

## **Binge-Watching: Web-Series Addiction amongst Youth**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*With the evident change in the medium of consuming virtual content, the traditional watching content on the television sets has been reduced as people are now binge watching content on smaller screens (mobile phones, tablets), and this ease of availability has resulted in an addiction to keep viewing digital media content continuously causing numerous ill-effects. The purpose of this research was to find out the behaviour of youth towards virtual content and its effects on their wellbeing. The study is a cross-sectional survey of youth (18-25 years old) based on a sample of 90 respondents from Mumbai. This research attempts to study the after-effects of binge-watching, and its being similar to any other addiction.*

**Keywords:** Binge-watching, virtual content, web-series, addiction, digital media consumption

### **INTRODUCTION**

With the changing time, the medium and methods of consuming virtual data has also seen a drastic change, going from scheduled television programs which were limited by accessibility to easily available repositories of seasons of shows accessible almost anywhere anytime by the viewers. This change was seen in the positive light initially, before discovering the hidden negative facets of 'binge-viewing' digital media content by the individual consumers. Binge-watching refers to the consumption of episodes one after the other in order to curb curiosity or just as an impulsive behaviour trait of the user- completing seasons of the web-series at one time.

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Binge-watching is generally observed to be done for one of the few following reasons:

1. Production companies upload entire seasons at once to encourage such behaviours,
2. Web-series are structured with cliff-hangers at the end of every episode to keep the viewers engaged continuously, or
3. The viewers simply want to keep watching, many times as a substitute for healing emotional damages, or disturbances.

Such behaviour of binge-watching shows the addiction of viewers to virtual content that often leads to disturbances in their personal life whether it's displaying anti-social behaviours, increased emotional sensitivity or disrupted sleep-cycles leading to various health issues amongst the bingers, usually youth.

Youth of today is highly dependent on electronic devices for simple execution of basic chores, right from using calculators to designing art virtually, which ensures having their devices with them always. This over-dependence on devices makes it easier for them to fall prey to binge-watching and spiralling into the addiction of daily watching virtual content, whether online or offline.

This becomes similar to any addictive behaviour, which may result in the viewers feeling worse later but continuing despite that due to being able to escape reality for quite awhile.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Binge Watching- Web Series addiction amongst Youth

## **OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

- To study behaviour of youth towards Web Series.
- To study the effects of binge watching on physical and mental wellbeing of youth.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The psychological and medical literature considers binge behaviour as an addiction (eg: Gold, Frost-Pineda, and Jacobs – 2003) research which often shows that individual often engage in such activities to escape reality.

So what is binge watching? The Digital Democracy Survey defined the activity as “watching three or more episodes of a TV or web series in one sitting” (Deloitte 2015).

Rather than consuming one episode of a series each week in accordance with a typical television schedule, viewers may opt to view several episodes of a single series in immediate succession. Surveys have revealed that a majority of consumers prefer to watch multiple episodes of their favourite programs in a single sitting (Pomerantz 2013). A Nielsen (2013) study finds that 88% of Netflix users and 70% of Hulu Plus users reported watching at least three episodes of the same program in one day.

In addition to individuals consuming more content, they report doing so in a condensed period of time. According to a survey conducted by Netflix and Harris Interactive in 2013, 61% of adults who stream television shows at least once a week reported that they regularly engage in “binge watching” sessions that consist of two to three episodes of a single television series in one sitting, with nearly three-quarters of respondents having positive feelings about binge watching (Netflix 2013). In its 2014 Digital Democracy Survey, Deloitte reports that 31% of respondents engaged in binge watching at least once a week, with more than 40% of respondents age 14–25 engaging in the behaviour weekly (Deloitte 2015).

Binge watching has also helped advertisers to gather a customer base for them by selecting a target group based on the type of content they watch. The report has thus been generated from the data collected from *hulu.com* a service provider just like Netflix. A typical binge watcher is either inclined to watch the entire programme and switch to a new season/show or either the person is a situational binge watcher. The study also shows that people are less prone to watch online content in the morning or

afternoon than compared with the night time or late fringe. In addition, people are more likely to break their habit of watching once the season or series end.

This report thus gives the conclusion that as the number of viewing programmes increases the tendency to binge watching also increase. Users are also hooked to use a single platform for their convenience, preference and also because of the hands set on the platform. Thus, even the platform uses this opportunity to advertise them with products and the production companies become keen to identify as well as differentiate the binge-watchers group from the non-bingers.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Descriptive and exploratory research has been used in this research paper.

Tools: Qualitative data was collected for research purpose.

Sample Size: 90

Sampling Method: Purposive Sampling adequately representing the population

Sampling Place: Mumbai

Statistical Technique Used: Chi Square test and Frequency Distribution Charts

## **ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

### **Chi Square test:**

**Variables and measurement:** This hypothesis has two variables, namely – binge-watchers of virtual content and non-bingers, across three parameters viz. occupation, gender and age.

**Objective:** To find out whether a systematic association exists between demographic parameters implied to youth in study and binge-watching of the web-series content by them.

**Hypothesis:** Binge-watching or addiction to web-series is independent of occupation, gender and age.

From the parent hypothesis, we can formulate sub-hypothesis for each variable, where  $H_0$  denotes null hypothesis and  $H_1$  denotes alternative hypothesis.

### 1) Occupation

Here, we study whether the occupation of the youth, i.e. being a student or working professional affects their behaviour of binge-watching.

$H_0$ : Binge-watching the web-series is independent of nature of occupation (student or working professional)

$H_1$ : Binge-watching the web-series is dependent on nature of occupation (student or working professional)

Variables	Sub-hypothesis (null)	Behaviour studied	P value	P $>, <, =$ 0.05	Accept / Reject
Occupation	$H_0$	Binge-watching	0.0088	$<0.05$	Rejected

Result:

From the above table, we can reject the null-hypothesis. For  $H_0$ , if the p value  $\leq 0.05$ , then we reject the null hypothesis. Here, the p value is 0.0088 which is less, thus we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states that ‘Binge-watching the web-series is dependent on nature of occupation (student or working professional) in Mumbai’.

## 2) Gender

Here, we study whether the gender of the youth, i.e. being a female or a male, affects their behaviour of binge-watching.

H<sub>0</sub>: Binge-watching the web-series is independent of gender

H<sub>1</sub>: Binge-watching the web-series is dependent on gender

Variables	Sub-hypothesis (null)	Behaviour studied	P value	P >, <, = 0.05	Accept / Reject
Gender	H <sub>0</sub>	Binge-watching	0.2657	>0.05	Accepted

Result:

From the above table, we accept the null-hypothesis. For H<sub>0</sub>, if the p value < or = 0.05, then we reject the null hypothesis. Here, the p value is 0.2657 which is >0.05, thus we accept the null hypothesis which states that 'Binge-watching the web-series is independent of gender in Mumbai'.

## 3) Age

Here, we study whether the age of the youth, i.e. being in the age group of "18-21" or "22-25", affects their behaviour of binge-watching.

H<sub>0</sub>: Binge-watching the web-series is independent of nature of age

H<sub>1</sub>: Binge-watching the web-series is dependent on nature of age

Variables	Sub-hypothesis (null)	Behaviour studied	P value	P >, <, = 0.05	Accept / Reject
Age	H <sub>0</sub>	Binge-watching	0.1988	>0.05	Accepted

From the above table, we accept the null-hypothesis. For H<sub>0</sub>, if the p value

$< \text{ or } = 0.05$ , then we reject the null hypothesis. Here, the p value is 0.1988 which is  $>0.05$ , thus we accept the null hypothesis which states that 'Binge-watching the web-series is independent of age group in Mumbai'.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

### Findings:

- The result mentions that 28% of students are binge-watchers while only 26% of working youth are binge-watchers, and their occupation has a significant level of impact on their decision to binge-watch.
- The results also mention that the decision to binge-watch is independent from other variables such as age and gender.
- About 95% of the respondents in the age group of 18-25 have admitted to watch web-series, with approximately 81% of them watching it online.
- 42% of the total viewers affirmed watching the web-series on a daily basis. The most preferred portals to watch these shows were rated to be: 1. Netflix, 2. Amazon Prime, and 3. Hotstar respectively, with the most preferred genre being comedy and horror.
- 58.9% of the viewers have reported being aware of their addiction to web-series consumption and 42.2% felt the need to stop binge-watching media.
- Respondents agreed to various ill-effects of this addiction, being similar to others, such as 43.21% reported repercussions on physical and mental health, 53% reported decline in productivity, 48.9% reported developing anti-social behavioural traits, 77.8% reported disturbances in sleeping-patterns.
- Although 75.6% of viewers reported feeling of satisfaction or a sense of high after binge-watching, there were 31.1% who said they felt more emotionally disturbed after consuming content due to this addiction

## **Conclusion:**

Findings reveal that youth in Mumbai prefer binge-watching independent of their age group or gender, depending upon their work demands. They have been struggling with the addiction of digital media consumption and seem to be aware of it, and also would like to change their impulsive behaviour towards web-series consumption. The report highlights the negative impact of binge-viewing on emotional, physical, psychological and social health of these young individuals.

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