Indian Reality Television Shows: Ordinary People, Celebrity and the Fame Cycle

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Abstract- In this paper, we discuss the phenomenon of Indian reality television shows explore its function for those participating in it. Drawing on the success of their talent hunt programmes such as Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, Indian Idol and Dance India Dance, this research work argues that reality television appeals in different ways to participants and celebrities at different points in the fame cycle. ‘Ordinary’ people seeking to become known through using reality television as an opportunity. To understand the importance of Indian reality television shows for ordinary people and considering fame as a cyclical process, a survey of opinions has been conducted through questionnaire among students of media and communication studies. The present study explores how a successful reality television show cast ordinary people who are at a range of points in the fame cycle as seek to develop their own image and those whose careers are in a period of ‘post-celebrity’ who seek to renew their fame and to prove a key attraction for audiences.

Keywords - Celebrity, Fame, Indian reality television, Ordinary people

I. INTRODUCTION

When television expanded in India, it also provided the space for genre of reality television. In the development of reality television as genre includes a wide range of entertainment programmes which about real people. Reality TV can be located in between information and entertainment, documentary and drama. Reality TV has become a successful part of television in the 1990s and 2000s (Hill Annette, Pg.2:2005). With the popularity of reality TV, this genre has reached to mass audiences. Popular series as Indian Idol (2004-present) and Sa Re Ga Ma Pa (1995-present) or Big Boss (2006-present)… have attracted more of the population of television viewers tuned into reality television programmes. Reality television as the careful video construction displaying “the ‘lives’ of ordinary people engaged in sometimes extraordinary events” (Jagodziński, 2003 p. 320). The programming of reality television attracts the attention of viewers across the nation from 1980s (Lundy, Ruth, & Park, 2008). To achieve higher ratings these reality TV series have to be more focused on entertainment. In India, the roots of Indian reality television can be linked to the beginnings of the first Indian singing reality television show Antakshari aired by Zee TV in the year 1993. The growth of reality TV in India can be count with the increasing number of reality shows in India. “There was also a wave of popular reality shows being adapted for regional audiences. Reality TV shows are one of the most popular genres of content viewed on digital (KPMG in India’s Media and Entertainment Report 2018”). One of the reasons the genre of reality television has been so popular in television market is that it appeals to young audience in particular. For example, reality talent hunt shows are mainly popular with young viewers who have watched these shows in
bigger numbers on Indian television and children are most attracted from reality talent hunt based shows and number of participation has also been increased in last few years.

However, the present study discuss the role of these shows can serve for participants and celebrities at different levels of their careers. To understand the importance of Indian reality television shows for ordinary people and considering fame as a cyclical process, a survey of opinions has been conducted through questionnaire among students of media and communication studies.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are few studies in the area of fame and reality television shows. The work of Deller has some degree of relevance to the study. Deller mentioned in her book reality television is one of the defining genres of the 21st century and provides overview about reality television and celebrity on the bases of fame cycle (2019:112).

Further, Ruth A. Deller (2016) analysed Star image, celebrity reality television and the fame cycle and explored how a successful reality show cast is one that combines celebrities who are at a range of points in the fame cycle as the interactions between the cast members and their debates about fame and hierarchy prove a key attraction for audiences.

Frances Bonner (2013) considered why celebrity shows, and indeed competitive reality-television shows generally, are popular with broadcasters in the post-broadcast era. After the examination of the dance series Bonner revealed that the format provides a valuable site for the valorisation of work, although as is usual for celebrity discourse, the work of actually being a celebrity, including cross-promotion, is not part of this and explored the utility of this in terms of generating interest in this popular format.

Nico Carpentier (2011) focused on the concept of ordinary people and analyzed its discursive construction also discussed the importance of ordinary people concept for reality television studies. Nico defined ordinary people and mentioned identity struggle in reality television practices.

Julie A. Wilson (2010) analysed cultural powers of reality television celebrity, how reality stars come to benefit the media and cultural industries and what new pleasures they afford to fans and audiences. Additionally, this study shows how the production and consumption of these new forms of celebrity participate in broader social and cultural formations and hierarchies.

Graeme Turner (2009) examined in his book about the relationships between the medium and the ordinary people who appear on it and consume it. Turner’s extensive work presents how thinking about ordinary people and media offers valuable insights into areas such as globalisation, participation representation, media industries, cultural politics and technology.

From the above studies the underlying point is that reality television studies need to be exploring in Indian context.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the phenomenon of Indian reality television.

2. To understand the role of Indian reality television serve for participants at different levels of their careers.

3. To explore how reality television cast ordinary people and celebrity who are at a different stage in the fame cycle.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study based on mixed method research, which is qualitative, descriptive and quantitative. We have focused on talent hunt competitive Indian reality television shows. As these rely on casting a range of ordinary people in order to be successful because the casting of these shows draws a combination of ordinary people and celebrities and the appeal beyond that of the competitive element – the appeal of seeing celebrity stars openly discussing and comparing their experiences of fame. To explain the stages of fame cycle within Indian reality television shows, Ruth A. Deller's Fame Cycle Model (2016) has been used and questionnaire is construed as a tool of measurement in survey method for media research. For the objectives of carrying out this study, a
survey of opinions has been conducted through questionnaire among 250 students of media and communication studies from different colleges of Mumbai.

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

5.1. The Pre-Celebrity Stage: Entering in the Fame

‘Pre-celebrity’ refers to ‘ordinary’ people who might use these types of talent shows such as Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, Indian Idol, dance+ in order to develop their own star image and fame. Reality television shows offers a chance to ordinary people to become a star. In the starting of singing reality shows in India some of the people proved and become successful in the society. In the year of 1995, the first show came and Sonu Nigam (popular singer) hosted the show. The series of Sa Re Ga Ma Pa (1995) aimed to offer a platform to newcomers to get success and fame. The show hosted by some of the most popular singer from music genre include TV anchor and actors Sonu Nigam ((1995-2000), Shaan (2001-06), Bangash brothers, Amaan Ali Bangash and Ayaan Ali Bangash (2000-01), Purab Kohli (2010), Manish Paul (2010), Karan Singh Rathore, Archan Jiani, Vipul Roy, Jay Soni, Javed Ali (2012-2013) and the current host is Aditya Narayan (2007-09, 2014-present).

The Fame Cycle

Source: (Ruth A. Deller, 2016)

The series of Indian Idol aired on Sony Entertainment Television since 2004. This show has also gives the chance to ordinary people and try to achieve fame through this platform. However, as the 2000s and 2010s have progressed and more and more reality contestants have passed through TV screens and auditions, the potential of the genre as a launch pad for a celebrity career has diminished (Collins, 2008). In the next section, successful reality TV stars who have been tried and tested in ‘regular’ formats can be immensely valuable to the celebrity reality TV genre, and this, in turn, may provide them the springboard for achieving a longer-lasting celebrity status.

5.2. The Proto-Celebrity Stage: Expanding Fame

‘Proto-celebrity’ refers to those people who may be having certain degree of recognition but may be not that much famous. In this category we include a range of people in these early stages of fame (such as In Sa Re Ga Ma singing reality television show included twenty five jury members with three judges). In this show some jury members are on their starting career and they got the platform in this singing reality show.

In this section, we discuss the value of reality television shows formats may have for those personalities who might be seeking to gain more recognition and acceptance as a ‘well-known’ celebrity. This category can include a range of personalities from different age group but the same thing is that they may be not yet that much famous what they want. Reality TV shows helps to explore their talent as a mentor or trainer within the
show. The best part to cast proto celebrities in the show is they will not ask for huge fees and they are performer as well. They knew the format of reality television shows. Such participants those who did not win the show but they achieved special appearance in another reality TV show (Sa Re Ga Ma Pa reality TV show’s mentors).

There are another personalities those lose their chance to win first prize but they maintained runner up position within the show. Such as personalities try to participate in another singing reality TV show, won the title and become a mentor for another singing reality TV show (Salman Ali, winner of 10th season of Indian Idol 2018, first runner up of Sa Re Ga Ma Pa L’il Champs 2011 and Mentor/ Captain in Superstar Singer, 2019). The audience seeking thing is those audience members who followed contestants through their original reality show journey can follow them in other shows as well and those who missed their earlier shows they can see in the current show.

We can relate successful examples from those participants who proved their talent, achieved success and create star image among the audiences. These include the contestants of Sa Re Ga Ma Pa and Indian Idol shows (Shreya Ghoshal, Arijit Singh, Neha Kakkar, Shekhar Dhanjwani, 25 mentors). Reality TV stars who proved their talent in their country they explored to another country’s show as well. Such as dancing and singing reality TV stars performed and enjoyed in other countries. The appeal in reality TV shows these people are and whether or may not be famous. If a proto celebrity performs well in reality TV shows, they may have an opportunity to become famous.

5.3. The Promotional Celebrity Stage: Enterprising Fame

‘Promotional Celebrity’ refers those who are actively working in a professional career i.e radio jockey, TV anchor and presenters but who would not be considered as celebrity and star. These celebrities may be looking for more attention and recognition from reality television shows. In this section, we have explored the role of narrative in reality TV shows. Bonner explained how reality TV shows not only give the platform to celebrity they also enhance the brands these celebrities represent:

In-house promotion to be seen in reality talent shows which encourage the excision of ads and promotion slots. Product placement is the other side of reality TV shows. (Bonner 2013, p. 170)

The ‘Promotional Celebrity’ refers those who are actively working in a professional career i.e. radio jockey, TV anchor and presenters but who would not be considered as celebrity and star. These celebrities may be looking for more attention and recognition from reality television shows. This category of contestant is mostly seen in singing, dancing and cooking shows. In the episodes of audition they have shown the area and work profile of contestants and they want attention through their talent. For example Rani Koh Nour or Sushant Divgikar, contestant of Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, 2018 belongs and representor of Lesbian, gay, bio sexual, and transgender community. Sushant is a gay but he dresses in women’s clothing. He has participated in this show and shared his journey within the show.

As a promotional celebrity they have shown their ‘other job’ and use reality TV as a promotional platform also reminds to viewers that talent related reality TV shows needs hardworking and passionate people. For example Swami Ramdev has become guest in many reality TV shows and promoted ‘Yoga’ and Patanjali products.

Sometimes judges use to promote their book or other work within the show as a product promotion. Most of the time Bollywood celebrities use to come and promote their films within the reality TV show. In singing reality television shows contestants perform and show their talent, show will not ask to leave your regular work. The importance of talent based show is that participants can connect with their family within the show and according to the show format one family member is allowed to stay with participant. In Rojek’s (2001) terms some celebrities are presented as ascribed (famous through family connections) or attributed (‘famous for being famous’) celebrities, they are presented as ‘achieved’ celebrities, those who have a skill or talent legitimising their claim to fame. For example In Sa Re Ga Ma Pa L’il champs (2017) Neha Kakkar Promoted their siblings on the stage she shared stage with them. Bollywood celebrities also promote their kids and their upcoming films through this platform (Sunny Deol promoted his son Karan Deol for his upcoming film). This reframing within the show is not only gives the promotions to celebrities even show producers also get more viewership.

5.4. The Proper Celebrity Stage: Enjoying Fame

‘Proper Celebrity’ refers to those who are famous in their field and no need to come in reality television shows but they use these platforms for their promotion and appear as a guest or judge in the show also share their experience looks like inspiring for participants.
According to singing reality TV show format, not all celebrities take part in the show. Sometimes show producers are not able to afford such famous stars, but budget is not always the reason for show cast. Within the show proper celebrities may participate as a contestant of the show but there are still some roles for them. High Profile Singers i.e. Asha Bhonsle, Alka Yagnik, Udit Narayan, Kumar Sanu, Suresh Wadkar came as a guest in singing reality TV shows also offered their wisdom to the next generation who aspire to become like them, and, by their presence, boosting the credibility of the shows. Guest performance slot is also beneficial in reality shows because sometimes a guest spot is highly rated show. The stars also get a chance to connect and promote their upcoming work with large viewership. (Kareena Kapoor Khan entered as a judge on Indian dance reality TV show, Dance India Dance- 2019).

5.5. The (re) Purposed Celebrity Stage: Enhancing Fame

(Re)-purposed celebrity’ refers to those who take participation in these shows for rebranding themselves. In this category may include those seek a major change in their life (such as transgenders also participate for their current identity and role in the society).

The platform of reality television means a lot for those who want to re-imagine their star image. These repurposed celebrities may be looking to extant the period of fame. For some celebrities this strategy has proved successful (Anu Malik is guiding as a judge in Indian Idol from so many years). Some celebrities expand their star image and became mentor and experts within the show (In Sa Re Ga Ma Pa twenty five jury members introduced as a mentor. Himesh Reshmiya, Indian actor, music director, lyricist, composer, producer, singer, screenwriter and film distributor and Javed Ali, Indian playback singer participated as a judge within the show).

5.6. The ‘Post -celebrity’ Stage: Exhuming Fame

According to Ruth A. Deller the final category is ‘Post-celebrity’. Those who are no longer a famous celebrating among people and society and they hope might be reality television restore their star image again. There is no compulsion that all celebrities will go through with this fame cycle but this is important phenomenon to the appeal of these reality shows.

We have noticed that the judges of reality television shows got coverage through other mediums after become a part of reality TV shows, which regularly feature participants whose careers are in a post-celebrity state.

5.7. From Post-celebrity to Pre-celebrity: Exiting fame

Reality television shows offers the way to re-enter in the fame cycle and begin with pre-celebrity stage. Singing and dancing reality shows has given the chance to so many participants those were already participated in other singing reality TV shows. Salman Ali was the contestant of Sa Re Ga Ma Pa L’il champs later he won Indian Idol 2018 and he was the caption in Superstar Singer, 2019, Azmat Hussain (Winner of Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Lil Champs, 2011), who returns to TV with Indian Idol 11, which means reality television narratives helps contestants to re-frame their fame.

Analysis from data based on questionnaire

As a part of our research work we conducted survey among students of media studies. In the questionnaire which we supplied to our respondents, these questions pertain to the perceived what we have observed in Indian reality television shows. A number of questions concerning the participation of ordinary people in reality television show have been raised by us and we have found strong support in the form of agreement. In response of questions we got strong agreement (14.3%) and agreement (66.4%) that reality television shows encourage ordinary people for participation. For question related to the appeal of Indian reality television shows in different ways to celebrities at different points in the fame cycle, the strong agreement is 17.2% and agreement is 58.6%. With regards to question, Indian reality television as a rehabilitative strategy or an opportunity to develop new skills, the respondents expressed strong agreement 15.3% and agreement 69.2%. Further questions which concerned about those personalities who might have a certain degree of recognition but are not ‘famous’ they approach reality television shows, strong agreement is 14.2% and agreement is 56.4%.

All these answers have encouraged us to understand and interpret how fame operates on a cyclical basis and that this ‘fame cycle’.
VI. CONCLUSION

Indian reality television can offer a range of opportunities for participants and celebrities at different stages of the fame cycle. Although this research work focused here on successful examples, there are many for whom reality television has been a failure. As per the show format only the winner will get trophy, so may be some participants have not expanded their fame, reinvented their star image or re-launched their career. Sometimes these failures also important because those who were not the winner of reality television show they are presently enjoying proper celebrity fame as a professional singer. Reality television shows has given a platform to them.

When a reality television cast works, it offers viewers a range of interesting narratives, background of the participants, discussions about the nature of fame (both its attractions and its problems). It allows audiences to imagine where in the fame cycle participants are, where they ‘deserve’ to be, and affords audiences the power to assign them accordingly.

We have argued that to understand the appeal of talent hunt competition based reality television shows and the fame cycle is one of the way in which we can try to understand and explore the motivational way for celebrities and participants through the show also a range of encouragement for the audience. In addition, we have mentioned that reality television shows beneficial for broadcasters and program producers, they may achieve cross- promotion through they uncover the unknown talent and offers a platform to become star celebrity and get high rating through this strategy. Judges of reality television shows has also an appeal through audiences and helps to increase TRP. This research work is limited by genre and model selected by us, in the genre of reality television still many areas for research which can cover for further study, we have outlined here the phenomenon of talent hunt reality television shows with the fame cycle in which audience encouraged to ordinary people and celebrities for participation.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX

The following list of reality television show contestants those participated as an ordinary person became celebrity and achieved fame in playback singing;
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Name of Singer</th>
<th>Reality television show</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sunidhi Chauhan</td>
<td>DD National’s Meri Awaz Suno</td>
<td>Awarded with the Lata Mangeshkar Trophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shreya Ghoshal</td>
<td>Sa Re Ga Ma</td>
<td>Winner</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Shekhar Ravjiani</td>
<td>Sa Re Ga Ma Pa</td>
<td>Contestant</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Kunal Ganjawala</td>
<td>Sa Re Ga Ma Pa</td>
<td>Contestant</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Neha Kakkar</td>
<td>Indian Idol 2</td>
<td>Contestant</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Arijit Singh</td>
<td>Fame Gurukul</td>
<td>Contestant</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Harshdeep Kaur</td>
<td>Junoon Kuch Kar Dikhane Ka</td>
<td>Winner (Sufi ki Sultana)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Monali Thakur</td>
<td>Indian Idol 2</td>
<td>Contestant</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mohammed Irfan</td>
<td>Amul STAR Voice of India and Sa Re Ga Ma Pa</td>
<td>Contestant</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kamal Khan</td>
<td>Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Singing Superstar</td>
<td>Winner</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Antara Mitra</td>
<td>Indian Idol 2</td>
<td>Contestant</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Bela Shende</td>
<td>Sa Re Ga Ma</td>
<td>Winner</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Neeti Mohan</td>
<td>Channel V’s Popstars</td>
<td>Winner</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Altamash Faridi</td>
<td>Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Singing Superstar &amp; Music Ka Maha Muqabla</td>
<td>Contestant</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Anushka Manchanda</td>
<td>Channel V’s Popstars</td>
<td>Winner</td>
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<td>Nakash Aziz</td>
<td>Indian Idol 2</td>
<td>Contestant</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Arman Malik</td>
<td>Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Lil Champs</td>
<td>Contestant</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Bhoomi Trivadi</td>
<td>Indian Idol</td>
<td>Contestant</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Amanat Ali</td>
<td>Sa Re Ga Ma Pa</td>
<td>Contestant</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Raja Hasan</td>
<td>Sa Re Ga Ma Pa</td>
<td>First runner-up</td>
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