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Indian Reality TV Shows: An Empirical Study on Perceptions

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Abstract

Television continues to be the most prominent entertainment medium in the Indian M&E industry. Viewers of reality television who are addicted to these daily programs often get deeply involved into any situation. Often, certain reality television shows are based on topics that have no thought process or concepts. However, some reality shows show positive things, which viewers can learn and apply in their daily life. The study is restricted to Amritsar District. For research 100 respondents from different places of Amritsar have been surveyed. Convenient non-probability sampling method has been used in the study. The study showed that people are interested to watch the reality shows rather than daily soaps but movies come first in the preference. There are a number of features due to which reality shows are becoming more popular like Cost effective, Emotional Connect, Relatedness, Family Appeal, Quick Results, etc.

Introduction

The advent of reality shows can be traced back to the forties with shows like Allen Funt's Candid Camera, that captured candid reactions of people to humorous tricks and prank. TV shows without stringent story-lines, soon became increasingly popular with the audience. Ordinary people captured in real-life situations seemed to amuse the audience, which was hitherto bombarded with ultra-dramatic soaps and movies.

Reality television broke the monotony to create interesting scripts and out-of-the box ideas that made them stand out from the run-of-the-mill shows. Although drama-lovers are still glued to their idiot boxes at prime time, reality shows are hogging the limelight big time.

Some of these reality shows are talent hunts, game shows, celebrity shows, documentary-style shows, makeover shows, or some of them are just plain voyeurism personified. However different their concepts might be, all the reality shows, intrinsically run on the same path. They put ordinary people or celebrities in real-life situations and allow peeping toms to enjoy the thrill of watching them!

Besides giving the audience the thrill and excitement of live un-edited action, reality television allows the audience to be a part of the show. Take for example *The American Idol*, or the moviemakers' favorite reality show- *On the Lot*, these shows allow the audience to choose the winner through a voting system. Although the credibility of these voting systems is debated about forever, the interactivity factor definitely fetches the show a lot of following.

Keywords

*Entertainment Industry,
Realityshow, involvement*

Indian Entertainment Industry

The Indian Media & Entertainment (M&E) industry is highly driven by strong consumption in non-metro and small cities, intense emergence of regional media and burgeoning new media businesses and formats. According to a report jointly prepared by KPMG and an industry body, the industry registered a growth of 12 per cent in 2011 over 2010. While television (TV) retains its top slot as an entertainment medium, segments like animation, VFX, digital media and gaming are up-coming as major media. Multiple movies crossed Rs 100 crores (US\$ 20.04 million)-business in domestic theatrical collections and Rs 30 crores (US\$ 6 million) mark in Cable & Satellite (C&S) rights.

Advertising spends across all media accounted for 41 per cent of the overall M&E industry revenues, aggregating to Rs 300 billion (US\$ 6 billion) while advertising revenues witnessed a growth of 13 per cent in 2011.

REALITY TV SHOWS OF INDIA Reality shows come from USA. The mother of this concept is European countries have given sizeable contribution as well. When in the year 1993 reality shows came no one thought that one day such reality shows would be life line of the TV channels. Reality Shows are fast replacing the daily 'daughter-in-law versus mother-in-law' soap television. The high TRPs of the reality shows made them the number one choice of every possible television channel. From Talent-Hunt shows, to dance dramas, to acting- flicks, talk shows, chat-shows, cookery shows, art and craft shows, astrology shows, the list is endless. All such shows have engulfed (flow over and swamp) most of the television space and they have a strong audience. Anything that strikes the emotional chord is an instant hit in our country. The reason for this is that we Indians are high on the emotional quotient and every Indian (even the most practical one) has an emotional soul hidden somewhere. The success of reality shows in India can be attributed to a great extent to this weakness of ours. Apart from this, the relief that these shows provide from the saas-bahu soaps, which currently dominate television, is another reason for their immense popularity.

Most Popular Reality Shows on Indian Television

- **MTV Bakra**

No one can ever forget Cyrus Broacha's grinning face and the confusion and bewilderment created amongst his victims. A wicked show with witty pranks followed by loads of laughter.

- **Kaun Banega Crorepati**

Amitabh Bachchan's stint on television that was perhaps the first reality show on Indian television to garner humongous audience response. The second season of the series was hosted by Shahrukh Khan but did not seem to fare just as well.

- **Indian Idol**

This show has been one of the most popular reality shows on Indian television and perhaps due to the voting factor. With boys next-door turning into

ultimate singing sensations, this show already has completed three seasons.

- **Sa Re Ga Ma**

What started as a humble talent show hosted by Sonu Nigam soon metamorphosed into an ultra-glam, uber dramatic reality show with the various celebrity judges like Himesh Reshamiya, Alka Yagnik, Abhijeet and Ismail Darbar constantly at loggerheads with each other.

- **Big Boss**

The Indian version of UK's Big Brother was the most sensational and controversial reality show in India. Although long forgotten Actor Rahul Roy emerged as the winner, it was people like Anupama Verma, Aryan Vaid (due to their on-air love-affair) and Rakhi Sawant (due to her in-your-face attitude) who got instant recognition from this show.

- **The Great Indian Laughter Challenge**

This hunt for India's biggest comedian created a laughter riot on air with almost all its contestants enjoying tremendous popularity. Star Judges Shekhar Suman and Navjot Singh Siddhu enjoyed great following too.

- **Nach Baliye**

An original concept that involved celebrity couples trained by their choreographers battling against each other in an entertaining dance competition. The show has celebrity judges like Saroj Khan, Malaika Arora Khan, Farhan Akhtar, Kunal Kohli, David Dhawan, Isha Koppikar and Vaibhavi Merchant. The first season was extremely popular and so was the second one, however the third season seems to be losing its charm.

- **Jhalak Dikha ja**

This was the Indian version of the hit show Dancing With the Stars, which was also very popular. The first season had celebs like Mona Singh, Mahesh Manjrekar and Shweta Salve as participants and Farah Khan, Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Shilpa Shetty on the judges panel. The show also had Shiamak Davar, Urmila Matondkar and Jeetendra on the judging panel whereas the participants included celebs like actress Sonali Kulkarni, anchor Mini Mathur and singer Mika.

Reality shows seem to be a huge trend on television, but anything that is popular has to bear the brunt of constant criticism and analysis. Controversies about these reality shows being 'planned and scripted' or the voting lines being a hoax continue to rise every now and then. Sometimes reality is stranger than fiction, they say! Well as for television, don't be surprised or shocked as yet...something far more real and far more strange might be on its way...till then...Enjoy Reality TV!

Reasons for popularity of Reality Shows:

- **Cost effective:** It is possible to tap a very large dedicated heterogeneous audience base at very less cost. This makes reality shows a very cost-effective

marketing tool and consequently has gained popularity.

- Emotional Connect: This not only attracts new customer base but keeps the existing customer base loyal because of the emotional- connect.
- Relatedness: Reality shows have a strong reflection of the dreams, struggle, and emotions of common-man. Hence people tend to relate very strongly to the characters of such shows.
- Family Appeal: Reality shows are mostly family catches. Grandparents, parents and children all watch such shows mostly together. The formats of most shows are such that they attract audience across age groups and genders.
- Quick Results: The formats of the reality shows have a built in quick response seeking factor from the audience.
- High Involvement Level: Most of the reality shows demand conscious as well as subconscious involvement of the audience.

In India people mostly watch Adventure reality shows, Celebrity reality shows, comedy reality shows, Game reality shows, Prank shows and also watch Talent hunt shows.

Objectives of the study :

- To study the perceptions toward Indian reality shows.
- To study the reasons behind participants and judges to join reality shows.
- To study the reasons for inviting guests to the reality shows.

Research Methodology

The data for the study was collected with the help of structured questionnaires. The questionnaire is self-administered. To develop a list of items for framing a questionnaire, existing literature is revised, brainstorming was done. The design of the research is descriptive in nature and also quantitative in nature. In this study we have used multiple cross sectional descriptive design, which produces the phenomenon in which the decision maker is interested. Primary data has been used. The sampling units are the general viewers. Viewers are from Patiala. For research 100 respondents from different places of Amritsar have been surveyed. In this study non-probability, convenient sampling method has been used.

Results & Discussion

Out of 100 respondents 61% were females and rest 39% were males.

Distribution of Respondents by age

Age	Respondents
Under 18	17
18 – 30	39
31 – 40	25
41 – 60	19
Over 60	0

It can be observed that 17% of them are under 18 years of age, 39% of them are between 18-30 years of age, 25% of them are between 31-40 years of age and rest 19% of them are between 41-60 years of age.

Hours spent on watching television:

Time	Respondents
1 hour or less	15
2 -3 hours	53
4 -5 hours	23
6 -7 hours	9
More than 7 hours	0

Programmes watched:

Programs	Respondents
News / Documentary	26
Sports	29
TV Drama	24
TV Comedy	32
TV Movie	39
Daily Soaps	21
Talk Shows	16
Reality Shows	45

62% of respondents said that they agree that they enjoy watching reality show and rest 38% of them say that they disagree that they enjoy watching reality show.

Involvement so that do not wish to change channels:

Agree	30
Disagree	32
Sometimes	38

30% agreed that they got so much involved that they did not want to change the channel, 32% disagreed and rest 38% of them agreed that sometimes they did not change channels.

I like being able to talk about reality TV shows with people I know.

Agree	62
Disagree	15
Sometimes	23

62% of respondents said that they agreed, 15% of them said that they disagreed and 23% of them said that they sometimes talked about reality TV shows.

I like reality TV shows because it puts me in a good mood.

Agree	39
Disagree	35
Sometimes	26

I like watching reality TV shows because I can relate to the participants.

Agree	23
Disagree	47
Sometimes	30

Watching reality TV shows makes me feel smarter than the participants in the show.

Agree	15
Disagree	53
Sometimes	32

Reason behind people participation in reality show

Showing Talent	36
Exposure	31
Money	15
Getting Good Platform	18

Reasons behind inviting guests in reality shows

Fame	31
Money	23
Exposure	25
Publicity	21

Reasons for inviting guests

Increasing TRP	37
Publicity of Guest's Upcoming event	39
To give honor to invited guests	24

Findings

The study concludes that though reality shows are among the most preferred way of entertainment through television, their popularity is decreasing & viewers now understand the motives of show makers. But still viewers would like to see them. The future of the reality shows is brighter than other shows as viewers believe that they are interesting.

- In this study we can see that people are interested to watch the reality shows rather than daily soaps but movies comes first in the preference.
- Though reality shows are full of controversies still majority of population prefer to watch the reality shows.
- It has been found that people are participating in the reality shows for various reasons but the main reason behind participating is that they are getting good platform and another reason is exposure.
- Mostly people believe that the celebrities participate in the reality shows because of publicity that they are getting from the reality shows.
- It was found that the main reason for inviting celebrities in the show is for publicity of guest's upcoming event.
- At the end the researcher found that viewers know that most of the reality shows are unreal and way of money making for marketers but still they prefer reality shows because they are interesting compared to daily soaps.
- Most of the viewers at one end believe that popularity of reality shows is declining but on the other end reality shows are more popular than daily soaps.

Suggestions

- Reality shows must be based on the cultural ethics and society we live in.
- There must be some check on the content as children get exposure to issues pre-maturely.
- Reality shows promoting social causes should be made as they make the public aware as well as motivate them to become Samaritans.
- Strict rules must be implemented to keep a check on language used in reality shows.
- Result criterion must be more transparent and must be based on the real test of talent.

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