

Television Format Adaptation: Articulating 'Cultural Proximity' from *Big Brother* to *Big Boss*

Narendra Kumar Jangir

Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of English, Central University of Rajasthan
Email - 2014phden04@curaj.ac.in

Abstract: *Format adaptation broadens a certain kind of public domain to analyze the space(s) between cultures. Television has become unavoidable tool for entertainment and to gain and reach to the information system of the world outside home. This research would focus on the process of adaptations in format transportation function extremely contextualized re-interpretation of the global format Big Brother transnational version into Big Boss in India. This study explores the spaces between cultures and examines the methodology behind constitution of world culture through fading national boundaries in adaptation. I would also investigate differences on dynamic grounds between socio-political and cultural manifestation and how the language is used in USA format and what transportation carries with its novel version. Finally, the study also focus on the distinguish audience response and the part played in game show by forth wall both in American and Indian shows differently.*

Key Words: *New Media, Format Adaptation, Global Format, TV Adaptation, Audience response, Ethnicity, World Culture, Cultural Exchange, Television and film Theater, visual culture.*

New Media has emerged as critical term in the era of exchange of cultures and economical values. Media studies have been developing since long back around a century through its available medium earlier as print media and later facilitated on screen or online, screen phase distributed the world into every house with an easy accessibility and excitement with tools as television, computer, mobile etc. While exploring past facts, television in India introduced post independence first in form of National Television of India named as Doordashan or DD and first telecast started on September 15, 1959 in New Delhi, but the inauguration of color television remarked in the 80s gifted by Asian Games in 1982 (Wadai 2008). From the very childhood of small screen media choose to begin with serial-cum-adaptation of celebrated religious texts like Ramayana and Mahabharata. Television has become a tool of collective family entertainment and, of course, a need in urban and semi-urban locale of India in 1990s. In the same decade TV industry has had a rapid development of several other channels CNN, Star TV, MTV, foreign channels and Zee TV and Sun TV as Domestic channels. Now coming back to the term New Media, television programming has moved from traditional entertainment genre as news, debate shows, soap opera, drama and documentary to factual entertainment genres as reality shows, lifestyle, sitcoms etc. As the notion of globalization grows the history of television is also largely stuck with the issue of medium specificity which is again articulated as a national medium. Indian television industry being provoked/influenced and adhere to the ongoing international boom in television Format adaptation. Generally, the notion of reality shows are the product of New Media and particularly, the term television format is called a sub genre under Reality television programs. There the study of this paper lies to explore the multiple aspects underneath Format adaptation in context to national socio-cultural, political and economical impacts. The last two decades of twentieth century introduced the standards for genres of reality and lifestyle and coincidentally in beginning of 21st century Format adaptation established a formulae to cope with distinct global television Formats.

Format has been considered a critical term in new media studies since beginning of 21th century, and has been dynamically studies in contexts of a nation's culture, politics, economics, and social values. The phenomenon is introduced and defined by Albert Moran in his seminal article 'The Pie and Crust: Television Program Format' as a common basis of television programming. Moran states on television formats as, "a television format is that set of invariable element in a program out of which the variable elements of an individual episode are produced" (Moran 2004, 263). Therefore a television format could be conceived as a process through which a television industry adapts an 'engine' of a particular program into its national context making apt modification. The reception of formats in distinct country manifested as dissent programming structure to those which are traditionally available while importing such 'flexible ideas' confronted the 'canned' television programs in the industry. Because format is "an easily-replicated and adaptable framework licensed through the international television for local adaptation" (Oran & Sharon 2012, 2). The process of adapting a format is quite different from narrative adaptation because it is already a pre-proposed show from different linguistic and cultural background with some essential duplicates. Formats are the necessary combination of 'restricted' rule and 'pithy pitch' and called a conceptual (Oran & Sharon 2012, 3). While understanding the concept through the context of production, format adaptation utilizes as a socio-cultural artifact that

is not tangible rather it is called a 'technology of cultural exchange' which is originated in one temporal and spatial context and translated into a new form to suit another local context. As Silvio Waisbord notes, "television formats are conceived with flexible formula(e)" (Waisbord 2004, 368). they are templates that can be licensed to produce worldwide and turned into programs with a characteristically 'local flavor'. Local version is anticipated to be cultural specific. In reality television shows format adaptation has emerged as new growing trends bridging the national boundaries to be subsumed into the complex process of globalization as Waisbord states, "formats are culturally specific but nationally neutral"(Waisbord 2004, 368). Format has iterative functions in pre-defined structure within a specific context but beyond that they constitute the notion of national identity in another form and consequently strengthen the national quality of television. The concept reality television format adaptation has proliferated across the globe, and national channels compete not only among themselves but moving vertically step ahead to compare with their international version.

Format adaptation broadens a certain kind of public domain to analyze the space(s) between cultures. As television has become unavoidable tool for entertainment and to gain and reach to the information system of the world outside home. Every telecasting whether be it domestic drama, reality shows or news distributed observing the social and professional stature of social individual which is also reflect in their opine just after the show with family or with people around. This common social behavior fabricates the cultural practices unconsciously based on class, tradition, knowledge, ethnicity, and social affair. At the consumption mood the meaning derived from distinct TV programming render accordingly and that could refer to Stuart Hall's production – consumption – reproduction in social context of meaning making. Now when Format adaptation is discussed in the scene wherein a global format is to be followed as protocol model originated under bounded localities of audiences and travel in alien culture. The 'technology of cultural exchange' communicates with a transnational sensibility in novel context and also reshapes the national narratives, ideology and expression, and culture and identity that constitute the interconnectedness at global media system. The abstract global platform generate a certain kind of social behavior in a middle class global television format consumer who undergoes a cultural transmission to identify oneself as a part of global citizen – these characteristics renders the canned social realities. As Lauhona Ganguly comments, "social transformation is accommodates within the market need to render new realities; and ordinary lives on reality television screen perform to commercial ends", foreign social realities represented through 'in-between' spaces finds its place in process of adaptation in specific nation's culture (Ganguly 2012, 342).

Television Format adaptation is not absolutely the textual adaptation, but cannot be a completely different approach or concept as Linda Hutcheon discussed adaptation as "a form of repetition without replication", therefore, format adaptation is a theoretical expression of iterative text. Formats, although, are 'content-free' but are textual entities instead of relying on content based text; they produced a text of merely form/style because they have little 'essence' or 'core' through that meaning is acquired. The distinguish feature of such type of adaptation construct meaning not establish on a principle rather to examine the 'function or effect' as Moran declares on the points as, "the format is a technology of exchange in the television industry which has meaning not because of a principle but because of a function or effect"(Moran 2004, 18). So the process of format adaptation is focused more on the sharing the idea of making meaning through a franchised structure. The notion of adapting a formula is different from conventional approach of translating a text into another linguistic and cultural context, but also same because the idea translate transnational politics into it. Rather importing concepts to "help to organize and regulate the exchange of program idea between program produces" Vinicius Navarro again writes, "Formats are also expected to function as intellectual property so that they can circulate easily not freely"(Navarro 2012, 24). They brings national televisions into a shared platform of globalization where notion of cultural imperialism (another point to discuss on Format adaptation) and neo-colonialism can be put aside mutual and globally celebrate the World cultures alike the phenomenon world literature. Waisbord achieves his idea of global culture through the process of "eviscerate(ing) the national" cultures, because while developing a formula(e) structure in a national tempo and space it internalized with specific cultural values but distributed franchise drop the attached context and embarrass new soul in the form of national cultures. Finally, bringing Vinicius Navarro back in support who argues that, "TV formats may indeed be the clearest manifestation of a cultural regime in which global reach is secured, rather than threatened by local specificity"(Navarro 2012, 25) seems as acknowledging the fading of national cultures and vision of the world culture deploying transnational sphere of human existence. But we should also underline the idea that we, as world citizen, understand the significance of individual cultural artifacts look beyond our prejudices to form a global culture.

This research intent to focus on the process of adaptations in format transportation function extremely contextualized re-interpretation of a global format *Big Brother* transnational version into *Bigg Boss* in India. The franchised sitcom and reality genre feed on the voyeuristic tendencies of viewers and show has reached several steps ahead of the original format. This study explores the spaces between cultures, and examines the methodology behind constitution of world culture through fading national boundaries in adaptation. It would also investigate differences on

dynamic grounds between socio-political and cultural manifestation and how the language is used in USA format and what transportation carries out with its fresh version.

Big Brother is a random adaptation of the novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* by George Orwell into reality game show design and created by John de Mol. As the novel set in dystopian location obscure to the people living inside a house which is absolutely cut off from the real world, the TV show also follows the concept of being isolated from outside events; secondly, the characters/contestants staying in the dystopian place is called housemates or houseguests; thirdly, a leader is appointed as Boss who observes the activities of housemates and meets at every weekends to analyze the progress of the characters and maintains the fear factor in their minds; fourthly, techniques for monitoring the house activities play an significant role because hidden TV cameras and personal audio microphones records natural behavior of every contestant during their stay; fifthly, the given games to perform are merely life experience tasks which most importantly scores the marks to win or loss at the end of week; sixthly, the hock eye keenly observes the relationships develop among the fellow contestants as friends, opposites, couples, captain-teammates, co-worker and professional player at times during their co-living; next is the prize which matter most; and finally, the elimination of individual from the house for not performing adequately creates emotional drama with eviction cliché note ‘WE LOVE YOU’, ‘YOU WERE SUPERB’, and ‘GOOD LUCK. Many a reality show hike up for projecting local and national celebrity on screen with their personal life exposure before audience with voyeuristic tendencies such as *Khatron Ke Khiladi (Fear Factor)*, *Comedy Nights With Kapil* hosted by Kapil Sharma (*The Kumars at No. 42* by Sanjeev Bhaskar), *I Can Do That*, *Sacch Ka Saamna (The Moment of Truth)*, *Dus Ka Dum* etc.. The Global TV format *Big Brother* has been franchised in India since 2006 as *Bigg Boss* first aired on Sony TV and later Colors TV. This show have set new TRP records and been successful in drawing attention of the audience towards reality game show on the television in India. The calculation of TRP number could be understood not only with shows’ content but beyond that host would also play crucial part as India’s legendary actor Amitabh Bachchan hosted the earlier season that uplifted the Sony TV rating into leading three channels. As the matter of fact, reality television attracts the audience most importantly through the celebrity status either as host or contestant similarly show *Bigg Boss* have fascinated audience representing Amitabh Bachchan, Shilpa Shetty, Sanjay Dutt, Farah Khan and Salman Khan, comparatively at the international stage also the format *Big Brother* in different countries represents host like Julie Chen (US English), Davina Macall and Dermot O’Leary (UK), Gretel Killeen, Kyle Sandilands and Jackie O (Australia), Arisa Cox (Canada) etc. Apart from the host and contested audience voyeuristic tendencies are fulfilled by surprise celebrity guests who enter the house for different purpose sometime in course of promoting their (special celebrity) upcoming films, music etc., and many a times surprise guest are introduced just to add more liveliness, to eradicate monotony of the game, to increase the difficulty level. Thus, *Bigg Boss* of international format *Big Brother* has strike strongly in Indian television industry of reality shows, the international format with all its admissible characteristics adapted in this (India) nation specific to perceive testes of the national audience.

Although Indian television screen cramped with daily soaps which are endless with some or other suspense for the ‘homemaker’ woman, because while discussing the Indian scenario we must also count the idle time woman spend at home, left alone with television box to entertain herself in most semi-urban and urban localities. Therefore, beside the daily soap serials networks captivated by the genre reality show world again inspired by the west/ Hollywood. The reality programs are on play around a decade ago but within a decade this new genre has flourished widely. It has made very clear that most of Indian reality shows are adapted from its international version to name some as *Kaun Banega Crorepati* from *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, *Indian Idol* from *American Idol*, *Sach Ka Saamana* from *The Moment of Truth*, *Pati, Patni or Wo* from *Baby Borrowers*, *Survivor* from *Survivor*, *Khataron Ke Khiladi* from *Fear Facor*, *I can Do That*, *India’s Got Talent* from *Britain’s Got Talent*, and *Bigg Boss* from *Big Brother* etc. Since audience loving genre is transported, it would obviously have gone through a lot changes. So the questions are what kind of cultural, social, economic and political aspects have been reshaped to suit the form to particular ethnic group? How does the celebrity culture differ in those of European and American countries than that of Indian? How does the host become center of attraction for audience? How do the contestant and host relationship perceived by the audience at large? What is role of Hindi language in *Bigg Boss* comparing to the English Language in America? There the study focuses to answer these given questions with special reference to *Bigg Boss* compared to American version of *Big Brother*.

Format is generally a set of standards commonly declared for the particular program to operate every time with the definition as game, sitcoms, dance competitions, talent hunt etc. where we understand format as a set of rules and more commonly called ‘engines – a set of visual, formal or structural element that would characterize a format pitch’ and the format creator is known as ‘divisors’ (Oren, 2012). *Bigg Boss* is running in its 9th season (2015) with Salman Khan as the host whereas American version has done with season 17 and UK *Big Brother* is set for season 17 in 2016. Despite being three programs in different countries with one concept gained immense popularity in their respective countries, but also both were not left behind in gathering all sorts of controversial to grab the attention of millions. While comparing Indian show with its counterpart in America at cultural and social phenomena, differences

can be observed from the use of language in the house. It is very phenomenal in this format that some contestants behave very childish throw objects in air, pushes and shoving each other, things being broken and abuses being hurled similarly in both countries but words used in conflicts proves juxtaposition between cultures in American version and even *Celebrity Big Brother* of UK uses vulgar vocabulary (considered offensive in Indian context) as fuck, ash hole, dick, butthole etc very often which is accepted in those society and everyday life with no negativity over there. The Western shows are more explicit in terms of sexual connotation. Whereas, in Indian context Dolly Bindra's harsh words towards Shwati Tiwari in season 4 made her evicted because cultural specific audience in the country did not vote for expansion of vulgarity. Investigating all the winner of eight season of *Bigg Boss* claims that being in the created (by host) confused situation which pushes individual to react in particular manner but only those contestant can reached till the last who behave in a certain way – to stay calm, control on words, be oneself and respect others says Rahul Roy season 1 winner (Jain 2015, 4). Another instance to site is Gautam Gulati, winner of season 8, rejects the idea of argument and fighting scene to be promoted says, "I dislike the fact that people would around fighting and arguing with each other...it's Big Boss's job to torture people, to confuse them. But it's up to you to manage yourself" (Jain 2015, 4). Thus, of course, *Bigg Boss's* voice make contestant to behave rude with each other and given task become matter to indulge in controversies but apart from all abusive nature of communication *Bigg Boss* has exposed celebrities like Shweta Tiwari an Indian middle family girl. Again, to contradict with naked scene in US *Big Brother* season 15, national audience voted for a kitchen girl Juhi Parmar, winner of season 5, who always limited herself in cooking activities and avoided fighting and arguing uselessly with other inmates. Next point could be much funny to the reader, Indian woman while arguing or fighting never wants to loss and if the war is among women then it can't be under one roof. In Indian social women do shout while fight at highest possible pitch, example can be notice from every season or show, except Dolly Bindra and Shidhardh Bhardwaj contestant like Sambhavana Seth, Rakhi Sanwant and Pooja Mishara were known for their flaring tempers and shrill voice enough to bring down the roof of the *Bigg Boss's* House. On the contrary US culture slightly distinguish from this high sound arguments their characters go upset, cranky, weeping and do back biting but audience yet to hear something so loud, deafening and atrocious. The voyeuristic tendency of the viewers has been spoiled at different levels while over dramatizing the situation while interaction among the housemates. As these issues of discussion turned into rage where UK version is considered much blatant which clearly manifest cultural context for instance Shilpa Shetty was racially abused by Jade Goody in British *Big Brother*. These incidents vindicate that western nature of expression is far blatant than Indian.

Moving to the next point, cultural proximity – fascination of audiences towards their language and culture in media or the media of similar culture – consequences into celebrity culture which has been constantly developing for last a decade wherein audience are fascinated to celebrity representation in many diverse ways. As a scientific study reveals that we human being have a tendency to be fascinated with celebrity, and 'that our brains receive pleasurable chemical stimuli when we see familiar faces' (Altman 2005, 2). "Television, more than any other cultural development, has radically changed our experience of celebrity" says David Blake, a professor of English at the college of New Jersey. Ewing states, "Television has made celebrities both prevalent and ubiquitous, and with the rise of television came a whole new branch of the public relations industry. Public relations once focused on preparing accomplished individuals for the interest and scrutiny that had come to them. Now it involves manufacturing celebrities to meet the culture's seemingly insatiable desire for them" (Altman 2005, 2). Celebrities' personal life and their reaction towards basic activities of daily life create charm in viewers rather than their dramatic performance. TV has brought intimacy with actors into the homes and audience quickly forms a close friendship, which later transforms a actor into icon. Characters on the reality programs also enjoy the equal celebrity status to the host. In Indian ethnicity host as celebrity maintains a gap from the contestant and allow them to built relationship with audience. The process of becoming dear to voter examined merely on the goodness of one's heart and tasks performance, whereas American celebrity gets their love mostly for the negative arguments, practical way of life even if it disturb somebody else, blunt expression of love and sexual frustration etc.. for example in UK *Celebrity Big Brother* 2015 Austine is declared as runner of the show who have felt much comfortable in underwear all the time and representation of his homosexual intimacy towards other inmates, his swimming pool scene are captured naked. These mentions tasks can't be taken negative as such but if compared in Indian context than TV producer and director had to have thought thousand times before broadcasting on the tube. Because the idea of Indian family means three consecutive generation runs from grandfather to grandson and the traditional families still relish TV programs together in that case vulgar scene are strictly not allowed. Whereas, US and UK families are most extended up two generations, or most probably nuclear. Therefore, social scenario completely changes while transporting the concept from another cultural context.

One of the noticeable gaps in the process of transnational adaptation of a concept would of regarding the host. Host play significant role in spreading popularity of the show by sometimes firing up the controversies and sometimes sharing the real world experience to cope with situation. *Bigg Boss* is being hosted by Bollywood superstar Salman Khan since season 4 and once being accused by media for favoring a contestant Tanisha but in reality he was not. Salman is also seen in with red face scolding, grilling and realizing them that big boss holds all the power, whereas

contrary to Big Boss, Emma and David behave much like formal acquaintance with no harsh word. In India host represents both the authority of the show and audience at times for example while announcing evicted name Salman creates suspension albeit he knows the final decision of Janta and *Bigg Boss* whereas David McCall does not state any decision straight instead left to the Big Brother's voice to announce and Emma Wills open up as, 'the public has made their decision, your fates are sealed' Now, another remark can be observed from stage, the platform where host has to be, India version forms the audience as forth wall and camera is focused mostly on host, but US version prepared stage in middle of the audience. Salman does not perform as a host as such but reacts as in the as he walks casually in his signature style, sits on floor, moves his body, sings etc. but on the other side we are yet to see Julie Chen dancing, singing and gossiping that way. Therefore, from the behavior of a host towards contestant to audience differs in their versions which directly or indirectly represents a picture that how US and UK celebrity host are close to their audiences and their show is more audience oriented comparing to Indian version. Finally, interacting with the cultural ideology while trans-plotting the show at distinct spaces the use of language creates a sense of national specific show. As US and UK follow one language to resolve every bit of communication i.e. English as a language of communication across the world, but here scenario changes widely the sustained function cliché 'unity in diversity' rules out the idea of one language for every corner of the wide India because there are around two dozens of languages spoken widely across the states and so are the cultures to follow. However, *Bigg Boss* choose Hindi language as medium of expression for the show irrespective of diverse linguistic disparity and contestants like Carol Gracias, Jade and Claudia etc. who were less frequent with Hindi language made the ambiance of the house fascinating complex to pour audience's mind in it.

To conclude, the *Big Brother* as a franchises format has developed a culture, beyond the specific nationalistic cultural boundaries to form a global vision of living together what M.K. Gandhi called Global Village, but at the same unique formation of members from distinguish fields as Politics, reality shows, LGBT, Pageant show, law breaker, dance, music, sports, films stars, TV stars, comedy and non-celebrity constitutes platform to discuss unusual behavior of the society at large ignoring the politics of gender, class, race, religion and color. Inasmuch as these formats of different kinds are to make world smoother and lighter to understand individual philosophy of life and character in general. The world through pre-defined rules of reality shows is celebrating the differences and exploring the similarities in dissimilar cultural values, social ethics and political discourse. The format of Big Brother engender the participants to be self-expressive and creative all through their stay in the house which recollects Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of *Vishva-manva* or universal being as defines world literature, and here we take as world culture, only in connecting with "everyone else in the broadest way" and individual beyond everything is a "man (who) is breaking and re-making himself only to himself in the universal" (Paranjape 2011). Therefore, there these set of rules are in process of transcending the nation's geographical and cultural boundaries to produce a world celebrity culture beyond narrow provincialism and parochialism to be the local of individuality and at the same time globally connected with all sorts of imaginative creativity.

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