

Rural Women and Gratifications of Television Viewing: A Study in Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Television viewing is considered to be one of the best ways of reducing stress. For rural women, television viewing is an important leisure time activity that helps them to relax. This study tries to find out the gratifications rural women seek when they watch television. This study is conducted in Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu and is based on the findings of an UGC- UPE funded project. A survey method was adopted for this study. Findings reveal that rural women view television to satisfy various needs that help them in everyday life both socially and psychologically.

Key Words : Rural women, Television viewing, Gratifications, Villupuram, Tamil Nadu

INTRODUCTION

Television viewing has come to occupy an important place in the daily activities of rural women. Rural women may use television to satisfy their particular needs. They could use television for information, entertainment, relaxation, and escape from boredom. Television viewing could provide an adaptive retreat from ordinary responsibilities that helps and maintain normal activity.

This present study tries to analyse the gratifications rural women in Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu seek when they watch television. The study works from the approach of the Users and Gratification theory. This study is based on the findings of an UGC- UPE funded project.

Review of Literature :

Researchers Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch in their article, "Current Perspectives," constructed the uses and gratifications model that still guide researchers today (Katz *et al.*, 1974). The uses and gratifications framework explains media use in terms of expected positive outcomes, or gratifications. According to this theory, people choose to use a particular medium to gratify their needs. This theory focuses on descriptions of audiences' uses and purposes for choosing the media. The theory explains that the choice of the medium was to satisfy their needs socially and psychologically.

By determining which media audiences chose, researchers made assumptions of how a person used the medium to gratify his or her needs. Audiences select a media and expect to receive particular gratifications as an outcome of their selection.

Grounded in the functionalist paradigms of sociology and psychology, uses and gratifications research is centered on the social and psychological origins of people's needs, the resulting need expectations connected with mass media (television), and essentially on the differential patterns of exposure that result in need gratifications.

The theory assumes that audiences actively seek out media in a goal-directed way that provides them with the means of gratifying a wide variety of needs (Katz *et al.*, 1974). Given the importance of time as a variable, media scholars have devoted considerable effort in developing explanations for why individuals spend time with certain media.

Jeffers (1975) divided the goals of media behaviour into three, namely: a) Media-seeking goal - the situation in which the individual is merely attracted to the media for the media's own sake without regard to content, needs or any other reason, b) Content-seeking goal - media behaviour influenced by specific contents, c) Non-seeking - where the individual makes no deliberate attempt towards media consumption (What he gets is thrust upon him by relations and associates in daily interactions).

The proponents of this approach, Wilhoit and de Bock (1980) undertook a survey of 786 American and 413 Dutch residents, using a well-structured questionnaires aimed at measuring the salience of various needs, the most preferred medium for each need, frequency of media use to gratify needs and levels of satisfaction obtained from the mass media. They found that the urge to keep tabs on issues and the need for relaxation were the most salient for both American and Dutch samples. Among the Dutch respondents, these two needs were closely followed by the need to be entertained and the need to monitor other people's opinions.

Larsen's (1982) study of media use was also designed after Wilhoit and de Bock's approach. In the study which dwelt on university students, he reported that television ranked highest as a source of information on international news and as a medium for excitement, entertainment, companionship and escape.

Amu-Nnadi *et al.* (1986) analyzed the soap opera, "Mirror in the Sun" and found that a generality of Nigerian university students derived satisfaction from the programme with more of the females than the males rating it as highly entertaining.

In a more detailed study, Ogunmodede (1988) explored the viewing habits of Nigerian adults. Nigerian adults, she discovered, put television to the following uses: knowing what others think, entertainment, obtaining up-to-date information, relaxation, fighting loneliness, passing time and having influence in that order. The gratification manifestly obtained from television primarily as entertainment medium.

The theory simply aims at explicates the way in which individuals make use of communication among other resources to satisfy their needs or to attain their goals. Uses and gratifications studies offer highly informative lessons to media managers and information policy-makers. Knowing that audiences are active, these communication designers should strive to give the audience what will be of benefit or utility to them. The need to do this has been all the more emphasized by the present climate of sporadic privatisation of the media in developing nations and the corresponding competition.

The uses-and-gratifications perspective argues that time spent with media is the result of media's ability to fulfill needs (Rubin, 2002). This study assumes that rural women watch television to gratify specific needs both socially and psychologically. There could be various reasons why rural women watch television.

METHODOLOGY

This study attempts to find out the gratification rural women seek from television viewing. The participants of the study were 514 rural women from Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu. These rural women were selected from the villages in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu.

Instrument :

A survey instrument was used to collect data. The questionnaire included a 5 point Likert – type scale from ‘Very Often’ to ‘Never’ and was used to measure the gratification rural women seek from television viewing. Higher scores indicated lower gratifications.

Television Viewing was defined as the number of hours rural women spend viewing television in a day. Higher scores indicated higher television viewing. The number of hours of watching television daily, a numeric variable was collapsed into a categorical variable called TV viewing, by dividing it into three groups. Heavy Viewers (those who watch more than three hours TV), Moderate Viewers (those who watch more than one hour but less than three hours of TV), and Light Viewers (those who do not watch TV at all or watched less than one hour of TV).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A one –way analysis of variance was performed with the compound variable, television viewing, as the independent variable on the following dependent variables.

I watch television, because I think it’s pleasant on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 7.159, p=.000$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers ($M=2.823$) said that they watch TV because it is pleasant significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers ($M=1.712$) (Table 1).

Table 1 :

| Sr. No. | Dependent Variables | Degrees of Freedom | | F | P |
|---------|---|--------------------|-------|-------|------|
| | | Within | Error | | |
| 1. | I watch television, because I think it’s pleasant | 2 | 498 | 7.159 | .000 |

I watch television, when there’s no one else to talk to on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 9.737, p=.000$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers ($M=2.739$) said that they watch TV when there’s no one else to talk significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers ($M=1.233$) (Table 2).

Table 2 :

| Sr. No. | Dependent Variables | Degrees of Freedom | | F | P |
|---------|---|--------------------|-------|-------|------|
| | | Within | Error | | |
| 1. | I watch television, when there’s no one else to talk to | 2 | 498 | 9.737 | .000 |

I watch television, because it’s a habit, just something I do on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 7.526, p=.001$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers ($M=2.964$) said that they watch

TV, because it's a habit, just something they do significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers (M=1.587) (Table 3).

Table 3 :

| Sr. No. | Dependent Variables | Degrees of Freedom | | F | P |
|---------|---|--------------------|-------|-------|------|
| | | Within | Error | | |
| 1. | I watch television, because it's a habit, just something I do | 2 | 498 | 7.526 | .003 |

I watch television, because it gives me something to do to occupy my time on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 7.526, p=.001$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers (M=2.993) said that they watch TV, because it gives they something to do to occupy their time significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers (M=1.945) (Table 4).

Table 4 :

| Sr. No. | Dependent Variables | Degrees of Freedom | | F | P |
|---------|---|--------------------|-------|-------|------|
| | | Within | Error | | |
| 1. | I watch television, because it gives me something to do to occupy my time | 2 | 498 | 8.117 | .002 |

I watch television, because it amuses me on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 8.126, p=.004$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers (M=2.864) said that they watch TV, because it amuses them significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers (M=2.395) (Table 5).

Table 5 :

| Sr. No. | Dependent Variables | Degrees of Freedom | | F | P |
|---------|---|--------------------|-------|-------|------|
| | | Within | Error | | |
| 1. | I watch television because it amuses me | 2 | 498 | 8.126 | .004 |

I watch television, so I can be with other members of the family or friends who are watching on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 6.379, p=.004$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers (M=2.864) said that they watch TV, so that they can be with other members of the family or friends who are watching, significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers (M=2.395) (Table 6).

Table 6 :

| Sr. No. | Dependent Variables | Degrees of Freedom | | F | P |
|---------|--|--------------------|-------|-------|------|
| | | Within | Error | | |
| 1. | I watch television, so I can be with other members of the family or friends who are watching | 2 | 498 | 6.379 | .004 |

I watch television so I could learn about what could happen to me on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 7.657$, $p=.000$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers ($M=2.869$) said that they watch TV so they could learn about what could happen to them significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers ($M=1.781$) (Table 7).

Table 7 :

| Sr. No. | Dependent Variables Information | Degrees of Freedom | | F | P |
|---------|---|--------------------|-------|-------|------|
| | | Within | Error | | |
| 1. | I watch television so I could learn about what could happen to me | 2 | 498 | 7.657 | .000 |

I watch television because it cheers me up on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 9.714$, $p=.000$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers ($M=2.764$) said that they watch TV because it cheers me up significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers ($M=1.273$) (Table 8).

Table 8 :

| Sr. No. | Dependent Variables Arousal | Degrees of Freedom | | F | P |
|---------|--|--------------------|-------|-------|------|
| | | Within | Error | | |
| 1. | I watch television because it cheers me up | 2 | 498 | 9.714 | .000 |

I watch television, so I can get away from what I'm doing on TV viewing $F(2,498) = 7.558$, $p=.003$. A post hoc Tukey test was done to see if any category was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that rural women who are heavy viewers ($M=2.973$) said that they watch TV, so that they can get away from what they are doing significantly more than rural women who are light or no viewers ($M=1.525$) (Table 9).

Table 9 :

| Sr. No. | Dependent Variables Escape | Degrees of Freedom | | F | P |
|---------|--|--------------------|-------|-------|------|
| | | Within | Error | | |
| 1. | I watch television so I can get away from what I'm doing | 2 | 498 | 7.558 | .003 |

Discussion :

Television helps rural women to relax and gives them a pleasant feeling. It gives them company when they do not have anyone to speak to at home. Therefore television viewing has become a habit for rural women and helps them pass time. Television entertains them by amusing them and helps them to spend time with members of the family or other friends who are watching. Rural women feel they learn from television. It cheers them up and helps them escape from mundane routine activity that causes boredom.

Conclusion :

From the above study it is clear that rural women from Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu, seek

specific gratifications from television viewing. They feel that television satisfies their particular needs. Television sets are cheap and every household in the rural area can afford a television set. This makes it all the possible for rural women to view television as a routine activity. Considering the specific needs of rural women television programmes should be produced so as to satisfy them both socially and psychologically.

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