UNIT 9: TV JOURNALISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

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9.1 Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- describe the nuances of Television journalism and writing for visuals,
- analyse the mediaof Presentation, Reporting, Interview, Reportage, Live Shows and Anchoring a Show, and
- discuss the details about programme production and packaging for a channel.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous block of this course we discussed the inception and growth of television along with the importance of the audio visual media in the society. In this first unit of the second block, you will be introduced to the world of television journalism and its various aspects. Television journalism involves more than reporting the news on TV. It also involves researching and writing stories, collecting facts, following tips, and more. Television journalism is the reason we have major television news shows – whether those shows are regarding world news, politics, sports or celebrities. The journalists who work to bring those television shows to life may research stories, write, collect facts, follow tips, present the information to the public on television and more. Television journalism is not quite so different from print journalism, although television journalists use a different platform to tell their stories.

There are many different kinds of television journalism fields one can enter into. A future TV journalist with a love for sports may decide to pursue a career reporting news about sports. Whilemany a times former sports players are given these jobs, there are plenty of sports journalists who simply love the sport and have never played it. Similarly, individuals with interest in celebrities and the glamorous world of cinema may pursue a career as a celebrity television journalist.

So you have seen how Doordarshan has evolved over the years. But today we have many channels other than Doordarshan. You may have heard the term “satellite channels”. Generally satellites are used for communication or research purposes. Man-made satellites are objects which are launched to orbit the earth or any other celestial body. Let us see how satellites help in bringing your favourite television channels to your homes. What is the relationship between a satellite and a serial that you see in the cable network? They might seem completely unrelated. But, communication satellites are instrumental in bringing the serial to your home. Have you ever owned a television set with an antenna which had to be positioned exactly to catch the signal? A heavy rain or rough weather can

disrupt your television viewing in such a case. The introduction of communication satellites has improved the situation greatly. How many channels can you watch on your television set? Star TV, Aaj Tak, NDTV, Zee, etc. are a few of the many television channels available to us today. Ask your mother if she had such a wide choice of channels in her childhood. The answer will be 'no'. This is because these private channels came into the Indian Television scene quite recently. In the earlier days, Doordarshan had a monopoly as it was the only channel available to the Indian television audience. This changed in the 1990s with the arrival of private channels. The coverage of the Gulf War by the American news channel, Cable News Network (CNN) propelled the arrival of satellite television in India. Satellite dishes were used to catch the CNN signals and cable operators took to satellite broadcasting immediately.

9.3 Ethics of Journalism - Code of Ethics for Television Journalists

Every news organization has only its credibility and reputation to rely on. It's important that the journalists apply impartiality, fairness, a balanced view, and truthfulness to each and every one of the stories they present to the public. These ethics are what inspires trust in the public, and what makes certain television journalists more likeable and trustable in the eyes of the public than others. Television journalism is important in our times, as a huge percentage of the population receives their news and information from the television.

9.4 Challenges for Television Journalists

Often times, television journalism can be difficult. There is the urge to bring the public the story before anyone else, and to provide as many details as possible. Then there are times when certain information can be more harmful than it would be helpful. For instance, in cases involving minor children, it's up to the journalist to leave the names or personal information out so as not to place the children in jeopardy. In certain cases, television journalists may choose to leave out details so as not to ruin an

investigation. Television journalism can be exciting and fun, but it comes with a healthy dose of reality and choices that do bring consequences.

9.5 Advantages of Television Journalism -

The most important way in which television journalism has an identity of its own, as compared to print or radio journalism, is that it is audio-visual journalism. The unique features of television journalism, which are its own characteristics and do not belong to any other journalistic medium, all spring from this fundamental difference. The main advantages of television journalism are as follows.

- Television journalism provides visual evidence of events. Evidence is extremely important in establishing the credibility of a news story, and there can be no stronger proof of an event having occurred than its being recorded and visible.
- Television is like a window to the world. The word 'television' etymologically means 'tele' + 'vision', which means 'seeing from a distance'. The Hindi word 'Doordarshan' is thus a direct translation of this term from English into Hindi. Thus, it provides visual and aural experience of places all over the world to people in their drawing rooms.
- Television journalism reaches out a larger number of people nationwide than either radio or print. For this reason, it has a greater social reach, and can potentially stimulate more widespread public discussion of issues.
- Since television uses moving images and sound, it has a greater subconscious emotional appeal than print, and can therefore not just inform but can potentially also influence people. It is therefore not just an informative medium, but also an influential one.
- Television is an extremely efficient medium in terms of the speed with which events are reported. In ideal conditions, it can even deliver the news to the audience as the event happens.

9.6. Disadvantages of Television Journalism -

Every medium has its own limitations and television is no exception. The disadvantages of television journalism are as follows.

- Television does not have the intellectual depth of print journalism. Meant to appeal to and be understandable to literate as well as semi-literate and illiterate audiences, it simplifies the news and therefore neglects the subtleties and deeper connections between events. While television news channels make an effort to overcome this limitation by organizing programmes such as studio interviews and panel discussions, they cannot match the durability of analysis expressed through words by experts on a printed page.
- Television journalism takes place through twenty-four hour television news channels, which report and update the news regularly. While this is an advantage on days when there is plenty of news, it can be a serious disadvantage if the news channel does not have enough news to fill up twenty-four hours of reporting. On such occasions, news channels tend to exaggerate trivial events, and present non-news as news. This is done to feed the twenty-four hour news cycle.
- Television can provide visual evidence, but it cannot provide enough contexts for the conclusive interpretation of that evidence. An example is the sting operation carried out by tehelka.com which was broadcast on a major Indian news channel and provided visual evidence of how a senior politician accepted money as part of a deal. While this was compelling evidence that the politician did indeed accept money, it remains open to interpretation whether the transaction was a valid one or whether it was a case of bribery. Events derive their meaning from their larger background, and television does not provide this effectively enough.

9.7 Processes of Television Journalism

Television journalism consists of the broadcast of either packaged news or live news. A packaged news story is one, which is explored, shot, edited and most importantly, broadcast after the event has happened. A live news story is one which captures and broadcasts the action of an event as it happens. Depending on whether a journalist is preparing a packaged or a live news story, there is a certain well-defined process to be followed. The processes of packaged news reporting and live news reporting are describedbelow.

9.7.1 Packaged News Stories

The word 'package' refers to a complete product. In other words, a news package is a story, which has been carefully scripted, shot, edited, and thus given a final shape, which contains all the elements of a finished product. The steps involved in the making of a news package are as follows.

1. The reporter gets information about a potential news story from a source. This source may be an individual or an organization. Experienced reporters build up a network of reliable sources over time, and depend on them for the first vital leads to a story
2. The reporter then researches the story. For this, he or she may conduct interviews, consult books, magazines, newspapers, the internet and go through relevant documents and archive material. From this process, the full background to the story emerges.
3. After this, the reporter, along with a cameraperson, travels to the various locations, which are relevant to the story. There, the cameraperson shoots visuals and cutaways related to the story, while the reporter speaks to people on the location and explores the story. The cameraperson then shoots interviews of the relevant people by the reporter and also record their sound bites and cutaways. The reporter must ensure that the

coverage of the story is balanced and impartial and that all sides to the story are represented. The cameraperson then records one or more PTCs PTC = Piece to Camera) given by the reporter on the location. The PTC is any such recorded clip in which the reporter who is present at the location speaks directly to the camera. Many news stories end with a Closing PTC in which the reporter gives a byline to the story.

4. After this, the reporter and cameraperson return to the office of their organization. The reporter previews the recorded tapes, which means that he or she watches them carefully to identify the shots, interviews and sound bites which are usable. The usable clips are called OK takes, while the unusable ones are called NG takes. OK stands for 'All Correct', while NG stands for 'No Good'. The OK shots, interviews and sound-bites are logged, which means that the reporter prepares a list which mentions each of them along with the time-codes of their in and out points. The time code, also called TC, is a numerical code which appears near the bottom of the screen during playback, and which indicates exactly how much of the tape has been played in terms of hours, minutes, seconds and frames. The 'in point' of a clip is the point where it starts, and the 'out point' is where it ends. The 'log sheet' is the list of clips along with the time codes of their in and out points that is prepared through the process of logging.
5. The reporter then submits the tape or tapes along with the log-sheets to a facility in the news organization called 'Ingest'. Ingest is a technical facility with its own staff. It consists of a server to which various computer terminals in the news channel are connected. The staff in the Ingest facility captures the OK takes mentioned in the log sheets. Capturing is the process whereby the OK shots, interviews and sound bites are copied into the memory of the server. Alternatively, the reporter may seek to

capture the OK takes in the memory of an individual computer. The first process is the standard one in most news channels, since it is a more time saving process. This is because after the tapes have been captured in the memory of a common server, the reporter can use any computer terminal in the office to access and edit them, depending on whichever terminal is free at that time.

6. While the capturing process takes place the reporter writes a script, which includes voice-overs (VO) and which states exactly which sound bites and PTCs are to be used. The most common pattern for a news script is - VO-BiteVO-Bite-VO-Bite-VO-PTC. This is not a hard and fast rule, however. The average duration of a news story is between two to three minutes and the script must be written accordingly, unlike the other forms of broadcast media, such as in documentary filmmaking, news-scriptwriting, the script usually happens after, and not before the shooting. Usually, and especially in hard news stories, the content of the script must be presented according to the formula 5 Ws and 1 H What , Where, When, Who, Why and How.
7. Next, the reporter records the voice-overs written in the script. Usually, a lip-microphone is connected to each computer terminal and the reporter can record the VOs directly at that terminal. If a lip-mic is not connected to the terminal then the reporter needs to get the VOs recorded according to the prevailing system in the organization.
8. The reporter then edits the story, with or without the help of a video editor. An experienced reporter is expected to know enough video editing to be able to edit the story himself or herself. Editing involves organizing the shots, interviews sound bites and voice-overs in a coordinated and correctly ordered manner. At this point various graphic elements, such as Astons, bugs and slugs may be added.

9. The story has now been given the final shape and is now called a news package. A senior member of the editorial team who decides whether or not it should be included in a news bulletin for telecast now screens it. If approved, the package is included in a list called the Rundown. The Rundown is a list, which states exactly what is telecast in each news bulletin in which order.

9.8 Broadcasting Live Coverage

The word 'live' refers to the broadcast of an event which takes place as the event happens. Thus, for example, if a political rally is taking place and a reporter is present at the location of the rally, then he or she can report the event and its developments as they take place. The audience gets to witness images and hear the sounds of the location almost as if they were present there themselves. The process of live reporting is not neatly divided into steps but is more of a coordinated process in which several things take place simultaneously. The reporter is present at the location, and is accompanied by a vehicle called an OB Van, which is short for Outdoor Broadcast Van. The OB Van is crucial to linking the reporter to his news organization. It consists of a technically equipped van to which a camera and microphone are connected. The reporter observes and explains the events to the camera as they happen and the OB Van relays these images by means of wireless transmission to a satellite, which then relays them to the news organization. Sometimes, there may be several reporters present at different locations simultaneously, and each of them may be sending back images and sounds of their locations to the news organization at the same time. Thus, there are inputs coming to the news organization from several sources simultaneously. All of these signals reach a technical facility in the news organization called the PCR, which means Production Control Room. Also, a camera in the studio is also covering the news anchor, and the signal from that camera also reaches the PCR. The PCR is that central place in the news organization which decides which of these various signals must be put on air at which precise point in time. Within the PCR,

there are several monitors television screens pres ent, each of which shows the signal coming from any one camera or OB Van. There is also another monitor which shows exactly which of these signals is being telecast at that moment. The technical staff in the PCR keep switching between various signals, alternatively putting one, then another, and then a third, and so on, on air. This process is called live editing, online editing, or switching.

9.9 WRITING FOR TV NEWS

Writing for television is different from writing for print, radio or the internet. This is because television is an audio-visual medium, and television writing must maximize the possibilities and avoid the limitations of the medium. In print, writing is the main element, and is supported by photographs. In television, one writes to be heard, not read, and the language used is only one of the elements of television. Language is used along with visuals and sound, which are the main elements, and must therefore support them rather than the other way round. Thus, there are two main principles to be kept in mind when writing for television:

Firstly, one must write simply and eloquently, so that the language is understood the very first time it is heard; and secondly, one must write in order to complement the visuals, so that one does not repeat what is being shown in the visuals, to supply some further information to them.

9.9.1 Writing Principles for TV Medium -

The following principles must be kept in mind when writing for visuals –

1. The language must be simple and understandable. But simple does not mean that it must resemble the language of kindergarten-school children. Rather, it means that it must be clear and understandable. The listener should know exactly what you wish to say the first time he hears it. It is also a myth that simple language cannot be beautiful, as some of the best writers, scriptwriters and broadcasters in the world have been

admired for the simplicity as well as the beauty of their language. Therefore, one must aim at writing both simply and beautifully. The beauty of language does not derive from difficult words or phrases but in expressing complex thoughts and ideas clearly and with the use of thought provoking comparisons and metaphors.

2. One must write to complement the visuals, also known as writing off the visuals. This means that one must write something related to the shots but without describing them. For example, if there are shots of butterflies on the screen, the voice-over could mention how butterflies have traditionally been admired for their beauty.
3. Numbers and quantities must be mentioned, wherever justified, with comparison to something the mind can grasp clearly. For example, rather than say 'three feet high', it is better to say 'waist-high'.
4. Large numbers must be written in a combination of numerals and words. For example, 36,000,000 is better written as 36-million. This makes it easier for the person recording the voice-over.
5. Scripts should ideally be neatly typed out, and if written by hand, they must be carefully written with no mistakes or corrections. This is necessary to make it easier for the person recording the VO.
6. Scripts should be written or typed on only one side of the page, since turning the page during recording can create a rustle which may get recorded.
7. For the same reason, the different pages of a script should not be stapled together. However, they must be correctly numbered.
8. The last line on any page must end on that page and must not run onto the next page, as this will lead to a rustling of paper during the recording.

9. The script for a film, programme or television serial consists of the split-page format with two columns – one mentions the VO or dialogues, and the other mentions the visuals, a news script does not follow this format, since it is usually written after, and not before the shoot, and is also written under severe time constraints. The format of a news script consists simply of text, and does not usually indicate visuals in a separate column.

9.10 REPORTING FOR TV

Reporting and Editorial Judgment are the two pillars of all journalism, including print, broadcast and web journalism. Reporting consists of, as its name indicates, reporters unearthing news stories while Editorial Judgment consists of deciding which of those stories are to be published or telecast, and in which form.

Programme Format of Reporting:

The unit 13 of this course explains the role of reporters in details, and in this unit we will briefly look into the topic. Areporter's role involves 'story-telling' with an appropriatebeginning, middle and end. The reporter needs to be responsible, understand the power of knowledge and the power oftelevision. He or she has to be fair and balanced in his/her work. It is important for a reporter to be accurate and to know the facts presented in the news story by researching one's topic and the concerned key people thoroughly.

9.11 NEWS SOURCES

Sources are those individuals or organizations from which a reporter receives initial information about a potential story. A reporter cannot know the inside story of an event or organization unless someone inside provides him that information. Therefore, to be able to have access to hidden information, a reporter must develop his contacts and network of sources over time. A fresh reporter with little experience has fewer contacts than an experienced reporter. There are primarily two kinds of sources for a reporter:

primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are people who are involved in an event or are first-hand witnesses. Secondary sources are those, from which background information can be gathered, and need not be individuals or organizations. Books, reference materials, newspapers, the Internet etc. are secondary sources. Secondary sources also help in research. A good reporter never reveals his/her sources. The reporter must respect the confidentiality of the sources. When a source discloses something to a reporter 'off the record', it means that the information is not meant to be written about, printed or broadcast or told to anyone else, but is only given to the reporter in confidence to help him or her understand the story better. A reporter also has a responsibility to crosscheck the information given by a source and not to take it on trust. Ideally, therefore, a reporter must have several different sources which can provide their viewpoints on the story.

9.12 Piece To Camera :

A piece to camera is the television and film term used when a presenter or a character speaks directly to the viewing audience through the camera. It is most common when a news or television show presenter is reporting or explaining things to the viewing audience. Indeed, news programmes usually take the form of a combination of both interviews and pieces to camera. The Piece to Camera, also known as PTC, is any part of a news report, whether packaged or live, in which the reporter speaks directly to the camera while being on the location of the story. The following points need to be kept in mind for delivering an effective PTC.

- Position the camera on the tripod and ensure the lens is in level with your eyes.
- Do a white balance.
- Zoom out as far as you can go - this is an easy lens angle to find and will work best with non graduated lens. If you have a more professional camera and lens you'll have to experiment with angles. The wide lens will ensure that the focus isn't so critical and will

make sure the viewer can see some of the background.

- Frame the background.
- Tilt the camera down slightly from the horizontal - this will stop you having acres of space above your head, which will make you look short.
- Switch to Auto exposure and auto sound levels.
- Start recording.
- Take 2 steps back from the camera and place a marker by your feet. Stand in the shot for a few seconds.
- Review the tape to make sure your framing is correct.
- Focus on the marker and reframe shot.
- Assure that the camera doesn't tilt up or down while recording.
- Start recording again
- Do your piece to camera
- Once you've done it - check it.

9.13 TV NEWS PRESENTATION

Presentation is the art of finding and delivering the best possible expression for any given content. It includes diverse factors including use of language, shot composition, choice and selection of relevant details, and an interesting and engaging way of presenting one's subject matter. In other words, it is the skill of capturing and holding the interest of the audience.

9.13.1 Principles of Effective Presentation-

1. The very first principle is that presentation is effective only when the content is sound. The purpose of packaging is to enhance and bring out the inherent significance of a story, not to apply cosmetic effects. A strong story stands on its own with minimal packaging, whereas even excellent packaging cannot rescue a weak story. In television journalism, unlike in filmmaking, bad shots which tell a good story are preferred to excellent shots

which tell an ineffective story. Having said that, it is of course the ideal combination to have a strong story along with excellent shots.

2. Presentation is about deciding what needs to be emphasized, what needs to be underplayed and what needs to be left out. It involves intelligently understanding the story so that one knows which are the best shots to take, which facts come first, and which come later. In this context, a general guide in writing hard news scripts is to follow the 5 Ws and 1 H formula - What, Where, When, Who, Why and How.
3. The mark of good news presentation is that it does not sensationalize but calmly and quietly makes sense of an event or trend. Thus, it should be sober, balanced, objective, and impartial and must not be too noisy.
4. It is important not to use special effects such as flashes, page-turns, etc. when editing a news story. One is supposed to be reporting a story, not adding on aesthetic effects.
5. Equally, one must avoid using dissolves when editing a news story. As far as possible, cuts should be used when making shot transitions.
6. One must never add background music to a news report. A report is supposed to be objective and unemotional. The only case where use of music is permitted is when it is part of the ambient sound of a location where the story has been shot.
7. If split-screen editing techniques are used, they must serve a functional purpose, and must not be done merely to make the story superficially attractive.

9.14 Some Terms to remember in TV Journalism usage

Anchor: An anchor is a broadcast journalist who reads the news and

introduces the reports of other broadcasters.

Correspondent: A correspondent is a person employed to contribute news regularly from a place in the world.

Director: A director is in charge of organizing and directing the news on the air, gives the anchors their cues and makes sure everything is running at the right time.

Editor: An editor is in charge of preparing the segments, revising them along with the writer and releasing them to the director.

Floor director: The floor director is in charge of keeping the anchors alert and makes sure they look at the right camera at the right time.

IFB: An earpiece used by the newscast anchors for directions from the director in the control room.

Producer: The producer presents the final presentation to the director and both work together to make the production.

Reporter: A person who gathers, writes and sometimes presents the news on the air.

Tele-prompter: A device used to transmit cued lines to the anchors from the control room to the newsroom while on the air.

Writer: The writer is in charge of helping the editor write up the news segments.

9.15 Milestones in TV Journalism Industry -

- Television Broadcast started on an experimental basis with a financial grant from UNESCO on 15th September 1959.
- In 1965, daily one-hour program with a news bulletin was started.
- Before 1990s, Doordarshan had monopolized newscast on television.

- As a public broadcaster, Doordarshan presented the news in naturalized manner. The ruling government had a strong hold on the television broadcasting. Doordarshan news bulletins were unable to provide the international news to the national viewers.
- The news was liberated from the confines of the DD newsroom and gained in objectivity and credibility when New Delhi Television (NDTV) produced 'The World This Week' which was broadcast every Friday night in 1988.
- In 1989, NDTV produced India's first live televised coverage of the country's general elections. The critical and commercial success of the coverage sets a new standard for Indian television.
- International satellite television was introduced in India by CNN through its coverage of the Gulf War in 1991
- In August 1991, Star Plus became the first satellite channel to beam the signal to Indian subcontinent
- India's first privately owned Hindi channel Zee TV started in October 1992
- The list was followed by Sony and other domestic channels such as Eenadu, Asianet and Sun TV
- Doordarshan faced a stiff competition in news and public affairs programming and planned to sell some slots for news programme under sponsored category
- In February 1995, NDTV becomes the country's first private producer of the national news 'News Tonight'
- In the same year, TV Today Network occupied a 20 minutes slot in DD Metro channel and aired a Hindi and current affairs programme 'Aaj Tak', Business Aaj Tak and Newstrack
- Nalini Singh produced 5 minutes fast paced, condensed daily news capsule Ankhon Dekhi
- Doordarshan's monopoly was broken in 1992, when the media houses started to produce news magazines, entertainment

magazines and news programs for different channels

- Television Eighteen India Limited (TV18) started India's first ever entertainment magazine 'The India Show' on Star Plus in 1993
- To provide India centric News, Zee Television launched the news and current affairs channel Zee News in 1995
- Star TV beamed its exclusively 24-hour news channels, Star News in 1998. Star made a contract of five year with NDTV for outsourcing of news and related programming for this news channel
- In November 1999, TV18 entered into a 49:51 joint venture with CNBC Asia to launch CNBC India
- TV Today group launched a 24-hour Hindi news channel 'Aaj Tak', in December 2000
- NDTV's five years contract with Star group expired on March 2003. After that NDTV simultaneously launched two 24-hour news channels; NDTV 24X7 – English news channel and NDTV India – Hindi news channel
- 'Sahara India Parivar' launched a 24-hour national Hindi news channel, Sahara Samay, in March 28, 2003
- DD Metro was converted to DD-News channel on 3 November 2003
- 'Aap Ki Adalat' fame Rajat Sharma, Sohaib Ilyasi, the man behind the highly successful 'India's Most Wanted' and Tarun Tejpal, editor-in-chief of Tehelka roped together and launched a free-to-air Hindi news and current affairs channel India TV on May 20, 2004.
- NDTV launched NDTV Profit, a business channel on January 17th, 2005
- Jagran TV Pvt Limited's launched Channel 7 on 27 March 2005
- In 2006, Rajdeep Sardesai and Sameer Manchanda promoted GBN and bought a stake in Channel 7 and took editorial control in the channel and later renamed it as IBN 7



9.16 LET US SUM UP

- Every news organization has only its credibility and reputation to rely on. It's important that the journalists apply impartiality, fairness, a balanced view, and truthfulness to each and every one of the stories they present to the public.
- Television journalism can be exciting and fun, but it comes with a healthy dose of reality and choices that do bring consequences.
- A live news story is one which captures and broadcasts the action of an event as it happens. Depending on whether a journalist is preparing a packaged or a live news story, there is a certain well-defined process to be followed.
- The very first principle is that presentation is effective only when the content is sound. The purpose of packaging is to enhance and bring out the inherent significance of a story, not to apply cosmetic effects. A strong story stands on its own with minimal packaging, whereas even excellent packaging cannot rescue a weak story.
- A fresh reporter with little experience has fewer contacts than an experienced reporter. There are primarily two kinds of sources for a reporter: primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are people who are involved in an event or are first-hand witnesses. Secondary sources are those, from which background information can be gathered, and need not be individuals or organizations.



9.17 FURTHER READINGS

- Shrivastava, K. M. (2005). Broadcast Journalism: In the 21st Century. New Dawn Press
- Hudson, Gary & Rowlands, S. (2007). The Broadcast Journalism Handbook. Pearson Longman



9.18 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q.1 : What is the meaning of the word ‘Television’?

Q.2 : What is PTC?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question within 150 words)

Q.1 : Write a note on live broadcast?

Q.2 : What are the principles of effective presentation?

C) Long Questions (Answer each question within 300-500 words)

Q.1 : Describe the milestone in TV journalism.