Vol.1 No.4 2020
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2020.048

Critically Evaluate the Contribution Made by Feminist Research of Media with Soap Opera as an Example

Zhong Yi*
School of Communication&Media; Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, Korea
*Corresponding author, e-mail: 576720305@qq.com

***Abstract**: With the popularization and development of mass media, it has played a great role in not only entertaining the people but by educating them about the issues and health of the people. Unlike the mainstream theory's disdain for soap operas, feminism has deconstructed and reconstructed the concept of gender in research, and is committed to helping women viewers of soap operas gain respect and rights and has showed a path to the people regarding understanding and solving the issues related to the health of the women.*

***Key words**: Mass media; Feminist; Soap opera*

Introduction

This is an era of information and technology advancement which could be termed as an era of communication and globalization. The media is playing an important role in delivering the information at a global level, Moreover the cultures, values, norms, believes, life-styles, issues, economic condition, wars and general issues are being telecasted and conveyed through the medium of media. The media also focus on the ideas to resolve the issues regarding to personal lives, economy, society or the country. This essay focuses on the role of media regarding the issues faced by women and possible ways to overcome issues. Moreover, the role of media is reshaping the behavior, attitudes, life-styles and society culture of the people and the relationship of media with the audience.

Media

The resources that are utilized in order to deliver the message or communicate with the audiences or to send or receive information are termed as a "medium". The resources that are utilized in this cause such as television, internet, radio, magazine and newspaper is known as the media. The medium through the message is communicated to the large number of audience is said to be the "mass media", whereas the interpersonal communication is done between one person with another person (Livesey, 2011).

According to Cohen (1963), the media has changed the people and influence them to think about something instead of what to think. The media plays a part in persuading an individual's mood and thinking towards someone and something and the atmosphere & circumstances around which shows them the way about how and why to think, respect or take decision regarding something. It is significant to understand the quality of the entertainment provided to the audiences with the help of media, moreover, the message that is being

conveyed should also be considered because the media influences the thinking and perception of the audience regarding the issues of the life.

The media has found as a platform that provides information and news that are important for the people even the business organizations, students, children, male & female in fact any one can get the required piece of information from the media moreover, the people can engage in social networking by using such sites and can get in touch with their friends and families and can upload pictures, messages and information so that the people can feel connected to the related ones all the time. Moreover, the media has provided a platform of discussing their opinion with the other people and can get to know the experiences of other people as well which can help them in solving issues that are related to them. In addition to it the organizations can even connect with their customers to provide better feedback and can understand their issues (Bradley, n.d.).

Steinberg (1995), has stated that the Mass Communication that is the media are playing a significant role in displaying the culture and trends of the people. The people those are more involved in socializing now days write blogs, a developing relationship with the others that were not even thought about in the past years. The Government and the organizations are also getting advantage from the Mass Media and are able to know the preferences of the people. The organizations now days are able to track the trend that is moving globally and can provide better product and services to their customers. The media has played a great role in making the world look like a global village. Furthermore the organizations with the help of the media are able to focus on different cultures of the people around the globe, understand the issues, and are working in solving the issues and giving the people the ideas to resolve them. However, it is also concerned with entertaining the people while educating.

According to Ahmed (1991), Woman is kept down internationally at all the levels whether it is related to social, economic or political aspects. The perspective of feminism could be explained in three ways liberal, radical and socialist. The liberal feminist argues that women should be treated equal to men and should be provided emancipation. The radical feminism is related to the men who suppresses women whereas the social feminist is related to the right of female to have the power of decision making (Ashraf & Zaheen, 2010).

According to McQuail (1994), the study regarding the mass communication depends upon the basis of effects and impact of media or that the media has an important impact on the lives of the audience. The impact of media is divided into four periods in the first phase the media ruled the strategic- propaganda through which the messages that were conveyed through media persuaded the approach, feelings and manners of the people. Klapper (1960), stated that the second phase modified the concept and theory of strong effects of media. According to Neumann (1973), exploring the new and strong effects of media was conducted in the third stage. The fourth phase is also termed as social-constructivism where, the social reality is impacted by the mass media by structuring the figure different from originality that is predicted and mounded.

According to Tuchman (1978) the mass media positions the structure of something that the audience uses to judge, understand and talk about in the community. Media is playing a great role in impacting our lives day-by-day and differently. It is not based on only reality but is modified as per the requirements of the audience demands and hopes. In addition to it the message that is conveyed through the media is construed, accepted or rejected by the audiences as per their community and environment (Zoonen, 1994).

Vol.1 No.4 2020
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2020.048

The post-modern individuality is created according to the picture represented on the media and consumerism. It could be said that the individuals modify by their personality according to what they see over the media and therefore, the identity could be transformed anytime. For example, the ads, latest fashions that runs over the television keep changing the character and the image with the passage of the time and does not stick to one kind of a representation all the time. These images creates a perception as the role model for many of the audience and the try to copy their ways, adapt their style and attitude (Kellner, 2003). Taylor (2003), has stated that the behaviour of a person is directed by the society instead that they are hereditary transferred or occurs naturally in an individual.

Gender plays a significant role in the media whether it is related to advertising, movies, kids programs, books, magazines, newspaper or sports (Eisend, 2010; Rouner, Slater & Rodriguez, 2003). The role of gender in the media is prevailing, masculinise are symbolized as competitive, independent, strong, logical, aggressive and confident while feminism is usually represented as caring, encouraging, calm, helpful, sensitive and more appearance concerned (Wood & Reich, 2006). The media usually demonstrates the women more negative as compare to the men as stated by Rouner et al. (2003). Moreover, the women are show casted as a sex purpose in the media (Morris, 2006). According to Dill & Thill (2007), in order to grab the attention even the cartoon and the video games are extremely sexualized demonstrating the attractive body of the females unnecessarily. According to Ryerson. The mass media most specially the broadcast-entertainment media played a great role in carrying out a huge change in the replicating and reproducing behavior and in encouraging the health issues that are needed to sort. Such as, the entertainment serial Soap Opera that telecasted on the Radio and Televisions in India, US, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mexico, Brazil, Kenya, Niger and St. Lucia brought a huge difference and impacted highly on the attitudes of the audiences regarding to health problems in a family targeting specially the woman such as evading HIV-AIDS and planning a proper family.

Soap Opera was born when the technology got advanced and the way to televise the pictures and sounds in the homes. Soap Opera was the first show ever ran over the radio and then on the television. In 1930's Soap Opera was introduced over the Radio in US. It was sponsored by the manufacturers of washing powder and soap, such as P&G, Lever Bro, and Colgate-Palmolive, hence named as SOAP Opera. It featured families and focused on their problems however, some of the episodes touched the hearts of the audiences and became history (Copeland, 1991).

The Soap Opera Was telecasted at the day times all the week and targeted specially the housewives. Soap Opera was based on a continued that grab the attention of audience and made them curios to know what is going to happen the next day in the serial and how are they are going to solve their problems. Soap Opera was telecasted in the prime time also and got the attention of a huge viewers including woman mainly (Anonymous, 2012).

As per the Population Institute, the serial of Soap Opera has helped to reform the social behavior of the people around the world and has made a huge and affirmative contribution. It helped the people in recognizing the serious problems regarding planning a family, reproductive health, preventing HIV-AIDS and taking action against the violence woman faces. One of the major contributions of Soap Opera is that they distributed the whole message into daily serials and grabbed the attention of major audience and created a bond with them that, the audience started to follow the characters and grabbed so much information about the issues regarding the unsocial life and health of the woman specially. Moreover, the characters in the Soap Opera became role

model for many of the people and helped the viewers in reshaping their culture and life styles (Population Institute, 2014).

Bergman (2006), Soap Opera found out a very innovative of "edutainment" that influence the behaviour of the people in the current years. The serial Soap Opera deliver the huge variety of information in form of a serial for example, Soul City, which was telecasted in South Africa in, got popular embarked upon solving many issues such as, HIV-AIDS and rape (Cassidy, 2008; Peltzer & Promtussananon, 2003). Another serial of Soap Opera, Family House according to Elkamel (1998), figured out the social issues including AIDS, Addiction of drug, marriage of children, infection of respiration and home accidents in Egypt.

Adams et al. (2007), stated that Soap Opera has portrayed so many issues regarding the health and has helped the society in changing and shaping their behaviors and attitudes in order to minimize and reduce the health issues emerging in the society. The people that are engaged in making these kinds of programmes that are promoting health have found a successful method in encouraging the healthy behavior of people. The media has played a tremendous role in protecting the health of a woman and Soap Opera has telecasted many of the programmes focusing specially on the family planning. A very good example is the "Telenovela" telecasted in Mexico that promoted family planning.

Chatterji (2008), found out that looking at the era of 2000 Soap Opera focused on communicating and delivering a message over the liberation of woman. Soap Opera has focused on freedom and liberation of woman, criticism on religion of people, their values, a healthy life-style and an adultery problems relating to homosexuality and their impact in the people (Hamburger, 2001; Chong et al., 2008; Neto, 2001).Chong et al. (2008), have stated that the Soap Opera has focused to deliver a message that it costs a lot to brought up a children in a good way and to have a small family so that they won't be burdened and could live a happy life because the children needs great care and sensitivity.

According to Klein (2010), that the mass media are not only considering on delivering or entertaining the people rather they are focusing more on the social issues and their preventions. A Strategy of edutainment is being used by the directors and maker of the T.V. shows and has become popular in media. Entertainment-education that is being adopted by the media has a clear goal on focusing on the social issues and educating the people moreover, entertainment-education is not considered as a communication theory but, moreover it is considered as a strategy to broadcast and circulate the possible attitudes to reshape the behavior of the people in order to reduce the social problems (Singhal & Rogers, 2002). In addition to it interview with the makers of the Soap Opera disclosed that resolving the social issues cannot served at first but the characters have to show the issues and then come up with the solution (Coleman, 2008).

According to Azalanshah & Hamzah (2012), the most admired program in the local viewers was the Western Soaps whereas; American Soaps focused more on life-styles, Sexuality and risk associated to the Malay Culture. Soap Operas are known at an international level and contributing to many of the similar structure, formats and characters including romance, family issues, suspense and melodrama (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008). The Soap Opera has allowed the Malay woman to become modern by telecasting the programs and provided them with opportunities so that they can involve themselves the way the world is moving. The Malay woman became interested in the episodes of Asian Soaps because they more related with the issues arising at the domestic level and the stories were connected to their ordinary life such as, family issues, divorce problems,

unnecessary pregnancy issues and self independence (Wahab, 2006).

Hobson (2003), has argued that the Soap Opera has got the attention by representing the cultures, traditions, norms and values of the people rather entertaining the people by showing different comedy programs. The Soap Opera has promoted and has show-casted the life-style of the middle class families and has also attracted many of the audiences that can relate their lives, culture and traditions with these kind of life-styles.

Conclusion

The advancements in the media and the communication platform had a great impact in reshaping the life and social culture and issues of the people the media has played a great role in not only entertaining the people but by educating them about the issues and health of the people. Soap Opera has showed a path to the people regarding understanding and solving the issues related to the health of the women. Moreover it has educated the people regarding the importance of family planning and preventing the serious diseases like HIV-AIDS, Cervical cancer, Respiratory dis-functioning and other health issues related to women. It could be concluded that the media has showed a sense of responsibility of representing different cultures and understanding the issues the women are facing all over the globe. The episodes of Soap Opera has allowed the women to think about themselves, take care of their health, move with the world and get modernized in a way that it could help them saving their-selves with so many diseases, social issues and rape.

Reference

Adams, et al. (2007). Portrayal of health-related behaviours in popular UK television soap operas. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 61(7), pp. 575-577.

Anonymous. (2012). The Continuing Story of Soap Opera's in Kenya. Kenya Forum. Retrieved from: http://www.kenyaforum.net/2012/03/28/the-continuing-story-of-soap-operas-in kenya/

Ashraf, M.K., & Zaheen, B. (2010). Portrayal of Women by Star Plus Operas: A Feministic Perspective. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 13(2), pp. 365-378.

Azalanshah, M., & Hamzah, A. (2012). Imagining Transactional Modernity in Contemporary Malaysia: Manay Women, Asian Soap Operas, and Moral Capabilities. *Asian Women*, 28(1).

Bergman, M.J. (2006). A formative approach to strategic message targeting through soap operas: Using selective processing theories. *Health Communication*, 19(1), pp. 11-18.

Bradley, C.J. (n.d.). The Four Functions of Mass Communication. Retrieved from: <smallbusiness.chrom.com/four-functions-mass-communication-56326.html>

Cassidy, J. (2008). The soap opera that saves lives. *BMJ*, 336(7653), pp. 1102-1103.

Chatterji, S. (2008). India Together: Looking Back at Hum Log. Retrieved from:<http://www.indiatogether.org/2008/jul/wom-humlog.htm.>

Chong, et al. (2008). *Soap operas and fertility: Evidence from Brazil*. Bureau for Research and Analysis of Development (BREAD), Working Paper, Duke University.

Chua, B.H., & Iwabuchi, K. (2008). *East Asian Pop Culture. Analysing the KoreanWave. Aberdeen*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Cohen, B.C. (1963). *The Press and Foreign Policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Coleman, S. (2008). The depiction of politicians and politics in British soaps. *Television and*

New Media, 9(3), pp. 197–219.

Copeland, M.A. (1991). *Soap Opera History (First Edition)*. Bdd Promotional Book Co.

Dill, K., & Thill, K. (2007). Video Game Characters and the Socialization of Gender Roles: Young People's Perceptions Mirror Sexist Media Depictions. *Sex Roles*, 57, pp. 851-864.

Eisend, M. (2010). A Meta-analysis of Gender Roles in Advertising. *Journal of the Academy*, n.p..

Elkamel, F.M. (1998). Soap operas may be good for health: impact evaluation of the Egyptian soap opera, 'Family House'. *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*, 4(1), pp. 178-180.

Hamburger, E. (2001). *Telenovela, Gender and Demography in Brazil*. XXIV General PopulationConference of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. Salvador, Brazil.

Hobson, D. (2003). *Soap Opera*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kellner, D. (2003). *Cultural Media*, Ed. Institutul European.

Klapper, J. (1960). *The Effects of Mass Communication*. Newyork : Free Press.

Klein, B. (2010). An episode a day: the instructional value of health-related reality programming. In Baruh, L., & Park, J.H. (Eds.). *Reel Politics: Reality Television as a Platform for Political Discourse*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 182-197.

Livesey, C. (2011). Defining the Mass Media. *Sociology CentralMarketing Science*, 38, pp. 418-440.

McQuail, D. (1994). *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction (3rd Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Media, 47, pp. 435-454.

Peltzer, K., & Promtussananon, S. (2003). Evaluation of Soul City School and Mass Media Life Skills Education among Junior Secondary School Learners in South Africa. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 31(8), pp. 825-834.

Population Institute. (2014). Soap Operas: Making A Difference in DevelopingNations. Retrieved from: https://www.populationinstitute.org/resources/populationonline/issue/1/7/

Rios-Neto, E. (2001). *Television, value constructs, and reproductive behaviour in Brazilian Excluded communities*. IUSSP XXIV General Population Conference.

Rouner, D., Slater, M., & Rodriguez, M. (2003). Adolescent Evaluation of Gender Role and Sexual Imagery in Television Advertisements. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic*, n.p..

Ryerson, W.N. (n.d.). The Effectiveness of Entertainment Mass Media in Changing Behavior. Retrieved from:www.populationmedia.org/wpcontent/uploads/2007/08/EFFECTIVENESS-OF-ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION-012609.pdf

Singhal, A., & Rogers, E.M. (2002). A theoretical agenda for entertainment-education. *Communication Theory*, 12(2), pp. 117-135. Sociology, 31, pp. 300-311.

Steinberg, S. (1995). *Introduction to Communication Course Book 1: The Basics*. Juta & Company Ltd.

Taylor, F. (2003). Content Analysis and Gender Stereotypes in Children's Books. n.p..

Tuchman, G. (1978). *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press.

Wahab, J.A. (2006). *Perkembangan industry television of Malaysia: The Development of Malaysia Television Industry: A Historical Perspective*. Penang: USM Press, pp. 163-191.

Wood, J., & Reich, N. (2006). Gendered Communication Styles. In *Intercultural Communication: Areader*. 11th Edition, pp. 177-186.

Zoonen, L.V. (1994). *Feminist Media Studies*. London: Sage Publications.