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### Communication strategies in BBC: A Critical Analysis of BBC- Sinhala Service

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#### Abstract

This research has been conducted to indicate the communication strategies used in BBC – Sinhala service. BBC- Sinhala service is Sri Lanka's first international media and Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom have a deep relationship as Sri Lanka was a British colony for decades. Therefore, it was interesting to examine the communication strategies used by the British main international media BBC with its special reference to Sri Lanka. This research is qualitative research and the data was collected through secondary content such as BBC – website and BBC's Facebook page. These documents have been reviewed and the data analyzed through content analysis. The research indicated 5 main impactful communication strategies used

by BBC- Sinhala service for its international audiences such as documentary news reporting, storytelling, vox pop, and live video reporting, Style, Repertoire and Arrangement, Catchy headline and persuasive language and expertise viewpoints and sources of information. There are several limitations in this present study. In the future, these can be expanded. The current study only used to indicate the communication strategies in the future this can be expanded to identify the impact of communication strategies on the audience. Further, the secondary contents were only used to collect the data, the primary data could use in future research as well.

**Keywords:** Communication Strategies, BBC Sinhala Service, International Media

#### 1. Introduction

The recent developments suggest that a new powerful "multifaceted" BBC is emerging –one that integrates the many elements of this venerable yet still, dynamic modern institution. According to Robertson in 2004, the BBC in Britain started to impact the world over the past 80 years. It's an immense time of sharing the soft diplomacy of Britain throughout the world. The BBC controls one of the biggest news organizations in the world, with 3700 new employees and 4q overseas bureaus- more than CNN and more than even the biggest newspapers and networks in the United States (Robertson, 2004).

The BBC is established under a royal charter and operates under its agreement with the secretary of state for digital, culture, media, and sport. Its work is funded principally by an annual television license fee which is charged to all British households, companies, and organizations using any type of equipment to receive or record live television broadcasts and iPlayer catch-up. The fee is set by the British Government, agreed by Parliament, and is used to fund the BBC's radio, TV, and online services covering the nations and regions of the UK. Since 1 April 2014, it has also funded the BBC World Service (launched in 1932 as the BBC Empire Service), which broadcasts in 28 languages and provides comprehensive TV, radio, and online services in Arabic and Persian.

Around a quarter of the BBC's revenue comes from its commercial subsidiary BBC Studios (formerly BBC Worldwide), which sells BBC programmes and services internationally and also distributes the BBC's international 24-hour English-language news services BBC World News, and from BBC.com, provided by BBC Global News Ltd. In 2009, the company was awarded the Queen's Award for Enterprise in recognition of its international achievements.

From its inception, through the Second World War (where its broadcasts helped to unite the nation), to the popularization of television in the post-WW2 era and the internet in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the BBC has played a prominent role in British life and culture. It is colloquially known as the Beeb, Auntie, or a combination of both (Auntie Beeb).

Sri Lanka was a British colony from 1815-1948 period, there was a great relationship between Sri Lanka and Britain due to national interests. Both countries continuously had a close relationship which has been maintained within the international arena after the post-cold war era. Therefore, Sri Lankans were affected by the British colonial perspectives and the post-colonial effects can be seen in Sri Lankan society up to date. However, the BBC Sinhala service has been one of the pioneering

services which have started on 1942 March 10, and it is working up to date with expanding digital media platforms. BBC service has four major platforms such as BBC TV, Radio, and online. The Online platforms include BBC social media sites and the BBC website. Therefore, in Sri Lanka, the BBC digital platforms are in operation for a long time and recently it has been expanded to many followers. With this sudden expansion of the Sri Lankan audience seeking information through BBC, the present study leave has been conducted to indicate the communication strategies used by BBC- Sinhala service online platforms. Therefore, the study identifies the BBC- Digital platforms such as BBC- Sinhala Facebook page and BBC Sinhala website. The strategies implemented in BBC – Sinhala service have been examined in the present study with the selected platforms. The present study focus to indicate that BBC – Sinhala service needs to attract the Sri Lankan audience and the strategies they implemented to attract the Sri Lankan audience towards BBC.

## 2. Literature review

### *Communication Strategies in Media*

Mass media is said to be increasingly pervasive in political and organizational life (Hepp, Hjarvard, & Lundby, 2010; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Schillemans, 2012). According to medicalization scholars, media logic is incorporated into the functioning of organizations (Hjarvard, 2008; Klinger & Svensson, 2014). Consequently, organizations adapt their processes and structures to media pressure (Hjarvard, 2008; Pallas & Fredriksson, 2013; Schillemans, 2012). One example of these adaptations is that organizations professionalize their strategies to deal with the media (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Veri, & Sriramesh, 2007). External communication strategies have received increasing scholarly attention over the past decade (Jain, De Moya, & Molleda, 2014). External communication aims at reaching out to external stakeholders such as shareholders, customers, or the general public via various channels such as mass media, social media, and newsletters (Anke, S, 2016).

The instance of the Lappers fort forest exemplifies how information and communication technologies (ICTs), like the Internet and mobile communication, may support and sustain real-world direct action, networking, and mobilization. Citizens and allies may access information, a petition, contact information, and new acts on the activists' own website. Having their own website gives activists more control over their message and self-representation, and it can also help them recruit new allies and activists. The Internet played a critical role in mobilizing activists both before and after the evictions. This actual prospect had been planned for a long time. When the judge ordered them to leave the forest, this statement surfaced on the Indy media-Belgium website: In this regard, it's also worth noting the widespread use of mobile phones for internal organizational functions, as well as for mobilizing on short notice, in addition to e-mail. When the police began their operation, an alarm mobilization call was issued practically immediately via mobile communication and the Internet. (Rucht *et al.*, 2004). In other words, for a direct action to resonate beyond a "ghettoized" community of like-minded people, beyond the fragmented public sphere of the (spl) Internet, where you need to be already interested or semi-informed in order to actively seek information regarding the aims of the action,

activist communication strategies also need to be directed towards the mainstream public sphere. In this regard, a push strategy is enacted in an attempt to reach a broader constituency and gain public support, which then can potentially transform into political influence. Figure 1 depicts an attempt to depict these various activist media usages directed at various target groups. Within the core group, face-to-face communication, mobile communication, as well as point-to-point Internet communication, are important. The Internet, and especially mailing lists, is also useful to pull sympathizers situated at the periphery into the core group or sustain the dynamism within the movement. Communication strategies directed at the mainstream media represent a push strategy towards a broader audience, be it local or national. It can be concluded that this fairly successful direct action adopted a dual communication strategy, combining an independent voice through the Internet directed at core supporters and a mediated voice through local and national press directed at the general population. Referring to Ruchts' (2004: 36) quadruple "A" in activist media strategies – "abstention, attack, adaptation, and alternatives," the Lappers fort case clearly combined adaptation to the logic of mass media with developing alternatives in the form of "movement-controlled media" in order to "secure autonomy and operational flexibility" (Rucht, 2004: 55).

### *BBC in Digital Era*

Any discussion on public service broadcasting today needs to take into account the digitalization process, which enables media convergence and the flow of content across multiple media platforms. The methodological approach we chose was content analysis. A sample was chosen from the BBC's digitally broadcast output. The BBC news website and news channel were obvious choices for the web and television content. For the radio content, we analyzed the news output of the BBC's digital music station, 6Music. The reason for this choice was that 6Music is an exclusively digital station; to have used any other station with a significant audience share would have meant that we would be measuring content accessed by the AM and FM audience as well as the digital-only listenership. We chose to focus the research on the BBC because of the unique position it holds as a publicly funded broadcaster. Each household in the United Kingdom owning a television set has to pay a license fee in order to receive content. The income generated from the license fee provides the BBC with the vast majority of its funding, and its right to broadcast is the subject of periodic reviews, which determine the renewal of the BBC Charter, allowing broadcasting to continue. Therefore, the relationship the BBC has with the audience has been one of providing the material that is designed to inform and educate, as well as entertain. Until the late 1950s, the BBC was the only legitimate broadcaster in the United Kingdom. This changed with the creation of regional Independent Television (ITV) and a network of local radio stations. The ITV network was funded by advertising revenue, but the various franchises were only awarded on the guarantee that certain public service characteristics, particularly regarding factual and news content, were observed. In 1982 Channel 4 was launched as a hybridization of the BBC and ITV as it is a public service broadcaster with a board of trustees, like the BBC, but is funded largely by advertising revenue, like ITV. In the late 1980s, Sky television became the first satellite

broadcaster in the United Kingdom and is funded by subscription fees. Since then, the broadcasting market in the United Kingdom has been more open and competitive.

### ***International media Effect on Sri Lankan audience***

Research conducted by Piyumali in 2020 about mass media and cultural imperialism in Sri Lanka (A special reference on the impact of Korean teledrama's soft power on Sri Lankan culture) indicated that the impact of Korean Tele dramas that broadcasting in Sri Lankan channels the subjugation of Sri Lankan culture and the emergence of Koreans culture. The selected dramas are famous and adored by both Korean & Sri Lankan audiences. They contain insight into Korean culture, religion, myths, Korean music, Korean pop culture, and also the background of Korean society. This research employs the method of both qualitative and quantitative analysis (mixed research method). To prepare research findings the data gathering tools used were interviews and questionnaires. A sample size of 100 was involved in the study through questionnaire data gathering technique by using random sampling methods, how simple television productions can be used as a tool for effective social changes & win millions of hearts and minds in the nation was researched. The cultural Influences made by these dramas created the market potential for such culture-based commercial goods in the local market. The hidden truth behind it is that they used the ideology of these dramas for establishing themselves in the local market as well as to publicize their businesses. The lifestyles of many Sri Lankan have been affected by these Korean characters and the ideologies they stand for. This is a controversial social, cultural, and media-industrial challenge for Sri Lanka due to the gradual invasion of the culture by the Korean soft power thus creating an ideology to trap the local audience as well as the very core of the local culture.

According to the research conducted by Sugath Senerath about the Indian drama and movies' impact on the audience, it indicated that contemporary mass media is becoming transnational and global. Through the communication literature media impact on the audience can be varied from one to another. The literature further shows that the measuring impact and influence of the media on the audience is very complicated. However, now communication research on media impact and influence has been becoming more systematic and scientific to the Sri Lankan audience. This study consists of four major aims. Those are coming to address, what extent the local and Indian television programs influence Sri Lankans' daily lifestyles, and how far the Indian telecast control over Sri Lanka's television channel and their programs. What is the cross-cultural impact of television programs on the Sri Lankan ethnic groups and what factors are more significantly influencing the changing daily lifestyle due to Indian television programs? The main objective of the research is to investigate the impact of Indian television programs on the Sri Lankan audience's daily lifestyles and their changing patterns from an intercultural communication perspective. Accordingly, this study highly focuses to examine the impact of Indian television programs. This study also investigates mostly affected mental and physical aspects of the audience's daily lifestyle due to watching Indian programs. It further identifies the role of the contemporary local media and their productions.

Contemporary mass media research paid attention to the impact of transnational and global media on their regional or global audience.

### **3. Research methodology**

This is qualitative research and the researcher used BBC digital platforms to collect data. The BBC FB page and the website were the data collected samples. Further, the web content analysis and social media analysis were conducted to indicate the study outcome of the present study.

### **4. Research findings**

The present research indicated interesting findings through the collected data. Therefore, 5 main communication strategies are indicated through the BBC Sinhala service which has been used to attract an international audience.

The BBC website is including main functions such as the most talking and special facts in the world, the special and unknown information in the globe, then the socio-political and economic, cultural facts in Sri Lanka, and then the most read news of the BBC. Each section has very much important news to the Sri Lankan audience and the reporting has been conducted to attract the audience with several strategies.

#### **▪ Documentary news reporting**

BBC – Sinhala service has used documentary news reporting to attract the Sri Lankan audience. Documentary news reporting has been used to appeal to the audience with the news content. The documentary brought about the social issues and conflict situations mainly to the international audience. This could give the real feeling of the information to the audience as it included the real stories. The documentaries brought out the lifestyle of sex workers in India and other countries, as rural living in different developing areas and countries in the world. This information reporting has taken much interest among the Sri Lankan audience due to the way of reporting the facts. Further, the biographies have been taken out as documentaries in BBC Sinhala service to give the news facts more interestingly. The biography reporting has been done mainly about the people who are famous currently through different social media platforms. For example, Kabee Lame-the one who has the highest developing Tik Tok account in the world and the Indian black modeler who challenged society with her color and being a modeler. The facts mainly reported through BBC Sinhala service are not easy to identify or get from other different Media. The uniqueness of reporting with different communication strategies makes the audience understand the information very clearly. Further, most of the documentaries used interviews to describe the real stories which make the audience trust the fact. Further few of the stories are brought out with creative silent, subtitles in Sinhala with light music. These ways of reporting the information became very much interesting to the audience and can be indicated through the number of views, comments, and shares of the video.

#### **▪ Storytelling**

Storytelling has been indicated as another one of the main communication strategies used inside the BBC- Sinhala service to share information with an international audience. In storytelling, it has been given priority for the nested loop and sparkling storytelling methods. Storytelling has been used to report much about the innovations and cultural facts in the world. The innovations made by the different

unknown or less popular people from all around the world. Storytelling is one of the most captivating techniques to convey messages and information. If you want to be a true storyteller, create engaging stories that make people vigilant listeners. If utilized on social media, this can turn online audiences into your ardent followers (David, 2019) the story has given a unique appeal for the information which it can be easily given and shared with the international audience. This strategy could reach the majority of the audience without a level of literacy. Because the stories are always familiar to the local audience and it has a good impact to be memorized the information with the narration of the story. BBC has used this technique to report curious news in Sri Lanka. The up-to-date information when the local media is reporting just as a news BBC reported it with all the facts inside as a story for the audience to reach easily.

#### ▪ **Vox pop and live video reporting**

According to the data analysis, it could indicate that vox pop and live video reporting have been used as one of the main communication strategies inside the BBC Sinhala service. Especially during the time of mass riot in Sri Lanka live video reporting and vox pop reporting have been used immensely. This gives the audience trust and curiosity. Because the live reporting caused curiosity in the audience. The vox pop will always give the audience perception and the ideologies directly. Therefore, these news items are much more appealing to the audience than simply reporting the facts. Especially when the local media is reporting as well about the same fact, BBC Sinhala service has used another side to reach the audience. According to the analysis of the BBC Facebook, it's very clear that they do have many views, shares, and comments for the vox pop and the live reporting news videos. This information reached the audience very effectively due to the strategy they used to report. The phrase itself comes from Latin and it translates to mean 'voice of the people.' Today, a vox pop is a short video made up of clips taken from interviews with members of the public. These video interviews investigate public opinion towards widely known topics, brands, or products and are commonly used for market research. These videos are nowadays created in a variety of different ways. From on-the-street style to in-home interviews and even mobile video diaries. Traditionally, however, a vox pop video refers to an on-the-street intercept interview, this method is not much popular among the Sri Lankan local media channels and the BBC Sinhala service uses it to reach the audience effectively. Because the general audience prefers to understand the perception of people for different matters.

#### ▪ **Style, Repertoire, and Arrangement**

Style and eye-catching arrangement of the website and Facebook page have been used very clearly as a communication strategy in BBC- Sinhala service. Therefore, the surface of the website has been colored with the national colors and it added the red, white, and gold touch. This color combination in the website catches the eye of the audience earlier than the information. The surface indicates that its important news from Britain. As a general rule, serif and sans serif typefaces are used for either body copy or headlines (including titles, logos, etc.), while script and display typefaces are only used for headlines.

Mono-spaced typefaces are generally used for displaying code, though they can also be used for body and headline copy, and were originally used on typewriters. BBC has used mono-spaced typefaces to keep the attention of the

audience. Further the font sizes, font colors, and pictures are very catchy for the audience. The BBC- Website has a unique appeal with plenty of information. This appeal grabs the audience. Further, the headings, formats, and structure deviation clearly indicate the typography techniques used in the website. First and foremost, typography is about capturing the onlooker's attention. In BBC website establishes the information hierarchy. As a lot of text is grouped together utilizing typography to differentiate the information helps a reader digest what is being shown. The typography communication strategy used on BBC- website, builds and fortifies country recognition. The color combination, fonts, and textures are used to emphasize and indicate that the site is the BBC- Sinhala service. Further, this typography indicated the professionalism and the well-managed structure of BBC Sinhala service. Formalizing the structure of typography gives the power to build a professional personality and the first image about the country as its international media.

Further, the style has a visual voice of its own. As CRI-Sinhala service has been used all the visual communication through clear photographs conveying the messages beyond what is actually being stated. The colorful and clear images added an authentic appeal to the website that the foreign audience feels. Moreover, there can be seen that the same wording giving a different impact depending on the letter and font type. As Communication happens with foreign audiences whom they don't know about the state, there should be a high message-delivering strategy. As this strategy has been used inside BBC the service has an aesthetically pleasing appearance on the website where it can be identified as unique.

#### ▪ **Catchy headlines and persuasive languages**

BBC- Sinhala service has used always curiosity-awakening headlines, which the audience feels to read the content. Because the headline is much more important when it comes to news reporting in any media. Because the headline only catches the audience towards the news. BBC Sinhala service has been using this strategy very often and every news information is reported with appealing headlines. Further, BBC Sinhala service uses conversational, Persuasive, and simple language in report writing and speaking. The conversations have been used to bring information related to economic, political, and business news. That has given an added flavor to the programme content. The reader or the listener must feel that he or she is also a part of the conversation where they can grab the message very easily. This communication strategy has been used in all the videos posted on the BBC Facebook page. Further, BBC- Sinhala service has used simple and neutral language so that all the readers will be able to understand the passages. Especially when they are reporting related to political and economic information, they have used simple language where everyone can understand the content. The simple language tone has been used when posting the Facebook post that everyone in the audience can understand. Moreover, neutral language behavior in some concerned topics is also important to indicate.

#### ▪ **Expertise viewpoints and sources of information**

To create trustworthiness and credibility BBC – Sinhala service uses expert viewpoints about different perspectives to prove the facts about the relationship, economy, and political condition in the world and Sri Lanka. This strategy helps the Sri Lankans to trust the information as the familiar

expertise expresses their positive viewpoints about the sectors. This builds trust among the audience. Further, it has been indicated as the source of information when it comes to

information about different countries and in the information indicating the global power and leaders of different countries.

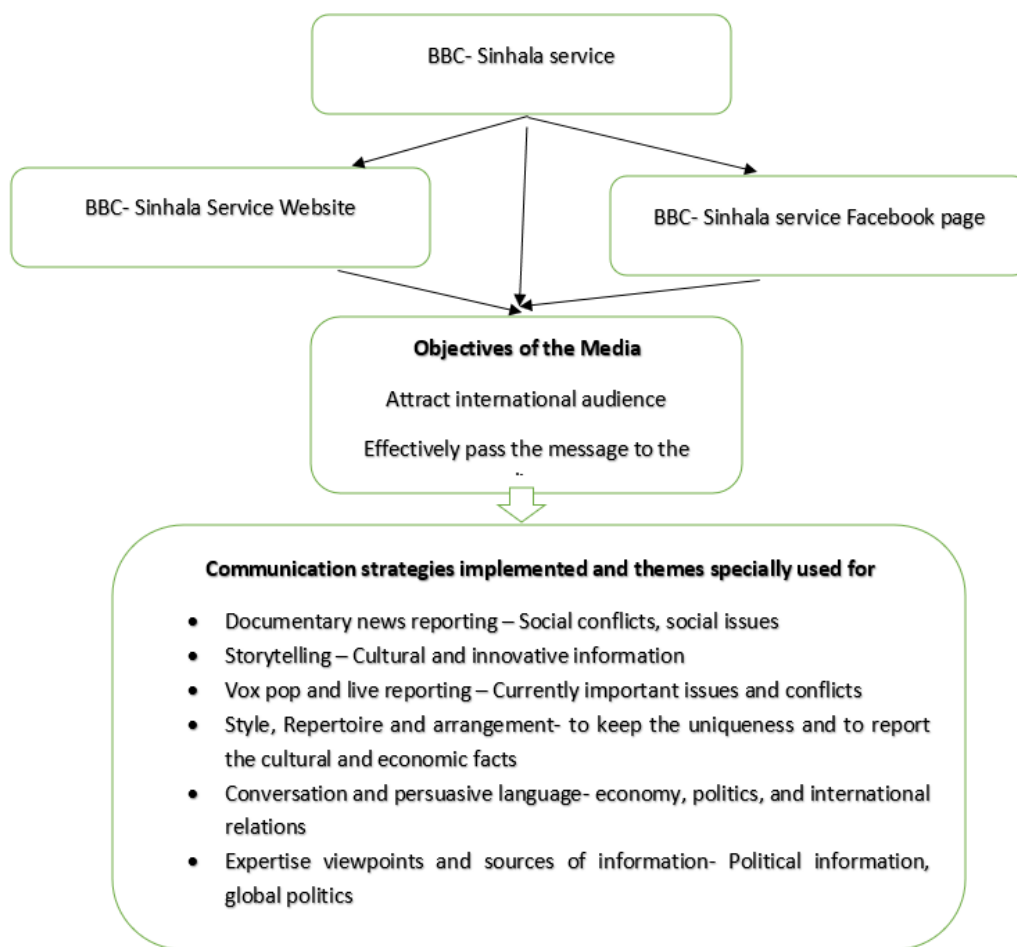


Fig 1: Summary of Findings

**5. Conclusion**

This research has been conducted to indicate the communication strategies used inside BBC Sinhala service for its international audience in Sri Lanka. Therefore main 5 communication strategies have been indicated which have a great impact on the Sri Lankan audience. Each and every communication strategy has been used to report different themes. Overall, it has given the information effectively to the international audience in Sri Lanka. These communication strategies can be used by the local media channels as well to get the audience's attention and in the future, the author suggests using some strategies to give the western perception of developing countries, especially Sri Lanka. Further, cultural information more could be added to the BBC Sinhala service.

In this research, there are several limitations and, in the future, these limitations can be expanded. This has been used by BBC Sinhala service and indicated the communication strategies used in it only. Future the real impact of communication strategies could be indicated by conducting other research. Further in this research, only the secondary contents have been used as digital platforms of BBC- Sinhala service and in the future, the primary data also can be gathered to justify the research outcomes.

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