
TSUNAMI OF OPINION ON SOCIAL MEDIA: 'MY CHOICE' VIDEO

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Abstract: Social Media gives a platform to people to express their opinion, share insight and make counter arguments. In the recent past, social media evoked a spark which had been vigorously discussed by other forms of media. Fashion magazine Vogue's video titled 'My Choice', published on 28 March, 2015 on YouTube directed by Homi Adajania, featuring Deepika Padukone, went viral on Youtube and other social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter. The video has been a subject of debate on issues related to gender equality and women empowerment in India ever since it made its way online, with 9,989,386 views, 62,822 likes, 40,943 dislikes and 20,371 comments by people on Youtube. These figures truly represent how much people share their opinion on social media. Present study is an attempt to gain an insight into the active role of social media in providing a platform to freely discuss the sensitive issues related to gender equality and women empowerment in Indian society.

Keywords: Gender equality, Social Media, Women Empowerment.

Introduction: Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.⁵ It has transformed the idea of how information is shared globally. (Shirky, 2011). Beyond its use as a social networking tool, it allows for the first time any individual to share content and opinions with a global audience, bypassing traditional media or other modes of information transmission (European Parliament, 2013). This unconventional form of media, combined with rich content opportunities, allows us to give real-time feedback in many ways and discuss sensitive issues freely. This way, Social media's effect on our ability to interact and communicate is visible throughout all areas of society. Huge participation of people on social media is also justifying the role of Media as a forth pillar of democracy.

Present study is an attempt to gain an insight into the active role of social media in providing a platform to freely discuss the sensitive issues related to gender equality and women empowerment in Indian society. To achieve this goal author selected MyChoice video and the responses on it, which went viral on social media and drew the attention of other forms of media too.

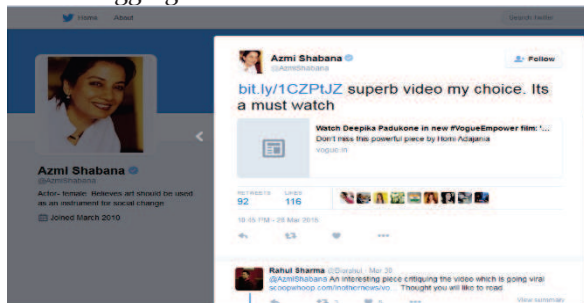
Women Empowerment and Gender Equality: Gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today. Indian women have awoken to exploiting unconventional media to combat discrimination and inequality imbedded in their societies. The concept of empowerment flows from the power. It is vesting where it does not exist or exist inadequately. Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision making.

Gender equality describes the absence of obvious or hidden disparities among individuals based on gender. Disparities can include the discrimination in terms of opportunities, resources, services, benefits, decision-making power and influence. Gender is a social construct which is based on social roles, not sexual differences. The dichotomous nature of gender lends to the creation of inequality that manifests itself in numerous dimensions of daily life.³

'My Choice' Video: 'My Choice' is one of the short films dedicated to #VogueEmpower, Vogue India's social awareness initiative. Based on a piece written by Kersi Khambatta, the video has been shot by Tassaduq Hussain. A collaboration between director Homi Adajania and Bollywood actor Deepika Padukone, and produced by JSW and Sangita Jindal.⁴ Published on 28 March, 2015 on YouTube, *My Choice* featuring Deepika Padukone starred 99 other women from different walks of life addressing different pressing issues for womankind. The video shows Deepika talking about the freedom of choice that women must have regarding multiple issues.

Tsunami of Opinions: The video after being uploaded went viral within 24 hours and has been a subject of debate on issues related to gender equality and women empowerment in India ever since it made its way online, with 9,989,386 views, 62,822 likes, 40,943 dislikes and 20,371 comments till December, 12 2015 by people on Youtube. These kinds of responses are not only limited to Youtube but FaceBook and Twitter is also flooded with both positive and negative feedbacks. One of the viewers, Ankur Poddar went ahead and uploaded another video on Male version of "My Choice' as a reply to the Vogue Empower video with a theme 'Respect Women and Men equally', which gathered around 2 million views just in one day. It clearly shows that people choose social media platforms to show their disapproval to Deepika's video.

Prominent Bollywood figures like Karan Johar, Alia Bhatt, Randeep Hooda, Arjun Kapoor, Amitabh Bachchan, Shabana Azmi and others have lauded Padukone for this video. They came forward to support the cause and shared the short film on their micro-blogging sites like Twitter and Facebook.



https://twitter.com/AzmiShabana/status/582055973407191041?ref_src=twsrc^tfw



https://twitter.com/SrBachchan/status/581865798609813504?ref_src=twsrc^tfw

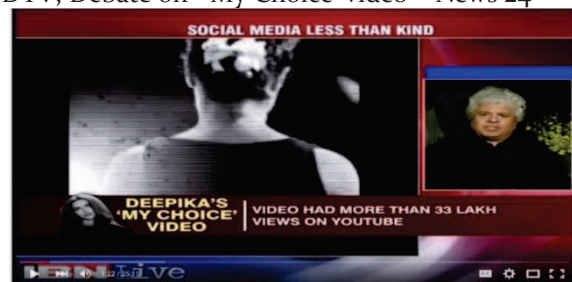
Not only Bollywood but Hollywood star Ashton Kutcher also took to social networking site Facebook to share the much-debated “My Choice” video.

Social media evoked a spark which had been vigorously discussed by print media and electronic media. Various newspapers and electronic media had these kinds of discussions: Deepika Padukone's 'My Choice' video: Twitteratti stands divided – The Hindu (April 1, 2015), Boys talk: An answer to Deepika's video from a man's point of view – Daily Bhaskar (Mar 31, 2015), Sorry Deepika Padukone, these are not the choices women need - Hindustan Times, New Delh (Apr 01, 2015). Debates on Television News channel; Is Deepika Padukone's Video Empowering? Social Media Has Mixed Reviews – NDTV (March 30, 2015)¹. Controversy over Deepika Padukone's 'My Choice' video , The debate on 'Aapke Mudde Aapke Saath'- Focus News.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djcvhLVcOeQ>
Deepika Padukone's 'My Choice' video: Is it empowering or hypocritical? -Ibn7 and Deepika

Padukone's #MyChoice Video: Brave or Banal? – NDTV, Debate on- 'My Choice' video – News 24



Deepika Padukone's 'My Choice' video: Is it empowering or hypocritical?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5CSiIXh4c>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mypNT6gTR34>

These are some of the responses of the Social Media active users.

Okay so as usual everybody is going gaga over the new video 'starring' Deepika Padukone, and as usual I am here to...Posted by Amrita Mukherjee on Sunday, 29 March 2015

Do what you like. Say what you think. It high time we break stupid stereotypes #MyChoice

— Malikka Narang (@MalikkaNarang) April 1, 2015
My home loan was rejected coz I refused to give my husband's income details (I'm the sole applicant) & they think #MyChoice is empowering!SampurnaLahiri(@Sampurna_Lahiri)Apr 1, 2015

*Dad: Are you doing drugs Me : My Life #MyChoice * Now Homeless **

— Aditi (@aditipandit2) April 1, 2015
Somewhere between your choice and #MyChoice , our choice died silently.

— Gautam Trivedi (@Gotham3) April 1, 2015
Fat Girl - I'm so fat. Deepika Padukone - No, you're infinite in every direction Fat girl - :((#MyChoice— Baba Sehgal (@HaramiParindey) March 31, 2015

This has to be the best comparison of double standards of #MyChoice society pic.twitter.com/6tfuPahhGN— Deepika Bhardwaj (@DeepikaBhardwaj) March 31, 2015.

Discussion and Conclusion: Researcher is not here to discuss the pros and cons of the content of the video but her aim is to study the active role played by the social media in building a more open society. My Choice video has been viewed over eight million times (approx)online and there has been a tsunami of opinions from different sections of the society, which has proved that Social Media is a powerful vehicle for

bringing women's rights issues to the attention of a wider public, and to let people think about how can we achieve gender equality. The impact of the opinion expressed on this unconventional form of media was so powerful that the other forms of media were compelled to take notice and report about it. Amid the mixed reactions garnered by the video on social media, its director Homi Adajania said, "Ironically, the misunderstanding is what made #MyChoice go explosively viral and if that's what it takes to get people discuss gender equality then I am willing to take the hit and be misunderstood. Let's hope that a healthy discussion on gender equality continues."

For achieving the aim of gender equality and women Empowerment in Indian society which is patriarchy in nature it is very necessary to take the discussion of this issue in the right direction and after examining the above facts researcher is able to conclude that social media is a powerful platform for expressing free and frank opinion. Not only the video but the

feedback on that video also got viral as the user Ankur Poddar went ahead and uploaded another video on Male version of "My Choice" as a reply to the video with a theme 'Respect Women and Men equally', which gathered around 2 million views just in one day. My Choice video served as a stimulus to the society and individuals reacted to that stimulus.

In the opinion of the author Social Media will provide a powerful platform to achieve the goal of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in India.

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