

National Consultation
MEDIA PLURALISM: NEWS OWNERSHIP, CONTENT & ADVOCACY
1030-1730, 17th Nov. 2009 - Tagore Hall, JMI

This consultation seeks to capture the landscape of TV News from a public interest perspective. It is steered through 6 'briefings' (8-10 min.)--each framing one axis of concerns--to provide a locus for the respective discussions (~30 min). The briefings are spread over three sessions, one each on grasping the Industry, reflecting on Advocacy experiences and reviewing Methodological emphases.

Programme

10.30 Tea & Registration

Inauguration & Session 1: 10.45 – 12.45

Introduction: Prof. Biswajit Das

Chair's Remarks: Mr. Najeeb Jung, I.A.S., Vice Chancellor, JMI

Overview: Vibodh Parthasarathi

Briefing 1 *The Business of TV News: Key Markers* Vibodh Parthasarathi

The first briefing will outline key traits of the TV News industry in India viz. market share, advertising, viewership and access. This is as much to provide a background as to stimulate discussion on the relevance of commonly used yardsticks to enumerate the news industry.

Discussion

Briefing 2 *Theoretical Perspectives in Ownership and Content* Keval Kumar

The second briefing will outline four theoretical perspectives on ownership-content relations in broadcast news: 'liberal pluralist', 'political economy', that from Cultural Studies and the 'ethno-methodological'. The proliferation of round-the clock news channels, with their direct ownership widely dispersed and their audiences fragmented, demands raising a more complex set of questions.

1. What is the relevance of these theories in India to explore the ownership-content relationship in TV News?
2. What are the parameters for measuring the relationship between contours of ownership--- State/Private, Domestic/Foreign, Political Parties / Trusts---news content, content types and programming formats?
3. Does focusing on cross-media concerns provide additional traction, especially since this dynamic forms the most visible cusp of ownership and content?

Discussion

Lunch served at Venue

Session 2: 1.45-3.15 (Moderated by Ammu Joseph)

Briefing 3 *Plurality in Media – The Panos South Asia Experience* Kazu Ahmed

Panos South Asia's (PSA) mandate, and strategies for engagement with the media, stem from the need for a diversity of voices and debates in the public sphere. With the idea of a plural and democratic media implicit in its activities in different media landscapes and regions, PSA's programmes in the north-eastern region of the subcontinent aim to actively operationalise this.

1. Choice of methodology for media monitoring and impact on advocacy.
2. Relationship between choice of themes, partnerships and forms of advocacy.
3. Regional approaches and transnational strategies on critical issues.

Discussion

Briefing 4 *News Code & Advocacy: Contests & Stakeholders* Supriya Chotani

Questions of whether and how news should be regulated, what should be the guidelines and who should codify the same have fed the debates on the pending Broadcast Services Regulation Bill. The draft bill of 2006, which inter alia proposed a content code, became entangled in contests over Content, with news broadcasters proposing their own guidelines for self-regulation and redressal mechanisms. Consequently, news regulation has emerged as a battlefield of advocacy, moving through an eventful trajectory of sting operations and public interest petitions, court orders and government advisories, content studies and public consultations, 'live' coverage of terror attacks and citizen outcry---all invoking and contributing to the contested question of 'public interest' in news coverage. Given this backdrop, the presentation will map

- The trajectory of key events and advocacy interventions on TV news content since 2004
- Key stakeholders in the process and their points of contestation

Discussion

Tea

Session 3: 3.30-5.30 (Moderated by Vibodh Parthasarathi)

Briefing 5 *Enumerating News Ratings* Pradeep Krishnatray

Television news is part of a large corporate order, we may call, communication business. The rules of the business are determined by broadcasters, advertisers and media agencies. We, therefore, beget television 'ratings' that not only determine the success of a channel or the program but also its survival in the market place. What are the issues associated with ratings and what can be done to improve them?

1. TRP and Exclusion?
2. Inputs from Citizens groups on programme content and fine tuning of method for Ratings?
3. Possible initiatives by Regulator and diversity of Rating Agencies?

Discussion

Briefing 6 *Challenges in studying TV News* Biswajit Das

Four observations inspire this briefing, one each at the level of scope, methodology, analysis and epistemology: viz. the first, most studies of News in India have explored the print media; second, Content Analysis is the only methodological option exercised; third, rarely is the study of content co-related with its producers/owners; and lastly, the studies view the mediated reality presented on TV as social reality.

1. How do news channels within a segment differ in the totality of the 'content' they telecast?
2. How is the shift from 'the word' to images/sounds is to be measured?
3. Can pluralism on TV be measured across established thematic concerns?

Discussion

Wrap Up

'Contours of Media Governance'

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