

Television Programme Preferences: Viewing Choices of Rural Women in Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Rural women make a conscious choice and watch certain television programmes. They prefer certain type of television genres over the others. This study tries to find out the television programme viewing choices of rural women in Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu. This study is based on the findings of aUGC- UPE funded project. A survey method was adopted for the study. Findings reveal that rural women's viewing choices are inclined more towards entertainment programmes.

Keywords: Television programme preferences, viewing choices, rural women, Villupuram district, Tamil Nadu

Introduction

In rural areas everyone owns a television set and a large number of people are attracted to television because of its programmes. Television programmes are educative, informative and entertaining. This makes women in rural areas spend their leisure time watching television. Television overrules other mass media with its range of characteristics. The reach of television is phenomenal. Rural women tend to watch television because of its reach. Television viewing cuts across all strata of the society. Since there is a vast choice of television programme, rural women make a conscious choice and watch certain television programmes. They prefer certain type of television genres over the others. This study tries to find out the television programme viewing choices of rural women in Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu. This study is based on the findings of aUGC- UPE funded project.

Review of Literature

Programme choice is a rational choice motivated by an expectation of need gratification. Under this perception, an individual's programmes choices should express some consistency of preference for those type of content which best gratify certain needs (McQuail, Blumer & Brown, 1972).

Studies on overall television viewing patterns have found that viewers tend to be loyal to specific channels and programmes (Webster & Washkag, 1983). Other studies have found viewers exhibit genre loyalty (Brosius, Wober & Weimann, 1992). The basic notion is that specific programme preference is a cause of programme choice. 'Channel loyalty' is defined as the tendency of programmes on the same channel that leads to viewing behavior (Bruno 1973).

Jensen and Oster (2008) have explained that with the arrival of television in the home, women and men have closer proximity in spending their time together. Women engage in television that they become dependent on television programmes. Entertainment programmes have become the important foundation in restructuring their lives. Television helps to break the sex-role differentiation of work among the viewers. Family members divide the work in order to make arrangements for everyone to watch television. Television had changed the way people related to each other for centuries. People from different economic classes, genders, and age groups are spending more time together as a result of television. The authors conclude that the introduction of cable television had improved the status of women. In addition, satellite television helped women and made them take independent decisions within the family.

Zillmann (2000a) argued from a historical viewpoint that entertainment media will inhabit an increasingly foremost role in modern life. Kubey (1986), explains that television can teach, amuse, distract and escape people from worries. Atkin (1985) reported that the number one motive for media use is for entertainment purposes.

Grable (2006) in her study explained that individuals' utility of television is centered on social interaction and life satisfaction characteristics. People are inclined to use television to get psychological enjoyment and escape from stress. This feeling of escape makes an individual to view television at times of trouble. This thought tends to build a strong affinity towards television. Therefore, they seek personal satisfaction through television viewing. Some studies suggest that 'life satisfaction' might be one of the motives of television use.

At the same time, the few who completely abstain from television risk being looked upon as strange and different people, and especially children growing up in such families may face problems among peers (Steuer&Hustedt, 2002). Winick (1988) found that life without television is often much disliked.

For instance, a diaries study by Anderson, Collins, Schmitt, and Jacobvitz (1996) found that heightened stress on a particular day resulted in longer television consumption. Stressed participants spent more time on television entertainment, such as comedy, while neglecting news and documentaries under such circumstances.

People are more likely to watch programs that match their own self-concepts in terms of content (Preston & Clair, 1994), for example, those who believe in a just world are more likely to watch crime dramas than those who do not (Gunter &Wober, 1983).

According to Uses and Gratifications theory,audience actively seek out media in a goal-directed way that provides them with the means of gratifying a wide variety of needs (Katz, Blumler&Gurevitch, 1974). Rural women in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu make a conscious choice and watch certain television programmes. They prefer certain type of television genres over the others to gratify goal-directed needs. This study tries to find out the television programme viewing choices of rural women in Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu.

Method

This study attempts to find out the television viewing motives of rural women in Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu. The participants of the study were 514 rural women from Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu. These rural women were selected from the villages in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu.

Analysis

The respondent was asked to rank the preferred TV programmes according to their choice.

Table 1 Television Programme Preferences

S. No.	Variables	Percentage	Rank
1.	News/current affairs	39%	3
2.	Serials	88%	1
3.	Movies/Film based programmes	75%	2
4.	Sports	5%	8
5.	Discussion/talk shows	26%	5
6.	Game show/reality programmes	23%	6
7.	Religious programmes	32%	4
8.	Health programmes	18%	7

The above table shows that 88% of rural women prefer watching serials, 75% of them prefer watching movies/film based programmes, 39% of rural women prefer watching news/current affairs, 32% prefer watching religious programmes, 26% of rural women prefer watching discussion/talk shows, 23% of them prefer watching game show/reality programmes, 18% of rural women prefer watching health programmes, and 5% of them watch sports.

The top three programmes that rural women prefer watching are Serials (88%), movies/film based programmes (75%) followed by news/current affairs (39%).

Television Viewing

Television Viewing was defined as the number of hours rural women spend viewing television in a day. Higher scores indicated higher television viewing. The number of hours of watching television daily, a numeric variable was collapsed into a categorical variable called TV viewing, by dividing it into three groups. Heavy Viewers (those who watch more than three hours TV), Moderate Viewers (those who watch more than one hour but less than three hours of TV), and Light Viewers (those who do not watch TV at all or watched less than one hour of TV).

A one -way analysis of variance was performed with the compound variable, television viewing, as the independent variable on the following dependent variables.

Table 2: Entertainment

S.No.	Dependent Variables	Degrees of Freedom		F	P
	Entertainment	Within	Error		
1.	I watch television, because it entertains me	2	498	9.845	.000
2.	I watch television because it's enjoyable	2	498	5.381	.002
3.	I watch television because it amuses me	2	498	8.126	.004

1. I watch television, because, it entertains me on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 9.845, p=.000$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers ($M=2.743$) said that they watch television, because it entertains them significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers ($M=2.045$).
2. I watch television because it's enjoyable on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 5.381, p=.002$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers ($M=2.574$) said that they watch TV, because it's enjoyable significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers ($M=1.963$).
3. I watch television, because it amuses me on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 8.126, p=.004$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers ($M=2.864$) said that they watch TV, because it amuses them significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers ($M=2.395$).

Table 3: Information

S.No.	Dependent Variables	Degrees of Freedom		F	P
	Information	Within	Error		
1.	I watch television, because it helps me learn things about myself and others	2	498	5.184	.002
2.	I watch television, so I can learn how to do things which I haven't done before	2	498	3.979	.001
3.	I watch television so I could learn about what could happen to me	2	498	7.657	.000

1. I watch television, because it helps me learn things about myself and others on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 5.184, p=.002$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers ($M=2.851$) said that they watch TV because it helps them learn things about themselves and others significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers ($M=2.137$).
2. I watch television, so I can learn how to do things which I haven't done before on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 3.979, p=.001$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers ($M=2.568$) said that they watch TV so that they can learn how to do things which they haven't done before significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers ($M=1.934$).
3. I watch television so I could learn about what could happen to me on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 7.657, p=.000$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers ($M=2.869$) said that they watch TV so they could learn about what could happen to them significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers ($M=1.781$).

Discussion

The study revealed that rural women prefer watching serials the most, followed by movies/film based programmes, news/current affairs, religious programmes, discussion/talk shows, game show/reality programmes, health programmes, and sports. The rural women choose to watch entertainment genre since they feel that these programmes entertains and amuses them and is enjoyable. They also watch television for information because it helps them learn things about themselves and others, they also learn how to do things which they haven't done before and they learn about what could happen to them through programmes that they watch on television.

Conclusion

Rural women make a conscious choice to watch entertainment related programmes on television. They prefer entertainment genres over other genres. This could be because television might be the only source of entertainment for these rural women. Though television offers a variety of choices to them they prefer entertainment the most. Entertainment on television is readily available at any time. They are not expected to spend money for this entertainment. It relaxes them and helps them carry on with their day to day chores in a more refreshed way.

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