

FROM NARRATIVE TO NUDITY: THE RISE OF VOYEURISTIC WEB CONTENT AND THE DEATH OF STORYTELLING ON INDIAN OTT PLATFORMS

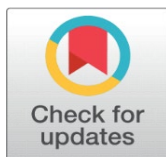
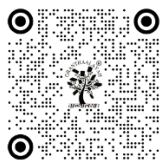
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ABSTRACT

The present study examines the digital storytelling landscape on Indian Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms, focusing on the rapid rise and continuous expansion of voyeuristic web content. It explores how traditional narrative structures are increasingly displaced by erotic spectacle. It signals a potential 'death of narrative' in selected Indian voyeuristic web series. The study uses Narrative and Gaze Analysis (NGA) as its methodology. NGA is based on a seven-parameter matrix developed through inductive coding. These parameters emerged from the data and were supported by theories from media studies, sexuality studies, and feminist visual culture. The study looks at how the stories are told, where the sexual content is placed, how it is placed, how the sound is designed to achieve voyeuristic aesthetics. All these elements were organized into categories to see what patterns and themes came up across the selected series. The study examined themes such as Absence or Simplification of Plot, where storytelling becomes weaker because erotic content is given more importance; Voyeurism, where visual pleasure is prioritized over meaningful narrative; Objectification of Characters, especially the portrayal of women as sexual objects; and Moral and Ethical Representation of Sexuality, where sexual behaviour is shown as acceptable, taboo, or socially transgressive. Findings suggest a paradigmatic shift where narrative depth goes down and sensationalized sexual imagery becomes dominant in such web content.

Keywords: Voyeurism, Erotic Web Content, Indian Web Series, Narrative Disjunction, Erotic Spectacle, Objectification

1. INTRODUCTION

OTT video platforms are seen as a place where people use creative freedom and tell stories of various topics, themes and dimensions. Lack of censorship and exercising of creative freedom has led to streaming of erotic and voyeuristic content on some OTT platforms. The present study looks at how some Indian web series use erotic moving images, where they use it, what techniques content creators employ to rope in audience to consume erotic content. A web series is a collection of video episodes that are scripted or unscripted (A Bannerjee, 2013) (Nagpaul, 2022). They are on demand

and available on the Internet (Nagpaul, 2022). The paper also tries to understand what this trend says about the digital culture and media in general. It further investigates at how eroticism is visually constructed through elements like camera angles, lighting, sound design and costume and how these choices affect the narrative structure of erotic web content. The research also examines web content and how it influences the public. Erotic web content became popular on platforms like Ullu, Kooku, ALTBalaji, MX Player and Zee5 (Guest, 2020) (Inc42, July 2020). These platforms witnessed a spike in the number of subscribers during COVID-19 pandemic (P. Sharma and R. Jha, 2020). This trend continued to flourish even after that too (Inc42, July 2020).

The rapid growth of OTT platforms and their expanding subscriber base also created space for new forms of digital entertainment, including content centered on sexuality and voyeurism, whose roots can be traced back to the evolution of erotic representation in cinema. Conventionally, the depiction of sex scenes on screen traces its history in the late 1970s and 1980s (Keeseey). "According to Keeseey, modern erotic films in the US started after the sexual revolution in the late 1960s. In 1968, the old censorship rules called the Motion Picture Production Code were replaced by a ratings system. This new system allowed filmmakers to show more content freely in their movies, this development led to the emergence of soft porn industry in the country," points out Keeseey. As Mini stated, in mid-1980s, the Indian filmscape too saw the emergence of a wave of soft porn films (Mini, 2019). Iranian cinema too has same trajectory of soft porn cinema in the 1970s and 80s. "Tehran (Capital city of Iran) in the 1970s was the site of a dizzying convergence of sex and consumerism. It's film industry played a pivotal role in establishing this orgy of sexual desire, naked bodies and money by not only representing sex but also marketing and selling it" (Atwood). Atwood discussed how sexual content became more visible in Iranian cinema during the 1970s. He linked this change to the growth of the film industry and the rise of popular commercial films known as *filmfarsi*. By studying films such as *Chaos* (1973), *Into the Night* (1978), and *Skin of the City* (1974), he argued that earlier *filmfarsi* films mainly used café dancers to attract audiences, but the 1970s saw a major increase in direct on-screen sexual representation. Keeseey (2012), after analysing around 40 erotic films from different countries, argued that sex in cinema is not shown only for physical attraction. It can also represent emotional intensity, artistic expression, intellectual excitement, or spiritual pleasure. However, he pointed out that mainstream erotic films still present limited body types and repetitive sexual situations, while rarely showing real sex involving well-known actors. Keeseey further stated that "a sex scene needs no deep explanation; it simply is what it is." In contrast, feminist scholar Linda Williams argued that sex on screen is not a natural or raw reality captured by the camera. Instead, it is carefully constructed by filmmakers through acting, editing, camera angles, dialogue, and visual techniques.

In India, researcher Darshana Sreedhar Mini studied Malayalam soft-porn films—a regional version of Bollywood's cinema. She highlighted the 1980s as a key moment when soft-porn exploded in Malayalam films (Mini, 2019). By 2001, over 70 percent of Malayalam films were in this genre, with many starring Shakeela, who became its iconic figure. In these films, the female lead was often portrayed as a cultural outsider—someone passing through, seen both as a danger and as a symbol of desire. Shakeela, in particular, stood out as a bold, sexually confident woman who didn't follow traditional norms. Her popularity even shook Kerala's male-dominated film industry, leading to what many called the "Shakeela wave." In Kerala, soft-porn films were "not the first to use sexually charged imagery; sex and sexuality were narrative elements in films of the 1970s and 1980s as well. Low-budget "glamour films" made by K. S. Gopalakrishnan, Crossbelt Mani, P. Chandrakumar, and others in the 1980s were frank about using erotic scenes. The year 2001 marked the height of soft-porn film production in the Malayalam film industry, where 57 out of 89 released films belonged to this genre (Pillai, 2015). In South India, soft porn had already become a recognised category in film industry and media discussions during the 1990s. Researcher Darshana Sreedhar Mini noted that Malayalam soft-porn films grew rapidly during this period and gained strong popularity. However, this success did not last long. Within a decade, the genre declined because of changing industry trends, cultural shifts, and other structural changes in cinema. In contrast, North Indian regional cinema—particularly Bhojpuri films—retained a more persistent engagement with erotic and suggestive content. Rooted primarily in eastern Uttar Pradesh and central Bihar, the Bhojpuri film industry carved out a distinct niche despite competing with the dominance of mainstream Hindi cinema (Ghosh, 2012). Its productions have often been characterized by overtly sexualized dialogue and imagery, with narrative structures designed to provoke sensual and libidinal responses. Examples of suggestive lines such as "Tohar Lehnga Uthayi Deb Remote Se" ("I'll lift your skirt with a remote control") and "O Bhauji Debu Ke Nahi" ("O sister-in-law, will you give it or not") reveal the genre's explicit tone and its reliance on sexual innuendo (VKA, 2017). Furthermore, the titles of many Bhojpuri films underscore the industry's tendency to objectify women. Films like *Pepsi Peeke Lagelu Sexy* ("I become sexy after drinking Pepsi"), *Jeans Wali Bhauji* ("Jeans-clad sister-in-law"), and *Mehraru Chahi Milky White* ("I want a fair-skinned wife") exemplify the hyper-sexualized portrayal of female characters and reflect wider gendered tropes embedded in the industry (VKA,

2017). Even though soft-porn cinema declined by early 2000s, its influence still remains in storytelling and cinema culture. As Darshana Sreedhar Mini explains, traces of this genre can still be seen in modern visual narratives and audience imagination. In the digital age, this legacy has shifted to OTT platforms, where many “desi Indian” erotic web series continue to use similar themes and sexually suggestive content for online audiences. This shift from soft-porn cinema to OTT web series shows how voyeurism and erotic content have become more important in digital entertainment, while storytelling and narrative quality are often pushed into the background.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The present study is based on the idea that many Indian OTT web series are shifting from story-driven narratives to voyeuristic and sexually sensational content. The conceptual framework connects theories of narrative decline, voyeurism, gaze, and objectification to understand how erotic spectacle increasingly dominates digital storytelling. The structure is based on Narrative Theory, which points out that meaningful plots, character development, and the emotional arc are the main elements of storytelling (Chatman, 1978). Still in many voyeuristic web series, the narrative becomes a mere background. Sexually explicit scenes and visually attractive characters dominate the screen. Because of this, the study describes this as the “death of narrative.” Besides that, the research is grounded on Male Gaze theory by Laura Mulvey (1975), where women in the media tend to be shown as objects of male's visual desire. In OTT voyeuristic content, the camera angles, close-ups of body parts, the way characters express with their bodies, and the use of sound most often aim at producing a voyeuristic gaze rather than the narrative engagement. Besides that, Objectification Theory by Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts (1997) which talks about how women are mainly viewed through the lens of their attractiveness and sexual appeal. Besides objectifying, the selected web series depict the female characters mainly in a decorative role rather than as full-fledged narrative subjects and human beings. The study also takes ideas from Sexuality and Media Studies which suggest that digital platforms use sensational and erotic content to attract viewers attentions to stay competitive in burgeoning streaming market (William, 1989). As a result, voyeurism, erotic sound design, and sexually suggestive visuals become central storytelling tools.

Based on these theoretical ideas, the study develops a seven-parameter Narrative and Gaze Analysis (NGA) matrix to examine:

- Narrative strength and plot depth
- Placement of erotic scenes
- Voyeuristic camera techniques
- Objectification of characters
- Sound and sensual aesthetics
- Moral and ethical representation of sexuality
- Shift from storytelling to visual spectacle

The framework (Figure 1) explains how Indian OTT voyeuristic web series move from narrative-centered storytelling toward spectacle-centered entertainment, where erotic imagery often becomes more important than story, character, or social meaning.

Figure 1

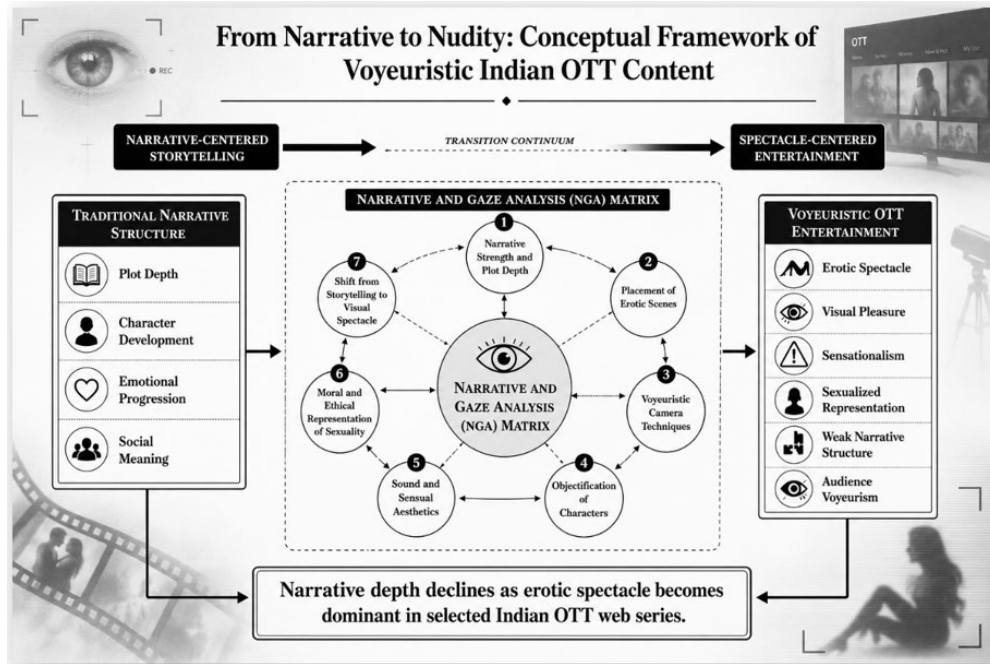


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Voyeuristic Indian OTT Content

2.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) RQ1: How do sexualized visuals and voyeuristic scenes affect the depth and quality of storytelling in selected web series?
- 2) RQ2: How do Camera work, mise-en-scène, and sound design create voyeuristic aesthetics in Indian Hindi Web series?
- 3) RQ3: In what ways does the increase of voyeuristic content on Indian OTT platforms show larger social and cultural changes in media and audience preferences?
- 4) RQ4: How do Indian OTT soft-porn web series use erotic storytelling and voyeuristic visuals to control female agency and reinforce gender stereotypes?

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research uses a qualitative and interpretative methodology using Narrative and Gaze analysis (NGA) to explore the sidelining of narrative depth by voyeuristic and erotic content in Indian OTT web series. The study was done with the help of a seven- parameter thematic analysis matrix that was especially designed for this study. It is drawn from theoretical insights from media, sexuality studies, and feminist visual culture. Besides secondary literature on digital media and erotic content, data were also gathered from OTT platforms. Table 1 demonstrates the research design for this study.

Table 1

Table 1 Table Showing Research Design		
S. No	Items	Explanation
1	Sampling and Selection Criteria	A purposive sampling method was used to select six popular web series from four major Indian OTT platforms: Ullu, ALTBalaji, Kooku, and MX Player. The selected series are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Charmsukh (Ullu) · Palang Tod (Ullu) · Gandii Baat (ALTBalaji) · Mastram (MX Player)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Riti Riway (Ullu) · Saali Aadhi Gharwali (Kooku)
2	Selection criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · High consumption/viewership ratings. · Recurring voyeuristic and sexualized content. · Labeled as "bold," "18+," or "erotic" by their platforms.
3	Data Collection Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The data include full-length episodes (2 to 5 episodes per series), viewed multiple times for close analysis. · Field notes and episode summaries were created for each series. · Elements focused: Storyline structure, Visual aesthetics (mise-en-scène, costume, lighting, camera angles), Sound elements (music, moans, voice modulation), Character development, Sexual content placement.
4	Methodology and Analytical Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Narrative and Gaze Analysis (NGA). NGA is based on a seven-parameter matrix developed through inductive coding.

4. NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND EROTIC/VOYEURISTIC WEB-SERIES

Essential to this paper is the concept of narrative or story structure, understood as the purposeful organization of events into a coherent sequence: a beginning, a middle, and an end. An often-quoted storytelling rule is that a good narrative must follow a three-part structure. The most familiar version of this structure is the THREE- ACT STRUCTURE, which divides the story into three main parts (Field, 2005). ACT ONE or SET-UP is where the characters are introduced, the dramatic situation is set up, and the opening scenario is presented. ACT TWO or CONFRONTATION is where the main character is faced with an increasing series of problems or obstacles and ACT THREE or RESOLUTION is where the main problems are solved, though this may not give a complete sense of closure (Field, 2005). A similar structural framework, though articulated using different terminology, was proposed by John Gardner in his 1983 work "The Art of Fiction". Gardner introduced the concept of the FICHTEAN CURVE, a model often employed in screenwriting, which emphasises a chain of continuous crises or rising action without a traditional exposition, thereby keeping the viewer engaged through sustained tension and emotional escalation.

Figure 2

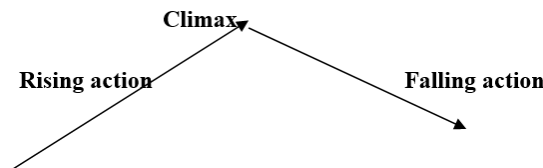


Figure 2 Fichtean Curve Showing Story Structure

It focuses on conflict and crises and has three main components: RISING ACTION, CLIMAX AND FALLING ACTION. German novelist and playwright, Freytag's Pyramid demonstrates five-point dramatic structure used in movies (Smith, 2021). It includes in linear fashion following steps: INTRODUCTION; RISING ACTION; CLIMAX; FALL and finally CATASTROPHE. However, such meticulous structuring in the narrative scheme of web series under study is not found. One can easily discern disjointed links in them. The author has surmised that storyline of 'Action, Violence and Suspense genres of web series is found to be strong enough to glue the audience to the couch till it gets finished, therefore, coherence, robustness and logical flow is found in storylines of such web series'. However, the storyline of erotic/voyeuristic web series' is found to be imbalanced, fractured and haphazard in nature.

Figure 3 shows that all supporting story sequences gradually lead toward the main erotic sequence, which becomes the central focus of the narrative. Sequences 1, 2, 3, and other side events exist mainly to build up or connect to this central sexual moment. As a result, the storyline takes a centrifugal form in which all peripheral sequences revolve around and direct attention toward the core erotic content. The secondary narrative elements receive limited development, while excessive emphasis is placed on the central erotic sequence to maintain audience attraction, encourage binge-watching, and sustain visual engagement.

Figure 3

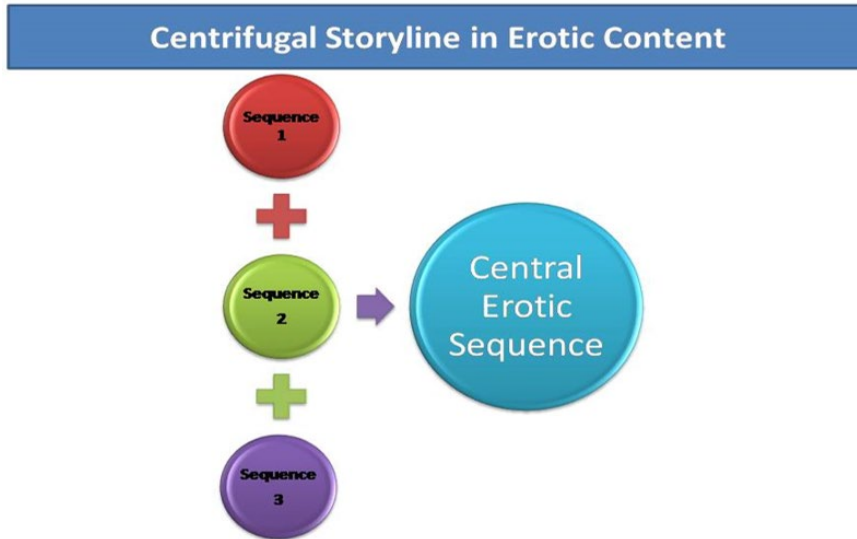


Figure 3 Visual Representation of the Central Erotic Sequence in Voyeuristic Content

Figure 4 presents the idea of an asymmetrical storyline in voyeuristic web content. The structure is divided into two types of sequences: main sequences and secondary sequences. The main sequences are the scenes containing erotic or sexual content, while the secondary sequences include ordinary story events and narrative fillers. The figure shows that the main erotic sequences receive greater visual and narrative importance, whereas the secondary sequences remain weak and underdeveloped. These supporting scenes mainly function as fillers that quickly lead the audience toward the next erotic moment. As a result, the storyline appears unbalanced, with limited plot coherence, weak narrative depth, and excessive dependence on sexual spectacle to maintain audience attention.

Figure 4

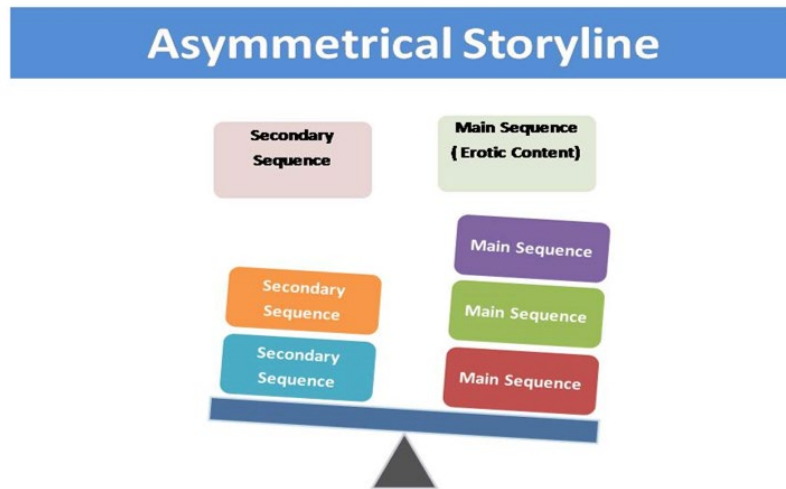


Figure 4 Visual Representation of the Asymmetrical Storyline in Voyeuristic Web Series

The figure 5 explains how storytelling in some voyeuristic OTT web series becomes weak as erotic content takes center stage. The cycle begins with thin narrative structures, where the story exists only as a basic framework. The erotic scene then becomes the main climax instead of meaningful plot development. This creates disruption without depth, where sudden sexual scenes break the natural flow of the story. As a result, the female subject gradually disappears as an individual character and is mainly shown as an object of visual pleasure.

Figure 5

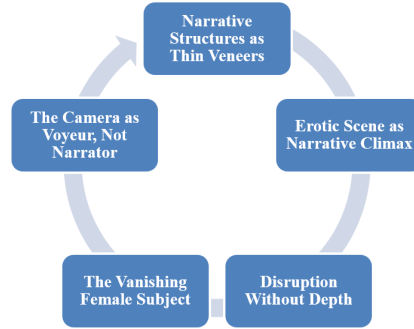


Figure 5 Visual Representation of Cycle of Spectacle-Driven Narrative in Erotic Web Series

In nutshell, Language in these web series often uses metaphors, symbols, and suggestive expressions that objectify women and reduce them to sexualized bodies. The secondary dialogues and scenes mainly act as fillers that build excitement before the central erotic sequence. As a result, storytelling becomes weak and fragmented, while repeated sexual scenes dominate the narrative, disrupting logical flow and replacing meaningful plot development.

5. NARRATIVE DISRUPTION AND VOYEURISTIC SPECTACLE IN INDIAN OTT WEB SERIES

The analysis of selected Indian OTT web series reveals a recurring pattern where erotic spectacle dominates over narrative depth and character development. This section discusses how voyeuristic camera techniques, objectifying visual framing, and fantasy-driven plots play a significant role in shaping audience engagement. Although some series briefly present women as active participants, their agency is often controlled, superficial, or ultimately directed toward male-centered desire. It elaborates how these web series prioritize spectacle over storytelling and reproduce gendered patterns of representation within the contemporary OTT ecosystem.

Table 2 shows how selected Indian web series use erotic content and visual pleasure more than strong storytelling. It compares different series based on plot structure, female characters, camera focus, and story flow. Most series have weak or repetitive plots where erotic scenes become the main attraction instead of the story. Female characters are often shown with less freedom and are mainly presented for male visual pleasure. The camera frequently focuses on body parts, showing the dominance of the male gaze. Dialogue is limited, while physical scenes are given more screen time. Overall, the matrix helps explain how voyeurism and objectification often replace meaningful storytelling in these web series.

Table 2

Table 2 Narrative and Gaze Analysis Matrix of Selected Indian Erotic Web Series										
Web Series	Platform	Episodes Analyzed	Narrative Structure	Disruption Point	Erotic Scene as Climax ?	Narrative Coherence	Female Agency	Camera Gaze	Dialogue-to-Action Ratio	Remarks
Charmsukh: Jane Anjane Mein	Ullu	S1E1-S1E4, S5E1-E2	Linear-repetitive	Daughter-in-law's sexual submission becomes normalized	Yes	Very Weak	Low – passive recipient of male desire	Male Gaze dominant – frequent focus on body parts	20:80 – minimal dialogue, mostly physical acts	Redundancy across episodes; changes in characters don't alter plot logic
Palang Tod: Gaon Ki Garmi	Ullu	S1E1-S1E2, S2E1-E2	Seasonal relooping	Reappearance of male characters who serve erotic tension	Yes	Very Weak	Medium – bhabhi initiates but lacks interiority	Voyeuristic Gaze – slow panning, objectification	25:75 – short monologues, long softcore visuals	Formulaic reboot of same erotic fantasy

										using rural tropes
Gandii Baat	ALTBala ji	S2E1, S4E2, S5E1	Disjointed erotic fables	Queer/bisexual desire or village taboo breach	Yes	Weak	Variable – some women resist norms briefly	Mixed Gaze – sometimes subverts male gaze	30:70 – narrative effort in queer arcs, otherwise minimal	Attempts subversion in queer stories, but eroticism hijacks plot
Mastram	MX Player	E2, E4, E6, E8	Fantasy-publishing framework	Real women as muses for erotica	Yes	Medium	Low – women are vessels for male storytelling	Authorial Gaze – male fantasy as lens	35:65 – narration fills gaps between fantasies	Layered structure via writer’s POV but still heavily objectifying
Riti Riwayat (Wife on Rent, Water Wives)	Ullu	S1E1–E4	Ritual-based erotic trigger	Women exchanged or shared due to village customs	Yes	Very Weak	Low – no agency in choosing rituals	Traditional Patriarchal Gaze	15:85 – rituals are short pretexts for action	Customs used to justify male gratification; rural poverty fetishized
Saali Aadhi Gharwali	Ullu	S1E1–S1E2	Tabloid-style linear	Intrafamilial seduction through jealousy	Yes	Very Weak	Low – women compete for male attention	Objectifying Gaze	20:80 – titillating lines precede erotic visuals	Exploits forbidden desire without moral inquiry

The stacked bar chart (figure 6) shows the comparison of the shares of dialogue-driven and physical/erotic action sequences in some Indian OTT web series. The chart reveals that physical/erotic action dominates over dialogue. Most of the series allocate 70-85% of their story time to visual, non-verbal acting. Conversely, dialogue has much lower shares and normally accounts for only 15-30% of the screen time. This pattern mirrors a broader industry obsession with the spectacular display of the human body leading to the sidelining of the narrative.

Figure 6

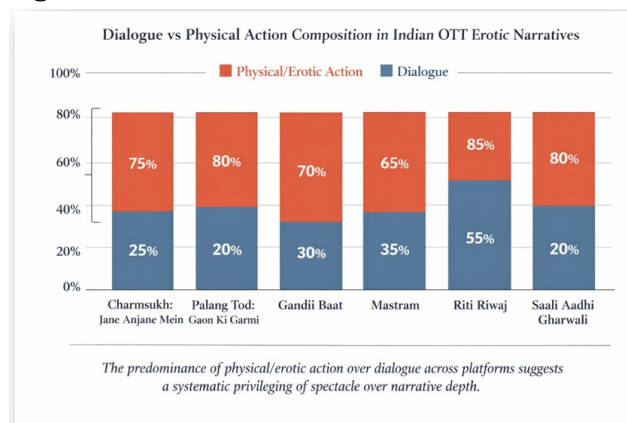


Figure 6 Dialogue vs Physical Action Composition in Indian OTT Erotic Narratives

This heatmap chart (figure 7) is an analysis of six Indian OTT erotic web series based on five important features: female agency, camera gaze, story coherence, erotic centrality, and dialogue. A colour code is used in each cell. Green represents balanced portrayal and red represents problematic portrayal. Web series such as Charmsukh and Palang Tod are seen in the majority of categories with the colour red depicting that they mostly use erotic scenes. They hardly provide any depth in the storyline or female characters' freedom. Other web series like Saali Aadhi Gharwali have more green and yellow colours indicating a somewhat balanced approach.

Figure 7

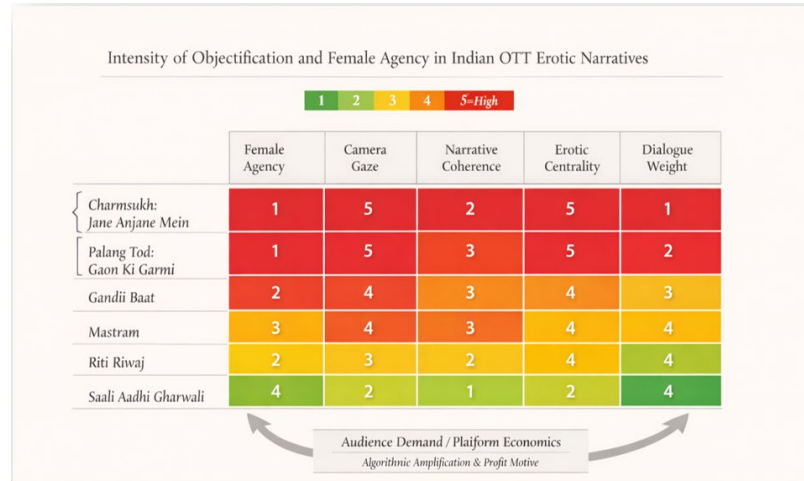


Figure 7 The Heatmap shows scaling from one to five in demonstrating from high objectification and low agency of women portrayal

The scatter plot (figure 8) shows a clear opposite relationship between female agency and objectification in Indian OTT erotic web series. This suggests that these web series focus more on visual attraction and spectacle than on giving women strong and independent roles. Abbreviations used in the scatter plot are: Charmsukh: Jane Anjane Mein (“JA”), Palang Tod: Gaon Ki Garmi (“PT”), Saali Aadhi Gharwali (“SG”), Gandii Baat (“GB”), Mastram (“MM”), and Riti Rivaj (“RR”).

Figure 8

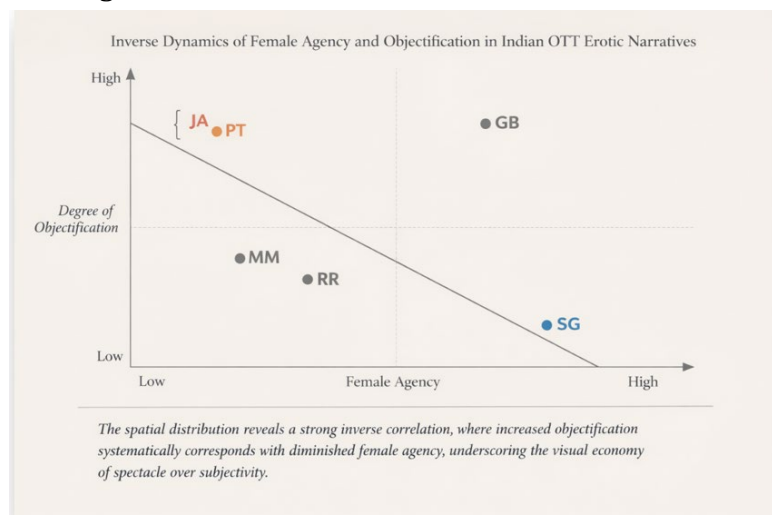


Figure 8 Scatter Plot Showing the Relationship Between Objectification and Female Agency in Selected Indian Erotic Web Series

Most series, especially Ullu Originals like Charmsukh and Palang Tod, show high objectification and low female agency. This means women are mostly presented as visual attractions rather than strong and independent characters. Only Saali Aadhi Gharwali shows the opposite pattern, where female agency is higher and objectification is lower, making

it a rare example. Overall, the plot suggests that these erotic web series often reduce women to objects of entertainment instead of giving importance to their individuality and decision-making power.

The scatter plot (figure 9) shows that male characters with more agency are usually more important to the story. Ullu Originals like Charmsukh and Palang Tod fall in the low-agency, low-importance category, while Saali Aadhi Gharwali shows high male agency and strong narrative importance. The trend line clearly shows that as male agency increases, narrative importance also increases. This is different from female characters, whose agency often decreases as objectification increases.

Figure 9

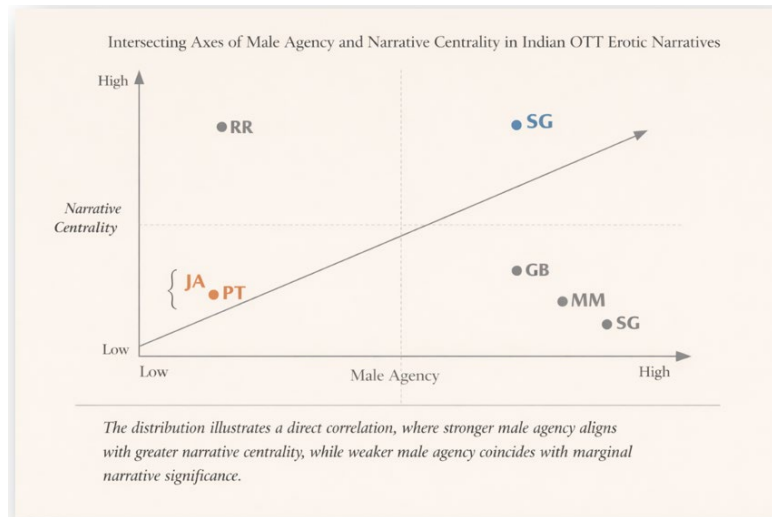


Figure 9 Relationship Between Male Agency and Narrative Importance in Selected Web Series

The visual gaze typologies diagram (figure 10) uses different types of "visual gazes" to portray women in Indian OTT erotic. The level of women's empowerment and the degree to which they are objectified are indicated by different types - from male-dominated, voyeuristic, and patriarchal perspectives to hybrid, slightly resistant ones. It depicts the varying ways in which platforms present female bodies, sexuality, and culture, at times perpetuating stereotypes, at other times momentarily subverting them.

Figure 10

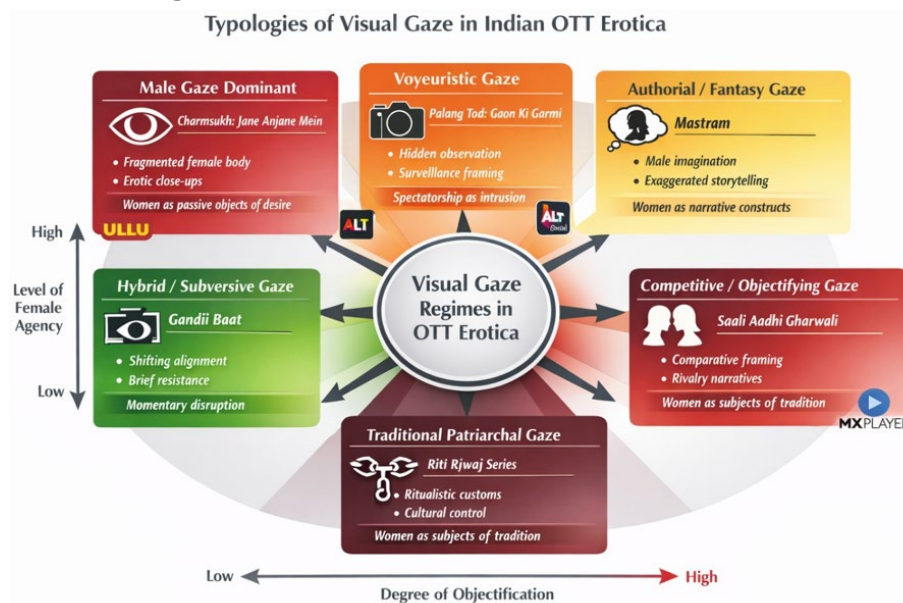


Figure10 Typologies of Visual Gaze in Indian OTT Erotica

6. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

6.1. EROTIC VISUAL CULTURE AND VOYEURISM IN DIGITAL STREAMING

The intersection of erotic visual culture and digital storytelling has emerged as a critical area of inquiry within media and cultural studies, particularly in the context of global streaming platforms. As OTT content proliferates in India, scholars have begun examining the representational politics of desire, the commodification of the female body, and the shift from narrative complexity to visual titillation. Erotic visual culture, as Mulvey (1975) first theorized through the "male gaze", is a cinematic mechanism wherein women are objectified as passive subjects for masculine pleasure. This framework continues to inform analyses of digital streaming content that prioritises voyeurism through camera angles, fragmented body shots, and choreographed sexual scenes. More recent works (C. Evans and L. Gamman, 1995) (Attwood, 2006) expand this lens to include "soft-core" aesthetics that operate under the guise of boldness and empowerment but remain embedded in patriarchal visual codes. In the Indian context, recent scholarship has observed the emergence of what (Mehta, 2021) terms "algorithmic erotica", wherein viewer demand, platform metrics, and low-budget production intersect to produce formulaic, hyper-sexualized web content. Series from platforms such as Ullu, Kooku, and ALTBalaji exploit voyeuristic tendencies by marginalizing narrative structure in favour of episodic eroticism (Rajadhyaksha, 2020). This displacement of storytelling raises concerns about the death of narrative integrity, echoing RQ1 in this study. The technical orchestration of visual and auditory elements—mise-en-scène, lighting, sound design—also plays a vital role in constructing a sustained erotic gaze (Doane, 1982) RQ2, which investigates this orchestration, finds resonance in (Attwood, 2006) notion of "mainstreaming sex", where erotica is no longer confined to the margins but constitutes a core aesthetic and commercial logic of digital platforms. Audience reception is equally critical. Pilot studies such as (P. Sharma and R. Jha, 2020) indicate that young Indian viewers interpret erotic content through a complex lens of curiosity, critique, and cultural negotiation. This aligns with RQ3, suggesting that consumption is not merely passive but reflective of broader transitions in sexual discourse and media literacy in post-liberalisation India. Existing literature provides a strong theoretical foundation for examining the production, aesthetics, and reception of erotic visual culture, while this study contributes an empirically grounded exploration of how these dynamics unfold in India's OTT ecosystem.

6.2. CONSTRUCTION OF VOYEURISTIC AESTHETICS AND IMPACT ON NARRATIVE DEPTH

Across the six analyzed web series, voyeuristic aesthetics dominate by means of zoomed camera strategies such as slow panning shots, objectifying framings, and male-centered gaze (Charmsukh, Palang Tod, Saali Aadhi Gharwali). The dialogue-to-action ratios favor physical acts over meaningful narrative exchanges (20:80- 25:75). Dialogue-to-action ratio shows that sexual imagery is prioritized over storytelling. Even series narrative layering like Mastram, use authorial male gaze, which means that erotic spectacle structurally disempowers narrative depth. The outcome is weak or very weak narrative coherence; the plots are usually subordinated to the sexual scenes which are often employed as enactment peaks.

6.3. DISPLACEMENT OF TRADITIONAL STORYTELLING STRUCTURES

Erotic content causes breaks in the flow of traditional narrative structures, such as linear, episodic, or fable-like ones, in all the series under discussion. Often, the points of disruption will be where the sexual acts are depicted as the main climax (e.g. the normalization of daughter-in-law submission in Charmsukh; the ritualization of erotic acts in Riti Riwayat). Seasonal reloops or episodic repetition (Palang Tod) show the formulaic use of erotic elements replacing the advancement of the plot. On the other hand, in Gandii Baat, queer storylines try briefly to subvert the narrative but eventually get dominated by the voyeuristic perspective. There is very little character development especially female psychological depth as women are primarily represented as passive or semi-resistant objects of male desire which further displaces traditional narrative agency.

6.4. SOCIO-CULTURAL REFLECTIONS AND REPRESENTATION OF SEXUALITY

These series reflect cultural and industrial changes on a large scale: the rural milieu, forbidden motifs, and patriarchal rites are used as a means to stage erotic spectacles (Riti Riwayat, Palang Tod). These cultural and industrial

changes are ways for post-liberalized India to express at one and the same time its fascination with and negotiation of the morals of sexuality. Women's empowerment is strongly downplayed, and questioning of morals is hardly present, which shows a media that mainly seeks to stimulate desire rather than to encourage thoughtful consideration. Sometimes, minority forms of resistance do get shown, for instance in the queer stories of *Gandii Baat*, but the sexual content is still usually dominant over the narrative and the thematic areas, and this is also the case in reference to the consumption patterns of the audience and the socio-cultural environment that accepts voyeuristic pleasure as regular content.

6.5. COMMERCIALIZATION OF DESIRE AND GENDERED SPECTATORSHIP

Commercial logic of soft-porn economies is the main factor influencing both the visual aesthetics and narrative structures. The dataset clearly indicates that platforms like ULLU, ALTBalaji, and MX Player are following a plan where visual eroticism is given priority over narrative depth which indirectly leads to the continuation of gendered modes of spectatorship. Basically, to explain this economy, one could use the phrase commodification of desire where visually, female bodies are seen as the main point of attraction, rather than being complex subjectivity carriers. This point could be more emphasized by the example of shows like *Charmsukh: Jane Anjane Mein* and *Saali Aadhi Gharwali*, which show a male gaze dominating and an objectifying visual regime consisting mostly of close-ups of fragmented body parts and a strong emphasis on erotic spectacle. In such stories female characters are simply transformed into objects of male desire with barely any narrative role. As a result, it becomes apparent that the main objective is not storytelling but simply stimulating and holding the viewers which fits the platform-driven revenue models. The web series *Riti Riwayat (Wife on Rent, Water Wives)* are quite similar on this, where the usual patriarchal gaze is made a means to eroticizing culturally-based practices. Here, women are shown with very little freedom or choice, especially within oppressive social traditions. These traditions are also sexualized, turning patriarchy into a form of entertainment. In *Palang Tod: Gaon Ki Garmi*, the voyeuristic camera style objectifies the female character, making her apparent empowerment feel shallow and controlled by the male gaze. *Mastram* presents women mainly through male fantasy, reducing them to objects of desire rather than emotional individuals. Among these series, *Gandii Baat* shows limited female empowerment, but this is often weakened by objectifying visuals, creating only a "pseudo-agency."

The diagram (figure 11) presents a conceptualization of how digital streaming platforms turn desires into commodities through algorithmic selection, visual language, and storytelling techniques. It shows a cyclical arrangement in which platform decisions, sexualized pictures, and male-dominated narratives merge together to support women as objects of male pleasure, broaden the male gaze into algorithmic and industrial aspects of digital media consumption.

Figure 11

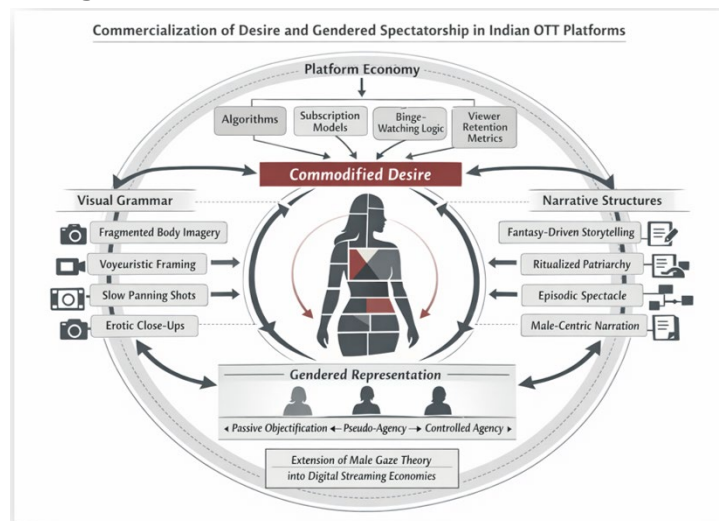


Figure 11 Systemic Circuit of Commodified Desire in Indian OTT Platforms

6.6. SOFT-PORN ECONOMY AS A SYSTEM OF CONTROLLED AGENCY:

The analysis of different Indian OTT soft-porn web series shows that female agency is presented in a controlled and limited way. Women characters may appear bold, confident, or independent, but their freedom is often shaped to support erotic storytelling and visual pleasure. Their choices and actions are designed mainly to attract viewers through voyeuristic visuals and sexual content rather than to develop strong or meaningful characters. OTT platforms compete heavily for audience attention, and this competition encourages the production of content that keeps viewers continuously engaged. As a result, many soft-porn web series use repetitive erotic storytelling, where small changes in plot or characters are introduced mainly to maintain curiosity, while the main focus on visual pleasure remains unchanged. Story progression and character development often become secondary and act only as tools to justify continuous erotic scenes. This directly connects with RQ4, which examines how Indian OTT soft-porn web series use erotic storytelling and voyeuristic visuals to control female agency and reinforce gender stereotypes. The findings reveal that women are frequently shown through fragmented body shots, voyeuristic camera angles, slow tracking visuals, and fantasy-based narratives that place the viewer in a dominant position. Such techniques reduce women to objects of visual consumption instead of presenting them as complete individuals with emotional depth or independent identity. Similarly, narratives based on customs, rituals, or forbidden desires normalize objectification by presenting it as part of culture, fantasy, or entertainment. Although female agency appears visible at the surface level, it remains carefully controlled within male-centered erotic frameworks. Overall, these visual and narrative strategies create episodic spectacles of desire, where erotic attraction becomes more important than meaningful storytelling. In this way, these web series reinforce traditional gender stereotypes while creating only an illusion of female empowerment.

7. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study supports and expands Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze theory. While Mulvey focused on traditional cinema and camera techniques, this study shows that OTT platforms have created a new, technology-driven form of the gaze. Today, algorithms, binge-watching systems, and subscription models shape what viewers watch and enjoy. Erotic content becomes a powerful tool because it quickly attracts attention and increases repeated viewing. The study argues that the gaze is no longer controlled only by the camera or storytelling, but also by platform algorithms that decide what content is promoted and consumed. As a result, women's objectification becomes part of the digital media system itself. Overall, OTT soft-porn web series prioritize erotic spectacle over strong storytelling. Voyeuristic camera work, fragmented narratives, fantasy-driven plots, and objectifying visuals reduce female agency and push narrative depth into the background. These platforms not only reflect existing gender inequalities but also strengthen them within the digital attention economy, where desire is packaged as repeatable and profitable entertainment.

8. CONCLUSION

A narrative and gaze analysis of the six selected web series reveals that erotic spectacle is consistently prioritized over narrative coherence. Sexual scenes frequently function as climactic moments, while plot development often remains weak, repetitive, or formulaic. Female characters are largely portrayed as passive objects of desire, with limited agency and only occasional moments of resistance. Camera techniques such as slow panning, objectification of the frame, and male-centered gaze work together to promote voyeurism. Besides the dialogue-to-action ratios heavily favoring physical over verbal storytelling, even series that try narrative complexity or subversive changes, such as queer stories in *Gandii Baat* or the authorial views in *Mastram*, are basically filled with erotic scenes. The use of rural settings again and again, the way of thinking that is breaking taboos, the ritual of sexual scenarios all point to larger socio-cultural issues making voyeuristic pleasure the norm and showing the commercialization of erotica of Indian OTT platforms. In general, these findings show that voyeuristic aesthetics continually disrupt traditional storytelling and reshape digital narratives to favor spectacle over thematic, emotional, and narrative depth. It signals a potential "death of narrative" in selected Indian voyeuristic web series.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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