
TECHNOLOGICAL DETERMINISM OF TELEVISION ON PECHIPARAI KAANI TRIBES

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Abstract

Pechiparai Kaani Tribes is one of the sectors of Kaani Tribes who have built their livelihood along the Pechiparai Mountains on the bank of Pechiparai Dam in Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu. The tribal and forest livelihood of this ethnic people have experienced a large pace of development due to the intervention of Television. This paper attempts to shed light on those developmental changes brought by Television among the Pechiparai Tribal life. The developments are categorized under five perspectives and analyzed using qualitative and quantitative research approaches.

Moreover, this research is theorized underpinning ‘Technological Determinism’ theory of Marshal McLuhan (1962) which states that media technology shapes the way in which an individual in a society think, feel and act.

Introduction:

Tribal people are the ethnic people who stick to their own culture and belief, living with the nature in harmony. They constitute the major part of the world population. India has the largest concentration of Tribal people in the world except when not compared to African continent. These ethnic people can be considered as the children of nature and their lifestyle is conditioned by the ecosystem they live in. India, with a variety of ecosystems presents a varied tribal population throughout the length and breadth of its territory” (Mandelbaum. D.G. 1970). There are 533 tribal communities scattered all around the country of only 75 are considered as primitive tribes. Tamil Nadu houses 36 tribal communities of which 6 tribal communities live in Kanyakumari District. Among which “Kaani Tribe” are also a part of it, their life are still

linked to the forest and have hunter-gatherer instinct collecting food from the forest. The areas where tribe lives are considered as the areas under-development.

The word “Kaani” denotes 24 manais where one manais is equal to a piece of land covering an area of 823 square meters. The person who owns or has the control over the land was called as Kaani (Davidson, et.al, 2012).

Media technologies have taken a major part in the lives of people around the world. It functions as a vehicle transferring and connecting various parts of world through informing and entertaining about various societies to each society witnessing it through real-time or time-shifted programming (O’Shaughnessy, Stadler, 1999). Among the various technological medium, television is one of the medium that have entered every home and is still occupying a wider space

in peoples' life. Undoubtedly, television has become an important tool in performing the work of distributing information and knowledge (Schramm, 1964; Katz and Wedell, 1977; Schramm, 1979; Noelle-Neumann, 1981; Raboy, 1996; McPhail, 2009).

At the advent of twenty-hour television and rolling news have made the national government dependent on media to prompt citizens to the changing environment to communicate urgency responsibility and to redefine national values, cohesion, inter-dependency (Osabuohien P. Amienyi, 2004). Televisions have the ability to bring a change in the lives of people, where the term 'change' can be considered as 'developments' adopted by the people (Haferkamp and Smelser, 1992).

Technological determinism theory of Marshal McLuhan (1962) strongly suggests on the change or development. Any media technology can bring in an individual or entire society. As the technology acts as a key mover in history or social change by determining the societies developments (Kunz, William. M, 2006).

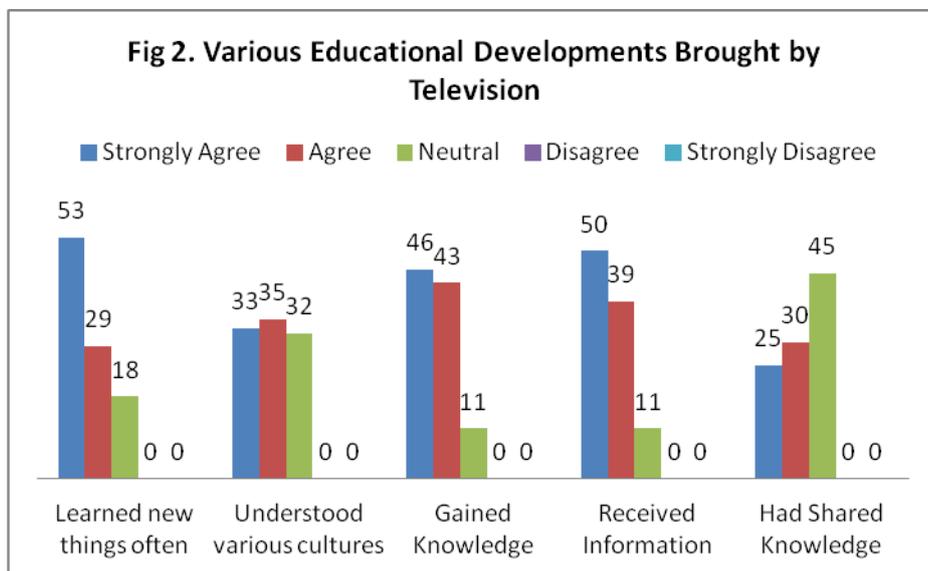
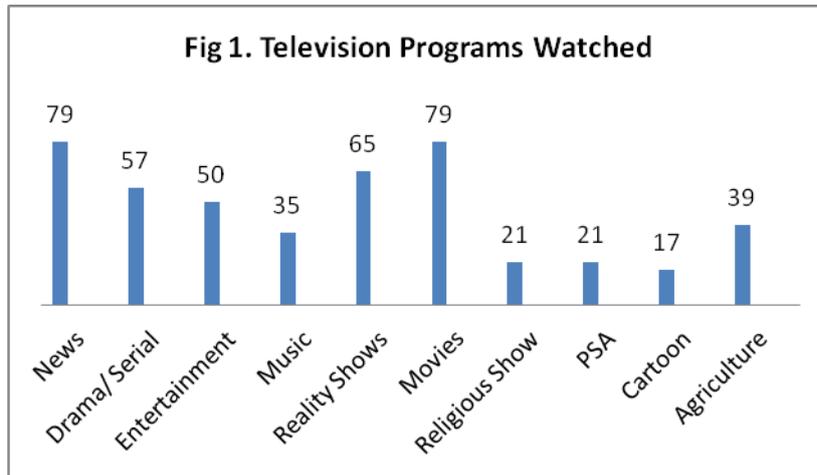
This research article was studied at the 'Pechiparai' which is a forest range located at Kanyakumari District, the place is known for its dam and unpolluted river. There are 28 Kaani settlements in Pechiparai. They received electricity in 2000 and television sets were freely distributed by the government in 2006. Television sets are available in every house and

they have DTH dishes as cable connections were difficult to penetrate the thick forest covered hills, yet four settlements have cable connections. This paper explores the different types of developments determined by the Television, brought among the PechiparaiKaani people.

Developments Determined by Television

Television is the second technology which has entered the lives of Pechiparai Kaani people, replacing the radio sets. And it has brought a wide range of developments among them. The developments are categorized under five divisions i.e., Education, Food, Clothing, Livelihood and Communication. These five developments were analyzed by subdividing each of them. As these five developmental areas comprise all the developments within it. And these developments were futures analyzed, whether they were considered as positive or negative by the Pechiparai Kaani people.

The developments were analyzed by categorizing the television programs and thereby drafting the outline over the television watching behavior. The programs were divided into ten categories which included News, Drama/ Serial, Entertainment, Music, Reality Shows, Movies, Religious Shows, PSA, Cartoon and Agriculture

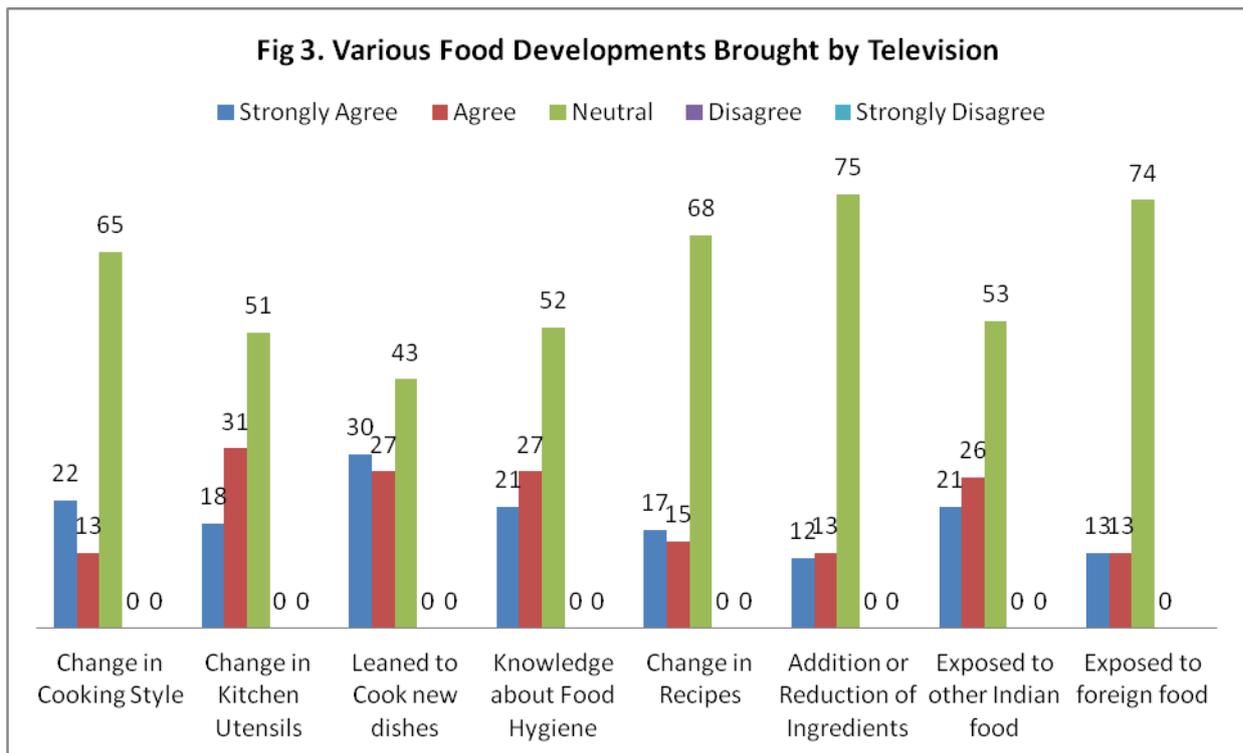


Educational Development

The educational developments focuses on how the television technology have helped the Pechiparai Kaani people to get educated i.e., to equip and increase their knowledge level. The television has determined their knowledge level which varied among the respondents. It was clearly seen that 69% of the respondents have experienced educational developments as they have learned new information; they have understood the various cultural aspects, have

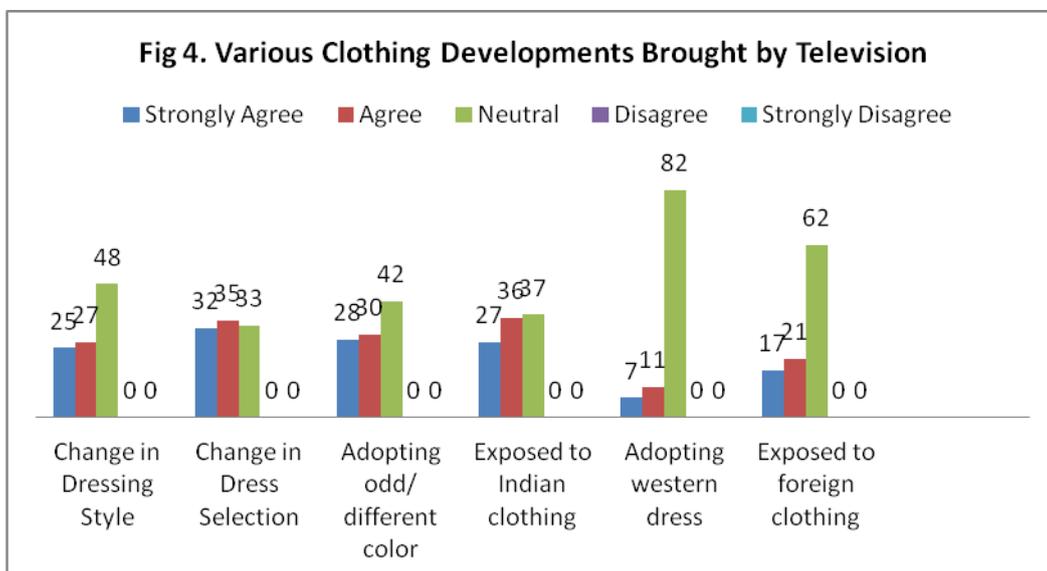
gained a wide-range of knowledge, have received and shared the knowledge. News programs and knowledge based reality shows have educated them more over the other programs. These educational developments have made them understand the importance of education due to which most of the children are sent in motor boats to other Government Schools and Colleges for higher education.

Food Developments



The food development concentrates on food cultural development. As food plays a vital role in determining and differencing various cultures. Pechiparai Kaani tribe still have their own food culture of having Kali and Kappai (a potato variety), yet at the same time they also go for the modern food culture of cooking and having Briyani, Noodles, etc. Among the respondents 47% of them have experienced food development which was brought by the television. They have changed their cooking style, have adopted new kitchen utensils like cooker and induction stove. They have learned to cook new dishes, are aware of food hygiene, have changed their recipes by adding or reducing the ingredients. Now they are more exposed to other Indian food and foreign food.

Clothing Developments

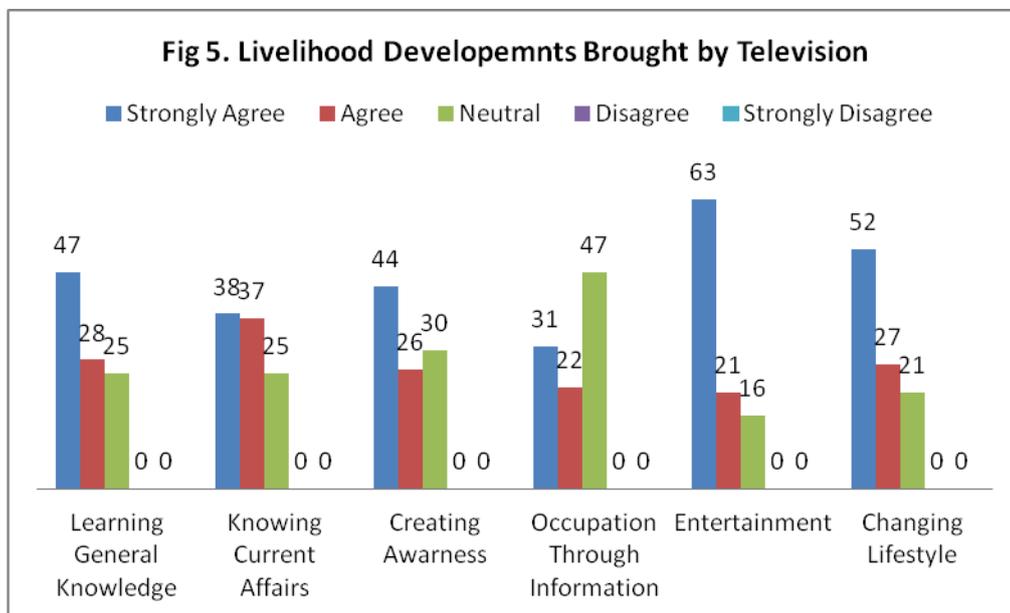


The clothing culture had also experienced a change which is considered in a positive way. They have begun to adopt other Indian clothing styles and trends which reflected in their dress selection and stitching manner. Reality shows, Movies and Drama Serial have brought this wide ranged development in their clothing. 60 % of the respondents have changed their dressing style as men go for weird colours and women go for decorated dresses. Television have brought in a change in altering their dress selection, as some young girls (11%) can be observed wearing western clothing such as jeans and tops. Moreover, they are also aware of various other Indian clothing trends like lehenga, dhoti etc and foreign clothing culture.

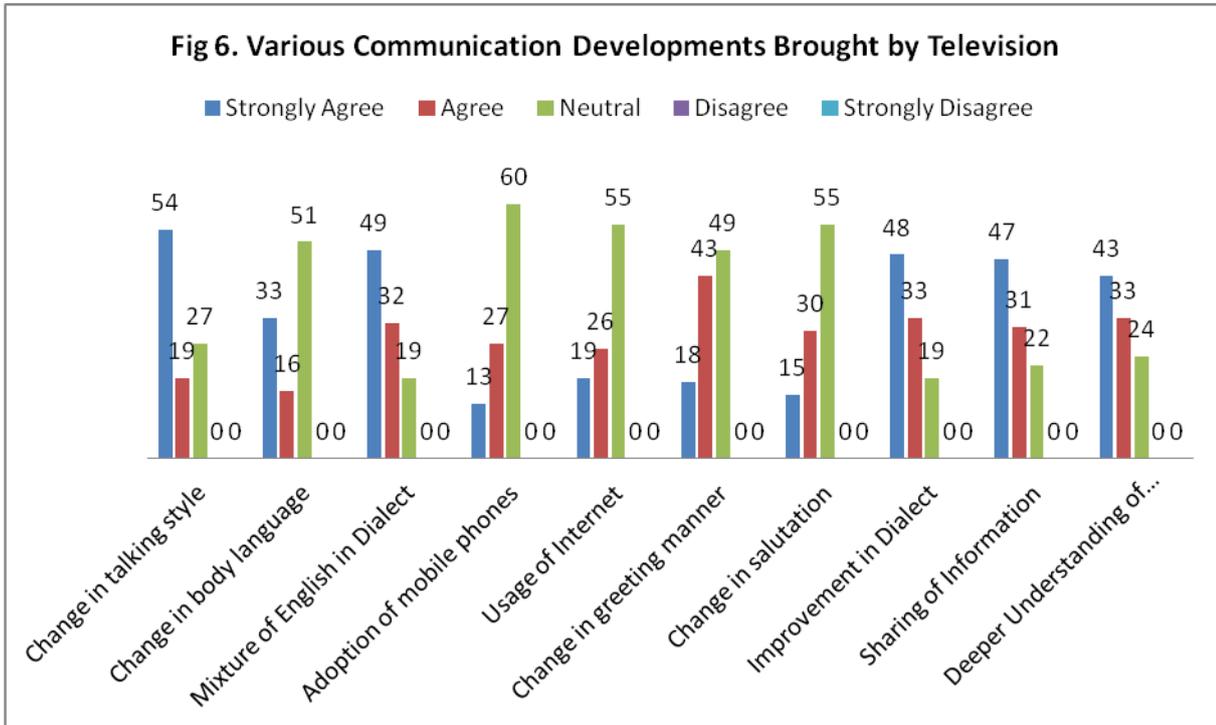
number of developments that have had an impact in their lifestyle. 56% of the respondents have experienced livelihood development which had been determined by the television. It can be observed that the hut have been replaced by concrete houses in some of the Pechiparai Kaani settlements. They have transformed their living and dining space as discussing arena for debating over current affairs. They have improved the living setup but bringing in Refrigerators and Washing machines to ease their tasks. Men have begun to adopt other occupations such as truck driving, shop keeping in city, etc. These livelihood developments have persuaded the Pechiparai Kaani Tribe women to travel over the city and explore.

Livelihood Developments

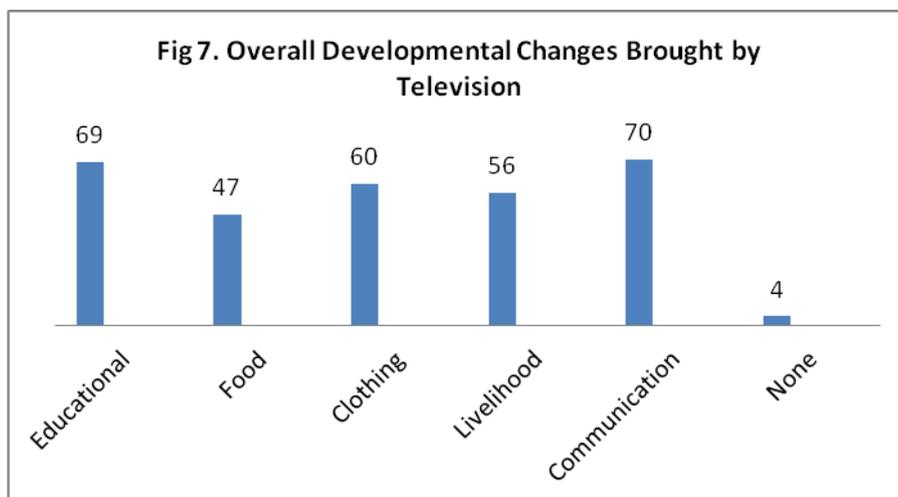
The livelihood development is a broad area of development, which can include any



Communication Developments



Communication is the most important part of any human beings life, as the ability to communicate, differentiates a human and animal. Similarly, the dialect of Pechiparai Kaani people was completely different, but the interference of television has made them communicate in regional dialect i.e., Tamil and Malayalam. 70 % of the respondents have experienced communication developments. As it can be observed that there is a change in their talking style as they have begun to use English words in normal dialect. They have learned the importance of body language and salutation in communication. Pechiparai Kaani tribes are into mobile and internet communication too. These communication developments have led them to share the information efficiently and to understand the contents deeper. Television programs such as Reality shows, Movies and Drama/ Serial were the ones that have brought in the communication developments.



Conclusion

Television has the ability to determine and create the development among the Pechiparai Kaani people. Though they have experienced a wide-range of developments in educational, food, clothing, livelihood and communicational aspects, yet they still retain their cultural beliefs and values to certain extent. Their culture and tradition have not been degraded or uprooted due to the intervention of television or the developments. The respondents of this research who vary in age from 15 to 55 years have accepted these developments to be positive.

Apart from the five developmental areas analyzed, the Pechiparai Kaani people have also felt that television had made them more cultured by teaching them new information. It had made them exposed to the outer world removing their isolation as they feel to be a part of the public. Moreover, television had also improved their living by the introduction of new technology. They also have built a closer relationship with the relatives of other settlements through mobile and internet communication.

Television has completely opened the doors to the outer world, of which they feared and were isolated from. The pace of these developments is higher as, Pechiparai Kaani tribes accept and adopt the changes quickly. They are also much keen observer and learners of outside world through television, as even the children are aware of the current affairs and recent happenings in district. Newspaper and radio are the least preferred media among them. These developments were sighted in 3-5 years after the

intervention of television in their daily lives. Pechiparai Kaani tribe watch television mostly during the night hours and concentrate more on educative programs such as news, quiz, nat geo and discovery documentaries rather than entertainment programs, due to which the pace of development is faster among them.

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