

SCIENCE POPULARIZATION ON TV IN A THIRD WORLD COUNTRY

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ABSTRACT

Science Popularization in general, but in special on TV, is in a Third World Country is a difficult job, in order to produce attractive materials for a broad audience.

A way to show the advance of the national scientific community in fields like Astronomy, Astrophysics, and Cosmology, applicable to other sciences also, connecting them in friendly relation with a broad majority of the people, is to combine the wisdom and knowledge of the local scientists together with the most spectacular TV production of the first world countries, commenting, analyzing and conveying the hard science into the public debate of the common citizens.

Here we present our eight years long experience of TV presentations in a program devoted to Science outreach which have reached rating indexes ranging from 22 to 33, becoming in successful conveyor of Science information to the Cuban people.

INDEX TERMS.

TV Science Popularization

INTRODUCTION.

The Science Popularization on TV, is in a Third World Country hard to do if you want to produce attractive materials for a broad audience. Budgets constraints in most of the cases and lack of the technical equipment required to produce first class visual materials conspire against motivation and creativity of local scientist and media professionals.

A way to show the advance of the national scientific community in fields like Astronomy, Astrophysics, and Cosmology, applicable to other sciences also, connecting them in friendly relation with a broad majority of the people, is to combine the wisdom and knowledge of the local scientists together with the most spectacular TV production of the first world countries, commenting, analyzing and conveying the hard science into the public debate of the common citizens.

The Science communication objective of this work is to convey cutting edge science to the general public of a third world nation, with limited resources to produce TV imaginary and filmography, highlighting and making public the development, knowledge and wisdom of the local scientists.

THE SCIENCE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

What you should get in a TV science popularization program in order to reach a broad audience and high rating index.

To reach a broad audience and high rating index in a TV science popularization program you should to motivate the fascination for the probable thing not yet demonstrated, pursue some kind of agreement between the decipherable mystery and science, to show the defensive and some time uncertain fight between the questionable truth and the approach to the speculation not yet proven.

Maybe a single one of these elements or a partial or whole mix of them will be the salt to flavour the final product making it attractive to a broad audience.

On March 1997 the Cuban television aired by first time a science popularization program entitled "Pasaje a lo Desconocido" (Passage to the Unknown) with the aim to convey cutting age science and new discoveries to a public with special interest in this type of themes.

Since the screen setup of the first program to the date, a very few TV spaces, devoted to science outreach, have been promoted so well the desire to know about, the reflection on, and polemic for science themes in the Cuban television directly from the centre of the program to the centre of the public (Paneque, 2004).

The space first thought to be devoted to a selected public sector became general public phenomena. The high popularity of the program acquired from the beginning, lead to the directorate of the TV move the regular airing space from a Tuesday night late in the night first to a Thursday stellar space and finally to a Sunday Prime Time at 8:30 pm just after the News space.

Those decisions taken for the TV policy officials can be taken as a good proof about the impact of the program in the whole nation, with a regular audience ranging from 3 to 4 million spectators from about the 12 millions inhabitants of the country.

In the program scope of presentations, not only the hardest topics of cosmology and astrophysics has been presented to the public despite these ones has been between the most popular spiced by some approaches to the extraterrestrial life and UFOs, but also the commentator had subjected to chirurgical dissection the emotional and brilliant episodes - and also some dark ones - of general sciences, culture and their unlimited band of unanswered questions.

The introduction of a single or a pair of Cuban panelists and the contrast of their approaches with the messages or thesis of the documentaries exhibited, contribute with an undeniable national touch to the program.

Sometimes arguing between them, sometimes expressing their own points of views, but always being confronted by the program host which has to assume the role of the common citizen, the participants play a decisive role in the success of the popularizing experience.

EVALUATION

The evaluation of the impact on the public audience of this program within the rest of the TV programming is conducted regularly by the Centre of Social Studies of the ICRT which emit an annual report.

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In 2003 "Pasaje a lo Desconocido" occupied the place 26 from a 117 program universe, with rating index of 25 (mean audience) and public acceptance of 90-95 percent. If we take in account that more than a half of the programs obtained rating indexes less than 10 it is possible to figure out the relevance acquired by itself in the national TV spectrum.

The rating index of the program descended a bit in 2004 due to the appearance of a new highly competitive TV channel, devoted to rise the cultural level in general and the scientific level in particular of the Cuban population. The rating index reached this year was 24.1 (mean audience) occupying the place 37, but keeping the public acceptance level in 90-96 percent.

CONCLUSION

As common person all of we love mystery, this reality shows the way to reach the soul of people aimed with the purpose to illustrate themselves of the fundamental concepts best established by science.

The popularizing experience must leave space to the reasonable doubts and questionings, which in definitive is the spirit of the scientific method, in order to get maximum effectiveness.

If "Pasaje a lo Desconocido", as a popularizing experience, has been imposed by itself and has been favourably admitted with the consensus of the mean TV spectator, is due in great way, by the use of first class visual materials spiced by a confronting debate, allowing in that way to highlight the knowledge and wisdom of the local scientific community, and conveying science developments into the public debate of the common citizens.

REFERENCES

A. Paneque, *Estrellas y quásares en la constelación "debate"*, Gramma newspaper, November 24, 2004, p. 6.