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NEW DIMENSIONS IN MEDIA REVOLUTION: 24X7 TELEVISION NEWS AND VIEWER'S RESPONSE

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ABSTRACT:

The inventors of televisions from 1890s until the 1950s thought of it as an additional means for delivering information and entertainment, as an extension of telephone, radio, theatre, cinema; but it has now gathered to itself a range of functions beyond the entertaining and informing audiences. What the inventors never quite realized was that television would become normative, that so much of what we see on the screen would contrive to suggest how things ought or ought not to be.

KEYWORDS: *inventors of televisions , extension of telephone, radio, theatre.*



INTRODUCTION

At the start of twenty first century television started undergoing technological and institutional transmutation. Between 1950s and the 1990s television was organized as a regulated and essentially national medium dependent on the scarce resource of electromagnetic frequencies. At the end of the era it is becoming a medium of abundance, with hundreds of satellite and cable channels becoming available to living rooms.

After 1991, private and foreign broadcasters were allowed limited operations in India. Now there were more than 800 permitted private satellite

channels in India, more than a hundred of which were 24-hour news channels. Presently the number of licensed private satellite TV channels in India reached 877, of which 389 were news channels and 488 were non-news channels. 300 channels were pay channels, while 577 were free to air. 11 fresh channel licenses were issued during 2017. There were 1,469 registered MSOs, six DTH operators, two IPTV operators, one HITS operator and Doordarshan's Free Dish free satellite service operating in India. The number of local cable operators is estimated to be over 60,000. News television, depending on the type of format,

focused on from around 10-15 stories a day (depth of analysis) to 90 to 100 stories per day (width of coverage) across different products. The key change appears to be an increase in the time spent on studio-based content which shows anchors and guests in conversation and debate. Due to a stress on advertising revenues, some news broadcasters curtailed the amount of original news they generated, and focused on aggregating news from non-competing channels, other media, digital, etc. Gradual privatization and deregulation have resulted in increased entertainment-driven rather than public-service oriented news. Marketing

pressures, the tabloidization of news, and management and economic pressures are affecting journalism ethics and issues such as accountability, independence, and conflict of interests. True journalism is not having a degree oriented towards conventional news but the ability to raise your voice and to understand and maintain the ethical principles and standards of media. However, media these days whether print or electronic are more bothered about their circulations or TRP ratings and hence never hesitate to feature moments vulnerable to many interpretations. Earlier it was only restricted to local media but now even national TV news networks have started hitting the screen with unusual stories. Some are even creating episodes of their own based on magic and superstition which have nothing to do with news.

Especially since 2000, the Indian news media, has geared up to match the challenges of 24X7hour, rolling news television. With the capital available with entrepreneurs and access to technology due to globalisation, the Indian news channels gather and produce their news using contemporary technological facilities. Information is gathered and transmitted using VSAT connectivity, Ku-band based OB Vans, flyaway and helicopters, usage of MPEG-4 video compression techniques to get broadcast qualities at low bit-rates, transmission of high quality videos through telephone lines and using fully redundant earth station for broadcasts. The post-production facilities have also been tried to match up to global standards. The use of specialized graphics and editing software and latest practices such as automated ingest of broadcast inputs used by ABC News, APTN, Bay News 9, ITN, to name a few, are also being applied. And the benefits of these facilities are also being availed by regional news channels, in addition to national and international players.

NDTV Bureau, Star News gained respect as a credible and professional set-up, one comparable to international standards. But its low viewership was attributed to the fact that it was viewed as 'Westernised' in its ethos, with the news agenda reflecting the middle class, urban bias of its producers. But things were to change in the form of Aaj Tak who understood the pulse of the masses in the truest sense. The entry of Aaj Tak, a part of the India Today media group in December 2000 proved to be epochal in India's television news history. India Today Group's foray into the audio-visual media, began in 1988 with Newstrack, a video newsmagazine on Doordarshan. By 1995, TV Today Network had evolved to produce one of the most influential current affairs programmes, Aaj Tak. Telecast on the terrestrial network, it enjoyed a strong nationwide viewership. Because of its popularity, the group launched a 24X7 hour Hindi news Channel, Aaj Tak, in December 2000. Within six months of its launch, Aaj Tak emerged as India's number one news channel. Aaj Tak did well because it catered to the same language mix and same audience as Zee News, but it had better professional and production practices and brought India's local flavour with it.

From the non-glamorous days of Doordarshan in India to the more dynamic Zee news in 90s, there has been a noticeable tilt towards sensationalism in Indian news media with the advent of a new Hindi news channel India TV. What started as a ripple effect to boost TRPs has now cascaded into a chain reaction with every new channel using the sensationalism card to raise its popularity index. The ambit of satellite TV and its 24x7 nature has revolutionized the news scenario as well. With 24 hours' news channels, the Indian liberal democracy is, to say the least, addicted. The constant relay of information has redefined the contours of the viewers' reception and the newsmakers' intent. From the regular political, social, sports and related fare, the television news media have reshaped the concept of information. More precisely it is infotainment on a roll. Critically, the trend could be assumed as plain sensationalism fuelling stories and TRPs.

Crime, cinema and cricket rule the roost when it comes to news channels in India. All three parameters are the source of constant news feed. The form and presentation of the content is sensationalized in a way to grab eyeballs and has revamped the entire concept of news. Objectivity as the focal news value has undergone a complete makeover. From the conventional idea of reporting without adding perspectives, news on television has become more fancy and perspectivized. This has led to an erosion of public confidence in news content.

Marketing pressures, the tabloidization of news, and management and economic pressures are affecting journalism ethics and issues such as accountability, independence, and conflict of interests.

True journalism is not having a degree oriented towards conventional news but the ability to raise your voice and to understand and maintain the ethical principles and standards of media. However, media these days whether print or electronic are more bothered about their circulations or TRP ratings and hence never hesitate to feature moments vulnerable to many interpretations. Earlier it was only restricted to local media but now even national TV news networks have started hitting the screen with unusual stories. Some are even creating episodes of their own based on magic and superstition which have nothing to do with news.

The Indian TV news industry—and it is very much an industry—has been both a beneficiary and a victim of the speed of its growth. The medium has, in part, been reinvented for the Indian market – and is arguably more minutely responsive to the habits and opinion of a section of its viewers than any other major TV news industry around the world. The industry has been able to use new technology and work practices in a way that would delight many commercially indeed TV bosses in the West. But the shortage of trained TV journalists is all too evident, particularly on the less well-known channels—and many of the channels make no secret of the fact that their news agenda is driven largely by commercial imperatives. For those who entered the profession believing in a journalist's duty to be as fair and as objective as possible, this can be deeply unsettling.

News is not merely a media product but a vehicle for engagement in the democratic process, feeding off and into domestic politics and international relations. The growing commercialisation and of airwaves as a result of the privatization of global communication hard and software, the deregulation of broadcasting and the technological convergence between television, telecommunication and computing industries, have fundamentally changed the ecology of broadcasting. The satellite revolution has redefined the meaning and relations between television and global, creating convergences between televisual and satellite technologies and necessitating an expanded definition of television – one encompassing military monitoring, public education as well as commercial entertainment and public broadcasting. The general shift from public to a ratings conscious television, dependent on corporate advertising and broadcasting to a heterogeneous audience, has implications for news agendas and editorial priorities.

As television news has been commercialized, the need to make it entertaining has become a crucial priority for broadcasters, as they are forced to borrow and adapt characteristics from entertainment genres. Its tendency to follow a tabloid approach, its capacity to circulate trivia, blend fact with fiction and even distort the news is observed. News-gathering, particularly foreign news is an expensive operation requiring high levels of investment and, consequently, media executives are under constant pressure to deliver demographically desirable audiences for news and current affairs programming to contribute to profits or at least avoid losses.

In the future, things are expected to stabilize and the current drive to steer ahead of competition through compromising on content could subside. With DTH and IPTV coming in, the channels will be forced to concentrate on improving their own content, rather than merely aping their competitors. Niche players will enter the market, catering to the needs of specifically targeted consumers. Consolidation between transnational-national-regional-local and niche channels could see only a few consolidated groups seriously in contention, and such wide tie-ups could enhance variety and quality of output. The local players should rise to a better standard of technical and editorial practices, and the international players could expand their reach, both, in terms of audiences as well as resources.

This may take time. The current obsession of the news channels for speed is generating a kind of fast-track journalism, where news is losing its credibility. But as the industry players maintain, their way of journalism need not be restricted to only one particular kind of practice as 'good' and another style of news channels journalism, as 'inappropriate'. The Indian news channel genre is likely to evolve in its own unique way.



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