

199. Science Communication through Doordarshan With Special Reference to Doordarshan Kendra, Sikkim

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Abstract. There is a general lack of understanding of how advances in science and technology affect our lives. Against this background, controversial or sensational reporting on food safety, bird flu, global warming etc. can leave citizens confused and frightened and science misunderstood. This is why scientists are increasingly asked to communicate their work to a wider audience and science communicators and the media to act as the responsible bridge between the scientists and society.

To disseminate scientific information and to inculcate scientific temperament among the general mass we have been using print, audio and audiovisual media. If we concentrate on audio visual media, Doordarshan is playing a very significant role in the process of inspiring rural masses towards accepting social changes, establishing a constructive means for the upliftment of the common people and building a scientific temperament among the mass from its beginning. Though the history of Doordarshan in Sikkim is not very much old, but is giving a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to inculcate scientific temperament in the rural mass.

This paper is an attempt to analysis the programme content of Doordarshan Kendra, Sikkim as well as to find out various constrains in the process of science communication. The present work also emphasizes the assessment of the impact of the science programmes on target audience.

Keywords: Science communication, Broadcasting, Doordarshan Kendra of Sikkim

Introduction

'Development describes the growth of humans throughout the lifespan, from conception to death. The scientific study of human development seeks to understand and explain how and why people change throughout life'. Kendra Cherry

The influence of science on people's lives can be ignored at all. But a considerable measure of public mistrust of science and fear of technology exists in today society. The gap between science and common man needs to be bridged for which effective science communication is required.

Science communication is facing various problems as chatting capability, mass accessibility, cultural like-minded, linguistic and socio-cultural variety, socio-political obstacles, proper process of communicating science successfully and professionally and inculcating scientific temper among the people etc. But for the society development, it is extremely necessary to bring a change in the attitude of the general mass from the non-scientific to the scientific one and to motivate them living in a scientific life. Science communication means to acquaint the masses with scientific knowledge for scientific awareness. All the arguments come to end when society mirrors a wide gap between scientific community and common mass, which needs to be shortened. To get rid of centuries age old misbelieves and superstitions and accomplish a familiar platform for science for mass, regional network and languages are very significant.

There are Print, Electronic and New Media. Each and every medium is very much significant in this regard if the due role is played. Among the all the modern media television is one of the most vibrant medium. Before coming the Disc culture, this medium was not so much accessible and was restricted within a certain strata of our society. The impact of audio visual media cannot be overlooked. It is not only attractive but also influential which is thought to be more viable to make common man grasped the scientific temperament beyond the age bar. For this reason science related information can be disseminated through this medium at ease to the common mass.

Significance of the Study

Science communication does not only mean to include the word 'science' as the contents. Talk 'about science' not 'on science' is a general tendency which should never be devoid of scientific contents. The very basic method of science communication means explaining common science 'how and why'. Nobody enjoys science unless it is linked with the linguistic stuff of cuts and curls, covered with surprising and genuine facts, and flavoured with piquant instance through cheerful presentation. So, there is awful necessity for dissemination of science sense among the common masses. But selection of the right medium, format, style and language for science communication is very important task considering background, sentiment, curiosity and amusement of the target audience.

It is true that TV is most acceptable medium in all stage in the country like India. There are many more Private Channels. But still Doordarshan has its own importance in common people's mind. In this research work we have taken DD Sikkim as case study. Because Sikkim is still unexplored in this context. There are 120 big and small newspapers, All India Radio and Doordarshan in Sikkim as the major media for communication. The attack of private audio visual channels still is not seen. Doordarshan is very popular channel out there especially in the rural areas. Though there are a few local cable television channels. Sikkim Doordarshan is trying its level best to inculcate scientific temperament among the common mass along with its all sort of constrains.

Objective

1. To analyze the impact of Television on general masses in communicating science.
2. To explain the role of Doordarshan in Sikkim
3. To study the various constrains faced by DD Sikkim in the field.
4. To assess the effectiveness of DD in this regard.

Research Methodology

The study is based on conceptual data. It is basically a case study. To collect the primary data, we followed interview & observation, case study method. For collecting the required information to complete the work we have contacted and taken help a few relevant sources. Keeping in view the complexities of social customs, cultural norms and values of the society, we specially have given stress on informal interview. For secondary sources we tried to explore a few web sources, Journals and books.

Discussion

The field work mirrors a few very important data. On that basis the discussion may be started. More than a generation ago, Marshall McLuhan predicted that television would bring us together into a "global village". Our world is more and more a single "information society", and television, as the world's most powerful medium of communication, is a key part of that society. Television can be a tremendous force for good. It can educate great numbers of people about the world around them.

The introduction of television was not an exception. The birth of the electronic television age is almost impossible to pinpoint exactly. Due to the numerous contributors that helped to develop this new medium, it is even more difficult to acknowledge any one person for its invention. The time span between the origin of the electronic television until its full understanding of how it functioned extends from the age of Thomas Edison (1847-1931) to the mind of Idaho farm boy, Philo Farnsworth (1906-1971).

Television in India, came in delay, after having the approval and consent of the government to a long awaited demand and needs of many Indians from different segments like scientists, educationists, politicians, businessmen and other institutions and professional study centres etc. With the financial assistance as acquired from UNESCO and equip mental support from U.S.A, the government of India started its Delhi centre on sept15, in the year 1957 successfully. If we consider the content of television, from the very beginning, along with other entertainment programmes, science is the un separated part of programme content in Indian television scenario.

The history of Science Communication through DD in India:

The use of broadcast and digital media had opened new vestal of science journalism. Doordarshan, the national television service of India, devoted to public service broadcasting is one of the largest television networks in the world. Since its inception in 1957, Doordarshan started telecasting science programmes for students. First popular science programme telecast was 'Vigyan Partrik' during 1971 to 1975 which was in 'B' and 'W'. In the year 1966 broadcast of agriculture based programmes had started. From 1982, 15 August colored television had started in India and brings a new ray in broadcasting. After that during 1984-92, a popular science programme named 'Quest' produced by Calcutta,

ran for eight years. A programme on growth of science in India was produced by NCSTC named 'Bharat Ki Chap', 'Bigyan ki Baate', another programme that had broadcast in every saturday. Then 'Turning Point' was landmark programme on started in 1991. It has been telecast in some regional languages also. Doordarshan also telecasts some western Television programmes. Many private TV channels such as National Geography, Animal Planet, Discovery etc are now-a-days taking up science programme seriously and after the emergence of these private channels, science and technology have become interesting for every people.

In North East Guwahati DD is the first centre. The history of Doordarshan Guwahati can be traced back to the year 1982. It was in this year that India hosted the 9th Asian Games and this event in New Delhi brought about a far-reaching change in the social and economic lives of people of Guwahati.

In the same year Doordarshan Kendra Guwahati was commissioned with LPT status on 19th November 1982. Later it was converted to HPT in the month of January 1985 with a transmitter power of 10KW covering range of 89-120 Kms. The Kendra transmits its programme through III/09 channel Band. At the initial stage, the Kendra was run in a rented House at Panbazar, Guwahati. Later it was shifted to its permanent area at R.G. Baruah Road Guwahati on 7th February 1992. The complex has got better facilities for recording and transmission with modern technology. It has got two colour studio set up. Besides, there is a studio for recording of North East programme separately (PPC, NE) and a computerized Earth Station for networking. Presently this Earth Station is utilized for Uplinking the Guwahati Doordarshan programme for networking to the entire country through INSAT-4B. programme. There was another achievement of DDK, Guwahati that the induction of External Satellite Service from 14th March 1995 while the North East News service begun to telecast from Guwahati from 1st March 1997 onwards. Moreover the other significant achievement of PPC (NE) was the installation of North-East Satellite Service (24 hours) with effect from 27th December 2000.

Being a public broadcaster Doordarshan always leads in production of programmes on mainly information, education and entertainment. Last year, DDK Guwahati telecast 31% informative, 24% educative and 45% entertainment programmes. Most of the content focuses science issues.

Doordarshan in Sikkim

Though completed in 2003, with 100-metre- tall tower in misty clouds the Gangtok DD centre still could not provide regular programmes like daily news bulletins catering to Sikkim. Doordarshan Kendra in Sikkim started telecasting programmes on regional language from the year 2003. Apart from these programmes in Nepali, the centre is a mere transmission point to relay feeds of national DD channels. Instead, the Gangtok centre airs only a half an hour round-up programme on Sikkim events three times every month and a 30-minute episode on agriculture in the state from Monday to Friday. In Sikkim, they mainly focuses on broadcasting programmes aimed for educating, entertaining and providing information to both the rural and urban masses of the state.

Programmes

There are basically two narrow cast programmes being telecasted from Sikkim currently.

1. Agriculture Episode
2. Sikkim Round-up

Agricultural programmes

Sikkim is an agricultural based state. So that is the reason Sikkim Doordarshan believes that this sector should be given a primary attention. Hence, the target audience for this programme is specially the agricultural labourers. This program mainly aims at the teaching the farmers regarding new technologies which would gradually increase their agricultural output.

Sikkim is under process of becoming an organic state the farmers are facing serious problems while practicing agriculture without the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Here, D.D. is playing an active role in teaching the farmers regarding other various alternative ways of cultivation where these fertilizers and pesticides may not be used.

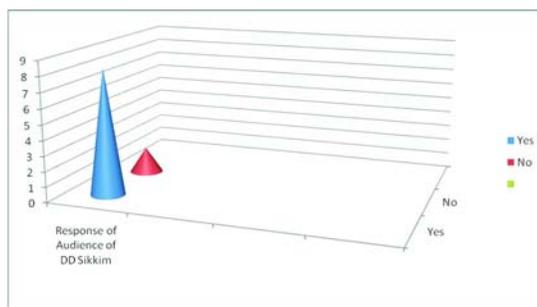
Through these programmes, it also attempts to inform the rural masses regarding various schemes of Central and State government, like National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme, Self help Group, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna for the upliftment of the poor and the tribals.

Sikim round-up

This programme basically informs the Sikkimese about the news and happenings within the State. It also covers various festivals, culture and tradition of the people living in Sikkim.

The Audience Feed Back

The audience prefers Doordarshan specially in rural areas. But they demand more programmes in their own language. The chart shows that 80.3 % watches DD Sikkim regularly.



The above chart shows that only 9.3 % target audience believe that Sikkim DD is able to inculcate scientific temperament properly in the society. The rest opined that it needs to give more time for the science related programme



Constrains faced by DD Sikkim

Though D.D. is a national network fully funded by the government, it facing lots of difficulties both mental and technical along with a stiff competition from other private players. A few problems are discussed here.

- Heavy rain and steep gradients also delays or cancels outdoor shootings.
- Landslides and road blockage due to heavy rainfall is a routine affair which affect the normal schedule of the transmission.
- Sometimes DD persons even have to work long distances for hours to reach the shooting spot.
- Unlike other private channel Doordarshan mainly focuses on broadcasting programmes focusing on education, information and not on entertainment..
- Less number of staff (especially trained in Science Programme).
- Inadequate infrastructure.
- Lack of common awareness.

Conclusion

There are 31 regular employees at the centre and around estimated 2 crore is annually spent on the salaries and the maintenance cost in Sikkim DD. There it is strictly followed the code of ethics of broadcasting due to which it cannot sensationalize issues like other private channels. Its real motive/objective is not profit or to raise the T.R.P. but to work for the people towards the path of development and nation building. Sikkim DD has its own production team

and aims to supply the people with more educative, informative programmes and scientific awareness inculcating is one of them. The D.D Kendra is looking forward to extend its regional programmes. Television spreads information in an accessible format to viewers quite quickly. When an important event occurs, the audio and visual proceedings of that event can be broadcast in order to inform viewers of the event. Practically this centre needs special attention of the Government. More trained staff with required infrastructure may solve the various problems because the target audience is there to get the information.

Acknowledgement

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