

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF TELEVISION-BASED REALITY CRIME SHOWS ON THE YOUTH OF MUMBAI.

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Abstract

Reality-based crime shows, also called crime docudrama, are a hybrid form of programming which mixes drama and documentary style of presentation. Each episode re-tells a crime chronicle using actors and narration in a way that is supposed to be aimed at generating awareness about the crime in society. Since the crime-reality shows are being positioned as tools of information and awareness and becoming popular on Indian television over the recent years. With their growing popularity, it is important to study the possible impacts that they could have on youth. Using a quantitative survey method with a strategic sample gathered from youth in Mumbai, this study found that reality-based crime shows for gaining awareness and for entertainment purpose. Although crime docudrama may exert a positive impact on society such as spreading awareness and providing tips to fight crime, a significant amount of open-ended responses showed that crime shows inspire imitative crime and create fear of crime in the minds of people.

Keywords: Reality-based crime shows, crime docudrama, crime shows, television, Hindi, youth, fear.

INTRODUCTION

Television and its viewership

Television is a device for transmitting visual pix and sounds which can be reproduced on screens, essentially used to broadcast programs for enjoyment, information and education purposes.

Amongst all the mass media nowadays, television draws all the largest numbers of viewer's attention. It's the target market that is larger than any of the other media audiences. This is due to the fact TV is capable of attracting the audiences of all age groups, literate and illiterate, and of all the strata of the society.

Reality Shows

According to Collins dictionary, "A reality show is a type of television program that aims to show how ordinary people behave in everyday life, or in a situation, often created by the program makers, which are intended to represent a lifestyle."

Reality TV has transformed from radio giveaway and layman talent competition to secret cameras stunt shows to dating shows to documentary-style series. The reality TV genre now surrounds unscripted dramas, remake sagas, celebrity exposes, lifestyle-change shows, dating shows, talent spectacular, and almost any quite competition that you simply can consider.

Reality TV shows repeatedly use a host to run the show or a narrator to tell the story or set the stage of events that are about to unravel. Unlike scripted shows like sitcoms, dramas and newscasts, reality TV does not rely on writers and actors, and much of the show is organized by producers and a team of editors. Therefore, it can be very affordable programming option from a production standpoint.

Reality-based CrimeShows

Reality-based crime shows also known as crime docudrama, are a combination of programming that combines drama and documentary style of presentation together. Each episode re-narrates a crime chronicle using actors and narration in a manner supposed to be aimed at generating awareness about crime in our society.

The reality-based crime shows started as a US phenomenon but later it spread all over the world (Cavender). The crime shows based on real-life stories began from Unsolved Mysteries later it became more popular with Crime Watch and America's Most Wanted.

In India, it came into the picture with India's Most Wanted (1999) an adaptation of America's Most Wanted. India's Most Wanted to gain a huge popularity at the time because of its sensational demonstration of the real stories of crime happening in our society.

Between the years 2003 to 2006, the reality-based crime show 'Crime Patrol' aired its first season but didn't attract more attention. In the wake of four years, Crime Patrol has aired again with anchor AnoopSoni and SakshiTanwar. It began to gain popularity with the Indian audience and is still running high on TRPs. In the year 2012, a new reality-based crime show came to fright people; this show is an adaptation on Crime Patrol known as 'Savdhaan India'. After the completion of first season, it did a comeback with a new name Savdhaan India (Fight's Back) which seems to be gaining equally good TRP with the Indian audience.

The reality-based crime shows in vogue is an extremely fascinating topic all over the world and many kinds of research have manifested a number of characteristics and in justification of their popularity by examiners of various authorities such as communication, psychology, sociology and criminology. This reality TV crime shows represents and re-enact a few real-life crime stories that arise in our society with the help of method actors and pragmatic approach. Instances like Dowry, murder, acid attack, robbery, human trafficking, family disputes, rapes, etc. These are the few cases that we reached every day on tabloids or watch on news channels or hear from someone. These shows present the reality in an entertaining manner that sketches upon the tradition of newspaper journalism and crime fiction that are not considered at news. (Fishman and Cavender, 1998).

The reality crime shows and information aimed to bring focus in society are unintentionally constructing a society this is growing worried and imprisonment in their mind. This is a scenario that leads to social distrust. In this situation, viewers accept as true with the content of the show and make a perception approximately the sector that it is a greater risk than reality. This is much like a paranoiac stage wherein someone lives in an illusionary circumstance and behaves as they're actually for them. (Swati)

Overall, the impact of looking at crime-related programming impacted students' perceptions of forensic evidence incidence and fear of victimization, which mirrors previous research. When controlling for other unbiased variables, it appeared that crime-related television viewing did not affect students' belief of police, perceptions of clearance rates, perceptions of crime rates, or information accuracy of the criminal justice system. Total TV viewing (in general) had the strongest have an impact on students' perceptions of clearance rates, even if all other impartial variables were controlled. (Fedorek)

The overdramatized illustration and normal repetitions and insurance of Real crime testimonies by using the audiovisual medium create horror/worry of crime inside the audience. The target audience makes perception approximately a society primarily based on these reality crime shows. It leads to social distrust in which audiences are always in worry of being attacked, raped, and killed by using a recognized or unknown person. The Indian own family channels like Sony, Life Ok, repeat best the lower finances shows on all free time slots. It results in every day 3 to 4- hour repetitions of crime shows. These repetitions pressure the target audience to cultivate the statistics accordingly. It constructs misconceptions in viewers in which they trust that society is erupting in crime. Hence, the Reality Crime Shows from this point of view stands as a hassle in society.

Reality Crime Shows in Hindi GEC

If an individual were to look at the entire scenario with reference to television shows in our country, it is evident that crime shows to have gathered a lot of eyeballs these days. The few crime shows listed are 'Shaitan' on Colours TV, 'Savdhaan India' on Life Ok, 'Crime Patrol' on Sony TV and 'Gumrah' on Channel V. Up until not long ago crime came under province of new, channels but lately, Hindi GEC has embraced the trend to gain more TRPs. It seems to be creating clatter for the Indian viewers can't seem to get enough of it and the TRP says it all.

The fragile line between reality and drama seems to have been fade by the presentation of crime shows on GEC. In spite of these crime shows depicting the real occurrence, the substantiation frequently seems excessive and gory. In spite of real ringing reasoning words by the anchors, the viewers are frequently compelled to think otherwise. More frequently they don't seem to provide a solution but a brand new issues that is a notion of a perfect crime learned from these shows.

Crime Patrol – Show with the highest TRP in Crime

Crime Patrol is one of the oldest and the longest-running reality crime show on Indian television. It deals with various crime occurrences that happen in our society like abducting, murder, dowry, rape, robbery and various other societal issues. The top active audiences for Crime Patrol is around 10, 00,000. There are various other reality crime shows in a similar genre. Crime Patrol deals with real-life incidents that happened with real people. The primary aim of this show is to spread awareness in the society. The senior anchor of the show, AnoopSoni, who narrates the story that is later played dramatically in front of us. Crime Patrol not only shows the real stories they also try to help the victim and punish the real culprit. One major controversy was raised when this show decided to feature the Delhi gang-rape case. Initially, it was objected to by some NGOs but later it was featured with all the laws and orders.

Uses and Gratification Theory

The study on crime dramas and reality crime shows has been growing rapidly for three decades now. Such shows have been examined in various conditions; the most significant process includes the connection of crime dramas and reality-TV shows to the fright of crime, consistent inaccuracies that such crime shows represent, and the

consequences such shows have on its audience. This research takes a distinctive approach to the examination of reality crime show viewership by practicing the Uses and Gratification theoretical approach to regulating viewers' analysis of reality crime shows.

This technique is relevant, given the intellectual debate on 'How reality crime shows do or do not affect their audience?' (Gerbner) (Doob), (Cavender). Instead of analyzing the possible consequences of the media, this research inspects the reason 'individual watch crime dramas to better appreciate the connection between television shows and the audience who watchit.'

Uses and Gratification theory postulates that viewers use various media channels in order to satisfy certain needs and desires (A.M.Rubin). In simple terms, viewers diligently explore the specific form of media in a rational way that will give them the gratification for which they are yearning. The gratification that viewers' experience from media is both psychological and societal in nature (Blumler). Uses and Gratification theory makes a conceptual move from 'what media does to people, to what people do with the media' (A.M.Rubin).

One of the primary establishments of Uses and Gratification is that so as to elucidate the consequences of media use, motivation, and behavior of the audience must be acknowledged (A.M.Rubin). According to McQuail (1984, 1987), four crucial categories to viewer's media use are offered. They include Information (for example finding out about any relevant events), Personal Identity (for example finding build-up of personal values and models of behavior), Integration and Social Interaction (for example identifying with other people and gaining a sense of belongingness), and Entertainment (when a person wish to escape the real world, turn their mind off the problems or if they just want some leisure time). McQuail's categories are considered helpful in classifying the motivations of the audience while viewing reality crime shows.

There have been various researches that helps in examing the audience of violent media in the context of Uses and Gratification framework. For instance, Greene and Krcmar (2005), found that commotion seeking, verbal belligerent, disputatious, and instrumental androgyny were related to subject to violent films, and violent television. Likewise, Slater (2003) showed that sensation seeking was a prominent foreteller for attraction to violent television. Further, Greene and Krcmar (1999) set on that prime sensation seekers were more interested in real-world crime shows. Within the Uses and Gratification framework, these features (passing time and escapism) would be categorized under McQuail's (1987) entertainmentcategory.

Uses and Gratification continue to have noticeable appeal largely because of its applicability to a brand new research area in communication. The recent study on the internet blog use helps us to see through. The Uses and Gratification approach is reviewed as one of the most suitable theories which help to gain insight into the viewer's psychology and behavior. To the best of our information, Uses and Gratification theory has not directly been studied in the realm of watching reality crime shows, therefore giving a significant rationale for this research.

CULTIVATION THEORY

The Cultivation theory extremely noteworthy and popular approach in media-effect theories. According to this theory, substantial viewing of television helps in generating a sphere of ideas and rational thoughts which forms the perception about real through 'reality' which is build by the television entertainment channels. It often leads the viewers to form misperceptions of the realworld.

Cultivation theory established by George Gerbner and Larry Gross in their research project titled 'Cultural Indicator Project'. This cultural indicator project was directed to estimate the cultivated effect of television audiences. Gerbner discovered that there are three primary components that suffered from substantial or continuous television viewing. The very first component is 'Mean' where the viewers are diminished to the information which they consume from the television. It influences their social ties and connections. These kinds of viewers see the 'World' (which is the second component), just the way it is portrayed on television. Viewers have faith in the

television content whether they agree with it or not. The third and the last component is 'Syndrome' where shows fortify the worst fear and anxiety into the audience. Gerbner named is 'Mean World Syndrome'. This research was established during the 1980s when the television industry had taken a move with Globalization and the Marketization of entertainment content. The crime was an extremely important component for estimating the impact of television. This was the time of increasing the reality crime shows in the UK and the USA.

Cultivation theory appeared to cultivate the impact of television violence. (Spark and Sarapin 2009), conducted research on the connection between subjection to television crime shows and perception of the criminal justice system. They concluded that subjection to television crime shows is frequently associated with overestimation of the frequency of crime misperceived knowledge facts and twisted facts about the criminal justice system.

"Many people die as a result of being murdered in these types of shows, and we found the heavy TV-crime viewers estimated two and a half times more real-world deaths due to murder than non-viewers. People's perceptions also were distorted in regard to a number of other serious crimes. Heavy TV-crime viewers consistently overestimated the frequency of crime in the real world." (Sarapin, 2009)

According to Spark, it is extremely prominent to acknowledge how these crime shows affect their audience's opinions and perceptions. Spark noted that "this type of television viewing can lead to 'Mean World Syndrome'

where viewers start to think about the world as a scary place.”

This crime shows build a paranoiac society where viewers believe in the notion that the society they live in is much more dangerous as compared to reality. They overestimate the violence and victimization in society as compared to their neighbors who do not watch violence on television. It makes a paranoia (syndrome) for their audience which takes them to an illusionary world that is not real but publicized as the reality of society, which leads to creating social distrust in society.

Cultivation theory has various kinds of assumptions that study the television role, its importance, and impact in our life. The very first assumption is that it has power to shape our society to relate to the real-world. Similarly if applied to the context of Indian crime shows, it has used a technique of narrating a story that provides a message to learn and understand the circumstances.

Human beings learned through the stories with certain people who they have faith in. Television does exactly the same thing for its viewers, it narrates the story for its audience with a pleasant and emotional approach.

According to (Gerbner 1986), television’s primary function is to stabilize the cultural social patterns and cultural resistance to change. (Gerbner 1986), proclaims that television is stronger to influence social trends and individual’s perception. It’s monotonous function and common content forms the whole society in a common symbolic environment. Several numbers of studies have proved that the Cultivation theory is the most suitable to examine the effects of all kinds of impacts.

Cultivation theory appeared to study the American violent culture but now it has applied all over the world in communication, psychology, criminology, and sociology field because of its trustworthy conclusions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objectives of study are to examine the media influence on viewer’s perceptions towards crime and society, to find out the positive and negative influence of a Hindi reality crime show on youth and to understand how viewers use Hindi reality crime shows to satisfy their need for information, entertainment, personal identity, social interaction, escapism. The methodology used for this study is a mix of both Qualitative as well as Quantitative. Quantitative method focuses on objectives or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys; whereas qualitative method gives an in-depth picture and it is particularly useful for exploring how and why things have happened. The study was conducted in Mumbai with a sample size consists of 100 people between the ages of 16 –35 and of both genders (male and female).

FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

The data collected through the survey was thoroughly examined as a means to understand the impact of television-based reality crime shows on the youth of Mumbai. A total of 100 people were part of the survey. Where 79 people watch crime shows on a daily or frequent basis and the remaining 29 do not watch this reality-based crime shows at all. The survey consisted of 11 questions and 1 open-ended question.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analysis. Variables were coded to allow for a more streamlined analysis as a dearth of data was found within certain variables. The majority of the quantitative analysis incorporated standard frequency analysis to understand the impact of crime drama on its viewers.

More than 50% of the respondents who were a part of the survey belonged to the age group between 21-25 years old. And the respondents who fall under the category of this age groups were either newly Graduates or Post Graduates. The respondents were asked if they watch television-based Hindi crime shows.

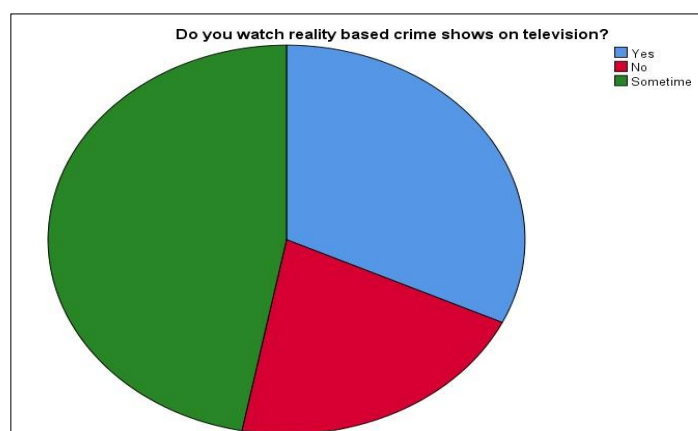


Chart1: Respondents who watch television-based reality crime shows

Out of the 100 respondents from Mumbai, 79 people watch crime shows on a frequent or daily basis, divided by the table above, 32% of the people watch this show daily and 47 people sometimes watch these shows. The remaining 21% of the respondents do not watch crime shows at all. For a better understanding, the statistical representation of the number of people watching crime shows is demonstrated in the pie chart below.

According to the survey, Crime Patrol is the most watched reality-based Hindi crime shows in India, followed by Savdhaan India and Gumrah. The Indian family channels like Sony, Life Ok, repeat only the lower budget shows on all free time slots. It results in a daily three to four hour repetitions of crime shows. These repetitions force the audience to cultivate the information accordingly.

The respondents were asked how many hours they watch the repeat telecasts of these shows. 89.9% of the people only watch these shows for 0-2 hours but there is this 10.1% of people who watch these shows for 3 or more hours.

Based on the Uses and Gratification theory, the respondents who watch this show usually watch them for awareness and general interest, and for entertainment purposes.

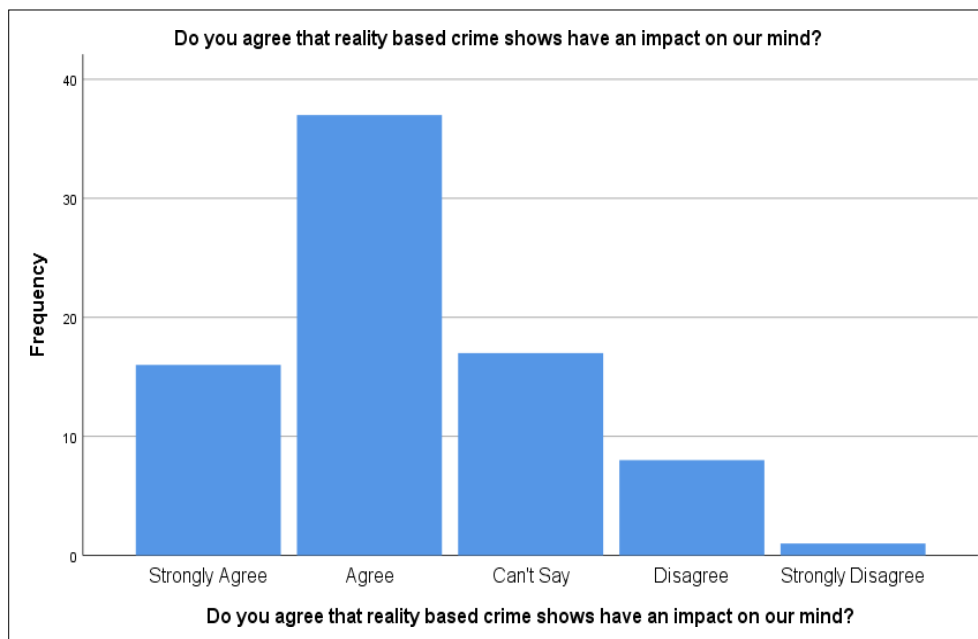


Chart 2: Impact of reality-based Hindi crime

The respondents were asked if they agree that reality-based crime shows have an impact on their minds. The respondents were asked to mark their answer on a Likert scale which ranges from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. 46.8% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that reality-based crime shows have an impact on the youth. 20.3% of the respondents agree with the statement. 21.5% of the respondents have a neuter response 'Can't Say' where they are not sure if these reality-based crime shows have an impact on them or not. 11% of people disagree with this statement.

The final question that respondents were asked was if they agree with the statement that crime shows encourage people to commit a crime. The respondents answered the question with the help of the Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. 50.6% answered this question saying that they were not sure if this crime show encourages people to commit a crime.

DISCUSSION

With the assistance of this examination, researchers need to grasp the impact this crime shows have on youth. The observer can be conscious of info if youth 'who' watch reality-based crime shows on television like Crime Patrol and Savdhaan India to be aware or simply for entertainment purposes. This observation takes a singular technique at analyzing crime drama on Hindi television to acknowledge why the youth, specifically, prefers to watch reality-based crime shows on television. This observation is targeted on uncovering the motives why those shows are even watched in the first place. The secondary objective of this has a glance at it to explore the emotions that those shows evoke at intervals the viewers(youth).

The study will help the researchers to understand the impact that these crime shows have on youth which is either positive or negative. Through this research, the researchers will understand why viewers are so inclined to watch crime shows. And will also help researchers to understand if these crime shows create fear in the mind of

their audiences.

The few limitations of this research is that it only targets people who watch crime shows in Hindi language and who are between the age group of 16 – 35 years. There are a large number of middle age and old age crowd who views this show in heavy number but they are not considered as the part of the study.

This study will help the researcher to understand or to explore the impact of Hindi Reality Crime Shows on youth. It also helps in exploring the reason why youth in particular love to watch television-based Hindi Reality Crime Shows like Crime Patrol or Savdhaan India. This research will provide us people's reaction to these crime shows, how much does the audience fear of being victimized in watching crime shows. The individual who watch television-based Hindi Reality Crime Show tend to overestimate the crime around them because of how overdramatized and gory these crime shows are portrayed to their audience.

CONCLUSION

The study proves the first speculation that says that Television-primarily based Hindi truth crime indicates have an impact on the youngsters. The respondents feared being victimized after looking at a series of crimes indicates episodes .

However, the flip side of the coin conjures a miles darker and scarier picture. Awareness could restrict itself to the expertise of how the police or judicial gadget works, what loopholes within the police procedure may be exploited, and the way the 'perfect' crime can be committed. A horrifying trajectory, however nevertheless a highly likely one – as a minimum inside the case of kids for his or her naïve minds and underdeveloped moral cognition cripples their reasoning in stressful situations and can make a contribution to increasing the wide variety of imitation of crimes. Quite a number of instances of imitative crime where teenagers and youngsters, in particular, had been inspired to take pleasure in crook methods for cloth gains.

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