

# **Remapping Indian Television in The Age of Digitalization (2001-2020)**

## **Abstract**

This research tries to examine the digitalization of cable television broadcasting in order to address the intricate relationships that exist between the state, the neoliberal market, and digital technology. I try to locate the shifting relationship among the various stakeholders, who are implicated in the mandatory digitalization of television broadcasting. My objective is to underline how digitalization can be conceived within the television broadcasting ecosystem in neoliberal India and how digitalization shapes the technologically mediated relationship between the state and its citizens. I use multi-sited ethnography as a method to understand the ways in which the relationship among the stakeholders has shifted during this transition. In order to understand the policies formulating this mandatory digitalization of cable television, I have also studied the policy documents through a critical policy studies approach in order to trace the consumer-centric approach in the shaping of media policy. Since digitalization has brought many changes to the conception of television related to its form, technology, and distribution, especially with the advent of OTT video-streaming services (Over the Top), so, I also try to examine how highly distinctive forms of distribution technology and audience arise in comparison to the traditional forms of television services. I suggest that mandatory digitalization of cable television broadcasting is the most direct and explicit attempt towards platform governmentality in the Indian context.

Television in India has played a formative role in the developmental projects of the state, leading to subject formation and identity creation. With India's economic liberalization, a new age of television ushered with the coming private satellite channels and the growth of cable as a distribution system. However, with new developments in technology and the rise of channels, complications arose in the cable industry in the form of non-payment of dues, varying agreements between individual broadcasters, multi-system operators and local cable operators and under declaration of the number of subscribers, all of which led to frequent channel blackouts which affected the viewers in various ways. Against this backdrop, the implementation of the Digital Addressable System (DAS) was mandated by the government, making the use of the set-top box mandatory for the viewers.

To comprehend the present volatility in the television broadcasting environment, I propose that the roots of transition have been planted in distribution systems and technology. Digital

distribution is a fluid and multidimensional phenomenon that influences nearly every part of the television industry. Contentious arguments over the value of television content, changes in audience behaviour, and the creation of easy, intuitive access are the markers on which the category of distribution is being shaped. Perceptibly, agency and authority are central to each of these concerns. Hence, more critical attention must be paid to the distributary infrastructure supporting this shift.