

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF WEB SERIES CONSUMPTION ON THE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS OF INDIAN YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Online media platforms have become a fundamental part of daily life, especially among the youth, leading to a significant shift in media consumption habits from traditional television to digital platforms. The variety of online media options continues to grow, integrating deeply into the routines of individuals. This change influences how content creators, broadcasters, and advertisers engage with their audience. Leveraging online media effectively is crucial for these entities to retain viewership and remain relevant in the digital age. This study aims to investigate the popularity of online media among youth compared to television, focusing on factors influencing their media consumption preferences.

To gather data, a comprehensive survey was conducted in the Jalandhar district, Punjab; involved 200 respondents aged 15-35, selected through simple random sampling. The survey explored various aspects such as viewing frequency, platform preferences, content types, and perceptions of content quality. The findings reveal a strong preference for online media platforms over traditional television, with factors like convenience, content variety, and the ability to binge-watch being significant influences.

The results of this research offer valuable insights for broadcasters, content creators, and advertisers aiming to optimize their strategies in the digital landscape. By understanding youth preferences and behaviors, these entities can better tailor their content and engagement efforts to retain viewership and drive user satisfaction effectively.

KEYWORDS: Online media, Television, Viewership, Digital platforms, Broadcasting, Media consumption.

INTRODUCTION

Entertainment has been a cornerstone of human activity for millennia, captivating audiences through various mediums such as paintings, dance, drama, storytelling, and music (**Parmar, M. 2016**). With the advent of modern communication channels, entertainment has evolved, transitioning from traditional forms to new media platforms. This evolution has brought about web series, a novel form of entertainment that has garnered significant popularity among today's youth.

Web series, a product of the digital age and a manifestation of web 2.0 characteristics, offer audiences a diverse range of content in episodic form, accessible through the internet (**Christian, 2009**). The surge in popularity of web series among the youth can be attributed to various factors, including the increasing reliance on the internet for entertainment consumption and the accessibility provided by over-the-top (OTT) platforms (**Living and Learning with New Media, 2008**). These platforms have emerged as catalysts in shaping the viewing habits of audiences, offering a vast array of web series content both with and without subscription packages.

WEB SERIES: DEFINITIONS AND OVERVIEW

Web series, a relatively recent form of digital entertainment, refer to a series of episodes or short videos produced specifically for online distribution platforms (**Allen, M., 2017**). Unlike traditional television shows, web series are created with the intention of being streamed on the internet rather than broadcasted on television networks.

These series often explore a wide range of genres including comedy, drama, science fiction, horror, and documentary, catering to diverse audience preferences. Viewers can watch episodes at their own convenience, on various devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, and smart TVs, without being tied to specific broadcast schedules. This flexibility has contributed to the popularity of web series, especially among younger audiences who prefer on-the-go entertainment (**Brown, K., 2015**). In recent years, the spread of online streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, and YouTube has further accelerated the growth of web series.

CHARACTERISTICS AND FEATURES OF WEB SERIES

Web series are associated with Web 2.0, also known as the interactive web. The interactive web allows audiences to interact with creators of web series or other internet programs. Web series possess several unique characteristics and features that distinguish them from traditional television shows and other forms of entertainment.

1. **Personal and Convenient Medium:** Web series are developing a new breed of content providers who produce fresh content for digital audiences. Web series cater to digital audiences, offering personalized viewing experiences accessible anytime, anywhere via internet-connected devices (**Miller, J., 2018**).
2. **Anytime-Anywhere-Anything Content:** Nowadays, the trend of web series is defining the new concept of entertainment in terms of “Anywhere-anytime-Anything” with the new demand of the audience, especially youth. (**Thomas, 2015**). Web series offer something for everyone, by providing viewers with a diverse range of content spanning various genres and formats., catering to a wide range of audience preferences (**Thompson, L., 2017**).
3. **Offbeat and Creative Content:** The creative and appealing content of web series brings the audience together, shifting their perspective from traditional television to a digital format. Web series showcase unconventional narratives, free from traditional TV constraints, allowing creators to innovate and explore unique storytelling approaches (**Adams, R., 2016**).
4. **Content without Censorship:** Web series are digital platform programs that display uncut and uncensored content in the form of original scripts. Unlike traditional television networks, web series are not subject to the same censorship regulations and content restrictions. This freedom allows creators to explore sensitive or controversial topics and express themselves without fear of censorship, fostering a diverse and inclusive media landscape (**Garcia, 2018**).

IMPACT OF WEB SERIES

The emergence of web series as a popular form of entertainment represents a modern approach embraced by the younger generation. Web series represent a modern entertainment trend embraced by the younger generation, revolutionizing digital platforms and integrating diverse media and technology (**Williams, J., 2017**).

POSITIVE IMPACT

1. **Diverse Representation and Inclusivity:** Web series prioritize portraying characters from diverse backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, and abilities, offering viewers a more accurate reflection of society and fostering personal identification (**Smith, A., 2017**).
2. **Empowerment of Marginalized Communities:** By providing a platform for marginalized groups to share their stories and challenge stereotypes, web series empower individuals and communities traditionally underrepresented in mainstream media (**Jones, B., 2018**).
3. **Accessibility and Global Reach:** Web series are accessible worldwide through online streaming platforms, democratizing access to entertainment and information regardless of geographical constraints.
4. **Community Building and Engagement:** Through social media and online forums, web series facilitate fan communities where viewers connect, discuss, and create content related to their favorite shows, nurturing a strong sense of belonging (**Taylor, D., 2017**).
5. **Educational and Informative Content:** Many web series tackle significant social issues like mental health, LGBTQ+ rights, and environmental sustainability, raising awareness and promoting dialogue on pressing societal concerns (**Robinson, E., 2017**).
6. **Career Opportunities and Talent Discovery:** Web series serve as launching pads for emerging talent in the entertainment industry, enabling actors, writers, directors, and other creatives to showcase their skills and innovate within the field (**Garcia, 2018**).

NEGATIVE IMPACT

1. **Social Impact:** The frequency of watching web series is rapidly growing, especially among youth. The content of web series often portrays drugs, alcohol consumption, pornography, unsavory language, and violence, which can influence young viewers' behavior, leading to anti-social tendencies and disrupted sleep patterns (**Dhanuka & Bohra, 2018**).
2. **Physical Impact:** Youth today are heavily reliant on electronic devices, leading to increased viewership of web series (**Rai, 2017**). The binge-watching culture means viewers often watch entire seasons in one sitting, neglecting physical activities, household chores, studies, and work (**Koravi, 2017**).
3. **Health Impact:** Excessive consumption of web series poses significant risks to both physical and mental health. Extended periods of watching can cause headaches, back pain, eye problems, and anxiety. The exposure to continuous audio-visual stimuli also impacts hearing and sleep patterns, with binge-watchers often experiencing higher levels of depression and anxiety.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the reach and impact of web series.
2. To study the reason of popularity of web series among youth.
3. To study the impact of web series on youth.

4. To explore the relationship between web series consumption and academic performance among youth

LIMITATIONS

1. Area of research has limited to Jalandhar city only, so that it does not reflect the point of view of the whole state.
2. Due to lack of time and sources the study was not conducted in whole of the state which would have provided more reliable information.
3. Lack of comparative data for better generalization.
4. Sample size has limited to 200 people only. The small sample size taken at convenience might have affected the result of the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The study employs a quantitative research design using a survey method. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect data on consumer attitudes, engagement, and purchasing decisions related to social media advertisements. The survey was conducted in Jalandhar City, Punjab, targeting a diverse demographic group. A sample size of 200 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different age groups, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds. Data was collected through online and offline surveys. The questionnaire included multiple-choice questions to measure various aspects of consumer behavior and attitudes towards social media advertisements. Simple average method is used for the computation of results.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kassabian (2017) conducted studies on web series, asserting that they are episodic video content programs aligned with binge-watching habits. These series are distributed on internet platforms allowing user-generated content. The research highlights their structure in episodic formats, typically lasting 30 minutes or more, and their similarity to traditional TV series.

Christian (2009) analyzed web series in "Promise and Problems: Web Series and Independent Production in Periods of Change," highlighting their low production costs, the rise of OTT platforms, and exploration of niche topics. He noted the challenges in justifying their significance amidst changing media landscapes.

Holla (2016) studied Indian web series, revealing insights from top shows: episodes averaged 17 minutes and 39 seconds, with significant viewership and 40% sponsorship from brands like Ola and Flipkart. The study underscored the growing popularity of web series in India and their appeal to diverse audiences.

Shah (2016) noted Indian web series' popularity, citing shifts away from traditional TV due to mobile accessibility and targeted audience advantages over cinema and television. The research highlighted the strategic importance of digital platforms in reaching specific demographics and the evolving preferences of Indian viewers.

Furtado (2017) examined advertisers' interest in web series for branded content, predicting rapid growth in India's digital video market to \$1.6 billion by 2020. The study emphasized the increasing role of web series as effective platforms for brand engagement and consumer interaction in the digital age.

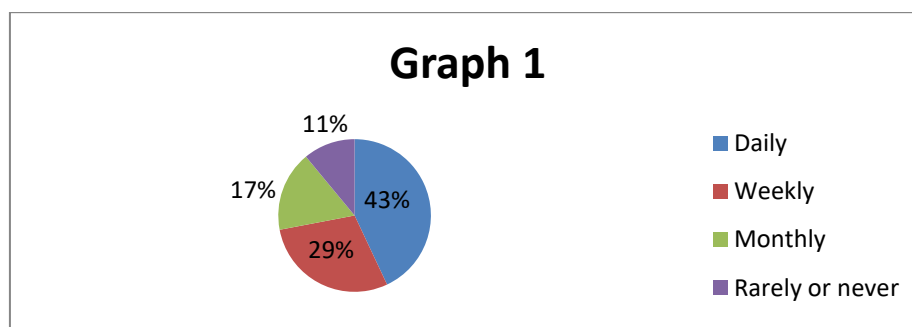
Sung et al. (2015) linked binge-watching with depression and loneliness among young adults, highlighting changes in behavior and social life due to online video content

consumption. The research underscored the psychological impacts of binge-watching habits facilitated by web series and OTT platforms.

Huang (2015) analyzed the impact of Chinese web series like "Go Princess Go," which garnered significant viewership and profitability for LeTV, signaling a boom in China's entertainment industry. The study explored the cultural and economic implications of web series as influential digital content in China's media landscape.

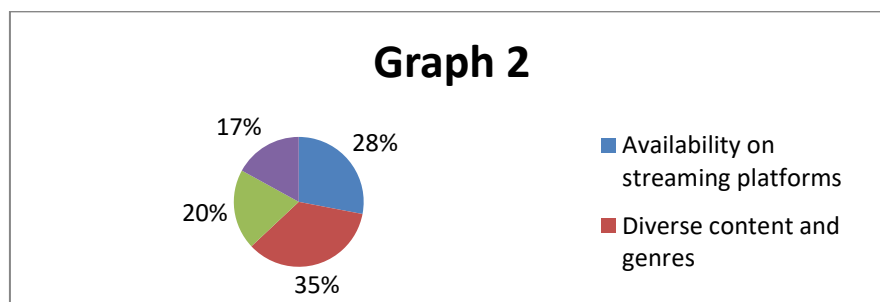
DATA ANALYSIS

1. How often do you watch web series compared to traditional TV shows or movies?



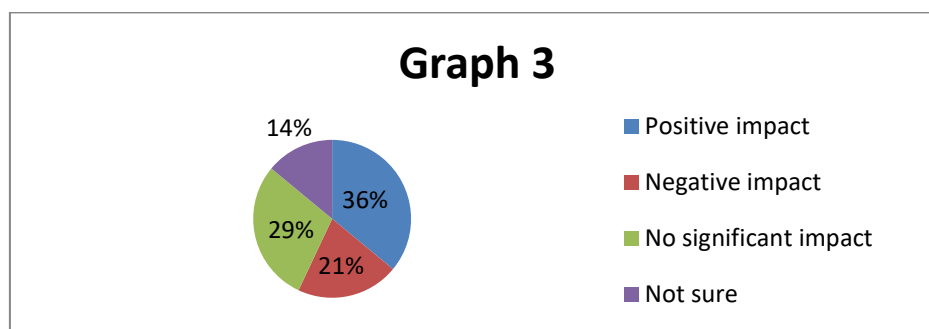
The survey findings indicate that 43% of respondents watch web series daily, highlighting a strong preference for this form of entertainment. Additionally, 29% watch weekly, 17% watch monthly, and 11% rarely or never engage with web series. This shows that popularity of web series is growing among youth.

2. What factors do you think contribute most to the popularity of web series among youth?



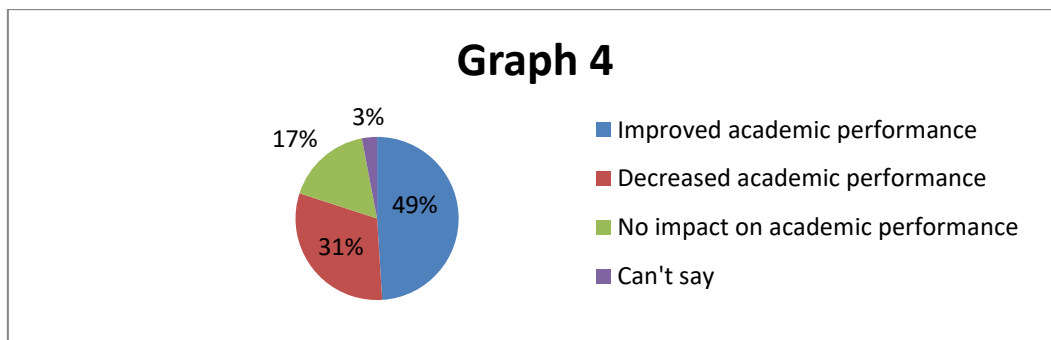
According to the survey, the primary factors contributing to the popularity of web series among youth are diverse content and genres, with 35% of respondents selecting this option. Availability on streaming platforms follows closely at 28%, while the ability to binge-watch entire seasons and social media influence are cited by 20% and 17% of respondents, respectively.

3. How do you perceive the impact of web series on your personal life and preferences?



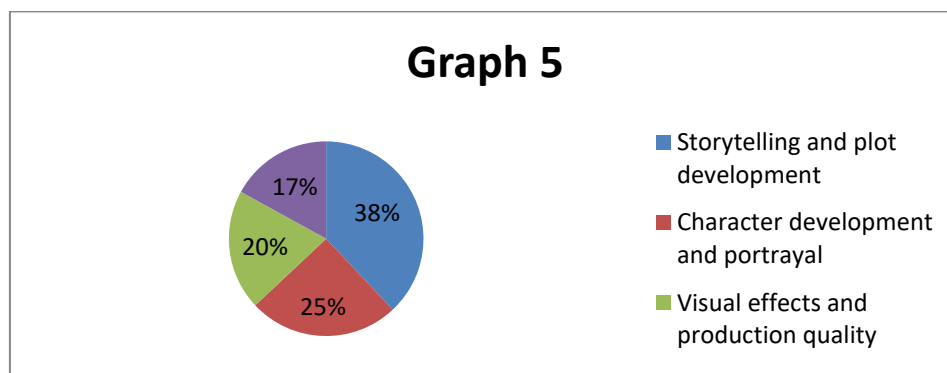
The survey on the impact of web series revealed varied perspectives among respondents. Approximately 36% acknowledged positive impacts, including increased entertainment options and exposure to diverse content. Conversely, 21% reported negative effects such as excessive screen time. About 29% felt web series had no significant impact, while 14% were unsure about its influence on their lives. These findings highlight the diverse perceptions and effects of web series consumption on personal preferences.

4. In your opinion, how has watching web series affected your academic performance or study habits?



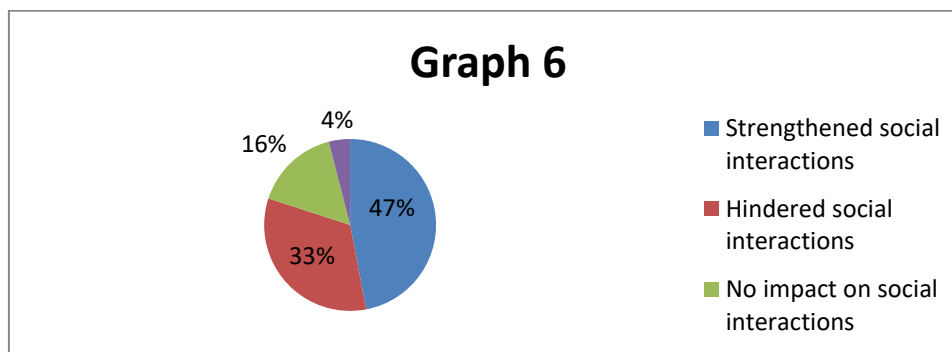
Regarding the impact on academic performance, 49% of respondents report no significant change due to watching web series. However, 31% feel that it has somewhat decreased their academic focus, while 17% believe it has improved their ability to manage stress and relax and 3% respondents are not sure about this.

5. Which aspect of web series consumption do you find most appealing?



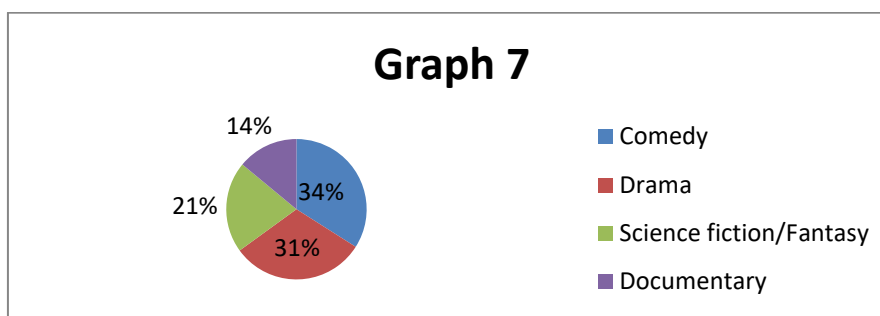
When asked about the most appealing aspect of web series consumption, storytelling and plot development emerge as the top choice among 38% of respondents. This is followed by character development and portrayal at 25%, visual effects and production quality at 20%, and social and cultural themes explored at 17%.

6. How would you describe the relationship between web series consumption and your social interactions with peers?



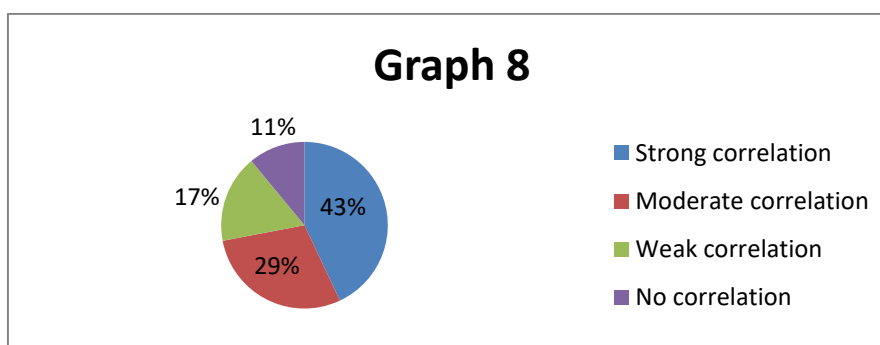
The survey reveals that for 47% of respondents, watching web series has strengthened their social interactions, providing common topics for discussion among peers. Conversely, 33% feel it has somewhat hindered face-to-face interactions, while 16% report no noticeable impact on their social interactions and 4% not sure about this.

7. What genres of web series do you prefer the most?



Comedy emerges as the most preferred genre of web series among respondents, with 34% selecting it. This is followed by drama at 31%, science fiction/fantasy at 21%, and documentaries at 14%, highlighting the diverse preferences in content consumption.

8. Have you noticed any correlation between the themes explored in web series and the issues important to today's youth?



According to the survey, 43% of respondents perceive a strong correlation between the themes explored in web series and issues important to today's youth. This is followed by 29% indicating a moderate correlation, while 17% see a weak correlation, and 11% perceive no correlation at all.

CONCLUSION

The research aimed to explore the impact of web series on youth, focusing on their reach, popularity factors, perceived effects, and relationship with academic performance. The

findings underscored the widespread appeal of web series among young audiences, driven by factors such as convenience, diverse content offerings, and niche appeal. Insights into the perceived impact revealed a spectrum of responses, highlighting both positive and negative influences on personal lives and preferences. Additionally, the study unveiled nuanced connections between web series consumption and academic performance, shedding light on how viewing habits may intersect with educational outcomes. This research contributes valuable insights into the complex dynamics of web series consumption among youth, offering guidance for future studies and implications for stakeholders navigating this evolving digital landscape. As digital entertainment continues to evolve, understanding these dynamics becomes crucial for educators, policymakers, and content creators aiming to harness the potential of web series in constructive ways.

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