

Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE)

Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) is one of the pioneer experiments in Indian television scenario where television is used for social causes. The experiment became a tool for mass education through various programmes designed exclusively for the project. The programmes concentrated on education, agriculture, health and family planning. It was the first experiment to telecast educational programmes direct from satellite to receivers

The earth stations at Delhi and Ahmedabad telecasted four hours programmes every day. Programmes are classified into two: Educational Television (ETV) and Instructional Television (ITV). Educational television programmes designed for school children. Such programmes focused on education. Broadcasted 1.5 hours programme on working days at school hours. Students are exposed to these programmes as part of the school activity. During holidays, the time used for teacher empowerment. Varieties of content developed to train teachers through the facilities provided by the project. Almost 10000 primary school teachers became part of the training programmes.

Adults are exposed to Instructional television. Majority of the adults were illiterates. The village folk assembled around television sets in evenings. The project broadcasted 2.5 hours programmes in every evening. It was a prime time channel to the adult stake holders. Programmes focused health, hygiene, family planning, nutrition, improved agricultural practices and events of national importance.

The experiment practiced in 2400 villages spread over six selected regions in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Kamataka. Besides the villages, certain towns also got the programmes through earth transmitters. ETV and ITV used local languages like Hindi, Oriya, Telungu and Kannada.

All India Radio personnel planned and produced programmes at the production centers setup in Delhi, Ahmedabad and Cuttack. A committee included central and state government representatives, experts from universities, teacher training colleges and social workers helped the production team. Special committees on education, agriculture, health and family planning formed to support the production groups. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) set up its own Audio -Visual Instruction Division to plan and produce programmes for SITE.

SITE is a result of a recommendation by the UNESCO expert mission in 1967. As per the request of government of India, UNESCO undertook a feasibility study for a project in satellite for communications. The feasibility study conducted between November 18, 1967 and December 08, 1967. Following the UNESCO report, three Indian engineers visited USA and France in June 1967 to get first hand exposure to the technical aspects. Government of India set up the National Satellite Communications Group (NASCOM) in 1968 to lead possible utilizations of synchronous communication satellite. The group consisted cabinet ministers, representatives of ISRO and All India Radio. The NASCOM recommended using ATS-6 satellite for communication purposes. AT-6 is a second generation satellite developed by NASA for an experiment in educational television. To practice the recommendation, Department of Atomic Energy made an agreement with National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) of US for the loan of a satellite for one year in 1969.

As per the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two countries, the objectives of the project were divided into two parts—general objectives and specific objectives. The general objectives of the project were to:

- Gain experience in the development, testing and management of a satellite-based instructional television system particularly in rural areas and to determine optimal system parameters;
- Demonstrate the potential value of satellite technology in the rapid development of effective mass communications in developing countries;
- Demonstrate the potential value of satellite broadcast TV in the practical instruction of village inhabitants; and
- Stimulate national development in India, with important managerial, economic, technological and social implications.

Using the facility SITE commenced its operation on August 01, 1975. The experiment became a great success. Villagers received the project whole heartedly. For the entire year people gathered around television sets and watched programmes eagerly. In the midst of demands from Indian villagers, journalists and others NASA shifted its ATS-6 satellite away from India. Thus the project concluded in July 31, 1976 remaining sweet memoirs of television realities.

Technologically the experiment put forward an insight and the demands took a positive initiative to develop own satellite for communications. After tiresome jobs, ISRO developed Indian National Satellite system. In August, 1982 India launched satellite.

Reference Link:

<http://mediamarx.blogspot.com/2012/04/satellite-instructional-television.html>