

ROLE OF TELEVISION AS A MASS MEDIUM

Introduction

- ⦿ Amongst all the mass media today, television attracts the largest number of viewers. Its audience is greater in size than any of the other media audiences. This is because television is able to attract the audiences of all age groups, literate and illiterate and of all the strata of the society.
- ⦿ There is no doubt about the fact that the technology has given us a major tool in television. It is a very powerful persuasive mass communication medium. How and why we make use of this tool will determine the effectiveness of this tool to enhance the development process.

- In the 1950s, the Philips company was one of the driving forces behind the introduction of television in the Netherlands. In advertising campaigns, the Eindhoven-based company praised the new medium as a phenomenon that did not pose a threat to the traditional family but would rather strengthen it. The advertisements often showed a happy and harmonious family watching the screen that was bringing the world into their living room.

Television in India

- ◉ In India, from the beginning i.e. 1989, television has been used more for education and information purposes than for entertainment. It has performed different functions as compared to the television in west.
- ◉ Even today, though commercials have entered Indian television in a big way, it's basic purpose has not changed. It continues to perform it's function of national integration and development.
- ◉ Dr. Rajendra Prasad, while inaugurating India's Television Service on September 15, 1959, hoped that television would go a long way in broadening the popular outlook in line with scientific thinking.

- ① Television has been able to influence the people living in remote areas of our country as its outreach has covered the remotest villages and tribal pockets. It is ushering information explosion.
- ① The growth in television both in technology and reach in the last three decades has been phenomenal. It was basically conceived as a mass medium and a mass educator for its large population scattered in remote and culturally diverse areas.
- ① It is supposed to disseminate the message of development and modernization to create awareness for generating public participation. It is expected to support government plans and programmes for bringing about social and economic change and to protect national security as well as advance the cause of national integration.



- ① Television, being an audio-visual medium, brings us into contact with events in an exciting and clarifying way. For example, a live telecast of a national event such as celebration of golden jubilee year of independence, or launching of a satellite, offers meaning to the events that no amount of reading or still pictures or even films could match.
- ① However, this incomparable quality of reality and immediacy is not found in all television programmes, especially those programmes which are prepared specifically for education purposes.
- ① Television is considered as a mirror of a nation's personality. It can recall the past, dwell upon the present and peep into the future of a society. This role of television is all the more relevant to a country like India, having continental dimensions and innumerable diversities.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TELEVISION AS A MEDIUM

MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF TELEVISION

- AUDIO VISUAL MEDIUM
- DOMESTIC & INTIMATE MEDIUM
- LIVE MEDIUM
- MASS MEDIUM
- TRANSITORY IN NATURE
- EXPENSIVE MEDIUM.



Radio has sound, television content includes both sound and visuals.

This audio visual character of television makes it a magic medium which allows us to watch the world from our drawing rooms.

You might remember how exactly Sachin hit a sixer in a crucial match. For most of us, “seeing is believing”. This powerful visual nature helps television to create vivid impressions in our minds which in turn leads to emotional involvement. The audio visual quality also makes television images more memorable.



To watch television, you need not leave your drawing room. No need of going to the movie theatre or buying tickets. You can watch television in the comfort of your home with your family. This is why television is generally regarded as a domestic medium. It provides entertainment and information right inside our homes and has become an integral part of our everyday lives. It can actually pattern our daily activities.

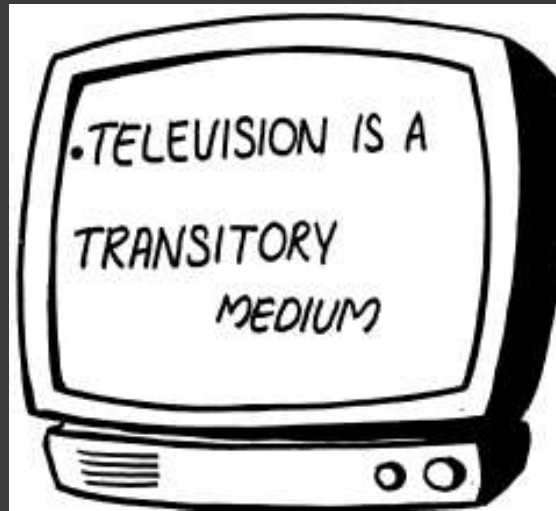
Does your family make it a point to watch their favourite serial at a particular time and adjust dinner timings accordingly? This domestic nature of television influences the content also. Have you noticed that a newspaper report has an impersonal tone, whereas the television anchor addresses you, the viewer? The domestic nature of television makes it an intimate medium. This makes the viewers experience a sense of closeness to the anchors of a show or with the characters in a serial.



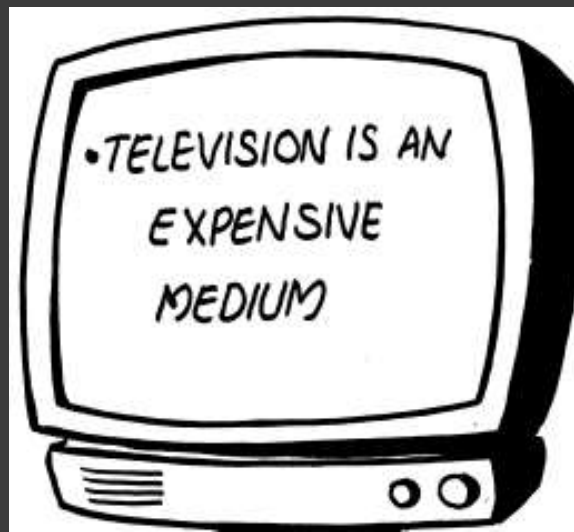
What will you do if you hear that there is a bomb blast in a neighbouring city? You may switch on your television set for more information. This is because the live nature of television allows it to transmit visuals and information almost instantly. So, another important characteristic of television is that it is capable of being a live medium. The visuals of an earthquake in Indonesia can reach your television set in almost no time. This capacity of the medium makes it ideal for transmitting live visuals of news and sports events. If you are watching a football match in a television channel, you can almost instantly see the goal hit by your favourite team. On the other hand, you can read about the football match only in the next day's newspaper. Television allows you to witness events which happen thousands of miles away.



All of us know that there are a large number of people who cannot read or write. Such people may not be able to read a newspaper, but they can watch television. Any one with a television receiver can access the information shown on television. This makes it an ideal medium to transmit messages to a large audience. In a country like ours, with a huge illiterate population, this characteristic of television makes it an ideal instrument for transmitting social messages. Television also has a very wide output, range and reach. It is truly a mass medium.



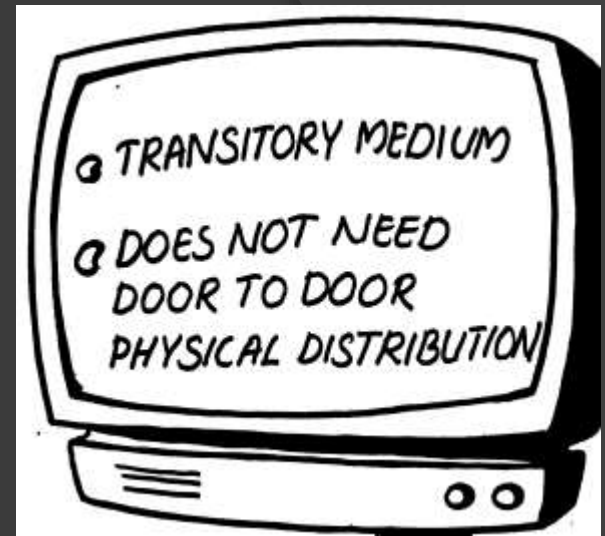
Do you read your newspaper every morning? What if you did not get time in the morning? You can always read it later. But, what if you miss an episode of your favourite television serial? You will have to be satisfied with some one telling you the story unless you had arranged a recording of the programme. Due to the large output and lack of permanence, television programmes are not easy to be recorded by viewers. It may be practically impossible to record every programme which appears on your television. Therefore, television is generally identified as a transitory medium.



Have you ever visited a television station? You will be amazed at the amount of machinery and expertise needed to run a television station. Have you or your friends ever tried to bring out a hand written magazine? You can write articles and stories and draw your own pictures. All you need will be paper, pen, drawing instruments and time. However, a television programme can never be made this easily. It requires lots of money, machinery and experienced people. Broadcast media in general and television in particular involves complex technology and organization. You will need crores of rupees to start a television station.

TELEVISION AND OTHER MEDIUMS OF MASS COMMUNICATION

NEWSPAPER



How do you get your daily newspaper? Your newspaper boy delivers it to your doorstep, right? Otherwise you will have to go to a shop and buy the newspaper. In other words, print medium needs physical distribution of its limited products. If there is too much demand, the newspaper stand can run out of newspapers. Compare this with television. Any one with a television set can have access to it. Too many people tuning in to a particular programme does not affect its availability.

On the other hand, we have already learnt that television is a transitory medium. Contrast it with the comparative “permanence” of print. You can easily make cuttings out of your favourite articles from your newspaper. Contrast it with recording your favourite television news for a month.. Which will be easier to do?

1995-2000
NEWS (Sun)
WED 1995



RELATIVELY
PERMANENT
IN NATURE

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NEEDS DOOR TO DOOR
PHYSICAL
DISTRIBUTION

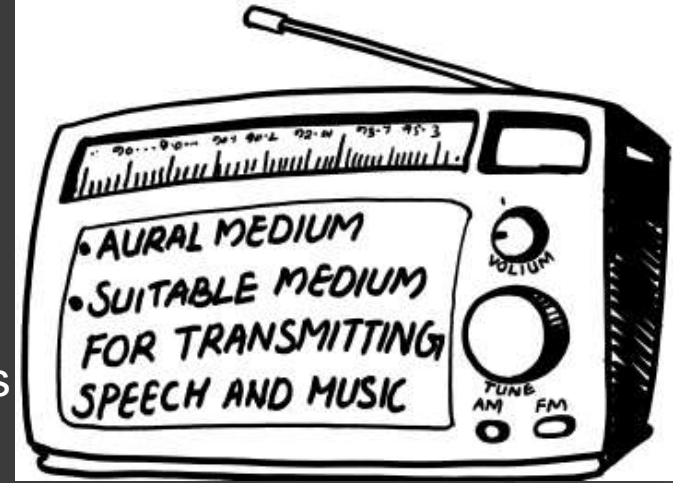


RADIO

Radio is an aural medium where as print relies just on visual content. The tremendous success of television as a mass medium has its roots in its ability to incorporate both visual and aural content. It combines compelling visuals with the personal immediacy of radio. This audio visual character gives it great power in conveying realism and this keeps the viewer emotionally involved.

Do you own a television set as well as a radio? What kind of programmes do you listen to in your radio set? Does your favourite radio channel broadcast more music oriented programmes? This is because the aural nature of radio makes it an excellent medium for transmitting music and speech.

Television, on the other hand is a better medium for conveying documentary information. Would you prefer watching news on television or listening to it on radio? The visual content of television news makes it more appealing than radio news. This is because radio cannot outsmart television in providing the experience of physical reality. Imagine watching a tennis match between Sania Mirza and Venus Williams on your TV set. Wouldn't it convey a more "real" experience of the match than hearing a radio commentary?





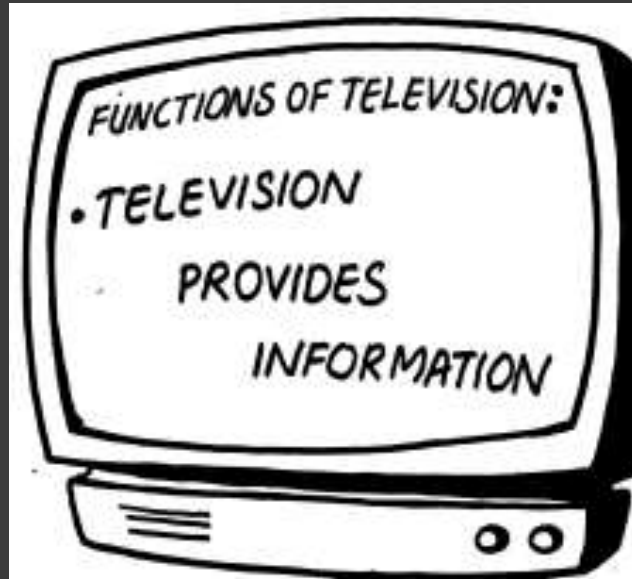
You can listen to radio while doing your household work. You can listen and drive or shave while hearing the news. However, watching television demands more undivided attention. You can play your radio in the living room and hear it from the kitchen. However, if you try to do the same with television, you are sure to miss most of the action. Many people keep their radios switched on in the background while they go about with their daily activities. This trait of radio has helped it to survive the onslaught of television. Radio stations have realized this advantage and have included more musical content in their programming.

NEW MEDIA



Internet or new media has opened a whole new world of communication. What do you do when you find a particular television programme boring? You might change the channel. Or you might write a letter to the television channel about the programme. In both the cases, the feedback is delayed. There is no mechanism which allows the producer of the programme to find out whether all the viewers liked the programme or not. Thus, another trait of television is delayed feedback. New media on the other hand is an interactive medium. It allows you to instantly register your comments about its contents. It allows you to even create your own content. The lesson on new media will give you more details about how to do this. While watching a television programme, you are more or less an inactive spectator. This is definitely not the case with new media.

FUNCTIONS OF TELEVISION



Do you watch the programmes aired on channels like National Geographic? They give you a whole lot of information about a variety of topics ranging from the life of turtles to the scientific facts about volcanoes. Similarly, a news channel gives you information about events ranging from the local football match to the war in Iraq. Thus providing information is one of the main functions of television.



Why do you watch television? Is there any one major reason? Many of us watch television to relax or to be entertained. Thus providing entertainment is one of the major functions of television. As a result serials, films or music based programmes are among the most popular television programmes. Television provides different kinds of programmes for different sections. Your brother might watch a football match while your sister may be more interested in a quiz contest.

Television is a source of Education

Do you watch the programmes of the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) aired on Gyan Darshan? Do they help you to understand your lessons better? Gyan Darshan is an excellent example of how television is used for educational purposes. Because of its visual nature, television can be an excellent source of instruction. A lesson about France can be made all the more exciting through a television programme on the country which can show you the sights and sounds of Paris. Thus, television can be an excellent educational tool.

Television can be used:

- to demonstrate processes or physical skills
- to show movement
- for those lacking reading skills
- to make distance learning more personalized
- to make teaching and learning more attractive and dynamic
- it is primarily a one-way communication medium
- both production and transmission of programmes are costly
- the production process is very lengthy

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