
TV and globalization in India: An overview

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In India TV is still enormously significant. The overwhelming growth of digital media or to be more specific, social media still cannot drown the hunger for melodrama flashed through the Indian tv sets every day and night. According to the KPMG reports, the industry growth size is estimated to be 474.8 million INR in the year 2014 and is expected to grow to 631.2 million INR by 2016. The Advertising revenue generated by Indian television in the year 2014 consisted of 37 percent with a growth rate of 14.2 percent from 2013. Television viewing now continues to be the dominant activity for the majority of the population not only in India but all over the world, with statistics suggesting that each individual in the UK consumes tv programs to roughly three hours a day and in US it is estimated to be somewhere close to 6 hours a day a tv set is likely to be kept on (Macionis and Plummer 1998). In India tv viewership is easily 2 hours a day (FICCI-KPMG). Between 1995 and 2003 there was a 50 percent rise in TV ownership in India, 33 percent in China and Indonesia, 25 percent in Thailand and Malaysia. As whole, Asia is expected to increase its TV ownership to 500 million households and more, making the region three times as large a tv region as Europe. China with its huge population as well holds the potential to be the most lucrative single nation for television advertisers with as many as 900 million tv viewers even during the year 1995. (Balnaves 2001).

Key words: TV region, New Global Order, Participatory Democracy, Global alliances

Almost 30 years ago when the Asian Games was organized in New Delhi, the capital city of India that the country stepped into the world of Television as a mass me-

dium for entertainment. Though television existed before that, but it was primarily used as a tool for education specifically in the agriculture sector. The rural areas saw

the tv sets and stations set up with the help of various international charitable foundations and grants from developed countries to educate Indian farmers about the latest methods of farming technology for yielding crop and managing livestock. Even though it might seem to be a late entry for India, it did not take much time for the industry to zoom into the market as a throbbing industry. Further, with the development of home grown programming and the tremendous support from the sister industry which is the movie industry (popularly called as the Bollywood) the tv industry gained a strong footing over the last 15 years so much so that it quickly moved beyond its traditional boundaries and began collaborating across nations all over the world. As programming content evolved, doors were opened for partnerships, talent ventures and creativity from across countries began to be visible in the Indian small screens. Indian TV became global in its true sense in the mid 1990s by penetrating and emulating the best of the practices from the US to Europe and Japan when newer genre emerged, number of

channels increased to around 700 as on date and news channels proliferated like never before as the skies were opened for channels like CNN, Aljazeera or BBC, regional language channels boomed even though Hindi happened to be the official national language of the country. Reality TV format with its TRP success has been a classic case of merging the local with global. Therefore today just like any other medium TV has the overarching edge of globalizing the Indian mass as a learned member of the “global village”.

Being perceived as having an impact beyond the experience of viewing, tv is often blamed by critics for encouraging violence and frivolity and for lowering educational standards in India. At the same time it has been lauded for raising political consciousness on issues as diverse as it can get. Academics of various schools have argued that it has helped people in India to become aware of nationalities, genders and even the human race - or, conversely, that it has dulled the sensibilities of every human who comes within its orbit. What is apparent is that television

as a bombardment of images and programs, as a technology and as a world-wide industry, touches social life in profound ways especially in this country because of its vast range of recreational demands just as the television has contributed in many ways to transform the cultural landscape all over the world. The society earlier took time to experience any form of dramatic social change, however with the emergence of media and television in particular the unleashing of social, economic and political changes helped in promoting the global interdependence. Initially a bit unsettling for the Indian audience, but over some time the 'localization' made itself relevant. According to post modern theorist, Giddens (1990) globalization is one of the definitive qualities of post modernity, or what emphasizes as 'late modernity' and constituting a new 'global order'. Sklair points out that social developments must be transnational, recognizing that social, economic and political processes now operate across national boundaries, and that 'power' flows and operates in increasingly complex ways (Sklair,1991). Media

studies have termed such system of globalization as *Americanization* and at times, *Cultural imperialism*. Giddens means to call it a process of shrinkage of space with different conceptions of 'local' and 'distant', where social relations are increasingly shaped by abstract, global processes rather just local circumstances. What is convincing is that tv media inevitably led the *transnational* movement which grew and spread rapidly by virtue of new technologies and Indian tv took on the leadership in its own unique way.

Global preferences

As television industry in India gradually shifted to the private ownership domain from the Government control, motivated by profit and largely funded by advertisers, it tended to be even more popular. A kind of 'synergy' became more distinctive in its global appeal. The decade of 1990s witnessed some of the most sweeping transformation in the broadcasting and cable television in Asia. DBST (Direct Broadcast Satellite Television) started in 1991 and opened

the flood gates to International channels like CNN, HBO, MTV and many more. These foreign tv content were attracted to a market that had a large English speaking population and a substantial middle class that was expected to *rise* up the social classes with more liberal outlook and certainly possessed that disposable income to try and test the fun that globalization could bring in. In India it paved the way for a tough competition to be economically viable for such global channels, so to speak. The first mover advantage of these international channels did not really benefit them always in the local markets in the initial days. Perhaps due to its colonial past the Indian content productions of the existing Tv channels had to do with keeping alive the feeling of nationalism and preserving its diverse cultural heritage. Myths and epics which are typical to Indian traditions and mindset were produced and telecast which became hugely popular. Other than those literary adaptations of heroic efforts towards the country valorizing the anti-colonial, post colonial sentiments, the plots and stories depicted a complex interplay

between religious beliefs and practices with the secular vocabularies of the public. Based on the development realist aesthetic, an idea espoused by Hardinge (1934) a colonial bureaucrat who insisted that the Indian 'peasant needs daily shorts of a homely nature upon rudiments of hygiene, sanitation, child welfare, improved agricultural methods and marketing, and similar helpful subjects flavored with entertainment'. Therefore in the 1970s, there was this one year Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) and the Kheda rural project in conjunction with the technocratic - bureaucratic elite along with the support of UNESCO, and a satellite borrowed from the US, such programs were initiated. These were encouraged as a 'participatory democracy' system in order to bring in a shift in the deeply entrenched feudal, caste and class relations in the rural India which accounts for almost 70 percent of the population. The upheavals of globalizations were not very far away. TV media went to become privatized and growing control by the corporate paved the way for entertainment to be ex-

panded which soon morphed into an infotainment mode with the advent of sponsored News coming in from all over the world. Communication studies demonstrate that audiences' prefer national over international products. Straubhaar (1991) argues that 'cultural proximity' of media products increases their appeal. An estimation of top twenty programs in Asian countries showed that between seventy five percent and fifty percent were locally produced. Audience in Hong kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia and India show a preference towards domestic content rather than foreign programs (Chadha and Kavoori,2000). Understandably, the media corporations' desire to reap the benefits of scale of business had been in conflict with the needs of the audience who valued entertainment which is culturally proximate. Soon it became clear that in order to develop an audience, these channels that were open to venture offshore had to tailor out the programs much more innovatively. Strategic alliance of the global therefore had to be ironed out by mapping the behavioral factors of the sides, the local and the global.

India saw an upsurge of such alliances 90s onward. Over the last two decades and more there has been an increase in such alliances which experts agreeably see as effects of globalization. Strategic positioning theory states that alliances are motivated by the determination to shape competition and consolidate the company's market position. Different strategic motives have been offered as explanations for alliance formation. These include risk sharing and market dominance, conforming to a host of Government policy and developing vertical linkages that lead to competitive advantage (Contractor and Lorange, 1988). One of the major challenges faced by the international channels amidst global positioning was effective distribution. In Asia, from the 1990s penetration of satellite dishes did not show any significant rise primarily due to the cost of the dishes and government regulations. (Barnard 1998) News channels had to deal with the cable operators to gain an entry to make way for its potential audience. The cable operators became the gate keepers to the audience of Asia.

Media scholars definitely have raised concerns over the loss in diversity in the Indian audience as media conglomerates carve out their market share through mergers and acquisitions which are an inevitable result of globalization.

Regulation journey from being local to global:

The process of globalization are open to regulation by individual nations, rather than being an autonomous and unstoppable process and global forces that are regulated by contracts and by international and national laws. As opposed to the consumer goods or commodity industry, tv channels and its content provide a platform for cultural expression which reflect the social, economic and political identities of the people. Hence regulatory issues assumed a significant role in determining how far and how much of media exposure is to be given to the Indian audience in the name of globalization. Common threats that were perceived to be were that of “international market pressure” and “safeguarding local ethos”.

The Broadcasting Bill of India (1997) has drawn out features which have restrictions to disqualify licenses among others are a) An individual who is not an Indian national b) Companies not incorporated in India c) Companies incorporated in India but with – Foreign equity in case of terrestrial broadcasting services, foreign equity exceeding forty nine percent in case of other services not mentioned , d) management control not with Indian share holders.

In light of the above, it is imperative to note that a large number of satellite television channels / programs have been beaming through the Indian skies. These foreign entities and their programs are uplinked from outside the country without any regulation through the law of the land. At the same time, quite ironically however, Indian entrepreneurs and other Indian companies are not permitted to own a radio or tv stations for various regulatory reasons.

Such is the chaotic nature of Indian media and globalization which shifts away from the unidirectional

approach of one *world order* that any medium of communication aims for. Even though with a capacity to communicate homogenous media products with a prime concern for profit, there is genuinely an analytical problem prevalent when we think of globalizing tendencies in media, which is another subject of study and a serious concern of post modernity.

Notes & References:

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