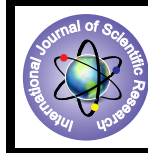


Impact of Spiritual TV Channels on the Health, Financial and Family Issues of Viewers



Media

KEYWORDS: TV Broadcasting, Spiritual TV channels, Spirituality, Health, Financial difficulties, Family relationships

Ramesh C Raina

Research Scholar, University of Mysore and BIMTECH

Manosi Chaudhuri

Associate Professor, BIMTECH, Greater Noida

ABSTRACT

Spiritual television channels have changed the religious and spiritual scenario in India. First spiritual TV channel Aastha channel was launched in the year 2000 followed by Sanaskar TV in 2002. Since then the size of spiritual TV channels has grown to 17 channels. Such is the demand of spiritual content that even news and entertainment channels show case spiritual content on daily basis. Serials like Mahadev on Life OK, Ramayana on Doordarshan and Yoga by Ramdev are being showcased on these channels. It has developed markets like Ayurveda, Yoga, Astrology, and spiritual merchandize in India. Spiritual TV channels promoted many new saints and Gurus like Baba Ramdev, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Babu Aasharam, Brahma Kumaris, Murari Babu, Ramesh Bhai Oza and hundreds of others. This study focused on spiritual TV channels. The main concern of the research endeavour was to gauge the impact of spiritual TV channels on the perception of the viewers. The concern was to dig out the impact of spiritual TV programs on the health, financial and family issues of the viewers of spiritual programs.

Introduction

Today, television is considered to be a major source of entertainment and learning for many, especially the young. All television programs, especially the commercials, news, documentaries and cartoons, affect people of all ages in different ways. Youngsters constitute one of the groups in society who spend a lot of time watching television. In recent years, youngsters are even named as "active media users". Television has become one of the most important mass media tools affecting social behaviour.

Dorr (1986) states that TV stands out from other media as it is generally used more and can present more life-like content than most of the other media. Television habits consist of patterns of behaviour determined by the amount of time and importance individuals give to watching television broadcasts and recorded videos. Contemporary Indian society can no longer be considered static or in a state of equilibrium; a view that anthropologists and sociologists have held for very long. Several sociological studies have indicated the presence of an inner dynamism within the Indian society that has helped its perpetuation and survival through several millennia. "Without doubt, the paradigm of the 1940's and early 1950's are no longer seen as valid" Wadley (1998). "Work in sociolinguistics relating to Indian languages has continued actively up to the present..." Gair (1998), however, scant references are available relating to linguistic changes as a result of mass media in the Indian society. Observations indicate influence of mass media, or print or audio-visual, on patterns of speech behaviour, social etiquette and interpersonal relations, to mention a few. While journalists have reported these changes, research efforts to understand the influence of mass media on linguistic behaviour at individual or societal levels are limited.

The same holds true for sociological studies on the impact of mass media on Indian society to a large extent, though a large number of sociologists are seriously concerned about the effects of film and television on the Indian viewers. Verma (2000), followed by Desai (2004) in India were among the few who had examined the influence of transnational television on the values of adolescent viewers in India, who, as a result of such exposure, wanted to have sexual freedom, liberty to perform western dance and wear western clothes (Verma, 2000).

Literature Review

According to Mehta (2008), the Indian television was transformed from two Government owned and controlled channels to a multi channel global media market. Until 1991, Indian audiences received a controlled; sometimes development-oriented

(like agriculture and education) and at other times, propaganda-induced television programming. Since 2009, audiences are being subjected to a cacophony of nearly 450 commercially driven broadcasters, which cater to more than 50 % population of India (more than 510.43 million population) compared to 30 million viewers in 1984-85. Researchers have conducted various studies to gauge the impact of television on viewers. Television programs could either leave positive or negative impacts on the viewer, elaborates Agrawal (2001) in his study on "Transnational television and socio-cultural diversities in the Indian subcontinent: will it survive?"

The study on "Effects of Television on children: what the experts believe" carried out by Turow in 1985 presents several thought-provoking findings about mass media and scholars' perceptions of the effects of television on children. Overall, the scholars exhibited a good deal of certainty and conviction that television plays an important causal role in expanding children's views of the world, decreasing their reading behaviour, increasing their propensity to engage in sex stereotyping, reducing their overall physical activity, and promoting excessive materialism. One would not exactly call this view a vote of confidence in the medium. Being female and, less often, being older and not having children at home seemed moderately related to the voicing of these concerns. Somewhat startling was the finding that highly published academics tended not to judge television's effects so negatively.

Spirituality has become differentiated from religion (and religiousness). It has taken with it some of the elements formerly included in religion. Therefore, recent definitions of religion have become narrower and less inclusive. Whereas religion historically was a "broad-band construct" (Pargament, 1999) that included both individual and institutional elements, it is now seen as a "narrow-band construct" that has much to do with the institution alone (Zinnbauer, 1999). Spirituality appears to be the favoured term to describe individual experience and is identified with such things as personal transcendence, super conscious sensitivity and meaningfulness. As Pargament (1999) states "... the term spirituality is increasingly reserved for the loftier / functional side of life. Religion, in contrast, is now more often identified with rigid or formally structured, religious institutions that often are perceived to restrict or inhibit human potential".

According to Wimmer (2006), Panel studies are a type of longitudinal studies that measure the same sample of respondents at different points in time. Panel studies can make use of mail questionnaires, telephone interviews, personal interviews, or the

Internet via web panels. Television networks, advertising agencies and marketing research firms use panel studies to track changes in consumer behaviour. Panel studies can reveal shifting attitudes and patterns of behaviour that might go unnoticed with cross sectional research approaches. Thus, trends, new ideas, fads and buying habits are among the variables investigated with the help of panel studies. Lazarsfeld (1944) pioneered the use of the panel technique in which the same individuals are interviewed several times.

Objectives of this Study

- To assess the impact of spiritual TV programs on the health of viewers.
- To examine the impact of spiritual TV programs on financial issues of viewers.
- To examine whether the family relationships of the respondents improved after watching spiritual TV programs.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses framed for this study are as follows:

- H1₀ – Watching spiritual television programs does not affect the health of viewers.
- H1₁ – Watching spiritual television programs improves the health of viewers.
- H2₀ – Watching spiritual television programs does not improve financial issues.
- H2₁ – Watching spiritual television programs improves financial issues.
- H3₀ – Watching spiritual television programs does not improve family relationships.
- H3₁ – Watching spiritual television programs improves family relationships.

Research Design

In this study, survey method was used to obtain quantitative data from a large representative sample of a diverse and widely scattered population. The survey aided the researcher in collecting information directly from the cable and direct to satellite viewers so that comparing their lives could make a proper analysis. The second aspect of the study was to analyze the impact of two popular programs from each channel under study that is AASTHA, SANSKAR and DISHA TV. The change in their lives was figured out through the information provided on a quantitative scale. In this longitudinal study, data was collected four times i.e. after every six months spread over two years, starting from December 2012 till June 2014. The panel of respondents was formed in the month of April 2012. The selection of the household was based on five points. First, the respondents should have access to spiritual TV channels like Aastha, Sanskar, and Disha TV either through cable television or direct to home platform. Second, the respondent should be from the family of the owner of the household and the respondent should have less travelling. Third, the household should have owned cable and satellite connection from the last two years. Fourth, it should have members from different age groups, gender and occupation. Fifth, the members should be able to understand and speak both Hindi and English. Time period 1 (T1) was December 2012, Time period 2 (T2) was June 2013, Time period 3 (T3) was December 2013 and Time period 4 (T4) was June 2014.

Sampling

The study was conducted in the Greater National Capital Territory of Delhi, comprising of cities like Delhi, Ghaziabad, Noida, Greater Noida, Faridabad and Gurgaon. The scientific approach was used for the determination of sample size. The size of the total population was considered in determining the sample size. Population of the study comprised viewers of spiritual channels.

Spiritual channels are those channels, which mostly telecast spiritual programs. Channels that telecast spiritual programs during limited period of time, like Zee and Star, were not considered in this study.

Obviously, the size of population was extremely huge. Besides, the population was heterogeneous in terms of age, occupation and gender. However, the education and occupation in most of the cases were closely related. In addition to this, the population was spread over a wide area. Therefore the social, economic, demographic and even psychological diversities were likely to be highly marked. Selection of adequate and representative sample for such a population was an extremely difficult proposition.

Not only this, an individual researcher’s time and resource constraint may also act as a handicap. In view of the above researcher accepted 15% margin of error between the sample and population. Error margin stands for the difference between values of important parameters like mean and variance of the population and sample.

The entire Greater NCT of Delhi was divided into four zones geographically. Every zone contained a number of districts. Two districts were selected randomly from each of the four zones. Thus, the sample was drawn from eight districts out of the 13 districts of the Greater NCT of Delhi. Each district comprised of a number of colonies. Two colonies were selected randomly. Hence, after zone and district, the third sampling unit was colony. Within the colony, welfare associations and security staff were contacted to collect the preliminary information of the households. In Delhi, most of the colonies have multistoried flats and each flat carries a number. Similarly, the traditional houses carry the number allotted by the municipal corporations. The size of the sub sample was determined on the basis of the principle of proportionality (Sukhatme and Sukhatme, 1970). The first household was selected randomly. The remaining households were selected systematically. Every tenth household to the right of the first household was selected, making this a multi-stage cluster sampling.

The demographic characteristics of the sample in terms of age, gender, education, profession and monthly income are presented in the Table below.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

S. No.	Description	Categories	Male	Female	Total	%age Male	%age Female
1	Gender		27	45	72	37.5	62.5
2	Age Group	21 - 30 years	3	5	8	4.16	6.94
		31 - 40 years	7	10	17	9.72	13.88
		41 - 50 years	6	12	18	8.33	16.66
		51 - 60 years	7	7	14	9.72	9.72
		Above 60 years	4	11	15	5.55	15.27
3	Educational Qualification	Up to 10th	3	9	12	4.16	12.5
		11th - 12th	1	6	7	1.38	8.33
		Graduation	14	22	36	19.44	30.55
		Post Graduation	5	6	11	6.94	8.33
		Above Post Graduation	4	2	6	5.55	2.77

4	Profession	Housewife	2	17	19	2.77	23.61
		Private Job	8	11	19	11.11	15.27
		Government Job	5	3	8	6.94	4.16
		Business	6	4	10	8.33	5.55
		Not Working	2	6	8	2.77	8.33
		Retired	2	0	2	2.77	0
		Professionals	2	4	6	2.77	5.55
5	Monthly Income	Up to 10000	2	2	4	2.77	2.77
		10001 to 30000	4	7	11	5.55	9.72
		30001 to 50000	6	9	15	8.33	12.5
		50001 to 70000	4	6	10	5.55	8.33
		More than 70000	8	4	12	11.11	5.55
		Not Earning	3	17	20	4.16	23.61

Since the study focused on the impact of spiritual TV programs on viewers, the contents of the program played a vital role. Therefore, content analysis method was used to analyze the content of the spiritual programs. Differences of contents of different programs had differential impact on viewers. The significance of these differences was analyzed by the application of t-Test paired two sample for means assessing the difference in mean values. Content analysis method was used to analyze the audio and video content of the spiritual TV programs.

The first spiritual channel, which started operating from India, was Aastha TV in 2000 and in 2002 Sanskar was on air. Disha TV started its operations in 2007. This study focused on Spiritual TV channels because these channels have created a huge spiritual industry in India. Many saints, speakers and singers have been showcased and promoted by these channels. Followership of these speakers has increased due to their publicity on Spiritual TV channels.

These channels were selected on the basis of their popularity, distribution, visibility, availability in respondent homes, content, Television Rated Points (TRPs) and consistency in broadcasting. The three channels were Aastha Channel, Sanskar channel and Disha TV. Two programs from each channel were selected on the basis of popularity, consistency, viewership ratings, easy availability in respondent homes, content genre, type of content and face value of the saints. The programs selected are mentioned as under:

Table 2: Details of Spiritual Gurus and Programs

Channel	Program	Guru
Aastha Channel	Sant Rajender Singh	A
	Brahma Kumari Sister Shivani	B
Sanskar	Sri Sri Ravi Shankar	C
	Baba Ramdev	D
Disha TV	Avdoot Baba Shivanand	E
	Swami Bhoomanand Tirtha	F

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Impact of Spiritual TV Channels

This study measured the difference of means of paired samples through multivariate analysis. Confidence interval refers to degree of confidence that the investigator reposes in a sample result. This is determined by the choice of the level of probability at which selected parameters were tested for significance. This study opted for .05 level of significance, which means 95% confidence interval.

Impact on Health

H₀ – Watching spiritual television programs does not affect the health of viewers.

H₁ – Watching spiritual television programs improves the health of viewers.

Table 3: t-test for paired means for impact on health for successive time periods

All Gurus	T1- T2	T1- T3	T1- T4
t stat	0.46	- 1.832	- 0.192

On observation of the table above, it was found that the t stat < t critical (t critical = 1.66; df = 71; level of significance 0.05) in all the comparisons between T1 and T2, T1 and T3, and T1 and T4 for all the Gurus taken together. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted and alternate hypothesis is rejected. The health of the respondents was not affected by watching programs of the saints. Respondents agreed that there was no improvement in their health during the survey periods.

Table 4: t-test for paired means for impact on health for different Gurus

Guru	A	B	C	D	E	F
T1 - T4	2.02	0.2	-1.39	0.22	-.43	-0.80

On further analysis of impact of each Guru separately between T1 and T4, it was found that t stat > t critical (t critical = 1.79; df = 11; level of significance 0.05) for Guru A. Hence, the above result shows that the program of Sant Rajender Singh on Aastha channel had impact on the health of the respondents during the period T1 and T4. There was no significant impact on the health of the respondents who had watched the programs of Brahma Kumari Sister Shivani, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Baba Ramdev, Avdoot Baba Shivanand and Swami Bhoomanand Tirtha on Aastha, Sanskar and Disha TV respectively.

Impact on Financial Issues

H₀ – Watching spiritual television programs does not improve financial issues.

H₁ – Watching spiritual television programs improves financial issues.

Table 5: t-test for paired means for impact on financial issues for successive time periods

All Gurus	T1- T2	T1- T3	T1- T4
t stat	-0.275	1.91	2.73

On observation of the table above, it was found that the t stat > t critical (t critical = 1.66; df = 71; level of significance 0.05) in the comparisons between T1 and T3, and T1 and T4 for all the Gurus taken together. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. The financial issues of the respondents had improved by watching programs of the saints at least over a period of one year. The financial issues of the respondents did not improve by watching spiritual TV programs within the first six months.

Table 6: t-test for paired means for impact on financial issues for different Gurus

Guru	A	B	C	D	E	F
T1 - T4	4.06	-0.56	2.54	0.804	0.61	0.51

On further analysis of impact of each Guru separately between T1 and T4, it was found that t stat > t critical (t critical = 1.79; df = 11; level of significance 0.05) only for Gurus A and C. Hence, the above result shows that the programs of Sant Rajender Singh on Aastha channel and Baba Ramdev on Sanskar channel had impact on the financial issues of the respondents during the period T1 and T4. There was no significant impact on the financial issues of the respondents who had watched the programs of

Brahma Kumari Sister Shivani, Sri Sri Ravishankar, Avdoot Baba Shivanand and Swami Bhoomanand Tirtha on Aastha, Sanskar and Disha TV channels respectively.

Impact on Family Relationships

H3₀ – Watching spiritual television programs does not improve family relationships.

H3₁ – Watching spiritual television programs improves family relationships.

Table 7: t-test for paired means for impact on family relationships for successive time periods

All Guru	T1- T2	T1- T3	T1- T4
t stat	2.54	1.64	1.90

On observation of the table above, it was found that the t stat > t critical (t critical = 1.66; df = 71; level of significance 0.05) in the comparisons between T1 and T2, and T1 and T4 for all the Gurus taken together. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. The family relationships of the respondents had improved by watching programs of the saints. During the time period T1 – T3, significant impact on the family relationships of the respondents was missed very marginally.

Table 8: t-test for paired means for impact on family relationships for different Gurus

Guru	A	B	C	D	E	F
T1 - T4	1.14	1.1	2.13	1.91	0.20	- 1.82

On further analysis of impact of each Guru separately between T1 and T4, it was found that t stat > t critical (t critical = 1.79; df = 11; level of significance 0.05) for Gurus C and D. Hence, the above result shows that the programs of Sri Sri Ravishankar and Baba Ramdev on Sanskar channel had impact on the family relationships of the respondents during the period T1 and T4. There was no significant impact on the family relationships of the respondents who had watched the programs of Sant Rajender Singh and Brahma Kumari Sister Shivani on Aastha channel, and Avdoot Baba Shivanand and Swami Bhoomanand on Disha TV channel.

Conclusion

On analysis of the results of the study it can be concluded that spiritual TV programs of the saints under study had impact in some cases on health, financial issues and family relationships of the respondents. Future researchers can analyze impact of other spiritual programs like story-telling, devotional music, astrology, Ayurveda and discourses on the users of the spiritual TV channels.

REFERENCE

A. Dorr, (2001). Media Literacy: International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences. Oxford, England Elsevier science Limited Agarwal, C, Binod , (2001). Transnational Television and Socio – Cultural Diversities in the Indian Subcontinent: Will it survive. Socio –Cultural Diversities and Globalization issues and perspectives edited by S.R.Mehta. Indian Institute of Advance Study Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla Desai, Mitra Kapil (2004). Comparative Study of Influence of Transnational Television in Gujarati and Marathi speaking households in Mumbai. Mumbai: SNDT Women's University (Unpublished PhD Thesis) Gair, James W, 1998, Linguistics. In India's worlds and U.S Scholars 1947 -1997. Joseph W. Elder, Edward C. Dimock, Jr, Ainslie T.Embree eds. New Delhi: Manohar- American Institute of Indian studies, pp 328. Mehta, Nalin (2008). India on Television, First Edition, Noida: Harper Collins Publishers India Sukhatme, V. P. and Sukhatme, V. B. (1970). Sampling Theory of Surveys with Applications: Asian Publishing House Turov, Joseph (1985). The Effects of Television on Children: What the Experts Believe. Department of Papers University of Pennsylvania Verma A.2000, Impact of watching International Television programs on Adolescents in India – A Research Note. Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 31(1): 117-126 Wadley, Susan, S. (1998). Anthropology. In India's worlds and U.S scholar's 1947- 1997. Joseph W.Elder, Edward C. Dimock, Jr, Ainslie T.Embree eds; New Delhi: Manohar American Institute of Indian Studies, pp127. Zinnbauer, B. J., Pargament, K. L., and Scott, A. B. (1999). The emerging meanings of religiousness and spirituality: Problems and prospects. Journal of Personality, 67