



## POPULAR CARTOON PROGRAMS ON TELEVISION AND CHILDREN PERCEPTION

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### **Abstract**

*To attract their target audience, the channel organises a wide range of creative events on their website and in their city, such as in-camp activities, games, and quiz competitions. On the other hand, alternative approaches include marketing their own products as cultural commodities through websites, television cartoon shows, and giving away freebies with any FMCG product on the market in order to create a reciprocal bond between their target audience and the broadcaster. Because there are so many more international channels and programmes than there were in previous decades, it is more crucial than ever to consider the effects of these foreign cartoon programmes. The purpose of the study is to evaluate whether children between the ages of 11 and 13 can comprehend the concept of culture by looking into how popular animated cartoon programmes depict culture and what sorts of cultural values are embedded in them. The surveys discovered that parents discussed our traditions, rituals, and conduct with their children and were aware of the richness of Indian culture.*

***Keywords: Popular, Cartoon, Television, Children and Perception.***

### **Introduction**

One of the most well-known entertainment sectors nowadays that is admired by all facets of the public is Indian animation and interactive gaming. Despite the local animation industry's previous struggles, outsourcing by foreign nations has always been a multimillion dollar sector. The corporations that outsource work to Indian animation companies include household names like Walt Disney, Fox Entertainment, and Time Warner. Both financially and in terms of the advancement of professionalism, the rapidly expanding worldwide animation industry has benefited emerging nations like India. In 2005, the global animation industry generated between \$50 and \$70 billion in sales, according to NASSCOMM (National Association of Software and Services Companies) (Rayadurgam, 2005). Our own animation studios, such as Animation Bugs, Agaram Studios, TAN 90, Tata Elxsi, DQ Entertainment, and Wire frame Animation, among others, are now producing a number of cartoon shows. To meet the demands of worldwide commerce, cities like Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Thiruvananthapuram, and Kochi have animation production hubs with cutting-edge equipment (Kumar, 2003). To suit the needs of the entire world, they created high-quality studios, skilled crews, and production facilities. Now, the Cartoon Network channel is purchasing Indian-produced programming (Rayadurgam, 2005). New episodes of Cartoon Network India's well-known shows were released, and several events centred on the network's programming were held. The channel hosts a variety of imaginative events on their website as well as in their hometown to draw in their target population, including in-camp activities, games, and quiz contests. To establish a mutual link between their target audience and the broadcaster, on the other hand, alternate methods include marketing their own products as cultural commodities through websites, television cartoon shows, and giving away freebies with any FMCG product on the market. For instance, Cartoon Network and POGO achieved two thirds of economic growth in 2011 through merchandise.



## **The Evolution of Children's Television**

India first had colour television in 1982. Doordarshan was the only channel broadcasting content at the time. The first mythical stories to break audience records were shows like Ramayana (1987) and Mahabharata (1989). The liberal policies of the central government under Prime Minister NarasimhaRao led to an invasion of foreign television shows starting in 1991. Foreign investors started their own channels in India as a result of the government's introduction of national socio-economic reforms. We can consider the Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse broadcast in November 1995 to mark the start of the modern era of children's television, even though some broadcast historians place the start far earlier (Cy Schneider, 1989). It was the first kids' show to air one hour a day, five days a week, at the hours when most kids were at home. Children's product advertisers never missed an opportunity to promote their goods as the programme grew to be a big popular with young viewers. In 1955, CBS debuted Captain Kangaroo, the longest-running programme in history. When compared to today's situation, some people believe that the early years of children's television, which began before 1955, were a golden era. Because the networks intended to sell televisions, early programming was broadcast in the evening. Additionally, they aimed to show how television brought families together by offering programming for all ages, including kids. Locally rather than nationally, children's programming was well received.

The majorities of children's local television programmes were a mix of live broadcasts and theatrically produced film clips. Most programmes had a host who played vintage Popeye cartoons for the station's daily audience of kids, who were then a huge hit. Since few production companies or broadcasters made significant financial investments in creating new television programmes for children, they rarely developed original programming. Local live performances and vintage Popeye cartoons and movies were typically televised due to a lack of appropriate sponsorship. Even the cereal sector, which traditionally targeted youngsters with radio advertisements, made a relatively gradual transition to television. Cartoons were initially bought from motion movies instead of stock. When there was a lack of movies, the stations hoarded as many as they could and aired them on Saturday mornings. Television used to be nothing more than a storage facility for vintage animation films, and they did nothing to promote the creation of new cartoons, which was practically impossible at the time. Additionally, the full animation generated by major studios for theatrical release could not be afforded by television. The makers employed novel methods while making use of fewer graphics to solve this issue. Limited animated cartoon programming quickly took over children's television, and live personalities started to go away. The growth of children's programming brought in a lot of revenue for broadcasters, turning it almost into a lucrative venture. Although some parents and viewers claim that the only worthwhile programming on television is a few vintage cartoons, television stations have demonstrated a strong interest in presenting kid-friendly programming throughout the week. We now have a lot of children's television as a result. The enormous sum of money spent on children's television has spurred the creation of numerous new series in various media.

## **Television and children**

Both fiction and fantasies can be found on television (comic or dramatic programs). The likelihood of a child bringing up anything on television is highest. If a child enjoys a certain show, he or she will likely get everyone to watch it, and he or she will never forget to bring up the show they do not. While television can amuse viewers without having an effect on their thinking, it frequently has a persuading effect on them that causes them to accept a certain thought or act in a certain way. Children between the ages of two and five struggle to comprehend that television shows and characters are fictional,



according to Lyle (1972). These young kids think that television characters know the viewer just as well as the viewer knows the characters from television, living within the television set. Additionally, these studies show that young toddlers engage in para-social interaction with television characters and perceive them to be genuine individuals and friends with whom they can play in real life. Thus, for young children who become emotionally and psychologically absorbed in it, television has evolved into a realistic world (Noble, 1975).

Since 1950, parents, media specialists, practitioners, communication experts, and social critics have studied the effects of television. Children's metacognitive, social, expressive, and other behaviours are influenced by television (Mares & Woodard, 2001). Television provides illustrations of several facets of family life and dyadic communication. Children are drawn to television because cartoon programmes provide a variety of kid-friendly characters. Children are more likely to watch television shows that have multiple child characters (Schmitt, Anderson & Collins, 1999). Psychologists began looking into children's viewing habits, their motivation for watching TV, and their responses. Their research showed that violent television programming, and particularly cartoon programmes, unfairly exploited young children's naivety to promote aggressive behaviour. The effect on kids varies depending on the type of cartoon programme and their age. Each cartoon programme has a unique pattern of influence over kids. Additionally, the age of the child affects how much power they have over purchasing. A child's pressure to make purchases increases as they get older. Children never respond inadvertently to television. Children are drawn to the goods that are intended for them and that they typically utilise, such as toys, candies, and snacks.

For kids, watching television is the activity that comes naturally and eventually develops into a habit. However, there may be major consequences if a child watches television for four to five hours a day. Children between the ages of five and six are enthusiastic consumers of marketing messaging. A child's interest in children's television significantly decreases between the ages of 11 and 12. The middle group, aged seven to nine, is the one that enjoys and pays attention to cartoons the most. This describes the dedicated television viewer. Children aged one to five cannot read, thus they are greatly influenced by television and frequently watch it for long periods of time. They are only able to comprehend parts of a given communication; they are unable to comprehend full messages. They can understand topics with properly defined visuals. This demographic has a limited attention span, making it challenging for them to follow a lengthy story. For individuals studying communication, psychology, or sociology, analysing cartoons may provide a number of advantages. Since cartoon characters frequently resolve problems in television shows, kids view them as role models for how to behave in real-world situations. Evra and Kline (1990), on the other hand, noted that young children could act in the same way as a cartoon character because they lack the mental capacity to link their actions to negative outcomes. From the perspective of an adult, children's cognitive capacities are different and they lack the experience necessary to comprehend television. Research on children's television comprehension has benefited from the insights provided by Jean Piaget's (1928, 1950, and 1954) work as well as that of American cognitive developmental experts. Additionally, the most recent studies on how well kids grasp television messages show that kids of different ages have different ways of digesting what they see on television. Both their cognitive capacities and their comprehension of their social environment evolve as children get older. The way that television messages are perceived at various ages depends on these developmental talents. When compared to adult standards, a young child at the age of seven has a somewhat limited manner of perception, thinking, and social interaction.



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### **Statement of the problem**

Out of a total population of 1.21 billion people, 31.1 percent are children between the ages of 0 and 14 in India, according to Cardoza (2002). Children aged 4 to 14 make about 85% of viewers of the children's television category. They prefer cartoon programming over regular programming. The majority of foreign animation businesses primarily target our children in order to advertise their products and spread their culture, as children are the target audience for cartoon programming. Cartoon television on a regular basis may cause our kids to adopt the cultural norms and values of those alien cultures. It is now more important than ever to look into the impact of these foreign cartoon programmes because there are so many more foreign channels and programmes now than there were in past decades.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To investigate how popular animated cartoon programmes depict culture and what kinds of cultural values are ingrained in them.
2. To determine whether kids between the ages of 11 and 13 could understand the idea of culture.
3. To determine if cartoon characters have adopted the persona of humans.
4. To determine whether cartoons have an impact on kids' conduct.
5. To determine whether gender differences in children's preferences, perceptions, and behaviours with regard to culture and cartoon shows.

### **The need for the Study**

The aim of the study is to comprehend how youngsters perceive and relate to cultural representations in cartoon programming. India's culture is an essential component of daily living. India has advanced in numerous fields, including science and technology, engineering, and medicine, all of which are undergoing rapid transformation. However, we still value maintaining our culture highly. This can be understood by looking at how many parents choose to return to India when their children have grown up. In this context, we should seriously consider the media programming, particularly that aimed at youngsters, that introduces foreign cultures into Indian homes. More than three-quarters of cartoon programming nowadays is imported from various other nations. There is a greater likelihood that our children will adopt those cultural values as their own. Therefore, it is important to investigate how cartoon programming affects kids.

### **Review of Literature**

India, with 138 million television households, is the third-largest television market in the world. Over the previous two decades, the Indian television industry's annual growth has doubled. In India's media and entertainment sector, 2011 was a year of consolidation. The Indian government began merging domestic media companies with international ones. The media companies have formed a 50:50 share joint venture with other media companies in western countries (Tata, 2011).



For certain countries to accept the start of globalisation, a case study frequently used in cultural studies would be helpful. "If you mix some vodka into the milk your cat drinks, eventually the cat will develop an addiction and crave the vodka-laced milk. Similar to that example is the gradual dissemination of civilizations to the populace. The post-soviet republics experienced globalisation in comparably less time than western nations, which came as a shock to their populations. Western nations had abundant opportunity to implement globalisation. They are currently going through culture shock since they have lived for years in a single cultural and ideological setting (Kuruoglu, 2004).

According to Agrawal (2009), we watched programmes created by our own people for our own people up till the year 1992. Therefore, strange cultural beliefs and images could not have any impact on our kids. Later on, though, the problem took on a new dimension. Due to the entrance of hundreds of foreign satellite television shows being broadcast through either Indian or foreign television channels, we are unable to say the same today. For the vital benefit of foreign profit-making interests, foreign cultural values are primarily imposed on host country values through television in general and cartoon programming in particular (Sengupta&Frith, 1997).

### **Methodology**

To investigate the cultural values present in the two well-liked cartoon television series, the quantitative content analysis methodology was chosen. In order to reveal patterns and relationships that could otherwise go overlooked, content analysis is used to methodically explain a phenomenon. In previous studies (Alexander et al. 1998, Atkin and Heals 1977, Barcus 1975, Condry, Bence and Scheibe 1988, Doolittle and Pepper 1975, Kunkel and Gantz 1992, Stern and Harmon 1984, Winick et al.1973), this strategy was shown to be a useful technique for interpreting children's television programming.

### **Research Design**

The study combines descriptive and analytical elements. It uses a deductive strategy to support theories that lead to hypotheses, facts, and conclusions. In a descriptive study design, evaluating a sample at one particular time is the main objective. On the one hand, the study utilised a survey to look into how viewers perceived how two well-known television cartoon programmes represented culture, and on the other, it used the same survey to look into the television text's content. This project was started to better understand how culture is portrayed in kid-friendly cartoon television shows and whether kids understand and follow those elements in real life.

### **Findings and Discussion**

One third of the amusing tales the parents recounted were solely moral tales, while another third were humorous tales of adventure and horror. Regardless of the genre, 90% of the stories had moral principles. At the conclusion of each story, 68% of the parents expressly stated the moral. They thought it was customary to provide morals at the conclusion of stories. Additionally, a sizable portion of the kids claimed to uphold certain moral principles. In fact, a higher percentage of females (89%) said they adhered to the morals shown in the stories. When the Chi-Square test was used to see whether there was a significant correlation between gender and the morals the children claimed to uphold, it was discovered that there was. At the 1% level of significance, ( $\chi^2 = 6.938 > 6.635$ ). Similar to this, there was a strong correlation between the students' moral behaviour and the medium of instruction. More English-medium pupils (88%) than Tamil-medium students professed to uphold values. At the 1% level of significance, ( $\chi^2 = 6.832 > 6.635$ ) However, there was no conclusive link between the management style and moral behaviour in kids.



However, the amount of time kids spent watching TV was far more than the amount of time they spent hearing stories from their parents. Children watch television for about 5 hours (per day) on average, up 4% annually, according to TAM Media Research 2010. However, in the current poll, 46% of girls and 37% of boys claimed they didn't watch television on weekdays. On weekends, about a quarter of both boys and girls did not watch television. On the other hand, a sizeable 12 percent of them spent weekends watching television for longer than 5 hours. The gender and the amount of time spent watching television throughout the workday were significantly correlated. Boys spent more time watching television than did girls. (At a 1% level of significance,  $\chi^2 = 26.303 > 6.812$ .)

Half of the boys and girls watched English cartoon programmes, while the other half did not. The gender of those who watched English cartoon programmes was not significantly correlated. Sixty percent of respondents said they watched the programmes just for fun, while forty percent said they did it to pass the time. None of them used television to gather knowledge or for academic purposes. They were interested in other television genres like humour, music, movies, science, and nature even though more than half the respondents (57%) exclusively watched children's networks. Pogo was their second favourite channel, viewed by an overwhelming majority of them (86%) after Cartoon Network. Particularly school life-based programmes were favoured by three-fourths of the respondents. 64 percent of parents of boys and girls agreed that the content of cartoon programmes was suitable for their children based on their perception of the programmes' age-appropriateness. Only 49% of them were aware that the majority of cartoon programmes are produced elsewhere.

### Conclusions

The study found that parents were aware of the depth of Indian culture and that they also talked to their kids about our traditions, customs, and behaviour. According to the current study, children were taught several Indian cultural values like respect for elders, hospitality, unity, and tolerance, and they practised these values on a daily basis. Despite being drawn to animated shows like Ben 10, they do not alter their conduct as a result of watching them. In conclusion, it can be concluded that kids do copy some behaviours from cartoons. However, they always pass in their own time, just like passing clouds. However, the behaviour of kids between the ages of 11 and 13 is more effectively influenced by parental and familial influence. Even while it now serves as a babysitter and a storyteller, television cannot take the place of parents as role models for children. The children are tied by the family bond, at least in a nation like India, where it is still strong.

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