



Fourth Wave Feminism through Lens of Technology and Web Series: A Deeper Perspective in Indian Context

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Feminism has been a debated topic since time immemorial. Various renowned authors have made deliberate attempts to make people understand the concept of feminism through their postulates & thesis. Since the repullulation of civilisation, four waves of feminism have been come into light, granting Right to vote, emphasizing on sexuality, family, reproductive rights, political activism to expand civil rights, empowerment of women through Internet Tools and Intersectionality etc. This paper attempts to unfold the idea of fourth wave feminism through the lens of Web Series and technology in Indian context, which comes into incept with anti rape movement embodying generalised misogyny, sexual harassment & violence in 2021 based on secondary data sources and opinions of media persons, law practitioners, civil society organisations and academicians in the form of questionnaire based on primary data source. It also makes a deliberate attempt to unravel what kind of change web series and technology imbibe on the minds of people in context of fourth wave feminism.

Keywords: *Fourth Wave Feminism, Misogyny, Intersectionality, Sexual Harassment, Violence.*



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1. INTRODUCTION

Feminism comprises of all the theories and postulates advocating for equal social, economic and political rights of women which make them stand on the same pedestal as compared to men. This concept of waves of feminism has its roots in the west with the primary goal to secure voting rights of women. The second wave of feminism encompassed the space to think of the broader aspects like sexuality, domesticity, workplace, reproductive rights and legal inequalities. The

third wave of feminism originated in 1990s paving the way to deconstruct the concept of "Universal Womanhood" with the shift of focus from communal objective to communal rights.

The concept of first wave feminism in India started long back in India when the pioneering activist of women rights and education in India Savitribai Phule started the first Girls School in those challenging times when women going to schools seem to be the worst nightmare for those who never wanted the stereotypes to break, she

always carried one extra saree in her bag when she initiated first girls school in India as people splashed black ink on her on way to school. Tarabai Shinde, who wrote India's first feminist text *Stri Purush Tulna* (A Comparison Between Women and Men) in 1882. Pandita Ramabai, who criticized patriarchy and caste system in Hinduism. After India got independence, there was a comprehensive need to intrigue into the social issues dawned upon them hyping the need of a systematic development plan for women. The second wave of feminism increased its span and horizon as the state recognised the intersectionality of class, caste and culture. As the literacy levels amongst women began to improve, women started becoming more determinant in raising their demands for equal place in the society.

Unlike the first wave feminism, which was more about advocacy of rights of women by men, which did not break the ice to challenge the ascendancy of patriarchal societal structure, second wave feminism had a huge backing of women and women led organisations. An exemplification of this can be found in Chipko movement originated in Himalayan region of Uttarakhand where women used the primary tactic of embracing the trees to impede the loggers. This movement can be depicted as a major advocacy movement not only in terms of a constitutional right but thwarted a major milestone in challenging the hegemony of patriarchal societal structure. In 1980 with the advent of fifth five year plan, focus was shifted on health, employment opportunities and educational status of women which embarked upon the third wave of feminism. With the advent of economic liberalization in 2000s, there was the casualization of workforce to reduce income disparities in the society causing a shift in employment from men to women. The term fourth wave of feminism finds its roots in the west, but it became synchronously popular in India due to the widespread dissemination of knowledge through the use of social media as it was gradually becoming prominent at that time period.

2. TECHNOLOGY AND FOURTH WAVE FEMINISM

Kira Cochrane, a British journalist and novelist and an active participant in fourth wave feminism movements in her article for The

Guardian entitled "The Fourth Wave of Feminism: Meet the Rebel Women" writes,

"Welcome to the fourth wave of feminism. What's happening now feels like something new again. Its defined by technology: tools that are allowing women to build a strong, popular, reactive movement online. Just how popular is sometimes slightly startling."

What was clearly evident from her article was as we make it to year 2013, it becomes next to impossible to suppress the lumber of female activists across the globe. And surprisingly the unfailed attempts to suppress the widespread movement only resulted in making it stronger than ever before. It all started in 2014 when US based feminists initiated a campaign #Feministsareugly on Twitter to challenge the preconceived notion that feminists are not attractive consequently resulting in challenging the hegemony of deep rooted body shaming practices online and notion of differentiation between what is considered beautiful and attractive.

Me too movement in 2009 led by Tarana Burke to lend support to survivors of sexual violence making people realize how difficult it must would have been for the survivors of sexual violence went viral and many survivors from all over the world marched forward becoming vocal about their painful tales. As the web offers anonymity, so a lots of young cyber feminists are now in the role of torchbearers to become the voice of hopeless young and old women out there. Back in the times when Internet and web did not come into existence, traditional offline activism was the sole method to help the ailing survivor women that too with the active participation of women activists and women led organisations.

Some global feminists have also tried their level best to raise their voices through the academia making their academic intellect unravel in front of the world which was too naive at that time to grasp and understand what was said. Now when the digital activism has provided all the feminists with blooming feminine energy to become stronger and staunch than ever before, academia still continues to be the backbone of major feminist movements. Although the fourth wave feminism is still in embryonic stage in India, women are grossly involved in using digital activism to voice up their opinions. Through a computer assisted emotion analysis of 65,613

Twitter posts (tweets) posted during the Nirbhaya social movement (movement against Delhi Gang Rape) in India, millions of voices were raised up garnering support from street protests. Consequently several laws like Criminal Law Amendment Act, popularly known as Anti Rape Act, Section 354 A, 354 B, 354 C, 354 D, 376 (2)(c), 376A, 376C, 326 A, 326 B have been added aftermath the age for being tried as an adult for violent crimes like rape was changed from 18 to 16 years under Juvenile Justice Act, 2015.

The Delhi Rape incident brought the issue of women safety at public places in the forefront. Me too movement in India began in 2018 after gaining inspiration from the popularity of International movement when several defamation cases were filed against the popular figures of Bollywood, Law and politics, several influential women and women led organizations joined hands and came together showing anger and despair. The NCW saw an increase in complaints from 570 in 2017 to 965 in 2018 after me too movement came into existence, it also tried to cover the gaps previously existing in the Sexual Harassment at workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act 2013) In 2005, a 15 year old young girl's face, who was resenting to marry a 32 old year old guy, was splashed with acid on her face. As there was no law in our country which can deal with acid attack, she had her medicament under Section 320, 325, 326 of Indian Penal Code.

Thereafter, she started her campaign against acid attack in 2006 nuancing that We are not survivors, we are fighters. The campaign spread all over the online web platforms and she gathered more than 28,000 signatures to file the PIL. She filed a Public Interest Litigation in Supreme Court of India to control acid sale and to make a amendment in the existing laws like Indian Penal Code, Indian Evidence Act, CRPC etc to include acid as a separate crime and demanded the rehabilitation and compensation of acid attack victims. Consequently, it was recognized as a crime under Section 326 of Indian Penal Code. In 2017, a Mumbai based NGO She Says India, launched an online campaign to reduce the 12% of taxation on Sanitary Napkins in India. Several celebrities like Mallika Dua, Cyrus Broacha, Vishal Dadlani and Aditi Rao Hydari etc joined their hands in movement and tried to make it widespread online through their mass reach persuading the then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley

to make sanitary napkins tax free. Entrepreneur Arunachalam Muruganatham launched the campaign on Social Media named #PadManchallenge aimed to make low cost sanitary pads for women of his village.

It went viral garnering the support of many Bollywood Celebrities like Twinkle Khanna, Akshay Kumar, Shabana Azmi, Alia Bhatt, Madhuri Dixit, Rajkumar Rao etc stating a message going viral on social media "Yes there is pad in my hand and there's nothing to be ashamed. Periods are natural." An Indian Social Media Campaign Selfie with Daughters was initiated by a sarpanch at Bibipur, a village in Jind Haryana in 2015 aiming to encourage the feeling of pride and dignity in being the parent of girl child and to improve the child sex ratio of the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was truly impressed by this campaign mentioning about this time and again in his Man Ki Baat. Three years later in 2018, he said, " Who would have imagined that a small campaign "Selfie with Daughter starting from small Village of Haryana would not only spread throughout the country but also other countries as well. In 2019, an All Women Selfie Campaign was launched emphasizing on single mothers. Know Your Lemons, a campaign launched in 2017 aiming to increase awareness about Breast Cancer in women through the illustration of 12 Lemons to educate women about the symptoms of Breast Cancer transcended the boundaries of social media and offline traditional media as well. It resulted in 70 percent of respondents feeling more educated about Breast Cancer and 89 percent of respondents feeling more confident in their skin and capabilities to know the symptoms of Breast Cancer.

He or She campaign was launched with a message of "You are not stuck in traffic. You're traffic. Speak up. Cycle on. Support gender equality." In 2015 with 700 cyclists joining in a Bicycle Rally in Pune. Cycle was symbolized as a balance of genders which was a prerequisite to move forward calling for solidarity for men and women in all walks of life. The Procter and Gamble company initiated a campaign named Touch the Pickle persuading women to come forward and join hands in sharing their ridiculous tales of period related tales and taboos on social media. As the Indian society has always been passing on Don'ts of periods since ages and civilization, this campaign really tried hard in becoming the change

maker garnering support from people from all walks of life. Cast and crew of Chappak, a film starring Deepika Padukone and Vikrant Messy initiated a campaign named Ab Ladna Hai and Muh Dikhai at the time of film release in 2020 to target the concept of strange dichotomy of beauty standards of women. Deepika Padukone took it to her Instagram handle with a caption, "Badlav ki neev shuruat hoti hai.. badalna hai..". There are many other programmes like Internet Sathi, Digital literacy for women etc which have been launched to show their support for the cause of women.

3. WEB SERIES AND FOURTH WAVE FEMINISM

As the decade old offline traditional media fails to generate interest among youths in contemporary India, youths have turned to web series arousing interest on so many pedestals. A report depicts that, on average, Indian viewers spend approximately eight hours 29 minutes watching online video content. It all started in 2014 with a show named "Permanent Roommates" garnered a lot of support and popularity. Indian youth connected with it on so many levels and it has gained more than 50 million views. So as and when this web series culture has gained prominence and widespread acceptance of people from different walks of society, nothing could hold back men and women showing up for the cause of feminism. OTT platforms have successfully taken the cause forward with some web series popping up time and again to showcase that a ray of hope still shines on nullifying the dark tunnel of despair that tries to hold women back at homes. Some of the web series illustrating the cause are as follows:

3.1. DAHAAD

In this web series, there is a small Village Mandwana, in the state of Rajasthan, sub inspector Anjali Bhati comes to know a case where twenty seven women of the state have been missing without any clue and the local residents had no idea about that. But as soon as Anjali Bhati realizes that there is a common thread intertwining all the missing cases, everything starts shifting towards it being a well calculated plot. As Anjali arrives in her thirties, it becomes extremely difficult for her mother to find a suitable groom as she takes up the cause so strongly that she starts facing stiff resentment particularly due to her caste still remains a staunch strong headed cop as earlier.

Deep diving into the case, she discovers a pattern that all the missing women were belonging from under privileged strata, were above 25 years old, unable to marry because of poverty, were emotionally vulnerable. When she traces each victim's message from a previous number, she finds out that all these 27 women have been killed the same day when they ran away from their spouses and all died due to cyanide poisoning. After a lot of interrogations, Anjali finds out the man behind all the mysterious deaths, Anand Swarnakar. Anand justifies all her evil deeds claiming that they deserved punishment and he also criticizes Anjali due to her underprivileged strata and questions her relationship with her boss. Then, Anjali takes a decision to change her surname back to Meghwal, to show her non-compliance to the societal norms and prejudices.

3.2. HEERAMANDI

Heeramandi which in Urdu and Punjabi, means a diamond market, is an area in the city of Lahore in Pakistan, also known as Shahi Mohalla, one of the most sought after destinations in Pakistan which witnessed one of the most substantial collapse in British India. The area which witnessed its uprising in the Mughal era where they used to sing, entertain the emperors deteriorated during the British regime and it became the centre of prostitution where it gradually began to lose its grandeur and came to be known as prostitution hub. After the Mughal era collapsed, Maharaja Ranjit Singh reintroduced the royal customs of Mughal in the city of Lahore, started food grain market in the era, named it as Heeramandi, initially known as Heera Singh Di Mandi but he failed to match the resplendence of Mughal era. According to some historical sources, Maharaja Ranjit Singh also fell in love with a woman belonging from Kanjar Caste and faced stiff resistance from the people around. But still his unwavering commitment and love made her to marry him and he also built a mansion for her. It was only in the British regime that the reputation of Heeramandi started deteriorating. Now, it has been shifted to Lahori Gate and Taxali Gate. A prostitution house is now running in the form of Heeramandi in disguise of a food shop during the day time. When Zia Ul Haq came to power in Pakistan, he rigorously tried to end the practice of prostitution but he failed at his attempt as it got shifted to other parts of Lahore. In this era of

internet, Sex workers now offer their escort services via host of apps.

Hira Nadeem, a undergrad student of Sociology tried to get sneak peak of Hiramandi to have a glimpse from within. Pinky, a resident of Heeramandi told her, when men pay for sex, that's when their inner animal comes out. She also told her that how they all manage to find contacts via her manager and tries to build rapport with them through digital sex bazaar. If you shut down one Heeramandi, another will rise up, other resident Shabana told her. Opening this whole Heeramandi bazaar through digital space, no matter of its closure in physical space, only made it more omnipresent than ever before.

3.3. LUST STORIES

Lust stories is an anthology film discovering the lives of 4 women centred around lust directed by Anurag Kashyap, Joya Akhtar, Dibakar Banerjee and Karan Johar in which the deep diving of 2 films directed by Joya Akhtar and Karan Johar has been carried out.

4. FILM DIRECTED BY JOYA AKHTAR

The film starts with a series of incidents with heavy make out happening between Sudha, the maid and Ajit, the employer. Sudha does all the household chores with utmost honesty and sincerity. Then a day comes in their lives when the marriage of Ajit gets fixed. Sudha is asked to serve tea and snacks to the bride's parents when they visit his home, she feels very much uncomfortable seeing Ajit being cosy with another girl. For a while, Sudha glares at Ajit. Then, marriage of Ajit gets fixed. When she waits for the life after completion of her daily chores, maid from another house comes and makes her see the Salwar Kameez given by her employer. Sudha asks her sweets in the lift. This web series shows the deteriorating condition of women at some households where they are grossly used for sexual satisfaction of men.

5. FILM DIRECTED BY KARAN JOHAR

Megha is a young school teacher who gets engaged with her office worker, Paras. When they get married, she finds out that Paras constantly takes enjoyment during the sex but he never pays heed to her dissatisfaction. Paras's family constantly forces her to have children as they think this is the only desire of married women.

One fine day, in her college, she finds her colleague Rekha using a vibrator in the school library. Owing to her inquisitiveness, she also tries to use this at home. Meanwhile, Paras meets with an accident and arrives in a rumpled state, she straightaway runs to Paras with vibrator inside her. And the grandmother of Paras mistaken it with a TV Remote and starts increasing the vehemence. Megha starts seeking enjoyment from it after so many failed attempts at controlling herself. Then, she reaches at the peak of sexual arousal and releases orgasm leaving everyone in awe. Paras's mother's feels infuriated and asks divorce as she thinks Megha is not appropriate and worthy to become the mother of his son's children. After one month, Paras confronts Megha and says he will not take divorce just because his wife made a mistake. Then, Megha says she has not made any mistake and the circumference of a woman's desires is not constrained to producing children. A woman has multifaceted desires. Then, Paras starts persuading her by feeding her ice cream. This shows how a woman who is never afraid to show her flaws and is so unapologetic in her choices looks like.

6. BANDISH BANDITS

It is a story tale of confused masculinity muddling through the patriarchal hierarchy and its association with the women. The story is set in the royal haveli of Jodhpur, seems to be the ideal place to showcase the manoeuvre of patriarchal hierarchy. Pandit ji, the head of ghar is presented as a proud man, in a white Kurta pyjama. The Goddess is the only woman he bows down to and pays heed to, all other women are merely characters in his story. His shrouded past starts unravelling in the later episodes. He got married to two women, abandoned his first wife and son because he got infatuated towards other women at a competition of Sangeet Samrat and later had two sons from her as well. Both his wives remain incognito until they have been invigorated by their sons again, one dedicating a music school on her name and the other singing a thumri dedicated to her made by Pandit ji. His eldest son, Digvijay wishes to seek revenge from his father for having him left his mother, but he is still portrayed as having a high opinion about his father. The entire lives of other sons have been gone in vain always doubting their worth and self-questioning, but they never gather the courage to confront their

father. The daughter in law of house, Mohini is portrayed as a submissive character behind the four walls of kitchen compelled to give up his love for Digvijay and to settle for Rajendra to pay the debts of her poor father. She emerged as the Sangeet Samratini, strongest character being the only woman to defeat Pandit ji at music. Her life only revolves around the kitchen as she had to be taught a lesson for a woman blemishing the Patriarchal hegemony.

Radhe, the protagonist, a small town boy falls in love with a music sensation Tammana, later at a musical concert, he tries to sing all the hookup songs of Tammana making it feel like a plot of him saving her from embarrassment of singing live. While Tammana introduces him to her family, invites him at his home and he becomes physically intimate with her while her father is still at home, Radhe never introduces her to his family. This showcases the contradiction among boys regarding the kind of women to be introduced in front of parents. To portray Radhe as a broad minded guy, he is introduced to a girl who has just come from Royal Family of Belgium to marry an Indian Guy. Bandish Bandits is the musical coalescence of Male Ego, female oppression, confused masculinity and oppressed femininity.

7. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Jain (2020), Internet and online digital activism has opened new avenues for women to speak up for themselves and come out of the cocoon that has been made by them by stereotypical people supporting patriarchal hegemony. Internet has provided women with a safe space to come together garnering support from people of different walks of life. Digital activism garners widespread support from people across the globe as it has higher burn out chance as compared to offline traditional activism but as soon as it gets ascendancy, it descends at the same rate. India doesn't have the enough tools to foster online traditional activism owing to cultural barriers, regional barriers which constraint the inclusive participation of women. Cyber feminism should become more decentralised and democratic.

According to Kumari (2020), the widespread and powerful presence of social media has provided with the required momentum to ideologies supporting women empowerment.

Social media has become the weapon of social change which has garnered support for the global cause of women breaking all the stereotypes. Social media has also played a phenomenal role in financial, social, psychological empowerment of women. As there is a lack of digital literacy among women, some gaps are still prevalent.

According to Mohajan and Hardhan (2022), women were deprived of all the basic human rights because of gender. Before the advent of four waves of feminism, women were always treated as second class citizens. The first wave of feminism, represented by middle class women of US and Europe, helped women achieve some rights such as right to education, right to access to public space, right to property of father etc. Non-white women have also started participating in second wave of feminism protesting for sexuality and basic reproduce rights, equal opportunities for education, employment, maternity leave, birth control, abortion rights. Sexual Harassment at workplace, sexual violence and rape, etc movements have come into light during the advent of third wave of feminism. Fourth wave of feminism brought a transformative change through the usage of online technologies like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to aware women about their rights. In this 21st century, it becomes utmost important for women to be independent in their choices of any sort and all sorts of oppression against women must come to an end.

According to Thakur (2012), some people claim that feminism has become outdate now and doubt the relevance of feminism. They think that women could have needed it before a time span of 100 years but now women have become pilots and made their entry into Supreme courts, this concept starts to lose its relevance. But still there are no of reasons that feminism is still relevant. There are some girls who dare to dream big and can go to any extent for their pursuit of dreams but on the other end, there are some girls who are constantly harassed, abused, assaulted and afraid to walk by themselves late at night. Pop and this advertisement culture have defined some prejudices and norms for beauty standards of women how they should look like, how they should behave. Even if reproductive right is their birth right, still they have to face stiff resentment from society. There are sometimes no equal pay for equal work. And when you don't feel safe, when your body is not your own, what is the sense

of all the freedom and opportunities. Real social headway should be made.

8. OBJECTIVES

- To know how technology has taken the array of fourth wave feminism forward and intertwining of technology and fourth wave feminism
- To know how web series have transformed the idea of fourth wave feminism
- To know the opinion of people coming from multifaceted sectors like media, law, civil society organisations and academicians on fourth wave feminism

9. METHODOLOGY

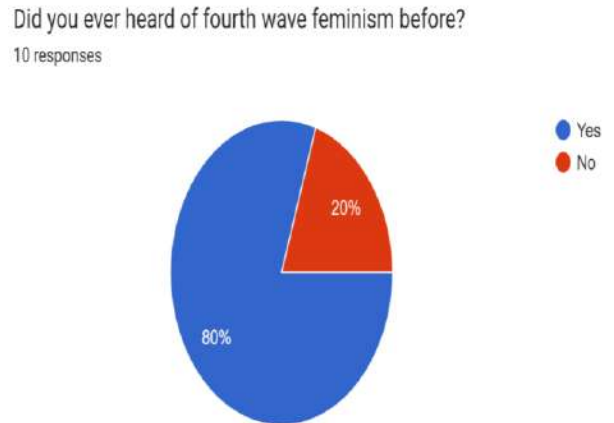
In this study, the researcher used Survey method with close ended questionnaire having nine questions covering all the objectives of the study. The primary data was collected through online survey created in Google form and secondary data was collected through articles and blogs on four web series, Dahad, Heeramandi, Lust Stories and Bandish Bandits and previous studies written in literature review for fulfilling the desired objective. The data interpretation was done using observation method and the representation was done using pie charts, graphs and tables.

10. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

As the fourth wave feminism in India has started to showcase its existence, a lots of people from different walks of life have come forward, showed a wide array of interest to make it more stronger and to leave a significant impact. This research aims to cover the fourth wave feminism through the lens of Web Series and technology that how the intertwining of technology and fourth wave of feminism has showed exemplary results. The scope of the study is limited to a sample size of 10 people coming from different sectors like Law,Media, Academia, Civil society organisations being observed though survey method in the Google form with 10 research questions in the form of primary data and content analysis of four web series, Dahad, Heeramandi, Lust Stories and Bandish Bandits through secondary data and previous researches.

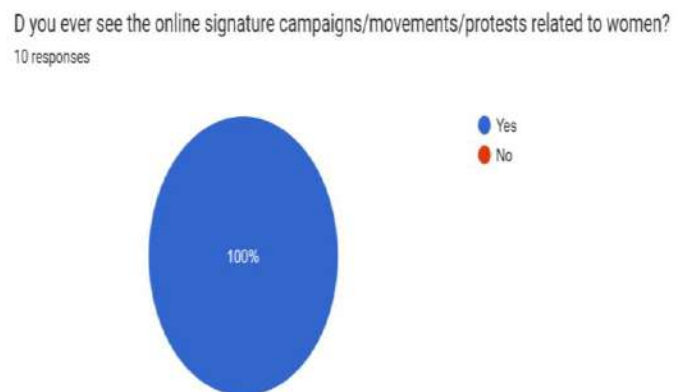
11. DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Figure 1: Awareness of Fourth wave feminism



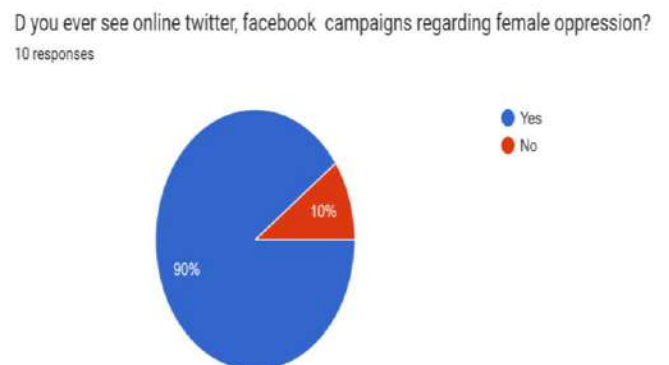
80% of people knew about fourth wave feminism and its origination in India while 20% of people had no idea about the same.

Figure 2: Online Signature Campaigns related to Women



100 % of people knew about the online signature campaigns related to women oppression.

Figure 3: Online Twitter, Facebook Campaigns regarding female oppression

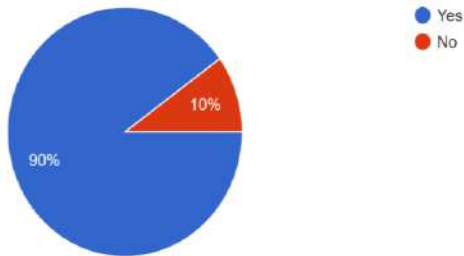


90% of people knew about the online Facebook, Twitter campaigns related to women empowerment.

Figure 4: Web Series based on Feminist Ideology

Have you ever watched web series based on feminist ideology?

10 responses

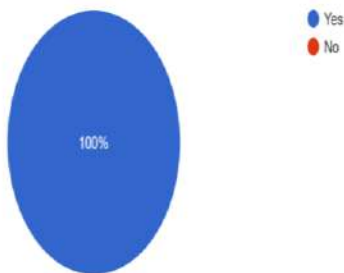


90% of people had watched web series related to feminist ideology

Figure 5: Transformative Change by Web Series

Have you ever experienced web series making a transformative change on the minds of people?

10 responses

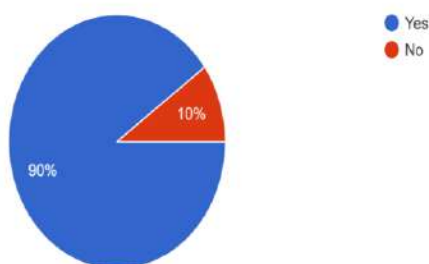


All the people think that web series transform the minds of people culminating a positive change.

Figure 6: Relevance of Women Centric Acts

Do you believe in the relevance of women centric acts made in the past?

10 responses

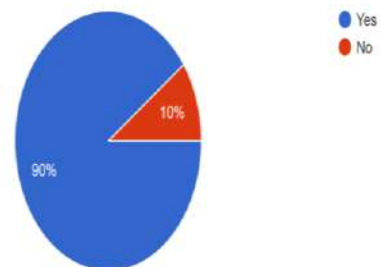


90% of people have been inspired by feminist web series and 10 % didn't get inspired.

Figure 7: Positive Impact of Web Series regarding Women Empowerment in future

Do you think web series make a positive impact on the minds of people regarding women empowerment in the near future?

10 responses

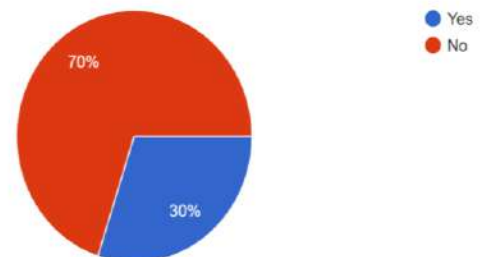


90% people think that web series are going to contribute to women empowerment in the near future.

Figure 8: Sexual Harassment

Did you ever face sexual harassment of any form in your life before?

10 responses

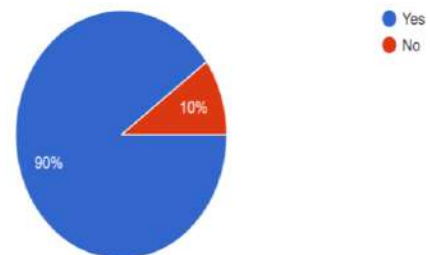


70% of people have faced sexual harassment in their lives before.

Figure 9: Web Series regarding Women Centric Approach

Did any web series inspired you the most regarding women centric approach?

10 responses



90% people think that women centric acts are relevant while 10% don't believe in the relevance of such acts.

So, it becomes evident that web series have now successfully made headway in bringing positive changes in the lives of people in general and women empowerment as well. As fourth wave of feminism has successfully made its headway in India, people are not naive about it. And as women across the globe have started becoming vocal about their rights, people are becoming well versed about the online signature campaigns and online Facebook, twitter, YouTube campaigns. More and more web series are being made by people, so people being inspired by them have begun to realise how extremely imperative it is to become the voice of voiceless, the hope of hopeless. As audio visual aids make strong imprints on the minds of people, web series have been also serving as an efficient medium to bring transformative change on the minds of individuals. People are also very hopeful that web series will serve as torchbearer in the future to come. This survey clearly shows that the audio visual message which one gets through web series that since time immemorial, women have been fighting about their rights and how emotionally exhausting it is for them.

12. CONCLUSION

We have come a long way stepping up from first, second and third wave of feminism striking multifaceted plethora of issues required for the upliftment of female community. Now the fourth wave of feminism has taken the cause of feminism forward, web series have emerged as one of the most distinct platforms to make a way for feminism to come into the mainstream media. Signature campaigns during Nirbhaya Movement made it gain a lot of impetus owing to which amendment in laws could be possible. The feminist shows which have been portrayed as a major milestone in thwarting the ascendancy of patriarchal hegemony have successfully reached to wide array of audiences. Dahad, Heeramandi, Lust Stories and Bandish Bandits are a list of shows which depicted despite so many obstacles and hurdles, women never failed to show up and unite for the cause despite of so many failed attempts of society to hold them back at homes and to make them submissive about their choices. Cyber feminism has garnered support from women of all

walks of life, but still there are some gaps because of digital illiteracy, sometimes it fails to have an inclusive participation of women and the movement starts weakening.

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