

**SOCIOECONOMIC AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF
RURAL WOMEN AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON TELE-
VIEWING BEHAVIOUR**

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Abstract

Genetically and phenotypically, no two human beings are alike or exactly similar in all respects in this universe, because their behavior is constantly shaped and governed by their past environment in which they live in. Nevertheless there are certain characteristics which become distinguishing characteristics for a particular group of people. Some of the past researchers have revealed few such characteristics of viewers which are presented as under. This study is an attempt to find out the pattern of television viewing behavior of women behavior as well as choice of programmes and have implications for future policy considerations. However, most of the TV offerings are cosmopolitan in nature, oriented towards middle-upper middle class and diversity and ethnic flavor. Realizing that women are a distinct social entity having their own information and communication needs, various television channels have allotted a separate regular chunk of women in their transmission schedules. They regularly broadcast different programmes targeted especially at women of different social media.

Keyword: women TV preferences, programme preferences of rural women and mass media.

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Introduction:

‘Television was first demonstrated in India in 1955 at an international industrial exhibition. At the conclusion of the exhibition, a part of the electronic apparatus was presented by the Philips Company to the Government of India to start an experimental television unit. The experiment concentrated on a few programmes designed for community viewing, such as ‘responsibilities of citizenship’, in which were included: traffic and road sense, dangers to community health, adulteration of food stuffs, encroachment of public property and good manners of a citizen.

After the apparent success of this experiment, it was decided to extend the scope of the community viewing to schools and initiate television in educational curricula. Thus, school television was launched on 23 October 1961, in Delhi's government schools. At that time, students in middle and higher secondary (post-high) schools run by the Delhi Administration received television lessons based on their academic curriculum, some 12,000 students benefited to begin with. But later, the service was extended to cover more than 30,000 students in Delhi.

From April 1965, television's general service was increased from one hour once-a-week to one hour 4 days a week. But from 15 August that year, it became a daily transmission. The Krishi Darshan (programme for better farming practices) was introduced on television from 26 January 1967. This rural service was primarily meant to familiarize the rural viewers with the technical and scientific know-how about farming, agricultural implements, fertilizers, weather forecasts, better seeds and all other allied farming inputs. In addition, it also contained messages for the rural audiences on the importance of education, personal hygiene, health, family welfare, national and emotional integration through purposeful, social comment and healthy entertainment.

Varalakshmi and Sinha (1987) conducted a study on televiewing behaviour of nettipuram programme by Trivandrum district and reported that level of education of the respondents was found to affect the viewing behavior. Singh (1988) found that respondent's education was the most important reason for the non-viewing of ‘krishi- darshan’ programme. Dharmadikari (1991) found that respondent's education level was positively and significantly correlated with their televiewing behavior.

It can be concluded from the above studies that, majority of the viewers completed secondary level education. There is highly significant relationship between education with radio listening and televiewing behavior.

Significance of the study

The Significance of the study based on the findings of current investigation are as follows;

- 1) Majority of the rural people viewed television for only entertainment purpose. This indicated that television is still only a media for entertainment. This calls for strengthening the educative and informative functions of electronic media
- 2) Higher proportion of the respondents was not benefitted by television programmes, which are broadcasted during noon hours and which are purely informational and educational in nature. This needs the attention of programme makers.
- 3) Considering the least educational orientation among rural Indians, the educational programmes can conveniently be combined with recreational programme, though music plays and dramas programmes can be exploited for disseminating messages, which have educational values.

Mass media offer effective channels for communicating agricultural messages, which can increase knowledge and influence behaviour of audience members. Broadcast media have the ability to disseminate information to large audiences efficiently; television can be particularly important channel.

The role of television in rural development is not in doubt. The role covers the political, economic, agriculture, health, education, employment and social spheres. The television set the public agenda and acts as the gatekeeper of public issues. It performs the watchdog role especially in transparency of development programmes. As the fourth estate, the TV provides the checks and balances in relation to the three branches of government, as created by the Constitution.

The role of communication in development has become part of a much larger debate on the process of social change and the nature of development itself. There exists a wide variety of

views about the role and relevance of mass communication to development. This study was conducted to evaluate the role of television programmes in rural development. Using the procedure of survey method, this study found out the worth of development programmes. Results of the study indicated that development programmes were very useful for rural people and majority got benefit of it.

This study showed correlation between farmers' knowledge level and educational level, age, marital status, family dimension, and monthly income of farmers which confirmed by some of the findings of the earlier studies indicating that educational level, age, marital status, family dimension, and monthly income of farmers has correlation with their knowledge level.

Television though commenced with the aim of promoting the objective of socio-economic development of the rural people by disseminating of knowledge, through education and information. But during the course of expansion it fulfilled the three widely accepted principals, namely, entertainment first, information second, and education last. The entertainment element went on increasing at the cost of education and information disseminating through their programmes.

Media scholars usually are more interested in producing programs that are of high commercial value. Most often, the few agricultural programs are not timed to suit the farmers. Consequently, most farmers are constrained to rely on third parties for agricultural information, which may often be biased. Considering the fact that rural population forms a great amount of population in any country, it seems indispensable to set up a particular TV network for this group to meet their needs. It is also suggested that producers include appealing and appropriate TV items such as, show, contest, comic plays, and etc in their programs under the supervision of the experts in agricultural organization

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

One of the major components and driving force of rural development is communication. Television has been given considerable importance in many countries as a source and a tool of communication. The success stories of using television for development in many countries has

negated the concept that television is basically an entertainment oriented medium and it is hostile to thoughts. Television is adaptable and can follow different approaches when used in the different developmental situations. This medium has been used for formal, non-formal and informal education. Importance of television to communicate information, idea, skills and attitudes has been affirmed by research studies.

There is more scope to do further research with more applicable, comprehensive studies covering wider geographical area by taking into consideration other independent variables not used in this study. Other communication media can be considered for future research like effect of print media on rural mass. An experimental study may be undertaken on the impact of different programmes broadcasted and telecasted on knowledge and adoption behavior of rural people. A comparative study can be conducted on the televiewing habits of Urban and Rural Indians. A study on Television impact especially on rural women and rural children can also be conducted. In future research the problems expressed by rural people and suggestions given can be considered.

Objectives:

The following were declared to be the objectives of television in India, according to the federal information and broadcasting ministry which then financed and continues to control and regulate the medium, now through an independent autonomous body, Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India)

1. To promote and help in the preservation of environmental and ecological balance;
2. To highlight the need for social welfare measures, including welfare of women, children and the less privileged;
3. To promote interest in games and sports; and to stimulate appreciation of artistic and cultural heritage

Methodology:

The data pertaining to the entire study was collected between 2008 and 2011. In this particular study, the researcher adopted a survey method to collect data from the respondents. The study,

which is of a survey in nature, adopted a stratified random sampling technique to arrive at the desired findings

Reviews of Literature:

Science-fiction writer Ray Bradbury lamented in 1953 about television as, “that insidious beast, that Medusa which freezes a billion people to stone every night, staring fixedly, that Siren which called and sang and promised so much and gave, after all, so little” (Kenny, 2009). Indeed, Bradbury was not alone in the angst as television has been as reviled as it has been welcomed since the first broadcasts began in 1928.

Indian television in its infancy was managed by All India Radio. In 1976, television was separated from radio and given a new name – Doordarshan. This adjunct arrangement is seen by some commentators as an impediment to the natural development of television in its initial years (Page and Crawley, 2001).

The public service broadcaster – Doordarshan has been used over the years to deliver a number of useful messages. These include messages on family planning, immunization, nutrition of the mother and the child, the need to stem bias against the girl child, among others. Experience suggests that some communication campaigns have worked better than others. A key reason for the failure of many development communication campaigns was the lack of co-ordination with field level agencies (Ninan, 1995; Singhal and Rogers, 2001). Ninan (1995) explains just why the family planning message, the mainstay of development communication messages on television, failed to work. She attributes the failure to the inability of state agencies to provide back-up facilities in rural areas that were required to make the campaign successful. (Shitak, 2011)

On the other hand, certain messages conveyed through television have worked well. Notable in this category are the health, hygiene, sanitation, and oral rehydration messages which people have adopted to a large extent (Ninan, 1995).

Educational Television is another area in which Doordarshan has made significant contribution. Ever since the inception of television in India in 1959, one major responsibility entrusted to it is

to provide support for the education system in the country. School television (STV) was launched in October 1961 as an organised, systematic and sequential support to formal school instruction. Teachers appreciated STV as a tool for teaching and presentation of content (Kumar, 2000).

The country-wide classroom initiative of the University Grants Commission dedicated to higher education started its telecast on Doordarshan in 1984 with one-hour educational programmes. Though the urban youth may not even be aware of such programmes, these were found to be very useful in the small towns and remote areas of the country where people had less access to other sources of information (Ninan, 1995). In order to boost educational telecasts, a satellite channel devoted exclusively to education Gyandarshan was launched in 2000 in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Indira Gandhi National Open University. (Shitak, 2011)

Gyandarshan offers interesting and informative programmes of relevance to special categories – pre-school kids, primary and secondary school children, college and university students, and youth seeking career opportunities, housewives, adults, and many others. In addition to educational fare, programmes from abroad are also broadcast to offer viewers a window to the world (Agrawal and Raghaviah, 2006).

For three decades ever since the inception of television, the dominant theme was communication for development so as to improve the quality of life for the vast rural majority. The logic was that in an underdeveloped, largely rural country; television could be used to convey messages on agricultural improvement, health care, and family planning to millions of people without depending on the extension infrastructure such a task would normally require. But the irony was that none of this was done imaginatively or consistently (Ninan, 1995).

Emergence of Private Television Channels:

After reading the lesson the student will be familiar with the following

Advent of private television channels in India

- * How cable TV began and spread in India

- * Regulatory and policy intervention
- * New technologies
- * Business model of cable TV industry
- * Impact of television in our daily lives
- * New trends in television

So you have seen how Doordarshan has evolved over the years. But today we have many channels other than Doordarshan. You may have heard the term “satellite channels”. Generally satellites are used for communication or research purposes. Many man-made satellites are objects which are launched to orbit the earth or any other celestial body. Let us see how satellites help in bringing your favourite television channels to your homes. What is the relationship between a satellite and a serial that you see in the cable network? They might seem completely unrelated. But, communication satellites are instrumental in bringing the serial to your home. Have you ever owned a television set with an antenna which had to be positioned exactly to catch the signal? A heavy rain or rough weather can disrupt your television viewing in such a case.

The introduction of communication satellites has improved the situation greatly. Ask your mother if she had such a wide choice of channels in her childhood. The answer will be ‘no’ this is because these private channels came into the Indian Television scene quite recently. In the earlier days, Doordarshan had a monopoly as it was the only channel available to the Indian television audience. This changed in the 1990s with the arrival of private channels. The coverage of the Gulf War by the American news channel, Cable News Network (CNN) propelled the arrival of satellite television in India. Satellite dishes were used to catch the CNN signals and cable operators took to satellite broadcasting immediately.

Digitalization

The current TV transmission in India is predominantly analog which does not allow any technological up gradation. Besides it results in huge revenue leakage for the Indian cable operators as the household gets more than one TV connected to cable and pays only for one connection. Besides, the quality of analog transmission is very poor. In the case of analog transmission, the operator cannot restrict the choice of channels to the customer. As a result, the

cable operators pay for pay channels even if they are not required by the user. Digitalization leads to triple play where the customers get TV, broadband connection and telephone services from the same source. This will facilitate the cable operator to effectively compete with DTH and IPTV technologies.

Major operators

Last mile connectivity, technological up gradation and digitalization requires huge investments. The cable industry is moving towards consolidation in favour of triple play operators or Multi service operators. There are five major national operators in India. They are Hathway Cable, incablenet, Wire & Wireless India, DEN and Asianet. They collectively access over 25% of the country's TV subscribers. Competition in the cable TV segment has intensified as the corporate battle for acquiring the last mile connectivity. The recent acquisition of Digicable by RCom is a prelude to the shape of things to come in the merger and acquisition in the industry.

The industry is still fragmented and unorganized due to which it is not able to attract investment. The revenue estimate of the industry is not accurate and the industry is blamed for under reporting of subscriber numbers. The cable TV sector will come under a proper licensing mechanism where city, state or national licenses can be bought. The TRAI recommendations are a big step forward in ensuring effective licensing compliance, digitization of networks and attracting investment.

Conclusion:

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