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Glamour Industry and Global Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 pandemic has brought difficult situations for citizens of nations across the world. While this pandemic affects different dimensions of life and society, this paper examines the impact of the outbreak COVID-19 pandemic on the entertainment industry of India. The entertainment industry was almost hit when lockdown was imposed all over the country. Film and TV producers were under the pressure to mitigate impact from delayed release schedules, closure of theatres and production stoppages. This industry is one of the famous industries of India which had to face many losses as well. Rapid changes in consumer behaviour and consumption, cancelation of events and sports and cut in advertisement expenditure had impacted a lot of companies. Result of the pandemic on these industries had ranged from lowered attendance at film festivals and music concerts, disruptions in film distribution to delayed or cancelled movie releases and curtailed on-location film shoots. We could also see how different actors were coming up and helping the government with funds and posting leads on the internet for helping the people in need. Also, there were many of them who were seen as breaking the pandemic laws implemented by the government. However, lack of policies at the national level and fewer regulatory measures from the government has further complicated this issue.

(Note-this study is restricted to only Bollywood industry of india and not the South industry.)

Keywords: *Pandemic, Losses, Delayed Releases, Production*

INTRODUCTION

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) provisionally named 2019-nCoV is the causative agent of the recent global pandemic COVID-19 with increasing fatality rate. It is depicted as a public health emergency of global concern by the World Health Organisation (WHO). This contagion initially emerged in Wuhan city, Hubei Province, China on December 8, 2019, which caused pneumonia-like symptoms in a cluster of patients. On January 7, 2020, the causative agent was identified as a new corona virus (2019-nCoV), and the disease was later named as COVID-19 by the World Health Organisation (WHO). WHO declared corona virus as a pandemic worldwide. India was not an exception within this. The Government of India confirmed India's first case of COVID-19 on 30 January 2020 in the state of Kerala, when a university student from Wuhan travelled back to the state. As the number of confirmed COVID-19 positive cases closed 500, Modi on 19 March, asked all citizens to observe 'Janata Curfew' (people's curfew) on Sunday, 22 March. At the end of the curfew, Modi stated: "Janata Curfew is just the beginning of a long battle against COVID-19". Following this, while addressing the nation second time on the 24 March, he announced the nationwide lockdown from midnight of that day, for a period of 21 days. He said that the only solution to control the spread of coronavirus was to break the cycle of transmission through social distancing. He also added that the lockdown would be enforced more strictly than the Janata Curfew. However, it is clear that from all this, a lot of people was also affected; especially many industries were hit very badly. Further, entertainment industry was not an exception here; it too faced many hardships and losses. The bollywood industry, the music industry and the television industry was badly hit as the consumption pattern shifted as well, that is, from theaters to OTT platforms.

PANDEMIC AND BOLLYWOOD

"This is an industry which is already dealing with losses going into millions, and it is going to be worse than 2020 if losses keep on mounting," a senior trade analyst stated.

The year 2020 saw one of the biggest global shutdowns of the entertainment industry. Around 2000 films are typically produced in India every year in various languages. About 250 to 300 of them are in the Hindi language, popularly known as Bollywood films. India's film industry —BOLLYWOOD—which is the second largest industry after Hollywood—hasn't been immune to the impacts of the corona virus pandemic. Many films were postponed across the country as lockdown was announced, theaters and film multiplexes lie deserted as thousands of cinemas have shut down, prompting job losses across the country.

The pandemic has cast a huge shadow over India's flourishing movie business with shutdowns impacting box office revenues and the outlook looking grim for the industry.

"It is a worrying situation. Many big releases have been hit, and this has disrupted the entire production chain. Losses have been incurred and worryingly nobody has an answer when the situation will normalize," said Taran Adarsh, a trade analyst.

The Film industry functions on a line of agreements between content owners, production houses, artists, investors, sponsors, promoters, distributors, vendors, production companies, broadcasters, ticketing agencies, theatres, licensors etc. With the disruptive impact of a global pandemic resulting in the standing down of workforces, closure of borders, and enforced work from home arrangements, the risk of non-performance, poor performance, delay and non-payment is heightened. Execution of physical agreements is posing to be a challenge. Cancellation of movie releases and events result in potential refunds, exchanges, and contractual obligations, particularly in relation to interested parties like sponsors, broadcasters, and ticketholders who may have committed significant amounts of money now subject to uncertainty and losses.

"I just think every business will face a little bit of financial hit including the movie business. The kind of content people will churn out will also get affected," said actor Taapsee Pannu.

The entertainment industry workforce is largely comprised of casual workers or contractors who aren't entitled to paid leaves and hence stand the risk of losing their means of livelihood. Since production and distribution streams are virtually at a standstill, companies, sooner than later, will look at cutting costs which will consequently result in pay cuts and lay-offs for reasons beyond the employer's control. However, these are difficult decisions that affect people's very livelihood and can involve careful consideration of factual circumstances to determine the true nature of an employment relationship.

"There are many daily wage workers in the industry who're badly affected right now, and they're the ones who actually need the livelihood more than anyone else," said actor Tamannaah Bhatia in a recent interview.

PANDEMIC AND OTT PLATFORMS

Over the Top (OTT) platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime have become the 'new big screen'. OTT entertainment platforms gain acceptance in the pandemic times as everything was shut down. According to 2020 report from accounting firm Ernst & Young, India had around 9500 screens out of which there were around 6000 single-screen theaters and 300 multiplexes. Last year, around 1,000 screens shut down permanently due to which it took a heavy toll on cinemas. With lockdown being imposed again and again; more theatre owners were looking at permanent closures. This led to huge unemployment as many were also fired from their jobs.

"Thousands of screens countrywide are forced to close down. Even their supply chains and other stakeholders facing personal hardship, it is a tough state of affairs," Gautam Dutta, CEO PVR Cinemas told RFI. *"It is estimated that the Indian cinema exhibition industry had lost theatrical revenues of close to 120 billion rupees in 2020-21. There has also been additional impact on revenues in terms of lost concession sales, and screen advertising sales,"* Dutta added.

Last year few movies had to pull out from the theatre and eventually released on the O.T.T. platform. However, many big-ticket films from mainstream and regional languages have also been delayed because various state governments ordered to close the Cinema Hall. Industry players don't have any other option except experimenting with digital and virtual space, giving new exposure to them. As a result, there is an ever-increasing demand for the O.T.T. platform, which is expanding to new demographics and locations. It coupled with the continued proliferation of internet users with cheap data and smart phones led to a rise in subscriptions. Abhishek Singh, Founder of CelebBazaar, highlighted, "Yes, the pandemic has affected all the industries, but on a positive side, for the entertainment industry, it has accelerated the subscription trend (of O.T.T. platforms) because of increased in-home spending. Subscriptions for top O.T.T.s grew by 55-60 percent as has many of them also made inroads into tier two, three and even four cities." he further added on the current scenario

"As a consequence of this lockdown revenue from this industry was hit big time. The annual box office earnings of Bollywood stand at a little over Rs 3,000 crore, but in the year 2020, it was around Rs 500-600 crore only." Abhishek said.

PANDEMIC AND DAILY SOAP

Daily Soaps were badly hit by pandemic as actors used to shoot everyday for bringing up brand new episodes and promos for the show. In March last year, people across the country were trying to wrap their heads around the novel corona virus-outbreak. When the WHO declared it as pandemic, makers did try to shoot with all safety measures. However, Indian Government imposed nation-wide lockdown due to which shooting has to be stopped. For the first time, sets saw no action for a period as long as this. In July, the government allowed resuming shooting.

Producer Zama Habib's show "Ishaaron Ishaaron Mein" (Sony TV) was having a successful run but was taken off air during the pandemic. However, the maker has no complaints given it was always supposed to be a finite series, and even if they came back after the long gap, he felt the story wouldn't have left an impact.

“We honestly had expected things to get back to normal by April but soon realized it wasn’t. Survival of people was more important then. What was getting really tough for us was to get everyone paid in time, and to do it digitally,” he shared talking about the challenges. The producer is set to go on floors with his new show on Star Plus, and when asked if the budget cut demand by channels added to his woes, Habib smiled to say, “We are all in the same boat, everyone is going through losses. In order to keep working, you need to overlook these monetary crises, and I think everyone has understood of the situation. Also, I think in such times, you manage to sometimes surprise yourself with better creative ideas even on a limited budget.”

Given Zama Habib is also a writer. This kept the finances coming in, helping him sail smoothly. He did add that the losses the television industry faced are huge but assured that slowly and steadily, they will rebuild things. *“Earlier, the notion was ‘roti, kapda and makaan’, today it’s ‘roti, kapda and television’. Whatever may come, the entertainment industry is here and to stay and will keep fighting every challenge together,”* the show maker concluded.

Further adding to this, there have been many actors without work for the whole year as well. For the acclaimed director Arif Shamsi, the pandemic is yet to get over. He has been without a project for more than a year, and with limited shows getting launched, he feels it will take time before he heads back on a set. The director was already working on a serial, taking workshops with the team and prepping himself with the script when shoots were put to a halt. Once the show went on floors, the makers decided to make it with another director instead, leaving him empty handed. Beside this, there were many actors whose shows went off-air and a huge pay cut. Vijayendra Kumeria Naagin 4 wasn’t topping rating charts but it was doing fairly well. And then amid the lockdown, news of it shutting down arrived. The actor said it was shocking initially but having been part of TV for a long time, he understands each show has to end somewhere. As they got back to shoot the climax, Kumeria added that it was quite scary, as no one had any idea how things would work out in the new normal. In the past few months, the actor said he took time to introspect on the kind of work he wants to do next. And while a few offers did come in, he chose Aapki Nazron Ne Samjha as his comeback vehicle.

“A lot of producers and even channels don’t call me knowing that I would not fit in the new budget. Although, I too understand the situation and would be okay coming to a mutual discussion but they have already assumed I am not available,” he said.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The entertainment sector is the most admired sector. Entertainment is an escape from the real world – from work, school and the daily stresses of life. Entertainment brings light to our lives and makes us happy, often inspiring people to believe that they can do and be more. The industry influences society and culture dramatically. But as the pandemic hit everyone, it did have an impact on this area as well. There were huge losses incurred which were sometimes visible as well. So, therefore there is urgent need to study the industry closely.

METHODOLOGY

This research paper is mostly based on Qualitative research methods. Qualitative research pertains to compiling and evaluating non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to comprehend theories, beliefs, or experiences. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural atmospheres, trying to make sense of, or decipher, manifestations in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Quantitative research is the process of compiling and evaluating numerical data. It can be utilized to find structures and standards, make predictions, test causal associations, and generalize outcomes to wider populations.

Because of the covid-19 pandemic, the data analyzed in this research paper is secondary and collected through surfing on the internet (articles, research papers, videos).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The global pandemic affected many different areas of entertainment as well, for some it was negative while for some it was a positive impact. Film and TV producers were under the pressure to mitigate impact from delayed release schedules, closure of theaters and production stoppages. Beside this, when everything opened up, still social distancing was the main focus of government, which didn’t allowed shooting of any projects. Another vital issue at hand is managing the workplace environment and ensuring the safety of its employees as and when they begin heading back to their workplaces. This industry is one of the famous industries of India which had to face many losses as well. Rapid changes in consumer behavior and consumption, cancelation of events and sports and cut in advertisement expenditure had impacted a lot of companies. Even after the lockdowns were lifted, the call for social distancing had become a norm and the rippled effects had serious implications for the people in the entertainment industry who survived on production and distribution of music and movies and the allied live events. Result of the pandemic on these industries had ranged from lowered attendance at film festivals and music concerts, disruptions in film distribution to delayed or cancelled movie releases and curtailed on-location film shoots.

Not only the film industry, but even the event industry has also suffered a lot, approx. 10 million people were affected by the crisis. M.I.C.E. (meetings-incentives-convention-exhibition) is a 500,000-crore market including organized and unorganized sector put together, and covid-19 is responsible for impacting job. Cancellation of live events resulted in potential claims relating to consumer protection rights. Companies would have faced the challenge of refunding monies to ticketholders which would put immense strain on the already slow economy in the industry. Varun Bansal, Founder and C.E.O. of Limelight Entertainments, highlighted how the event industry has taken a hit, and people from top to bottom are affected "Naturally, one of the worst affected by the pandemic was the events industry. 2020 saw the cancellation of many prominent festivals, sporting events, exhibitions and concerts in an effort to slow the spread of the virus. The restrictions imposed due to the pandemic have also impacted private events, Bollywood movie promotions, movie shootings and celebrity appearances.

Case study I- Fighting for survival

Spot boy Kalimuddin Sheikh thanks his stars that he works with a big corporate giant like Zee Studios. While his employers kept paying them even in the lockdown, he shared that he did see a lot of his friends fighting for survival with no income for months. He also shared that none of them gets any aid from unions, organizations or individuals. With not much work in Mumbai, Sheikh has been in Chandigarh working for Zee Punjabi shows once shooting was allowed to resume. "It has been tough to find work. While my family did not have to face a harrowing time, I have seen the worst around me. The daily wage earners like us live hand to mouth, and the pandemic disrupted everything for us." Sheikh added. Having been in the industry for more than a decade, he has empathy for producers who could not pay their workers, as he said, "Woh bhi kya karte, kaam hi kahan tha? (What would they have done, there was no work)." Sheikh, who is set to travel home to Mumbai soon, hopes that he and his friends never have to face a similar time as work is what keeps them going. "I just pray that the makers are allowed to have the full workforce so that everyone gets employed. That's the only way to have a better life for us and our families," he concluded.

Case study II- Delay in release of the film

Akshay Kumar's much-awaited cop drama Sooryavanshi was set to release on 24th march 2020, but due to nationwide lockdown the film was rescheduled for few months later. At the press conference of his upcoming adventure reality show Khatron Ke Khiladi, when Shetty was asked about the release of Sooryavanshi, he countered: "The question is when theatres will open up?" The film was originally scheduled for a release on March 24 last year, the makers had later announced in June 2020 the movie will hit screens during Diwali but it was postponed again and was set to arrive in cinema halls on April 30 this year. Therefore, the release of the cop-drama has been pushed thrice due to cinema halls being shut across the country owing to the corona virus pandemic. However, the movie is being released now as theaters are allowed to open with fifty percent capacity and the film is set to hit the stage on November 2021.

Case Study III- Losses at its peak

Multiplex chain operator PVR Ltd on Monday reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 74.61 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2020, as the film exhibition business was impacted because of Covid-19 pandemic. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 46.75 crore in the January-March quarter a year ago, PVR said in a BSE filing. Beginning March 11, 2020, the company started closing its screens in accordance with the order passed by various regulatory authorities and within a few days most of our cinemas across the country were shut down, PVR said in a statement. Meanwhile, PVR said its results for year ended March 31, 2020, are not comparable with year ended March 31, 2019, 'on account of acquisition of SPI Cinemas'.

Therefore, it is pretty clear that due to ongoing pandemic everyone had to pay some price. The first case study shows that how actors were willing to work for their survival, as they used to travel from their hometown to place for shooting. Most of the actors weren't getting work or proper pay according to their potentials. However, every actor was ready to work at any amount to survive. The second case study shows that how delay in release of movies affected the whole management and the team of the movie. The film Sooryavanshi is finally releasing after two years, which is also a big thing to celebrate for the team. The third case study focuses on the losses that PVR faced due to unexpected pandemic, about the gap in revenue generated between the year 2019 and 2020. Further, we can definitely conclude here that it resulted in unemployment may be for many workers working there- the guard, the person on the ticket counter, the people who sell the food items there, the workers who clean the theaters regularly.

Due to this pandemic and lockdown we could also see that how bollywood stars spent their quarantine at home. Stars used to regularly post pictures and videos about their changed lives, some learnt cooking while few focused on their bodies. We could also see how different actors were coming up and helping the government with funds and posting leads on the internet for helping the people in need. And in between all of this, actor SONU SOOD came up and helped the poor people, migrants and corona virus patients. Whole twitter was filled with people's post of appreciation for the actor. After him, many actors also came up and helped the government with funds like – Amitabh Bachchan, Anushka Sharma, Virat Kohli, Akshay Kumar and many more. Beside this,

many actors both female and male were seen as washing dishes and mopping the floors, which was quite a new experience for them. Other than this, we also saw many actors breaking the pandemic rules laid by the government and going to parties which did invited a lot of hatred towards them. However, actor Sonu Sood was flourished by so much love and respect all over India that no one had ever expected.

POLICIES ISSUED BY THE GOVERNMENT

The sudden outbreak of the novel corona virus ("COVID-19") led the Government of India to impose a nationwide lockdown in an attempt to control the spread of the pandemic. The lockdown which began on March 25, 2020, deeply impacted the media and entertainment industry. However, the Government of Maharashtra on the request of various stakeholders allowed shooting of content for films, television and 'Over-the-Top' platforms and through a government resolution dated May 30, 2020 issued the 'Guiding Principles to restart Media Entertainment Industry in Maharashtra'. The Guidelines lay down detailed standard operating procedures to be followed by the producers, various members and departments of the crew as well as cast, while shooting. The Guidelines are 18 pages long and included:-

- i. **Aarogya Setu Application** -The Guidelines mandated the installing of Aarogya Setu application on compatible devices owned by the cast and crew, which is required to be kept on, throughout the day
- ii. **Education and Sensitization**- The Guidelines require that all the partners and employees involved in production of content should be educated and sensitized on preventive measures for COVID-19.
- iii. **Sanitization and Personal Hygiene** -The Guidelines provide that all doors and windows should be kept open for ventilation. Sharing of tools should be minimized and each crew member should be provided his or her own tools. The producer should provide minimum 3 washrooms which should be sanitized every hour. PPE should be worn by hair and make-up artists and other crew involved in activities involving person-to person contact.
- iv. **Social Distancing** - The Guidelines require ensuring social distancing by minimizing physical contact, maintaining a distance of minimum 6 feet and wearing of masks and gloves by all persons on set, except for those on screen. The strength of the crew is required to be reduced to 33% of the strength prior to the outbreak of COVID19. Any employee who is pregnant or above sixty five years is not allowed coming on shoot. In respect of non-fiction shows, children below the age of 10 years are not being allowed to participate. For children above the age of 10 years, only one acquaintance of the child may be allowed to accompany such child.
- v. **Medical Facilities** - An ambulance, a doctor and nurse are required to be present on every set, constantly monitoring the health of the entire cast and crew. Every set should have an oximeter. Every shooting unit should maintain data of personnel suffering from co-morbidities like diabetes, hypertension.
- vi. **Self-Declaration** -All employees are required to submit a self-declaration about any close contact with a COVID-19 patient, person returned from a foreign country, and any symptoms of COVID-19.
- vii. **Domestic Travel** -Travelling should be minimized and any travelling should be in adherence to the guidelines issued by the Government of India or State Government of Maharashtra. People returning from a containment area should monitor themselves for any symptoms for 14 days. If they notice any symptoms of COVID-19, they should self-isolate themselves, and inform their health care provide or local public health department. All necessary permissions required for travelling should be sought from the concerned authorities.
- viii. **Handling of COVID-19 Positive Cases** - In the event any person in the shooting premises is found positive for COVID-19, that person should be isolated and the studio should be vacated immediately. Any person who had been in contact with the person who is COVID-19 positive should also be isolated. Shooting and other operations are to be halted for 3 days and resumed only after safety checks.
- ix. **Permission for Shooting** - Permission for shoots can be sought by making an application to the managing director of the Maharashtra Film, Theatre, Cultural Development Corporation, for shoots within Mumbai and to the respective district collectors for shoots outside Mumbai.

CONCLUSION

The entertainment industry cannot be ignored as it has become the source of lives of people today. The industry influences every aspect of everyone's life in today's modern world. Entertainment is an escape from the real world – from work, school and the daily stresses of life. Entertainment brings light to our lives and makes us happy, often inspiring people to believe that they can do and be more. The industry influences society and culture dramatically. It influences the way we think, live, eat, dress and even the purchases we make. In regard to the film and television industry, there are countless features that imitate real life situations and experiences; however, they are often glorified and made more glamorous than is realistic. Depending on one's viewpoint, media can be either a positive or negative influence, or both. Either way, the entertainment industry influences all of us in one way or another. However, the problems faced by this sector do not come to limelight, as its getting hidden behind the glamour of the industry. The truth comes out only when an actor or producer or director tweets about his/her condition in the pandemic. Given the current scenario, it is understood that the time is ripe for O.T.T.s, even in 2021 when people are still hesitant to go to theatres. The film industry went through an entire industry shift when O.T.T. platforms bypassed the theatrical release of a film and started releasing mainstream Bollywood films on their platforms. As consumption has grown, spending habits have changed. While some consumers take on more subscription services at home, others have opted out of subscriptions under financial pressure. Services with a dual business model are able to retain their customer relationship through the crisis, churning into a free-to-consumer, ad-funded model until the economy recovers. As consumption patterns have shifted to in-home during the crisis, device- and platform-agnostic services have been able to follow listeners.

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