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**FILM REVIEWS IN THE TRADITIONAL PRINT MEDIA AND IN THE  
COMMENTS SECTION OF YOUTUBE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS  
OF FEEDBACK ON BOLLYWOOD FILMS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Feedback given for any *message* sent has a direct effect on the *message*. The audiences of a message have the power to change the ways in which the identity of the *message* can be changed. There have been studies in the past that have emphasized on the role of feedback and its effects on the different elements of communication. Communication models and theories which were feedback central were formulated as a result of these studies. The new media especially with the birth of web 2.0 provided the audiences of the *messages* with a platform to provide an immediate and direct feedback that could be accessed at any point of time and could be accessed as a part of the *message*.

This study looks at the role of the comments on YouTube which are primarily designed to function as feedback for the posted video (The *message* sent). A comparison is then drawn by studying the nature of feedback that the traditional media of 'print' provides for the same *message* studied on YouTube. Film reviews are one of the popular forms of feedback that look at affecting the identity of the film directly. There are numerous studies that have looked at the relationship between film reviews and their effects on the film. This study takes into account the reviews available on both forms of media and establishes a comparative analysis between the two.

The study will be conducted on film reviews of five most popular Bollywood films of the year 2013, on newspapers and on YouTube. The study will use the chunking method to break down the text and form categories of text talking about different aspects of the film. The chunks will be assigned to different positions of the 'encoding and decoding' theory of Stuart Hall. The

comparison will then be drawn between the categories of both the media to look at how the feedback affects the *message* in these two different forms of media.

**Keywords:** Film reviews, Feedback on bollywood film, YouTube Comments, Traditional print media

## INTRODUCTION

**Communication and Feedback:** The concept of feedback becomes an integral aspect of the process of communication. The process of communication is considered to be incomplete without the presence of feedback. Shifting focus to the specifics of ‘feedback’ and assessing the role it plays in the process leads us to discover that its effects on the message are enormous. Initial focus of all theories and studies of communication were on the ‘message’ and its ‘path’ however as more elements were being connected to it, newer explanations were born. The ways in which the ‘message’ changed its form was being considered by different researchers. And, the message changed its forms as it passed through each element of communication. This is where ‘feedback’ plays an important role, Ana Georgievska in his paper emphasizes on the importance of feedback as “The feedback is a reaction, that thing helping us to understand if communication has been understood. In our everyday life we are unconsciously looking for the “return” message in all our actions; this way things seem to have more sense. The feedback is the response and it should be delivered right away.”(Georgievska, 2005) Feedback becomes crucial to the process because it has the potential to change the nature of the message sent, thus changing the initial form and nature of the message.

There are different forms of media available in the present day situation with the term ‘new media’ taking newer forms and shapes. This constant evolution of the term makes it necessary to explore all the different ways in which the newer media changes the nature of communication. The communication process takes up newer dimensions, enters newer spaces and makes communication between the senders and the receivers a process that is filled with newer experiences. Feedback as a concept has also been evolving with the evolution in the nature of media. Feedback used to appear in the form of letters to the editor and phone calls to programs traditionally and have now taken the newer form of tweets, comments, sms feedback etc. Evolving feedback forms force us to study the changes in the nature and process of communication itself. It brings with it newer dimensions and issues that force the creators of the message to be able to utilize the forces of the new forms of media.

YouTube’s comments section is a thread of opinions that act as the feedback for the uploaded video. The comments posted in this section are diverse, immediate and limitless. Thus, the feedback provided takes forms that the senders could never have had access to through the

traditional forms of media. YouTube comments are also accessible to all kinds of audience and are not just limited to the senders of the message. This feature thus results in the message becoming a combination of both the posted video and the corresponding comments. The message is prone to constant changes in its nature thus taking different forms. "YouTube provides several social tools for community interaction, including the possibility to comment on published videos and in addition to provide ratings to comments by other users. And these meta ratings help the community to filter relevant opinions more effectively." (Siersdorfer et al, 2010)

This study looks at trying to assess the potentials of the 'new media' in changing the message. The focus of the study is limited to comments on film trailers as trailers are the comparative tools that come closest to traditional 'film reviews' in print media. The comparative analysis will explore the different dimensions that are born out of the process of commenting and reviewing films; with the different forms of media taken into consideration.

**Objectives of the study:** The study will be conducted on reviews of five most popular Bollywood films in the year 2013; in newspapers and on YouTube. The study will use the chunking method to break down the text and form categories of text talking about different aspects of the film. The chunks will be assigned to different positions of the 'encoding and decoding' theory of Stuart Hall. The comparison will then be drawn between the categories of both the media to look at how the feedback affects the message in these two different forms of media.

**Theoretical framework:** The comments for each video posted will be placed into one of the three categories of the decoded message that were given by Stuart Hall. The placement of the comments is based on the nature of the comments. Stuart Hall stressed the role of social positioning in the interpretation of mass media texts by different social groups. In a model deriving from Frank Parkin's 'meaning systems', Hall suggested three hypothetical interpretative codes or positions for the reader of a text (Parkin 1972; Hall 1973; Hall 1980, 136-8; Morley 1980, 20-21, 134-7; Morley 1981b, 51; Morley 1983, 109-10): dominant (or 'hegemonic') reading: the reader fully shares the text's code and accepts and reproduces the preferred reading (a reading which may not have been the result of any conscious intention on the part of the author(s)) - in such a stance the code seems 'natural' and 'transparent'; negotiated reading: the reader partly shares the text's code and broadly accepts the preferred reading, but sometimes resists and modifies it in a way which reflects their own position, experiences and interests (local and personal conditions may be seen as exceptions to the general rule) - this position involves contradictions; oppositional ('counter-hegemonic') reading (Daniel Chandler, 1994).

## **OVERVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE**

Although, social media is an emerging area which started to gain popularity in the mid 2000's the amount of research available is vast. Most users of the Internet have profiles and accounts on social media from different parts of the globe, these patterns result in the availability of a wide variety of information on social media.

There are many issues that are addressed in the academia related to social media communications that are applicable only to the new media. Studies on privacy, personalization, identity construction, addiction to social media, representation of the minorities, case studies on national and international issues etc. are some of the areas that have been constantly touched upon. Some of the technical research studies include topics on the structure of the social media, color analysis, the user interface, boundaries on social media, etc. There are some studies that purely focus on the exposure of social media on different demographic population. There are many such areas that are specific to certain facets of new media. The existing literature on the analysis of the different forms of comments on the new media are all mostly focused on the contribution of the comments to the community in which the 'bigger' message is a part of. These contributions are assessed in the ways in which the message is affected as the process of commenting progresses.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The primary objective of the study is to discover the world view that is generated by the participants on the website. As Roland Barthes says, there are a million interprets that can be made from one single element; however, the interpretations formed by the audiences and the ways they are reflected to affect the message differ for the different media. The different dimensions that are born out of these interpretations make up the feedback for the message entering the space of the media.

The primary method of studying the data to draw conclusions is done using content analysis method. The content generated for the films being studied is chunked based on common ideas and the comparison is drawn on three different levels.

1. Themes - The different dimensions that the chunks touch upon in both forms of media
2. Decoding - The different positions of Stuart Hall's de-coding that the messages fit into will be then compared.

Sample - The study will choose five bollywood films that are rated as the top 5 highest-grossing films in the year 2013. Dhoom 3, Chennai Express, Krrish 3, Yeh Jawani Hai Deewani, Goliyon ki Raasleela - Ram Leela.

The study will choose film reviews given by the leading newspaper times of India on the films chosen, and then select the first displayed video for the trailer of the film to choose the comments being studied.

The first 20 comments for each of the trailer will be chosen for the process of analysis.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Movie 1: Dhoom 3**

Director: Vijay Krishna Acharya

Film Review - Times of India

#### **Print Media**

A detailed category of chunks available in the content presented in the film review in print media are discussed below followed by the analysis of the decoding process.

**Actors:** The review begins by praising the lead actor Aamir Khan and his performance by going on to call it Aamir Khan's show all the way. A section of the review praises his looks and 'abs' and talks about how these elements attract the audiences' attention 'magnetism' is used to associate the actor's performance and its relationship with the audience. The review also praises the other actors in the film who play the main characters like Abhishek Bachchan and Katrina Kaif. Uday Chopra who plays a comical role has been praised for his contribution to on-screen humor.

**Characters:** The review lays out the importance of all the characters to the narrative plot and thus establishes a positive connection of the construction of these characters and the success of the film. The lead character 'Sahir' has been mentioned four times in four different parts of the review connecting the name to the actions performed by the character. The review almost glorifies the character by constructing images such as 'Sahir breaking the bank', 'Sahir making the police look like turkeys' and 'Sahir's stunts'.

The very next part of the review mentions Abhishek Bachchan's character 'ACP Jai Dixit' and how this character contributes to the narrative on the whole and how effectively these two are interrelated. The review also mentions the other characters that play a vital role to the film i.e., Ali and Alia.

**Plot:** The film review presents a summarized bird's eye view of the story of the film. The story line is scattered across the review starting from a mention of the protagonist's father dying, the

reasons for his death, how this forces the protagonist to avenge his father's death. A great part of the film review presents the sequences in which the protagonist uses bikes and technology to rob the banks. Although the concluding section mentions the presence of a twist it makes sure there are no spoilers in the review. Bikes have received a generous mention in a few sections of the film review thus highlighting the bikes which were one of the highlights of the film.

Criticism: The film review criticizes parts of the film which are elongated, making the film lengthy but the review quickly defends the film by saying elements like leather boots, bikes and electric guitars make up for this drag.

### **Decoded Positioning**

All the sections of the review can be categorized into the dominant position of Stuart Hall's decoded positions. Except the concluding segment which falls under the negotiated position where the dragged parts of the film are discussed. There is no section of the review that can fall under the oppositional position.

### **YouTube Comments**

A detailed category of chunks available in the content presented in the comments on YouTube are discussed below followed by the analysis of the decoding process.

Characters: The very first comment talks about the lead character's facial expressions calling them flat, using the term 'constipated expressions'.

Location: One of the comments praises the portrayal of Chicago through the movie and seems impressed.

Plot : A few sections of the comments talk about the plot. Some comments praise the plot while some criticize the plot. The comments criticizing the plot have used terms like - Illogical, funny, bad stunts, flaws in the plot, etc whereas the positive comments mostly revolve around the twist in the plot.

Actors: There are many comments that discuss actors Aamir Khan who plays the protagonist and Katrina Kaif who plays his counterpart. There are mixed reactions from the commenters on actor Aamir Khan.

Accusations of copied script: Some comments point out the film's script being copied from that of a Hollywood movie 'The Prestige'.

Appeals: Two comments from the selected sample talk about the emotional appeal in the movie and praise the movie for the 'Emotional appeals'

Action and stunts: There are comments that criticize the stunt sequences referring to them as fake and could have been done better.

Dhoom 4: There are some comments that are already discussing the next film from the Dhoom franchise, discussing potential actors and plot line.

### **Decoded Positioning**

All three categories of Stuart Hall's decoding positions are reflected in the comments however a majority of the comments fall under the oppositional category with a number of 11 comments all criticizing different aspects of the film, whereas dominant position has 6 comments that contain positive content for the movie. There are 3 comments that fall under the negotiated category, these are the comments that criticize the film but also justify the film's possible reasons.

### **Movie 2: Chennai Express**

Director: Rohit Shetty

Film Review - Times of India

### **Print Media**

A detailed category of chunks available in the content presented in the film review on the print media are discussed below followed by the analysis of the decoding process.

Plot: The film review begins with a specially dedicated mini section called 'story' that talks about the basic plot of the movie. The rest of the review goes on to describe the movie in parts comparing it to other similar stories. There are three paragraphs dedicated for plot explanation within which there is glorification of the style of presentation.

Director: The lead of the article goes straight on to praising the filmmaker Rohit Shetty stating the movie's presentation being a trademark of the filmmaker.

Criticism: The review talks about the frequent usage of Tamil language in the film that makes it hard for viewers of other linguistic backgrounds and suggests usage of subtitles in order to reach a wider audience.

Actors: The concluding section of the review goes on to praise Deepika Padukone (Female lead) while it criticizes Shah Rukh Khan's (Male lead) attempt at acting out a comical role.

### **Decoded Positioning**

Most part of the review can be categorized into the dominant and the negotiated positions of the decoding positions. Only the part where language is criticized can be categorized under the oppositional position which is still negotiated to some extent by the review trying to justify how Tamil language is well suited for a film like this.

### **YouTube Comments**

A detailed category of chunks available in the content presented in the comments on YouTube are discussed below followed by the analysis of the decoding process.

Pathos: Some comments talk about how watching the film was a waste of time and how it is a worthless film to watch. These commenters do not have a specific reason to justify their dislike for the film but use strong words to reflect their dislike for it. Similarly, there are some other comments that do not specify reasons to like the movie but mention how the movie is good to watch.

Actors: Some of the comments talk about the lead actor of the film, Shah Rukh Khan. While some comments are positive, some criticize his acting skills or accent in the movie.

Culture: There are a few comments that criticize the portrayal of Tamilians and the Tamil language.

### **Decoded Positioning**

The number of dominant and oppositional positions in the comments is very close to each other and a very small number of negotiated comments. However, the dominant comments that praise the film and its other elements are more in number standing at 10 as compared to the negative ones at 7, there are 3 negotiated comments.

### **Movie 3: Krrish 3**

Director: Rakesh Roshan

Film Review - Times of India

### **Print Media**

A detailed category of chunks available in the content presented in the film review on the print media are discussed below followed by the analysis of the decoding process.



**Plot:** The review has a detailed plot in the initial section of the review that gives us a brief insight into the storyline and the characters. The later part of the review goes into describing the setting of the story and a very small introduction to how the prequel had ended. The characters are presented alongside the description of the plot making sure nothing is spoiled for the audience and no detailed description is given about the characters either.

**Director:** The lead of the review begins with a comparison of the film's theme to other superhero-themed films from other countries and thus praises the director, Rakesh Roshan for his consecutive attempts at the Indian superhero film Krrish.

**Actors:** The review in the initial parts gives a one-line introduction to each of the actors. The later part of the review has dedicated one paragraph for the actors - Hrithik Roshan and how he's the best choice for a superhero's role, Vivek Oberoi in the evil villain role and Priyanka Chopra and Kangana Ranaut in their respective roles.

**The Film elements:** The usage of VFX and other directorial elements have been appreciated in the review. However the review mentions the similarities of some of the aspects of the film to superhero films from Hollywood yet the review safely says the influences are good in a way when there is some amount of uniqueness added to it.

**Criticism:** The review has only one negative point to make which is still very subtly placed in the closing part of the review. The review mentions the background to be 'slightly disappointing' but still not bad.

### **Decoded Positioning**

The entire review revolves around the dominant position of decoding with no oppositional position at any point of the review. However, the part where the review points out the disappointing background score can be categorized under the negotiated position of the decoding theory.

### **YouTube Comments**

A detailed category of chunks available in the content presented in the comments on YouTube are discussed below followed by the analysis of the decoding process.

**Logos:** Comments on how the film is worth the budget involved and should not be compared to Hollywood movies that have a huge budget. Some comments justifying the film's lack of perfect VFX and production elements as suited for Indian audiences are also visible.

Criticism: Comments that have used words that are negative in nature are made across the comments section showcasing words like ‘useless movie’, ‘waste of time and money’

Accusations of copied ideas: There are many comments that have drawn a comparison between the film’s ideas and that of the Hollywood superhero movies like x-men, batman, superman etc. Some of them go on to criticize the filmmaker’s lack of originality.

Storyline: Two comments praise the storyline while one talks about how well suited the story is for the Indian audience, the other talks about the narrative structure and the plot twists.

### **Decoded Positioning**

The YouTube comments section from the sample analyzed has a majority of oppositional positioned comments as compared to dominant and negotiated. However, there are a good number of dominant and negotiated comments as well.

### **Movie 4: Yeh Jawani Hai Deewani**

Director: Ayan Mukerji

Film Review - Times of India

### **Print Media**

A detailed category of chunks available in the content presented in the film review in the print media are discussed below followed by the analysis of the decoding process.

Story: The first section of the film review presents a summarized plot of the film. Most part of the review focuses on the plot describing the main action and talking about what the audience can take away from that particular section.

Theme: The initial section of the review focuses on praising the theme of the film and the treatment of the theme that has already been dealt with in the past and in many films. The review uses terms like ‘invigorating’ and ‘fresh vibe’ to describe the treatment of the theme.

Actors: The final part of the review talks about the performance of each actor starting with the lead actor Ranbir Kapoor, praising his dancing skills, acting skills and looks. And the rest of the actors get praises for their performances too.

### **Decoded Positioning**

The entire film review contains parts that can be categorized under the dominant category. There is just one part in one single line that talks about the first twenty minutes being a little slow

which soon shifts tone to praise the way the movie picks up again and this can be categorized under the negotiated category.

### **YouTube Comments**

A detailed category of chunks available in the content presented in the comments on YouTube are discussed below followed by the analysis of the decoding process.

Pathos: Many of the comments for the movie are emotional in nature expressing how good the movie is. Some comments use words like ‘love the movie, love the characters, wow, etc.’

Actors: There are an equal number of comments that express positive concerns for both the lead actors Ranbir Kapoor and Deepika Padukone. There are comments that praise their acting skills, looks, dialogue delivery etc.

Love story: Quite a few comments talk about the love story shown in the film while some people relate to it; some people just show plain interest in the portrayal of the love story.

### **Decoded Positioning**

All the comments found under this trailer can be categorized under the dominant position of the decoding theory.

### **Movie 5: Goliyon ki Raasleela - Ram Leela.**

Director: Sanjay Leela Bhansali

Film Review - Times of India

### **Print Media**

A detailed category of chunks available in the content presented in the review in print media are discussed below followed by the analysis of the decoding process.

Story: The film review starts with a one line section that is called story which says “Boy and girl from warring factions love one another. Do they live happily ever after?” The next part of the review discusses the story’s initial setting and how well the idea has been adapted to fit into the Indian scenario.

Direction: Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s strategy of adapting a Shakespearean classic using his own knowledge of filmmaking and unique style has been praised in the review. And there are two parts of the review that talk about the filmmaker’s talent in bringing out the chemistry of the

characters in the film. However, the review also mentions the climax shown in a very contrived way.

**Characters and setting:** The setting and characters are presented in parallel in this review. The entire plot is an adaptation of Romeo and Juliet in a traditional Gujarati set-up, this has been emphasized in the review across the second and the third paragraphs.

**Actors:** The actors and their acting skills are praised across the review.

### **Decoded Positioning**

All the comments found under this trailer can be categorized under the dominant position of the decoding theory. However, the one part where the review focuses on the climax, where the actors fall into water, and calls it fake can be categorized under the oppositional category.

### **YouTube Comments**

A detailed category of chunks available in the content presented in the comments on YouTube are discussed below followed by the analysis of the decoding process.

**Sexual tension:** A lot of comments for the movie are focused on criticizing the sexual tension between the lead characters, calling it unwanted and pointless.

**Costumes and sets:** Some comments focus on the grandiosity of the costumes used and the set design. There are certain comments that have criticized different aspects of the movie, however praise the film production aspects.

**Actors:** Many comments have praised the acting skills of the female lead actress Deepika Padukone. There are some comments that also praise the acting of the male lead actor Ranveer Singh, however he has received a few negative comments as well.

**Negative Criticism:** There are comments that are focused on using strong words to describe their dislike for the film citing no specific reasons in some cases and using reasons like bad dialogues, bad adaptation etc.

**Adaptation:** There are comments that compare the movie with Ishaqzaade another Bollywood movie that is an adaptation of Romeo and Juliet and believe it to be a better adaptation than Ram Leela.

### **Decoded Positioning**

The number of dominant and oppositional positions of comments is quite similar. However, the dominant comments that praise the film and its other elements are more in number standing at 9 as compared to the negative ones at 6, there are 5 negotiated comments.

## **CONCLUSION**

Understanding the importance of feedback in the process of communication in different forms of media thus becomes a crucial part of making sense of the communication process itself. Unlike interpersonal communication, mass communication has the potential to bring about a variety in feedback. This study focuses on looking at the nature of feedback obtained in two different forms of media i.e., the traditional print media and YouTube which is a part of the 'new media'.

An important factor that makes both forms of feedback different from one another is the content generated. The content generated in print media is produced by one person and the entire content is the perception/ interpretation of that one person's opinions about the film, whereas on YouTube the content is generated by many people and the entire content is a huge chunk of multiple opinions.

There is a common structure of presentation of feedback presented in the print media. The feedback in print media tends to follow a common pattern of presentation of ideas with the same style of writing, a common linguistic style and common topics touched upon. YouTube comments on the other hand do not have a common structure of linguistic style. The ideas keep shifting with no linear arrangement in the structure. The comments have no rules of any kind and thus the comments do not have any ethical or linguistic filters.

The reviews given in print media are audience centered; written to give the feedback of a film for the potential audience of that film. The film review thus has heavy inherent rhetoric tools evident throughout. However, on YouTube the comments are not purely audience specific, most comments are mainly opinions that do not use any rhetoric tools that strongly try to convince the audience to buy their point.

The feedback given in print media is heavily pro sender in nature i.e., when categorized under the theoretical framework of Stuart Hall's decoding positions the chunks mostly fall into the dominant category with very minimal amount of negative criticism making the medium sender friendly when it comes to feedback. On YouTube however the comments contain an equal amount of criticism and praise thus being categorized under all three categories of Stuart Hall's decoding positions.

The number of topics or areas touched upon in print media is limited as compared to YouTube comments which have a variety of areas discussed. The YouTube comments also include

external factors such as the actors' personal lives, the film's comparison with other films, personal interests of the commenters etc.

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