Analysis of the Hong Kong Data from the Cartoon Network's New GenerAsians\(^1\) Survey

Presentation made in conjunction with the Hong Kong release of data from the 12 Asian nation study of youth attitudes, perceptions and behaviours at the New World Harbourview Hotel, Hong Kong, 23rd June, 1998

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As a researcher on the impact of Television on children, I'm interested in the relationship between watching TV and other activities.

Slide 1 - Time spent in leisure activities - total sample

Ninety-one percent of the youth and children in the New GenerAsians Survey watch TV most days and 65% watch more than 2 hours a day. These results are consistent with US surveys of the amount of TV that US children watch per day (two hours and 47 minutes). As we can see, watching TV uses more leisure time than any other activity.

Slide 2 - Time spent in leisure activities - Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, TV uses three times as much leisure time as being with friends, or playing/practising sport and nearly eight times as much as doing an artistic activity like music, dance, drama, art, craft or writing. And this doesn't count computer games and watching videos which also are daily activities for about 20% of the children and youth in the region.

We could argue that TV just keeps children occupied when there is nothing else interesting to do, but that is not what the Survey says.

Slide 3 - Children watch TV, but do they really like it?

When asked to pick from a list of 14 leisure activities, 64% of the regional sample said that watching TV was one of their three favourite activities. This was 56% more than being with friends, more than twice the number for playing a sport, more than three times the number for reading and more than five times the number for doing an artistic activity.

Slide 4 - Three leisure activities I most like doing

In Hong Kong, the results were not as extreme, but even here 55% picked TV as one of their three favourite activities. Of the twelve countries, only Australian children had activities they enjoyed doing more than watching TV - being with friends, playing sport and listening to music CDs and cassettes.

And they want more TV. When asked what activities they would like to do more of, 40% of the regional sample said "watch more TV", again more than any other activity.

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\(^1\) The New GenerAsians Survey covering twelve Asian nations and involving 5600 children between 8 and 18 was sponsored Turner Network Television through their subsidiary the Cartoon Network. The survey covering some 340 response items was done by AC Nielsen. Dr Bridgman, was a consultant in the construction of the survey and in the analysis of data relating to the impact of television and electronic media on children and youth.
Slide 5 - Leisure activities I would like to do more of

In Hong Kong this was 52% more than being with friends, 75% more than playing sport and more than double those wanting to do more artistic activities. However, in Japan the desire for more TV may have reached a point of saturation, and Australian children, as well, have strong desire for new experience beyond the world of TV,

Slide 6 - Leisure activities I would like to do less of

with 24% saying they wanted to watch less TV, much more than the regional average of 9%, and much more than Hong Kong or Japan.

Slide 7 - How much influence will TV have on the next generation of adults

As a researcher and as parent, I am concerned at how TV will shape the coming generation of adults. Clearly, TV will be a major influence for good and ill. As parents we would like to think that this wonderful baby-sitter, that we use so frequently use and that our children so enjoy is safe and responsible. So should we be concerned that 47% of the children in the Survey have watched programmes that they have found unpleasant and frightening?

Slide 8 - Having a frightening or unpleasant experience watching TV

In Hong Kong this was true for 70% of the children, higher than for any other city. The programmes that they found unpleasant almost all contained violence.

Slide 9 - If children watch TV, will they become violent?

Watching violence on TV has long been suspected of causing violent behaviour in children and adults. Long term studies in the USA and Finland support links between the watching violence as a child and criminal convictions for violence as an adult. While it is fair to say that the jury is still out on the impact on behaviour of watching violent TV, it is also fair to say that the vast majority of researchers in the area believe there is a causal link.

Slide 10 - Parent/child perceptions of access to TV

Do we know what our children are watching? Sixty-two percent of the regional sample said they were allowed to watch anything they liked. Their parents did not quite agree, for only 47% of parents thought that children had free access to TV. In Hong Kong the difference was especially marked with a 24% difference in the views of parent and child. Seventy-seven percent of Hong Kong children, the second highest in the region, feel they can watch what ever they like, even if it rated only for older children and adults.

Slide 11 - Watching TV that is restricted to older children or adults

Thirty nine percent of the regional sample watch programmes which are restricted to an older age group, with Hong Kong much lower than Japan or Australia. As parents we need to be careful here as ratings are often based on sexual content and bad language, and many programmes rated as suitable for children can have high levels of violence.
Slide 12 – What’s really important (as opposed to enjoyable)?

We have already seen that our children's aspirations are to study hard, go to university and to be successful contributors to society. We have also seen how important the family is to most Asian countries - Japan and Australia being notable exceptions.

Slide 13 – Does watching too much TV lead to academic failure

Is television a danger to our children's aspirations? The other major worry about TV is that watching too much TV leads to academic failure. The counterpoint to this argument is that gifted children do watch considerable amounts of TV. However, it's what they watch and how they watch it that counts. Their parents watch with them, search out programmes of complexity, or search for complexity in the programmes, discuss the issues that arise and turn what for many children is a mind blot, into an active learning experience. The parental role is critical and this New GenerAsians survey is a very important first step in assisting parents to think about how they want television to influence the lives of their children.
Time Spent in Leisure Activities

REGIONAL

% 

- Do most days
- Do 2 hrs or more most days

Base: All respondents aged 7-18

Time Spent in Leisure Activities

HONG KONG

% 

Base: All respondents aged 7-18
Children watch TV, but do they really like it?

64% said TV is 'one of my 3 favourite activities.'

→ 56% more than for spending time with friends.
→ 137% more than for playing sport.
→ 256% more than for reading a book that is not schoolwork.
→ 433% more than for doing an artistic activity (music, drama, dance, art, craft, writing)

3 Leisure Activities I Enjoy Doing Most

Base: All respondents aged 7-18
Leisure Activities I Would Like to do
More of

Base: All respondents aged 7-18

Leisure Activities I Would Like to do
Less of

Base: All respondents aged 7-18
How much influence will TV have on the next generation of adults?

47% of the children say they have watched programmes that they found unpleasant and frightening.

Having an Unpleasant or Frightening Experience Watching TV

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Base: All respondents aged 7-18
If children watch violence on TV, will they become violent?

The jury is still out, but the opinion amongst experts favours a causal relationship.

Parent/Child Perceptions of Access to TV

Base: All respondents aged 7-18
Watching TV that is Restricted to Older Children or Adults

Base: All respondents aged 7-18

What's really important (as opposed to enjoyable)?

- Getting good grades and going to university
- My mother, my father, my family (except for Australia & Japan)
Does watching too much TV lead to academic failure?

- Gifted children watch considerable amounts of TV.
- Parents
  - watch with them,
  - search out programmes of complexity,
  - search for complexity in the programmes,
  - discuss the issues that arise and
  - turn watching TV into an active learning experience.