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“Carried” over to streaming: glocalizing *Sex and the City* in Amazon Prime Video’s *Four More Shots Please!*

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates how global television formats are culturally reimagined through streaming-era adaptations by analyzing *Four More Shots Please!* (FMSP), an Indian adaptation of the American show *Sex and the City* (SATC). It examines how FMSP localizes narrative and aesthetic elements to reflect Indian sociocultural realities, specifically around gender, sexuality, and postfeminist expression, while considering the enabling role of streaming platforms in shaping transnational remakes.

Design/methodology/approach: The study employs qualitative thematic analysis of all 30 episodes of FMSP and comparative coding of selected episodes from SATC, using a five-part coding framework comprising the following key dimensions: characters, narrative structure, audiovisual style, space-time structure, and emergent themes. Drawing on the glocalization framework, it maps cross-textual transformations and analyzes how platform infrastructures and sociocultural norms influence adaptation practices.

Findings: FMSP retains SATC’s core premise – female friendship and autonomy – while reworking it through Indian family structures, linguistic hybridity, and sociopolitical dynamics. Characters such as Damini, Anjana, Umang, and Siddhi are mapped onto SATC’s leads but are recontextualized within Indian discourses of journalism, motherhood, queerness, and body politics. The study identifies two inductive themes – bisexuality and body image – that deepen the adaptation’s engagement with localized gendered struggles. Amazon Prime Video’s creative flexibility enables a postfeminist narrative that is both culturally specific and globally recognizable.

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Practical implications: This study highlights how streaming platforms serve as active agents of glocalization by allowing producers to blend global formats with culturally embedded narratives. It underscores the strategic adaptation choices made to appeal to both domestic and diasporic audiences while leveraging existing intellectual property.

Social implications: FMSP expands mainstream representation of Indian womanhood by integrating narratives around LGBTQ+ identity, professional autonomy, body image, and familial negotiation. These portrayals challenge traditional gender norms while navigating the complexities of cultural authenticity and aspirational modernity.

Originality/value: The study contributes to scholarship on media globalization by foregrounding the role of streaming infrastructures in mediating adaptation practices. It extends existing work on transnational television and glocalization by demonstrating how adaptation is shaped not just by cultural proximity, but also by platform logics, audience expectations, and production politics in the Global South.

Keywords: glocalization; streaming platforms; television adaptation; qualitative thematic analysis; transnational media flow; Amazon Prime Video

1 Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected media environment, transnational television adaptations offer a unique lens through which to examine cultural negotiation, hybridization, and identity formation. This study focuses on *Four More Shots Please!* (FMSP), an Indian web series that adapts the globally popular American television show *Sex and the City* (SATC), to explore how streaming-era adaptations reframe global formats within local sociocultural frameworks. Through this case study, the project examines the cultural, narrative, and aesthetic transformations that occur when a Western series centered on female autonomy, sexuality, and urban life is reimagined for Indian audiences.

Transnational remakes have long operated at the intersection of global influence and local sensibility. However, the rise of streaming platforms like Amazon Prime Video, where FMSP premiered, has added new dimensions to this process. Unlike traditional broadcast models, streaming platforms allow greater narrative flexibility, enabling local creators to take creative risks while still aligning with the broad narrative architecture of globally recognizable formats. FMSP exemplifies this new form of glocalization, in which global content is neither passively consumed nor wholly indigenized, but instead reshaped through an ongoing dialogue between original and adaptation, East and West, and tradition and modernity.

Four More Shots Please! (FMSP), produced by Pritish Nandy Communications Ltd., premiered on Amazon Prime Video and ran for three seasons between 2019 and 2022. Each season was helmed by a different female director – Anu Menon (Season 1), Nupur Asthana (Season 2), and Joyeeta Patpatia (Season 3) – with an all-women writing team comprising Devika Bhagat, Ishita Moitra, Rangita Pritish Nandy, and Ishita Pritish Nandy. The series was notable for its all-women creative team and positioned itself as a feminist, urban, ensemble drama. While FMSP was not officially marketed as a remake of *Sex and the City*, critics and viewers alike drew immediate comparisons, often framing it as the “desi” or Indian version of the iconic show. The series was also a commercial success: Season 1 ranked among the top three most-watched Indian Amazon Original Series in 2019, and Season 2 became the most-watched Indian show on the platform by May 2020. In 2020, FMSP was also nominated for Best Comedy Series at the International Emmy Awards, further cementing its global visibility. This critical and commercial acclaim underscores the significance of FMSP as a glocalization success story – adapting a globally recognizable format to reflect the tensions, aspirations, and gendered politics of contemporary Indian society.

To situate this study, the following literature review outlines key debates in transnational media flows, format adaptation, and glocalization, with particular attention to the transformative role of streaming platforms in shaping global-local television practices.

2 Literature review

2.1 The role of formats in transnational adaptations

Transnational television remaking involves adapting series across national contexts, requiring cultural and narrative localization. This process balances cultural proximity, market demands, and audience preferences, transforming global formats through local lenses (Keinonen 2016). These adaptations become sites of cultural negotiation, where new meanings emerge via local reinterpretation.

Rather than producing cultural uniformity, successful adaptations reflect a complex interplay of global and local influences. They rely on revising formats through local narratives, aesthetics, and values. Hirsch (2018) pointed out the tension between standardized programming and cultural specificity, emphasizing local resonance. This tension intensifies in the streaming era, as global audiences consume both originals and remakes (Garofalo et al. 2020).

A central concept in adaptation studies is the logic of franchising. Chalaby (2011 and 2016) introduces the notion of “super-formats” like *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*, *Survivor*, and *Pop Idol*, which balance flexible narrative frameworks with localized content, illustrating how global television blends transnational reach and local authenticity. Hilmes (2012) further classifies transnational television into imported series, reality formats, adapted series, and format fiction – each reflecting varying degrees of creative modification. This taxonomy reveals how producers navigate fidelity to originals while adapting to local cultures.

Perkins and Verevis (2015) extend this framework by highlighting “critical transculturalism,” viewing remakes as shaped by socio-cultural contexts, industrial histories, and economic imperatives. Scripted formats, once overshadowed by reality TV, now circulate globally. Chalaby (2016) attributes this delayed rise to the creative demands of adapting serialized drama – localizing not only language, but also cultural codes, genres, and storytelling conventions. Effective drama adaptations require reimagining narratives within the target society’s cultural fabric.

Navarro (2012) notes that adapting scripted formats involves interpretive labor from local teams, who must “redefine the format” rather than merely translate scripts. Perkins and Verevis (2015) argue that serialized storytelling in television requires sustained efforts to remap sociocultural specificity, influencing characters, settings, and genre conventions.

Chalaby (2016) characterizes scripted formats as “open” due to their need for flexibility and cultural re-actualization – an active rewriting of meanings within specific localities. These formats thus become tools for expressing national identity while maintaining global ties.

Waisbord (2004) critiques cultural imperialism by highlighting the resilience of national identities, arguing that audiences actively interpret global media through locally rooted cultural frameworks. Rather than enforcing uniformity, remakes often demonstrate glocalization – the co-production of global and local (Robertson 1995). Moran (2009) echoes this, suggesting remakes strengthen national media while utilizing global storytelling forms.

Esser (2010 and 2016) focuses on the industrial logics behind format success, highlighting how scripted and unscripted formats are embedded in global value chains. Tools such as production bibles, licensing frameworks, and consultancy networks support localization, presenting formats as industrial frameworks shaped by markets, production practices, and audience needs.

2.2 Evolving theories of television format adaptation

The global circulation of television formats reflects a dynamic tension between global forces and local responses. Early theories framed this through media imperialism. Schiller (2019) warned that Western media exports, especially American, risked cultural homogenization. However, scholars like Straubhaar (1991) and Waisbord (2004) reframed this, highlighting globalization as a negotiated process shaped by cultural proximity, local preferences, and institutional contexts.

Localization thus becomes a creative negotiation, not mere translation. It involves tailoring narrative arcs, humor, and cultural cues to local sensibilities. This is particularly relevant in genres like soap operas, sitcoms, and reality shows, where emotional and cultural familiarity drive audience engagement (Darling-Wolf 2014). Moran (2009) also notes the role of market forces and regulatory frameworks in shaping adaptation outcomes.

Contemporary studies move past binaries of dominance versus resistance, highlighting glocalization and hybridization. Robertson's (1995) glocalization theory – where global and local forces co-create texts – has become central. Nederveen Pieterse (1994) adds that globalization involves hybrid recombination, generating novel, context-specific forms rather than erasing the local.

Yet this process isn't always balanced. Roudometof (2016) warns of asymmetry, where global centers influence what cultural content is retained or transformed. Kraidy (2005) concurs, arguing hybridization is not just aesthetic but also shaped by ideological, political, and economic factors. Appadurai's (1996) concept of media-scapes captures how media content flows, is interpreted, and contested locally.

Digital technologies intensify these dynamics. Jenkins (2006) notes the role of grassroots participation in shaping transnational media, while Thussu (2006) points to the institutional politics embedded in these practices.

Empirical studies support this view. Štětka (2012) found that audiences in post-communist Europe, after initially embracing Western imports, returned to local content. Similarly, Rai and Straubhaar (2016) show how countries like Brazil and India increasingly develop indigenous formats rather than only adapting Western ones. These shifts indicate a more reciprocal global media flow – one that negotiates and redefines cultural hierarchies.

2.3 The role of streaming platforms in shaping global-local media flows

The rise of digital platforms and streaming services has significantly reshaped global media flows, fostering multidirectional exchanges between regional industries

(Lotz et al. 2022). With global television content increasingly available on streaming platforms, audiences can access original foreign series, which influences expectations for local adaptations and redefines format localization. This shift challenges earlier top-down models of media globalization and highlights the cultural agency involved in how transnational content is received and reinterpreted.

While transnational television flows predate digital platforms, services like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ Hotstar have scaled up glocalization by expanding the distribution of hybrid content. Traditional broadcasters, often more nation-centric, historically engaged in deeper localization tailored to domestic viewers (Chalaby 2016). Streaming platforms, by contrast, offer both global and localized content simultaneously, encouraging fluid exchanges between global influences and regional identities. Their localization strategies cater to diverse cultural contexts while retaining international appeal, further intensifying the glocalization process.

Rai (2024) distinguishes between the “cosmopolitan local” strategy used by platforms like Netflix, which fuses global formats with localized storytelling to engage regional audiences, and the “indigenized global” approach of services like Disney+ Hotstar, which embeds global content within local traditions, notably through cricket and Bollywood. These strategies showcase how streaming platforms not only distribute but also actively transform cultural products to suit national sensibilities.

Chalaby (2022) notes that streaming services have enhanced both local media industries and international visibility by globalizing culturally specific content. This contributes to transcultural media flows, where global formats are not merely imported but redefined through local agency, reinforcing national identity within global media structures (Kim 2022). As Biswas (2025) observes, while local producers do not control global platforms, streaming has altered media hierarchies by enabling their content to circulate more widely across borders.

Ultimately, streaming platforms play a pivotal role in the hybridization of global and local content, reflecting a dynamic interplay between global media power and local cultural expression.

2.4 Format adaptations in India

India presents a rich example of media glocalization. The post-liberalization media boom of the 1990s exposed Indian audiences to global content, prompting hybrid programming strategies. While shows like *The Bold and the Beautiful* introduced new narratives, localized adaptations found greater cultural resonance (Sinclair and Harrison 2004). Pathania-Jain (2001) attributes this to the need for aligning with

domestic viewers and advertisers, noting the strategic use of Hinglish, Indian familial norms, and cultural references to connect with aspirational urban audiences.

Game shows and talent formats the adaptation wave, with *Kaun Banega Crorepati* – India’s version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* – emerging as a seminal success. It localized the format using Bollywood references, mythological themes, and cricket metaphors, resonating across regional and class divides. The host’s charisma, linguistic range, and nationalistic undertones reinforced its cultural grounding while maintaining aspirational appeal (Roy 2014).

Drama formats followed, notably *Jassi Jaissi Koi Nahin*, the Indian remake of *Yo Soy Betty La Fea* (Roy 2011). While Jassi retains Betty’s awkwardness and ambition, her arc centers on values like modesty, family responsibility, and professional growth. Her transformation is about competence over desirability, aligning with Indian middle-class ideals rather than Western beauty norms.

In contrast, *Nikki Tonight*, a late-night chat show modeled after U.S. formats, failed to resonate due to its overt sexual humor and irreverence, which conflicted with Indian norms around gender and public discourse Kumar (2006). As Pathania-Jain (2001) cautions, cosmetic localization – focused merely on language or format tweaks for commercial gain – often falls short. Superficial strategies like dubbing or using local hosts may increase accessibility but fail to achieve cultural depth. Furthermore, overemphasis on Hindi-English urban markets marginalizes regional languages and avoids politically sensitive issues, reflecting commercial priorities over cultural inclusivity.

2.5 Sex and the City and its global remakes

Originally airing from 1998 to 2004, *Sex and the City* (SATC) followed four women in Manhattan navigating careers, relationships, and friendship. Adapted from Candace Bushnell’s book, the show garnered critical acclaim and attracted over 10 million viewers on HBO (Bauder 2004). Its protagonists became global fashion icons and sparked conversations around feminism, sexuality, and postfeminist identity (Meyer 2014).

SATC’s global influence spanned over 200 countries and inspired multiple international remakes, each localizing its core themes – female independence, urban modernity, and intimacy – according to regional values (Yoshioka 2011). In *Down to Love* (China), the focus shifted to traditional ideals like marriage; *Diaries of Shou-nyus’ Desire* (Taiwan) retained professional and romantic themes but downplayed political commentary (Yang 2011); *Sexo e as Negas* (Brazil) reinterpreted SATC through race and class, featuring Afro-Brazilian women and engaging local sociocultural tensions (Joyce and La Pastina 2014).

Urban settings in these remakes adapted SATC's depiction of New York as a glamorous, sexually liberated city (Handyside 2007; Heller 2007) into distinct, localized imaginaries in cities like Taipei and Rio. While structural elements were retained, character arcs, friendships, and relationships were recalibrated to reflect local realities. These adaptations exemplify glocalization, revealing how globally popular formats are elastic enough to enable localized storytelling. They stress the importance of analyzing transnational television beyond surface similarities.

This scholarly discourse on SATC's global remakes sets the foundation for examining *Four More Shots Please!* (FMSP), its Indian adaptation. While FMSP mirrors SATC's premise – four urban women navigating love and selfhood – it roots these themes within Indian sociocultural realities, addressing gender norms and post-liberalization aspirations. Feminist critiques of FMSP are varied. Paunksnis (2023) contends that the show frames agency through individualism and consumerism, while Laskar (2021) critiques its focus on “sismance” over collective feminist solidarity.

Rather than solely evaluating FMSP's feminist politics, this study situates the show within broader debates on format adaptation and glocalization. It examines how narrative arcs, character tropes, and aesthetics from SATC are recalibrated for Indian audiences and how streaming platforms like Amazon Prime Video enable new modes of localized storytelling. These platforms offer both the structural framework and creative flexibility to tailor global content to national contexts. The research questions for the study are:

1. How does *Four More Shots Please!* adapt the characters, story, visuals, setting, and themes of *Sex and the City* for Indian culture?
2. In what ways do the textual and contextual changes in *Four More Shots Please!* reflect the process of glocalization?
3. What key themes emerge in the adaptation, and how do they reflect cultural shifts in India?

Although comparing SATC with other global adaptations could enrich discussions of glocalization, meaningful analysis requires linguistic and cultural fluency. Given the researcher's Hindi-language expertise, focusing on FMSP ensures a deeper and more contextually grounded examination of adaptation practices.

3 Methods

This study employs qualitative thematic analysis, a key method in social science research, as proposed by Holton (1975). Thematic analysis, akin to grounded theory and ethnography, involves coding and interpreting data to identify overarching

narratives. Unlike other qualitative methods, it focuses on reframing and analyzing data to offer deeper insights beyond surface description. Thematic analysis has been refined by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Kiger and Varpio (2020), who stress the importance of identifying meaningful patterns across data to develop theoretically grounded themes. The six-step procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2014) was followed to ensure methodological rigor and transparency.

The study draws upon the glocalization framework to analyze how *Four More Shots Please!* (FMSP) adapts and recontextualizes elements from the American original, *Sex and the City* (SATC). Glocalization provides a lens for understanding how global television formats are selectively modified to fit local cultural expectations, production environments, and audience preferences.

All 30 episodes across the three seasons of FMSP (approximately 28–30 min each) were analyzed in depth. The analysis focused primarily on the text of the series, while also incorporating contextual factors – such as platform distribution and production dynamics – only insofar as they informed on-screen adaptation choices. The text is prioritized, following the logic that all adaptive decisions ultimately manifest in the final audiovisual product, whereas context serves as a secondary frame that influences, but does not determine, textual representation.

All character dialogues cited in this analysis were paraphrased and translated by the researcher from the original series, which features a mix of Hindi, English, and Punjabi, with care taken to preserve tone and contextual meaning.

To systematize the analysis, the study employed five categorical variables adapted from Villegas-Simón and Soto-Sanfiel's (2021) work on *Los Misterios de Laura* and its transnational remakes. These variables and their analytic dimensions were:

1. Characters – including adaptation of main and secondary figures
2. Narrative Structure – including plot construction and conflict resolution
3. Audiovisual Style – including visual grammar and use of sound
4. Space-Time Structure – including the role of physical locations and temporal sequencing
5. Topics – inductively identified thematic motifs that emerged across episodes

3.1 Comparative procedure

The comparative design consisted of three distinct but interrelated phases:

Phase 1 – Descriptive coding. All 30 episodes of FMSP were viewed and coded using the five variables above. In parallel, all 94 episodes of SATC across its six seasons were watched at least once, with selected episodes viewed again for deeper comparative coding. Each SATC episode was summarized for its dominant plotlines,

character functions, and stylistic signatures – such as voice-over narration, fashion-led mise-en-scène, and iconic uses of Manhattan space.

Phase 2 – Cross-text mapping. For every FMSP episode, variables were mapped against SATC patterns. Particular attention was paid to:

Female friendship settings (SATC's diners & cupcake bakeries ↔ FMSP's Truck Bar).

Occupational parallels (Carrie & Damini as columnist/journalist; Miranda & Anjana as lawyers balancing single motherhood; Charlotte & Siddhi's aspirational focus on marriage).

Sexual agency archetypes (Samantha's unapologetic exploration ↔ Umang's bisexual storyline).

Notable examples include: S3E5 “No Ifs, Ands, or Butts” – a key moment showcasing the centrality of food venues to female bonding, echoed in FMSP's repeated use of the Truck Bar. S1E3 “Bay of Married Pigs” and S3E12 “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” – episodes that reflect Charlotte's idealization of marriage, paralleled in Siddhi's Season 1 arc. S2E11 “Evolution” and S5E4 “Cover Girl” – which explore Carrie's journalism career and tension with editorial constraints, mirrored by Damini's trajectory. S5E3 “Luck Be an Old Lady” and S6E5 “Lights, Camera, Relationship!” – where Miranda balances career and motherhood, analogous to Anjana's legal and personal challenges S3E4 “Boy, Girl, Boy, Girl...” and S4E6 “Baby, Talk Is Cheap” – both of which portray Samantha's engagement with sexual fluidity, providing a thematic bridge to Umang's bisexual identity and narrative centrality in FMSP.

Phase 3 – Thematic synthesis. Recurring patterns and divergences were clustered into meta-themes – such as “urban female autonomy,” “familial absence versus presence,” and “linguistic hybridity” – and interpreted through the glocalization lens. This process allowed for identifying not only what was retained or changed in adaptation, but also how cultural specificity shaped the transformation of global television genres for a regional streaming audience.

4 Findings and discussion

4.1 Characters: comparative analysis of main and secondary figures

The core narrative of *Four More Shots Please!* (FMSP) mirrors *Sex and the City* (SATC) in its focus on four urban, affluent women navigating love, careers, and identity in a cosmopolitan setting. However, while SATC's characters function in a context of

individualism and romantic autonomy within New York's consumerist culture, FMSP situates its protagonists in a socio-cultural framework marked by familial entanglements, linguistic hybridity, and the evolving norms of Indian post-liberalization society. The adaptation exemplifies what Villegas-Simón and Soto-Sanfiel (2021) term the "search for equivalences" – where original character functions are retained, but attributes and interpersonal dynamics are reconfigured to align with local cultural logics.

This section begins with a character-by-character comparison between *Sex and the City* (SATC) and *Four More Shots Please!* (FMSP), highlighting key parallels in role, personality, and narrative function. Damini Roy in FMSP maps onto Carrie Bradshaw in SATC, both serving as narrators and career-focused writers. Anjana Menon parallels Miranda Hobbes as an ambitious lawyer and single mother. Umang Singh mirrors Samantha Jones in her embrace of sexual agency and defiance of heteronormativity, especially through her bisexual identity. Siddhi Patel resonates with Charlotte York in her traditional aspirations around marriage and family, but her arc pivots toward body image and self-worth. These equivalences are explored in depth in the following subsections, each grounded in specific character arcs and illustrative episodes across both series.

4.1.1 Damini Roy and Carrie Bradshaw: journalism and narrative centrality

Damini Roy, an investigative journalist and *Four More Shots Please!*'s narrator, finds her closest analogue in Carrie Bradshaw, *Sex and the City*'s columnist protagonist. Both frame the narrative through their professional voices and embody the "career/consumer postfeminism" archetype (Dejmanee 2016), where ambition, aesthetic pleasure, and romantic entanglements intersect. Yet while Carrie's career is seamlessly integrated into Manhattan's aspirational lifestyle, Damini's trajectory is shaped by institutional gatekeeping and political censorship in Indian journalism.

This is evident in an early confrontation with her media board, when Damini refuses to dilute her investigative reporting in favor of profit: "I'm not here to please anyone. I'm here to tell the truth." Her insistence that "Our job isn't to avoid lawsuits – it's to ask the hard questions" crystallizes the precarious position of independent journalism in India's digital media ecology, contrasting with Carrie's breezy self-reflections on urban love.

While Carrie's romantic arc with Mr. Big spans the series, Damini's relationships – particularly with Jeh – are emotionally significant yet framed by culturally specific tensions around commitment, familial acceptance, and autonomy. During a breakup conversation in Season 3, Damini tells Jeh: "Maybe we're not meant to be together right now." Her subsequent admission – "You deserve honesty, and I haven't been fair to you" – reflects not just personal regret but the burden of

navigating modern intimacy under the pressure of traditional expectations and professional strain.

4.1.2 Anjana Menon and Miranda Hobbes: legal careers and motherhood

Anjana Menon parallels Miranda Hobbes as a high-powered lawyer and single mother. Both characters contend with challenges of combining motherhood and professional ambition. However, while Miranda critiques gender expectations within a neoliberal careerist frame, Anjana's storyline addresses the dominance of patriarchal norms in Indian workplaces and family life.

This tension surfaces sharply in a Season 1 boardroom scene where Anjana is interrupted during a key legal pitch and later told: "Maybe we need someone with fewer... distractions at home." She fires back, "Being a mother doesn't make me less of a lawyer." The scene anchors her dual burden of proving professional legitimacy while quietly battling maternal bias – something Miranda often framed as ironic, but Anjana experiences as structural.

Her interactions with ex-husband Varun similarly reveal the affective labor of co-parenting in a judgmental social context. When Varun questions her dating life, Anjana responds: "You don't get to police my choices just because I'm a mother." Her tone is not combative but weary, capturing the emotional toll of performing independence while under surveillance by former partners and in-laws.

Romantic entanglements also become sites of cultural friction. In a conversation with Arjun, her Season 2 partner, Anjana states: "I'm not looking for a savior. I just want someone who respects that my time is mine." These lines reflect not just boundary-setting but a refusal to downplay her complexity as a single working woman.

4.1.3 Umang Singh and Samantha Jones: sexual agency and queer visibility

Umang Singh serves as *FMSP*'s adaptation of Samantha Jones, *SATC*'s most sexually liberated character. Both reject monogamy and explore their desires. Yet while Samantha's sexuality is framed as playful and provocative within a heteronormative script, Umang's bisexuality is a political and emotional struggle.

In a pivotal coming-out scene with her conservative Punjabi family (Season 1, Ep. 7), Umang says: "I like women. I like men. And I'm done pretending that makes me confused." This declaration – met with stunned silence – marks not just a personal admission but a rupture in familial and cultural expectations. Her bisexuality is neither hidden nor resolved within a single storyline; instead, it unfolds across seasons as a source of pride and conflict.

Her relationship with Samara Kapoor, a closeted Bollywood actress, captures the tension between private desire and public visibility. In a moment of vulnerability, Umang pleads: “I’m out, Samara. I’ve already fought for us. You have to meet me halfway.” Unlike Samantha’s episodic sexual experimentation, Umang’s arc sustains a coherent and emotionally grounded representation of queer identity. The adaptation thus exchanges Samantha’s sexual spectacle for a layered narrative of love, shame, courage, and cultural negotiation, signaling *FMSP*’s embrace of progressive but locally contextualized queer politics.

4.1.4 Siddhi Patel and Charlotte York: body image and familial aspiration

Siddhi Patel can be viewed as *FMSP*’s reimagining of Charlotte York. Both characters begin with a desire for marriage and social approval, yet their personal growth narratives diverge. While Charlotte’s arc centers on fertility and religious conversion, Siddhi’s revolves around self-worth, body image, and familial expectations.

In early episodes, Siddhi expresses her longing for traditional milestones, telling her friends (Season 1, Ep. 2): “I just want to get married. Is that so wrong? I want the big fat Indian wedding, okay?” This line, delivered with a mix of sincerity and comic desperation, reflects the internalization of heteronormative ideals promoted by her mother, Sneha.

Sneha’s frequent body-shaming intensifies this pressure: “If you lost some weight, maybe someone would actually want to marry you.” Siddhi’s response, once hesitant, gains assertiveness as the series progresses. In a stand-up performance (Season 2, Ep. 7), she declares: “I’m not the punchline. I’m the whole damn joke – and I get to tell it.” Here, comedy becomes resistance, allowing her to reclaim agency over how she’s seen and heard.

Collectively, these character arcs reveal how *Four More Shots Please!* retains the feminist spirit of *Sex and the City* while reworking its themes within India’s cultural terrain. Romantic autonomy, professional ambition, queer identity, and body politics are reframed through the pressures of family, tradition, and social expectation. By grounding personal struggles in collective contexts, the adaptation transforms individualist narratives into culturally embedded negotiations of modern Indian womanhood.

4.1.5 The role of secondary characters: families, sexes, and emotional stakes

A key site of cultural adaptation lies in the treatment of secondary characters. In *SATC*, parents and extended families are largely absent, reinforcing the series’ emphasis on friendship, professional life, and romantic experimentation. Family, if mentioned, serves as background rather than an active emotional force. This

omission reflects individualism and detachment from traditional relational constraints – a strategy rooted in 1990s American postfeminist sensibilities. While there are cues that Charlotte comes from a wealthy family, her parents are never introduced. Her mother-in-law briefly appears as an adversary.

In contrast, FMSP reorients emotional gravity toward intergenerational ties, familial obligations, and the aftershocks of romantic entanglements. Characters like Sneha (Siddhi's mother), Varun (Anjana's ex-husband), and Jeh (Damini's partner) occupy sustained narrative space. These secondary figures are not fleeting devices; they structure character development and introduce enduring conflicts rooted in Indian socio-cultural norms.

Sneha evolves into a layered character navigating grief, self-discovery, and romantic reinvention. Her relationship with Siddhi – marked by criticism, affection, and growing understanding – offers a maternal presence absent in SATC. Her own dating subplot challenges generational stereotypes and expands the emotional terrain beyond the younger protagonists. Varun and Jeh are not just love interests but emotional anchors. Varun's involvement in Anjana's life post-divorce – especially his jealousy and efforts to police her dating – reflects patriarchal power even after formal separation, a theme rarely explored in SATC's episodic portrayals of exes.

Perhaps the most instructive comparison lies in the narrative function of Jeh in FMSP and Mr. Big in SATC. Both serve as emotional foils to Damini and Carrie, offering a mix of intimacy, frustration, and unresolved longing. Yet their cultural positioning differs: Mr. Big's aloofness and resistance to commitment reflect a neoliberal masculinity unencumbered by family or tradition. Jeh, by contrast, is emotionally available but constrained by social expectations, including Damini's abortion and mental health struggles, which test his ability to remain supportive. Where Mr. Big symbolizes the unattainable romantic ideal, Jeh embodies the imperfect partner negotiating real-world limitations. In this way, FMSP glocalizes the “will-they-won't-they” trope by embedding it within Indian debates around gendered responsibility, sexual health, and emotional labor.

4.2 Narrative structure: premise, plots, and dramatic conflicts

Both *Sex and the City* (SATC) and *Four More Shots Please!* (FMSP) move the plot forward with dramatic conflicts. Yet, while SATC locates these dramas in an environment of individualism and romantic experimentation, FMSP embeds them within collective structures of family, social expectations, and patriarchal resistance in post-liberalization India.

In both series, the episodic structure revolves around personal dilemmas, romantic entanglements, and work-related challenges. However, SATC's episodes often function as loosely connected vignettes centered on one thematic question (e.g., "Can women have sex like men?"), usually posed by Carrie in voiceover. In contrast, FMSP's plots unfold as serial arcs with sustained emotional stakes, grounded in family-based conflicts and identity negotiations.

Damini's professional arc – being ousted from her investigative outlet – functions not just as a workplace conflict but as commentary on press freedom and gendered leadership in Indian journalism. While this echoes Carrie's challenges as a columnist, FMSP revolves around systemic barriers over personal indecision. Anjana's storylines – especially her efforts to balance single motherhood with legal aspirations – parallel Miranda Hobbes, but are reframed to reflect Indian custody dynamics, informal labor, and maternal guilt shaped by communal expectations.

Romantic plots also reveal structural similarity and cultural differences. SATC constructs romantic instability as a site of self-fashioning, often framed through Carrie's cyclical relationship with Mr. Big. FMSP mirrors this in Damini's shifting choices between casual encounters and cohabitation with Jeh. But unlike Carrie's open-ended pursuit of love, Damini's dilemmas reflect respectability politics and the expectations on ambitious, unmarried Indian women. While SATC interrogates romantic agency within a neoliberal framework, FMSP presents relationships as spaces where desire and duty are negotiated.

FMSP introduces dramatic conflicts absent in SATC – especially those rooted in generational and parental disapproval. Umang's coming-out, dismissed by her father as a "lifestyle choice," reveals the emotional labor of asserting queer identity in a society shaped by heteronormativity and filial duty. Siddhi's tension with her mother over body image and marriageability echoes Charlotte's idealism but shifts the conflict toward intergenerational shame and resilience. Where SATC privileges friends and lovers, FMSP assigns narrative weight to family, tradition, and constraint.

In both series, autonomy is affirmed, but through different paths. SATC's characters find empowerment through consumerism and friendship; FMSP's protagonists must wrestle choice from embedded norms. The adaptation recontextualizes narrative structure within India's sociocultural terrain, fulfilling Robertson's (1995) notion of glocal negotiation.

4.3 Audiovisual style: visual language, narrative rhythm, and linguistic codes

In their audiovisual styles, *Sex and the City* (SATC) and *Four More Shots Please!* (FMSP) reflect the distinctive aesthetic traditions and audience expectations of their respective

media cultures. SATC draws from the visual lexicon of Western prestige television, with elegant tracking shots, muted urban palettes, and fashion-forward mise-en-scène. Its polished cinematography and restrained color grading complement the aspirational cosmopolitanism of late-1990s Manhattan, where the city becomes a narrative entity – an emblem of personal reinvention, stylish independence, and postfeminist self-fashioning.

FMSP adapts and transforms these elements through Indian streaming aesthetics, drawing heavily from Bollywood's sensorial traditions. Rather than mimicking SATC's minimalist visual palette, FMSP saturates its screen with bold colors – deep oranges, pinks, golds – aligned with the melodramatic vocabulary of Hindi cinema. Stylized montages, heightened lighting, slow-motion sequences, and musical cues replace Carrie's voiceovers to mark emotional turning points. Diegetic music scenes like karaoke or dance numbers are used not only for spectacle but to externalize internal conflicts or celebrate moments of female camaraderie. While SATC often reserves emotional expression for private moments or witty reflection, FMSP locates emotional intensity in public spaces, using visual excess and music as devices that reflect the collectivist ethos and performative culture of Indian storytelling.

This Bollywood-inspired stylistic hybridity serves a dual purpose. It localizes the format in an aesthetic familiar to Indian audiences while also appealing to global streaming viewers accustomed to gloss, polish, and cinematic production values. As Kraidy (2005) argues, such “cultural hybridity” enables local adaptations to repackage global genres with indigenous affective registers, enhancing both commercial appeal and narrative authenticity.

Language further distinguishes the adaptations. SATC's dialogue is rooted in the sharp idiom of urban American English, filled with metaphors of dating, therapy, brunch culture, and liberal individualism. In contrast, FMSP deploys Hinglish – a fluid mix of Hindi and English – as a register of class, generation, and cosmopolitan identity. This code-switching is central to the show's realism and appeal. Umang's shift from Punjabi with her conservative family to English with her friends dramatizes her ongoing negotiation of identity. As Pathania-Jain (2001) and Nema and Chawla (2018) note, Hinglish signals aspirational modernity and global belonging, anchoring FMSP's characters in India's urban, English-educated middle class. While SATC uses monolingual English, FMSP's multilingualism reflects Indian urban polyglossia – grounding the adaptation in its local linguistic ecology.

4.4 Space-time structure: urban settings, domesticity, and temporal arcs

Both *Sex and the City* (SATC) and *Four More Shots Please!* (FMSP) are structured around distinct urban spaces and intimate settings that reflect the emotional and

sociocultural trajectories of their protagonists. However, while SATC uses New York City as a metaphor for female autonomy and experimentation, FMSP reimagines Mumbai as a layered urban site where tradition and modernity coexist, often in tension.

SATC positions the city as a liberating force. Carrie's apartment, with its view of Manhattan, represents a safe haven for self-reflection, while restaurants, boutiques, and nightclubs become spaces for personal transformation. Public space is tied to freedom and pleasure. In contrast, FMSP's Mumbai is more domesticated and familial. While the Truck Bar echoes SATC's social hubs (e.g., Magnolia Bakery or Samantha's haunts), FMSP layers these with culturally specific domestic spaces – Siddhi's family home, Anjana's apartment with her daughter and ex-husband, Umang's childhood home in Ludhiana – which highlight how the personal and political intertwine in private Indian settings.

The Truck Bar functions as the Indian equivalent of SATC's regular cafés and lounges. It serves as a narrative anchor where the four women regroup, gossip, and reset. However, unlike SATC's fluid use of nightlife as a playground, the destruction of the Truck Bar in FMSP's final season is symbolic – it signals rupture, communal transformation, and the end of a life phase. SATC rarely treats its social spaces with such gravitas, underscoring a key difference: FMSP imbues spatial change with narrative weight.

Temporal structure also reflects differing cultural logics. SATC's six-season arc spans nearly a decade, with little closure until the final season. Episodes are episodic, often independent, and driven by Carrie's voiceover reflections. Time is fluid and subordinated to theme. FMSP, by contrast, adopts a serialized arc over three seasons, where each represents a cohesive chapter. The shorter time span (2019–2022) and condensed episodes reflect streaming platform norms and an aesthetic of emotional intensification, where growth and trauma are cumulative.

FMSP also expands into regional India – a move absent in SATC's urban focus. Flashbacks to Umang's life in Ludhiana and her return home to face familial rejection shows how small-town conservatism shapes identity. In contrast, SATC rarely leaves Manhattan, and when it does, excursions (e.g., to Paris) are framed as exotic detours.

4.5 Inductive themes emerging in FMSP

To situate the adaptations in the times they were released, *Four More Shots Please!* introduces themes like body image issues, sexual self-presentation online, and the current state of feminism and journalism in India – reflecting the socio-political shifts between 1998, when SATC was released, and 2019, when FMSP debuted. Two

new themes that build on the dramatic conflict and character arcs are bisexuality and body image.

4.5.1 Bold representation of bisexuality

Sex and the City (SATC) introduced queer themes into U.S. primetime television through characters like Stanford Blatch, Carrie's gay best friend, and Samantha Jones, who openly identifies as "trysexual" – willing to experiment across the sexual spectrum. One of the most prominent portrayals occurs in season four, when Samantha enters a brief relationship with Maria Diega Reyes, a female artist. Other episodes, such as "Boy, Girl, Boy, Girl" (season three), explore bisexuality as a generational trend, often presenting it as a phase embraced by the youth but met with skepticism by older characters. However, these depictions are fleeting. Queerness in *SATC* tends to occupy the periphery, introduced for variety or comic relief, and rarely sustained across seasons. While groundbreaking for its time, *SATC* largely avoids deeper explorations of queer identity, institutional barriers, or familial tensions.

In contrast, *Four More Shots Please!* (FMSP) places bisexuality at the center through Umang Singh, a bold, confident personal trainer from Ludhiana. She is unapologetic about her sexuality, engaging in relationships with both men and women while navigating Indian social constraints. Her past with Pinky – now married to Umang's brother – illustrates the cultural dissonance she faces between personal desire and societal expectations. The show maintains her ongoing conflict with her father as a plotline, who disapproves of her sexuality and dismisses it as a lifestyle choice. In their most charged encounter, her father remarks, "This is just a phase – you'll grow out of it," to which Umang replies, "It's not a phase. It's who I am, and I'm not ashamed." Yet Umang refuses to fully sever familial ties, reflecting the emotional complexity of queer identity within Indian family structures.

While not the first instance of queer sexuality in Indian media, FMSP's portrayal is emotionally layered. Historically, Indian cinema – especially Bollywood – has often depicted homosexuality negatively (Bhugra et al. 2015). In the 1980s, films like *Holi* and *Subhah* portrayed lesbians as pathological, ultimately punishing them with death. Deepa Mehta's *Fire* (1996) was a rare exception, asserting lesbian visibility through homosocial intimacy, eroticized domesticity, and emotional bonding (Gopinath 2005). More recently, Rao (2018) notes that covert forms of same-sex love – especially among men – have existed within Indian cultural codes, though Bollywood often frames lesbianism through sensationalism or criminality, as seen in *Girlfriend* (2008).

FMSP's portrayal of Umang aligns more with progressive Bollywood depictions like *Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga* (2019) and *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan*

(2020), which frame queerness around negotiation and family reconciliation. These stories – like *FMSP* – foreground protagonists who validate their identities while emotionally engaging their families (Prasitha & Bhubneshwari 2024).

That said, *FMSP* is not without limitations. While it deepens *SATC*'s episodic and apolitical portrayal of queerness, Umang's arc centers on emotional struggle more than structural critique. Her family's rejection is framed as a personal burden rather than systemic exclusion. Moreover, *FMSP*'s urban, upper-middle-class context limits its representational scope. The queer experience offered – though sustained and sensitively rendered – emerges from a privileged lens, risking exclusion of less affluent, less Anglophone, and more marginalized queer women. In this way, *FMSP* extends *SATC*'s legacy while revealing the limits of glocalized storytelling.

4.5.2 Depiction of body image issues

While *SATC* popularized conversations around fashion, sex, and female empowerment, it avoided addressing body image directly. Its protagonists – slim, conventionally attractive white women – moved through New York's social and romantic scenes without overt commentary on appearance-related anxieties. Any references to body image were brief and couched in humor or fashion, reinforcing a silent normativity around thinness and glamor. Thus, *SATC* participated in what DeJmanee (2016) calls “career/consumer postfeminism” – offering empowerment without questioning bodily ideals.

By contrast, *FMSP* explicitly foregrounds body image as a recurring source of conflict, especially through Siddhi Patel. Siddhi's arc – from self-loathing to tentative self-acceptance – signals a shift toward body positivity, though this shift remains linked to patriarchal approval.

Acutely aware of her weight, Siddhi internalizes her mother Sneha's frequent criticisms, in one confrontation, her mother Sneha snaps, “You'll never find a husband looking like this.” This tension is deeply relational, reflecting broader cultural expectations of beauty tied to marriageability, class respectability, and heteronormative desirability. But, Siddhi's arc – from self-loathing to tentative self-acceptance – signals a shift toward body positivity, where she pushes back saying “Maybe I don't need a husband to feel enough.”

These issues are echoed in Samaira, a Bollywood actor whose insecurities about aging and weight stem from industry pressures. Her fear of being replaced by younger, thinner actresses highlights how age and size are weaponized in celebrity culture. These storylines offer a rare exploration of body surveillance in Indian media. Still, *FMSP*'s engagement with body image is uneven.

However, the show's attempt to foster dialogue around body positivity is both commendable and flawed. Though it critiques fat-shaming, particularly through

Sneha, it also reproduces problematic ideas. For instance, the line “Men like curves, dogs like bones” reframes acceptance through male desire, rather than challenging the structure that marginalizes certain bodies. In this way, the show mirrors a postfeminist model: Siddhi’s empowerment stems from personal confidence and romantic affirmation, not structural resistance, reinforcing neoliberal ideas of self-making.

FMSP’s portrayal must also be seen within Indian media’s thinness obsession. As Das and Sharma (2016) found, portrayals of ultra-thin women in Indian advertising and film lower women’s self-esteem and impact eating behaviors. Recent analyses (Jain et al. 2019) confirm that Bollywood songs disproportionately feature underweight women, perpetuating unrealistic norms. Within this landscape, Siddhi’s arc offers a counter-narrative, however partial.

Unlike *SATC*, where bodily conformity is assumed and unspoken, FMSP casts weight as both obstacle and emotional struggle. Yet even as it gestures toward inclusivity, it frames body image as personal rather than political. This variance reflects FMSP’s attempt to localize postfeminist narratives while also exposing the limits of adaptation in confronting deep-seated cultural ideals.

This ambivalence – simultaneously expanding representational boundaries while reinscribing neoliberal frameworks – reveals not only the challenges of adaptation, but also the conditions under which such narratives are produced and circulated. In reworking *Sex and the City* for an Indian context, FMSP reflects the need for feminist storytelling to respond to shifting cultural and political climates. Crucially, it is streaming platforms themselves that make such recalibrations possible – providing the flexibility, reach, and infrastructural support necessary to negotiate between local sensibilities and global narrative conventions.

5 Streaming platforms and the evolution of glocalization

Streaming platforms have fundamentally reshaped the landscape of transnational television adaptation by becoming active mediators of glocalization. In the case of *Four More Shots Please!* (FMSP), the adaptation’s thematic boldness and narrative complexity were enabled, in part, by its distribution through Amazon Prime Video – a subscription-based platform that offers creators more latitude than traditional Indian broadcast television. The portrayal of sexual agency, queerness, and critiques of gender norms in FMSP likely would have been significantly muted had the show been produced for linear TV, which is subject to stricter regulation and broader cultural scrutiny.

This creative flexibility reflects a broader transformation in global-local media flows. As Rai (2024) and Chalaby (2022 and 2023) argue, streaming services facilitate hybridization by supporting adaptations that retain global structures while embedding local sensibilities. Prime Video's infrastructure enables content that is grounded in Indian culture yet globally legible. Through what Rai (2024) terms a "cosmopolitan local" strategy, platforms allow Indian producers to reimagine global formats with social and cultural specificity – blending regional idioms, linguistic hybridity, and contextually relevant themes. Biswas (2025) similarly notes that digital platforms empower local creators to take greater risks, pursue bolder storylines, and reach diverse audiences without the constraints of traditional gatekeeping.

However, this flexibility is embedded within the logic of platform capitalism. As Tang and Wei (2023) demonstrate, platforms like Netflix and Tencent Video operate not merely as content distributors but as integrated digital infrastructures governed by data analytics, audience segmentation, and monetization imperatives. These platforms structure their operations around algorithmic curation and cloud-based engineering models that shape which local adaptations are developed and promoted. Adaptations like FMSP are thus not just cultural expressions but also *products of a commercial logic* – selected for their potential to balance regional authenticity with global accessibility.

A critical implication here is that streaming platforms are increasingly competing for overlapping global audiences. In domestic markets like India, local adaptations of globally recognized formats offer streaming services a way to monetize familiarity while minimizing financial risk. When a successful format such as *Sex and the City* is localized, it is not necessarily about accessing new audiences, but about offering a restructured, market-tested product tailored for regional consumption. This allows platforms to generate value from existing IP while subsidizing production costs through an already proven narrative model.

Beyond domestic viewership, such adaptations are designed with the diasporic audience in mind. Indian viewers living abroad, especially in the U.S. or the U.K., often seek cultural continuity and find resonance in content that reflects local sensibilities within global formats. These viewers are situated in a comparative interpretive mode, constantly navigating between their homeland and host cultures. Their engagement with shows like FMSP reinforces the commercial rationale for producing localized, hybrid content with global overtones.

A third audience segment includes global fans of the original format. Viewers outside India who were familiar with *Sex and the City* may be drawn to FMSP out of nostalgia or algorithmic recommendation. For streaming platforms, this presents an opportunity: the localized adaptation becomes another monetizable asset that leverages brand familiarity while attracting new geographies and demographics. As Tang and Wei (2023) point out, streaming platforms increasingly design content

strategies around behavioral data, infrastructure flexibility, and modular narrative forms – enabling transnational circulation of content without having to create entirely new viewer bases.

Streaming has also transformed audience expectations, not only in terms of what content is available, but how it is interpreted across global and local registers. Indian viewers today access both localized series like FMSP and their source material, such as *Sex and the City*, within the same platform ecosystem. This co-visibility shapes production logic: creators must now navigate global familiarity while asserting local distinctiveness. The adaptation must function as both homage and reinvention, acknowledging its global template while negotiating culturally specific themes like sexuality, friendship, and urban modernity.

As a result, platforms like Netflix and Prime are not merely pipelines of distribution; they are active agents of glocalization – curating and shaping content not only through data and monetization frameworks, but by fostering new aesthetic expectations and global-local comparisons. Their infrastructures expand representational possibilities, yet do so within parameters governed by algorithms, brand coherence, and global marketability.

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