

Television Media and Routine Life of Rural Society in Punjab: A Sociological Insight

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Abstract

The present study deals with the interface of the modern technologies especially the information and communication technologies that have greatly influenced the societies especially the rural society in Punjab. In this, we have delved deeper to understand the idea that how television has influenced the daily routine life of the rural people in Punjab and how under the influence of the content shown over the screen leads them to draw their perspective towards the situations occurring in the outer world. Television has changed its placement from public sphere such as the common space in the houses to become the device of the private sphere such as bedroom. As, at the starting it has impacted the societies by bringing the people together in the verandas of the rural households (common place at the entrance of the houses) to the private and personal areas i.e. the bedrooms, kitchens etc. Also, in this study an attempt has been made to understand the impact the society, through various factors, has to determine the content of the television. As majority studies consider the technology as determinant to build the opinion of the people, however the concept of reverse of technological determinism is being used to understand the factors determining the content formation for the media. It is the people and their respective culture that determine the content of any media. As an outcome of our research we have negated the idea that technology is neutral, as the modern media technologies are so devised that give the audience the prescribed options out of which they have to select the genres as per the given options.

Keywords: Television, rural society, isolation, public sphere, content of television.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies have shaped our modern world in an unprecedented way [1]. Almost all the aspects related to human life have been impacted by these technologies. One of the most popular and powerful medium of communication that has dramatically changed as well as shaped our lives is television. Its ability to bring together audio-visual representations made it an attractive and lively medium of communication [2]. It has greatly impacted the socio-cultural aspects related to human societies that include class, caste, education, religion, age, rural and urban life styles, regions etc. and which further become the central point for the researchers to understand these thoroughly. Within a short span television has evolved from being luxurious equipment to an ordinary gadget of common man's routine usage [3].

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STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF BROADCASTING IN INDIA

The development of broadcasting in India can be divided into three stages. The first period was from 1930 till the beginning of World War II to follow the strictly government set rules provided by the British government, with urban-oriented programmes in English language. The second period that connotes the War period, witnessed the beginning of the centralised news bulletins from Delhi, leading to the creation of the central room

[4]. The third period i.e. the post-independence period, is the period of the development of the Indian broadcasting laden with the idea of national service, with fewer staff members, has the responsibility to plan and develop a major national network [5]. The third period of broadcasting, in its bag has the prominent and remarkable changes leading the broadcasting media to become a national network [6]. The country-wide surveys were conducted to check the terrain, concentration of population and to know linguistic similarities and variations along with understanding the demographically distributed different ethnic groups. In addition to this, different pilot stations were setup to reach the population which never had experienced radio programmes before [7-18]. In the starting phase of third period of broadcasting in the year 1952, All India Radio had organised the National Programme of Music, where the programmes like *Surbahar* and *Sitar* and also programme *Vadya Vrinda* were produced for the listeners (Menon, [19] 1980)

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BROADCASTING OF TELEVISION CHANNELS IN INDIA

Doordarshan is a public broadcast television channel being run under a government organisation i.e. Prasar Bharati. Until 1990s, Doordarshan was the only television channel in India. In the year 1976, the television services were taken out from the All-India Radio services, therefore two separate posts of director general i.e. one for the Doordarshan and another for the radio services were created for their smooth functioning [19-27].

The DTH (Direct-to-home) service was launched by Doordarshan to enhance its area of broadcasting by the then Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on December 16, 2004, and some other channels i.e. DD Rajya Sabha and DD Lok Sabha were launched in the public interest to watch the live proceedings of both the upper and lower house of Parliament (Renjith, [22] 2015; Srinivasan, [28] 2011).

However, the scenario got changed in the year 1995, when the Doordarshan had allowed the CNN to broadcast twenty-four hours news services via Indian satellite by paying the prescribed annual charges and the share of the advertisement related revenue. Mathai [17] (2015) in their study mentioned about the new policies related to liberalisation and privatisation that paved the way for the foreign and private sector to enter the field of the television media such as CNN, STAR TV and indigenous channels such as Zee TV and Sun TV that run through the satellite technology [7].

TELEVISION AND COVID-19

In another combined report released by BARC India and Nielsen Media in order to understand the 'Impact of Covid-19 on TV Viewership and Smartphone Behaviour Across India- Edition 11 and it is mentioned that TV AD Volumes in Covid period surpasses Pre-Covid Volumes by 12%. In order to draw the understanding towards the impact of Covid-19 on TV viewership and Smartphone behaviour, the BARC provided the data on the television that there is a consistent rise in the television viewership as the current week daily average reach is 7 per cent higher and the average daily time spent is 13 per cent higher than pre-Covid period [8]. Overall smart phone usage is little lower than pre-Covid calculations, as the report cited the reason of reduction of time due to banning of the apps that are popular among their users. News and Movies have got more viewership during the prime time [9].

PLACEMENT OF PUNJAB AMONG DIFFERENT STATES REGARDING THE TELEVISION PENETRATION

According to 2011 Census figures released, over 75% of India's urban households now own a TV set, compared with just one third of rural homes. TV penetration is highest in the capital Delhi (88%), followed by Tamil Nadu (87%), Punjab (81.7%), Chandigarh and Puducherry. Bihar has the lowest TV penetration of any state at just 15%. However, among the northern states, Punjab is at the top in context to the percentage of the households having television ownership to the total number

of households in the state [10]. The study focused the Punjab, due to its highest percentage of penetration of TV with respect to other states in the north India [11].

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study is largely guided by the ideas envisaged by Pierre Bourdieu. The concepts such as culture capital, sensationalism, emphasising more on banal things rather than important factual information, dumbing down factor, audience ratings, scoop, criteria for the selection of the panellists for the panel discussion shows etc. [12] have been made part of this research to create a deep understanding of the media in the form of television and the social change it has brought in the rural society of Punjab [13].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is conducted in the State of Punjab. This research is exploratory in nature [14]. For the purpose of the study both primary and secondary sources are used. Secondary data is collected from books, research journals, newspapers, magazines, government reports, Census reports etc. Primary data is collected through field work with the help of interviews, interview schedules of the selected sample and also through observations in the field. The data is analysed through the tools such as average, percentage as well as WAS (Weighted Average Score) [15]. The study is based on the data collected from the 360 respondents from the rural areas of Majha, Malwa and Doaba, three culturally different regions of Punjab [16]. From each of the three regions, based on the Census of India 2011, the district with highest penetration of television is been selected, and from each of the selected district two villages, one with highest penetration and one with lowest penetration of television have been selected [17]. From each of the selected village 60 respondents i.e. 20 respondents with the age group of up to 25 years and 20 respondents with the age group of 26 to 50 years and 20 respondents with the age group of 51 years and above have been selected. From each age group, it was made sure that half the respondents should be male and half of them should be female (Table 1).

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

Change in the Placement of television-

Number of Rooms in House and placement of Television

During the data collection we have asked the respondents about the number of rooms at their place of residence, placement of the television and their preference of placing television at home [18].

REGION-WISE NUMBERS OF ROOMS IN THE HOUSES

The attempt has been made to understand the placement of the television in the house and to know the preference of the respondents for its placement. For this the respondents were asked to about the number of rooms their houses have (Table 2). The information related to this is mentioned in the following table:

In order to understand the placement of the television in the house of the respondents we have drawn from the response given by respondents regarding the number of rooms in their houses [19]. The information related to the number of rooms was so asked to understand the options before the respondents to place their television sets. From the above table it is drawn that the majority respondents have more than two rooms at their respective houses showing the choice they have for the placement of the television set [20]. It is drawn from table that the majority of the respondents with 35.6 percent of the total respondents reside in the houses that are having four or more number of rooms, followed by 29.7 per cent of the total respondents residing in the houses having two rooms set and 28.6 per cent of the total respondents are residing in the houses having three rooms set and very few i.e. 6.1 per cent of the respondents reside in one room house [21].

REGION-WISE PLACEMENT OF TELEVISION SETS AT HOME

The attempt has been made to draw the pattern between the number of room, and the placement of the television is to know that whether television is promoting integration within the members of the

family or is it promoting isolation within them (Table 3). The information related to placement of television sets is as under:

Regarding the placement of the television, the above table depicted that the majority of the houses have television sets being placed in the bedrooms of the respondents. As per the response given by the total 360 respondents, the villages we have chosen for data collection have the total of 504 television sets at their respective houses [22]. As per the placement of the television sets the majority of the TV sets with 78.0 per cent (with frequency 393) out of the total 504 TV sets have been placed in the bedrooms, as stated by our respondents [23]. This is followed by the 16.9 per cent of the television sets out of the total TV sets being placed in the common room/lobby of the houses of the respondents [24]. The remaining 5.2 per cent of the television sets have been placed in the drawing rooms/guest rooms in the houses of the respondents (a particular room which they kept for meeting their guests). Further on analysing the concept of placement of television on the regional basis, we have drawn that among all the regions i.e. Malwa, Majha and Doaba, as told by the respondents that the majority with 76.33 per cent, 78.65 per cent and 78.98 per cent of the TV sets respectively are kept in the bedrooms of their houses. Following this, 18.93 per cent, 16.85 per cent and 14.65 per cent of the TV sets from within Malwa, Majha and Doaba regions respectively have been placed in common room/lobby of the houses. And 4.73 per cent, 4.49 per cent and 6.37 per cent of the TV sets in Malwa, Majha and Doaba regions respectively are recorded to be placed in the drawing room, or guest room of the residences of the respondents from these regions [25].

Therefore, from the above, we can draw the assertion that television which previously was being placed in the common rooms of the houses has now got placed in the bedrooms, leading the people of the villages to spend most of their leisure time in their bedrooms. It is drawn that the people in Punjab in their leisure time, usually preferred to sit at the village's common place called *sath*, have shifted their preference to sit in the bedroom watching TV. Many of the respondents have told us that in order to avoid any conflict with the fellow villagers, they avoid going out and become the part of the people sitting at the common place [26-32]. Along with that during our field work we have seen some of the village youth sitting in the grocery shops watching movies on television installed in the shops. From this it is also inferred that television by getting it placed in the bedroom has, in a sense, promoted bedroom culture in the village society, as cited by Livingstone [33] (2007) in her analysis where she found people sitting in bedroom watching their preferred programmes. The researcher also analysed that the television has also promoted isolation among the family members. As the number of television sets in the rural houses also shown that the people prefer to watch their preferred programmes in their own personal rooms. In the present scenario where the television has changed itself from a box like structure to a LCD and LED and now from LED to smart phone screens made the people more isolated [26].

Contrary to this, as depicted by Kirk Johnson [32] (1998) in his study in the India of 90's that with the coming up of the television in the village society and being placed at the common place within the house, the television has not only integrated the members within the family but also the persons within the neighbourhood, most of whom don't have the television sets at their home [27-32]. As the persons within ones neighbourhood, across castes differences, used to come and watch television sitting together and spending their leisure time with each other. In his ethnographic research, Kirk Johnson [32] (1998) has mentioned number of instances where the people from the village Danawli (the village he has analysed to understand the social impact of the television on the villages in India) used to come to the residences having television sets [27]. The sitting together of the people from different caste groups has mitigated the social distance and promote interaction among them, which otherwise could not be possible. Not only this, the researcher also mentioned in his work, the instances where the children from the neighbourhood got asleep at the common place where the television got installed while watching the programme at night time. Kirk Johnson [32] (1998) is talking about this phenomena when the villages have few television sets, and for this the television set used to install in the common place of the house so that anyone i.e. not only the family members but also the persons from the neighbourhood felt comfortable to sit and watch [28].

PREFERENCE REGARDING THE PLACEMENT OF THE TELEVISION

In this part of the chapter the respondents were asked about their preference for the placement of television in their houses. The idea to gather information regarding the preference of the respondents is to know that at which place of their houses they would like to watch television, i.e. whether they want to watch TV programmes at the common place with their family members or they want to watch it in isolation i.e. at their bedroom (Table 4).

Table 1. Distribution of viewers (respondents).

Categories															Total
Cultural Regions			Malwa				Majha				Doaba				03
Districts (Rural Households having Highest Television Ownership)			Fategarh Sahib				Gurdaspur				Jalandhar				03
Villages			Bhagatpura (H)		Ambe Majra (L)		Sherpur (H)		Jaswan (L)		Kotha (H)		Buraj Hasan (L)		06
Classification of No. of Television Viewers	Gender		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	-
	Age	Up to 25 Years	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	120
		26-50 Years	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	120
		51 Years and Above	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	120
	Total		60		60		60		60		60		60		360
Total No. of Viewers			120				120				120				360

H- Villages with highest television penetration

L- Villages with lowest television penetration

M- Male, F- Female

Table 2. Region-wise numbers of rooms in the houses of the respondents.

Categories		Malwa			Majha			Doaba			Total
		Bhagatpura (H)	Ambe Majra (L)	Total	Sherpur (H)	Jaswan (L)	Total	Kotha (H)	Buraj Hasan (L)	Total	
No. of Rooms At Home	One Room	7	5	12	2	3	5	3	2	5	22
		(11.7)	(8.3)	(10)	(3.3)	(5)	(4.17)	(5)	(3.3)	(4.17)	(6.1)
	Two Rooms	16	18	34	16	16	32	22	19	41	107
		(26.7)	(30)	(28.3)	(26.7)	(26.7)	(26.67)	(36.7)	(31.7)	(34.17)	(29.7)
	Three Rooms	23	21	44	5	13	18	23	18	41	103
		(38.3)	(35)	(36.67)	(8.3)	(21.7)	(15)	(38.3)	(30)	(34.17)	(28.6)
	Four Rooms and More	14	16	30	37	28	65	12	21	33	128
		(23.3)	(26.7)	(25)	(61.7)	(46.7)	(54.17)	(20)	(35)	(27.5)	(35.6)
	Total	60	60	120	60	60	120	60	60	120	360
		(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)

Note: Figure in parentheses represents percentage of share in total number of respondents.

Table 3. Region-wise placement of television sets at home.

Category		Malwa			Majha			Doaba			Total
		Bhagatpura (H)	Ambe Majra (L)	Total	Sherpur (H)	Jaswan (L)	Total	Kotha (H)	Buraj Hassan (L)	Total	
Placement of Television in the houses	Common Room / Lobby	17	15	32	12	18	30	12	11	23	85
		(20.2)	(17.6)	(18.93)	(14.3)	(19.1)	(16.85)	(16.9)	(12.8)	(14.65)	(16.9)
	Bedroom	62	67	129	68	72	140	55	69	124	393
		(73.8)	(78.8)	(76.33)	(81)	(76.6)	(78.65)	(77.5)	(80.2)	(78.98)	(77.9)
	Drawing room/ Guest room	5	3	8	4	4	8	4	6	10	26
		(6.0)	(3.5)	(4.73)	(4.8)	(4.3)	(4.49)	(5.6)	(7)	(6.37)	(5.2)
	Total TV sets	84	85	169	84	94	178	71	86	157	504
		(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)

Note: Figure in parentheses represents percentage of share in total number of respondents.

Table 4. Region-wise preference of the respondents for the placement of the television in their houses.

Categories		Malwa			Majha			Doaba			Total
		Bhagatpura (H)	Ambe Majra (L)	Total	Sherpur (H)	Jaswan (L)	Total	Kotha (H)	Buraj Hasan (L)	Total	
Preference of respondents to watch Television as per the placement of the television	Common Room / Lobby	14	13	27	9	12	21	11	7	18	66
		(23.3)	(21.7)	(22.5)	(15)	(20)	(17.5)	(18.3)	(11.7)	(15)	(18.33)
	Bedroom	44	46	90	51	48	99	45	53	98	287
		(73.3)	(76.7)	(75)	(85)	(80)	(82.5)	(75)	(88.3)	(81.67)	(79.72)
	Drawing room/ Guest room	2	1	3	0	0	0	4	0	4	7
		(3.3)	(1.7)	(2.5)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(6.7)	(0)	(3.33)	(1.94)
	Total	60	60	120	60	60	120	60	60	120	360
		(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)

Note: Figure in parentheses represents percentage of share in total number of respondents.

The present study has depicted that majority of the respondents not only placed their TV sets in the bedroom under compulsion, but they also have the preference to watch their favourite programmes privately in their bedroom. As shown in the previous Table above that out of the total (504) TV sets 77.9 per cent of these were already being placed within the bedrooms of the houses of the respondents. However, from the table above it is depicted that across all the regions majority of them also prefer to watch television while having privacy in their bedroom. Also, majority of the respondents have told us that they and other members of their family tried to spend their leisure time at home only for this watching television is their favourite time pass. Many of them have conveyed that nowadays people consider indecent to stand outside their home or at the common place of the village with other fellow members of the village [29].

REVERSE TECHNOLOGICAL DETERMINISM

Majority of the research have proven that in the modern times of surveillance it is the information and communication technologies that determine the culture, values and perspective of the members of the society. The scholars consider the phenomena as the outcome of media or technological determinism [30]. However, in the present study it is drawn that the reverse is also seen in case of the society in the villages of Punjab. As the television programmes take the themes and their design as per the perspective and the culture of the society. The television programmes are relayed as per the

availability of the type of audience i.e. based on the factors such as age, gender, region, time, culture etc [31].

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it is drawn that the television that entered the rural households of Punjab in the 80's and 90's has got the central position in the common area of the houses and very few numbers of houses have television sets. However, with time and with open availability, the shift of placement of television is observed as they got positioned in the bedroom or the private area of the houses. Now that television is providing the so options for the channels to its viewers and everyone prefer to watch their choice of channel in their private spaces. Therefore, there is a shift of the role of television i.e. from providing space to integrate the people to sit at the common or public space of the houses to providing them the isolation from the people around them. With the advent of the modern technology of smart phones and due to the availability of the content of the television on these, it has not only isolated the people from the outer society but also from the family members who are present at home. Despite of the sitting together and watching television programmes everyone prefers watching the programmes of different genres as per their interest. This in a sense has promoted the isolation among the persons within their family. Consequently, instead of promoting community cohesion among the members of the village, which previously it was, television is likely to promote isolation among them. Also nowadays, television is giving abounding choices to its viewers in the form of channels with different genres which further lead the viewers to select the programmes as per the choice given to them and also to watch them sitting separately in the private space i.e. bedrooms.

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