CHAPTER IV
TELEVISION CONTENT

It is extremely rare that communication researchers have the opportunity to study the content of a medium, and also trace the impacts of such content. If modernisation-related impacts of the TV year are being investigated, it is necessary to know how the TV was programmed to further this goal, so desirable impacts can be optimised. For manpower planning and organisational design, it is useful to know what kinds of producers created the messages for modernisation, how, and why. This chapter provides information related to these issues.

Part of the SITE pilot-project (1975-1976), preparatory to launching a multi-purpose Indian National Satellite (INSAT, due date 1981), involved linking all the terrestrial TV stations in the nation so they all re-diffused the same programme simultaneously. To test the possibility of re-diffusion of a national programme by a low-power village transmitter, the Space Applications Centre of the Government of India’s Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) especially set up one such facility 50 kilometres from its campus at Ahmedabad in Gujarat state. A half-hour of national programming from Delhi, common to all SITE villages and cities was received in this study village every evening.

The National TV Programme

This was to consist of the following:

1. a ten-minute news bulletin;

*In addition to re-diffusion of the national programme by regional city-based transmitters in Delhi and Amritsar.
2. a collation of folk and classical culture from all parts of India;
3. a weather bulletin for farmers.

What did the National TV Programme actually present, given the context of the Internal Emergency declared in the Summer of 1975? This is in light of the fact that on June 26, all fundamental rights were suspended, and censorship of all media was imposed.

Quantitative Analysis of the National TV Programme

Table 4.1 shows topic treatment distributions over the TV year. To sum up the findings, the thirty-minute long National Programme was divided between the following areas:

1. News and Current Affairs 43% of total time
   (includes ministers', Congress Party workers' and Emergency supporters' speeches, inter-
   views on the success of the Emergency, and status reports on the implementation of the
   Prime Minister's Twenty Point Programme)
2. Culture-sharing (folk and classical song-and-
dance routines from different parts of India) 20%
3. Weather 12%
4. India Travelogue 9%
5. Miscellaneous 16%

Qualitative Description of a Typical Evening's National TV Programme

The following section outlines the contents of the National pro-
gramme on an ordinary day in the TV year.*

*November 24, 1975.
Table 4.1
TIME-DISTRIBUTION OF THE DAILY HALF-HOUR NATIONAL TV PROGRAMME BETWEEN FORMATS, TOPICS AND TARGET AUDIENCES

1. Average number of programmes per evening 3

2. Different forms of presentation (% time)
   a. Straight announcements 2
   b. Lecture/news reading 13
   c. Lecture-cum-demonstration 8
   d. Interviews 5
   e. Documentary films and news reels 52
   f. Drama 1
   g. Music-vocal/instrumental 9
   h. Music-and-dance routines 10
   i. Graphics *
   j. Puppets *
   100%

3. Time distribution between topics (% time)
   a. News and current affairs 43
   b. Folk songs and dances 21
   c. Weather 12
   d. India travelogue 9
   e. Coverage of religious events 4
   f. Handicrafts 4
   g. Biographies of leaders 3
   h. Social problems 2
   i. Family planning 1
   j. Health and nutrition *
   k. Science 1
   100%

4. Time distribution per target audience (% time)
   a. Adult villagers 88
   b. Farmers 11
   c. Women 1
   d. Children *
   100%

* Percentages rounded off to the nearest whole number.
* Less than 1%.
1.0 News (0 to 10 minutes).

1.1 Speaking at a meeting in Lucknow, the Prime Minister appealed to the people to take an active part in the development of their country.

1.2 The Congress Party President, D.K. Borooah, exhorted villagers to help implement the Prime Minister's revolutionary Twenty Point Programme.

1.3 Yesterday was the 27th anniversary of the founding of the National Cadet Corps. Celebrations were held throughout the country.

1.4 In a speech yesterday, the Union Health Minister said that the primary teacher was the key to the improvement of India's educational system.

1.5 30,000 new grain storage silos have been constructed so far as part of government's effort to increase its grain warehousing facility.

1.6 Food grain prices have been falling since the Prime Minister declared the Emergency. To meet food production targets in the Fifth Plan, government is recommending intensive cultivation per acre rather than increasing acreage under cultivation.

1.7 An exhibition of handicrafts was opened in Delhi today.

1.8 The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mr. S. S. Ray has appealed to the Judiciary to help implement the Prime Minister's Twenty Point Programme.

1.9 Punjab state is installing electric tube wells widely to help boost agricultural productivity further.
2.0 The Weather (10 to 19 minutes).

2.1 The skies are clear over Amritsar, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Orissa. A few showers are expected in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in the South.

2.2 Very cold weather is expected in Punjab, so keep bonfires lit to keep crops in the field warm.

2.3 Potato crops have been found to be diseased in some places. Use pesticides to protect your crop, and uproot and burn affected plants.

2.4 If you have not sown your late-wheat crop, you still have time to do so. And protect it with 2,4D spray. Make sure that the spray does not touch the potatoes or grain.

3.0 Santhal Folk Dance (21 to 25 minutes).

4.0 Bengali Folk Dance (26 to 30 minutes).

Writing of a context of political and ideological state intervention in educational media projects, Lenglet and McAnany state,

The mere repetition over the mass media of a plan for rural development could legitimate the state's efforts in many rural people's minds, whether this results in tangible benefits for the rural poor or not (1977).

The Twenty-Point Programme Publicity could be seen in this light.

What kinds of producers created the National TV programme for transmission every evening? Under what conditions was it produced? This Hindi-language half-hour was made in the nation's capital by the urban Delhi All India Radio-TV News Service Division in full accordance with government's mass media policy during the Emergency. A Joint Secretary
from the Prime Minister's secretariat was present in the newsroom or in the office of the Director (News), giving directions on coverage and treatment of news. In response to questions raised by broadcasters about the credibility of such doctored news, at the All India Radio station director's meeting on September 9, 1975, Mrs. Gandhi said, "Quite honestly, I don't understand what it (credibility) means. Who has credibility."

During the TV year under study here, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting wrote to the Prime Minister (October 1975):

> The media, functioning under the close guidance of the Ministry, are continuously endeavouring to be in step with the broad sweep of the new orientation that has been imparted to every aspect of governmental functioning in the country during the post-Emergency period. In tune with the rest of the country, all media have shed their earlier approach of neutrality vis-a-vis the propagation of the political, economic and social approaches of the Central leadership and instead of confining themselves as a disinterested purveyor of dry official information, all media under the Ministry have become live organs continuously projecting the entire gamut of the Government's policies and programmes (Government of the India White Paper, 1977).

This, then, is the background against which the content of the SITE National TV Programme should be seen.

**The Gujarati Local TV Programme**

Having set up a new transmitter in Kheda District neighbouring Ahmedabad to test for rural re-diffusion of a national TV programme, it was felt that at least, a half-hour of regional programming in their own language (Gujerati) should also be presented to the viewers of the district. ISRO was responsible for this part of the daily TV transmission which was to support local initiative, and development schemes.
The programming was produced by approximately nine producers with liberal arts undergraduate degrees, a five-year diploma in film direction, and no TV experience. Born into urban middle-class homes for the most part, none of them had any rural development experience. In addition, only three of them spoke the local language in which they were directing programming.

Quantitative Analysis of the Gujerati Local TV Programme

The programme plan involved straight how-to-do-it tips on agriculture, animal husbandry, cottage industries, health, coverage of villager grievances, dramatic series dealing with problems of individual and social modernity, and, entertainment. Table 4.2 shows what the actual transmission looked like. Far from the Censors in Delhi, and close to the grassroots level, this transmission featured the following topics:

1. Entertainment 28%
2. Individual and social modernity and traditional patterns of behaviour 26%
3. Village events related to community consciousness and popular participation 10%
4. Agriculture 7%
5. Science 5%

Qualitative Description of a Typical Evening's Local TV Programme

The following section outlines the contents of the Gujerati local transmission on an unexceptional day in the TV year (September 26, 1975):

1. Dramatic serial (0 to 15 minutes). Chatur Mota is a slice-of-life series aimed at social and individual modernity. It is
Table 4.2

TIME-DISTRIBUTION OF THE GUJERATI DAILY HALF-HOUR LOCAL TV PROGRAMME BETWEEN FORMATS, TOPICS AND TARGET AUDIENCES

1. Average number of programmes per evening 3

2. Different forms of presentation (% time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Straight announcements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Lecture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Lecture-demonstration</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Interviews</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Documentary films, news reels</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Drama</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Music-vocal/instrumental</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Music-and-dance</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Graphics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Puppets</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Group discussions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Photographs/slides</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Combinations</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Time-distribution between topics (% time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Community-related village events</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Entertainment</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. India travelogue</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Biographies of leaders</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Coverage of religious events</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Handicrafts</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Social problems</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Agriculture</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Animal husbandry</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Family planning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Health and nutrition</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Science</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Emergency-related</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Time-distribution per target audience (% time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Adult villagers</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Farmers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Women</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Children</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

@Percentages rounded off to the nearest whole number.
named after a Patel elder and focuses on his conservative responses to everyday village problems. In this evening's installment, Clever Elder (Chatur Mota) is shown surrounded by his favorite gossip group. A father brings his son to Mota to resolve an argument they have been having: the son wants to involve farm labour in decision-making, and increase their wages. The father feels his son is merely squandering his father's earnings. Mota agrees with the father and tries to persuade the son. The son explains to both that labour cannot continue to be treated inhumanly, because this was done in the past. The two older men are unyielding. The son decides that he cannot work on the family property under those conditions, and that he will attempt to set up a small enterprise with the full participation of labour in decision-making.

2. **Health instruction** (15 to 23 minutes). A doctor is interviewed on the causes, symptoms, treatment, and cure of leprosy.

3. **Village events** (24 to 30 minutes) is a community-related local news in-depth series. Today's case is on the collective planning and implementation of a cleanliness drive in Sandesar village.

While the quarterly and monthly programme outlines were prepared collectively by all the producers in response to their assessment of villager's needs, and their programming interests, the actual shape of each individual programme was determined solely by the producer, with no guidelines from any authority.

**Summary**

Pulling the two very different national and local transmissions together, it seems that the villagers under study first received a Hindi half-hour of
primarily Emergency-related government publicity, folk arts, and the weather from the nation's capital, followed by a half-hour in the local language dealing predominantly with changes in traditional practices towards greater modernity. These programming foci will be related to audience composition and impacts presented in Chapter VII.