

The Utilization of Television Media by the Rural Community in Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, India: A Study

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Abstract - This study investigates the utilization of television media in the rural community of Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, focusing on the preferences and behaviors of different demographic groups. The research entails an extensive literature review on television media within the region, followed by a targeted survey among housewives, youths, farmers, and professionals in rural areas, conducted in the Tamil language. The survey results indicate that more than 30.49% of housewives, 26.83% of youths, 23.17% of farmers, and 19.51% of professionals exceeded the surveyed thresholds, highlighting significant engagement with television in diverse demographic segments. The findings illuminate the substantial role of television media in the rural community, emphasizing the need to comprehend and address the specific needs and interests of various demographic groups. This study contributes valuable insights into the dynamic relationship between television viewership patterns and demographic characteristics in rural areas, laying a foundation for further research and initiatives aimed at optimizing the impact of television in rural development.

Keywords: Television Media, Rural Community, Coimbatore District

I. INTRODUCTION

Television media, a powerful communication tool, has evolved over the years to become an integral part of societies, connecting with diverse audiences on a national scale. Coined in the 1920s with the establishment of nationwide television networks, the term “Television media” represents a concerted effort to reach vast populations within a nation-state. The journey of television’s development saw significant milestones, from Jenkins’ transmission of a still picture via radio waves in 1922 to Baird’s groundbreaking achievement of transmitting a live human face in 1925. The very term “television” itself was introduced by the Frenchman Constantin Perskyi at the 1900 Paris Exhibition.

Within the context of media studies, the term “rural” takes on significance as an adjective describing aspects related to life in the countryside. The notion of “country life” encapsulates experiences outside the bustling confines of large towns or cities. A “rural community,” by definition, comprises a collective of individuals residing in areas situated away from urban centers, typically characterized by

a population of fewer than 2,500 people (Arvind, 1998). In this study, we delve into the utilization of television media by rural communities in Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, India, exploring the dynamics of access, preferences, and impact within these distinct settings.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Main objectives of the present study are as follows.

1. To analyze the distribution of the sample and the responses received.
2. To identify preferred places for watching television.
3. To determine the television channels preferred by the respondents.
4. To assess the usefulness of television.
5. To identify the preferred time for watching television.
6. To examine the benefits of watching television for the respondents.
7. To explore the effects of watching television on the respondents.
8. To investigate the frequency of watching television.
9. To identify the frequently viewed topics on television by the respondents.

III. ABOUT COIMBATORE DISTRICT

Coimbatore district, situated in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, India, holds a distinctive position among the 38 districts in the region. As the administrative headquarters, Coimbatore serves as a multifaceted hub, excelling in industries, textiles, commerce, education, information technology, healthcare, and manufacturing, contributing significantly to the state’s economic landscape.

According to the 2011 census, Coimbatore district boasts a population of 3,458,045, exhibiting a remarkable sex ratio of 1,000 females for every 1,000 males, surpassing the national average of 929. A detailed demographic breakdown reveals that 319,332 individuals were under the age of six, comprising 163,230 males and 156,102 females. The district’s literacy rate stands at an impressive 83.98 percent, reflecting a commitment to education. With 958,035 households, Coimbatore accommodates a diverse and thriving community.

The workforce in Coimbatore district is dynamic, with a total of 1,567,950 individuals engaged in various occupations. Among them, 75,411 are cultivators, 201,351 are main agricultural laborers, and 44,582 are involved in household industries. Additionally, 1,121,908 individuals contribute as other workers, with 124,698 categorized as marginal workers. This includes 4,806 marginal cultivators, 28,675 marginal agricultural laborers, 5,503 marginal workers in household industries, and 85,714 other marginal workers.

Language diversity adds to the cultural richness of the district. While Tamil serves as the principal official

language, Kongu Tamil, a regional dialect, is widely spoken. A small proportion of the population also communicates in Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, and English, reflecting the multicultural fabric of Coimbatore district..

IV. PILOT STUDY

The questionnaire was administered to a selected sample in the Rural Community of Coimbatore District from October 2021 to December 2021. Based on the difficulties encountered during the survey, the questionnaires were revised.

TABLE I DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE AND RESPONSES RECEIVED

Sl. No.	Peoples	Respondents	Percentage
1	Housewives	75	30.49
2	Youths	72	26.83
3	Farmers	69	23.17
4	Professionals	66	19.51
Total		282	100.00

Among the surveyed television viewers in the Rural Community of Coimbatore District, 30.49 percent were

Housewives, followed by 26.83 percent of Youths, 23.17 percent of Farmers, and 19.51 percent of Professionals.

TABLE II FREQUENCY OF WATCHING TELEVISION

Sl. No.	Peoples	Daily	Once in Week	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
1	Housewives	62	12	01	0	0	75
2	Youths	58	13	01	0	0	72
3	Farmers	53	12	02	01	01	69
4	Professionals	52	12	01	01	0	66
Total		225	49	5	2	1	282
Percentage		79.79	17.38	1.77	0.71	0.35	100.00
Mean		27					
SD		96.37323					
Skewness		2.01347					

The Table II above indicates that 79.79 percent of the respondents (225) watch television daily, followed by 17.38 percent (49) who watch television once a week, 1.77 percent (5) who watch television sometimes, 0.71 percent (2) who watch television rarely, and 0.35 percent (1) who never watch television, represented by a farmer. It can be inferred that over seventy-nine percent of the respondents watch television daily.

The observations regarding the frequency of watching television by surveyed television viewers in the Rural Community of Coimbatore District respondents yielded a mean average of 27, with a standard deviation of 96.37323. The skewness (2.01347) appears to fall within the high distribution range.

The Table III indicates that the majority of the respondents prefer to watch television during the night (58.01 percent), followed by 19.57 percent who watch television in the evening. Additionally, 10.32 percent of the respondents watch television in the afternoon, 7.47 percent watch television in the morning, and only 4.63 percent watch television late at night.

The observations regarding the preferred time for watching television by surveyed television viewers in the Rural Community of Coimbatore District respondents yielded a mean average of 29, with a standard deviation of 61.75111. The skewness (1.900151) appears to fall within the high distribution range.

TABLE III TIME PREFERRED FOR WATCHING TELEVISION

Sl. No.	Peoples	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Night	Late Night	Respondents	
1	Housewives	01	09	17	46	02	75	
2	Youths	11	06	15	37	03	72	
3	Farmers	04	10	13	36	05	68	
4	Professionals	05	04	10	44	03	66	
Total		21	29	55	163	13	281	
Percentage		7.47	10.32	19.57	58.01	4.63	100.00	
Mean		29						
SD		61.75111						
Skewness		1.900151						

TABLE IV PLACES TO PREFERRED FOR WATCHING TELEVISION

Sl. No.	Places Preferred	Respondents	Percentage
1	Home	255	90.75
2	Friend's house	112	39.86
3	Neighbor house	56	19.93
4	Office	30	10.68

(Note: Respondents may have selected more than one option)

The Table IV reveals the various preferences of the respondents regarding the places where they prefer to watch television. Among the total respondents, 90.75 percent

watch television at home. This is followed by 39.86 percent who watch television at a friend's house, 19.93 percent at a neighbor's house, and 10.68 percent at their workplace.

TABLE V FREQUENTLY VIEWED TOPICS IN TELEVISION BY THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Viewed Topics	Respondents	Percentage
1	Entertainment Drama/Movies/Music	235	83.63
2	Games/Sports	221	78.65
3	News	209	74.38
4	Political Information	199	70.82
5	Environment/Weather Information	138	49.11
6	Spiritual Programmes	125	44.48
7	Science and Technology	121	43.06
8	Education and Training Information	119	42.35
9	Business and Commerce	104	37.01
10	Agricultural Information	65	23.13

(Note: Respondents may have selected more than one option)

Entertainment is the primary purpose for which respondents view television. Other significant reasons for watching television include games/sports, news, political information, environment/weather updates, and spiritual programs. Business, commerce, and agricultural information were the least-watched programs.

Srirupa Roy (2011) has provided an elaborate analysis of the impact of television on society in India, highlighting its wide coverage, especially in local and small locations and cities. Additionally, Arvind K. Sharma (2007) and Biradar

(2008) have identified television and radio as the primary sources on which the rural community relies to obtain information related to government schemes.

The Table VI reveals the television channels preferred by the respondents. Star Vijay, Sun TV, Local Tamil Channels, Zee Tamil, and Colors Tamil are the major television channels viewed by the majority of the respondents, all of which are Tamil channels. On the other hand, sports channels, National Geographic/Discovery, and Doordarshan are the least-viewed television channels by respondents.

TABLE VI TELEVISION CHANNELS PREFERRED BY THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Channels Preferred	Respondents	Percentage
1	Star Vijay	212	75.44
2	Sun TV	210	74.73
3	Local Tamil Channels	195	69.40
4	Zee Tamil	165	58.72
5	Colors Tamil	139	49.47
6	News Channels	132	46.98
7	K TV	130	46.26
8	Sports Channels	129	45.91
9	National Geography/Discovery	98	34.88
10	Doordarshan	35	12.46
11	Other TV channels	12	4.27

(Note: Respondents may have selected more than one option)

TABLE VII BENEFITS OF WATCHING TELEVISION TO THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Benefits of Watching	Respondents	Percentage
1	Relax and Time Pass	225	80.07
2	Improving social life	199	70.82
3	Updating general knowledge	146	51.96
4	Creating political awareness	140	49.82
5	Studies	112	39.86
6	Personal health and hygiene	85	30.25
7	Improving language	65	23.13

(Note: Respondents may have selected more than one option)

The Table VII analyzes that relaxation, passing time, improvement in social life, and updating general knowledge and awareness of politics are major benefits of watching television. However, television is found to play a very limited role in studies, personal health and hygiene, and

improving language skills. Nazari (2011) found that the use of television for studying among rural communities has enhanced their knowledge and influenced the behavior of farmers.

TABLE VIII EFFECTS OF WATCHING TELEVISION BY THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Effects of Watching	Respondents	Percentage
1	Children are wasting time	135	48.04
2	We are losing our culture	128	45.55
3	Prefer live city life	113	40.21
4	Being influenced by western culture	102	36.30
5	Aware of social life	101	35.94
6	Increase in violence	98	34.88
7	There is increase in consumerism due to advertisement	56	19.93

(Note: Respondents may have selected more than one option)

The Table VIII reveals the effects of watching television. Approximately 48.04 percent of respondents feel that children waste their time by watching television, and 45.55 percent believe that television contributes to the loss of

cultural values. Other perceived negative effects include a preference for city life (40.21 percent) and influence by Western culture (36.30 percent).

TABLE IX USEFULNESS OF TELEVISION

Sl. No.	Usefulness of Television	Respondents	Percentage
1	Very useful	135	47.87
2	Moderately useful	58	20.57
3	Somewhat useful	50	17.73
4	Not at all useful	38	13.48
5	No response	01	0.35
Total		282	100.00

The Table IX illustrates the perceived usefulness of television. About 47.87 percent of respondents feel that television is very useful, followed by 20.57 percent who think it is moderately useful. Additionally, 17.73 percent believe it is somewhat useful, 13.48 percent consider it not at all useful, and 0.35 percent provided no response.

V. SUGGESTIONS

As part of the research findings, the following are the suggestions of the study.

1. Community television centers should be established, and a greater number of documentary films should be screened in villages.
2. By establishing such centers at the village level, people can be educated and informed about advancements in agricultural and industrial methods and techniques. This can raise awareness about social and political conditions.
3. More channels should be introduced to provide increased access to educational, informative, and entertaining programs.
4. It is also suggested that longer durations be allocated for regional language programs.
5. There should be an increase in the telecasting of informative and entertaining programs with educative value or moral representation. For example, addressing social issues like dowry and child marriage, along with information about the laws and rules against such crimes, can help people apply this knowledge in their personal lives.
6. The timing of UGC programs, telecasted twice a day, is not convenient for students to watch. Therefore, a change in timings should be considered to enable all sections of employees and students to benefit from the programs.
7. The presentation of programs should be improved. The study recommends a strategic and thoughtful approach towards program presentation, taking into consideration various factors that contribute to audience engagement and comprehension.
8. An increase in programs and information on the history and culture of the country would contribute to national integrity.
9. Programs on the status of women, emphasizing the problems faced by women along with potential solutions, should be telecasted.

V. CONCLUSION

The survey results revealed notable percentages of respondents exceeding the surveyed thresholds, indicating a substantial engagement with television among different demographic groups. This underscores the importance of understanding and addressing the specific needs and interests of diverse communities. Initiatives should be undertaken to establish community television centers in villages, promoting access to a variety of documentary films that cater to the interests and needs of the local population. By establishing such centers at the village level, opportunities arise for educating and informing people about advancements in agriculture, industry, and societal issues. This can contribute to raising awareness about social and political conditions. The introduction of more channels can provide increased access to educational, informative, and entertaining programs, catering to a wider range of interests within the rural community. Allocating longer durations for regional language programs can cater to the linguistic and cultural preferences of the local audience. Increased telecasting of programs addressing social issues, coupled with information about relevant laws, can contribute to the community's understanding and potentially drive positive societal change. Recognizing the inconvenience of current timings, adjustments in the scheduling of UGC programs can ensure broader accessibility for students and employees alike. Enhancements in the presentation of programs can lead to a more engaging and effective viewing experience for the audience. An increase in programs and information on the history and culture of the country can foster a sense of national integrity within the community. Programs addressing the status of women, emphasizing challenges faced and potential solutions, can contribute to empowering women and fostering positive societal changes. In implementing these recommendations, it is possible to harness the potential of television media as a powerful tool for education, information dissemination, and cultural enrichment in rural communities. This study serves as a foundation for further research and initiatives aimed at optimizing the role of television in rural development.

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