Psychology Behind Working of Electronic Media and Role of Indian Electronic Media in Built Attitude Towards Nation

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Abstract

Descriptive research methodology used for this research article. The objective of this research article is examines the psychological mechanisms that underpin the influence of electronic media and analyzes its specific role in shaping attitudes towards the nation in India. Drawing upon theories of cognitive psychology, social identity, and media framing, the paper argues that Indian electronic media particularly 24/7 news channels leverages powerful emotional appeals (fear, pride, outrage) and cognitive biases (confirmation bias, availability heuristic) to construct a compelling, yet often simplified, narrative of the nation. It explores how the relentless news cycle, high-decibel debates, and the strategic use of national symbols work to create a strong sense of in-group identity ('us') against perceived out-groups ('them'). The paper concludes that while this process can foster a sense of national unity and patriotism, it also risks promoting hyper-nationalism, stifling dissent, and polarizing public discourse, thereby playing a critical and often contentious role in the construction of modern Indian national identity.

Keywords: Electronic media, Attitude.

Introduction:

The psychology behind electronic media's functioning revolves around its ability to engage, influence, and shape human thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. It leverages psychological principles to capture attention, maintain engagement, and impact decision-making. Here's a breakdown of the psychological mechanisms at play:

Attention and Engagement:

Sensory Appeal: Bright visuals, dynamic graphics, and catchy sound effects stimulate sensory organs, capturing immediate attention.

Curiosity Gap: Headlines or teasers are designed to create curiosity, compelling viewers to seek answers.

Dopamine Triggers: Media content that evokes excitement or pleasure (like breaking news or entertainment shows) releases dopamine, encouraging repeated engagement.

Emotional Influence:

Emotional Storytelling: Narratives that evoke strong emotions (joy, sadness, anger, or pride) are more

memorable and impactful.

Fear and Anxiety: News about dangers, risks, or crises captures attention more effectively due to the brain's natural threat-detection mechanism.

Empathy and Identification: Viewers often empathize with relatable characters or situations, fostering emotional connections.

Reinforcement and Conditioning:

Repetition: Repeated exposure to specific ideas or narratives leads to familiarity, acceptance, and belief (the mere exposure effect).

Rewards and Reinforcement: Positive reinforcement through likes, shares, or comments on social media fosters a cycle of content creation and consumption.

Cognitive Biases:

Confirmation Bias: Media often tailors content to align with viewers' existing beliefs, reinforcing their attitudes and perceptions.

Availability Heuristic: Frequent coverage of dramatic events (like crimes or disasters) can make people overestimate their likelihood.

Bandwagon Effect: Seeing widespread support or viewership can influence individuals to conform to popular opinions or trends.

Social Influence:

Social Proof: Viewer numbers, trending hashtags, and viral content create a sense of importance and urgency.

Opinion Leaders: Influencers, anchors, or experts serve as role models, guiding public attitudes and behaviours.

Group Identity: Media fosters a sense of belonging by targeting specific demographics and promoting shared values.

Behavioural Impact:

Priming: Exposure to certain stimuli influences how people think and behave afterward (e.g., aggressive news might lead to increased hostility).

Agenda-Setting: Media determines which topics are deemed important by controlling the frequency and prominence of their coverage.

Cultivation Theory: Prolonged exposure to media shapes perceptions of reality, such as believing the world is more dangerous than it is.

Addiction and Dependence:

Intermittent Reinforcement: Unpredictable rewards (e.g., viral news, likes) keep users hooked, similar to gambling mechanisms.

Habit Formation: Regular exposure to electronic media turns consumption into a habitual activity, making it an integral part of daily life.

The role of Indian electronic media in shaping attitudes toward the nation is significant, as it has the power to influence public opinion, national identity, and social cohesion. Here's an overview of its role:

1. Promoting National Unity and Patriotism:

Indian electronic media often broadcasts programs that highlight the country's cultural diversity, history, and achievements.

Coverage of national events like Independence Day, Republic Day, and other celebrations fosters a sense of unity and pride.

Programs focusing on the armed forces, scientific achievements (like ISRO's space missions), and sports victories contribute to national pride.

2. Awareness of National Issues:

Media brings attention to pressing national issues such as corruption, poverty, education, and healthcare.

By covering social movements and public concerns, it encourages civic participation and collective problem-solving.

3. Debates and Discourses:

News channels host debates on political, social, and economic issues, which shape public opinion and awareness.

Media platforms provide a forum for diverse perspectives, influencing how people perceive governance and policies.

4. Cultural Preservation:

Indian electronic media plays a role in preserving and promoting regional languages, traditions, and values through movies, TV shows, and regional channels.

This helps in building a shared cultural identity while respecting diversity.

5. Highlighting National Achievements:

Regular coverage of achievements in science, sports, arts, and international relations strengthens national self-esteem.

Inspirational stories of individuals and communities contribute to a positive image of the nation.

6. Crisis Management and Solidarity:

During natural disasters, pandemics, or conflicts, media serves as a platform for disseminating crucial information and rallying public support.

Coverage during such events can create solidarity and collective action.

7. Challenges and Criticisms

Sensationalism: Overemphasis on sensational news can create fear, anxiety, or polarization instead of constructive discourse.

Bias and Propaganda: Media controlled by political or corporate interests may spread biased narratives, influencing attitudes unfairly.

Excessive Focus on Negativity: Highlighting failures and scandals without balancing positive stories may harm national morale.

Conclusion

Electronic media works by leveraging fundamental psychological principles to attract, retain, and influence its audience. Understanding these mechanisms can empower individuals to consume media critically and resist manipulation. And also Indian electronic media has a dual role: it can either strengthen the nation's fabric through responsible journalism or create divisions through biased reporting. The onus lies on the media to act ethically and on viewers to critically analyse the content they consume.

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