Chapter 41
Satellite Communication Policy in India

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ABSTRACT

This chapter on satellite communication policy in India aims to deliver first hand information and gives insight into the satellite invasion in the country. The Government passed cable bill from time to time to regulate the operation of cable television networks, seeing the haphazard mushrooming of cable television networks all over the country. In the last few years, foreign television network started to enter India. This has been perceived as a 'cultural invasion' in many quarters since the programs available on these satellite channels is predominantly western and totally alien to Indian cultures. This chapter briefly studies the communication policy in India and intends to answer some pertinent questions like –the question of autonomy of Doordarshan, the policy of expansion of television network, the software policy for television, the need for setting up new broadcasting regulations to meet the global media trends. As a part of conclusion, we try to come out with a solution for proper balance of information sharing and development of satellite communication in India.

INTRODUCTION

A satellite communication policy is required in every country, recognizing the vital role of communication in nation building. A national policy on the operation and use of satellite communications is very essential. A modern, efficient and adequate satellite communications facilities and

services is required to promote the pole vaulting strategy of the government to become the telecommunications hub in the Asian continent. In 1959, the government of India took TV equipments on loan. Philips (India) made an offer to the government of a transmitter at a reduced cost. Earlier, the company had demonstrated its use at an exhibition in New Delhi. A United Nation's Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) grant of US$20,000 for the purchase

of community receivers and a United States offer of some equipment proved much too tempting to resist, and on 15 September, 1959, the first ever TV transmission started at 6 pm, when Pratima Puri welcomed the audiences for the first stint with audio-visual media. The range of the transmitter was 40 kilometers round and about Delhi. Soon programs began to be beamed twice a week, each of 20 minutes duration. The fortunate audience comprised of members of 180 'Teleclubs' who were provided free sets by UNESCO. Thus, the government ushered the country into the age of (audio visual) mass communication. The first TV centre was called Doordarshan Kendra. After seven years, the second TV Centre came up in Bombay. Entertainment and information programs were introduced from August 1965, in addition to social education programs for which purpose alone TV had been introduced. The Federal Republic of Germany was helping in setting up a TV production studio in the country. By 1970, the duration of the broadcasting service was increased to three hours, with the addition of two weekly programs running up to 20 minutes each for "Teleclubs" and another weekly program of the same duration called "Krishi Darshan" for farmers in 80 villages.

By 1970, there were 22, 000 imported TV sets, excluding the community sets. By mid 1970's Indian made TV sets were in the market, and the number overshot the 1, 00,000 mark in quick time. The demand continued and within a decade, there were more than 2, 00,000 sets in Delhi and the neighboring states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. The Bombay centre was opened in 1972 and within a year TV centers began to operate in other small cities like Srinagar, Amritsar and Pune as a relay centre. In 1975, three more cities – Calcutta, Lucknow and Madras were put on the television map of the country. From 1st January, 1976, "commercials" came to be telecast at all the centers. During the same year, the ownership of TV was separated from the All India Radio. Television became an independent media unit in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B), under a new banner "Doordarshan".

In the year 1977, Terrestrial transmitters were put up at Jaipur, Raipur, Gulbarga, Hyderabad, Shambhalpur and Muzaffarpur, extending coverage to a population of more than 100 million. The Asian Games in 1982 gave further impetus to the rapid expansion of the national television network. By mid 1980's, a second channel was introduced in New Delhi and Bombay. Later, it was further extended to other metro cities as well.

In this chapter, we want, first, to show the growth and development of communication system in India. Second, we wish to study the different policy and regulations of the government and Committee's report on broadcasting media. This chapter intends to answer some significant questions like the question of autonomy of Doordarshan, the policy of TV network expansion, the issue of TV accessibility, software policy for TV, Direct to Home Broadcast (DTH) and Conditional Access System (CAS). Finally, we wish to begin a discussion of the potential of satellite communication in terms of providing information, considering the future trends of satellite communication policy in India. Around 2002, India had about 38 million homes with satellite television cable connection. Now the number is increased manifold and serious regulations are recommended in the sphere of satellite communication.

Need for a Communication Policy

Television is the dominant medium for young people and adults around the world. From the mid 1980s to the 1990s, the number of television channels, household television sets and hours spent watching television more than doubled. Satellite television reaches all continents, offering increasing numbers of channels targeting specific market segments, including young viewers (Naval & Narendra, 2007).

The prevalence of television viewing among young people raises serious concerns about the

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