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Research Paper

Role of Television Shows in the dissemination of Science.

Management

KEYWORDS : Mass Media, Science Communication, Role of Communication, Television shows.

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ABSTRACT

Science is playing an important role in contemporary society. Inspite of this fact in many countries, science popularization does not come to programming schedule very often due to both intrinsic difficulties science communication and those of the medium. A considerable gap exists between science and common knowledge.
Science Communication has been defined as " the use of appropriate skills , media , activities and dialogue to produce one or more of the following personal responses to science (the AEIOU vowel analogy) : Awareness , Enjoyment , Interest , Opinion- forming , and Understanding(Burns et al. 2003) & generally refers to media presenting science related topics to non-scientists.
It includes science exhibitions, Science Parks, Science Competitions, science journalism, science policy and science media production.
Science communication can be important not just to maintain a demand for ongoing science but it can benefit individuals with directly applicable skills and knowledge, by informing social policy, or simply by empowering the field of science.
Television is one of the powerful channels of the mass media which transmit information very fast. T.V could play an important role in dissemination of information about scientific knowledge, research findings, education, health, agricultural techniques thereby creating scientific awareness and information among the masses. This will influence development social welfare of the community.
Scientific knowledge should be disseminated to all target audiences in accessible format. So if science is proliferated through easy to understand, simple though entertaining manner, it will not remain alienated from the common masses.
This paper is designed especially to assess the role of Television Programmes in the dissemination of science.

INTRODUCTION

Television Channels are playing very important role in creating scientific awareness and in the dissemination of science. The potential of TV Channels for influencing public attitude and behavior should be acknowledged. To popularize science Television Channels tend to approach particular issues that will raise immediate public attention, laying stress on some aspects which can make headlines. But, very often, such criteria do not coincide with those that make an issue remarkable from scientific point of view.

Further more, television seem to impose another relevant limitation, since their storytelling style tends to separate them from the procedures commonly used in scientific communication, as they try to achieve its characteristic verisimilitude. Narrative structure used in television is mainly of a poetic and dramatic kind. This medium does not communicate intellectual, theoretical or technical knowledge in a detailed logically structured way. On the contrary, it tries to build interesting discourses, to be able to attract viewers' attention through practical interest and emotional appeal.

In spite of such difficulties, some examples of television programmes can be found, which succeed in establishing an effective link between scientific issues and the viewer's interest, by means of communicating science in an interesting and understandable manner. Among them Science with Brain Café on Zee Q presents very interesting Science topics in a presentable manner that it catches the eyes of the viewer's. The programme showcases a café where Science is always on the menu, it's a perfect programme where children can learn all about science concepts and theories and of course the application of these in a fun loving way.

We distinguish three different types of resources, which are labeled as narrative, dramatic and argumentation techniques. The first two categories aim to achieve expository interest, whereas the last one attempts to rationalize the discourse. Among the narrative techniques, several ways of simplification appear, ranging from establishing the story line of the film to eliminating scientific controversies. Another important narrative resource is anthropomorphism, which is often criticized by scientist and filmmakers but can be a useful instrument if employed in a careful manner. Among dramatic techniques, story building is an especially relevant device to hold the viewer's attention, as well as to create conflict and suspense.

Attempts to demystify science ought to be our priority. If science is proliferated through easy to understand, simple though entertaining manner, it will not remain alienated from the common masses. As CNBC Awaaz , ETV Urdu and Hindi Channels has a show titled "Tech Guru" & NDTV has a show titled "Gadget Guru' , both the programme introduces Gadgets in user friendly manner. There are some science video serials "Science this week" and "Vigyan Darpan" , on Lok Sabha TV , "Kahani Dharti Ki" on DD National and "Jo hai jaisa ... kyun hai vesa "? (Story of Chemistry on Lok Sabha TV) . On this pattern private TV Channels can dedicate slots for science based programmes. Documentaries on interesting themes, Biographies of acclaimed scientists ought to be made for Television viewers, apart from this News channels can have a weekly small discussion on current science issues. Once in a week a science based talk show having one anchor and one eminent scientist can be designed for different TV channels. In this show, the host will interview the scientist about his work and the recent research trends in the specific field. Acquisistion of celebrity films / documentaries which are already produced in various countries. While screening the documentaries in school, colleges, societies etc interested themes should be selected such as Food Inc by Robert Kenner. It's a very articulate series dealing with specific topics in each branch of science (like string theory in Physics).

Science Communication initiatives should investigate new forms of digital media and films to move beyond traditional popular science outlets, such as science newspaper columns, science magazines , and television programmes like "Science this week" and "Vigyan Darpan" on Lok Sabha TV. This includes finding ways to create opportunities online for incidental exposure among key audiences not actively seeking news, information, and science related content. Conceiving interesting revolving around significant developments and innovations will be an important task. Scientific organizations need to track science related media coverage (news , entertainment, etc.) to be aware of the numerous cultural contexts through which public interprets science . National Newscasts, talk radio, films, entertainment shows, Televison provide audiences with alternative messages about science topics and can be important source for dissemination of science. Journalism schools and TV News channels should develop a science beat to address the gap between the journalists covering science and those covering politics. Workshops for science reporter's and science teachers need to be organized, to teach them very interesting manner of teaching and reporting science. Seminars ought to be organized where the scientists can get a platform to interact with film and documentary makers, so that they can get correct and stimulating ideas for making films.

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Argumentation techniques are identified by means of a new approach to the same issues, on the light of classic and contemporary rhetoric. These resources are related to one of the three main elements of any communication process: the speaker, the audience and the discourse itself. Two basic dimensions are involved in the credibility of the speaker: character and competence. The viewer's attitude to the discourse can be improved if the speaker establishes an effective community of interests with the audience. Finally, within argumentation through the discourse itself, some rhetoric figures can be very useful.

MAIN GOALS OF SCIENCE BASED SHOWS ON TELEVISION CHANNELS

1) To contribute to school readiness by fostering children's intellectual skills, motivation to learn, and confidence in themselves as learners.
2) Observing people, events, and objects around us.
3) Exploring and investigating to try to answer questions and elaborating observations with the help of simple charts and drawings.
4) It encourage children to think, talk and work the way scientists do by building on preschoolers' natural curiosity about the world.
5) By watching shows on TV they can have a feel that science is all around us – we all interact with and are capable of learning about scientific concepts and discoveries.

STEPS TAKEN TO PROMOTE SCIENCE

1) Films with a message in them like "Tare Zameen Par " , "Beautiful Mind " and other theme based films with a message in them should be encouraged among children on different channels on Sundays so that they can learn science as a fun.
2) Biographies of acclaimed scientists with the information of their innovations ought to be made.
3) News Channels can have a small discussion of 10-12 minutes with 2-3 scientists regarding recent developments is the field of science.
4) Science Exhibitions at the National and state levels may be conceived and exhibited at different cities OR it may be done at local levels.
5) Science Parks museums and similar spaces will create exciting spaces for families. Every city should have science parks focussing on various themes
6) Science Competitions / Quiz Shows at National, state and local level should be organised.
7) Weekly talk show where the anchor will interview an eminent scientist about his /her work etc, new inventions, discoveries etc may also be slotted on different TV Channels.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that Mass Media (Television shows) can play a vital role in the dissemination of science but they are not fully utilized .There is a urgent need for effective Television shows /documentaries /short films/debates etc to create scientific awareness in the masses in order to improve their scientific awareness and for the Public understanding of science (PUS). Some interesting science content based shows /films have to be worked out at grass root level for creating scientific awareness and information among the masses. Public understanding of science is a major social good. Role of Mass Media in awareness of science, science content based shows is very vital. It is worth taking into account that effective popularization on television requires a special kind of discourse, which is not just a simplified scientific message but a different one, with its own characteristics, values difficulties. Documentary can be effective to popularize science, as long as filmmakers know the mechanisms and difficulties implied in the construction of a program which must be, at the same time, rigorous and interesting for the publi

Popularization is an attempt to reduce the distance standing between science and everyday knowledge. To overcome that distance it is necessary to build a new special discourse, in which scientific knowledge is subjugated to a process of transformation to the audience's way of understanding. Science, in principle, science is not located within the area of interest of most people; it has to be approached to the public's interest. Communication effectiveness achieved by some popularisers – Attenborough being an outstanding example-, leans on several techniques or resources which help in the process of making the message interesting and easy to understand. Obviously, these techniques are not the only key to communication effectiveness, but they can help in the process when they are properly used.

In their attempt to bring science to the public, popularisers constantly face the danger of distorting the truth. Nevertheless, as good popularisers prove, it is possible to reach a balance between scientific rigour and journalistic interest. One of the keys to this balance is to simplify the issues to the point where the audience will understand, without oversimplifying them. Although some scientific subjects are easier to simplify than others, the capability of the populariser plays an important role in the process.

Dramatic structures can work very well in popularizing documentaries, although they tend to avoid the multiple ramifications of scientific knowledge, in order to create a unitary artistic discourse. The reduction of scientific facts to an artistic message can easily turn science into an attractive but false discourse. However, using dramatic techniques does not necessarily mean distortion of reality. Filmmakers are free to identify elements of the world which work well in drama. And, fortunately, science is full of stories, conflicts and suspense. This search should not be pushed to the end of transforming the real elements of life, so that they can make better stories, because here is where the lack of scientific rigor begins.

The effectiveness of popularizing documentary does not only depends on its intellectual capability to communicate facts, since it is also accepted or rejected by the audience depending on the emotional values it transmits. For that reason, popularizing documentaries must use several resources which try to create a positive attitude in the audience towards the discourse. And this means that the speaker must establish an effective community of interest with the audience, a process where several rhetoric operations can be helpful.

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