The Role of Cinema in Promoting Gender Equity to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals in India

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The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. Gender inequality is one of the most constant and widespread forms of injustice which is still present on a local, national or global level. It is one of the biggest hurdles to achieve sustainable development, economic growth and poverty reduction. Where gender inequality exists, it is generally women who are given a backseat in opportunities, position, powers, decision-making and access to economic and social resources. Women's equality and empowerment is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, but also integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development.

Cinema is an effective medium of mass communication and has a magnetic hold on mind of the audience. It is a powerful and impactful medium to catalyze social change. Projection of gender stereotypes in movies forms the society's perception of gender roles. The over-saturation of gender stereotypes in the films results in the misrepresentation of gender roles which gets embedded in the human mind and is passed on from generation to generation as an acceptable view. Earlier Indian cinema is usually about heroism where a man rescues and comforts the female protagonist and takes all responsibility on his shoulders to fix all the problems and troubles. The lead actress of 50's, 60's and 70's in Indian Cinema was initially portrayed in the roles of 'Sati Savitri' who only looks after their family and children and depends on her husband to keep herself alive. They played society's perception of what women should be like, ideally good wives and mothers. The man as the 'Saviour' and woman as the 'Victim' are also prominently seen in the movies. The times have changed and the women in Indian Cinema don't need to be rescued by the hero anymore. From an era when men played women's characters, we have come a long way to having a female as the only central character in the film. The proportion of female-centric movies has risen in recent years. "

Modern day films like Queen, Kahaani, Mary Kom, Raazi, Mom, Manikarnika released in recent years have portrayed women as central to the storyline and have attempted to establish women as heroes on screen. It helps in removing the stereotypes that only a man can be a hero and women are supposed to stand behind them for protection, security and safety of themselves and their family. These movies breaks the image of a women from home maker to a super woman. It can be seen in the history also like Jhansi ki Rani to the modern women of today and these films are making the women realize that they are not the weaker class and can fight for themselves.

Kangana Ranaut Starrer-Manikarnika The Queen of Jhansi is a biopic based on the life of a brave queen 'Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi'. The film narrates the story of brave women warrior, who took a heroic stand against the East India Company and emerged as one of the prominent icons of the independence movement. The line from the famous poem on Rani Laxmibai written by Subhadra Kumari Chauhan "Khoob ladi mardaani woh to Jhansi wali raani thi" is true to each word and relevant today also. There's a lot that women can learn from Rani Laxmibai, her confidence and courage to take up arms, authority to lead an army of men and the grit to take down British raj single-handedly can help each one of us in overcoming the challenges of life. This film showcases that women are not the weaker class and can fight for themselves.

Meghna Gulzar is famous for her women centric movies with a strong women lead and Raazi is one of them. Alia Bhatt is the lead protagonist in Raaz, which is based on a true story of an Indian spy Sehmat, who was wedded to Pakistani military officer (Played by Vicky Kaushal) during the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971. This movie is portraying a fearless and courageous woman who sacrifices everything for her country to find out the valuable piece of information about the enemy. This kind of story is an attempt to inspire the whole new generation of our country by showcasing such strong women who is fearless and can go to any extent for her country.

Mom is a thriller with dark and gritty twists women centric movie which is directed by Ravi Udaywar and lead by late legendary actor Sridevi. It is a sturdy revenge tale of a loving mother Devki Sabarwal (played by Sridevi) whose step-daughter Arya was molested at a party which was lead by her own class mate and was left half-dead. When the law fails to provide justice to her daughter, the mother avenges the rape of her daughter by exacting her coldblooded strategy on the 4 culprits who walk free from court, with the help of a private detective, which was played incredibly well by Nawazuddin Siddiqui. When her revenge is complete, her daughter witnessed' extend of intense love of her mother for her. Mom is not just a word it's an emotion and this movie was successful in portraying the extent to which a mom can go for her child. Mom is a powerful, heart-wrenching and soul stirring story about the strength of a mother's selfless love in the face of all odds which ultimately brings justice and emotional emancipation to her step-daughter.

Mary Kom is based on the story of an Indian boxer and great Olympic medalist Mary Kom. The Priyanka Chopra starrer Mary Kom is an inspiring story of a woman who challenged the age-old notion that a woman's career doesn't ends after marriage and pregnancy. In a country where sports is not taken seriously as a career, especially for girls who are supposed to get married and look after their family, Mary Kom sets an example for all of us. Her story proves that no obstacle can hinder an uncompromising determination. The film also breaks the stereotype that an Indian man can be extremely supportive of his wife's career, rather than act as a hurdle to it.

Vikas Bahl's Queen is a masterpiece which breaks gender stereotypes and challenges the notions society holds about women. Queen is a story of a shy, under-confident punjabi girl Rani (played by Kangana) who discovers herself as she sets off on her honeymoon alone after her fiancé Vijay (played by Rajkummar Rao) abandoned her just a day before the wedding. During her honeymoon, she meets new friends, discovers the world and life and comes back as a changed person, ready to take control of her life. The movie gave all new goals to women who have faced heartbreaks. Independence, power and self-confidence is what 'Queen' portrays and defines every woman's character in the best possible way. The natural, innocent and effortless acting made Rani look like a real life character and inspires many girls to come out of the shadows and feel confident. Kangana Ranaut's Queen proved that a film doesn't need a hero, it needs a queen. . The film also received an award for Best Hindi Film.

The movie title Kahaani released in 2012, is one of the films which laid the foundation for gender equality in Indian cinema, where the protagonist did not need a hero to save a story. The director Sujoy Ghosh showcases the inner strength of a woman and how she is undeterred by situations. The story revolves around a pregnant woman Vidya Bagchi (played by Vidya Balan) who breaks all norms to take revenge from her husband's killer. In Kahaani, Vidya Balan played a prominent role of an action hero, manipulating a serious of events to avenge the death of her husband and destroy a terrorist cell. The character Vidya Bagchi not only won hearts of the public, but also proved that the audience is ready to come to theatres and watch a movie which has only one hero - the female protagonist.

Conclusion

As Cinema has been one of the major tools that influence the society, the role and responsibility of film makers in depicting a particular gender in films is important. As society entered the world of modernization, the role of women in Indian cinema has changed tremendously in recent years. They are not projected as an ideal sati savitri wife or an ideal sacrificing daughter-in-law. The Indian society is changing and with it the mindset of the people. From a damsel in distress to a figure of power, women have come a long way in Indian Cinema. The women in Indian Cinema don't need to be rescued by the hero anymore. Now the female actors in movies are more doing the meaningful and realistic roles which the audience can relate to. They are now accepting newer kind of roles without any inhibitions because audiences are accepting them wholeheartedly. Today, women in unconventional and dominant roles are appreciated and respected by audiences. The notion that only a hero can deliver a super hit has drastically changed.

Understanding The Covid-19 Effect On Online Shopping Behavior I.E., E-Commerce

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Did the spread of novel coronavirus has changed anything? The answer is yes. It is true that due to the effect of COVID-19, our whole live is changed. This global pandemic made everyone to work from home and some became couch potato. From offices to restaurants, from cinema halls to shopping centers- everything was shutdown except the groceries and medical shops. This pandemic made all of us homebound as people started working online, student started studying online, extra activities became online and so on. Everything was changed and the major impact in our lives was of- 'Online Shopping'. Shopping is our daily routine and this pandemic made us to adopt e-commerce a new normal. Even to make the use of online facilities, the recharge of internet was also done online. Before this global pandemic, online shopping became a trend but now, this trend has been shifted to necessity. In short, the major effect of COVID-19 pandemic was on e-commerce or we can say, digital media. On one hand, there are people who are use to this trend but on the other side, there are also people who doesn't have any knowledge about the usage of digital media.

Gaining trust during uncertain times- The situation is rapidly changing. People are trying to adopt the nee normal and with the realities of our interconnected world. Online shopping became necessity but online stores were also struggling to keep up with demand and price for gauging supplies became rampant. Gaining trust during in this uncertain times is a challenge for the online retailers. The 2 main aspects the online retailers has to deal with their customers were- one, making sure that goods are available and deliverable and second, providing a superior customer experience to each and every time a shopper logs onto your site. Gaining and maintaining trust during the virus crisis is not only to increase revenue, but also to retain and earn brand loyalty that will serve you when the crisis ends. Not only the product, but these sites have also started providing basic knowledge to their customers about coronavirus and its precautionary measures. It also provided steps on how to purchase and receive products safely. In short, online storers shown full safety measures towards the products, their staff and customers.

Competition among online sites- Since the requirements of necessary things has increased, on the other hand, the competition among online sites has also increased. Apart from Big Basket, Grofers and Amazon, other sites have also started selling groceries and medical related products to fulfill the need of our country and to generate some revenue for their own survival. On 25th March 2020, Big Basket- a key online grocery player in India had the following message "We'll be back soon! We are currently experiencing unprecedented demand. In light of this, we are restricting access to our website to existing customers only. Please try again in few hours." So overwhelming was the response that it faced a breakdown due to a steep increase in demand amid COVID-19. Grofers- a rival, also had a similar kind of message which said "Due to the sudden rush, we have stopped servicing many locations, but we are working to increase capacity and will be resuming operations shortly." Grofers spokesperson said that amongst all new users on its platform in the last 1 year, 64% were first time online grocery shoppers while 20% were totally new to e-commerce. But on the other hand, Amazon is one of the leading e-commerce players in the country and the world has announced on its site that the customers are relying on them like never before in their social-distancing and self-quarantine efforts. Hence, Amazon was prioritizing its available fulfillment and logistics capacity to serve essentials such as household staples, health care, personal safety, packaged food, hygiene and other priority products. It has temporarily stopped taking orders for lower priority products. Globally too, Amazon has seen a surge in orders and it was raising overtime pay for its associates working in their warehouses during this COVID-19 outbreak. It also saw similar trends as thousands of neighborhood kirana stores and offline retailers also came onboard to leverage digital technology to reach customer's doorstep. Apps like Flipkart and Snapdeal also followed the same pattern. To ensure convenience for first-time shoppers, Flipkart introduced new features with a addition of a voice-assistant and native language network in multiple languages. The new normal of working from home also raised the demand for consumer electronic products. Here, Flipkart have seen 3X increase in demand of laptops and desktops in 2020 as compared to pre covid scenario. Snapdeal also revived resources to start shipping essential items. Food delivery platforms like Swiggy and Zomato had partnered with several brick-and-mortar stores to deliver essential products to people. Even, the e-commerce payment platform- PhonePe launched new features on the 'stores' section of its app to enable home delivery of groceries and essentials and contact less payments for its users. It also launched a dedicated COVID-19 platform centre on its app that includes details such as prevention tips, a tracker for positive cases, symptoms and list of testing center's.

One side, e-commerce platforms having a fierce competition among each other but they were also facing issues while fulfilling the need of the people as there was a high shortage of products. With the increasing demand of the necessary products, there was a huge strike for the offline retailers to survive in this crisis. E-commerce was becoming the 'new normal' which led offline retailers to shift to social commerce to survive in this pandemic. Retail offline sector, especially those who selling non-essential items like clothes and jewellery had faced a massive impact along with widespread job losses. This impact had pull down 2020 sales by around $7 billion from 2019. When offline retailers and wholesalers were setting up their online channels, small businesses were suggested to join the league. Offline to online e-commerce platforms are emerging as facilitators to ease the process of transition and growth for India's offline retail businesses. These platforms are also integrating certain buyer-seller behaviors of offline retailers. They are helping them to get access to supplies directly from manufacturers, working capital and instant credit services. This will enable offline sellers to list their products on social platforms, sell them after striking a deal with potential customers and ensure a faster stock sourcing, hence ensuring a steady flow of income. Offline retailers can now create their own web stores and take orders. They can market their products through WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook and more they can even chat with their customers before making a sale. Apps like Facebook and Instagram started a campaign named 'SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS' during this pandemic to help small business with the help of their platform. Many of those small retailers started learning the use of technology to operate their business. This global pandemic has given us the habbit of buying through online but it does not mean that online sales are having positive impact. Many segments including apparel, jewellery, beauty products and services etc. are down both in sales and traffic. Such segments had faced a huge loss even in online selling.

The nationwide lockdown and its associated factors led the gross merchandise value of the e-grocery segment to grow to $3.3 billion in 2020, according to research consultancy Red Seer, which expects the sector to touch $24 billion by 2025. Future Group, which serviced online orders for groceries only from its Easy Day stores in Delhi NCR, has extended that capability to 250 of its Big Bazaar stores across the country on which Bharati Balakrishnan, senior VP, digital commerce, Future Group said- "We were able to launch Bigbazaar.com within ten days and since then we've scaled it to about 10,000 orders a day." Apart from this, Kolkata based Spencer's retail has also partnered with internet firms like food delivery platform Swiggy, cab-hailing app Uber and bike taxi startup Rapido to deliver orders placed by customers on its website.

CONCLUSION

This crisis had pushed away big offline retailers to partner with online stores to survive this pandemic by helping the customers as well. Customer retention by online platforms has improved as these platforms has emerged as one of the lifelines for consumers during covid. Even, the non-essential items were getting buying online as maintaining social distancing. The pandemic also marked a turning point for small and medium businesses which swiftly adjusted to the new e-commerce reality. Amid these challenges, rival seems tough because it all depends on the attitude of the consumers. Offline retailers are trying to increase their capability in the digital world. While the authorities are taking steps to curb the spread of covid, we are seeing the changing way of small businesses stores. Not everyone will opt this option for lifetime but for us, it would be interesting to check that how many shoppers will switch to online shopping even after this crisis.