



Pattern of Film, Soap Opera and Reality Show Consumption among TV Viewing Rural Women of Ludhiana District

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ABSTRACT

A Study on 120 rural women of Ludhiana district was conducted to explore their pattern of film, soap operas and reality show consumption. The respondents, who were mostly in the age range of 30-50 years and educated at least upto secondary level, cited daily soaps and films as their most preferred genres. Comedy was found to be the most popular theme of TV programmes among rural women of Ludhiana, while themes like documentaries or agriculture were relegated to position of lesser importance. The respondents mostly treated TV as a source of entertainment rather than an instrument of information. It is important to note that information consumption, with or without the component of entertainment, is a pre-requisite for democratization of information.

Key Words: Rural women, Ludhiana, Soap operas, Films, Reality shows, Comedy, information

INTRODUCTION

The Supreme Court ruling of 1995 which stated that the airwaves are not the monopoly of the Indian government, boosted the growth of new TV channels. Apart from the regional channels, a host of international channels like CNN, BBC and Discovery are now available to the Indian television audience. With different categories of channels like 24 hour news channels, religious channels, cartoon channels and movie channels, there is something for everyone to watch. Today, about 90 per cent of the Indian population can receive Doordarshan programmes through its network. This includes Regional Language Satellite Channels, State Networks, International Channel and All India Channels like DD National, DD News, DD Sports, DD Gyandarshan, DD Bharati, Lok Sabha Channel and DD Urdu. 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. Hong Kong based STAR (Satellite Television Asian Region) entered into an agreement with an Indian company and Zee TV was born. It became the first privately owned Hindi satellite channel of India. The agreement between STAR and Zee did not last long. But the Indian television audience was waiting for a shift from the monopoly of Doordarshan and soon a number of private channels emerged.

Media (films/TV), friends and family also have an important bearing on people's behaviours. Qualitative findings support these preferences, suggesting that differing issues of interest, situations that paralleled their own, and/or familial concerns guided men and women to select the kind of films they view and the content/messages they seek from them. Indeed, the findings highlight that women's keen awareness of family and social expectations, and the internalization of their families' apprehensions about the potential 'harmful' influence of films, apparently affect the selection of the kind of programmes they watch as well as avoid.

Joshi (2007) concluded that the contribution of media in social transformation has to be accepted. Radio and television made women aware of their rights and duties. The Indian cinema gave the message of fighting evil and revolt against injustice. Media introduced women achievers to the society but there has been the other side of the coin also where TV soap operas portrayed elite class and excluded middle and rural segment of the Indian population. They also did not pay much attention to domestic violence and to the working conditions of women in unorganised sector. Also presenting women in ads as a sex symbol and using them for sales promotion hampered their goal towards empowerment. She also pointed out that though there has been increase of women professionals in media but still they are confined to a few subjects. Though Indian women are making use of media and removing their ignorance and empowering themselves, still lot more needs to be done collectively.

Keeping this in view, it would be interesting to gain an insight into pattern of TV program consumption among rural women who constitute a considerable chunk of population in the country. Since Punjab is largely an agrarian state, 120 rural women of Ludhiana district were randomly chosen for the purpose. Six villages were randomly selected from six randomly selected blocks of Ludhiana to administer close-ended questionnaires to these women. Simple percentage method was used to derive the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic profile of the respondents showed that 56.66 per cent were within the age range of 30 years to 50 years, a majority of them i.e. 55 per cent being married. More than half of them i.e. 51.67 per cent were homemakers. More than half of the respondents i.e. 65 per cent were living in nuclear families. A total of 71.66 per cent were educated either at secondary level or graduate level. The family income of one-third of respondents (75.83 per cent) was above Rs 40,000.

Table 1: Decision making to watch a particular programme

Who decides which TV programme to watch	
Who decides	Number
I decide	79 (65.83)
Mother / mother in law	0 (00.00)
Father/ father in law	0 (00.00)
Children	41 (34.17)
Someone else	0 (00.00)
Total	120 (100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

Table 2: Reaction of eldest female member to respondent's decision

How members of family react to TV viewing	
Eldest female member	Number
I am the eldest one	70 (58.33)
I don't know	45 (37.50)
She doesn't mind	0 (00.00)
She wants me to watch a bit less	0 (00.00)
She wants me to watch a lot less	0 (00.00)
She wants me to watch more	5 (04.17)
Any other (specify)	0 (00.00)
Total	120 (100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

Table 3: Reaction of eldest male member to respondent's decision

Eldest male member	Number
I don't know	50 (41.67)
He doesn't mind	70 (58.33)
He wants me to watch a bit less	0 (00.00)
He wants me to watch a lot less	0 (00.00)
He wants me to watch more	0 (00.00)
Any other (specify)	0 (00.00)
Total	120 (100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

In order to investigate the decision pattern for TV programme consumption, the respondents were asked certain questions. Tables above show that a majority of respondents i.e. 79 (65.83 per cent) decided themselves about which programme to watch while 41 (34.17 per cent) complied with the decision of the children for the same. When queried about how the eldest female member of the family reacted to their TV viewing, 70 (58.33 per cent) respondents reported that they themselves were the eldest ones. Regarding reaction of the eldest male member, 70 (58.33 per cent) replied that the eldest male members in their families did not mind or object to their TV viewing habits. This could be due to more than one TV sets in a household. Moreover, it portrays growing independence in decision making among women which is a positive sign for the rural Punjab.

Table 4: Preference in TV genres

Genre	Number
Films	37 (30.83)
Programmes/ Daily soaps	55 (45.84)
Songs	28 (23.33)
Total	120 (100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

Table 5: Reasons for viewing films on TV

Reason (for 37 respondents)	Number
Because it finishes after 2-3 hours. It is short and interesting	13 (35.14)
Because of their favourite actor	12 (32.43)
It is telecast when I am free	12 (32.43)
Any other (specify)	0 (00.00)
Total	37 (100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

Table 6: Last visit to movie hall

Last visit to Movie hall	Number
Never	47 (39.17)
Last week	28 (23.33)
Last month	6 (05.00)
Last year	27 (22.50)
More than a year ago	12 (10.00)
Total	120 (100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

Table 7: Reason for viewing daily soaps

Reason (for 55 respondents)	Number
Because they are available on fixed time and part of my routine	33 (60.00)
Interesting	17 (30.91)
Learn a lot from them	5 (09.09)
Any other	0 (00.00)
Total	55 (100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

Table 8: Reasons for viewing song videos

Reason (for 28 respondents)	Number
Regional/local language	11 (39.29)
Favourite singer	6 (21.42)
Because of songs video	11 (39.29)
Any other (specify)	0 (00.00)
Total	28 (100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

Tables above show the TV genres preferred by the respondents. Daily soaps and programmes were preferred by 55 (45.84 per cent), films by 37 (30.83 per cent) and songs by 28 (23.33 per cent). Out of the 37 respondents who preferred films on TV, almost equal weightage was given to reasons like films are short and interesting, the films had their favourite actor and telecast was at the time when one was free. Seeing their interest in films, all the respondents were asked about their visit to movie hall. Surprisingly, 47 (39.17 per cent) replied never while the frequency for others varied from one week to more than a year. This shows that those who like films go to movie halls or they even watch them on TV. The trend of visit to a movie hall for a pure cinematic experience was not very encouraging.

Out of 55 respondents who preferred programmes and daily soaps on TV, 33 (60.00 per cent) cited the availability of such programmes on fixed time as the major reason for their preference. The 28 song lovers preferred songs mainly because of their local language and videos.

Table 8: Favourite theme for TV programmes of the respondents

Theme	Rank				
	1	2	3	4	5
Sports	5 (04.17)		4 (03.32)	6 (05.00)	6 (05.00)
Sitcom	5 (04.17)	4 (03.32)			4 (03.32)
Documentary				6 (05.00)	
Soap Opera	17 (14.17)	22 (18.33)	5 (04.17)		4 (03.32)
Cartoons					6 (05.00)
Agriculture			10 (08.34)	3 (02.50)	
Comedy	20 (16.67)	17 (14.17)	25 (20.82)	20 (16.67)	5 (04.17)
Travel				9 (07.50)	
Drama	2 (01.67)	10 (08.34)		14 (11.67)	12 (10.00)
Makeover		6 (05.00)			
News	9 (07.50)	9 (07.50)	12 (10.00)	4 (03.32)	18 (15.00)
Cookery		9 (07.50)	5 (04.17)	14 (11.67)	8 (06.67)
Reality TV	2 (01.67)	9 (07.50)	18 (15.00)	4 (03.32)	16 (13.33)
Game shows		5 (04.17)	2 (01.67)		2 (01.67)
Chat shows	4 (03.32)		9 (07.50)		
Factual	8 (06.67)	3 (02.50)		3 (02.50)	2 (01.67)
Music shows	16 (13.33)	13 (10.84)	6 (05.00)	31 (25.84)	8 (06.67)
Films	16 (13.33)	1 (00.84)	19 (15.83)	3 (02.50)	15 (12.51)
Science fiction		3 (02.50)	3 (02.50)	2 (01.67)	3 (02.50)
Shopping		5 (04.17)	1 (00.84)		
Religious	16 (13.33)	4 (03.32)	1 (00.84)	1 (00.84)	11 (09.17)
Total	120(100.00)	120(100.00)	120(100.00)	120(100.00)	120(100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

The above table reveals the favourite theme for TV programme among the respondents. It is discernible that comedy is the number one choice as it was placed at rank 1 by 20 (16.67 per cent) respondents, at rank 2 by 17 (14.17 per cent) respondents and at rank 3 by 25 (20.82 per cent) respondents. Soap operas followed comedy as a second choice for them. They secured rank 1 with 17 (14.17 per cent) respondents voting for it while 22 (18.33 per cent) respondents ranked it as number 2. Surprisingly, the ranking for documentary as well as agriculture was found to be the least. This corroborates the idea that respondents treat TV as a mere source of entertainment rather than an instrument of information. Watching soap operas and comedy might reflect on changes happening socially and economically. However, this portends a dangerous trend of forming couch potatoes out of our citizens. Themes like agriculture which provide information one can use and documentaries which enlighten an individual about a countries past, present and future should be made in a more interesting way to attract the attention of the viewers.

Table 9: Reasons for favourite theme preference of the respondents

Reasons	Number
More interested towards that theme	64 (53.33)
Friends/relatives suggested it	20 (16.67)
Don't have any other option	14 (11.67)
Family members watch that	22 (18.33)
Any other (specify)	0 (00.00)
Total	120 (100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

The respondents were further asked the reasons for choosing their favourite themes. The table reveals that a majority i.e. 64 (53.33 per cent) respondents choose themes based on their interest. However, 22 (18.33 per cent) respondents watch it because their family members like it whereas 20 (16.67 per cent) respondents view a particular theme because their friend or relative suggested it. This shows that personal interest carries more significance for the respondents followed by family and peer pressure.

Table 10: Popular TV soap themes among the respondents

Kind of daily soaps	Number
Mysterious	29 (24.17)
Women empowerment	0 (00.00)
Comedy	11 (09.17)
Historical	0 (00.00)
Social problems	0 (00.00)
Religious	18 (15.00)
Multiple themes	62 (51.66)
Total	120 (100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

Table 11: Reasons for preferring a particular soap opera theme

Reason for preference	Number
They are interesting	48 (40.00)
Their friends/ relative say so	13 (10.83)
It is the only programme available at the given time	5 (04.17)
They reveal interesting aspects of life	54 (45.00)
Any other	0 (00.00)
Total	120 (100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

As majority of the respondents preferred TV soaps as revealed in the previous tables, it was found that all the respondents watched them at one or the other time. Therefore, all the respondents were asked about the popular themes for soap operas they watched. The number of respondents who watched soaps on multiple themes was 62 (51.66 per cent) while 29 (24.17 per cent) preferred mysterious storyline. None of the respondents liked themes like women empowerment, historical and social problems. Perhaps those who preferred multiple themes watched soaps on these subjects too. 'Soaps reveal interesting aspects of life' was cited as the main reason by 54 (45.00 per cent) respondents for watching them. Those who found them interesting were 48 (40.00 per cent).

Table 12: Viewing pattern of TV reality shows among the respondents

Preference	Number
Yes	83 (69.17)
No	37 (30.83)
Total	120 (100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

Table 13: Favourite reality show

Name of favourite reality show (for 83 respondents)	Number
Bigg boss	24 (28.92)
Dance India dance	2 (02.41)
Nach baliye	19 (22.89)
Indian idol	0 (00.00)
Sa Re Ga Ma Pa	0 (00.00)
India's got talent	20 (24.09)
Master chef India	17 (20.48)
Star voice of India	0 (00.00)
Any other (PTC voice of Punjab)	1 (01.21)
Total	83 (100.00)

**Figures in parentheses are percentages*

Table 14: Reasons for viewing favourite reality show

Reason for viewing	Number
They end on time	11 (13.25)
They are interesting and inspiring	17 (20.48)
They deal with human emotions	5 (06.02)
They test patience of contestants	6 (07.23)
They test mental and physical strength of contestants	7 (08.44)
I prefer to watch arguments and fights	7 (08.44)
Favourite time pass	28 (33.73)
One doesn't need to apply brain to understand them	0 (00.00)
Any other	2 (02.41)
Total	83 (100.00)

*Figures in parentheses are percentages

Table 15: Voting pattern for reality show

Ever voted for reality show	Number
Yes	29 (24.17)
No	91 (75.83)
Total	120 (100.00)

*Figures in parentheses are percentages

Table 16: Reasons for voting for reality show

Reason for voting (for 29 women)	Number
Because of favourite contestant	12 (41.38)
Because he/she is having family problems and he/she needs votes (sympathy factor)	17 (58.62)
Friends/relatives told	0 (00.00)
Because they know her personally or through someone	0 (00.00)
Any other	0 (00.00)
Total	29 (100.00)

*Figures in parentheses are percentages

Tables above study the viewing pattern of TV reality shows among the respondents. A total of 83 (69.17 per cent) respondents prefer watching reality shows, Bigg Boss and India's Got Talent being the most and the second most preferred shows, respectively. Almost one-third of the respondents who view reality shows, i.e. 28 (33.73 per cent) cited 'favourite time pass' as their main reason for watching these shows. There were other reasons also like they are interesting and inspiring, they end on time and they test mental and physical strength of contestants. However, only 29 (24.17 per cent) respondents out of the total sample had ever voted for a reality show. Those who voted did that mainly because of the sympathy factor or due to their favourite contestant. A staggering 75.83 per cent did not vote for such shows. This could be due to high SMS rates and the feeling that these shows are actually scripted and meant only to benefit the TV channels.

CONCLUSION

Media have an important bearing on people's opinion and behaviours. Rural women are no exception to this school of thought. However, watching only comedy shows, reality programmes and soap operas would not serve the purpose of the current information onslaught. Though low on popularity index, viewing information-centric programmes is need of the hour for continuous learning and a broadened vision. The media organisations too should package information in a way that has an eyeball-grabbing effect. Democratization of information can be achieved only if it is consumed by its intended recipients or target audience.

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