

# A STUDY OF REPRESENTATION OF TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY IN MEDIA INDUSTRY

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**ABSTRACT-** This article analyzes how transgender community is depicted in numerous print and visual media. The strategy adopted by the researchers is quantitative whereby the researcher has analyzed specific case studies and conducted an opinion survey based on the topic. The target of these analyses is to know and study the representation of transgender people in media and also the judgments and prejudices faced by them from society. Findings indicate journalistic practices accommodate transgender identity and expression, but efforts to provide more multi-dimensional representations of this marginalized community are still needed.

**KEYWORDS:** Transgender Community, Media Representation, Audience Research, Individual and Society

## INTRODUCTION

Media is a set of communication tools that are accustomed deliver data to a large number of individuals. It's become a primary education tool currently. TV shows and films aren't the sole sources of media that are influencing our senses. Different media like newspapers, magazines, web and books also influence an individual. Whereas some programs are created to educate public, they are doing not always prefer to walk off with that data.

False assumptions will become prejudices once strengthened and might cause discrimination. If consumers base their expectations on what they watch on media, they're at risk of have wrong assumptions regarding varied cultures.

So media influences individuals in a way that it's strengthened in consumer minds whether or not the facts are true or not. The media affects the way we have a tendency to act and assume. It offers a profound influence on the behavior of its audience. It affects the physical self, the emotions, the psychological side, and even the spiritual stand of the many individuals.

One negative influence will trigger another negative impact and this may cause a series of reaction resulting in destruction of values in society. The best way to divert these prejudices is through correct education of the masses. Once the media starts representing a culture or circumstance that needs a lot of information and understanding, drawbacks arises

There are several diverse communities that suffer through the mis presentation of media. One such community is that the transgender community who are twisted by the portrayal of transgender characters in media. They are largely figures that are laughed at. Several haven't disclosed their identities for the concern of rejection. A number of them lose their jobs, friends and even their families because of the incorrect prevailing within the society. It's inconceivable to wear a mask and live as some other person. They're also humans who have emotions and feelings, good days and bad days, dreams and hopes in life. People who haven't met a transgender can have any vivid plan or understanding regarding their scenario.

Naturally, they have a tendency to believe the media portrayals.

Before starting with this thesis, it's necessary to have a short information regarding transgender.

According to GLAAD's media reference guide, "transgender" is defined as "an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth." (GLAAD's Media Reference Guide) The transgender community is unbelievably diverse. A number of them take into account themselves as male or female gender queer, non-binary, gender fluid, bisexual etc.

Even though the visibility of transgender community has multiplied, the challenges and difficulties faced by them are still prevailing within the society. Per the organization of Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the challenges faced by transgender community are:

- \* Lack of legal protection
- \* Poverty
- \* Harassment and Stigma
- \* Anti-transgender violence
- \* Barriers to health care
- \* Identity documents.

While activists try and notice remedies to those inequalities, change cannot return early on for transgender individuals. Positive pictures of transgender individuals within the media and society continues to create a crucial distinction, however it's not enough once it comes to marginalized

Communities like transgender. In India there are a great deal of socio- cultural teams of transgender individuals like hijras/ kinnars, et al. transgender identities like- shiv-shaktis, jogtas, Jogappas, Aradhis, Sakhi etc. However these are not the only transgender individuals, however there could also be those that don't belong to any of the teams however are transgender persons on an individual basis. The Constitution of India provides the fundamental right to equality and doesn't tolerate discrimination on the idea of sex, caste, creed of religion. In 2014, the Supreme Court of India recognized the transgender because the Third Gender. The court directed national and state governments to redress the discrimination suffered by transgender individuals by recognizing them as a political candidate minority, reserving jobs under the govt. and admission to academic institutions and medical aid. The effect of media framing on audiences has been significantly studied. "If the media really are stunningly successful in telling people what to think about, they must also exert significant influence over what they think," wrote Robert Entman in 2006

### OBJECTIVES

1. To observe the view of society towards transgender community.
2. To find out how much eager are society on watching transgender oriented films.
3. To study how much media is a powerful medium to set the right image of transgender community in the society.

### HYPOTHESIS

1. Society's attitude towards Transgender community is not positive.
2. Media is powerful medium to portrayal the correct image among the people of the society
3. Media is a source to aware about the Transgender' rights among the society.

### SCOPE OF PAPER

1. Take perspective of society about Transgender Community.
2. Showcase the Transgender issues in front of society through lens of Media

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. To complete the research, Descriptive method using survey and questionnaire practices were adopted.
2. For implementation of survey, 100 sample questionnaires are taken from the different people of different society having age between 18-29 years. This survey is done among male and female both categories.
3. Other aspect of study is done by reviewing few research papers and articles. Some important data is collected by watching selected Bollywood and Hollywood movies released between 2005 - 2016.
4. In this paper collected data has been analyzed and represented in chart and tabular form.

### PORTRAYAL OF TRANSGENDER IN PRINT MEDIA AND ADVERTISEMENT

Print Media has been recorded all through history, and this is the first medium to even inform the public about transgender community. A lot of our behavior and perception are influenced by the images we in see print media. It can be a significant contributor of false and misleading information and data. It's common to see most magazine and newspaper advertisements show photos and images of people are who physically and socially "perfect". Misconceptions on transgender community have blinded people's mind and the way they think. Not until recent years transgender made their way into the limelight through different advertisements. Portrayal of transgender community in print media and advertisements is dealt in this chapter.

### ADVERTISEMENTS

Advertising is an act of practice of promoting a product, service, need, or an idea especially by paid announcements in newspapers and magazines, over radio and television. The primary function of advertising is to persuade people to buy the products. It helps a company to brand their product among their target audiences. Many leading brands have started placing transgender as their ambassadors for their products or services. Now that the transgender is gaining popularity in advertising as a whole, it is an indication of some changes in the Indian society and the way it looks at the transgender community or it's just another topic that the industry is using for publicity. 'The Seatbelt Crew' and 'Six Pack Band' are the two advertisements the researcher chose for the case study.

### THE SEATBELT CREW

A two-minute video shot at a traffic light in Mumbai had gone viral, which received more than 3.4 million views on YouTube. In the video, a group of transgender or hijras (members of India's most prominent transgender community) address a captive audience of drivers stopped at a red light on the importance of wearing seatbelts. Dressed in blue saris they call themselves "The Seatbelt Crew" and mimic the flight-safety instructions of airline cabin attendants, teaching road safety in a video uploaded on May 5, 2014.

The hijra community in India, unlike in any other part of the world is a much worshipped community. Newly married and parents of newborns often seek their blessings for an auspicious beginning, as they are considered 'sacred' and also quite feared at times. But despite that they have no source of employment and often resort to begging at traffic signals to make a living. A majority of them are hence considered a nuisance, especially when they come clapping their hands at traffic signals and public transports asking for money.

The Wall Street Journal went looking for the Seatbelt Crew, and in the process found out that the video was created as part of a public service announcement by advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather. The agency's Creative Director Mr. Abhijit Avasthi said

it created the video in collaboration with music network Channel V. The goal, he said, was to promote road safety and help foster a more positive public image of transgender.

### SIX PACK BAND

Six Pack Band, India's first transgender music band, comprising of six members : Fida Khan, Ravina Jagtap, Asha Jagtap, Chandni Suvarnakar, Komal Jagtap and Bhavika Patil. They won the Cannes Grand Prix Glass Lion award, an award that recognize creative work around gender-related issues- at the 63rd International Festival of Creativity at Cannes in the year 2016. Celebrities such as Hrithik Roshan, Sonu Nigam, Arjun Kapoor and Rahat Fateh Ali Khan were featured in their videos. The band was formed by Y-Films for Red Label, a product by Hindustan Unilever with a motive to break all the misconceptions of the transgender community.

The idea was to create a music band comprising members of the transgender community. Red Label was pitched by Y Films, the 'youth wing' of Yash Raj Films (YRF). The objective was to influence the growing talent in the content space and find a way to incorporate HUL's brands into it.

Initially Y Films team had to face a lot of difficulties for the approval of the idea. Many thought the idea was too bold for a common tea powder. But the idea was to meaningfully integrate the product into this kind of content. "There were times when we were thrown out of societies and buildings because the authorities didn't allow transgender to enter, some would then just break down and cry. There were times when men dressed in saris turned up for auditions," shares Mr. Ashish Patil, Vice President, Y Films.

The members of the band say that after their achievements, their families and communities have been accepting them for what they are. Surprisingly, two of the members, Chandni and Fida had no issues with their families from the beginning. They had supported them all through their transition. All six of them are really passionate about music and want to continue in the band. Being not accepted was the reason they were holding back. With this advertisement, they have come out open in to the light, never to hide again.

### PRINT MEDIA

Print Media refers to paper publications circulated within the type of physical editions of books, magazines, journals and newsletters. A survey conducted by Trans Media Watch in November 2009- February 2010 observed that the majority transgender individuals weren't happy with what was being reported concerning them. If transgender community is shown in a very negative and inaccurate manner significantly in media, it will begin touching their life within the worst possible ways in which. The survey additionally strongly suggests that such representations inspire a minimum of a number of the verbal and physical abuse that transgender individuals experience in their day to day lives which they will be a major factor in family breakdown. Vanitha, a leading magazine in South India, broke all the on top of mentioned wrong ideas concerning transgender after they placed a transgender in their cover page of 2016's July edition. And April fifteen 2016 was another joyous day for transgender when the Supreme Court of India recognized them formally as the third gender. It's considered a major milestone within the history of our nation. The researcher can have a case study on each the above mentioned articles with the following pages.

Vanitha, is a renowned fortnightly magazine in Maharashtra, paved way for an additional milestone after they featured a transgender in their cover photograph of the July edition in 2016. Deepti, a transgender model was the lucky one to be a part of this history. The magazine conjointly carried a close interview concerning Deepti in which she talks concerning her transition and sufferings she faced as she selected this path.

Deepti lived as Shinoj until the age of sixteen. She was teased and abused from people in and out of the family. Later, she left her native and joined a transgender community in Bangalore. She learned performing arts and has become a performer thenceforth. Shinoj underwent SRS (Sex reassignment surgery) and have become Deepti. She eventually won back her family's support.

This feature of transgender within the popular magazine shows how media, print media above all, has started accepting and representing the third gender in the right manner. Supreme Court knowledge transgender as Third Gender. On fifteen April 2014, Justice K. S. Radhakrishnan and A. K. Sikri granted legal recognition to transgender as "third gender" and directed the centre and state government to treat them as socially and educationally backward classes for the aim of allocating special quota for admission to educational institutions and public appointments. The apex court's 2014 ruling on transgender rights was cited to hunt a review of its 2013 decision upholding Section 377 of the Indian penal code that prohibits 'carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal.'

Lawyers seeking a review had then said that though the court has recognized the rights of the transgender community, their gender continued to be criminalized by Section 377. The law affects the rights of the LGBT population; in particular, however its provisions may also be applied to heterosexual citizens. In recognizing the third gender class, the Court acknowledges that basic rights are available to the third gender within the same manner as they're to males and females. Further, non-recognition of third gender in each criminal and civil statute like those with reference to wedding, adoption, divorce etc. is discriminatory to the third gender. Centre and State Governments are directed to take correct measures to provide medical aid to transgender individuals within the hospitals and also to provide them with separate public toilets and other facilities. Further, they have been directed to operate separate HIV treatment measures for transgender individuals. Concerning two million transgender live in India, wherever the term hijra is usually used to describe eunuchs, transgender individuals, transsexuals, cross-dressers and transvestites. Most of them face discrimination and abuse within the society. The Court directed all governments to take steps to resolve issues like fear, shame, social pressure, depression and social stigma faced by transgender. The Court notes that these

declarations are to be read in light of the Ministry of Social Justices and powerment expert Committee Report on problems with reference to transgender individuals.

### **PORTRAYAL OF TRANSGENDER IN TELEVISION AND MOVIES**

In this chapter, the researcher will analyze samples from the mini screen and silver screen and how they have represented the third gender. Movies and soap operas have always influenced audience's thoughts. The visual representation of different characters, cultures, tradition etc persuades the minds of audience even if it is accurate or not. Many divisions of the society have always been stereotyped in these mediums. Going back in time, transgender were always misrepresented in these mediums. They were represented mostly as comic figures or as criminals.

#### **TELEVISION**

Television is one of the most common forms of media. According to TV Technology, a digital website, it was found that 79% of the total households in the world have at least one television in their house. This clearly depicts how the rate has increased in television viewers. Characters are serialized and plot lines are either stretched out to fit a season's worth of episodes or condensed to fit a half-hour time slot. In this section, the researcher has chosen an American comedy-drama series 'Transparent' and also discusses on how Mr. Jazz D'souza, a transgender, made it to the popular Malayalam dance reality show 'D 4 Dance'.

#### **TRANSPARENT**

As the name suggests, the television show is about a 'transgender' parent. Transparent, created by Jill Soloway, is an American comedy-drama series which was screened on February 6, 2014. The story is about a family from Los Angeles and their lives following the discovery of their father as a transgender.

The creator of the show, Jill Soloway, was inspired by her father, who in reality was belonging to the transgender community. Jill Soloway wanted to use this series to explore the ideas of gender identity. And as part of the show, she enacted a "transformative action program", where transgender applicants were hired in preference to gender ones. So all the bathrooms on set were gender-neutral.

Over eighty transgender people worked on the show including transgender consultants as well as some co-producers. The series, surprisingly, unlike other series, did not focus on Maura's (the transgender parent) transition stories, how she faced her new obstacles, or gave insights on what it's like to be a transgender. Instead, the story develops as Maura and her spoiled children deals with the whole situation and her parenting. Which broke the stereotypical plot run as expected by the audience as well as the channels?

#### **MS.JAZZ D' SOUZA –THE TRANSGENDER CONTESTANT**

Jazz D'Souza, a Malayali transgender performer won many hearts through the dance reality show D3 Dance, Mazhavil Manorama, a channel under the Malayala Manorama Productions. It provided a tremendous platform to Jazz, who had run away from her family some years ago. Her family did not accept her for what she had become. She moved to Mumbai where she worked as a bar dancer for some time. She underwent a sexual reassignment surgery and was bed ridden for several months.

Jazz's classmates used to make fun of her feminine behavior and mannerisms when she was a kid. She ran away from her house so that her family wouldn't have to live in shame of having a transgender in the family.

This story came out in the open only after Jazz was presented in the world through the show. The show producers also did an initiative for transgender by making an album out of Jazz's story, which also showcased her talents of acting and dancing. This album "Story of a transgender life" was supported and shared by Varun Dhawan and Khushboo in social media.

#### **MOVIES**

A movie of Film is the art of simulating experiences to communicate ideas, stories, and perceptions through strong visuals. The massive influence that film has on today's society, Movies. Everyone watches them. Everyone enjoys them. From psychological thrillers to romcoms, film is a part of everyday life and the industry is developing and growing every single day. Word Counter

#### **ADVERTISEMENT**

The changes in the opinion of the Society, the difficult audience's morality and change in the viewer's judgment are influenced by representing of the society in the films. Transgender characters are always represented as victims or conventional cinema's villains. Due to these negative exposes, they have to face the discrimination problem in the society and also they are afraid to come out of fear of misbehavior and rejection by the society. Fortunately, in the past few decades, Transgender have emerged as a new identity in the society.

Brandon Teena (1998), The Danish Girl (2015), Transamerica (2005), Tangerine (2015), Paris Is Burning (1990), Laurence Anyways (2012), Gulabi Aina(2003), Ardahnari(2017) etc . Movies are Hollywood and Indian movies which portray transgender character.

"Arddhanaari" was south Indian movie was released in 2016 and This was Vigilant action drama film written and directed by Bhanushanker Chowdary made in Telugu language. The film stars newcomers Arjun Yajath as Transgender and Mouryaani in lead roles. The film was dubbed into Hindi under the same name by Wide Angle Media Pvt. Ltd. Arddhanaari movie revolves around the character, who takes the mask as Transgender and lead the fight against social unfairness and turns punisher as well.

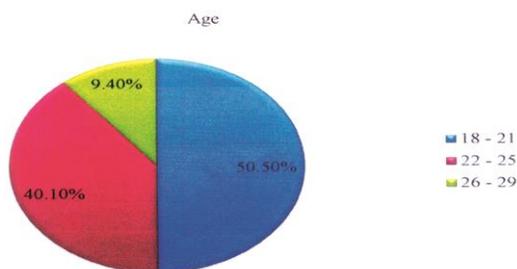
"Brandon Teena" was a real person who was assaulted and murdered in Falls City, Nebraska, in 1993. The film's director, Kimberly Pierce, had done an extensive research on this case before starting with the movie. She also admits that she took

creative liberty in the actual story to write the screenplay. The film made people aware of the transgender community and the violence constantly faced by transgender individuals in their everyday life. The film's brutal rape and murder are tragic and they greatly affected the audiences across the world. And it was the first time a transgender character was seen as the hero of a story. Wrong concepts or portrayals indirectly warn the transgender community that if they reveal their identity publically, they will be rejected or bullied by people, potentially by their own families. Many activists have voiced their opinion against the misrepresentations in various medium. Wrong portrayals do more harm than not being represented.

**SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

The project is based on a study of representation of transgender in media and as mentioned earlier, the researcher has adopted quantitative analysis method. It is based on a survey where data was collected from 40 random individuals from various age groups. The data was collected through a questionnaire, containing various attributes relating to the study.

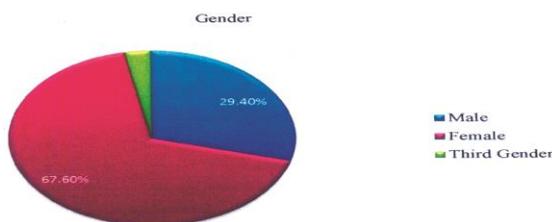
**AGE:**



**Fig 1: Age**

The above pie chart (Figure 1) gives a pictorial representation of the age composition of the data. The age composition of the respondents of the survey is from 18-29. 50.50% of the study, received data from the age group of 18 to 21, 40.10% from the age group of 22 to 25 and 9.40% people from the age group of 26 to 29. This clearly indicates the rising urge in the younger age group (18 to 21) to take active participation in the study. The age group 22 to 25 also received considerable number of respondents, though not as much as even half of the age group of 18 to 21, still indicating their perspective on the characteristics of the changing scenario.

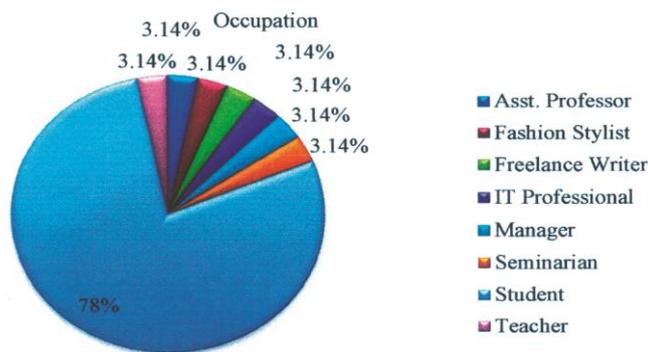
**GENDER:**



**Fig 2: Gender**

The above pie chart (Figure 2) gives a pictorial representation of the gender composition of the data. The data for the study was collected from 40 individuals, 67.60% being female and 29.40% being male. And the survey was taken by 3% of the transgender community too. This shows the participation of all three genders in the society.

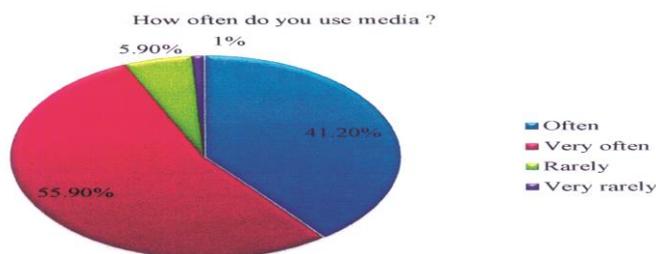
**OCCUPATION:**



**Fig 3: Occupation**

The above pie chart (Figure 3) gives a pictorial representation of the occupational composition of the data. As can be seen, 78% of the respondents are students and the rest are employed in different areas of interest. The data may thus be implicated to be a more or less appropriate mixture of the employed and student community of the society, which are fundamentally the future of the social order. However, the relevance of the factor of occupation with regard to one's perspective on the subject matter of the study has not been implicated or interpreted in the study as one among its objectives.

**HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE MEDIA?**



**Fig 4: Percentage of People Using Media**

The above graph (Figure 4) gives us a pictorial representation showing how often people use media. From the data, it is apparent that most of the people use media very often in their daily life. Furthermore, it was found that 55.9% of the people who took the survey are quite active in the media. People who use media are very less compared to the other categories.

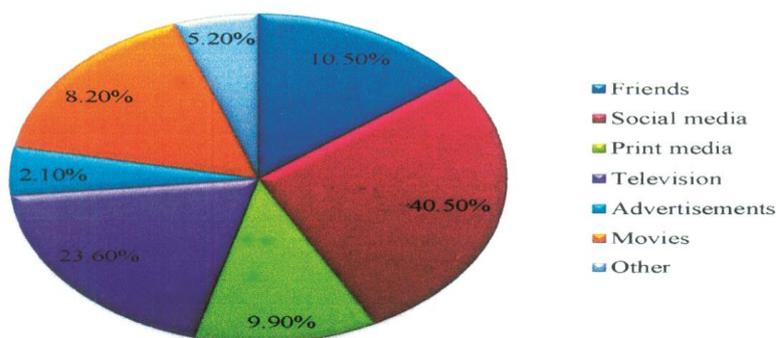
**DO YOU KNOW ABOUT TRANSGENDER?**



**Fig 5: Percentage of People Who Knows About Transgender**

From the pie chart below (Figure 5), it is understood that 96% of the people who took the survey knows about transgender in a way or other. Only 3% weren't sure about transgender.

**HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT TRANSGENDER?**

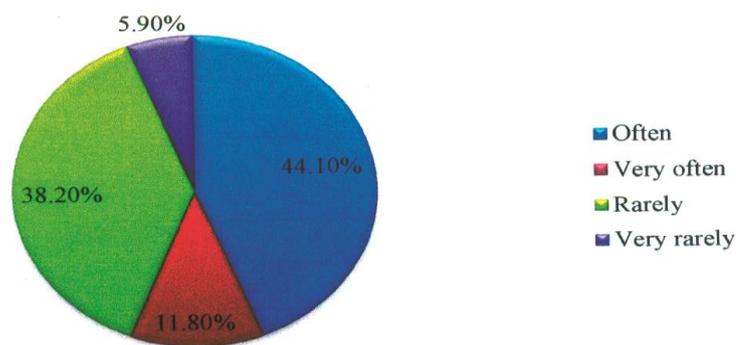


**Fig 6: Mediums through Which People Knows About Transgender**

The above graph (Figure 6) gives us a pictorial representation of different mediums through which people knows about transgender. The majority of the data has been collected from people who use social media. Another 23% knows about transgender through television. People who are aware about transgender through movies are more compared to the percentage of people who know them through print media and advertisements.

**HOW OFTEN DO YOU SEE/HEAR ITEMS ABOUT TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN THE INDIA?**

How often do you see/hear items about transgender people in the media?

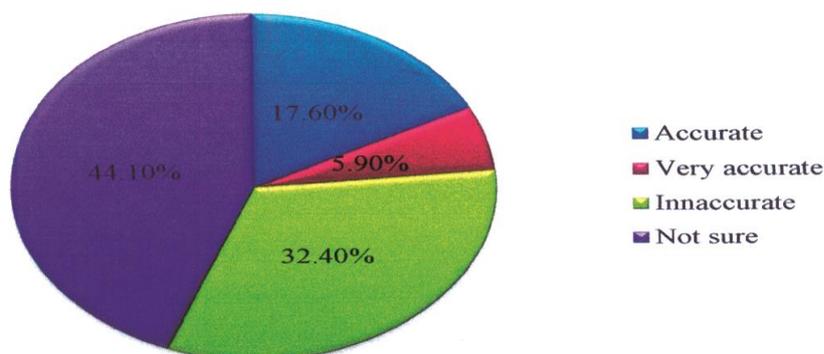


**Fig 7: Transgender Reports Found in Media**

From the above pie chart (Figure 7), the researcher found out that 44.10% of the people often hear or see items about transgender people in the media, while alarmingly over 38.20% of the people rarely hear or see about transgender people in the media. On a positive note, 11.80% of the people very often hear or see items about transgender people in the media.

**HOW ACCURATE WOULD YOU SAY THESE MEDIA PORTRAYALS ARE ABOUT TRANSGENDER?**

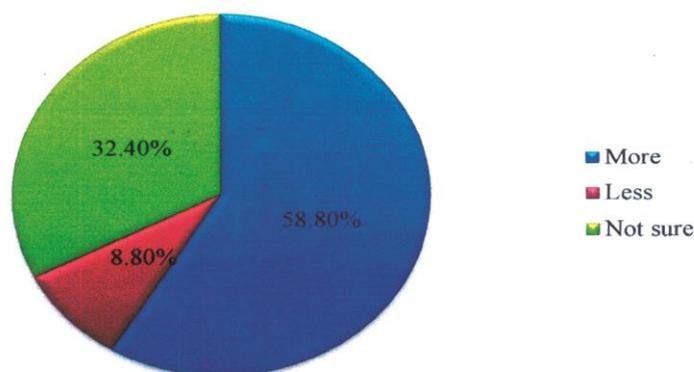
From the pie chart (Figure 8) below, the researcher found out that 44.10% of the people are not sure on the accuracy of media portrayals about transgender people in the media, while alarmingly over 32.40% of the people find such portrayals inaccurate. On a positive note, at least 17.60% of the people find the portrayals as accurate too.



**Fig 8: Accuracy of Transgender Reports**

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OR LESS TRANSGENDER REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA?**

Would you like to see more or less transgender representation in the media?

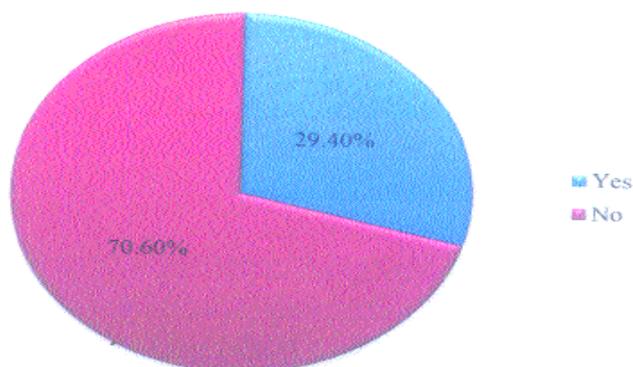


**Fig 9: Transgender Representation**

From the above pie chart (Figure 9), the researcher found out that 58.80% of the people would like to see more transgender representation in the media, while only 8.80% of the people would want lesser representation. It was also noted that 32.40% are not sure whether they want more or less representation.

**DO YOU KNOW TRANSGENDER PERSONALITY?**

Do you know any Transgender personally?



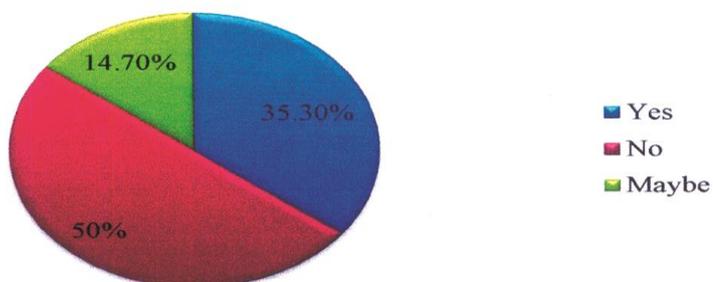
**Fig 10: Percentage of People Who Knows Transgender Personally**

From the above pie chart (Figure 10), the researcher found out that 70.59% of the people know transgender/s personally, while only 29.41% of the people know transgender personally.

**ARE YOU AWARE OF THE TRANSGENDER RIGHTS ISSUED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA?**

From the pie chart (Figure 11) below, the researcher found out that alarmingly 50% of the people are not aware of the transgender rights issued by Government of India. Whereas, only 35.29% are aware of these rights.

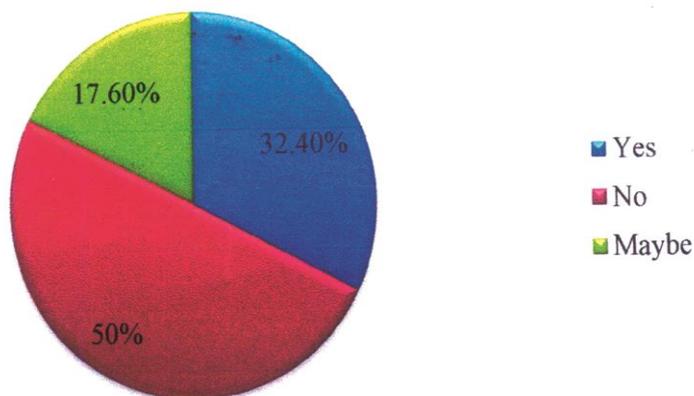
Are you aware of the transgender rights issued by the Govt. of India?



**Fig 11: Percentage of People Aware of the Transgender Rights**

**ARE YOU AWARE OF THE DIFFERENT EXISTING TRANSGENDER COMMUNITIES EXISTING IN MAHARASHTRA ?**

Figure 12 Percentage of people aware about Transgender communities in Maharashtra



**Fig 12: Percentage of People Aware About Transgender Communities in Maharashtra**

From the above pie chart (Figure 12), the researcher found out that again alarmingly 50% of the people are not aware of the transgender communities in Maharashtra. Only 32.4% of the participants are aware of these communities.

### WHAT IS YOUR APPROACH TOWARDS THE THIRD GENDER IN OUR SOCIETY?

The participants were asked an open question in the survey. Each answers received were positive. It shows the support the transgender community has in the current scenario. It also shows the change in negative reviews that they have gained through time. Most of the comments that were received were, to treat the community with dignity and respect because they are also human beings just like any other individual.

### CONCLUSION

Transgender people have the same right to be treated with accuracy, dignity and respect as anybody else. They have the same right to live their lives free from harassment. They also face risks that the majority of the population does not have to contend with. By and large, the media was unethical in the past and has definitely changed their views about transgender community over time. Transgender people are used to sensationalize stories and to pull in higher ratings so producers can make more money. This co-opting comes at a cost. Stereotypes are employed and treated as valid assessments of masses, and also the struggles faced by the transgender community are downplayed and treated as very little over comedic props. These ideas then become strengthened in viewers, who don't have any other information of what it means to be transgender. Media won't offer more responsible and honest portrayals of transgender characters till the audience demands it of them.

The advertisements brought out a very positive image of the transgender community. The advertisements that came up and are coming up in media are breaking the assumptions of the society about transgender. 'Six Pack Band' and 'The Seatbelt Crew' brought the community into a better image. People now understand that they too are good humans. Print media in the past, depicted the transgender community in a negative image. This habit of journalists has changed over time with many activists trying so hard to save the community. Journalists are only to write factual and accurate reports on any matter. Otherwise, it is against the ethics that they follow. Also, in the survey, it was found that 50% of the respondents did not know about the transgender rights issued by the Indian Government. Print media has the responsibility to let the people know about the changes in the rights and regulations. By large, the participants want to see more of transgender representation in media.

After analyzing the survey of 40 random individuals, the researcher found out that people were mostly in support of the transgender community. They wanted more of transgender representation in media. But the respondents were not sure if the portrayal of the audience is opening up to see new changes in the society. These representations have a critical impact on the society and transgender community.

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