



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

STUDY OF TELEVISION VIEWING HABITS AMONG THE RURAL WOMAN OF ASSAM.

Dr Mohsina Rahman

Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication & Journalism

Assam Women's University, Rowriah, Jorhat, Assam

Abstract

As a mass medium, television has a significant impact on our society. There is no doubt that television is an influential and appealing medium capable of capturing the attention of viewers, whether literate or illiterate, and that it is effective mass media in all aspects. The boom in the television industry has captivated not only the urban masses but also the rural masses. Most people accept television consumption as a part of their daily lives, with choices and preferences reflecting one's "taste." In India, where the rural masses are isolated in villages, communication is difficult; television is one of the most important mass media sources, reaching a large number of people quickly. Television has radically altered society as a whole. Women have been influenced by television in a variety of ways. Its influence is still visible today in changes in women's speaking, debating, awareness, and lifestyle. Television has established itself as a low-cost and knowledgeable source of entertainment for women from low-income families, as well as uneducated women. It is, in fact, a revolution in the process of social communication. As a result, a study is being conducted to investigate the viewing habits of rural Assamese women.

Keywords: Television, Great Impact, Rural Women.

Introduction

Television is a 1936 invention that has spread to every corner of the globe in less than seven decades. It has grown in popularity due to its tremendous visual and audible appeal; ever since the introduction of television in India in 1959, UNESCO has funded research into the use of television as a medium of education. In August 1961, an educational programme for Delhi schools was launched with the primary goal of educating students. The next step was the introduction of general-public television service on August 15, 1965, which marked the beginning of entertainment-oriented television programming. Two years later, in January 1967, the 'Krishidarshan' programme was launched; television began broadcasting rural programmes for farmers in approximately 80 villages across India. On October 2, 1972, Bombay received its second television station. In 1973, the Bombay station began relaying programmes to Puna, and television stations in Srinagar and Amritsar were established. The Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) was launched in 1975 for a one-year period, covering 2400 villages in six states. Terrestrial transmitters were installed in Jaipur, Hyderabad, Raichur, Gulbarga, and Sambalpur in 1977. INSAT - IA, India's first communication satellite, was launched into orbit in 1983. Since then, several television centres have been installed throughout the country as part of a campaign-based network expansion, particularly during 1984-85. Parliament passed the 'Prasar Bharati' (Broadcasting Corporation of India) bill in 1990 to give Doordarshan autonomy. All Doordarshan Kendra's, through their five hundred and fifty-three television transmitters, telecast programmes regularly in their service areas. These programmes occasionally include entertainment and various aspects of development like family welfare schemes, community development, functional literacy, and agriculture (Vir Bala Aggarwal/ V.S Gupta, 2012). The transfer of science to rural people and the gradual inoculation of scientific attitudes in everyday life need to be demonstrated in a language that rural people will understand and appreciate. Television is a major source of information, education, and entertainment. As a mass medium, Television is an institutionalized source of information for creating awareness about innovations. It is one of the most versatile audio-visual aid ever developed. Its ability to convey life and event in action profoundly influences the masses.

Furthermore, television has a huge impact on our society as a mass medium. Television has proven to be a profound means of communication capable of having a huge impact on society, and there is no doubt that television is an influential and appealing medium capable of capturing the attention of viewers, whether literate or illiterate, and television is effective as a mass media in all aspects. The boom in television industries has not only impacted the urban masses, but it has also captivated the rural masses. Most people accept television

consumption as a part of their daily lives and thoughts to reflect one's choices and preferences, which in turn reflect one's "taste." Communication is difficult in India, where the rural masses are isolated in villages; television is one of the most important mass media sources, reaching a large number of people quickly. Television has transformed society as a whole.

Television has also significantly altered women's viewing, thinking, and understanding habits. Television has also influenced women in a variety of ways. Its impact can be seen today in changes in women's speaking, debating, awareness, and lifestyle. Television has established itself as a low-cost and knowledgeable source of entertainment for women from low-income families and even those who are uneducated. It is, in fact, a revolution in the social communication process. Television became a medium of communication with a powerful impact on women, and different changes were seen in the TV-viewing habits of women in recent years. It is observed that the duration of T.V. viewing in general and the duration of watching T.V. alone have increased. T.V. stands out from other media as it is generally more and can present more life-like content than most other media (Dorr, 1986). It can be said in definite words that Television possesses great potential to be used in furthering the cause of women's development. Moreover, Television empowers women by broadcasting programmes for them.

Bhakat Suburi Gaon is located in Teok Tehsil of Jorhat District in Assam. It is situated 8km from Sub District headquarter Teok and 26 km from Jorhat. Around 1800, B.C few Gokhais, Bhakat and Pachani from Majuli thought of establishing a satra in this place using their "Sari Hati" method. There is a lot to be known regarding the importance of the usage of the Sari Hati. To the north direction, there flows the great Brahmaputra river; to the south, there was the Rajbari, which was the King's kingdom.

Moreover, to the east, for the bhokots and Pachanis to reside, they established a space named Bhakat Suburi and started residing there simultaneously. Simultaneously, the Maonmoria revolution started at that time, creating hindrances in the establishment of satras in this particular place, leading to the return journey of the people who came from Majuli back to their place. On the other hand, the situation has created space for the two important villages, Bhakat Gaon and Bhakat Suburi Gaon of Jhajimukh, etched in the pages of Assam's History. As per 2009 stats, Jhajimukh is the gram panchayat of Bhakat Gaon. The total geographical area of Bhakat Suburi Gaon is 101.57 hectares. It has a total of 326 people. There are about 71 houses in Bhakat Suburi Gaon. Among 326 people, 170 are male, and 156 are female, i.e. 52 % are male, and 42 % are female, per the

2011 population census. The study will attempt to study television viewing habits among the rural women of Bhakat Suburi Gaon, Jhajimukh Teok of Jorhat District.

Aim of the study:

To study the television viewing habit among rural women of the Jorhat District of Assam.

Objectives

- 1) To identify the information needs of the women.
- 2) To identify the sources through which women access information.
- 3) To examine women's awareness of television programmes.
- 4) To study the changing behaviour of women by watching Television.
- 5) To study the effectiveness of the television message among women.

The rationale of the study:

Television performs multiple functions- entertainment, edutainment, and infotainment. So, research is designed to study the television viewing habits of rural women of Bhakat Suburi Gaon. Bhakat Suburi Gaon is one of the villages in which development is mushrooming in every aspect. For this aspect, the village is taken for the study to identify if Television is one such factor for development.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratification theory and Cultivation theory is used to study the television viewing habits of the rural woman of Bhakat Suburi Gaon.

Uses and Gratification Theory

Katz propounded this theory in 1959. This theory is an approach to understanding what media do to people and what people do with media. Uses and Gratification discuss how users deliberately choose media that will satisfy given needs and allow them to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social interaction/companionship, and diversion. The uses approach assumes that audiences are active and willingly expose themselves to media, and the most potent of mass media content cannot influence an individual who has no use for it in the environment in which he lives. The uses of mass media are dependent on the perception, selectivity and previously held

values, beliefs and interests of the people. The term "Gratification" refers to the reward and satisfaction experienced by the audience after the use of media; it helps to explain the motivations behind media use and habits of media use or the satisfaction of the actual needs by the media called media gratification. This theory is so functional in orientation that it ignores the dysfunction of media in society and culture. It is conservative at heart and sees media primarily as a positive way for individuals to meet their needs without any attention to the negative cultural effect of media in society. They can verbalize them. This approach relies heavily on surveys based on the actual response of audience members. Thus, the research techniques assume that people's response is valid indicators of their motives.

Cultivation theory

George Gerbner developed this theory in 1967. It is based on the assumption that mass media have a subtle effect on the audience who unknowingly absorb the dominant symbols, images and messages of media. Accordingly, to this theory, long, persistent exposure to T.V. can cultivate common beliefs about the world. Gerbner and his colleagues believe that Television's message does not portray reality in society, but repeated exposure to such distortion leads to the development of particular beliefs that get reinforced once they are developed. He also strongly suggests that the powerful effect of mass media acts as a moulder of society.

Additionally, cultivation analysis concentrates on the long-term effect of exposure rather than the short-term impact on attitudes and opinions. Although results are not as clear as we might like, cultivation appears to depend on motivation for viewing individuals who watch T.V. to pass the time or because of a habit that appears to be affected more than people whose viewing is planned and motivated. Moreover, cultivation appears to be enhanced when the viewer perceives the content of entertainment shows to be realistic. Moreover, frequent watching of Television influences the ideas of reality and beliefs or assumptions about life.

Research Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative method was used for data analysis.

Sampling Techniques

Stratified Random Sampling was used for the study.

Sample Size

There are 71 households in, the Bhakat Suburi Gaon, Teok, Jorhat of which 156 constitute female populations of different age groups. Fifty women are taken as a sample from 18yrs and above.

Data Collection

The survey, Interview and observation method was used for data collection.

Limitation of the study:

The Limitation of the study are as follows: –

- 1) The sample size taken was small.
- 2) The research was only confined to the woman of Bhakat Suburi Gaon.
- 3) The Population of Bhakat Suburi Gaon is less in number.

Data Analysis

1. Age Group:

Table 1

18- 25years	25 – 35 years	36 above
13	14	23

- Among 50 respondents, 26% of the total respondents belong to the age group (18-25yrs), 28 % of the respondent belong to (25-35yrs), and 46% belong to the age group (36 and above).
- Among the age group (18-25yrs), 14 % of the respondents are unmarried, and 12 % are married.
- In the age group (25-35yrs), 28 % of the respondents are married and
- In the age group (35 and above), 46 % of the respondents are married.

2. Occupation:

Table 2

Occupation	18-25 yrs	26-35 yrs	36 yrs & above	Total
Teacher	1	1	2	4
Business	0	2	3	5
Housewives	6	11	18	35
Students	6	0	0	6

8% of the respondents are Teachers, 10% have Business as an occupation, 70% are Housewives, and 12% are Students.

3. Presence of television set in the home:

Table 3

Age Group	Yes	No
18-25yrs	11	2
26 -35yrs	14	1
36yrs above	21	1

Among fifty respondents, forty-six respondents have television sets in their homes, and four respondents do not have television sets. Eleven respondents belong to (the 18-25yrs)age group, fourteen respondents belong to (the 26-35yrs) age group, and twenty-one respondents belong to the age group (35 and above). On the other hand, of the four respondents who are not having television sets at home, two respondents belong to (the 18-25yrs) age group, one respondent belongs to (the 26-35yrs) age group, and another respondent belong to the age group (35yrs above). So, it can be assumed that 91% of the female population in the age group (35yrs and above) have television sets in their home. Here, Television is mostly seen by homemakers

4. Regular viewer:

Table 4

Age Group	Not Regular	Regular
18-25yrs	6	7
26- 35yrs	3	11
36above	7	16
Total	16	34

Thirty-four respondents are regular, and sixteen are not regular viewers, i.e. 68% of the population are regular viewers, and 32% are not regular viewers. Out of 68% of the population, the age group of 36 yrs & above is higher than the other age group for being the regular television viewer.

5. Duration of watching Television:

Table 5

Age group	1hour	2 hours	3 hours above	Total respondents
18-25yrs	5	6	2	13
26-35yrs	3	9	2	14
35yrs above	5	15	3	23
Total	13	30	7	50

Thirteen respondents watch Television for 1 hour, i.e. 26 % of the respondents, thirty respondents watch Television for 2 hours, i.e. 60% of the population, and seven respondents watch Television for above 3 hours, i.e. 14% of the total population. Out of 60% of the respondents who watch Television more is the age group (35yrs & above).

6. Time to watch Television:

Table 6

Age	Morning	Noon	Evening	Night
18-25yrs	2	0	6	5
26-35yrs	1	1	5	7
36yrs above	2	1	11	10
Total	5	2	23	22

Five respondents watch Television in the morning, i.e. 10% of the respondents watch Television in the morning; out of 10% of the respondents, 4% of the respondents are in the age group (36 yrs & above), and another 4% are in the age group (18- 25yrs). From the respondents' answers, it is found that the age group of 36 yrs & above watch Television in all the slots, i.e. morning, noon, evening, and night and also their watching increases in the evening and night.

7. Watching Television is accompanied by:

Table 7

Age	Alone	Friends	Parents	Husband	Siblings	Children
18-25yrs	2	2	6	0	2	1
26yrs-35yrs	1	1	7	2	0	6
36yrs above	5	0	2	0	1	17
Total	7	3	15	2	3	25

Here, the respondents in the age group (18-25) yrs mostly like watching Television with their parents. Again the age group of (25-35) yrs like to watch Television with parents and children. However, the age group of (36yrs & above) mostly like to watch Television with children, i.e. out of twenty-three respondents of the age group of (36 yrs & above) seventeen respondents like to watch Television with children.

8. Deciding the programmes of Television:

Table 8

Age	Self	Husband	Parents	Siblings	Children
18-25yrs	12	0	0	1	0
26-35yrs	14	0	0	0	0
36yrs above	15	0	0	0	8

82% of the respondents said that they decide on the programmes of their own, and for 16%, the programmes are decided by their children and only for 2% of the respondents, their husbands, parents, and siblings decide the programmes.

9. Objectives of television viewing:

S.L	Objective of viewing Television	18- 25yrs	26-35yrs	36yrs above	Total
1	To derive entertainment	12	10	13	35
2	To gain Knowledge	11	12	15	38
3	To gather Information	4	3	16	23
4	To watch advertisement	2	2	2	6
5	Others (specify)	0	0	0	0

70% of the total respondents watch Television with the objective of deriving entertainment, and 76% of the respondents watch Television to gain knowledge. 46% of the respondents watch Television for Information related purposes, and 12% do not skip the advertisements during their favourite programmes.

Again, 42% of the respondents give first preference to News and Information related programmes, 34% of the respondents give second preference to serials and entertainment, 22% of the respondents give third preference to Educational and Health related programmes, 2% of the respondents give fourth preference to Sports, and Business related programmes. News and information related programmes are given more preference compared

to other programmes. Among 42% of the population, 26% of the woman belongs to the age group (36 yrs & above).

9. T.V. is useful in improving the quality of life

Table 9

Age	To great extent	To some extent	Not at all
18-25yrs	2	11	0
26-35yrs	2	12	0
36yrs above	17	5	1
Total	9	40	1

The age group (36 yrs & above) responded high in compared to other age groups.

10. Television is the most effective medium of mass media:

Table 10

Respondents	Yes	No
50	50	0

100% said Television is the most effective medium of mass media.

11. Television brings awareness:

Table 11

Respondents	Yes	No
50	50	0

100% of the respondents think that watching Television brings awareness.

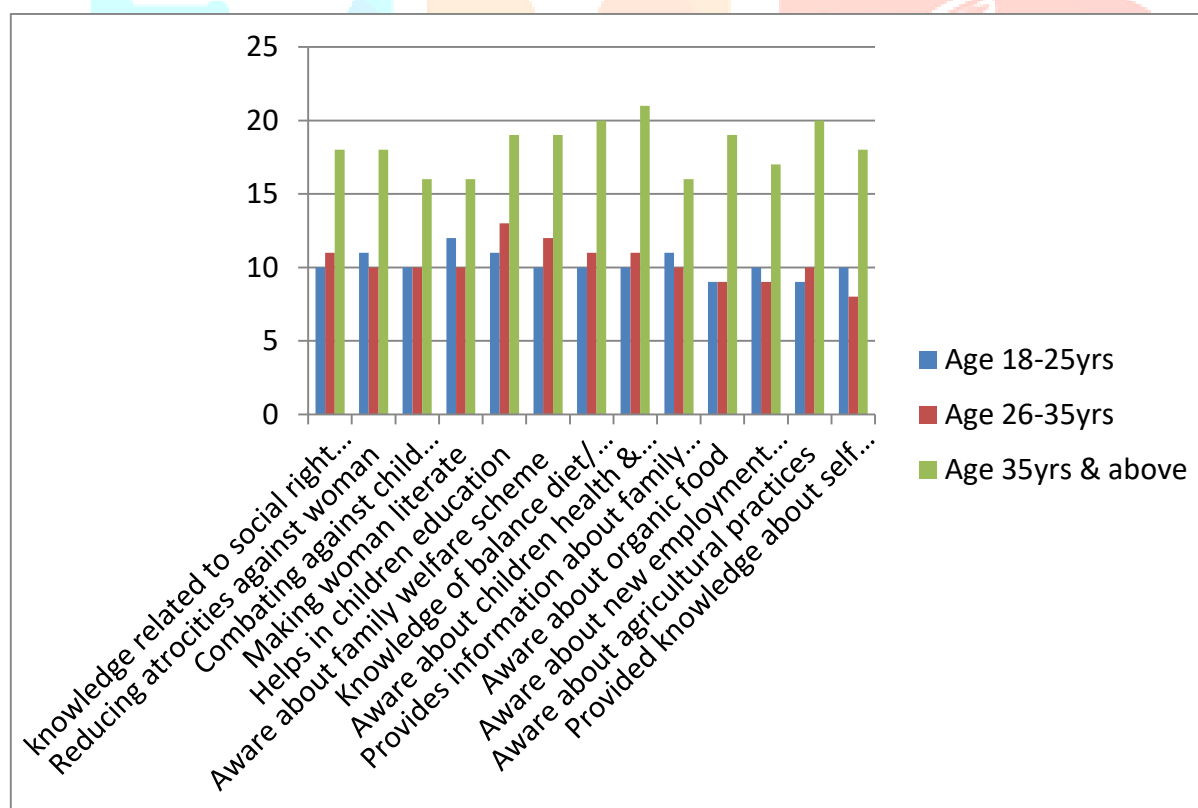
12. Television network:

Dish T.V.	Airtel dish TV	Videocon d2h	Tata sky	Others
22	17	0	11	0

Among fifty respondents, twenty-two respondents use dish T.V., i.e. 44% of the total population; seventeen respondents use Airtel Dish T.V., i.e. 34% of the total population; eleven respondents use Tata Sky, i.e. 22% of the total population. None use Videocon D2h Services or other services. Compared to all the services, the respondents highly use Dish T.V. service.

13. Development activities of the rural women((only the respondent's high frequency is shown))

Table 13



From Table 13, we can assume that Television has a great significance towards the development of rural women. In enhancing knowledge related to social rights, every age group mentioned above has a high response rate. T.V. plays a vital role in the lives of women, in letting them know about social rights like rights of property, human rights, prevailing gender discrimination, making active participation, saying no to the dowry system, and disparity in wages. Mostly, from the television soaps, they came to know on what grounds women are discriminated against, and Television made them aware of it. Males are paid more than women workers, and after knowing it through different sources and also from Television, women are becoming conscious of demanding equal wages as men. By watching daily soaps like "Aaina" and "Junaki kareng" and discussion programmes like "Abhimat" etc., the mindset of the rural woman also has changed for the greater good. There is a huge social development among rural women.

Again, in combating child marriages/ early marriages, they too agreed that there is a huge development from the content of watching Television. It is seen that early marriages are growing lesser day by day, and most rural girls are sent to schools to pursue their education and girls are sent for higher studies to do something valuable in their life so that they can be responsible citizens of society. The age group 18-25 yrs is an example in this context. Among 18-25 yrs most of them are college going students. They are aware of the T.V. programmes such as "Nari tumi ananya", "Madhurima", & different UNICEF advertisements which raise awareness in combating early marriages. These programmes are mostly discussed among the village's students and women. These programmes have a huge impact on them which helps them move forward toward development.

Talk shows also have played a huge role in motivating rural women. On being asked how Television is liberating them, they replied that the different talk shows with specialists, educationists, discussions shows, and programmes like "Kotha Barta", "Bisor Ajob Khobor", "The Burning Topic" all these push the rural woman think critically over a subject. Some of the content of daily soaps and chats show the benefits of sending children to school and educating them. Discussion shows with experts, news helps rural women impart knowledge and inform regarding children's education. Hence, the number of children admitting to school is increasing at the place. The programmes like KBC, and reality shows, also help in seeking knowledge.

In making aware of family welfare schemes, providing information about family planning (e.g., using contraceptive pills and condoms), and information about children's health and the importance of breastfeeding,

Television has taken a great step in highlighting the importance of birth control & keeping a gap of 3yrs between the children, how adopting family planning has an effective impact on stabilizing the financial condition as well as for better health of the mother and children. The rural woman gets direction and first-hand information from the Television, and to acquire more detailed information, they consult the Health care centres and Asha workers. Moreover, according to the rural woman, various government schemes like “Maajoni”, and “Mamoni”, were introduced to them through Television. Unsurprisingly, women are aware of birth control pills and condoms. Moreover, in rural areas, childbirth in every house is lessening due to increased knowledge about the consciousness of family planning. Therefore, Television has a major impact on the rural woman in influencing and informing and has created a strong motivation in family planning.

Again, in making the rural woman aware of organic farming and New agricultural practices, poultry, and fertilizers, Television can be claimed to be one of the effective media in this context. Women are engaging in organic farming, dairy farming, etc., are increasing daily. In this regard, Television is diffusing scientific knowledge to the masses. As a result, it has enlightened the rural woman regarding various techniques in farming and new practices and introduced the rural woman to organic farming, creating awareness of healthy eating habits and making organic food accessible. Through various Krishi programmes, the rural farmers are guided, and information is delivered on vital new technologies to farmers. Through various programmes and talk shows of various agricultural scientists & researchers and from the various inspiring story of the farmers, the rural woman is developing a lot regarding new practices and organic farming. It is observed that various homemakers in rural areas have started their businesses doing organic farming, and they in order to acquire more knowledge regarding their farming engage in the phone in programmes of the Television talking to the experts on their problem and in acquiring more detailed knowledge. Women are seen doing organic farming, and more women organic entrepreneurs are mushrooming in the rural areas, which has set an inspiring example for other women. So, Television has a huge impact on introducing the platform of organic farming and business.

Again, Television has left no stone unturned, helping to create economic empowerment of women, increase their self-esteem and self-confidence, and growing leadership quality. Through television programmes and advertisements, rural women learn about implementing different women's self-help groups, which helps uplift the economic condition. They learned about the existence of self-help groups like NABARD, the service of

the Gramin Vikash Bank, microfinance, and various schemes in SBI, which provide government subsidies and loans at low interest, helping them to acquire productive assets. Moreover, now, more and more women are inclined to self-help groups, and most women know the benefit of the bank, so they open savings accounts and register themselves as a member of the group, making a small contribution and that little savings prosperity in their life. The rural women, i.e., the self-help group members, attend weekly group meetings, which help them keep updated regarding the new schemes and utilization of such schemes. SHG plays a major impact in reducing poverty and enhancing the quality of life. Thus, these are some of the areas where Television has helped rural woman bring development and boost empowerment.

The study reveals that most female respondents watch Television to gain knowledge. Television for rural women is a source through which they enrich themselves with new ideas and information, and it has undergone a great transformation in their lives. Furthermore, women are more likely to depend on and prefer Television for entertainment, edutainment, and for seeking information; they find Television easy to access than other mass media by both literate and illiterate women. The visual presentation helps the women to disseminate the information presented simply and easily. T.V. plays a vital role in women's lives, in letting them know about social rights like property rights, strengthening family relationships, human rights, prevailing gender discrimination, making active participants, saying no to the dowry system, and the disparity in wages. Mostly, from the television soaps, they came to know on what grounds women are discriminated against, and Television made them aware of it.

Conclusion

Television has a great impact on the development of women in every aspect. Rural women consider Television an important source of awareness among them. It can be considered as an ideal medium to convey information to the illiterate as well as the literate and can improve the life of the rural woman.

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