



The Representation of Indian Ethnicities in Hindi Daily Soaps and its Impact on Predefined Stereotypes of Indian Audiences

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ABSTRACT

Hindi daily soaps are the inevitable part of the Indian television industry delivering entertainment to Indian households. Popular among people specifically between Indian women Hindi daily soaps is enriching its emotional value day by day, resulting it gaining wide reach and economic profits. The paper considering this fact proceeds with targeted investigations. As Hindi daily soaps in a way representing various ethnicities, it makes them crucial to study its impact on predefined stereotypes including societal structure in India. The study enclosed in this paper uncovers the truth by investigating manner of ethnic representation in Hindi daily soaps. Additionally, keeping society and its predefined stereotypes at centre, the study tries to shed light on the impacts of Hindi daily soaps on Indian audiences. Indian television shares a huge market cap in the entertainment industry where Hindi daily soaps are playing a major role in harnessing prosperity and television popularity. Meanwhile, investigating the defined targets, the paper also showcases the development of Hindi daily soaps in India while keeping prior statement in mind. The research paper also provides data that upholds the important aspects related to Hindi daily soaps including fulfilling the aim defined to the study.

KEYWORDS: Hindi daily soaps, Indian Television, Indian Ethnicities, Ethnic Stereotypes

1. INTRODUCTION

India is defined as an ethnically diverse nation with more than 2,000 different ethnic groups fairly significant within different states and union territories. The ethnicity in India belongs and differentiated within different rituals, livelihood, cuisines and ideologies as well. However, it does not lie into religious structures as people coming from various ethnicities may follow same religion. According to demographic census of 2011 the most prevalent ethnicity in India are Hindi (43.6%), [Bengali](#) (8%), [Marathi](#) (6.9%), [Telugu](#) (6.8%), [Tamil](#) (6.7%), [Gujarati](#) (4.6%), [Urdu](#) (4.2%), [Kannada](#) (3.6%), [Odia](#) (3.1%), [Malayalam](#) (2.9%), [Punjabi](#) (2.7%), [Assamese](#) (1.3%), [Maithili](#) (1.1%). These Major ethnic groups in India belong to two linguistic families: Indo-Aryan (spoken by 78% of Indians) and Dravidian (spoken by 19.6%) whereas other languages including those from the Austroasiatic and Sino-Tibetan families which are spoken by about 3% of the Indian population.

The ethnicity in the contemporary world has come a long way from the ancient era to this modern world, where communication and specifically various forms of media play a major role in encouraging it from one generation to another as ethnic legacies. Furthermore, the evolution of media and communication also popularizes various ethnicities from time to time and it can be observed by the flourishing entertainment industry so far in India which is accompanying ethnics showing through their representations. Today, the television industry is enriching. In 2023, India's television sector was worth approximately 696 billion Indian rupees. It was estimated to reach 766 billion Indian rupees by 2026, indicating a compound annual growth rate of around 3.2 percent. Here, most importantly the Indian Hindi daily soap or soap operas share a large proportion at a great extent which not only facilitating Indian economy but diverse Indian ethnicity. The Hindi daily soap, commonly known as "Hindi serials" refers to the television drama series dealing with daily events in the lives of the same group of characters as a part of television sector catering people need of entertainment while reflecting different ethnicities. In the current scenario there are 44 Hindi daily operas actively running on various major Hindi TV channel. Among which are Start Plus (09), Zee TV (08), Sony TV(7), Colors(10), &TV(4) and Sab TV(6) which collectively airing approximately 85% of Daily Soap in India.

The Hindi daily soaps are the integral part of Indian household which caters the need of entertainment. People specifically women are the prime viewers of daily soap but men also share their part as a viewers. In general daily soaps have a predominantly female audience, but daily soap such as *Bade Achhe lagte hain* (BALH) was also captivated to male audience. Around 98% of hindi daily soaps are women centric, means the plot or story are oriented to women. As major chunk of daily soap viewership shared by women, in order to harness this viewership the story of a daily soap mostly based on women lives. However, it may vary, as mentioned earlier some men are also part of the entire circle of Hindi daily soap audience.

Hindi daily soaps are the epitome of different ethnicity in India. The Hindi daily soaps showcase different ethnicity of the Indian origin. Within the plot or characters shown in a Hindi daily soap the accent, livelihood, food habits etc. of a certain ethnicity is taken into consideration. As India is a land of ethnic diversity the production houses realize this fact which results the releases of daily soaps based on a certain ethnicity. This is the reason why Hindi

daily soap showcases different ethnicity. Moreover, Hindi daily soap also sometime oriented to some specific issues, problems of a specific ethnic community, while leaving behind the general pattern of showcasing society as whole, coating it with a specific ethnicity. Soaps like *Balika Vadhu* which was an Indian Hindi soap opera that aired on Colors TV between 2008-2016 is a best example of such soaps that presented the issue of child marriage prevalent in the Rajasthani ethnicity. The Hindi daily soaps from the beginning indulge with ethnicities. The very first Hindi daily soap *Hum Log* which was used to telecast on Doordarshan in mid 80s showcases the mix of Rajasthani, Haryanvi ethnicity. Likewise, *Buniyad*(1986), *Wagle ki Duniya*(1988), *Surabhi*(1990), *Hum Paanch*((1995) are also some of those earliest daily soaps aired in late 80s and mid 90s that had represented ethnic characteristics of various ethnicities.

As mentioned earlier Hindi daily soaps well showcases different Indian ethnicities. But, while presenting the livelihood of different ethnicities, sometimes this also results in building stereotypes among people towards various ethnic communities. Some Hindi daily soap some or the other way highlights social differences among Indian ethnicities which overall strengthens predefined stereotypes including Societal Structure in India. However, some soap operas also nullify the stereotypes. For instance, the new season of *Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai* shows Rajasthani ethnicity as open minded that allows women of houses to work freely rather indulging them into house chores, this has actually changed people views towards Rajasthani ethnicity as they think it to be earlier. Hence, this can be said that although it encourages stereotypes among people there are some instances still take place where Hindi daily soap category fades perceptions while discouraging it through actions shown by characters among general audiences. The scenes such as actions against widow remarriages, dowry and other ill practices is prevalent in soap operas specifically shows which are airing nowadays. But, as per some studies it is found that the negative aspects of too many irrational sequences in the serials also affecting the mental state of the audience from all the age groups 14 -25 youth to, middle-aged people especially the women. It can be building negative perceptions and hatred in audiences towards some specific ethnic group. While exaggerative stereotypes by showing characters with unethical attitude and behavior of a specific group, commenting on wearing of communities, setting standards of beauty it impact people views of a ethnic group and create a wrong image in audiences. This results people detached from the reality.

The sense of casteism and conservatism is also seen in some Hindi daily soaps where characters are shown following caste structures prevalent in their ethnicities. As per the analytical report published by the Mint, the Hindi daily operas or so called 'serials' shows societal norms followed strictly by the characters. Moreover, the practice of endogamy is observed in most of the Hindi soaps where Marital relationship builds within same ethnicity or group. The serials such as *Diya Aur Baati Hum*(2011), *Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai*(2009), *Tumhari Paakhi*(2023), *Ekk Nayi Pehchaan*(2013) according to mint are some of those highly rated daily soaps which exhibited ethnic or social conducts, specially Pardah system, Dowry system and the dominance of patriarchal structure. This has overall impacted adversely on people's perception, instead discouraging stereotypes of people towards specific ethnic groups, it builds certain wrong perceptions among audiences,

The Representation of ethnic groups in Hindi daily soaps is done in distorted manner, which is far from the reality, mainly focusing on what attracts the people formula. While keeping a specific ethnic group at centre, family feuds, arguments over generational properties, harassing women are some of those things commonly represented in Hindi daily soaps. This actually misleads people to understand certain ethnic communities. Besides, this thing creates a wrong image of an ethnicity while showcasing things which is not really exist in a specific group. The Hindi daily soap is the major entertainment source. The representation of various ethnicities is crucial for a Hindi daily soap that shoots its TRP and reach. But, while running in the blind race of more reach, the Hindi daily soap generally used to forget its purpose to show ethnicities in rightly manner. This is the reason why people have wrong images in their minds towards various ethnicities. This leads to the creation of wrong perceptions, views and even detestations.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To study the representation of ethnicities in contemporary Hindi daily soaps.
2. To study the impact of Hindi Daily soaps on ethnic stereotypes of audiences.

1.3. Research Methodology

The research methodology used for this study was the survey method where through questionnaire the data is collected. An online survey was conducted through Google forms to know the representations and impacts of Hindi daily soaps on Indian ethnicities. In total 100 respondents were selected from different backgrounds as a sample for the data collection. The data is analyzed through simple percentage analysis.

2. DATA INTERPRETATION

The data was collected online through Google forms. The questionnaire which consist of both open and closed ended questions were asked to people in order to know people views on ethnic representations in Hindi daily soaps and to identify its impact on them. The questionnaire's respondents was not specified to a particular gender. The respondents are male and female in almost equal proportion to 50:50 ratio.

Table-1 Representation of Different Ethnicities in Hindi Daily Soaps

Response	Percentage of Respondents
Very Poorly Shown	10%
Poorly Shown	30%
Fairly/Well Shown	30%
Very Well Shown	0%

The representation of diversity in case of ethnicities is crucial in order to down the perplexities. How well are different ethnicities represented in Hindi daily soaps? This was the first question asked to the people where 10% people stated it as very poor, 30% said poorly shown, 30% said fairly/well shown, and 'No one' said very well shown. Most of the ethnicities in Hindi daily soaps are loosely represented. Whether in sense of livelihood, perception, or customs Hindi daily soaps showcases an distorted image. As per the response came from the side of respondents it is clear that how representation of ethnicities are taken down in a plot of a Hindi daily soap. The data presented in the above table reflecting this fact and altogether reflects that how poorly and fairly various ethnicities were taken into consideration in making of Hindi daily soaps and are not shown full the fullest.

Table-2 Accuracy of Ethnic Representation in Hindi Daily Soaps

Response	Percentage of Respondents
Not at all accurate	20%
Slightly accurate	40%
Moderately accurate	40%
Very accurate	0%
Completely accurate	0%

Hindi daily soaps are well perceived in India specifically among people who are residing in Hindi belt regions. However, belong to same region, can speak Hindi, these people follows different lifestyles and characteristics associated to their respective ethnicities. Hence, it is necessary for Hindi daily soaps to add this phenomenon in their plots and they do, but with what clarity and accuracy. This is the question. How accurately do you think the ethnicities represented in Hindi daily soaps reflect real-life characteristics and lifestyles? This was the second question which was asked to people for this regard. The respondents answered honesty, where 40% respondents stated slightly accurate, 40% respondents stated moderately accurate, 20% respondents stated not at all accurate and 'No' one said very accurate or completely accurate. Collectively, this shows that how different ethnicities are over exaggeratedly shown in Hindi daily soaps with fabricated lifestyles.

Table-3 Influence of Hindi Daily Soaps on Ethnic Perception of People

Response	Percentage of Respondents
Neutral Opinion	50%
Agree	40%
Strongly Disagree	10%

Some or the other way visual representations influences people point of views, so with the Hindi daily soaps. Do you believe that Hindi daily soaps influence viewers perceptions of different ethnicities? This question was included in the questionnaire where respondents were asked to state the impact of Hindi daily soaps on people perceptions towards different ethnicities. On one hand exactly 50% respondents have a neutral opinion, 40% respondents showcased agreement to the question whereas, on other hand only 10% respondents shows strongly disagreement to the question. Thus, the influence of Hindi daily soaps on ethnic perception of people is a crucial problem that Hindi daily soaps are neglecting. It is well know that how an entertaining content leave its impression in people's mind and so with the daily soap that is influencing people to see the community which is almost far from reality. Entertainment, Education and Empowerment should be the principle of Hindi daily soap. Instead following such principle, Hindi daily soaps mostly emphasize on the principle of Influence cum Persuasion.

Table-4 Storylines Portrayed in Hindi Daily Soaps Reinforce/Strengthen existing Ethnic Stereotypes

Response	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly Agree	10%
Agree	40%
Neutral	40%
Disagree	0%
Strongly Disagree	10%

A daily soap revolves around a storyline, which used to be mainly based on a particular social community. In case of Hindi daily soaps, only certain practices believed to be associated with a particular ethnicity is shown. Meanwhile, there are certain stereotypes shown in these storylines which are not meant to be true. Do you think that the storylines portrayed in Hindi daily soaps reinforce/strengthen existing ethnic stereotypes among people? This question was asked to the people in order to know their opinion on whether the storylines in Hindi daily soaps which is commonly related to a ethnicity, showcases stereotypes and somehow reinforces it among other people or not. As per the data collected about 40% of respondents agreed, 40% have neutral opinion, 10% strongly agreed and 10% strongly disagreed. Altogether, this concludes that more people shows agreement over reinforcement of stereotypes among people through the storylines of Hindi daily soaps compared to people who disagrees with the question.

Table-5 Portrayal of Audience Ethnicity in Hindi Daily Soaps

Response	Percentage of respondents
Felt offended by the portrayal	80%
Did not feel offended by the portrayal	20%

Hindi daily soaps often sometimes represent certain characteristic of a ethnicity that is subjected to complexities. This can lead to confusions, controversies and emotional unrest among people. Have you ever felt offended or hurt by the portrayal of your ethnicity in a Hindi daily soap? This question was asked to the people in order to know whether they felt offended or hurt by any sort scenes shown in a Hindi daily soap. As per the gathered data 80% of total respondents felt offended by the portrayal of their ethnicity in a Hindi daily soap and only 20% were not felt offended or hurt by the portrayal of their ethnicity in a Hindi daily soap.

Table-6 Portrayal of Ethnicity in Hindi Daily Soaps and People Response Cum Action

Response	Percentage of Respondents
Felt offended by the portrayal of their ethnicity and stopped watching Hindi daily soaps	80%
Did not feel offended and continued to watch Hindi daily soaps	20%

Viewership is essential for a daily soap to sustain. In order to run for a long time and gather high TRPs in Television industry, viewership is an only key. But, sometimes an inappropriate portrayal of certain ethnic characteristic or ethnicity lead to the downfall of a soap. Have you ever stopped watching a Hindi daily soap because you felt it portrayed ethnicities in a stereotypical or offensive manner? This question was asked to the people, where 80% of total respondents felt offended by the portrayal of their ethnicity in Hindi daily soaps and stopped watching. Moreover, only 20% were not felt offended or hurt by the portrayal of their ethnicity in a Hindi daily soap and continued to watch their preferable Hindi daily soap.

3. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the representation of different ethnicities in Hindi daily soaps is either poorly shown or fairly shown where instead of representing more ethnicities, only few ethnicities are taken into consideration. Additionally, the ethnicities and their characteristics which are represented in Hindi soap operas are mostly unreal or moderately accurate, where things are shown far from reality and more in a stereotypical manner. This has resulting a bad affect on Indian audiences who belongs to different ethnic backgrounds. Audiences find an influence on their perceptions, where they see ethnicities with a specific image and believing it to be true. Perhaps, this can lead to discrimination, or even hatred. As per the survey more people found themselves influenced with the representation of ethnicities in Hindi daily soaps.

Moreover, storylines portrayed in Hindi daily soaps reinforce and strengthen existing ethnic stereotypes. Many people shows agreement over reinforcement of stereotypes through the storylines of Hindi daily soaps. This can lead to a problematic situation where audience predefined stereotypes may become stronger and which may lead them to become more suspicious towards ethnicities they are unaware.

Furthermore, audience reaction towards the representation of their ethnicity in Hindi daily soap is a subject to more disappointment. This is due to the unreal and stereotypical representation of their ethnic backgrounds. The Hindi daily soap audience shows their disagreement over the presentation of their ethnicity. This has a big impact on both audience and the soap as on one side audience felt disrespected which cause to their emotional damage, whereas on other side they stop watching Hindi daily soaps, which resulted to its downfall because of low reach and profits.

Although, Hindi daily soap is an entertaining asset to the television industry, engaging people to television, it always encircled by ethnic complexities. India is all about diversity, and Hindi daily soap in order to connect with this diverse nature of India, include ethnic plots specific to some ethnicity. But, it more of a time lead stereotypes to evolve in the India society causing harm to the society some or the other way.

In order to dissolve stereotypes and its impact on societal structure in India, Hindi daily soaps should (1) include and represent various ethnicities with accuracy. (2) should constitute an advisory that guide producers and channel to portray ethnicity in storylines carefully. (3) should represent storylines in a manner that debunk ethnic stereotypes. However, there is a big milestone to follow these suggestions and to represent ethnicities in Hindi daily soaps as it is in reality. Lastly, Hindi daily soaps are the potion of entertainment for Indian audiences that should only entertain not to engulf society in 'stereotypical flames'.

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