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Topic of Research: Women oriented Bollywood movies and de/constructions of feminine and masculine subjectivities: A reception study of audiences in Noida

Findings

The number of women-centric movies is on the increase in the post-Nirbhaya period. Moreover, many Bollywood movies show themes of gender sensitivity and equality in family entertainers. Another related phenomenon is the rise of the hero who is unafraid to oppose society to deliver gender justice. The present study, therefore, constructs the term Women oriented Movies (WOM) to perceive its reception and possible deconstruction of the self. It is also important to mention here that there are very few reception studies of Bollywood audiences in India. The study is relevant as many of these WOMs address the gender-based violence and threats that were associated with the perceived image of Delhi as the rape capital. The study is located in Noida, adjoining Delhi, and has a history of some of the most gruesome crimes committed against women. This work addresses this gap in audience research conducted in India through the reception of WOMs in Bollywood.

In the evolving landscape of media representation, audience reception plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of gender roles. Portrayals of femininity as independent, physically strong, and caregiving, and masculinity as supportive to remove stigma, are subject to diverse interpretations. The process of reception highlights a minimal separation between the

production and reception of Women on Screen (WOM). This blurring of lines signifies an active engagement by audiences in constructing meanings from the portrayals they encounter. The deconstruction of traditional gender norms is evident, particularly in the increased subjectivity of self, notably among women. However, negotiations with husbands to enhance marital life are depicted infrequently, and the impact on workplaces appears negligible. The polysemy of WOMs accentuates the multiplicity of meanings attributed by audiences, underlining the dynamic nature of interpretation where viewers actively shape their understanding of gender portrayals.

The key finding of this work is that WOM offers alternative aspects of masculinity and femininity though it is far removed from feminist portrayals of both men and women. Most of the respondents studied have reflected a deconstruction of the self that changed their perspective of themselves and others. Simultaneously, there was also a reconstruction that indicates a shift of the constructs of feminine and masculinities different from the mainstream portrayal.

This study has significantly broadened the scope of applying traditional notions of femininity and masculinity to comprehend the reception of contemporary Women on Screen (WOMs). By exploring how audiences interpret portrayals of independent and physically strong femininity, coupled with supportive masculinity aimed at stigma removal, this research sheds light on the evolving dynamics of gender representation in media. Furthermore, it highlights that WOMs play a crucial role in cultivating gender sensitivity and awareness among viewers.