

COMMUNICATING GENDER EQUALITY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: AN ANALYSIS OF INDIAN CORPORATE WEBSITES

MONA GUPTA

Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (India)
mona.gupta@vips.edu

AKSHAY TYAGI

The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group (India)
aksbay14tyagi@gmail.com

Abstract: Covid-19 has been the test of time for corporates to act responsibly toward the sustainable development goal of gender equality. The present research is conducted to understand the representation of gender equality in Indian corporates through their websites during the pandemic of the Covid-19 second wave using the Impression management technique. Impression management taxonomy has been applied to lead the content analysis of the 110 corporate websites from public and private sector companies for a period of six months. It is found that the corporates have been using more assertive techniques than defensive and the private sector has been active in comparison to the public sector in working towards gender equality initiatives. The situation of pandemic resulted in low business and struggle for existence still some companies tried to be gender-sensitive. In a focus group discussion with corporate representatives, it is found that Covid-19 was a difficult situation even for the corporates, but by posting women-centric stories and sharing their concerns, it was possible for an organisation to get a dedicated women workforce. Websites thus can work as a potent corporate communication tool whereby promoting gender equality, a company can be a morale booster for its employees and can gather positive public support.

Keywords: gender equality, pandemic, Covid-19, corporate website, corporate communication.

INTRODUCTION

With the 2030 United Nations Agenda of Gender equality, Sustainable Development Goal 5 stresses the need to “get to justice and inclusion” and to have “economies that work for

ISSN 2283-7949

GLOCALISM: JOURNAL OF CULTURE, POLITICS AND INNOVATION

2022, 2, DOI: 10.12893/gjcp.2022.2.9

Published online by “Globus et Locus” at <https://glocalismjournal.org>



Some rights reserved

all”. In April 2020, the Secretary-General of the UN urged the governments to put the “women and girls at the centre” of all their initiatives as the minimal “gains in gender equality and women’s rights made over the decades are in danger of being rolled back”. Women are the most affected segments during the pandemic and to alleviate the Covid-19 impact, the UN stressed the five key areas which require attention. They are gender-based violence; socially and economically protected packages; supporting and practicing equal sharing of work; leading and participation of women and girls in Covid-19 initiatives, and working on tools considering gender perspectives (UN 2020).

Covid-19 has massively affected the women workforce with an increase in their responsibilities that of family and office due to which many of them are dropping out of work. The estimated job loss is about 1.8 times more than the male loss which is 5.7 per cent for women as against 3.1 per cent for men (McKinsey 2020). The situation is even worst in Indian families where women are still responsible for household chores. According to McKinsey’s *Women in the Workplace 2020* report, the dwindling numbers are more due to “lack of flexibility at work” and a “housework and caregiving burdens due to Covid-19” (McKinsey 2020). Corporates can thus see a pandemic as an alarming sign and should strive to create a just and robust economy and can think big about their contribution towards sustainability. With the pandemic in the background, it is expected to address issues like Covid-19 response planning and decision-making; equal care work, and efforts towards “designing socio-economic plans” (UN 2020) for women and girls along with developing a “flexible and empathetic workplace” (McKinsey 2020). A statement issued by UN Women and W20 urged the G20 Ministers and Governors to prioritise women’s leadership and participation and “preserve women’s jobs and generate new” (UN Women 2020).

Analysing the data between December 2021 and January 2022, gender diversity is just 26 per cent across different sectors in India in a survey conducted with 775 software, retail, and professional services-related companies. Only 25 per cent of a diverse population is not a feasible option for the companies especially when a “diverse workforce fosters creativity and



innovation” (AON 2022). Organisation can be a game changer in terms of “maximising the potential of their women colleagues” as women often are left behind due to “family expectations” in India (Daruwala 2022). According to the Gender Gap report by the World Economic Forum (Global Gender Gap Report 2021), with such a representation of women in the corporates, it would take 135 years to bridge this gender gap. In a survey done with 156 countries, India ranked 140 in terms of analysis done on the basis of Economic participation and opportunity, health, education, and political empowerment. This makes it more pertinent for companies to acknowledge the need to bring gender equality and find ways to overcome the factors causing inequalities and difficulties for women to pursue a professional career. Such a step may be noteworthy in terms of developing a secure work atmosphere paving the way for creativity and sustainability among employees from diverse backgrounds.

An increase in diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) at the higher level in organisations has proven that an increase in the level of gender diversity results in better production, higher profits, enhanced creativity, and a return on the shareholder (Kumar 2021). According to a report by the World Bank, the participation of female labour in India has fallen from 31.85 per cent in the year 2005 to 20.8 per cent in the year 2019. As compared to 805 literate men, only 65 per cent of women are literate. Among all the countries in the world, the labour force participation rate is lowest in India (The World Bank 2019). According to India’s Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), the women’s participation in the workforce is 10.2 per cent on September 2021 which is even lower in urban areas to just 7.8 per cent. Pandemic is one of the recent causes behind the difference. Companies either laid off the women employees or most of them left voluntarily due to crisis (Kumar 2021). The Covid-19 lockdown resulted to the loss of jobs for 17 million (Misra, Patel 2021) to 19.3 million women between the months of March and April 2020 (Abraham, Basole, Kesar 2021). The female employment fell by 43 per cent of its pre-lockdown level as compared to men with 30 per cent (Abraham, Basole, Kesar 2021). Considering the growing awareness of diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) among



Fig.1. *Gender Gap in India by Avatar.*

The Crisis

India has slipped 28 places to 140 among 156 nations in World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021

Estimated income of women in India is 20.7% of the amount earned by men

The economic participation and opportunity gap declined by 3% year on year in 2021

52% of women employees in IT say they are paid 30% less compared to male colleagues

Share of women in professional and technical roles declined to 29%

India has lower levels of female workforce participation in sectors related to STEM at 21%. It was 32% over a decade ago

In senior, managerial positions, the share of women fell to 14.6%

Out of 7 lakh organisations in the EPF directory, only 0.1% invests in diversity solutions

Only 8.9% of firms in the country have female managers at the top

Source: Fortune India.

organisations, the data contradicts the efforts put in to develop gender-balanced workplaces. This clearly emphasises the need to develop better opportunities and incentives for women to be back to work. According to *DivHERsity Benchmarking Report 2019* of India, in data from 300-plus companies, just a quarter workforce is female (Atul Raja 2020). Gender equality means a fair representation of both genders without any prejudice. Gender equality can be instrumental in influencing the decision. It works as the “strategic component of the business as it brings more agility, innovation and aligns the organization towards the needs of the customers” (Cox, Blake 1991). With a mandate from the Companies Act 2013 companies have been ensuring sufficient women’s participation on the board. Besides equal pay for equal work; child care support, active action towards sexual harassment and abuse, and even working with women entrepreneurs all can be seen quite active in Indian corporates. But Covid-19 has created a different situation for women. The pandemic has resulted into the decline of jobs more for women than

Fig. 2. *Diversity Aids Growth.*

Diversity Aids Growth

Highly inclusive companies are likely to hit their financial target goals by up to 120% and have better ROI

A diverse workforce helps an organisation understand the preferences of various customer segments

Diverse companies report 2.5 times higher cash flow per employee

Creating a culture of DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) is a must for building a positive reputation for the brand

Inclusive teams are productive by over 35%

Source: Fortune India.

men in most countries (Kabeer et al. 2021). The percentage of women employed post-lockdown is 23.5 less than being employed in the pre-locked down phase as compared to men (Deshpande 2020).

The lockdown has created a “gender gap in work productivity and job satisfaction” due to the rise in the “housework and childcare” which is suggestive that the “society needs to provide additional support” to the working women (Feng, Savani 2020). Many researches have been conducted in understanding the role of gender equality in the corporates. The studies though used the term gender diversity instead of gender equality but the focus is just on men and women. One study finds the influences of feminism in reinforcing the issue of gender and diversity in the organisation (Vilseche 2017). Another study was conducted to find out the effect of gender diversity on the performance of the firm in terms of economic value added, however, no such influence was found on economic performance (Al-Mamun, Yasser, Entebang, Nathan 2013). A direct relationship has been found between “board gender diversity and corporate environmental violations” (Liu 2018) where with female representation, the corporates are able to reduce the environmental violations. In a similar study of gender

ISSN 2283-7949

GLOCALISM: JOURNAL OF CULTURE, POLITICS AND INNOVATION

2022, 2, DOI: 10.12893/gjcp.2022.2.9

Published online by “Globus et Locus” at <https://glocalismjournal.org>



Some rights reserved

diversity in Indian corporates, the paper confirmed the significant effect on the financial performance of the organization that of the independent gender-diverse boards (Halder, Shah, Rao 2015). In an empirical investigation of public companies in China, the researcher found a “positive role” of women with “at least two seats on the boards” as well as “a further increase in representation of women” in “improving corporate governance along the environmental dimension” (He, Jiang 2019). Another study inspects “35 countries and 24 industries” and discovers a positive correlation between “gender-diverse firms”, and “market valuation and increased revenue” (Zhang 2020).

For corporate communications, using the internet can be the best way for the organization to defend its “organizational interests” (Holtz 2002) and gender equality can be one of those. Point and Singh, 2003 have clearly pointed out the use of websites by the corporates for putting “diversity statement” as a tool to highlight the “diversity management policies” (Point, Singh 2003). Corporate websites have been serving as an important tool of communication as well as helping in realising the transaction objective of the exporters (Dou, Nielsen, Tan 2002). The corporate websites have been found in one of the studies making perceptions for the prospective job applicants by creating a favourable image of “fit in” (Stockdale, William, Arevshatian 2018). A study of the websites of 75 companies in five different countries concluded the concepts of diversity and inclusion branding are “mainstream” and so are “relevant” for the corporates to “appear as an employer of choice” (Jonsen, Point, Kelan, Grieb 2021). Besides, the websites have a significant effect on the customer as it develops trust and indirectly leads to positive word of mouth (Hong, Rimb 2010). The corporate activities catering to social aspects along with environmental come under sustainability where “internet” is a “privileged channel” and the “website has developed in the center for the dissemination of content” where the idea is “to create an interface that offers an adequate fruition of content” (Siano, Conte, Amabile, Vollero, Piciocchi 2016). Windscheid, et al 2016 have also analysed the websites of German corporates using impression management techniques to analyse how truthfully the organizations are communicating their concern about



gender diversity. The present study is thus a replica study of the same conducted with the purpose to contribute to giving a better understanding of the use of corporate websites for the representation of gender equality by the Indian corporates during Covid-19.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Impression management can be defined as a purposive activity meant to control information and a way to make oneself as “socially desirable” (Schlenker, Britt, Pennington 1996). The theory is meant for “social influence and tactics” like assertive techniques whereas the defensive techniques are used for “excuses and justifications” with a purpose to repair for any wrong doing (Zaidman 2007). Though the theory refers to individuals’ efforts of creating desirable behaviour for controlling others but organizations also engage in “self-presentation” (Windscheid, Bowes-Sperry, Jonsen, Morner 2018).

Every organization wants to be seen as favourable to its stakeholders. Even in the case of gender equality, an organization wants to create a positive perception of itself through its actions and then by highlighting the same for creating a “favourable image” (Ginzel, Kramer, Sutton 1992). Impression management thus is a way to create information in order “to shape others’ perceptions” about the organization (Schlenker, Weigold 1992). It is first significant to find out whether the organization wants to show its own “traits, abilities, and accomplishments” (Cialdini 1989) or to “enhance or protect the image of the ones with which it is associated”. Tedeschi and Norman, 1985 defined them as assertive and defensive techniques. Assertive tactics are image builders where the organization tries to build up a positive image by highlighting their work and actions. Defensive techniques are a way to cover for the damage by responding to save itself from adverse situations.

Mohamed used a 2x2 taxonomy (Mohamed et al. 1999) where both direct and indirect ways are used by the firm to present their assertive and defensive aspect. In this study, we are only using direct techniques used by the organization to portray



their assertive and defensive attitudes. The assertive techniques used for this study are Ingratiation, Organizational promotion, Exemplification and supplication. Ingratiation refers to the “strategic behaviour” designed to “control desired rewards” to catch the attention of its stakeholders (Schlenker 1980; Jones, Pittman 1982). This can help in causing the “constituents to be favourably disposed towards” the organization. Organizational promotion is an act of speaking about itself by the organization and through certain action towards gender diversity the company tries to get highlighted (Mohamed, Gardner 1999; Avery, McKay 2006).

Exemplification is an act of setting an example in order to seek respect and admiration for its integrity and morality from diversity related achievements in the organization (Jones, Pittman 1982). Supplication is the act of highlighting the need of collaboration and support towards meeting certain duties where the company shows itself inept and “incapable” (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, Gilstrap 2008). Defensive tactics include Accounts where the organization denies or act innocent in order to protect its image by trying to mitigate the negative effects out of a situation (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, Gilstrap 2008). Disclaimers are meant to provide information in advance to safeguard from the “negative reactions” (Hewitt, Stokes 1975). Organizational handicapping is when a company tries “to make task success appear less likely” to show its helplessness and failure (Berglas, Jones 1978). Apologies are acceptance of the blame and responsibility towards an unexpected incident in order to seek forgiveness from the “offended audiences by expressing remorse” (Gardner, Martinko 1988). Prosocial behaviour is a way to state the company’s identity in spite of its earlier lapses. Restitution is a strategy of offering compensation to the affected audience in order to portray itself as generous and that its actions were accidental (Tedeschi, Lindskold 1976).

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The following study is conducted to find out the role and importance of a corporate website on the representation of

gender equality. With a purpose to contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which gender equality is presented on corporate websites during Covid-19, the researcher tried: *a)* to find out the number of stories on the issue of gender equality on the corporate website to examine to what extent do corporates represent the issue of gender diversity; *b)* to analyse the type of impression management technique- assertive and defensive technique used in presenting the issue of gender equality on the websites to study how corporates represent gender equality; *c)* to find out the difference between the public and the private sectors towards representation of gender-equality on their corporate websites.

To answer this objective, the researcher has tested the following hypothesis. *i)* H0: there is no significant difference in the use of assertive techniques in public and private sector; *ii)* H1: both public and private techniques use defensive techniques at the same rate; *iii)* H2: there is no significant difference in depiction of gender equality issues in the public and private sectors considering the situation of Covid-19.

The analysis of websites will use a descriptive approach. To test the hypothesis, the research will use statistical inference where the data of the public and private sectors will be analysed using ANOVA. Besides the above objectives, the researcher has further investigated the importance of corporate websites as a significant corporate communication tool for representing gender equality through focus group discussion on the questions: 1) how companies are depicting the issue of gender equality?; 2) do you think the corporate website is one of the best ways to show concern towards gender diversity issues during Covid-19?; 3) what possible steps an organization can take through its corporate website to work towards the issue of gender diversity during the pandemic?; 4) what do you think women look for while looking at the company's website?; 5) what possible advantages a corporate can gain by presenting information on gender equality through its website?

The time between Covid-19 post first wave and during the second wave of Covid-19 has been taken to study the corporate websites when the companies were expected to be sensitive and active towards the issues of gender equality.

SAMPLE AND BASIS OF ANALYSIS

The paper has investigated the communication on gender diversity on the corporate website of the companies from the public (55) and private sectors (55) from Nifty companies as per their stocks weighted till March 2021, for a period of six months from January to June 2021. All the companies are publicly listed and are on the common ground in terms of their market position. Besides, on the basis of the number of employees, the companies are also listed as small companies with no more than 10,000 employees, with medium as 10,000-20,000 employees and large, more than 20,000 employees. In total the public sectors have an 11.10 per cent of women employed and in private sector its 27.6 per cent. Using the occurrence-based content analysis, the women-related posts and information on the corporate websites are studied and categorised under sub-categories of assertive and defensive techniques. A priori coding scheme has been used to classify the stories as per Mohamed et al taxonomy. Further, emergent coding was used to classify the sub-type of both the impression management techniques. In coding, a story is defined as highly accessible if it can be reached within three clicks else treated as restricted. A story is coded as identity conscious if it refers to women only else identity blind. Also, if a website has a mix of highly accessible and restricted stories for a tactic then they all together grouped as highly accessible. Also, if identity conscious and identity blind stories are used in same website, even then the website is coded as identity conscious.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Corporates representation on Gender-equality during Covid-19

Corporates do represent the issue of gender equality on their websites. Referring to table number 1, in total, 110 websites are analysed. 106 websites have talked about gender equality which means 96 per cent of the corporates have talked about women and related issues during Covid-19. In terms of

accessibility, out of 106, 56.6 per cent websites were highly accessible whereas 43.3 per cent were found restricted as the information was not accessible in three clicks. Analysing the element of identity consciousness, 55.4 per cent websites were found conscious whereas 44.5 per cent were identity blind. From the organization size point of view, all the companies whether small, medium and large sized have shown some sort of representation using either assertive and defensive techniques. Corporates thus have been trying to create an impression of being active towards achieving the sustainable development goals even during pandemic. The companies like Tata and Infosys rather have posted stories where they have invited back all the women employees who left the organization for some reason during the pandemic.

Impression Management Tactics Used in Gender Diversity-Related Communications

Looking at the table 1 and 2, using descriptive approach, we could see that the focus is on assertive techniques where ingratiation (106) was present the most, followed by supplication (90), then organizational promotion techniques (87) and finally exemplification with 73 companies. However, the defensive techniques of impression management were also used in some of the websites with only a few techniques used. This includes prosocial (38), then disclaimer in 11 websites, followed by accounts (10). Organizational handicapping, apologies and restitution were not used in any of the websites. In terms of accessibility, in using the assertive techniques: all the types are equally used, mean of 56.5, and a standard deviation of 3.14.

In defensive techniques, with a 6.16 mean and a standard deviation of 11.28, only disclaimer (9) and prosocial (28) techniques were there to be found easily. In contrast, with a mean of 32.5 and SD 10.47, the 46 websites used ingratiation and 29 organizational promotion. In using defensive techniques, mean 3.67 and SD 4.9, 10 websites using accounts, (2) disclaimer and prosocial (10) techniques were found restricted. This states that the corporates worked actively during the pandemic by working



Tab. 1. Websites applying impression management techniques.

		Assertive tactics					Defensive tactics					Prosocial behaviour	Restitution			
		Overall	Types of assertive tactics				Overall	Types of defensive tactics								
			Ingratiation	Organizational promotion	Exemplification	Supplication		Accounts	Disclaimer	Organizational handicapping	Apologies					
Sector																
	Public	55	51	33	22	39					0	0	0	4	0	
	Private	55	55	54	51	51					10	11	0	0	34	0
	Total	110	106	87	73	90					10	11	0	0	38	0
Accessibility																
Public sector	High		21	19	16	19					0	0	0	0	2	0
	Restricted		30	14	6	20					0	0	0	0	2	0
Private sector	High		39	39	36	37					10	9	0	0	26	0
	Restricted		16	15	15	14					0	2	0	0	8	0
	Total		60	58	52	56					0	9	0	0	28	0
	Total		46	29	21	34					10	2	0	0	10	0
Consciousness																
Public sector	Identity Conscious	53	49	33	22	39					0	0	0	0	4	0
	Identity Blind	2	2	0	0	0					0	0	0	0	0	0
private sector	Identity Conscious	8	8	8	8	8					0	1	0	0	3	0
	Identity Blind	47	47	46	43	43					10	10	0	0	31	0
	Total	61	57	41	30	47					0	1	0	0	7	0
	Total	49	49	46	43	43					10	10	0	0	31	0
By Organization Size																
Public Sector	small	18	18	12	9	16					0	0	0	0	0	0
	medium	18	15	12	10	13					0	0	0	0	2	0
	large	19	18	9	13	10					2	0	0	0	0	2
Private sector	small	15	15	14	14	14					8	1	5	0	8	0
	medium	14	14	14	12	13					9	2	1	0	0	0
	large	26	26	26	25	24					17	7	5	0	0	17
	Total	33	33	26	23	30					8	1	5	0	8	0
	Total	32	29	26	22	26					11	2	1	0	2	0
	Total	45	44	35	38	34					19	7	5	0	0	19

Tab. 2. Companies using assertive technique types.

		Ingratiation										Organizational promotion	
		Female Development	Mentoring	Networking	Equality Policies	Work-life balance	Recruiting Promotions	Female Events	Diversity council and ambassadors	Female Testimonials	Commitment from Top Management	Diversity Management	Awards and success certificates
	Public	47	31	17	21	7	13	16	23	12	30	28	27
	Private	55	46	32	30	29	27	28	37	38	44	43	32
	Total	102	77	49	51	36	40	44	60	50	74	71	59
Accessibility													
Public sector	High (21)	18	13	7	6	2	5	5	9	3	12	15	16
	Restricted (34)	28	18	10	15	5	8	11	14	9	18	13	11
Private sector	High	39	34	22	24	22	19	19	25	26	33	29	25
	Restricted	16	12	10	6	7	8	9	12	12	11	14	7
	Total	57	47	29	30	24	24	24	34	29	45	44	41
	Total	44	30	20	21	12	16	20	26	21	29	27	18
Consciousness													
Public sector	Identity Conscious	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0
	Identity Blind	45	29	17	21	7	11	16	22	12	29	28	27
private sector	Identity Conscious	8	5	2	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	8	4
	Identity Blind	47	41	30	26	25	23	24	32	34	39	35	28
	Total	10	7	2	4	4	6	4	5	4	6	8	4
	Total	92	70	47	47	32	34	40	54	46	68	63	55
By Organization Size													
Public Sector	small (18)	16	12	7	5	3	3	5	8	3	9	9	8
	medium (18)	15	9	5	6	2	6	4	9	5	11	11	12
	large (19)	16	10	5	10	2	4	7	6	4	10	8	7
Private sector	small (15)	15	12	9	9	9	7	8	9	9	7	10	11
	medium (14)	14	13	7	6	5	7	5	9	8	12	9	9
	large (26)	26	21	16	15	15	13	15	19	21	25	24	12
	Total	31	24	16	14	11	10	13	17	12	16	19	19
	Total	29	22	12	12	7	13	9	18	13	23	21	21
	Total	42	31	21	25	17	17	22	25	25	35	32	19



towards female development, mentoring, equality policies, recruiting where NTPC has organized the job fair only for women. In table 2, in ingratiation, a commitment from top management has also been quite active where remarks from the top management, pictures of women awardees on International Women's Day were posted on almost all the websites.

In some cases, the stories though were restricted but still can be seen as the part of news releases or corporate stories where companies highlighted the diversity management success and shared their victory in equal work force both for men and women. Considering the stressful situation in this difficult time, GAIL launched campaign "Bharosa" to provide support to the women in distress round the clock. In terms of identity consciousness, while using assertive techniques, total of 61 websites have been found identity conscious with an average of 43.75 and a standard deviation 11.29. 49 websites are identity blind with an average of 46 and SD of 3. In using defensive techniques, mean 1.3 and SD 2.8 websites are found identity conscious and with a mean of 8.5 and SD 12.06 were identity blind. Companies have been very careful in being identity blind, somehow when it comes to stories related to women empowerment or when there are corporate social responsibility videos on the website, the companies tend to get identity conscious. Sector-wise, out of the small-sized companies, the average number of websites using various sub-types of assertive techniques is 28 and SD is 4.39 and in using the defensive techniques, the mean is 2.3 and SD is 3.38. In medium-sized companies, various types of techniques using assertive techniques are with a mean of 25.75 and SD of 2.87 while in defensive techniques, the mean is 0.83 and SD is 0.98. In large-sized companies, the mean is 37.75 and SD is 4.5 in applying different types of assertive techniques while with an average of 5.16 and SD of 7.41 different types of defensive techniques like accounts, disclaimers, organizational handicapping, apologies, prosocial and restitution are used. The participation level can be seen high among small scale companies like Power Finance Corporation has focused on the theme #ChooseToChallenge committing their support towards women in all walks of life. Similarly, large companies like Tata

Steel have “deployed the first batch of women for the first time to operate earth moving machines at iron mine”.

Public and private sector companies' communication on gender-diversity on their corporate websites

H0: There is no significant difference in using assertive techniques in public and private sector. In the application of assertive techniques, p value 0.03 which rejects the null hypothesis. This means there is a significant difference in the use of assertive techniques in public and private sector.

In using defensive techniques, p value is 0.14 which accepts the null hypothesis stating that both public and private sectors have been using defensive techniques at the same rate. The p value for both rows and columns is less than 0.05 which rejects the null hypothesis and states that there is a significant difference in the use of impression management techniques in public and private sector. This indicates that the private sector has been more conscious and active towards the issue of gender equality in comparison to public sector. Covid-19 has affected both the sectors equally still private sector organizations have been trying to maintain a balance and have been giving equal space to both the genders. In public sector undertakings, most of the information was found only in Annual reports. For this year, only International women day was the highlight, only 5 per cent of the companies focused on recruitment policies, flexibility and mother care.

Flexi working hours and work from home has been mentioned in 10 per cent of the PSU for the women and has only been declared on the day of International Women day. Women representation is there on the board, where 75 per cent of the companies do have women in the topmost positions, however, the images in most of the organisations are still disturbing seeing all the men and just one woman in the top management group photographs. The required percentage of women should be 30 per cent as per SDG 5, but no company except 2 per cent of them could manage to bring it to this figure. Women empowerment has been a highlight in the CSR segment but not for the women employees.



Tab. 3. *H0: Assertive Techniques.*

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Public Sector	4	145	36.25	146.25
Private Sector	4	211	52.75	4.25

Tab. 4. *ANOVA (a).*

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	544.5	1	544.5	7.23588	0.036055	5.987378
Within Groups	451.5	6	75.25			
Total	996	7				

Tab. 5. *H1: Both public and private techniques use defensive techniques at the same rate.*

Defensive Techniques				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Public Sector	5	4	0.8	3.2
Private sector	5	55	11	193

Corporate websites as a significant corporate communication tool for representing gender diversity

Through focus group discussion we can take actual point of view as an what is expected out of corporate websites and in what fashion has the companies been using their website to work towards the cause of gender equality specially during Covid-19.

Tab. 6. ANOVA (b).

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	260.1	1	260.1	2.651376	0.14211	5.317655
Within Groups	784.8	8	98.1			
Total	1044.9	9				

Tab. 7. H2: There is no significant difference in depiction of gender diversity issues in public and private sector during Covid-19.

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Rows	7381.44	8	922.6806	14.16784	0.000562	3.438101
Columns	760.5	1	760.5	11.67754	0.009125	5.317655
Error	521	8	65.125			
Total	8662.9	17				

Focus group discussion is conducted with the companies' gender-diversity executive, human resource manager, marketing manager looking after website content creation and promotion, and the image-building consultant. See tables 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

What measures did as an organization you take to bridge the gap?

By showing flexibility and empathy and acknowledging that Man/ Women during the pandemic all had too much on their plate managing work, house chores and kids, and their online classes. These are certain measures organisations took to support women and bridge the gap: companies introduced Sat-

Sun off; introduced silent hours at work; training sessions; counselling sessions; option to work from home; online fun and interactive sessions for employee engagement.

Gender Equal Website as tool of Corporate Communication during Covid-19 Pandemic

In order to share a perspective on gender equality, organizations use metrics as a means to communicate. The focus is on discussing the level of employment of a specific gender in order to showcase their efforts to create parity by promoting empowerment. Though the company's act has a mandate to have women representation on board otherwise also the corporates have been trying to have women in senior positions to highlight equality. However, considering the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a struggle towards existence than on gender equality and so the lack of initiatives can be seen on the websites when there are fewer or no stories related to women empowerment during the second wave. Still, some companies can be seen active during International Women's Day though they might be just ticking boxes and following the "tokenistic approach". But a website is not just meant for outsiders it is also a morale booster for the employees. The activities that are strategized and planned and are regularly posted on the corporate websites, it is like a word of mouth not going unnoticed.

So, even the smallest of activities should be updated on the websites, it may create a positive narrative and can even support the sales team. Pandemic has affected businesses and even during the difficult time what supported most was the workforce of any organization. It is thus important for the corporate to understand the sensitivities of women considering the double work load on women. The corporates though could not directly support due to their troublesome position but could introduce some fun activities on the websites accessible for all. Websites also acted as the platform for training with easy access and convenience of time for both the genders. Websites are the first point of contact and a company can share a point of view so could communicate stories through their websites meant to sensitise man to share the load.



Tab. 8. *About Respondents.*

Respondent 1	Human resource manager at Fashion and Retail Industry
Respondent 2	Journalist and Gender Expert
Respondent 3	Consultant at UN Agency
Respondent 4	Consultant, Diversity and Inclusion
Respondent 5	Consultant, Marketing and Communications and entrepreneur

A corporate website thus can be the first pitch where a company can present its ethos, values and objectives that it upholds even during difficult times. It can be instrumental in building the first impression of the organization in the minds of its stakeholders and the publics. A company can easily invite its prospective workforce through career pages on its website. Being one of the most persuasive tools of corporate communication, a website can create required imagery through its content and representation. The website should look like a diverse website that displays both male and female points of view equally along with other communities like queer and transgender. The colour and tone should also be gender-neutral. Employees from different backgrounds can be shown on the websites to display inclusivity. Stories related to unconventional roles of women and text testimonials can be posted as women look for growth opportunities and seek similar information on the company's websites. Women might be interested in knowing how much concerned an organization is towards child care initiatives, and career transition policy both pre and post maternity which can even make a company the first choice in terms of employment. Corporate websites thus can be a useful pool of information to bring talented candidates. True representation can build trust among women employees and can build a respectable and progressive image. Gender-neutral measures can enable empathy and may result in endorsing a positive brand image.



Tab. 9. *Depiction of Gender Equality in Organizations.*

Respondent 1	As per respondent 1, organization uses metrics such as percentage of women working across levels, women professional attrition, women returning after maternity break, no. of women applicants, no. of women interviewed, etc. to understand gender at workplaces and discussed in internal forums during business/ HR reviews.
Respondent 2	Respondent 2 who covers issues on gender from “BBC” says most of the companies are aware of the fact that they can’t ignore women rights and gender equality anymore. Therefore, they do try to do “something” about it or at least they want to be seen doing something about gender equality. As a journalist, if I talk about media organizations, they are trying to have more female reporters and editors working in the newsroom and on the field. Organizations are also trying not to confine women journalists to a certain beat like fashion or lifestyle. At BBC we have been following the 50-50 target which means we aim to have at least 50 per cent female faces on our websites, 50 per cent bytes from women, and 50 per cent comments from women experts. But the problem remains at the decision-making level which is still in control of men to a larger extent. And, we also can’t deny that there are very few companies that really want to do something substantial about gender equality. Most of them just want to be perceived as doing something because they want to have a certain kind of image, and look progressive and modern.
Respondent 3	As per respondent 3, companies are making efforts to create Balance and Equal opportunities and overall remove parity and promote women empowerment.
Respondent 4	Respondent 4 feels, pandemic has turned the world upside down for all the industries wherein we have seen organization focus more on business than the diversity whereas those who are already diverse in nature handled the situation comparatively better. Be it women led country or the women led organizations- they did better even at these difficult times. It is hence important that organizations work on representation, have woman in leadership roles and use their platforms wisely to depict gender equality which a lot many of them have started as well.
Respondent 5	Respondent 5 says that organizations need to level up and go beyond just ticking boxes and attain a particular ration to improve their gender parity. Their roles should evolve, representation should improve, their participation should be increased to actually contribute to gender equality than just taking tokenistic approaches.

Tab. 10. *Corporate websites as the way to show concern towards gender diversity during Covid-19.*

Respondent 1	Respondent 1 says that most progressive organizations show active participation in gender diversity issues not just on their careers page, but through their product advertisements, CSR/ Employee Volunteering Initiatives, etc.
Respondent 2	Respondent 2 however believes that corporate websites can be one good way to show concern about gender equality during Covid-19 but it is certainly not the only best way. There are other important ways too. For example- social media and offline campaigns.
Respondent 3	Respondent 3 also feels that websites can share the stories from the organisation's view and can reflect the vision the company holds to support women but there's a lot more needed in reality.
Respondent 4	On corporate websites, Respondent 4 says that they should always be used as a platform to share their vision and mission for women. Storytelling, messaging to support women, connecting with stakeholders, and representation of women on websites are very important for any business to create that first impression.
Respondent 5	Respondent 5 also felt that websites are online addresses for any organization. They reflect ethos, values, and objectives and builds connection. They are also the first sales pitch so should be used as a platform that not just shows your product but also the value you uphold especially during these difficult times.

CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 has created a difficult situation for the work force where women have been affected the most. With the goal of sustainable development, the corporates have tried to talk about the issues of women, worked towards women empowerment, organised recruitment events, celebrated international women day, collaborated with agencies for women empowerment programmes, created special events and awarded the exceptional work by women and many more. Impression management though is the strategy behind maintaining corporate website but with a situation like pandemic when women needed support and the question of bringing equality has been raised, it was expected out of the organization to act more favourably

Tab. 11. *How organizations through their websites can work towards the issue of gender diversity during the pandemic.*

Respondent 1	Respondent 1 feels, it is important for organizations to first understand the impact websites can create, foremost how to use the platform and that will help develop the required imagery and content for a website.
Respondent 2	Respondent 2 says, if you want your corporate website to be diverse, first of all, it should look like a diverse one. Imagine that your website is a group of people and build it accordingly. A website should display female faces prominently, should have quotes and comments by women, and must-have resources specially designed for women. And not only women, but we must also aim for having people transgender and queer communities too. Intersectionality is a must because, without intersectionality, gender equality can't be achieved. It would be nice to have pictures of disabled people and people of different skin colour. Make sure that people working on your website come from diverse backgrounds. And this will reflect on your website only if your company has diverse employees.
Respondent 3	Respondent 3 shared that the organisations need to focus on websites as a platform to share their brand story, their vision, mission, and values.
Respondent 4	As per respondent 4, companies can share stories on unconventional roles women are performing within the organization, language should be gender-neutral on the website, Content should be balanced and tonality should be gender-neutral as well. Colors should be selected wisely as it reflects you as an organization and the website should have representation and content which should include everyone.
Respondent 5	Respondent 5 says adding text testimonials, audio-visual, sign language messaging considering accessibility in mind, subtitling of content is very important while working on websites. Other than just business centric, there should be some human touch to it to create an impact.

towards the gender equality factor. However, the commitment is missing seeing women's images and stories only on the special day or awardees are women only from the top management woman or few investments in women empowerment social responsibility programmes. Though the private sector has been a little proactive in comparison to the public sector still many avoided

Tab. 12. *What women look for while looking at the company's website?*

Respondent 1	As per Respondent 1, like any other professional, women would seek similar information such as role, company's market positions, growth opportunities, learning opportunities, infrastructure, and facilities. Additionally, women might be interested to understand child care initiatives, flexibility options, career transition policy (pre- & post- maternity), women in leadership positions, professional accreditations such as best employer for women, etc.
Respondent 2	As per respondent 2, women consider on website the following things: 1) The look and feel. 2) How many women work at your company? 3) Are there any women in decision making position? 4) The tone of information you have given on website. 5) How accessible and easy to use the website it.
Respondent 3	As per Consultant at UN, women at websites look for no different than what an employee should be given.
Respondent 4	Respondent 4 feels that it's through a website only that one builds their first impression about the organization. Your values, your teams, your leaders, your cultural reflection, your thoughts, your messaging, your links to talks, and social media is what we look for to learn and plan our minds to prepare ourselves.
Respondent 5	Respondent 5 also mentioned that it's about benefits one will get that one really looks for and as per them it's just body issues which add to the list rest all it's as the same as what men also look for.

initiatives. The website is the face of the organization and there is a need to act and talk through it, which can be helpful in communicating impressions among the publics. It is found that many initiatives are available in news stories but their reference was missing on the websites. A website is the face of the organization and there is a need to act and talk through it. Websites are required to be maintained like image-building tools. Corporates websites thus are a newsroom which speaks for the organization and their orientation towards gender diversity too has been a matter of concern which should be highlighted on corporate websites.

This can be helpful in communicating impression among the publics. Pandemic is the situation where companies could have taken this as an opportunity and acted responsibly towards

Tab. 13. *Advantages a corporate can gain by presenting information on gender equality through its website?*

Respondent 1	Respondent 1 on advantages says that it can be helpful in increasing the pool of candidates applying for roles at the organization
Respondent 2	As per respondent 2, websites can help with: 1) Building trust among women. 2) Women might talk about other women about the website so in that case a wider reach. 3) A respectable and progressive image. 4) Employee friendly feel. 5) Encouraging women to apply more.
Respondent 3	Respondent 3 also mentioned that websites other than to your HR can be of great support to your other teams in pushing their hard work out and share their narratives, services etc.
Respondent 4	Respondent 4 mentioned that website will add to sales, talent, help you share your philosophy, CSR, and gender-neutral measures.
Respondent 5	Respondent 5 says that you'll see improvement in your creativity, certainly attract talent, enables empathy and add to the experiences of people, builds a positive brand image, and sell your story.

gender equality. Hence, there is a need to acknowledge the fact that corporate websites are a way to connect with the stakeholders which may help in attracting the employees from all the groups It can thus help in developing an honest and responsible image of the organization if handled earnestly and gendered equally.

REFERENCES

- R. Abraham, A. Basole, Kesar (2021), *Tracking Employment Trajectories in the Covid-19 Pandemic: Evidence from Indian Panel Data*, in "CSE Working Paper Series".
- E. Ageeva (2019), *Evaluating the factors of corporate website favourability: a case of UK and Russia*, in "Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal", 22, pp. 687-715.
- R.V. Aguilera, V. Kuppuswamy, R. Anand (2021), *What Happened When India Mandated Gender Diversity on Boards*, in "Harvard Business Review".
- A. Al-Mamun, Q.R. Yasser, H. Entebang, T.M. Nathan (2013), *Gender Diversity and Economic Performance of Firms: Evidences from Emerging Market*, in "Journal of Economic Development, Management, IT, Finance and Marketing", 5, 2, pp. 100-110.
- AON (2022), *The India Inc report card on gender diversity*, in "The Economic Times".

- D.R. Avery, P. McKay (2006), *Target practice: an minority and female job applicants*, in "Personnel Psychology", 59, pp. 157-187.
- T.W. Bank (2019), *Working for Women in India*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2019/03/08/working-for-women-in-india>.
- S. Berglas, E.F. Jones (1978), *Drug choice as a self-handicapping strategy in response to noncontingent success*, in "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology", 36, pp. 405-417.
- M.C. Bolino, K.M. Kacmar, W.H. Turnley, J.B. Gilstrap (2008), *A multi-level review of impression management motives and behaviors*, in "Journal of Management", 34, pp. 1080-1109.
- T. Cox, S. Blake (1991), *Managing cultural diversity: Implications for organizational competitiveness*, in "Academy of Management Executive", 5, 3, pp. 45-56.
- Z. Daruwala (2022), *The India Inc report card on gender diversity*, in "The Economic Times", March 8.
- G. Davies, R. Chun, R. da Silva, S. Roper (2001), *The Personification Metaphor as a Measurement Approach for Corporate Reputation*, in "Corporate Reputation Review", 4, 2, pp. 113-127.
- V.P. DeFrancisco, C. Palczewski (2007), *Communicating Gender Diversity: A Critical Approach* (New York: Sage).
- A. Deshpande (2020), *The Covid-19 Lockdown in India: Gender and Caste Dimensions of the First Job Losses*, Working Papers id:13085, "eSocialSciences".
- W. Dou, U. Nielsen, C.M. Tan (2002), *Using Corporate Websites for Export Marketing*, in "Journal of Advertising Research".
- I. Ehnert (2009), *Sustainability and human resource management: reasoning and applications on corporate websites*, in "Inderscience Online".
- Z. Feng, K. Savani (2020), *Covid-19 created a gender gap in perceived work productivity and job satisfaction: implications for dual-career parents working for home*, in "Gender in Management".
- W.L. Gardner, M.J. Martinko (1988), *Impression management in organizations*, in "Journal of Management", 14, pp. 321-338.
- L. Ginzler, R.M. Kramer, R.I. Sutton (1992), *Organization Impression Management as a Reciprocal Influence Process: The Neglected Role of the Organizational Audience*, in "Research in Organizational Behaviour", 15, pp. 227-266.
- Global Gender Gap Report 2021*, in "World Economic Forum".
- A. Haldar, R. Shah, S.N. Rao (2015), *Gender Diversity in Large Listed Indian Companies*, in "Corporate Ownership & Control", 12, 3.
- C.D. Hatch, S. Stephen (2015), *Gender Effects on Perceptions of Individual and Corporate Social Responsibility*, in "Journal of Applied Business and Economics", 17, 3, pp. 63-71.
- X. He, S. Jiang (2019), *Does gender diversity matter for green innovation?*, in "Business Strategy and the Environment", pp. 1-16.
- R. Heath (1993), *Toward a paradigm for the study and practice of public relations: A rhetorical approach to zones of meaning and organizational prerogative*, in "Public Relations Review", 19, pp. 141-155.
- R. Heath, M.J. Palenchar (2009), *Strategic Issues Management: Organizations and Public Policy Challenges* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage).
- J.P. Hewitt, R. Stokes (1975), *Disclaimers*, in "American Sociological Review", 44, pp. 1-11.
- S. Holtz (2002), *Public Relations on the Net: Winning Strategies to Inform and Influence the Media, the Investment Community, the Government, the Public, and More* (New York: Amacom).
- S.Y. Hong, H. Rimb (2010), *The influence of customer use of corporate websites: Corporate social responsibility, trust, and word-of-mouth communication*, in "Public Relations Review", 36, 4, pp. 389-391.
- The 2019 Diversity and Inclusion*, in "IMA".
- DivHERSity Benchmarking Report 2019*, in "jobsforher".



- E. Jones, T.S. Pittman (1982), *Toward a General Theory of Strategic Self Presentation*, in "J. Suls, Psychological Perspectives on the Self", pp. 231-261.
- K. Jonsen, S. Point, E.K. Kelan, A. Grieb (2021), *Diversity and inclusion branding: a five-country comparison of corporate websites*, in "The International Journal of Human Resource Management", 32:3.
- N. Kabeer, S. Razavi, Y.V. Rodgers (2021), *Feminist Economic Perspectives on the Covid-19 Pandemic*, "Feminist Economics", 27, 1-2, pp. 1-29.
- A. Kaur, B. Singh (2019), *Edifying role of corporate reputation in new issue market: Indian Evidence*, in "Asia-Pacific Journal of Business", 11, 2, pp. 159-170.
- A. Kumar (2021), *Gender diversity at top level boosts productivity, profits*, in "timesofindia.indiatimes.com", December 8.
- C. Liu (2018), *Are women greener? Corporate gender diversity and environmental violations*, in "Journal of Corporate Finance", 52, pp. 118-142.
- McKinsey & Co. (2020), *Women in the Workplace, 2020*, https://wiw-report.s3.amazonaws.com/Women_in_the_Workplace_2020.pdf.
- Ministry of Company Affairs (2013), Section 149(8), *Companies Act, 2013*, http://ebook.mca.gov.in/Actpagedisplay.aspx?PAGE_NAME=17533.
- S.S. Misra, T. Patel (2021, January 22), *The Inequality Virus: India Supplement 2021*, in "Oxfam India", retrieved from <https://www.oxfamindia.org/press-release/in-equality-virus-india-supplement-2021>.
- A.A. Mohamed, W.L. Gardner (1999), *A Taxonomy of organizational impression management tactics*, in "Advances in Competitive Research", 7, 1, pp. 108-130.
- NASSCOM (2016), *Women "In" Equality-Not Anymore!: Gender Diversity & Inclusivity Trends In The IT-BPM Sector*, in "India: NASSCOM".
- S. Point, V. Singh (2003), *Defining and Dimensionalising Diversity: Evidence from Corporate Websites across Europe*, in "European Management Journal", 21, 6, pp. 750-761.
- M.C. Pucheta-Martínez, I. Bel-Oms, O.S. Gustau (2018), *The association between board gender diversity and financial reporting quality, corporate performance and corporate social responsibility disclosure*, in "Academia Revista Latinoamericana de Administración", 31, 1, pp. 177-194.
- A. Raja (2020), *Gender Diversity: The secret weapon for an organization's success*, in "Advertising and Media Insider", September 29.
- B.R. Schlenker, T.W. Britt, J. Pennington (1996), *Impression regulation and management: Highlights of a theory of self-identification*, in R.M. Sorrentino, E.T. Higgins (eds.), *The interpersonal context*, "Handbook of motivation and cognition", 3, pp. 118-147.
- B. Schlenker, M. Weigold (1992), *Interpersonal Process Involving Impression Management*, in "Annual Review of Psychology", 43, pp. 133-168.
- A. Shashidhar (2022), *Diversity Goes Beyond Gender*, in "Fortune India", June 7.
- A. Siano, F. Conte, S. Amabile, A. Vollerero, P. Piciocchi (2016), *Communicating Sustainability: An Operational Model for Evaluating Corporate Websites*, in "Sustainability 2016", 8, 9, pp. 950.
- E. Stockdale, L.C. William, L. Arevshatian (2018), *"Do I fit in?" Signals on corporate websites*, in "Human Resource Management International Digest", 26 7, pp. 7-11.
- J.T. Tedeschi, S. Lindskold (1976), *Social psychology: Interdependence, interaction, and influence* (Oxford: Wiley).
- U.N. (2020), *Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Covid-19 response*, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality>.
- U.N.D.P. (2018), *India Skills Report 2018*, <https://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/library/poverty/india-skills-report-2018.html>.
- F. Villeseche (2017), *Discourses on Gender Diversity on Corporate Websites: A Systemic Functional Linguistics Analysis*, in "Academy of Management".
- D. Waymer, S. VanSlette (2013), *Corporate Reputation Management and Issues of Diversity*, in C.E. Carroll (ed.), *The Handbook of Communication and Corporate Reputation* (London: Wiley-Blackwell), pp. 471-483.



L.S. Wilton, D.T. Sanchez, M.M. Unzueta, C. Kaiser, N. Caluori (2019), *In Good Company: When Gender Diversity Boosts a Company's Reputation*, in "Psychology of Women Quarterly", 43, 1, pp. 59-72.

L. Windscheid, L. Bowes-Sperry, K. Jonsen, M. Morner (2018), *Managing Organizational Gender Diversity Images: A Content Analysis of German Corporate Websites*, in "Journal of Business Ethics", pp. 997-1013.

U.N. Women (2020), *Women as drivers of economic recovery and resilience during Covid-19 and beyond, New York and Riyadh*, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/7/statement-joint-w20-women-during-covid-19-and-beyond>.

A.D. Zaidman (2007), *Impression management behavior: effects of the organizational system*, in "Journal of Managerial Psychology", 22, 3, pp. 280-308.

L. Zhang (2020), *An Institutional Approach to Gender Diversity and Firm*, "Organization Science", February 25, pp. 1-19.

