

A Study on Investigating the Societal Impact of Real-Life Narratives in Indian Web Series

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ABSTRACT

The growing Indian web series industry has not only broadened its horizons but has also explored new and unexplored areas of storytelling. This research examines the effects of real-life stories presented in Indian web series, focusing on their development, social impact, and the subtleties of their representation. This research investigates the correlation between fact and fiction in online series such as "Scoop," "Jamtara," "Rangbaaz," "Delhi Crime," and "House of Secrets." It provides valuable insights into the intricate realm of web-based storytelling. These stories include all facets of Indian storytelling, spanning from principles of journalism to illicit activities. They effectively blur the boundaries between reality and fiction. The research emphasizes the emotional impact, genuineness, and significance that true stories elicit in audiences, while also acknowledging concerns about the reinforcement of stereotypes and harmful actions. However, these stories still greatly influence the cultural environment, bringing to a period of consuming knowledge that is marked by genuineness and truthfulness.

Keywords: Indian Web Series, OTT Platforms, Real-Life Narratives, Content Evolution, Societal Influence, Authentic Storytelling, Audience Engagement.

Introduction

The growth of online series and Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms has significantly changed the Indian entertainment industry over the last few years. Today's consumers get their entertainment from a range of outlets outside conventional movies and television. Thanks to the emergence of digital platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, and others, viewers may now easily access a wide variety of material. Indian web series are becoming a major force in the entertainment sector, causing disruption. These web series, often consisting of many online episodes, have gained immense popularity because of their innovative storytelling, bold themes, and diverse representation of people. Web series provide the benefit of not being limited by the limits of broadcast scheduling or censorship requirements. This allows artists to explore a wide range of subjects and genres.

Indian web series have significant value since they have the ability to attract a diverse audience and provide content that authentically represents the diverse nature of Indian culture. These web series include a diverse array of subjects, spanning from captivating criminal dramas to touching romances, and from academically engaging social commentary to light-hearted comedy. They provide a platform for up-and-coming artists to exhibit their skills and communicate narratives that deeply engage with people on a personal and emotional level.

The influence of traditional media has been greatly reduced by Indian online series, which have increased the voices of underprivileged groups. Sensitive subjects including gender inequality, mental health, and sexuality have been brought up, sparking conversations and encouraging social change. In addition to exploring the intricacies of Indian weddings, the online series "Made in Heaven" also addresses topics such as homophobia and socioeconomic inequities. Moreover, Indian online series have garnered global acclaim for their outstanding quality and distinctiveness. The television series "Sacred Games," adapted on Vikram Chandra's book, garnered global recognition for its compelling storyline and exceptional acting. Similarly, the television series "Delhi Crime," which centres on the 2012 Delhi gang rape case, garnered substantial praise for its empathetic depiction of the events and the intricacies of the investigative procedure.

Indian web series has significant cultural significance as they not only provide amusement but also deeply influence our patterns of media consumption and shape our worldview. These initiatives have made content

creation more accessible to a wider range of people and have promoted inclusion by providing a platform for diverse views, hence allowing for a wide variety of opinions and storylines.

This study seeks to analyze the intricate and multifaceted attributes of Indian web series, with a particular focus on their portrayal of real-life narratives. The goal is to analyze the thematic and narrative strategies used in these series, as well as their societal consequences and audience reception. The study used a content analysis approach, using IMBD ratings to evaluate real-life stories that are accessible on several OTT video streaming platforms in India. Furthermore, this newspaper has chosen five online series: Scoop (accessible on Netflix), Jaamtara (accessible on Netflix), Delhi Crime (accessible on Netflix), Rangbaaz (accessible on Zee5), and The House of Secrets (accessible on Netflix). The main aim of the study is to thoroughly examine and explore different aspects of OTT web series and their influence on viewers. Furthermore, this paper will examine the impact of real-life narratives shown in Indian web series on audiences, scrutinizing their emotional impact, authenticity, and importance. In addition, it will address issues of the perpetuation of stereotypes and negative behaviours', while acknowledging the ability of web series to foster social awareness and cultural understanding.

The research aims to provide a significant addition to the scholarly discourse on Indian web series and their influence on shaping the contemporary media landscape. This research seeks to get a comprehensive understanding of this growing field by analyzing the confluence of real-life experiences, narrative techniques, and societal trends.

Review of Literature

In recent years, the increasing popularity of web series in India has captured the interest of academics and intellectuals. Various aspects of web series consumption have been examined, including their influence on viewer behavior and their role in shaping cultural narratives. The objective of this literature review is to provide a thorough evaluation of the existing research on web series in India, focusing on significant findings and perspectives from published studies.

Sahar Abdul Gafoor's (2024) study centered on the examination of stress levels and binge-watching habits among college students in India. Their research revealed that captivating narratives, intricately crafted personas, and exhilarating resolutions were highly indicative of the tendency to engage in binge-watching among Indian university students. This study examines the psychological factors that motivate the consumption of web series in India.

Das and Agarwal (2019) conducted a study to examine the portrayal of gender roles in Indian web series. Their research revealed the intricate ways in which gender is portrayed in Indian media, with some web series challenging and others endorsing traditional gender standards. This study enhances our understanding of how web series mirror and strengthen societal norms and values.

Reddy and Rao (2020) conducted a study on the impact of web series in India on social consciousness and proactive actions. According to their study, web series that tackle social topics like as mental health stigma, LGBTQ+ rights, and caste discrimination have a crucial role in increasing public awareness and fostering discussions. This study uncovers the potential of web series to serve as a catalyst for societal transformation in India.

In their study, Wagh et al. (2022) examined the impact of web series on the development of cultural identity among Indian youngsters. Research conducted via interviews and surveys has shown that web series have significantly impacted the formation of cultural identities among young Indians. These series provided them with a sense of representation and belonging in the arena of digital media. This research primarily examines the societal ramifications of consuming web series in India.

Purpose of Research

It's crucial to study the impact of these web series and web movies on audiences, particularly young people, given the explosive development in web series and web movie consumption in India over the last several years. This research paper aims to investigate the most recent advancements in the content and concept development of Indian web series and movies, the impact of online advertisements aired in these web series and movies on them, and the overall impact of these web series and movies on the audiences from a psychological and social perspective.

Objectives of the Study

This study has three main objectives:

- 1) To understand the influence of web series consumption on the attitudes and behaviours of audiences in India.
- 2) To examine the thematic and narrative aspects of certain web series, with a particular emphasis on how they depict actual events and individuals.
- 3) To analyze the sociological ramifications of watching web series, including their influence on public discourse, the establishment of cultural standards, and the facilitation of social dialogue.

By achieving these objectives, this study aims to contribute to our understanding of the evolving landscape of media consumption in India and the role of web series in shaping contemporary media culture. Additionally, it seeks to provide insights into the potential benefits and drawbacks of web series consumption, both for individual viewers and for society as a whole.

Research Methodology

The qualitative technique was employed in the study, which included content textual analysis and observation. For this impetus study the primary data is gathered from online sources and observing the content on different parameter.

The study includes three different parameters for the selection of web series

- First, the most watching OTT platform among viewers,
- Second, the IMBD ratings,
- Third, the pictorial depiction of the real content.

The study include secondary data from different online sources which further states about the reach and frequently watching platform among the viewers or consumers of OTT streaming platforms in India. The study examined five web series: "Scoop," "Rangbaaz," "Jamtara," "Delhi Crime," and "The House of Secrets."

Depiction of the Content

The content has been discussed over here in which fulfilled the demand of the research questions and also throw light on the aim of the study.

A. Scoop

The web series was shown on Netflix and consisted of 6 episodes. Scoop uncovers the unvarnished reality of current events and criminal activities via a captivating storytelling approach. Scoop highlights the callousness of the press industry and the lack of transparency in the Mumbai police's inquiry into the journalist's murder, resulting in the apprehension of another journalist. This narrative is based on a true incident.

In 2011, the Indian media and the citizens of the nation were taken aback when Jigna Vora, a journalist specializing in crime reporting, was apprehended and accused of the murder of journalist Jyotirmoy Dey under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA). Vora, who was incarcerated for a period of nine months and eventually found not guilty after a span of seven years, authored the book titled "Behind Bars in Byculla - My Days in Prison." Scoop is a gripping six-episode series that delves into the intricate and unresolved connection between the police, the media, and the judicial system. It offers a candid portrayal of the harsh reality of Indian journalism.

Another big win for Scoop is its nuanced and observational writing, which is evident in the interplay of characters. Be it the journalists, the photographers, the policemen, the top officers, or the local newspaper vendor in the nonstop whirl of Mumbai, the people in the series feel and talk like real people from the city. The series also accurately presents newsroom dynamics.

B. Jamtara- Sabka Number Aayega

Jamtara is actually a district in Jharkhand, India. It is a hub of Internet scams and phishing scams in India. Jamtara is the origin of banks and insurance frauds that people like us encounter on a regular basis. Every year, fake banks and insurance companies agents dupe millions of people in India. Netflix's crime drama series Jamtara is based on these cases. The show unveils the unbelievable true story of a group of young men operating a phishing organization. The show has 2 seasons and both depicts the harsh reality of phishing scams operated by the youth and poor people of Jharkhand. The portrayal of the events in the story did complete justice with the real story of phishing scams. The story showed how politics get involved in such scams and ministers make a lot of profit from such scams.

C. Rangbaaz

Rangbaaz is a crime drama that depicts the actual life of Shri Prakash Shukla (known as Shiv Prakash Shukla in the series), a prominent gangster and the most sought-after criminal in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh. The series depicts his transformation from a student at DDU to being the second most sought-after criminal in India. The series was shown on the streaming platform ZEE5. The narrative portrays the actual events behind Shri Prakash Shukla's transformation from a student to a criminal. The narrative is derived on actual events involving Shukla and his transformation into the second most sought-after criminal in India. While the first season was based on the true story of Shri Prakash Shukla, the second and third seasons were based on the life of Anandpal Singh and Mohammad Shahabuddin respectively. The whole series is a real crime based stories which unfolds the truth of a student of DDU Gorakhpur Uttar Pradesh, to become a gangster and then a second most wanted criminal of India in police records.

D. Delhi Crime- Season 1

The Nirbhaya gang-rape case from 2012, which shocked and outraged the whole nation, is the basis for this crime thriller on Netflix. The primary actors in this web series are Adil Hussain, Rasika Dugal, and Shefali Shah. The series highlights the consequences of the 2012 Delhi gang rape. The story revolves on Deputy Commissioner of Police Vartika Chaturvedi (played by Shefali Shah) as she tackles a complex case while managing the influence of the city's law and order crisis on her personal life. At the 48th Emmy Awards, the series took up the Best Drama Series prize. The film was well praised by critics for its outstanding performances, gripping story, and faithful depiction of the true story that served as its inspiration. The series spans six days in a row, from December 16, 2012, to December 21, 2012, and chronicles the events from the first incident to the final capture. Delhi Crime is a really potent series that shifts between being unsettling and engrossing.

E. House of Secrets (The Burari Deaths)

This Netflix crime based drama is based on the real incident of the 11 people including children of age group 14 and hang themselves by the rope found in their home in Delhi. Every moment will give you chills down the spine especially the second episode where the revelation with each turning page of the diary not only shock you but also make you think. How could anyone do this and why all members of the family blindly followed the cult. By the end you will get a logical explanation of everything that has happened but still a lot of questions remain unanswered as there was no eye witness and it was a well- kept secret by the family. Overall, this series is a must watch not only for the finesse it was made with but also for you to understand that there is a fine line between faith and delusion.

Analysis

Most of the web series inspired by true events are based on selective stories, especially where it got viral or sparked a new controversy or it could create a sensation after its release. Most of these web series has fabulous casting, majority of them hail from theatre, which makes their content more realistic. True events as narrated by media houses, social media and many people, creates a narrative which suits them or their ideology, therefore, audience either they are in favour of their narrative or they're against it, they both get triggered about its web series to confirm about actual series of events. People like web series inspired by true events because they are often based on real-life stories that are both intriguing and relatable. They allow viewers to learn about historical events, people and cultures that they may not have been exposed to before. Additionally, the fact that the events depicted in the series actually happened can make the story feel more grounded and authentic, which can be more engaging for viewers. Additionally, many web series inspired by true events are often more accessible than traditional television shows, as viewers can watch them at their own pace, and on a variety of different platforms.

Web series inspired by true events often appeal to people for several reasons:

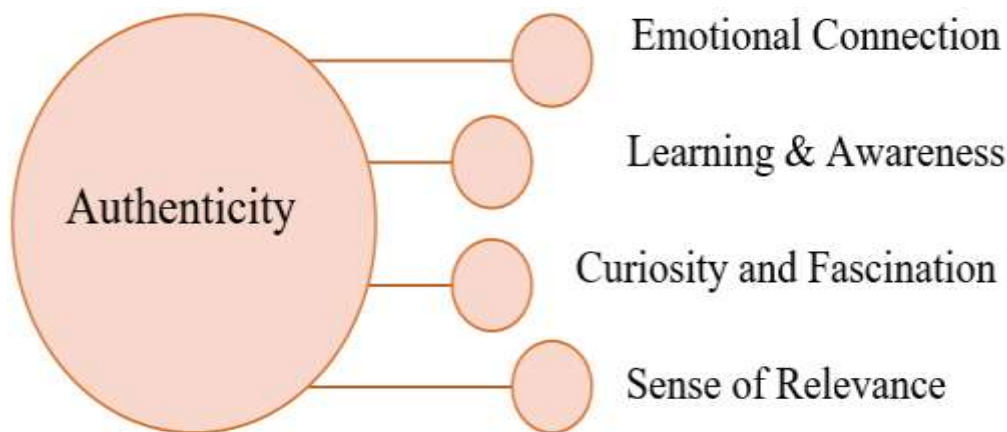


Figure 1: Factors Driving the Appeal of Web Series Based on True Events

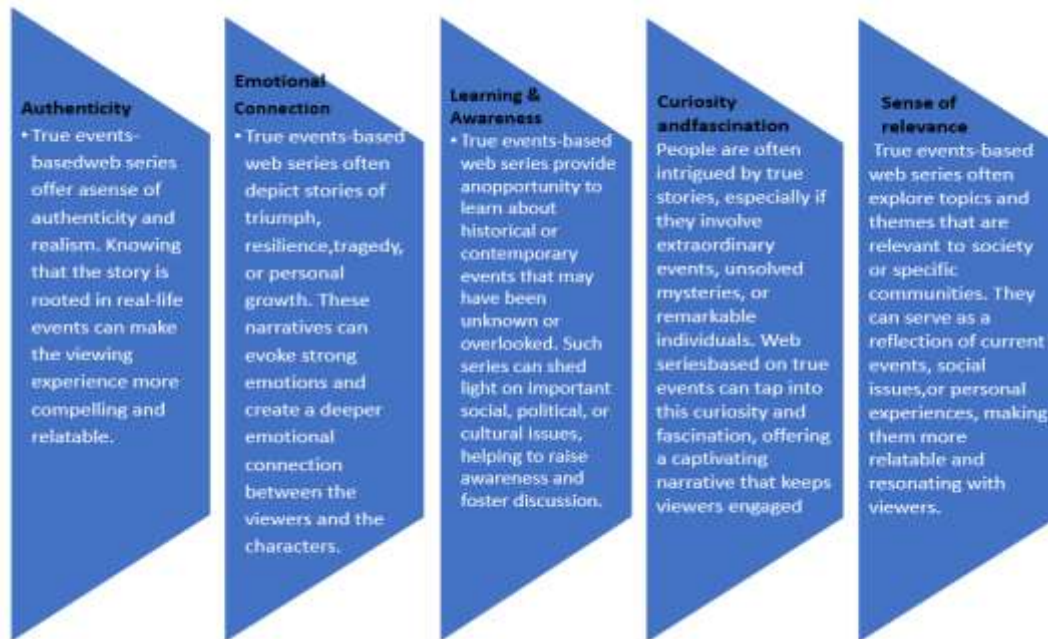


Figure 2: Reasons behind web-series inspired by true events often appeal to people

A. Impact of Real-Life Narratives on Viewers

The portrayal of real events in Indian web series has a substantial impact on viewers, evoking strong emotional responses and fostering a sense of authenticity. Programs like "Scoop," which draws inspiration from the actual arrest of journalist Jigna Vora in connection with a murder case, engage audiences by delving into the complexities of the Indian media and the legal system. These stories provide viewers a concise glimpse into the unpleasant realities of society, promoting reflection and empathy.

Similarly, the series "Jamtara- Sabka Number Aayega" sheds light on the extensive issue of cyber fraud in India, namely in the region of Jamtara, Jharkhand. The series exposes the harsh reality of phishing schemes and the involvement of young persons in criminal behavior, therefore raising awareness about the socio-economic challenges faced by vulnerable communities. Viewers are confronted with the harsh truth of life in rural India, prompting them to contemplate the fundamental issues that contribute to crime and corruption.

B. Emotional Connection and Authenticity

Web series that draw inspiration from real-life events can create a deep emotional connection with viewers due to their authenticity and ability to strike a chord. Shows like "Rangbaaz" resonate with viewers by providing a genuine and unfiltered portrayal of criminal behavior and violence, as they chronicle the life of the notorious gangster Shri Prakash Shukla. The authenticity of the characters and the unfiltered depiction of real events captivate viewers in the plot, eliciting both empathy and intrigue.

Similarly, "Delhi Crime" portrays a harrowing representation of the repercussions of the Nirbhaya gang-rape case, brilliantly illustrating the profound emotional anguish and unwavering resolve of the victims and law enforcement officials. The series connects with viewers due to its precise portrayal of the case's facts, prompting introspection and a desire for societal change.

C. Role of Web Series in Learning and Awareness

Web series that depict real-life happenings have a significant impact on teaching and informing viewers about historical events and important social concerns. The television series "House of Secrets" explores the perplexing case of the Burari Deaths, prompting viewers to contemplate the intricate connections among mental well-being, religious beliefs, and family relationships. The series illuminates the complexities of the case, promoting a more profound understanding of the events that led to the terrible incident.

Similarly, "Delhi Crime" functions as a proficient educational instrument that offers a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of Indian law enforcement and the criminal justice system. The series elucidates the intricate depiction of the Nirbhaya case investigation, therefore increasing awareness about the difficulties encountered by law enforcement officers and the need for substantial changes to combat gender-based violence.

D. Relevance and Societal Implications

Indian web series effectively depict genuine narratives, precisely mirroring the socio-cultural reality of contemporary India and bringing attention to pressing social issues. TV series such as "Scoop" and "Jamtara"

shed attention on the pervasive presence of corruption and crime in Indian society, prompting viewers to reflect on the underlying socio-economic disparities and institutional barriers.

Furthermore, web series that draw inspiration from real-life events have a broader impact on society, sparking debates and conflicts about equity, accountability, and social change. These series improve our understanding of Indian society and culture by giving priority to the viewpoints of marginalized groups and challenging commonly held misconceptions.

Therefore, Indian web series that get inspiration from actual events function as influential venues for narrative, enlightenment, and societal critique. These series deeply affect viewers by evoking strong emotions, being genuine, and addressing important issues, leading to self-reflection, increased understanding, and active support for societal change.

Conclusion

Indian web series that draw inspiration from real-life experiences have become influential platforms for storytelling, imparting knowledge, and offering insightful observations on significant social matters. These series connect with viewers and stimulate thought-provoking discussions on urgent societal concerns. These series deeply affect viewers by being genuine, evoking strong emotions, and addressing important issues, leading to self-reflection, consciousness, and support for societal change.

An analysis of web series like "Scoop," "Jamtara," "Rangbaaz," "Delhi Crime," and "House of Secrets" illustrates the diverse and engrossing approaches used to depict and explore real-life events in the world of digital media. These series provide viewers a thorough understanding of contemporary Indian society and culture by delving into the intricacies of Indian media, internet fraud, notable criminals, and the consequences of tragic events.

Moreover, the emotional connection established between viewers and the characters and storylines of these series highlights their capacity to cultivate empathy, compassion, and social consciousness. These series illuminate the intricacies of actual events and the interconnected human experiences within them, compelling viewers to face unsettling realities, question prevailing myths, and champion justice and transformation.

Indian web series that are based on real-life situations have the capacity to educate, inspire, and empower. However, they also raise important questions of representation, ethics, and the careful portrayal of sensitive topics. To effectively adapt to the evolving business, it is imperative for content creators, platforms, and legislators to prioritize ethical storytelling methods, diversity, and inclusion. This means making sure that these tales are delivered in a way that is sensitive, honest, and respectful to all parties involved.

Indian web series that draw inspiration from real-life tales epitomize a vibrant and revolutionary type of storytelling. They provide viewers with a glimpse into the intricate aspects of the human condition and the socio-cultural dynamics of modern-day India. By using storytelling tactics that provoke contemplation, evoke emotions, and inspire active participation, these series have the potential to achieve significant social change and cultivate a more inclusive and empathetic society. Indian web series are essential in shaping public discourse, challenging societal norms, and magnifying diverse viewpoints within the ever-changing digital media landscape. They have become a crucial and indispensable component of contemporary Indian culture and entertainment.

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