

Effects of cartoon characters on child communication, behaviour and habits: Analysis of Effects of Chota Bheem Characters on the Minds of Young Audience.

Dr. Aanchal Sehgal

Centre for Advanced Media Studies

The media, internet, mobile and television have changed the living lifestyle of children and parents. The impact of gadgets, electronic media and social media have redefined the relation between family members, children and parents.

Abstract

This article attempts to examine the influence of television as a part of entertainment among a special group of audience. It has been seen that prominent research between the relationship of television content and children has been done but only among the educational TV or their child behaviour. Through this paper we would like to draw the attention towards a very eminent aspect of cartoons and other child characters affecting child behaviour in today's world. The effort is dedicated to open the Pandora box and address the eminent questions candid and upfront.

Is ban on programming a solution of all ills afflicting the society?

Can TV programming content be restructured amidst the race of TRP's?

Do parents themselves introduce the children to TV?

Introduction

The creative revolution across the world in television created multiple variations of sight, sound and spoken word. The basic thing is who invented television: Who marked and developed this medium in order for it to succeed? J.L. Baird was the first person who recorded the mechanical television production. In 1884, Thomas Edison invented telescope. This device showed pictures and heard from different place where they were taking place. Edison's invention was first to be able to transmit lights as well as sound at same time.

The unpredictable growth of television has made it a popular social form. The antennas on the rooftop are increasing day by day all over the world and India is not an exception. Today, one can sit at home and simultaneously watch the events that are taking place even in very remote corners of the world. India's first television was all round development agenda on 15th September 1969 initially for twice a week slot for an hour each. SITE was conducted in 1975-76 and was an attempt to use sophisticated technology of satellite broadcasting for social education. In 1982, television went colour. Soon there was host of foreign channels beaming their content in India. With the new economic reforms underway the Indian economy adopted the principles of liberalisation, privatization and globalization. The inflow of programmes with varied themes, stories and presentation dealt with issues sometimes completely alien to our value system. The main sufferer was Doordarshan who was fighting hard for the social education and development.

The main powerful weapon of social change was television which is an electronic magic carpet, the 20th century's creation of the technological revolution, the great instrument of persuasion and the most powerful weapon of social change. The television is mass mediated. It cut across geographic, demographic and psychographic classification to reach an anonymous heterogeneous mass. The change in the century brought specialization of TV content. Post millennium Indian witnessed a huge amount of television channels catering to specific sets of audiences. The aim was to construct the programmes on specialized content exclusively for specific audiences. The main aim was to construct for specialized content exclusive for a certain class of viewers. Viewers were segmented on basis of age, sex, occupation, language, lifestyle and interests. Every television network offered a bouquet of channels on different genres of programming from education, information, current affair events and entertainment. Amongst all the genres entertainment is the undeniable leader. Different programme format like daily soaps, game shows, sitcoms, movies and animated strips are telecasted to cater the ever increasing audience base and their demands. For different section of people programme are made according to the target audience. Television content can be attributed to commercialization of the media. With more than 100 channels, it is necessary to target specific need or an urge to stay ahead in race. It is indeed a battle to surge ahead of the rivals and maximize the market opportunities. The changing trend of idiot box stands testimony to it.

As concerns about the cultural impact of television programmes grow, the sociologists express serious reservations on the effect of television on children in India. Children in family are most affected to the content of television transmission. They are fragile. At the most important period of the life, the formative years are under threat. The curiosity of learning from different sources among children is at a high level. With the parent child relationship undergoing a visible change, sources of information and entertainment are changing. Television content has become the primary source to meet the curiosity of audiences.

Television era and audience:

Television is creating a young lobby of audience. From all media sources television is wooing the future consumers with a glut of programming content. There are specific channels for children and among them Cartoon Network, Nick, Pogo, Hungama are the popular ones. Television has found the most loyal consumers i.e. children. The use of children in product promotion, role played by them in consumer decision making and dedicated brands for children is exposed to

Television content for mass consumption

TV programmes designed especially for children which include cartoon series, Quiz programmes, game shows etc. Television for all: the programming content which is broad based meant for general mass consumption.

For example: Music or film based programmes, sitcoms, reality shows and daily soaps.

The best programme for children is which include information, entertainment and education. To increase the infotainment value of a programme, some commonly used devices are:

1. Action and Drama: Fast paced action helps in keeping the young audience targeted to the screen. Music is one of the elements which attracts their attention. It is also the effective aid of memory; children are generally able to memorize the concepts
2. Humour: depending on the target age group, different forms of humour can be incorporated into programmes including slapstick, verbal humour etc.
3. Use of live characters:
4. Visual variety: variations in visual and verbal content as well as pace stimulate young minds.

5. Repetitive messaging: this ensures that the message is well assimilated and recalled
6. Indirect instruction: children can acquire desirable attitude and habits through processes of modelling and imitation by emphasizing with the protagonist on screen.
7. Use of child characters: emphasize more with characters from own age group. Stories revolving around children like themselves are their favourite.
8. Puppets: Puppetry is one of the most fascinating characters for children.

Animation: There are international lobbies operative aggressively to propel upon animation serials for children. That is how today cartoons have become synonymous for children's TV. Most of the serials are produced after so much of research. But not for general knowledge aspects, but for capturing the attention of children again and again. Perception differ as to whether there should be the regulation of Television content available to a young viewer differ with the perception of parents in screening the exposure of media message. In order to study the details of the impact the need of the time is to find the real status.

A study was conducted to analyse the impact of animated series on young minds.

Today children see hundreds of animated characters and their behaviour through cartoon programs.

Content of the programme

Cartoons always remain one of the best ways to entertainment and amusement for children. Children spend most of the time in watching their favourite cartoons. Television brings their dream world in to the magic screen.

Making a bond with children by telling stories has been practiced from centuries. Through moral stories, we can cultivate the positive vibes in children. Today, this place is covered by television as it educate children in many aspects and they learn lot of things from this box. these days watching television is not only an entertainment, rather it reflects the socio- cultural phenomenon of the society.

Who is chota bheem ?

'Chota Bheem' is a cartoon aired in POGO channel. Chota bheem is a popular cartoon character nowadays among the Indian kids. Chota bheem is a phenomenon for of today's children. Some consider Bheem as a role model. It is a mythological character. However, the cartoon character chota bheem has no similarity with the legendry character Bheem, only except his strength. Chota bheem always respect elders and is a brave character that is never afraid of any bad situation.

Why Chota Bheem ?

The animated strip called for attention because of the immense popularity of the character. My assumption found support in the newspaper article dedicated to the rising viewership of programmes with special reference to cartoon characters.

Where does the Chota Bheem Reach ?

Telecasted nationwide chota bheem is on the mind of every young viewer in the cities and urban towns. At present the cartoon strip finding more support in the urban middle class. Children with the lower middle income growth increasingly getting hooked to it. The study is limited to a sample size of 60 urban middle class children in New Delhi.

When is it telecasted?

It was first aired in 2008 on POGO TV with 277 episodes by Green Gold Animations.

How is it telecasted?

It is aired through satellite communication worldwide. The series is run, dubbed in national languages at different channels in different countries.

Objective of the study

The main objective of the study is to find the role played by TV programming on child behaviour. It attempts to explore the effects of popular animated series on the mannerisms, communication and the TV viewing habits of the children. The study aim to highlight the transformation in a child after watching the programme in short term.

Hypothesis

It has affected the language of the young kids

It has made children more aggressive

Methodology

For the purpose of the study a sample of 0 children in the age group of 5-8 years was selected through non probability sampling. The respondents were limited to Patiala city because of wide reach of the television programme in the region. For data collection survey research method is used. The questionnaire is used for the study and it was distributed among parents of children to secure the requisite information. These respondents responded to open, closed questions on influence of chota bheem on child behaviour.

Key findings:

1. 99% responded that their child watches the programme. 80% watch television for 1-3 hours, 5% are continuous TV viewers and 10% watch TV less than one hour. 99% respondents watch chotta bheem. In addition to it, 90% parents said that their children watch the programme regularly.
2. 54% respondents were aware of the characters language, action and behaviour
3. There was a strong perception of the character in the minds of the parents. 62% feel him rude and a significant 20% perceives him as a child attracted more towards the characters. 3% believe that it is just another cartoon character with no negative persona.
4. 59% respondents said it is not easy to drag the child away when he/ she is watching the programme.
5. 2/3rd parents responded that child imitates the character of chota bheem. 75% believe that their child uses idioms and phrases which are used in the series.72% believe that their language became like some of the characters of chota bheem which are fascinated to their child. Whopping 85% respondents say that their children introduce themselves as the lead character in front of all. 82% believe that their child sometime behave rude and show impudent behaviour.
6. Apart from language and conduct, 85% respondents say that their child imitates the characters of chota bheem
7. 30% feel that they use foul language to cartoon viewing. 20% parents associated chota bheem with moody behaviour of the child, 18% with discipline and 15% with decrease in

- willingness to spend time with the parents. Importantly, 63% parents said they have found all these characteristics in their child ever since he/ she started watching chota bheem
8. Parental regulation in questionnaire shows that 77% parents have not applied force to stop the child from watching the series, whereas 91% ban on the cartoon strip.

Discussion of the results

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis 1

It has affected the language of the young kids

Analysis 1 : Data analysis indicates that maximum number of parents feel that exposure to chota bheem has made changes in the behaviour pattern of children. 34% parents received complaints of their children from school and other places of the bad and aggressive behaviour of their child whereas 25% received such complaints from elders and grandparents

Analysis 2: Some parents believe that due to the continuous exposure of chota bheem their children do not obey or listen to them.

Almost all parents believe that their child imitate the character and facial expressions of the cartoon and make the similar excuses and behave same way the characters in the chota bheem are shown.

Hence, both the hypothesis proved to be true.

Conclusion: the research study was conducted to study the relationship between watching animated series on TV and child behaviour. Results suggest that popular animated programmes are affecting the children adversely. Television exposure is leading to inculcation of behavioural changes not acceptable to the family and society. Most parents are worried about the imitation of the character and the habits which are extremely affecting the behaviour patterns of the child. Children have started twisting the idioms and phrases by emulating the character. The research study highlights the pervasive presence and questionable role of television in the formative years of a human being. Parents are finding it increasingly difficult to engage children into more creative and fruitful activities as the children are hooked to the serial. Both hypotheses prove true. The emphasis is on observing the more visible and short term changes in the behaviour of children exposed to particular TV programme format but it can also serve a guideline for long term effects in parent child relationship.

The future of television as a medium and an industry evokes a mixed response. If one side, it reinforces the expanding spread of the television net signalling big bucks and more commercial airtime, it also rises alarm vis a vis monstrous changes in a social fabric of the country. Television has become a member of the family participating in all important events and decision of human life. No one is indifferent from the charisma of the idiot box and especially in age group of 4- 18 years. Ideally, television for children provides an opportunity to expose the children to infotainment but the real paints a different picture. Influence of television content is irresponsible. Child behaviour is now under scrutiny and the role of TV cannot be ignored. The content affect the thought process of children and guide them to behave in a particular manner through the effect of the content. Family is the worst affected.

In the previous generation children were spoken and heard. But today, the kids have forsaken the controlling world of the parents. Even the youngest among them wants a representation. They aspire to be independent and important. Children in the age group of 3-10 are becoming strong headed and do not

know what is right or wrong for them. Mass media cannot deny its role in cultivation of 'I am right' and 'I know the best' attitude amongst the children and teenagers alike. Many children imitate or mimic the character, sing an advertising jingle. What is shown on TV carries more weight than the voices of the parents. Good, bad or ugly media is intrinsic to our lives so the solution is not to administer a complete ban on the use of television by the children but to be discerning in its use. The negative impact of media is the need for a new age parent. The need of the time is the infotainment and the tuning among parents and media to create more effective programmes for the benefit of the children as well as mass media.

Bibliography and References

Dr Raobhaskara N, Whitner Children's television in India

Gupta Manjula, Television and child development

MC Dougall J. And David Chantrey : The making of tomorrow's consumer or research analysis

Program " chotta bheem" – A content Analysis Global journal

Wildgen (2004), Environmental influences on food choice, physical activity and energy balance. Psychology and Behaviour. 86 (5)

