

PRO-SOCIALLY SHAREABLE ENTERTAINMENT TELEVISION PROGRAMMES: A Programming Alternative in Developing Countries?

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In 1969, Peruvian Television broadcast *Simplemente Maria*, a soap opera which became one of the most popular programmes of all time (Rogers and Antola, 1985; Singhal and Rogers, 1989a). It told the rags-to-riches story of a migrant girl, Maria, who succeeded in achieving socio-economic status because of her hard-work, determination, and sewing skills. When this soap opera was broadcast in other Latin American countries, it met with similar audience success. Many young women in Mexico, Venezuela and Columbia identified with Maria, enrolling in adult literacy and sewing classes in order to gain upward social mobility (Gonzales, 1992; Brown and Singhal, 1993).

‘Using entertainment programmes to promote pro-social messages maximises audience exposure, liking and recall of messages in ways that might not be achievable through the use of straight-forward didactic messages. As opposed to purely entertainment programmes, which are generally ratings-driven and hence largely targeted to the more affluent audience segments, pro-social entertainment programmes can be targeted to the oppressed and less fortunate audience segments and thus represent a balance between production-centred and people-centred programming.’

Between 1975 and 1982, Miguel Sabido, a writer, producer, and director at Televisa, the Mexican national television network, created seven entertainment soap operas, promoting such educational-development themes as adult literacy, smaller family size norms, and a higher social status for women. These soap operas earned high ratings in Mexico and in other Latin American countries, where they were subsequently broadcast. There is evidence to suggest that many of the pro-social objectives of these soap operas were met (Nariman, 1993; Singhal, in press; Rogers and Antola, 1985).

In 1993, Japan's NHK television network broadcast *Oshin*, a melodramatic television series, which earned ratings of up to 65 percent, the highest for any Japanese television programme. The series traced the life of Oshin, the central character, from age 7 to 83, documenting the enormous difficulties she overcame in moving from a state of abject poverty to prosperity. *Oshin* became the most popular television programme that NHK ever produced and exported, viewed in over 25 countries with seemingly powerful effects (Mowlana and

Rad, 1992; Lull, 1990; Brown and Singhal, 1993; Akagi, 1985).

We refer to these three illustrations as examples of *pro-socially shareable entertainment television programmes*. *Pro-socially shareable entertainment programmes* utilise the widespread popularity of entertainment media to promote socially desirable values in a broad socio-cultural context (often going beyond local, regional, or national boundaries).

The purpose of the present article is to investigate the potential of pro-socially shareable entertainment television programmes in developing countries. We analyse certain recent trends in the worldwide flow of entertainment television programmes, making a case for creating more culturally *shareable* programmes. Factors that affect the shareability of entertainment television programmes are discussed. We discuss the promise of television soap operas as a pro-socially shareable entertainment genre. Problems associated with the use of pro-socially shareable entertainment television programmes are discussed, along with possible solutions.

The Historical Perspective on World Television Flows

The dominant paradigm, which united international development scholars in the 1950s and 1960s, sought to explain how traditional societies could achieve modernity (Lerner, 1958; Rogers, 1962; Schramm; 1964). Development was equated with modernisation, where modernity was defined as a *participating lifestyle* (Mowlana and Wilson, 1990). The mass media were viewed as important contributors in the modernisation process of traditional societies. The role of mass communication was to expose audiences in traditional societies to the outside world.

The political, economic and ideological bias of the modernisation paradigm was coupled with the international aid programmes initiated by Western industrialised countries to *rescue* their developing country counterparts. This resulted in a more-or-less *one-way* flow of media technology and programming from the Western industrialised countries to the developing countries (Nordenstreng and Varis, 1974; Schiller, 1971). This one-sided flow of media programmes was referred to as a type of media imperialism, a situation where a center nation (typically a Western industrialised nation) had power over the periphery nation (a developing country), leading to a disharmony of interest between them (Galtung, 1971; Oliveira, 1986; Schnitman, 1984). The ruling class in a peripheral nation, comprising foreign investors and the local elite, controlled the available channels of mass communication (Sparks and Roach, 1990; Sussman and Lent, 1991).

The consequences of this unequal distribution of mass media programming were profound: Dependency relationships were spurred between source-receiver nations, in addition to contending with the potentially harmful socio-cultural impacts of imported programmes on indigenous audiences (Beltran, 1975). The topic of worldwide television flows became the subject of several studies in the 1970s and early 1980s (Nordenstreng and Varis, 1974; Salinas and Paldan, 1979; Lee, 1980; Murdock, 1982; Hamelink, 1983; Varis, 1984). These studies identified the various cultural, economic and political factors that

determined the direction of television flows. Varis (1984) concluded that world television flows in the early 1980s continued to be marked by serious inadequacies and imbalances, with most developing countries still serving as passive recipients of television programmes distributed by a few industrialised countries. Imported television programmes undermined indigenous cultural values in developing countries (Pool, 1977; McAnany, 1984; Hoskins and Mirus, 1988).

However, research conducted in the past decade indicates that the nature of worldwide television flows is changing (Rogers and Antola, 1985; Oliveira, 1986). In many developing countries, resistance to such media-led cultural imperialism, notably to U.S. television imports, has increased in recent years (Cambridge, 1992; Straubhaar and Viscasillas, 1991). Brazilian TV networks now broadcast almost 80 percent indigenous programmes, up from about 40 percent in the early 1960s (Oliveira, 1990; Straubhaar, 1984).¹ Rogers and Antola (1985), who investigated the flow of television programmes between the United States and Latin American nations, concluded that indigenously-produced Brazilian, Mexican and Venezuelan programmes successfully competed against U.S. television programming imports. Moreover, television programmes produced in Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela helped displace U.S. imports in many neighbouring Latin American countries (Rogers and Antola, 1985; Oliveira, 1990; Straubhaar, 1991).

Audiences in developing countries generally prefer locally produced television programmes to imported programmes. Support for such audience preference is also found in several recent studies which investigate the process of audience interpretation, evaluation and preferences for certain media messages (Bradac, Hopper and Wiemann, 1989; Cambridge, 1992; Straubhaar, 1992). In Europe, regional exchange of mass media programmes goes back over a decade. More than 40 percent of the imported television programmes in Western and Eastern European countries originate in other countries of the region. The increase in regional exchange is also notable among Arab countries, where approximately one-third of the imported programmes comes from countries (such as Egypt) within the region (Varis, 1984; Singhal, in press).

Development scholars now argue for the importance of producing socio-culturally relevant television programming, and the advantages this approach can offer to developing countries. They recognise that audience groups in developing countries are not simply passive or fatalistic, but actively interpreting mass media, and selectively resisting what is not in their interest by creating their own popular culture out of the elements of a mass culture (Rogers, 1976). Enhancing the role of audience members in selecting media inputs is viewed as an important development activity (Straubhaar, 1991).

For instance, in the Dominican Republic, research shows that audiences prefer more *culturally proximate* television programmes. Viewers find it especially difficult to identify with the styles, values, beliefs, institutions and behavioural patterns that are depicted in imported television programmes. The first preference of audiences is to view nationally-produced television programmes, followed by a preference for regional Latin American, Asian, or African productions, all of which are relatively more culturally-proximate, and hence shareable, than television imports from the U.S. (Straubhaar, 1992).

In sum, the development of indigenous cultural industries and popular

genres, coupled with lower production costs, provide developing countries the opportunity to substitute *foreign* television programming with more culturally proximate television programming. This can be shared regionally with other culturally proximate audience groups (Cambridge, 1992; Straubhaar, 1993; Oliveira, 1990; Straubhaar and Viscasillas, 1991).

What is Shareability?

Total shareability of television programming is impossible, even between closely-linked societies with a common language (Head, 1985). All the same, all societies share common human traits, myths etc. which makes shareability of programmes possible. The concept of *cultural proximity* represents an important determinant of the degree of shareability of a television programme. *Cultural proximity* is defined as the active choice made by an audience to view international, national, or regional television programmes. It is usually a choice that favours the latter two (when available) because of their greater cultural relevance to the audience (Straubhaar, 1991). Cultural proximity implies that audiences will prefer programming which is most *proximate* to their own culture, and which reinforces traditional identities through the use of common signs and symbols, language, historical heritage, ethnicity, religion and such other cultural elements as dress, gestures, body language, humour, music etc. (Straubhaar, 1993; Stevenson, 1984).

In a general sense, the notion of cultural proximity refers to the active choice made by audience members to consume (or not consume) television programmes based on the various social, cultural, historical, geographic, political, economic and linguistic dimensions of the television programme that is broadcast. Creators of culturally-proximate *shareable* television programmes thus need to pay careful attention to the grassroots construction of meaning by audience members, the generation of common cultural symbols and the projection of a public conception of historical development in order to evoke widespread audience identification and participation (White, 1990).

Reasons for Producing Pro-socially Shareable Entertainment Television Programmes

What arguments can developing countries make to justify increased production of entertainment programmes that are both pro-social and shareable?

Why produce pro-social programmes?

A felt need exists for pro-social television programming in developing countries. Why? Development is the top priority of national governments in every developing country (Singhal and Rogers, 1989b). Therefore, media officials in developing countries display a strong interest in using mass communication to bring about pro-social changes (Nordlund, 1979). *Pro-social programmes* depict cognitive, affective, or behavioural activities that are

considered to be socially desirable by the intended audience (Brown and Singhal, 1990). The desired pro-social changes may range from adoption of family planning methods, to the promotion of adult literacy, to raising the status of women, or a combination thereof (Singhal and Rogers, 1989c).

Despite the felt need to broadcast pro-social television programming, the dominant fare on television systems of most developing countries is either *anti-social* or serves no useful function in bringing about pro-social changes. In fact, broadcasting systems of many developing countries are often riddled with imported television programmes, which are far removed from the socio-cultural realities of the indigenous television audiences. So pro-social programming can help counteract the pervasiveness of *non-useful* imported television imports, and provide a more desirable alternative to existing *anti-social* domestic productions (for instance, programmes which might depict excessive sex and violence).

Why use entertainment programmes to carry pro-social messages?

Entertainment may provide an effective way to reach the public with pro-social messages (Kincaid, Rimon, Piotrow and Coleman, 1992; Head, 1985; Cambridge, 1992; Lull, 1990; Nariman, 1993; Singhal, Rogers and Brown, 1993; McAnany, 1992; Lozano, 1992; Lozano and Singhal, 1993; Singhal, 1993; Singhal, in press; Mody, 1991; Sabido, 1989; Church and Geller, 1989; Coleman and Meyer, 1990).

The entertainment media are endowed with at least seven special qualities which make them especially appropriate for carrying pro-social messages in developing countries (Piotrow, 1990; Singhal, in press). Entertainment media programmes are (1) *Popular*, because everybody likes to be entertained; (2) *Pervasive*, because they have a wide and growing reach; (3) *Personal*, because they can present pro-social messages in a manner that is more personal (by depicting the joys and sorrows of media characters) than might be possible in real-life; (4) *Persuasive*, because they can encourage viewers to change their attitudes and behaviours regarding a pro-social issue; (5) *Passionate*, because they can stir strong audience emotions about a pro-social issue, (6) *Profitable*, because they can attract the support of commercial advertisers; and (7) *Practical*, because they are feasible to produce.

Using entertainment programmes to promote pro-social messages maximises audience exposure, liking and recall of messages in ways that might not be achievable through the use of straight-forward didactic messages (Kincaid, Rimon, Piotrow and Coleman, 1992; Bettinghaus and Cody, 1994). As opposed to purely entertainment programmes, which are generally ratings-driven and hence largely targeted to the more affluent audience segments, pro-social entertainment programmes can be targeted to the oppressed and less fortunate audience segments and thus represent a balance between production-centred and people-centred programming (Singhal, in press; Straubhaar, 1992).

While the creation of pro-social educational television programming might represent a great budget expense for a national government, pro-social entertainment programmes can be profitable and may potentially represent a *win-win* situation for the purveyors of social change (Nariman, 1993; Kincaid, et. al. 1992; Brown and Singhal, 1993).

Why produce "shareable" pro-social programmes?

Why should developing countries consider the production of pro-socially shareable programmes?

1. The idea of producing pro-socially shareable programmes is consistent with recent advances in communication technologies, which have led to increased outflows of U.S. television programming to developing countries, and in the case of certain developing countries (such as Brazil, Mexico, Hong Kong etc.) have made more local and regional productions feasible (Straubhaar, 1993). So the need for creating more shareable television programmes is on the rise, driven by technological advances in communication satellites, cable systems, VCRs and multi-lingual dubbing facilities.
2. Developing countries often lack the infrastructure to produce quality pro-social programmes on their own. Creating programming with high production values is expensive and requires artists, technicians and facilities which individual developing countries might not be able to afford. This problem could be overcome if several developing countries agreed to pool talent and resources to produce *shareable* pro-social programmes.
3. By producing pro-socially shareable programmes, developing countries might be able to overcome the limitations of broadcasting relatively *non-useful, culturally-irrelevant* imported television programming.
4. By producing pro-socially shareable programmes, developing countries might be able to reduce their dependence on imported programming, moving toward more regional and local interdependence.
5. By producing pro-socially shareable television programmes, developing countries might be able to more effectively address common regional problems, for instance, the dissemination of AIDS prevention messages in Africa.
6. By producing pro-socially shareable television programmes, developing countries might be able to achieve higher production quality at a relatively lower production cost.
7. By producing *shareable* television programmes, developing countries might be able to tap into diaspora markets, outside the home country. For instance, television producers in Hong Kong can produce programmes for domestic consumption and also tap the larger and more profitable audience markets in China and in other countries of the Far East, Europe and North America where expatriate Chinese reside.

Pro-socially shareable entertainment genres

Are certain entertainment television genres more shareable than others?
Are certain genres especially suited to carry pro-social messages?

Melodramatic soap operas represent a television genre that is highly shareable (Mowlana and Rad, 1992; Lull, 1990; Rogers and Antola, 1985; Head, 1985) and also especially suited to carry pro-social messages (Nariman, 1993; Singhal, in press; Brown, 1988; Vink, 1988; McAnany, 1992). The nature of the melodramatic serial is to search for discourses that, in different cultural contexts,

have the potential to carry with them both the power of the mass mediated and the force of the popular and local (Lozano, 1992; Lozano and Singhal, 1993). Some spectacular examples of pro-socially “shareable” television soap operas include *Simplemente Maria* from Peru, Miguel Sabido’s Mexican soap operas and *Oshin* in Japan.

In 1969, Peru broadcast *Simplemente Maria*, a television soap opera, which told the rags-to-riches story of a migrant girl, Maria, who succeeded in achieving socio-economic status because of her sewing skills with a Singer sewing machine. *Simplemente Maria* was purposely created to be a “shareable” television programme: Its setting, characters and plot could have transpired anywhere in Latin America (also no direct reference was made in *Simplemente Maria* to a country of origin or to a specific city). Maria, a rural-urban migrant, was depicted in the television series as hardworking, idealistic and a positive role model for upward mobility (Gonzalez, 1992). For instance, after a long hard day of household work, Maria spent several hours in the evening toiling in adult literacy classes.

Simplemente Maria achieved very high television ratings (up to 90 percent) in Peru, and when it was exported in the 1970s, throughout Latin America. The sales of Singer sewing machines boomed accordingly. In fact, the Singer company purchased advertising in the broadcasts of *Simplemente Maria* in most Latin American countries, earning heavy profits. More importantly, tens of thousands of young women in Peru, and in almost every other Latin American country where the television series was broadcast, suddenly began to enrol in sewing and literacy classes (Singhal, in press). This *pro-social* effect of *Simplemente Maria* was unintended, but its lesson was simple: Entertainment soap operas could attract large audiences in several *culturally-proximate* countries, and could also carry pro-social messages (Gonzalez, 1992; Singhal, in press).

Inspired by the lessons drawn from the audience success of *Simplemente Maria*, Miguel Sabido, a writer, producer, and director at Televisa, the Mexican national television network, designed seven pro-social television soap operas in Mexico between 1975 and 1982 (Table 1). These soap operas were highly unusual mass media messages in that they were grounded in several human communication theories, including Bandura’s social learning theory (Nariman, 1993; Singhal, in press). Viewers were intended to learn socially desirable behaviours from models depicted in the television series (Sabido, 1989; Bandura, 1986). Sabido argued that a melodramatic television series was especially appropriate to depict *pro-social* and *anti-social* behaviours in discord. This conflict between *good* and *bad* behaviours helped focus the audiences’ attention on the soap opera’s anecdote, influencing them to support the forces of *good over bad* (Nariman, 1993).

All of Sabido’s soap operas earned high television ratings and were commercially viable (see Table 1). They also seemed to have strong *pro-social* effects on Mexican audiences.² For instance, *Ven Conmigo*, which promoted the Mexican National Plan of Adult Education, encouraged about 1 million Mexican adults to enrol in literacy classes (Nariman, 1993). The number of new enrolments in Mexico in 1976 (when *Ven Conmigo* was being broadcast) was nine times the number of enrolments in 1977, when *Ven Conmigo* was no longer broadcast

(Televisa's Institute for Communication Research, 1981). All seven of Sabido's pro-social soap operas were highly popular in several other Latin American countries, a reflection of their *shareable* quality (see Table 1). No data, however, was gathered on the pro-social effects of Sabido's soap operas outside of Mexico.

The experience of the Japanese television programme *Oshin*, reinforces the

Table 1
Miguel Sabido's Seven Pro-socially Shareable
Entertainment Television Soap Operas

Year	Title	Pro-social theme	Average ratings in Mexico (%)	Number of countries' where broadcast
1975-76	<u>"Ven Conmigo"</u> ("Come With Me")	Adult Education	33	15
1977-78	<u>"Acompaname"</u> ("Come Along With Me")	Family Planning	30	12
1979-80	<u>"Vamos Juntos"</u> ("When We are Together")	Responsible Parenthood	15	6
1980	<u>"El Combate"</u> ("The Battle")	Adult Education and Literacy	14	6
1980-81	<u>"Caminemos"</u> ("Let's Walk Together")	Sexual Responsibility Among Teenagers	15	6
1981	<u>"Nosotras las Mujeres"</u> ("We The Women")	Status of Women	12	4
1981-82	<u>"Por Amor"</u> ("For Love")	Family Planning	10	5

* Almost all of Sabido's seven pro-socially shareable entertainment soap operas were broadcasted in Latin America.

Source: Based in part on Televisa's Institute for Communication Research (1981) and Singhal (1990).

notion of utilising the soap opera genre as a carrier of pro-socially shareable messages. The series traced the life of *Oshin*, the central character, from age 7 to 83, documenting the enormous difficulties she overcame in moving from a state of serfdom to prosperity. *Oshin's* ability to maintain a family and achieve success against all odds struck a poignant chord among Japanese and overseas audiences (Lull, 1990).

To-date, *Oshin* holds the record for being the most popular Japanese television programme of all time (with ratings of up to 65 percent). The programme's popularity was no less outside of Japan. *Oshin* was broadcast in such *culturally-proximate* and (seemingly) *culturally-diverse* settings as China,

Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Australia, Belgium, Mexico, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Poland, Brunei, India, Vancouver and Toronto in Canada, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco in the United States (Mowlana and Rad, 1992). In the seemingly *culturally-diverse* environment of Belgium, research studies showed that the audience success of *Oshin* was due to the similarities between Belgian and Japanese lifestyles of a century ago (the time period in which *Oshin* was set): A case of *historic* shareability, we presume.

The experience of *Simplemente Maria*, Sabido's soap operas, and *Oshin* points to the viability of utilising the television soap opera genre for carrying pro-socially shareable messages among *culturally-proximate* audience groups. Past and present trends in world television flows reinforce the *shareability* aspect of the soap opera genre across national and cultural boundaries.

Limitations and Possible Solutions

While pro-socially shareable entertainment programmes provide certain useful programming alternatives for developing countries, they have their limitations. Some of the limitations of pro-socially shareable entertainment programmes include:

1. There is no such thing as total programme shareability.
2. Programme shareability comes at a price. Shareable programmes may find it difficult to focus on the specific problems of a specific targets audience in a regional or linguistic group. In trying to be "everything for everybody", shareable programmes run the risk of becoming "something for a few" or "nothing for nobody".
3. Shareable programmes are more likely to engender multiple audience readings, given the heterogeneity that is present even in *culturally-proximate* audience groups. For instance, in Belgium, *Oshin's* popularity was attributed largely to the cultural similarities between Belgium and Japanese lifestyles of a century ago (Mowlana and Rad, 1992). In China, *Oshin's* popularity was seen more as a function of its protagonist's values being in line with the dominant Chinese values of sacrifice and compromise (Lull, 1990).
4. Shareable television programmes may run the risk of eroding the *cultural identity* of individual audience groups in a much larger *culturally-proximate* group (Singhal and Rogers, 1989a; Hawkins and Pingree, 1981). Homogenisation of cultural values, the dominance of one group's worldview on others etc. may represent certain undesirable outcomes of shareable television programmes.
5. Pro-socially shareable entertainment programmes are not value free. What constitutes *pro-social* to one audience segment might be perceived differently in another group (Rushton, 1982).
6. Pro-socially shareable entertainment programmes face several ethical dilemmas. For instance, the ethical dilemma manifest in the question: Who is to determine what is right for whom (Brown and Singhal, 1990). Another ethical dilemma concerns the issue of unintended, unanticipated

and undesirable consequences of a pro-socially shareable entertainment programme (Rogers, 1983; Brown & Singhal, 1990).

7. Often the *pro-social* and *entertainment* dimensions of a television programme may be in conflict. Striking a balance between entertainment and *pro-social* content can be a challenge (Singhal, in press).
 8. Many logistical challenges exist to creating, maintaining, and implementing pro-socially shareable entertainment programmes. The paths, minds, and interests of government policy-makers, commercial sponsors, creative producers, development officials and broadcasters seldom converge. Even if they did, other challenges abound: For instance, finding a talented scriptwriter to create a pro-socially shareable entertainment programme is difficult.
- Possible solutions to some of the above-mentioned problems include:
1. Extensive use of formative research to assess the needs of a *culturally-proximate* group, focusing on the nuances of their differences.
 2. Enlightened political leadership which can put the weight of its position behind the idea of creating pro-socially shareable entertainment programming.
 3. Activation of consensus-building mechanisms between policy-makers, broadcasters, the creative community, development officials, advertisers and audiences (such consensus-building was undertaken by Miguel Sabido in Mexico).
 4. Effective utilisation of mechanisms for creating, maintaining and sharing pro-social entertainment programmes through co-productions, syndication and distribution networks.

Conclusions

In the present article we investigated the potential of pro-socially shareable entertainment television programmes in developing countries. These programmes utilise entertaining media formats to carry pro-social messages to a wide, yet *culturally-proximate* audience group.

Even though total shareability of television programming is impossible, several reasons exist for developing countries to consider producing pro-socially shareable entertainment television programmes. Pro-social programmes have the potential to serve a useful development function in society, and can provide a more desirable alternative to imported foreign programming. Entertainment formats, because of their popularity, pervasiveness and profitability can provide effective means to carry the pro-social messages to the audiences. Creation of *shareable* programmes can help in developing countries pool resources, fight common development problems, reduce their dependence on imported programming, and promote regional and local interdependence.

Certain entertainment television genres, like melodramatic soap operas, offer certain advantages for carrying pro-socially shareable messages to audiences. The widespread popularity of the soap opera format, the ability of the melodrama to depict the tussle between pro-social and anti-social behaviours and their iterative, repetitive nature makes the soap opera genre

especially suited for carrying pro-socially shareable messages.

However, the possibility of utilising other television genres and media channels (like rock music and film) for carrying pro-socially shareable messages also needs to be seriously considered. Johns Hopkins University's Population Communication Services (JHU/PCS), for instance, has utilised rock music to promote sexual responsibility among young adults in Latin America, the Philippines and Nigeria (Kincaid et. al., 1992). In Africa, John Riber, a talented film maker has created several pro-socially shareable films (on teenage sexuality, AIDS awareness etc.), which have found widespread audiences in Africa and other countries (Table 2). Within Africa, viewership levels of Riber's two films, *Consequences* and *It's Not Easy*, were five to six times that of Zimbabwe and Uganda, respectively, the countries where the films were originally produced (see Table 2).

Pro-socially shareable entertainment programmes have their limitations

Table 2
The High Degree of Pro-social Shareability of the
Two Entertainment Films Produced by John Riber in Africa

Indicators of shareability	"Consequences"	"It's Not Easy"
Pro-social theme	Sexual responsibility	AIDS awareness
Country of production	Zimbabwe	Uganda
Original language	English	English
Number of languages dubbed	5	4
Number of countries released	65 All African countries, U.S., Canada and Caribbean nations	65 All African countries, U.S., Canada and Caribbean nations
Viewership of the film in country of original release	6 to 8 million	5 million
Viewership in other African countries	30 to 50 million	20 to 40 million
Viewership outside Africa	0.5 million	0.5 million
Commercial success (profit)	\$ 0.2 million	\$ 0.1 million
Number of awards won	7	7

Source: Development for Self Reliance, Inc. (1993).

and problems. A certain degree of message dilution invariably accompanies the quest for *shareability*. Targeting specific problems in specific audience groups is difficult. The *identity* of a relatively small homogenous group can be

threatened in a larger *culturally proximate* group. The value-laden nature of pro-social content can be problematic, as is the ethical dilemma associated with who actually determines the *right* course of action for others? The logistics of creating and maintaining pro-socially shareable entertainment programmes are mind-boggling, though not insurmountable.

As mass media systems in developing countries expand, television programming becomes a crucial factor in determining whether or not the media would serve *pro-social* or *anti-social* objectives, or *global* or *local* interests. Pro-socially shareable entertainment programmes may provide a viable alternative to present-day programming options in developing countries.

Endnotes

1. Despite the growing competence among several developing countries to produce high quality television programming for domestic consumption and regional exports, serious imbalances continue to exist in worldwide television flows. McAnany (1984) emphasised the need to modify the economic structures of cultural production in order to overcome the dependency on industrialised nations. Fiske (1992) contended that the global media business has become so production and profit-oriented that the needs of the production system generally assume precedence over the needs of the people. The challenge of improving educational efficiency and effectiveness of television programming in developing countries looms as large today as it did over three decades ago (Mayo, 1989).
2. Sabido went ahead to formulate a reproducible set of design and production techniques, inspiring officials of many developing countries to utilise the pro-social soap opera format for educational-development purposes. The Indian television soap opera *Hum Log (We People)* and *Hum Raahi (Co-Travelers)* were directly influenced by Sabido's work, as were the Kenyan television soap opera *Tushauriane (Let's Discuss)* and the Kenyan radio soap opera *Ushikwapo Shikimana (Hold on to He Who Holds You)*, and the Tanzanian radio soap opera *Twende na Wakati (Let's Go with the Times)* (Singhal, in press).

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