Chapter 6

Indian content for Rural Children: Missing link
6.1 Findings

1. Maximum children watch TV during the prime time along with their parents. They have no control over the viewing as the remote of the TV is controlled by the Parents in the house.

2. Children like to see comedy and action programs but they are forced to see the programs of family drama. These programs are targeted for adults. The content is based more on love and relationship. Children are not mature enough to understand the same and indeed have negative impact.

3. Children feel they are poorer and backward than the TV world. The images of TV has developed a complex in them.

4. TV is controlled by mothers, they take the decision about which program is to be seen.

5. They like the house and the interiors shown on the TV more than the real house they stay in.

6. Children are highly influenced by the clothes and Jewelry, which in their real life they can never dream of.

7. Children like to watch private TV channels than Doordarshan.

8. Children feel that TV mothers take better care of their children than the real mothers.

9. By 2017 BARC has started producing separate data for the rural audience. Because of the mandatory of STBs (Set Top Boxes), channels are getting more income from subscription fees. So channels have started broadcasting more rural content.

10. Watching soap operas has become a ritual in which the entire family participates. They consume TV content along with the evening meal.

11. Rural children like rural content. They can connect with the characters and can easily remember the story and main incidents in the programs they like.

12. Children, who are greatly influenced by soap operas, start to believe that they lead poor, miserable lives in comparison with the characters shown on TV.

13. Children believe that parents shown in soap operas take better care of their children.
14. Most of the key findings of 2017 are similar to those of the survey conducted in 2011-12. The major difference is that now, because of STBs and the new TRP measurement system, subscription fees will become the major source of income for channels. So consumers will be more dominant in demanding the kind of content they like.

6.2 Implications for Indian Television

1. When channels develop their content, they should keep in mind that children may also be watching their programmes even if they are not the target audience. GECs (General Entertainment Channels), in particular, have a huge audience of rural children but they do not offer any special programmes for them.

2. The research agencies involved in the data production and rating system should also consider the rural population as an audience and collect research data in villages and rural areas as well. Private channels should change their attitude towards rural India.

3. The Government of India should form a strong regulatory body to control and censor television content. The provisions in the law should be strictly followed.

4. The relevant laws should be reworked and made more audience-friendly. The process of complaints against the channels should be made simple and easy to use.

5. Special provisions should be made to protect children from harmful television content. The improved laws should be implemented strongly.

6. The audience should come together to form an organization or an NGO to keep a check on television content. Such autonomous organizations exist in the developed countries of Europe. India should follow suit.

7. TRAI should implement the rules regarding minimum advertisements because pay channels are earning both ways: through advertisements as well as subscriptions. Once subscriptions become the major source of income, it will lead to the development of content according to audience tastes and the quality of the programming will also improve.

8. There is a strong need for education about media and its effects. We have the example of the western countries, where reforms are taking place after seeing how
children are affected by constant exposure to television. We have just completed 25 years of free market and have great scope to control its negative impact. Media education should be made compulsory in schools and the Government should introduce subject like media literacy, to enlighten children about all types of the media.

9. The government should institute awards or other rewards for better and original programming on television. For instance, we have National awards for films, but not for television content.

10. Since the rural audience is ignored by all the channels, the government should provide special initiatives to develop content for it. Besides, the Government should encourage companies who come up with niche channels catering to the needs of the rural audience.

11. Channels should take the initiative to improve their content by doing more research about their target audience.

12. On the lines of community radio, the Government should start community television, so that regional people could produce programmes required for their own community. Rural India will also get a chance to participate in the mainstream media. This is definitely possible because there is more bandwidth available now after the digitization of broadcast signals.

13. Television channels and production houses should be set up in rural India so that viewers there can participate in the process of content development. The government should offer subsidies for the same.

14. The government should reduce the cost of frequency allotment to start a channel. Also the process of starting a channel should be made simple and transparent so that the rural population can take the initiative to start their own channels.

15. Rural India is preserving its culture and folktales wonderfully and this could provide good content for television.

16. Doordarshan should take a serious initiative to start a special channel for rural children, as their numbers are significant for the country.
6.3 Limitations of this study

1. Because of budgetary constraints the sample chosen was a purposive sample; every village of Maharashtra should be studied to draw more accurate conclusions.

2. Lack of proper schooling in rural India led to less accurate data collection; Low attendance, inability to read and write properly and lack of attention span were the leading problems.

6.4 Scope for further research

There is tremendous scope for further research on this topic. As stated earlier, very little research work has been done with respect to television and its impact on child audience in India. Rural India, has been always ignored for research. As the majority of the Indian population is rural-based, the research assumes great importance. There are various issues raised in the research which could be studied further. Following are some of them:

1. Impact of television advertisements on the rural audience (children and adults).

2. How content creators social background affects the content of the channel.

3. Depiction of rural India in the GEC channels.

4. Depiction of rural India in the news channels.

5. Representation of rural women on television.

6. Doordarshan’s contribution to the growth and development of rural India.

7. Increase in crime rate amongst children because of the influence of television.

8. Need of community television for the growth of the rural audience.

The list can go on; it is endless. There are many layers and sub-topics which could be explored for research. It’s time researchers understand the importance of research in rural India.

The government should also provide extra incentives to the rural researcher. India is a culturally, economically and geographically diverse country; hence every village or state could have its own problems with the media.
Citation

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