

## **Harnessing the potential of entertainment-education telenovelas**

ARVIND SINGHAL,<sup>1</sup> EVERETI M. ROGERS,<sup>2</sup> and WILLIAM J. BROWN<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *School of Interpersonal Communication, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, U.S.A.;* <sup>2</sup>

*University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, U.S.A.;*

<sup>3</sup> *College of Communication and Arts, Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia, U.S.A.*

**Abstract.** The enormous economic, political and social problems of the developing world call for creating effective, equitable, and socially responsible mass media programs that will solve human problems and benefit society. The present article investigates the use of the entertainment-education strategy in mass communication, especially focusing on the potential of *telenovelas* in addressing problems of national development. We trace the diffusion of the entertainment-education *telenovelas* from Mexico to other developing countries, and distill the lessons learned to date about the conditions (for instance, the physical and human resources) needed in a country to successfully design and implement the entertainment-education strategy.

### **The entertainment-education strategy**

Political revolutions, economic uncertainties, impending environmental catastrophes, infectious diseases, and unsupported population growth are but a few of the enormous challenges that face developing countries in the 1990s. The rapid political, social, and economic transitions in Second and Third World nations are producing a critical demand for creating effective, equitable, and socially acceptable mass communication systems that will benefit society. The use of the media to solve human problems and improve the quality of life depends on the successful implementation of mass communication strategies that promote development.

The entertainment-education strategy in mass communication represents an innovative approach to addressing problems of development. *Entertainment-education* is defined as the process of putting educational content in entertainment messages in order to increase knowledge about an issue, create favorable attitudes, and change overt behavior concerning the

educational issue or topic (Singhal, in press). Increasingly, entertainment formats such as television serials, rock music videos, and game shows are being utilized to convey educational-development messages to audiences. The *telenovela* (literally 'television novel' or 'soap opera') genre has emerged as one of the major carriers of entertainment-education in developing countries.

The present article investigates the use of entertainment-education *telenovelas* for national development, and identifies the necessary conditions in a country to successfully design and implement the entertainment-education strategy. A historical perspective on the development of entertainment-education *telenovelas* in Mexico is provided. The diffusion process of Mexico's entertainment-education *telenovela* 'technology' to India, Kenya, and other countries is analyzed. The main lessons learned to date about the conditions needed in a country to successfully design and implement entertainment-education *telenovelas* are derived.

### **Formulating the entertainment-education strategy for *telenovelas***

The historical roots of entertainment-education *telenovelas* go back to 1969, when the highly popular Peruvian *telenovela*, *Simplemente Marfa*, was broadcast.

#### *Simplemente Marfa*

*Simplemente Maria* enacted the classic Cinderella-type rags-to-riches folk story of a migrant girl, Marfa, who succeeds in achieving higher socioeconomic status because of her sewing skills with a Singer sewing machine. Marfa, a rural-urban migrant to Lima, was depicted in the *telenovela* as hardworking, idealistic, and a positive role model for upward mobility (Gonzales, 1992). For instance, Marfa asked her employers for free time in the evening to enroll in an adult literacy class. Wherever the *telenovela* was broadcast (it was exported to several Latin American countries), young maids showed a sudden interest in learning how to sew, and requested time in the evenings to participate in adult literacy classes. While this 'educational' effect of *Simplemente Marfa* was unplanned and unintentional, it demonstrated that entertainment *telenovelas* could convey educational-development messages.

### Miguel Sabido's *telenovelas* in Mexico

Inspired by the audience and educational success of *Simplemente Maria*, Miguel Sabido, a creative writer-producer-director at Televisa (the Mexican national television system), created a methodology to produce entertainment-education *telenovelas*. This methodology included a formal, reproducible set of design and production techniques for the construction of persuasive mass media messages.

It took Sabido eight years (from 1967 to 1975) to hone his methodology of producing entertainment-educational *telenovelas*. Between 1967 and 1970, Sabido created four historical-cultural soap operas for Televisa, each designed to promote and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Mexico (Berrueta, 1986). The audience success of these historical-cultural soap operas convinced Sabido that *telenovelas* were ideally suited for educating Mexican viewers about various development topics: *Telenovelas* were highly popular in Mexico, achieved spectacular audience ratings, could be produced on relatively low budgets, and commercial sponsors were willing to underwrite production costs. Further, *telenovelas* reached millions of viewers for half-an-hour daily, five times a week, for about one year, representing massive exposure to an educational message. The melodrama in a *telenovela* represented a natural confrontation of 'good' role models against 'bad' ones, providing a unique opportunity to promote 'socially desirable' behaviors and dissuade 'socially undesirable' behaviors (Sabido, 1989).

Sabido realized the importance of preserving the basic characteristics of *telenovelas*, for instance, its melodramatic content, central and secondary plots, low production costs, commercial relationship, and high ratings. His challenge was to subtly incorporate educational messages in entertainment content (without making them too blatant) in order to produce a valuebased, morally coherent, and a realistic *telenovela*, with believable characters and locales (Brown, Singhal & Rogers, 1988). His methodology to produce entertainment-educational *telenovelas* was based on 1) the determination of a central educational value which all involved parties could agree on, 2) an integrated multi-disciplinary theoretical framework which, among other perspectives, drew upon Bandura's social learning theory, and 3) a well-defined *telenovela* production system.

### *Deciding on a central educational value*

In designing an entertainment-education *telenovela*, first, a central value is decided upon (for example, family planning). Based upon a needs assessment survey of the target audience (as part of the formative evaluation process), a grid of related values is derived that interact with the central value (for example, status of women, family harmony, spousal communication, and child development). These values are defended by characters and situations. Determination and agreement on the central value is extremely important. In Sabido's soap operas, central values which are defended in Mexico's Constitution were agreed to in writing by mass media officials, public health officials, policy-makers, religious leaders, commercial sponsors, and others. Such an agreement represents consensus among key officials and facilitates inter-institutional coordination in providing the infrastructure (for example, family planning clinics) to implement the central value promoted in the soap opera (Singhal, in press).

### *Theory-based message design*

Sabido's entertainment-education *telenovelas* represent an unusual type of media message in that their design is based on human communication theories. Bandura's social learning theory is central to Sabido's multidisciplinary theoretical framework (which also draws upon Bentley's (1967) dramatic theory, Jung's (1959) theory about the archetypes of the collective unconscious, and others).<sup>1</sup> *Social learning theory* explains how human beings learn social behaviors as a result of modeling their behavior after that of others with whom they interact, or that they observe in the mass media (Bandura, 1977). Viewers can learn socially desirable behaviors from models depicted in the television series, as was the case in *Simplemente Marfa* (Bandura, 1986).

Each of Sabido's entertainment-educational soap opera begins with three sets of characters: 1) those who support the value (positive role models) 2) those who reject the value (negative role models), and 3) those who are somewhere in-between (the doubters). Each soap opera has at least four positive role models and four negative counterparts: A character who approves of the value and one who disapproves, one who promotes the value and one who does not, one who exercises the value and one who does not, and one who socially validates the value and one who does not.

In addition, there are at least three doubters, who represent various

demographic groups within the target audience. One of the doubters adopts the value about one-third of the way through the soap opera, the second adopts the value about two-thirds of the way, and the third doubter keeps doubting all the way through the soap opera and is seriously punished (often killed) toward the end of the soap opera. When the first and the second doubters gradually change their attitudes and behaviors toward the value, their transformation is reinforced and explained in the epilogues. The epilogue is in essence a 30 to 40 second 'advertising spot' for the educational content of the soap opera, usually delivered by a highly-respected national figure, who relates the content of that episode with the daily lives of audience members. Each time a positive role model or a doubter performs a socially desirable behavior, they are rewarded immediately. Each time a negative role model performs a socially undesirable behavior (relative to the value that is being promoted), he/she is immediately punished.

#### *A telenovela production system*

Sabido created a specific production system for an entertainment-education *telenovela*. The *telenovela* format incorporates many production elements that can be organized to create a desired response from the viewer:

Melodrama, characters, actors, dialogues, location, staging, props, music, costumes, make-up, pacing, camera-shots, broadcasting time and frequency, editing, and so on. Sabido's methodology provides numerous strategies to orchestrate the various production elements of a *telenovela*. For instance, the anecdote is stretched over several episodes, so that a television viewer who does not watch every single episode, can still follow the plot-line. The scriptwriter adapts real-life problems and events to television melodrama, placing characters in believable crisis situations, thus building suspense. Characters, sets, costumes, and locales fit the conditions of the target audience.

#### **Implementing Sabido's methodology in Mexico and its international diffusion**

Based on his methodology, Sabido created seven one-year-long *telenovelas* (in addition to the four historical-cultural *telenovelas* he produced between 1967 and 1970). Broadcast on Televisa from 1975 to 1982, these

*telenovelas* pioneered the entertainment-education strategy. Sabido's *telenovelas* addressed such social issues as adult literacy, family planning, female equality, and child development. They all achieved high audience ratings, and seemed to have strong 'educational' effects (reflected in the increases in adult literacy enrollments, the number of people visiting family planning clinics, etc.) (Nariman, in press). The Mexican *telenovelas* were accompanied by supplementary multi-media messages to form an integrated communication campaign, a possible reason for their apparently 'strong' educational effects (Singhal, in press).

With the assistance of David Poindexter, the President of Population Communication International, a non-profit organization in New York, the 'technology' of entertainment-education *telenovelas* spread to India in 1984 (where a soap opera called *Hum Log* ('We People') was broadcast) and then to Kenya in 1987 (where a radio soap opera, *Usikwapo Shikimana* ('When given advice, take it') and television soap opera, *Tushauriane* ('Let's discuss'), were broadcast). In 1992, a second Sabido-style entertainment-education television soap opera, *Hum Raahi* ('Co-Travelers'), was broadcast in India.

In addition to meeting government officials of Mexico, India, and Kenya, Poindexter convinced national leaders of many other countries (for instance, Brazil, China, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria) to adapt Sabido's 'technology'. His efforts have met with some limited success to date. The difficulty in transferring the 'technology' of entertainment-education soap operas is reflected in the 9-year gap between 1975, when the first of Sabido's seven *telenovelas* was broadcast in Mexico, and 1984, when the broadcasting of '*Hum Log*' began in India. Why this gap? Many nations' policy-makers were favorably impressed with the apparent success of Sabido's *telenovelas* in Mexico, but they held back for one or more of the following reasons:

1. No external evaluation research was conducted on the effects of the seven Mexican *telenovelas*, so policy-makers in other nations were not entirely convinced of the strong effects that were claimed for the Mexican broadcasts (for example, that the second telenovela, '*Acompdiame*' led to adoption of family planning by half a million Mexican couples).

2. Specific details about how to design and produce an entertainment-education television soap opera were not easily available. Only some information was available in a paper (Televisa's Institute for Communication Research, 1981) presented at the annual conference of the International Institute of Communication, in Strasbourg, France.

3. Other nation's policy-makers, particularly population program officials and broadcasting officials, were not convinced that they could produce an effective entertainment-education soap opera without Miguel Sabido and his team of creative professionals. They doubted that the software technology could be transferred and implanted successfully in their own country.

4. Many policy-makers were not convinced that the advantages of using the 'entertainment-education' strategy could outweigh its relatively high start-up costs and start-up time. What if commercial advertisers were reluctant to associate their products with such sensitive topics as 'family planning' and 'gender equality'?

So how did the entertainment-education strategy spread from Mexico to India, Kenya, and to other nations? How was the 'technology' adapted and modified as it diffused from nation to nation?

### *Hum Log in India*

*Hum Log* ('We People'), a particularly popular television soap opera, was broadcast in India from 1984 to 1985. *Hum Log* featured educational messages about women's status, family harmony, and smaller family size norms (Singhal and Rogers, 1988). It attracted a very large-sized audience, setting a record for television ratings in India (up to 95 percent), and getting through to the mass population of India as no television series had ever done before. We found that the *Hum Log* broadcasts had particularly important impacts on certain audience segments.<sup>2</sup> For example, many young women in the audience identified with Badki, a positive role model for female equality, who modeled her rejection of the traditional role for Indian young women by seeking a professional job outside the home, selecting her own husband, etc. (Singhal and Rogers, 1989a; 1989b). However, we also found that many older women in the audience identified with Bhagwanti, a negative role model for female equality, who portrayed the role of a stereotypical Indian wife-mother. This latter effect, which was unintended, demonstrates the difficulty in predicting all of the audience effects of an entertainment-education program.

Despite the best efforts of Poindexter and Sabido, the transfer of the entertainment-education *telenovela* methodology from Mexico to India was, at best, incomplete. Manohar Shyam Joshi, the scriptwriter for *Hum Log*, did not have the opportunity to personally meet Sabido. Joshi's understanding of Sabido's *telenovela* methodology was solely based on the paper

presented by Sabido at the International Institute of Communication Conference in Strasbourg, France in 1981. Little or no formative research was conducted to assess audience needs in India. Also missing from the Sabido methodology in Joshi's creation of *Hum Log* was a committee of social scientists, family planning officials, and media officials to decide on the positive and negative social values to be presented in the television program. In designing the soap opera, Joshi relied more on his creative intuition than on the multi-disciplinary theoretical framework proposed by Sabido (personal conversation with Joshi, 1986). The infrastructure resources needed to support *Hum Log's* educational messages were inadequately mobilized. Also, inter-institutional coordination between media, public health agencies, voluntary organizations, religious groups, etc., was lacking.

Despite its possible shortcomings, *Hum Log* was a spectacular audience success. Audience members strongly identified with the soap opera characters, and for the most part were successful in distinguishing the positive role models from the negative ones (in terms of the 'educational-development' purpose of the soap opera). The epilogues helped engender a phenomenal volume of viewer mail (estimated at about 400,000 viewer letters), providing a national forum for discussing educational-development topics. *Hum Log* represented a turning point in the international diffusion of the entertainment-education *telenovela* technology.

#### *Television and radio soap operas in Kenya*

Once the broadcasting of *Hum Log* in India showed that Miguel Sabido's entertainment-education strategy could be transferred from Mexico to another nation, David Poindexter began to work with broadcasting officials in Kenya in designing both a radio and a television soap opera utilizing the entertainment-education communication strategy. Radio and television producers from the Kenyan broadcasting network were trained by Miguel Sabido, and both a radio soap opera, *Ushikwapo Shikimana* ('When given advice, take it'), and a television soap opera, *Tushauriane* ('Let's discuss'), were broadcast in Kenya in the late 1980s. Eventually, the broadcasts of both series were halted due to various political reasons, despite their high audience ratings. Some evaluation research data were gathered in Kenya that showed the radio and the television soap operas reached large audiences with a family planning/population message. The radio broadcasts reached a much larger audience, especially of less-educated and lower-



income individuals (who typically have a larger family size) than did television.

### *Hum Raahi in India*

The planning for *Hum Raahi* ('Co-travelers'), a television soap opera focusing on female status and family planning, began in India in 1986, almost as soon as the broadcasts of *Hum Log* ended. Roger Pereira, a media executive in Bombay with considerable expertise in family planning communication, headed a production team to Mexico City in 1986 for a one-week training seminar with Miguel Sabido.

Formative evaluation research was conducted, as an input to planning *Hum Raahi*. Over five years (1986 to 1991) were required to plan the series. During this time, some half-dozen scriptwriters tried in vain to create messages which subtly combined entertainment content with education. Finally, in 1991, Joshi (the scriptwriter for *Hum Log*) was commissioned to write the scripts for *Hum Raahi*. Joshi rewrote the *Hum Raahi* storyline to the producer's satisfaction, demonstrating the crucial need for an adept scriptwriter in an entertainment-education effort. Some 26 episodes of *Hum Raahi*, which emphasized the theme of gender equality, were broadcast at a choice prime-time slot between January and July, 1992. Another 26 episodes, focusing on the value of family planning, are scheduled for broadcast in late 1992.

In contrast to *Hum Log*, the design of *Hum Raahi* more closely followed the entertainment-education strategy pioneered by Miguel Sabido.<sup>3</sup> Educational content about the issue of female equality was subtly transmitted through the main characters that were portrayed. There were 1) both positive role models for the desired educational behavior (for example, a young village woman who taught about female equality in a woman's organization, a male expert on female equality, etc.), and 2) negative role models (for example, a personable young servant girl whose marriage was arranged and who died in childbirth as a teenager, and an older male parent who did not allow his daughter to continue her formal education, even though she won a merit fellowship). According to the Miguel Sabido-type entertainment-education strategy, audience members were expected to identify with one or more of the main characters in *Hum Raahi*, usually with a same-sex, same-age character.

Each half-hour episode of *Hum Raahi* cost between \$12,000 to \$16,000 to produce, and it was sold to a commercial sponsor at a profit. The spon-

sor, in return for providing the production costs of each episode, got two 30-second advertising spots before and after the soap opera's broadcast. So an entertainment-education television soap opera represents a kind of 'winwin' situation in that education of the public, which usually is expensive in most cases, actually is a profit-making activity.

*Hum Raahi* commanded audience ratings of up to 78 percent in four cities in the North India Hindi-speaking belt (which includes about 40 percent of the nation's population). Like *Hum Log*, *Hum Raahi* was broadcast in Hindi, and thus earned lower audience ratings in South India where Hindi is not the mother tongue.

The epilogues on *Hum Raahi* were delivered by Tanuja, a very popular Indian movie star in the 1960s, and a highly respected member of the Indian film community. Our research on *Hum Log* found that the epilogues were particularly important in bringing about the educational effects on the part of audience individuals (Singhal and Rogers, 1989a; Brown and Cody, 1991; Singhal, 1990). Each epilogue related the content of that episode with the daily lives of the audience members, closing with an on-the-air slide of post-office box number, where viewers could direct their suggestions and concerns. An amazing 400,000 viewers' letters were received in response to the *Hum Log* epilogues. Viewers' response to *Hum Raahi* was also strong (although not nearly as much as it was for *Hum Log*).

#### **Necessary conditions for creating and implementing entertainment-education *telenovelas***

Our several years of research on entertainment-education *telenovelas* indicate that the effective creation and diffusion of the entertainment-education strategy from one country to another depends upon several important factors. One set of factors represents the necessary infrastructure that must be present in a nation wishing to produce entertainment-education media programs. Both Mexico and India provided adequate human resource systems and hardware technology to enable them to implement the entertainment-education strategy. A second set of factors critical to the effective creation and implementation of entertainment-education media programs involves the socio-cultural environment. The interaction of people, social systems, and culture in Mexico and India reveal why the effects of Mexico's series of *telenovelas* and India's *Hum Log* were not the same.

### *Infrastructure and implementation of the entertainment-education strategy*

Before a successful entertainment-education strategy can be implemented, one needs to ascertain whether or not the necessary 1) physical, and 2) human resources are available to effectively produce and implement the entertainment-education strategy?

#### *I. Physical resources*

Financial support must be generated in order to finance the development of entertainment-education media programs. Working capital may come from the government, commercial sponsors, or wealthy individuals. Initially, both Mexico's and India's entertainment-education soap operas were supported with public funds, but were later supported by commercial sponsors. *Hum Log's* commercial sponsor was Nestle; the company successfully launched 'Maggi 2-Minute Noodles', a new product, which was advertised before and after the broadcasts of *Hum Log*. The Mexican and Indian experiences with *telenovelas* clearly demonstrates that an entertainment-education media program can attract external funding sources, reducing or eliminating the investments of scarce government funds.

A *second* physical resource that was needed in Mexico and India to utilize the entertainment-education strategy was appropriate hardware technology. Both Televisa in Mexico and Doordarshan, the government TV station in India operated nation-wide television systems and production facilities for producing television programs. A capacity to domestically produce media programs is an important factor in determining the success or failure of the entertainment-education strategy (an issue that we will discuss later).

A *third* physical resource that must be considered when designing an entertainment-education media program is the network of social service organizations needed to support the behavioral changes promoted by the program's prodevelopment messages. For example, after an episode of the Mexican telenovela *Ven Conmigo* ('Come with me') in 1976, a huge traffic jam was created in Mexico City due to unexpectedly large numbers of viewers who attempted to reach a warehouse in order to obtain free literacy booklets (Brown and Singhal, 1990). Requests for the booklets far exceeded the supply, creating frustration among viewers unable to obtain the booklet.

One episode of *Hum Log* encouraged Indian viewers to consider arranging the donation of their body organs for critically-ill patients in need of

organ transplants. However, many viewers were not sure how to secure arrangements for the donation of specific organs. One audience member who belonged to the Chandigarh Youth Club started a private eye-donation campaign in response to the program, and within a few weeks arranged over 5,000 eye donation agreements (Singhal and Rogers, 1989a). If several existing organizations had planned organ-donation campaigns prior to the broadcast of the television program, the viewers who arranged for organ donations probably would have been larger in number. The promotion of adult literacy by *Ven Conmigo* and the promotion of family planning by *Acompdfiame* in Mexico would not have been successful without the existence of a large network of adult literacy classes and government health clinics where couples could receive counseling, respectively. Although *Hum Log* promoted better treatment of women in India (Brown and Cody, 1991), the infrastructure of organizations that could assist mistreated women and abusive husbands was not in place to support the behavioral changes promoted by *Hum Log*. The impact of the program on women's status would have been much more powerful with the support of pro-women's organizations.

A more basic infrastructure need that should not be overlooked is the transportation systems that are necessary for people to access the development resources promoted by an entertainment-education program. A media user who is encouraged to use family planning methods but who does not have the ability to travel to a medical facility cannot implement the required behavior change to control family growth. Nigeria's entertainment-education television serial 'In a lighter mood' successfully promoted family planning because the program referred viewers to a specific clinic in Enugu that had prepared for an influx of people (Winnard, Rimon and Con visser, 1987). In contrast, the effectiveness of the Kenyan entertainment-education soap opera *Tushauriane* ('Let's discuss') is not well understood because the program producers did not coordinate its prosocial message strategies with specific family planning clinics.

## 2. *Human resources*

In many developing countries, the first necessary human resource is government officials who will support the production of entertainment-education programs. Almost every nation that has employed the entertainment-education communication strategy for development has done so with government leadership, approval, and patronage. In India, for example, it is hard to conceive of the production and broadcast of an

innovative program like *Hum Log* without government involvement. One reason Indian government officials supported the creation of *Hum Log* was because they traveled to Mexico to meet with Mexican researchers at Televisa and to learn how to use the entertainment-education communication strategy.

A *second* important human resource is a pool of trained communication scientists who are competent communication theorists and researchers. The entertainment-education communication strategy is built on several important theories of social science (Brown, Singhal and Rogers, 1988; Brown, 1992a). The Mexican entertainment-education *telenovelas* were developed by a collaborative effort of media professionals and communication scientists. Such collaboration was inadequate in the case of Indian and Kenyan soap operas.

*Third*, entertainment-education programs are difficult to produce without the existence of an entertainment industry. Professional writers, directors, producers, musicians, actors, actresses, and media technicians were needed in both Mexico and India in order to produce popular entertainment-education soap operas. Mexico already had a large television industry prior to the broadcasts of its entertainment-education *telenovelas*. In India, a large film industry provides professional expertise for the production of indigenous soap operas (Singhal and Rogers, 1989b).

*Fourth* human resource need that will determine the effectiveness of the entertainment-education communication strategy are trained social workers and other local professionals. An infrastructure to support the implementation of development messages requires organizations of skilled professionals such as family counsellors, literacy teachers, agricultural agents, health workers, and so forth. For example, in Mexico, professional teachers and family" planning counsellors were already prepared to work with those audience members who responded to the messages of adult literacy and family planning, respectively.

#### *Socio-cultural environments and entertainment-education*

Another important set of factors that determines the effectiveness of an entertainment-education media program is the socio-cultural environment. The cultural values and beliefs that guide social interaction in a society can either enhance the effects of entertainment-education messages or oppose them. For example, *Hum Log* attacked the dowry system of marriage and challenged traditional beliefs about the subservience of women in Indian

society. However, many viewers did not realize the program was presenting a non-traditional view of women. Audience members had strong identification with Bhagwanti, one of the negative role models for femal equality, the stereotypical Indian wife-mother (Brown, 1992b).

Failure to anticipate the cultural and social impacts of a media program can result in surprising consequences. When the Japanese soap opera *Oshin* (a Japanese name) was imported into Iran and dubbed in Farsi, few people anticipated the program's great popularity among Iranians (Mowlana, 1988). However, *Oshin* became so popular in Iran that many women began naming their new-born babies Oshin, after the name of the poverty-stricken laundry woman who was the hero of the series. The Ayatollah Khomeini became very angry when he heard one woman on a radio talkshow admit that Oshin was a more important role model than Fatemeh Zahra, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter. To the dismay of Iranian media officials, Khomeini imprisoned the head of radio and sentenced the director of Iran's broadcasting agency's ideological group to 50 lashes (Tehrani an, 1992).

Sometimes the potentially powerful effects of soap operas on the social attitudes and beliefs of an audience are difficult to predict. Even the success of a program can produce negative social consequences unexpectedly.

## Lessons learned

Based on the experiences of those in Mexico, India, and Kenya, numerous lessons have been learned regarding the design, production, implementation and socio-cultural effects of entertainment-education media programs. We summarize these lessons as follows:

*1. The entertainment media are highly popular with audiences.*

Multinational corporations promote consumerism through entertainment, and governments of the world promote political and economic ideologies through entertainment. So why not education?

*2. By combining entertainment with educational content, the entertainment-education strategy can appeal to the emotions (thus influencing attitudes and perhaps overt behavior) of audience members, as well as to their intellects.*

*3. The mixture of entertainment and educational content can serve to attract large audiences to the media, and thus earn high profits from advertising and/or sales. High profits can have both desirable and undesirable effects. A desirable outcome would be that more funding is given*

by private corporations to develop educational programs.

*4. Entertainment-education media campaigns employ principles of commercial and social marketing for increasing their effectiveness.*

*5. The effects of using the entertainment-education strategy are increased when the entertainment-education strategy is accompanied by supplementary multi-media messages to form an integrated communication campaign.*

*6. Entertainment-education communication cannot make the educational content too blatant or hard-sell, or the audience will reject such messages.* Research of family planning media messages provides a good example of this lesson. When an audience perceives an entertainment message is intended to produce a change in attitudes and behavior, a counter-attitudinal effect can occur, creating resistance to the persuasion.

*7. Repetition of the educational content in an entertainment-educational message is important in achieving its desired educational effects* (Singhal and Rogers, 1989b). Compared to the results of most communication research on a single message (which typically finds only minimal effects), studies of the effects of entertainment-education messages show they have considerable effects. Why? One main reason is repetition. A television soap opera that is broadcast for one hour per day, five days a week, for a year or more, represents massive exposure on the part of a regular viewer of the program. Unlike a single-shot message, which, if once missed, is lost forever, a soap opera provides several opportunities for the message to 'connect' with its target audience. The effects produced by a single-shot message are vastly different (usually less) from the effects produced by repeated persuasive messages (Bradac, Hopper, and Wiemann, 1989).

*8. Use of the entertainment-education strategy can 'fail' if an adequate infrastructure for providing services does not accompany the mass media messages.* An entertainment-education strategy which combines mass media messages with community, small group, and individual action options is likely to be more effective.

*9. The use of formative evaluation to assess audience needs and design entertainment-educational messages contributes to the soap opera's increased effectiveness.*

*10. Collaboration between creative professionals and social science researchers is essential for a successful entertainment-education strategy.*

**II.** *Entertainment-education communication strategies are most successful when public health officials, broadcast media officials, development planners, religious organizations, commercial sponsors, and other*

*involved parties work collaboratively.*

12. *Start-up costs for entertainment-educational programs are usually very high, and considerable start-up time is required.* However, entertainment-educational television programs offer tremendous economies of scale in delivering messages to target audiences. For example, the cost of reaching one audience member per episode of *Hum Log* came to only 0.02 cents (U.S.).

13. *Several champions in a nation, key power figures or groups, must become interested in an entertainment-education mass medium, and put the weight of their position behind the idea, for it to be carried forward into action.*

In summary, from the experience of Mexico, India, and Kenya we have learned that a complex set of factors contributes to the success or failure of specific entertainment-education media messages.

## Acknowledgements

A previous version of this paper was presented to the International Association for Mass Communication Research, Sao Paulo, Brazil, August, 1992. We thank the respondent for providing useful suggestions to revise the present manuscript.

## Notes

1. Sabido's integrated multi-disciplinary theoretical framework is discussed in detail in Televisa's Institute for Communication Research (1981); Singhal (1990); and Nariman (in press).
2. The main findings from our research on the effects of *Hum Log* were published in a series of journal articles and two books: Singhal and Rogers (1989a; 1989b; 1988); Brown and Cody, 1991; and Singhal (in press).
3. The Sabido strategy of entertainment-education has been adapted and reinvented by officials of the Population Communication Services of Johns Hopkins University (JHU/PCS), who launched several highly effective family planning communication campaigns in Mexico, the Philippines, Nigeria, Turkey, etc., utilizing rock music, miniTV series, and soap operas (Kincaid, Jam. Coleman, & Segura. 1988). Other examples of entertainment-education efforts not inspired by the work of Sabido can be found in various other countries (Wang and Singhal, 1992; Singhal and Rogers, 1989a).



## References

- Bandura, A. (1977) *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1986) *Social foundations of thought and action*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bentley, E. (1967) *The life of drama*. New York: Atheneum.
- Berrueta, M.e.G. (1986) The soap opera as a reinforcer of social values, M.A. Thesis Mexico City: Iberoamericano University.
- Bradac, J.J., Hopper, R. & Wiemann, J.M. (1989) Message effects: Retrospect and prospect, in: J. Bradac (ed.), *Message effects in communication science* (pp. 294-317) Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Brown, W.J. and Cody, M.J. (1991) Effects of a prosocial television soap opera in promoting women's status. *Human Communication Research* 18(1), 114-142.
- Brown, W.J. (1992a) Effects of entertainment television on development. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 3 (3,4) (in press).
- Brown, W.J. (1992b) Socio-cultural influences of pro-development soap operas in the Third World. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 19, 157-164.
- Brown, W.J., Singhal, A. & Rogers, E.M. (1988) Pro-development soap operas: A novel approach to development communication. *Media Development*, 4, 43-47.
- Brown, W.J. and Singhal, A. (1990) Ethical dilemmas of prosocial television. *Communication Quarterly*, 38(3), 1-13.
- Caparelli, S. (1982) *Televisao e Capitalismo no Brasil*. Porto Alegre, Brazil: L6 PM. Gonzales, H.G. (1992, August) *Narrative, cultural industry, and popular memory: The evolution of television genres in Peru*. Paper presented to the International Association of Mass Communication Research, Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- Jung, e.G. (1959) *Archetypes and the collective unconscious*. Buenos Aires: Ed. Paidos. Kincaid, D.L., Jara, R., Coleman, P. & Segura, F. (1988) *Getting the message: The communication for young people project*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Agency for International Development, AID Evaluation Special Study 56.
- Mowlana, H. (1988, September) *Communication and cultural development: A Report from Iran*. Paper presented to the International Institute of Communication, Washington D.C.
- Nariman, H. (in press) The social use of soap operas in Mexico. New York: Praeger.
- Sabido, M. (1989, March-April) *Soap operas in Mexico*. Paper presented to the Entertainment for Social Change Conference, Los Angeles, University of Southern California, Annenberg School for Communication.
- Singhal, A. and Rogers, E.M. (1988) Television soap operas for development in India. *Gazette* 41, 109-126.
- Singhal, A. and Rogers, E.M. (1989a) Educating through television. *Populi* 16(2): 39-47. Singhal, A. and Rogers, E.M. (1989b) Pro-social television for development in India, in: Ronald E. Rice and Charles Atkin (eds.), *Public communication campaigns* (pp. 331-350), Second edition, Newbury Park: CA, Sage.
- Singhal, A. (1990) Entertainment-Education Communication Strategies for Development. Ph.D. Thesis Los Angeles, CA: University of Southern California, Annenberg School for Communication.
- Singhal, A. (in press) *Entertainment-Education Strategy in Mass Communication*. New Delhi, India: Sage.

- Tehrani an, M., Islamic fundamentalism in Iran and the discourse of development, in: M. Marty & S. Attleby (eds.), *Fundamentalism and society* (vol. 2, in press). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Televisa's Institute for Communication Research (1981) *Towards the social use of soap operas: Mexico's experience with the reinforcement of social values through soap operas*. Paper presented to the International Institute of Communication, Strasbourg, France.
- Wang, M., and Singhal, A. (1992) *Ke Wang*, a Chinese television soap opera with a message. *Gazette*, 49(3), 177-192.
- Winnard, K., Rimon, J., & Con visser, J. (1987) *The impact of television on the family planning attitudes of an urban Nigerian audience: The NTA/Enugu experience*. Paper presented at the American Public Health Association, Chicago.