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Manisha Koirala's Celebrity Persona: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study delves into the life and career of actress Manisha Koirala, particularly focusing on authenticity, philanthropy and activism, ageing, and scandal. The study explores Manisha Koirala's public persona, her active engagement in philanthropic activities, her perceived authenticity, and her career in the film industry. Furthermore, this research explores the challenges and difficulties posed by ageing and how she is dealing with them in her life and career. It also studies how she reacts to the scandal in the media and how it shapes her image in the public eye after the scandal. The research used case study as the methodology to study several aspects of Manisha Koirala's life and career by gathering information from various sources, such as news stories, media reports, her public statements, and interviews. The findings of this study are that through her acting and activities, she is an authentic celebrity and takes the scandal news positively without reacting or embracing the ageing process.

INTRODUCTION

Manisha Koirala was born in 1970 into a political family; her grandfather was the former Prime Minister of Nepal (Nworie, 2024). She studied in Vanarasi, Delhi, and Mumbai. Manisha Koirala started her career as an actress in a Nepali movie named "Pheri Betaula" in 1989 and continued her acting career by playing blockbuster movies such as Saudagar, A Love Story, Agni Sakshi, Khamoshi: The Musical, and others that also became blockbusters (Thakkar, 2023). She has played in more than 64 movies, and she is continuing her career in the latest movies. Similarly, she has received many awards: 4 Filmfare Awards in 2001, the Gorkha Dakshina Bahu Award, and other 18 awards in various fields (Sangroula, 2023).

In 2010, Manisha married in a traditional way with a businessman from Nepal named Samrat Dahal, but they got divorced in 2012. While giving an interview to the media outlet News Nation, she revealed that the reason behind her unsuccessful marriage was herself (Kaur, 2017). In 2012, it was discovered that she had stage IV ovarian cancer. On the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre website, she talked about the incident and said that, like the character in the movie, she asked her doctor to remove it and discard it. In 2012 and 2013, Manisha Koirala had treatment at Memorial Sloan Kettering in New York for advanced ovarian cancer (Koirala, 2018). Koirala also appeared in Rajkumar Hirani's biography Sanju, starring as Nargis, Sanjay Dutt's mother. She also appeared in the Prasthanam Hindi remake of the political thriller Do Paise Ki Dhoop, Chaar Aane Ki Baarish. Manisha shared her experiences of going to Bollywood movies with her political family. She believes that her acting career has broadened her knowledge as she gets the opportunity to meet and talk with many people

worldwide (Kaushal, 2022).

This study aims to do a case study on Manisha Koirala's life, delving into her film career to see how authentic a celebrity she is, her achieved personality, her activism and philanthropic activities, her ageing, and scandals in the film industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Celebrities became popular through different channels, their works, and their efforts. And this is different from the various fields of celebrity. In the film industry, celebrities are not only known by the public for their acting skills but also for their authenticity, how real they are on the reel, their activities and activism, their lifestyle, and the scandal. Olugboyega (2023) states that celebrities love the scandal to remain in the spotlight to attract the media and the audience. Celebrities are considered the ideal people; through their work, many followers or fans get motivation and appreciation. The public always wants their loved celebrities to be authentic and real, and they believe whatever they show to the public should be real, not a fantasy. Being fans, they have so many expectations of their celebrity. Dyer (2010) believes that celebrities have different identities and behave differently in different places, from the red carpet to brand promotions or interviews. They don't have fixed identities; they behave according to the situation and place to place. Celebrities who are real are always praised by the audience, who take them as role models in their lives.

According to Dyer (2010), the present period of celebrity development differs from the traditional one. Celebrities had to be required to put in a lot of work and get followers via their performing skills, but with the rise of social media, the idea of celebrity has changed.

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Nowadays, people take reality TV winners, TikTok stars, and YouTube vloggers as micro-celebrities. Terri Senft coined the term “microcelebrities, which means those people or celebrities who earned fame from social media sites (Usher, 2020). Some people become celebrities for a day, then disappear, and they cannot continue their name and fame. They choose the hype type of issues and use the social media platform for fame (Hou, 2018). Whereas most people try different strategies to continue their fame, they do YouTube vlogging to show how transparent they are in life. And people also wanted to see their authenticity and their real lives by seeing their blogs every day. Through these YouTube videos, celebrities can earn a good amount of money and fame. The celebrities are also focused on the economy. And it depends on the celebrities what they choose—to be authentic or to earn money and fame. They do brand endorsements of various products like makeup, clothing, and soft drinks. Many celebrities are hired by the advertising agency for brand production, as people trust the celebrity and buy the product if they see the celebrity promoting it. The study showed that people find celebrity-sponsored ads more appealing than those without celebrity endorsements, and that respondents’ perceptions and purchasing decisions were strongly impacted by celebrity attributes, leading them to purchase goods and services that celebrities promoted (Ahmed *et al.*, 2015).

The recent example of how celebrities spread fake news about her death. Model and reality TV star of India Poonam Pandey’s team confirmed on February 2, 2024, that she died from cervical cancer, but on Saturday evening, Poonam Pandey clarified in a video on an Instagram account that the fake death announcement was an effort to initiate a conversation and spread awareness about cervical cancer (Naaz, 2024). The media and her fans are pouring anger on her, calling her the worst publicity stunt ever. So, to be in fame and to get attention, the celebrity can do anything to play with the sentiments of fans and create hoax news.

We can see several celebrities who have the name and fame have their own stories and struggle for success. Rojek (2016) defines various kinds of celebrities. An ascribed celebrity is the kind of celebrity who gets their name and fame from their family background and lineage. They get their name and fame not from their efforts but from their family legacy, marriage, and going viral on social media. Whereas an achieved celebrity is that kind of celebrity who gets name and fame through their talent and skills in fields like acting, music, and sports. An attributed celebrity is the kind of celebrity who gets fame through media attention and focus. For instance, a Nepali girl who is being called ‘Tarkariwali’ (who carries vegetables to the grocery shop) has set a million hearts a-flutter after a picture of hers went viral online on social media. In a day, she became a celebrity, and various media took her interview and offered to play a Nepali movie. And celebtoids are the kind of celebrities who are famous

only for a short time. The winners of the lottery are an excellent example of this; following their win, they become well-known in the media, but eventually, both the public and the media begin to forget about them.

In “Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America,” Gamson (1992) examines how the media shapes the status of celebrities. He talked about how celebrities are portrayed and maintained by the media. Dyers (2010) also believes that a celebrity’s image is crafted through various forms of labour, such as scripting and acting. Celebrities’ lives have changed with the development of media, especially social media. The way they are portrayed and covered through news articles and social media posts. And there has been a shift in how they are discussed and portrayed by the public. Media houses these days have assigned reporters to keep an eye on celebrities, and most of the reporters wait in the airport or near the house of the celebrity to click their photos and videos. Through this, they make news and upload short videos, through which people start reacting to their physical appearances, makeup, and dress style. Due to the media’s attention, various types of celebrities have emerged from the acting field to reality TV, and it has been advantageous to the celebrity to get fame all the time. There is an increasing trend of celebrities showing their ups and downs, processes, and activities in the media. So, there is a relationship between the media and celebrities.

A celebrity always wants to be in the media, whether through their acting, activism, advertisements, paparazzi, or scandal. A report by the Pew Centre titled “Public blames for too much celebrity coverage” states that 87% of the public says the news coverage of celebrities’ scandals is excessive. The audience also loves to read the scandal of the celebrity more than their activism or social work news, and sometimes celebrities want to be in scandal for publicity, whereas sometimes they face scandal unknowingly. Holmes (2005) talks about how celebrities are constructed and mediated through the media. The media also needs gossip and news from celebrities’ sides so that they can get attention from the public. Van Den Bulck & Claessens (2013) say that every day, celebrities’ sex lives capture the attention of media and audiences. The media made the gossip and news a scandal. There are various kinds of scandals, such as sex scandals, divorce scandals, extramarital affair scandals, and drug scandals. In 2002, one actress from Nepal named “Shreesha Karki” committed suicide because of the sex scandal. Her nude photo was published in a newspaper in Nepal, saying that life is filthy. After her death, many protests were held in Kathmandu, and the editor of the newspaper went out of contact for some months (Reporters Nepal, 2019). The late Shreesha was not able to handle these scandal issues, so she chose that way. But there are some celebrities, so take this scandal positively and do their work. Another example of that is the Namrata Shrestha sex video that was made public, but she didn’t react to that topic (Sarkar, 2009). In Nepal, this video was highly criticised, as this

kind of scandal is rare and new to the public. The next is the divorce scandal. Celebrities who have divorced from their partners become gossip topics for the media and the public. Gamson (1992), in his writing, has discussed the framing of the media and how they convey information by adding spice to the news. The media and the people named the couple Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie “Brangelina.” They were the most loved couple by the audience. In 2016, Angelina filed a divorce case against Brad Pitt; all fans, audiences, and the media industry were shocked by this news (Sanchez, 2023). And this news was in the headlines and on the cover pages of many media outlets for several months.

Many celebrities who undergo cosmetic surgery do look good because they are under the pressure of the audience, fans, or society. Due to this societal pressure and pressure from the media and people, they do cosmetic surgery to look good and to get compliments from the public. As fans or followers, they should accept their loved celebrities as they are, but people want something different from their celebrities. One example from the Hollywood movie “Bridget Jones’s Diary” is actress Renée Zellweger, who faced intense scrutiny and criticism from the media for her wrinkles on her face (Kester, 2021). The media focused on her wrinkles and facial structure, saying she was growing old.

Jermyn (2012) says there is a difference in the ages of males and females. Males, despite their age, also play a lead role in the movies, but it is quite opposite in the case of female actresses. Once they get married and have children, they don’t age in movies or any shows, saying that now they are old, so they can’t play a lead role in the movie. The actress or actor also changes the types of roles and opportunities available to them (Jermyn, 2012). They want to play any role, whether antagonists, protagonists, or short roles in the movies. They just want to earn money and want the media to notice their role to get more movie offers. Amitabh Bachchan, a Bollywood actor who is known as King of Bollywood, was a very popular actor and played more than 192 movies. He transitioned from the lead role to the role of father because of his aging. He is now playing the role of father to the actors and actresses.

Most people follow celebrities for beauty purposes. That’s why celebrities also try to be young, but the consequences of cosmetic surgery have been very bad for celebrities. Saint Von Colucci, a Canadian actress, underwent 12 plastic surgeries, and she died of a heart attack while doing the last surgery (Durova, 2003). Even for many celebrities, plastic surgery has turned out to be shocking. Their plastic surgeries have been wrong.

The role of media is very useful in making a celebrity famous. But when the celebrity becomes old or doesn’t look nice, then the media also ignores them and gives priority to the younger celebrities. Dyer (2010) states that there is a shift from traditional to modern celebrity. In traditional times, ageing impacts an individual’s career,

and they used to hide from the media and the public. And it has changed. Celebrities who are living their old lives are also active on social media, sitting live and having interactions with the public. They are making vlogs on YouTube or any social media platforms and earning a decent amount of money to sustain their lives.

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study that delves into the case study of news, interviews, reports, and articles and is selected according to the research objectives. A case study explores real-life experiences and situations in depth (Paparini *et al.*, 2020). Themes such as authenticity, achieved celebrity, ageing, celebrity philanthropy, and scandal. Authenticity was studied and analyzed according to her actions, interactions, news articles published about her, and interviews with her. Achieved celebrity status is accessed and studied by her family background and tenure of work in the film industry. Similarly, ageing is explored through how she has given interviews or the news that has been published about her fitness and health-related perspectives. Whereas celebrity philanthropy is evaluated through her activities and activism in the social sector by helping the people who are in need, and lastly, scandals are studied according to the news articles published about her love, breakup, and marital news. 30 news articles that were published online were collected from 2017 to 2024 for in-depth analysis of the chosen concepts. And all news articles were searched on the internet by using key concepts such as authenticity, achieved celebrity, ageing, celebrity philanthropy, and scandal.

Theoretical Framework

Users and Gratification The theory coined by Elihu Katz and Jay Blumler in 1974 states that people use media for their own purposes and satisfaction (Sridharan, 2022). Through media, seeing the programs or watching the favorite shows of their celebrities fulfils their desires. Celebrities are considered the ideal people; through their work, many followers or fans get motivation and appreciation. People always want their loved celebrities to be authentic and real, and they believe whatever they show to the public should be real, not a fantasy. Being fans, they have so many expectations of their celebrity. They get satisfaction from seeing their movies, songs, and lifestyles, and others praise them for their achievements. People might take her journey and struggle as inspirations and use them as motivational strategies in their careers and lives. Her cancer journey and the experiences she has shared related to it can be useful information for people. In the case of Manisha Koirala, she represents the people and dreams of Nepalese people who want to play in Bollywood movies. She is the role model for many people around the world who also want to pursue a career as an actress. People see Manisha Koirala’s movies, videos, interviews, and posts on social media for entertainment and knowledge purposes and relate their own lives to her.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Authenticity

Manisha Koirala is always open about her life, whether it is family life or professional life. We can call her an authentic celebrity because of the following reasons: Firstly, in 2010, Manisha Koirala married the Nepali businessman Samrat Dahal in the capital city of Nepal (Singh, 2010). Many celebrities from India also attended the wedding, but after six months of marriage, she gave an interview stating that her husband had become her enemy (Naudiyal, 2023). That statement caused a jolt in the media industry in Nepal and India. In 2012, she divorced Samrat Dahal. While talking about her marriage life, she has always been real and shared about her marriage life and why it didn't work. In an interview with Indian media, Mirchi shared about her marriage and motherhood. She always dreamed of happy family life and children and always wanted to enjoy the motherhood journey.

In 2012, after her separation from Samrat Dahal, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and shared everything about her cancer journey. In 2015, she was cancer-free after getting treatment in the USA. At that time, she was active on social media, especially Twitter. Through this social media platform, she shared her photos and videos from every stage. The photos and videos she shared about her cancer journey were praised by her fan following (India TV, 2019). Through her photos and videos, it served as an inspiration to many cancer victims that it can be cured if we get proper treatment and have positive attitudes. But she was criticized by the media for not doing well in Nepal and India. At that point, she said that in the West, there is a good insurance plan and treatment. That's why, following her family's suggestions, she did her treatment in the USA. After the treatment of cancer, she has published a book named "Healed" and written about her cancer journey in it. While inaugurating that book in Pokhara, she said that she has published this book to raise awareness among the people about cancer, her experiences, and how she overcame it (Koirala, 2018). Manisha's truthfulness helped spread awareness about ovarian cancer and the value of early diagnosis and treatment. Similarly, the focus on her journey might have helped others prioritize their health and get regular checkups to identify possible health problems early.

She is working in India and has played in many Bollywood movies, but she has always supported Nepal. In 2020, there were some territorial issues with Nepal and India. She gave her viewpoint, supporting Nepal. After this incident, people also praised her statement that she fearlessly talked about that incident. Manisha Koirala received huge support from Nepali people and celebrities for supporting the decision of the Nepali government (Chaudhary, 2020). However, Indian media criticized her harshly for her support for her motherland. She is still doing many interviews and goes to many political programs to give her speech on contemporary issues in Nepal. Due to her real and transparent behavior towards her fan followers and her country, Nepali citizens want to

see her in politics. Tolson (2001), in his article, said that being yourself is the pursuit of authentic celebrity. She has always been herself and followed her dream by being truthful and always supporting the truth.

But there is one controversial piece of news about Manisha Koirala. In 1994, Mahesh Bhatta, the director of the Criminal movie, published the photo and news in the newspaper stating that Manisha was dead. The director followed the publicity stunt, and he said that in that movie, the heroine was killed. He wrote that as a headline (Singh, 2024). The news was criticized by the public. So, from this news, the question was raised about Manisha's authenticity.

Celebrity Philanthropy and Activism

Manisha gained her new life after winning the cancer, she is also actively working in the social work sector, collaborating with different organizations. In her social work journey, she has campaigned to protect women's rights, stop abuse against them, and prohibit Nepali girls from being trafficked into the prostitute business. In 2015, she was appointed as a UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador and has been actively working to help victims following the earthquake that struck Nepal. With the help of Global College International, Kathmandu, she established the "Manisha Koirala Cancer Education Fund" in 2020 to help the students whose parents have been diagnosed with cancer (DC Nepal, 2020).

Likewise, in Nepal, there is a system where if a family supports one political party, then all the remaining family members support them. But in the case of Manisha Koirala, she is from a Nepali Congress political background; her father and grandfather were in the same party, but she is supporting another party. She does not support her family party but believes in the progress and development of the country by supporting and advocating for different political parties.

Achieved Celebrity

Manisha was born into a wealthy and reputed family in Nepal. Her grandfather was the former prime minister of Nepal, and her father is a politician (Dhruv, 2018). She had so many opportunities in Nepal to establish her career because, in those days, they also had so much power in Nepal. Manisha is an accomplished celebrity; being from a highly reputed family, she chose a different career path. Entering Bollywood was not that easy for her. During her interview in the media, she shared the story of her starting days and how hard it was for her to work 18 hours a day without having zero knowledge of film, makeup, or dress-up sense. She has shared that when the director of the movie said she had bad acting, she tackled that situation and proved that she had good acting and worked hard to prove that (Singh, 2024).

But she has won the hearts of the people through her acting skills. She has a huge fan base in Nepal, India, and around the world. Manisha has 1.5 million followers on Instagram. After her treatment of cancer, she played many Bollywood movies and many TV programs in

Nepal. Through her social media, she is raising awareness on many topics, such as girl trafficking and violence against women.

Scandal

Manisha Koirala in the beginning of her career and while playing a movie called Saudhagar. In an interview, the mother of Manisha Koirala said that the director of that movie, Subash Ghai, sexually assaulted her during the shooting. This news made a headline, and when the media asked Manisha about this, she said she was never saying anything about it, and even she never played the movie of that director (Pinkvilla, 2017).

Manisha Koirala's love life is also quite popular in the media industry. Before her marriage, there was a rumor that she dated 11 men (Jha, 2018). But the most popular of her relationship scandals was with Nana Patekar, a Bollywood actor. While doing the movie Agni Sakshi, Manisha enjoyed the company and care of Nana, and at the time she was in her breakup phase. Nana was already married, so he denied giving divorce to his wife, so their love relationship ended (Lodhi, 2023). And this news of their breakup covered the news media, and many criticized Manisha for dating a man who was already married and had kids.

Likewise, there was a rumor that Manisha Koirala married Amir Khan before marrying Samrat Dahal. Manisha and Amir both played a blockbuster movie, and their pair was loved by the audience. And the media spread the rumor that Manisha and Amir would get married (Hindustan Times, 2023). And after this time, Manisha stopped playing the movie, and this was regarded as her reason not to play the movie.

Manisha Koirala was quite popular with the cat fight with the celebrity named Aishwarya Rai, who is also the Miss World of 1994. Manisha and Aishwarya were both in love with Rajeev. It is said that the model dumped Aishwarya for Manisha. During an interview, Aishwarya said that every two months, Manisha was seeing a different guy (Lekhaka, 2019).

Talking about her drinking scandal. The media caught her drunk at a party, and while giving the interview, she was not able to speak and asked the media not to click on her photos. The media got the content, and that news became so viral that Manisha was not happy in her marriage life, so she started drinking (Khurana, 2023). In an interview, Manisha also revealed that she has an alcohol addiction and that she can't sleep without alcohol. She said, "I think alcohol helps me get rid of my problems and drinking it daily has been my habit." Similarly, in another program, the media also found her drunk, and some of the media posted news that Manisha is lost in her personal life (Koirala, 2018). In her book "Healed," Manisha says that after her cancer battle, she has completely quit alcohol, and she is more focused on meditation these days.

Manisha Koirala shared with the "Mumbai Mirror" that she had a dreamy idea of marriage. Media. She shared that if the partner is not happy and does not want to

stay with each other, it is better to separate. She married the Nepali businessman, Samrat Dahal. That was the time when Manisha was not getting many movies offers, and she got married. After two years of marriage, she revealed that she was not happy with her marriage, and Samrat also blamed Manisha for their failed marriage. And Manisha herself has also said that the failure of her marriage is hers. Manisha was criticized by the media and audiences when she married Samrat Dahal, her former husband, who was 7 years younger than her. The media criticized her, stating that due to the age gap and Manisha being more mature than Samrat, she also failed with her marriage. Likewise, Indian media backlashed her, saying that to gain popularity in Nepal, Manisha shared the new map of Nepal. There is always a dispute between Nepal and India over the land territory, and the former foreign minister shared the new map of Nepal (My Republica, 2020).

Ageing

Manisha Koirala is 53 years old, but she is still working on many movies and web series and participating in various programs. And in these 30 years, she played 100 movies (Hindustan Times, 2024). The Manisha role she used to play before has been changed. She has shifted her leading roles in the movies to the mother and sister of the main actress or actor. In the recent Bollywood movie named Shehzada Released in 2023, she played the role of the actor's mother, and it was also her little role. She played that movie, and after that movie, she got many offers for other movies and web series. And in the case of her, the saying is wrong that when there is ageing, the actress doesn't get any movies or any roles. This is an inspiration for those actresses and celebrities who think age matters a lot in the movie industry. In terms of Manisha, her role has changed, but she is playing an enormous role in movies and series (Giri, 2023). Manisha Koirala has been given the title of natural beauty celebrity in India. People are fans of her acting as well as her natural beauty. She has also adapted that ageing is a natural process, so we must accept that fact. Manisha said she is embracing the natural process of her ageing and told everyone to enjoy it, as once people must be old, it is compulsory. And she even said that age is no barrier to people's success. Recently, the Times of India reported that she has shared her skin care product and how she is looking beautiful with flawless skin. She has said that she doesn't do heavy makeup, drinks a lot of water, uses baby oil to remove her makeup, washes her face with cold water, and applies moisturizer daily (Shukla, 2023). And to remain fit Manisha follows a healthy lifestyle; she goes to bed before 10 p.m., wakes up at 5 a.m., and does yoga, meditation, and physical exercise.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the life and career of actress Manisha Koirala, shedding light on the concepts of authenticity, achieved celebrity, ageing, celebrity philanthropy, activism,

and scandal. Firstly, by exploring news articles, reports, and interviews, Manisha Koirala is an authentic celebrity who has been transparent about her life, career, marital life, and health situation. She has always been open to the public and has accepted her flaws as well. When she had a divorce, she accepted that in the media and in public. Secondly, Manisha is an accomplished celebrity; she has achieved her name and fame due to her hard work. She worked hard for fame. Thirdly, after her cancer treatment, she is actively engaged in social awareness on issues like women's rights, cancer awareness, and activism. And lastly, Manisha Koirala's perceptions of ageing and how she is embracing her ageing can be inspirations for many people. In conclusion, the case study of Manisha Koirala traces the lives of celebrities under public scrutiny. Her career goals and positive attitudes can help people know how to balance the life and career of the film industry.

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