INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER 1

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Mass Media has become a very basic component of modern society, touching almost every aspect of man's daily routine. The rich diversity of formal media is a natural element of the social environment today. Walter Weiss (1975) has rightly said that mass media contributes to the carrying out of daily practices from relaxation and respite to an informed understanding of the world - to action, personal education and intellectual stimulation. Mass media can be defined as organised means of carrying different kinds of messages to a heretogeneous people.

According to Lerner (1958), it is because of mass media that a person's horizons are expanded and new incentives generated by the act of imaginatively possessing a new and possible way of life. Both Lerner (1958) and Schramm (1964) have studied the mutually interactive relationship between the growth of mass media and other characteristics of modern society, like increased economic development, literacy and a certain level of social and geographic mobility. Schramm suggests that the media serve three basic societal functions - as 'watchman', reporting on near or far off happenings only if it is relevant to a
particular society; as 'contributor' to social decisions, making available to people relevant material necessary for a social dialogue; as 'teacher', helping substantially in all types of education and training.

1.1 MEDIA USAGES

To study communication effects, knowledge about the different types of media usages is necessary. There are the 'user paced' media like pictures and sculpture, which can be perused at leisure, the features of interest being re-looked at if necessary. These are different from the 'time based' media like theatre, radio and television whose flow of images must be experienced as it takes place. Finally, there are the 'intermediate' media like the print media, records, tapes and video cassettes. While these media have a pace and sequence of their own, the perceiver is free to stop, repeat, skip and so on, pretty much at will, (Huston & Wright, 1989). Often, the behaviour of a television viewer may seem outwardly passive, but the information processing demands, especially on a young mind to keep up with the fast pace and the complex audio visual sequence are extensive and the fixed stare at the screen could mask a very active and busy mind, (Huston & Wright in Press).
1.2 MEDIA EFFECTS

Media can affect people in many ways. The very presence of the medium can create an effect regardless of the message. The intrinsic characteristics of a medium may relate to other kinds of effects and form a basis for intermedia differences in effects. If the manner in which a particular medium conveys a message is more appealing, then obviously more time will be spent with that medium.

The understanding and interpretation of the message is very important, as this is what causes emotional arousal which is one of the most potent effects. Gripping fiction and crime dramas have always been associated with this aspect of emotional arousal. But the audio-visual medium with its life-like portrayals has always borne the brunt of these criticisms.

Identification or in Lerner's (1958) words 'empathy' is a key concept in discussions of the general effects of communication. It is particularly central to those effects associated with vicarious experiences. When an individual associates himself with a particular character whether from a book or from a screen representation, there is a deep psychological participation in the events, feelings and behaviour of the character. This very often leads to
another much discussed effect, that of imitation, or atleast the desire to imitate. However, for actual imitation to take place, there has to be the right opportunity, proper motivation and the appropriate tools to carry out the act, once the viewer comes back to reality.

Media is a reinforcer more than a reformer. It is a stimulus that emphasizes existing values and opinions. A complete change of heart due to the media message alone, though not impossible is highly improbable. For this change there has to be continuous exposure to similar messages as well as motivation from outside.

No medium has had as much impact as that of the electronic, which has galvanised the very heart of communication. The sudden increase in television signals aided by the satellite revolution along with the abundance of video cassettes available today, have without doubt given the television set pride of place in the modern home.

1.3 THE ELECTRONIC REVOLUTION

The technology that produced radio gave television an early advantage. Baron Jons Jakob Berzelius of Sweden discovered the element Selenium, which led to the invention of the photo-electric cell (the electric eye) which later
In 1870 led to the early version of the Cathode Ray Tube. It was however only in the 1920s that scientists of both America and Britain working independently came upon the idea of combining electronic technology with photography and a scanning disc. Later on the iconoscope which codes the picture in the television camera and the kinescope which displays the picture in the receiver were invented. Thus technological inventions of more than a century were the basis of the all electronic television system we have today, Murphy (1977). The Indian electronic industry first started experimenting with television in 1959. The Asian Games in 1982 was the first programme the viewers saw in colour.

Cable TV, a combination of television's own technology with cable and satellite relay systems which made an appearance in the late seventies, has begun to dominate the media world today. Cable TV is also called Community Antenna Television (CATV) and broadband communication. The latter term refers to cable's unmatched ability to produce a variety of services by frequently providing additional channels due to the advantage of their superior antennae.

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Cable News Network (CNN), Asia Television Network (ATN), Music
Television, Prime Sports, Star plus and the Chinese Channel are examples of television signals now bombarding our country directly and are available to every television viewer having access to a dish antenna. And despite Doordarshan's reluctance to react, television in India will never be the same again. Most of these world services are beamed into India by STAR TV (Satellite Transmission for Asiatic Regions), the Hong Kong based television company. The households receiving these programmes are hooked onto parabola aerials, popularly known as dish antennae, which are capable of receiving television signals deflected by geo-stationary satellites which have India in their footprint. The cable television operators who transmit vernacular movies run as a parallel industry.

As an extension of television, the Video Cassette Player provides increased flexibility in terms of schedule and content choices. It also releases one from 'public' viewing that is both time and space bound (Scherer, C.W. 1989). There is almost unanimous agreement that video is inseparable from television in both companion and companionate roles. The video cassette is a very effective and utilitarian instrument of communication because of its facility in production as well as in dissemination, not to mention its extreme portability and mobility. Unlike the
celluloid film, video employs a reusable tape, has no negative/positive format and requires no darkroom processing. It has easy facilities for 'Stop', 'Hold', 'Go', 'Forward' and 'Reverse' viewing.

The joining of the computer with the telecommunications technology has blurred, if not eliminated the distinction between print and television, film and television and so forth. For example, the magazine is a message design or format whether transmitted as the traditional printed product or in an electronic format. A relevant example is the Indian fortnightly news magazine "India Today" whose electronic format is the video cassette called 'Newstrack'.

1.4 IMPACT OF TELEVISION

With this continuous flow of programmes and movies available right inside the homes, it is crucial to find out its impact, especially on growing children and adolescents. Television portrayals are considered to be one of the best representations of the present day culture, by conveying a fabric of impressions, information and knowledge about society at large. Both sight and sound combine to leave a bold imprint on the mind of the viewer. Active viewers, especially, participate vicariously with the events on the screen.
The Negative Influence

Somehow, the negative impact of this medium has been causing rising concern over the past five to six decades. First of all television has replaced a whole lot of activities with its entry into the household. The most serious charge against this medium is that it keeps people, especially children away from books, and therefore in an indirect manner encourages illiteracy as a person does not have to be literate to decode screen representations. It monopolises entertainment to a very large extent, as more and more people engage in passive viewing rather than active participation.

Due to excessive television viewing it is claimed that outdoor activities are neglected to a great extent and health is affected indirectly. In the November 1991 issue of the HEALTH magazine published in India, Dr. Kurt Gold, a paediatrician of the University of California has stated that scientists have linked children with a high level of cholesterol to excessive television viewing. He has surprisingly found that the link of high cholesterol was stronger with television viewing than with diet, obesity, inactivity and family history of heart or cholesterol problems. He explains that "TV pulls many known risk
factors together. You may end up sitting around all day, eating too much of junk food and not getting enough exercise".

Violence, aggression and what this does to the viewer is becoming a major focus of public concern. K.E. Moyer (1976) in 'Psychobiology of Aggression' says that "brutal acts especially on TV often act as a stimuli towards aggression, especially to people who are susceptible by nature. The mass media often lend a certain glamour both to the violent act and it's perpetrator, that makes such behaviour seems flashy and attractive to certain people". He defines violence as a form of human aggression inflicting physical damage on persons or property.

People may not view movies or programmes for the sake of viewing violence alone, but a major component of action and thriller movies (which are so popular today) is violence which forms part of the high action, which is accompanied by rapid camera shots, loud sounds and resounding music, (Potts, Huston & Wright, 1986).

1.5. AGGRESSION

To study how exactly this violence on television affects the aggressive level of an individual, it is
important to know what aggression is. Spiegel, (1968) says, "It is behaviour involving the use of force or its symbolic equivalent to affect an outcome in line with the intentions or goals of the adversary". K.E. Moyer (1976) says, "it is behaviour involving intent to inflict noxious stimulation or to behave destructively towards another organism". According to Moyer, much of man's behaviour is symbolic and aggression can also be symbolic. Man can produce noxious stimulation through sarcasm, gossip or character assassination, also by destroying property. Aggression can either be physical or verbal, direct or indirect (Buss 1961).

There are three basic theories of aggression. One is that man is basically aggressive by nature, originating from an innate fighting instinct. Freud's psychoanalytical theory (1933) stresses that all aggression is basically destructive. The more that has accumulated, the weaker the stimulus necessary to release it into overt aggressive behaviour. Books championing this theory in the 1960s were Lorenz's 'On aggression' and Ardrey's 'The Territorial Imperative'.

However, one of the theories brought into focus by Lydia Jackson (1954) in 'Aggression and its Interpretation', states that the age old popular view that
all aggression is destructive should be replaced by a more recent and dynamic one, which equates aggression with the biologically indispensable urge to self assertion, in its meaning of self realisation.

The second theory of aggression states that man possesses an aggressive drive further engendered by frustration. This theory has been propounded by people like Dollard et al (1939), Berkowitz (1964) and Feshback (1971). Berkowitz says that frustration induces anger which by itself does not lead to overt aggression, but instead to a readiness to respond aggressively.

The third theory states that man is born with the cognitive and morphological potential to act aggressively, but whether he does so or not depends on various contingencies in his environment. Individual viewer attributes like age, gender and aggressive predispositions and environmental attributes like home background, motivation, opportunity and appropriate tools to imitate the screen characters/portrayals are important factors influencing the relationship between viewing aggressive material and actually exhibiting such behaviour.
Adolescents are particularly susceptible to the influence of the audio-visual medium, being in that vulnerable age where everything bright and glamorous on screen seems appealing. Lack of experience in real life makes them identify and emulate characters from the 'reel' life. In 'India Today' (July 31st, 1992), there was a discussion as to why teenagers had imbibed so much of violence. Sociologists cite the overdose in films and television as the main reason. The writer of the article, Ramesh Menon states that by the time the Indian child is in his teens, he has already seen thousand of brutal acts on the tube. He narrates a gruesome incident about Chandan, a Bangalore medical student who strangled his uncle to death in a car for the one lakh rupees he carried, exactly the way he had seen it done in 'The Godfather'.

Many studies have been conducted in other parts of the world also on the effects of violent television viewing and the debate still goes on as to whether television viewing is a causative or contributive factor. Unlike India, in countries like America and Britain for example, television programming has been a specialised industry from the 1950s onwards. Social concern about the potential effects of media violence on the attitudes, values and
aggressive behaviour of young viewers led to a large scale research by psychologists. Their result was summarised and evaluated in the 1972 Surgeon General's report and the 1982 report from the National Institute of Mental Health. Their conclusion that television violence has a causal effect on the aggressive behaviour of children and adolescents was reaffirmed by the American Psychological Association in 1985. But academicians like Freedman (1984) dispute this and say that television is only a stimulant and a contributive factor.

In India, the studies that have been conducted chiefly deal with the overall impact of Doordarshan programmes, mainly to gauge the viewership frequency. But now that things have changed dramatically with satellite television and the mushrooming of video libraries, people in authority are becoming increasingly concerned about the influence of this influx of programming. Articles and interviews with students in particular are abounding in newspapers and magazines. Doordarshan's strict censorship codes have become meaningless, because anyhow the viewers get to see anything and everything, either via the foreign network or on video cassettes.
Judged from the above discussion, it can be seen that not only are television, cable television and the video cassette player making available a variety of programmes to a captive audience in the home itself, but these media arouse attention, encourage imitation, produce fantasizing and both directly and indirectly arouse emotions of a wide variety in the viewers. Therefore, a study in this area however limited, would definitely throw some light on the influence of television and video on adolescents in India.
FOOTNOTES ON CHAPTER 1

1. India's national television network run by the Government of India.

2. Other Incidents of Imitation of Screen Violence

a) B. Sneh, who writes for the 'Women's Era' has stated in the January issue of 1992, that TV addiction which keeps people indoors encourages criminals and crimes. She says, "TV which is the modern man's window to the outside world, has sadly closed the one to his immediate surroundings". This is mainly because violence is being glorified and justified as weapons in this competitive world.

b) The 'World This Week' newsmagazine on Doordarshan dated 29th March, 1991, stated that the movie 'New Jack City' by the Warner Brothers was criticized for causing a spurt of violence all over the United States of America. This was with special emphasis on the youth. But the Warner Brothers denied this criticism saying that the youth did not need to see a movie to commit an act of violence.