



A study on female representation in ten most viewed movie teasers on YouTube

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ABSTRACT

A teaser is one of the ways of promoting a film. It releases months before the release of a film. It gives little idea about the plot of the film and is released to entice the audience and increases the hype of the film prior to the release of the movie trailer. It is generally created during the shooting of the film and released before completing the shooting and editing of the film. Previous research has shown that in various forms of media, females are continuously diminished, excessively sexualized, stereotyped, and victimized. The aim of the present research is to study the representation of females in the top 10 most viewed Indian movie teasers on YouTube. Content analysis is employed as the method of analysis to determine how women are portrayed in movie teasers through representation, sexualization and gender roles.

Keywords: Teaser, female representation, sexualization and gender roles.

INTRODUCTION

A teaser is an advertising technique used for the promotion of a product, service, and idea. A teaser campaign typically consists of a series of small, enigmatic, interesting ads that anticipate a larger, full-blown campaign for a product launch, for an existing product, services, ideas; these ads are called "teaser advertisements". The Marketing Dictionary and Barron's Educational Series, 2007 defines teaser advertising as: "A brief ad planned to tease the public by offering only few information without revealing either the advertiser of the ad or the product being promoted.

Nowadays Teaser's ads has become popular for the promotion of films. A teaser is a way of advertising a film, by releasing a teaser months before the release of a film. The present study discusses how females are represented in the movie teasers released on YouTube.

A Film teaser is shorter than the trailer and is used to advertise an upcoming film, by building eagerness and interest in the audience watching. Teasers are too short and may not contain all information about the movie. It is used to promote and create awareness of an upcoming film. Just as the name suggests, teasers tease the audience, with minimal dialogue and video clips from the movie, without talking too much about the content of the movie.

They are often released before trailers, and work well in building the anticipation of the audience. Teasers are very short and could last for less than a minute. According to Differencebetween.net, one of the first teasers to be made was the ad for the Idol Dancer movie, released in the year 1920 is an American silent South Seas drama film produced and directed by D. W. Griffith.

A teaser awakens curiosity in the viewers as it lasts for less than a minute and does not provide specifications of the movie. Teasers are usually designed for big-budget films that have a huge target audience. Sometimes they are also designed for the sequel of a hit movie in order to create excitement or buzz for the film that already has a large audience base with existing knowledge. So, ad teasers are just a clue or hint of what is going to happen and do not confirm anything. Teaser informs the audience about the upcoming movies, lead characters (around whom the movie will revolve), sometimes plot, and also the main idea. The teaser is the first look of the movie. In the past, teasers would be showcased right before the movie launches, approximately within a week. Today teasers ads are released way ahead, sometimes even months or years before the official release dates of the movie are announced.

A film's teaser campaigns have been easily recognizable. According to the report 'Teasers on Television – A new trend' published in afaqs.com 'Pather Panchali' (1955 Indian Bengali-language drama film) directed and produced by Satyajit Ray (one of the greatest filmmakers in film history) was the first Indian film to have a series of teaser ads marking its arrival. Satyajit Ray's advertising background helped him with the innovative

idea of teasers to promote his very first film “Pather Panchali” to the viewers. In 1988, the blockbuster hit, *Qayamat se Qayamat Tak* (QSQT, Indian Hindi-language musical romance film, directed by Mansoor Khan, written and produced by his father Nasir Hussain) ran a teaser ad campaign for the promotion of the film. It was an outdoor billboard teaser ad with a question headline as the teaser element. It started with the first teaser ad reading “Who is Aamir Khan? A nameless anonymous ad, followed by a wave of teasers on Aamir, who was an unknown being back then. The final reveller ad opened the mystery with a full-blown launch poster of QSQT with its release date and caption reading introducing Aamir Khan as the lead actor’.

The biggest advantage of teaser ads is their inherent ability to arouse curiosity. Concealing information creates an information gap. The customers are fascinated by the signs given in the teaser ads. The knowledge gap persuades the consumers to increase their efforts to fill the gap in order to reduce the feeling of scarcity created by the teaser ads. Consumer’s need and desire to know makes them a captive audience of the campaign till they complete the incomplete knowledge structure on the release of the final reveller ad.

Sometimes people get so excited about the movie that the teaser gets leaked. Report published in Entertainment Times section of Times of India website revealed that ‘the teaser of 2.0 film (2018 Indian Tamil-language science fiction action film written and directed by S. Shankar) was released weeks earlier it was officially released on YouTube.

Teasers tend to be tailored towards the young generation, and what is often depicted of the female is stereotyped, sexualized portrayals as the love interest or secondary character, and not very often the lead (Reichert & Lambaise, 2006; Oliver & Kalyanaraman, 2006; Gilpatric, 2010; Smith et al., 2015). With the movie industry being so prominent in our society and teasers being so easily accessible, the sheer influence the industry could have on forming and manipulating both male and female social constructions of how females are “supposed to be” and how women should behave is insurmountable. This, in turn, affects social norms as these underlying constructions are frequent through communications. Essentially, with movie teasers being very popular and also personalized specifically to bring in paying spectators to see a film if what is offered to the general public in teasers is a wrong portrayal of women, then the film industry has the power to create a strong impact and limit a person’s social construction of gender. Since these constructions are a product of interaction, the portrayals presented, whether inaccurate or not, inform societal norms toward how women should act, how they should behave, and could even limit their aspirations (Smith, 2007). Therefore, teasers are imperative to examine while researching how women are portrayed in them, which is what the research study seeks to explore.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaser Advertising

Aaker [1] argued that “this Teaser advertising not only attracts the target consumers’ attention but also generates interest and educates the consumer about the product benefits and positioning, thus acting as an effective tool of communication”. A teaser ad is a powerful tool used to convey a message to the target audience but in its own style of creating curiosity on what the ad is about and thus directs the attention of the target audience (Journal of Advertising, 2001).

The early mention of Teaser advertising is found in the works of Perin Banayagam and Iser. In 1981, Iser argued that the reader or the viewer aims to arrive at a continuous explanation of the ad message on exposure. Gaps or indeterminacies promoted the curiosity of the reader in his process of piecing together all the links in the ad chain.

Kover (1995) finds mention of teaser advertising to catch the attention of viewers by the creative professionals. Kover noted that ‘a teaser gives incomplete information that tempts another to search to unravel or to trap the concealer into subsequent acts of discovery’.

June Vallalderas in her book categorizes teaser as a distinct type of advertising, she states that the teaser is a series of ads that can appear in the same newspaper on the same day or on successive days which reveal the advertisers’ message in stages.

In his book, Felton (2006) described teasers as sequential ads. Felton discusses this series of ads in print, outdoor and internet media. In print media, they are series of more than two incomplete ads that appear on

succeeding pages generally in the same edition of the newspaper or magazine whereas in outdoor media, such ads can be set in a series of ads on several billboards placed one after the other leading to a final ad on the farther one off the highway. Internet banners provide an ideal platform to insert sequential ads where images and language succeed one another, or users are invited to click on the ad to reveal the next part of the message. Felton says, “these ads gain collective power: if readers don’t see the first ad, the repetition, with some change from the previous one, of succeeding instalments eventually registers. It’s is one to beat the clutter: repeat yourself until people notice”.

The research paper talks about the film teasers. It can be a print, outdoor, audio-visual or digital teaser ad. The current study focuses on audio-visual digital teasers released on YouTube.

Kimberly Michelle Tolson's (Oklahoma State University) Film Teasers are considered as a text of their own, with their own logic and design, and most certainly not considered a Para text or a metatext. The film teaser is not a part of a whole and does not contain any hidden levels of interpretation and meaning. Teaser rarely uses actual footage from the film itself while traditional movie trailers use many, if not all, scenes from the movie edited together to make a fresh, alternative narrative compared to the original film. Instead, the teaser creates new images, striking and meaningless, to represent the film in an abstract and intangible way.

According to the report published in India.com website ‘Yash and Sanjay Dutt starrer KGF Chapter 2 (is an upcoming Indian Kannada-language period action film written and directed by Prashanth Neel) teaser released and created a buzz on YouTube and within a few hours of its release, it created a new world record. The video went on YouTube and become the highest viewed for any YouTube teaser in the world within 24 hours of its release. Not only that, KGF Chapter 2 teaser also became the most viewed teaser in 24 hours and also the fifth most-watched video in 24 hours with more than 72 million views.

In the given study female representation in movie teaser is studied by analysing the content of movie teaser.

Content analysis is used by many scholars to demonstrate how different groups, such as teens, men, and women, are portrayed in various forms of media regarding notions such as violence, stereotypes, gender roles, sexualization, and even risk behaviours.

Although a significant amount of content analysis on this topic has been conducted on movies, newspaper or magazine ads, and commercials, there has been surprisingly little research conducted on how women are portrayed in movie teasers. In all aspects of the film, both on and off-screen, women are underrepresented or misrepresented.

Laura Mulvey (1975) stated that, from a feminist perspective, women are on display as erotic objects for the male character within the narrative, the director, and the male viewers of the movie. Moreover, the male protagonist controls events forward in the story and is depicted as the representative of power within this traditional narrative. This power is partially derived from enjoying the erotic gaze directed at the female figure (Mulvey, 1975). In a study on the role of women in film, Haskell (1987) described the portrayal of female characters as visibly sexual or inherently weak, or both; women in the film exist primarily as a prop to develop the storyline or enhance the value of male characters. Thus, Haskell (1987) said that there should be more detailed female characters with lives that exist outside of the supporting role they play for men.

In a recent study of 700 popular films from 2007-2014, women’s representation in movies was assessed (Smith, Choueity, & Pieper, 2015). Movies were chosen using the top-grossing domestic box office information provided by Box Office Mojo, a website that provides film information. The findings reveal that in 100 most popular movies of 2014, female characters are vastly underrepresented on the screen. Women make up less than a third of all speaking characters on screen., despite comprising roughly 50% of the population. In animated or action-adventure movies less than one out of four characters were female. Evidently, the norm in Hollywood is to eliminate females from the screen (Smith et al., 2015, p. 8, emphasis in original).

Annenberg Report on Diversity, women’s representation was assessed by observing movies, television shows, and streaming series distributed by ten major media companies such as CBS, Sony, Disney, Amazon, and Hulu – similar findings emerged (Smith et al., 2016). Characters in a show that were either named or had a

speaking role were observed to assess sexualization, demographics, role, and domesticity. The gender and race composition of the directors and writers behind these shows and movies were noted as well.

The ratio of males to females in the study was roughly 2:1, with female characters approximately comprising only roughly 29% of the speaking roles in film. In addition, women aged 40 or older were especially excluded compared to men in the same age range, with men having approximately 75% of these roles and women in the same age range comprising only 25% or fewer (Smith et al., 2016). Provided the prevalence of these illustrations of women in films, it is reasonable to assume that similar results may emerge from an analysis of movie teasers as well.

The Annenberg Report on Diversity reported the sexualization of women as well, noting that as compared to men sexualization occurred far more for women in the study (Smith et al., 2016). The study found that, “women than the men to be shown in sexy wear more likely. (Females=34.3% vs. Males=7.6%), with some nudity (Females=33.4% vs. Males=10.8%) and physically attractive (Females=11.6% vs. Males=3.5%)” (p. 2). In a study of 700 popular films from 2007-2014, similar findings emerged. Speaking characters in the films were assessed for sexually revealing clothing, references of physical attractiveness, and nudity. In 2014 in particular, 28% of the women compared to 8 % of the men were depicted in erotic attire, findings that mirrored results over the years (Smith et al., 2015). Females were also more likely than males to be shown with some nudity (roughly 27% to 9%) as well. In fact, it was revealed that female young adults were just as likely to be sexualized as female teens in the study. As the theory suggests and research supports trends found in the study “are problematic, that exposure to objectifying content can contribute to negative effects (e.g., self-objectification, body shaming) between some females” (Smith et al., 2015, p.10).

Throughout the 1970s, several studies analysed popular media depictions of women, often with strikingly similar results (Dominick and Rauch 1972; McNeil 1974). The research found that women tended to be depicted in inferior roles (for example, housemaker, secretaries), whereas men were often portrayed in roles of authority, in power (for example, household breadwinners, professionally established, employed). The studies reported that images of women were more likely to be set in the domestic sphere, whereas the workplace and other public settings were more likely characterized as male spaces. Ads of household and appliances (such as detergent, refrigerators) typically targeted towards the women that reinforced their housewife status or cosmetics ads lure them to look more beautiful to attract men.

Films targeted at a female audience often fail to represent independent women that real viewers can relate to. Commercial films and parallel-cinema both habitually see the female characters centred in “themes of sacrifice, defined in relationship with male lead or kid, dependent on the male lead, and have encouraged [the female audience] to categorize either with female figures on-screen who were helpless or victimized or with active male heroes” (Montgomery, 1984, p. 39).

In inference, the role media can play in enhancing gender equality and equity has been debated in several international conventions of women working in the information and communication sector (Frankson, 2000). In most countries, media are overwhelmingly male-controlled and women still lack the power to determine the nature and shape of media content or to influence media policy. It is established that all types of mass media portray images of the sexes, many of which perpetuate stereotypical, limiting, and unrealistic perceptions.

Movie and their trailers and teasers influence the thoughts, beliefs, values of the viewers. So, it becomes important to know what these media sources are communicating and representing.

Problem of the study: The movie industry has the power to severely impact and limit an individual’s social construct of gender beliefs. In all aspects of the film, both on and off-screen, women are underrepresented or misrepresented. Even though there has been a significant amount of “activism and attention devoted to raising awareness on this topic in the popular press, the prevalence of girls and women on screen role has not changed in over 50 years” (Smith et al., 2015, p. 7). The purpose of the present research is to study the representation of the female characters in the 10 most viewed movie teasers of Indian movies.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The general objective of the study is -

- To analyse the selected teasers for understanding gender representation

- To interpret female portrayal in the selected teasers
- To understand the social construct by studying the teasers

The overall research question that the study addresses is **how women are portrayed in movie teasers, with regards to the representation, sexualization, gender roles, screen time, and clothes.**

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative content analysis is a research method attempt to identify core uniformities and meanings through the organized classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.

Unit of Content Analysis

The Unit of Analysis is the entity that frames what is being looked at in a study, or is the entity being studied as a whole, within which most factors of causality and change exist.

- Total time of the movie teaser.
- Presence/ absence of female character in the movie teaser
- Number of female characters shown
- Total screen time of the female character
- Dialogue by female character
- Interpretation of gender roles of female character
- Cloths worn by female character

Sample of the study: The sample selected for the study is the top 10 most viewed Indian movie teasers on YouTube till January 2021. In the present study, a stop-clock is used to measure the screen time of the female character. The gender role of the character is interpreted according to the scene in the teaser. The YouTube views of the teaser are taken on April 15, 2021.

<p>Sample 1- KGF Chapter -2 (Hindi) Actor: Yash, Sanjay Dutt Actress: Raveena Tondon, Srinidhi Shetty Director: Prashanth Neel Producer: Vijay Kirgandur Teaser Premiered: Jan 7, 2021 Views: 181,849,884</p>	<p>Sample 2- 2.0 (Hindi) Actor: Rajinikanth, Akshay kumar Actress: Aishwarya Rai, Amy Jackson Director: Shankar Shanmugan Producer: A. Subas Karan Teaser Previewed: September 13, 2018 Views: 72,016,983</p>
<p>Sample 3- Master (Tamil) Actor: Vijay Actress: Malanika Mohan Director: Lokesh Kanagaraj Produced: Xaviers Britto Teaser Previewed: November 14, 2020 Views: 66,355,326</p>	<p>Sample 4- Sanju (Hindi) Actor: Ranbir Kapoor, Vicky Koushal Actress: Manisha Koria, Sonam Kapoor, Dia Mirza, Anushka Sharma Director: Rajkumar Hirani Producer: Vidhu Vinod Chopra, Rajkumar Hirani Teaser Previewed: April 24, 2018 Views: 64,083,270</p>
<p>Sample 5- Saaho (Hindi) Actor: Prabhas Actress: Shradha Kapoor Director: Siyeeth Reddy Producer: Vamsi Krishna Reddy Teaser Previewed: June 13, 2019 Views: 59,437,525</p>	<p>Sample 6- War (Hindi) Actor: Hrithik Roshan, Tiger Shroff Actress: Vaani Kapoor Director: Sidharth Anand Producer: Adity Chopra Teaser Previewed: July 15, 2019 Views: 50, 881,250</p>
<p>Sample 7- Kalank (Hindi)</p>	<p>Sample 8- Zero (Hindi) Actor: Sharukh Khan</p>

<p>Actor: Varun Dhawan, Aditya Roy Kapoor, Sanjay Dutt Actress: Alia Bhatt, Sonakshi Sinha, Madhuri Dixit Director: Abhishek Verma Producer: Karan Johar, Sajid Nadiawala Teaser Previewed: 12 March, 2019 Views: 45, 821, 592</p>	<p>Actress: Anushka Sharma, Katrina Kaif Director: Anand L. Rai Producer: Karuna Badwal, Gauri Khan Teaser Previewed: June 14, 2018 Views: 45, 092, 233</p>
<p>Sample 9- Bharat (Hindi) Actor: Salman Khan Actress: Katrina Kaif Director: Ali Abbas Zafar Producer: Atul Agnihotri Teaser Previewed: January 25, 2019 Views: 44, 945, 940</p>	<p>Sample 10- Sakar (Tamil) Actor: Vijay Director: A.R Murugodoss Producer: Kalanithi Maran Teaser Previewed: October 19, 2018 Actress: Keerthi Suresh Views: 44, 601, 644</p>

FINDINGS

(After studying the movie teasers in YouTube, these are the findings come from the study)

S. No.	Name of the movie	Total time of teaser	Presence/absence of female character	No. of female character shown	Dialogue of female character	Gender roles	Clothes	Screen time of female character
1.	KGF Chapter-2	2:16 Minutes	Present	4	No Dialogues	Character 1- Playing the role of mother (nurturing, emotional) Character-2 (Strong, Confident) Character 3(Strong, Aggressive) Character 4 (Accommodating, polite)	Indian Traditional	17 Seconds
2.	2.0	1: 31 Minutes	Present	1	No Dialogues	Subordinate behaviour	Western	3 Seconds
3.	Master (Tamil)	1:30 Minutes	Present	1	No Dialogues	Simple, polite	Indian Traditional	3 Seconds
4.	Sanju	1:25 Minutes	Absent					
5.	Saaho	1:39 Minutes	Present	1	Yes	Strong, Modern	Western	18 Seconds
6.	War	53 Seconds	Present	1	No Dialogues	Subordinated	Western	2 Seconds
7.	Kalank	2:05 Minutes	Present	3	Yes	Character-1 (Emotional, weak)	Indian Traditional	45 Seconds

						Character-2 (Scary, emotional) Character-3 (Strong, Confident)		
8.	Zero	1:15 Minutes	Absent					
9.	Bharat	1:27 Minutes	Absent					
10.	Sarkar (Tamil)	1:33 Minutes	Present	2	No Dialogues	Character-1 (Calm, Composed) Character-2 Confident and Independent	Indian Traditional	12 Se co nds

- **Total time of the movie teaser:** All the teasers of the current study have a maximum time of 2:16 minutes and a minimum time of 53 seconds.
- **Presence/ absence of female character in the movie teaser:** Out of the 10 movie teasers, female characters are present in seven of the teasers. In Sanju, Zero and Bharat, no female character is shown in the teaser of the movie. In rest of the 7 movie teasers there is no clear mention of female character in the plot of the movie.
- **Number of female characters:** There are four female characters in KGF chapter-2 while in Kalank and in Sarkar, there are three and two female characters are present respectively. On the other hand, in the movie teaser of 2.0, Master, Saaho and War, one female character is showed.
- **Total screen time of the female character:** The movie teasers wherein female characters are present; the screen time of female characters is not more than 45 seconds. In all the movie teaser, male actors tend to have twice as much screen time as female actors.
- **Dialogue by female character:** Only in two movie teasers, the female character has dialogue.
Kalank- Alia Bhatt- *Jab kisi aur ki barbadi apni jeet jaisi lage,
Toh humse jada barbaad or koi nahi hai Iss duniya mein*
 (By the dialogue it is interpreted that the character of ‘Alia Bhatt’ is fearless and strong. She has the guts to communicate her views strongly)
Saaho- Shradha Kapoor (Dialogue-1)- *Mere pas koi nahi hai jisse main
apni khushi ya gham baatun*
(Fight Scene)
Saaho- Shradha Kapoor (Dialogue-2)- *Yeh log kaun hai?*
Prabhas- Fans
Shradha Kapoor- *Yeh Itne violent kyu hai?*
Prabhas: *Kyunki yeh mere diehard fans.*
 (By ‘Shradha Kapoor’ dialogue it seems she is alone and need someone in her life, she might be emotionally weak character. In the 2nd dialogue superiority of male is showed as he is fighting with goons.)
- **Cloths worn by female characters:** Out of the seven teasers in which female characters are present, in four of them, females have worn Indian traditional attire and in rest of the 3 teasers, female characters are shown wearing western outfits. The clothes wearied by female characters depends on the role they are

playing and also the time period or era showed in the movie. The traditional cloth like saree and salwar suit lehenga connect with the Indian audience, convey the Indian culture and create an image of the actress that she is cultured and well-behaved. When the girl is wearing western cloths, she is considered modern and unsophisticated.

- **Interpretation of gender roles of Female character:** In KGF-Chapter-2 1st female character is a middle-aged woman, wearing a cotton saree, messy hair, playing with a baby. (The character is single mother; her condition is poor physically and financially still she is working to feed her son. Her character is strong and independent.)

Character 2: She is walking confidently in the parliament; everyone stands up when she enters. She is wearing a saree, looks like a politician. (Her character seems negative, she had confident personality and anger in her face.)

Character 3: The woman is wearing a black cotton saree, and has messy hair, and seems like she is screaming. (The character seems angry and disappointed by anything)

Character 4: She is wearing red lehenga with bridal make-up, standing with pooja ki thali. (The character is waiting for someone and emotional.)

2.0 Character is shown as subordinate to the male lead character. (The actress seen falling the male lead actor everywhere, role seems of a secretary of male lead.)

Master, Character seems to be a college student, wearing a salwar suit, does not look like a strong personality. (She seems to have secondary role in the movie, just to give romantic angle to the film.)

Saaho, Female lead is shown dependent on the male lead. (The female lead seems modern, and male lead always trying to protect her.)

War: The character shown dancing in the teaser wearing revealing or provocative cloths. Female character is shown in a secondary role.

Kalank: Character: 1 Old age woman is wearing an Anarkali suit with traditional jewellery. (She is showed crying disrespected in the teaser. She is emotional and weak.)

Character 2: The Married women seem worried and confused about something. She is wearing a saree and light jewellery

Character 3: She is a married and working woman. Her character is young and her personality is strong and confident.

Sakar: Character 1 is represented as the love interest of the male lead. She is calm and composed and is wearing a salwar kurta.

Character 2 Is a political leader, wearing a saree, seems strong and confident.

CONCLUSION

Women's portrayal in various forms of the media such as movies, video games, and television advertisements has garnered much research. Surprisingly, there has been a little research on how women are portrayed in movie teasers considering their prevalence and easy accessibility within society. Teasers have to be precisely edited and tailored to entice audiences to see a film, and in that case, they are both an advertisement as well as a form of entertainment.

The present research sought to observe women's portrayal in the movie teasers, their, representation, sexualization, gender roles. Overall, the result revealed that there is much difference between the presentation of the female and male characters in the teasers. The women portrayed in the teaser are attractive, physically fit, and in secondary roles to male characters. In all the 10 teasers, male characters are dominating over female characters. The screen time of the male character is more than the female lead. The main plot of the story is also revolving around the male lead. There were no instances of sexually suggestive behavior in any of the teasers. Female leads in the movie teaser are all not showed in stereotypical gender roles. Some women are showed strong and independent in the movie teasers. The roles played by the females are changing with the time but still maximum time they are in the secondary and supporting roles, they often portrayed through a patriarchal lens.

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