

COS 645

Intercultural Communication

Zewen Li

C12116624

The book, *Entertainment-Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change*, has a clear structure. First of all, the book tells how this strategy was put forward, and gives an outline of the book in the first chapter. In the second chapter, the origin of entertainment-education strategy, the telenovela “*Simplemente Maria*” has been introduced. Then, the third chapter talks the person, Miguel Sabido, who formulated the intellectual basis for the entertainment-education strategy, and gives some explanations about the strategy. From the fourth to sixth chapter, the applications of entertainment-education strategy in different countries and different fields have been discussed. The last three chapters discuss the effects of entertainment-education theory and lessons that learned from entertainment-education strategy.

The origin of entertainment-education strategy is a telenovela called “*Simplemente Maria*”, a Spanish soap opera that has 448 episodes, which is popular not only in Peru but also in other Latin America countries in 1969 to 1970. Main story of this soap opera is like the classic Cinderella Story: the heroine lost her job as a maid because she was pregnant, and divorced soon, but after learning how to sew from her mother, the heroine launched her own business and married a successful man. The big scene in this soap opera that leads the discovery of entertainment-education strategy is the wedding day of the heroine in 228th episode. Not only one scene, but the whole soap opera has huge influence on the entire city at that time: business part, leads sewing fever; education part, leads the enrollment in adult literary class; individual part, leads increased consideration for maids; social change part, leads rural-urban migration. The most important but indirect part is stimulating the entertainment-education strategy. However, the soap opera also caused some ethical problems.

Miguel Sabido, a writer-producer-director in Mexico, is the man first put forward entertainment-education strategy. He got the idea of entertainment-education strategy from the soap opera “*Simplemente Maria*” that has been discussed above. Sabido did audience analysis of the soap opera and put forward two components of his methodology of entertainment-education strategy: an integrated, multi-disciplinary theoretical framework, and a well-defined production system. After proposing his revolutionary idea, Sabido produced seven entertainment-education soap operas between 1975 and 1982.

As the founder of entertainment-education strategy, Miguel Sabido has six main contributions to it. First, Sabido created a moral framework of the specific educational issues to be used in entertainment-education strategy and a value grid for it. Second, in order to design entertainment-education strategy, Sabido used formative evaluation research with targeted audience. Third, Sabido used social science and other theories of behavior change as the base of entertainment-education strategy. Fourth, Sabido used many different transitional role models. Fifth, in order to

measure the effects of entertainment-education on behavior change, Sabido conducted summative evaluation research. Last but not least, at the end of each episode of soap opera conducted by Sabido, there were epilogues.

As the fourth contribution mentioned above, Sabido used five theories to support entertainment-education strategy that he proposed: Rovigatti's circular model of communication; Bentley's dramatic theory; Jung's theory of the collective unconscious; Bandura's social learning theory and MacLean's triune brain theory.

Sabido also created three-steps production system for entertainment-education soap operas: pre-production activities; production activities and post-production activities. Pre-production activities include identifying the central educational value; evaluating the role of television in society; evaluating the infrastructure that support educational issues; assessing the appropriateness of the entertainment-education format and assessing the physical characteristics of the targeted audience to design life-like episodes. Production activities include collaborating with social scientists and formative researchers to inform the production team; linking creative and production personnel to find cooperation; designing character profiles basing on value grid and reducing costs when shooting episodes.

After entertainment-education soap opera being on air, the discussion between conventional soap opera and entertainment-education soap opera was heated. There are mainly four differences between conventional soap opera and entertainment-education soap opera. Firstly, conventional soap opera aims on entertainment that hence undesirable value, while entertainment-education soap opera promotes particular prosocial values and convey purposely educational issues. Secondly, conventional soap opera is often morally incoherent. There is no clear distinction between good and bad. However, entertainment-education strategy is morally coherent that rewards positive behavior and punishes negative behavior. Thirdly, conventional soap opera is unrealistic that it usually inaccurately depicts real life while entertainment-education soap opera fits the reality of life. The most important difference is that conventional soap opera has no theoretical base, but entertainment-education soap opera based on multi-disciplinary frame work of human communication theories.

Entertainment-education strategy has been applied in music field. The application of entertainment-education strategy in music was successful to help solve teenage pregnancy in 20 Latin America countries in 1986 and promote sexual responsibility among young adults in Philippine in 1987. However, two rock songs were failed both in commercial and educational perspective because people had trouble understanding the educational messages in these two songs. Learning from the successful and failed cases, two songs aiming on promoting sexual responsibility in Nigeria was successful.

Radio is another field that has been applied entertainment-education strategy. Before television

becomes popular, radio is the most widely available medium all over the world. The first popular radio was “The Archers”, a radio that aimed to promote the diffusion of agricultural innovations to British farmers. Although this radio was not designed as an entertainment-education radio, but it met many education goals. Elaine Perkins was inspired by this radio and he created several entertainment-education radio soap operas in Jamaica, such as “Raymond, the Sprayman”, “Naseberry Street”. Costa Rico, Kenya, Tanzania and India also created entertainment-education radio soap operas in succession from 1970.

As entertainment-education strategy widely applied in several areas, the research on the effects of entertainment-education has begun to increase. Researchers used three theories as the foundation of the research: social modeling theory, self-efficacy and parasocial interaction. Researchers chose one of the successful entertainment- education radios, “Twende na wakati” to study. Results show that there are four main effects that caused by this Tanzania radio soap opera. First, it closed the family planning KAP gap. Second, it was spousal communication and family planning adoption by stimulating interpersonal communication about educational content. Third, it encouraged the adoption of HIV prevention methods. Last, the cost per adopter of family planning and HIV prevention is much cheaper because of the low cost of creating radio soap opera.

After examining the effects of entertainment-education radio, researchers take an India radio soap opera as an example to find how do entertainment-education effects occur. The results showed two ways that entertainment-education effects occur. First, driven by parasocial interaction theory, the India soap opera, Tinka Tinka Sukb let listeners relate their own life experiences to the characters in the soap opera. Second, listeners of this soap opera get social learning by peer conversations. They shared their perceptions of the soap opera, and they talked about considering or adopting behaviors that been emphasized in the soap opera. The research also showed that gender equality is an important issue discussed in the soap opera.

With the development of entertainment-education strategy in 1990s, the evolution of research methodologies began. At the beginning, researcher thought that measuring and understanding effects is the general purpose of most mass communication research. However, one researcher of Johns Hopkins University held the view that entertainment-education had influence both on individuals and also it stimulated conversations within peers. He also pointed out that entertainment-education requires extensive formative evaluation. Furthermore, the after-only survey had been proposed using in the research of entertainment-education strategy. However, the after-only survey is not efficient, so researchers found another way, before-after measurements. The advantage of before-after measurements is that they can allow researchers to calculate scores on variables that represent the effects. At the same time, researchers also introduced interrupted-time series to do research. The advantage of interrupted-time series is that researchers can expect the effects indicator to increase and finally to return to the original rate of increase, while the disadvantage is there is no control group so that researchers could only got the statistics from certain group of people.

In 1960, field experiments had been brought into the research of entertainment-education strategy. The advantage of field experiment is that it can remove the influences of contemporaneous changes from main treatment influences. However, there are also some requirements when researchers used field experiments. Researchers should have a high degree of control over the communication treatment. There are some problems with the control and gaining permission to conduct field experiments because no control group had been used in the usual sense.

Triangulation has been used when researchers want to measure the same variable or a set of variables. It requires researchers use more different kinds of research methods. A disadvantage of triangulation is that it costs greater costs and more effort to obtain multiple measurements of variables. Also triangulation has another disadvantage that the researchers do not have adequate control.

To determine how often do negative role and positive role occur in a soap opera, the researchers adopted a new research method, content analysis. By determine the frequency of negative and positive role, researchers wanted to see the strength of effects of each character on audience behavior. Another content analysis had been brought into use is semiotic analysis. Different with content analysis, semiotic analysis mainly focused on nonverbal communication, such as spatial, body language codes. Researchers often conduct semiotic analysis together with in-depth interview for deep understanding of the effects of soap opera.

Methods mentioned above are all focused on one aspect, while case studies have been used for not only one aspect like individuals, or groups, but also systems or other variables' types. The condition for case study to use is that researchers should not control the phenomena and the phenomena should be contemporary. When researchers turn the focus point from deciding whether entertainment-education can have effects to how entertainment-education had effects, case study became the main methods that researchers used most. There are some elements of case study: gathering data from unstructured interviews, focus-group interviews, participant observations, examinations of archival records. The disadvantage of case study is that data is so huge that requires more time, skills, researchers to analyze. Case study data can not be reduced during the analysis. The vital disadvantage is that results of case study can only be used on the group that have been studied. In other words, the results can not be used to a larger group.

The last method that been brought into use by researchers is analysis of letters from audience. As many research reported, the letters express audience's opinion not only on the story or characters of soap opera but also their thoughts about how soap opera influences their own lives. Through analysis of letters, researchers can understand the future direction of soap opera and change the usage of entertainment-education strategy for better use. The most important advantage is that the data collected by analysis of letters are huge but the it costs little. It also can reflect the real life experience of audience so that let researchers access the first-hand resource of audience.

There are six factors mentioned by researchers that help determine the effects of entertainment-education: audience, characteristics, organizational factors, media environment, audience research, program-specific factors and infrastructural factors. Among the usage of entertainment-education strategy, ethical dilemma issue is the key issue that has been mentioned most. There are some aspects of ethical dilemma in entertainment-education strategy: prosocial development dilemma, prosocial content dilemma, source-centered dilemma, audience segmentation dilemma, oblique persuasion dilemma, sociocultural equality dilemma, and unintended-effects dilemma.

Although entertainment-education strategy has been used for over 50 years, there are still some aspects to be improved in the future. The researchers give some directions for other researchers to improve in the future. Firstly, change “production-centered” approach to “audience-centered” approach. Secondly, seek cooperation with more cultural traditions in designing and researching entertainment-education programs. Thirdly, use both traditional and modern mediations of entertainment to spread more educational messages. Fourthly, besides family planning and public issues that has been focused now, try to meet other educational needs. Lastly, use more ways to apply entertainment-education strategy.

There are some needs that mentioned in the book. First of all, future researchers need to provide training and instructions of entertainment-education strategy for creative and scholarly community. Second, future researchers need to increase more entertainment-education messages that delivered by media. Third, future researchers need to create entertainment-education programs more international and become no-boundaries. Last but not least, entertainment-education strategy still needs to be studied by more researcher on the question that how, why, and when the entertainment-education programs have more or less effects on audience.

After reading this book, I was confused that entertainment-education strategy are used in developing countries more than developed countries. Because the book was published in 1999, after 20 years’ developments, I am curious about the current situation of entertainment-education strategy in China, where I come from. I read some papers related to the application of entertainment-education strategy in China, but find an interesting thing. In the book “Entertainment-Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change”, entertainment-education strategy mostly used on teenagers. However, the results of those papers I read show that nowadays in China researchers are more willing to apply entertainment-education strategy on children who are under ten years old. Different with the book that the strategy used in television or radio program, in China, the strategy is used more on producing toys that can educated children while they are playing. With the development of technology, the strategy is used on the development of applications of electronic terminals, such as smart phones or computers.

Reference

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