

Exploring the Three Dimensions of Web Series and TV Soap Opera

(A Comparative Study of Content, Audience and Medium of Web Series and TV Soap Opera)

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Abstract:

TV soap opera and the Web series are the audio visual media of communication in the context of fiction. It influences the audience in many ways. This study aims the comparative study of the TV soap opera and web series in India with three variables i.e. content, audience and the medium. During the quantitative study, researcher examines the perception of 15-40 years' age group people of different cities of Rajasthan regarding the Web Series and TV soap opera.

Key Words: Web Series, TV Soap Opera, Audience study, Perception study, Impact study, Screen studies

Introduction:

TV Soap operas are the most popular medium of entertainment at the beginning. In 1980s, in US, 50 million Americans consider themselves fan of one or more soap operas (Whetmore and Jielwasser, 1983). But now the dynamics of entertainment Industry is drastically changed. Web Series has changed the content and audience of the fictitious serial.

Nowadays, the house wives and working class are the main target audience of TV soap operas. It has the target audience stereotypically is female because of the different possibilities of characters. Whereas, the teen agers and youngsters are supposedly the main target audience of the Web series. For these kinds of new audience, M Gómez Aguilar, FJ Paniagua Rojano, P Farias Batlle (2015) states, 'This new audience has been given different names, including

prosumer, active audience, social audience (referring to those using social networks while watching TV) (Congosto, Deltell, Claes, and Osteso, 2013: 57), creative audience (Castells, 2009: 184), multitasking audience and multiscreen audience.’

When it comes to the content, television entertainment content have faced heavy censorship, although web series goes with thought provoking content on demand. As the taste and demands of the new-age viewer changes, content providers are exploring new ways to deliver original programmes specific to the digital audiences. Author Tamborini (2013) suggesting that media representations can influence the motivations of their viewers.

Convenient Accessibility:

Web series allows audience to watch shows at their convenience. The target audience have to plan their favourite T.V Shows to watch, while for Web series, audience has the freedom to watch their favourite shows as and when they please and that too without advertisement breaks. Just few years back, entertainment meant pay a visit to movie-hall or just sit before the T.V set, but today, Web series has perfectly changed the whole scenario. The authors Michal Kabát, Juraj Kovalčík (2012) states as, ‘While at first it served mostly for a one-directional content transfer (from producers to consumers), contemporary web presupposes active user participation on multiple levels. The new “masspersonal” medium has been expanding its functionality: information source has turned into an interactive platform for obtaining, creating, storing and sharing information’.

Content : Uncensored and varied:

In terms of the content, the Web series has gained popularity because they are taking us where television material won't. We are grown up watching this melodrama every day a troubled housewife who gets into the habit of walking up and becoming the perfect role model of everyone in the house with her good attitude and yet gets disrespected by everyone this can be seen in almost every plot of every TV soap opera. Dave Boothroyd (2009) states, ‘That all of this is possible has led to a widely held belief that the Internet represents a prima facie democratisation of communications and information, and thus signals yet another "end" to censorship by virtue of its subversion of traditional forms of power of sanction’.

Nuria Lloret Romero and Fernando Canet Centellas (2008) states that, Web series renew narrative strategies that have been already consolidated for some time on television. But they incorporate on-line resources like active participation from the audience in the story's progress and the ease

which this interactive medium allows for the generation of virtual communities - something which is key to consolidate the series' fictional universe.

As it is Wu and Chen mentioned that Web series have enriched people's lives and made the entertainment industry full of variety (Wu & Chen, 2015). Even they have started to invest heavily in regional content too.

Review of Literature:

In research paper, 'Fandom as industrial response: Producing identity in an independent web series. Transformative Works and Cultures', A. J. Christian (2011) frames the development, production, and distribution of a Web series, *The Real Girl's Guide to Everything Else*. She unfolds the dynamics of Web series to create their 'own audience'. In this regard, she finds issues about Black community, Homosexuals and female, 'as a fan-driven response to an industrial product'. She correlates the new media economy and various ethnicities, which are projected in the web series for fan productions.

This research paper helps this research study to know how the new economy of web series is emerging by creating 'separate audience'.

In his research paper, *Web TV Series: How to make and market them*, published in Oldcastle Books, D. Williams (2012) explains the unique elements of each and every web series. He quotes, '..what works for one show cannot be replicable for another.' While analysing the content and the new media space, he traces the relation between modality and the content of various web series. This paper gives an idea to understand the dynamics between a medium and its message.

Nuria Lloret Romero and Fernando Canet Centellas, (2008) in his research study, 'New stages, new narrative forms: The Web 2.0 and audiovisual language', which was published in *Journal Hypertext. Net, Barcelona*, discusses about new narrative forms of 'The Web 2.0 and its audiovisual language'. He shares the various emerging patterns of expression at web media, which provides a culture of 'collective creation' or 'collective intelligence'.

In the research study, 'The web as television reimaged? Online networks and the pursuit of legacy media', published in *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Aymar Jean Christian, (2012) differentiates the TV and Web as a medium of communication and entertainment. While differentiating the characteristics of these two, he talks about the 'dialectic between old and new, continuity and change, insiders and outsiders' and finds 'the instability of television as a concept and the promise of the web as an alternative'.

In the study, 'Soap opera viewing patterns of college students and cultivation', Elizabeth M. Perse (1986) collected the responses of students of 313 colleges to analyze their viewing habits about Soap Operas. Data collected by Survey method and analysed on Cultivation theory, He finds that, 'the limited cultivation effect observed was related to more instrumental soap opera viewing motives,'.

Research Questions:

RQ1: Are teen agers and youngsters the target audience of Web series?

RQ2: Are house wives the target audience of TV soap opera?

RQ3: Is the content of Web series full of sexuality and offensive language?

Hypothesis

Ha1: The teen agers and youngsters are the target audience of Web series.

Ha2: The house wives are the target audience of TV soap opera.

Ha3: The content of the Web series is full of sexuality and offensive language.

Ha4: The content of the web series is influencing the language of the teen agers and youngsters.

Research Objectives: The Research objectives of the research study are as below;

RO1: To compare and analyse the target audience of TV soap opera and Web series.

RO2: To explore the variety of the content of TV soap opera and Web series.

Research design: The nature of the Research study is Qualitative Research method.

Types of variables: In this study, two independent variables are used i.e. audience and content.

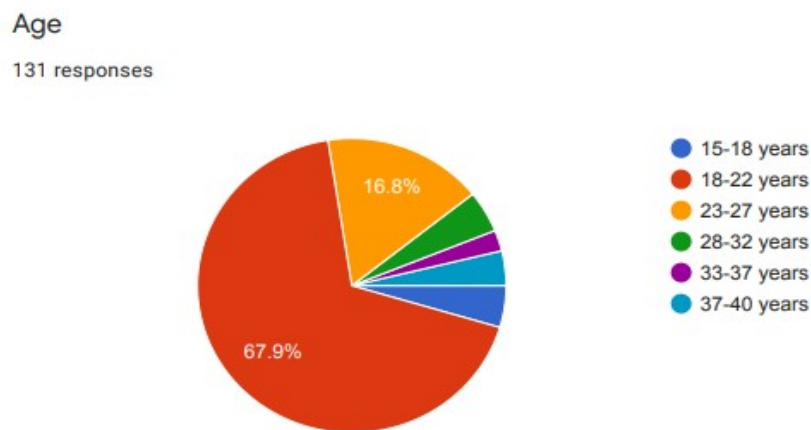
Sample design: In the research study, these are the elements of the Sample Design as below;

- **Universe:** Indian Web Series and Indian TV Soap Operas are the Universe of the Research Study.
- **Sampling Element:** Indian Web Series and Indian TV Soap Opera released in year 2019 and 2020 construct the Sampling Element of the Research Study.
- **Selection of Unit Sampling:** Any Indian Web Series is the Unit Sampling of the Research Study.

- **Sampling Technique:** The Selection of the samples is based on the Purposive Sampling technique.

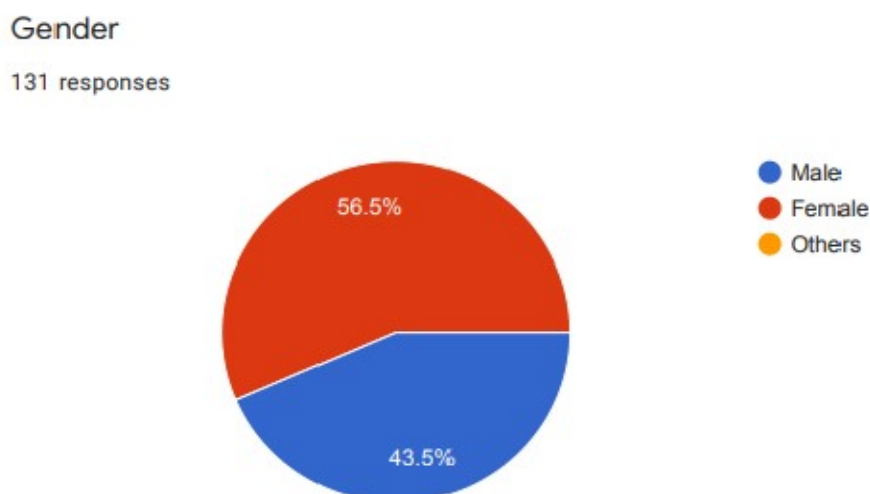
Data Analysis and Interpretation: The Simple Percentage Analysis is used to analyse and interpret the data collected for the Research Study.

Age group of the respondents



To authenticate the young age group of the respondents, as it is stated in the research title too, this data confirms that 67.9% people are from 18-22 years of age group and 16.8% people are from 23-27 years of age group. Therefore, the reflection of the data confirms that, around four out of five respondents are actually ranges from the age group of 18-27 years.

Gender ratio

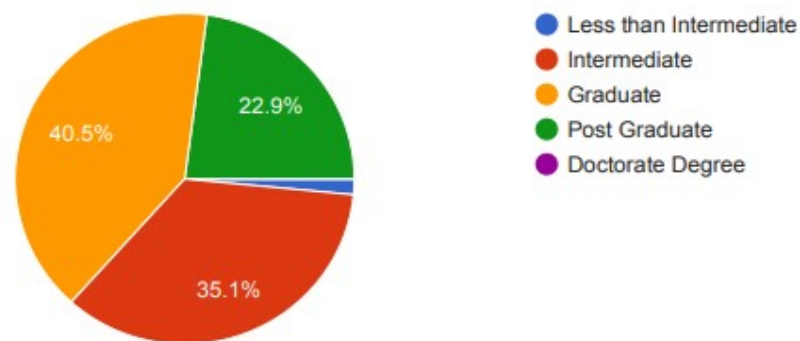


To observe the varied gender gaze, the male-female ratio is approximately 1:1. To be precise, the data clearly shows that 56.5% respondents are female and 43.5% of them are males, out of total 131 respondents.

Educational Qualification

Education Qualification

131 responses

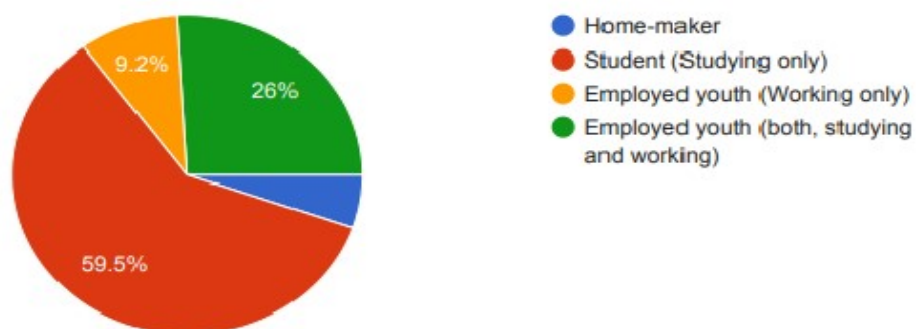


To observe the range of the audience of TV soap opera and Web series too, the respondents possess varied level of educational qualification too, i.e. ‘Less than Intermediate to Doctorate degree’. Although, this data states clearly the absence of any respondent having doctorate degree and only 2 nos. of respondents having ‘less than Intermediate education’ out of total 131 respondents. This data indicates that graduated people are in a majority i.e. 40.5%. Furthermore, it states that 35.1% people are intermediates and 22.9% people are post graduates. So, 98.5 % respondents possess the education ranges from ‘Intermediate to Post Graduation degree’.

Occupation

Category

131 responses



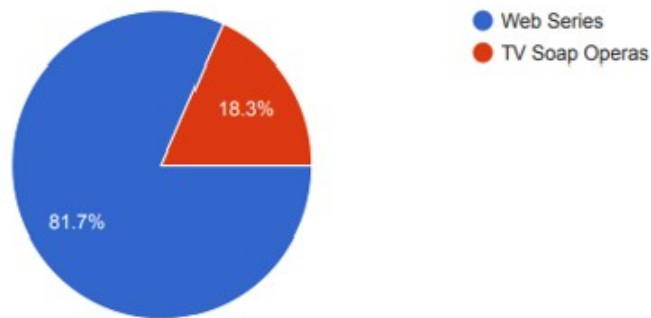
To observe the audience perception of different category, the occupation category was classified in four parts, i.e. Home maker, Students(Studying only), Employed youth (both studying and working) and Employed youth (working only). As it is stated in our hypothesis, we consider different choices of media material in these categories.

The insight shows that 59.5% respondents are students (studying only). 26% of them are employed youth, which are actually studying and working together. 9.2% of them are the working employed youth and 5.2% are the home makers.

Daily preference to watch TV Soap Opera or WebSeries

On a working day, what do you prefer to watch the most?

131 responses

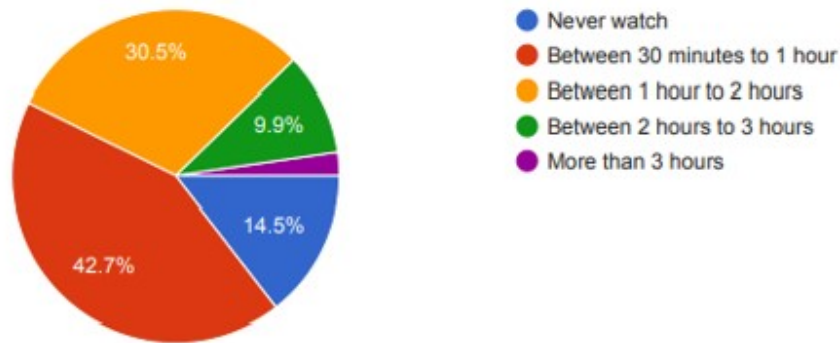


The working day analysis shows that web series are more preferred to be watched than TV soap operas. The results are 81.7% and 18.3% respectively. It is clearly states the rapidly changing choices of Media material (entertainment). Also, as 6 out of 10 respondents are actually students, therefore it is also shown by this data that, students are the main portion of this change of the dynamics.

Duration to watch Web Series daily

On a working day, how much time do you spend on watching Web Series, every day?

131 responses



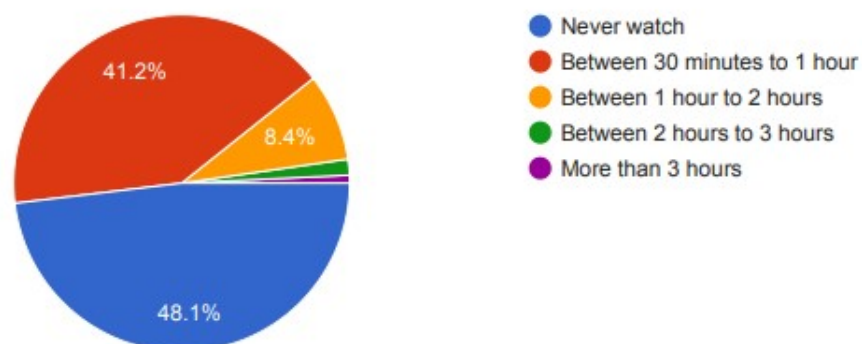
It is resulted by this data that, the daily consumption of the Web series possess a big part of the total. 40.4% of total respondents are actually watching the Web series from 1hour to 3hours actually. Although, every seventh respondent denied watching the Web Series.

On a working day, the maximum hour spends by most of the people on watching web series is 30minutes to 1hour and 1hour to 2 hours that is 42.7% and 30.5% respectively. Whereas, on a working day 14.5% people do not prefer to watch web series.

Duration to watch TV Soap Opera daily

On a working day, how much time do you spend on watching TV soap opera, every day?

131 responses



It is striking to know with this data that, 89.3% respondents of the total either never watch TV soap opera or watch for 30 minutes to an hour daily only.

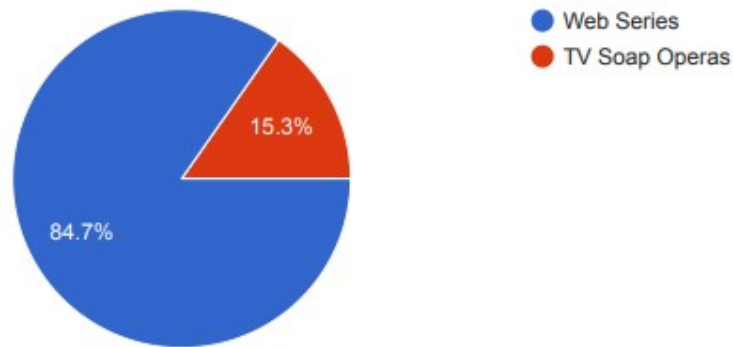
It is clearly indicating the rapid decline of the audience for TV soap opera actually.

On a working day the maximum hours spent by most of the people on watching television is 30 minutes to 1 hour and 1 hour to 2 hour that is 41.2% and 8.4% respectively, whereas 48.1% people do not prefer to watch Television on a working day.

Preference to watch the most, on Holiday

On a holiday, what do you prefer to watch the most?

131 responses

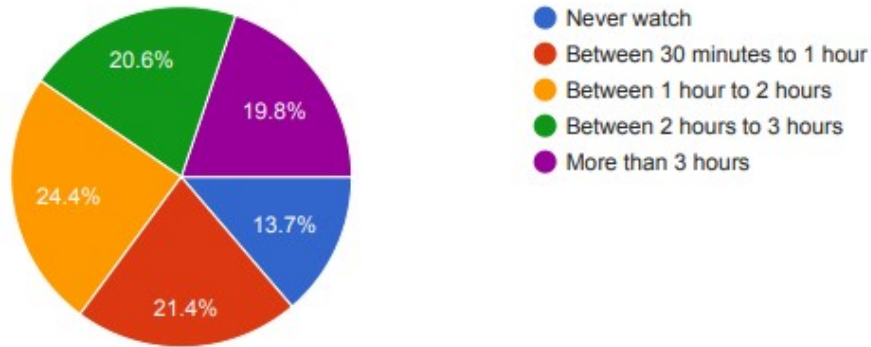


So, weekends or other holidays are best days to earn big number of TRPs actually, Therefore, Researcher framed this question with an objective to analyze the tendency of the audience for watching the Web Series or TV soap operas on a holiday. This data states that, on a holiday, most people prefer watching web series with a higher percentage of 84.7% whereas 15.3% people watch television on holiday. This again establishes the mobilization of the audience at large level towards watching Web series, particularly.

Duration to watch Web series on holiday

On a holiday, how much time do you spend on watching Web Series, every day?

131 responses

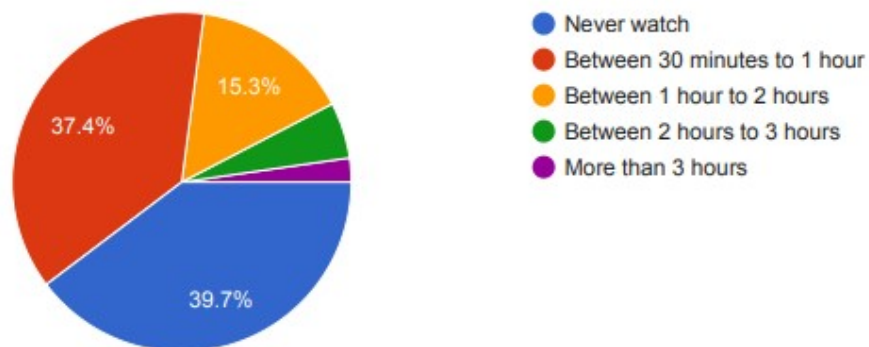


So the data, collected by last question obviously raised a question about the amount of time spent by the respondents. On a holiday, the maximum hours spent watching the Web Series ranges from 1 hour to 2 hours by 24.4% respondents. 21.1% of the total watch the Web series for 30 minutes to 1 hour and 20.6% of them watch devote 2 hours to 3 hours and 19.8% people watch for more than 3 hours whereas the data shows that 13.7% people do not watch web series on a holiday. This data is divided in an almost equal parts ranges from 30 minutes to more than 3 hours. It clearly establishes that, audience presence is there, but in varied range.

Duration to watch TV soap opera on holiday

On a holiday, how much time do you spend on watching TV soap opera, every day?

131 responses



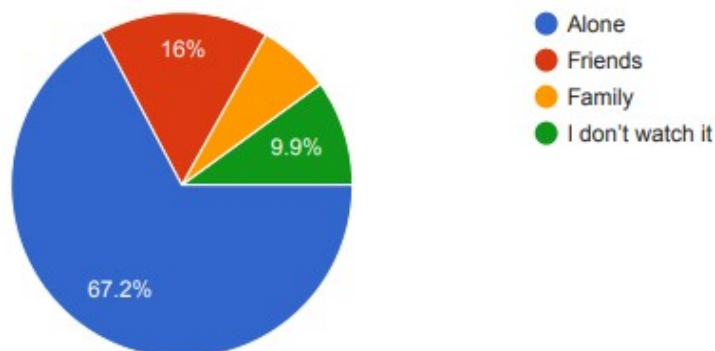
Although, approximately only 15 % respondents prefer watching the TV soap operas, but it is important to analyse the duration devoted by them. On a holiday, the portion of the total respondents devoting time to watch the TV soap opera from 30 minutes to 1 hour and from 1 hour to 2 hours i.e. 37.4% and 15.3% respectively. Whereas, 39.7% people do not prefer to watch TV soap opera on a holiday.

So, approximately 15% of the total respondents prefer watching TV soap opera in total, and 39.7% of those 15% of the total respondents do not prefer watching TV soap opera actually. It is clearly showing the great decline in number of TV soap opera audience.

Preference of fellow viewers to watch Web series

With whom you prefer to watch Web series?

131 responses

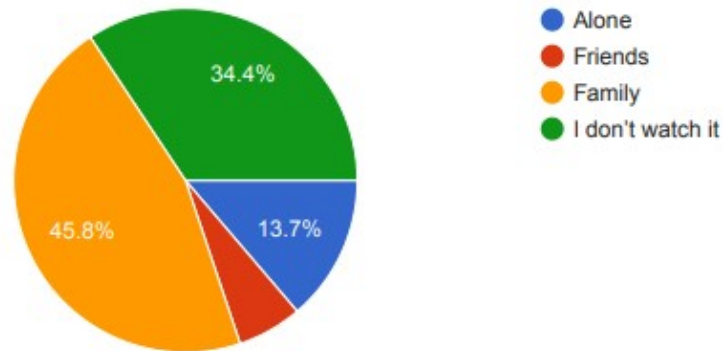


For most of the respondents, watching a Web series is a time for personal only. The data shows that two out of total three, 67.7% to be precise tend to watch web series alone, whereas 16% people prefer to watch web series with friends. Although, 9.9% people do not watch web series at all.

Preference of fellow viewers to watch TV soap opera

With whom you prefer to watch TV Soap opera?

131 responses

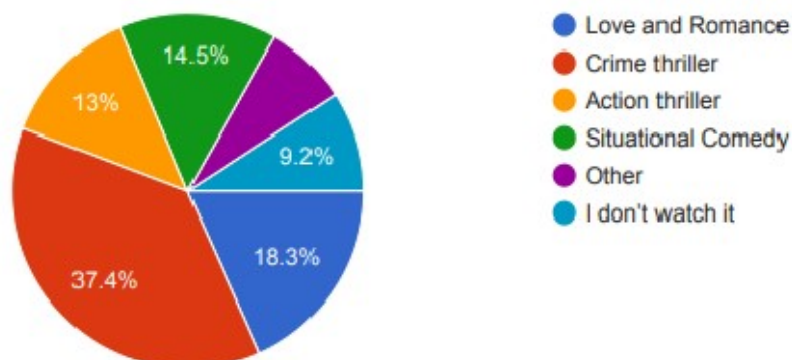


Watching a TV soap opera on a TV screen is a collective viewing exercise. The data shows that 45.8% of the total respondents prefer to watch TV soap opera with family members, whereas 13.7% people of the total respondents tend to watch TV soap opera alone and 34.4% people do not watch TV soap opera at all. Therefore, for Screen study, these data are remarkable, which indicates that watching TV soap opera is a collective viewing practice. On the other hand, watching a Web series is more likely possessing and relishing a personal screen.

Most watched types of Web series

Which type of content you like the most to watch in a Web series?

131 responses



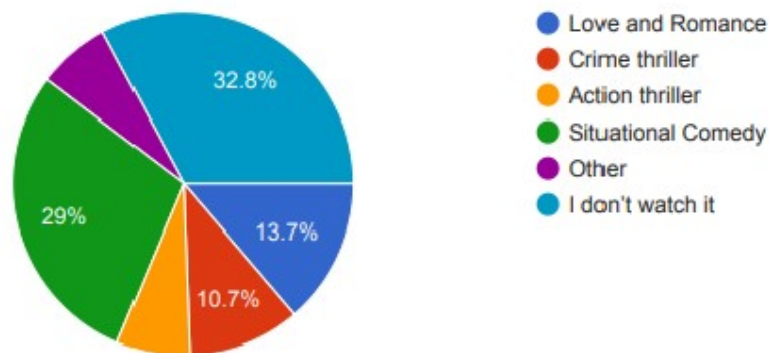
This indicates the important findings for the third element of our Research study, i.e, Content. Classifying the content in four categories primarily i.e. ‘Love and Romance’, ‘Crime Thriller’, ‘Action Thriller’ and ‘SIT COM’. Although, for covering other categories, provided a category as, ‘Other’ too. The survey shows in web series 37.4% population enjoy watching Crime Thriller and 13% loves watching Action Thriller, whereas 18% of the respondent like to watch ‘Love & Romance’ genre and 14.5% goes with SITCOMS.

It shows the primary interest of the respondents to watch Crime Thriller actually.

Most watched types of TV soap opera

Which type of content you like the most to watch in T V Soap Operas?

131 responses



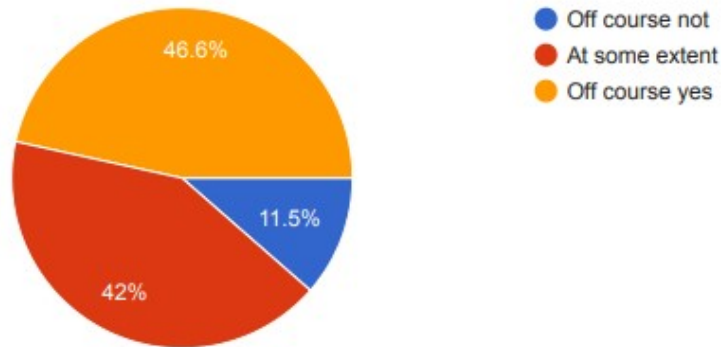
While observing the interest of the audience for the content of the TV soap opera, found interesting results. Around 42.7% of the respondents prefer to watch the Comic or Romantic media material actually, i.e. comprises of the genres ‘Love and Romance’ and ‘SITCOM’.

The survey shows that 29% respondents enjoy watching SITCOM on TV screen, whereas 13.7% of the respondents are watching the ‘Love and Romance’ genre related material. Only 10.7% population like action thriller. In comparison of the results found about the preferred genres of Web Series, there are a few portion of the audience, which prefer watching the Crime thriller here on TV screen.

Sexual content in Web series and TV soap opera

Is there more sexual content in the Web series than the T.V Soap opera?

131 responses



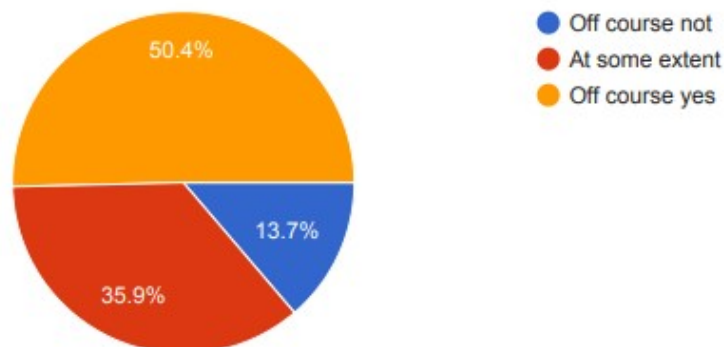
It's a question again about the variety of the content provided by the Web series. The survey shows that 88.6 % of total responded agrees about the presence of the sexual content at large level, both surely or at some extent. To be exact, it is shown that 46.6% respondents believe that Web series have more sexual content than the TV Soap operas, whereas 42% people are determined that at some extent, Web series possess more sexual content than on Soap Operas. Only 11.5% denies this assumption.

This finding clearly proves one of our hypotheses, which indicates about this assumption.

Offensive language in Web series and TV soap opera

Is there more offensive language in the Web series than the T.V Soap opera?

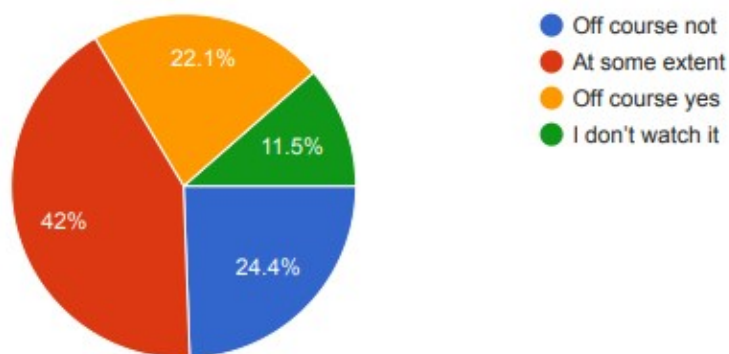
131 responses



After analyzing the sexual content in the web series, its important to analyze the presence of the offensive verbal language too. In this regard, the survey shows that half of the respondents (50.4%) believes at some extent that, the web series have more offensive language then the TV Soap opera having. Whereas 35.9% are very much sure about this assumption. Only13.7% people opposes the statement.

Does Web Series impact your daily spoken language?

131 responses

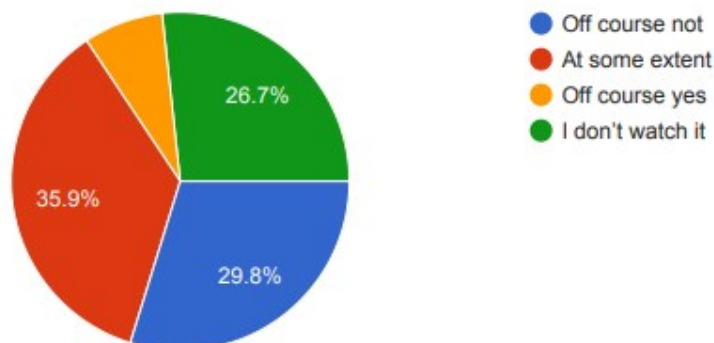


For having an impact study too, this question was framed. The survey conveys that 42% people believe that Web series impact the daily language of the viewer at some extent and 22.1% agreed with this statement, whereas 24.4% respondents oppose the assumption.

Impact of TV serials on daily spoken language

Do you think TV serials impact your daily spoken language?

131 responses



As far as the impact on language by watching TV Soap opera is concerned, the survey conveys that 35.9% people believes that TV Soap opera affects their daily spoken language at some extent, whereas 29.8% were sure about having no impact at all.

Comparing it with the data available about the Web series, it is clear that, Web series is impacting the daily used language at large level.

Conclusion:

- Daily soap opera affects the colloquial language of the people.
- The language of web series is more offensive than of a TV soap opera.
- There is more sexual content in web series than in a TV soap opera.
- People prefer watching TV soap opera with their families.
- Audience prefers watching web series alone.

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