

Evolution of Gender Representation in Streaming Media

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Abstract: *OTT platforms have played a big role in breaking down old ideas that pushed women aside in traditional media. Today, Indian pop culture has women characters that are complex, not perfect, and easy to relate to. By challenging traditional ideas of what it means to be feminine, these people allow for a more honest representation. Women on streaming platforms are now shown as more than just attractive or sexy. Instead, it shows how special, complicated, and independent they are. The media has been using the idea of "hegemonic masculinity" and showing a one-sided picture of men that is simple, straightforward, and matches traditional ideas of what being a man means. These exaggerated representations of men help keep discrimination against other genders alive, which also hurts men. The rise of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms, which challenge these representations, is definitely a positive development. These platforms present the basic ideas of the theory of social construction of reality, which aims to question traditional ideas of masculinity and promote different views of what it means to be a man. This study will look closely at how Indian online streaming content changes the way masculinity is shown, instead of just saying what these shows and movies show. It will examine how different Indian streaming platforms represent masculinity. To challenge traditional ideas about gender and power, and help future research in this area, the paper proposes a new look at gender, femininity, and masculinity. The study says that by showing different types of masculinity, streaming platforms have helped promote gender equality by changing how society views gender roles.*

Keywords: Sex, Gender, Gender representation, Hegemonic Masculinity, OTT Platforms, Gender Deconstruction, Social Construction, Indian Media.

1. Introduction

1) Sex and Gender

SEX refers to the biological differences between males and females, like body parts and chromosomes. Gender, on the other hand, is about the roles, behaviours, and activities that society considers appropriate for men and women. As Simone de Beauvoir once said, "Women are not born, they are created." The same is true for men. Becoming a man or a woman is a lifelong journey that starts even before a baby is born, when parents wonder if their child will be a boy or a girl. When a baby is born, it is quickly labelled as either a boy or a girl. This label decides whether the baby will be seen as male or female for the rest of their life. The physical differences between males, females, and intersex people are called "sex." This includes things like chromosomes and body parts, as well as the signs that doctors see when a baby is born. The word "gender" refers to how someone sees and identifies them.

GENDER refers to the roles and behaviours society expects from different sexes, while sex is about the biological differences between males and females, mainly related to their ability to reproduce. It's not surprising that ideas about gender and society are closely connected to straight marriage and raising kids. But that's not the complete story. Gender is based on biological sex, but it also emphasizes physical differences and applies them to areas where they don't really belong. For example, there is no natural reason for men to walk bravely and women to walk lightly, or for women to paint their toenails red while men don't. Even though we think of gender as something influenced by society and sex as something biological, the differences between them aren't always obvious. Many people think that sex is just a natural thing based on biology, while gender is shaped by how we are raised and society, so it can change. Because nature and nurture are connected, it's hard to separate the differences

between gender and sex. Gender is the way people think about boys, girls, men, and women based on society's ideas. This includes how people interact with each other and the expectations, actions, and roles that are associated with being a woman, man, girl, or boy. Gender is an idea created by society that varies between different cultures and can change over time. Unlike traditional representations of women, which often show them as weak and passive, the breakdown of gender roles focuses on portraying women as strong, brave, and independent. The feminist poststructuralist approach is used as a theory and a method. Gender norms are rules made by society that restrict how girls, boys, women, and men should act and what identities they can have. For example, women are much more likely than men to do chores at home.

Gender Deconstruction is the process of questioning and breaking down traditional ideas about gender. It involves looking at the social, cultural, and historical contexts that shape our understanding of gender. Gender deconstruction makes us think again about what it means to be a man or a woman. It challenges the idea that there are only two categories for understanding gender. Rules and expectations about what it means to be male or female are made by society. Deconstruction looks to challenge and go against these expectations. It understands that what a person likes, how they act, and how they show their feelings aren't always connected to whether they are male or female. Gender deconstruction looks at how gender connects with things like race, social class, sexual orientation, and ability. It understands that people's experiences with gender are different and shaped by many different identities. Gender deconstruction helps people move away from strict labels. It recognizes identities that aren't just male or female, like gender queer and non-binary. When we break down the idea of gender, people have more freedom to decide who they are and how they express themselves. It raises questions about

the idea that certain traits or jobs are only linked to one gender. Remember that gender deconstruction is an ongoing process that helps develop a more accepting and open understanding of gender in our society.

How Women are Shown on OTT Platforms

Women on OTT platforms are increasingly depicted in multifaceted and empowered roles, reflecting evolving societal perspectives on gender representation. While traditional portrayals often revolved around nurturing, romantic, or secondary characters, modern storytelling highlights women as strong, independent, and complex individuals navigating various aspects of life. From fearless leaders and ambitious professionals to flawed yet relatable protagonists, their narratives showcase resilience, intelligence, and emotional depth. Additionally, these platforms amplify diverse stories, offering perspectives on issues like gender equality, personal identity, and societal expectations. As audiences seek more authentic and nuanced portrayals, OTT content continues to reshape the representation of women, celebrating their strength while embracing their vulnerabilities. Let's look at how they have made female writers and characters more important.

Breaking down old biases: OTT platforms have challenged the long-standing stereotypes that pushed women to the side in mainstream media. Today, there are many complicated, flawed, and relatable female characters in Indian pop culture. OTT programs show women as strong, independent, and driven characters, unlike the flat and basic roles often seen in movies and TV shows. For example, Devi Vishwakumar from the popular TV show "Never Have I Ever" breaks the usual ideas about how an Indian girl should act, making way for more true and powerful stories.

Taboos: OTT platforms boldly talk about sensitive topics that people in Indian society used to avoid. To help people understand and feel for others, stories focused on women's experiences talk about issues like mental health, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and gay rights. The web series "Four More Shots Please." looks at topics like friendship among women, feeling good about their bodies, and sexuality. It tells the stories of four strong women living their own lives. By tackling these issues directly, the program has encouraged discussion and helped make positive changes in society.

Platforms for Women Filmmakers: Streaming services give women filmmakers a great place to show their work. Because men have mostly been in charge of the Indian film industry, it is hard for women directors to get noticed and find chances to work. On the other hand, OTT platforms have been open to stories about women and have given opportunities to new female filmmakers. For example, Alankrita Shrivastava's bold and touching movie "Lipstick under My Burkha" explores the hidden dreams and desires of four Indian women living in a small village. In summary, OTT platforms have changed Indian culture by supporting different stories, breaking down stereotypes, and giving women more opportunities in many roles.

How Men are Shown on Streaming Platforms

Men are often portrayed on streaming platforms through a diverse range of narratives, reflecting shifting societal norms and expectations. Traditionally, they have been depicted as strong, authoritative figures, embodying traits like resilience and leadership. However, modern content increasingly explores vulnerability, emotional depth, and personal struggles, allowing for more complex and multidimensional male characters. From flawed antiheroes to empathetic protagonists, these portrayals challenge stereotypes and redefine masculinity in contemporary storytelling. Additionally, genre influences these depictions, with action films emphasizing physical prowess, while dramas and comedies showcase sensitivity, intellect, and humor. As audiences demand more authentic representation, streaming platforms continue to reshape the portrayal of men, presenting them in nuanced and relatable ways.

Challenging Stereotypes: In the past, being a man has often meant following strict rules about being powerful, unemotional, and tough. Modern discussions, however, prove that these misunderstandings are wrong. Nowadays, men are encouraged to express their feelings, understand others, and be open about their emotions. The media, like ads, TV shows, and movies, really affects how people think about being a man. Media can enhance traditional ideas of masculinity by analyzing how they are shown.

Inter-sectionality: means that a person's race, gender, and social class all connect with their experience of being a man. Knowing this complexity helps you see things from a wider point of view. **Toxic masculinity:** refers to harmful behaviours associated with traditional manliness, like hating women, being aggressive, and hiding emotions. We need to change toxic masculinity to create better relationships.

Positive Masculinity: A new way of being a man involves showing kindness, respect, and working well with others. Men can be strong without being controlling or harsh.

Role Models: Men who break the rules set by society can inspire others and encourage change. They created a way for a better kind of masculinity, from artists to activists.

Changing what it means to be a man means looking closely at old stereotypes, being understanding, and accepting that men can show their feelings in many different ways. It's about going past strict expectations and promoting a culture where being strong isn't just about being in charge, but also about being kind, being open about feelings, and showing respect for each other. By promoting acceptance and understanding, society can make a place where fairness and kindness are most important. This allows men to express who they are in ways that match their beliefs and uniqueness.

Breaking Down Gender Roles in Online Streaming Platforms

Around the world, well-known media companies are being asked to keep an eye on how the tech industry operates. The performers strive to bridge the gap between people's access to social products and their own businesses, seamlessly integrating community needs with their entrepreneurial

endeavours. These changes help bring back the old way that big and small businesses worked together. It's now obvious that a small number of top communication companies are having a big impact on the future of social projects. These companies create content in a detached way, and their business practices aren't mainly focused on helping the social projects grow. As a result, the way media is created and shared has changed a lot because of big companies like Google, Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Netflix, and Facebook. Because they are becoming more popular in the market, their products, services, and stages are now being studied, and companies are changing their strategies and analyzing their management around the world. The Bollywood industry, which has mostly depended on top male actors to lead movies and compete for success, is now starting to change. It is giving more opportunities to female creators to showcase their talents. Studies show that as people's earnings grow in India's large economy, the average person will need to spend almost twice as much on entertainment and media, increasing from \$55 to \$35 by 2021. This is a complex field where people work with their hands and think at the same time.

Most films focused on the same themes and styles for nearly a hundred years. A study by IBM Research, IIIT Delhi, and DTU looked at 4,000 Bollywood movies and found that women are often shown as weak, dependent on men, and not very skilled. The main female characters are mostly there to look good on screen and attract attention; they don't have much dialogue in the script. The paper says that in Bollywood movies, men usually get roles where they can be successful, like a famous singer or a police officer. In contrast, women are often shown in a more simple way, with charming looks, or they are connected to other characters. Radhika Apte plays a spy in *Sacred Games*.

All the women from these shows, which are on big networks, are strong and speak well. Since women are a big part of the world's population, Anne Wallin, who is in charge of Consumer and Brand Communications at Netflix Asia, believes that their shows will show many different life experiences, with strong female characters being very important to that. She also recognizes that many people are interested in local shows about women since international characters and shows have been popular here. The main characters in *Made in Heaven* are a gay man and a woman who thinks for herself. They run a wedding business together. They are wedding planners who are asked to deal with any problems that might come up during a regular Indian wedding. The story shows how complicated Indian weddings are and how they help create a happy, typical family. An affair outside of marriage: Indian TV shows and movies often show LGBTQ+ people in a wrong way. This series tries to highlight relationships without judging whether they are good, bad, or ugly. The collection "Lust Stories," directed by four famous Bollywood filmmakers, came out in 2018. In a society where people are shy about sex, Anurag Kashyap, Zoya Akhtar, Dibakar Banerjee, and Karan Johar created a lot of excitement. The stories talk about four women's issues, dreams, and affairs outside of marriage, along with their sexual desires. No other movie had ever told a story like this before. Streaming services

continue to evolve, shaping cultural perceptions and challenging long-standing gender norms.

Online streaming services have changed the way we enjoy entertainment by providing a variety of shows and movies that show how society is changing. Rephrase One big change in this area is that traditional gender roles are breaking down, which is challenging old stereotypes that have often shaped how people are shown in the media. Today, streaming platforms show both men and women in various roles that highlight their strength, emotions, and complexity, going beyond traditional views. This change not only makes stories more inclusive but also helps the audience understand different views on gender better. As creators want more real and true stories, streaming services are important for changing how gender is shown in entertainment.

- **Variety of Characters:** Today's streaming platforms show men and women in roles that break traditional stereotypes, giving more depth and realness to the characters.
- **Empowering Women Leaders:** Women are being shown as strong and independent, breaking away from old stories where they needed help or played minor roles.
- **Changing the Way We See Men:** Male characters show deeper emotions, weakness, and different kinds of strengths, moving away from old ideas of being dominant.
- **Inclusive Storytelling:** Content creators tell stories that show different types of gender identities and promote equality among all genders.
- **Effect on Viewers:** Challenging stereotypes helps people accept more modern ideas about gender roles, changing how they think in real life. Different types of stories like action, drama, comedy, and science fiction now include characters that don't follow old ideas about gender roles.
- **Impact of Social Talks:** Talks about gender equality affect what shows and movies streaming platforms create because people want fair representation.

2. Summary

How women are shown in the media is a big issue for everyone around the world. Misrepresentations and negative stereotypes about women both show and strengthen the existing differences in gender. Film plays an important part in studying society. Movies talk about how people express their sexual orientation. Honestly, movies often show women in the same types of roles relating to traditional romantic relationships in ways that are usually seen as positive. The main reason for using OTT phases is to provide entertainment. More and more, it's clear how important OTT platforms are in the everyday lives of regular people. Young people are more used to online platforms and often use devices like computers or advanced mobile phones. They like to watch entertainment shows on OTT platforms. These online services are great at giving viewers new content that they really want, interesting stories, and relatable characters and situations. Other key reasons why more people want to use OTT platforms are the convenience of the devices that let them access these platforms, the variety of content that matches their interests, and the ability to choose what to watch.

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