

## Effect of Satellite Television on the Culture of Bangladesh: The Viewers Perception

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### Abstract

Satellite television started its journey in Bangladesh in 1992 and became a demanding business in the field of recreation. Before that state regulated Bangladesh Television (BTV) was the only dominant medium of entertainment for an extended twenty-eight years (1964-1992). Bangladesh Television (BTV) ended its monopoly power with the penetration of Satellite TV in 1992. But unfortunately due to these foreign satellite channels gradually people of Bangladesh are losing their Bengali norms and customs and getting used to the foreign lifestyles which are detrimental to the social norms and values of Bangladesh. This study has been conducted to understand the influence of satellite television on the culture of Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Satellite television, Bangladesh Television (BTV), culture, Bangladesh.

### 1.0 Introduction

The role of technological development in society has long been an interesting area and an important intellectual issue for both academics and researchers. The influence of technological development is changing the present world very rapidly. Changes are taking place in all spheres of life and ultimately changing the social and cultural belief systems. Technological advancement is the one which is playing a major role for this change. The introduction of satellite television is one of the dimensions of this technological advancement which has a definite effect on the social and cultural area of Bangladesh. For these changes, human behavior is also changing and therefore, the study of changes in the human behavior is becoming more important in the present business world. The purpose of this article is to analyze the effects of Satellite Television on the culture of Bangladesh.

According to Zia (2007), satellite television viewership is no more restricted to the upper-middle class only; with the availability of low-priced television and cable connection, it has become a common household facility for the lower class as well. Viewers have access to a variety of channels from local to foreign, which provide them an opportunity to watch all types of programs. These media sources expose viewers to new information about the outside world and other ways of life, which may affect attitudes and behaviors (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2004; Olken, 2006) as well the overall culture (Zahid, 2007). Numerous research studies have been conducted to observe the impact of satellite television on viewers, particularly on their behavior (Bukhari., 2002; Malik, M., 2001; Naseem, A. 2001). Due to easy access to satellite channels, low cost and a huge interest of television viewership for entertainment purposes have created the rapid growth of satellite television all over the world (Zia, 2007).

In Bangladesh the rapid demand for satellite television is no exception. Whereas the rapid growth of cable TV was regarded as a distinctive feature in the Western World in the 1960s (Hilliard and Keith, 1996) the residents of a poor country and the middle class viewers of Bangladesh did not possess any clear insight about satellite television for number of years. According to Huda (2005) state regulated Bangladesh Television (BTV) was the only dominant medium of entertainment for an extended twenty-eight years (1964-1992). Bangladesh Television (BTV) ended its monopoly power with the penetration of Satellite TV in 1992. Bangladesh government put their steps into the global media environment in 1992 by becoming the client of the entertainment bazaar (Huda, 2005). Since then, this business has undergone a rapid growth throughout the whole country. Initially this business started in two technologies. One is multi-channel point distribution system [SMA technology] and the other one is communication antenna technology [CA technology]. In SMA technology, a dish antenna is erected on the roof and the satellite signals are received by using satellite TV receiver by the viewers. CA technology started in 1993. Instead of a particular user, CA technology selects a particular area and TV signals are received and distributed to various viewers through decoder and cable. In fact, this CA technology has emerged in the form of cable business throughout the country and become a demanding business in the field of recreation.

Like other countries in the world the emergence of satellite television brings significant impact on the country, society and particularly on cultural mores and values (Fahmy, 1997 and Amin, 2001). In this regard, Harbi (1996) suggested that there is a positive correlation between satellite exposure and adoption of Western values

and that satellite viewing causes superficiality, distortion, and ambiguity. Labib (2001) stated that there is no solid evidence yet to prove the influence of satellite television, but he does not deny the anecdotal evidence to suggest an influence on women and girls in fields such as fashion and clothing as well as fast food consumption. However, El Fawal (2001) indicates that satellite television affects reading habits and radio listening in general. According to Meyrowitz (1986) for any particular country, culture is the representation of the country's identity. He demonstrates how television undermines the national identity and overrides the local traditions through the various transnational communications and media networks. For Bangladesh, the significant cultural shift arises due to the impact of regional channels of Satellite TV; particularly the Indian channels like Zee TV, MTV, Star Plus, Sony TV serials are influencing the cultural sphere of Bangladesh. Through watching these channels family ties and family values are getting threatened; specifically materials that favor divorce as a means to solve family problems or programming that includes obscenity, nudity, arousal of sexual instincts, or premarital sexual relations are completely destroying the cultural beliefs and values of Bangladesh (Page and Crawely, 2001).

In the present global context of the world, culture of a country is not confined to a territorial barrier. For satellite channels one country's people are getting used to another's culture very easily. But this adaption of other culture forgetting their own, might be a disastrous factor for them because culture means the origin of a nation. Historically the culture Bangladesh is indispensable in everyday life. Gradually people of Bangladesh are losing their Bengali norms and customs which is a shameful matter. This is due to the effect of foreign satellite channels. The young generation and women are enjoying foreign programs with great attraction ignoring their own cultural programs. They are also getting used to the foreign lifestyles which are detrimental to the social norms and values of Bangladesh. The Western and Indian channels have captured the attention of viewers in Bangladesh and exposed its audience to programs that are vividly different to the usual available programs on local television channels. These Indian and Western channels may adversely affect viewers' minds and activities. Therefore, it is high time to conduct a study on how satellite television is affecting the culture of Bangladesh.

## 2.0 Literature Review

Decades of studies on the consequences of mass media exposure demonstrate that effects are varied and reciprocal—the media impact audiences and audiences also impact media by the intensity and frequency of their usage. The results of mass media for promoting social change, especially in developing countries, have become important for public health. Finnegan, Viswanath, (1997) have identified three effects or functions, of media: (1) the knowledge gap, (2) agenda setting, and (3) cultivation of shared public perceptions.

Mass media are tools for the transfer of information, concepts, and ideas to both general and specific audiences. They are important tools in advancing public health goals. Communicating about health through mass media is complex, however, and challenges professionals in diverse disciplines. In an article in the *Journal of Health Communication*, Liana Winett and Lawrence Wallack wrote that "using the mass media to improve public health can be like navigating a vast network of roads without any street signs—if you are not sure *where* you are going and *why*, chances are you will not reach your destination" (winnet and wallok, 1996).

Sophisticated societies are dependent on mass media to deliver health information. Marshall McLuhan calls media "extensions of man." G. L. Kreps and B. C. Thornton believe media extend "people's ability to communicate, to speak to others far away, to hear messages, and to see images that would be unavailable without media" (Kreps and Thornton, 1992).

Television is a powerful medium for appealing to mass audiences—it reaches people regardless of age, sex, income, or educational level. In addition, television offers sight and sound, and it makes dramatic and lifelike representations of people and products. Focused TV coverage of public health has been largely limited to crises. However, for audiences of the late 1950s, the 1960s, and the 1970s, television presented or reinforced certain health messages through product marketing. Some of these messages were related to toothpaste, hand soaps, multiple vitamins, fortified breakfast cereals, and other items.

In Bangladesh the most important far reaching effect of cultural globalization is the commercialization of culture. Production and consumption of cultural goods and services have become commodities, along with the essentials of social life such as marriage and family life, religion, work and leisure etc. These are the crucibles of cultural creations. Culture whether it is music, food, clothes, art, sports, and images of age, masculinity or

femininity has become a product that is sold in the market place. Sociology says that, cultural change is a reality. Nevertheless it should be kept under surveillance. Due to the introduction of cable TV and Internet the young generation of our country has become reckless. (Zahid, 2007) The study, thus, reveals that most of the respondents are more used to having Western 'Fast Food' compared traditional foods. The respondents prefer trendy clothes, Western movies and music. Watching TV is mostly the way in which the respondents pass their leisure time. A large number of respondents said that they are very close to their school and college friends, compared to their family members, and they discuss mostly about sex, fashion and show-biz world. (Zahid, 2007)

According to Akande (2002) globalization has resulted in the extinction of 22,000 indigenous cultures in the past decade and optimistic estimates suggests that as many as 90% of the world's languages will disappear in the next century .

Mass media are the methods of communication such as, language, design, facial expression, print, radio, television, mobile phone, billboards and musical instruments etc to dig up large number of people at the same time. For example, television, when it broadcasts, it goes elsewhere and the people of different places can watch it (Berger, 2002)

The interaction between media messages and interpersonal communication was first described by Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld in their two-step flow hypothesis. They argued that media effects were moderated principally by interpersonal encounters. Community opinion leaders scan the media for information, and then communicate that information to others in interpersonal contexts. It is in this second step, interpersonal interaction that opinion leaders wield enormous power, influencing others not only by what they choose to reveal but also the slant that they use in conveying the message.

The two-step model has been expanded to include multistep models—most notably information diffusion models. Step models have been limited by their linear assumptions of one-way influence and causation. Media influence is undeniably linked to complex interpersonal dynamics. A shared influence likely results when people are exposed to health messages and then converge together in contexts that influence what they say to one another (and even how they say it), as well as what they selectively think. George Gerbner describes a three-component framework. The first of these components is semiotics, the study of signs, symbols, and codes. In this study, the researchers do not try to build any model. Researchers just simply take data from Chittagong City to understand the influence of Satellite TV on cultural changes.

### **3.0 Research Objective**

The main purpose of the study is to understand the effects of satellite television on the culture of Bangladesh. The study has the following specific objectives:

- To find out the consumers attitude towards satellite television.
- To find out the demand of various satellite channels based on consumer profile.
- To find out the satisfaction level of general consumers based on the existing service provided.
- To understand the effects of satellite channel on our culture mainly from the consumers point of view.

### **4.0 Research Methodology**

The methodology used for this study included both primary and secondary data collection. Some of the historical data is taken from the secondary sources. In reviewing the literature for collecting the secondary data, both theoretical and empirical studies were taken into consideration. Secondary data were collected through content analysis from various published sources including books, online journals, newspapers, magazines, and reports. . All the primary and secondary data were collected during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> week of November, 2011.

The primary outline of the study was developed based on personal experience and observations on the topic. For developing the questionnaire and selecting the sample personal experience and observation was used. Subsequently the data received through the survey was analyzed and in some cases the help of personal experience were taken to reach some of the logical decisions.

The data required for the study is collected using the interview questionnaire. At first various dimensions of culture is highlighted through the exploratory research. Then the response of the consumers regarding the various changes of these dimensions and the influence of satellite television for this change was collected.

The target population of this study is the people of Chittagong city who have television and possess cable connection in their house. Any one staying in mess/ hostel but having cable TV facilities is also part of the target population of the study. To carry out the survey non probability judgmental sampling is carried out. As there is

no comprehensive list of the population of Chittagong city conducting the probability sampling was not feasible. Since accuracy of the result was not a prime factor and the cost involved in probability sampling is excessively high, so no probability method was used.

For getting a general representation of the population total 03 areas of interest was selected using the judgmental method. The areas are Khulshi, Jamal Khan and Chittagong Port Area which represents three different classes of people. In Khulshi the higher Class people, in Jamal Khan the middle Class and in Chittagong Port Area generally the Lower Middle Class reside. No specific sampling frame is available. The respondents within the specific area are also selected on judgmental basis. The sample size was 40 and efforts have been taken to include both males and females and consideration was also given for different age groups.

## **5.0 Findings and Interpretation**

### **5.1 *Demographic Profile of the Respondent***

Here we show the demographic data of the three groups. As age, occupation and income is an indicator of social class & lifestyle, we are trying to classify them in three tables. The researchers concentrated mostly on the 18-30 years age group, taking almost equal share from each professional category including home makers and in income most respondents are from mid income range level. It is notable that middle class families are more aware of cultural impact and changes rather than high society or poor class.

### **5.2 *Consumers' Preference of Cable Channels***

Consumers of Chittagong City are divided in their preference of cable channels. Within the 40 respondents total 19 people prefer Star Plus, 17 prefer Sony, 16 prefer HBO, 15 National geography and 14 prefer to enjoy ESPN as their 5 most preferred cable channels.

### **5.3 *Satisfaction Level of Consumers:***

The satisfaction level of the consumers about the existing service provided by the cable operator in terms of number of channels, picture quality, sound reception, monthly payment are shown in the table 5.3 in the appendix which shows that consumers are in general satisfied with the existing service. There are no significant changes in the consumers' opinion basing on the demographic classification. More than 85% consumers are satisfied with the quality of picture and sound. About 25% consumers think that numbers of channels are not sufficient. As the monthly charge came into the picture, an interesting relationship is found. Only 35% of the respondents think that the monthly charge is high and they are the people who are somehow related to the payment i.e. the younger people or those whose money is not used for payment thinks that the monthly charge is reasonable.

### **5.4 *Consumers' attitude Towards the Cable TV:***

The consumers of Chittagong city also vary in their attitude regarding Cable TV. The general view of the respondents about the cable TV is shown in table 4 in the appendix. Consumers have a positive attitude towards the Cable channel. 37.5% of the consumers think it to be a means for increasing knowledge and education along with recreation. 27.5% think it only as a means of recreation, 30% thinks it as a means for increasing knowledge and education whereas 17.5% think of as it just a means for passing time.

### **5.5 *TV Timing:***

The timing of enjoying TV also differs within the consumers. The data collected through the survey in this regard is shown table 5 in the appendix. The result of the survey gives a clear indication about the media timing of the consumers. It is observed that people prefer watching TV after the evening than during the day time. Within the night the most preferred time is 08:30-11:30 pm. In addition some people also prefer the day time especially after lunch hour i.e. 01:00-03:30 pm.

### **5.6 *Means of Exposure To Foreign Culture:***

The traditional culture of our country is changing day by day and we are becoming more exposed towards the foreign culture. The respondents were asked the views regarding the media which they think is contributing most for this cultural change. The data collected is shown table 6 in the appendix. The respondents of the survey are on a common footing about their opinion in relation to the means of exposure to foreign culture. 95% of the respondents think that cable TV is the main reason for the exposure to the foreign culture as it is the most available and easy means that one can get within their surroundings. This is the result only in comparison to other means available for the exposure to foreign culture like internet, newspaper/magazines etc. Other possible reasons like the general increase in the overall knowledge base, social awareness and the increase of education level are not considered here. In this context this may not seem to be the accurate picture but considering the

personal experience and the survey conducted a general conclusion can be drawn that cable TV is playing the main role for our exposure to the foreign culture.

### **5.7 Influence of Satellite TV on This Cultural Change:**

Comparing the last 10-12 years demonstrates that there is a significant change in our traditional culture. Due to easy exposure and other reasons this change has occurred in the various dimensions of culture. Due to this change, consumers preference towards some of aspects have increased like the increase in fashion awareness, quality preference etc. On the other hand aspects like bargaining habit, attraction towards the traditional songs, reading habit etc has decreased where as for some of the aspects there is no change. To understand the influence of satellite TV on the culture of Bangladesh consumers are asked to consider the influence of satellite TV ignoring the other possible reasons for the cultural change. For collecting the data a five point rating scale is used ranging from strong influence to no influence. The data is shown table 7 in the appendix.

The survey result shows the respondents' view about how the cable TV has influenced the cultural changes. The changes in the dimensions on which the respondents think that satellite TV has strong influence are increase of fashion awareness, brand preference, following foreign customs and for the decrease in social bondage, home based fantasy, interest of foreign music/movie. 70% of the respondents think that satellite TV has strong influence for increased fashion awareness, 58% think it has strong influence for increased fast food consumption habits and another 63% think it to be the influencer for increasing interest in foreign music/ movie.

On the other hand Cable TV has moderate influence for increases in quality preference, gender balance, and knowledge based society and for the decrease in interest of Bangla movies music. The area where the cable TV has less influence is the increase in eating out, children's participation in decision making, and for the decrease in religious bindings. For the change of other dimensions like decrease in bargaining habit, and for reduced family size the respondents think that there is no influence of cable TV. They think that there are other reasons for this change like changes in education level, social awareness, technological change and other need driven changes.

A general pattern is observed in the result that the people of middle/ lower middle class think that the cultural changes is mainly due to the influence of Cable TV whereas the upper class people think that there are other important reasons for this cultural change. This view of the upper class people is possibly due to their more exposure to other media / latest technology and greater awareness about the changing society.

### **5.8 The Negative Impact of Satellite:**

The respondents were also asked if there are any negative impacts of satellite TV or not and what is the influence of satellite TV for those negative aspect. The opinion was taken on a four point rating scale ranging from strong influence to no influence.

One of the reasons for asking the consumer about the negative impact was to find out the respondents' attitude towards the Cable TV more clearly. The result shows that the respondents are almost on a common footing and admit that Cable TV has certainly some negative impacts. Two of the aspects which most of the respondents have identified as having strong influence of Cable TV is the tendency of wearing indecent/short dresses especially by the ladies and the disturbance of study for the children. For both the cases 55% of the respondents think that Cable TV has strong influence.

Respondents also think that Cable TV has influence for the increase of social crime and sexual violence. In this regard the percentage of respondents who think cable TV has strong influence for these aspects are 40% and 37.5% respectively. The others who think it has moderate influence are 40% and 42.5% respectively. Besides, a few respondents think that it has some degree of influence for attraction towards smoking/drugs by the young people.

Despite these impacts the respondents' general view is positive towards cable TV and they still think of it as the main media for recreation. The study also shows that the negative role cable TV is playing is very insignificant for the present state of our social insecurity and there are other important reasons behind this. By taking few of the measures we can reduce this state of insecurity by a significant amount. The measures on which the respondents strongly agree are the improvement of law-order situation, the increase of social awareness and undertaking local motivational/religious programs for building the social value within the general people. Side by side the controlling of action/sex-violence driven channels will also help in this respect.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

Business in today's market is very competitive. To operate profitably in any business the focus must be customer oriented. Like any other businesses, the cable business should also try to provide the customers the channels they

like most and improve the quality of the sound and picture to operate profitably in this sector. People who produce programs for television have a great responsibility in today's world. Therefore, corrected effort should be made to sensitize producers and broadcasters for improving the quality of whatever program they are they are general public. At the same time local channels should be strengthened and programs should have better content. These channels should produce and broadcast quality programs that could help in the promotion of Bangladeshi values and traditions and improve the image of Bangladesh at the international level.

The result of the study clearly shows that considering the last 8-10 years, there is a definite change in our traditional culture and this change is likely to continue. Though all of this change is not only due to the effects of satellite TV, this is playing one of the major roles as maximum exposure towards the foreign culture is due to this media. This cultural change has great marketing implications. Marketing efforts in the present day like designing products/services, appropriate placement, pricing and promotion strategy must be focused considering the recent cultural changes.

## Appendix

**Table: 1 demographic profile of the respondents**

(Age distribution of Respondents)

	Under 18	18-30	31-45	46 and above	Total
Male	1	13	7	2	23
Female	2	13	2	----	17
Total	3	26	9	2	40

(Occupational Distribution)

	Student	Govt. Service	Private Service	Business	Home Maker	Others.	
Male	4	9	3	6		1	23
Female	8		2		7		17

(Income distribution)

Income Level	Respondents
Under 8000	2
8000-15000	18
15001-25000	7
250001-35000	2
Above 35000	11
Total	40

**Table-2: Most preferred Cable Channels**

Gender	Name of 5 Best Preferred Channels									
	Star Plus		Sony		HBO		Geography		ESPN	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	NO	%
Male	05	26	04	23	13	82	14	87	10	67
Female	14	74	13	77	03	18	02	13	05	33
Total	19		17		16		15		14	

Percent	47.5	42.5	40	37.5	35
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<i>RESPONDENT</i>	<i>SATISFACTION</i>							
	Number of channel		Picture quality		Sound quality		Monthly payment	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Male	17	06	22	01	21	02	14	9
Female	13	04	16	01	14	03	11	06
Total	30	10	38	02	35	02	25	15
Percent	75%	25%	95%	05%	87%	13%	62.5%	37.5%

**Table-3: Satisfaction level of Consumer**

**Table4: Consumers Attitude towards Cable TV**

VIEWS	RESPONDENTS	
	Number	%
Only a Means of Recreation	12	30%
Means Of Knowledge And Education	11	27.5%
Means Just To Pass Time	07	17.5%
Both Means of Knowledge And recreation	15	37.5%

**Table 5: Consumers Preference of TV Timing**

	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS					
	BEFORE 01:00 PM	01:00-03:00 PM	03:00-06:00 PM	06:00-08:30 PM	08:30-11:30 PM	1030 -0100 AND MORE
<b>Male</b>	01	02	-	02	16	01
<b>Female</b>		02	04	01	17	06
<b>Total</b>	01	04	04	03	33	07

**Table 6: Means of Exposure To foreign Culture**

	News paper/ magazines		Cable TV		Internet	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
<b>Male</b>	01	2.5%	22	55%	-	-
<b>Female</b>	-	-	16	40%	01	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	01	2.5%	38	95%	01	2.5%



**Table 7: Influence of satellite TV on cultural change**

Factors	Number of respondents				
	Strong Influence	Moderate Influence	Less Influence	No Influence	Total points
Fashion awareness	28	10	2	-	148
Brand preferences	6	27	5	2	118
Quality preferences	8	11	17	4	103
Bargaining habit	1	6	6	27	79
Eating out habit	4	13	16	7	64
Preference for fast food/ Instant food	23	05	6	6	105
Time consciousness	1	11	17	11	82
Spending leisure time outside the home	5	19	11	5	104
Home based fantasy	11	24	4	1	125
Social Bondage	6	20	8	6	106
Gender balance	5	15	18	2	103
Children's Participation in decision making	-	16	19	5	91
Family size/ Joint family	4	7	8	21	68
Religious bindings	4	9	21	6	91
Interest on foreign music/movie	25	11	3	1	140
Interest on traditional/or folk songs/ Bangla movie	11	15	6	8	109
Trend of following foreign customs	20	18	2	-	138
Knowledge base	16	21	2	1	132

**Table 8: Negative Influence of satellite TV on cultural change**

Factors	Strong influence	Moderate influence	Less influence	No Influence
Social Crimes	16	16	6	2
Sex violence	15	17	7	1
Decrease of Social bondage	3	24	8	5
Drug addiction by young generation	2	12	17	9
Use of Short/indecent dresses by ladies	22	17	-	1

Disturbance of Study for kids / youngsters	22	8	8	2
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