241. Science Communication by Dialogue Through Mass Media

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Abstract. Normally science communication is taken as the dissemination of science and technology through a one way communication flowing from the author/ presenter to the target reader/audience. This limits the scope of dissemination without leaving any room for getting the doubts on the subject clarified. If the dissemination is done through a dialogue there is ample scope for the recipient of the scientific information to seek clarification and get the doubts cleared.

Having decided that the dissemination of science and technology is by a dialogue, the ways to make it a dialogue have to be explored When we start exploring the means for a dialogue, the available avenues of mass media line themselves in. Defining the mass media, various types of mass media and the mode of science communicatin as a two dialogue using these media will be discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Science communication, Two-way dialogue, Mass media, science communication Dialogue in mass media

Defining Mass Media

Mass media is any medium which is used to transit.mass communication. Presently it may be taken as the medium used to transmit science communication. Books, newspapers, magazines, recordings, radio, television and the internet all can act as a medium to transmit science communication.

The above list is not exhaustive as the new kinds of medium like mobile phone communication, video games are still evolving as the technology is advancing leaps and bounds to make these as emerging mediums in addition to the already existing mass media.

Devising A Dialogue in Mass Media

As we want the science communication to take place two-way between presenter and the target audience, readers as the case may be it has to be a conversation or dialogue. A dialogue may be ingeniously devised in all the foregoing mediums. Radio, television and internet offer easier ways of creating dialogues for dissemination of science. We are going to study in detail each of the mass media to see the roles played each of them.

Radio and Television

Radio was the foremost In electronic media carrying programmes live to the listeners. Science programmes like science snippets, science news may be aired to the listeners as a one way communication. Discussions and interviews on science topics like global warming are dialogues between participants in the programme itself. The real dialogue takes place only when the listeners directly participates in the programme. A live feed via phone may be fed into the programme enabling listeners to phone in their questions, answers and opinions on the live discussions on the programme. This way all other listeners may clarify their doubts if any as their representative lot from the listeners side participate in the conversation.

Television has taken over as the foremost medium for programmes aired via radio. The viewers get to see the participants, the interviewer, announcer, anchor all live on the television screen. Scientifically educative programmes on AIDS awareness, prevention and cure, topical epidemic like dengue fever, bird flu, super bug may all be make as programmes with viewers participation both as part of the panel and or as interacting views with live phone in to the studios.

The Internet

The internet arrived on the scene of information flow with a bang, rightly termed the information super highway providing information on every conceivable subject. Science and Technology dissemination had been never so easy after the advent of the net. Search engines spew out the hundreds of thousands of sites for disseminating science and technical information. Again coming to the two way communication, the sites disseminating science and tech may

put up blogs, articles with a provision for live loading of the comments by the readers. The author then can answer any query by the readers. Even the readers may put in their expert comments if they are well versed in the subject. The beauty of net is it's accessibility anywhere any time. That makes it an excellent medium for two way dialogue of science and technology on a 24X7 basis.

The Physically Flipped Newspapers and Magazines

The newspapers and magazines constitute the print media. They are read at leisurely medium for the science communication , physically flipped by the readers. They are not live when compared to the electronic media like radio and television. When viewed as a two way dialogue medium for science communication they are less favoured. Even then the newspapers and magazines may be used to involve the readers ingeniously. The readers participation may be solicited by rewarding the best questions and best answers from them. A contest may be announced for this purpose.

The Mobile Revolution in Science and Technology Dissemination

The information dissemination received a shot in the arm by the latest entrant into the live media. Science can be compressed into a blog and article and transmitted into the hand set. The responses from the users may be Sms-sed to the original site/source. The cell phone doubles up as a internet downloader and use the medium of net as well. Like net , the cell phone medium is an anywhere anytime access/interactive medium

Science Wagons

Science wagons like the ribbon express vigyan ratha are directly reaching the people using satellite link hook-ups, audio, video, DVD aids and slide projections. What is better way than reaching the people with audio-visual aids. The AIDS awareness generating ribbon express, science programmes disseminating mobiles vans with satellite link up, audio and video aids like voice recorders, video recorders and slide projections are all live mediums directly interacting with people. Live cyclone and storm warnings, polio , family planning awareness programmes. The moving experts on these mobile platforms may interact with people educating them and clarifying their doubts

Videogames

The idea of using video games to arrive at the science communication through steps could be another ingenious way of involving the video game players who can be anyone children, young and old. Typically the game may start with a puzzle and followed by alternative routes for arriving at the solution. To encourage active participation, marks and points may be awarded the winners of the game.

Conclusion

Involvement of society in science communication is the ultimate aim of dialogue through mass media. The idea of a dialogue in science communication is to ensure the satisfaction of having participated in the discussion of scientific information. Science communication then achieves involvement of society in it's two-way journey.