



## Influence of Reality Television Shows on Society

### KEYWORDS

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**ABSTRACT** *Mass media means of communication that reach and influence large numbers of people, esp. newspapers, popular magazines, radio, and television. Television plays a vital role and most powerful medium of mass communication. The moving images of television facilitate people, demand attention and eventually influence their thoughts and behaviour. Now, the youth are interested to see a live reality shows rather than emotional, scripted drama shows. The study the 'Opinions of the Youth regarding the influence of Reality Shows on society was conducted with the objective to study the overall opinions of the selected Youth regarding the influence of Reality TV shows on the Society. Students of 17-24 of age from the stream of Science / Technology, Commerce and Social Science from The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara 2013-14. It proves that the Reality TV Shows are one of the most influencing format of television medium of communication and have a great influence on the society as a whole.*

### INTRODUCTION

Mass media means of communication that reach and influence large numbers of people. A medium is a 'channel of communication' - a means through which people send and receive information. The printed word, for example, is a medium; reading a newspaper or magazine, something is communicated to receivers in some way. Similarly, electronic forms of communication -television, telephones, film and such like - are media (the plural of medium). (Source: [http://www.sociology.org.uk/media\\_defined.pdf](http://www.sociology.org.uk/media_defined.pdf))

The media put our environment in perspective by giving several aspects, meaning and explanations relating to it. The media must have some pervasive influence on our thoughts, beliefs, values, and even our behavior. Television is a popular and powerful medium that both imitates and influences culture. For many people, television is a primary source of information and entertainment. It is a window into a different world an opportunity to view people, place, and things that we may not have experienced firsthand. In an increasingly global society, television shapes society's perception of the world.

Reality television, they say, breaks the monotony by creating interesting concepts and innovative ideas that made them stand out from the regular shows. With the worldwide small screen sector coming up with new concepts for reality shows, India too is in the race to project good and original concepts. Every day on television, some new reality shows are being introduced, enabling the viewers to choose to choose from a large menu of many shows. Reality television is a genre of television programming that presents purportedly unscripted dramatic or humorous situations, documents actual events, and usually features ordinary people instead of professional actors, sometimes in a contest or other situation where a prize is awarded. With the advent of shows like *Antakshri* and *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa*, the music reality shows, Indian television industry saw a new wave generated in the genre of Reality Television

shows back in early 1990s and since then there has been all kinds of reality shows and perspectives like *MTV Bakra*, *Nach Baliye*, *Kaun Banega Cropati*, *Jhalak Dikhlaja*, *Big Boss*, *Swayamvar*, etc. According to Hight (2001), most assumptions about the psychology of reality television viewership are derived from textual analyses of reality-based programs, rather than research involving audiences. Thus, it calls for investigations of reality-based programming based on the assumption that such programmes may implicate a network of social, economic, and political changes in modern society and hence the study attempts to determine impact of reality shows on the society. ( source : <http://www.siliconindia.com/news/general/Impact-of-Reality-Shows-on-Society-nid-110251-cid-1.html>)

### Positive Influence of Television Shows on Society

- Television is a learning tool for children, youth and adults.
- It helps people to learn about other cultures.
- It gives privilege of family members to spend time together while watching it.
- Parents and children can talk about knowledgeable television programmes.
- Documentary movie can create a picture of the world in youths' minds.
- Cultural programs showcase good inventions.

**According to the Nielsen (2003)** ratings, shows such as *Survivor*, *American Idol*, *Fear Factors*, *Big Brother* are attracting more than 18 million viewers per episode. A researcher at the University of Missouri Columbia discovered these shows actually have a positive impact on viewers.

(Source:- <http://www.newswise.com/articles/reality-tv-has-positive-impact-on-viewers>)

According to **Frisby C. (2003)** "Entertainment needs are met through reality television because these shows allow people to make comparisons with media images – com-

parisons that ultimately help them feel better about themselves and their personal circumstances .”

(Source:- <http://www.newswise.com/institutions/view/342>). Such behaviours are easily adapted to audience specially youth, which are harmful for overall society's progress. These traits are unhealthy and considered uncivilized in the society. Therefore, to sum up, television helps to learn about other cultures, gives an opportunity to spend time with family members when they watch television together. It also helps parents to involve their children to read books on the same subjects as they discuss the television programmes.

### Negative Influence of Reality TV Shows on Society

For most of the people, Television has become an “idiot – box” because they have found some negative influences of Television Shows where the youth are watching too much television that leads to obesity and other risky behaviour in them. The youth that spend a lot of time in watching television do not spend enough time being physically active. Television itself also promotes risky behaviours in youth to react upon. On Television shows, Youth are often portrayed doing drugs, smoking, drinking and having premarital sex.

Since Reality TV is believed to be true life, people come to expect that the things that they watch on the shows will happen in real life and people start acting negatively towards others. When it comes to influence, Reality TV definitely has an impact on people. Many of them start wearing more revealing clothes even to the extent that they get the cosmetic surgery done because that's what the girls do on the shows. Reality TV shows have adverse influence on the minds of the youth, as they project that it is fine to behaviours like being aggressive, using abusive language, jealousy and have provocation dressing. It can create disturbance in youths' life and make one life stressful.

Keeping in the mind the above discussion it was decided to study the 'Opinions of Youth and their Parents regarding the influence of Reality Shows on society'. Many conceptual and empirical studies were referred for the reviews. The population of the study consisted of the students of 17-24 of age from the stream of Science / Technology, Commerce and Social Science from The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara during the academic year 2013-14. Furthermore, their parents also come the part of the population of the study.

One Opinionaire was developed for the study the reliability of the Opinionaire (0.997) was checked by test retest method. Pretesting of the Opinionaire was done with the 10 students from the selected three streams having at least one student from each stream. The purpose of the pretesting was to check the clarity and appropriateness of the tool. The data were collected personally by the researcher

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

### Opinions of the Selected Youth regarding the influence of Reality TV Shows and its influence on the society

- 1) The intensity indices for the influence of the Reality TV Shows on the society ranged from 3.53 to 1.96. This means that the respondents agreed that Reality TV Shows have influence on the society ranging from to great extent to less extent.
- 2) The highest intensity indices within the range of great extent were found for the item “Reality Show creates awareness of fashion trends in clothes, hairstyle, make-

up and footwear” i.e. 3.53.

- 3) The respondents agreed to considerable extent for the influence of Reality TV Shows on the society. Furthermore, the respondents also opined that “Reality TV

17 Shows popularize music, dance among the people” to some extent (3.34) and influences the people to have change in their personalities (3.22). This means that the respondents agreed to some extent that the influence of reality TV shows has its influence on individuals and hence affects the society.

The respondents agreed to some extent for the following statements related to the influence of Reality TV Shows:

- Allows the viewers to fantasize about gaining celebrity status.
  - Raises the expectations of the people by projecting fantasy.
  - Provides platform for the people to show their talent in front of the society.
  - Helps people to build their confidence level.
- 4) The least intensity indices were found to be 1.96 for the opinions of the youth regarding the statement ‘Reality TV Shows promotes socially unacceptable behaviour such as casual sex, alcohol abuse and abusive language’.

The overall fifty percent youth had more favourable opinions regarding the influence of Reality TV Shows and fifty percent youth had less favourable opinions about Reality TV Shows.

- 5) The significant differences were found in the opinions of the youth regarding the influence of Reality TV Shows on the Society in relation to the Sex and Personality Type.

### Suggestions of Respondents for the Reality Television Programme

- The respondents opined the following suggestions to great extent for the quality of Reality TV Shows:
- The censorship rules should be stricter for the Reality TV Shows (66%).
- The body image of women should not be shown negatively in Reality TV Shows (53%).
- Reality TV Shows must publicise the principles of human values (53%).
- Reality TV Shows should promote dialogue on issues like injustice, violence, gender inequality, etc. (51%).
- Family based Reality TV Shows should be aired (49%).
- Reality TV shows should be knowledge based (46%).
- It should not project scenes, which inflame passion of the people (46%).
- Reality TV Shows should persuade people to take up challenging tasks (39%).
- It should not encourage the show emotional side of the contestants (35%).

The present study focuses on the opinions of the youth and their parents regarding the influence of Reality TV Shows on Youth. The study revealed that Reality TV Shows have great influence on the youth as per the qualitative findings. Statistically it is proven that the Reality TV Shows have influence on the life of the youth as well as society. The television is the most powerful medium of mass communication that can create powerful impressions on the

accessible minds of the youth. Thus this study proves that the Reality TV Shows are one of the most influencing medium of communication by revealing the influence of Reality TV Shows on the Youth and the society as a whole.

Differences in the opinions of the youth regarding the influence of Reality TV Shows were studied in relation to their Gender, Age, Stream of the Study, Personality Type and Exposure to the Reality TV Shows. It was observed that the majority of the statements, the above mentioned variables did not make any differences in the opinions of the youth. However, the Gender and Personality Type to Reality TV Shows did make a significant difference in the opinions of the youth for the selected statements. This implies that there might be other than the selected variables which may make the difference in their opinions within the larger sample group.

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