al.) found that viewer-character similarity is essential for media engagement. We often consider similarities in demographic terms. (Bui) noted that consumers like media personalities that share their age and gender. Psychographics, including personality, behaviors, and attitudes, may facilitate viewers' connection to media characters. The research indicates that media participation correlates with character recognition and affinity. Authentic material enhances the allure of OTT media.

Films in the realism genre depict authentic women. However, as Christine Gledhill inquires, "Are they genuinely focused on women?" counter substance is insufficient without corresponding counter language. Jutta Bruckner, the German filmmaker, contends that it is not only a new

language but perhaps a new identity. A new identity would undoubtedly signify a new expression. Some believe that analyzing film via a feminist lens has just reinforced the 'absence' of women both in front of the camera and as viewers. They have also said that there are some real pleasures in the progress of the narrative and are doubtful to what extent these pleasures can be broken and subverted. What it really means is that there is no one language that can be identified as a feminist language and defined and categorized. There will always be as many languages as there are women. While one is not asking for one universal feminist language, one should be definite that the present myths of realism in cinema would be of no use in helping to find a language that will be a woman's own. This new language will not emerge until the changed values and attitudes towards women become part of the living consciousness of the director, male or female. Anything else would only create a fake creation. Any creation with loud, overt attempts to portray women must hold suspect even if it is packaged as a "woman's film.

Understanding the representations of women on Indian OTT platforms has great importance, as it acts as a mirror of the changing dynamics of gender portrayal in media and its impact on society's viewpoints. Across the annals of time, women operating within the domain of Indian film and television have often encountered limitations in the form of stereotyped and constrictive portrayals, hence propagating gender prejudices and fortifying established social standards. The rise of creating original content

have provided a promising opportunity for the portrayal of diverse and complex women. Analyzing these portrayals through the review of scholarly literature provides valuable insights into whether OTT platforms are actively challenging traditional gender standards or inadvertently reinforcing pre-existing preconceptions. Moreover, as addressing the researchable gaps, representation of women on these platforms has the capacity to influence the viewpoints of audiences not just inside India but also on a worldwide level. The analysis of the representation of women that constitutes half of the Indian population on over-the-top (OTT) platforms has significant potential for generating important insights into the ongoing discussions of furthering SDG 5, gender dynamics and women empowerment, media accountability and responsible viewership, and the powerful impact of digital media on molding social perspectives. After the Second World War, when human suffering was out in the open to see, there were talks of "redemption of physical reality," by which it was meant that cinema has the capacity to "mirror" reality without intervention. It is important to dwell at length on aspects of the realistic cinema while speaking of the images of women on the screen. It is difficult to take out elements from the whole and look at them separately. They must be seen as parts of a whole in order to be viewed in the correct perspective. Hence the reality that is presented is actually a reality modified, pruned and altered to suit one's worldview. This myth of realistic cinema has to be understood not only to understand women as characters in realistic cinema

but also to be sure what myths we have to destroy when we think in terms of alternate or counter-cinema. Realistic cinema is based on the twin-pillars of narration and the concept of identification.

Marxian, post-Marxian, and sub-Marxian theories of ideology tend to see the television audience as an epiphenomenon of other factors. Despite their differences, ideological theories must concur that a society may establish and sustain a prevailing, self-serving culture that obscures social reality via representations, images, ideas, and values (Hall). Despite being qualified, they must acknowledge that the disguise functions due to the support of the dominant societal factions and the equally unchallenged acceptance by the beneficiaries. Such concepts presuppose audience reliance. Audiences must be assimilated into a 'fake' culture via the legitimation, dissimulation, unity, fragmentation, and reification of ideology (Thompson). The Frankfurt School, Gramsci, Barthes, Althusser, Habermas, and the Birmingham School have expressly seen the media as a fundamental component of what Althusser termed 'the ideological state apparatuses' and what the Frankfurt School referred to as 'the cultural industries'. John Thompson contends that these theories inadequately integrate the mass media, based on the premise that the media have never played a significant role in ideology. Thompson's redefinition of ideology as a vital tool for mass media study include the audience, spectator, and citizen as active agents in reproducing, inventing, opposing, or altering mass-mediated culture.

Screen theories saw the audience as a mere byproduct of cinema and television ideology, and while they presented a psychoanalytically educated perspective on that interaction, they negated the empirical audience's significance or impact. The audience just reflected the prevailing structures, biases, and power dynamics addressed in other contexts. An examination of the audience, its influence on social formation, and its relationship with media texts and technology must acknowledge the creation of ideologies and the assignment of subject positions to those perpetually exposed to public communications. The television's coherence among diversity, legitimization and exclusion, familiarity, and unquestioned acceptance contribute to a society that restricts and confines alternatives, distinctions, and oppositions. They also need an extended timescale, contending that television's ubiquity, durability, redundancy, and pervasiveness within modern society establish its distinctive and potentially influential role as a shaper of cultural reality, particularly for habitual watchers. Despite their differences, ideological theories must concur that a society may establish and sustain a dominant, self-serving culture that obscures social reality via representations, images, ideas, and values (Hall). Despite their qualifications, they must acknowledge that the masquerade functions via the support of the prevailing segments of society and the unchallenged acceptance of the beneficiaries. Such concepts presuppose audience reliance. Audiences

must be assimilated into a 'fake' culture via the legitimation, dissimulation, unity, fragmentation, and reification of ideology (Thompson).

Mainstreaming identifies the effects of varying viewing intensities in social groups with stable demographics and living conditions. They demonstrate that consumers possess television-like worldviews to a greater extent than anticipated based on their social, cultural, or economic origins. (Morgan and Signorielli) contend that cultivation theory may assess and quantify television's impact within the socio-geological temporal context, which is lacking in ideological audience methodologies. Numerous methodological problems exist, particularly in detecting psychological processes at the impact level, which refers to the long-term, subtle but significant impacts identified as the essence in cultivation study. Insufficient attention is devoted to the social dynamics of television consumption inside the family or household and to the perceived unproblematic nature of 'viewing' television. It seems to be a hybrid theory that integrates technological and ideological frameworks with social awareness. The positioning of text requires careful study, since television's mediation via text may be the most primitive form. Message not being the medium affects the study paradigm of the audience, since the patient receiving the influencing syringe aimed to ascertain which textual stimuli had the most influence. The Lasswellian inquiry of who communicates what to whom via which medium and with what impact focused on text-

audience dynamics, seeing the text as fundamental but uncontroversial. Following the measurement of individuals' responses to violent or obscene video, the study concentrated on variations among subjects or viewing circumstances, but the text remained unexamined. The text was seen as substance rather than structure (Burgelin). The text was decontextualized not only from its placement among other texts in the media content continuum but also, importantly, from the reception contexts where viewing dynamics, genre affiliations, and social and demographic disparities were assumed and overlooked as independent variables. These experiments failed to sufficiently elucidate text-audience interactions and determinations, both empirically and philosophically.

Numerous theoretical frameworks, each with its strengths and shortcomings, facilitate the examination of women's gender mainstreaming via nuanced depictions in the Indian cinematic landscape and media representations. In 1979, Goffman published "Gender Advertisements," a seminal study on the representation of gender roles, notably concerning women in magazine advertisements. He asserts that gender roles in advertisements mirror the actual, aspirational, or prescriptive identities of men and women in respect to themselves and each other (Silverman and Ryalls). (Shields and Heinecken) assert that gender representations in advertisements standardize the connection between biological and cultural gender. Goffman focused on gender

expressions and the complexities of bodily postures and gestures, including hands, knees, and eyes, in contrast to Kilbourne's documentary "Killing Us Softly," which addresses women's sexual objectification and commercialization. Women had a crucial role in advertisements as both customers and influencers, despite their stereotypical roles. They are present in almost all contemporary product advertisements, regardless of gender. They may assume various roles, eliciting scrutiny and inquiry.

In Social Learning Theory (1977), Albert Bandura revealed that individuals acquire knowledge from others, including media representations. Film portrayals of women may reinforce stereotypes and societal attitudes, influencing women's opportunities (Bandura). Bollywood portrayals of women validate sexism and their role in Indian culture. Bollywood cinema audiences surpass the general population, and the ideals shown in these films become embedded in Indian culture, influencing public opinion. This notion highlights the influence of filmmakers' representations of women on society perceptions. Socially responsible cinema should promote women's liberty and transform female characters to attain gender equality. Indian film has long perpetuated patriarchal control by depicting males as superior and women as subordinate. Women's narratives are being elevated and promoted in unprecedented ways, mostly owing to the #MeToo and Time's Up movements. (Gopalan) observed that several films featuring women in

prominent roles with a "strong presence on screen" from earlier decades often depicted women as victims of violence or as timid, weak characters requiring elevation.

3. Structuralism: Structuralist, post-structuralist, and psychoanalytic theories of language and discourse enhanced the sensitivity of television and film. Although avoiding empirical study, these strategies classified the audience as an epiphenomenon. Rather than being 'influenced', the audience was 'hailed'. The book had ideological effect with differing levels of conflict (Hall; Voloshinov). It was intended to exert ideological influence via conversation. Semiotic theory (Eco) and cultural studies, spearheaded by Stuart Hall at the Birmingham School of Contemporary Cultural Studies, contributed to the dismantling of this authoritarian textual focus. Recognizing the text as processual was essential. Structuration and textuality—unfinished, dynamic constructs requiring reading for completion or construction—were emphasized. The many readings of the text recognized the sign's polysemous and contentious character (it may or may not represent the 'arena of class conflict') and that 'every encoding necessitates a decoding' (Hall). Texts have lost their autonomy. Their continual reification was unachievable. Analysis imminent; conclusion reached. Open or closed texts may exhibit varying degrees of determination and indetermination, but with potential complications. The dual components of David Morley and Charlotte

Brunsden's Nationwide research demonstrate that this reoriented television's impact on audience and reception, rather than on mediation. The concept of audiences as active consumers or creators of media messages has been discussed since the works of (Schramm et al.; Katz and Lazarsfeld) concerning child audiences. The audience as readers and the text as polysemous have influenced our perception of television's influence. It has further intensified the ambiguity surrounding the audience, the linkages between audience and text, and the diverse but structured interpretations and effects that must be considered to understand television's role in everyday life.

Audience-based reception research is the predominant method for examining variations in meaning and perception. The often-unquestionable authority and integrity of media messages start to deteriorate at this juncture. Denis McQuail (McQuail) asserts that media consumption is shaped by society and individual variables. This is a sobering observation for those seeking to research and comprehend audience behavior, according to (McQuail). Radway has presented a detailed and significant analysis and model of text-reader interactions (Thompson). Radway elucidates how individuals interpret texts, characters, events, motivations, and the narrative as a whole through the lens of their own values. She claims that interpretive communities establish such belief systems. Her study revealed that each reader

participates in a collective endeavor, defined by a mutual stance: individual-social link. Her readers are only people in relation to their texts and socially defined by gender. Radway's study posits gender, in all its complexity, as an essential sociological framework for comprehending text-reader relationships and, more controversially, individual responses and society attitudes. Sonia Livingstone (Livingstone) asserts that methodological and theoretical presuppositions may lead to misrepresentation. She saw the characters as stationary since viewers were prompted to establish a constant impression of them in television shows. She esteemed divergences since they enable her to interrogate "top-down" concepts about television's homogeneous response. Livingstone examines viewer divergence. Ferriss and Young argue that academics and society oversimplify chick flicks, portraying women as more than simply objects. Terry Eagleton thinks that structuralism entails examining the overarching framework rather than the detailed elements of a work. This aids in identifying patterns within a book or film. Structuralism just examines the relationships among narrative elements, disregarding external factors. This concept permits modifications to characters and situations without impacting the narrative.

Narrative theory disregards specifics: hence, an actor's past is irrelevant. Romantic comedies often confine women inside the narrative structure. assert that these films empower women inside male-dominated structures,

hence engaging female audiences. The prevalence of female protagonists, themes of monitoring, and the rejection of sexual innocence engage female audiences and enable the perception of the male characters in each film as interchangeable. Lévi-Strauss presents the exchange of women within familial networks distinctively in structural anthropology. Tom Gunning's narrator system theory posits that the method of storytelling influences its transmission to the audience, who engage with the filmic text to construct the narrative. The audience is integral to the narrative; hence the narrator system cannot be detached. Disregarding the audience would render romantic comedies futile. Most romantic comedies mostly showcase heterosexual white women. Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra examine romantic comedies, a focus shared by other academics of the genre and women's cinema. Their perspective juxtaposes feminism with post-feminism. Feminism advocates for equality via collective action and access to opportunities. Post-feminism extends the principles of second-wave feminism, which prioritizes individual equality via engagement in the capitalist market. This perspective prioritizes capitalism and financial accumulation above feminist objectives, since the latter have been achieved. Tasker and Negra contend that feminism encompasses a broader spectrum of women compared to post-feminism, which is rooted on commerce, choice, and individualism. Instances of surveillance and female sexuality contest their seemingly simplistic and repressive narratives.

4. Surveillance and oversight: Female characters, like to celestial bodies, are constantly observed. The cinematic narrator, other characters, and the audience examine their actions. Public performances, media coverage, telecommunication devices, and residential units are often used for surveillance. In "Ways of Seeing", John Berger illustrates how women perpetually see themselves as social objects. Berger states, "While she traverses a room or mourns her father's demise, she can hardly refrain from envisioning herself in the act of walking or weeping." Women have challenges in maintaining privacy owing to this duality and self-awareness, especially when they internalize the judgments of others. Due to their gender, individuals forfeit privacy and thus gain notoriety for their sexuality. Comprehending the interplay between a character's private and public spheres necessitates discourse. Dyer asserts that when women in these films are scrutinized, language may serve as a diversion to disclose more intimate or constrained ideas via gestures or implied meanings. Renowned actress Anna Scott develops romantic feelings for British bookseller Will in Notting Hill. Her apprehension over the press, which dictates her ideas and behaviors, seems to jeopardize their relationship. The press pursues her and infringes upon her solitude with each flash. Following her breakup with Will due to a public incident, Anna visits his apartment for a second opportunity. He spurns her, prompting her departure to America. Subsequent to his error, he meets her at a film press

conference where she declares her return to Los Angeles. Subsequent to his pretense as a reporter and his recommendation for her to remain in England, she is inquired once again. Cameras and reporters await her reaction. Anna expresses her desire to remain in Notting Hill with Will. At the film's end, Anna uses the press conference to reconcile with Will. The camera and audience focus on her eyes and face to illustrate the intimate invasion. Every character discloses secrets in court, at the palace, or during film press conferences. Women in these flicks manipulate public perception and scrutiny. Roman Holiday and Notting Hill start with surveillance. These flicks depict women's assertive and vigilant reactions. They all confront these barriers to contest the media, technology, masculine figures, and patriarchal perspectives on their lives and bodies. The bodies and sexuality of women are scrutinized and interrogated. A multitude of these women reject the notion of perpetual examination and provide explicit or implicit counterarguments to the narratives that dictate the utilization of their sexuality. The Hays Code enforced social morals and prohibited overt representations of sexuality or sexual consciousness in classic Hollywood. Lack of privacy and patriarchal sexual narratives restrict and "sanitize" a woman's body and sexual desires. Female characters used technology, clothes, and voice-overs to convey their sexuality within the constraints of Hollywood from 1934 to 1960. Similar to Wilder's The Apartment, an apartment may represent a woman's affection and sensuality. The post-war apartment provides individuals with

an alternative to suburban living. Toni Simmons, portrayed by Goldie Hawn, embodies the bohemian archetype and her residence in *Cactus Flower*   *(1969).*

In Morley's later writings, gender took precedence over class. Television watching was thus seen as distinctly gendered owing to domestic political hierarchy and the ensuing disparities in time allocation and geographical organization. The selection of programs, the autonomy to see favored shows, and the capacity for interruption or lack thereof were influenced by gender and familial cultural norms. What activity do television programs depict? This may be examined via theories of pleasure or imagination (Burgin). Numerous individuals engaged in this domain, especially concerning women's participation as active television viewers, have arrived at more ambiguous (and even pessimistic) conclusions, suggesting that television-related activities globally do not inherently promote greater liberation and may, as exemplified by Radway's romance readers, merely offer private compensations for public grievances. Heteroglossia is essential for semiotic democracy and segmentation, since television offers semiotic experiences rather than just programming by presenting a multitude of texts in many voices to diverse audiences. Fiske, 1989a. Baudrillard asserts that screen theory overlooks the tangible individual, their "subject-for-discourse," and the discursive subject positions established by discursive actions and operations (D. morley). The audience

swallows the pasteurized item, not the alienated one, to avoid indigestibility (Miller, 1987). Consumption is always cooperative. Television is both object and medium in domesticity, so picking technology and integrating it into our homes' private places, times, and practices is like choosing programs and working on them inside and outside our homes to make them our own. Consumer audiences always existed. A worldwide, networked, technologically diverse media political economy establishes material and symbolic trade conditions but does not determine them. As broadcasting's golden age may end, viewers will become consumers, buying software, hardware, and telecom services. Many media audience research ideas characterize women's gendered depictions.

5. In 2011, Hoijer introduced Social Representations Theory (SRT) as a new theory for media research. In the 1960s, Serge Moscovici developed Social Representation Theory to explain social meaning creation, exchange, and interpretation. Social representation theory explains how people and groups construct shared understandings of social events and their effects on social dynamics. Social Representation Theory emphasizes communal processes that produce social reality knowledge, convictions, and values (Moscovici). Social representation theory's anchoring and objectification apply. Another key concept in social representation theory is objectification. (Moscovici) defines objectification as turning abstract

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ideas into shareable objects. SRT explains how media gender roles are created and transmitted. The author believes SRT can explain how media portrayals of women shape gender roles. Agarwal and Das say Indian web series have changed mainstream media portrayals of women. The writers say these series challenge gender norms and prejudices to empower underrepresented women. They believe Indian web series are a turning point for women's media representation and a key step toward gender equality. Sifwat Moini's "The Changing Portrayal of Rural Woman in Hindi Cinema" examines Hindi cinema's portrayal of rural women. Social psychology's SRT studies group worldviews. Höijer believes SRT can help academics understand media consumption, interpretation, and negotiation. Speech, symbols, and collective memory shape how people and communities see the world, according to SRT. Context shapes social representations, which change over time and are often contested, she says. When applied to media research, SRT can help scholars go beyond content analysis to understand how audiences interpret and negotiate media messages. Scholars can use SRT to understand how media messages shape social norms and identities. Rita Brara examines Bollywood's "item number" song and dance routine" that reinforces Indian patriarchy and women's objectification. She believes item numbers promote patriarchal gender norms by depicting women as objects of male desire and valuing them based on their beauty and sex. Brara also claims that item numbers

normalize sexual assault and harassment against women by promoting men's consumption of women's bodies.

6.Media Representation Theory examines how media portrays social groups, identities, and concerns, impacting public perceptions and attitudes. The theory lets viewers critique the onscreen portrayal of Indian women and their gender roles, revealing its wider implications. Media Representation Theory reveals the portrayal's power, beliefs, and stereotypes. Media influences women's domestic norms, expectations, and social hierarchies, which academics can study. Depictions influence viewers' gender roles and domesticity perceptions. Media Representation theory can be used to study the series' portrayal of Indian women's empowerment and domestic negotiation. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall backed Media Representation Theory. Media encodes and decodes meaning and meaning-making representation, according to (Hall). The study and public opinion on gender representation in media were guided by media representation theory. Media representation theory stresses media power and social norms.

Diversity in films enhances narrative forms. Women provide internal narratives, in contrast to male protagonists (Orwin). Women need to convey diverse narratives; yet feminist films "explicitly or implicitly contest, rather than conform to, prevailing depictions of female identity,"

in contrast to masculine films (Hankin). Men may narrate remarkable stories about women but seldom empower them. Unbiased male filmmakers do not narrate feminist stories (Sutherland and Feltey, "Here's Looking at Her: An Intersectional Analysis of Women, Power and Feminism in Film"). This deficiency is shown by the Bechdel Test, which evaluates whether two identified female characters in a film engage in conversation about topics other than men (Sutherland and Feltey, "Here's Looking at Her: An Intersectional Analysis of Women, Power and Feminism in Film"). The evaluation of critical mass and actor theories in the films was conducted using quantitative background data. The concept of critical mass has faced criticism; yet the presence of women in behind-the-scenes roles in film influences on-screen portrayals, as shown by the literature study. Critical actor theory, rather than critical mass theory, may elucidate these favorable portrayals of women in the 10 films. Several women contributed to Black Panther, but a pivotal actor was essential. Ryan Coogler actively pursued female contributors in behind-the-scenes roles throughout the film's creation. As is common in films directed by women, four out of thirteen principal behind-the-scenes positions were occupied by women. Among the 10 films analyzed, Black Panther featured the only female cinematographer. (Richards) observed that costume designer Ruth E. Carter said that Coogler "cultivated an environment conducive to women's success," illustrating his pivotal role in the production. The significance of Coogler and the variety of backgrounds

are shown. The film empowers women, in contrast to other male-directed films. Not the case in Black Panther Similar to Coogler, other female filmmakers advocate for gender equality in cinema, rendering them significant contributors. Ava DuVernay used her substantial budget to convey a broadly appealing feminist narrative in A Wrinkle in Time (2018). Blockers had the least number of female protagonists; yet Kay Cannon transformed a male-centric narrative into a feminist film (Baum). This analysis indicates a greater presence of pivotal characters in mainstream cinema. The financial success of these films may demonstrate to studio executives that diversity is commercially viable. The study further reveals the gender disparity within the film business. After Black Panther, just 9% of women were employed behind the scenes in the subsequent four highest-grossing live-action films helmed by male directors. Only two of the four remaining films succeeded in passing the Bechdel test. Restricted female autonomy, masculine narratives, and an absence of pivotal figures illustrate Hollywood's inequality both on and off screen.

2.3 Feminist media studies and Women's representation

The late-20th-century third wave of feminism movement shaped gender and empowerment discourses. Famous feminist writer and activist Rebecca Walker said third-wave feminism seeks to "recognize the

diversity of women's experiences and identities and challenge the notion of a singular feminist agenda" (Walker). This feminist wave emphasizes individuality, intersectionality, and women's narrative autonomy. Third-wave feminism has shaped the study and how people view gender dynamics. The third wave of feminism, which emphasizes intersectionality, inclusivity, and gender breakdown, has had a major impact on the show and its audience. Third-wave feminism shaped the series' critique of society and gender roles.

1. Intersectionality: Crenshaw's concept of many identities that might exacerbate marginalization [92, 93]. In essence, identifying as queer encompasses more than the mere act of being gay. Beyond the singular problem of life, it demonstrates that alternative identities may have more significance in individuals' experiences of misfortune. Examples include age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity. Young co-authors saw them as reflections of their own experiences. Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality theory examines how gender, race, class, and other identities affect Indian women's portrayal. We can see how cultural expectations, traditions, and power dynamics shape their roles and negotiations by considering how race, religion, and gender intersect. Our analysis is improved by using intersectionality theory to show how social categories affect domesticity and Indian women. The intersectionality theory helped this study examine how identity and social

status affected the characters' experiences. The show featured characters from diverse backgrounds overcoming their own challenges and discovering their place in society.

An Interdisciplinary Examination of Live Streaming Sex and Gender identity is complex (Wood and Eagly; Berger and Krahé; Whyte et al.). Live broadcasts from diverse places should focus on gender and sexuality, which are often underrepresented in several domains. The intersections of gender, sexuality, race, class, and disability in live streaming may also examine intersectionality. Researchers in certain fields encounter limitations when analyzing a single identifying component. Thus, addressing various identity components is challenging but essential for a meaningful, nuanced, and socially fair understanding of live streaming. Informatics and computer science sometimes impede study on individuals' use of technology and digital platforms to express gender and sexuality. Feminist (Bardzell), queer (Spiel et al.), and trans-focused researchers have significantly contributed to the discourse; nonetheless, gender and sexuality are fundamental to comprehending the human experience, and technology cannot achieve diversity, inclusivity, or equity without their consideration. Live broadcasting highlights feminism and toxic masculinity. Amanda Cullen's work on feminist participation views emphasizes how researchers might expand academic discourse. According to Tom Welch, live broadcasting showcases masculinity and gendered

male interactions. Noel Brett's paper elucidates how computer science researchers may identify "heteronormative assemblages" arising from human-technology collaboration to address gender and sexuality in live streaming. These works demonstrate how live broadcasting, and its cultural impact facilitate knowledge exchange among experts from many disciplines. Gender is often analyzed through the lens of intersectionality, which explores the distinct experiences of individuals with various identities, including gender, ethnicity, and sexuality (Mays and Ghavami). Consequently, we concentrate on gender identity in its many manifestations thereafter. (Cole) advocacy for broadening research via intersectional perspectives aims to achieve a nuanced comprehension of gender identity, transitioning from a single societal category to a multifaceted portrayal of individuals across several aspects (Reich). The primary reasons for using intersectionality are to demonstrate that gendered personality traits significantly determine OTT character interactions and to evaluate the influence of (non-) stereotypical gender representations on audience-media relationships.

2. Underrepresentation: Women's human rights include full and equitable participation in society. Women are inadequately represented in politics, entertainment, and the workforce worldwide. Cinema is among the most prevalent forms of entertainment in India, where women's roles are distinctly delineated within its patriarchal framework. In her 1974 book

"From Reverence to Rape," (Haskell) revealed that cinema mirrored society's social construction of women. Feminist film critics have always scrutinized gender stereotypes in movies. They generated key cinematic concepts to advocate for gender equality by highlighting women. The second wave of feminism in the United States and women's studies throughout the 1960s and 1970s influenced feminist film theory. The alternative feminist perspective on films was facilitated by feminist cinema theory. Feminist film criticism advocates for gender equality by contesting patriarchal male subjectivity and the objectification of women. Mulvey asserts that cinema implicitly employs women as sexual symbols, reinforcing the male as the subject and financial benefactor, while positioning the female as the carrier of meaning (White). Cinematic portrayals of women objectify and restrict them to fulfill men's psychological requirements and patriarchal norms, implying that women are fetishized and idealized rather than given the opportunity to impact a narrative. Men predominate among film writers, directors, and audiences (Leonard et al.). Men dominate the worldwide cinema industry, including directors, producers, actors, and audiences. IBM Research-India, IIIT-Delhi, and DTU-Delhi disclosed that male characters are referenced 30 times, whereas female characters are referenced 15 times. Male characters engage in 63% of dialogues, while female characters account for 37%. Over 50% of movie posters depict females, despite 80% of movie narratives referencing men more often than women (Madaan et al.). Male

characters accounted for 68.5% of screen time, while female characters comprised 31.5%. Women in media and leadership positions are uncommon. Women constitute just 5% of television writers, executives, and producers (Lrchter et al.). The absence of female film directors and MTV executives may not be coincidental in an industry that demeans women. Media specialists (Mills) assert that an increase in women occupying executive positions would enhance the representation of women in media. Films inspired by male narratives are lucrative. The hero prevails in all active roles, dialogue, and screen presence in these films, while the heroine remains submissive. The male protagonist of "*Baahubali 2: The Conclusion,*" the highest-grossing Indian film, reigns supreme. The masculine character depicts the heroine as reliant. India's highest-grossing films have Mulvey's psychoanalytic concept of Alia Bhatt's subordinate role in *RRR* and her ornamental character in *KGF 2*, which idealizes the hero-centric narrative. The top-grossing films of 2022 are RRR and KGF2, both over 1000 crores. These films showcase male protagonists while relegating women to the role of love partners to mitigate violence and drama. A limited number of the 100 highest-grossing films have female protagonists, and those that do consistently fail to achieve the same financial success as their male counterparts. Actresses assert that films centered on women generate just half the revenue of those starring male superstars (Habib). *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, a female-driven triumph,

generated 153.69 crore in India. African Americans and other minorities are less prominent than women (Gray; Stroman et al.).

3. Sexism: Sexism influences prevailing societal perceptions. The discourse about sexism and gender role stereotyping in Indian cinema, television, and advertising is ongoing. Sexism is directed at women. Female sexuality is a significant taboo in Indian cinema, with several actors gaining notoriety for their portrayal of it. They seldom received new parts due to preconceived notions held by the audience and director. *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, Darr, Anjaam, Tere Naam, and Wanted* normalized stalking, sexual harassment, and violence, hence appealing to a youthful audience. The female characters in these films either revered the criminal or he died as a martyr for love. Incarcerated individuals generate enigmas of affection. The objectification, degradation, and contempt for women intensified. Hindi films contribute to a significant number of sexual assaults nationwide. The female protagonist in fashion relinquished her aspiration to pursue motherhood and became acutely aware of morality and ethical distinctions after her struggles with cocaine and racism, catalyzed by a sudden sexual encounter with a black guy that prompted her psychological enlightenment, while the corporate lead exhibited poor professional judgment. Women possess desires and flaws in the majority of films. Regardless of their occupation, autonomy, or aspirations, women contended with neglect, abuse, humiliation, and the

quest for dignity. They discussed the maltreatment of widows in Varanasi, same-sex love, cultural intolerance towards women who challenge societal norms, and many topics. They are often artistic or parallel films that fail commercially. Mainstream television has perpetuated gender role inequity over the last two to three decades. Comparable themes are foundational to Netflix's upcoming *Indian Matchmaking* series. The "women empowerment-patriarchy reinforcement paradox" has afflicted Bombay Begums and similar women-centric organizations. Most regional soap operas use similar situations. Recently, conditions have improved. Programming, digital performances, and stand-up comedians contest gender conventions. Behm-Morawitz and Mastro observed that films influence gender stereotyping. Prominent visual media, gender role stereotypes, and sexism may shape public opinion, beliefs, and attitudes via imitation, idolization, normalization, and the sensitization to gender disparity. The sociocultural framework of attitudes, values, and beliefs influences the emotions of both the director and the audience. Substandard media ideals, attitudes, and beliefs engender discontent and result in financial and societal failure. Consequently, several individuals choose the more straightforward path. The theory of power structure is presented. Unique characteristics jeopardize societal stability. In *Fire* and *Water,* protecting the director from conventional graffiti may result in discontent, prohibitions, and murder. The third hypothesis pertains to cognitive dissonance. Analogous to the preceding theory centered on psychological

constructs. Conflicting perspectives induce cognitive dissonance and distress. Media and social institutions establish a cyclical relationship. Challenging entrenched cultural belief systems and media gender stereotypes is arduous, although even little improvement warrants recognition. In conclusion, visual media is essential for altering perceptions and eradicating sexism in mainstream media.. (Ganti) asserts that Bollywood mostly exhibits a male-dominated society, whereby male characters are given far more importance than female parts. A #MeToo research analyzes how Indian films such as *Ek Ladki Ko Dekha To Aisa Laga (2019), Thappad (2020), and Paglait (2021)* enhance women's status and foster gender-neutral pleasure. The feminist roles of Bollywood performers are analyzed to comprehend their assertions on women's power, agency, and equality. This research analyzes the male liberator myth, which dominated Bollywood and popular culture but is currently dismantling patriarchy. Films have conveyed society ideals and situations while offering widespread entertainment. The current research emphasizes the need to examine how contemporary Indian films reinterpret women's roles and autonomy while fostering gender-neutral pleasure. (Nijhawan) discusses a "new woman" in Bollywood (p. 107). New Woman diverges from Bollywood's earlier portrayals of women as victims, objects of desire, subservient, and oppressed. Polarized personality traits and local traditions are intertwined with global notions of uniqueness and freedom (Nijhawan). Films challenge gender norms and provide alternative

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viewpoints. Scholars of cinema and culture elucidate the gender dynamics within Bollywood.

(Milburn et al.) assert that Hollywood and media stereotypes, together with a deficiency of multifaceted female characters, endure. This little discrepancy, however accidental, implies prejudice within the film business. Discrimination theory posits that "individuals from a specific group are favored, even when their performance is indistinguishable from that of another group" (Lauzen). These behaviors dissuade women from pursuing careers in cinema and preferentially benefit males in the recruiting process (Lauzen). Consequently, the majority of films are written, directed, and produced by males (Orwin). Increased and equitable possibilities for female filmmakers address these challenges. The involvement of women in directing and writing enhances the representation of female characters (Sutherland and Feltey). Substantial budgets compel studio executives to choose seasoned filmmakers (Lauzen). At least one female director, executive producer, producer, or writer achieves equivalent domestic box office revenues to films mostly directed by males (Lauzen et al.). Female sexual wants, dreams, and autonomy, formerly considered forbidden, were ultimately shown on film, facilitating the exploration of future socially relevant themes. These films demonstrate that 21st-century Indian cinema is transforming society and perceptions.

4. Hegemonic stereotypes: The Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci resurrected hegemony theory. He defines hegemony as political, social, and ideological supremacy. Artz (Artz) added that hegemony requires permission. Hegemony is the direction of mutually advantageous interactions between groups or classes, not domination or force. It is a group or institution's temporary dominance. Gramsci (Santucci) states that hegemony can only be accomplished by bribery and agreement since power and legitimacy are the essential pillars of the theory (Artz). Gramsci understood hegemony as an ideology that explains how social groupings rule without violence. Numerous media portrayals of genders are erroneous, clichéd, and limiting. The representation of gender in media encompasses three areas. Initially, the underrepresentation of women erroneously suggests that males are the cultural norm while women are either secondary or invisible. Gender stereotyping reinforces existing gender biases. Third, male-female relationships validate gender-based violence and roles. The persistent misperception leads us to presume that males surpass females in number and are the norm. Television shows for all demographics portray guys as serious, knowledgeable, authoritative, and of elevated status. Males, formerly kind, are now severe and aloof (Boyer). *Lethal Weapon, Predator, Days of Thunder, Total Recall, Robocop, Die Hard*, and *Die Harder* depict males as formidable, autonomous, sexually assertive, intrepid, aggressive, emotionally stoic,

and devoid of femininity. Women who are submissive, meek, aesthetically pleasing, and conform to masculine identity norms achieve success. MTV depicts women as submissive and dependent on men who disregard, exploit, or control them (Brown and Campbell). African American rap videos portray males exerting dominance over women as objects of desire (Pareles; Texier). Advertisements depict masculine supremacy and feminine subordination. These nonverbal cues depict women as vulnerable and submissive, while men dominate. In nearly 90% of women's advertising, males articulate the product's value (Basow; Wirtz et al.). *Sleeping Beauty* and *Judy Jetson* exemplify how males may be persuasive, emphasizing that women's power derives from their femininity. These stereotypes convey that they must achieve victory to be seen acceptable.

The media depicts women as caregivers and men as providers. The response of the 1980s reinforced traditional gender norms. (Horowitz and O'Brien) asserts that advertising mocks men's dietary habits, parenting skills, and domestic knowledge. It may generate unrealistic expectations of a "superwoman" who never fails to attend a conference. (Peirce) found that women's publications emphasize physical appearance and the need of pleasing others, especially men, as essential to femininity, while cautioning that a partner may go if these standards are not met. Media representations of women as sexual objects, domestic caretakers, and maternal figures promote consumerist roles. Lana Rakow (Rakow)

disclosed that feminists oppose oppressive advertising practices. Women are shown as sexual objects in media representations of relationships between women and men. Cultural feminine standards both victimized women and exalted attributes such as beauty, sexiness, submissiveness, and helplessness. Societal expectations compel males to exhibit aggression, dominance, sexuality, and strength, resulting in the subjugation of women. S. Magazine asserts that since 1987, there has been a rebirth of masculine importance, attractive female sidekicks, and female homemakers, with advertisements portraying women as sexual objects. Attractive, dangerously slender television and film actresses assert that women must undergo starvation to appeal to males (Silverstein et al.). Women engage in provocative dancing while wearing less clothing to attract males (Texier). The most recent films endorse violence against women. (Warshaw and Koss) noted that films depict rapes, especially acquaintance rapes, as sexual interactions rather than as power-driven violations of women. The media depicts males as aggressive and women as submissive. D. Russell (Russell) asserts that violence is sexualized.

5. The male gaze and Freudian psychoanalysis: Film is seen in a dimly lit room with moving images projected, creating a dreamlike quality that amplifies scopophilia, or 'sexual pleasure derived from observation.' Cultural gender disparities influence the prevailing cinematic perspective. These signals embody societal attitudes toward women and concepts.

Images are presented as denotative, obscuring their connotative significance. To understand the imagery in film and the portrayal of women in realistic movie, one must consistently consider this level of mythology. Psychoanalysis, popularized by Sigmund Freud, posits that all individuals possess unconscious beliefs, desires, ideas, and memories rooted in their previous experiences or concealed conflicts within their cognitive processes (McLeod). Laura Mulvey, a distinguished feminist film critic, was the pioneer in using psychoanalysis to examine the cinematic objectification of women. In her article, Mulvey employs Freud and Lacan to illustrate how unconscious fears and wants influence both filming and watching experiences. This study indicates that Indian OTT platforms advocate for feminism and are well appreciated. The ability to examine genuine Indian urban experiences and sensitivities without restrictive control or populist tactics safeguards Indian web series from mimicking commercial Bollywood. Indian internet series are replete with emerging talent, innovating in visual presentation, and are on the verge of becoming a thriving industry.

Web series have shown to Indian audiences that a woman may be ambitious, career-driven, and empowered while still enjoying her sexuality and maintaining a good outlook. A woman may exhibit strength without resorting to aggression, machismo, or defiance. Despite her femininity, she may exhibit ambition, sophistication, and success. She may advocate for men's equity or express her preferences outside societal

patriarchal and judgmental expectations. Certain online series have analogous female characters. Her seminal 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure And Narrative Cinema" elucidates the unconscious influence of patriarchy on the production and reception of cinematic imagery via the lens of psychoanalysis. Mulvey's work serves as the most comprehensive and lucid introduction to feminist film studies within the context of neo-Freudian psychoanalytic theory and stands as a vital reference. She recommended that we consider filmmaking and reception instead than only observing them (Singh). Mulvey's concept originates from Freud's notion of scopophilia. Mulvey, like to Freud, associates scopophilia with voyeurism, when spectators get pleasure from observation. Cinema facilitates connection with one's on-screen counterpart, ego ideal, and libidinal gratification derived from the object of the gaze (White). Mulvey utilizes Freud's concepts of the Ego and the Castration complex, as well as Lacan's mirror stage. She asserts that this ego compels spectators to align with the film's masculinized identity and the protagonist, facilitating his ascendance to power by depicting him as dynamic and authoritative, while rendering feminine characters submissive and powerless. Mulvey correlates Lacan's illustration of a child seeing himself in the mirror as a distinct identity from his parents with an audience connecting with the film's male protagonist, so endorsing phallocentrism by portraying males as creators of meaning and women as mere recipients of it. Mulvey characterizes the castration complex as men's anxiety over women's

absence of a phallus, which represents an unconscious threat of castration. Women are objectified by the camera and marginalized by the narrative to reduce their perceived threat to male protagonists and audiences. The prevalence of male-centric films illustrates the ability of societal patriarchy to use women as instruments for heterosexual male storylines. Mulvey thinks that males use narcissism and objectification to alleviate their fears toward women. Phallic power structures generate assertive male and submissive feminine archetypes. Male writers, directors, protagonists, and spectators heterosexualize female characters (Leonard et al.). Films provide visual gratification via voyeurism and narcissism. The male character's domination and the female's objectification provide importance to this voyeuristic gaze and narcissistic identification (Smelik). Certain women-centric films depict female characters in significant roles; nonetheless, they also reflect patriarchal identities in a novel way, prompting the question of their contribution to societal feminine ideals. This study employs psychoanalytic theory to assess the impact of patriarchy's social construction on gender stereotyping and phallocentrism in Indian film, as well as the factors that distort the representation of women. The theoretical framework must include investigative theories that align with the objectives, rather than psychoanalysis, since the research focuses on portrayals of women.

2.4 Gender taboos and audience perception -

Indian film is among the major producers and with extensive worldwide reach (Dwyer). Thus, portrayals of women on this substantial platform promote cultural and ideological notions of women's autonomy within the context of social and political-economic progress. For most Indians, cinema is the preeminent source of entertainment (Srinivas). (Rajadhyaksha) characterizes this reinforcement via popular influence as the "Cinema Effect" (p. 107), signifying the substantial impact and exposure of the film and culture industries on several aspects of life. (Rajadhyaksha) contends that cinema's capacity to establish a recognized "reality" requires the formulation of narratives that enable symbolic register exchanges. Furthermore, these registers are public symbolic creations, similar to the trappings of state apparatus; nevertheless, on more subtle levels, they also serve as frameworks designed to foster certain conditions for the establishment of an objectivity that mostly highlights a permitted viewpoint. (Gerbner and Gross) posits that media may shape views and ideas on social problems, especially with gender roles and expectations. The patriarchal framework of society generates several gender-related issues in films. We all accepted this social order owing to the conditioning exerted by our previous cinema and culture. Films must depict the contexts around female characters, since cinema reflects societal conditions. The patriarchal view of women has been so beneficial over time that these categories have transformed into a widespread lifestyle and

the essential power structure of society, hence reinforcing stereotypes and complicated attempts to deconstruct them. The lack of monitoring over this tendency has led to investigations into gender stereotyping, media quality, and the disruption of a balanced society, both in media and in reality.

Traditional and customary practices like taboo and omen feed each other. These taboos are ritually sanctioned and guarantee comprehensive protection against violations, perpetuating patriarchal rules in society. Religious sanction adds societal validity, institutionalizing female subjugation and reliance. It's not limited to a community's belief system. Taboos preserve the patriarchal equilibrium of society. As expected, Santal witches are women and witchfinders are males. This article cannot fully explain this fascinating topic, but various research illuminates it (Chakraborty; Nathan et al.; Shashank S. Sinha). Thus, Santal women have several taboos. Some seem innocent, but others, like the plow taboo, hurt her. Women are forbidden from ploughing in most Indian peasant civilizations, especially Adivasi ones. The taboo ranges from touching to carrying to yoking a plough. The taboo persists in most Adivasi groups in India, including Ho (Kishwar), Oraon (Roy), Munda (Kelkar and Nathan; Shashank Shekhar Sinha), Mising, Deori, and Sonowal people of Assam (Sonowal and Saikia). Thus, Santal women appear to be stuck between taboos that promote hierarchy and technology that threatens to erase

ground. Restructuring Santal's social structure to be gender-just is the only solution.

Despite certain observable advancements in specific storylines, it is apparent that Indian over-the-top (OTT) platforms can persist in portraying traditional gender roles, whereby women are shown as caretakers, dependent on male protagonists, or confined to domestic realms. On the other hand, progressive and empowering depictions have the capacity to interrogate and challenge prevailing gender stereotypes, incite transformations in cultural perspectives, and serve as catalysts for substantial social transformations. The portrayal of positive role models in media has the capacity to foster a feeling of self-esteem and confidence in people, thereby inspiring them to engage in diverse hobbies and question current social limitations. Moreover, these depictions have the capacity to cultivate empathy and augment understanding, thereby ameliorating harmful prejudices and biases that are pervasive in contemporary society. The examination of gender stereotypes and role models in Indian over-the-top (OTT) programming has significant significance in understanding the complex dynamics of media representation and its potential to shape society's perceptions of gender. This chapter seeks to contribute to the scholarly discourse on the role of recent developments of popular entertainment in shaping inclusive and equitable gender norms within modern Indian society by examining the perpetuation of conventional

gender roles, identifying gender taboos plaguing the ecosystem, and evaluating their influence on audience perceptions of women in Indian cinema.

1. Tokenism: The study contends that the effects of women's underrepresentation on their professional experiences have not been adequately examined, and without evidence demonstrating a causal link between relative numbers and occupational outcomes, one cannot assume that increasing the number of women in an organization will automatically improve their employment conditions. Augmenting the number of women without addressing entrenched discriminatory attitudes in male-dominated industries may exacerbate women's job difficulties. The research suggests that a gender-neutral notion such as tokenism is inadequate for understanding and tackling gender inequalities in the workplace, since it neglects the relational dynamics between men and women in a culture plagued by sexism. Although there are several rationales for advocating the recruitment of more women in male-dominated sectors, there is less evidence to suggest that this strategy will result in fair job circumstances for women post-hire.

The term "token" has been used in many settings relevant to Kanter's meaning of the word. (Laws) is acknowledged as the first popularizer of the concept. Laws underscores the token's peripheral status as an

individual permitted entry yet deprived of complete engagement, mirroring George Simmel's (Simmel) idea of the "stranger" and Everett Hughes's (Hughes) concept of the "outsider": a person who meets all formal requirements for group membership but is devoid of the expected "auxiliary characteristics" (particularly race, gender, and ethnicity) linked to that role. Consequently, "insiders" consistently prevent them from achieving full membership and may even eject them if they diverge much from the prescribed "niche" assigned to them. Kanter emphasizes the problem of assimilation, when dominant groups modify the characteristics and behaviors of tokens to align with their stereotyped views of the token category; token women may either reject assimilation or submit to a kind of "role encapsulation." Kanter identified that women primarily occupied one of four archetypal roles (the mother, the pet, the seductress, or the iron maiden), each of which limited their advancement chances. Kanter used deliberately gender-neutral language while addressing tokenism. She refers not to men and women, but to dominants and subordinates. Kanter and associates advocate for many more policy proposals, contending that a balanced approach is crucial for the fair treatment of women in the workplace. They argue that advancements toward equity will intrinsically promote enhancement and warn against the victim-blaming discourse that assigns women's inability to achieve professional parity mostly to their own behaviors. This perspective exonerates women from responsibility while concurrently failing to hold men responsible for the detrimental

conditions in which many women functions. In a patriarchal society, gender-neutral theories of organizational behavior may obfuscate rather than clarify reality. Kanter asserts that both men and women are "confined" inside organizational structures that perpetuate preconceptions and uphold the prevailing status quo of sexual inequality. She asserts that the organizational structures, rather than people, need alteration. Tokenism, when considered apart from sexism, offers less insight into women's organizational behavior or the interactions between women and men in newly integrated professions. (Kanter) elucidate the concept of tokenism in a value-neutral context in their book "The Tale of 'O'—On Being Different," emphasizing the elimination of token status inside an organization. For women, the persistence of sexism diminishes the significance of tokenism, and efforts to eliminate tokenism without confronting sexism are likely to be futile (Martin). Establishing effective regulations to address sexism is likely to be far more difficult than modifying the gender ratios within work groups. This study indicates that a gender-neutral theory such as tokenism is of little use in clarifying the experiences of men or women in a culture where gender remains relevant.

2. Strong language and expletives - Taboo language refers to the use of emotionally charged, derogatory, or harmful words and phrases as insults. Taboo language enables speakers to convey profound emotions and influence listeners. It is generally recognized that "men curse more often

than women; men have a more extensive vocabulary of curse words than women; and men use more vulgar curse words than women" (Güvendir; Islam Shazu). Individualism against collectivism concerns the extent of individual integration within loosely structured groups, while power distance denotes the level to which subordinate members of organizations and institutions, including families, accept and expect unequal power distribution. All civilizations display inequality; however, some are marked by more pronounced differences than others. IBM research categorized the assertive pole as 'masculine' and the gentle, caring pole as 'feminine', emphasizing a gender divide.

3. In her 1975 article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey critically examined the 'Hollywoodian magic,' challenging the significant manipulation of visual and pleasurable experiences inflicted upon film audiences, especially by male filmmakers aimed at viewers of the same genre. She contended that these audiences, in their quest for the "formal beauty" of cinematic language, voluntarily subject themselves to the alienation of these norms, mostly arising from an imagined emptiness defined by loss and horror. Professor Gerard Imbert (2017, p. 17) asserts that this led to the emergence of "horror pornography" in modern film. Philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2021, p. 77) contends that feature films exhibit "an extraordinary degree of cold cruelty." The depiction of violence makes it almost benign, leading audiences to become passive,

indifferent, and dulled (Han). Thus, the pornographic, vindictive, shocking, and aestheticized cinema of cruelty now originates from a model "acquired" as a genre (Imbert, 2017, p. 17). The portrayal of cruelty in contemporary film seems to have retained a scopophilic, violent aesthetic, embedding it into popular culture more vividly than in the second half of the 20th century. (Stark) contends that Julie Taymor's film *Titus* (1999) exemplifies modern cruelty in cinema, as the director subverts traditional narrative conventions, particularly in horror, utilizing both realistic and stylized modes of representation to explore abject imagery across various screens. (Tait) contends that 'pornography' permeates the viewer's present context to highlight their societal anxieties while neglecting the portrayed crime and the examination such images may provoke. Psychoanalyst (Goldstein) describes the "eroticism of cruelty" as a modern expression of more sympathetic or humane ideals disseminated in many cultural artifacts. Thus, "spectatorial pleasure" in cruelty and vulgarity involves "gaining enjoyment from the suffering of others." As (Goldstein) observes, each epoch possesses distinct nuances of this pleasure, and our current era is marked by an affinity for brutality unencumbered by preconceived notions. It would include overwhelming the audience with basic, popular culture stimuli that depict the most corrupt human traits as visually appealing. (Baudrillard) characterized a reality hidden by the "orgy of images" as an illusion. An audience yearning for spectacle may be enthralled and seduced by this elaborate, sexual illusion including

suggestive visuals. (Wheatley)contends that spectacle is a fundamental component of television programming, and that viewers value visual pleasure alongside story and information. Thus, spectacular television prompts viewers to contemplate beauty, eroticism, the grotesque, and the sublime, cultivating a deep rather than superficial bond between the viewer and the program, marked by intense visual pleasure. Villanueva et al. (2013, p. 591) contend that "TV violence, real or fictitious, captivates viewers." Thus, the eroticism of cruelty may be regarded as a means of providing aesthetic pleasure to the audience through an abundance of violent imagery that seizes their attention and desires, offering an 'innocent' yet vengeful illusion. This illusive, delightful, and revolting manner of modern audiovisual experience on streaming platforms is at a critical crossroads. Television shows have a contemporary narrative language and a distinct type of cinematography and violence. Art exists "in an era of impunity regarding pleasure," resulting in "erotic impoverishment as a consequence of the extremes of both hope and despair" (Suzunaga Quintana). Numerous scholars and critics, such as Martin-Barbero have condemned the partnership between art and popular culture since the mid-20th century. Consequently, mass culture is characterized not as "the dissemination of a cultivated culture, but rather as the distortion of popular culture" (Solórzano et al.). The issue is in mass culture's commercial potential masquerading as condemnation, rather than its transcendent capacity. Characteristics of erotic cruelty encompass:

"horrific sexual imagery," "visual spectacle over narrative," "perverse characters with a condemnatory intent," entertainment and product cruelty, nihilistic movies, and perverse series prevailing in leisure activities. Television and cinema depict brutality as commercial rather than artistic. These series, grounded in prevalent brutality, seem to convey the horror and violence—often non-physical—of pornography that has emerged in the early 21st century inside the esteemed realm of postmodern film. Eroticized cruelty (Goldstein), the prioritization of jouissance over rational comprehension (Suzunaga Quintana), and the acclaim of pornographically violent films at esteemed festivals such as Cannes have been associated with ideological outrage (Rivera García). Postmodern cinema's grotesque and sexually explicit content, influenced by Artaud or Bazin's profound emotional exploration of artistic cruelty, expresses its outrage at human injustice. Contemporary television series, heralded as the third golden age of television, are now seen as an incomplete art form, comparable to cinematic and literary arts (Joyard). Consequently, early 20th-century dystopian fashion reemerges, but with a novel twist: it garners popularity, eroticizes the tragic brutality of its somber narratives via creative obscenity, exhibits pronounced bleakness, adopts a didactic tone, and serves as a status symbol. The online series seem to engage in a dystopian trend where the story, masquerading as shocking, examines various levels of abjection in the third golden age of television, evoking feelings of sorrow or discomfort as a kind of intellectual sustenance. Contemporary

television programs seem to embody the new creative prestige of our day, addressing postmodern apocalyptic anxieties via hideous imagery. Current historical pessimism on the prevalence of gender-based violence, as shown by cultural consumption (Dias et al.), seems dictated by a society that prioritizes emotional impact above education, largely manifesting as moral judgment. In the context of seriesphilia culture's artistic liberty, status, and style, viewer sentiments often decline. This theoretical research investigates if internet pornography (IP) increases women's susceptibility to aggression and violence. Mainstream heterosexual intellectual property portrays the sexual assault, abuse, and degradation of women. Notwithstanding its detrimental characteristics, the effects of violent and derogatory intellectual property on concepts, perceptions, and behaviors remain uncertain, as do the factors contributing to its widespread appeal. The second analyzes the objectification and dehumanization of women in IP, as well as the viewers' moral disengagement that allows them to disregard the violence's effects.

4. Sexuality: Web-based television series and content available on OTT platforms have widely explored a wide array of female characters, successfully depicting a variety of origins, professions, and identities. There is an emerging inclination towards more transparency in discussing topics pertaining to sexuality, mental well-being, LGBTQ+ portrayal, and female companionship. The portrayal of women in Indian media has seen

a notable shift from basic and stereotypical positions to more complex and varied representations. Despite some progress made, there are ongoing challenges that need sustained endeavours to promote improved gender equality and authentic representations of women in the Indian media. The study may possibly redirect its focus towards an examination of the intersectional portrayals of women on Indian over-the-top (OTT) platforms. This would need a more thorough analysis of the depictions of women from many backgrounds, including LGBTQ+ women, women with disabilities, and women from other socioeconomic and cultural groups. The growing popularity of television series and films with female protagonists has spurred academics to examine the impact of women-centric programming on audience perceptions, levels of engagement, and the empowerment of female viewers. In her book Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center, Bell Hooks asserts that "the initial act of resistance for women who are sexually oppressed is to reclaim their sexuality" (2000, p. 15). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick posits in her book Epistemology of the Closet that "sexuality is a site of ongoing social construction" (1990, p.1). This promotes the deconstruction of biases and encourages more acceptance and understanding of women's sexuality. Deakin and Bhugra (2012) assert that, in recent decades, depictions of female sexuality have markedly transformed, accompanied by changes in family attitudes toward sexuality, sexual behavior, and diverse sexual orientations. Female sexuality has transitioned from repressed and subordinate characteristics

to forceful, extroverted, and dominant ones (p. 37). "Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga," directed by Shelly Chopra Dhar, examines the challenges of same-sex relationships in rural India, focusing on a woman contending with her sexuality within a restrictive cultural context. R. Raj Rao, an Indian queer studies academic, posits that "queer desire is inherently a longing for homecoming, a return to the maternal figure, and a yearning to (re)establish family" (2007, p. 130). This aligns with R. W. Connell's theories of masculinity presented in Masculinities (1995), in which he argues for the possibility of many masculinities and contends that males may adopt a more constructive and egalitarian form of masculinity (p. 56). The concept of the male liberator has been prevalent in classical literature and society for centuries, however it is now undergoing reevaluation. Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt contend that "representing queer individuals on-screen is an amplified form of public expression." This enhances the revelation of their sexuality to both the film's characters and its viewers. The privacy of LGBT women is doubly infringed upon for public consumption. Cultural and social norms are often influenced and depicted via media representations. Individuals may choose to either challenge or uphold these established norms. An example of the influence of LGBTQIA+ representation in media is its role in promoting a more inclusive perspective on various sexual orientations and gender identities (Gross, 2001).

Homophobia: The portrayal of homophobia in the OTT and media industry reveals a complex landscape where representation varies significantly across different contexts. While some platforms have made strides in showcasing LGBTQIA+ narratives, others perpetuate harmful stereotypes and marginalization. Indian web series often depict LGBTQ individuals in stereotypical roles, reinforcing notions of fragility and helplessness (Mishra & kittu, 2021). Conversely, shows like "Merry Queer" present authentic LGBTQ experiences, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of queer identities (Seung & Cho, 2023). Trans representation in popular Hindi series often aligns with cis-heteronormative agendas, failing to challenge dominant stereotypes and reinforcing societal biases (Arora et al., 2023). The rise of Boys' Love (BL) content, such as "Semantic Error," indicates a shift towards more diverse portrayals, yet it still grapples with traditional tropes (Lee, 2023). New media platforms empower LGBTQ communities to combat homophobia actively, utilizing social networks to challenge exclusionary narratives (Venzo & Hess, 2013). Despite these advancements, the media landscape remains fraught with challenges, as many narratives still reflect societal prejudices, highlighting the ongoing struggle for authentic representation. It is imperative to comprehend the audience's demand for diverse and authentic portrayals in order to evaluate the inclination towards inclusive and empowering representations on Indian over-the-top (OTT) platforms. The preferences of viewers have the potential to shape the creation of content and exert an impact on the decision-making procedures of content

creators and over-the-top (OTT) platforms. The examination of the depiction of women on Indian over-the-top (OTT) platforms is of utmost importance in comprehending the level of visibility and representation afforded to individuals belonging to sexual and gender minorities. To examine the extent to which OTT content serves as a medium for LGBTQIA+ women to express their narratives in an authentic manner, while also questioning and contesting dominant heteronormative discourses also les within the groundwork of OTT. The LGBTQIA+ community in Indian society has historically experienced marginalization, thereby, emphasizing the importance of media representation in promoting acceptance and gender inclusivity. It underscores the significance of genuine and favorable representation in confronting the marginalization of these individuals and fostering increased societal acknowledgement.

5. Narrow beauty standards- The influence of media portrayals, particularly in the realms of advertising and entertainment, may have a substantial effect on an individual's self-esteem and perception of their own physical appearance. The experience of being exposed to unattainable beauty standards has the potential to result in negative outcomes such as body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, and diminished self-esteem, especially in the teenage population (Grabe et al.). Portrayals reinforce gender roles that limit men and women and legitimize anorexia and battering. Both sexes are dehumanized by media across cultures, especially advertising. Any

medical definition of "normal body weight" for American women causes severe dieting (Wolf, 1991). Hegemonic depictions of female bodies in television contribute to dissatisfaction with body image among women, as idealized representations create unrealistic standards. The effects of these portrayals are compounded by social cognitive theory, which suggests that repeated exposure shapes viewers' self-perception and body satisfaction (Hendriks, 2002). Within a few years, the majority of women's periodicals had advertisements for underarm hair removal, and by 1922, Sears Roebuck's middle-American women's department offered razors and depilatories for sale. The media's physiological pathologizing is perilous. Thinness may result in severe and perhaps fatal dieting practices, especially among Caucasian women (Spitzack, 1993). A considerable proportion of women's natural breast sizes exceeded the cultural ideals of thin, angular physiques that were prominent in the 1960s. Breast reduction surgeries proliferated; yet, by the 1980s, small breasts were seen as unfeminine. As a consequence, breast augmentation surgeries increased significantly, with 80% of implants being for cosmetic purposes ("The Implant Circus," 1992), leading to deformities, loss of feeling, and mortality among women due to the association of silicone implants with deadly illnesses. Implicit media suggest that our inherent state is deviant and unfavorable to advocate for products and self-improvement advice. An additional striking example of media misrepresenting reality is

body hair. Adams (1991) contends that summer attire and contemporary dance need the elimination of unwanted hair.

Colorism- Colorism, the discrimination based on skin tone, is a pervasive issue in media representations, often privileging lighter-skinned individuals while marginalizing those with darker skin. This phenomenon is deeply rooted in historical contexts, such as slavery and colonialism, which have shaped societal perceptions of beauty and worth (Hunter, 2013). Adolescents of color frequently encounter colorism in various settings, including media, leading to a desire for lighter skin tones and dissatisfaction with their natural appearance (Craddock et al., 2018). The use of skin-lightening products among youth is linked to severe health risks, highlighting the urgent need for media literacy to combat these harmful ideals (Craddock et al., 2018). Local television news often portrays persons of color predominantly as perpetrators in crime stories, reinforcing negative stereotypes and ethnic blame (Romer et al., 1998). While media often perpetuates colorism, it also holds the potential to challenge these narratives through more equitable representations and critical engagement with racial issues.

Men are vulnerable to ageism. All people, especially ladies, need to disguise the gray hair that appears with age. In a culture that values youth, facial wrinkles may be eradicated to get a more youthful visage (Greer, 1992). Female characters see an 8% decrease in representation between

their 30s and 40s, whilst male characters exhibit a 3% gain. The ratio of male characters is about double that of female characters in their 50s. These data demonstrate the effects of aging on women in cinema leads to widow to deprive her of femininity, symbolizing castration. This signifies that widowhood in Indian culture involves gendered violence with social or economic change. The "uglifying" of widows is a symbolic castration that strips them of femininity, sexuality, and autonomy. Spivak has examined the stigmatization and ostracism faced by Indian widows. (Spivak) contends, "The widow is the quintessential representation of the 'dislocated' subject; she epitomizes the deepest conflict between tradition and modernity" (A Critique of Postcolonial Reason). Spivak contends that the patriarchal structure of Indian culture affects the treatment of widows. The widow exemplifies the insufficiency of patriarchal safeguarding, the symbolic structure that sustains patriarchal society (Spivak). Spivak says that widows are stigmatized in Indian culture due to cultural perceptions. She claims, "The literary representation of widowhood in India exemplifies the unrepresentable, and therefore the unattainable" (Spivak). This marginalizes widows in India by portraying them as pitiable and fragile rather than resilient and independent. Thus, portraying women as weak, subservient, and simply objects of desire might alter society beliefs and reinforce detrimental stereotypes (Clover, 1992; Projansky, 2001). For decades, Bollywood has shown widows in a regimented manner; nevertheless, it is progressively expanding the storylines around women.

They are often portrayed as soulless, inert beings accountable for all their adversities.

Research examined whether reminders of a woman's menstrual status provoke heightened negative reactions towards her and increase the objectification of women overall. Moreover, gender schematic participants exhibited heightened objectification of women when exposed to reminders of menstruation, which we interpret as a strategy to safeguard culturally sanitized perceptions of femininity. A study examined outcomes through the lens of feminist theory and fear management theory, focusing on ambivalence toward the human body and its impact on the objectification of women. Stereotypes about women have always been paradoxical, including both negative and seemingly positive evaluations. Menstruation, pregnancy, and nursing contribute to the perception of women as more inherently connected to nature, ultimately leading to their devaluation. Thus, reproductive functions signify women's designated role as caregivers and their perceived inferiority. Women's reproductive skills are seen as markers of inferiority, yet their bodies are simultaneously regarded as objects of beauty and desire. The research examines a theoretical claim suggesting that the objectification of the female body is primarily linked to the perceived association between women and nature (see to (Goldenberg et al.) for a summary). This "objectification" effectively eradicates the body's physical attributes by refining it and converting it

into an idealized cultural symbol. While objectification inflicts several detrimental psychological effects on women (Fredrickson and Roberts), seeing women as sexual objects may fulfill an existential purpose by estranging them from their inherent humanity. Women in this community use many techniques to conceal signs of their menstrual cycles, including using discreet packaging for menstrual products and employing euphemisms to avoid discussions about menstruation. Research on adolescent females' views toward menstruation indicates that a major concern is the concealment of sanitary products from others (Kissling; Williams). Studies indicate that women have anxiety around the potential for shame due to odors or stains on their clothing (Kissling) asserts that discoloration serves as a concrete symbol of women's contamination and shame, representing a failure to meet the culturally imposed duty of hiding menstruation and averting embarrassment for others. Cultural stigma also restricts women and adolescent girls from candidly addressing menstruation, especially in the presence of males (Williams; Brooks-Gunn and Ruble). Euphemisms that obfuscate discussions around menstruation are mostly negative, such as "the rag" and "the curse" (Kissling). Discussing menstruation poses challenges for parents, sometimes leading to delayed conversations with their teenage daughters. Girls get contradictory cultural messages about menarche. Psychological studies on menstruation have mostly concentrated on the symptomatology associated with menstruation and women's experiences throughout their menstrual

cycles. The objectified body serves as a means to surpass the perceived inferiority of the biological body. The social tendency to objectify women's bodies may disrupt their connection with nature. (Roberts et al.)determined that women who self-objectify possess intensified negative perceptions, such as disgust and shame, about menstruation. Individuals who rigidly adhere to social standards are considered more "disgust prone," exhibiting negative reactions to breaches of cultural norms related to cleanliness and propriety (Rozin and Fallon). Individuals who strongly subscribe to traditional gender role ideology are often more committed to maintaining rigid social norms for gender-related behavior (Bem).

Societal reactions to women's breasts illustrate the contradictory perspective towards women's bodies. A woman publicly breastfeeding her child without covering is deemed obscene (Yalom), yet her breasts are socially acceptable when sexually objectified for commercial purposes. Women are compelled to conceal their menstrual cycles, since product marketing reinforces an ideal of heightened femininity (Courts). Objectification leads to several psychological issues for women, including less concentration and reduced emotional experiences, as they start to see themselves through the lens of an external observer ((Fredrickson and Roberts; Fredrickson et al.) for a comprehensive study). This study indicates that seeing menstruation as a biological function indicative of women's inferiority may result in women, whose menstrual status is disclosed, being seen as less competent, hence diminishing their likability

and increasing physical avoidance. Furthermore, we incorporated a measure of gender schematicity to investigate its possible moderating effect on the objectification of women concerning the menstrual prime, based on the hypothesis that individuals with pronounced gender-typing demonstrate increased conformity to cultural norms of gender-appropriate conduct. Feminist theorists of the body contend that in patriarchal systems, women's perceived inferiority is delineated by their differences from males. A patriarchal perspective on gender differences, akin to an ethnocentric view on cultural diversity, posits that men, authorized to define and characterize their own bodies and behaviors as "normal" and "good," see the characteristics that distinguish women from men as inferior. The reproductive systems of females differ from those of males. As a result, the physiological processes linked to this system (e.g., menstruation, breastfeeding, and childbirth) are seen as symbols of feminine inferiority and are met with derision. From this perspective, reminders of menstruation diminish perceptions of competence, hinder likability, promote physical isolation, and intensify the objectification of women by underscoring a significant discrepancy between genders.

7. Television dramas and "true crime" documentaries promoted by local and national media networks aid viewers in understanding criminal law. Contemporary literature illustrates explicit examples of physical violence and consistently highlights female victims, positioning gender violence as

a central theme and women as a vulnerable group. These texts often depict women as victims, necessitating a feminist examination of autonomy, resistance, and vulnerability in relation to gender violence to challenge neoliberal paradigms. Feminism and neoliberalism demonstrate significant definitional differences regarding the notion of "violence." Hannah Arendt stated in On Violence that "violence harbors within itself an additional element of arbitrariness"(Arendt), although this "unpredictability" obscures the intentional nature of violence. Mackenzie asserts that this novel understanding of autonomy may mitigate vulnerability by: "first, addressing the feelings of helplessness and diminished agency often linked to vulnerability; and second, countering the dangers of undesirable paternalism." (Mackenzie) that may "generate pathogenic forms of vulnerability" (Mackenzie). Cudd also examines systemic violence (Cudd), which perpetuates the subjugation of one group by another, using "violence against women" as an example. This comprehension of gender violence may explain the proliferation of crime novels depicting severe violence against women. *Big Sky* (2019) addresses many types of gender violence, ranging from child molestation to trafficking, in an effort to illustrate the everyday atrocities women face for the sake of discipline. The television adaption illustrates that mainstream media perpetuates this neoliberal narrative to obscure society's contribution to violence against women. Renowned crime novels convey to women that gender-based violence is inevitable and that they must

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relinquish their rights to avert it. The theories used to analyze the textual series, and its visual adaptation elucidate how media sustains neo-patriarchal norms.

7. Substance Abuse: Social Cognitive Theory asserts that social norms are crucial in promoting behavioral change. The observation of role models and the consequences of their actions affect behavior. This kind of observational learning bolsters an individual's belief in their ability to change behavior. This highlights the importance of product placement as a crucial promotional tactic for tobacco corporations. Film depictions of smoking promote teenage smoking start, exhibiting a clear dose-response correlation between television use and the onset of smoking in adolescents. This has led to a suggestion to use ratings to restrict access to films that depict smoking. A correlation has been proposed between television watching and alcohol intake in teenagers. There is insufficient evidence explicitly analyzing the impact of famous films on sexual and drug-related behaviors throughout the community. A survey of the National Youth Anti-drug Media Campaign indicated that popular films mostly depicted drinking and smoking, with many occurrences of illegal drug use. Of the 87 films, seven (8%) depicted between one and 10 occurrences of cannabis usage (mean=3.9). A total of 27 unique episodes mostly showcased adult characters (74%) in supporting roles (77%). Cannabis use was shown positively in 14 episodes. 52% displayed good images, and 48% offered

neutral depictions, with no negative portrayals. No adverse effects of cannabis use were shown. Among 87 films, six (7%) depicted non-injected illegal drug use. The films had between one and five occurrences of non-injected illegal drug use (mean=2.2, SD=1.60), amounting to a total of 13 episodes. Older individuals were often shown in secondary roles and regarded favorably. In three of the thirteen episodes, the representations were neutral; nevertheless, none were considered bad. The only result shown was the demise of an addict. In 59 films (68%), at least one character was shown smoking, while 28 films (32%) had individuals under the influence of alcohol. No films depicted the administration of injectable substances. These results corroborate previous study indicating the frequency of smoking and drinking in the media. Popular culture, particularly OTT media, often depicts standard portrayals of harmful health practices.

Though theories abound, a single holistic framework doesn't seem to accommodate women's representations on OTT media. Therefore, the integration of multiple theories was reviewed to study the heterogeneity or nuanced portrayals of women on OTT also taking into account the prevalent taboos being perceived by the youth dominated fabric of OTT audience:

1. Psychoanalytic Feminism: This theoretical framework merges psychoanalytic concepts with feminist thought, emphasizing how unconscious mechanisms and formative experiences influence gender identities, desires, and societal roles. Psychoanalytic feminism extends the theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, critically refining their ideas to include the unique experiences and societal conditioning of women in patriarchal contexts. Psychoanalytic feminists contend that gender identity and behavior are shaped not only by biological and social factors but also significantly by unconscious psychological processes. They investigate the influence of patriarchal institutions on women's inner lives, assessing how social expectations mold women's identities, wants, and relationships by positing that identity development is significantly influenced by gendered socialization earlier, whereby conventional family dynamics and gender roles foster the formation of implicit notions about femininity and masculinity, influencing behavior, aspirations, and conflicts. Expanding upon Lacan's concept of the "symbolic order," psychoanalytic feminists contend that patriarchal ideals infiltrate the unconscious mind. Women assimilate societal narratives that associate femininity with submission, passivity, or nurture, resulting in internal tensions when these values contradict personal aspirations for agency and autonomy. It explores the repression of women's aspirations to conform to social standards. Media portrayals of women often illustrate people grappling with society expectations and individual ambitions, exposing

suppressed impulses, anxieties, and dreams. Psychoanalytic feminism in media analysis examines the psychological complexity of female characters, their internal struggles, and their navigation of patriarchal conventions, especially significant for comprehending how media portrayals either contest or uphold unconscious assumptions about gender norms and identity, enabling academics to examine how female characters in media representations navigate and react to suppressed urges, cultural norms, and internalized gender roles. Confined areas may represent the limitation of women's options or aspirations, while mirrors may signify issues with identity. It examines how spectators project their inner conflicts or wants onto female characters. Viewers may identify with characters who defy society's conventions, seeing their own challenges or aspirations mirrored on screen. The analysis of Indian OTT media through the lens of psychoanalytic feminism facilitates a nuanced comprehension of how female characters either conform to or challenge patriarchal ideals, exposing the psychological ramifications of adhering to rigid gender norms and the capacity of media to empower women by depicting their internal conflicts.

2. Integrating Abject theory and psychoanalytic feminism for the analysis of gender representation provides a multifaceted perspective for analyzing how Indian OTT media addresses intricate gender problems, confronts societal taboos, and interacts with viewers on both conscious and

unconscious planes. Abject Theory facilitates the analysis of taboo images that elicit social discomfort or the depiction of violence against women. This theory elucidates how these marginalized people compel society to address gender problems that are often overlooked or stigmatized. Psychoanalytic feminism enhances understanding by analyzing the psychological impact of patriarchal standards on female personalities. It may elucidate the underlying problems encountered by women negotiating conventional gender roles in rural India as they reconcile household expectations with individual aspirations. By combining, researchers may conduct a thorough investigation of not only character representations but also audience reactions. This method may demonstrate how Indian OTT content mirrors, confirms, or contests the implicit gendered assumptions that influence women's lives, providing a nuanced comprehension of gender representation in modern Indian media.

Abject theory originates from the work of French psychoanalyst and philosopher Julia Kristeva, particularly in her seminal book Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection (1980). Kristeva's notion of the abject is rooted in psychoanalysis and existential philosophy, examining the formation, preservation, and sometimes disruption of the boundaries between self and other by what is deemed "abject." The term "abject" denotes anything that is considered unclean, forbidden, or "other" by society, often linked to death, decay, body fluids, and other themes that elicit disgust, horror, or terror. Kristeva posits that abjection is an

emotional reaction to perceived challenges to the integrity of the self and the social structure. Kristeva posits that individuals construct their identities by establishing differences between themselves and what they reject, dread, or deem repugnant. This demarcation creates a distinction between "self" and "other," wherein anything that jeopardizes the integrity of the self or society is deemed "abject." The abject is often associated with the body, especially bodily fluids, waste, death, and decay, which evoke awareness of one's mortality and fragility. The body serves as a locus of identity and fear, and depictions of it under squalid conditions may undermine conventional concepts of purity and agency. The notion of abjection is intricately connected to social order and societal standards. Abject subjects—such as menstruation, menopause, oversexualization, sexual assault, or gender transgression—pose a challenge to societal standards and are thus seen as taboo, dismissed, or concealed by society. Kristeva posits that while the abject elicits fear, addressing it might facilitate catharsis by compelling the subject (or spectator) to recognize and, in a manner, "purge" these worries. In media studies, abject theory is used to examine representations that challenge viewers with socially forbidden topics or visuals, especially those concerning the body, gender, and sexuality that challenge traditional limits and elicit intense emotional reactions from audiences. These taboos use abject imagery to underscore social unease with these issues, thus compelling viewers to confront facets of life and identity they may otherwise avoid. It has particular significance

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in feminist media analysis since women's bodies are often shown in abject contexts—especially with menstruation, pregnancy, sexuality, or physical injury. These representations illuminate cultural apprehensions around gender, sexuality, and authority. Confronting on-screen violence against women might provide a cathartic release, allowing viewers to experience a transient liberation from cultural repression or silence over these matters. In examining gender representations in Indian OTT media, abject theory facilitates the exploration of the depiction of taboo themes, the emotions they elicit from viewers, and whether these depictions support or contest social constraints.

2.5 Gaps and Objectives

Gaps: OTT platforms are new gateways to disseminate entertainment and cinematic content to the audience. It is the only medium of popular culture that entirely has a consumer centric approach to prompt the audience's instantaneous feedback into regulating its content accordingly thereby making its stakeholders translate their views into perception-based action. In addition, the pivotal role of online media in consolidating the trajectories of gender-based violence and perpetrators stands undeniable today. Through films, fictional narratives depicted through these mediums also aid readers to cultivate empathy. The crucial contributions of these mediums in deep rooting gender roles and normalizing gender-based

exploitation further seems problematic and questionable. The study was to identify deficiencies and suggest future avenues for women's representations on OTT media after knowing its recent trends and existing body of literature. Nonetheless, these studies fail to provide a thorough synthesis of the literature on theories and methodologies for examination of in-depth gender representations due to prevalent taboos underlying them. Mulla (Mulla) released a review on OTT services; nevertheless, the research was confined to aspects affecting consumers' views toward OTT media adoption and lacked theoretical and methodological advancements towards gender. Singh conducted bibliometric studies of OTT literature; however, their analysis was restricted to topic identification, excluding gender studies and current advancements in OTT services (Nagaraj et al.). The literature mostly highlights technology adoption theories such as TAM and UTAUT, which are helpful in comprehending the utilization of OTT platforms, although they fail to include audience responses to representations of gender taboos. Research often neglects the ways in which viewers, perceive and internalize gender taboos shown in OTT content and its impact. Although research has thoroughly examined the comparison between OTT platforms and conventional media regarding media consumption, it has inadequately investigated the distinctions in their approach to gender portrayals. OTT platforms possess more latitude to contest established norms in comparison to traditional television; yet there is a paucity of empirical study examining if and how OTT material

more successfully transcends gender taboos than traditional media. Qualitative research on audience involvement with gender portrayals might address this deficiency. The research examines the competitive dynamics of OTT and the theoretical underpinnings of media consumption, although it neglects the unique portrayal of gender taboos, including gender-based violence, body negativity and unrealistic beauty standards, menstruation, abortion, and female sexual autonomy, in Indian OTT media. Investigating the representation of these taboos in Indian shows and films is essential for a thorough understanding of OTT's influence on modern gender discourse.

The body of literature on OTT services is expanding rapidly quantitatively and requires more investigation by scholars to enhance theoretical frameworks regarding gender, particularly women's portrayals, with taboos surfacing and resurfacing them. The chapter reveals several evaluations that provide OTT service providers with a chance to get insights for developing marketing strategies that attract viewers and deliver tailored services accountably. Since the OTT landscape is dominated by a younger demographic, the portrayals constantly shape their perception, making them learn and unlearn social nuances and norms. The new formats and genres consumed by them are unexplored and hence should be studied at length to expand research. The argument of whether new technology can topple old technology in redefining art is an age-old argument addressed through Niche theories in both global and Indianized

contexts, but OTT's make-aware socio-cultural role in the gender mediascape has been unexplored from a literary and theoretical lens. The prominence of gender bias, violence and resistance in South and Southeast Asia's rich media fabric is undeniable. Analyzing and understanding gender taboos offers an opportunity to empathize with characters' nuances and emotional and psychological aspects of gender-based violence often in the form of slow/invisible violence. Additionally, our quotidian OTT language is laden with gender expectations and prejudices. Insufficient study on how Indian OTT content addresses intersectional feminist issues and cultural taboos specific to India, particularly with the portrayal of women confronting patriarchal standards seeks redressal. Although current research examines OTT's role in the media ecosystem, it seldom situates female representations within India's distinct socio-political framework. Since the content entails tackling sensitive socio-political themes, it is crucial to examine how these portrayals engage with broader discussions on women's rights, discrimination, and prohibitions. The need for more refined investigations connecting gender portrayals in Indian OTT content with overarching societal movements, such as feminism, queer theories, and psychoanalytical lenses, is overarching.

Though neo-femininity and the nuances of women in Western multicultural societies have been well explored, women's studies did not extend to India's new contemporary entertainment OTT like platforms.

Though media and film theories are replete in research, the heterogeneity of women's representation in the Indian context can only be unearthed through in-depth analyses and appropriate feministic theoretical methodologies that govern their on-screen portrayals and their nascent traits and characteristics. Although several studies investigate gender representation in Indian media, many neglect to address the intersectionality of layered identities in the depiction of women. There is not only a need for theoretical analysis to comprehend how Indian OTT platforms depict marginalized women and if they reinforce or contest prevailing cultural taboos but also a detailed description of methodological implications. Literature has ample representation theories and models that necessitate the examination of taboos, but it does not define which suits the purpose and why. Albeit Freudian psychoanalysis thoroughly investigates taboos and misrepresentations, no further development in theoretical frameworks corresponds to further its detailed applications to the OTT media in India. Multifaceted exchanges on normative gender role assumptions, marginalization, resistance, capitulation, negotiations, contribute to the advancement of gender scholarship and promote social justice and equality.

Women's representation on OTT, though substantial, the underlying societal taboos with conventional gender tropes pertaining to gender roles are therefore under researched arenas that require a robust theoretical

framework. Research is scarce on content regulation and censorship, driving the importance of gender sensitivity in OTT content regulation. Overall, the relegation of interrogation on taboos and their subsequent, understated role in shaping societal transformation in the context of Indian OTT's women needs immediate address for the youth to be gender sensitive and responsible viewers of Indian OTT media and the stakeholders to observe corporate social accountability. The influence of self-regulation on OTT platforms is continually developing, and the effect this has on gender taboo representations remains inadequately studied. Its impact on the artistic representation of sensitive subjects such as sexuality, sexual assault, or reproductive rights in Indian OTT media is still to be unearthed. There is a deficiency of research examining how OTT censorship policies either restrict or facilitate discussions on gender taboos, particularly in contrast to strictly controlled conventional media. The identified research gaps underscore the need for comprehensive, intersectional, and qualitative investigations into the representation and reception of gender taboos on Indian OTT platforms. The literature has mostly concentrated on technology adoption and competition with conventional media, therefore leaving considerable opportunities for investigation into gender taboos in Indian women's representation and the social impact of such OTT content. Moreover, studies that can comprehend the Indian audience's heterogeneity to understand the market dynamics better requires further segmentation. Addressing these

theoretical and methodological gaps may enhance the knowledge of how OTT platforms influence gender debate in modern Indian culture.

Objectives:

The aims and research questions aim to address the noted gaps in the literature, focusing on a more profound and nuanced analysis of gender taboos and the depiction of women in Indian OTT media.

1. **To study the audience perception of how women representations and gender taboos occupy the sites of the Indian OTT mediascape.**

   Sub-objectives:

   1.1 To investigate the depiction of women's representations on Indian OTT platforms, and examining how gender taboos engage and impact representation of women

   1.2 To theoretically evaluate audience reception and understanding of gender taboo representations in Indian OTT media with respect to women

   1.3 To examine the influence of gender sensitivity in content regulation in Indian OTT content

   Research Questions:

   1.1 In what manner are gender taboos and stereotypes prevalent in women's portrayals depicted in Indian OTT content?

1.2 What effect do these tabooed representations exert on audience perceptions and interpretations?

1.3 In what ways may theoretical frameworks, be used to analyze the depiction of gender taboos in Indian OTT content?

1.4 What is the role of OTT platforms in shaping societal transformation? What is the impact of content control and censorship regulations on OTT platforms for the portrayal of sensitive gender issues?

2. To investigate the dynamics of consumption through Indian audience perception

Research Questions:

2.1 What are the factors that determine OTT perception in the Indian entertainment industry?

2.2: Into how many market categories may Indian OTT consumers be categorized based on their perception?

2.3: What are the prevalent features of each market segment? Which factors are the most favored by a particular segment?

CHAPTER 3
MIXED METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3

MIXED METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Chapter 2 had enumerated the objectives and research questions after extensively reviewing the literature and examining its gaps. The primary objective is to study how women's representations occupy the sites of the Indian OTT mediascape through an intersectional examination of women's representations on Indian OTT platforms and examine how these depictions engage with gender taboos.

3.1 Rationale for Mixed Methods

Since the research questions cannot be answered by qualitative or quantitative approaches alone, as the primary focus of understanding the "whys" and "hows" of critically examining gender issues and taboos falls largely on qualitative research for the first set of objectives and sub objectives, the reasons for rejecting the quantitative research as the primary method are lucid.

A quantitative survey could utilize a larger sample size (e.g., 300–500 respondents) to assess audience perceptions of gender taboos in OTT content. However, they exhibited restricted depth. Quantitative surveys effectively measure attitudes or behaviors but do not provide the depth

necessary to comprehend the underlying reasons for those attitudes. The nuanced interpretations and meanings that viewers associate with gender representations remain untapped. The research emphasizes subjective experiences and interpretations of media content, indicating a preference for a qualitative approach that allows participants to express their thoughts in their own words.

However, we cannot negate the fact that OTT media is an industrial market. In audience perception studies, quantification is also necessary as it provides generalizable data that accurately reflects the "whats" and "how many" of the audience behaviors and preferences. This methodology enables researchers to extract statistical insights leveraging managerial implications and enabling the discernment of trends and patterns in audience behavior, including watching habits and preferences(Souchon and Diamantopoulos) . Unlike qualitative studies, employing statistical approaches facilitates generalizations about broader demographics, hence augmenting the relevance of results beyond the examined sample (Vijayendra and Fantone), mitigating bias via systematic data gathering procedures, and resulting in more definitive results on audience views (Plonsky) It facilitates the comparison of various audience groups, uncovering differing attitudes and expectations (Souchon and Diamantopoulos) useful for stakeholders and business strategists.

Since qualitative research may provide profound insights into the subtleties of audience perceptions, and the research aims to interrogate

them rather than thoroughly understand only, including the contextual rationales that quantitative approaches could neglect, this study underscores the need for deep examination of audience dynamics through qualitative research being supplemented by quantitative insights. A wholesome examination is possible only through integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods, with a primary focus on qualitative for the first set of objectives and extending it to the second objective by following concurrent embedded design.

The amalgamation of qualitative insights with quantitative measures facilitates a more sophisticated comprehension of audience behaviors and preferences (Skamagki et al.). Mixed methods enhance the validation of results by using several data sources, hence improving reliability (Jackson and Bazeley; Creswell) and are widely used in audience perception research for the capacity to combine the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative studies. Concurrent embedded design is preferred in mixed methods to facilitate the amalgamation of additional data types inside a single research project and enrich both its depth and breadth. Researchers might flexibly modify their approaches to tackle certain study inquiries, fitting the intricacies of audience encounters (Fetters et al.). This approach facilitates the simultaneous gathering of qualitative and quantitative data, providing instant context for quantitative results. Complementarity allows researchers to use qualitative data to elucidate or augment quantitative findings, hence enhancing the comprehensive study or vice versa

(Bryman).

3.2 Research Design of Qualitative Research:

Ethnography entails immersing in a community's cultural environment to observe behaviors, norms, and interactions over an extended duration. Ethnographic studies necessitate prolonged fieldwork and thorough immersion in particular cultural or social contexts, which was impractical considering the research's scope and timeline. The study's focus on media consumption in diverse settings, such as individuals watching OTT content at home or in private spaces, indicates that an ethnographic approach would not facilitate consistent direct observation of viewing behaviors.

A case study of a single OTT platform, such as Netflix India, could analyze its content and policies regarding gender representations and taboos. However, a case study of a single platform limits the ability to draw conclusions about trends in the broader Indian OTT landscape, while analyzing multiple platforms facilitates a more comprehensive comparison of narrative strategies and audience engagement. The study focuses on narrative structures, symbolism, and deeper meanings, which are more effectively analyzed through manually coded thematic analysis than through frequency counts. Automated coding may miss the nuances of

how gender norms are either challenged or reinforced. Quantitative content analysis can identify trends but lacks the capacity to explain the reasons behind the emergence of specific themes or how audiences interpret them. Therefore, a qualitative approach was selected as it aligns with the study's first objective of in-depth exploration of portrayals of women and gender taboos in Indian OTT media.

3.2.1 Qualitative technique:

The qualitative method facilitates comprehension of a situation from the viewpoints of the individuals involved (Welman et al.). Contextual richness encompasses the socio-cultural dimensions of gender representation in media. Since participant-centered approaches facilitate the amplification of marginalized voices and personal narratives, which is particularly crucial in the examination of taboo subjects, a qualitative phenomenological technique is deemed suitable for research as it enables direct interpretation of the participants' perspectives (Groenewald). Qualitative approaches are enough for obtaining a comprehensive solution to a question (Corbin and Strauss) elucidating the emotional, symbolic, and cultural significances linked to behavior. To methodologically represent this, qualitative methods were opted through interviews using open-ended questions designed to place the viewer, like the respondent, on a more equitable level (Lotz). In-depth interviews provide more meaningful and robust responses to how and why questions (Weiss Robert

Stuart) and offer rich descriptions that may enhance the robustness of the later quantitative surveys too. Additionally, we examined the respondents' detailed accounts using pragmatic, inductive reasoning, acknowledging roles as researchers (Banet-Weiser Sarah; Sender Katherine) also recognizing (Sender Katherine) that the viewer's position (Ang Ien; Charmaz Kathy) is fundamental to media behavior, if not to content generation itself (Steiner and Xu). The methodology aims to prioritize reflective subjectivity rather than objectivity (Charmaz Kathy) engaging in dialogue with the respondents and the project as a whole (Torfing Jacob) and anticipates that the findings of researchers will enhance quantitative surveys to more accurately represent contemporary television audiences.

3.2.2 Instrument Selection:

In order to develop a framework for analysis to systematically assess representations of women and gender taboos in the chosen OTT content, the instruments were selected on a two-folded level:

1. Instruments for Audience Reception
2. Study Units

As study units, OTT content as in each chosen show or film is examined as a distinct unit, focusing on its portrayal of gender and sensitive taboos. Audience members from varied backgrounds will be analyzed to understand the interpretation and internalization of these representations.

For understanding audience reception, conducting semi-structured interviews with participants will facilitate open-ended responses and enable follow-up questions, thereby enhancing comprehension of audience interpretations of gender taboos. An initial survey to collect demographic data and basic viewing preferences contextualized the qualitative data gathered later. Further, based on the results of the pilot study, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted on the sample size.

This research will employ qualitative methods such as content analysis of OTT media, semi-structured interviews for the later thematic analysis. Content analysis facilitates a thorough analysis of the textual and visual components of chosen OTT shows and films. This analysis identifies recurring themes, narrative structures, and ideological positions, offering a thorough understanding of gender and taboo representations. Semi-structured interviews facilitate an in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions regarding gender representations. The semi-structured format balances topic focus with participant freedom to share insights and experiences. The use of content analysis and semi-structured interviews offers the necessary flexibility and depth to analyze the complex cultural and social dynamics of the Indian OTT landscape, rendering it the most appropriate for this research. This study examines the construction and communication of gender representations in media and the ways in which audiences perceive and internalize these narratives.

3.2.3 Inclusion Criteria of Instruments (OTT content and respondents of interviews):

1. Study units- A selection of 5 key OTT shows and movies was made, concentrating on content that directly addresses gender issues and taboos. The selected size aims to ensure sufficient diversity to reflect variations in representation, such as rural versus urban narratives or traditional compared to modern depictions, while being manageable for comprehensive analysis of each piece. A selection of Indian OTT shows and films from popular platforms such as Netflix India, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+Hotstar, and Zee5 based on their thematic engagement with gender and women's issues were chosen. Currently, numerous movie review websites provide fundamental information about films alongside viewer reviews and opinions regarding Indian cinema. The demographic profiles of visitors to these movie websites show no significant differences, making data from IMDb a reliable representation. IMDb has become a major platform for users to express their opinions, making it a valuable resource for evaluating audience sentiments. This study analyzed Indian OTT users and collected data from Indian reviews on the IMDb website (Tripathi and Trivedi). A pilot survey was conducted as the selection criteria, in which 60% found IMDb an updated, resourceful

database, with 67.7% finding themselves dependent on its ratings and reviews that influence their entertainment choices and viewing habits most of the time. The most popular Indian series released from 2018–2022 were selected to access audience reviews. Only user-provided ratings were included in the primary corpus preparation. IMDb had released its annual topmost Indian popular movies, web series, short films, and documentary list, all of which are constituents of OTT media content today, out of which the pilot sample polled for 18 out of 25 listed shows. Most of them were popular and major cinematic successes from each year. However, the size was not feasible, nor were some selections thematically relevant. To filter further the most discussed OTT shows that were the most favored among the respondents yet relevant and feasible for the study, feminist media tests were conducted on the 18 selected Indian shows.

The most popular and internationally accredited was created by cartoonist Alison Bechdel in 1985 and is commonly referred to as the Bechdel-Wallace test. It evaluates a film or literary work about its portrayal of gender. It inquires if a picture has (1) a minimum of two women (2) who engage in conversation over a topic unrelated to a male individual. It is currently often used to evaluate films, and a substantial quantity of significant and renowned Hollywood films is recognized for having failed the examination. Though the Bechdel test functions as a benchmark for gender equity, it often fails to conduct a comprehensive critical analysis of structural concerns on the objectification and injustice of women. The test

is unreliable to the extent that 2 female characters against more than 2 males do not justify onscreen representation. At least one conversation about something other than a male character is too shallow or an example of tokenism in an entire narrative. More than fifty percent of films do not pass these criteria, underscoring substantial gender representation concerns (Bouchat). The Bechdel Test's requirements may provide a misleading perception of success in gender representation since it just requires that two women converse about a topic unrelated to a male. It fails to account for the nature of interactions, or the roles women assume, thereby reinforcing preconceptions. (O'Meara)

However, there are a plethora of such feminist fiction tests with their own limitations. Mako Mori test is that the female gets her own narrative arc, being a plot contributor. The only drawback is that the minimum criterion is that the fiction has to have one female character, which is again an example of tokenism in terms of representation. Ellen Willis Test justifies equal representation of characters/plot contributors in a narrative. The Sexy Lamp Test is effective only when a female character is over sexualized, inspires the male's actions, or is limited to an object to be competed for. Though it combats objectification and male gaze, it doesn't give her a narrative of her own to contribute to the entire plot. The Tauriel Test only determines an occupationally competent woman's character and doesn't cover other aspects of a woman. Raleigh Becket is impressive as it focuses on inclusivity—that of a male needing the development of a

woman. It fails only when it overlooks the romantic/sexual association between the two. Furiosa has its shortcomings, as it concentrates on the audience's fury when a feminist work is released on the internet and doesn't evaluate the character's role. Babs and Kara seemed perfect as it examined recognizable identical characters irrespective of gender. Although these assessments provide significant insights on gender representation, they may neglect the subtleties of character development and storytelling in film by overlooking certain aspects. This viewpoint indicates a need for more thorough evaluations that take into account the wider context of gender dynamics in cinema.

However, the Crystal Gems Test was found to be a holistic combination of the Bechdel Test, Mako Mori, Sexy Lamp, and at least 4 female characters, where each has to pass at least 1 of these tests, and each test must be passed by at least 1 female character; the more, the better. Since it is a rigorous assessment with strict parameters of 3 fictional tests, if some work happens to pass this test, the narrative centrality of non-androgenic dialogue between leading women will be ensured. The Crystal Gems Assessment examines the interactions and mutual support among female characters, emphasizing their autonomy and agency (Locuas) Cultural context facilitates a profound comprehension of gender taboos within certain narratives, mirroring society norms and obstacles. The implementation of crystal gems tests, including the Bechdel Test, functions as an essential instrument for analyzing gender taboos in film

(Beere)For nonfiction/documentaries/short films, the Finkbeiner test examines nonfictional depiction of a real-life woman by her own merit rather than being in a relationship with a male spouse/children. Vito-Russo test determines a queer character in a pivotal role in a narrative that is independent of their gender identity. For streaming series, given their longer runtime, the criterion was the overall character analysis which narrowed the 18 shows to 12. The 12 being unmanageable in size was further tallied and ratified by the Trailer Talktime Test.

In the age of bite-sized content, trailers have become more than just a powerful marketing tool. To gauge the visibility of female characters in a movie's promotional material, the Trailer Talk Time Test determines what percentage of speaking time in the main trailer of each property was given to female characters vis-à-vis male characters. The findings of this application in a study reveal that men outspeak women by a factor of 3:1 in trailers. As many as 48 properties had trailers in which women spoke for 10 seconds or less. However, streaming films and series provided more trailer talk time to female characters compared to theatrical films, by a wide margin of 10 percentage points and 14 percentage points respectively (Guild et al.). Out of 150 shows, the highest trailer talk time for female characters were found in *3 Roses, Ajeeb Daastaans, Aranyak, Bombay Begums* and *Chhori* like 10 shows, movies, short films, and documentaries each (Guild et al.). The ones that coincided with the pretested 12 shows were retained as the study units. They were *Panchayat* (2 seasons), *Gullak*

(3 seasons), *Delhi Crime* (Season 1) among web series, *Devi* as the sole short film and *Period. End of Sentence* as the sole documentary.

2. For audience reception studies, a diverse group of viewers had been selected using purposive sampling. The sample was selected on the basis of engagement level variation. Viewers who frequently consume OTT content and have interacted with programs addressing gender issues were to be selected. Investigation of their gender and taboo perceptions necessitated a comprehensive grasp of narrative content and audience interpretations. The first action was delineating the sample universe by using Robinson's 'inclusion criteria'—a collection of essential characteristics required for research participation (Robinson, "Sampling in Interview-Based Qualitative Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide"). The inclusion criteria were that participants must be urban Indians and must have watched all the selected content from OTT platforms. The rationale for selecting this target demographic is their regular use of OTT platforms. The selection of study participants aimed for broad representation, using data indicating cities with the highest Internet television viewership (Bhattacharya). An online survey was conducted as a pretesting pilot study where participants were asked about the various OTT platforms they use in India. Additionally, it comprised questions about IMDb's reliability as a database, their polling of watched OTT content, their habitual frequency of OTT content consumption, their favorite platforms, genres, and watching gadgets, characterized by

frequent engagement with Indian video content across one or more platforms. To guarantee that the replies are legitimate, we posed a filter question about the selected 5 series or films they had seen on different OTT platforms. The participants who responded to the filter question and viewed Indian OTT content at least weekly were exclusively selected based on their self-reported engagement. It turned out that they were young adults aged about below 18 and went up to 40 years, since this demographic is more closely linked to the use of new media, including online television (Pisharody). They also demonstrated demographic variation in India.

3.2.4 Sampling Strategy: The study deliberately employed a non-probability technique in which subjects are chosen based on characteristics that correspond with the research objectives since not all members of the population were deemed equally informative(Neuendorf). Since it was ideal for extracting rich datasets from experts, this sampling was preferred. To ensure the extraction of only relevant reviews, a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria for textual units was established, with careful consideration that any omissions would not detract from the analysis (Krippendorff). Moreover, it was low-cost, less time-consuming, and convenient to access thick descriptions from respondents with expertise in the phenomena.

3.2.5 Theoretical Framework:

Mulvey employed Lacanian psychoanalysis to explain gendered subjectivity, desire, and visual pleasure, but she permitted no resistance or critical spectatorship and saw no differences in realism movie structure or impact. The Monstrous-Feminine by Barbara Creed claims that horror films' female protagonists "necessitates a rereading of key aspects of Freudian theory, particularly his theory of the Oedipus complex and castration crisis". Creed instead uses Kristeva's abject-maternal philosophy (Freeland Cynthia A.). Few of Mulvey's detractors have used cultural studies, identity politics, deconstruction, or Foucault's philosophy. Feminist philosophers contest patriarchal ideologies and advocate practice-theory integration. But cinema theorists utilize contentious terms like explanation, justification, and systematicity. There is no discipline-wide definition of evidence, testing, or validation of a hypothesis. Though universalizing, feminist cinema theory uses sophisticated vocabulary and alienating concepts to reject women's experiences as active viewers and critical readers. Bell hooks claims mainstream feminist cinema critique ignores black female spectatorship. It ignores the potential that women may create an alternative gaze by comprehending race and racism. Many feminists see feminist cinema theory as abstract, totalizing, jargon-filled, and non-experiential (Freeland Cynthia A.). Psychoanalysis has narrowed the investigation of subjects, pleasure, and desire, ignoring female perspectives. Therefore, neither psychoanalysis nor feminist film theory is self-sufficient to address our research problem. However, it is the need of

the hour to examine the rationale behind women's portrayals and their taboo-centric representations appealing to the modern audience.

The reason why scary and violent films appeal to the contemporary audience includes cinema's power, changes in film spectatorship, and film and genre traits. Psychoanalytic approaches to cinema hold that desire and wish-fulfilment drive film production and experience and meet artists' and viewers' psychological, protective, and expressive needs. Psychoanalytic studies of cinema often combine explanations of creative production and spectatorship, film's potential to influence audiences, and the emotive and cognitive importance of film experience. Psychoanalytic theory and psychotherapy are founded on Freud's understanding of the mind. "Orthodox psychoanalytic theories of art have focused on (Cox and Levine) the relationship between the creation of art, sexuality, and unconscious mental life, and a great deal of both film and literary criticism has used psychoanalytic theory to interpret texts or genres of texts, but film theory's distinctive contribution to psychoanalytic theories of art lies in (Livingston and Plantinga) its focus upon the nature and character of film spectatorship." Psychoanalytically, 1 and 2 are connected. Freud wanted to explain not just text meaning and the artist's relationship to it, but also how art works for artists and viewers. He also tried to explain why audiences liked such works and how art may express fantasies, aspirations, and desires in digestible ways. Psychoanalytic studies of cinema also examine film's ability to move audiences and film spectatorship (the

emotive and cognitive value of film experience) with genre traits like horror or retribution. Film theory has been heavily influenced by psychoanalysis. (Cox and Levine) Christian Metz's Lacanian account of film spectatorship and Laura Mulvey's account of cinema's structure as grounded in male voyeurism are two prominent and influential psychoanalytic interventions in film theory, but their interactions have been longstanding, extensive, varied, and deep. Audience's inclination to conceal and disown painful or perverted urges and to receive a specific type of enjoyment from dreaming and imagining them explains several aspects of cinema spectatorship. Dreams and fantasies suspend self-critical judgment and include representations. In cinema spectatorship, the same phenomenon occasionally happens. Just as Freud employed (Cox and Levine) "the psychopathology of everyday life," movies and other arts assist and conceptually expand psychoanalysis. Art and psychoanalysis complement one another. (Cox and Levine) Our discussion of psychoanalysis and genre below will focus on how psychoanalysis can coexist with other interpretative methods and tools and characterize some fairly general aspects of genre spectatorship, such as abject film spectatorship. Psychoanalysis in cinema theory in the 1960s and 1970s offered universal and basic interpretations of film experience (Cox and Levine). The psychoanalytic value of the "gaze" was highlighted by (Metz). According to the theory, seeing meaningful, moving visuals on a screen is appealing because of the camera and scopophilia. This

essentializes the cinematic experience by describing its major aspects from a single theoretical standpoint. This essentializing approach attained apotheosis with 1970s 'apparatus theory' that merged psychoanalytic, semiotic, and Marxist ideas to make cinema spectatorship psychoanalytic and ideological by including the physical and institutional equipment of film production (Rosen). An essentialist theory of cinematic spectatorship that characterizes moving picture spectatorship has been abandoned. This suggests that psychoanalytic ideas are essential to explaining some features of cinema spectatorship.

Richard Allen is a major critic of psychoanalytic filmmaking. Although (Cox and Levine) psychoanalysis is concerned with sexuality and unconscious mental processes, this definition is deceptive, particularly when trying to explain its connection to cinema. It reflects the untouted belief that psychoanalysis is about sex and its objections. (Cox and Levine) Sexuality and unconscious mental states must be understood in relation to the orectic (desire and hunger), as well as physiological and mental pleasures (not sex). Some films require multiple approaches, and psychoanalytic film interpreters should not be seen as using the only useful approach to understanding character, narrative, or spectatorship, even when necessary (Cox and Levine). Art is orectic. It serves artists' and audiences' psychological needs and connects them via shared wants and fantasies. Psychoanalysis believes these wants, desires, and phantasies, together with the artist's frequently unconscious intentions, are important

for cinematic interpretation and spectatorship (e.g., pleasure) (Cox and Levine). This also supports psychoanalysis' belief that art is essential to well-being. Films have different psychoanalytic functions. According to (Gabbard), some films represent the director's subjectivity and strive to resolve challenging childhood experiences and conflicts. Again comparing dreams to cinema, he argues (Cox and Levine) that "Certain films defy conventional analysis and understanding unless they are viewed as dreams subject to condensation, displacement, and other elements of Freud's dreamwork." Many Alfred Hitchcock films are best understood this way. (Cox and Levine) In *Vertigo (1958),* the protagonist follows a fantasy item through its loss, replacement, and ultimate loss, which cures his vertigo. Without psychoanalytic concepts, the film is challenging to understand. Viewing a movie is different from dreaming since the viewer is awake and the pictures are genuine (Metz). The parallel only offers a limited explanation of the cinema experience, which may not be best analyzed psychoanalytically. However, this does not suffice as the only theory to read films and critically analyze women's portrayals. Freud was condemned by feminists for reducing sexual difference to penis existence or absence. Numerous critics call him 'phallocentric', a word created by British psychologist Ernest Jones, who questioned penis envy. Freud had trouble understanding women throughout his career. Feminists saw the 'problem' of femininity in psychoanalysis as emblematic of patriarchal discourse, where it appears as an absence or assessed by male standards

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(Chaudhuri). Feminist Freud supporters like Mitchell said he was a more sophisticated thinker than his adversaries thought. He continuously altered and reformed his beliefs, cognizant of their temporariness. Feminists who use his ideas modify them and question psychoanalysis. Women and Film articles see film 'as a type of mirror which reflects a changing society', but it 'has always been restricted in its representation, and sometimes distorted' (Chaudhuri). This distortion is always 'a male viewpoint'. This monolithic critique of Hollywood film's "system" targets negative female archetypes including prostitute, wife, mother, vamp, and femme fatale (Chaudhuri). Its films may promote false awareness, enabling women to identify with their representations. Women & Film authors believe that 'the mirror we see on screen will be substantially transformed' as preconceptions recede or more women filmmakers are present. Female characters shall not be 'servile caricatures' (Jacob).

Mitchell reread Freud via Lacan's work in Psychoanalysis and Feminism (1974), teaching English-speakers about him. In 1982, she and Jacqueline Rose compiled Lacan's feminine sexuality works. Through her, Lacan and Freud became significant players in feminism's debate with psychoanalysis. Mitchell explains why Freud is still relevant and not 'the culture-bound creation of a small-minded "Victorian" patriarch' as some feminists would have him: his concept of the unconscious (Chaudhuri). The unconscious would always remain, but Freud believed it did not transcend history. The unconscious is vital to internalizing social rules and

attitudes. Though vulnerable to societal change, these rules and ideas have traditionally underpinned patriarchy. Mitchell claims that psychoanalysis is not 'a proposal for a patriarchal society but an examination of one' (Mitchell and Aron). This makes psychoanalysis essential for feminism. In her article, eventually extended into Woman's Estate (1971), she attacks conventional Marxism and current socialism for ignoring women's issues. Classical Marxist literature depicts women as slaves before slavery, symbolizing their position in society. Mitchell claims these notions fail to appreciate women's uniqueness. Women's exploitation and subjugation have "a specific structure". Freud contends in The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) that dreams fulfill suppressed desires, but they are veiled in the waking consciousness to avoid ego censorship. The latent dream content is 'translated' via 'condensation' (limiting several thoughts to one picture) and 'displacement'. When ideas lose their emotional power, Dreamer wakes up attempts to recollect the dream, it undergoes 'secondary revision': the dreamer interprets the dream as a story. It produces the dream's' manifest' substance, a heavily concealed latent content. However, Freud felt content might be exposed via psychoanalysis. Women must modify production, reproduction, sex, and child socialization to achieve true emancipation. Freud, unlike Marx, believed that the nuclear family socialized people into gender norms and expectations.

To probe into research objective 1, analysis of how characters' psychological conflicts or aspirations illustrate the effects of patriarchal

conditioning and how taboos' repesentation, their symbolism, and subtexts signify suppressed impulses or internalized gender roles are necessary. Through examination of narrative techniques that elucidate the subconscious effects of trauma, shame, or stigma of female characters, identification of instances when gendered taboos are addressed, emphasizing their capacity to disturb or provoke viewers, character marginalization that violates social standards being "abjected" by their communities or families, and how this impacts their representation and social status; how abject theory elucidates the discomfort or catharsis that viewers may feel when confronted with these forbidden images need to be studied. Therefore, the following theories build a foundation for our study:

1. Psychoanalytic Feminism for studying women's portrayals on OTT media

2. Abject theory for examining gender taboos and audience's responses to such depictions on Indian OTT platforms

1. Psychoanalytic feminism utilizes psychoanalytic theory to investigate unconscious motives and symbolic significances in gendered behaviors and identities. This method emphasizes the influence of cultural expectations on women's personal experiences, aspirations, and dilemmas. Psychoanalytic thought, particularly when examined from a feminist perspective, emphasizes the unconscious mechanisms that influence human behavior, desires, and internal conflicts. Psychoanalytic feminism

emphasizes the impact of patriarchal norms on female identity, sexuality, and psychological experiences, often generating conflict between society standards and personal aspirations. Psychoanalytic theory will be used to investigate how characters in Indian OTT media grapple with internalized gender stereotypes, repression, and trauma. This theory elucidates the manifestation of social constraints as psychological conflicts in female characters, exposing the underlying tensions in their representations. It also utilizes psychoanalytic ideas like repression, projection, and the unconscious to explain how viewers may subconsciously connect with or dismiss certain gendered representations. For instance, audiences may identify with characters confronting cultural taboos or reflect their own aspirations and anxieties onto these 5 selected narratives.

2. Problematic psychoanalytic views of emotions neglect description, introspection, and moral suggestion by portraying emotions as unconscious. According to feminist aesthetics, "perception and appreciation not only entail some particular social standpoint but are also formed out of the responsive dynamic operating within an embodied viewer" (Zalta et al.). The rationality of emotions may be used by cinema philosophers to study film pleasures without psychoanalysis. A reasonable emotional reaction to a film (or other artwork) might reveal that the spectator is active, aware, and possibly critical, not just absorbing ideological influences. Laurie Shrage claims that cinema texts have universalized psychological topics and overemphasized readers'/viewers'

passivity. Shrage suggests a contextual strategy that acknowledges viewer "cinematic habits"(Smelik). Flo Leibowitz uses a rhetorical and cognitive method rather than a psychoanalytic one to examine audience connection with melodrama, which she believes may constitute rational reflection (Smelik). Noel Carroll believes that emotions are complicated learnt behaviors gained via "paradigm scenarios" in movies and other sources (Edward). Cavell's film works are distinctive and not feminist, but they provide a foundation for philosophical criticisms of Freudian feminist cinema theory's subjectivity and pleasure assumptions (Eldridge). Johnston examines the flaws of Women and Film and other 'Images of Women' studies in 'Women's Cinema As Counter Cinema.' They presume film is transparent when they say it reflects reality. Cinema is an artificial production that filters reality with its own signifying practices; therefore, Johnston rejects the sociological approach that compares filmic pictures of women to 'real' women. Psychoanalysis-like disguise and displacement change screen images. They seem coded and need psychoanalysis and other ideas to decipher. Johnston stresses that film is a communication tool, not a window in which films create meaning. This also questions the Women and Film reviewers' claim that male-dominated films deliberately use feminine stereotypes in industry. Johnston also questioned social film reviewers' need for 'positive' or 'true' woman pictures. Are we demanding pictures of women as they really are or as we want them to be? It also implies that patriarchal ideology has prevented women from portraying

their 'essence' accurately on television, which would change if they were permitted to. As de Beauvoir and Friedan showed, patriarchy has always pushed a feminine essence to justify women's subjugation and prevent them from evolving. Realism is also a building that hides its creation with norms and conventions. Realist films make spectators think their meanings are obvious, but they do not involve creating their meanings from internalized conventions. Since OTT media is bent on portraying realistic and relatable women on screen, there needs to be frameworks that unearth the coded femininity behind such realistic representations. In her 1980 article Powers of Horror, Julia Kristeva describes characters whose presence threatens feminine, appropriate, and moral values. Kristeva says the abject "is radically excluded and draws me to the place where meaning collapses" (2). Abjection happens when identity, system, and order are disrupted. Abject is dirty, due to which desire is repulsed, and the body reacts. Abjection in psychoanalytic diagnosis is perverse, corrupting every restriction rejected or assumed. Socialized abjection may seem like law-abiding corruption. It accepts religion, morality, and the law but exploits them. Contemporary writing crosses binary categories like impure/pure and moral/immoral to impose the abject on religion, morality, and the law. The abject cannot be eliminated, but it may be cleansed to restore our separation from it. Religious traditions, legislation, and art have traditionally provided "catharsis par excellence," according to Kristeva. Barbara Creed, like Kristeva, calls horror films a "modern defilement rite"

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related to maternal body reconciliation. In The Monstrous Feminine, Creed defines abjection as women who have violated their feminine role and seem hideous. Lacan places desire in context via law and tragedy. Kristeva says, "Abjection is a resurrection that has gone through death (of the ego)" (15). After the ego dies, one loses their symbolic identity, which is between two deaths. Purification via catharsis is essential to abjection and tragedy. While thrilling, a performance may cause pain or unpleasant emotions. One must pass a threshold to release negative feelings and enjoy doing so. Abjection is a painful, fundamental experience that yields catharsis. Catharsis, or cleansing, involves resurfacing the abject. Abjection creates an ethical problem by conflicting with desire and the law while remaining beyond them. Restoring identity or order is not catharsis but accepting their intrinsic instability as categories. The "she-tragedy" is a late 17th- and early 18th-century theatre play in which "women are presented to the audience's gaze, established as desirable, and then driven into prolonged and often fatal suffering" (60). Male gaze and visual pathos shaped she-tragedy reception. Sexual offenses like rape may affect female actors. Instead of blood and gore, the focal point was her sexualization and mental and physical agony as Alfred Hitchcock says, "Torture the women!". The afflicted lady in films typically feels abject about her purity/impurity. Feminine hardships are vital, yet the suffering woman may be a spectacle or mocked stereotype. Several directors have struggled to represent feminine sorrow without embracing the clichés they criticize.

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Abject theory, grounded on psychoanalysis and cultural studies, examines social limits and the repulsion or disgust linked to transgressive or taboo topics. This is particularly beneficial for analyzing the representation of taboo topics such as menstruation, sexuality, and violence against women in Indian media. Abject theory, articulated by Julia Kristeva, addresses cultural limits and what is deemed "abject" or taboo; it examines how communities delineate the "self" from the "other," repudiating anything considered deviant or impure. This approach is especially pertinent for examining gendered taboos. Gender roles in Indian culture are important for understanding item song reception. Sex and women have traditionally been shamed in India. Pornography, prostitution, and liberal social interaction with women are forbidden. In contemporary India, myths of courtesans, prostitutes, and vamps portray "notorious" women as sexualized and stained. Visiting prostitutes is shameful, thus male encounters with or imaginations of female sexuality have always been private, forbidden, or secluded. Due to their secrecy, constraint, mystery, and allure, item songs are a fairly acceptable way to publicly connect with women and sexuality. According to Ganti, the film business is seen as a morally risky environment for women, yet being an actress highlights a woman's sexuality in a way that male actors do not (Ganti). The item song intensifies this sexualization. In Bollywood movies, item songs are non-situational, lavishly filmed, and typically serve a supporting role in the story. (Mulvey) (Shah and Cory)

have argued that media images of female bodies portray women as passive objects of male sexual desires and have condemned erotic depictions of women as misogynistic and sexually violent. However, while bordering on eroticized depictions of female bodies, they empower women and reclaim the narrative on female sexuality, gender roles, and a woman's right to her body and life. According to Judith Butler, such songs are performative activities that define modern Indian feminine subjectivities. This study argues that item numbers purposely defy the (heterosexual) male gaze by showcasing female sexuality. Kumar says that item songs are a way to rebrand oneself as appealing. In India, encounters with women are usually socially guarded, giving the item song a grandiose exaggeration: play, fantasy, and symbolic sexual yearning. Hence, such forbidden taboos, once propagated, become a strict no-no for consumption and, therefore, production in due course of time. In OTT representations, as Copjec describes how women absorb the male gaze as panoptic and unavoidable, this intangible information makes women's identity, which is based on how she seems to others, insecure, causing an existential crisis. Women uses the gaze as an inescapable panopticon (McWhorter). Hilary Neroni notes that the film fragments her mirror image. Cleo's continual peering at mirrors shows her vanity and hyperawareness of the public eye, even in private areas. With the increasing public acceptability, she acts femininely in her bedroom. The private world ceases to be a relief from illusory personal appearance and

primal self-deception. Infectious and fatal threats undermine her pristine self-image, which she cannot retain even in private (Neroni). Kristeva says "the more or less lovely picture in which I see or identify myself is abject and ends when suppression, the perpetual watchman, is loosened (Kristeva). Illness, ugliness, and death threaten to become women's image, which is abjection. Also, La Pianiste, directed by Michael Haneke in 2001, depicts the harsh masochisms of its female heroine, creating an ethical issue. Haneke explores a woman's yearning that defies society based on Elfriede Jenilek's German book. Erika Kohut (Isabelle Huppurt), a late-30s Vienna Conservatory piano instructor, who is sexually repressed. Erika's suppression causes masochistic, voyeuristic, and self-mutilating sexuality. Menstruation and other body secretions are commonly dramatized in uncontrollable sequences in movies. Examples include Carrie's bathroom scene when Carrie gets her period for the first time. Lacan views feminine masochism as a masculine dream and irony. He finds it hilarious that she dominates the law via submission and femininity. Movies frequently depict female sexuality as a grotesque, a 'evil' or wicked persona, or even a monster with a vagina dentata, whose menace is inherent in her reproductive capabilities. Both conceptions of sex and the sexual in cinema have Victorian roots and dictate that although we may like witnessing sex in our films, we must nearly always punish its participants, particularly if they're female. Repurposing this grotesque may allow us to celebrate feminine otherness, sexuality, and deviance without

punishing it, using power and gender signifiers to challenge stereotypes and promote more egalitarian representations on screen. In Powers of Horror, Julia Kristeva convincingly argues that all societally enforced concepts of what is filthy, forbidden, horrible, and abject are a veiled "confrontation with the feminine" (Kristeva). According to (Creed) "The ultimate in abjection is the corpse". Its boundary with ourselves is artificial, formed by society or religion to separate subject and object, 'dirty' from 'clean' (Kristeva). The boundary is fragile (Kristeva). Its restrictions are only specified by these artificial borders (Kristeva). The Abject both warns us not to breach its limit and tempts us to return to its primordial bosom (Kristeva). Wilfully ignoring the Abject Female figure, portraying women as only positive, relatable, moral, socially conforming (or non-conforming in 'friendly' ways that are never violent, libidinous, vengeful, dangerous), and ignoring the Monstrous-Feminine's primordial power is to miss an opportunity of authentic portrayals. Karen Shimakawa suggests that women in the current culture may need to deliberately assume the (abject) role to avoid invisibility. Additionally, "Approaching the problem of stereotyping discourse through abjection may therefore be the only route available" (Shimakawa). Such depictions, such efforts to violate a social body's laws for abject states and beings, are problematic in film because they might reinstitute the preconceptions they intend to challenge. One such example that illustrates the makeover film to be abject is that it relies on the subject's seclusion and integration. Makeover films

let viewers enjoy the advantages of metamorphosis vicariously, yet abjection remains a concern. Abjection plagues the corps propre, and life's circumstances undermine our understanding of it, according to (Kristeva). The makeover employs abjection to define who we are and reject our flaws to become our best. For instance, the central theme of Miss Congeniality is that neoliberal femininity is the path to happiness and fulfillment for women. Kristeva views (Vann-Alexander) abjection as 'becoming' in which the person achieves subjectivity by removing oneself from the abject, (Kristeva); girling is a process of being formed. Abjection involves instinctive physical and emotional reactions, whereas girling is planned and supported by authority. Abjection is linked to identity and gender performances from a young age (Vann-Alexander), confirming Kristeva's 'lives predicated on exclusion'. (Kristeva) She believed the abject must be excluded but not fully separated from society; society requires the abject to identify itself as non-abject. (Vann-Alexander) She is pulled over the boundary into acceptable feminine performance and away from abjection. This unusual variation on the idea that the makeover is a delightful dream lets reality peep through the neoliberal postfeminist bubble in which all self-improvement is pleasure, not labor (Vann-Alexander). The purposeful inclusion of difficulty and discontent in beauty procedures (painful waxing, dieting, hours of effort) may be a breath of fresh air, but it's often used as a humorous element to show how out of place Gracie is in the corps propre (Vann-Alexander). McRobbie's article on What Not to Wear

and Would Like to Meet argues that the show's 'public denigration' of its makeover subjects is key to its construction (McRobbie) and that postfeminism links beauty products to confidence and identity formation. Makeovers are not always fun. Makeover scenes illustrate Gimlin's thesis that the body is a location of oppression due to societal control mechanisms (Gimlin). They depict the disorderly body being ordered and transformed into the corps propre. If the 'organic body cannot be trusted to stay intact and whole' (Arya), the makeover scenario presents the body as 'malleable' and hence controllable with the dominating Western beauty standard that may govern the body. Gracie must also brutally remove her body hair to overcome abjection. Multiple frames show her getting her knuckles and legs waxed and her off-screen shriek of pain during a bikini wax. Removing body hair, forcing something naturally produced by the body out of the body (Vann-Alexander), reminds me of Kristeva and the abject: it denies and controls the organic body to ensure our survival and represents the contradictions of neoliberal postfeminism. Gracie may be whomever she wants, but she needs to wax her body till it's hairless to please the beauty standards. Neoliberal postfeminism holds that people should pursue self-improvement and reinvention to make themselves valued. Gracie's change is a complicated example of Bordo's 'cultural plastic (Bordo), which imagines the body as a place for unlimited reinvention, confirming a 'rhetoric of freedom and self-determination' and typifying postfeminism's body vision (Bordo). This implies that both the

audience and the film are aware of the difficulty of maintaining an impossible beauty standard and the constant push-pull relationship between the abject, untamed body and our attempts to fence it in through maintenance and surveillance, which can disgust others (Vann-Alexander). However, abjection must return to emphasize the fragility of corps propre and the necessity of beauty standards. Makeovers allow the film to pull people over the abject/corps propre line to satisfy its own needs. The examination of Indian OTT media's treatment of taboo subjects, particularly those that challenge conventional gender norms, will be informed by abject theory. The theory offers a framework for examining OTT content and topics often seen as taboo in Indian culture. This theory may also be used to examine audience reactions to taboo representations, which may evoke discomfort, identification, or catharsis. Comprehending this reaction provides insights into the wider societal reception of sensitive subjects in OTT media. When combined, abject theory and psychoanalytic feminism provide a multifaceted perspective for analyzing how Indian OTT media addresses intricate gender problems, confronts societal taboos, and interacts with viewers on both conscious and unconscious planes. Abject Theory facilitates the analysis of taboo images that elicit social discomfort, shown as menstruation in Period. End of Sentence or the depiction of violence against women in Delhi Crime. This theory elucidates how these marginalized persons compel society to address gender problems that are often overlooked or stigmatized.

Psychoanalytic feminism enhances understanding by analyzing the psychological impact of patriarchal standards on female personalities. In Gullak and Panchayat, psychoanalytic feminism may elucidate the underlying problems encountered by women negotiating conventional gender roles in rural India as they reconcile household expectations with individual aspirations. By integrating these ideas, researchers may conduct a thorough investigation of character representations and audience reactions. This method may demonstrate how Indian OTT content mirrors, confirms, or contests the implicit gendered assumptions that influence women's lives, providing a nuanced comprehension of gender representation in modern Indian media.

3.2.6 Semi-structured interviews

Localists theorize and interpret research interviews distinctively, perceiving the interviewing process as a social interaction where the interview serves as a productive site of reportable knowledge rather than merely a neutral conduit or source of bias (Holstein and Gubrium). Three overarching kinds of interview techniques exist on a continuum: organized, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. The interview process is "a complex and involved procedure" (Minichiello Victor, Aroni Rosalie), hence there is no definitive guide for good interviewing, and formulating suitable and perceptive questions is far more challenging than many acknowledge. Furthermore, (Hannbuss Stuart) endorses four

essential interviewing competencies. (Qu and Dumay) The steps include creating rapport with interviewees, acquiring techniques to sustain the dialogue, and, crucially, avoiding inquiries that stifle the conversation. Third, the interviewer must discern when to interject and acquire and regulate the tempo of the interview and finally, maintaining a non-judgmental demeanor and patience, allowing periods of stillness to serve the interviewer's advantage. (Schensul Stephen L. , Schensul Jean J.)also assert that the quality of an interview can be preserved by adhering to three key principles: (1) sustaining the continuity of the interviewee's narrative; (2) fostering a positive rapport with the interviewee; and (3) mitigating interviewer bias. (Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln) advocate for the perspective of the research interview as a dialogue, seeing it as the skill of inquiry and attentive listening. Conducting interviews requires "a respect for and curiosity about what individuals express, along with a methodical endeavor to genuinely listen to and comprehend their narratives" (Rubin, H.J. and Rubin)

The focus group methodology has several drawbacks, including moderator bias, groupthink, dominant discussions, and various distortions. Consequently, in-depth interviews are favored over focus groups (POWELL and SINGLE) as they provide a comprehensive analysis of consumption patterns, aligning with ethnographic research. Consequently, we favored interviews rather than the focus group technique for data collection. Structured interviews entail a structured collection of prepared

inquiries that do not permit more elaboration of these inquiries. Conversely, unstructured interviews provide an unrestricted dialogue as guided by the participants and do not include a pre-established set of inquiries. The individual semi structured interview was the optimal solution to facilitate the asking of both preset questions and adaptability throughout the interview (Stake). Semi-structured interviews include many open-ended inquiries enabling a researcher to pursue clarifications on points mentioned by an interviewee and thoroughly investigate a phenomenon by elaborating on the interviewee's comments (Shankar and Rishi). Moreover, qualitative researchers may use unstructured or semi-structured interviews (Foley and Timonen). The implementation of a semi-structured interview guide facilitated open, adaptable, and detailed narratives, free from the rigid constraints of structured interviews, while maintaining a focus on empirically relevant topics (Brinkmann) The research recommends using interview guidelines, specifically semi-structured interviews, with no more than 10 questions to maintain the interviewee's concentration on the subject of inquiry (Srivastava et al.; Foley and Timonen)

In this work, we examine the intermediary realm of the semi-structured interview, the predominant qualitative research technique (Alvesson and Deetz).The semi-structured interview is favored for its flexibility, accessibility, clarity, and, crucially, its ability to reveal significant and frequently concealed aspects of human and organizational behavior. It is

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often the most efficient and convenient method of collecting information (Kvale, S., & Brinkmann). Primarily, it allows respondents to articulate their replies in their own terminology and in accordance with their cognitive and linguistic preferences. Consequently, both the interviewer and interviewee engage in the interview, generating questions and responses via a discourse of intricate interpersonal communication. While it may seem that anybody can readily pose questions, interviews executed informally with no preparation may provide unsatisfactory outcomes, resulting in squandered opportunities (Hannbuss Stuart). The interview design process involves careful consideration of many factors, including the selection of interviewers, the needed number of participants, the style of interview to be conducted, and the methodology for analyzing the interview data (Doyle).

3.2.7 Sample Size:

In qualitative research, the ultimate sample size is contingent upon reaching the saturation point; hence, the sample size can only be established after the preliminary data analysis (Mukherjee et al.). The saturation point is a stage in qualitative data collection and analysis at which no new information is generated (Corbin and Strauss). Consequently, in alignment with standard procedures in qualitative research (Shankar), the data gathering process continued until saturation was achieved. The study will include 5 key OTT Indian shows and 64

respondents, ensuring thematic saturation and diverse audience perspectives. The respondents with expertise in the phenomena were purposefully selected in this study (Groenewald). Given the project's idiographic objectives, the sample size was limited to 64 interviews to prevent analytical overload (Robinson). Saturation, defined as the stage where no additional themes or insights arise, is a crucial factor influencing sample size in qualitative research. The objective is to achieve thematic saturation in audience responses. The specified range is adequate for attaining data saturation across various viewpoints. It balances the inclusion of diverse socio-demographic backgrounds (e.g., age, gender, socio-economic status) with the capacity for in-depth exploration of each participant's perspectives. The sample size for qualitative interviews typically ranges from 20 to 60 participants, influenced by the complexity of research questions and response variability. Since theoretical sampling methods were used, saturation was attained after 58 responses. Nevertheless, 6 further interviews were conducted to guarantee saturation. The study's emphasis on diverse regional and cultural perspectives in India necessitated a slightly larger sample size with newer insights and a steady influx of taboo-related viewpoints.

3.2.8 Selection of NVivo as research tool:

NVivo is a robust qualitative data analysis instrument extensively used across several qualitative research domains, including the examination of

over-the-Top (OTT) media due to its narrative fiction library. Its functionalities enable the examination, classification, and evaluation of various data types, making it very beneficial for researchers in this field. NVivo accommodates several data kinds, such as text, audio, video, and social media, allowing an extensive analysis of OTT material (Bakla). The program has sophisticated coding functionalities, such as auto-coding, which assists researchers in swiftly identifying themes and patterns (Sorensen). Apart from multifaceted analysis, it offers instruments for developing idea maps and reports, improving the visualization of qualitative findings, and enabling more profound insights into media (Kraiwanit and Pongsakorn Siripipatthanakul). Researchers may examine viewer comments, social media interactions, and content narratives to comprehend audience participation and preferences through content analysis. Its coding functionalities enable the detection of recurrent themes in OTT media, contributing to the formulation of hypotheses about viewer behavior (Jackson and Bazeley). In addition to thematic analysis, the program facilitates the comparison of various OTT platforms or content kinds, yielding insights on market trends and customer preferences (Sorensen). Although NVivo provides comprehensive capabilities for qualitative analysis, some researchers may see its sophistication as daunting, which might result in the underutilization of its functionalities. Therefore, NVivo was selected as the research tool as the manual

transcriptions of interviews could assist in coding procedures of thematic analysis and visualization of the findings.

3.3 Research Design for Quantitative Study:

This online revolution grew rapidly due to its one-stop-all-entertainment quality, notably during the COVID-19 pandemic, and television crossover to OTT media is attracting scholarly attention and probe. Researchers often seek for shared consumer traits when segmenting markets, such as OTT platform traits, their impact on customer preferences, and their effectiveness. Existing research identify comparable groups and classify them according to homogeneous factors. Next, comprehending the consumer preferences' implications on the OTT market was vital. Demographic and psychographic factors are generally established in consumer or audience research literature (Dwyer et al.; Gupta and Singharia; Nagaraj et al.; Jain). Since OTT media is rapidly emerging, we cannot relegate the fact that it is a market in itself offering services for consumption. As OTT platforms expand, stakeholders need to grasp OTT consumers' distinctively dynamic behaviors. The current research aimed to categorize consumers and profile them by utilizing demographic and

psychographic variables in the Indian OTT market. To address the gaps of prior literature and the fast evolution of the media ecosystem, we aim to segment a diverse consumer base into smaller, homogeneous groupings exhibiting comparable features regarding OTT consumption trends.

Organizations must understand and apply market segmentation and targeted marketing to effectively increase the number of paying customers. Market segmentation and specialty marketing are effective strategies for OTT service providers when user attributes are diverse rather than uniform. The diverse addressable market is categorized into groups with uniform consumption trends (Hamka et al.) enabling organizations to adopt niche marketing strategies and identify a more precisely defined market for effective service development and promotional strategies. In the OTT sector, most researchers have concentrated on the antecedents of consumers' behavioral intentions and actual behaviors, exploring general consumer behavior theories such as the (TPB) (Ajzen) as well as technology acceptance frameworks including (TAM) (Davis et al.) and UTAUT (Williams et al.). In a context where more than sixty percent of the Indian population has engaged with OTT, the significance of adoption behavior studies is limited; rather, it is essential to categorize the diverse user behaviors into key classifications from both academic and managerial

perspectives. Unlike traditional adoption-based profile research, understanding the unobserved heterogeneity of customers is crucial, employing market segmentation and targeted marketing theory (Motiwalla et al.).

3.3.1 Sample and Data Collection

A questionnaire was designed and administered to a sample of educated adults for this study. In growing economies like India, educated and mature people understand OTT better (Sundaravel and Elangovan). The survey targeted India's most populated urban regions. As OTT media is more prevalent in cities, Kolkata, Pune, Bangalore, Lucknow and Delhi were included in the sample, serving 60% of the Indian population and known known for their substantially younger demographic. A convenience sample of adults (Philip Kotler (Northwestern University); Yeo et al.) from the population of interest, including premier educational institutions, received 622 e-questionnaires. After receiving 403 responses and excluding incomplete replies, 343 valid responses were analyzed, yielding a response rate of 55.14%.

3.3.2 Measurement Scale

In order to effectively measure consumer perception, the researchers employed a deductive approach, utilizing the survey method to obtain the

underlying parameters. The survey tool consists of two distinct sections. The first section focuses on categorical variables, specifically demographics, including gender, age group, educational attainment, occupation, and income group. Additionally, this section includes psychographic variables such as preferences in entertainment media, platform, gadget, content type, genre, and censorship, inclusivity of characters, awareness, popularity, accessibility, and potentiality. Both demographic and psychographic indicators are measured on a nominal scale, and their descriptions are listed in Table 3.3.2. The second section, Table 3.3.2, measures questions related to OTT perception such as value delivery (3 items), content quality (6 items), convenience (5 items), affordability (4 items), and peer group influence (3 items), which were derived from the research conducted by Bhattacharya, Mehta, and Nayak (Bhattacharyya et al.) and slightly reworded to better suit the context of the study. Also, the construct, namely, personalization (4 items), was adopted from the previous studies conducted by Ting-Peng Liang, Hung-Jen Lai, and Yi-Cheng Ku (Liang et al.). The constructs in question were assessed using a five-point Likert scale. In preparation for data collection, a survey instrument was administered and pretested on a sample of 20 research scholars and 3 professors who were actively engaged with watching OTT at regular intervals. This step was undertaken to verify the simplicity and ease of response of the measures employed in the scale as

perceived by the intended population. As a result, inputs of significant

value were taken into account in order to finalize the survey instrument.

Table 3.3.2: Demographic and psychographic variables

Demographic Variables	Particulars	No.	(%)
Gender	Male	228	66.5%
	Female	114	33.2%
	Prefer not to say	1	0.3%
Age	<18	59	17.2%
	18-25	129	37.6%
	25-30	83	24.2%
	31-40	45	13.1%
	41-50	22	6.4%

	>50	5	1.5%
Educational qualification	Below High School	5	1.5%
	High School	30	8.7%
	Intermediate	67	19.5%
	Graduate	83	24.2%
	Postgraduate	136	39.7%
	Doctorate	22	6.4%
Annual income	<1 lakh	160	46.6%
	1-5 lakh	102	29.7%
	6-10 lakh	43	12.5%
	11-15 lakh	18	5.2%
	>15 lakh	20	5.8%
Employment status	Salaried	119	34.70%
	Self employed	9	2.60%
	Homemaker	7	2.00%
	Student	203	59.20%

	Others	5	1.50%

Psychographic variables

Preferred entertainment medium	Television	48	14.0%
	Multiplexes and theaters	27	7.9%
	OTT platforms	268	78.1%
Awareness	Yes	339	98.8%
	No	3	0.9%
	Not sure	1	0.3%
Watching frequency	At least 1-2 hours daily	98	28.6%
	2-6 hours daily	29	8.5%
	6-8 hours daily	2	0.6%
	Weekly	152	44.3%
	Monthly	53	15.5%
	Yearly	9	2.6%
Preferred OTT platform	Disney+Hotstar	83	24.2%
	Amazon Prime Video	70	20.4%

	Netflix	175	51.0%
	Sony Liv	6	1.7%
	MX player	7	2.0%
	Zee5	2	0.6%
Preferred Content Type	Movies	100	29.2%
	Web series	206	60.1%
	Documentaries and non-fiction	37	10.8%
Preferred Genre	Comedy	68	19.8%
	Romance	36	10.5%
	Action	53	15.5%
	Crime thrillers	133	38.8%
	Drama	30	8.7%
	Non-fiction	23	6.7%
Content Accessibility	Purchase a yearly subscription	132	38.5%
	Purchase a 6-month subscription	26	7.6%

	Purchase monthly subscription	85	24.8%
	Borrowing log-in credentials from peers	68	19.8%
	Gray or alternative sources to pirated content	32	9.3%
Censorship/Regulation of content	Yes	193	56.3%
	No	86	25.1%
	Not sure	64	18.7%
Inclusivity of Character Representations	Yes	246	71.7%
	No	26	7.6%
	Not sure	71	20.7%
Impact on daily lives	Negligible	46	13.4%
	Moderate	182	53.1%
	Fairly large	96	28.0%
	Extremely large	19	5.5%

3.3 Ethical Considerations:

Ethical considerations are crucial for safeguarding participants' rights, dignity, and privacy, while also preserving the integrity of the analyzed content. Morally principled considerations included participant recruitment, acquisition of informed consent, and confidentiality (Creswell). Therefore, it involved informed consent, preserving anonymity, confidentiality, and sensitivity in topic discourse.

(Rubin and Rubin) assert that prior to the beginning of the one-on-one interview, each participant must receive an introduction to the research, and written informed consent must be obtained from the interviewee. Participants were informed about the study's nature and data usage. Consent was obtained for recording throughout the recruiting process and transcribing the interview through the distribution of consent forms. This was once more validated at the commencement of the interview. Each respondent was queried prior to the inquiry if he/she would be amenable to doing follow-up interviews. Precautions were implemented to ensure that the full interview is finished on the first try. Nevertheless, three people required additional interviews. This was undertaken for three purposes-to finalize an interview, as the participant was stopped during the first interview for clarification replies acquired during the first interview or to request more clarification regarding some aspects.

Appointments were requested from all participants to ensure a tranquil and favorable environment for executing the interview. Self-selecting a suitable time and location by the interviewee enabled the interview procedure and guaranteed that participants spoke without restrictions. Participants were had the choice to maintain their anonymity or assign pseudonyms of their choice. This was executed with regard to the sensitivity of the discussion topics like LGBTQIA+ issues, gender-based violence, and sexuality. Except for 22 individuals, the remainder used this option. Consequently, participants were enumerated for identification purposes by their occupation and age. Considering the nature of the research, participants were also informed that they might terminate the interview at any moment if they experienced discomfort; yet none of the respondents opted to act. Therefore, interviews were performed over the Google Meet platform.

India exhibits a diverse societal landscape characterized by differing cultural perspectives on gender and sexuality. Participants may exhibit a range of ideological perspectives, from conservative to progressive. Hence, participants may experience apprehension regarding sensitive topics being disclosed. So, pseudonyms were employed in transcripts and final reports, and the data's identifying information was restricted to the research team. Interviewees received an information sheet that included an explanation of confidentiality preservation. Despite the majority of interviewees being entirely unfamiliar, the interactions were intentionally

kept lighthearted, with the interviewer sharing her own experiences and frustrations regarding the research topic to mitigate any potential power imbalance perceived between academics and laypersons (*Warren, C. (2002) Qualitative Interviewing.Pdf*) .

Consent was voluntary, and information was given prior to involvement for the research team members. Supplementary safeguards included explicitly delineating the restrictions on departure from the trial, especially post-analysis and dissemination. Particular emphasis was placed on the constraints on privacy and secrecy, which were clearly articulated in the informational brochures and consent documents. To sustain their data privacy was maintained, with all data storage and analysis conducted in accordance with institute protocols.

These represent fundamental values primarily concerning person dignity and privacy, the prevention of damage, and the secrecy of research outcomes (Punch Maurice E.) as a fundamental component of the dyadic exchanges and dialogues between interviewer and interviewee. (Jönsson Sten and Lukka Kari) articulate this as "the necessity for the researcher to traverse the boundary between the etic [outsider] and the emic [insider] perspectives, there and back again." This investigation used a qualitative technique due to the limited literature available for this study and the need for a comprehensive grasp of contemporary entertainment paradigms.

CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND PROCESSING

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND PROCESSING

4.1 Thematic Analysis (for Research Objective 1):

Following (Hesse-Biber) broad four-step analytical framework: data preparation, data exploration, data reduction, and interpretation, we used qualitative and inductive methodologies (Emerson et al.) to document and categorize the content (Charmaz). Throughout the content analysis and interview process, several recurring keywords and themes emerged in the discussions. We analyzed and categorized the data descriptively while maintaining discussions with interviewees that shaped the themes and codes until saturation. Theoretical sampling (Charmaz) facilitated the elucidation of our motives. Subsequently, the descriptive data were analytically coded to identify categories and recurring themes that elucidate the thematic analysis and conceptual frameworks of our respondents. The study used Attride-Stirling's six-stage analytical framework for thematic analysis due to its capacity to adeptly find, analyze, and interpret patterns within the data (Attride-Stirling; Braun and Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology"). Since data processing includes 6 stages: (1) data collection; (2) coding; (3) thematic analysis; (4) review themes; (5) definition and nomenclature of themes 6) drafting a report.

A thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns in the data, focusing on the portrayal of women and gender taboos in diverse contexts through a psychoanalytic lens so that the impact of gender taboos on representation and audience reception could be well defined in analyzing the framing of gender issues and its resonance with audience experiences. An audience reception analysis enabled personal interviews to be transcribed to assess audience reception and perceptions of gender taboos in OTT content, yielded data regarding viewer interpretations, engagement, and perception, which was also followed as an analytical tool. The transcriptions were validated against the recordings. Thematic analysis was used to discern main codes and topics. In accordance with (Braun and Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology"), the process entailed (1) familiarization with the data; (2) generation of preliminary codes; (3) categorization and organization of the codes to identify initial themes; (4) reorganization and evaluation of the themes; (5) definition and designation of the themes; and (6) elaboration and discourse on the themes. It was a reflexive and active process of interpretation and analysis, incorporating a systematic conceptualization of the data. It was iterative, inductive and focused on the visible and hidden content of the data, namely, the statements made and the manner in which the risks were articulated and deliberated. In accordance with the principles of qualitative theme analysis (Miles)(Rishi and Gaur), a detailed six-phase coding technique was used. During an initial familiarization phase, each review

was thoroughly read, comprehended, and then categorized by 5 researchers to ensure the general sentiment was maintained in the following coding phases. This was followed by a comprehensive coding, distillation, and categorization procedure leading to the establishment of the final verified themes for the theoretical framework of this research. Newly developed codes extracted from content analysis of 5 selected OTT shows were juxtaposed with those of the interviews. The thematic analysis yielded several themes, which are then reported in the results section.

Observations from the phase of code familiarization were integrated into a predetermined framework, used for a first broad brush coding, while remaining receptive to the inductive identification of emergent codes and patterns. This was followed by an intricate coding, distillation, and sorting procedure leading to the formulation of the final verified themes for the analysis of this research. The figure illustrates a coding extract example, showcasing layers of codes linked to a sample OTT user response. Furthermore, language was directly extracted from interviews for labeling, referred to as "in vivo coding," such as "gender-based violence," to maintain the authenticity of participant thoughts in the final outcomes.

4.1.1 Data Collection:

Pilot testing refers to the preliminary phase of evaluating a project or program through a small-scale implementation to assess its feasibility, time, cost, and adverse events prior to a full-scale rollout. A pilot test was conducted prior to full-scale interviews or focus groups to refine interview questions and discussion guides. An online pilot survey in the form of Google Forms was conducted with 20 respondents initially serving as the selection of instruments for study. The questionnaire was conducted as a pretesting pilot study where participants were asked about the various Indian OTT platforms they used, IMDb's reliability as a database, their polling of watched OTT content, their habitual frequency of OTT content consumption, their favorite platforms, genres, and watching gadgets, characterized by frequent engagement with Indian video content across one or more platforms, and the selected series or films they had seen on different OTT platforms. I was to dig into the demographics and psychographics of the immediate OTT audience, in which the majority found IMDb to be an updated, resourceful movie database whose ratings and reviews influence their entertainment choices and viewership most of the time. It also assisted in selecting Indian movies, series, and documentaries released from 2018–2022 through polling to access the audience's reviews and comprehend their perception. The respondents were further selected based on their self-reported engagement and exposure to Indian OTT platforms. Most of them were young, urban adults

aged about 14–40 years who are more closely linked to the OTT media (Pisharody). They varied demographically and psychographically. The pilot survey additionally guaranteed clarity, cultural sensitivity, and the elicitation of meaningful responses in the questions posed. It aided in identifying ambiguous or leading questions, thereby ensuring that interview prompts do not introduce bias in responses. Modifications were implemented to guarantee that questions were open-ended, promoting participants to express their authentic opinions. Through feedback loops, insights from the pilot phase informed enhancements to the structure and flow of interview guides, promoting thorough examination of sensitive topics.

Considering the ongoing worldwide pandemic's health and safety protocols and the incapacity to conduct in-person interviews, the one-on-one interviews lasting around 60 minutes and casual debriefing lasting approximately 15 minutes were conducted virtually using Google Meet. The interviews occurred from April 12, 2023, until July 5, 2023. 41 women and 23 men participated. The participants ranged in age from 14 to 40 years and resided in the metropolitan cities of India, including Kolkata, Bangalore, Pune, Delhi, and Lucknow. The advantage of videoconferencing is that researchers may study interviewees' facial expressions during engagement. However, only 31 participants activated their cameras, while others opted to disable them. We used open-ended inquiries within a semi-structured framework that facilitated organic

dialogue (Weiss Robert Stuart). Semi-structured interviews were used due to their provision of freedom for researchers to provide both predetermined and spontaneous queries. While the majority of interviewees responded to all 11 questions, the sequence of questions was modified to align with the conversational flow (Brennen). The objective was to relax the interview framework to elicit profound and intimate insights. All interviews were audio recorded. The majority of participants were enthusiastic about sharing their experiences, with plenty to convey. During the debriefing after the interview, 8 individuals raised distinct topics pertinent to the research. However, note-taking was limited as I aimed to be fully engaged with each participant.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a diverse sample of OTT viewers, with the objective of obtaining comprehensive insights into perceptions of gender representation and gender taboos. The topic guide comprised 11 primary questions to allow sufficient time for the extraction of elaborate, vivid, and rich accounts (Rubin and Rubin). The interview guide was structured to ensure that questions progress naturally (Kvale) and are cohesively interconnected (Rubin and Rubin). A laddering technique was adopted as (Reynolds) elucidated that the laddering interviewing approach elicits information without preconceiving consumers' opinions and values. It assisted in identifying customers' fundamental views while choosing OTT service and probing further into their responses, elucidating the relationship between OTT content

characteristics and consumer's perceptions. (Reynolds; Russell et al.). The first segment examines how respondents integrate OTT media into their routines, its motivational factors, and OTT's role in societal transformation. The subsequent questions investigate the respondents' opinions of the evolution of women's portrayals in Indian media and inclusivity of gender representations in OTT platforms. The last series of questions inquire about the overt and covert gender stereotypes and taboos OTT media grapples with in context of the viewed shows and also the significance of gender sensitivity in content regulation. Ultimately, as noted by (Rubin and Rubin), the interview concludes with an inquiry on the respondent's desire to address any other OTT show or topic relevant to the previous discussion that was not explored. Moreover, icebreaker questions were designed to initiate dialogue (Brennen). Prompts, silence, and verbal signals, including phatic answers, were used in the interviews to facilitate a more natural probing with participants.

4.1.2 Data Coding: Validity and reliability assessment

Coding was conducted subsequent to reviewing the complete transcripts, reviewing the recordings, and revisiting the transcripts (Braun and Clarke). This procedure was mostly guided by theory but also permitted the emergence of inductive codes from the data. Similar codes were consolidated with their corresponding text segments, and prominent themes were refined according to Braun and Clarke's homogeneity criteria

(Braun and Clarke). These foundational themes were subsequently organized into mind maps to derive organizing themes, which were further analyzed and summarized as the principal assertions or themes. The text was then reexamined to verify its alignment with the thematic networks (Attride-Stirling). Coding is the analytical procedure by which the collected qualitative data are condensed, reorganized, and synthesized to formulate a hypothesis. The objective is to assist in deriving significant inferences from the data. Codes are designations assigned to text units that are then categorized. It often involves an iterative process, necessitating several returns to the data to enhance comprehension of the material, specifically to identify patterns and uncover connections and relations among the data and to classify the data into meaningful categories. Categorization is the process of grouping, ordering, and categorizing code units. Codes and classifications can be produced by both inductive and deductive reasoning. In circumstances devoid of theoretical frameworks, one needs inductive codes and categories from the data.

Coding was undertaken at a two-fold level—that of the 2 study instruments.

1. Personal interviews, and

2. Selected OTT content

1. One researcher in the team manually transcribed the audio recordings of interviews into written prose. Following transcription, each transcript was reviewed for inaccuracies. To do this, the audio recordings were re-audited while concurrently reviewing the transcription, with any modifications implemented instantly. This procedure was executed twice for each transcript. This program facilitated a computer-assisted examination of qualitative data, maintaining the rigor of thematic analysis (Bazeley) as all transcript files were loaded and imported into the NVivo 12 software program. The coding procedure was executed by five researchers. In thematic analysis, a theme encapsulates clusters of data that possess significance in addressing a research objective (Braun and Clarke). The justification for formulating each topic was grounded in the study's purpose, namely, to investigate women's portrayals on Indian OTT content. Given that the development of a topic is inherently subjective, being influenced by the researcher's own perspective, another advisory team of 5 researchers, proficient in qualitative research methodologies, evaluated the process.

Three stages were undertaken to evaluate the interviews (Reynolds and Gengler; Grunert and Bech-Larsen). Initially, open coding was conducted systematically on a line-by-line basis from the transcript. Codes having like meanings created a first-order code list. Secondly, axial coding

facilitated the creation of pertinent categories from open codes. Open codes were amalgamated to create a category (Spiggle; Goulding). To provide significant outcomes for practitioners, the number of categories was decreased to enhance clarity in comprehending the correlations. Therefore, the scholars elucidated the open codes and rationalized the categorizing codes and themes. This procedure enhanced validity by confirming that topics were precise and substantiated (Gibbs). The rigor in qualitative research is established by the reliability and validity of a study's results (O'Reilly and Marx). Reliability and validity have distinct meanings in qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research investigation. Categories are established to reach consensus on the inclusion or exclusion of certain objects within a defined population (Kassarjian). Clearly defined categories will result in enhanced category reliability, ultimately leading to increased intercoder dependability (Kassarjian). Consequently, intercoder reliability refers to the extent of consistency across coders analyzing identical data (Kassarjian).

The funneling approach of interviewing was used, with questions progressing logically from general to particular. Themes were derived from the coding, and inferences were extracted from the identified themes. The results were derived from interviews with 64 respondents, focusing on their content preferences, perceptions of Indian OTT platforms, evolution in women's portrayals, and the impact of gender taboos embedded in the content. Subsequently, participants were provided with a

compilation of 5 OTT programs and asked to critically discuss them in relevance to the topic.

Since OTT is a vast repository of content types and genres, the programs were selected for across content types and according to the specified criteria: Each performance, though had no fixed duration; the overarching narrative progressed from episode to episode; season to season; the web series must have had a minimum of 7 episodes each season open for the public to see; the program must have attained elevated ratings and some significant praise. The short film and documentary must run for at least 15 minutes.

Firstly, first-order codes (open coding) were matched with auto-coded themes. The codes and themes were matched with those of research papers that studied on the same line, and the matching frequency of codes (through text search) was rarely found, suggesting that they are under researched areas, especially with situating gender taboos in women's representations on Indian OTT. While running a query for word frequency (word cloud and summary) for all personal interviews, most of the prominent codes/themes matched with the words in the cloud. This seemed to establish the validity of codes. To interpret data, supplementary validity techniques to augment the accuracy and rigor of the results were implemented. The research incorporates triangulation by using many data sources, including interviews and OTT narratives, intercoder validation,

and peer debriefing conducted by advisory group of 5. (Creswell). These techniques contributed to the improvement of credibility, transferability, and reliability of the confirmability of the research (Morris).

2. Content analysis is a type of observational study used to objectively assess symbolic content. Forms of all recorded conversations (Kolbe and Burnett). To execute a content analysis of a document involves categorizing it and then examining it using conceptual analysis or relational methods. A narrative is a tale or an account that involves the recounting of a set of events in structured order "unfolds over time" (Denzin). Narrative analysis is a method designed to extract and examine narratives. For the content analysis of 5 Indian OTT shows, initially descriptions gathered from personal interviews were coded; secondly, key dialogues were selected based on the overall theme of the narrative and the ones cited by the respondents in particular. Interviewees were questioned on referring to remarkable instances of the narrative; their replies and thick descriptions proved useful apart from the descriptions provided by the streaming platforms. Since personal interviews related to the above shows were recorded verbatim, they enabled complete immersive information. Both the transcripts were imported into NVivo 12, and the primary researcher reviewed and re-read each transcript. A top-down coding method was first used to improve familiarization. Condensing the input into coding principles, categories were established. These codes endeavored to discern prospective themes that were refined via an advisory

team of 5 improving rigor and arriving at a consensus. Recurring patterns in the data were collaboratively examined and subsequently improved. Themes were found by an iterative process, emphasizing unprompted talks, followed by the cross-verification with the dataset, and a conceptual framework was formulated directly targeting the objective. Themes interwoven across the interviews and content analysis demonstrated the variations and commonalities across the cohort. Upon recognizing these overarching phases, it is important to emphasize that qualitative data analysis does not adhere to a linear, stepwise process not a linear process, but a continuous and iterative one.

The study integrated respondents' perspectives with theoretical foundations of psychoanalytic feminism and abject theory, providing profound interpretations of the data. Thirdly, the coding methodology and thematic maps were deliberated with other specialists in the relevant field, enhancing the validity of the codes and themes. The coding process was entirely computer assisted, thereby reducing biases. (Creswell) proposed using programming to provide a limited range (five to seven) of categories or themes. Subsequently, intricate thematic interconnections individually and collectively were established (p. 185). Hence, a table of codes was constructed that included encoded narrative excerpts from the 5 selected OTT shows to convey an in-depth examination of the open codes. Novel connections and angles were identified as the researchers exchanged their preliminary codes and compared observations. Relationships were

established and refined. The storylines, especially critical instances, enabled the researcher to understand the tensions and contradictions, as well as comprehend how the audience perceived the content in general. Consequently, at this juncture, the analysis transitioned from an emic to an etic viewpoint by contextualizing the participant narratives within a wider societal framework.

4.1.3 Content analysis of select OTT shows:

To address the study's objectives, a content analysis of chosen Indian OTT shows and films was performed to examine the representation of women, emphasizing themes associated with gender taboos such as sexuality, body autonomy, and social roles, and to detect recurring themes, stereotypes, and deviations from conventional representations.

Figure 4.1.3: Indian OTT shows and films

Table 4.1.3: Selective OTT Shows

Show title (Type)	Platform and IMDb rating/10	Genre	Central emphasis	Principal themes	Examination
Gullak (web series)	Sony Liv (9.1)	Family comic drama	Familial interactions in a lower middle class sub-urban Indian domicile	Gender tropes, domesticity, patriarchy, economic reliance and obligations of women	Shanti Mishra as the self-sacrificing mother, reinforcing patriarchy through subtle power imbalance, women's conventional role as caregiver, economic dependency, breakaway from agency, the make-aware humor.
Panchayat (web series)	Amazon Prime (8.9)	Comedy drama	Agrarian existence, rural administrative systems, Indian cultural conventions	Rural patriarchy, female agency, generational divides, menstrual taboo	Representation of female agency in rural environments, intergenerational conflicts and gradual transformation of women
Delhi Crime (web series)	Netflix (8.5)	Crime drama	Law enforcement inquiry into the 2012 Delhi gang rape incident	Gender-based violence, female fortitude, social equity, systemic transformation	Gender-Based Violence and Stigma, Women's Empowerment in Male-Dominated Environments, Catharsis and Communal Trauma

Devi (short film)	YouTube and Disney+Hotstar (7.6)	Suspense drama	Female survivors of sexual abuse and their shared experiences	Trauma, solidarity, silence, social negligence	Collective Trauma of gender-based violence and the Abject, Women's Unity and Empowerment, Addressing Societal Apathy
Period. End of Sentence (Documentary)	Netflix (7.4)	Social awareness	Menstrual hygiene and empowerment in rural India	Menstrual Stigma, Women's Empowerment, Health Rights, Societal Transformation	Menstrual Taboo as Abject, Women's empowerment via Self-Sufficiency, de-stigmatizing impact on perspectives

The selected OTT media shows provide a nuanced examination of trauma and resilience. Psychoanalytic feminism may be used to examine the effects of sexual assault trauma on the psyche of both law enforcement and the ladies they safeguard in "Delhi Crime" Season 1. The brutal and explicit depiction of rape in this series may be examined via the lens of abject theory to explore how crime and physical violation disrupt social norms and expose viewers with unsettling truths about gender-based violence. The short film, *Devi* centred on female survivors of sexual abuse, uses psychoanalytic feminism to examine the internalization of trauma by each character and their navigation of both common and unique experiences of victimization. This short film illustrates the significance of abject theory in comprehending the marginalization or "abjection" of

sexual abuse survivors by society with the film's setting in a confined claustrophobic location highlights the women's existence in a transitional area, overlooked by mainstream society. *Period. End of Sentence* documentary underscores the stigma surrounding menstruation in rural India. Psychoanalytic feminism elucidates how entrenched cultural taboos about menstruation shape women's self-perceptions, fostering shame and silence surrounding normal biological processes. This documentary explicitly addresses menstruation stigma, a traditionally "abject" subject in India. Abject theory may be used to examine the visual and narrative representation of menstruation as a taboo, as well as how the process of normalization contests these abject connotations. The widely popular series like *Gullak* and *Panchayat* (Seasons 2 and 3 respectively) albeit more comedic in nature, provide avenues to examine abjection via humor and nuanced critiques of rural taboos, including the interrogation of conventional gender roles and instances in which women deviate from established standards treated as examples of social abjection.

Every performance address cultural taboo in distinct ways. *Gullak* and *Panchayat* quietly underscore conventional roles and standards in rural middle-class family demographics, while *Delhi Crime* and *Devi* directly address gender-based violence. Period. End of Sentence reinterprets menstruation, addressing it as a corporeal abjection that is transmuted into a source of empowerment. These depictions compel people to engage with otherwise repugnant taboos, targeting stigma or societal unease and

sparking discussions on forbidden themes. Gender based violence, its directly and indirectly discriminatory manifestations are the categories impacting Indian audience's perception of OTT media content. Psychoanalytic feminism reveals women contending with internalized cultural norms while recovering their individuality. Characters such as Shanti (Gullak) and Vartika (*Delhi Crime*) exemplify several facets of female agency, ranging from the subtle fortitude of domestic existence to the overt might of law enforcement. This interaction between autonomy and repression illustrates the subconscious adoption of patriarchal values that female characters either negotiate or oppose in various settings.

The audience's connection with characters and their challenges throughout various programs indicates the potential for these representations to influence society's views. By normalizing discussions on gender taboos and highlighting female fortitude, these media texts amuse while simultaneously challenging and reshaping viewer perspectives, expanding the discourse on gender, identity, and social taboos. The content analysis demonstrates that the chosen OTT programs each fulfill a distinct function in illustrating and interrogating gendered social norms. By thematically depicting taboo, empowerment, and resistance, they both reflect and contest the socio-cultural milieu of India. Abject theory and psychoanalytic feminism provide a framework for analyzing these representations, highlighting the dual role of media as

both a reflection and a driver of societal change. These depictions engage with audiences, cultivating awareness and empathy.

4.1.4 Categorization of Themes from first-order codes:

The thematic analysis yielded several themes on gender taboos affecting women's portrayals on Indian OTT platforms. Utilizing the a priori framework as a basis, categories were defined that influence women's portrayals and the evaluation of gender taboos in Indian OTT platforms.
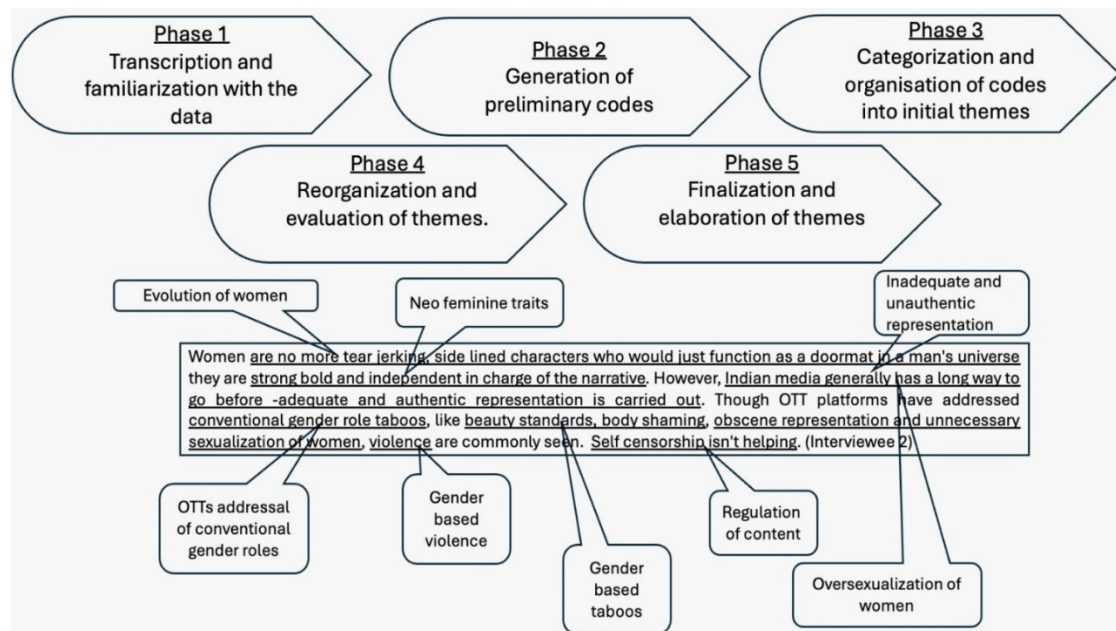
Figure 4.1.4: Visualization of thematic analysis process with an example of a coding extract

Table 4.1.4: Categorization of initial themes from first order codes

First-order Codes	Themes	Context
	Neo femininity	
Individualistic	Women's traits on OTT platforms	Audience perception of women's portrayals in OTT media
Agency and autonomy		
Aspirational value and leadership		
Assertive and opinionated		
Confidence		
Modernity clubbed with Indianness		
Efficient crisis managers		
Daring to dream, go getter like Attitude towards life		
Financial empowerment		
Hunger for success		
Identity creators		
New voices of dissent		
Skilful professionals		
Strong and independent		
Progressive and advanced		
Unapologetic and taking ownership of decisions		
Versatile		
Vocal and open to dialogue		
Work life balance		
Independent and courageous		
Role models		
Increased visibility	Women's departure from conventional femininity	
Contributors to plot progression		
Audience demand driven traits		
Authentic portrayal		
Better than mainstream Bollywood		

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Breaking the glass ceiling

Value addition

Well-rounded characterization

Modernity and unconventional gender roles

Welcome change and progressive evolution

Realistic

Relatable representation

Victims of sexist taboos and stereotypes

Taboos in OTT content

		Audience perception of taboos
Verbal expletives	Strong language	
Intoxication and addition	Substance abuse	
Alcoholism		
Drug addiction and abuse		
Nudity	Sexually explicit content	
Obscenity		
Scopophilia		
Voyeurism		
Homophobia	Inclusivity taboos	
Gender discrimination		
Tokenism		
Crime	Violence	
Cultural and regional insensitivity		
Hurtful religious sentiments		
Sexual abuse		
Hypersexualization	Gender based taboos	
Objectification		
Menstruation and menopause		
Narrow beauty standards		
Misogyny		
Mental health		

Gender based violence

Abduction	Direct forms

Acid attack

Blackmailing

Bullying

Sexual exploitation for opportunities

Domestic abuse

Sexual harassment or molestation

Physical and mental abuse

Rape

Murder

Marital rape

Dowry practices

	Indirect/ causal factors of Violence

Gaslighting

Rape and cyber threats
Normalizing codes of casual misconduct

Casual sexist remarks
Jibing online culture of trolls and memes

Eve teasing

OTT Content Regulation

Minimizing all forms of gender bias	Addressing gender-based violence	Audience perception of gender sensitivity in content regulation

Including gender neutral terms in content
Combating gender stereotypes and taboos
Ensuring non-violent and underogatory presentation of content
Content promoting gender Inclusivity and diversity
Creating inductive environment of Respect for a gender minors' Worldviews
Creating positive role models
Content reducing stigma related to Gender taboos

	Educational role of OTT	

Gender awareness
Media accountability of portraying Balanced and respectful Representations   Self-censorship
Corrective mechanism for Ideological misrepresentations of Feminism and sexuality
Corporate social responsibility
Content empowering marginalized Voices
Regular revision and updating Gender policies
Checking violence and insensitive Content
Sanitize content from gender intolerance
Encouraging authentic gender portrayals
Creating interdisciplinary Framework to critically examine Socio-cultural gender constructions
Preventing illicit dissemination of content to the younger demographic
Creating positive role models

Based on the first order coding of interview transcripts, themes were categorized into 11 categories characterizing OTT media content, namely:

1. Women's traits on OTT platforms

2. Women's departure from conventional femininity

3. Strong language

4. Substance Abuse

5. Sexually explicit content

6. Non-inclusivity

7. Violence

8. Oversexualization and Objectification of women

9. Menstruation based taboos

10. Narrow beauty standards and negativity

11. Misogyny

However, while finalization of themes by the 5 coders, they seemed not to be mutually exclusive categories. They shared an intricate cause-effect relationship rather than standing out independently as themes. The detailing of these categories helped coders thematically assess the causal relationship and finalize the themes which further underwent revaluation in the next chapter as the culmination of thematic analysis of qualitative interview data.

4.2 Factor Analysis: Assessment of constructs' reliability and validity (for Objective 2)

The assessment of constructs' reliability, validity, and dimensionality was accomplished through factor analysis (FA) utilizing SPSS software. The estimation of maximum likelihood was employed for this purpose. The researchers assessed the reliability of the scale using statistical methods.

Cronbach's α values were computed for all six constructs, yielding a range of 0.825 to 0.899. Based on previous research conducted by (Gefen et al.) and (Hair et al.), the observed values were above the minimum established threshold of 0.70, demonstrating that the scale exhibited satisfactory internal consistency. Additionally, the researchers conducted estimations for the composite reliability values of all implicit factors, which varied between 0.826 and 0.904. These values were found to exceed the suggested level of 0.70, indicating that the scale reliability demonstrated convergence consistency (Hair et al.).

Table 4.2(A): Factor analysis on constructs' reliability and validity

Constructs	Factor Loading	Cronbach α	Composite reliability	AVE
Value Delivery (VD)				
The content delivery of OTT is fulfilling	0.795	0.832	0.834	0.748
I am a happy customer of OTT media	0.743			
OTT services offer value for money	0.71			
Content Quality (CQ)				
The content is new and original	0.734	0.899	0.904	0.587
The services provide interactive viewing experience	0.715			
The content is relatable, realistic, and engaging	0.638			
OTT content is up to date	0.636			
The content is generated by user feedbacks	0.609			
OTT platforms offer high quality and out of the box content	0.551			
Convenience (CON)				
OTT allows me to access content in any of my devices or gadgets	0.68	0.844	0.852	0.616
OTT services provide ad-free viewing experience	0.67			

Its services are seamless and time saving	0.649			
It allows me to watch any content anytime at any place	0.599			
OTT offers uninterrupted online streaming experience	0.577			
Affordability (AF)				
OTT packages are economical and pocket friendly	0.857	0.89	0.893	0.753
OTT subscriptions are more affordable than traditional television packages and big screen releases	0.81			
OTT services are affordable	0.806			
OTT subscription patterns are varied and well suited to wide range of audiences	0.594			
Peer Group Influence (PGI)				
OTT is a very popular and most talked about mode of entertainment in my peer groups	0.788	0.825	0.826	0.743
OTT consumption is a rising trend among my peers	0.772			
I get influenced to watch content on OTT services when recommended by my peer groups	0.513			
Personalization (PR)				
According to me, the use of OTT services gives me a feeling of prestige	0.785	0.843	0.855	0.68
OTT showcases user relevant and customized content	0.744			
OTT media offers highly self-regulated content for its users	0.671			
OTT provides personalized content recommendations	0.616			

Subsequently, the examination of construct validity was undertaken by measuring the indicators of convergent validity and discriminant validity. The researchers computed the average variance extracted (AVE) for each latent component to assess convergent validity. The average values (AVE) [Table 4.2(b)] for the parameters "VD", "CQ", "CON", "AF", "PGI" and "PR" were seen to above the required threshold of 0.50, as indicated (Hair et al.). In addition to AVE, the magnitude of factor loadings is a significant component to examine when examining the construct structure and

dimensionality of the scale items (Hair et al.);(Anderson and Gerbing). Similarly, the factor loadings of all 25 items displayed a range of 0.513 to 0.857, above the established threshold value of 0.50 (Kline). Hence, the findings have substantiated the sufficiency of convergent validity for all constructs, as demonstrated in Table 4.2(A).

Furthermore, discriminant validity was tested for the Fornell & Larcker criterion in Table 4.2(B). The constructed correlation coefficients have values less than the square root of the relevant value's AVE. The results suggest that discriminant validity for the data was established, as demonstrated by previous investigations (Fornell and Larcker). Furthermore, the correlation values were lower than 0.70, indicating that discriminant validity was accepted.

Table 4.2(B): Discriminant validity of constructs

Constructs	AF	CQ	CON	PGI	PR	VD
AF	0.868					
CQ	0.577	0.766				
CON	0.563	0.774	0.785			
PGI	0.537	0.684	0.6	0.862		

PR	0.511	0.629	0.626	0.578	0.825	
VD	0.537	0.645	0.575	0.518	0.516	0.865

The diagonal elements, shown in bold, correspond to the square root of AVE for each construct. These values are AF (0.868), CQ (0.766), CON (0.785), PGI (0.862), PR (0.825), and VD (0.865). These values are all well above the threshold of 0.7, indicating that each construct has a high level of internal consistency and reliability. The off-diagonal elements in the table show the correlations between constructs. These correlations can help identify potential relationships between the constructs. For example, CON (Convenience) has a relatively strong positive correlation with CQ (Content Quality) at 0.774, suggesting that these two constructs may be closely related in the measurement model. Similarly, PGI (Peer Group Influence) has strong correlations with several other constructs, indicating potential interdependencies.

4.2.1 Data Analysis: Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Participants aged 18–50, had educational qualifications ranging from below high school to doctorate. Completed, usable replies came from 343 respondents. The sampled population exhibits certain demographic characteristics. The sample statistics indicate that among the 343 respondents, 228 (66.5%) of the respondents were male, while 114 (33.2%) were female. 59 people (17.2%) were under eighteen years old.

127 responders (37.6%) were 18–34, the most important age range. 83

participants (24.2%) were 25–30 years old, whereas 45 (13.1%) were 31–

40. In addition, 22 respondents (6.4%) were aged 41–50, and 5 (1.5%)

were above 50. The bulk of respondents, 217 (63.26%), had graduate or

postgraduate degrees. Employment status study revealed that 203

participants (59.2%) were students and 119 (34.7%) were salaried

professionals. Income data indicated that 160 respondents (46.6%) had

yearly incomes below 1 lakh INR, while 101 respondents (29.4%) had

incomes between 1–5 lakh INR. Most sample members were under 35

years old. They had a higher degree and earned less than Rs. 1 lakh

annually.

The study also helps determine respondents' entertainment preferences and

OTT platform utilization. Most respondents (78.1%) preferred OTT

platforms over television (14%), multiplexes/theatres (7.9%). A

staggering 98.8% were aware of OTT. Just 0.3% were unsure and 0.9%

clueless. The poll found that 44.3% of respondents view OTT content

weekly and 28.6% spend 1-2 hours each day. Netflix is 51% preferred,

followed by Disney+Hotstar at 24.2%. Web series are most popular at

60.1%, followed by films at 29.2%. Documentaries and nonfiction are less

popular, although 10.8% are intrigued. Most popular are crime thrillers

(38.8%) and humor (19.8%). OTT platforms have 38.5% annual and

24.8% monthly subscriptions for content availability. 56.3% of

respondents know about content limitations and censorship. Survey results

show 71.7% of respondents think content characters are inclusive. Finally, 53.1 percent of respondents say OTT content has a moderate impact on their daily lives, while 28% say it has a major impact, demonstrating the increasing significance of digital entertainment

4.2.2 Clustering and Multiple Discriminant Analysis

Non-hierarchical clustering was used to identify customer clusters using factor scores of six variables. These factors were identified as suitable in the previous factor analysis phase. The K-means algorithm was used to determine cluster membership throughout this investigation. The algorithm was applied on VD, CQ, CON, AF, PGI, and PR clustering variables. The five cluster memberships were estimated using mean scores and standard deviation scores in the K-mean clustering approach (Kirmani and Khan).

Table 4.2.2(A): Cluster analysis results: Summary statistics of five cluster solutions (n= 343)

Constructs	Cluster- 1 n=43(12.5%)		Cluster- 2 n=52 (15.2%)		Cluster-3 n=103(30%)		Cluster-4 n=79(23%)		Cluster-5 n=66(19.2%) n=66(19.2%)		Wilks' Lambda	F score	Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
VD	2.7907	1.02359	3.7179	0.77932	3.7735	0.73389	3.8861	0.64910	3.5657	0.63776	0.832	17.088	0.000
CQ	2.6163	0.88307	3.2724	0.58766	4.1262	0.45462	3.9072	0.51387	3.6389	0.49922	0.569	63.930	0.000

CON	2.6279	0.78871	4.2731	0.51033	4.1864	0.45870	4.1165	0.48949	3.3364	0.46031	0.464	97.766	0.000
AF	2.5930	0.90637	3.2885	0.79117	3.9587	0.56890	3.7785	0.62786	3.1212	0.80651	0.697	36.685	0.000
PGI	2.3876	0.78992	3.9615	0.75163	4.1715	0.48025	3.6667	0.55726	4.1717	0.44238	0.508	81.859	0.000
PR	2.6047	1.02822	3.6058	0.56087	4.1796	0.40887	3.1076	0.54697	3.2538	0.59078	0.556	67.373	0.000

Table 4.2.2(A) shows the five cluster solutions' results. After cluster analysis determined the appropriate number of cluster memberships, statistical tests were undertaken to examine if the five groups differed. Due to cluster analysis's limits in determining the discriminant power of components with greater discriminatory ability between groups, the Walks' lambda test of multiple discriminant analysis was performed next (Birks; Hair et al.). Multiple discriminant analysis was used to compare clusters (do Paço and Raposo; Jansson et al.).

Table 4.2.2(A) shows the Walks' lambda test findings for six constructs' discriminant strength and capacity to distinguish five groups. The study revealed significant differences in group averages for all six characteristics ($p < 0.001$). It implies that these constructions can distinguish the five clusters. Additionally, Walks' lambda (λ) statistics compare the discrimination effectiveness of each concept. The variables CON (λ= 0.464), PGI (λ= 0.508), PR (λ= 0.556), and CQ (λ= 0.569) exhibit significant discriminating power, as indicated by their lower lambda values These characteristics distinguish clusters well. The AF variable (λ= 0.697) has considerable discriminatory power. VD ranks lowest among five groups, with the highest Walks' lambda score (λ= 0.832). This suggests that VD may be less effective at group differentiation than other

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factors. In conclusion, the Walks' lambda test demonstrates that all six factors s distinguish clusters, with CON being most essential. The above results show how important these parameters are in differentiating clusters.

Table 4.2.2(B) shows the effectiveness of four canonical discriminant functions in distinguishing groups. Function 1 and Function 2 have statistical significance with p-values < 0.001 (Hair et al.; Saleem et al.). Function 1, with a Wilks' Lambda of 0.089, chi-square of 813.010, and p-value less than 0.001, reveals significant group variance in the variables. Function 1 is critical for group variant differentiation and has considerable discriminating power. Statistical analysis of Function 2 (Wilks' Lambda=0.209, chi-square=526.922, p < 0.001) indicates a smaller magnitude than Function 1. It still contributes greatly to group distinctiveness based on criteria. Increased Wilks' Lambda values (0.411 and 0.679) lower Functions 3 and 4's discriminating ability. However, their p-values below 0.001 suggest these functions contribute to the group difference. This study reveals the four canonical discriminant functions' statistical relevance. The primary group discriminators are functions 1 and 2.

Table 4.2.2(B): Summary of canonical discriminant functions and structure matrix

Functions	CON	PGI	PR	VD	CQ	AF	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	.880*	.694*	.666*	.330*	0.542	0.456	0.089	813.010	24	0.000
2	-0.255	0.471	0.325	-0.007	0.319	0.039	0.209	526.922	15	0.000
3	0.276	-0.028	-0.012	0.196	.626*	.480*	0.411	299.248	8	0.000
4	0.119	0.476	-0.461	0.257	0.140	-0.080	0.679	130.263	3	0.000

*Largest absolute correlation between each variable and any discriminant function

Table 4.2.2(B) highlights factors' contributions to the four discriminant functions. These contributions were assessed using the structural matrix. In Function 1, CON has the strongest positive correlation (0.880*) with the discriminant function. Additionally, PGI and PR revealed substantial positive correlations of 0.694* and 0.666*. VD is slightly positively associated with Function 1 (0.330*). PGI shows the highest positive correlation (0.471) in the second discriminant function, indicating its importance. PR affects Function 2 with a 0.325 positive correlation. CQ exhibits the strongest positive correlation (0.626*) in Functions 3 and 4,

suggesting a meaningful relationship. AF is positively correlated

(0.480*) after CQ. PGI and Function 4's discriminant function are

correlated by 0.476, indicating a significant relationship.

CHAPTER 5
Findings and Discussion

Chapter 5

Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, the findings of thematic analysis will be utilized as a validating mechanism of the content analysis of 5 OTT shows, namely, "Panchayat", "Gullak", "Delhi Crime", "Devi", and "Period. End of Sentence" personally performed in the earlier chapter. The categorized themes will be interpreted on the lines of psychoanalytic feminism and abject theory. Keeping with the findings, a conceptual framework will be formulated and solutions related to OTT content will be devised and discussed. After elucidating all possible solutions of examined taboos, the themes will be finalized.

For Objective no. 2, aiming to segment the Indian OTT audience based on the perception factors, this chapter will reveal the clusters of the Indian audience and profile them according to their demographic and psychographic characteristics.

5.1 Results of Thematic Analysis
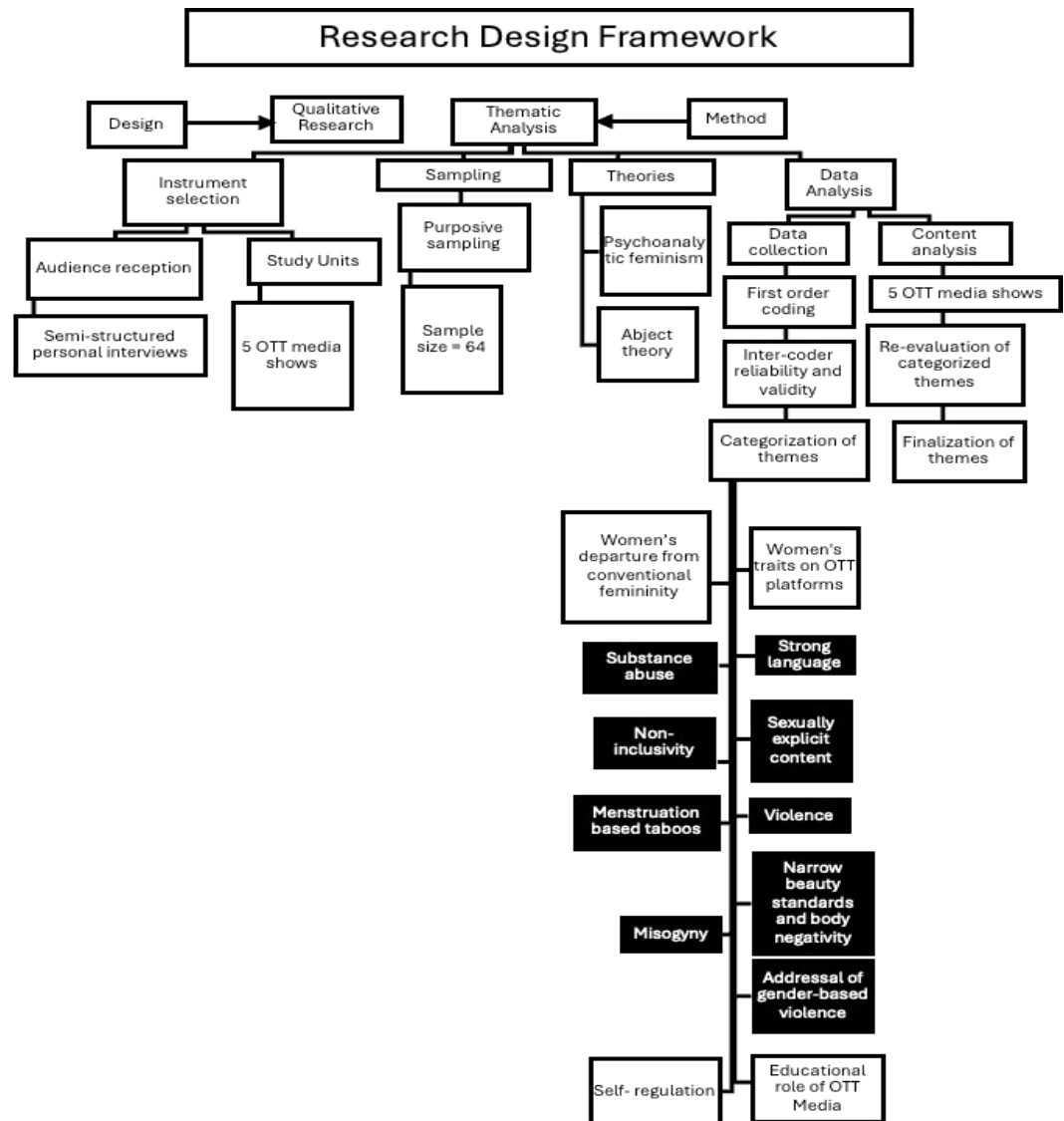
Figure 5.1: Research Design Framework of Qualitative Study Highlighting Categorization of Themes after Thematic Analysis

5.1.1 Elaboration of Categorized Themes:

In the earlier chapter, entitled "Data Analysis and Processing," data collection was followed by first-order coding as the first step of thematic analysis, for which 64 semi-structured interviews were coded by a group of 5 coders, including the researcher, using the NVIVO software. Once their reliability and validity were established, the first-order codes were then thematically categorized into women's traits on OTT platforms, women's departure from conventional femininity, strong language, substance abuse, sexually explicit content, non-inclusivity, violence, hypersexualization and objectification of women, menstruation-based taboos, narrow beauty standards and body negativity, and lastly, misogyny. Figure 5.1 illustrates the entire research design framework, and the data analysis results up to the categorization of themes. These findings or categories will be analyzed through the lens of psychoanalytic feminism and abject theory.

1. Neo femininity: Women's Traits on OTT Platforms

Positioning of women's femininity can be measured through such meaningful productions, and there is a void in the literature about traits doing so in the contemporary entertainment paradigms. A query that focuses on the role narratives play in producing meaning through character traits is therefore proposed to study the characteristics of women in Indian OTT media culture and how women's representations vary from

conventional media to more successfully challenge traditional gender tropes in Indian OTT platforms' content. This attempt adds various extra components to narrative interpretation through qualitative research approaches, such as context integration and purposeful meaning-making of lived experiences through a set of propositions, representations, and scope for further exploration.

The data analysis results show that the sample audience's reception of women largely rests on the below-mentioned categories:

a) Evolution in women's portrayal on OTT media
b) Women's autonomy in decision-making
c) Exploration of female sexuality

a) Evolution in women's portrayal on OTT media

"Evolution to an extent of the wider acceptance for what women can do and how. Audience is changing, and hence their needs, representations, and the content". Sangeeta

"I believe there have been successful series and movies with women-centric themes that people are talking about. This wasn't possible a few years back when it was centered mostly around a male actor. Today, women characters are encouraged on screen by the audience. Their visibility has significantly increased. The audience is the one who constructs a library of content through ratings and preferences. Women

are shown to be advanced and progressed in every arena of life and are assertive individuals today". Dr. Shanti

"*A substantial increase in visibility and good quality work is proof of their evolution. Improved in seizing opportunities, they are also quite opinionated individuals. Earlier, male domination was there in media, and females were often portrayed as supporting characters, but nowadays females are foregrounded; they create their own identity, emerging as independent characters in media".* Gargi

"*There has been a change; women are shown to be stronger and more opinionated than before. More and more reality is portrayed, which makes us connected to the characters and relate to them. Women are not shown merely as eye candies; more substantial roles are being written for them and by them on OTT, and inclusivity has also increased in terms of age, looks, and communities. But we still have a long way to go".* Divyanshi

"*There is a great evolution that we can find in Indian media. Films like "Gangubai Kathiawad," "Thappad," or series like "Masaba Masaba" have feminist-centered themes, creating a change in the conventional attitude of the patriarchal cliché shows where men are listed as the top priority. Portrayals of women characters like in Neerja, Aarya, Sehmat Sayed in Raazi, Rani in Queen, Tapsee Pannu in Pink, etc are powerful, empowering, and actively challenging the usual notion of a hero saving the innocent, scared woman."* -Sarah

The thematic analysis unveiled that portrayals and representations of women on Indian OTT platforms have paved the path for unsettling the screen dynamics in terms of gender equitability. The interviewees also highlighted that Indian cinema in general has evolved progressively with myriad roles and narratives. The new screen media only brought in a fresh change in portraying women with more visibility, nuanced functionalities, and subjectivities. The women characters aiding men's representations, who in turn help in the progression of the narrative, is no more a usual familiarity in serialized storytelling, with females emerging with a new trait profile as a whole and not aping men in the name of empowerment. The OTT media has debunked or is in the process of debunking the concept of "sheroes" with women, single-handedly, carrying the weight of the plotline and being the vector of the director's choice. The director's vision can, however, be contingent upon the sellability of the narrative, keeping with the audience's interests and the commerciability of the filmic text. In both filmic and episodic formats, representation has advanced significantly, with OTT content ranking higher in terms of neo-feminine portrayals. The presentation, screenplay, and cinematography are more real and relatable for the Indian audience, with "the slice of life" better experienced in OTT media than in Indian cinema. The other hallmarks of progressive evolution, apart from reality and relatability, are the diverse storylines and change in gender dynamics that has been coping better and seemed to keep pace with the amendments of the contemporary

entertainment. On-screen women today are skilful, aspirational, well-rounded, and versatile value additions instead of being one-dimensional in their roles, which helps the audience empathize with the female anti-heroes. The audience has to their delight 'angry young women' in series like *Delhi Crime 2* or movies like *Jigra* available on OTT. Since the audience has a say in determining the content library of the platforms, they have been more flexible with the portrayals of subjectivities of femininity.

Figure 5.1.1.1.A: Hierarchy chart of respondents' views on the evolution of women's portrayals on Indian OTT platforms

"*Evolution is definitely there, but still there are certain misrepresentations or underrepresentation of women.*" Darshika

"*Although the representation of women has considerably changed throughout the years, it is still debatable whether women are portrayed fairly even now. Even now, women are represented in two extremely juxtaposed dichotomies: either they're portrayed as saintly or sacrificial or as outright ultramodern, selfish human beings, as in the series, Four More Shots Please. There is no middle ground*". Disha

Though women contributing to the plot progression has grabbed eyeballs, OTT content has scope for improvement with more and more women setting positive images for the society at large. Women filmmakers, F-ratings, and screen time can curb underrepresentation gradually, and their contributions taken into cognizance. What looms large as a concern is, however, ideological, socio-cultural misrepresentations on creator-audience or conception-consumption levels.

b) Women's autonomy in decision-making:

The sample population had mixed views when asked to comment on on-screen women's autonomy in decision-making. While they acknowledged a significant shift in women's trait profiles, they questioned the degree to which their autonomy and decisiveness had been compromised. According to them, the majority of women are confidently decisive, as in being articulate, good crisis managers, possessing good leadership skills, and being individualistic and self-reliant entities. Women are depicted as intelligent and straitjacketed in their approach, not gender critical or

biased. They take ownership of their decision-led consequences, are opinionated, and hence there is a surge in agency and aspirational values. All these attributes cumulatively make them well-informed and independent destiny shapers in their respective narratives.

"*Bombay Begums in Netflix can be the best example where the characters overcome all the hurdles and at last achieve their goals by self-made decisions that serve as turning points in life. In the web series "Made in Heaven," the character Tara Khanna exhibits women's autonomy in decision-making as she navigates complex personal and professional choices. Neena Gupta in Panchayat. Konkona Sen, Anvita Dutt, and Zoya Akhtar are doing great as directors to bring forth decisive and resolute characters on screen.*" Sarah

"*As per the script, they get the opportunity to make decisions and exert influence, but they are more decisive and influential today. Women are selected as good decision-makers mostly at home, in business, and in workspaces. There are entrepreneurs like Tara Khanna in Made in Heaven and DCPs as in Delhi Crime. They at least participate in decision-making, which was not the case earlier.*" Jayshree

"*To the point of no return as to be opinionated, outspoken, dissentful and rebellious. They are standing out as capable decision-makers and not diffident individuals dependent on the males to take charge. Women on OTT are shown in the positive light as they are good with decision-making*

and taking initiatives. Beanie in "Bhaag Beanie Bhaag" made a lot of decisions independently while discovering her talented self." Ankita

"*The best is that today there is a paradigm shift in the autonomous functioning of women on OTT. The agency has increased, and there is a surge of women filmmakers of late, representing the worldviews through gynocentric lens, showcasing latent aspirations of women on OTT. Especially in Human like web series, the women ruled the screen through their thoughts and decisions.*" Tamannah
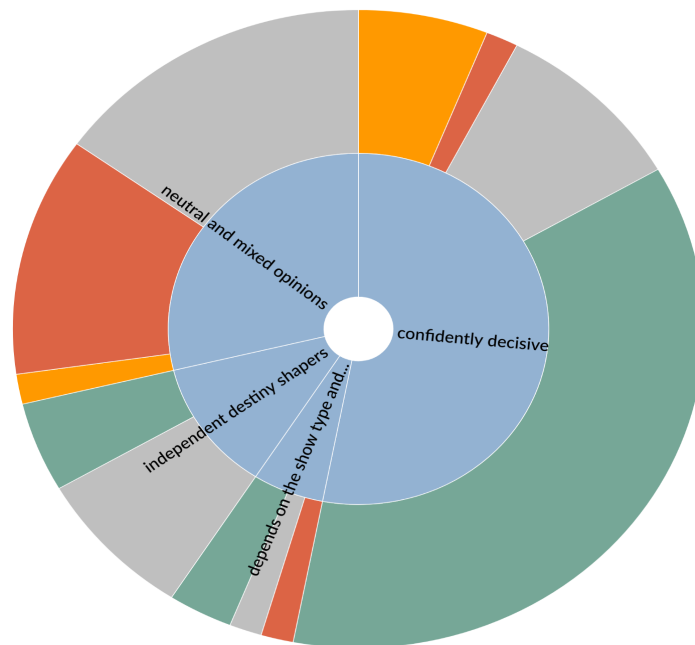
Figure 5.1.1.1.B (1): Sunburst visualization of women's autonomy in decision making

"Sultan of Delhi, Special Ops, there was hardly any autonomy being exercised by women characters. They rather had to compromise and accept the decision imposed. With the exception of a few, like the decisions taken by Shefali Shah in Delhi Crime, most of the shows do not completely let women exercise their rights in taking decisions, as all the decisions are shaped by external and societal factors that indirectly influence them". Priyanka

"*Though women are represented as good decision-makers, there are various underlying factors governed by patriarchy that intervene in their decision-making process. Gullak has shown women to be identified as mothers and wives of male leads. Mostly caregivers, women in the series have to keep their family in the hindsight even at the cost of personal loss. They are never autonomous but an accommodative one.*" Pranov

"*As the majority of creators/viewers are men, these shows largely cater to the male audience, and they are the ones who decide the quality of the shows and modify women's decision-making abilities according to their convenience, it doesn't translate into action and representation. They are made to feel apologetic later about their decision-making abilities.*" Tanya

However, some viewed OTT media as too new a phenomenon that has a long way to chart their fate. Negative opinions entailed women not being granted agency by the filmmakers, and if at all women exercise freedom and autonomy of decision-making, they are made to feel apologetic and

self-centered based on the outcome of events, as in the series, "Four More Shots Please." On the other hand, neutral and mixed opinions included that women characters' decisions are rather imposed or being shaped by unavoidable societal factors that are regulated by the show type and storyline.

Figure 5.1.1.1.B (2): Sentiment analysis of women's autonomy in decision making
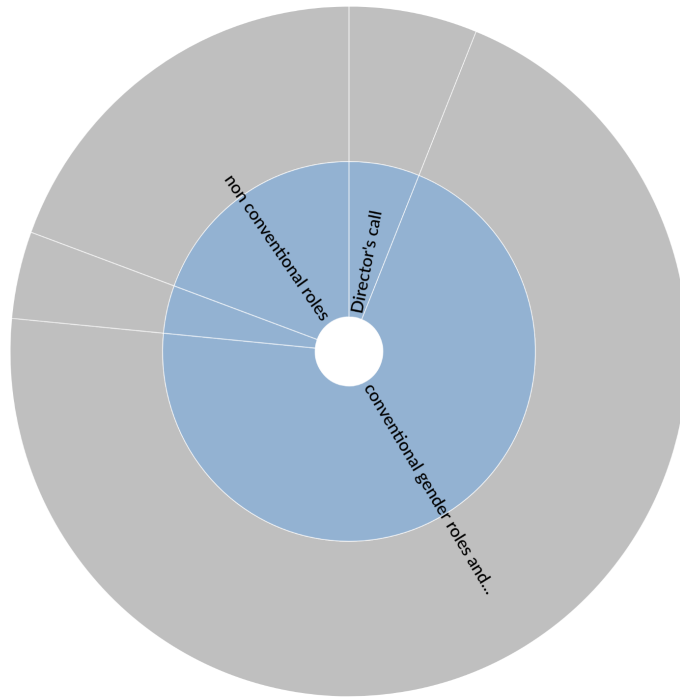
Figure 5.1.1.1.B (3): Sunburst diagram demonstrating audience perception on conventionality and stereotyping in Indian women on OTT platforms

"To some extent, conventionality exists, but with women taking up leadership roles, it is critical to realize that every conventional role and stereotype is unpacked and re-examined. At least the issue is being addressed. I cannot say that the majority of them are breaking stereotypes, but there is a significant focus on venturing into nonconventional content". Suvadeep

"Women have been (mis)represented since time immemorial. So, I don't think these select few contents have made any difference. There is a long way to go for OTT. Having said that, I also acknowledge the fact that it

has started. Conservatism is very much visible. The way women are represented deals with their objectification and tokenism". Shubhashish

"Stereotypical nature in representing women is still unexamined in India, but it is changing day by day, and no need to say OTT platforms are playing a vital role in breaking these boundaries. Stereotypes exist as in every other society, but the gender role tropes are changing with time". Sutanwi

"Stereotypes are an integral part of every media house, so they cannot get vanished, but OTT has minimized stereotyping to an extent. We find both modernity and old-fashioned models of representation. Women are breaking the stereotypes and moving forward, but it also talks about how much they struggled in the past. Patriarchy is deep-rooted in every Indian household, and there is no way we can get away with it anytime soon." Ritwick

"Women's roles are getting unconventional day by day, and they are better attracting the audience. However, the presence of conventionality and stereotypes cannot be ignored". Nidhi

"Gender roles and stereotypes exist. Still women are expected to be caregivers and nurturers. If they are working, they still can't be relieved of the gender roles. Working becomes their additional responsibility. So, sometimes, but not in large aspects. Mostly today, feministic roles are endorsed". Sudeeksha

When asked to comment upon the conventionality or gender tropes assigned to women, the audience was divided in their opinions, with the majority considering conventionality and non-conventionality as the director's prerogative and that OTT content is abundant with gender taboos and stereotypes. It is only when stereotypes are combatted that one can logically navigate towards depictions of nonconventional roles. Overall, it is the commercial success and filmmakers' lucrative calculations that govern the content, acceptability of the audience, and demands of the story, being secondary parameters of the conventionality of women's roles on OTT. The results reveal that the majority of the roles in OTT platforms are therefore conventional gender roles replete with age-old gender stereotypes. Additionally, the findings also highlighted that materiality and profit intent make filmmakers serve the content platter deliberately with gender-based taboos like objectification, voyeurism, oversexualization, and reinstating patriarchy, keeping with the visual gratification of the male audience and therefore an androcentric camera. On the other hand, content packaging also incorporates women's empowerment through plausible and inspiring women characters, their victimization bringing to the question of the perception of gender taboos by the Indian audience.
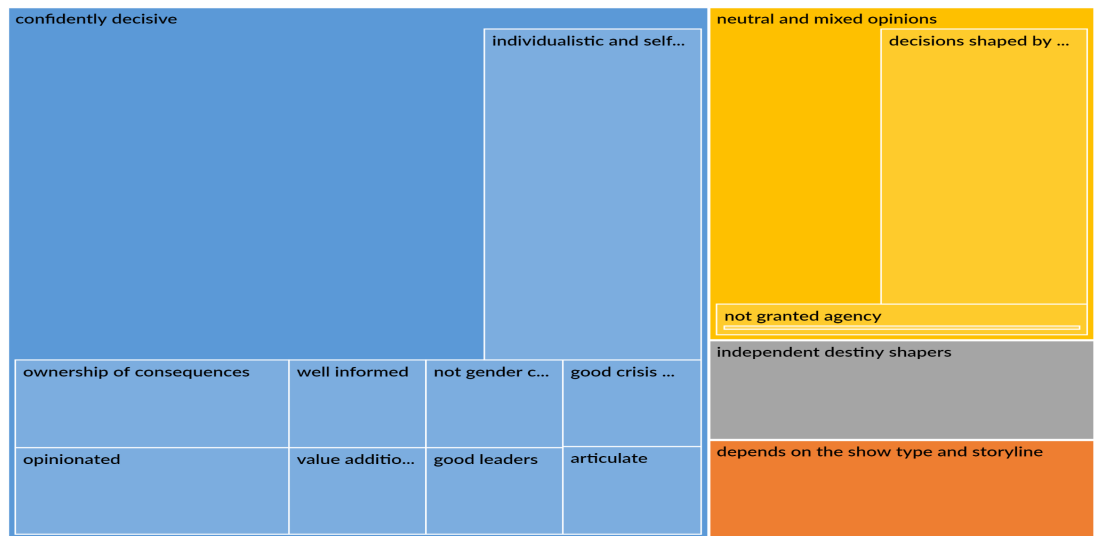
Figure 5.1.1.1.B (4): Hierarchy Chart of Divided Opinions on the Extent of Autonomy in Decisiveness

c) Exploration of female sexuality:

The prevalent dimorphism of sexuality has historically necessitated adherence to the socially constructed gender binary. Society has mostly established boundaries on issues of body, self, and sexual identity. As a result, cultural preconceptions and social taboos around gender identification persist to this day. The term sexuality is often defined in one or both of two ways. Sexuality relates to the essence of sexual orientation, which may be understood in binary terms (either heterosexual or LGBTQIA+) or in more fluid terms (such as pansexuality). Conversely, sexuality may be seen mostly as a result of actions, whether collective or solitary, linked to perceived sexual differences and/or sexual behaviors. The second definition may include a wide range of sexual behaviors that

have "message value," indicating actions that might communicate a message—be it good, bad, or neutral—to an audience, either deliberately or inadvertently. Although there are conceptual differences between gender and sexuality, it is essential to recognize that these two notions are often conflated, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Gender norms are dynamic, shaped and reshaped throughout time via both formal and informal encounters. The thematic analysis explored the OTT audience's perceptions of sexuality through contemporary narratives to understand how sexuality is differently perceived, experienced, and expressed by women within a youth-focused context that frequently aims to suppress their embodied sexuality. Media is regarded as a primary source and agent of socialization and has increasingly focused on these socially pertinent themes.

"Either overt or covert, there is no halfway to strike a balance. Women characters are definitely more outspoken and free to speak about their sexuality and virginity. Series like "The Trial, Lust Stories Seasons 1 & 2" do not shy away from talking about the vitality of pleasure regardless of the age or background they belong to when it comes to needs." Sangeeta

"Female sexuality, though, has been well explored, with women being upfront regarding their bodily desires, vocal about mental health and menstrual hygiene, being comfortable in their own skin, and accepting imperfections. There's still a long way to go, as some of the filmmakers

cloud it with physical obscenity and boldness. Upfront, unveiled representations are often misconstrued by both filmmakers and audiences. There is also some fair attempt at portraying female sexuality as not being bold and beautiful but being unapologetic about desires, vocal about their wants, and embracing their imperfections. In OTT content, women's issues are addressed, which in itself is an awareness tool." Neha

"Over time, although OTT shows have started exploring female sexuality by challenging taboos and making women more sexually aware and independent, there is still scope for improvement. Apart from the oversexualization of women characters, it is shown positively as it also addresses taboos and challenges stereotypes in the end. The best contribution of OTT content is that it has navigated and well-explored consent and boundaries-like concepts. Consensual should be the new trend." Saumya

"Most of the time it is represented in such a way that it either panders to the male gaze or is plainly exaggerated, but there are certain contents that are breaking the ceiling, such as Geeli Puchi in Ajeeb Daastaans or Konkana's segment in Lust Stories 2. Sometimes authentic representation of sexuality is missing." Abir

"OTT has been quite impactful in this area with shows like "She", where the woman lead introspects her own sexuality. They have accepted themselves and are more secure than before." Avik

"Despite the risk of perpetuating stereotypes or objectification, female sexuality is increasingly explored more openly and responsibly on streaming platforms with a more nuanced and diverse approach, addressing topics such as pleasure, consent, and relationships. However, there is a need of more respectful portrayals." Rajesh

Figure 5.1.1.1.C (1): Word cloud on audience perception of women's sexuality on OTT

Interviewees discussed how the curated and packaged vision and subjectivity of the director matter in the degree of exploration of the sexuality construct in the audience. They also envisaged that only female auteurs can justify female sexuality on screen and that male auteurs (mis)represent bodily politics and sexual autonomy. However, OTT media has facilitated more nuanced and diverse portrayals of sexuality over time. They are depicted with more introspective open-mindedness. These

women are no longer hackneyed women, as they demonstrate exceptional communication skills, effective body language, ambition, assertiveness, and a willingness to challenge traditional taboos such as menstruation, menopause, and reproductive rights. Being vocal about their desires and radiating confidence and strong individuality creates a positive body image and makes the characters daring and undaunted on screen. Freedom of decision-making and body autonomy, growing awareness of female sexuality in a gender-neutral way, are added markers of female sexual identity and performativity. The interviewees emphasized the prevalence of expressive counter-narratives that are more inclusive today and have a respectful approach towards sexual orientations as one of the contributions of OTT media. The relevance of consent navigation, setting consensual behavior as the new trend, greater self-acceptance, or being comfortable in their own skin leading to more security and self-exploration are other highlights for OTT women.
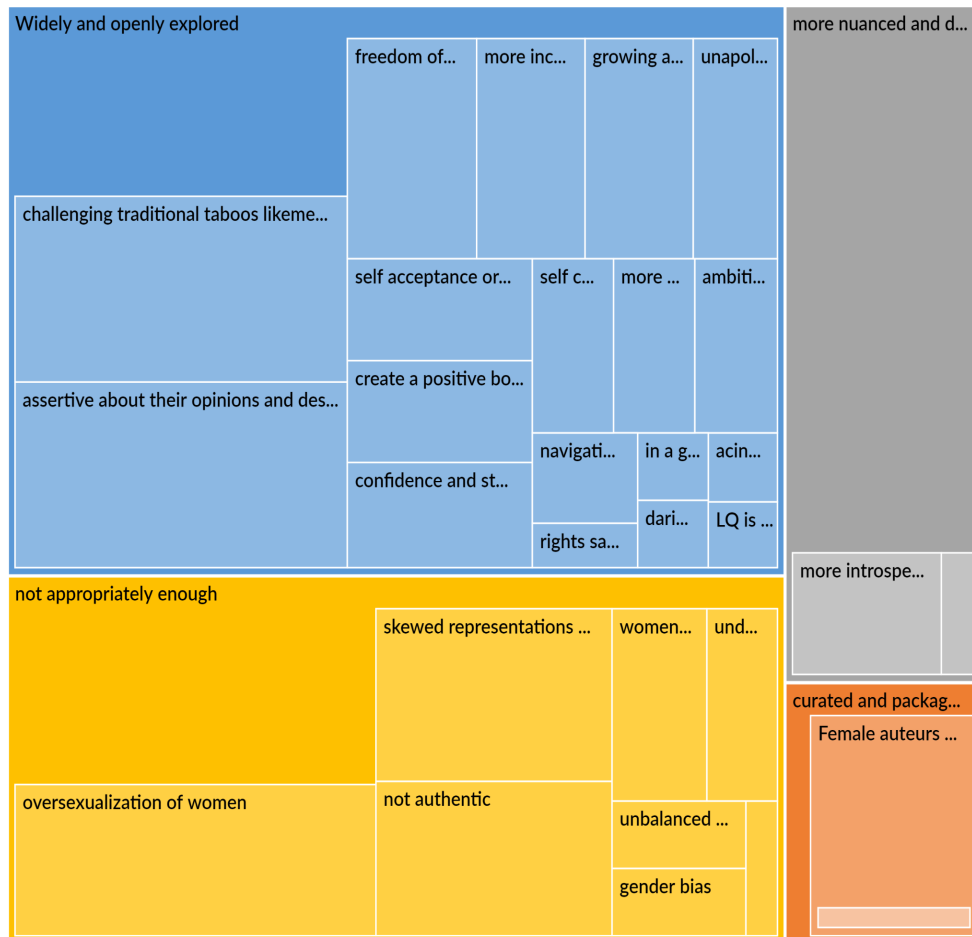
Figure 5.1.1.1.C (2): Hierarchy map for women's sexuality according to audience reception

"To be honest, women's bodies are exploited at its peak when it comes to OTT platforms. Sexualizing this way makes a negative impact on people's perceptions and finds it utterly a source of entertainment. OTT deals with sexualized and tokenized female roles and legitimization of misogynistic performativity also." Dr. Shanthi.

"Female sexuality has not been properly explored. It has been touched by giving certain misleading notions on sexuality. It shouldn't be only about

steamy scenes, skin show and nudity. Authenticity is to be taken care of, as the majority have pseudo ideas about sexuality." Shashank

"Diverse subjects like pleasure, body, sex, identity, mental health, etc. are being discussed through the characters in these streaming platforms. Will be better explored as being true and real to an extent only when filmmakers are females." Shalu

"More liberating than before, women's learnability quotient is high.To identify with one's sexual orientation inside out without any hesitation should be stressed rather than any skin show. To some extent, sexuality is shown in a positive light, especially when women are ambitious and assertive about their needs and wants." Krittika

"Layered as it is, a subjective term for both directors and audiences. Not in a very good light, as representation is a curated and packaged vision of the director, who is most often a man. Women directors will be able to genuinely represent the sexuality of women. Or women would get hypersexualized by men." Ashutosh

On the contrary, some argued that sexuality has not been represented appropriately on OTT platforms as gender bias persists, legitimizing misogynistic performativity, unauthentic and insincere portrayals of LGBTQIA+, and unnecessary oversexualization of women, leading to unbalanced or skewed representations of female sexuality.

2. Gender taboos:

While delving into the nuances of claiming one's rights over one's sexuality in the OTT space, the negotiation and challenge of the individual with the larger social system come across several stereotypical socio-cultural barriers, which then get conveyed to the audience. These restrictions are just creations of gender-based taboos.

"The OTT is struggling at times to understand that women's empowerment is not merely limited to drinking, hook-ups, smoking, and divorce. There is more to women's empowerment. The portrayal of being a jack of all trades, understanding, caring, vocal, and at the same time being wise and smart makes a woman a woman". Shomi

"Intoxication and addiction, strong language, obscenity"- Souvik Sao

"Beauty standards and fads, strong language, steamy scenes Snehanshu

"Body shaming, beauty standards, verbal expletives and strong language, substance abuse, women having only aesthetic functions on screen, nudity." Mousumi

"The landscape of Indian OTT content is evolving rapidly. However, some societal taboos that Indian OTT platforms may grapple with include issues related to explicit content, religious sentiments, depiction of LGBTQ+ characters, and certain cultural or regional sensitivities. It's important to

note that societal attitudes change, and the industry may adapt its content based on evolving perspectives and conversations."- Akash Dubey

"Obsession with fair skin, false body image, foul language, and when I say strong language, I mean extremely abusive language. These strong languages influence the teens, and they start using such words in their daily lives." Sudeeksha

"There are many societal taboos that still exist, for example, sexuality and LGBTQ+ representation, religious and political sensitivities, depression, beauty standards, and, of course, violence and crime are at the top." Disha

"Verbal abuse, violence, nudity, and obscenity mean too much vulgar and explicit content, unrealistic social standards and hence expectations, negative beauty images and models, and sexual mental health are to be taken for granted; setting unrealistic expectations for both men and women, dialogues full of sexual innuendos are lauded." Pranov

"Gender discrimination, misogyny, religious intolerance and controversies, nudity, and substance addiction. There are still gaps related to the sexuality of the LGBTQ community that are yet to be fully explored and make the Indian audience aware and educated. Mental health is another area that requires attention. Caste, color, and beauty standards are still considered societal taboos." Ritwick

"Nudity given focus. No less than porn these days." Rahul Dev

"Few of the existing taboos, like casteism in Indian OTT, are still prevalent. For example, one can see less obese or dark-skinned leading actors in the shows. A so-called "perfect body" with a light skin tone is preferred by the audience. Colorism, racism, and colonial hangover issues still linger." Suranjana

Figure 5.1.1.2(A): Word cloud on audience perception of taboos on Indian OTT content

There are many prevailing gender-based taboos in OTT content of Indian streaming platforms. On thematically analyzing the interview data, the findings validated that there have been increasing instances of adultery, infidelity, and casual dating in relationships. Evidence of ideological misrepresentations of masculinity, feminism, and femininity is also ample. There has been a growing incidence of violence and crime unfolding in domestic violence, sexual harassment, and abuse. The content very readily

and boldly presents content that has hurtful religious sentiments, cultural and regional insensitivity, casteism, and intolerance. There are spikes in instances where discriminatory gender taboos, like tokenism, undue recognition, conservative gender roles, unwanted women's objectification, hypersexualization, menstruation, misogyny, body-shaming, and narrow beauty standards, plague the content heavily. Non-inclusivity of genders or homophobia-like taboos also poses a concern for minds exposed to the content. The sample problematized scopophilia, generating sexually explicit content, nudity and obscenity, strong language, and substance abuse, such as in alcoholism, drug addiction, and abuse, as sowing the seeds of gender-based violence rampant across all OTT content. The taboos apply to all the genders: men, women, and LGBTQIA+. The status of women regarding their bodies and subjectivity within the broader societal context, along with the interplay of taboos in the mediated portrayal of OTT media, is significant, particularly considering the negative effects of taboos that both originate from and are perpetuated by OTT content. The taboos, as a result, plague women's positionalities in the OTT mediascape and in the young adults' conception of femininity in larger society.
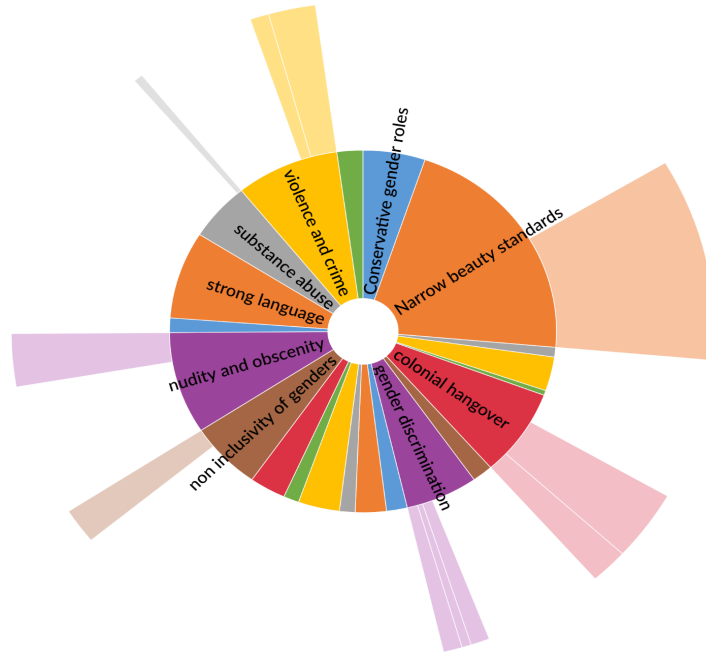
Figure 5.1.1.2 (B): Sunburst diagram on gender-based taboos in Indian OTT content

a) Menstruation

The biological processes of women's bodies and their societal reception are crucial to any examination of Indian women. In India and Nepal, women are seen as marginalized from daily activities and susceptible to animal assaults and sexual violence during menstruation(Sharma et al.). In some Indian households, menstruation, a normal biological process, is prohibited and discussed only in whispers. Social taboos and stigmas around menstruation obstruct dialogue and impede proper teaching, leading to misconceptions, confusion, anxiety, and negative opinions of menstruation. Cultural taboos, secrecy, and shame obstruct discussions

around menstruation, especially in rural and low- to middle-income regions globally. In several civilizations, stigmas surrounding menstruation and cultural beliefs obstruct adequate menstrual hygiene. Prejudices such as prohibitions on prayer, head bathing, or kitchen access, as well as the avoidance of religion, persist.

Menstruation is tabooed in India, despite ancient traditions worshipping women as Mother Earth. Even though they resisted stereotypes and taboos, Indians struggled hardest to overcome religious menstruation taboos. The idea of women being unclean at "that time of the month" leads to many rituals and taboos that limit women's liberty and movement. Such is the paradox that women are considered abject during menstruation, yet their reproductive potential and parenthood are praised in India. The gendered component of parenting, or the glorified celebration of motherhood has to be examined more closely since girls are raised as prospective mothers.

Work-family roles, diversity and stigma, and occupational health influence macro-changes (Ashforth et al.), including transitions from reproductive to postmenopausal identities and concurrent identity loss and gain across several domains. The three Ms may impact workplace gender diversity and stigma theory as well. Women get disparate treatment, compensation, and promotion compared to males (Roth et al.; Joshi et al., "When Can Women Close the Gap? A Meta-Analytic Test of Sex Differences in Performance and Rewards"). The media ridicules and

diminishes professional women throughout menstruation and menopause (Weiss-Wolf; Garber). Maternity, including the possibility of a childless woman conceiving, diminishes female employment incentives (*United Nations Population Fund. Menstruation and Human Rights- Frequently Asked Questions.*). The three Ms disrupt the organization's explicit or implicit social structure owing to their "leakiness," unboundedness, unpredictability, or unreliability (Jack et al., "Temporality and Gendered Agency: Menopausal Subjectivities in Women's Work"). Researchers advocate for the observation of physiological alterations and hormonal variations in the workplace (Akinola; Ganster and Rosen). Gender and physiological experience are interrelated, complicating the differentiation of gender, age, and biological changes (Lorber and Moore). Organizations may promote inclusiveness by acknowledging women's needs and refraining from stigmatizing the three Ms (Shore et al.), since feminists see workplaces as patriarchal.

The body, pregnancy, lactation, childcare, and menstruation are often scrutinized, stigmatized, and used to dominate and marginalize women (Acker); the "perpetual subjugation of women's bodies" (D. E. Goldstein) adversely affects women's health and professional trajectories. It was traditionally used to demean women due to secrets, shame, and ignorance (Sveinsdóttir). The typical age of "menarche," the onset of menstruation, globally is 12–13 (F. Thomas et al.). Taboos related to menarche and PMS (premenstrual syndrome) are prevalent, as mid-20s

women might develop PMS, which causes bodily discomfort, intestinal disorders, mood fluctuations, and sleep issues of which PMS and menstruation are supposed to produce severe sadness and impair decision-making across cultures. Experimental study by (Roberts et al.) indicated that menstruating women are less competent and avoided. These assumptions influence young female workers who want to be adaptive to different professions and challenges. Menstrual symptoms include forgetfulness and attention issues (Farage et al.); however, there is no conclusive evidence that the cycle harms cognition. (Sommer) found no correlation between menstruation and cognition in 73% of 48 classic studies. "PMS rage" ideas link menstruation to violence. Periods indirectly affect sleep (Herrmann and Rockoff) and workplace antisocial behavior (Barnes), but not violence.

Menopause remains a taboo subject in 'polite' discourse, particularly in professional environments where both women and men are reluctant to address it (Jack et al.). Vasomotor symptoms, including hot flashes, arise from hormonal fluctuations during menopause (Griffiths et al.). In the 1980s, the WHO characterized menopause as a "estrogen deficiency," implying that women's bodies were deemed abnormal (Bariola et al.). The deficit notion posits that "menopausal women" experience a decline in reproductive ability and may exhibit madness prior to entering severe depression (Borysenko), implying that reproduction is essential to women's functionality. Menopause is seen as the conclusion of a woman's

reproductive phase; nonetheless, employed women possess an additional 10–15 years of productivity till retirement (Sowers). Menopausal women are often stereotyped as frail and subdued or amiable yet incompetent (Bariola et al.; Chrisler et al.), which contradicts the expectations of leaders and reflects irrationality or emotional bias. Unanticipated menopausal symptoms were associated with diminished confidence and self-efficacy (Geukes et al.), potentially undermining performance evaluations and leadership emergence (Judge et al.). In male-dominated businesses with male leadership, cooling fans may induce embarrassment and fear among male employees, reinforcing the subordination of women h(High and Marcellino). Women are excluded inside organizations due to their perceived 'out of place' bodies (Mavin and Grandy). The recognition of menopausal symptoms in women may undermine their credibility and professional image (Lorber and Moore).

With Indian Gond tribals still isolating themselves during menstruation in Chhattisgarh's new Mohla-Manpur-Chowki district and women not handling hand pumps, let alone cooking or entering kitchens, the dominant majority's opinion prevails despite women realizing it is a taboo. Historically, the Sabarimala temple in Kerala banned women aged 10–50 from entering. They believed it was difficult to tell whether a lady was menstrual and that menstruating women were "impure". Muslim menstruators worldwide cannot visit mosques or pray during their periods. Jewish menstruators have period bans reinstating it as an established

societal taboo. Societal stigmas and cultural taboos adversely impact menstruation, a natural biological process. Implicit sexism and gender disparity are evident as period poverty represents a public health issue that requires action from healthcare professionals, improved teaching programs in schools, and changes to local and federal laws. Various variables, including gender inequity, cultural taboos, and poverty, can adversely impact taboo formation and retention. Unfortunately, existing stigmas create uncomfortable environments that prevent patients from discussing their menstruation and associated concerns with healthcare providers. Menstrual and reproductive health issues are crucial to women's dignity and autonomy. Period poverty and its ramifications need attention at all levels, and stakeholders ought to explore innovative solutions.

Sustainability requires customized action plans and policies for rural and urban communities globally. Health and wellbeing are directly and indirectly linked to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) three, four, five, six, and eight, which were established in 2015 by United Nations (UN) member states to provide a definitive framework of objectives for governments and communities to incorporate policies and initiatives that promote sustainable practices for a better future. Period poverty may harm various health aspects; thus this goal relates to it. Period poverty is a global public health crisis that demands a quick response.

Period poverty is the lack of menstrual products, education, hygiene facilities, or waste disposal. Menstruation stigma and resource inaccessibility worsen physical and mental health in many persons and communities, like the transgender and non-binary people alongside women. As underlined by Sustainable Development Goals four and eight, it may also hinder menstruators' active engagement in educational and professional settings, impacting education, employment possibilities, and financial autonomy (*United Nations Population Fund. Menstruation and Human Rights- Frequently Asked Questions.*). The fifth Sustainable Development Goal stresses empowering women and girls for gender equality. Period poverty harms menstruators and reinforces gender inequality, perpetuating sexism and social injustice. Thus, addressing period poverty in SDG five will let menstruators participate in society with dignity and equality like men. This is what the Netflix documentary, "Period. The End of Sentence," deals with, as menstruators worldwide require clean water and sanitation to sustain menstrual hygiene, according to the sixth SDG. Lack of menstrual hygiene management is a global health concern that impacts sustainability and community well-being. (MyPeriodIsAwesome)

A study in Egypt found that many schoolgirls did not bathe during menstruation because it was considered taboo During the original French closure, 9.6% of 890 women aged 18–50 had trouble getting menstruation protection. 49.4% of period-poor women experienced depressive

symptoms, compared to 28.6% of non-poverty women, and 40% had anxiety, compared to 24.1%. Depression and poverty were strongly correlated. Due to their struggle to manage menstruation during the epidemic, most period poverty menstruators reported acute depression. Deep social humiliation follows. Deep cultural roots caused unease and suicidal thoughts. The epidemic prevented young women from attending school, playing sports, and socializing, affecting their physical and mental health. The guilt connected with menstruation and difficulty expressing their feelings, especially with parents, left them feeling alone. This caused financial problems and anxiety. From poor water and sanitation to menstrual health education to cultural stigma, it varied (*MyPeriodIsAwesome. ThePeriodTaxAroundtheWorld*). It has shown "syndemic" traits, including an oncoming mental health crisis and ostracization of vulnerable people, especially menstruation poverty victims. Moreover, a "pink tax" occurs when items marketed to women cost more than those marketed to men.

Parental perspectives may promote poor menstrual health education. Generational views on promiscuity and sexuality or cultural preferences may explain these beliefs and uneasiness. Fragmented and unbalanced education fosters shame and inequality in a normal health procedure, worsening patient misery and preventing frank conversations with doctors. Parental views may worsen menstrual health education. Incomplete and wrong information promotes shame and inequity in a regular health

procedure, making patients uncomfortable and preventing frank conversations with doctors. Schools typically blend menstrual instruction with puberty and pregnancy problems, making it difficult to comprehend the complexities of menstruation and proper cleanliness. Legislation may reduce the cost of menstrual products but normalizing it as a biological function should reduce the stigma.

Menstrual health is a right, and regulating it in a dignified, affordable, and accessible manner improves physical and mental well-being. Menstrual health equality is imperative for all menstruators, regardless of identity, employment, or geography. Period poverty interventions require community engagement and policy tools. The lockdown forced millions of schoolchildren and adolescent girls to have few interactions with their educators, family members, and peer networks, so they had unconfirmed and limited information about menarche and its management, especially about menstruation hygiene curricula and programs. This difficulty was exacerbated in locations plagued by the digital divide (Alugnoa et al.). Menstruation hygiene management should be part of any government healthcare and education crisis response. Everyone should prioritize menstrual education in online and remote learning, at home and at school, to promote good menstrual health and reduce the stigma associated with this essential biological function. Low-income people should get free or discounted menstrual supplies in public spaces like schools and shelters. Subsidies encourage local businesses, especially self-help groups and

women's cooperatives, to develop period hygiene products and promote menstrual health awareness. Union and federal policies should lower sanitary product prices and increase availability, especially for impoverished communities needing community support. Tax exemptions on all sanitary products should be required. Public lobbying for menstrual product tax modifications may make sanitary goods affordable for everyone.

Period poverty must be addressed holistically, including gender equality and menstrual equity laws. Investing in water and sanitation systems is a proven way to reduce menstrual product shortages in resource-limited areas. Menstrual stigma, shame, and taboos continue to be at the core of the issue. Governments, civic society, and the public must support time poverty mitigation as a social justice and human rights problem. This should clearly include period health and needs assessment in patient consultations and improved training across all healthcare disciplines. Advocacy is essential for the expansion of reproductive health education, which educates menstruators and the public about health hazards and accessible or grant-funded diagnostics for menstrual hygiene product-related health issues. Non-experts, community health workers, and public health or healthcare professionals need to spearhead grassroots educational initiatives. To eradicate the issue, it is essential to debunk myths, reduce cultural taboos, and enhance reproductive hygiene; hence, menstruators in low- and middle-income, hard-to-reach areas with

vulnerable populations need accurate menstrual hygiene information. The male inhabitants of these period poverty pockets must be educated on how their beliefs about menstruation perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination. Literature indicates that educational institutions may address period poverty by ensuring clean hygienic conditions, supplying menstrual care items, and offering instruction on the biological changes associated with the female reproductive cycle, including menstruation ("43 Percent of Indian Women Don't Have Access to Sanitary Pads: Survey"). Education may alter adverse perceptions of menstruation, enabling communities to adopt laws addressing period poverty . Research on period poverty and its ramifications for global health initiatives, especially among vulnerable populations and economically challenged regions, need more support from governmental and commercial women's health organizations. Period poverty must be acknowledged and tackled as a public health concern to enhance global health outcomes for Sustainable Development Goals three, four, five, six, and eight. These results must recognize and safeguard menstrual rights pertaining to autonomy, dignity, health, and socio-emotional well-being.

Reappraising changes as normal and natural may reduce stress in workplaces (Motro et al.). Organizations in the UK have endorsed "period policies" allowing women to work with periods. Flextime place may help women returning to work postpartum manage physical changes, sleep loss, and nursing responsibilities (Begley et al.; Catalyst). Access to menstrual

hygiene items and clean, private, and quiet pumping/nursing areas are indicators of supportive organizations (Bergman M. E. et al.; Gabriel et al.). Providing workers with control over workplace temperature and air adjustment may aid menopause (e.g., modest fans, outside walks, opening windows (Jack et al.). Public health concerns like period poverty inspire local and national initiatives to improve menstrual items and education availability. There have been a few initiatives to further this domain. The BFC Period Hygiene Pantry shows how menstruation supplies may improve healthcare for period needs. In a similar vein, Canada has abolished the sales tax on tampons, sanitary napkins, and other period goods, whereas Scotland requires local governments to provide free menstruation supplies. Plan India, a community development effort, stressed the need for hygienic behaviors and items to reduce reproductive tract infections more than 10 years ago (Rapp, A.; Kilpatrick). Biodegradable sanitary napkins and flower waste incense have been made in rural areas since 2018 (TheTimesofIndia). The state government and local women's self-help groups launched this campaign six years ago in Maharashtra, India's second most populous state (Karelia, G.; Bhasker). The study required this since a prior health evaluation in a rural region of Maharashtra found that 11–19-year-old menstruators missed up to 60 days of school owing to their periods (Ghadyalpatil). Pravara Institute of Medical Sciences supports Pravara Jan Seva Mandal's Women Empowerment Project, which manufactures and distributes low- to no-cost

menstrual hygiene products for its village and other rural areas. This sustainable innovation improves an existing environment and serves as an example for other communities.

Certain Indian regions set themselves apart. It is shocking that menstruation has retained its taboo status in modern India for decades, despite historic Indian celebrations of women. It is celebrated in certain regions of India as a symbol of rebirth and fertility, as in Odisha's '*Raja Parba,*' Assam's '*Ambubachi Mela,*' and Kolkata's Durga Puja theme 'pandals.' Several Hindu and tribal festivals celebrated menstruation centuries before women felt comfortable talking about periods before menfolk. Assam's Kamakhya Temple's *Ambubachi Mela* and Odisha's *Raja Parba* celebrate Mother Earth's fertility, the source of all life. The celebration of procreation goes beyond traditional Hindu ceremonies. According to historian Jawhar Sircar, many other ancient civilizations thought that human females and nature were related. For instance, Mesopotamian deity, Ninhursag is supposed to have injected the 'clay of humans' with her 'blood of life.' Greece replaced 'procreative blood' for Mother Hera's miraculous crimson wine supplied to the gods. The Egyptians thought Isis' period blood made the Pharaohs immortal. In the Chengannur Mahadeva Kshetram temple (AD 300) in Alappuzha, Kerala, Devi Parvati menstruates every two–three months, and the 'blood-stained' fabric of Goddess Parvati is revered and prized for blessings. This festival follows the contemporary idea of keeping women away from religious

ceremonies during menstruation, yet in Assam and Odisha, goddesses and women, symbolized as Mother Earth, are adored and is linked to abundant harvests in the following agricultural cycle. In recent years, Kolkata has become a dynamic canvas of innovation as communities strive to produce the most inventive and thought-provoking Durga Puja pandals. Theme-based Durga Pujas have transformed this festival into a colorful display of creativity and ingenuity. The *Pathuria Ghata Pancher Palli* Durga Puja Committee campaigned against menstruation restrictions, breaking the taboo and utilizing menstruation as their Durga Puja motif to inspire change. They called their topic *Ritumati*, meaning 'menstruating person.' The topic promotes menstrual hygiene awareness and breaks the stigma surrounding menstruation. However, period poverty is a growing issue that needs   immediate   addressal.

b) Narrow beauty standards, appearance anxiety, and body negativity

Self-objectification (SO) is defined by an emphasis on physical appearance above competence and a recurrent preoccupation with appearance and body image (McKinley and Hyde; Noll and Fredrickson). According to (Fredrickson and Roberts), it may heighten women's concerns on physical appearance. External objectification may result in disordered eating, depression, and sexual dysfunction, stemming from internal bodily sensations (such as hunger, sexual arousal, and stomach

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contractions), body shame (arising from comparisons to cultural standards and perceived inadequacies), and anxiety regarding physical safety (including fears of molestation and rape). Women are more often sexualized and objectified than males. Moreover, misogynists often attack women in the media. Derogatory language towards women, sexual comments about their bodies, and behaviors such as ogling, leering, catcalling, and harassment intersect with various sociocultural identities, including sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and social status, leading to distinct media representations and experiences for specific subgroups of women (Fredrickson and Roberts). Media reinforces an unattainable beauty ideal for women, associating it with their attractiveness and worth. Exposure to sexually objectifying media correlates with heightened self-worth and beauty ideals in African American adolescent girls (Gordon), while it is associated with self-objectification, body shame, appearance anxiety, internalization of beauty standards, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating in White women. Additional research suggests that similar experiences are common among women (Moradi et al.; Kozee et al.). Numerous women also encounter immersive kinds of SO in contexts, locations, and subcultures in which they are deeply engaged. Contexts that heighten observers' awareness of women's physiques, like ballet, beauty contests, modeling, and cheerleading, may increase sexual objectification (Slater and Tiggemann). Women often operate in environments that incentivize them to embody sexual objects, such exotic dancing and

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cocktail waitressing. (Downs et al.) discovered that exotic dancers exhibited heightened body surveillance, valued physical appeal over competency, and had poorer relationship satisfaction compared to college women, suggesting that societal standards of beauty impact women differently. In addition to conventional kinds of sexual assistance, several women encounter more egregious instances, including rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment (Fredrickson and Roberts). Studies indicate that 25% of women have endured rape or attempted rape, and more than 50% of female college students have faced sexual victimization (Fisher et al.; White et al.). Internalized sexual orientation may intersect with various forms of oppression, including heterosexism, ableism, and racism. Lesbians may be affected by self-objectification and internalized heterosexism, leading them to discount homosexuality and emphasize heterosexuality. They may publicly express their sexual orientation but conform to heterosexual norms and attire based on masculine ideals of female attractiveness to be deemed socially acceptable or an exemplary lesbian. (A. J. Thomas et al.) discovered that internalized messages on racialized sexuality may cause some women of color to see their sexuality as a constrained resource. Women from certain ethnic or racial minorities may endeavor to align with the media-endorsed White female beauty standard, prompting them to alter their physical ideals through hair coloring or straightening, makeup application, dieting, exercising, cosmetic surgery for skin lightening, or modifying their appearance or

body size ((Fredrickson and Roberts); (A. J. Thomas et al.). (Buchanan et al.) indicated that African Americans' monitoring skin tone heightened body shame and dissatisfaction with skin tone.

c) Substance abuse

Media sexualization of women is mostly due to sexual priming. Sexual priming is unconscious exposure to sexual information that makes you think about sex and/or sexual circumstances. (Birnbaum et al.). Humans have struggled with sexual priming for decades. Technology increased sexual content accessibility. Access to pornographic material got easier as technology advanced. Sexual objectification harms women's mental (Halliwell et al.). The conclusion was that (1) increasing sexual material in music videos would enhance sexual priming among viewers and (2) greater sexual priming among females would increase self-objectification and objectification of other women. Evidence supports the idea that this unfavorable perception of women is linked to drug addiction (Carr and Szymanski). The idea is that the sexual objectification of women may be a factor in substance use and/or abuse because much alcohol advertising uses scantily clothed women and women as sexual objects. (Iijima Hall and Crum) evaluated 59 beer advertisements' camera work of males and women's body parts. There were many more body photos of women than males, defined as chest, buttocks, crotch, and legs (Iijima Hall and Crum) . In 49% of the ads tested, chest shots focused on women, while 24%

focused on males. This study suggests beer advertising oversexualize women. The media's sexual objectification of women harms their body image, generates false self-images, and treats them like edible meat for men to devour. In addition to the recognized detrimental effects, data suggests that media sexual objectification may interfere with the encoding of alternative information (Trekels et al.) identified four possible reasons of this comorbidity. Depression and inadequate nutrition may increase the risk of substance abuse. (Fredrickson and Roberts) identified six potential mediators of the self-objectification–depression relationship: self-objectification, body shame, appearance anxiety, insensitivity to physical signals, peak motivational states, and concerns regarding physical safety. However, only self-objectification and body shame have empirical support as linkages to disordered eating (Moradi and Huang). Consequently, sexual objectification experiences may result in self-objectification, which fosters body shame, depression, and disordered eating, ultimately leading to substance addiction. Third, depression and disordered eating may elevate the probability of drug addiction, whereas substance usage concurrently heightens the chance of depression and disordered eating. Although there is little temporal precedence, depression, disordered eating, and drug abuse exhibit common risk factors, including internalized, interpersonal, and societal sources of oppression (Stice et al.). Objectification theory provides a framework for examining the relationship among depression, disordered eating, and substance abuse in

women. It is essential to identify and understand the elements that promote sexual objectification (SO) in an environment. Self-objectification environments (SOEs), as delineated by feminist, vocational, and organizational psychology, are characterized by conventional gender norms, significant male presence, diminished female authority, emphasis on women's sexual and physical qualities, and endorsement of women's bodies. Factors that may lead to the emergence of an SOE include alcohol use, regulated sexualization (e.g., flirting, smiling), and/or competition among women. Gender roles are delineated by cultural standards pertaining to masculinity and femininity, including actions, psychological characteristics, self-perceptions, and anticipations (Gutek and Bikson; WORELL and REMER). Conventional male gender roles prioritize competence, achievement, and agency, characterized by traits such as independence, assertiveness, competitiveness, rationality, problem-solving, and objectivity (Berndt; Bales and Parsons). Conventional gender role indoctrination fosters male authority, control, and supremacy, seeing women as objects, sex as a conquest, and regarding women as possessions (Worell Judith). Objectification theory elucidates a gender-specific daily experience for females and the origins of psychological illnesses, such as body dysmorphia and eating disorders. The objectification hypothesis elucidates women's mental health issues, synthesizes empirical information about their experiences, and directs future empirical research (Fredrickson and Roberts). This theory posits that sexually objectifying

media and interactions condition women to see their bodies from an external viewpoint, leading them to view their bodies as objects. Self-objectification arises from persistent body monitoring, whereby individuals evaluate their physiques against societal standards and concentrate on external perceptions. Even little sexualization may lead to self-objectification. A woman who willingly displays her body as a sexual object for others may ultimately engage in self-objectification. Objectification theory elucidates the impact of gendered experiences on women's drug use and abuse, as well as the correlation between substance abuse and disordered eating (Allgöwer et al.). According to objectification theory, sexually objectifying media, internalized cultural norms, and interpersonal encounters may elevate the likelihood of drug use and misuse among women. (Szymanski et al., "Sexual Objectification of Women: Advances to Theory and Research 1ψ7") examined photographic depictions of male and female body parts in 59 beer advertisements from diverse brands. Despite women's reduced visibility in beer advertising compared to men, they exhibited more body exposure. Alternative media, including films and music videos, propagate the notion that women who use drugs are appealing, alluring, and desired by men (Jhally; Katz & Kilbourne). According to (Bem)media portrays women as objects or decorations for males to adore, which might lead to drug abuse. For decades, tobacco ads have targeted women to promote staying skinny and sexy. As an appetite suppressant, cigarette smoking is often used by

women to manage their weight (Zucker et al.). Tobacco commercials promoting cigarette use for attractiveness and thinness have been linked to increased smoking rates among undergraduate women (Zucker et al.). It seems that many young women may abuse narcotics to conform to societal attractiveness and conduct expectations. Advertising promotes the idea that consuming certain products can make you more appealing and enjoyable (Miller). Advertisers promise sex appeal, sexual esteem, sensuality, and attractiveness through product use (Jacqueline Lambiase). Heterosexual women may abuse substances to attract men and maintain romantic relationships (Gomberg). SO experiences and oppressive events vary from generic stressors due to their uniqueness, socio-cultural basis, duration, and excess stress (Landrine; and Klonoff). Oppressive environmental stimulation may harm psychological health (Clark et al.). (Meyer) identifies individual situations or occurrences that represent general stresses or biological traits. Living in a society that sexualizes women leads to anxiety-provoking occurrences, requiring ongoing monitoring over their physical safety and looks (Fredrickson and Roberts). Oppressive occurrences or a stimuli-filled atmosphere may be risk factors for drug addiction (Zucker and Landry). (Clark et al.) suggested that persons experiencing repressive circumstances may experience anger and sadness, leading to alcohol or drug usage for coping. (Zucker and Landry) suggested that women may use narcotics to deal with sexism that has numbing effects. According to (Bobbie), women may smoke or use other

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substances to cope with undervaluation and fear of being seen as unfeminine. Women who reported more sexist events, including SO experiences, in their daily diary reported higher levels of anger and depression (Swim et al.). Also, research shows that sexist criminalization (being mistreated because you're a woman) is linked. Research suggests that psychological discomfort, beyond general stress, may contribute to gender variations in anxiety, depression, and somatic symptoms (Landrine; and Klonoff). Additionally, undergraduates who use alcohol to cope with life had moderately higher rates of alcohol-related issues (Martens et al.). (Zucker and Landry) identified a favorable association between self-reported sexist discrimination and the behaviors of binge drinking and smoking. Female substance abuse, particularly concerning alcohol, is associated with sexual harassment in the workplace (Davis and Wood). Severe instances of sexual victimization in females forecast the use of alcohol, nicotine, and illicit substances, in addition to significant depression and post-traumatic stress, even when accounting for demographic factors and familial substance abuse (Moran et al.). The interpersonal experiences of sexual orientation may exacerbate and interact with other forms of oppression, affecting drug use and abuse among women with multiple minority identities (Moradi and Subich), which suggests a link to drug addiction (Szymanski et al.). The intersections of oppression, such as racialized social oppression for women of color, may influence drug use and usage (Collins). As a maturing adult,

an underdeveloped prefrontal cortex reduces cognitive control over emotions, reactions, and behaviors. When a vulnerable young adult female student sees sexually objectifying media, it might hurt their self-image and perspective of other women. Media objectification and oversexualization of women increase alcohol intake to feel attractive, condom usage self-efficacy decreases, and negative sexual affect increases (Ward et al.). Media depictions of men and women's bodies elevated physical features above internal ones and provide a terrible picture of many developing adults' self-image. Previous studies have shown that sexually objectifying media might negatively affect young adults.

d) Objectification and Oversexualization:

Globalization is ubiquitous, globally affecting every individual. It refers to the economic, social, cultural, and political interconnectedness resulting from transnational economic output, migration, communications, and technology. As globalization expands, women face new possibilities and problems, making the overall depiction of women in society a major issue and a key idea in media studies. Broadly defined, the depiction of women as a stereotype or sexual object focuses on who is portraying, how media uses space and time, and how globalization affects women's image. Numerous research studies have shown that media affect humans, out of which some studied women's portrayals as stereotypes or sexual objects that have a detrimental impact on women's psyche in patriarchal countries

like India. The primary concern is how the Indian media business conceptualizes and operationalizes portrayals of women in the age of globalization and how the same representation has been transformed. In the globalization period, mass media are corporate organizations. Originally, media were watchdogs of society, informing, educating, and entertaining it. Indian media's representation of women is a major issue for social researchers and scholars, as women are increasingly portrayed as commodities, sex objects, and victims in the media, including social media. Liberalization and privatization have entered India's consumer market while urban India is becoming more and more western. Due to the global village and information revolution, marketers are targeting the globe with one Eurocentric message. This process also infuses western culture into us in a linear, homogenous way. In the renaissance happening for Indian women, there is a fair share of misrepresentation of women's subjectivities.

In the renowned work "Public Opinion" (1922), Walter Lippmann coined the term "stereotype," contending that individuals mentally conceptualize a situation. "Amidst the overwhelming chaos of the external environment, we identify elements that our culture has pre-defined, leading us to believe we have selected from our culture's stereotypes (Kanahara). Jones defined a stereotype as "expectations or beliefs attributed to individuals solely based on their group affiliation." This acceptance may pertain to the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of certain communities.

Individuals often rely on stereotypes derived from preconceived thoughts and opinions. In conjunction with belief and group, 'generalization' characterizes stereotype. Stereotypes are generalizations about groups, as defined in cognitive psychology. Mental schemas retained by individuals, media, and governmental declarations facilitate these image constructions. These perspectives form the collective consciousness inside society and its cultural constituents. Stereotypes perpetuate the placement of minorities in low-power, low-status positions (DeFleur & Dennis). 1. The author (p. 373) asserts that characteristics differentiating a social group from others are more prone to be seen as stereotypes. Stereotypes propagate misconceptions across society (Kanahara). Black women have been shown in the media as sexual aggressors and savages, a portrayal stemming from their exploitation and suffering during and after slavery (Greene). Asian American women are often depicted in the media as subservient, juvenile, and exotic (Root). Women from the lower class are often seen as unclean, provocative, unrefined, and irritating, resulting in sexual exploitation and animosity (Smith). Nonetheless, the dominant group's pursuit of enhanced self-esteem may significantly influence the formation of stereotypes toward subordinates or minorities. Objectification theory (Fredrickson and Roberts) provides a framework for comprehending sociocultural experiences related to the sexual objectification of the feminine body within the collective consciousness. This is a fundamental organizational principle in feminist and counseling

psychology, consistent with multicultural-feminist and social justice objectives. It facilitates the examination of patriarchy at both micro and macro societal levels and advocates for social justice. Objectification theory (Fredrickson and Roberts) posits that many women are often sexually objectified and appraised based on their usefulness. It occurs when a woman is seen as a physical object of male sexual desire instead of as an individual (Bartky). Sexual objectification transpires when a woman's body or its components are dissociated from her identity, becoming her a mere object of male desire. Mental health difficulties significantly affect women via both overt sexual objectification and subtle sexual objectification related to their deepest feelings. Objectification theory posits that women's SO can result in mental health complications, including eating disorders, depression, and sexual dysfunction, through two main mechanisms: the silent internalization of experiences and self-objectification, wherein women perceive themselves as objects evaluated primarily on their appearance (Fredrickson and Roberts). The refinement of objectification and oversexualization is distinctive in that when objectification exceeds the narrative requirements, material containing mostly female characters often becomes hypersexualized, as they serve as the central figures of the plot.

e) Non-inclusivity of Genders-

The qualitative dataset findings unleashed that with OTT platforms ushering in myriad themes and being vast content repositories, the representation of genders has improved in terms of inclusivity. The attempt to depict gender representation was a welcome change, but its fairness was called into question.

The notion of representation and acceptance of third-gender individuals in Indian society while also illuminating myths surrounding the third gender has become more accessible via OTT platforms' content. Though media and screens possess the capacity to effectuate both positive and negative transformations in the stereotypical myths surrounding queer individuals, OTT serves as an effective platform to depict the challenges and acceptance issues faced by queer individuals, frequently reinforcing negative stereotypes and stigmas regarding LGBTQIA+ individuals.

The majority of respondents came to the conclusion that OTT platforms, with their affordable access to almost everyone in Tier 1, 2, and 3 cities, are a great leveller in India. With convenient and affordable access to consumption for anyone who has internet connectivity and a device to stream content, OTT content reaches masses irrespective of region, caste, gender, class, age, education, and profession. This transcending of socio-demographical boundaries through content makes its audience consume Indian, Pan-Indian, and global content from anywhere and everywhere. Moreover, the content coverage includes the representation of the third

gender or LGBTQIA+ transgressing heteronormativity as one of their content ingredients. Since Indian platforms host the library of gender minority-oriented videos, like those of women and LGBTQIA++, OTT platforms are considered all-inclusive and holistically sound in gender representation by a majority, at least in terms of their visibility in content with OTT's introduction in the entertainment industry.

"Gender representations are getting inclusive of all types of genders in OTT platforms. The Married Woman, Made in Heaven, Four More Shots Please, Forbidden Love, etc. are a few series that explore the theme of LGBTQ and its struggles." Sarah

"Very inclusive, as only cisgendered characters are not found on screen. We get to see all sorts of gender on OTT, so it is definitely inclusive to a great degree. It attempts to break free from man-woman characterization." Meruka

"On OTT, they are trying to include different kinds of characters, including different genders portraying heterosexuals, homosexuals, and LGBTQIA+. All sexual orientations are found in OTT characterization. But they're still working on making it better and more equal for everyone." Mousumi

"Very inclusive, as it does not stick to gender binaries, as in men and women, and gives a fair share of queer, which were dormant since ages, rather than men and women dominating the discourse." Jiten
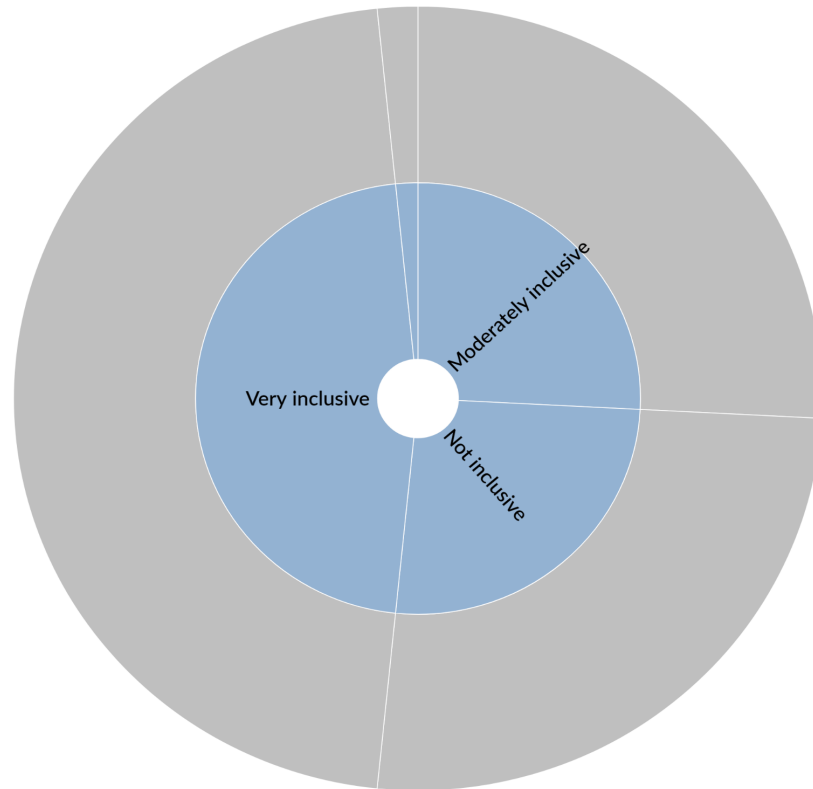
Figure 5.1.1.2.E (1): Sunburst diagram showing the proportion of inclusivity according to the respondents

"Not very much inclusive, as we have explored the tip of the iceberg. But yes, better than Bollywood. Jayshree

"Male and female characters are well represented, but LGBTQIA+ is underrepresented." Romi

"It has improved. Still have a long way to go." Ujjawal

"Less inclusive, as many misconceived gender representations confuse the audience, giving superficial knowledge about them." Abir

"Non-inclusive and pseudo-representations for the mere sake of popularity and mass appeal." Jyoti

"Many shows include LGBTQIA+ community currently. However, people from the community should portray the roles instead of heterosexual men and women." Dr. Shanthi

Some respondents perceive OTT platforms as moderately inclusive, given their relatively new status in the media and entertainment industry, and their potential for improvement as new talent and stories emerge over time. However, they appreciate the OTT content and its richness, with streaming content surpassing mainstream entertainment in terms of its gender representation by a large measure and improved focus. However, the concerns of non-inclusivity arise as concepts of pinkwashing and inauthentic portrayals of LGBTQIA++ surface as deciding factors for commercial gains and filmmaker's lucrative moneymaking, more so when dissemination of content and tokenism of gender minors is at the director's discretion. Pinkwashing is the appropriation of LGBTQIA+ movements and communities by corporate or political entities to appear progressive and tolerant towards the queer. A fraction of respondents also called out the inauthentic and pseudo portrayal of queer characters on screen by

heterosexuals, considered unjust and superficial due to outsiders experiences hindering authentic distribution to the Indian audience.

This sought-after sexuality through the objection of certain genders seeks to reclaim the impact of heteronormativity and forced heterosexuality in a culture that disregards and suppresses other sexual rights. (Adrienne), in "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," posits that heterosexuality is not an inherent inclination for all individuals but a cultural construct that subjugates women to males. This is a psychological phenomenon in which the prevailing sexual discourse often produces a kind of homophobia. The heterosexual desire and societal taboos surrounding homosexuality, along with economic reliance on males, render the likelihood of main sexual relationships with other women improbable, although such relationships have become increasingly common in recent years (Chodorow). In India, where conventional gender norms are firmly established, the issue of transgender sexuality and romantic relationships has long been considered taboo.

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Figure 5.1.1.2.E (2): Word Cloud on the Inclusivity of Characters on Streaming Content

Since Section 377 was overturned by the Indian Supreme Court, more homosexual characters are prominent in Indian films and OTT platforms. Hush Hush (2022) and The Fame Game (2022) are web series that successfully integrated a character's sexuality into the narrative without making it the main focus, normalizing queer ideologies and characters. Other major releases in recent years have been anything but subtle; *Maja Ma* (2022), *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* (2021), *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* (2020) and *Badhaai Do* (2022), and use comedy on OTT to normalize the discussion of homosexuality. To stand out, the directors addressed the need of blending in and addressing societal definitions of 'normal.'. Though comedy offers easy grasp of the narrative, it has a few drawbacks in sincerely portraying normalcies. In *Badhaai Do*, Shardul (Rajkummar Rao), while being forced to move into a police colony, may

be reserved about his sexuality, but the film seems to make him apologetic for it. In a drunken state, he tells that RoboCop is his favorite film, but he is a 'homocop.' In Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui, Manu's sisters think their brother's virility is influenced by bodybuilder photos, snoop around hospitals, and tell him they'll find him an "original ladki" (transgender). Dialogues like "Do you like trance music?" and "Where did you do it from?" when Manu tells his friends about his sexual encounter with a transwoman. These instances degrade the queerness of character and infantilize the audience, requiring a certain suspension of disbelief.

f) Strong language:

India is renowned worldwide for its diverse culture, traditions, religious sentiments, heritage, and values. People have long cited India as an example of how pluralism has passed down through generations. Television and film have long been important sources of infotainment for Indians. These sources have shaped attitudes, thoughts, behavior, values, and beliefs, as well as represented India globally with its rich cultural and social values. The influence of web series, OTT content, and language has transformed media consumption, democratized the entertainment industry, and promoted linguistic diversity. These platforms promote underrepresented groups but also glamorize certain taboos like substance abuse, obscenity, etc. Content creators across OTT platforms are also using the cuss trend, regardless of the genre of the series.

Moreover, the language used in these series influences society by reflecting and shaping audience cultural values and attitudes, as language is an essential indicator of cultural diversity. The use of profanity, verbal expletives, and strong language has increased in popular culture. While contentious or forbidden subjects have been mainstreaming, the evolving cultural norms of the audience may have both beneficial and detrimental influences on society, particularly among the young. Web series include gender disparaging terminology, suggesting that Indian web series often perpetuate gender norms. The research indicates that hate speech and pejorative language are prevalent in Indian web series, possibly undermining societal cohesiveness and promoting prejudice. (Sharma) analyzes the representation of gender roles and hate speech in Indian web series on OTT platforms. (Chopra, Tyagi, & Dutt) assert that the content analysis of Mirzapur and The Family Man indicates the proliferation of web series in India and the advent of new genres within the entertainment sector. The investigation revealed that both programs exhibit elevated levels of violence. However, both employ abusive language as a crucial trait of the narrative progression conducted a content analysis of web series to explore the rise of verbal abuse and hate speech on OTT platforms that revealed that violence in "Mirzapur" is largely unfounded, and the language is exaggerated, obscene, and hostile. "College Romance" used culturally deviant language with an episode titled, "Happily F***ed up" and rationalized the essence behind such utterances by saying, "*Gaaliyan*

shabd nahi, bhawna mere liye" ("Verbal expletives are not mere words but an emotion").

The linguistic fabric is in a flux, evident with Generations Y and Z introducing and using new terminologies for communication known as the GenZ language. The respondents shared their opinions, exclaiming that excessive swearing not only misrepresents our culture globally but also normalizes the belief that it is acceptable. Conventional media censored abusive language and limited it to villains or anti-heroes, but this is no longer the case. Characters, whether villains, protagonists, male, or female, use swear words in their dialogues and portrayals regardless of the character's professional or personal background. Indian web series content analysis on OTT platforms reveals language degradation, reflecting the country's culture and people globally. OTT platforms are profiting at the expense of inaccurate representation of India and its language, due to which India may be perceived as a violent, uncultured, and unruly society in the global community now that the streaming platforms are transcending global geography. Cultural representation, audience engagement, and viewer psychology from interview analysis can explain this. The use of strong language and its acceptability as a taboo or content warning reveals that OTT platforms often reflect current social issues, including vulgar language as cultural expression, and that Indian web series cater to a diverse audience seeking relatable content, so their depiction of obscenity and profanity reflects changing social norms (Gupta). The representation

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can normalize such language, influencing younger viewers' communication standards. It also reveals that strong language can increase viewer engagement, as millennial prefer unfiltered storytelling, so content creators may use profanity to compete for viewership, sometimes at the expense of quality (Gupta). Some argued that strong language can be artistic expression, challenging social norms and sparking morality and language discussions emphasizing context and intent in media profanity.

Theoretically, unresolved psychological conflicts and traumas, especially early childhood ones, often lead to abuse, according to psychoanalysis. Freud's theories emphasize family relationships and repressed desires, which can lead to verbal abuse. The Freudian slip, where unconscious thoughts surface, may also reveal abuse dynamics and underlying motivations or unresolved issues. Freud believed that unresolved childhood conflicts, such as those with parents, could lead to maladaptive behaviors like abuse ("Freud aurait-il été abusé?", 2022). The Freudian slip shows how unconscious thoughts can appear in speech and reveal hidden desires or conflicts from abusive experiences. Slips may indicate a person's struggle with abuse or victimization, highlighting their psychological complexity (Poland, 1992). Freudian slips, or "parapraxes," reveal unconscious thoughts and feelings, possibly indicating abuse issues.

(Koravi) states that youth who are of grooming age tend to focus on web series, indicating that they are learning valuable information from them.

As digital media merges with traditional media, it is now the responsibility of digital media to effectively represent and impact audiences. Matrix (2014) found that the Netflix Effect significantly affects teens' media consumption. Parents, educators, and policymakers must monitor the Netflix Effect and balance the benefits and risks of on-demand digital media consumption for teens. Though studies show that vulgar language can desensitize or aggressively communicate with young viewers (Saumya et al.) regulatory measures can mitigate these effects and protect vulnerable audiences. (Rashmi and Sood) analyzed that OTT providers in India should create localized content that appeals to the local audience while adhering to regulatory and censorship policies so that our internet-savvy generation may not be influenced due to their familiarity with web series. As language shapes personality, a person's impression and representation of themselves, culture, society, and country are crucial. (Chattopadhyay) suggests that web series often exaggerate violence, vulgar language, and sex to portray the real world while compromising morality, resulting in negative audience perception. Media negatively impacts attention, writing, verbal communication, and critical thinking, hindering cognitive development (Dhiman). He also found that web series are changing youth language and behavior. Youth, particularly kids and teens, are most affected by online streaming content consumption. Young people often retain language, actions, dialogues, and songs from movies and shows for a long time due to their developing minds.

g) Gender-based violence:

Art exists "in an era of impunity regarding enjoyment," resulting in erotic impoverishment due to the extremes of both hope and despair" (Barajas and Ho). Numerous academics and critics, such as (Scolari) have condemned the partnership between art and popular culture since the mid-20th century. Consequently, mass culture is characterized not as "the dissemination of a refined culture, but rather the distortion of popular culture" (Hung) .The issue is in mass culture's commercial potential masquerading as condemnation, rather than its transcendent capability. The attributes of erotic cruelty include "horrific sexual imagery," "visual spectacle over narrative," "perverse characters with a condemnatory intent," entertainment and product cruelty, nihilistic movies, and perverse series prevailing in leisure activities. The thematic analysis unearthed many other perspectives and dimensions to gender-based violence, its direct and indirect forms that specific genders are subjected to, of late, both in real and in virtual.

"A vast share of content shows heinous crimes like rape, murders, humiliation, gaslighting, mental abuse like violence on screen. Censorship might help in lessening it instead of violence terrorizing the audience. However, solutions if connected to reality also makes the audience equipped with current news." Nidhi

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"Gender based violence reflects through Casting couch cultures, #MeToo movements, disproportionate gender ratio, normalizing masculine codes of casual sexual misconduct resulting in verbal abuse, gang rapes and murders." Krittika

lot many times as domestic abuse, public humiliation, jibing and abusing are inflicted on a particular gender. OTT puts them across the audience through diverse formats for them to think and consider trying to convey a message. They bring up cases of even subtle domestic violence that layman is unaware of and as it goes, modern problems require modern solutions, the OTT platforms makes us aware too. Mousumi mam

"Violence is the only key of success nowadays for OTT platforms. It glues the audience. Sensitive content tags/warnings and realistic depictions are the only ways to address gender-based violence. OTT brings it out in a crude, real manner without packaging it at times. I believe, OTT has capitalized on these issues so that large amount of Gen-Zs watch these." Jyotirmay

Gender-based violence is often seen in the name of dowry practices, casteism, colorism, financial status marital rape, molestation, eve-teasing and mental harassment, especially directed towards marginalized sections of the society, including women and LGBTQIA+. OTT tries to address this through entertaining and gripping content in subtle ways. Jyoti

"Delhi Crime, for example, is based on real events and explores the aftermath of a brutal gang rape and its impact on law enforcement officials. It addresses the trauma and stigma experienced by survivors and the challenges in seeking justice. It highlights that characters may grapple with trauma, anxiety, depression, and the long-term effects of violence. These portrayals aim to shed light on the mental health challenges that survivors may experience and help reduce the stigma associated with seeking support." Anand

"It is visible to a great extent even in the smallest form of crude remarks and gaze. Trolls and memes have added to this culture. Indirect forms like sexist remarks and comments, trolling to bigger, direct forms of discrimination, harassment, molestation, rapes, and murders. We often see rapes and molestation. OTT throws light on investigation or probing the matter, it acts as a forewarning. But sometimes violent characters are put on a pedestal and made relatable. This glorification of the violent is problematic." Gargi

Figure 5.1.1.2.G (1): Word Cloud on Gender-Based Violence

What the interviewees were of the opinion is that GBV depiction is completely the director's subjective curation and packaging of content and not even the scriptwriter at times and that female auteurs can justify the aftermath more sincerely if female victimization is to be portrayed. Television and film portray violence as mercantilist, not artistic. Today, the portrayal is more introspective, sensitive, and considerate than popular cinema. All the genders are victims and perpetrators of violence. However, portrayals are legitimized of misogynistic performativity leading to either direct forms of abduction, acid attack, blackmailing, bullying, negative peer pressure, domestic abuse, sexual molestation and harassment, rapes and murders, and physical and mental abuse, due to discriminatory practices like casteism, colorism, dowry, or economic status. The presence of indirect forms of GBV cannot be negated, as it exists in eve teasing, gaslighting, misogyny, normalizing codes of casual misconduct, sexist remarks, trolls, memes, and tokenism. Built on mainstream cruelty, these series also seem to express the horror and violence—not always physical—of pornography that has developed in the early 21st century under postmodern cinema's prestige. Interviewees concurred that OTT's portrayal of GBV often serves as a forewarning, addressing specific trauma, stigma, and challenges associated with seeking justice, coping mechanisms, and updating general knowledge and awareness with real-time solutions and role models who have fought for justice. As a gray shade of GBV addressal, violent characters are glorified.
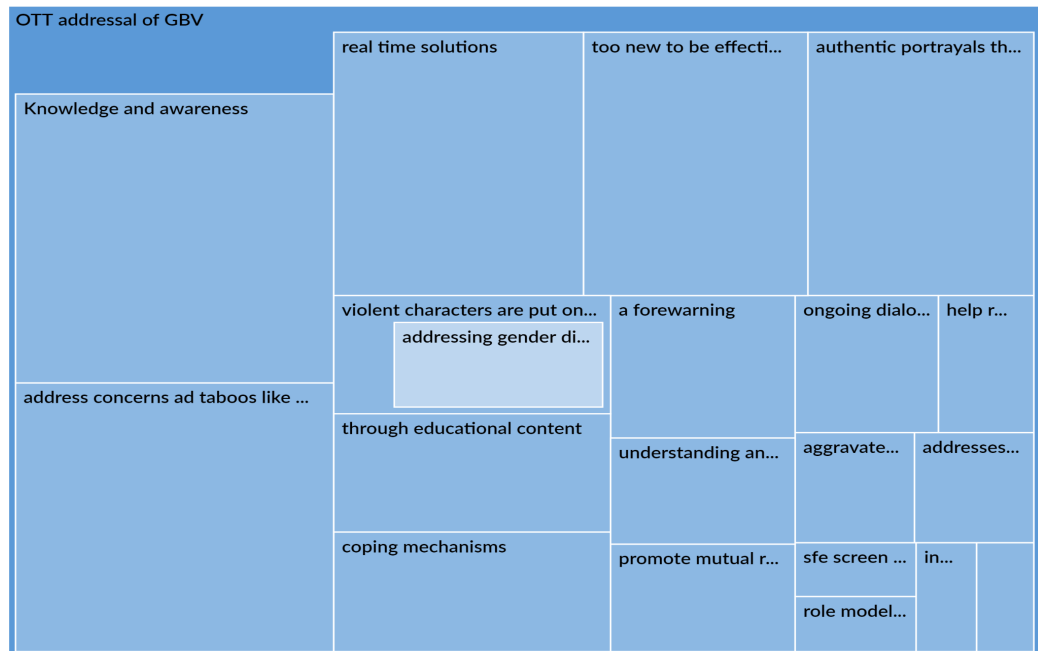
Figure 5.1.1.2.G (2): Hierarchy chart of OTT's addressal of Gender-based Violence

In her 1975 article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey explicitly critiqued the 'Hollywoodian magic,' questioning the extensive manipulation of visual and pleasurable experiences imposed on film audiences, particularly by male filmmakers targeting viewers of the same genre. She argued that these audiences seek a deliberate 'opening' to the alienation of established norms, largely stemming from an imaginary void of loss and terror inherent in the cinematic language. This resulted in "horror pornography" in contemporary cinema. Philosopher (Han) asserts that feature films demonstrate "an extraordinary degree of cold cruelty." The portrayal of violence trivializes crime, rendering spectators passive, apathetic, and silent (Han). Consequently, the pornographic, vengeful,

startling, and aestheticized cinema of cruelty is being nourished by a model assimilated as a genre (Imbert). The contemporary cinema of cruelty seems to have preserved this scopophilic, violent aesthetic and integrated it into popular culture in a more explicit fashion than in the latter half of the 20th century. (Stark) asserts that Julie Taymor's film, Titus (1999), exemplifies contemporary cruelty in cinema, as the director subverts the conventions of traditional narrative cinema, especially horror, employing both realistic and stylized modes of representation to examine abject imagery across multiple screens. (Tait) asserts that 'pornography' extends into the viewer's current circumstances to underscore their public fears while omitting the depicted crime and the scrutiny such pictures may attract. Psychoanalyst (M. Goldstein) refers to the "eroticism of cruelty" as a contemporary manifestation of more compassionate or humane principles endorsed in many cultural products. Consequently, a "spectatorial pleasure" in brutality and vulgarity would entail "deriving enjoyment from the suffering of the akin." (M. Goldstein) asserts that each era has distinct nuances of this pleasure, and our current moment entails savoring violence without of preconceived notions. It would include inundating the audience with fundamental, popular culture stimuli that portray the most depraved human characteristics as aesthetically pleasing. (Baudrillard) described a reality obscured by the "orgy of images" as an illusion. An audience eager for spectacle may be aroused and captivated by this vast, sexual illusion with provocative imagery. Wheatley asserts

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that spectacle is an integral aspect of television programming and that consumers prioritize visual enjoyment alongside narrative and informational content. (Wheatley) does not see spectacular television as cinematic; instead, "the aesthetics of spectacle typically linked to cinema could similarly pertain to specific forms of television." Consequently, exceptional television encourages viewers to reflect on beauty, eroticism, the grotesque, and the awe-inspiring, establishing a profound rather than superficial connection between the viewer and the show, characterized by strong visual gratification (Wheatley). Television violence, whether real or fictional, attracts viewers." 2013, p. 591. The eroticism of cruelty may be seen as a method to provide aesthetic enjoyment to the spectator via various violent images that appropriate the audience's attention and desires under the guise of an 'innocent' but angry delusion. In streaming networks, this elusive, enjoyable, and lamentable manner of experiencing modern audiovisual content is at a pivotal juncture. Television programs are a novel narrative medium and a distinct kind of cinematography and violence. Eroticized cruelty (M. Goldstein), the prioritization of jouissance over rational comprehension (Quintana), and the acclaim of pornographically violent films at esteemed festivals such as Cannes have been associated with ideological outrage (Rivera García). Postmodern cinema's grotesque and sexually explicit content, influenced by Artaud or Bazin's profound emotional and transformative exploration of creative cruelty, expresses its outrage at human injustice. Contemporary television

series, heralded as the third golden age of television, are now seen as an incomplete art form, comparable to cinematic and literary arts (Joyard). Consequently, early 20th-century dystopian fashion reemerges, but with a novel twist: it garners popularity, eroticizes the tragic brutality of its somber narratives via creative obscenity, exhibits pronounced bleakness, adopts a didactic tone, and serves as a status symbol (VanArendonk). (Fontcuberta) characterizes post-photography as a "symptom of a cultural and political pathology" wherein "visual overabundance" obscures the intrinsic significance of images. Moral discourse, employed as a pretext for the proliferation of disturbing imagery, is progressively relinquishing image pedagogy in favor of emotional saturation. The online series seems to engage in a dystopian tendency, where the story, cloaked in shock, examines various levels of abjection in the third golden age of television, evoking feelings of melancholy or discomfort as a kind of intellectual sustenance. Contemporary television programs seem to embody the new creative prestige of our day, addressing postmodern apocalyptic anxieties via hideous imagery. Current historical pessimism on the prevalence of gender-based violence, as shown by cultural consumption (Vargas Oliva), seems dictated by a society prioritizing emotional impact over education, particularly manifesting as moral judgment. In the context of seriesphilia culture's artistic liberty, status, and style, viewers' perceptions often decline.

This theoretical research investigates if internet pornography (IP)

increases women's susceptibility to aggression and violence. Mainstream heterosexual intellectual property portrays sexual assault, abuse, and the degradation of women. Notwithstanding its detrimental characteristics, the influence of violent and derogatory intellectual property on concepts, perceptions, and behaviors remains uncertain, as do the factors contributing to its widespread appeal. The second analyzes the objectification and dehumanization of women in IP, as well as the viewers' moral disengagement that allows them to disregard the violence's effects. Internet pornography (IP), particularly among minors, is widespread and becoming normalized. The eroticization and normalization of conduct are relevant; hence, intellectual property actions, like other social behaviors, must be understood within their cultural context. IP often portrays aggressive and violent sexual behavior against women, impacting cognition and behaviors. Violence against Women: Both offline and online violence against women is prevalent and persistent. The World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that 27% of women aged 15–49 in partnerships experience physical or sexual abuse by their partner.

5.1.2 Conceptual Framework for Gender Taboos in OTT Media

From the above discussions on categorized gender taboos, it is evident that various gender taboos are a part of OTT content streamed on Indian platforms. However, they seem to share an intricate causal relationship among themselves. Some are the direct or indirect consequences stemming

from a few taboos in the first place. The causative/source taboos are hypersexualization and objectification, narrow beauty standards and menstruation-based taboos among gender taboos manifesting into consequential or resultant taboos which then has transpires into certain severe psychological effects. The only resolution that can curb these taboos from getting disseminated into the younger demographic is that of regulation of content, not on moralistic gatekeeping grounds but in terms of gender sensitivity in OTT content regulation regardless of whether it is censorship or self-regulation by platforms. Hence, Figure 5.1.2 demonstrates how primary causatives manifest into resultant taboos that are physically and psychologically damaging on long-term exposure to OTT content if not regulated and gender sensitized.
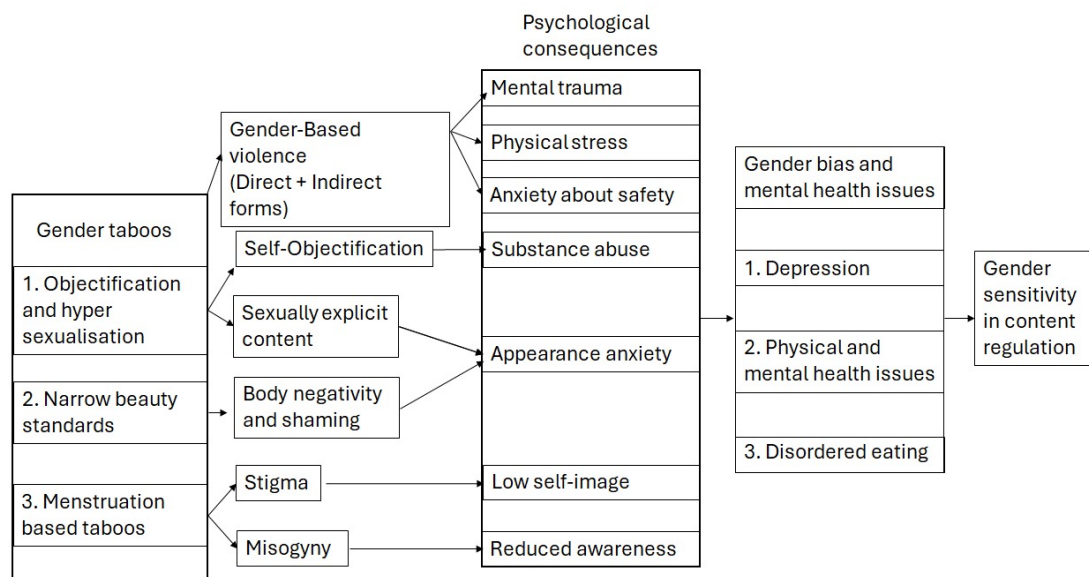
Figure 5.1.2: The conceptual framework for gender taboos in OTT content

Objectification and hypersexualization:

Although there is considerable acknowledgment of the influential role of advertising media on behaviors like food and alcohol consumption and the educational advantages of educational media (Calvert and Wilson), the correlation between violent media content and aggression may be elucidated by Moral Panic Theory, which posits that societies harbor aversion towards new media and attribute social issues to them until they acclimate to their presence. Experts suggest that the use of violent media, particularly intellectual property, may have significant adverse consequences on some people (Foubert). Researchers suggest that the consumption of violent media and ensuing aggressive behavior may be more accurately attributed to pre-existing aggressive inclinations. Exposure to media violence alone does not elicit moderately angry or violent behavior (Anderson et al.). In the absence of protective variables, an accumulation of risk factors, even those of minor to moderate magnitude, may increase the likelihood of such behaviors. The first hypothesis posits that IP is a cultural outlier, distinct from societal norms about sexual interactions and enabled by the third-person effect, a cognitive bias. The second hypothesis posits that viewers use moral disengagement to negate any harm inflicted on the subordinate actor, generally women, by the violent and degrading actions of heterosexual individuals. This theoretical study characterizes "cultural exception" as "the mechanisms through which specific networked media environments

facilitate the performance or observation of socially extreme behavior seemingly devoid of repercussions or relevance to conventional social existence and normative standards". This concept is based on Freud's and Elias's depictions of society's civilizing requirements, which restrict and regulate individual libidinal impulses to mitigate interpersonal harm. (Elias) posited that 'civility' entails the sublimation of violent and sexual impulses into artistic, literary, and athletic expressions (Häggström-Nordin et al.). Sexual objectification is the dissociation of a woman's body, its components, or sexual activities from her identity, which may manifest in either direct or indirect forms. Elias' theory of the 'civilizing process' posits that guilt and the suppression of violent impulses are evident in a society where individuals are constrained in their capacity to immediately fulfill all their urges and emotions. Indirect objectification entails the masculine gaze deriving pleasure from the feminine form(Atkinson and Rodgers) . Direct objectification encompasses all forms of sexual victimization that see a woman's body as an instrument. Men's regular exposure to objectifying media correlates with attitudes that endorse violence against women, influenced by perceptions of women as sexual objects (Wright and Tokunaga). Schema theory posits (Häggström-Nordin et al.) that objectifying views about women may become ingrained in an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge frameworks, so affecting their evaluation of women's position and reinforcing cognitive scripts regarding

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appropriate treatment of women. The objectification of women correlates with increased acceptability and perpetration of sexual violence, including a propensity to rape and sexually harass women, as well as unfavorable views towards female rape victims. Deindividuation also promotes dehumanization. Research indicates that objectified women are seen as less human than their non-objectified counterparts, resulting in less moral consideration and cognitive acknowledgment(Loughnan et al.) . In a study, (Vasquez et al.) found that objectifying a woman heightened hostility towards her, even in the absence of provocation. Decreased empathy and apathy towards the suffering of others promote moral disengagement from victims shown in media (Brockmyer; Hartmann et al.)posits that the recurrent depiction of violence as fundamental, acceptable, and pleasurable may instigate this gradual, subconscious phenomenon. The psychological mechanism by which moral disengagement influences behavior is well understood. Individuals acquire an understanding of right and evil via social interaction. Upon internalizing these ethical standards, the individual may use them to evaluate their own morality and engage in self-regulation (Fox and Potocki). The effects locus pertains to efforts to clarify consequences, including neglect, distortion, and denial of negative outcomes. If an individual can disregard the adverse effects of intellectual property, self-censorship is improbable. The victim locus signifies attempts to assign responsibility to the victim. Dehumanization and victim-blaming facilitate this(Bandura). Media exposure to sexual

violence normalizes aggression against women. (Dieter) indicated a significant correlation between female MTV viewers and the acceptability of sexual violence in "normal" relationships. He posited that favorable representations of sexual violence led women to acquiesce to it in relationships with males, diminishing their likelihood to object or protect themselves. Dieter contends that extensive media exposure normalizes relational abuse and violence as integral components of love and sexuality. Research indicates that exposure to pornography correlates with an increased propensity to tolerate or participate in violence against women within personal relationships (Russell). Erotica portrays consenting and pleasurable sexuality (MacKinnon). Graphic sexual content is not detrimental, however sexually violent content seems to be (Donnerstein, Linz, & Penrod). Research revealed that over 80% of X-rated films portrayed males subjugating and exploiting women, with three-quarters exhibiting physical aggressiveness and half depicting rape (Cowan et al., 1988). Recent studies (Demare, Briere, & Lips, 1988; Donnerstein et al., 1987; Malamuth & Briere, 1986) indicate that exposure to sexually violent content amplifies men's adherence to rape myths, heightens their propensity to acknowledge committing rape, and desensitizes them to the concept of rape, making forced sexual acts more palatable. This is alarming since 18 million males in the United States purchase 165 pornographic publications each month (Wolf, 1991, p. 79). A rising percentage of males acquiesce to coerced sexual acts and media portrayals

of rape (Brownmiller). Research on male studies (Allgeier) indicates that males exhibit comparable psychological adjustment, health, emotional well-being, heterosexual partnerships, and sexual frequency. Men who perpetrate sexual assault exhibit more hypermasculinity and endorse male dominance and sexual entitlement compared to non-rapists. The distinction between sexually aggressive guys and others is minimal. Prior to the age of 18, 33% to 66% of women experienced sexual abuse (Clutter; Koss). What are the factors contributing to rape, the most rapidly increasing violent crime in the United States? (Doyle). Experts assert that psychological deviance and overwhelming libido do not precipitate rape. Rape may occur absent of sexual intent. Rape is a violent act used to exert control and demonstrate dominance over another individual, exemplified by a male over a female or a captor over a captive (Rideau & Sinclair). Increasing data indicates that societal perceptions of men, women, and sexual relationships are predictive of rape. Rape is seldom in societies that esteem women and feminine attributes while fostering harmonious human-natural interaction (Griffin). Most media portray sex, violence, and male power over women in a nuanced manner, rather than in a pornographic context.

Narrow beauty standards:

Studies have associated self-reported instances of self-objectification with adverse psychological consequences, including self-objectification, body

shame, internalization of the thin ideal, diminished awareness, and disordered eating among both lesbian and heterosexual women(Breines et al.). Victimization correlates with self-objectification, body shame, and adverse psychological consequences, including depression and PTSD (Fitzgerald et al.). Moreover, heterosexist bias exacerbates certain instances of sexual victimization(Szymanski and Balsam). Experiences of unsolicited sexual objectification, conventional gender role stereotyping, and heterosexist incidents are significant predictors of psychological distress among lesbian and bisexual women (Szymanski and Owens). Films mirror society. Indian film has consistently shown authentic India over the centuries, serving as an economical form of visual pleasure. The cabaret dancing attire, which accentuates women's sensual features, the drenched sari, and the natural surroundings serve as cinematic stimuli. In the film *Hum Apke Hain Kaun* (1995), the attire of the principal female actress, reflecting the scopophilic tendencies of the camera, led Archana Kumari to assert in her research paper "Representation of Women in Media after Globalization" that "It is true that after globalization and liberalization, the economy of media has transformed women into commodities to be marketed alongside products." Women from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds may experience reduced internal bodily awareness, disconnection from physiological processes, impaired flow states, difficulties in task performance, body shame, anxiety regarding attractiveness, and symptoms of eating disorders and depression

as a result of self-objectification (Fredrickson and Roberts). Studies have associated self-objectification with numerous psychological factors, including diminished self-esteem, reduced life satisfaction, impaired relationship satisfaction, overall well-being, increased risk-taking, self-harm, and adverse attitudes toward breastfeeding (Breines et al.) discovered that lesbians exhibiting elevated levels of internalized heterosexism had increased self-objectification, which partly mediated the association between internalized heterosexism, adverse eating attitudes, and depressed symptoms. Menstruators experience heightened pain, anxiety, and melancholy. Obsolete gender roles and cultural limitations may hinder menstrual health care access. Period poverty undermines women's empowerment, adversely impacting their mental health.

Menstruation-based taboos:

(Goffman) saw stigma as a natural extension of the three Ms (menstruation, maternity, and menopause), which signify anomalies seen with revulsion and contempt. The three Ms are widespread among women, who face devaluation and stigma. Stigmatization of human biological systems affects morality. Women's guilt and disgust are reflected in assessments (Sitzmann et al., 2018). A new stigma literature review (Jones & King) suggests that dynamic stigmas, such as the three Ms, may become more prominent at important career phases. However, the three Ms are stigmatized in society and the workplace as humiliation, weakness, and

incompetence. Mostly women have these feelings because they fear being seen as weaker (Joshi et al.). Meta-analyses show women perform identically to men . Women struggle to discuss taboo topics due to shame and stigma.

Dysmenorrhea (abdominal cramps) is the most common symptom (ACOG, 2015). Sociocultural beliefs may link the monthly "period" to abject creatures—women being dangerous, filthy, and unpleasant (Stubbs and Costos). Menstruation is stigmatized in societies with greater animosity toward women and less equality, causing disgust, secrecy, and shame (Peranovic and Bentley). Due to menstrual taboos and shame, managing menstruation may create psychological stress and sadness in women and girls.

This conceptual framework provides a structured approach for linking thematic analysis analyzed through psychoanalytic and abject theories to explore audience perceptions and internalized reactions to gendered taboos in Indian OTT content. By focusing on the psychological repercussions of taboos and how viewers interpret them, this framework enables a deeper understanding of how media both reflects and challenges societal expectations around gender and taboo in India and eradicate latent prejudices by gender-sensitizing regulation to foster a more progressive and inclusive mediascape.

5.1.3 Possible Solutions and Regulation of OTT Media Content:

Censorship is clearly one of the most contentious subjects in the annals of film. Censorship is seen as a necessary evil. A notion that challenges dominant biases and assumptions may have a significant and transformative influence, since it necessitates the adoption of an alternative viewpoint or mode of thought. This may have profound and disquieting consequences, as established ideas and attitudes are confronted and maybe destabilized. Their entitlement to articulate oneself via their chosen media is as vital as any other citizen's right to free speech. Forty-two This is an age in which public viewing preferences have undergone a remarkable transformation, with individuals unreservedly expressing distinctive thoughts and audiences readily embracing them. All content they see must be refined to a standard suitable for presentation to a nation with a varied populace, which necessitates the function of censorship. As public expectations for online material increase, it is imperative to establish a dedicated legal framework for regulating OTT platform content, while considering the principles of creative freedom and audience preferences.

Individuals' freedom to express themselves via art, literature, or creativity, called "creative freedom," includes the right to discover, develop, and communicate ideas, feelings, and opinions via diverse mediums, writing, art, music, cinema, and theatre emphasizes individuality, self-expression,

cultural variety, and social enrichment via art. Freedom of speech and expression reinforce each other, both entailing people's freedom to express themselves and promote intellectual interaction and social vitality. Indian sovereignty, security, and friendliness are among these limits to freedom of expression. International relations, public order, decency, morality, contempt of court, slander, offense, incitement (Annappa). Freedom was a longstanding tradition in Indian speech and thriving media. Here, folks may voice their ideas and criticize the government and openly discuss concerns (Kanojia et al.). Online censorship and spying threaten such free speech and digital expressiveness. The 1952 Cinematograph Act and certifications for content regulation are allowed by bodies like the CBFC. In different situations, filmmakers have confronted difficulty gaining certification owing to censor board objections to certain scenes, speeches, genres, or topics (Bhowmik). These occurrences raise concerns about constraints on creative freedom and the need for a more open and progressive approach. Some of the world's most exceptional paintings, stunning sculptures, and melodious songs and dances may be stifled by legislation, as the state exhibits a puritanical attitude towards them, with moralists imposing paradigms and prohibiting heterodox expressions, thereby silencing innovative voices. While such restrictions are essential, it is crucial to ascertain when they become excessive and infringe upon our rights as viewers and the creative freedoms of creators. The emergence of OTT platforms in India during the epidemic coincided

with a surge in ongoing dispute. Media law in India is established under Article 19 of the Constitution of India Act, 1949. Censorship is synonymous with disputes, often emerging within disagreements involving politicians, philosophers, organizations, religious communities, and the general public. Censorship is the essential instrument for controlling public knowledge. The media business is afforded the same rights as any individual citizen of the nation. The predominant terms for comprehending the scope of limitation are 'decency' and 'morality.' Censorship, fundamentally a kind of moral regulation imposed by particular authorities about what they deem indecent or immoral, presents two perspectives. They are not a static idea and must be comprehended in relation to the context and circumstances. In the Bandit Queen Case, the Supreme Court determined that the frontal naked tableau depicting the rape of Phoolan Devi was only a representation of the act and did not infringe upon moral standards. The filmmakers' goal was therefore included into content regulation. Nonetheless, pornography is created with the purpose of stimulating sexual desire, distinguishing it from obscenity. Pornography not only conveys adult narratives; it also influences the audience's expectations and norms, purportedly inciting individuals to engage in criminal behavior, and is thus restricted to the specific segment of media devoted to it. The justification of the limitation must be assessed individually, taking into account all relevant considerations. The CBFC categorizes films into four classifications: 'U' for unrestricted public

viewing, 'UA' for unrestricted viewing with parental discretion for children under 12, 'A' for adult-only content, and 'S' for content suitable exclusively for specific professions or classes of individuals. 18 Censorship is more stringent on television, as enforced by the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 and the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994, which govern and limit the airing of films on television that have not received a 'U' certification from the CBFC. Consequently, it is accurate to assert that television censorship in India is much more stringent regarding the concepts of decency and morality. The notion varies per nation based on contemporary societal moral norms.

On a global scale, regulatory mechanisms vary. The US has a relatively light-touch regulatory environment for OTT platforms, with a focus on protecting consumer privacy and data security. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) plays a key role in enforcing these regulations. While the UK has a more stringent regulatory environment, with Ofcom overseeing content standards and ensuring compliance with the Broadcasting Code, China has a highly regulated environment for OTT platforms. The government imposes strict content censorship and requires platforms to obtain licenses for streaming. Platforms must also ensure that a significant portion of their content is locally produced, paying special attention to local customs. Additionally, the OTT platforms must receive NRTA licenses to operate and distribute audio-visual content lawfully in China (Wang and Lobato). The regulatory environment for OTT platforms

in India is still considered lax as OTT media is still in its growth phase. The United States is relatively free as it advocates freedom and choice of audience, but the UK and China have quite stringent rules.

Conversely, OTT platforms have included violent or gory material, including murder, assault, genocide, and self-harm. This information has significantly harmed targeted persons (Sanfilippo and Strandburg). Simultaneously, other platforms have encountered significant resistance about pornography, sexual assault, child exploitation, cyberbullying, and related issues (Kumar et al.). It is not confined just to India. An inquest in the UK determined that a young woman had taken her own life after seeing self-harm content on a prominent OTT platform. Subsequently, her digital evidence indicated exposure to many hazardous chemicals. In 2020, Ofcom released fieldwork research examining the opinions of adults and adolescents towards internet on-demand services. This study highlights improper language, issues about adults and adolescents, and instances of bullying and victimization(Dwivedi et al.). More than 18 respondents identified further concerns. In 2021, research conducted by the Centre for Countering Digital Hate (CDH) revealed that few OTT platforms exhibit white supremacist propaganda, Holocaust denial, and anti-Semitic material. This investigation demonstrated that these platforms purposefully took inadequate measures to delete problematic information despite social media warnings, stakeholders, and campaigners accused of religious offense. The series' creators were then accused of inciting hatred

and insulting others' religious views (Devasundaram). In India, "Mirzapur," a popular series, was regularly condemned for depicting a violent, lawless Indian hamlet where strong language, hooliganism, crime, and violence were glorified. The film "Gandi Baat" was criticized for inciting voyeurism and immorality. In 2021, an OTT platform was heavily retaliated against for distributing the film and was accused of fostering aggression and mental illness among youngsters. Likewise, the Chinese authorities found violent content on numerous major OTT sites in 2018, pornography, and violent video games (Steckman 2020).

Reliance Entertainment introduced OTT services in India with the launch of BigFlix in 2008. A self-regulation rule titled 'The rule of Best Practices for Online Curated Providers' was issued by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and endorsed by numerous OTT platforms as its regulatory framework. Thirty-two The creative freedom afforded by these platforms is a commendable attribute, enabling the creation of audacious material that resonates with younger audiences; yet, every liberty has consequences. This code aims to implement censorship and accountability inside the digital framework. The IT Rules, 2021, categorize these media sources as intermediaries. Thirty-five This endeavor is significant, since India has the second biggest population of internet users globally. With the increasing number of internet users and youngsters gaining access to mobile devices, it is crucial to implement control of these platforms. This regulation seeks to implement a self-

regulatory ethical code and a three-tier grievance resolution system for OTT platforms.

Complexity surrounds content management and regulation. Balancing free speech and information with responsibility. Achieving this equilibrium requires providing a clear legal foundation for free speech and establishing appropriate content management principles including content removal, moderation, and appeals (Lemieux and Trapnell). This framework should additionally involve human rights norms like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, considering local cultural and social standards. Additionally, in creating and executing these rules, numerous stakeholders should actively participate, including politicians, civic society, industry specialists, and academics. This involvement would ensure a variety of opinions and prevent power centralization. Additionally, governments should avoid or repeal broad or unclear laws since they might lead to arbitrary enforcement and unforeseen effects. From the end-user standpoint, digital literacy initiatives to educate people on how to evaluate trustworthiness and information-source credibility should be promoted. This may promote responsible consumption and decrease heavy content management (Ladley 2019). Lastly, states may adopt technology advances like artificial intelligence and machine learning to aid content filtering and management, working with IT businesses to create tools and algorithms to quickly detect and reduce harmful material, false positives, and discrimination(Dwivedi et al.).

Content control requires internal assessment and filtering systems before making it accessible. Any obvious infractions may lead to fines, content removal, or suspension or revocation of licenses.

Currently, several platforms are assigning mature ratings to material, however this varies by location. Restricting artists' independence due to the conservative views of a few would impede societal growth, since work should be seen as intended by its author. A balanced approach, such as self-regulation, is essential, allowing producers to exercise the discretion to provide potentially damaging information alone when it is vital to accurately represent the subject matter. The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), a representing organization for Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms, has issued a proposal for a self-regulatory framework. Seven This agreement established a framework of guiding principles for digital content, which included the enhancement of the content rating system to tackle the issue of pornographic and other explicit material.8 The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMA) has created a self-regulatory body called the Digital Publishers Content Grievances Council (DPCGC) for video streaming platforms or OTT services. The objective of this rule seems to be to facilitate informed decision-making among consumers over age-appropriate material and to protect their interests in selecting and accessing preferred content at their leisure.

An Overview of Content Regulation of OTT Platforms: Existing Policies and Frameworks

A number of web series released on different OTT platforms have been in controversy. The Netflix series "Sacred Games" (2018) was criticized for its derogatory and inappropriate language. The Amazon Prime series *Paatal Lok* (2020) faced legal challenges for its portrayal of violence, explicit scenes, and allegedly defamatory content. Multiple complaints sparked a debate on the need for regulation of OTT platforms. but the show was not banned and continued to be available on the platform. The political drama series *Tandav* (2021) on Amazon Prime Video faced controversy for allegedly hurting religious sentiments and portraying Hindu deities in a manner deemed offensive by some communities. Legal complaints were filed against the creators and the platform leading to the removal of controversial scenes and a public apology.

Recently, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting mandated the prohibition of eighteen OTT platforms due to vulgarity and obscenity in their content, despite several prior warnings. In March 2024, 18 OTT platforms, including Neufliks, X Prime, Besharams, Mood X, and Prime Play, were banned for distributing profane, vulgar, and, in some instances, sexual content. Numerous petitions have been filed in courts to mitigate obscenity on these sites. (Hindu) The petitioner said that these platforms function with business objectives and without consideration for the

cultural and moral sensitivities of the nation's society. The Supreme Court implemented the "Hicklin Test" to assess obscenity, concentrating on whether the material has the potential to corrupt or deprave those whose minds are susceptible or impressionable. The Supreme Court, in determining the parameters of obscenity under Section 292 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) concerning artistic and literary works, stated that obscenity should be assessed according to contemporary societal standards. It further asserted that the mere existence of vulgarity or explicit content does not inherently equate to obscenity if the work possesses literary or artistic value. The lawsuit challenged the legitimacy of Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, which was used in purported instances of internet expression considered offensive or obscene. Consequently, Indian courts have significantly contributed to the interpretation of laws and their reconciliation with the right to freedom of speech and expression via several landmark rulings.

The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, represent a significant step towards structuring this balance. As the OTT landscape continues to evolve, ongoing dialogue between regulators, content creators, platforms, and consumers will be essential to refine these regulations and address emerging challenges. The goal is to create an environment that fosters innovation and creativity while ensuring content remains respectful of cultural and moral standards as these platforms have revolutionized the media and entertainment

industry by offering on-demand access to a vast library of content, including movies, TV shows, documentaries, and original productions. The main motive of signing this code is self-regulation of the online streaming content. The Preamble to the code explicitly states that companies endorsing this Code pledge to exert reasonable efforts and act in good faith to guarantee that the material provided on their respective services in India aligns with the values delineated in the code. The need for the code arises due to reasons like the authenticity of content, self-injurious or self-harm-provoking content, sexually exploitative or obscene content of children, sexually explicit or abusive adult content, cyberbullying, and content showing harassment, hate speech, or discriminatory attacks against humanity and content potentially harming the intellectual property of owners.

 Consequently, the self-regulation code is established with the following aims to address these challenges: 26 The primary aim of the code is to enable customers to recognize age-appropriate material and let them to choose content appropriately. The objective is to safeguard consumer interests in selecting and accessing desired content at their convenience, while also respecting the creative freedoms of content creators and artists, thereby enabling them to produce content that upholds their freedom of speech and expression and establishing a mechanism for addressing complaints regarding available content. 26 The prohibited content under this code includes malicious disrespect towards the national emblem or

flag, children involved in sexual activities, any depiction of a child's sexual anatomy, and actions that outrage the religious sentiments of any class, section, or community. Any court with competent jurisdiction should prohibit the promotion of terrorism and other kinds of violence against the State. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that every individual has the right to freedom of thought and expression, including the freedom to hold views without interference and to seek, receive, and disseminate information and ideas via any medium. Social media and movies significantly contributed to the realization of freedom of speech and expression by facilitating the dissemination of individual perspectives and amplifying the viewpoints of a very influential audience. Contemporary cinema serves as a conduit for enhancing our cultural knowledge. Recently, the Supreme Court addressed the same issue regarding the prohibition of the film *Padmaavat*, which was mandated by the state governments of Gujarat and Rajasthan. It reaffirmed its stance from the case concerning the film *Aarakshan* by suspending the orders of the state governments and preventing other states from issuing similar directives. The Court asserted that "if intellectual prowess and the natural or cultivated power of creation are interfered with outside the permissible bounds of law, the concept of creativity faces extinction, and when creativity perishes, the values of civilization deteriorate." The Film Certification Appellate Tribunal 20 case is a pivotal instance in which the court delineated the procedures for censorship. Censorship of a

film must be assessed individually, since a standardized approach for determining a film's suitability for public display is not permissible. The right to freedom of speech and expression is consistently juxtaposed with the limitations outlined in Article 21 of the Constitution of India, since this right is not absolute. It became practically hard to delineate a definitive boundary about what would be subject to restriction. Consequently, the establishment of the Censor Board provides a measure of comfort about these issues. The Information Technology Act, 2000 has many sections pertinent to the regulation of material on OTT platforms. Section 66A of the Act pertains to the penalization for transmitting inflammatory communications via a communication service. Sections 67, 67A, 67B, and 67C of the Act impose fines and imprisonment for the distribution or transmission of obscene material, sexually explicit content, and any material portraying minors in sexually explicit actions, respectively, in electronic format. provision 69A of the Act empowers the central government to mandate monitoring, decryption, or interception, or a combination thereof, of any resource if justified by certain circumstances outlined in the provision, including the investigation of any offense. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) has just promulgated the Information Technology (Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 (IT Rules, 2021). The principal objective of this legislation was to provide a cohesive regulatory framework for digital media intermediaries, including Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms, in

alignment with the IT Act. 11 The regulations are divided into three sections. Part I contains definitions and preliminaries; Part II addresses intermediaries' due diligence and grievance redressal mechanisms; and Part III pertains to the code of ethics, procedures, and protections for digital media. The media and entertainment industry is thriving, however it requires creative adaptability to produce innovative content. Article 19 of the Indian Constitution ensures the protection of freedom of speech and expression, hence safeguarding creative liberty. Article 19 (1) (a) confers the following rights: (1) All citizens possess the right to free speech and expression; ... It is essential to acknowledge that these rights are constrained. The constraints are defined in Article 19 (2): "(2) Sub-clause (a) of clause (1) shall not impede the enforcement of any existing law nor inhibit the State from enacting legislation that imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the aforementioned sub-clause, in the interest of India's sovereignty and integrity, security, amicable relations with foreign nations, public order, decency, morality, contempt of court, defamation, or incitement."

In a democracy like India, where free speech and expression allow for open debate, freedom of expression helps shape and express public opinion on social, economic, and political issues nationwide, including:

1. Telecast and broadcast rights

2. Commercial Advertisements

TRAI (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India) sometimes favors market-oriented approaches over regulatory action. However, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting plans to propose laws to regulate OTT sites, ending the debate. Indian OTT platforms are regulated under specifications of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. Digital media is divided into news suppliers, intermediaries, and OTT platforms. OTT platforms must comply with content categorization, age ratings, and self-regulation. Only under some conditions, the government may censor content. These restrictions are a major step toward OTT platform supervision, content control, and user safety that have faced criticism over privacy and free speech issues. The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 ("IT Rules") and the Information Technology Act, 2000 ("IT Act") control OTT platforms in India, making regulation logical. The IT Act defines 'intermediary' as a company that transports or provides electronic record services- telecom, network, internet, web hosting, and other providers are included. Star India Private Limited ("Star") and the All-India Digital Cable Federation ("AIDCF") litigated this ruling. After reviewing the petition, the TDSAT determined that OTT platforms do not require central government permission or licenses since they are not television stations. Thus, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal cannot regulate OTT sites nor are the OTT

platforms subject to the provisions of the Cinematography Act 1952.4 as the Central Board of Film Certification is responsible for certifying films released for theatres alone and does not have any authority over online content. 5 The regulations provided distinct treatment to "films released online," as the CBFC was solely responsible for reviewing, categorizing, and censoring content intended for theatrical release nationwide. OTT platforms are subject to several provisions of the Indian Penal Code,1860, such as Sections 295A, 298, 153A, 499, and 500, as well as some provisions of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prevention) Act 1986.

They should also install parental locks for U/A 13+ material. The guidelines provide that if someone complains about objectionable OTT platform content, they may register a complaint via the platform's complaint system which may be escalated to Industry-led Digital Media Content Regulatory Council (DMCRC) body that monitors self-regulation, has the power to penalize, warn, and even suspend or revoke platform registration if regulation is violated (Bhardwaj and Rana 2021).

A three-level grievance redressal procedure under the multi-level self-regulation regulations includes:

Level 1: Publisher self-regulation.

Level 2: Self-regulation by publisher self-regulating bodies.

Level 3: Supervising mechanism.

Several provisions of the proposed legislation would mandate OTT platforms to adhere to a "duty of care," compelling them to adequately protect customers from illegal and dangerous material (Woods). Specific provisions of the Act mandate that OTT platforms designate a representative to ensure adherence to new standards and deliver annual reports on their initiatives to protect consumers from harmful content (Watney), thereby ensuring that the new legislation does not inhibit free expression but rather protects end users from perilous information (Wu). OTT content certification does not need pre-screening before to broadcast, in contrast to cinema, which requires pre-certification from the Central Board of Film Certification and Cable Television Networks. The material is governed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in accordance with the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics) 2021 Code Rules. These laws provide an ethical framework and grievance resolution process for digital media platforms, including OTT. These limits apply to all OTT platforms required to self-classify content as U (Universal), U/A 7+ (Universal/Adults over seven years), U/A 16+, and A. The publisher shall appoint a grievance redressal mechanism where an Indian officer will handle complaints received. Every complaint will be decided by the officer within 15 days. One or more self-regulatory bodies may exist. This panel will be chaired by a retired Supreme Court justice, a high court judge, or a distinguished independent individual, with no more

than six members who are required to register with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. This group will guarantee publisher adherence to the code of ethics and address outstanding publisher complaints within 15 days. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting will implement a supervisory framework. It will create a self-regulating body charter, particularly Codes of Practice that form an Interdepartmental Committee to address concerns. OTT operators who voluntarily developed a 'Code of Self-Regulation' to govern the content posted on their networks follow a strict set of ethical guidelines. The main features of the rules are:

• Intermediaries are required to publish on their website the rules, privacy policy, and user agreements for usage and access to its computer resources.16

 • Complaints are required to be acknowledged within a period of twenty-four hours 17 and resolved within a period of fifteen days from the date of receiving. 18

• Intermediaries are required to remove or disable access to the contents that expose private areas of a person, full or partial nudity, sexual acts, or impersonated or morphed images within twenty-four hours of complaint. 19

 • Intermediaries are required to remove or prevent access to any content that is obscene, pornographic, insulting on the basis of gender, violating

bodily privacy, or against decency or morality promptly but not later than thirty-six hours of receiving a notice or order from the appropriate authority. 20

• The OTT platforms will categorize the content into five age-based categories: 'U' (suitable for all ages), U/A 7+ (suitable for ages 7 and above), U/A 13+ (suitable for ages 13 and above), U/A 16+ (suitable for ages 16 and above), and 'A' (restricted to adults exclusively, i.e., 18 years and above). 21

• OTT platforms must provide robust age verification techniques for adults and access control systems to manage content categorized as U/A 13+ or higher. 22

• Each show's categorization rating will be displayed at the beginning. The viewer description should include a content advisory that accurately reflects the nature of the content, allowing viewers to make an informed decision about whether or not to watch. 23

The IT Act, 2021, serves just as a supplementary legislation; it is not specifically designed for OTT platforms and lacks the transformative impact necessary for a nation where the OTT industry has expanded rapidly, leading to a decline in cinema attendance. These platforms must be empowered to ensure that individuals' rights as viewers are not compromised. While the implementation of the Code of Ethics and self-

regulation model is a commendable initiative that the government should promote in alignment with the principles of freedom of speech and expression, it necessitates legal recognition with specific amendments, such as imposing penalties on violators and mandating membership for all stakeholders, to ensure the code effectively regulates audiovisual content on online video streaming OTT platforms. Additional alternatives include the Co-regulation model, which entails regulated self-regulation; the convergence model, which refers to a unified framework encompassing various dissemination platforms; and global ratings, which denote a standardized rating system for content and quotas for indigenous content on OTT platforms. The audience reception of censorship and regulation of content for the study sample showed the majority to be believing in the concept of content regulation.

Do you believe in censorship and regulation of content
343 responses
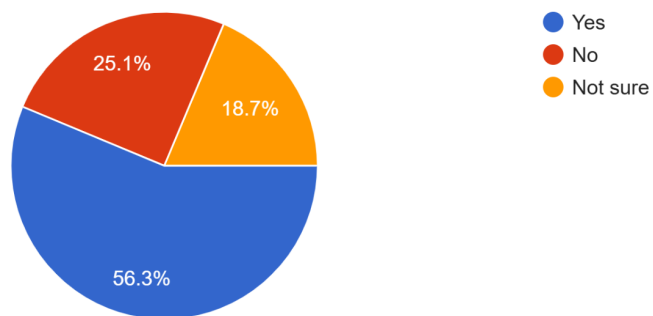
Figure 5.1.3 (A): Audience response regarding content regulation

To further explore the nature of content regulation, the personal interviews revealed that a certain level of content regulation is necessary in the contemporary media landscape and that

1. OTT media helps address gender-based violence.

"Censorship is mandatory, as that would make sure of what is reaching the audience comprising all age groups." - Abhay

"Gender-based violence is visible to a great extent, even in the smallest form of crude remarks and gaze. Trolls and memes have added to the jiving culture. OTT is just trying to promote inclusivity, mutual respect, empathy, and equality through its messages. Gender sensitivity in content regulation is important for creating a media outlook that contributes to positive social change, challenges regressive and hazardous norms, and promotes inclusivity and equality. It is a collective effort involving content creators, regulators, and the industry as a whole to ensure that media content reflects and shapes a society that values and respects all genders."- Amruthom

The censorship should be available because otherwise it may affect one's mental health deeply. Women are becoming independent and self-sufficient, but still they lack self-confidence and self-esteem. For that matter, gender sensitivity holds utmost importance, as male gaze, mocking the less dominant sections, are silent propagators of gender-based

violence. Regulation of content in these lines comes to play a responsible role as it would educate masses." Anjali Agarwal

Basically, harmony, peace, sisterhood/brotherhood, and empathy are the significance. Content regulation is necessary based on viewership and the impact on the audience. Gender sensitivity in content regulation is crucial for combating stereotypes, empowering marginalized voices, and addressing gender-based violence. It plays a key role in promoting a more inclusive and respectful media landscape. Also, it contributes to raising awareness about diverse perspectives and fosters corporate social responsibility, encouraging media platforms to prioritize ethical and equitable portrayals of gender in their content." Ashutosh Ranjan

2. It has an educational role that cannot be wholly achieved by a self-regulatory framework only.

"Very important, as it is educational for youngsters while meeting their entertainment needs. Content regulation can elevate the content quality and distribution. Gender sensitivity is highly significant, and it is absolutely important to sensitize the audience about the right notions of socio-cultural constructions of gender, as there are a lot of fads and misconceptions. It sure does combat discrimination, however small is the dent caused, which leads to inappropriate content in the name of creative freedom." Bisma

"It's largely significant; mostly for young adults, it can be a tool to influence them. Gender sensitivity and content regulation play an educational role. It is something that media houses should be accountable for. Raising awareness and providing genuine information in entertaining factors are the main significances. Content regulation will provide a tailored and customized social message without digression and unsuitable distractions if the intent and content are of good quality." Avik

"It will then redefine gender and its relations and will not limit it to bodily definitions. Content regulation may help this reach its audience clearly." Sutanwi

"To provide an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to understanding the social and cultural constructions of gender that shape the experiences of women and men in society." Akanksha

Figure 5.1.3 (B): Word Cloud on how the audience believes OTT helps address Gender-Based violence

However, the roots of self-regulation of OTT media content are evident in its gender-based taboos that are deep-seated in the minds of creator-audiences and are instrumental for creating gender bias in viewers through media portrayals. The self-regulation of content should target both creators and viewers to introspect on how consciously or unconsciously they impart gender and power imbalances in society and contribute to the resulting crime and violence.

"For building emotionally intelligent viewers, fostering gender equality, and minimizing bias. Content regulation does not mean only curtailing the artistic freedom of the creators but also ensuring a non-violent, non-regressive, non-derogatory presentation of content to its audience."
Indranil

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"The importance lies in attacking patriarchy and ill practices stemming from gender bias and discrimination. Content regulation puts a check on the illicit dissemination of content to the younger demographic, who mostly rely on OTT." Tulika

"Gender sensitivity in content regulation will not only help in combating stereotypes but also diminish the power imbalance between genders. Both gender sensitivity and content regulation are important as they shun gender discrimination and promote equality." Alokporna

"Very important for inclusive representation, addressing gender bias in society, preventing insensitive content, and fostering tolerance and resilience. Otherwise, violence and gender discrimination will continue to exist." - Darshika

"Significant in empowering marginalized voices. Content regulation is crucial, as the unsuitability of certain explicit content and taboos could be eliminated. Today, keen and intelligent minds also form a part of OTT audiences. Gender sensitivity should be included to create a well-informed, creative, and inducive environment that respects a woman's perspective and her worldviews. This is what content regulators can ensure apart from addressing violence and ruggedness on screen". Debika

"Gender sensitivity should be the new grammar for filmmaking. I believe censorship should be taken seriously and not create content only with a

mindset of obscenity. Content regulation is a must today, as a lot of lewd remarks, scenes, and commentary have become part of the OTT culture. Gender sensitivity acts as a safety mechanism in the regulatory part and is imperative to abide by, as a lot of misinformation and misrepresentation can be checked through this. Moreover, crimes and violence can also be controlled by instilling equality amongst all." Jiten

"Minimize discriminatory practices and foster empathy and respect, good and responsible content catered to its masses. It's very important, especially for the younger generation, to understand the nuances of gender sensitivity." Saumya

"Gender sensitivity is highly recommended as mainstream media portrays the idea that even a female-oriented society is rescued by a male figurehead. Such Godfather syndromes, seen in sources of funding, distribution, and publicity, are to be ousted by the filmmakers and content regulatory boards alike. Socially conscious narratives also have to be gender conscious. So, it is the need of the hour. Content regulations, censorship of strong language, violence, and nudity seem mandatory as the content creators are not always accountable. Using gender-neutral jargon instead of dialogues oozing toxic masculinity is to be taken care of." Meruka

"Including gender-neutrality in every walk of life promotes respect for all genders and helps combat stereotypes, minimizing discriminations of all

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kinds. Content regulators can help ensure this. Corporate social responsibility and raising awareness are 2 things that come to my mind as slowly but surely these widely watched and consumed content bring about a change in how the society thinks." Suranjana

Figure 5.1.3 (C) Word cloud of audience's views on gender sensitivity in content regulation and OTT's addressal to Gender-Based Violence
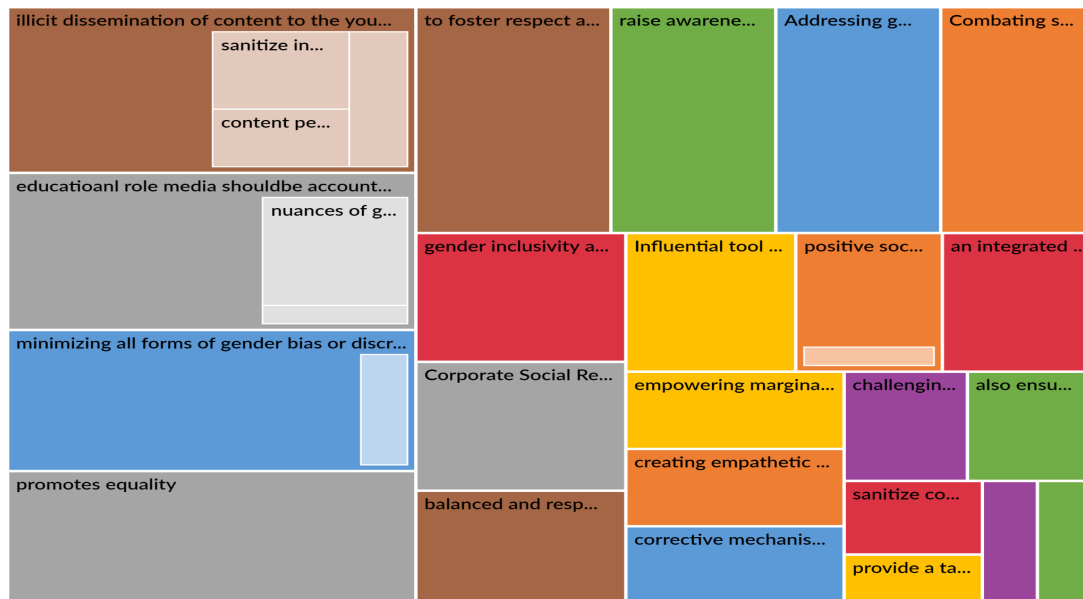
Figure 5.1.3 (D): Hierarchy chart of audience's views on gender sensitivity in content regulation and OTT's addressal to Gender-Based Violence

Therefore, as an introspecting mechanism, gender sensitivity should be the chief proponent in self-regulation, which is hereby absent in the regulatory framework. This can be achieved in multiple ways, like including gender-neutral terms in content, creating positive role models, reducing stigma relating to taboos, increasing awareness and media accountability of portraying balanced and respectful representations of gender minorities, introducing corrective mechanisms for misrepresentation of ideologies like feminism and sexuality, ensuring the role of corporate social responsibility, and empowering marginalized voices, sanitizing content from gender intolerance, violence, and insensitivity, and encouraging authentic gender portrayals on screen. Combating gender stereotypes and

taboos and minimizing all forms of gender bias will assist in ensuring nonviolent and non-derogatory presentation of OTT content and promote gender diversity and inclusivity. Thus, the sanitization of content stems from creating such a framework to critically examine socio-cultural gender constructions and prevent illicit dissemination of content to the younger demographic, the future of India.

5.1.4 Results of Content Analysis:

a)   Period: End of Sentence (2018):

Trigger Warnings: Menstrual stigma, cultural taboos, and discussions of health and gender inequalities

The description of the documentary says:

In rural India, where menstruation stigma endures, women produce affordable sanitary pads using a new machine, advancing towards financial independence. This short, directed by Rayka Zehtabchi and produced by Melissa Berton, received an Oscar for Best Documentary Short Subject. (Netflix)

In a hamlet near Delhi, India, women spearhead a revolution. For years, these women lacked access to sanitary pads. However, with the installation of a sanitary pad machine in the community, they acquire the capability to produce their own pads. Their flight is partially facilitated by high school

girls in California, who generated the first funds for the machine and established a non-profit organization named "The Pad Project." (Internet Movie Database)

The documentary, aiming at circulating the message worldwide through its title, reached its audience with the message, "A period should end a sentence, not a girl's education." Psychoanalytically, the documentary illustrates how rural women of Kathikhera village, Hapur District of India, internalize menstruation taboo, revealing their repressed aspirations for agency and autonomy. Psychoanalytic feminism clarifies how the stigma associated with it establishes psychological impediments towards menstrual hygiene and equality, resulting in embarrassment linked to the taboo. The lead character Sneh's transformation of desire from shame to financial empowerment through pad-making signifies the reclamation of autonomy and desires, resonating with psychoanalytic concepts of transcending internalized repression and hence taboo. In 2017, Sneh began her career at the pad-making unit, garnering attention for her choice of work and earning a mere 2000 rupees, which she used to fund her preparation for the police services examination. Being the first employment opportunity for women, every woman got a slice of what owning a job is. Once the machine was installed, women started manufacturing and marketing their self-made "Fly" pads, deliberately entitled to make females fly, aspire, and flourish. With the villagers being of the opinion of the unit manufacturing diapers for babies, they later

joined hands at the unit. Audiences may resonate with the women's struggle, projecting their own experiences with patriarchal norms, thereby enabling the documentary to elicit empathy and recognition.

Menstruation, historically regarded as abject and impure, exemplifies Kristeva's notion that is simultaneously integral to and repudiated by society. The concealed portrayal of an aged village woman, calling it "bad blood," and village boys, "disease of the girls," and a young schoolgirl calling it "a girl's problem" highlights this cultural unease. The documentary addresses cultural boundaries by candidly discussing menstruation, directly confronting societal discomfort of visiting temples during it or prayers remaining unheard "no matter how much you pray" during that time. Women also shared their inconvenience of changing wet clothes in farms in the dark with men hovering around while reasoning for school dropouts. This fosters a narrative of acceptance and normalization of the taboo, diminishing the "abject" status of menstruation. The production of pads by women converts the abject into a symbol of empowerment, challenging societal exclusionary practices and normalizing menstruation as a natural phenomenon that could also provide sustainable income for households. Reportedly, their financial independence also helped some garner respect from their husbands or brothers.

Figure 5.1.4. (A): Stills from the documentary, Period. End of Sentence

Arunachalam Muruganantham ("Pad Man"), the creator of the affordable pad-making machine, who has greatly advanced menstrual hygiene awareness and the empowerment of rural women, acts as the impetus for the transformation portrayed in the film. The documentary illuminates profound cultural anxieties through psychoanalytic and abject perspectives while presenting a transformative narrative for eradicating the stigma around the taboo. It critiques societal conventions, empowers women to reconstitute their identities, and promotes wider acceptance of menstruation as both a personal and public dialogue in the village. It chronicles women in rural India who challenge the cultural stigma surrounding menstruation by manufacturing and disseminating affordable

sanitary napkins. Through the production of sanitary pads, women attain economic autonomy and empowerment, emerging as proponents of menstrual hygiene and gender equality. It signifies the reclamation of bodily autonomy, the challenge of social constraints, and the promotion of personal action and challenges the cultural marginalization of menstruation and women's bodies. The narrative emphasizes their path to empowerment, challenging cultural taboos and promoting social change. The documentary effectively illustrates the relationship between menstrual health and broader societal equity, emphasizing individual and collective growth in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality).

The film has appropriately garnered international acclaim by securing the Oscar for Best Documentary Short Subject at the Academy Awards (2019), the Audience Award for Short Film and the Grand Jury Prize (Special Mention for Best Documentary Short) at AFI Fest (2018), the Best Documentary Short Film at the Cleveland International Film Festival (2018), the Best Global Short Documentary at the Savannah Film Festival (2018), the Best Documentary Short Jury Award at the Santa Fe International Film Festival (2018), the Opening Night Film Audience Award at the National Film Festival for Talented Youth (2018), the Best Documentary Short Film Jury Award at the Port Townsend Film Festival (2018), and both the Audience and Short Film Award for Best Documentary Short Film at the Traverse City Film Festival (2018).

b)   Delhi Crime (2020): Busting myths, Gendered Violence and Abject Terror

Trigger Warnings: Graphic depictions of gender-based violence, police procedural intensity, societal violence, and trauma.

The OTT platforms have opened up a wide horizon of stories and filmmakers, actors, and creative artists focusing on good content and real characters where every character has got a story to tell instead of being restrictive. Moreover, they provide an exploitative space to elicit drama out of violent depictions irresponsibly, especially when the narrative addresses rape-like gender-based violence. Being a fictionalized account and not a documentary, Delhi Crime Season 1 was responsibly and sensitively dealt with as to not show the crime in any way or ensure minimum visual representation without overstepping graphic boundaries and rightly being called a "seamless blend of documentary and fiction" by Anupama Chopra in one of her interviews with the Film Companion.
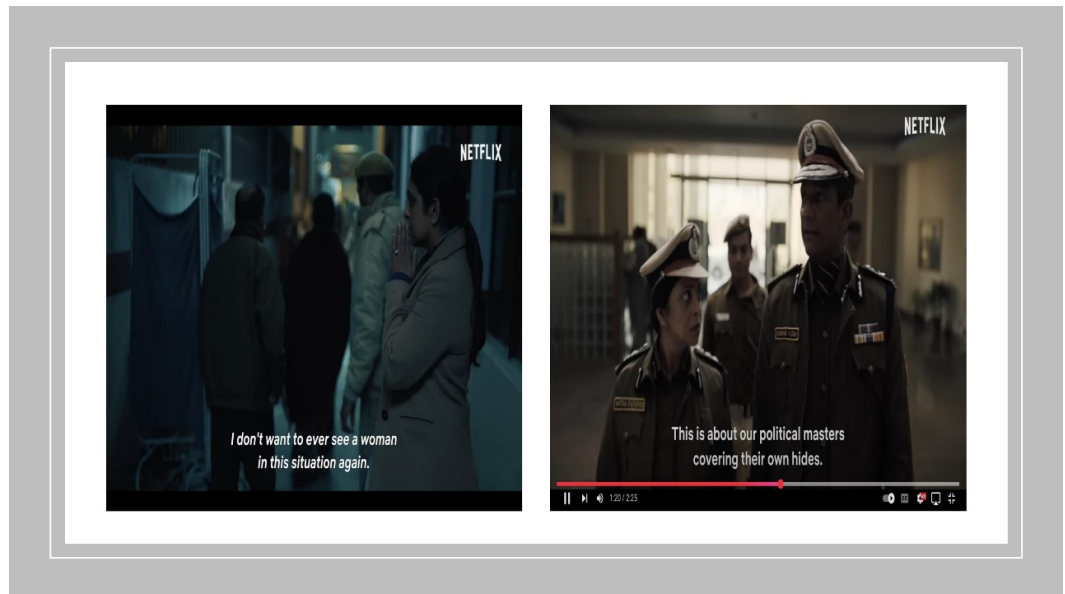
Figure 5.1.4. (B): Stills from the web series, Delhi Crime

According to Sartre's "outcomes of our decisions" (Sartre), productive women like Damini Roy in "Four More Shots Please" (Amazon Prime) and "Aarya" (Disney+Hotstar) are driven by conscious decisiveness. To assess the conventionality and unconventionality of feminine experiences, a similar exploratory elaboration must be used to "Delhi Crime." A crime thriller written and directed by Riche Mehta, "Delhi Crime" won the 48th International Emmy Award for Indian drama web series in 2020 for its skilful examination of gruesome crime tragedy from the lens of Delhi Police. Based on the 2012 Delhi gang rape, the seven-episode series explores Delhi Police's investigation of the horrifying incident, not just another instance of systematic violence that shocked the country and altered the narrative around women in India. The first episode, narrated by no-nonsense police officer DCP Vartika Chaturvedi (Shefali Shah), takes

viewers to a terrible murder scene in winter 2012 using symbolic power clothing. The battered victims, Deepika, gang-raped in a moving bus, and her injured friend Akash, found at the roadside, were found starkly denuded, highlighting the issue of women's security in the national capital. The DCP, always seen in her sartorial best, either with femininity coded in her police uniform or casual winter wear in the domestic sphere, assembled a team of her most trusted officers to nab the perpetrators. In a scary pilot episode, we meet the South Delhi Police squad, led by the experienced DCP Vartika Chaturvedi, on the verge of one of India's darkest crimes using their prompt decisiveness and empathetic sides. Throughout the season, the efficient task force works to identify the bus, interrogate the bus driver, and find his five accomplices within the deadlined 5-7 days while Vartika battles public outrage, team grudges, red tape, her daughter's fears, her own guilt, politicians, and the media. "Delhi Crime" realistically depicts the struggles of a woman trying to do justice with her amazing professional and leadership skills, breaking the mythical binaries of phallocentric discourses where an ordinary damsel in distress is rescued by an undebatable male knight, thereby reviving Butler's gender performativity and passivity via repeated performances or roles rather than societal norms and obligations (Butler). We see the DCP being addressed as "Madam Sir," indicating the conception of new femininity and not the new masculinity in the name of feminism among the team comprising mostly males. Media representations of police, characterized by

hypermasculine valorized Simbas and Singhams and mainstreaming the conversation around gender and gender-based violence from the perspective of multiple   constituted the meaning of new femininity, that women need not emulate and take on masculine traits in order to be effective human beings and efficient professionals.

On the other hand, the frontline warriors' perspective goes unheard mostly as seekers of justice for the victim. Hence the show humanized the police, who keep their personal and professional anguish separate in such an insanely gruesome crisis. The semiotic accent on the competent, confident, capable DCP Vartika dilutes and denies the traditional representation of women's carnal and mental limitations as weak, chaste, and reconstructs it as a "new" femininity that attacks voyeurism and fetishization of women's bodies. On one hand, DCP Vartika chastises some laid-back officers (males) to strengthen the task force and prevent them from mentally harassing imprisoned convicts (males) in two episodes, and on the other hand, the series portrays her as an insecure, worried mother who doesn't allow her daughter to pursue academic pursuits abroad due to the horrible, unsafe circumstances outside that resonated with parents/guardians of every family at the time. The auteur theory supports this by portraying the director, here, a man with his humanizing and feminist vision being reflected in setting the stage for emphasizing Vartika's teamwork, empathy, agony, and grit that relegates the male characters' gazes and invalidates the conversation regarding the victim's bare body. We are

rooted and culturally programmed to see men and women in a certain way. This sensitive yet sincere mainstreaming of gender violence on contemporary consumption media, rather than keeping it under wraps uses gender performativity to create a more egalitarian society and protest evils against women only to trigger a narrative pendulum that oscillates between the victim signifier and the rescuer-signified, the narratology's actants. It also problematizes eulogizing the stigma around rape survivors/victims, assigning her a name like "Nirbhaya," diversifying her into a larger-than-life fearlessness to some gruesome crimes. Such mythification and elevation of the name-calling were later opposed by the victim's mother in real life. It bore testimony that sexual violence is universal, transcending age, class, caste, geography, and religion. Today's tough women boot camp indirectly forms of violence and apparently refuse to get impacted by it. GBV only turns into a catharsis when it happens and no one talks about it, following the premise of "Don't ask, don't tell". The ongoing dialogue and gender mainstreaming in the sensitive portrayal of the "Delhi Crime" reaffirmed that the experimental space OTT platforms provide for depicting gender-based violence is not exploited irresponsibly by all auteurs.

**c) Devi: Gendered Silence and the Abject in Sexual Violence (2021)**

Trigger Warnings: Sexual assault survivors' trauma, collective grief, societal apathy, and discussions of gender-based violence.

In alignment with the paradox that Indians venerate goddesses in a nation where crimes against women surge periodically, Priyanka Banerjee has written and directed "Devi," a 13-minute Hindi suspense drama short film that recounts the experiences of nine women from diverse societal strata compelled to disclose their narratives of sexual violence. Situated in a solitary chamber, their sanctum sanctorum, inhabited by deceased women engaged in disputes amidst the cacophony of news broadcasts, the film illuminates how these victims of gender-based violence, despite their diversity and individuality, ultimately shared a common destiny, underscoring the ubiquity of gender-based violence irrespective of socio-demographic factors.

The straightforward but impactful narrative of endurance illustrates that, despite their differences, the complex women are bound together by the shared experiences of their bleak history. The short video accessible on Disney+Hotstar and YouTube commences with ladies from diverse backgrounds gathered together, each preoccupied with their own tasks. A resilient Hindu woman, Jyoti, engaged in prayer; a medical student in a lab coat studying; a trio of older Marathi women, Sandhya Mhatre and Rama Joshi, playing cards; an English-speaking,

career-focused woman in a suit rocking in a chair; a contemporary girl, Maya, consuming alcohol; a burqa-clad Muslim woman, Arzu, depilating her legs; and a mute girl attempting to repair the television. She successfully activates the television. Breaking news of a gruesome case that has "shaken the conscience of the nation" is being aired, but before to the disclosure of the facts, the television signal is lost once again. All the ladies exchanged fearful glances, as if they could anticipate the commission of a horrific act. In the later part, the doorbell rings, prompting contentious debates among the ladies on whether the space is too tiny to accommodate more individuals. The picture is thus undermined by this new character as all the ladies trivialize and compete against one another. The medical student proposes accommodating the new arrival. In the process of determining who departs to create space, they disclose their histories of abuse, including the identities and ages of their respective perpetrators of assault. They had a commonality of having been mistreated, maybe raped, and murdered, with the exception of the career-focused lady who indicates that her trauma ultimately led to her demise after the catastrophe. As the disagreements intensify without resolution, Jyoti intervenes, telling them that remaining in the packed room is better than reverting to a life of abuse. Prior to unlocking the door, she reminds them of their first fear upon entering the chamber. She opens the door, revealing an intensely impactful conclusion. She arrives with a kid, leaving all the ladies astonished, mortified, and tearful. The toddler rushes to the

elder Savitri and embraces her while a reporter on television discusses the inadequate protection for women in India.
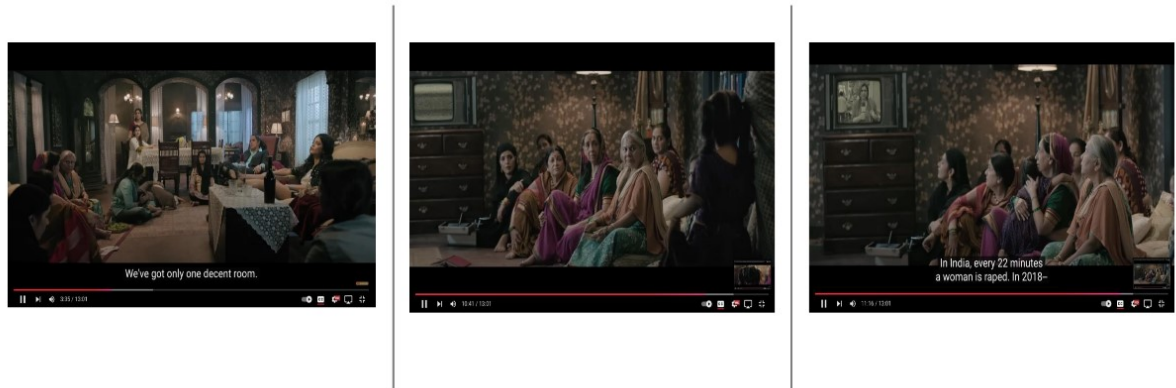
Figure 5.1.4. (C): Still from the short film, Devi

Throughout the film, this confined room setting becomes their holy purgatory, with their incessant disputes coupled by the monotony of the television news. The music, television broadcasts on the crime rate in India, and the room itself provide additional dimensions to the tale for those who are observant. The disputes among the convicts about who should remain in or leave the room also include the techniques of maltreatment. Some argue that age should be considered a consideration, while others propose that the nature of the connection with the perpetrator (such as that of a spouse or two strangers) should serve as a criterion. Actor Neha Dhupia inquires, "What is our relationship?" to Shruti Haasan. Their chats, imbued with heterogeneous but cohesive subtexts, evoke a therapeutic effect that may render the normalization of pain after violence

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disconcerting. Devi is a poignant exploration demonstrating that, irrespective of age, caste, religion, or status, female rape victims have a same experience of victimization. The God-fearing woman (Kajol), the differently abled girl (Yashaswini Dayama), and the elderly lady (Neena Kulkarni) all possess distinct feminine characteristics but endure a same plight. While observing the news on television, they fear that their little room will accommodate more residents with each day that passes. The introduction of characters portrayed by Neha Dhupia, Shruti Haasan, and a medical student played by Shivani Raghuvanshi reinforces the notion that no two rape victims have commonalities. Despite originating from disparate backgrounds, they are only victims to predatory guys. Devi is not conducive to effortless observation. The intricate narrative, along with the characters' vulnerability, prompts several inquiries about women's safety in India. The video illustrates that crimes against women transcend age, language, social rank, religion, education, and class. The viewers are intentionally left confused at the beginning of the film, but Banerjee's smart direction turns this confusion into curiosity, and the viewer becomes one with the character in no time. Though very different women, they are bound by the unusual sisterhood and solidarity thrust upon them through adverse circumstances.

OTT is a platform that is open to new, explorative content genres, and every kind of film is well received today, so much so that it is liberating to see that an entirely different avenue of every film can be made and be

accepted. Also, the society has woken up since the cinematic epistemologies have now made it economically feasible for every kind of film to be made by societal change makers for OTT viewership. 'Devi,' a powerful narrative that explores resilience, hidden truths, themes of gender inequality and societal judgment, and unbreakable bonds through exceptional performances and profound emotion has found its place on OTT and hence captivates the audience quite impactfully, being the Filmfare Award-winning Best Short Film (2021). A part of the awakening is women empowering each other in a non-preachy tone, humanizing sisterhood, debunking conditioning myths like empowerment coming from the men rather than the individual self, or considering women as noncontributing members of the society and tired acceptance of abuse. The film released by Royal Stag Barrel Select Large Short Films, which addresses the repercussions of societal disrespect towards women and insensitivity to their safety, achieved over 2 million views within 24 hours and surpassed 10 million views in a week, marking the highest viewership for a short film in recent history. However, its release incited controversy as filmmaker Abhishek Rai alleged that the creators of Devi plagiarized the concept of his short film FOUR, available on YouTube, which depicts three rape victims conversing in a room post-mortem. The film's location, a cramped chamber occupied by the survivors, symbolizes an abject environment that reflects society's repression and marginalization of women's pain reminding us of the Badru's falling prey to her husband-

inflicted domestic abuse in Alia Bhatt and Shefali Shah starrer movie, "Darlings" (Netflix, 2022). The profound nature of sexual assault, represented by each woman's painful silence, compels viewers to acknowledge the overlooked stories of female suffering, like that of Nandini's marital rape, against which the protagonist, Sampurna, the victim's sister-in-law, takes a stand in the Bengali web series, "Sampurna", streaming on Hoichoi (2022). The women's communal quiet signifies a collective suppression of pain, disrupted only by their mutual comprehension and fortitude. The silence and subsequent recognition provide catharsis for both the characters and the audience, confronting the societal suppression of victims' voices as in the Malayalam movie "The Teacher" available on Netflix.
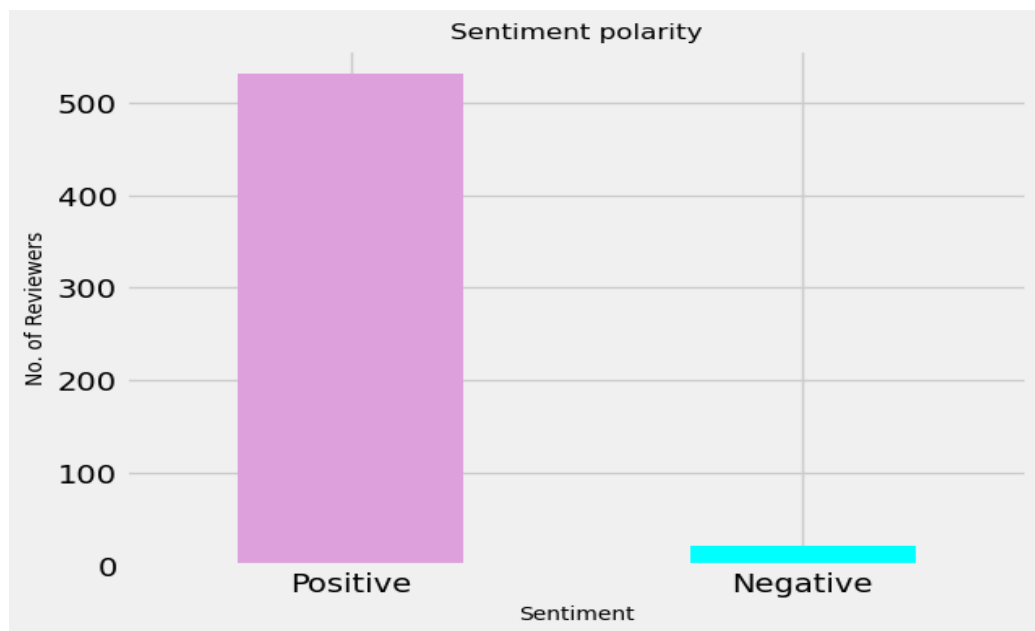
d) Gullak (Seasons 1, 2 and 3):

Trigger Warnings: Subtle patriarchal dynamics, gender roles, economic challenges, and family-related stress.

Gullak, streaming on SonyLiv, is a slice-of-life series that depicts the Mishra family, emphasizing quotidian challenges, interpersonal interactions, and domestic dynamics inside a conventional, lower-middle-class home. In the times when high-concept crime dramas and thrillers kept appealing to the viewers on OTT platforms, and had become successful, well-received formula for OTT content, Panchayat is a tribute to a non-glamorized, simplistic throwback to 80s like a breath of fresh air

depicting rural India landscapes without romanticizing or fetishizing it. Showing the easy breezy flow as it is, the effortless dialect does not make it incomprehensible but more real and relatable in nature. Apart from conveying a cinematic reality, what makes it distinctive is its gentle mix of comedy and drama, sparkling specificity, and smallness, or redefining the term "Slice of Life" making mundane, unexciting daily routine events and conflicts so engaging. An engaging aspect of the series is its ability to use comedic scenarios and defy algorithms examining the moments and scenes with utmost sincerity with the audience rarely feeling manufactured plotting and even if manufactured, the design is nearly invisible. The series directed by Shreyansh Pandey and produced by Arunabh Kumar gained immense popularity and were the most watched shows in 2022 on IMDb's top 10 lists. With impeccable scripting and attention to detail, the score brings to the visuals indicators of mediocrity like an old iron, a half-cut toothpaste tube, a medium-sized talcum powder container, and an all-purpose oil container, but the most significant 5th character is the Gullak, the titular piggy bank, which is also the inanimate mouthpiece and commentator of the Mishra family. All the characters live with the resilience of changing their present circumstances.

Figure 5.1.4. (D): A still from Gullak and sentiment analysis of IMDb reviews of Gullak (Seasons 1, 2, 3)

The limited visibility of women on screen and the only female character of the family is that of Shanti Mishra, who is steeped in household chores and domesticity. She exemplifies internalized patriarchal standards, seeing

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herself as the quintessential loving mother who suppresses her own aspirations for the sake of the family. Her suppression illustrates the influence of social conditioning on expected women's roles, whereby self-sacrifice is anticipated, and personal identity is eclipsed by household obligations. At times, she is seen to take proactive financial management measures in the kitchen and food essentials to balance expenses after a shockingly high electricity bill. (Season 1, Ep. 1, titled Bijlee ka Bill, 14:30-15:25) As the matriarch, and adapts to meet the family's needs, showing her pragmatic approach to finances. Other time, she courageously defies patriarchy by instructing Phurtili empathetically,"Don't be scared. If they ask you anything, tell them frankly." (Season 3, Ep. 3, entitled Agua, 2:05-2:30) and later in the episode, defends Phurtili and speaks as an exemplary on behalf of her happiness (30:05-33:10). Such a progressive stance calls out patriarchal hypocrisy, instilling agency, assertion and self-worth in her. The domestic environment functions as a metaphor of understated restriction, epitomizing the constraints imposed on women's aspirations. This corresponds with psychoanalytic feminism's focus on household environments as both sanctuaries and arenas of oppression, where women assimilate and perform social norms. Shanti's challenges, with several highlighting the authenticity of her character and situation. Some viewers saw their own moms in her role, highlighting the internalization of gendered norms. This association exposes the projection of their experiences and tensions with family expectations onto the

character of Shanti. Despite all her representations, she is not a powerless presence. The presence of males in her household never subordinates, relegates, or intimidates her; instead, she wields power through her vocal cords, yelling and ridiculing all three men as needed, resonating with Indian middle-class homemakers who scream to be heard. Exhausted by the daily drudgery of thankless homemaking, *Tehri*, a one-pot easy dish of rice, spices, and vegetables that originated in North India, becomes her go-to dish for preparation, being renamed "disappointment" by the very sound of it. Scolding her younger son in Season 1, Ep. 1 entiltled "Tehri" (00:50-5:00) for his habit of leaving dirty underwear in the semi-automatic washing machine in a no-nonsense style, she continues with her family banter blending it with humor. The patriarch of the house takes notice of the *kheer or* rice pudding being made with limited amount of milk denoting Shanti Mishra as a staunch realist who is aware and therefore, monitors the financial status of her family through limited expenditure. Another woman in the show is the annoying neighbor, "Bittu ki Mummy" who is noisy, opinionated, otherwise humorous, hurtful, personifying a human surveillance system and a salt to another's injury. These addressals are also suggestive of motherhood being the women's sole identity in a patriarchal society. Instances like men disastrously taking over the kitchen, she having to wash the dirty laundry of her sons, and her constant worries of the uncertainty of her children's future make her assume the relatable role of an average Indian female homemaker-mother trying to control her

present to the best possible capacity with glimmers of bickering (season 2), when she reveals to all the men what it takes to hold a household together.

The third season withholds the same crackling chemistry, quick-fire dialogue, warmth between Aman, Anu and parents Shanti and Santosh, scuffles, skirmishes, and wholesome life lessons portrayed by four excellent actors, Gullak as the 5th and the confined space of their home montages acting as the 6th character, full of stories and brought to life. One weakness of the show is the repetitive voiceover of the Gullak in every episode that as a fun gimmick but has become detracting from the emotion of a scene.

e) Panchayat (Seasons 1 and 2):

Trigger Warnings: Patriarchal norms, rural gender disparities, references to menstrual stigma, and generational conflicts.

The narrow streets of third-tier cities are generating significant discussion in our living rooms as many Indian middle-class families come together to watch heartland narratives such as Panchayat on Amazon Prime Video. These whimsical family comedies on OTT platforms, offering a glimpse into life's simplicity, provide yet another opportunity to reminisce about nostalgic experiences of the rustic charm, if any. These narratives pertain to ordinary individuals with universal aspirations and desires. An 8-

episode series directed by Deepak Kumar Mishra and produced by TVF, Panchayat narrates the tale of Abhishek Tripathi, portrayed by Jitendra Kumar, a recent graduate residing in New Delhi. He applies for and eventually gets a government position at a village panchayat situated in the Ballia district, Uttar Pradesh, as a contingency. Abhishek, who has never resided in a village, is urged by his friend, who states, "This is an opportunity to become Mohan Bhargav from Swades." (Swades ia a Shah Rukh Khan-starrer Hindi movie where the male protagonist, Mohan, an Indian expatriate employed with NASA carried away by the rustic charm of his village, gives up his job at NASA, the USA, and settles to work for the reform of the village folk in his native country, India). Over time, his reality in Phulera village becomes considerably less exhilarating, adapting to a life that operates on an alternate rhythm. For instance, in the inaugural episode, one of his associates rouses him at approximately 9 AM, instilling a sense of him having overslept until the afternoon. Amidst the persisting power cuts, he is merely solitary and cantankerous.

The setting was maintained in an exceptionally authentic and natural manner, with the majority filmed on location. The dialogue is astutely perceptive and exceptional, with the *lauki* (gourd) functioning as the silent character. Each episode revolves around a minor event, whether it is acquiring a new chair or visiting the local market to have his photograph taken for the CAT examination for which he is preparing. However, these seemingly trivial elements, which appear surreal, provide profound

insights into rural life and the intricately developed characters. Jitendra Kumar, a prominent figure at TVF, anchors the show with his exceptional acting prowess. He possesses a notable sense of humor when he is agitated and irritable, effectively encapsulating all that is occurring. Not intended for binge-watching, Panchayat does not feature cliffhangers but captivates audience's curiosity regarding the unfolding events in a tranquil village so much so that it is one of top listed web series on IMDb and also the most appreciated and recommended series among the studied interviewees. It bears resemblance to a film titled English August, directed by Dev Benegal, portraying Agastya, an IAS officer assigned to a specific task to a remote village. The film centered on his feeling of dislocation, alienation and his coping mechanism through a form of relinquishment, engaging in smoking and indulging in erotic fantasies. Panchayat is fundamentally the antithesis of that.It is a tender depiction of a life. In the final episode, Abhishek states, "This village is not conducive to love." However, that is precisely what occurs.
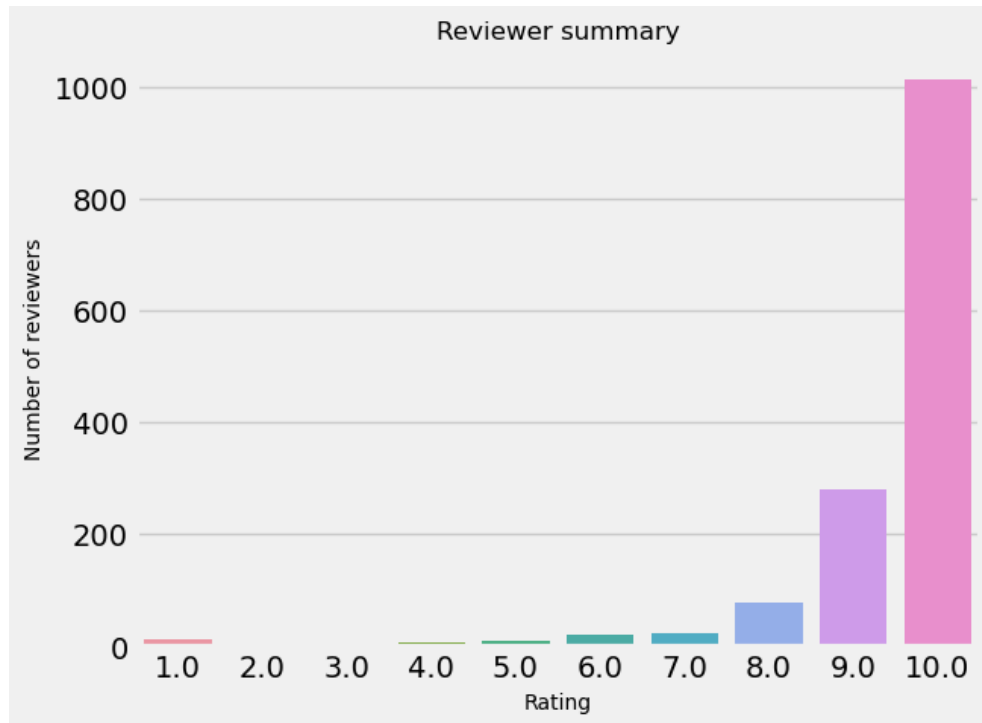
Figure 5.1.4.E (1): Sentiment analysis of IMDb reviews of Panchayat (Seasons 1 and 2)

Panchayat is mostly a reflection of masculinity and its fragility, possibly making it the definitive male friendship story of the streaming age. The Season 2 finale features administrative mishaps and misadventures but also portrays a man's struggle to overcome personal challenges, alongside one scene when, after months of suffering, he bursts into laughter with his friends, eliciting a difficult smile from the viewers. However, the apparently minor and less visible role of Manju Devi unravels into the conscience of her husband and the story, slightly empowering women and having a message to deliver by the end of Season 1. Gender and caste are problematic backgrounds to the screenplay but portrayed with such blatant

honesty that it fails to overpower the narrative. The much-liked father-daughter duo demonstrates their affection, satisfying our eyes and desires, not merely viewers' entertainment needs, although exhibiting a contrasting demeanor towards his wife. The progressive Pradhan, who aspires to educate his daughter and imposes no restrictions on her outings with friends on a scooty, supports her choice of spouse yet abruptly adopts a patriarchal demeanor towards his wife. Usurping the position of Pradhan, which rightfully belongs to his wife Manju Devi, or confining her to a mere symbolic role in the proxy-panchayat system, Pradhan ji (portrayed by Raghubir Yadav), the former Pradhan and spouse of Pradhan Manju Devi (played by Neena Gupta), is an unconditionally affectionate father to Rinky (played by Sanvika) not through extravagant gestures but through his everyday actions. Pradhan and Rinky consistently exhibited a heartwarming presence on screen, whether by prioritizing Rinky's consent during her marriage proposal or sharing lighthearted jokes about her mother. However, the Pradhan frequently dissuades Devi from actively seeking knowledge by joking about the role of a Pradhan, presuming that politics is beyond a woman's domain, which reflects societal norms where educated men aspire to raise their daughters as progressive feminists while concurrently failing to recognize their wives as equal individuals with aspirations and desires. These double standards stem from entrenched patriarchal values that inhibit men from recognizing their wives as their true "better halves." Regardless of the rationale, contemporary fathers

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aspire to a more promising future for their daughters and are prepared to challenge the entrenched patriarchal values of their upbringing. In the process of providing emotional and financial support to their spouses, they frequently overlook their own rights. This chasm is seldom closed, as societal norms compel mothers to prioritize their children over themselves.

Figure 5.1.4.E (2): Stills from the web series, Panchayat

Similarly, In the Netflix crime thriller Mai, a brief interaction among Yash, Supriya, and Sheel effectively illustrates the typical reactions of men in contexts involving family dynamics. Yash was a compassionate and attentive father, possessing an understanding nature that allowed his daughter, Supriya, to confide in him about her relationship and boyfriend, a topic she felt uncomfortable discussing with her mother. Nevertheless, Yash was the same individual who failed to defend his wife in the presence

of his elder brother, despite Sheel's request for his support. Frequently, men in the vicinity assume the "responsibility" of "upholding familial relationships" to the detriment of the women associated with them. Yash relinquished his son to his elder brother despite Sheel's objections. At some juncture, we may have observed our fathers or brothers embodying Yash in the presence of family and relatives, opting for silence rather than supporting their wives. Unequal and imbalanced relationships, an offshoot of patriarchy, hinder women from being considered as equals, possessing equal freedom and agency, creating a loophole in a woman's identity and individuality. However, in Panchayat, Manju Devi, with the slightest prodding from Abhishek, reclaims her role as the Pradhan, memorizes the national anthem, and performs it confidently yet humbly in front of the District Magistrate (Season 1, Ep. 8, 23:10-30:00) Nevertheless, the decision-making faculties still rested with her husband in the later seasons, and she, being a secure family woman, had no reservations. Eager to learn more about the functioning of Pradhan, she tells her husband "You don't tell me anything, so, I will have to learn from the labourers now." (Season 2, Ep. 1, 14:00-14:25) and is an able leader in resolving mud purchasing conflicts with her excellent bargaining skills with Prameshwar Ji singlehandedly (Season 2, Ep. 1, 20:30-25:00). Wanting to play her role as a Pradhan actively, she asks her husband "Take me along as well. Maybe I'll be able to convince" (Season 2, Ep. 6, 0:55-02:00) the MLA regarding road construction funds, giving sound advice to her husband

time and again to establish faith in people's minds about the Pradhan's responsibilities being done for social welfare but he makes fun of her by saying "Look, this is the time to use tactics, when it's time to fight I will take you along." When time arose, she also shuns the MLA away from the village on the account of misconduct, hypocrisy and indifference towards people with Rinki and other women reestablishing her firm grounds as Pradhan. Rinky's limited screen time makes her a subtle symbol of agency as she navigates cultural boundaries while remaining individual. Manju Devi as a mother allows Rinki to talk longer than anticipated despite her husband's reservations and also wants him to let them directly talk to each other-"Why don't you make Rajeev and Rinki talk directly?" (Season 2, Ep. 2, 15:00-15:30).

Rinki and her mother, Manju Devi, subtly resist patriarchal expectations, symbolizing rural women's changing aspirations. This slow transformation shows the growing awareness of gender equality and personal autonomy, highlighting the gap between newer generations and traditional values. Rinki's agency, however subdued, has a boundary-crossing dimension. Her understated transgression, shown by expressing views on governance or health, signifies a nuanced opposition to the marginalization of women in male-dominated environments. Series such as Panchayat and Mai illustrate the considerable distance we must traverse as a society regarding the discourse on women's and gender rights. Despite the acceptance of gender equality by some contemporary fathers, a family remains ensnared

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in patriarchal constraints as long as disparities exist between women within the same household, contingent upon their status and treatment, which are influenced by their relationships with the patriarchal head of the family. . The series, set in a caste-dominated Uttar Pradesh, is discreetly distinguished by its upper-caste Hindu Brahmin protagonists. In the first episode of each Panchayat series, a sign outside the local government building displays the surnames of the officials—Dubey, Tripathi, and Shukla—all of whom are Brahmins. Each episode features a Brahmin official. Consequently, this board illustrates the narrative of the performance, which depicts Brahmin men exerting control over the local office. Gender is further degraded by caste to the extent that, despite government reservations for women, males often use their wives as mere symbols to secure electoral victories. Abhishek Tripathi, an urban individual residing in this hamlet, is seen as the "outsider" in the rural office, however he belongs to the Brahmin group. The Brahmin authorities escort Tripathi on walks, invite him to dinner, and conspire to arrange his marriage with their daughter upon his arrival in the hamlet. In the inaugural scene of the first season of Panchayat, Brahmin Pradhan Brijbhushan Dubey warmly greets Abhishek Tripathi upon his arrival in the hamlet, informing his wife Manju Devi, "The most significant aspect; he belongs to our caste." Brahmins are present in both seasons, with the exception of a disenfranchised individual without access to a restroom, a politician

characterized as a goon, a dancer, and an infatuated but inebriated car driver.

Abhishek observes a female dancer dancing on stage for little compensation, without safety measures and facing abuse from males. He is coerced by unscrupulous individuals to transport the dancer to a local clinic after a transphobic incident, which includes anti-LGBTQIA+ comments that have not been critically addressed in the production. The dispensary is named after the Brahmin physician, Tripathi. Abhishek's disdain and contempt for rural India are characteristic of wealthy surnames. Brahmin officials in the program use rural schools and government offices for personal purposes, including hosting wedding receptions, where they and their families and friends reside, brandish firearms, store and consume alcohol, and subsequently appropriate office chairs for domestic use. The Brahmin-dominated series reinforces an infantilizing, misogynistic, casteist, upper-caste metropolitan perspective on rural India over both seasons via claims of impartiality and universality. The office keys, which Abhishek also occupies, have been mislaid in Episode 1, Season 1, by the self-designated Pradhan Pati. Other Brahmins, including his wife Manju Devi, who holds the official title of Pradhan, advise him to secure it to his "Janeu," the thread symbolizing caste pride worn by Brahmins. This figuratively implies that the Janeu, which all individuals visiting the rural government office possess, represents vital

access and authority. The class disparity is evident in the Brahmin Pradhan possessing abundant resources, including sacks of rice and liters of milk, far exceeding the needs of his family of three. In stark contrast, a destitute man lacks INR 30 to purchase and prepare vegetables for his starving child, to whom the shopkeeper audaciously advises against consuming oil like the affluent. Abhishek Tripathi emulates local dialects and conforms to the corrupt system. Aside from two self-aggrandizing episodes in which he is shown as the hero while the ladies contend, he seems unperturbed by the prevailing sexism. The series examines the derogatory regionalism of those who use "Main" to belittle others who use "Hum" both terms are self-referential. Even when the Brahmin Pradhans encounter a terrible suitor for their daughter, the suitor's father is referred to as "Pathak Ji," signifying caste-based endogamy. Upon Siddharth's visit to the hamlet, the Brahmin Pradhan acknowledges his first name and inquires, "I recognize your name as Siddharth. However, please provide your full name." Only once Abhishek mentions Siddharth's family surname does he relax and address him as "Gupta Ji." These linkages have been overlooked by rustic simplicity and obscured by comedy. The Panchayat perpetuates casteism via sardonic humor aimed at the upper class.

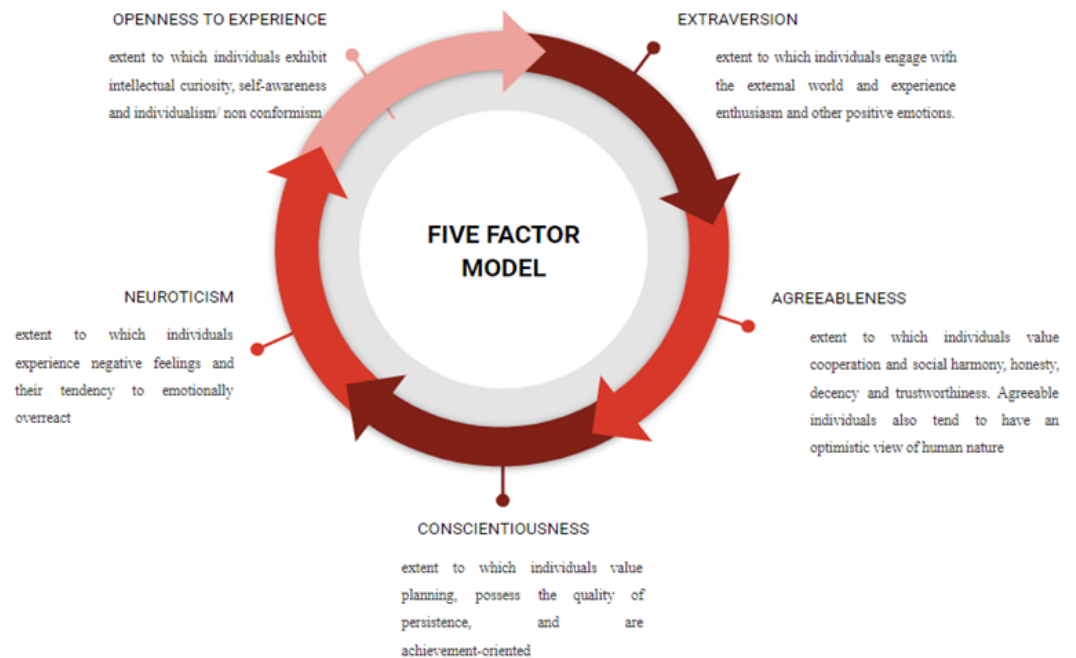### 5.1.5 Finalization of Themes
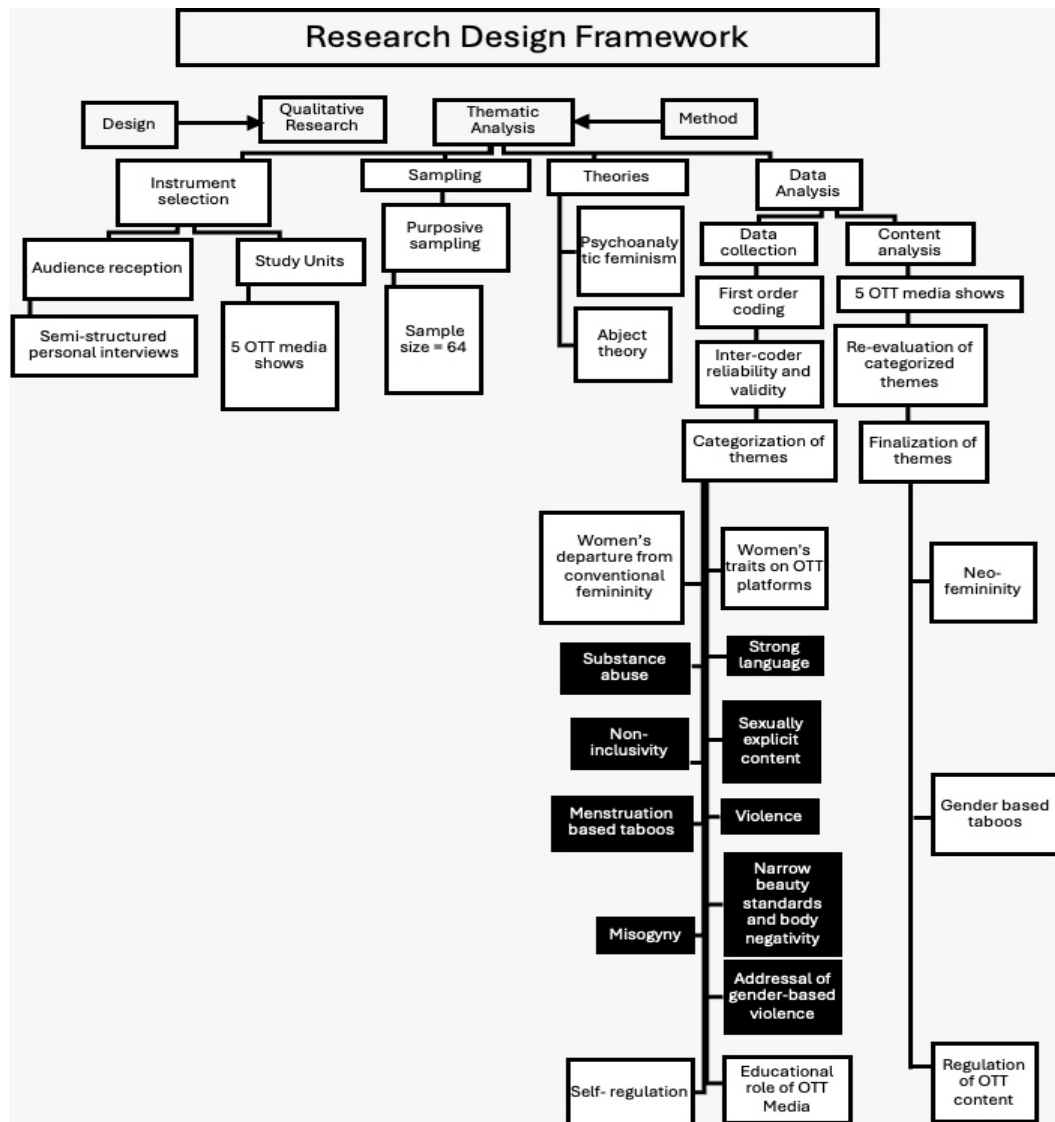
Figure 5.1.5 (A): A revised research design framework highlighting finalized themes after thematic analysis

1.   **Neo femininity**

2.   **Gender taboos in Indian OTT content**

3.   **Gender sensitivity in content regulation**

Theoretical Interpretation of Neo-femininity:

Despite various famous models of personality traits impacting meta-analyses and contemporary studies (Jung) today, the Big Five Model is one of the most widely utilized, well-known models (Rossberger). After adding a fifth trait, neuroticism, or emotional stability, to (Cattell), 35 bipolar language clusters pertaining to qualities and the standard Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI),

OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE
extent to which individuals exhibit intellectual curiosity, self-awareness and individualism/ non conformism

EXTRAVERSION
extent to which individuals engage with the external world and experience enthusiasm and other positive emotions.

FIVE FACTOR MODEL

NEUROTICISM
extent to which individuals experience negative feelings and their tendency to emotionally overreact

AGREEABLENESS
extent to which individuals value cooperation and social harmony, honesty, decency and trustworthiness. Agreeable individuals also tend to have an optimistic view of human nature

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS
extent to which individuals value planning, possess the quality of persistence, and are achievement-oriented

Figure 5.1.5 (B): The Big Five Personality Traits

Figure 1 is a summary of the Big Five features (Rossberger). The Big Five personality traits are designed on the basis that they encompass virtually

all attribute descriptors and are consistent across cultures. There are a number of mini markers for every character trait, such as 'talkative' for extraversion and 'sympathetic' for agreeableness, which would better represent a holistic set of characteristics. Characteristics are people's assessments of themselves based on consistent behavioral tendencies (McCRAE et al.). To better understand online entertainment culture, conceptual concerns about proposed models of personality elements defining the new Indian woman are analyzed to study these linkages. First, descriptions of diverse opinions on attribute-new woman interactions are described. Second, a logical framework for determining which features are most associated with neo-femininity and by whom is offered by rooting the analysis in the Big Five model and its expansions to Schwartz's Value Theory, one of the most explored trait models. Moreover, the Big Five Paradigm, the world's most researched characteristic nomenclature (Allik and McCrae; Costa), categorizes many traits into five trait orientations and sub-blocks. The study will additionally associate each variable and its characteristics shown in Figure 1, elucidating the degree and direction of the relationship between the neo-feminine traits with age and gender.

Through a qualitative analysis of the OTT web series in question, society's unconscious placement of biases and longing for independence is revealed. Five moderating traits aligned with the Big Five Factor Model are considered to alter the strength of correlations between qualities and new women. The keywords "personality," "traits," and "new woman" were

used to search Scopus and EBSCO for relevant papers. We also searched the reference sections of the papers found in the original search for extensive research. Structuralist narratives reportedly delve beyond what is offered to find the meaning's sources and context. To address the signs and symbols of the content and remove the terms from their surface meanings, the analysis is limited to the dominant taxonomies for categorizing traits, the Five Factor Model, and individual research on characteristics and values.

The pilot research used three respondents from a unique sample pool. The pilot research's hypothesis, data collection, and analysis successes and failures shaped the present study. Despite trait theories not being an ethnographic inquiry, the pilot proved the effectiveness of qualitative personal interviews in generating detailed perspectives. This study utilizes these interviews to decode audience perceptions and subsequently co-constructs the subjective experiences of daily viewers in comprehending Indian women's representation on OTT media. To acquire primary data on Netflix consumers' and interpreters' experiences, in-depth interviews were used (Livingstone). The literature study showed a lack of research on neofemininity in the context of Indian OTT media. Structured surveys confine respondents to researchers' presumptions in question development (Holstein and Gubrium), which may reflect respondent experiences or bias (Barker). Interviews chosen over focus groups and other methods are becoming impossible due to the commercialization of new media

consumption (Livingstone) and pandemic restrictions, which make it difficult to moderate objective, dominant voices and consensus. The sample technique employed Robinson's 'inclusion criteria' (Robinson) to include Indian young people who are regularly exposed to Internet TV and technology-based media (Bhattacharya). Only viewers who watched and mentioned "Delhi Crime" and "Bhaag Beanie Bhaag" and connected with Netflix at least once a month were chosen for interviewing across Lucknow, Kolkata, Delhi, and Bangalore. Along with inclusion criteria, purposive sampling was used. Semi-structured interviews enable open, fluid, and thorough narratives without the rigidity of structured personal interviews while preserving the study objective (Brinkmann). The fundamental and recurrent qualities were categorized to identify themes for further investigation or summarization. The reciprocity allowed the researcher to share her own experiences to help respondents feel comfortable discussing personal viewpoints. The findings contain an in-depth examination of the study's primary results. The study delves into how Netflix's vast array of digital storytelling has absorbed itself into the cultural fabric, unveiling new feminine traits in its characters that deviate from the conventional portrayals of women in traditional cinematic media. The key trait indications or tropes found by the study and agreed upon by respondents (Braun and Clarke) have been categorized into emotional, identity, and professional characteristic groups. These categorical groups

comprised qualities defining a definitive new woman represented on OTT in modern times. The propositions are:

1. The new women on OTT show traits of assertiveness, opinionatedness, unconventionality. They are unapologetic and are characterized by their nonconformity to societal expectations and the rebellious streak in them.

2. Neo-femininities are associated with agreeableness and women in the contemporary screen are portrayed to be real, self-loving, exploring and discovering yet balanced individuals on screen.

3. Women characters, today, reflect conscientiousness in the online streaming mediums by being ambitious, financially independent, good decision makers, team builders or leaders and street smart.

4. New women depict emotional stability on various OTT platforms by being an admixture of emotional strength, work life balance and a blend of liberal ideas and typical Indianness or the lack of any.

5. Femininity, nowadays, is more open to experience in web spaces as it is featured by flexibility and the daring to dream approach towards newness.
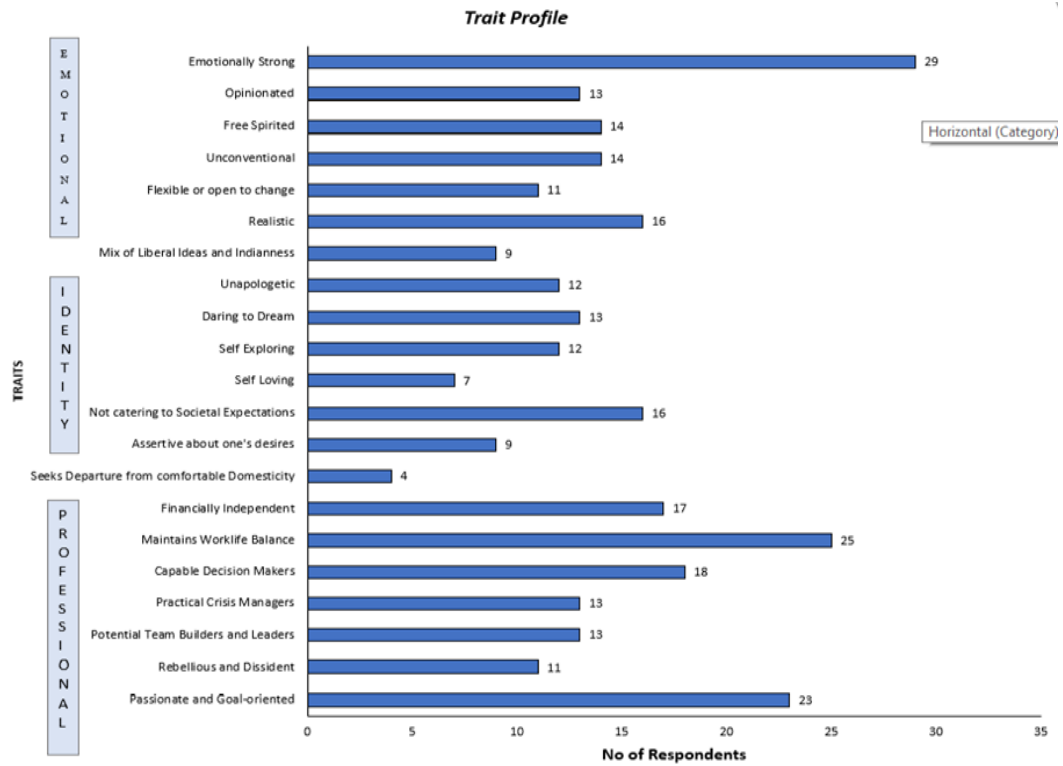
Figure 5.1.5 (C): Trait Profile of New Women on OTT

Most participants stated how women's portrayals and actions greatly affect the flow of tales by deviating from the inherent concept of 'good against evil' or its victory in traditional entertainment media. Since audience research considers the inclusion of specialized audiences, which are associated with urban, almost educated young people in India, linkages are drawn in terms of millennialism (age) and gender (as to which gender amongst millennials clubs and identify women with which of the traits). Consequently, the findings of hypothesis testing are provided to investigate the degree and direction of the relationship between the qualities, age, and gender. Trait Associations Our discussion of trait

classifications and neo femininity includes the amplitude and trends of discovered links.

1. Extraversion: It locates in new women traits like assertiveness, opinionatedness, unconventionality, unapologetic behavior, that of not catering to societal expectations, and rebelliousness. Extraversion, as predicted, is associated with more peaks and fewer valleys. Moreover, relationships are theoretically relevant and often follow a sinusoidal pattern. The Netflix series actively involved consumers between the age groups of 26 and 30. Individuals with high extraversion do not conform to societal expectations as the most prominent trait characterizing neo femininity, followed by rebelliousness, unconventionality, assertiveness, opinionatedness, and an unapologetic approach. However, the age groups of 31-35, 36-40, and above 40 are showing a declining trend, while below 18 and the 18-25 age range are showing moderate engagement. In the age group of 26–30, nearly equal numbers of males and females (15 males and 17 females) believe that such Netflix shows feature extraverted traits.
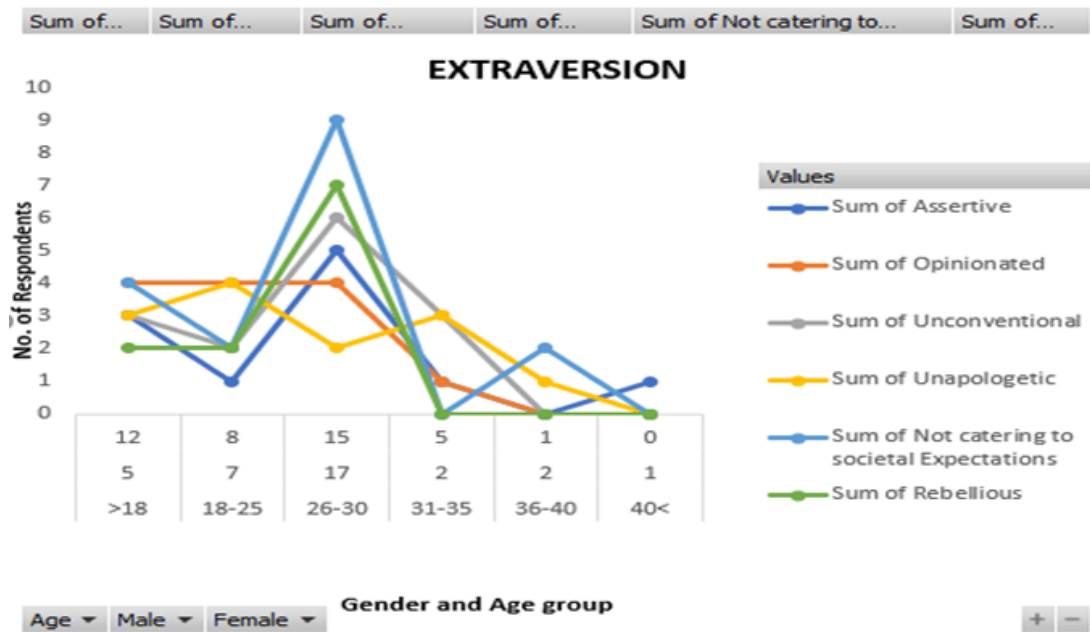
Figure 5.1.5.1: Extraversion Traits

2. Agreeableness: The extent of loving oneself, exploring oneself, maintaining work-life balance, and being realistic are traits associated with agreeableness. Individuals with high levels of agreeableness prioritize being prosocial, particularly toward individuals in their immediate circle, along with celebrating or discovering oneself. This may also mean restricting oneself to adhering to traditional norms and fostering good relationships with others. Individuals with low levels of agreeableness, on the other hand, prioritize being dominating. Agreeableness, like extraversion, shows less of a sinusoidal pattern and instead is characterized by more peaks with almost negligible valleys. The viewers, consisting of 11 males and 16 females, primarily watch the discussed series from the age group of 26-30. They hold the belief that new women should aspire to

be as realistic as Vartika and Beanie, prioritize work-life balance, and demonstrate self-exploration and self-love to qualify as women in contemporary society. The analysis revealed a decrease in the viewership and identification of these traits in other age groups, such as 31-35, 36-40, and above 40, but a potential increase in the age groups of 18-25 and below 18. Males and females alike, with minor variations, agree that the series depicts signs of agreeableness, a characteristic trait of neofemininity.
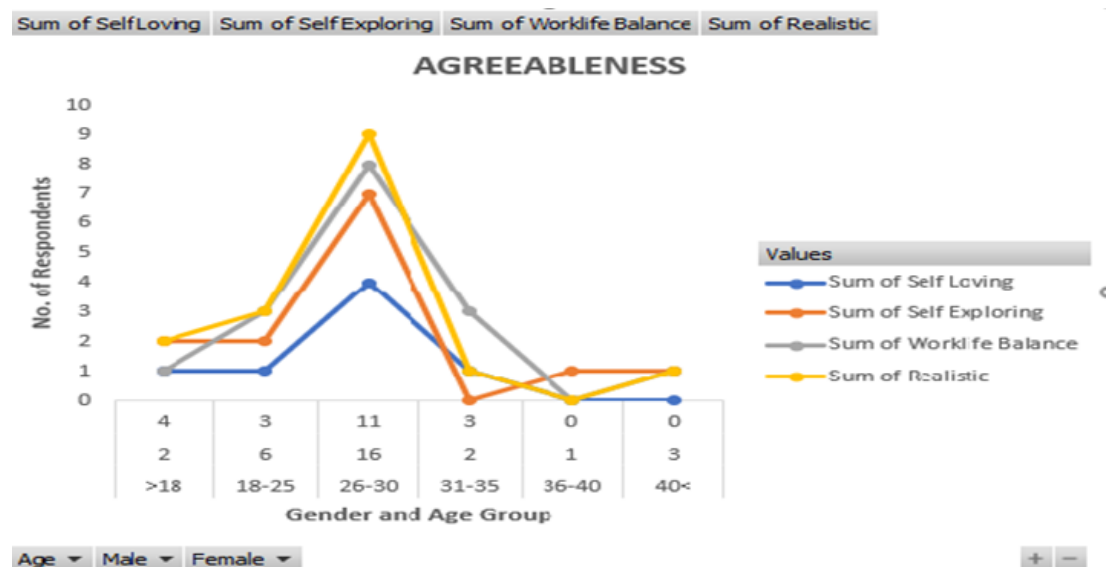
Figure 5.1.5.2- Agreeableness Traits

3. Conscientiousness—Only conscientiousness was predicted to be a positive characteristic exhibiting a peak of correlations with age and gender of respondents rather than a sinusoidal pattern of correlations. However, there is a consistent increase in viewing beginning at the age of 18. Its associations followed the predicted pattern; however, it was most

strongly linked to ambition, team building, and leadership; financial independence; decision-making; and crisis management in descending order among viewers (19 males, 18 females) of the age group of 26-30. The age group of 31-40 or above shows a steep decline. Additionally, the welcome note is that males, on average, surpass the females in believing conscientiousness as one of the features of a new woman.
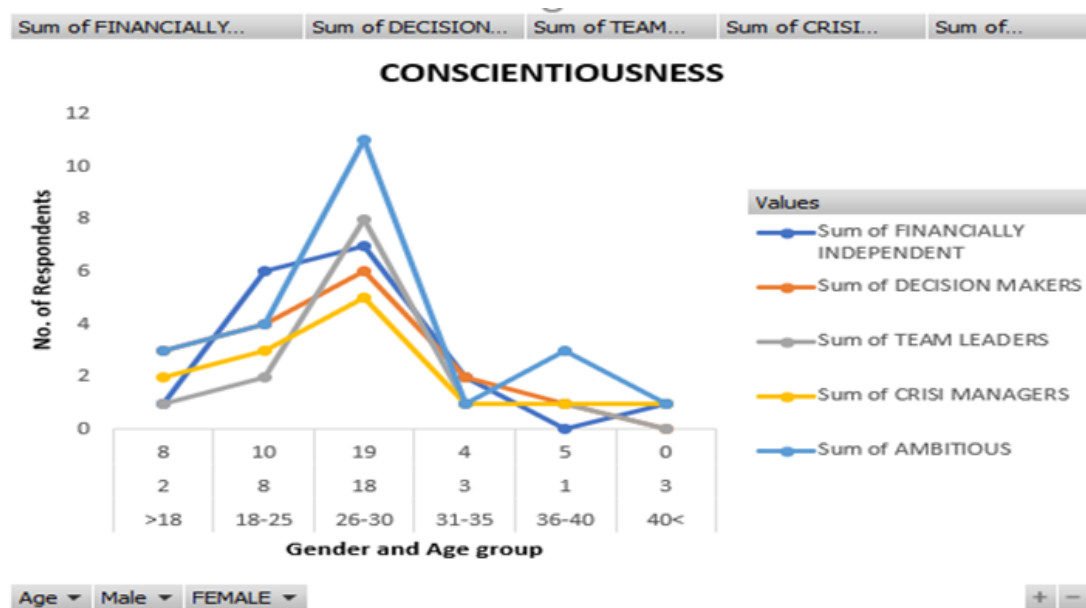
Figure 5.1.5.3: Conscientiousness Traits

4. Emotional balance—Emotional stability, as predicted, did link with the character traits on screen and was heavily valued as one of the prime desirable leads in the women portrayals on Netflix. This supports our hypothesis that emotional strength in the first place, a blend of liberal ideas and Indianness in the second and the closely following maintenance of work-life balance comprising emotional stability is depicted on screen and

should be cultivated to avoid the adverse effects of neuroticism and overreaction. Our analysis also backs up the idea that burnouts and the absence of the aforementioned traits lead to the negativity of neuroticism. The negotiation of the audience with the series, "Delhi Crime" and "Bhaag Beanie Bhaag" remained high in females within the age group of 26-30 (5 males, 10 females) with steady, if not dramatic, surges in the age groups of 18 or below 18-25. A dip is displayed in the 30-year-olds and those above with more males believing emotional stability is a requisite trait featuring neo-femininity in the visual media.

| Sum of Emotionally... | | Sum of mix of liberal ideas and... | | Sum of maintains work life... | |

EMOTIONAL STABILITY

	>18	18-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	40<
	2	4	5	1	0	0
	1	3	10	1	1	2

Gender and Age Group

Values
- Sum of Emotionally Strong
- Sum of mix of liberal ideas and indianness
- Sum of maintains work life balance

Chart Area

Age ▼   Male ▼   Female ▼   + −
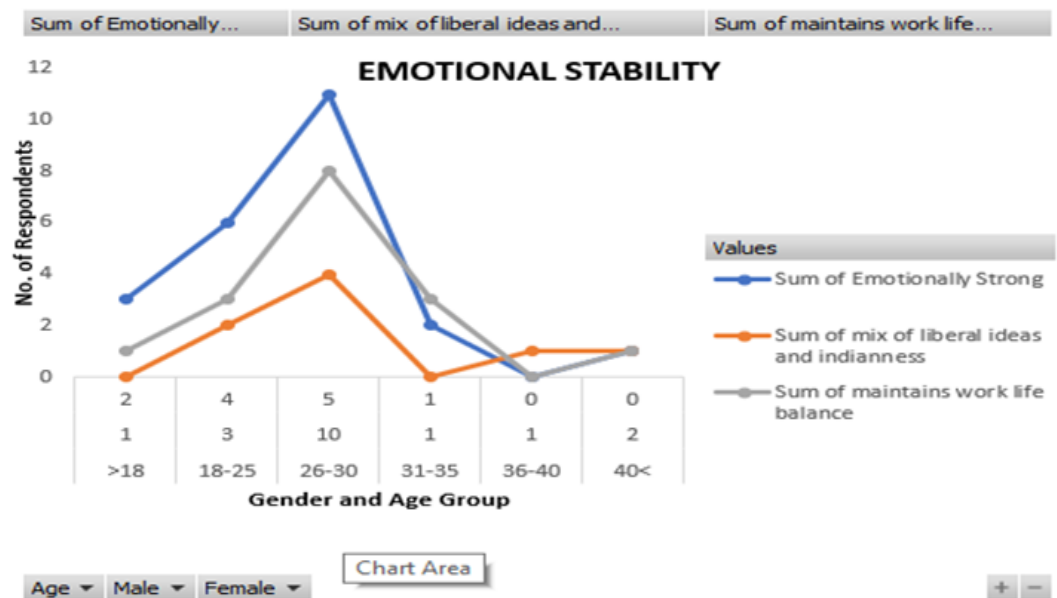
Figure 5.1.5.4- Emotional Stability Traits

5. Openness to new experiences—Based on the most cognitively based attribute, openness or availability to experiences, and the overlap in content, this trait was predicted to have the maximum associations with

contemporary women. Indeed, among the five qualities studied, openness to experience exhibited some of the highest relationships with the daring to dream characteristic. When it comes to the flexibility identified in both, it displays the clearest correlation pattern and almost sinusoidal correlation pattern. Individuals that are receptive to new experiences are considered to enjoy novelty, particularly imaginative ideas, and broadmindedness. Individuals who are closed to new experiences, on the other hand, place a premium on keeping the world intact and the comfort zone it provides (valuing legacy, compliance, and safety). Again, the popular age group of 26-30 (8 males, 7 females) were proven to be highly active participants of the series and ranked the daring trait above flexibility. Peaks are not dramatic in millennials, but a decline is found in the age group of 31-40 and above. Moreover, more males than females believe that openness to new experiences is an essential trait in modern women.

OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE

	>18	18-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	40<
	1	1	8	1	0	0
	0	3	7	1	1	1

Axis Title

Age ▾ Male ▾ Female ▾   + −
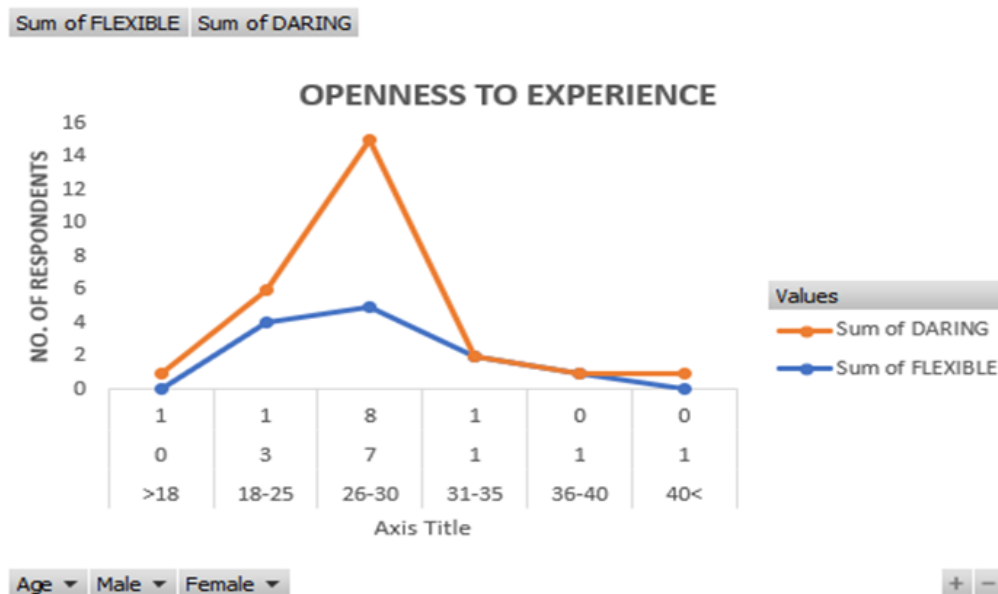
Figure 5.1.5.5: Openness to Experience Traits

The graphical results of this investigation, displayed in Figures 2-6, confirm that the first three categories and openness to experience positively correlate with the personality traits of innovation. These findings are similar with prior studies, which revealed that individuals with higher extraversion is better capable of executing inventive activities. (Eastman et al.; Hsieh et al.).). Individual innovative activities are influenced by agreeableness (Rossberger). Conscientiousness was detected for having a considerable favorable impact (Hsieh et al.). People with significantly neurotic personalities may struggle to demonstrate inventive behaviors and explore innovative ideas (Eastman et al.; Hsieh et al.; Allik and McCrae; Terracciano and Costa). Finally, it was discovered that openness to experience predicts individual-level creativity (Rossberger; Hsieh et al.).

Theoretical Interpretation of Narrow Beauty Standards-

The narrow beauty standards like colorism, fat and thin shaming is not introduced by OTT media to the Indian audience. Cinema had manifested through various formats with the original body deemed abject and needing remodeling. Makeover films had let viewers enjoy the advantages of metamorphosis vicariously, yet abjection remained a concern. Abjection plagues the corps proper (own lived body), and life's circumstances undermine our understanding of it, according to (Butler). The makeover

employs abjection to define who we are and reject our flaws to become our best. The central theme of the movie, "Miss Congeniality" is that neoliberal femininity is the path to happiness and fulfillment for women. The transformation of FBI agent Gracie Hart (Sandra Bullock) from abject failure to beauty queen illustrates the influence of abjection on postfeminist representations of the makeover. Gracie's reluctance towards the makeover enhances the significance of her post-makeover success, suggesting that even a hesitant individual may achieve self-improvement via consuming. Postfeminism prioritizes individualism and self-enhancement; hence, makeover films advocate for aesthetic alteration as a means to permanently eliminate the abject. Prior to her makeover, Gracie's vocal feminism renders her unattractive to men's comments, resulting in her unhappiness and disappointment despite her commendable achievements and independence. The film's opening sequence illustrates the transition from infancy to girlhood, or 'girling', so elucidating Miss Congeniality's postfeminist themes of abjection and identity. Butler characterizes girling as the imposition of gender performance expectations by authority and normative society on an individual (Butler). Girling jeopardizes a dismal identity since Gracie is expected to behave in a certain manner and is already failing to do so unknowingly, leading to her social marginalization and ridicule. Kristeva views abjection as a process of 'becoming' whereby an individual attains subjectivity by distancing oneself from the abject. The women present, the feminine standard against

which Gracie is measured and the corporeal aspect that renders her abject, remain always in the background, further marginalizing her. Gracie must choose between confronting the world independently and enduring humiliation for her perceived lack of femininity or risking humiliation by attempting (and failing) to conform to feminine ideals. The film concludes with Gracie embracing post feminism while adhering to a stringent beauty standard. The makeover scenario renders the body an entity that may be comprehensively comprehended and reshaped according to individual preference. The makeover scenario not only seems favorable but also demonstrates that our unattractive, unrestrained aspects may be rectified. Gracie is compelled into her transformation, like to a child. She is drawn beyond the threshold into appropriate feminine behavior and away from abjection. The intentional use of hardship and dissatisfaction in beauty rituals (painful waxing, dieting, extensive effort) often serves as a comedic device to illustrate Gracie's incongruity within the corps propre. The prevailing Western beauty ideal often dictates body image, revealing that makeovers are not always enjoyable. Gracie's makeover indicates that her prior obscurity concealed her attractiveness, leading to her subsequent career, emotional, and romantic success, suggesting she was a victim. Makeover scenes exemplify Gimlin's assertion that the body serves as a site of oppression owing to social control systems (Gimlin). They illustrate the chaotic body being organized and metamorphosed into the corps propre. If the 'biological body cannot be relied upon to remain intact and

entire,' the makeover scenario depicts the body as 'malleable' and, thus, controlled. Set in an air hangar and executed by a team of beauticians, Gracie's transformation for the pageant is essential to the film's exploration of beauty practices and how the corporeal self may supplant the abject identity. Gracie must also ruthlessly eliminate her body hair to surmount abjection. Several frames show her undergoing waxing on her knuckles and legs, accompanied by her off-screen cry of agony during a bikini wax. The removal of body hair, an act that expels a naturally occurring substance from the body, evokes the concept of the abject: it negates and regulates the biological form to secure our existence and embodies the paradoxes of neoliberal postfeminism. Gracie may be anyone she chooses, but she must depilate her physique to conform to societal beauty standards. Gracie's transformation exemplifies Bordo's concept of 'cultural plasticity,' which envisions the body as a site for boundless reinvention, affirming a 'rhetoric of freedom and self-determination' and epitomizing the body perspective of postfeminism (Bordo). Hersey acknowledges the discord between the pre- and post-makeover identities in the speech and posits that the transformation is ephemeral, stating that 'the audience does not anticipate Gracie to persist in waxing her eyebrows or eating celery after the pageant concludes'(Hersey) This analysis implies that both the audience and the film are aware of the difficulty of maintaining an impossible beauty standard and the constant push-pull relationship between the abject, untamed body and our attempts to fence it in through

maintenance and surveillance, can disgust others. Nonetheless, abjection must resurface to underscore the vulnerability of the body and the need of beauty standards in makeover flicks. Body dissatisfaction encompasses negative and maladaptive ideas and feelings about one's body image, including body shame and dissatisfaction with one's appearance. Body dissatisfaction can develop from a young age and has been found across people of differing body sizes, genders, and among various cultures around the world (Dohnt and Tiggemann). Recent extensive cross-cultural research including 10,500 girls and women aged 10 to 60 from 13 nations (including the United Kingdom, China, India, Russia, and South Africa) revealed that body dissatisfaction is widespread, irrespective of age and culture. Body dissatisfaction has historically been seen as a concern mostly impacting women, leading to a study domain concentrated on females. Historically, women have shown more worry with their looks compared to males. Existing research indicates that the incidence of eating disorders may be much greater among transgender and gender varied individuals compared to cisgender individuals, and that body image problems may differ according to gender identity. It is a very constant and resilient modifiable risk and maintenance factor for eating disorders and serves as a strong predictor of diminished quality of life, low self-esteem, and depression. (Paxton et al.)People who are more dissatisfied with their appearance are also more likely to engage in unhealthy diet and exercise regimes, and to use steroids. Seventeen Research indicates that, in addition

to physical and mental health, girls who exhibit more dissatisfaction with their looks are less inclined to express their ideas and tend to have less academic achievement (Florin et al.). From a young age, people, especially girls, learn to value their physical appearance and to believe that physical attractiveness is synonymous with success and happiness. These homogenous gendered beauty ideals are problematic because they are not representative of the general population and are biologically unachievable for most people, potentially contributing to the high prevalence of body dissatisfaction worldwide. In addition to the longstanding emphasis on thinness, there is also an emphasis on women's fitness.

The ideal body shape for men has also changed in the past 50 years, with the portrayal of a large buttocks and thin waist (Betz and Ramsey). This is particularly apparent on social media, where numerous "fitspiration" images—an amalgamation of "fitness" and "inspiration," also known as "fitspo"—are ostensibly intended to motivate individuals to exercise and maintain a healthy diet to attain an aesthetically pleasing, toned physique through muscle-enhancing supplements. Thirty-five Most body image research is from Western and high-income countries (Grabe et al). Studies reveal that civilizations have varied skin color preferences. South Asian countries prefer lighter skin over darker skin, while Western countries prefer light skin that appears tanned (Prichard et al.). The most frequently acknowledged paradigm in the research is the tripartite paradigm of

Influence (van den Berg et al.), which indicates that peers, parents, and the media compel people to conform to appearance standards. Appearance comparisons to women perceived to be more attractive than oneself can lead to body dissatisfaction (Myers and Crowther). Thus, appearance comparisons can be seen as a mechanism by which pressures to conform to societal beauty norms and internalization of the ideals lead to body discomfort and eating disorders. Since the 1980s, extensive research has been conducted on the impact of traditional media (e.g., magazines, television) on body image, with multiple meta-analyses consistently revealing small-to-moderate negative effects from brief exposure to idealized media representations on the appearance of young women and men. (Stice et al.) have shown that young women and men are more dissatisfied with their bodies after viewing idealized media images in magazines, television, and music videos than after viewing neutral control images (Barlett et al.) Due to its three sources of pressure—family, friends, and models/celebrities—social media may be a major source of beauty ideals. Selfies have garnered attention in the literature due to their potential to affect young people's body image. According to research, taking and manipulating selfies on social media is linked to more appearance issues. However, content analyses of fitspiration posts have found that they are highly appearance focused (e.g., images that focus on aspects of the body like the stomach and biceps, and images in which people are passively

posing in gym clothes) and primarily feature people who match gendered and narrow beauty ideals.(Sidani et al.) Furthermore, this type of activity among women who had a high tendency to compare their appearance to others seems to have a negative influence on concerns about their facial features but not their bodies. It also suggests that social media use may be particularly harmful for women's facial appearance concerns, perhaps because of the large number of portrait images and selfies posted online that primarily focus on the face. (McLean et al.)Women reported being less physically attractive and having a more negative mood after being instructed to post an image of themselves on their social media profile, regardless of whether they were able to edit and enhance the image or not (Haferkamp et al.). In contrast, another study found that the number of likes images received had no impact on how women feel about their body, but viewing images with more likes made women happier with their facial appearance. (Chen and Jackson) noted that body image problems transcend regional borders despite cross-cultural differences. Deviations from optimum weight might cause "social anxiety, depression, peer victimization, and lower self-worth" (Martynov et al.). Despite their typical looks, body dysmorphic disorder sufferers are upset by perceived physical flaws (Clerkin and Teachman. The media promote unrealistic attractiveness and socially acceptable physical appearance standards (Oakes). Women compare themselves adversely to classmates and celebrities on Facebook, but not to family members (Fardouly and

Vartanian; Oakes). The rising popularity of social media, particularly among young people is causing researchers, government agencies, and the public to worry about the negative effects of idealized, homogenous body images.

Media depictions of youth improve media literacy and modify the media's limited and unrealistic beauty standards using individual and macro-level initiatives. However, beauty standards seem more inclusive today. (Givhan and Morales) describe a "culture of big-tent beauty" where everyone is lovely regardless of looks. Further study is needed to see whether the "tent" can accommodate diverse global beauty standards. Macro-level interventions have included the introduction of government policies to include disclaimer labels on digitally edited media images, minimum body mass index (BMI) standards for fashion models, and promoting body positivity via social media posts and campaigns. School-based media literacy programs for body dissatisfaction and eating disorders are a frequent individual intervention. Media literacy programs encourage people to critique media images by deconstructing their idealized and edited nature and thinking about the intentions behind them, such as selling products. One experimental study found that women with high media literacy were less influenced by idealized images (McLean, Paxton, and Wertheim). There is now France, Israel, and Australia included disclaimer labels to digitally changed ads as part of their social media literacy campaign. The aim of the disclaimers was to educate

viewers on the filtered and unrealistic appearance of the models, which would presumably reduce the number of comparisons by preventing the models from being seen as relevant comparison targets (Media et al.). Although logical, a growing body of research has found that disclaimer labels on media advertisements are ineffective at improving women's body image and do not reduce the comparisons made to the models they contain (Paraskeva et al.). Similar results have been found for social media self-disclaimers, in which users describe the unrealistic and edited aspects of their own images in the captions of their idealized posts. One such intervention was the introduction of a minimum BMI of 18 (i.e., within the "normal" weight range) for fashion models, which was implemented in France, Israel, Madrid, and Milan. The aim of this intervention was not only to reduce eating pathologies among models themselves but also to move the female beauty ideal into a "healthy" weight range (Record and Austin). This solution has not been well received in the modeling industry, and further study is required to determine its efficacy on models and women. Larger models in ads and fashion runways are another option. Including average-sized women and men in advertisements improves body image and sells products as well as thin or muscular models (Diedrichs and Lee). There is growing social pressure on companies to include diverse body shapes and sizes in their ads. There is also evidence that larger models improve body image.

Sexually explicit content—Theoretical interpretation:

Today, every Indian OTT platform is supposed to self- regulate its content and also start streaming the content through content and trigger warnings. Content or trigger warnings are declared cautions indicating that the subsequent text, video, etc., may disturb or offend some individuals or it is expected that a few viewers may experience difficulty over the content presented. While a content warning is a verbal or written notification provided before the presentation of certain information, indicating that the subject may be sensitive and identifies content in materials that does not clearly indicate the presence of sensitive information, a trigger warning is a verbal or written notification provided prior to the presentation of material that is likely to evoke trauma, informing individuals that the content may be distressing for trauma survivors, encouraging emotional preparedness, and offering the opportunity to disengage and return when ready. For OTT platforms, both are introductory declarations notifying the viewer of the presence of potentially disturbing content. The following categories of content—sexual violence, smoking, eating disorders, and suicide—are illustrative of material that may be distressing or triggering, but this list is not comprehensive as it also includes sexually explicit content. Sexually explicit content refers to media that illustrates or articulates sexual actions or nudity without any censorship. It may encompass genital nudity, simulated or real sexual activities, intercourse,

exposed genitalia, audio recordings, motion pictures, video recordings, or periodicals featuring graphic representations.

Greek 'obscene', where Skênê signifies something outside or behind the scenes is related to violent scenes in 5th-century Greek plays, which were masked outside the scene. Culture underpins this taboo and also seems to justify defining obscenity as sexual repression. As long as sexuality is forbidden, sexual actions are considered within the parameters of this taboo. The desire to break this taboo is expressed through jokes which today finds its way through memes, trolling, and sexual innuendos in stand up comedies and new art forms on Instagram-like social media platforms. Since a culture of instinct liberation emerges from instinct suppression, human psychology has found satisfaction in licentious jokes' playful humor or the pleasure principle. (Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious by (Sigmund Freud)). Discussion of obscenity through sexual innuendo in jokes is a result of libido tension which is relieved through sexual jokes. Due to sexual tension, Freud said this manifestation targets the feminine. This is illustrated by the pornographic works of the 17th and 18th centuries, where a male narrator addressed a male audience (inside the narrative), targeting male readers. The main sexual assault victim is feminine. Therefore, two psychological activities occur: one for pleasure and one for power, both based on femininity. The mental excitement acts as a pleasure principle-based libidinal tension-release mechanism. Why are shows offered to the same interdiction mechanism

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affecting the modern public? Civilizing processes and taboos establish traditional values in a society undermining the rest. Thus, using the term's etymology 'obscene', we could say today, the curtain behind which Greek actors portray violence disappeared, making everything clear to the public. The ancient ob skênê is practically transformed into 'on skênê' in the contemporaneous show. Obsceneness stops the exposed reality and holds it neither profane nor sacred. This is applicable more to the OTT media that promotes individual viewing over social or collaborative and hence provides more individual alienation, the hallmark of technological progress. The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Times by (Kendrick)- According to culture, the obscene is a cultural phenomenon rooted in and tied to pornography. Today, the obscene is viewed through the lens of sex as an act and organ in pornography, where society's rules are disregarded in favor of a repressed fantasy that satisfies erotic compulsions. Pornography can be seen as a libidinal 'recycle bin', containing eroticism that was not fully achieved due to sexual interdicts. The political discourse of pornography focuses on the subversive element, driven by the rapid technological advancement of daily life, including intimate areas.

In his book Designing Pornotopia: Travels in Visual Culture (2006), (Poynor) emphasises the concept of a consumer culture shaped by advertising, which evolves based on the pornographic apparatus annually. The abundance of images perverts society and limits imagination, offering

everything sex-related on a silver platter. Steven Marcus' 2009 book The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Victoria called 19th-century England, pornotopia. Steven Marcus coined the term "pornotopia" in 1966, describing a "fantastic" world where all individuals, regardless of gender, are ready to face sexual challenges. Nietzsche's super-human, exemplified in pornography, is a strong, powerful individual who rebels against civilization by imposing a subversive culture. In this world, the dominant/dominated relationship (Foucault) is broken down, as both genders (male and female) share sexual desire and potency. The protagonists prioritize their own pleasure and performance, rather than slave/master dialectic. Pornography symbolizes a State within a State. This phenomenon results from pornotopia. On one hand, we discuss the ownership of cultural and historical traditions and moral values, while on the other, pornotopia, led by the obscene, contradicts the moral precepts of the rule of law. This is reflected in accusations against pornography for harming individual liberties and moral integrity and in today's times, censorship of content. However, pornotopia's values align with modern individuals' desires. These encompass complete expression freedom based on genitality and the obscene. Genitality is not limited to exposure or voyeuristic approaches, but also to how it can convey gender differences, sex changes, sexual orientations, and travesties. Thus, pornography has been a subversive force since the Renaissance and can be found today in show business and advertising. It transforms the individual's

consciousness from inner erotic experience to outer pornographic experience.

The evolution of feminist cinema theory was shaped by second-wave feminism and women's studies throughout the 1960s and 1970s, primarily in the United States. Feminist film theory was profoundly useful and powerful in offering an alternative feminist perspective on cinema. Feminist film critique advocates for gender equality by deconstructing the patriarchal framework that often prioritizes male subjectivity and female objectification. The notion of psychoanalysis was first promoted by the renowned psychologist Sigmund Freud who posited that all individuals possess profound unconscious beliefs, impulses, ideas, and memories stemming from their past experiences or concealed conflicts inside their cognitive processes (McLeod). In her major essay from 1975, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Mulvey employs psychoanalytic theory to elucidate the mechanisms of patriarchy that influences our methods of production and cinematic visuals. She suggested that films need not to be seen just as a medium of pleasure; instead, we need to contemplate the many realities about its creation and the reception it has garnered in our society (SINGH1). Mulvey references the theories of Sigmund Freud and Lacan uses this technique demonstrating how subconscious worries and wants are reflected in the production and reception of films.

Apparatus theory, proposed by Jean-Louis Baudry, is the most controversial psychoanalytical approach to film. Baudry suggests that all humans have had their desires repressed or lost due to psychological growth, and cinema is only the modern way to access them. Cinema mechanics enable this in many ways in a way that seeing a movie in a theater "reconstructs the situation necessary to the release of the 'mirror stage' discovered by Lacan. "The theater atmosphere plays on Lacanian mirror stage image identification". With streaming content available at our fingertips today, the content outrules the experience of such a theater situation. Christian Metz, another psychoanalytic film historian, agrees with Baudry's fundamental understanding of the cinematic machinery and focuses on identification as crucial to the apparatus. Identification, voyeurism, and fetishism provide the basis for most psychoanalytic work after Metz, and it's crucial to understand how they affect the viewer/film interaction in OTT platforms. Metz, like Baudry, believes viewers identify with the screen by re-enacting the confirming mirror stage, but he notes that it cannot operate as the screen/mirror, as it does not resonate with mirror-stage processes of seeing and associating with items outside of oneself via connecting with the camera and character appearances. With the screen types and sizes being flexible, the whole focus remains on the content: the interaction between the camera behind it and the characters enacting it, thus being the primary and secondary apparatus identifications. In his 1905 article "Three Essays on Sexuality," Freud wrote that "visual

impressions remain the most frequent pathway along which libidinal excitation is aroused.

Freudian views suggest that civilization involves human repression. This process created taboos for certain activities like sex in an individual's life. In Georges Bataille's vocabulary, this phenomenon involves taboo and transgression. In Eroticism: Death and Sensuality (1986), Bataille examines the development of taboos and the separation of human and animal nature through labor and civilization. At the start of the book, he identifies two types of taboos: sexual (reproduction, incest, menstrual blood) and death (covering the horror of a dead body and killing). The Eros-Thanatos principle, which combines life and death, underpins these concepts (Bataille). Transgression means overcoming and completing the interdict, according to (Bataille). Eroticism transcends the material world to the realm of pure thoughts, breaking sexual taboos by using culture to develop the Eros rather than suppressing it. This is how humans have separated themselves from animals for millennia. The experience of desire versus anxiety, which he attributes to consciousness, leads to transgression. (Bataille) defines inner experience as the individual's "spirit" (subject) world, while outer experience connects humans to nature and animals. According to (Bataille), organized labor prioritizes inner experiences over outer ones, assuming death and imposing sexual taboos. According to Hegel, working for another is Labor determined by something other than self-distinguishes humans from animals because it is

labor done for reasons other than fulfilling our own instincts or basic needs elevating humans above nature. The animal's actions to meet its biological needs omit the other labor but only obeys instincts (Hegel). In Western culture, the dominant social organization of labor and the psychic apparatus represses and controls basic instincts. The findings to date conclude that labor, which separated us from animals through basic restrictions and instincts, brought us closer to civilization by creating taboos, also drove us from natural to cultural.

When sexual exuberance, or animal instinct, clashes with labor and order, or humanity, it can disrupt civilizing dynamics and reactivate repressed libido. This is because eroticism is a conscious expression of sexual desire based on inner experience. (S. Freud) presented the concept of "libidinal" labor in Civilization and Its Discontents, highlighting how labor can be used to express erotic, narcissistic, aggressive, and erotic impulses. This idea fits Freud's definition of libido, which involves satisfying basic needs and pursuing mutual satisfaction through labor. (Marcuse) examines the Freudian idea that work provides pleasure. According to the author, libidinal pleasure can only be achieved through labor that activates the body's erogenous zones and erotizes the entire body. Normal labor, which involves social, organized, and cooperative activities, conflicts with the pleasure principle as it does not satisfy individual impulses and needs (Herbert).

Filmic texts are seen as reflections of society; thus, they must be attuned to the circumstances around a female character. A discourse on the media's societal responsibilities is required, particularly questioning why cinema primarily focuses on providing entertainment rather than fostering critical thought about gender objectification. No oversight or challenge exists about this self-replicating pattern; thus, the absence of equality both on and off-screen has prompted inquiries into gender stereotyping, the quality of media consumed by the public, and the distortion of a balanced society. Psychoanalytic media studies' classic work focuses on gender and power and how films reflect and impact gender's effects on its audience. Many feminist researchers criticized psychoanalytic theory for reducing female sexuality, but others have reinterpreted it as a strong indictment of gender injustice. According to Juliet Mitchell, Freud and Lacan's work should not be used to explain why male dominance "naturally exists," but rather to show how the social systems we encounter at an early age instill in us gendered power and inequality. There are many divergent strands of psychoanalytic theory and textual criticism, but apparatus theory, the male gaze, and fantasy theories respond to and build upon each other in psychoanalytic film studies, representing a somewhat clear trajectory of theoretical development appropriate for understanding the basis of sexually explicit content on OTT media.

With the publication of Laura Mulvey's landmark piece "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in 1975, some psychoanalytic media scholars

began shifting their attention away from the context of the cinema and focused more on the actual form and narrative of the films involved. This opened up a field of study on what has become known as the male gaze. In her essay, Mulvey contends that the film viewer is not merely called upon to participate in unconscious desire via the apparatus theories of Baudry and Metz, but that the cinema itself uses psychoanalytical concepts of desire, identification, voyeurism, and fetishism to frame the narrative across gendered, ideological lines. It is no accident that the protagonists of many film narratives are male, and Mulvey asserts that the matrix of identification and scopophilia proposed by Metz actually operates within a powerful phallocentric frame of reference. Accordingly, Mulvey turns to psychoanalysis to propose a theory of the cinema that associates desire and looking with gendered power. She melds concepts of identification and scopophilia with the male-presence and female-absence thesis of phallocentrism to arrive at a structure for filmic narrative: male/subject/looker and female/object/looked at. Within classic film narrative, Mulvey claims that male characters are active subjects who look upon female characters as passive objects. Likewise, the look of the camera, the way that the shot decisions of the director frame the narrative, is also inherently male and places the female body on display for audiences. Taken together, these two concepts form Mulvey's notion of the male gaze. In accessing a film through this male gaze, film spectators experience unconscious, scopophilic pleasure in two ways: (1) by

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identifying with the male gaze of the camera as it concentrates on female characters and (2) by identifying with the male characters who gaze at female characters within the film itself. Freud's characterization of scopophilia (the pleasure derived from seeing) serves as the foundation of Mulvey's theory. Similar to Freud, Mulvey links scopophilia to voyeurism, wherein a viewer experiences pleasure from observing a subject from a distance. She further posits that cinema, focused on the perspectives of both the spectator and the camera, provides identificatory pleasure with one's on-screen representation, ego ideal, and libidinal satisfaction derived from the object of the gaze (White). Mulvey's analysis is grounded on further psychoanalytic ideas, including Freud's concepts of the ego and the castration complex, as well as Lacan's mirror stage. She asserts that this ego entices viewers to align themselves with the masculinized identity presented in the film, facilitating identification with the hero. This process enables the viewer to ascend to a position of power by perceiving themselves as an active and dominant character while relegating female characters to a passive and powerless role.

Likewise, Mulvey correlates Lacan's illustration of a child identifying himself in the mirror as a distinct entity from his parents with an audience identifying with the male protagonist in film, thereby reinforcing the notion of phallocentrism by depicting male characters as creators of meaning while females serve as mere vessels of meaning within cinematic narratives. A fundamental principle of psychoanalysis is the notion of

Castration. According to Mulvey, the complex signifies the fear experienced by males due to the absence of a phallus in women, leading to the unconscious perception of women as a danger of castration. Mulvey asserts that film utilizes the unconscious mechanisms whereby the representation of a woman serves as a marker of sexual difference, affirming man as the subject and creator of wealth, while woman is positioned as the carrier of meaning (White). Cinematic narratives and representations of women are crafted in an objectifying and restrictive manner to fulfil the psychological desires of men and, more broadly, the patriarchal society; within the realm of cinema, predominantly men write, produce, and constitute the primary audience for the films. This unequivocally demonstrates that films evoke visual gratification by including elements of voyeurism and narcissism into the narrative and imagery. The voyeuristic gaze and narcissistic identification get their significance from the dominant influence of the male character and the objectified portrayal of the female character (Smelik).

Concepts of the male gaze do not end here. Mulvey asserts that all female objects in the film will eventually create anxiety for viewers/subjects because their very existence as women references the lacking phallus, sexual difference, and Oedipal castration. In order to contain the threat of castration, Mulvey claims that female characters in film are neutralized through notions of voyeurism or fetishism. In voyeurism, viewers and lookers experience a "preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original

trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object." Mulvey associates voyeurism with sadism, claiming that this avenue of neutralization visually consumes and controls the female object by subjecting her to physical punishment. In fetishism, viewers and subjects simply disavow castration anxiety by transforming the female object (or parts of her body) into a source of sexual beauty and pleasure. All filmgoers may enjoy watching, but they must adopt a male attitude (Mulvey subsequently said in a 1981 essay "). Mulvey believes identification prevents subordinated groups from creating their own viewpoints and perpetuates social inequality. The fact that non-heterosexual males watch movies led some academics to challenge Mulvey's male gaze hypothesis. They denied that women and non-heterosexual males must identify with heterosexual men for enjoyment. These theorists argue that Mulvey's difference between male subject and feminine object is not obvious or explanatory, and that cinema look or narrative identification is far more nuanced than she says. Fantasy theory is a major study of this instability of the subject/object connection. Mulvey posits that women represent a deficiency that induces anxiety in males prompts them to mitigate this discomfort via narcissism and objectification; hence, the portrayal of characters as aggressive males and submissive females exemplifies their status as products of a society structured on phallic authority. Male writers, directors, protagonists, and

target viewers together contribute to the formation of a singular heterosexual male viewpoint about female characters.

In her 1984 piece "Fantasia," Elizabeth Cowie uses Freudian theorists Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Portalis to argue that psychoanalysis may enable films to identify more fluidly than Mulvey suggested. Laplanche and Pontalis, like Freud, see fantasies as a basic function organically linked to infant desire and pleasure. Fantasy starts when the suckling youngster obtains sexual fulfillment from the mother's breastfeeding. Laplanche and Pontalis developed two key fantasy themes. Desire produces imagination, and we only dream when we want. Fantasy is a want situation, a mental framework that manifests and achieves desire. According to Freud and Laplanche, this capacity to connect with numerous dream scene viewpoints is linked to primordial or original imaginations about the (literally) foundational events that formed us. We naturally wonder who we are and where we come from, therefore we entertain these questions via fiction. We create a template for future dreams by considering the views of many parties in conscious or unconscious visions regarding the Oedipal complex and sexual differentiation. In this theoretical paradigm, media researchers focus on unconscious imagination. They say films are fantasies that allow us to subconsciously associate with numerous characters to fulfill our wants. These academics disagree with Mulvey that consumers enjoy solely associating with the male subject in filmic/fantasy scenes since we may relate with many

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views. Instead, OTT content creates an imaginative realm where viewers may identify with the camera's gaze, same-sex and opposite-sex characters, objects, and almost any other narrative element. Fantasy viewers may connect with any component of the journey (or numerous aspects at various times throughout the film) instead of just the male protagonist as he hunts for his missing piece. As Metz said regarding voyeurism in cinema, Cowie contends that filmic fantasy's pleasure arises from the narrative's constant postponement of desire. Desire is based on the subject constantly being away from the object; overcoming Lacanian lack and reaching the object destroys desire. It is this constant destruction of Lacanian lack and reaching the object that sexually explicit content aims for in the digizens or netizens of today, which has reached wide-scale acceptability in the OTT lovers.

5.2 Segmentation results: Clustering and Profiling of Indian OTT audience

5.2.1 Cluster analysis results: Summary statistics of five cluster solutions

Final analysis assessed categorization accuracy using Table 5.2.1. Diagonal entries show 91.5% of cases grouped correctly. Cluster-1 was 90.7% accurate, Cluster-2 90.4%, Cluster-3 89.3%, Cluster-4 82.3%, and

Cluster-5 90.9%. Discriminant function phase findings corroborate classification's validity (Birks, 2016).

Table 5.2.1: Classification results

Original cluster	Cluster-1	Cluster- 2	Cluster- 3	Cluster- 4	Cluster-5	Total
Cluster 1	39 (90.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (7%)	1 (2.3%)	43 (100%)
Cluster 2	2 (3.8%)	47 (90.4%)	1 (1.9%)	2 (3.8%)	0 (0%)	52 (100%)
Cluster 3	1 (1%)	4 (3.9%)	92 (89.3%)	2 (1.9%)	4 (3.9%)	103 (100%)
Cluster 4	2 (2.5%)	4 (5.1%)	6 (7.6%)	65 (82.3%)	2 (2.5%)	79 (100%)
Cluster 5	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	3 (4.5%)	1 (1.5%)	60 (90.9%)	66 (100%)

5.2.2 Results of Profiling

To gauge Indian audience perception of OTT consumerism, the segmentation results indicate the mean values of five clusters across perception factors. Clusters are statistically significant (0.000). The interpretations are grounded on the premise that factors with greater mean values indicate more pronounced preferences of OTT consumption in India, analyzing each cluster's inclinations.

Table 5.2.2(A): Mean scores of all clusters across perception factors

Constructs	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Sig
VD	2.7907	3.7179	3.7735	**3.8861**	3.5657	0.000
CQ	2.6163	3.2724	**4.1262**	3.9072	3.6389	0.000
CON	2.6279	**4.2731**	4.1864	4.1165	3.3364	0.000
AF	2.5930	3.2885	**3.9587**	3.7785	3.1212	0.000
PGI	2.3876	3.9615	4.1715	3.6667	**4.1717**	0.000
PR	2.6047	3.6058	**4.1796**	3.1076	3.2538	0.000

Further, the five groups were demographically and psychographically profiled. This profile utilizes categorical variables excluded from cluster and multiple discriminant analyses (Jansson et al.). The five groups' categorical variables were differentiated using Pearson's chi-square. As

indicated, this study used demographic and psychographic cross-tabulations (do Paço and Raposo; Saleem et al.). Demographic factors show no significant differences between clusters (p > 0.05) in Table 5.2.2(B).   Labeling the five primary categories by perception and characteristics is crucial.

Table 5.2.2(B): Demographic and psychographic profile of five clusters

Profiling demographic variables		C1 n=43 (12.5%)	C2 n=52 (15.2%)	C3 n=103 (30%)	C4 n=79 (23%)	C5 n=66 (19.2%)	Total n=343	Pearson chi square value	Significance (two-sided)
Gender	Male	8.7%	9.0%	21.3%	14.9%	12.5%	66.5%	5.653	0.686
	Female	3.8%	6.1%	8.7%	7.9%	6.7%	33.2%		
	Prefer not to say	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%		
Age	<18	2.6%	3.8%	4.7%	1.2%	5.0%	17.2%	43.045	0.002
	18-25	4.1%	5.2%	12.2%	9.3%	6.7%	37.6%		
	25-30	3.2%	4.1%	6.1%	6.4%	4.4%	24.2%		
	31-40	1.2%	1.5%	4.4%	3.8%	2.3%	13.1%		
	41-50	0.3%	0.6%	2.6%	2.3%	0.6%	6.4%		
	>50	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	1.5%		

Profiling demographic variables		C1 n=43 (12.5%)	C2 n=52 (15.2%)	C3 n=103 (30%)	C4 n=79 (23%)	C5 n=66 (19.2%)	Total n=343	Pearson chi square value	Significance (two-sided)
Educational qualification	Below High School	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	1.5%	19.263	0.505
	High School	1.2%	1.5%	1.7%	1.2%	3.2%	8.7%		
	Intermediate	2.9%	3.8%	6.7%	3.5%	2.6%	19.5%		
	Graduate	3.5%	2.6%	8.7%	5.8%	3.5%	24.2%		
	Postgraduate	4.1%	5.8%	10.2%	10.5%	9.0%	39.7%		
	Doctorate	0.6%	1.2%	2.3%	1.7%	0.6%	6.4%		
Annual income	<1 lakh	6.7%	8.2%	13.7%	7.3%	10.8%	46.6%	21.539	0.159
	1-5 lakh	3.2%	5.0%	7.6%	8.7%	5.2%	29.7%		
	6-10 lakh	2.0%	1.2%	3.8%	3.2%	2.3%	12.5%		
	11-15 lakh	0.3%	0.3%	2.3%	2.0%	0.3%	5.2%		
	>15 lakh	0.3%	0.6%	2.6%	1.7%	0.6%	5.8%		

Profiling psychographic variables

		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	Total	Pearson chi square value	Significance
Preferred entertainment medium	Television	1.7%	1.2%	5.0%	2.9%	3.2%	14.0%	5.52	0.701
	Multiplexes and theaters	1.7%	1.2%	1.7%	1.7%	1.5%	7.9%		
	OTT platforms	9.0%	12.8%	23.3%	18.4%	14.6%	78.1%		
Awareness about OTT	Yes	12.5%	15.2%	29.4%	23.0%	18.7%	98.8%	7.423	0.492
	No	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.9%		
	Not sure	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%		
Watching frequency of OTT	At least 1-2 hours daily	3.8%	5.2%	8.5%	5.2%	5.8%	28.6%	28.367	0.101
	2-6 hours daily	2.0%	0.9%	3.2%	2.0%	0.3%	8.5%		

Profiling demographic variables		C1 n=43 (12.5%)	C2 n=52 (15.2%)	C3 n=103 (30%)	C4 n=79 (23%)	C5 n=66 (19.2%)	Total n=343	Pearson chi square value	Significance (two-sided)
	6-8 hours daily	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.6%		
	Weekly	4.7%	5.5%	15.2%	10.8%	8.2%	44.3%		
	Monthly	1.2%	2.9%	2.9%	3.8%	4.7%	15.5%		
	Yearly	0.9%	0.6%	0.3%	0.9%	0.0%	2.6%		
Preferred OTT platform	Disney+ Hotstar	2.9%	2.0%	8.2%	4.1%	7.0%	24.2%	33.606	0.029
	Amazon prime video	1.7%	4.1%	7.0%	5.0%	2.6%	20.4%		
	Netflix	7.3%	8.2%	14.3%	12.8%	8.5%	51.0%		
	Sony Liv	0.3%	0.9%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	1.7%		
	MX player	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%	1.2%	2.0%		
	Zee5	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%		
Preferred Content Type in OTT	Movies	5.5%	2.6%	9.3%	7.3%	4.4%	29.2%	13.922	0.084
	Web series	5.0%	10.5%	18.4%	13.7%	12.5%	60.1%		
	Documentaries and non-fiction	2.0%	2.0%	2.3%	2.0%	2.3%	10.8%		
Preferred Genre in OTT	Comedy	3.5%	2.6%	7.0%	3.8%	2.9%	19.8%	35.643	0.017
	Romance	2.0%	0.0%	5.2%	2.6%	0.6%	10.5%		
	Action	1.2%	3.2%	4.4%	4.1%	2.6%	15.5%		
	Crime thrillers	2.9%	7.3%	10.2%	7.9%	10.5%	38.8%		
	Drama	1.7%	1.2%	2.0%	2.6%	1.2%	8.7%		
	Non-fiction	1.2%	0.9%	1.2%	2.0%	1.5%	6.7%		
Content accessibility in OTT	Purchase yearly	5.8%	6.1%	12.2%	8.7%	5.5%	38.5%	17.561	0.350

Profiling demographic variables		C1 n=43 (12.5%)	C2 n=52 (15.2%)	C3 n=103 (30%)	C4 n=79 (23%)	C5 n=66 (19.2%)	Total n=343	Pearson chi square value	Significance (two-sided)
	subscription								
	Purchase a 6-month subscription	1.5%	0.6%	2.0%	1.5%	2.0%	7.6%		
	Purchase monthly subscription	2.3%	3.5%	6.1%	7.9%	5.0%	24.8%		
	Borrowing log-in credentials from peers	2.0%	2.9%	7.6%	3.5%	3.8%	19.8%		
	Gray or alternative sources to pirated content	0.9%	2.0%	2.0%	1.5%	2.9%	9.3%		
Censorship /Regulation of content in OTT	Yes	7.0%	9.3%	17.2%	12.2%	10.5%	56.3%	8.849	0.355
	No	2.6%	4.4%	7.6%	7.0%	3.5%	25.1%		
	Not sure	2.9%	1.5%	5.2%	3.8%	5.2%	18.7%		
Inclusivity of Character Representations in OTT	Yes	5.8%	10.5%	25.7%	15.2%	14.6%	71.7%	37.347	0.000
	No	2.3%	1.7%	0.3%	3.2%	0.0%	7.6%		
	Not sure	4.4%	2.9%	4.1%	4.7%	4.7%	20.7%		
OTT Impact on daily lives	Negligible	3.5%	2.6%	2.9%	2.3%	2.0%	13.4%	24.029	0.020
	Moderate	7.0%	7.0%	17.5%	12.8%	8.7%	53.1%		
	Fairly large	1.7%	5.5%	7.6%	5.8%	7.3%	28.0%		

Profiling demographic variables	C1 n=43 (12.5%)	C2 n=52 (15.2%)	C3 n=103 (30%)	C4 n=79 (23%)	C5 n=66 (19.2 %)	Total n=343	Pearson chi square value	Significance (two-sided)
Extreme ly large	0.3%	0.0%	2.0%	2.0%	1.2%	5.5%		

Cluster 1 (Youthfully Moderate Enthusiasts): It comprises 12.5% (n=43) of the dataset. Men make up 8.7% of the cluster, women 3.8%. This cluster's majority are mostly 18-25 years old (4.1%). 4.1% of cluster members are high school graduates. 6.7% earn under one lakh a year. OTT is this cluster's 9.0% entertainment choice. 12.5%'s OTT platform knowledge is impressive. OTT material is consumed by 3.8% of people for 1-2 hours daily. 7.3% of them use Netflix as their primary OTT platform. They love web series (10.5%) and criminal thrillers (7.3%). Many (5.8%) subscribe for material accessibility annually. This cluster also believes that OTT services affect their lives by 7.0%. The cluster exhibits youthful enthusiasm for OTT platforms. This group displays no strong inclination toward any specific factors, suggesting they are different and moderately prefer all variables. They either regard every factor equally or lack a distinct attitude toward OTT platforms.

Cluster 2 (Educated streamers favoring convenience): 15.2% (n=52) streamers make up this cluster. It comprises 9.0% men and 6.1% women. Many respondents (5.2%) are aged 18–25, with 5.8% holding postgraduate

degrees. The annual income distribution is reasonable, with 5.0% earning 1-5 lakhs. For entertainment, the group prefers OTT (12.8%) and is well-informed (15.2%). About 5.2% watch OTT content daily for 1-2 hours. Netflix is the most popular OTT platform, with 8.2% of users. 10.5% of consumers prefer web series and 7.3% crime thrillers. This cluster prefers annual subscriptions (6.1%) and low OTT service influence on daily living (7.0%). Well-educated streamers prioritize convenience (mean value 4.2731). These people feel OTT services are more convenient for streaming since they favor simple accessibility, user-friendly features, and a seamless viewing experience.

Cluster 3 (Optimally judicious OTT aficionados): 30% (n=103) of this cluster is gender diverse. Men (21.3%) outnumber women (8.7%) in this cluster. The age distribution remains consistent with 12.2% and 6.1% in 18-25 and 25-30 age brackets, respectively. People have higher education, with 8.7% and 10.2% graduate and postgraduate degrees. Income levels vary, with 13.7% earning less than one lakh. The cluster prefers OTT platforms (23.3%). Their awareness is notable (29.4%). Most responders (15.2%) used OTT weekly. The most popular OTT platform was Netflix at 14.3%. Web series (18.4%) and crime thrillers (10.2%) are popular. Trending at 12.2%, respondents prefer annual OTT subscriptions. Additionally, 17.5% agree that OTT platforms impact their daily activities, enthusing them. They appreciate content quality (mean value 4.1262), affordability (3.9587), and personalization (4.1796). This sector includes

viewers who are knowledgeable, strategic, and well-informed about OTT platform selection. Consumers value a customized, informative, and cost-effective streaming experience to optimize their financial investments.

Cluster 4 (Utility-prone diverse viewers): 23% (n=79) of the dataset has diverse viewers, 14.9% male, 7.9% female. 9.3% of people are 18-25 years old. This age group has 5.8% graduates from varied disciplines. People earning 1-5 lakhs make up 8.7% of the population. OTT platforms, 18.4% of entertainment, have 23.0% awareness. About 10.8% watch OTT weekly, and 12.8% prefer Netflix. Web series (13.7%) and crime thrillers (7.9%) dominate content. Users (8.7%) pick yearly subscriptions for material accessibility. 12.8% of users consider that OTT services somewhat affect their lives. They emphasize value delivery (mean value 3.8861) and believe OTT services add a lot of value.

Cluster 5 (Varied and impressionable entertainment seekers): 19.2% (n=66) constitute this cluster, which has 12.5% male and 6.7% female. The 18-25 age group, 6.7% of the population, is notable because of its diverse educational backgrounds. About 10.8% of the population earns less than one lakh. The knowledgeable populace prefers OTT platforms for entertainment. Most watch OTT weekly at 8.2%. Netflix is the most favored OTT at 8.5%. Web series make up 12.5% of the popular content category, while crime thrillers make up 10.5%. Information accessibility is linked to OTT services' low impact on daily living (8.7%) and yearly

subscriptions (5.5%). They have a diverse range of preferences seeking entertainment. Notably, this group emphasizes peer group influence on OTT consumption (mean value 4.1717). This group values peer and social recommendations and embraces socializing.

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

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Research philosophy largely elucidates the evolution and essence of knowledge deemed essential in research. Organizations prioritize social well-being (Shankar et al.) and hence seek to provide sustainable solutions (Hua). The United Nations General Assembly established the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by adopting 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the government's eagerness to attain them has garnered considerable focus from scholars and professionals (Al-Htaybat et al.; Elalfy et al.; Olabi and Abdelkareem; Sindhwani et al.). Utilizing technological solutions is a method to promote inclusion and sustainable development. Gender equality promotes economic growth by increasing women's employment participation, demonstrating that the empowerment of women enhances commercial success and economic stability (Ishika Trivedi and Dr. Ruchi Dwivedi). Women are essential in food production and family health, and their empowerment may enhance food security among communities, enhancing gender equality (Mkandawire and Toit). Enhancing women's participation in leadership positions is crucial as diverse boards enhance decision-making and improve corporate social responsibility results (Beloskar et al.). Therefore, the increase in female

leadership is essential for promoting egalitarian societies, since it facilitates varied viewpoints in governance and policy formulation (Ishika Trivedi and Dr. Ruchi Dwivedi). Despite obvious advancements in gender equality, obstacles remain, especially in areas with deeply rooted patriarchal practices which permeated in media and entertainment representations. Overcoming these obstacles requires coordinated actions from governments, civil society, and international organizations to create an inclusive environment that promotes women's empowerment and ultimately advances Sustainable Development Goal 5.

The contemporary global mediascape is informed by an awareness of gender issues. Cinema and media have played a prominent role in raising awareness about issues that concern the human condition. In recent times, mainstream filmmakers in India have probed into issues such as sexual harassment, gender-based violence, misogyny, sexuality, etc. Additionally, with the immense outreach of new media and social media, storytelling has gone beyond entertainment and fantasy. Today, web series are known for its handling of conflicting forces of modernity and gender stereotypes, which in turn makes for a compelling viewing. While these may not be seismic shifts, they have proved themselves to be tremors, which were interesting to explore theoretically, how contemporary cinema, media, and digital platforms straddle the models of feminism. This chapter aims to extrapolate the key findings of the work.

6.1 Summary: An Overview of Key Findings:

Chapter 1: Infotainment has a wider catchment that cuts across all margins and is accessible to all sections of society. With OTT's now ubiquitous nature, it has become an infotainment surrogate in contemporary times. It is critical to problematize the trajectory of women's representations and social stigmas associated with taboos in Indian OTT spaces. Providing the background and context of how the analog is charting its way to the digital, it discussed how the cutting-edge technology has always borne the fruits of personalization, audience convergence and individualism in entertainment consumption as a welcome phenomenon among the audience. With globalization, industrialization, and privatization at their roots, audience autonomy was embraced, and the hunger for content variety took the upper hand. Thus, the chapter chronicled how OTT media evolved and the television crossover to new screen media took place.

The chapter further illustrated the epistemology and nomenclature of OTT and went onto rationalizing the need to locate the study in India and the popularizing factors of these platforms. India is pluralistic and multicultural, and its long history of multi linear cultural processes, ethnic and religious diversity, differential exposure of various sections and segments of the population to foreign cultural influences, and the varied paths taken by modern India's renaissance, the culture has always valued

synthesis and fission. India, one of the youth dominated countries, is open to newness of thought, lingo and is more receptive with its acceptance of multifarious norms on the rise and OTT, like any other media service, is reflective of ever-dynamic socio-cultural concerns. Also, cheap internet connectivity and quick content delivery have the potential to dethrone multiplexes via mobile phones and Smart LEDs. Unlike traditional media, OTT content regulations are minimal.

A comprehensive comprehension of live streaming remains elusive until the intricate interplay between the male-female relationship, sexuality, and gender is thoroughly examined. However, the contemporary audience has witnessed increased diversity with the emergence of such platforms, with a noticeable rise in the portrayal of robust female protagonists, LGBTQ+ characters, and narratives that question conventional gender roles and norms creating prospects for a transformative shift away from the traditional binary understanding of heteronormativity and towards a more inclusive recognition of non-binary gender identities in visual media. In conclusion, although there have been notable advancements in gender representation on OTT platforms, there remains a need for further progress as there exists a persistent requirement for sustained endeavors aimed at questioning and contesting stereotypes, enhancing the visibility and influence of diverse perspectives, and delivering precise and genuine representations of gender. By placing emphasis on the creation and dissemination of inclusive content and actively engaging with audience

feedback, over-the-top (OTT) platforms have the potential to play a significant role in fostering a media landscape that is more equitable and representative. The chapter also focuses on character representations like that of alternative masculinities, a noticeable silver lining with the entry of OTT in contrast to 'hegemonic masculinity' or a one-tone representation of men, who are linear, flat, and in line with the traditional definition of manliness. The presence of diverse perspectives fosters a more comprehensive comprehension of masculinity, thereby challenging the concept of a singular, homogeneous form of masculinity or femininity.

(Marx and Engels) (1956) claimed that the "transformation of a historical era can always be determined by the condition of progress of women towards liberty" (Towns). Hence, the best way to evaluate the status of women of any group or category, is to examine the different roles played by the women and the trend and pattern of their performance (Ghosh and Roy). The chapter tracks the trajectory of women's portrayals in Indian mythology, cinema and finally OTT platforms. The OTT landscape is underway to redefine women beyond eye candies or the weaker sex seeking a hero in shining armor. Modern actresses are likewise attempting to more than entertain by playing complex roles and helping the scopophilic camera move from the woman's body to her identity. The 'F-Rating' is used to promote gender equality in movies. The chapter also discussed the origin and purpose of taboo and shed light on psychoanalytic feminism as a theory asserting that men have an inherent psychological

need to subjugate women and that the root of men's compulsion to dominate women and women's minimal resistance to subjugation lies deep within the human psyche.

Chapter 2: The chapter delved into the existing body of knowledge on women's representations on OTT platforms in India using a funnel approach thereby situating theoretical perspectives from the least to the most relevant. Initially, focusing on the alteration in media consumption patterns, Literature review (LR) functioned as the essential instruments for assessing contemporary knowledge, pinpointing deficiencies, and suggesting novel research trajectories, which could be utilized for the synthesis and evaluation of existing scholarly work in a systematic fashion (Swain et al.; Kumar et al.; Jebarajakirthy et al.; Bodolica and Spraggon; Agarwal et al.). Likewise, scholarly investigations into broader industrial dynamics were examined to comprehend the study trajectory and identify constraints from the user behavior and reception standpoint. Scholars have already examined the potential for OTT to be effectively integrated into the existing media ecosystem and investigated consumers' behavioral intentions using an invention diffusion model. They also focused on quantifying the battle between pay-TV and OTT providers to ascertain the potential of OTT services to replace pay-TV in the future. Numerous studies have used quantitative analysis to assess customers' willingness to pay (WTP) by mirroring consumer preferences and to provide the ideal

setup for OTT services. Articles were also examined for their theoretical foundations, indicating that the User Gratifications Theory Technology Acceptance Models (TAM), Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Li; Jeong et al.), and Random Utility Theory (Shin et al.; Kim et al.) that have been utilized in multiple studies. Means-End Chain Theory (Sharma and Lulandala), Theory of Consumption Values (Chakraborty et al.). Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology-UTAUT2 (Bhattacharyya et al.), Niche Theory (Puthiyakath and Goswami), Market Segmentation Theory (Shim et al.) uncovered how industrial notions of new media transformed into interactive endeavors that facilitate the redefinition of audiences as both providers and consumers of digitized content.

However, the rise of over-the-top (OTT) platforms and the creation of original content have provided a promising opportunity for the portrayal of diverse and complex women. Analyzing these portrayals through the review of scholarly literature provided valuable insights into whether over-the-top (OTT) platforms are actively challenging traditional gender standards or inadvertently reinforcing pre-existing preconceptions. The analysis of the representation of women that constitutes half of the Indian population on over-the-top (OTT) platforms has significant potential for generating important insights into the ongoing discussions of furthering SDG 5, gender dynamics and women empowerment, media accountability and responsible viewership, and the powerful impact of digital media on molding social perspectives. However, there were multiple theoretical

frameworks with their strengths and weaknesses that helped interrogate women's gender mainstreaming through nuanced portrayals in Indian cinematic landscape and media representations. After Social Learning Theory (1977), Hoijer's Social Representations Theory (SRT), Media Representation Theory, Critical mass and actor theories in the films were assessed using quantitative background data. With increasing relevance, intersectionality, a concept coined by Crenshaw referred to multiple co-existing identities that may compound forms of marginalization examining how gender, race, class, and other identities affect Indian women's portrayal. Feminist film critics have always criticized cinema's stereotypical portrayal of women developing major film theories. Discrimination theory states that "members of a certain group are preferred, even when their work is indistinguishable from that belonging to another group" (Lauzen) discouraging women from entering films and favor men in hiring (Lauzen). The Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci resurrected hegemony theory defining hegemony as political, social, and ideological supremacy that explains how social groupings rule without violence. (Berger and Krahé) updated an earlier take by (Bem) on in-depth measurements of masculinity and femininity.

Since the research focuses on women's representations, the theoretical framework should have comprised investigative theories that appropriate the specifications of OTT femininity rather than inspecting it through the entire broader lens of psychoanalysis. The present study pointed out the

fact that the ideology of feminism is visible in Indian OTT platforms, and they get decent appreciation from the audience. In viewing films, the feminists have focused on the question of the male "gaze". Psychoanalysis, popularized by Sigmund Freud, holds that all humans have unconscious beliefs, desires, thoughts, and memories based on their past experiences or hidden conflicts in their thought process (McLeod). Laura Mulvey, the first to use psychoanalysis to analyze film objectification of women used psychoanalytic theory to explain how patriarchy subconsciously affects cinematic image production and reception. The review also revealed Kristeva's Abject theory as a branch of psychoanalysis. Keeping with the study of taboos, be it explained by Moral Panic Theory, or the objectification theory and schema theory, Social Cognitive Theory posits that social norms play a crucial role in advocating behavior change through the observation of role models and the outcomes of their actions like substance abuse and addiction.

After the review, the chapter identified gaps and suggested future avenues for women's representations on OTT media. After knowing its recent trends and existing body of literature, which failed to provide a thorough examination of in-depth gender representations due to prevalent taboos underlying them, a combination of psychoanalytic feminism and abject theory was finalized to address the theoretical gap. (Mulla) released a review on OTT services; nevertheless, the research was confined to aspects affecting consumers' views toward OTT media adoption and

lacked theoretical and methodological advancements towards gender. (Singh et al.) conducted bibliometric studies of OTT literature; however, their analysis was restricted to topic identification, excluding gender studies and current advancements in OTT services. The literature mostly highlighted technology adoption theories such as TAM and UTAUT, which are helpful in comprehending the utilization of OTT platforms, although they fail to include audience responses to representations of gender taboos. Research often neglected the ways in which viewers, especially women, perceive and internalize gender taboos shown in OTT content over time. Although research has thoroughly examined the comparison between OTT platforms and conventional media regarding media consumption, it has inadequately investigated the distinctions in their approach to women and implicit taboos in their portrayals. Qualitative research on audience involvement with gender portrayals could address this deficiency. Existing research examined the competitive dynamics of OTT and the theoretical underpinnings of media consumption, although it neglects the unique portrayal of gender taboos, including gender-based violence, body negativity and unrealistic beauty standards, menstruation, abortion, and female sexual autonomy, in Indian OTT media's women portrayals. The body of literature on OTT services is expanding quantitatively and requires more investigation by scholars to enhance theoretical frameworks regarding gender, particularly sex positive women's portrayals with taboos not being cornered. The chapter

reveals that timely updating of segmentation studies also could OTT service providers develop marketing strategies accordingly and deliver tailored services accountably.

Since the OTT landscape is dominated by a younger demographic, the portrayals constantly shape their perception, making them learn and unlearn social nuances and norms. Though gender and film studies abound, the new formats and genres are unexplored and hence should be studied at length to expand research. OTT's make-aware socio-cultural role in the gender mediascape has been unexplored from a literary and theoretical lens. Overall, the relegation of interrogation on taboos and their subsequent, understated role in shaping societal transformation in the context of Indian OTT's women needed immediate address for the youth to be gender sensitive, responsible viewers of Indian OTT media and the stakeholders to observe corporate social/digital accountability. The identified research gaps underscored the need for comprehensive, qualitative investigations into the representation and conceptualized reception of gender taboos on Indian OTT platforms. The chapter also laid bare the research objectives trying to address these gaps that are to study how women representations occupy the sites of the Indian OTT mediascape and investigate the dynamics of consumption through Indian audience perception with its sub objectives and research questions.

Chapter 3: This chapter dealt with employed methods and methodologies for fulfilling Objectives 1 and 2. Firstly it rationalized utilizing mixed methods. Since the research questions cannot be answered by qualitative or quantitative approaches alone, as the primary focus of understanding the "whys" and "hows" of critically examining gender issues and taboos falls largely on qualitative research for the first set of objectives and sub objectives; the reasons for rejecting the quantitative research as the primary method are lucid. The research emphasizes subjective experiences and interpretations of media content, indicating a preference for a qualitative approach that allows participants to express their thoughts in their own words. However, we cannot negate the fact that OTT media is an industrial market. In audience perception studies, quantification is also necessary as it provides generalizable data that accurately reflects the "whats" and "how many" of the audience behaviors and preferences. Therefore, for the next set of objectives, quantitative surveys were selected as they effectively measure attitudes or behaviors but do not provide the depth necessary to comprehend the underlying reasons for those attitudes. Since qualitative research may provide profound insights into the subtleties of audience perceptions, and the research aims to interrogate them rather than thoroughly understand only, including the contextual rationales that quantitative approaches could neglect, this study underscores the need for deep examination of audience dynamics through qualitative research being supplemented by quantitative insights. A

wholesome examination is possible only through integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods, with a primary focus on qualitative for the first set of objectives and extending it to the second objective by following concurrent embedded design.

To methodologically represent this, for Objective 1, qualitative methods were opted through 64 semi structured in-depth personal interviews using open-ended questions designed to place the viewer, like the respondent, on a more equitable level (Lotz). As study units, OTT content as in each chosen show or film is examined as a distinct unit, focusing on its portrayal of gender and sensitive taboos. Audience members from varied backgrounds will be analyzed to understand the interpretation and internalization of these representations. For understanding audience reception, conducting semi-structured interviews with participants will facilitate open-ended responses and enable follow-up questions, thereby enhancing comprehension of audience interpretations of gender taboos and women's representations. For determining study units, a selection of 5 key OTT shows and movies was made, concentrating on content that directly addresses gender issues and taboos. A selection of Indian OTT shows and films from popular platforms such as Netflix India, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+Hotstar, and SonyLiv based on their thematic engagement with gender and women's issues were chosen on frequency of audience's recommendations during the intrview. They were *Panchayat* (2 seasons), *Gullak* (3 seasons), *Delhi Crime* (Season 1) among web series,

Devi as the sole short film and *Period. End of Sentence* as the sole documentary. The chapter all entails the detailed selection criteria of the study instruments and the participants of the study. For audience reception studies, a diverse group of viewers had been selected using purposive sampling. The sample was selected on the basis of engagement level variation. Viewers who frequently consume OTT content and have interacted with programs addressing gender issues were to be selected.

As sampling strategy, it deliberately employed a non-probability technique since it was ideal for extracting rich datasets from experts. Therefore, the following theories that built a foundation for the study were Psychoanalytic feminism for studying women's portrayals on OTT media and Abject theory for examining gender taboos and audience's responses to such depictions on Indian OTT platforms. The sample size was limited to 64 interviews to prevent analytical overload (Robinson) and to achieve thematic saturation in audience responses. NVivo was selected as the research tool as the manual transcriptions of interviews could be useful and the tool could assist in coding procedures of thematic analysis and visualization of its findings.

As quantitative research design for studying Objective 2, a questionnaire was designed and administered to a sample of educated adults for this study. As OTT media is more prevalent in cities, Kolkata, Pune, Bangalore, Lucknow and Delhi were included in the sample, serving 60% of the Indian population and known for their substantially younger

demographic. A convenience sample of adults (Philip Kotler (Northwestern University); Yeo et al.) from the population of interest, including premier educational institutions, received 622 e-questionnaires. After receiving 403 responses and excluding incomplete replies, 343 valid responses were analyzed, yielding a response rate of 55.14%. The first section of the questionnaire focused on categorical variables, specifically demographics, including gender, age group, educational attainment, occupation, and income group. Additionally, this section includes psychographic variables such as preferences in entertainment media, platform, gadget, content type, genre, and censorship, inclusivity of characters, awareness, popularity, accessibility, and potentiality. Both demographic and psychographic indicators were measured on a nominal scale, and their descriptions. The second section measured questions related to OTT perception such as value delivery (3 items), content quality (6 items), convenience (5 items), affordability (4 items), and peer group influence (3 items), which were derived from the research conducted by Bhattacharya, Mehta, and Nayak (Bhattacharyya et al.) and slightly reworded to better suit the context of the study. Also, the construct, namely, personalization (4 items), was adopted from the previous studies conducted by Ting-Peng Liang, Hung-Jen Lai, and Yi-Cheng Ku (Liang et al.). The constructs in question were assessed using a five-point Likert scale. In preparation for data collection, a survey instrument was administered and pretested on a sample of 20 research scholars and 3

professors who were actively engaged with watching OTT at regular intervals. This step was undertaken to verify the simplicity and ease of response of the measures employed in the scale as perceived by the intended population. As a result, inputs of significant value were taken into account in order to finalize the survey instrument. At the end, ethical considerations were enlisted in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4: This chapter presented analysis and processing of data. For research objective 1, thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns in the data, focusing on the portrayal of women and gender taboos to discern main codes and topics. In accordance with Braun and Clarke (Braun and Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology") the process entailed (1) familiarization with the data; (2) generation of preliminary codes; (3) categorization and organization of the codes to identify initial themes; (4) reorganization and evaluation of the themes; (5) definition and designation of the themes; and (6) elaboration and discourse on the themes. During an initial familiarization phase, each review was thoroughly read, comprehended, and then categorized by 5 researchers to ensure that the general sentiment was maintained in the following coding phases. This was followed by a comprehensive coding, distillation, and categorization procedure leading to the establishment of the categorized themes for the theoretical framework of this research. The thematic analysis yielded several themes, which were then reported in the results section.

Furthermore, language was directly extracted from interviews for labeling, referred to as "in vivo coding," such as "gender-based violence," to maintain the authenticity of participant thoughts in the final outcomes.

The data collection process included considering the ongoing worldwide pandemic's health, safety protocols and the incapacity to conduct in-person interviews, the one-on-one interviews lasting around 60 minutes and casual debriefing lasting approximately 15 minutes were conducted virtually using Google Meet. The interviews occurred from April 12, 2023, until July 5, 2023. 41 women and 23 men participated. The participants ranged in age from 14 to 40 years and resided in the metropolitan cities of India, including Kolkata, Bangalore, Pune, Delhi, and Lucknow. Open-ended inquiries within a semi-structured framework facilitated organic dialogue (Weiss Robert Stuart). While the majority of interviewees responded to all 11 questions, the sequence of questions was modified to align with the conversational flow (Brennen). All interviews were audio recorded. Coding was conducted subsequent to reviewing the complete transcripts, reviewing the recordings, and revisiting the transcripts (Braun and Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology"). The collected transcripts were condensed, reorganized, and synthesized to formulate a hypothesis. Categorization entailed codes' grouping, ordering, and categorizing into units. Coding was undertaken at a two-fold level—that of the 2 study instruments.

1. Personal interviews, and

2. Selected OTT content

One researcher in the team manually transcribed the audio recordings of interviews into written prose. Following transcription, each transcript was reviewed for inaccuracies. To do this, the audio recordings were re-audited while concurrently reviewing the transcription, with any modifications implemented instantly. This procedure was executed twice for each transcript. All transcript files were loaded and imported into the NVivo 12 software program. The coding procedure was executed by five researchers. The justification for formulating each topic was grounded in the study's purpose, namely to investigate women's portrayals on Indian OTT content. Three stages were undertaken to evaluate the interviews (Reynolds and Gengler; Grunert and Bech-Larsen). Initially, open coding was conducted systematically on a line-by-line basis from the transcript. Codes having like meanings created a first-order code list. Secondly, axial coding facilitated the creation of pertinent categories from open codes. Open codes were amalgamated to create a category (Spiggle; Goulding). To provide significant outcomes for practitioners, the number of categories was decreased to enhance clarity in comprehending the correlations. Therefore, the scholars elucidated the open codes and rationalized the categorizing codes and themes.

Firstly, first-order codes (open coding) were matched with auto-coded themes. The validity was ensured by matching the codes and themes to those of research papers that studied on the same line, and the matching

frequency of codes (through text search) was rarely found, suggesting that they are under researched areas, especially with situating gender taboos in women's representations on Indian OTT. While running a query for word frequency (word cloud and summary) for all personal interviews, most of the prominent codes/themes matched with the words in the cloud. This seemed to establish the validity of codes. Newly developed codes extracted from content analysis of 5 selected OTT shows were juxtaposed with those of the interviews as a validatory mechanism to avoid researcher's bias in coding. For the content analysis of 5 Indian OTT shows, initially descriptions gathered from personal interviews were coded; secondly, key dialogue or incidents were selected based on the overall theme of the narrative and the ones cited by the respondents in particular. Interviewees were questioned on referring to remarkable instances of the narrative; their replies and thick descriptions proved useful apart from the descriptions provided by the streaming platforms. Both the transcripts were imported into NVivo 12, and the primary researcher reviewed and re-read each transcript. A top-down coding method was first used to improve familiarization. Condensing the input into coding principles, categories was established. The study integrated respondents' perspectives with theoretical foundations of psychoanalytic feminism and abject theory, providing profound interpretations of the data. Thirdly, the coding methodology and thematic maps were deliberated with other specialists in the relevant field, enhancing the validity of the codes and

themes. Hence, a table of codes was constructed that included encoded narrative excerpts from the 5 selected OTT shows to convey an in-depth examination of the open codes.

Utilizing the a priori framework as a basis, categories were defined that influence women's portrayals and the evaluation of gender taboos in Indian OTT platforms. Categorization results unleashed 13 categories characterizing OTT media content, namely, women's traits on OTT platforms, women's departure from conventional femininity, strong language, substance abuse, sexually explicit content, non-inclusivity, violence, menstruation based taboos, narrow beauty standards and negativity, misogyny, addressal of gender based violence, self-regulation, and lastly, educational role of OTT. However, while finalization of themes by the 5 coders, they seemed non mutually exclusive categories. They shared an intricate cause-effect relationship rather than standing out independently as themes. The detailing of these categories helped coders thematically assess the causal relationship and finalize the themes which further underwent revaluation.

For Objective 2, the quantitative study included the assessment of constructs' reliability, validity, and dimensionality was accomplished through factor analysis (FA) utilizing SPSS software. Cronbach's α values

were computed for all six constructs, yielding a range of 0.825 to 0.899. Additionally, the researchers conducted estimations for the composite reliability values of all implicit factors, which varied between 0.826 and 0.904. These values were found to exceed the suggested level of 0.70, indicating that the scale reliability demonstrated convergence consistency (Hair et al.). Subsequently, the examination of construct validity was undertaken by measuring the indicators of convergent validity and discriminant validity. The researchers computed the average variance extracted (AVE) for each latent component to assess convergent validity. The average values (AVE) for the parameters "VD", "CQ", "CON", "AF", "PGI" and "PR" were seen to above the required threshold of 0.50, as indicated (Hair et al., 2019). Similarly, the factor loadings of all 25 items displayed a range of 0.513 to 0.857, above the established threshold value of 0.50 (Kline). Hence, the findings have substantiated the sufficiency of convergent validity for all constructs. The results suggest that discriminant validity for the data was established, as demonstrated by previous investigations (Fornell and Larcker). Furthermore, the correlation values were lower than 0.70, indicating that discriminant validity was accepted. These correlations can help identify potential relationships between the constructs. Final analysis assessed categorization accuracy using Table 6. Diagonal entries show 91.5% of cases grouped correctly. Cluster-1 was 90.7% accurate, Cluster-2 90.4%, Cluster-3 89.3%, Cluster-4 82.3%, and

Cluster-5 90.9%. Discriminant function phase findings corroborate classification's validity (Birks).

Non-hierarchical clustering was used to identify customer clusters using factor scores of six variables. The K-means algorithm was used to determine cluster membership throughout this investigation. The algorithm was applied on the 6 variables. The five cluster memberships were estimated using mean scores and standard deviation scores in the K-mean clustering approach (Kirmani and Khan). After cluster analysis determined the appropriate number of cluster memberships, statistical tests were undertaken to examine if the five groups differed. The Walks' lambda test of multiple discriminant analysis was performed next (Birks; Hair et al.). Multiple discriminant analysis was used to compare clusters (do Paço and Raposo; Jansson et al.; Karlsson). The study revealed significant differences in group averages for all six characteristics ($p < 0.001$). It implies that these constructions can distinguish the five clusters. In conclusion, the Walks' lambda test demonstrates that all six factors distinguish clusters, with CON being most essential. The results highlighted factors' contributions to the four discriminant functions. These contributions were assessed using the structural matrix.

Chapter 5: This chapter entails the findings and interpretation or discussion ensuing those. For Objective 1, it sheds light on the findings of thematic analysis and content analysis. In this chapter, the findings of

thematic analysis were utilized as a validating mechanism of the content analysis of 5 OTT shows, namely, "Panchayat", "Gullak", "Delhi Crime", "Devi", and "Period. End of Sentence" conducted by the researcher in the earlier chapter. The categorized codes and themes were interpreted on the lines of psychoanalytic feminism and abject theory. Keeping with the findings, a conceptual framework was also formulated on the gender taboos and solutions related to OTT content were discussed. After elucidating all possible solutions of examined taboos, the themes were finalized and ratified by those of content analysis. Post finalization, theoretical interpretation of those themes followed. The research design framework was also revised after the last step of thematic analysis that is finalization of themes.
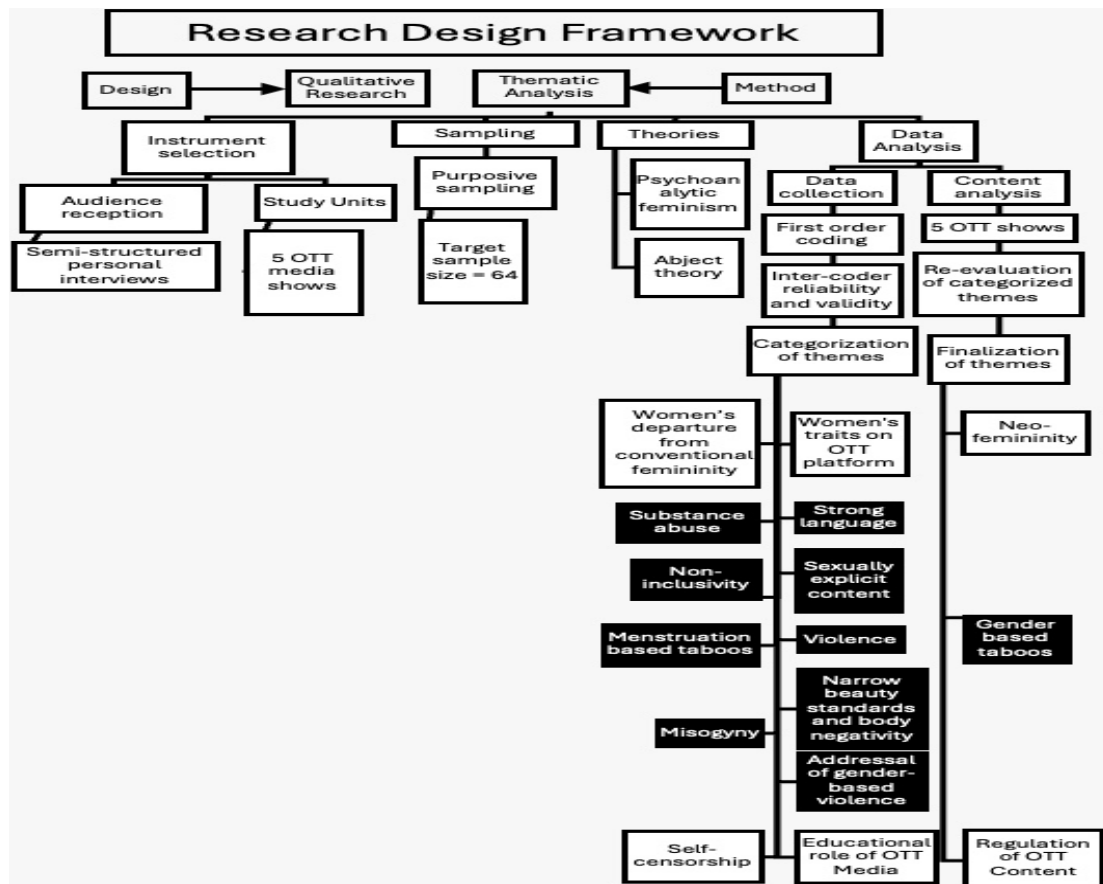
Figure 6.1.5(A): Revised Research Design Framework highlighting finalized themes after Thematic Analysis

After elaborating on the 13 categories based on respondents' views and coding interview extracts, the findings were visualized using the NVivo tool. The visualization of findings is illustrated in the form of hierarchy charts, word clouds, sentiment graphs and sunburst diagrams.

There are many prevailing gender-based taboos in OTT content of Indian streaming platforms. On thematically analyzing the interview data, the findings validated that there have been increasing instances of ideological misrepresentations of masculinity, feminism, and femininity on OTT and OTT media differed from the mainstream cinema in a lot of respects. OTT

has been proven better in a lot of gendered aspects especially in terms of women's visibility and evolution, newer trait profiles and nuances with complexity in content. It has also become more gender fluid and diverse in representing alternative masculinities and femininities. However, there has been a growing incidence of violence and crime unfolding in domestic violence, sexual harassment, and abuse with regard to content variety. There are spikes in instances where discriminatory gender taboos, like tokenism, undue recognition, conservative gender roles, unwanted women's objectification, hypersexualization, menstruation, misogyny, body-shaming and narrow beauty standards, plague the content heavily explicitly and implicitly. Non-inclusivity of genders or homophobia-like taboos also poses a concern for minds exposed to the content. The sample problematized scopophilia, generating sexually explicit content, nudity and obscenity, strong language, and substance abuse, such as in alcoholism, drug addiction, and abuse, as sowing the seeds of gender-based violence rampant across all OTT content. The taboos apply to all the genders: men, women, and LGBTQIA+. However, the position of women with respect to their body and subjectivity in the macrocosm of society and its relationship with such taboos in the mediated representation of OTT media carries ample weightage, especially with the adverse impacts of taboos both stemming from and resulting in OTT content. The taboos, as a result, plague women's positionalities in the OTT mediascape and in the young adults' conception of femininity in larger society.

A conceptual framework for the categorized gender taboos in OTT media also reveals that various gender taboos are a part of OTT content streamed on Indian platforms that seem to share an intricate causal relationship among themselves. Some are direct or indirect consequences stemming from a few taboos in the first place. The causative/source taboos are oversexualization and objectification, narrow beauty standards and menstruation-based taboos among gender taboos manifesting into consequential or resultant taboos which then transpires into certain severe psychological effects. By focusing on the psychological repercussions of taboos and how viewers interpret them, this framework enables a deeper understanding of how media both reflects and challenges societal expectations around gender and taboo in India and eradicate latent prejudices by gender-sensitizing regulation to foster a more progressive and inclusive mediascape.
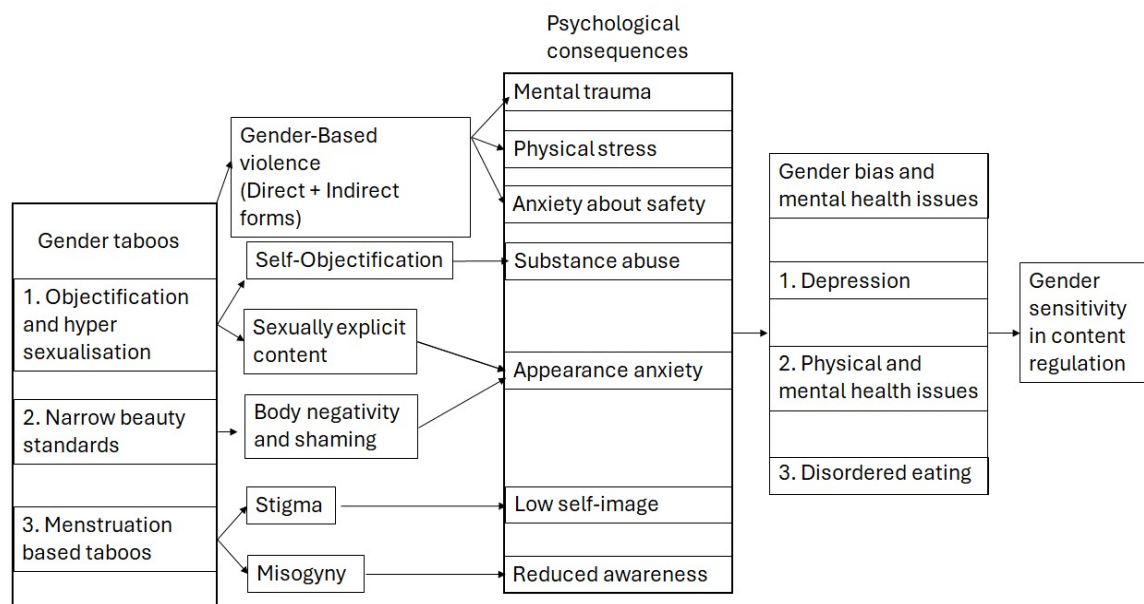
Figure 6.1.5(B): The conceptual framework for gender taboos in OTT content

Finally, the results of content analysis unleashed through the lens of psychoanalytic feminism and abject theory revealed the stigma and observed taboos of menstruation, burnouts related to conventional unpaid labor, domestic chores and gender roles, non-recognition, and downplaying of administrative roles on the basis of gender. Among other observations were objectification and oversexualization, victimization of gender-based violence, hostile and benevolent sexism, narrow beauty standards related to body shaming and negativity all leading to socio-psychological consequences related to poor physical and mental health issues of mostly women or gender minorities. Mental health is so intertwined with our society that it affects our daily lives, and these discussions are not new to the COVID-19 pandemic. With most of society not being able to afford mental health services, the underfunded public health system, societal inequalities, and cultural experiences need revamping, preventing society from achieving mental wellbeing or an open dialogue on it. Gender norms that contribute to mental health should be destigmatized and curbed. In addition to the dearth of healthcare facilities and mental health awareness programs, even seeking mental health treatment is sometimes stigmatized and ignored. To prevent such

adversities, gender sensitivity and awareness should be bolstered as a mandate.

The final themes or broader outcomes of thematic analysis were: 1. Neo femininity- Corresponding to the Big Five Trait model, feminine traits defined women characterizing extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional balance and openness to experience as newness to femininities on OTT. The graphical results confirm that the first three categories and openness to experience positively correlate with the personality traits of innovation. These findings are similar with prior studies, which revealed that individuals with higher extraversion are better capable of executing inventive activities. (Eastman et al.; Hsieh et al.). Individual innovative activities are influenced by agreeableness (Rossberger). Conscientiousness was detected for having a considerable favorable impact (Hsieh et al.). People with significantly neurotic personalities may struggle to demonstrate inventive behaviors and explore innovative ideas (Eastman et al.; Hsieh et al.; Allik and McCrae; Terracciano and Costa) as opposed to those with openness to experience. Finally, it was discovered that openness to experience predicts individual-level creativity. (Rossberger; Hsieh et al.). Today, hence, according to the Big Five Model, women characters on OTT are more multifaceted and innovative. The "modern Indian woman" on OTT is typically categorized this way- Someone who wears numerous hats and is always on edge.

Despite our binary labels, today's women are still evolving. This new woman is more aware of her agency and space to work things out on her own terms, not better or wrong. This lady becomes the lone traveler on public transportation, the noisy restaurant patron, the overworked corporate trailblazer, etc. She also stays home and cares for others unpaid Today, they surpass the 4 tropes of femininity particularly when understanding modern Indian women- "Manic Pixie Dream Girl", the "Cool girl", the "Girl Next Door" or the "Fatale Femme" trope. This persona is a fusion of all. The lived experiences and realities of women cannot be accurately represented unless we cease to construct monolithic concepts of what it is to be a modern, contemporary Indian woman. The technological revolution, industrialization, and modernization of society transform its shape. The ladies in this contemporary shape are learning, unlearning and relearning themselves.

2. Gender taboos in Indian OTT content- theoretical explanation of 'narrow beauty standards', 'menstruation-based taboos, and oversexualization and objectification'.

Over the course of time, internalized patriarchal conditionings find its ways through criticizing even natural attributes. Promotional language such as 'velvety smooth skin' contrasted with images of youthful females expressing joy and liberation, and descriptors like 'prickly' for 'other bodies,' contributes to this narrative. Another instance of body negativity is that body horror has significant potential in putting it out rather

assertively that there is violence and constant mutilation being done to the female body. It is done through a systematic psychological and physical oppression which requires a feminist inquiry even if the enactor is the woman herself. Women, non-binary people and people with disabilities are taught to hide or be ashamed of their bodies. Being policed for wearing "certain clothes", being made fun of and humiliated for finding someone attractive, or being snapped for fangirling over celebrities, are all ways in which society tries to control the sexuality of young adults. Feelings of shame and stigma about one's body can result in low self-esteem and negatively affect one's sexual interaction. Based on the premise of perfection being an illusion and that natural bodies are adequate; the body positivity movement rejects society's conventions and promotes self-acceptance to end the shame caused by narrow beauty standards. Sympathy for heavy-bodied or skinny persons contradicts body acceptance because it internalizes the concept that 'fat' or skinny people need saving. Since nobody needs rescue, only space, normalizing body kinds hinges on it. Such unsolicited compassion often reflects a poisonous optimism on everyone who does not meet the criteria of beauty, reducing the movement to toxic positivity.

3.   Gender sensitivity in content regulation- Since censorship is undesirable for most of the Indian audience, gender sensitization should rather be considered normative in regulating the content. Some initiatives have already been kick started like NCERT has launched a new teacher

training guidebook where the NCERT Department of Gender Studies released 'Inclusion of Transgender Children in School Education: Concerns and Roadmap', a detailed glossary explains gender identity, gender dysphoria, gender expression, gender incongruence, gender conformity, heterosexuality, homosexuality, asexuality, gender variance etc. in the training material. It defines and makes aware of what gender fluid, asexual, transfeminine, and transmasculine terminologies imply. Further, the training material provides practical ideas for sensitive and inclusive for gender non-conforming youngsters. These techniques include introducing gender-neutral restrooms and clothing, sensitizing non-teaching staff, ending gender-based school activities, creating support groups, hosting transgender speakers, etc.

For Objective no. 2, aiming to segment the Indian OTT audience based on the perception factors, this chapter revealed the clusters of the Indian audience and profiled them according to their demographic and psychographic characteristics. Further, the five clusters were demographically and psychographically profiled. This profile utilizes categorical variables excluded from cluster and multiple discriminant analyses (Jansson et al.). The five groups' categorical variables were differentiated using Pearson's chi-square. As indicated, this study used demographic and psychographic cross-tabulations (do Paço and Raposo; Saleem et al.). Demographic factors show no significant differences between clusters ($p > 0.05$) in Table 7. Labeling the five primary categories

by favored perception factor and characteristics were crucial- Cluster 1 (Youthfully Moderate Enthusiasts), Cluster 2 (Educated streamers favoring convenience), Cluster 3 (Optimally judicious OTT aficionados), Cluster 4 (Utility-prone diverse viewers), Cluster 5 (Varied and impressionable entertainment seekers).

Other Key Findings:

- The attention bandwidth of audience is reducing which pushed filmmakers to reduce a 3hour format to 2hour one and with OTT like formats coming up, it's a boon for women at the center and not the periphery

- Shorter entertainment formulas have almost equal focus on the substance and characters sidelining other extravaganzas. Also, the prominence OTT gives to detailed characterization which mainstream cinema gives to protagonists only is remarkable. It unearths the complexities and nuances of every character equally in its plot and detailed subplots, not necessarily to its protagonists only whom the audience identifies with as in mainstream, popular cinema. With this hierarchy of characterization gone, some less visible characters with depth also gives enough scope of identification and potentially leave an indelible mark on the spectators.

- The niche of realistic cinema is getting expanded

- After the thematic and content analysis was conducted, the factors or determinants of the content consumption and creation emerged and revolved around the 5 primary drivers.
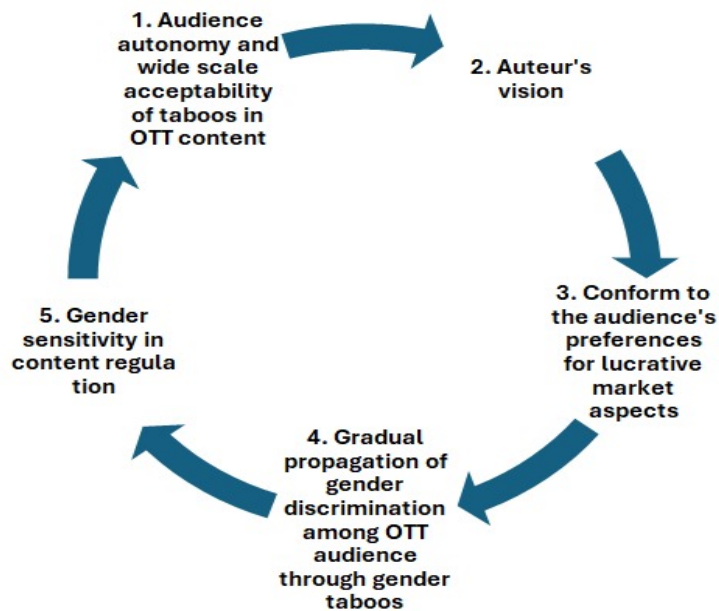
Figure 6.1.5(C): Drivers of viewership and content creation in the contemporary OTT landscape

The OTT enabled audience autonomy of choosing content and the wide scale acceptability of the modern Indians to admit viewing certain taboos prevalent in the content. This nonresistance prompts the auteurs, directors or content creators to envision reaching the masses exercising artistic freedom not only conforming to the audience's content preferences but also acting upon lucrative market factors. With all these factors in place, the gradual propagation of gender discriminatory taboos is facilitated due to which gender sensitivity should be ensured in various content regulatory

mechanisms. Their interconnectedness and interdependence make them act like a vicious cycle of content production and consumption.

- Other problematic areas of representation on OTT platforms include underrepresentation of women and queer on and off screen, valorizing toxicity and violence, moral policing of abortions and reproductive agency, hostile and benevolent sexism, rise of faux girl power, capitalistic patriarchy and victim blaming.

- Some affirmative observations in the OTT culture are taking cognizance of female pleasure, alternative masculinities, women writing and filmmaking, destigmatization of the word 'sex' and rise in queer awareness.

The positive and negative observations are extrapolated with the contemporary cinematic productions of the OTT platforms:

Underrepresentation- Deep-rooted power systems in Indian society are seen in popular culture, where gender disparities persist. Popular culture is a major aspect of daily social behaviors, where power operates at the lowest levels. Indian popular culture includes movies, ads, and sports. The gender gap in these fields has expanded over time. "Women-centric" films are becoming popular in Bollywood. Since 2000, more women-centric films have been created in this 1930s-era sector. The first Bollywood film

to breach the glass barrier was Nargis's 1957 *Mother India*. Later films with strong female protagonists appeared in the 1970s and 1990s. Women-focused films become increasingly common after 2010. Over 80 years passed before films featuring dramatic female protagonists became the norm. Recently, they have become blockbusters and draw big audiences. The box office for Vidya Balan's *Kahaani* and Aalia Bhatt's *Raazi* reached 1 billion. Despite strong performances by female performers, the business still has a gender pay discrepancy. Many Hollywood celebrities have spoken out about this salary disparity. Popular culture perpetuates gender inequality via uneven wages, skewed portrayals of women in media, unattainable beauty standards, and binaries rather than parity and inclusion.

Valorizing toxicity and violence- Popular culture has made us think "good" relationships are boring. "Good" individuals are dull, thus antiheroes are popular. The romance industry obsesses about toxicity. These harmful romantic clichés must be addressed. This obsession with psychopathic traits in relationships has spread to documentaries. Many serial killer films examine their reasons and acts. After the Netflix documentary, Ted Bundy is now recognized for his looks rather than his murders. Hundreds of individuals on internet forums discussing Ted Bundy or Richard Ramirez, a mid-1980s serial murderer who terrorized Los Angeles and San Francisco, are alarming. As Dulquer Salman's film Kurup, based on Kerala's most wanted criminal, Sukumara Kurup, is about

to be released, concerns have been raised about how a romanticized portrayal of the fugitive will harm the families who have suffered from Kurup's murders. The media makes villains sympathetic or protagonists because consumers want complexity. Viewers and readers want an antagonist's redemption but forget their sins when it happens. Unfortunately, there is no dark side. Abusers are brutal, deceptive, and aware. Most people, heroes and villains, have free will. They may assess rights and wrongs and choose a path. When audiences accept romanticized portrayals, abusers may feel free of guilt. The "protagonist" in the mirror becomes a script scrap, a minor figure. Social media romanticizes romance, which is harmful.

Moral policing of abortions and reproductive agency- A major UC San Francisco research indicated that over 95% of women thought their abortion was the appropriate choice five years later. Contrary to popular belief, not all abortion users regret their decision. It's hazardous to generalize abortion experiences. Most people are confident in their choice; however others may regret it. Childbirth and pregnancy are glorified; therefore, abortion is stigmatized and vilified. Terminology like "feticide" and "kill an unborn child" stigmatize abortion. The terms "unsafe abortion" and "illegal abortion" are frequently interchangeable. The former relates to inexperienced practitioners or unsafe medical abortions, whereas the latter refers to legal violations that may be safe. To correct these taboos, OTT, being a prominent medium today should spread

accurate knowledge in a healthy, sex positive and pleasure-affirmative manner. Additionally, age-appropriate Comprehensive Sexuality Education should be offered to everyone, particularly schoolchildren.

Reema Sengupta's short film, *Counterfeit Kunkoo* which won a Sundance prize, is a stinging critique of Indian society's inability to recognize marital rape as a crime. Although the film's concept centers on the problem of marital rape, Sengupta sheds light on several topics related to women's sexual agency and the institution of marriage. This is perfectly captured by Sengupta in a moment in Counterfeit Kunkoo where Sunil makes fun of Smita. Additionally, we observe that Smita does not pursue any legal action against the crime, which reflects substantially how society views rape inside the framework of marriage. The majority of the movie is on the fallout from the sexual assault, showing Smita's hardship and annoyance as she looks for a separate place to live. Smita is a reserved woman who threads fake *mangalsutras* for a job. As a result, Smita experiences housing discrimination due to her marital status and gender, even though she would make a perfect tenant. Due to her single status following her divorce from her marriage, Smita was forced to vacate her old residence and look for a new one. Instead of situating abortion within a positively defined spectrum of women's reproductive practices or life choices, the idea of an individual choosing to have an abortion is frequently communicated through links with discredited practices, which speaks to a sense of moral panic. Examining the social dualism and how these

portrayals create abortion seekers as a unique group that is in some ways apart from "normal" is helpful.

Hostile and benevolent Sexism- Sexism denotes the detrimental ideas, attitudes, and actions founded on the notion of male superiority and dominance, which express in many forms to discriminate against women and other marginalized genders. Hostile sexism, commonly referred to as misogyny, is characterized by overt hostility and competition directed at women, punishing them for challenging the patriarchal status quo. It may be seen as the legislation that sustains and maintains patriarchy while imposing penalties for violations. It manifests as aggressiveness, violence, insulting remarks, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, etc., directed at women to reintegrate them into the patriarchal status quo and penalize them for deviating from their designated roles. This perspective posits that the woman will be objectified, sexualized, and subjected to various forms of hostility on the grounds that she has transgressed her prescribed role. Sexism fundamentally stems from adherence to gender roles and societal positions dictated by the patriarchal system. Benevolent sexism, a term introduced by psychologists (Glick and Fiske), denotes seemingly positive attitudes and actions towards women that reinforce conventional gender stereotypes. It depicts women as loving and delicate entities in need of male protection. Although the gestures may seem benign, they perpetuate the belief that women are inherently weaker and less competent. Benevolent sexism adopts a seemingly positive tone, idealizing and

praising women who embody conventional roles (such as homemakers), while depicting them as morally virtuous and exceptionally kind, and presenting them as frail and unable to care for themselves. Benevolent sexism perceives gender relations as collaborative and complementary, assigning males the roles of safety and security and women the roles of caring and reproduction. When a woman adheres to these roles and complies submissively, she encounters 'benevolent sexism,' which superficially seems positive and presents apparent advantages in the form of protection, provision, and other 'rewards' for embodying the 'right kind' of woman who exemplifies traditional ideals. Hostile sexism and benign sexism are closely related, both functioning concurrently to sustain the patriarchal social order and contribute to the subjugation of women. Hostile Sexism is the explicit kind of sexism marked by unfavorable preconceptions and bias toward women. Benevolent sexism, conversely, is a euphemistic variant that conveys ostensibly positive sentiments towards women while perpetuating conventional gender stereotypes. It portrays women as loving and sensitive entities in need of men's protection and chivalry. These forms may be disrupted by knowledge, identification, and the elimination of 'beneficial gender biases,' fostering a society where individuals can choose any preferred kind of the opposite sex. The depiction of violence against women in Sandeep Reddy Vanga's films illustrates how Rashmika's character in Animal is glorified for conforming to patriarchal standards,

whilst Tripti Dimri's morally questionable character is objectified and demeaned for deviating from these norms. Serving patriarchal brutality while taking joy in its record-breaking box office receipts and ignoring its social responsibilities, Vanga's *Animal* uses stories of machismo taken from Andrew Tate's movies on Alpha males to coerce Geetanjali into marrying Ranvijay. He explains to her how people lived in prehistoric times, with the women taking care of the home and raising the children while the alphas hunted to survive. The movie affirms and justifies the protagonist's rage, and he receives no consequences for it. The icing on the cake is that he receives an energized audience.

Faux girl power- Pop culture may have contributed to the rise of faux girl power, which aims to appeal to people who want to imbibe feminist principles and then spew them out in a one-dimensional way as they are supposed to support women's empowerment based on a single token "badass" character in commercials. In movies, fake girl power is frequently "masculinized," or given a more forceful touch, because it loses its impact and strength otherwise. In the movie *Mardaani*, for instance, Rani Mukherjee plays a tough, no-nonsense inspector, yet the title portrays her as a woman who is or aspires to be like a male. The literal meaning of "Mardaani" is "like a man," or else you're simply not tough enough. Every sequence in the Marvel films where the female Avengers team together to fight the villain is an example of how films all around the world have attempted to use this "girl power" cliché. It is acceptable and crucial for

feminist representation to incorporate vulnerability rather than merely portray women as fierce, unflinching female bosses. Patriarchy detests vulnerability, particularly in its interpretation of masculinity, and the faux feminine power myth contributes to this idea. Filmmakers should also be careful about portraying vigilante feminism as female wrath in movies is frequently portrayed as crazy, making the angry one's villains. Gendered fury has been explored in several recent films like *NH10* and *Pari* that strengthen the characters with their wrath over injustices, giving a more complex picture of their actions and characters. *Kahaani* and *Gone Girl* show wrath in a more controlled, measured way, helping the protagonists. Like many classifications, labeling fury women as female rage suggests that their experiences, like their characters, are one-dimensional. The female gaze subverts screen sensationalization of women's fury by exposing gender inequality and collective moral consequences on women. Shifting gaze is more than just adding female characters or whitewashing female digressions. It examines the female experience through the lenses of social, moral, legal, and patriarchal standards of modesty. Bombay Begums will illustrate the profound difficulty successful women have in exhibiting even little vulnerability inside male-dominated environments, and the accountability imposed upon them for such displays. Consequently, each woman in Bombay Begums acknowledges her humanity and imperfections, converting them into strengths by identifying the facets of herself that require care and attention. Each older woman, in

her own manner, provides an imperfect model for the younger woman who succeeds her, imparting her pleasures and sorrows while facilitating opportunities for her successor. As this road is established, little fissures that may later develop into significant fractures may be seen in the prevailing framework of prescriptive regulations governing family, work, and home. Bombay Begums may be criticized for its unrepentant utopian fervor, although it merits acknowledgment for initiating challenging discussions that have been overlooked for an extended period. These discussions may include revealing workplace sexual predators, a sex worker's aspiration to run a factory, a new recruit's success in securing her own space, or a teenager's choice to seek purpose in her life via art.

Capitalism and Patriarchy- Theorists like Heidi Hartmann and Iris Marion Young contend that patriarchy and other structures like capitalism are responsible for the establishment and maintenance of women's oppression. They refer to this interconnected and interacting connection using Marxist terms like "capitalist patriarchy" or "patriarchal capitalism." The "wall of patriarchy" is the term used to describe the obstacles that keep women from completely exercising their decision-making power in the home, hence impeding their empowerment. The following three tenets guide feminist research in this area: Prioritizing the experiences of women in research, identifying the researcher in the study and a shift in gender relations. Feminist ethics especially seek to comprehend, critique, and rectify: (1) the binary conception of gender, (2) the historical privileges

enjoyed by males, and/or (3) the ways that gendered characteristics, such as sexuality and gender identity, are maintained by gendered perspectives that damage others, particularly historically marginalized women and girls, through oppressive societal systems or practices. The wellbeing of the informants should always come first, and there are a few factors that must be considered when doing research to prevent excessive interference with people's or communities' life. Their interests, privacy, and dignity should always be safeguarded.

Saas Bahu aur Flamingo provides an insightful examination of gender relations and power conflicts in this manner. It demonstrates the fortitude and tenacity of women who want to question and reinterpret social standards rather than seek retribution. The program offers a complex and powerful viewpoint that transcends the superficial assumptions sometimes connected to its genre. Most programs that aim to address societal issues like sexism, misogyny, and uneven participation in order to clear the air end up in the same chaos. The same narrative about somehow letting males handle the driver's seat just serves to undermine the goal and intention of bringing up the issue in the first place. The idea of excluding males from using motor vehicles is admirable and gives the story a fascinating depth. The agencies are kept safe for those who need and deserve them, making it a strong institution in and of itself. Often, voicing concerns is insufficient; shared responsibility is another way to address the issues. What is most remarkable is how Homi Adajania and the group were able

to mock conventional humor and portray *Saas Bahu aur Flamingo* as a borderline comedy affair. Even the movie, *Gehraiyaan* (2022 film) delves into friendship, emotional health, and intergenerational trauma, emphasizing the importance of emotional literacy. Importantly, the film presents strong feminist narratives, portraying women's agency and the necessity for spaces where they can heal amidst the demands of capitalist and patriarchal systems. The same applies to the construct of marriage in the eight episodes of *Indian Matchmaking Season 2*, aired on Netflix; Mumbai marriage matchmaker Sima Taparia victimizes bratty, pompous, and overconfident men while criticizing confident, identity-focused women. This profuse praise of Akshay is hypocritical for Sima aunty, who flinches when a lady in her thirties is unmarried or seeks an equal companion. Sima aunty believes that potential brides must "compromise" and that women who deviate should be excommunicated.

Victim blaming- In a 2013 rape case, a Goa sessions court acquitted journalist Tarun Tejpal by questioning the woman complainant's conduct, finding that she did not exhibit any normative behavior such as trauma and shock. In Kerala's two significant Solar scams in recent years, the ladies, Saritha S. Nair and Swapna Suresh were prime suspects. These women became linked with the cases due to media and public objectification and character assassination, regardless of whether they received a fair trial. One may discover jokes and trolls on "Solar Saritha" and "Smuggler Swapna" and face-morphed films on pornographic sites. In the times of

new media technologies and cancel culture, understanding language's biases is the key. In patriarchal institutions, women unconsciously internalize these ideals via their language. Conscious and continual realization of such language inflicted victimization reminds the OTT audience of *Scoop,* a 2023 Netflix web series on Jigna Vora's memoir where the accused protagonist, Jagruti Pathak undergoes severe blaming. However, she chose to fight for justice. Pierre Bourdieu, a well-known French sociologist of the 20th century, is credited with coining the term "symbolic violence,", a non-physical kind of violence that takes the shape of a power imbalance between two entities—two members of the same caste, two people in a relationship, different genders, etc. The significance of both verbal and nonverbal language itself can be traced back to symbolic violence which is particularly difficult to prevent or regulate since people are still ignorant and do not consider they victims. It must be acknowledged as a violence to be stopped. Deconstruction of fairy tales, folk tales, epics, and folk melodies suggests that our biases reside in our language and narratives. Breaking down phallogocentric language in India, where oral literature was prominent, can shape people's consciences. Also, euphemisms like "Nirbhaya" and "Abhaya" tend to sensationalize rape reportage and create an inherently patriarchal discourse around them which was a pertinent point raised during the content analysis of "Delhi Crime" web series.

Some affirmative observations in the OTT Culture:

Female pleasure- Since most conventional filmic texts focus on male desire, a distorted perception arises as a result of children and teenagers being exposed to it more frequently. This results in a lack of knowledge and an undervaluation of female pleasure. As the trend of films depicting reality increases, contrasting the intentional fabrication and idealization prevalent in mainstream commercial cinema, Indian films are exploring the complexities and chaos of womanhood. Tribhuvan Mishra in *Tribhuvan Mishra CA Topper* (2024) begins his journey as a male escort, grappling with his moral values and financial stress. Initially unable to interact comfortably with female clients or accept payment, he gradually gains confidence as they share their insecurities and personal struggles, seeking simple acts of intimacy. Mishra's sincerity and warmth, reflecting on the advice, 'Your action is equal to client's satisfaction,' help create a safe environment for women and their secretive desires. In a humorous twist, a police raid reveals gender stereotypes, as an officer mistakenly assumes a female client is the escort. This scene challenges societal prejudices regarding sex work and highlights the stigma faced by sex workers. As Mishra's business flourishes, he becomes more self-assured, engaging with female clients of diverse backgrounds and prioritizing their desires, which subverts traditional male portrayals. The series emphasizes women's agency in their sexual desires and provides a progressive perspective on intimacy, making it a thought-provoking narrative. It encourages viewers to rethink conversations around female pleasure and

sexuality, ultimately debunking societal stereotypes. A research by Allied Market Research indicates that the Indian sexual wellness market earned $1.15 billion in 2020 and is projected to reach $2.09 billion by 2030, reflecting a CAGR of 5.8% from 2021 to 2030. It indicates growing interest even amongst the millennial population towards sexual wellness and how sexual pleasure is gaining traction in the country. Nonetheless, the increasing spending power of Indians has become the internet a significant resource for those seeking items linked to sexual health and wellbeing. Sixty percent of India's population being under the age of 35 significantly influences the burgeoning market for sexual health goods. Increased access to information, OTT material, and educational resources is dismantling old societal boundaries and taboos, fostering opportunities for development in sexual openness and experimentation. Earlier women were either judged as immoral or demonized due to cultural and religious expectations based on the notions of morality. Keeping in mind the sexual wellness of everyone regardless of the societal taboos and stereotypes, the growth of the intimate wellness industry indicates how India is continuously paving the way for the upsurge in the demand for the products that promote sex positivity. Experts and prominent educators, such as Seema Anand, contend that women's pleasure has long been marginalized, prompting a search for literature that advocates for pro-women sexual autonomy. She acknowledges that there has been a transformation over the last several decades and commends the efforts of

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many stakeholders in the sexual health business, who are diligently striving to alter the environment.

Alternative masculinities- Gunjan in *Laapataa Ladies* (2024) signifies a notable transformation in the representation of masculinity in Indian cinema. Hussain articulates that Gunjan embodies a guy who is sensitive, emotional, responsible, and open in expressing his feelings, contrasting with the conventional stoic portrayal of male characters. This kind, sympathetic, and sensitive character is unconventional in Indian movies, subverting entrenched prejudices. During the 1970s and 1980s, Bollywood's depiction of male characters was characterized by the much analyzed "angry young man" stereotype, which embodied rebellion and discontent with society conventions. This image, firmly entrenched in the cultural environment of the moment, depicted males as defiant and emotionally detached. Recent popular films like Kabir Singh and Animal continue to portray male characters devoid of supporting and affectionate connections with women. Conversely, films such as *Newton* (2017) and *Satyaprem Ki Katha* (2023) provide a novel archetype of male characters who exhibit compassion and support for women, despite their status as major Hindi-language productions in India. Contemporary Indian film is changing, providing more complex and sympathetic representations of masculinity. The portrayal of males in Indian cinema is becoming more inclusive and varied. Traditional male stereotypes are yielding to more complex representations of men that reflect contemporary culture. Hussain

states, "Men are no longer exclusively depicted as heroic figures; they are also represented as feminist and compassionate fathers, brothers, and friends." This transition entails not only dismantling stereotypes but also providing a more authentic representation of men and their expressions of love, including both romantic and non-romantic dimensions, by showcasing men who embody vulnerability and emotional intelligence. Films such as *Laapataa Ladies* are shaping public attitudes and promoting a more equitable understanding of gender roles. This transition in film mirrors wider shifts in cultural views, offering a platform for more empathetic and aspirationally ordinary male characters. I contend that films such as *Laapataa Ladies* are crucial in contesting and reinterpreting cultural notions of masculinity. Hussain states that these films are dismantling stereotypes by depicting men as sensitive, caring, and emotionally receptive, hence offering a more authentic and affirmative representation of masculinity. He sees a future in which masculinity in Indian film is shown with more fluidity and less rigidity, with narratives that challenge conventional notions and examine the numerous ways in which men may embody strength, compassion, and complexity. The extensive popularity of Gunjan on social media, especially the myriads of Instagram edits highlighting his "soft boy" attitude, has profoundly impacted the public.

As viewers of two distinct generations and an older vintage, we are relieved to see the usual male protagonist of our adolescence disappear. In

the 1980s and 1990s, heterosexual desire was frequently portrayed as overwhelming and uncontrollable, and males were eve-teasing and consent-optional. Rather, we all exhaled in satisfaction at the main heroine Dimple Ahuja's polite, permission-asking romantic interests. Maybe the generation of our daughters won't have to put forth as much effort to be heard. *Mismatched* easily passes the Bechdel test without explicitly claiming itself to be feminist though the female characters have a lot to say to one another, a lot of it is unrelated to the males in their life. The plot is driven by the decisions made by the main female character, whether they are romantic or intellectual; the tale is continually told via her aspirations, her perplexity between the two male attractions, and her selection and rejection of them. Rishi Shekhawat's path is unclear, and he seems less ambitious than his "future wife," Dimple Ahuja. Through his therapy journey, Anmol Malhotra experiences a transformation in his relationships with others and himself, moving away from sexual jealousy and bullying and toward acceptance. Queer masculinities among Indian Gen Z have not yet been depicted in *Mismatched*. Some males have voiced queerphobia, and Celina Matthews and an elderly guy had a charming intergenerational conversation in which he observes that "pyar bahut achi baat hai, chahiye kisi se bhi ho," ("Love is a very good thing, whoever it may be with").

According to popular belief, "real men" do not weep, experience pain, or be vulnerable. We are misled into believing that "manning up" would reduce violence and abuse. By promoting machismo and hegemonic

masculinity, our culture privileges cis-het males. It simply accounts for physical abuse and denies the emotional suffering each body endures. Many believe that only trans and gender non-conforming persons feel gender role discomfort, although all people are pushed to adhere to gender standards. The imposition of gender norms and expectations harms mental health and ignores gender dysphoria. Marginalized masculinities may spark a holistic mental health conversation and a vocabulary for social change. As an alternative, trans masculinity reflects the power system and requires constant privilege questioning. It inspires us to envision new possibilities and share human weaknesses-masculinity that protects emotional wellness, welcomes soft behavior patterns, and comes from feminist and anti-caste politics to fight heteronormativity, caste ideology, and patriarchal masculinity. Unlearning and reclaiming masculinity from gender conventions is the strength of feminist discourse. Feminist politics and an alternative masculinity may facilitate healing, promote assistance, and transcend gender norms. The social and historical constructs of masculinity and femininity as dichotomous reinforce violent power dynamics. The queer-feminist framework and transgender spaces have facilitated the recognition of many masculinities and created a secure atmosphere for the community. In 'Female Masculinity', Jack Halberstam explores an interpretation of masculinity devoid of men or maleness. The notion that 'masculinity is immutable' and that there exists a certain kind of masculinity—characterized by violence and dominance—has

undermined discourse around mental health. Male performances are not invariably sexist and misogynistic. By proposing female and alternative masculinities, this art makes masculinity comfortable for feminine individuals.

Women writing and filmmaking- With OTT platforms facing relaxed budgetary constraints, censorship laws and regulatory mechanisms, there is scope for more narratives, diverse storylines and hence the experience of witnessing the work of women writers. When women write, their perspective and creativity add ingenuity, relatability and authenticity to the narration. They deliberately place characters of various genders in locations that show how patriarchy and gender norms make life choices difficult. Women writers write about real people, not simply sexual objects obliterating the dehumanization of genders. They own their sexuality and don't act for men. The portrayal of males shows how we might cultivate empathy and allyship if we relearn patriarchy's power relations. When women assume leadership roles in creative domains such as movies, the endeavor focuses on subverting the gaze. Women have been evaluated, reprimanded, penalized, and seen via the "male gaze" for centuries. Women-led narratives are more intimate and representative of female experiences, as demonstrated in Konkona Sen Sharma's *A Death In the Gunj*, Juhi Chaturvedi's *Piku*, Phoebe Waller-Bridge's *Fleabag*, and Céline Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, illustrating how storytelling transforms when women convey their own stories without appropriation.

The tendency to sexualize women has less, resulting in better developed female characters on television. Even women-led creative franchises often act like males and follow stereotypes owing to the drivers of viewership and content creation as discussed before. Having gone a long way in having more women in leadership roles in storytelling and in creative arts diversity, the adjustment isn't enough for intersectional identities. *Sharmajee Ki Beti* effectively illustrated a nuanced representation of the middle-class female experience across generations. The depictions indicated that such subtleties can only originate from a female director and writer. The pervasive presence of femininity and women in the film Sharmajee Ki Beti provides an engaging viewing experience that is both whimsical and profound in its examination of gender, identity, and societal topics. Furthermore, women's subjugation and lack of solidarity benefit patriarchal societies. The harsh comments of *Lipstick Under My Burkha* (2016), *Veere Di Wedding* (2018), *Crew* (2024) and *Dhak Dhak* (2024) depicting female solidarity challenge patriarchy. Even with their imperfections, these films are vital to keep female companionship in the mainstream of cinema and popular culture.

Destigmatization of sex- In our culture, it is a prevalent practice to stigmatize and impose taboos on everything related to the term 'sex.' Whether concerning sexual health, sexual expression, or sexual education, these topics are mostly seen as taboo or shrouded in silence for most individuals. OTT material has mitigated the stigma around 'sex' to some

degree. The term continues to evoke significant embarrassment and is seen just as an act of reproduction or a subject reserved for "private discussions." The customized, at-home watching experience enhances viewer awareness and expands the conversation, in contrast to the guilt and assumed judgment associated with group viewing. Silence or stigma around sexuality may result in misinformation and sustain falsehoods. The stigma around sex, sexuality, sexual health, and sexual expression, along with the fear of social ostracism, must be addressed since it may impact people' emotional and mental well-being. Society and politicians prioritize morality less, focusing instead on OTT media's role in empowering young people to make educated choices and fostering a sex-positive, supportive environment. The absence of comprehensive sexuality education may hinder a profound comprehension of sexuality, consent, and violence, as perpetuated by media such as *OMG 2* (film) and Sex Education (web series). Survey results indicate that hardly 1% of young, unmarried women had obtained knowledge about sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) from their moms, physicians, or governmental initiatives. Moreover, 53% of these women are uncertain if the sexual health issues they encountered warranted a consultation with a gynecologist. In a patriarchal society, discussions on young women's sexuality are constrained, even when such limitations jeopardize their health. The shame and stigma around sexual health that affects young people from the outset leads them to deprioritize their sexual health needs, self-regulate,

and avoid seeking essential services and supports. Sexuality, sexual health, and sexual expression are seen and addressed from a standpoint of apprehension. The converse of shame and fear is humiliation and trauma. When a person asserts their space and agency to express their sexuality, all institutions and authorities categorize them as "bad" and "unruly," therefore questioning their morality. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) reveals that just 29 percent of young women aged 15-19 and 40 percent of those aged 20-24 are permitted to access health facilities alone. This evidence indicates that women possess little to no agency over their bodies and sexual health, underscoring that they are often deprived of the ability to make choices about their sexual and reproductive health. Moreover, individuals with disabilities often have their sexual wants and expressions disregarded and rendered invisible. A significant difficulty that emerges is that medical doctors and frontline health workers are seldom educated to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. Nevertheless, with Siddhi Patel from the web series *Four More Shots Please* and the proliferation of streaming platforms, sexual wellness enterprises such as IMbesharam are swiftly gaining traction in the Indian market, and discussions regarding self-love through sexual wellness are increasingly permeating everyday conversations.

The most contentious issue in moral policing in India is sexuality. Since non-normative sexualities and wants are deemed 'western' imports, controlling sexuality, particularly of women and sexual minorities, is

paramount. Family, social, and community demands are constantly placed on women wherein the family disciplines and socializes the body. Gendered restrictions reiterate cultural notions of femininity and use the female body for societal control. Articulating complicated and disputed ties between women's bodies and the community or family shows territorial claim. Women's bodies symbolize honor and the divide between us and them. Feminist interventions aim to free women from 'culture's inhibitions. Women are restricted to hetero-normativity—monogamy, marriage, and opposite-sex relationships—by regulatory standards. The exotic, intriguing, and sensual labels given to women's bodies subjugate and confine female sexuality to heterosexual marriage rather than independent sexual enjoyment. Patriarchy's dialectic approach considers the female body as a mystified material object susceptible to societal control and supervision. When necessary, women's bodies are revered as family honor and name bearers and sometimes shameful, vexatious, scary, and filthy. Religious fanaticism and macho nationalism contradict the idea of female sexuality as a luxury. This discourse in inflexible patriarchal systems like the family threatens women's sexual and reproductive health by denying them physical autonomy. The private family violates the authority of safeguarding women and becomes a key location of sexuality and sovereignty oppression.

Also, the main characters of the Amazon Prime Video film, *Only* (2019) are a young couple named Will and Ava, whose location is unknown. They

can remain hidden and healthy for over a year primarily due to Will's (Leslie Odom Jr.) extraordinary efforts to keep Ava (Freida Pinto) from being taken for reproduction. In the name of race, religion, or country patriarchy has devised, overt efforts to seize women for their protection have often, if not always, been motivated by the hidden goal of dominating their bodies. Hindu traditions in India have at times, exalted practices like Sati, Jauhar, honor killing to prevent a woman—or rather, a womb—from being taken by the others. Victorian-era scientific theories explicitly articulated the "separate spheres" theory, which essentially holds that women are more likely to be submissive, emotional, and unstable because their reproductive organs dominate their bodies and minds, while men are naturally aggressive, independent, ambitious, and insensitive due to their need to maneuver in public. The renowned Victorian psychiatrist Henry Maudsley, who was just as prone to sexism as Manu, believed in such dehumanization and undervaluation of women's mental-intellectual abilities and the forced confinement of their bodies into an ideology of women's wellbeing that implied that they should be kept "safe"—which is the primary premise of *Only*. It's still unclear whether women will be characterized by the reductionist ideas of Manu and Maudsley or if they will continue to be much more than their wombs, making science fiction *Only* forever.

In the web series, *She* (2 seasons, Netflix) and in her alleged promiscuous job, Bhumi first blunders after having a failed sexual relationship with her

own husband. She meets Sasya, a drug dealer, and is pleasantly pleased by their sexual encounter. Through a well-planned plot, Bhumi eventually meets Nayak after tricking Sasya into getting caught. Intimate, personal notes are exchanged between Bhumi and Nayak, and eventually, Nayak removes her from all social interactions so that she can live with him. From the *Beauty and the Beast* inspired Stockholm Syndrome, here, the prisoner (Bhumi) starts to feel a strong sense of identification with her captor (Nayak). She reverses the gender roles paradigm by proving women are also well suited to her police occupation even if filled with risk and criminal activity. Fighting sexual assault, violence against women, and enhancing police-community relations all depend on having more women in law enforcement. As Bhumi attempts to juggle her responsibilities as a police officer with her romance with Nayak, Season 2 digs more into her life as a criminal. The show's depiction of a woman's sexuality is another exploration. Now that she is aware of her desires and sexuality, she discovers that she had never felt so secure, powerful, or confident as she did in her connection with Nayak.

With changing times have changed, the sins and the sinners have not, thus, today, it is up to the audience to alter the answers. *Ahalya*, a short film (2015) is the much-required ideal feminist twist that the digizens desired. Overall, Ahalya's suspense is straightforward and not that captivating, but what really stands out is how masterfully Sujoy Ghosh flips the script. In his retelling of the tale, the seducer is blatantly a seductress rather than a

man; the reins are in the women's hands, which is highly provocative given that men are typically the ones who are more vulnerable to sexual temptations and more gullible when they see a seducing woman. Ghosh portrays Ahalya's obvious sexuality as a powerful quality rather than a disgrace. In summary, Ahalya is highly contemporary, innovative, and redemptive.

Inclusivity and Queer awareness- OTT networks enable filmmakers and storytellers to disseminate unfiltered content, hence affording creative autonomy. While original, inventive, and diverse narratives are presented, they are contesting the dominant narrative perpetuated by the high-budget Bollywood cinema industry. One merit of such plotlines in media is increased awareness regarding the LGBTQIA+ community and their lived experiences. Queer portrayal transcends romance, passion, struggle surpassing heteronormative confines. OTT's willingness to experiment is a significant advancement for producers and filmmakers, though they frequently encounter failure in authentic portrayals. India has historically been deficient in LGBTQIA+ positive portrayals in film and television. Following the decriminalization of section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, filmmakers and producers began to investigate representations through the protagonists of '*Made in Heaven'* (Amazon Prime), '*Ajeeb Daastaans'* (Netflix), '*Four More Shots'* (Amazon Prime), *'Feels Like Ishq'* (Netflix). It is imperative that OTT content attempted to educate its audience and demonstrate solidarity through portraying their experiences, be it gender

dysphoria or queer baiting. Nevertheless, the majority of fiction portrays privileged, urban lifestyles in which Bollywood-inspired romantic dialogues can ostensibly "eradicate" homophobia that too among the affluent. Decades of institutional sexism that engender such conduct are hardly confronted and neither is it exclusive to the affluent. OTT platforms encounter significant representation challenges like numerous tokenistic and sensationalized misrepresentations of cisgender, heterosexual, and LGBTQIA++ lives. While OTT platforms positively redefine "mainstream" outside the confines of censor board-approved, hero-centric narratives, there remains a need for improvement in representation and non-appropriation both on and off screen.

Gender dysphoria is the distress and discomfort stemming from the persistent recognition that one's biological sex is incongruent with their gender identity. Gender dysphoria is not classified as a mental disorder; however, the associated distress or dissatisfaction may result in anxiety, despair, or detrimental everyday functioning, leading to mental health complications and other health concerns. On the contrary, numerous individuals encounter gender euphoria—the exhilaration of self-acceptance regarding their identity, physique, and gender—following a prompt and accurate opposite of gender dysphoria. The phrase "queer baiting" gained prominence in the 2010s when celebrities such as Nick Jonas and Rita Ora were alleged to have lured followers into seeing their music videos and streaming their songs using insinuations of queerness.

This phrase possesses political origins and importance. From the late 1940s through the 1960s, thousands of homosexual government employees were dismissed or forced to leave because of their sexual orientation. Due to the necessity for gay individuals to conceal their identities for survival, government officials engaged in queer baiting by "deceptively presenting themselves as allies and members of the LGBTQIA+ community." It entails the implication of LGBTQIA+ representation in media but ultimately failing to deliver any authentic representation. Queer baiting is occasionally conflated with queer coding that refers to the subtle portrayal of a character as queer without disclosing their identity. Queer coding fosters LGBTQIA+ visibility, whereas queer baiting manipulates it by undermining genuine representation. Typical instances of queer baiting involve celebrities portraying themselves as LGBTQIA+ folks to advance their forthcoming projects.

6.2 Answering Research Questions

Research Questions:

1.1 In what manner are gender taboos and stereotypes prevalent in women's portrayals depicted in Indian OTT content?

Answer: While the study of women's representations is extensively documented, the aim was to expand this field by incorporating innovative narrative formats and contemporary societal issues affecting women. Methodologically grounded in a thorough examination of digital new media, that is, OTT media exploring women's representations engage with socio-cultural taboos issues in filmic texts, and having both immediate, latent, and significant consequences for the Indian audience were one of the primary objectives.

The thematic analysis conducted to identify recurring thematic patterns in the data, focused on the portrayal of women and gender taboos to discern main codes and topics. After coding 64 semi structured personal interview transcripts, categorization procedure through open coding led to the establishment of 13 categorized themes, namely women's traits on OTT platforms, women's departure from conventional femininity, strong language, substance abuse, sexually explicit content, non-inclusivity, violence, menstruation based taboos, narrow beauty standards and negativity, misogyny, addressing gender based violence, self-regulation, and lastly, educational role of OTT. However, while themes were finalized by the 5 coders, they seemed not mutually exclusive categories. They shared an intricate cause-effect relationship rather than standing out independently as categories. The detailing of these categories helped coders thematically assess the causal relationship and finalize the themes which further underwent revaluation. These 3 final themes, neo-

femininity, gender-based taboos and regulation of OTT content were ratified by the results of content analysis of 5 recommended OTT shows as a validatory mechanism to avoid researcher's bias. The study integrated respondents' perspectives with theoretical foundations of psychoanalytic feminism and abject theory, providing profound interpretations of the data. Based on the findings of thematic and content analysis, it was concluded that the primary gender taboos like 'menstruation-based taboos', 'narrow beauty standards' and 'oversexualization and objectification' plagued and victimized gender minorities or marginalized genders of the society, particularly women.

1.2 What effect do these tabooed representations exert on audience perceptions and interpretations?

Answer: Indian OTT platforms vary vastly from conventional media in their representation of gender taboos. OTT content attempts to be far ahead than mainstream cinema and conventional entertainment media in terms of visibility, gender equality and gender inclusivity in terms of its diverse plotlines, nuanced characterization and audience's appetite for relatable content. Indeed, they have more successfully challenged traditional gender norms. However, to flag it green of all its gender bias, a conceptual framework was developed for the explicit and implicit gender taboos prevailing in the OTT content to determine its impact on women.
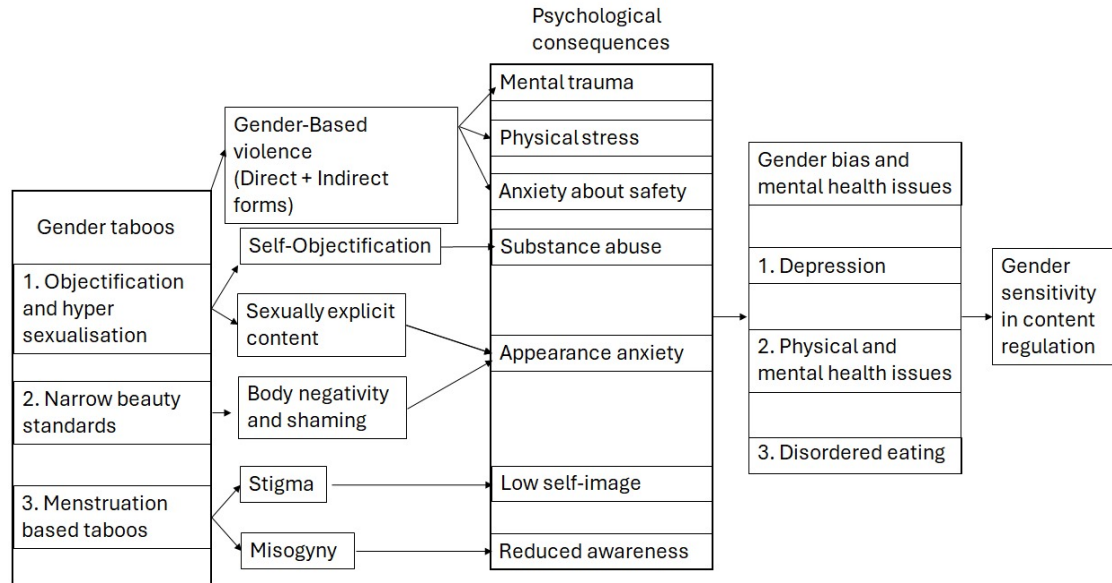
Figure 6.2(A): The conceptual framework for gender taboos in OTT content

The conceptual framework for the categorized gender taboos in OTT media also reveals that various gender taboos are a part of OTT content streamed on Indian platforms. However, they seem to share an intricate causal relationship among themselves. Some are the direct or indirect consequences stemmed from a 3 broad taboos in the first place. The causative/source taboos are oversexualization and objectification, narrow beauty standards and menstruation-based taboos manifesting into consequential or resultant taboos which then transpires into certain detrimental physical and psychological effects in women causing anxiety, depression, and disorderly eating habits. Hence, it demonstrates how primary causatives manifest into resultant taboos that are psycho-physically damaging on long-term exposure to OTT content if not regulated and gender sensitized. This conceptual framework provides a

structured approach for assessing the impact of gender taboos on audience's perceptions and internalized reactions to gendered taboos in Indian OTT content. By focusing on the psychological repercussions of taboos and how viewers interpret them, this framework enables a deeper understanding of how media both reflects and challenges societal expectations around gender and latent taboos in India and eradicate latent prejudices by gender-sensitizing regulation to foster a more progressive and inclusive mediascape.

Since India is lagging on SDG-5, cinema being an all pervasive medium and OTT is still in the development stage, a substantial focus should be shed on women's representations forming gendered perceptions and footprints of Indian womanhood globally and India, in particular. However, the long-term exposure of OTT content may make its audience internalize certain gender taboos over time drawing special attention to the examination of explicit or implicit manifestations of gender taboos mostly targeting the marginalized genders including that of the women. Some problematic areas are attitudes valorizing toxicity and violence, moral policing of abortions and reproductive agency, normalizing hostile and benevolent Sexism, assuming misrepresentations of ideologies like rise of faux girl power, victim blaming and extending Capitalistic patriarchy. The experience of being exposed to unattainable beauty standards has the potential to result in negative outcomes such as body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, and diminished self-esteem, especially in the teenage population

(Grabe et al.). The "uglifying" of widows is symbolic castration that strips them of femininity, sexuality, and autonomy showing how Indian widows are stigmatized and ostracized (Spivak). Moreover, societal stigma discourages women and adolescent girls from discussing menstruation publicly, especially in the presence of men (Brooks-Gunn and Ruble; Williams). PMS media portrayal was undiagnosed but now a disease (Richmond-Abbott). According to (Tavris), book descriptions of menopause "in terms of deprivation, deficiency, loss, shedding, and sloughing" define a normal process as negative and abject. Cudd also analyzes systematic violence (Cudd), which maintains oppression of one group over another, using "violence against women".

1.3 In what ways may theoretical frameworks, be used to analyze the depiction of gender taboos in Indian OTT content?

Answer: This research employs abject theory and psychoanalytic feminism to elucidate the intricate dynamics of gender depiction, taboos, and social impact in Indian OTT media illustrating how the integration of thematic content analysis and theoretical interpretation enables OTT platforms to challenge entrenched social constraints. Cinema's power, film spectatorship, film and genre traits all determine why certain content categories like horror, and violent films appeal to its audience. Theoretical approaches to cinema hold that desire and wish-fulfillment drive film production and experience and meet artists' and viewers' psychological, protective, and expressive needs. Psychoanalytic analyses of cinema often

include interpretations of artistic creation and audience engagement, the capacity of film to affect viewers, and the emotional and cognitive significance of the cinematic experience. Psychoanalytic theory and psychotherapy are based on Freud's comprehension of the psyche. Traditional psychoanalytic theories of art have concentrated on [1] the interplay between artistic creation, sexuality, and unconscious mental processes, with substantial film and literary criticism employing psychoanalytic theory to analyze texts or genres. However, film theory's unique contribution to psychoanalytic theories of art is [2] its emphasis on the nature and characteristics of film spectatorship. Psychoanalytically, both are connected. Freud aimed to elucidate not just the meaning of the text and the artist's connection to it but also the function of art for both artists and spectators. He attempted to explain why audiences appreciated such works and how art may convey fantasies, goals, and wants in accessible ways. Our inclination to conceal and disown painful or perverted urges and to receive a specific type of enjoyment from dreaming and imagining them explains several aspects of cinema spectatorship. Mitchell claims that psychoanalysis is not 'a proposal for a patriarchal society but an examination of one' (Mitchell). This makes it essential for feminism.

The application of abject theory, a branch of psychoanalysis, demonstrates how addressing taboo themes may contest society norms and elicit catharsis, therefore creating a forum for public discussion on previously

neglected issues. Abject subjects—such as menstruation, menopause, oversexualization, sexual assault, or gender transgression—pose a challenge to societal standards and are thus seen as taboo, dismissed, or concealed by society. The Abject theory examines the concepts of catharsis and transgression, assessing if audiences experience a feeling of release or relief after interacting with information that addresses taboos or unsettling subjects enabling audiences to collectively resolve social trauma. It also helps examine audience perceptions of characters embodying marginalized identities or victims of gender-based violence especially in series such as Delhi Crime or Devi. This facilitates the transition of study from individual character experiences to wider societal ramifications, illustrating how media either reflects or contests prevailing belief systems. Psychoanalytic feminism illustrates how internalized gender norms and suppressed urges influence character development and audience identification, emphasizing the relationship between society conditioning and individual identity.

Psychoanalytic feminism merges psychoanalytic concepts with feminist thought, emphasizing how unconscious mechanisms and formative experiences influence gender identities, desires, and societal roles. It examined how spectators project their inner conflicts or wants onto female characters which goes in tandem with understanding Indian audience's perception of both on screen women and explicit or implicit taboos in their representations. Integrating abject theory and psychoanalytic feminism for

the analysis of gender representation provided a multifaceted perspective in addressing intricate gender problems, confronted taboos, and interacted with viewers on both conscious and unconscious planes. This theory helped elucidate how the marginalized can potentially compel society to address gender problems that are often overlooked or stigmatized. By combining, researchers may conduct a thorough investigation of not only character representations but also audience reception or interpretation.

1.4 What is the role of OTT platforms in shaping societal transformation? What is the impact of content control and censorship regulations on OTT platforms for the portrayal of sensitive gender issues?

Answer: When asked about the role of OTT platforms in shaping societal transformation soon, the majority of respondents or interviewees threw light on the positive role of OTT in being a change maker and creating the difference with certainly some raising concerns on the exposure of OTT content on formative minds of young adults.
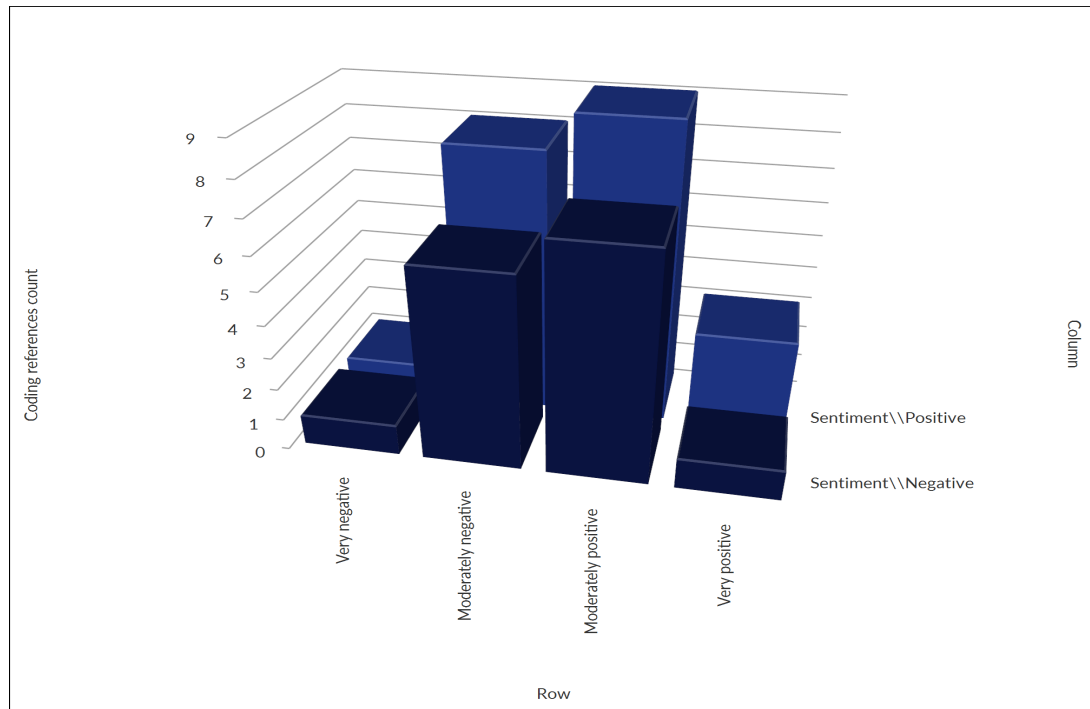
Figure 6.2(B): Sentiment polarity of societal transformational scope of OTT media in near future

"OTT can be used or misused by the society. However, if content is regulated responsibly, it is both the audience's reception and filmmakers' accountability that matters. OTT being rich in richly varied in content does have an educational and informative role otherwise." Shalu

"OTT platforms can shape societal transformation positively through education, positive role models, and promoting inclusivity. However, challenges like verbal expletives and obscenity need careful consideration." Shashank

"Entertainment and recreation devoid of educational value are meaningless. OTT addresses social issues through awareness and

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conveying social messages of women's empowerment including positive self-perception and reality checks." Nidhi

"*OTT is a powerful medium and has an infrastructure to portray socially conscious and alternative narratives and leave room for feminist content doing away with dynastic and nepotistic mainstream industry practices. With more platforms, there is fresher talents and natrratives flowing in. They are democratic and levelers in terms of its digital domain as long as onscreen and offscreen spaces are equally shared.*" Meruka

"*OTT platforms leave an impact on the netizens at the end of the day. it is very natural to relate and apply. So they definitely have the potentiat to change the society, as far as I can perceive, positively. For example, I myself got to know that gaslighting was a form of abuse from OTT.*"
Krittika

Figure 6.2(C): Sun burst diagram and word cloud visualizing audience perception of societal impact of OTT media
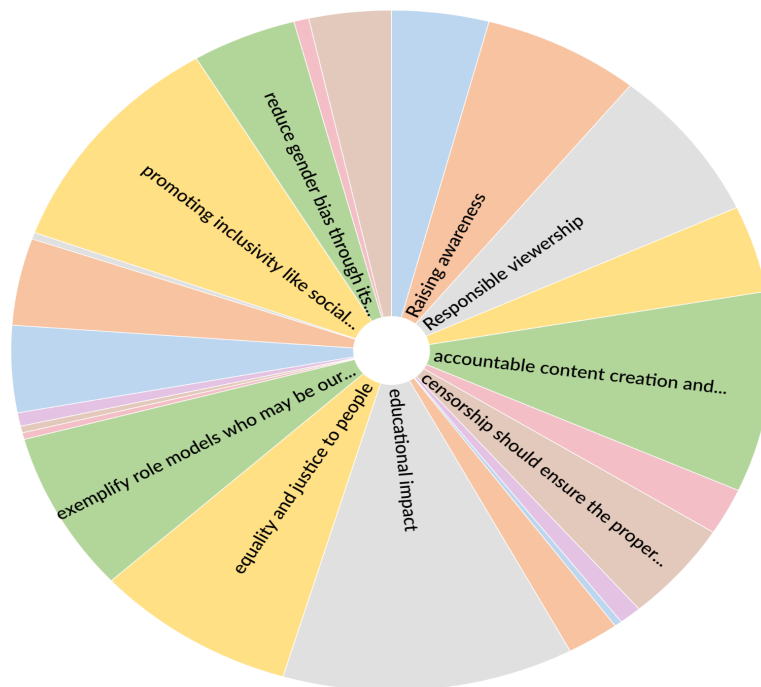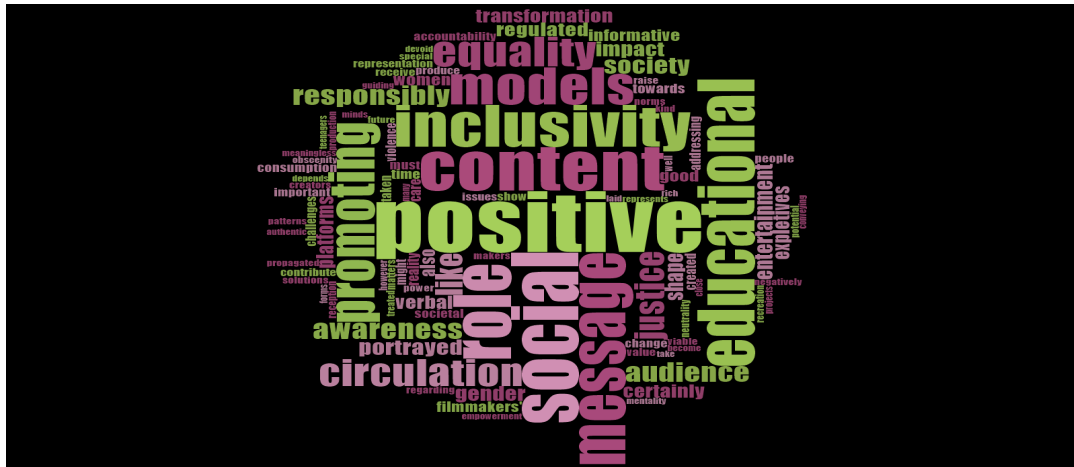
Mostly the audience is hopeful that OTT media is navigating towards gender equal representations leaving a positive influence in terms of reducing bias, promoting inclusivity, exemplifying role models and having educational impact on young minds. However, these were conditional in the sense that responsible viewership, regulation of content to an extent and accountable content creation or corporate social responsibility could only ensure the positive societal role OTT media plays in raising gender awareness and positivity.

As possible solutions to curb the taboos, regulation of OTT media content is the only one apart from corporate social responsibility and responsible viewership. Self-regulatory mechanisms are already in place for the OTT platforms to thrive against moral policing or censorship of OTT content. Censorship is undoubtedly one of the most controversial topics in the history of cinema. On one hand, censorship is viewed as an essential evil.

An idea that challenges prevailing prejudices and preconceptions can have a powerful and disruptive impact, as it demands acceptance of a new perspective or way of thinking. It is the era where what people love to watch has been spectacularly changed, and individuals are neither afraid to show some unique ideas nor are people afraid to watch them. The role of censorship insists that everything viewers watch must be molded into a form that is good enough to be showcased to a country with such a diverse population and tastes. With people's expectations of online content growing, it is very important that the regulatory bodies must consider having a proper framework meant only for the self-regulation of the content of OTT platforms, keeping in mind the concept of growing artistic freedom and what the people want to see. Some models and alternatives have been proposed in keeping with the current scenario.

The democratization of material via OTT platforms is revolutionizing storytelling, but it has side consequences. The 'test of acceptance' occurs when it reaches a larger, diversified audience. OTT material is frequently accused of offending religious or political groups. Such charges usually come from individuals who are accustomed to seeing themselves on the 'big screen' and having their story aired uncontested and their feelings protected from alternative narratives. Therefore, censorship is undesirable for most of the Indian audience. Gender sensitization should rather be considered normative in regulating the content. However, the roots of self-regulation needs of OTT media content are evident in its gender-based

taboos that are deep-seated in the minds of creator-audiences and are instrumental for creating gender bias in viewers through media portrayals. The current self-regulation model targets the creators to introspect on how consciously or unconsciously they impart gender and power imbalances in society and contribute to the resulting soft forms crime and violence. However, the self-regulatory policies should be updated and revised timely on account of the flexible nature of taboos of formulations and ramifications. As an introspecting mechanism, gender sensitivity should be the chief proponent in self-regulation, which is hereby absent in the regulatory framework. This can be achieved in multiple ways, like including gender-neutral terms in content, creating positive role models, reducing stigma relating to taboos, increasing awareness and media accountability of portraying balanced and respectful representations of gender minorities, introducing corrective mechanisms for misrepresentation of ideologies like feminism and sexuality, ensuring the role of corporate social responsibility, and empowering marginalized voices, sanitizing content from gender intolerance, violence, and insensitivity, and encouraging authentic gender portrayals on screen. Combating gender stereotypes and taboos and minimizing all forms of gender bias will assist in ensuring nonviolent and non-derogatory presentation of OTT content and promote gender diversity and inclusivity. Thus, the sanitization of content stems from creating such a framework to critically examine socio-cultural gender constructions and not with a moral

yardstick preventing illicit dissemination of content to the younger demographic, the future of India.

Objective 2. To investigate the dynamics of consumption through Indian audience perception

Research Questions:

2.1 What are the factors that determine OTT perception in the Indian entertainment industry?

Answer: The researcher calculated the average variance extracted (AVE) for each latent variable to evaluate convergent validity. The average values (AVE) for the criteria Value Delivery (VD), Convenience (CON), Content Quality (CQ), Affordability (AF), Peer Group Influence (PGI), and Personalization (PR) exceeded the requisite level of 0.50, as suggested by (Hair et al.). Alongside AVE, the amount of factor loadings is a crucial element to assess when evaluating the construct structure and dimensionality of the scale items (Hair et al.; Anderson and Gerbing). The factor loadings for all 25 items ranged from 0.513 to 0.857, above the set threshold of 0.50 (Kline). Therefore, the factors that determine OTT perception in the Indian industry are 6 in number, namely, VD, CON, CQ, AF, PGI and PR.

2.2: Into how many market categories may Indian OTT consumers be categorized based on their perception?

Answer: Consumers were classified into five clusters or market segments according to their perceptions. The five cluster memberships were determined using mean scores and standard deviation scores inside the K-means clustering methodology (Kirmani and Khan). Table 5 shows the five cluster solutions' results. After cluster analysis determined the appropriate number of cluster memberships, statistical tests were undertaken to examine if the five groups differed. Final analysis assessed categorization accuracy using Table 7. Diagonal entries show 91.5% of cases grouped correctly. Cluster-1 was 90.7% accurate, Cluster-2 90.4%, Cluster-3 89.3%, Cluster-4 82.3%, and Cluster-5 90.9%. Discriminant function phase findings corroborate classification's validity (Birks). To gauge Indian audience perception of OTT consumerism, the segmentation results indicate the mean values of five clusters across perception factors. Clusters are statistically significant (0.000). The interpretations are grounded on the premise that factors with greater mean values indicate more pronounced preferences of OTT consumption in India, analyzing each cluster's inclinations.

2.3: What are the prevalent features of each market segment? Which factors are the most favored by the particular segment?

Answer: The features of each segment are mentioned below with their names assigned accordingly:

Cluster 1 (Youthfully Moderate Enthusiasts): It comprises 12.5% (n=43) of the dataset. Men make up 8.7% of the cluster, women 3.8%. This cluster's majority is mostly 18-25 years old (4.1%). 4.1% of cluster members are high school graduates. 6.7% earn under one lakh a year. OTT is this clusters 9.0% entertainment choice. 12.5%'s OTT platform knowledge is impressive. OTT material is consumed by 3.8% of people for 1-2 hours daily. 7.3% of them use Netflix as their primary OTT platform. They love web series (10.5%) and criminal thrillers (7.3%). Many (5.8%) subscribe for material accessibility annually. This cluster also believes that OTT services affect their lives by 7.0%. The cluster exhibits youthful enthusiasm for OTT platforms. This group displays no strong inclination toward any specific factors, suggesting they are different and moderately prefer all variables. They either regard every factor equally or lack a distinct attitude toward OTT platforms.

Cluster 2 (Educated streamers favoring convenience): 15.2% (n=52) streamers make up this cluster. It comprises 9.0% men and 6.1% women. Many respondents (5.2%) are aged 18–25, with 5.8% holding postgraduate degrees. The annual income distribution is reasonable, with 5.0% earning 1-5 lakhs. For entertainment, the group prefers OTT (12.8%) and is well-

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informed (15.2%). About 5.2% watch OTT content daily for 1-2 hours. Netflix is the most popular OTT platform, with 8.2% of users. 10.5% of consumers prefer web series and 7.3% crime thrillers. This cluster prefers annual subscriptions (6.1%) and low OTT service influence on daily living (7.0%). Well-educated streamers prioritize convenience (mean value 4.2731). These people feel OTT services are more convenient for streaming since they favor simple accessibility, user- friendly features, and a seamless viewing experience.

Cluster 3 (Optimally judicious OTT aficionados): 30% (n=103) of this cluster is gender diverse. Men (21.3%) outnumber women (8.7%) in this cluster. The age distribution remains consistent with 12.2% and 6.1% in 18-25 and 25-30 age brackets, respectively. People have higher education, with 8.7% and 10.2% graduate and postgraduate degrees. Income levels vary, with 13.7% earning less than one lakh. The cluster prefers OTT platforms (23.3%). Their awareness is notable (29.4%). Most responders (15.2%) used OTT weekly. The most popular OTT platform was Netflix at 14.3%. Web series (18.4%) and crime thrillers (10.2%) are popular. Trending at 12.2%, respondents prefer annual OTT subscriptions. Additionally, 17.5% agree that OTT platforms impact their daily activities, enthusing them. They appreciate content quality (mean value 4.1262), affordability (3.9587), and personalization (4.1796). This sector includes viewers who are knowledgeable, strategic, and well-informed about OTT

platform selection. Consumers value a customized, informative, and cost-effective streaming experience to optimize their financial investments.

Cluster 4 (Utility-prone diverse viewers): 23% (n=79) of the dataset has diverse viewers, 14.9% male, 7.9% female. 9.3% of people are 18-25 years old. This age group has 5.8% graduates from varied disciplines. People earning 1-5 lakhs make up 8.7% of the population. OTT platforms, 18.4% of entertainment, have 23.0% awareness. About 10.8% watch OTT weekly, and 12.8% prefer Netflix. Web series (13.7%) and crime thrillers (7.9%) dominate content. Users (8.7%) pick yearly subscriptions for material accessibility. 12.8% of users consider that OTT services somewhat affect their lives. They emphasize value delivery (mean value 3.8861) and believe OTT services add a lot of value.

Cluster 5 (Varied and impressionable entertainment seekers): 19.2% (n=66) constitute this cluster, which has 12.5% male and 6.7% female. The 18-25 age group, 6.7% of the population, is notable because of its diverse educational backgrounds. About 10.8% of the population earns less than one lakh. The knowledgeable populace prefers OTT platforms for entertainment. Most watch OTT weekly at 8.2%. Netflix is the most favored OTT at 8.5%. Web series make up 12.5% of the popular content category, while crime thrillers make up 10.5%. Information accessibility is linked to OTT services; low impact on daily living (8.7%) and yearly subscriptions (5.5%). They have a diverse range of preferences seeking entertainment. Notably, this group emphasizes peer group influence on

OTT consumption (mean value 4.1717). This group values peer and social recommendations and embraces socializing.

6.3 Research Implications

Theoretical Implications:

A large pool of literature caters to women's representations on Indian films through various approaches like women's studies and film or media studies. Yet, few researchers have focused on the available OTT platforms streaming content in India. Since India is lagging on SDG-5, cinema being a pervasive medium and OTT is still in the development stage, a substantial focus should be shed on women's representations forming gendered perceptions and footprints of Indian womanhood globally and India, in particular. However, the long-term exposure of OTT content may make its audience internalize certain gender taboos over time drawing special attention to the examination of explicit or implicit manifestations of gender taboos mostly targeting the marginalized genders including that of the women. The study through mixed methods also uses the clustering technique for segmenting the OTT audience based on factors determining audience perception, later profiling them by their demographics and psychographics. OTT content, being a contemporary infotainment mainstay is already percolating young minds through gender-layered narratives especially since the Covid-19 pandemic. It is crucial for this medium to be an instrument that enables people to think differently and

empathize with alternative perceptions of gendered reality with its wide viewership.

Though the results that stemmed from qualitative data revealed that though there is a substantial evolution in visibility and autonomy of women on OTT screens compared to conventional modes of storytelling, taboos like narrow beauty standards, body image issues, gender based violence, oversexualization, menstruation based taboos reign supreme among other gender taboos across OTT platforms taking a direct yet slow toll on the psycho-physical health of its victims, again, most women. The current work extends the existing knowledge of women's representations on OTT media in the Indian context by highlighting the gender taboos that might adversely affect the health and wellbeing of its spectators. Furthermore, it identifies key factors that influence and modify the Indian audience's opinion of OTT platforms. It offers a complete framework by including gender taboos, their immediate and long-term effects, and potential remedies, so establishing a robust platform for future study. The research introduces methodological innovation in the field by integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to comprehensively analyze the market. Moreover, research on the regulating mechanisms of OTT material has been mostly limited to a select number of cultural settings, including the USA, UK, China, India, and Malaysia. An analysis of nations with exemplary censorship frameworks indicates that the results of this research might inform measures for enhancing the role of OTT in gender

studies across various countries. The framework on gender taboos used in this research may be adapted for these nations by including certain indigenous features. The theoretical combination of psychoanalysis, feminism and abject theories can extend the scope of applied interdisciplinary literature in media and gender studies. Additionally, a feministic methodology to create OTT an inducive ecosystem that respects a woman's perspective and her worldviews from gynocentric lens should be proposed to add to the body of gender scholarship both theoretically and managerially.

The quantitative research contributes to Indian OTT media, marketing, and retail literature. Several studies have examined the OTT market and consumer behavior (Chakraborty et al.; Fudurić et al.; Nagaraj et al.; Sharma and Lulandala). This work emphasizing on application of clustering techniques to identify and define Indian customer segments more thoroughly facilitates comprehending the heterogeneity of the burgeoning OTT audience, enabling the derivation of more specific and targeted information that may fuel Indian business strategies. It offers media scholars with significant research insights on the dynamic entertainment market, which may potentially update marketing tactics, content creation procedures, and customer retention endeavors.

6.1 Managerial implications

As the global consciousness is graduating towards mental health and holistic wellbeing, a gradual transition is observed among stakeholders of

OTT media. Imparting gender awareness can make a huge difference and narrow the knowledge deficit leading to the attainment of SDG-5. In collaboration with regulatory bodies and policymaking institutions, OTT content creators can initiate gender-equal notions for its audience and retail investors. Besides, unclear boundaries, stigma around taboos lead to heavier consequences, and the same is manifested in gender discriminatory representations of women on OTT media. Policymakers should formulate clearly defined rubrics and a modus-operandi to address the regulatory mechanisms for OTT media services. Since the OTT media audience is predominantly the younger demographic, or millennial, content curators should be cautious of not propagating gender taboos and instead focus on gender sensitivity in content regulation, to make OTT media an educational, sex-positive tool in shaping social transformation. In order to incorporate gender sensitivity in the content regulation policies, educational policies in Indian schools should include gender awareness and sensitivity in their pedagogy, F-rated films should be a force to reckon with in the entertainment industry to encourage fair portrayals of women and unbiased consumption by viewers. The examination of gender taboos plays a critical role in implicating that content creation is an onerous responsibility.

As technology and digitization infiltrate all facets of our existence, numerous cross-cultural viewpoints on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) have emerged, thoroughly cornering the complexities of the digital

realm. Corporate Digital Responsibility (CDR) is applicable in technologically driven and emerging markets like OTT industries. CDR seeks to support a service firm's ethical and equitable utilization of data and technology while interacting with consumers in the digital ecosystem (Wirtz et al.), involving stakeholders such as investors, consumers, producers, and government agencies. (Wirtz et al.) underscore consumer hazards and ethical challenges such as privacy and fairness. (Kluiters et al.) established that digital trust can augment firm worth and be regarded as a precursor to CDR. A notable disparity exists in CDR inside OTT markets compared to CSR research, which must be addressed to support a digital agenda in emerging nations such as India, particularly in light of exceptional breakthroughs in AI. This necessitates responsible and ethical business practices in OTT content, particularly for the widespread gender taboos being propagated. Regulators and governmental bodies must evaluate content standards including obscenity, defamation, and violations of religious and social sensitivities to ensure effective industry compliance. Moreover, authorities have the capacity to establish a framework that tackles issues related to intellectual property rights, consumer privacy, and security via the integration of blockchain technology (Chen et al.).

According to (Bhattacharyya and Verma), firms needed to use technology to better strategy execution and value capture. Policymakers and marketers might target Indian youth as OTT consumers. To accomplish this, they can

emphasize the OTT unique selling proposition (OUSP) as the differentiating element of OTT services and their functional advantages that meet this customer segment's demands. Therefore, the results of the study are crucial for policymakers as well as media professionals. It highlights key elements in classifying OTT customers alongside consumer profiling. These insights may be utilized to formulate OTT media marketing strategies tailored for India, a rising consumer market and has major ramifications for OTT service firms seeking to stimulate demand. Understanding clusters facilitates the creation of targeted advertising campaigns and personalized content recommendations, boosting user experience and engagement. Companies and fund managers should remember that investors are mainly motivated by financial performance and lucrative interests as mentioned in one of the research findings. Companies should guarantee they do well on income measures ethically but diversifying its content platter, quality and formats.

Policy Implications-

Based on the study's results, a strategic approach that utilizes existing governmental initiatives to speed gender sensitivity is needed. Market facilitators like regulators, financial intermediaries, corporations, and governments must collaborate, innovate, and commit to build a sustainable and resilient economy that addresses gender issues establishing long-term value for stakeholders.

Media literacy is crucial to combat misinformation, fraudulent practices, and false news. The establishment of hazardous offline and online ecosystems disproportionately impacts women and gender-diverse individuals. Social media is inherently volatile and perilous for women due to misinformation, deep fakes, and manipulated images, created narratives, and the man sphere, which unknowingly jeopardize their online safety. The World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report 2024 designates India as the epicenter of misinformation and deception, highlighting its detrimental impact on elections. Currently, media literacy is crucial for fact-checking, validating, and evaluating the sources and authenticity of media information. Policymakers and the government should implement media literacy education for young students in schools and initiate media literacy programs in rural regions seeing increased internet usage to eradicate deception and cultivate a populace proficient in media literacy. Comprehensive solutions to body image discrimination, ageism, and prejudices in beauty standards are essential to foster inclusivity and diversity, ensuring that all employees feel appreciated, accepted, and respected.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) goes beyond simply teaching about sexual tenets to cover aspects like relationships, consent, safety, and anatomy. It aims to empower youth with accurate knowledge to make informed choices. Despite its importance, CSE in India struggles due to cultural taboos, a lack of parental and educational support, stigma, and

misconceptions about what CSE entails. The decline of sexual health is a significant healthcare issue that warrants considerable attention. The Indian government's "Adolescent Education Program," initiated in 2007, covers topics like body image and STIs but lacks essential elements like consent and attraction. To improve CSE, collaboration among parents, community leaders, and policymakers is crucial. The approach should prioritize gender equality, mental health, and human rights, treating sexuality as a fundamental aspect of life rather than a taboo or fear-inducing subject. The present Indian demography is mostly youthful, necessitating prioritization of problems relevant to young people.

Since the OTT industry is known for its user-generated content and recommendations, viewers can responsibly take charge of the content being catered to them, and legislators can help shape policies that are beneficial to women hinting at the accountable viewership and content reception of the viewers. By reviewing existing policies related to content regulation and bringing to the fore positive role models, content producers can target their audience in a more inclusive, gender-neutral, resilient, and tolerant ecosystem devoid of taboos and gender-based violence. Governments, organizations, and corporate structures must first acknowledge gender inequity in society. This must be followed by gender mainstreaming across planning, policy formulation, and decision-making. Gender mainstreaming has the capacity to modify the status quo and resource distribution. From actively recognizing varied demands, this

method may really transform socio-political-economic systems and contribute to the gender dividend.

In the context of developing countries, where women are significantly underrepresented in economic, social, and educational possibilities relative to males, a gendered approach to macroeconomic planning is especially important. Women's health and employment opportunities are negatively impacted by cultural and socioeconomic barriers to healthcare and education with existing approaches to economic planning frequently fall short. In India, women are somewhat more likely than males to work in informal job sector frequently grouped in lower-paying positions. Due to the gendered allocation of employment, women's economic integration in developing countries frequently lags, underscoring the necessity of education, reskilling, and microcredit availability to advance economic parity with men. When establishing development goals, it is crucial to recognize the important role that women play in the labor market. To prevent using women as cheap labor in competitive markets, it is essential to evaluate how capital-intensive sectors affect labor mobility from a gender viewpoint. Budgetary resources for women's issues are reduced to promoting consumption rather than directly accelerating economic growth when women's contributions are not acknowledged in quantitative terms in macroeconomic policy.

However, there should be massive amount of work that needs to be done to flag OTT content green. There are some foundational practices

ingrained in imparting and conceptualizing like gender color coding-Blue/pink colors are associated with gender in baby shower themes, gender reveal videos, and other parenting material. This establishes a problematic duality of assigning aesthetics to youngsters by gender and differentiating them. The pink-loving boy cliché might be later shamed for being 'girlish' later. Not being able to presume a child's gender identification picking gender pronouns can also act as an imposition. In a country where the companies decide whether to provide paternity policies and its tenure, some large, gender-sensitive corporations have a three-month paternity policy. The preconceptions of employment regulations not favoring fathers sharing parental duties are so ingrained in pop culture that they cage alternatives, compartmentalizing them and socially reject others. Popular culture, corporate industries should be more gender sensitive and neutral to normalize such gender differential and assigning modes.

The self-regulatory framework for OTT platforms in Indian can be revaluated the extent to which regulations limit specific narratives or facilitate broader discourse on gender taboos. However, gender sensitivity in content regulation should be considered mandatory. The research findings have implications that go beyond content providers, as they also hold substantial value for marketers, advertisers, media scholars, professionals, and industry strategists apart from the OTT audience. Demand for services that satisfy customers 'entertainment requirements

and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the cinematic ecosystem is increasing. The audience perception measures would result in an improved understanding of consumer attitudes towards OTT services. The study also explored the customer experience and viewership patterns by tapping into the firsthand perceptions of the OTT audience. The findings also indicate that a significant proportion of Indian customers favor and are open to embracing OTT platforms. Therefore, Indian consumers prioritize market offerings' functionality.

6.4 Limitations and Scope for further Research:

Although the research involved sincere efforts, the study has limitations. A limitation of the study pertains to the scope of OTT entertainment in the future. Today, OTT media is a standalone digital entertainment platform. However, it is too new a phenomenon that are in its nascent stags and the way it took over television, newer technologies may surpass the OTT media model. Although taking into cognizance alternative masculinities and queer portrayals, the current research focuses mostly on women's representations only and couldn't accommodate masculinity studies and queer theories. Though the application of taboos like body negativity, narrow beauty standards, oversexualization and homophobia apply today to men and LGBTQIA+ alike, they are generic, therefore, shedding light on the potential of further studies that may evaluate taboos specifically

with respect to these gender constructs and premises. Taboos are cultural constructions and subjective to every community. Though gender significant taboos were studied in this work, all the taboos could not be studied due to relative variability. Studies in the future can examine more gender-based taboos evolving over time. The study only analyzed the audience perception of women's representation regarding gender taboos. Future research may tap the content creators', investors' and actors' perspectives. Studies may also focus on the women's portrayals in the post-Truth OTT era and the then prevailing gender stereotypes. Furthermore, the research design included two literary theories. Further studies could transcend the theoretical confines of psychoanalytic feminism and abject theories focusing on semiotic, post-structuralist theoretical lens. Cognitive models of film reception or sentiment analysis had their roots dated long back in Indian aesthetics of dramaturgy. Theories like the Rasa Theory can also serve as various approaches to gauge audience perception of OTT media. Additionally, we have utilized a predefined set of trait categories from the Big Five Trait model, which may not fully account for the new woman traits owing to the heterogeneous nuances and multi dimensionality of women. Consequently, efforts should focus on identifying and analyzing additional trait profiles of the contemporary on-screen women as well.

A fundamental method used in semi-structured interviews is the utilization of both planned and unscheduled inquiries, enabling to elicit more comprehensive narratives from respondents and to go further into certain topics. It assisted in recognizing any biases or emotions with the topic under discussion, especially during the analytical portion of the research. However, one-to-one interviews have downsides, including being time-consuming and expensive, having a restricted sample size, possible interviewer bias, and participant responses reliant on social desirability, the absence of respondent anonymity to the researcher, and the invasive nature of the inquiries. Every one of these was considered in the conception and execution as limitations of the interviews. Overall, while qualitative research does not generate numerical data, it produces substantial volumes of information that need time-intensive analysis of narrative data. Results from a small sample size cannot be readily applied to the broader population, complicating the ability to make wide-ranging conclusions, hence the limited generalizability. Since the sample size was limited and the findings cannot be extrapolated as typical of every Indian OTT consumer, nonetheless, respondents who consented to participate in the research provided a varied sample that guaranteed a broad spectrum of insights in the analysis and interpretation stages of the research (Belk). Since OTT platforms have proved itself to be far better than the popular, mainstream Indian cinema, the scope for further study can include the content consumed by the older gentry who are still accustomed to

socialized cinema viewing on televisions, single screens, or multiplexes. The current examination doesn't take into account their standpoints and opinions limiting is sample age to Generations Y and Z. A gerontological point of view could enrich further audience research. Digital divide in locational disadvantaged areas do not support internet connectivity nor is the OTT content accessible to them. Access is, therefore, another limitation of study.

For quantitative study, the research adds to the current segmentation studies in developing OTT markets. However, some shortcomings could be addressed in future investigations. Only Indian audience's perceptions were the focus of this study. While the research focused on certain Indian states, a bigger, more varied Indian sample could have improved reliability and generalizability. The survey included largely semi-urban and metropolitan young adults from India. Future researchers ought to perform analogous experiments, considering cross-generational impacts. The data gathered in this research was cross-sectional and may not have reflected the time impact. Consequently, the study advocates for future researchers to conduct a longitudinal investigation to examine temporal attitudinal variations. This research primarily focuses on Indian netizens and digital natives. A subgroup of Indians participated in the study, and due to time constraints, the sample size was limited to only 343 responses. Thus, future research may study how cultural and demographic characteristics affect recommendation formulation. Future research may analyze the platforms'

effectiveness, user uptake like paradigms along with measuring the impact

on Indian audience that policies and content regulations overseeing OTT

platforms have.

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Appendix

List of Noted Films and Series (in. Alphabetic Order)

Devi

[Devi - Short Film: Kajol, Shruti Haasan, Mukta Barve, Neha Dhupia | Royal Stag Barrel Select Shorts](#)

Delhi Crime

[Watch Delhi Crime | Netflix Official Site](#)

Gullak

https://www.sonyliv.com/shows/gullak-1700000659

Period. End of Sentence

[Watch Period. End of Sentence. | Netflix Official Site](#)

Panchayat Season 1

https://www.amazon.com/Panchayat-Season-1-4K-UHD/dp/B086BND8W2

Panchayat Season 2

https://www.amazon.com/Panchayat-Season-2/dp/B09W36PSSF

List of Publications

Journal Publication

- Bose A. and Mishra. S. "Metanarrative of Indian Neo-Femininity In Netflix: A Semiotic Analysis Of *Delhi Crime* And *Bhaag Beanie Bhaag*" in Library Progress International **(** ISSN: 2320-317X) Vol. 44 No.2, Issue July 2024 (Page No. 330-350)

- Bose A. and Mishra S. "Setting Narrative: A Study How OTT Content has influenced the Women and Sports in India" accepted in in Cuestiones de Fisioterapia (ISSN:1135-8599)

- A conference proceeding entitled by "Building Building Bridges and Crossing Egalitarian Macrocosms- The Engendering Sine Qua Non" is published in, "Educreator Research Journal, Aarhat Publications and Aarhat Journals", (ISSN P- 2455-0515, E-2394-8450)

Book Chapters

- A book chapter entitled "Covid-19 and Over-the-Top Platforms: Women Representations and the New Normal" is published in the book, "Role of Education and Culture in Nation Building" (ISBN 978-93-91467-23-4).

- A book chapter titled by "Trails Back to the Past: An Assessment of Women's Past in Pre and Post Independence Era with Special Reference to Bengal" is published in the book, " Colonial and Post Colonial Literature: Discourses, Disruptions and Intersections " (ISBN 978-93-90891-83-2)

Trainings and workshops

- 14-days lecture Series on "Literature across the Ages: Literary Schools/Movements" organised by Gnosis and Daath Voyage
  June 2022

- 6-Day FDP on "Literature and Films" organised by The School of Management Studies, NIT Calicut, Kozhikode, Kerala.

  August 2021

- "Academic Writing using Latex" organised by Applied Mathematics and Humanities Department, SVNIT Surat

  January 2021.

- "Dialexis 2022: a 2-week lecture series on Introduction of Contemporary Critical Theories" organised by Gnosis and Daath Voyage

  January 2022

- Lecture series of "Sneja Gunew on Multilingual Affect: The Talking Cure meets the Writing Cure" organised by Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi

  November 2021

- "Short Term Training Programme on Writing Quality Research Paper and Proposal" organised by SVNIT, Surat

  July 2021

Conference Presentations

- Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University, West Bengal

  Paper Presentation at the 3-days International Conference on
  Postcolonialism

  (Issued February, 2024)

- ICLILC-2022, International Research and Development Centre for
  Publication (IRDCP).

  Paper Presentation at the 7th International Conference on Literature and
  Culture

  (Issued May 2022)

- Department of Sociology, Sankardev College, Shillong

  Presenting a Paper in a two day National Webinar

  (Issued Dec. 2021)

- Department of English, Government P.G. College, Naraingarh (Ambala)

  Paper presentation in a one day national seminar

  (Issued July 2021)

- Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, the LNM Institute of Information Technology, Jaipur

Presentation at a 3-day International Conference on Literature and Media

(Issued Apr. 2021)

- International Conference for Women in multifacted research (ICWMR)-2021 Issued

Paper Presentation in a 2day International Conference

(Issued Mar 2021)

- Bombay Teachers Training College, Mumbai in Collaboration with department of women's studies, University of Calicut, Johannesburg, and ASIAN -AFRICAN Association for women, Gender and Sexuality

Presenting a paper in a two day online International Conference

(Issued Feb 2021)

- NIT Warangal

Presentation of paper in a 2-day International Conference

(Issued Jan 2021)