



## REALITY SHOWS AND NON-METRO URBAN YOUTH GRATIFICATION: A STUDY OF TWO REALITY SHOWS ON INDIAN TELEVISION

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### ABSTRACT

*Reality shows on television have been a new sensation among all the sections of television viewers irrespective of their socio-cultural differences. Not only in India, the popularity of reality television as an important genre has been proved to be successful across the different countries of the world. However, its popularity and acceptability especially among the Indian youths seems to be overwhelming in recent times because of its highly gratifying abilities. Using survey method and taking uses and gratification approach, the present study is a comparative assessment of the level of gratification among the non-metro urban youths with regards to two of the MTV reality shows (Roadies and Splitsvilla) among the television viewers of Sikkim in the north-eastern part of India.*

### Introduction:

A good number of studies in the field of mass communication have been conducted by scholars with a socio-psychological orientation who have focused on the effects the media have on people. They have investigated the role of media in attitude formation, attitude change, and so on

(Berger, 1995, P. 99). In this context, the uses and gratifications theory of media has been accepted as a viable approach in understanding people's attitudinal change and perception a result of their exposure to television contents. The uses and gratifications theory introduced a new phase in mass media research by challenging the traditional focus from what the media can do to the audience, to what audiences do with the media (Penzhorn 2009, Schröder 1999). Further, it also focuses on why audiences use media and the purposes for which it [the media] is used (Chandler, 2004). In a similar vein, Steven Reiss & James Wiltz (2004) have conducted a study on "*Why people watch Reality TV*". They have applied survey research to study the reason behind people watching reality TV shows. The survey found that people who watched and enjoyed reality television placed a higher value on vengeance than those who did not watch such shows. Significant, but small differences were reported on the motives of social contact, honour, order, and romance. People who liked two or more reality television shows tended to be more motivated by social life, less motivated by honour, more concerned with order, and more motivated by romance, as compared to those who did not watch any of the reality television. The study also concludes that 'the more status-oriented people are, the more likely they are to view reality television and report pleasure and enjoyment. In that case, reality television may gratify this psychological need in two ways. One possibility is that viewers feel they are more important (have higher status) than the ordinary people portrayed on reality television shows. The idea that these are "real" people gives psychological significance to the viewers' perceptions of superiority—it may not matter much if the storyline is realistic, so long as the characters are ordinary people.' In addition, the researchers opine that 'the message of reality television—that millions of people are interested in watching real life experiences of ordinary people—implies that ordinary people are important. Ordinary people can watch the shows, see people like themselves, and fantasize that they could gain celebrity status by being on television. Reality television viewers are more motivated by vengeance than are non-viewers. The desire for vengeance is closely associated with enjoyment of competition. Further, people who avoid conflict, anger, and competition may avoid viewing reality television shows because these shows often portray competition and interpersonal conflict. Because reality television is widely watched, it is often a topic of discussion at the office. It is not surprising, therefore, that sociable people are significantly more likely than non-sociable people to watch reality televisions, although the differences are small. The finding that viewing reality TV shows is negatively associated with the extent to which a person embraces morality (honor) is not surprising because

much reality shows champion expedience over ethics. These differences, although statistically significant, were small. Small, significant effects also were obtained for the value of order. This finding suggests that people who dislike rules may react negatively to the many rules that must be followed by the participants of reality television shows. The finding concerning romance suggests that the sexual aspects of some shows attract viewers but not much because the effect is small in magnitude. Some have questioned the intellectualism of reality television viewers, and others have questioned the physical laziness of people who like to watch television.’

Similarly, Isha Sapra (2015) has worked on ‘Reality Shows and Its Impact’. In this study, the author has used survey method to investigate the reputation and impact of reality shows on its viewers. As a sample respondent, the researcher included all the section of people from teenagers to adult to middle-aged person and people above twelve and below fifty. The results expand the research in the area by identifying a new gratification for reality programming: personal utility. This new factor was one of the two highest factors in terms of overall gratifications obtained from reality-based programming. One possible explanation for the higher level of gratifications obtained for this factor might be that as reality programs have become more individualized and specific in terms of content, they no longer appeal to the wider audience they did at their inception. Reality programming may begin catering more and more to niche groups and subgroups for ratings. In this context, viewers may no longer be watching them as much for social utility, but to obtain gratifications on an individual or specialized level.

### **Theoretical Reflections:**

The term ‘gratifications’ refers to the rewards and satisfaction experienced by audiences after use of media, it helps to explain motivations behind the use and habits of media use or the actual needs satisfaction by the media are called media gratification (Aggarwal and Gupta, 2002; p. 38). Uses and Gratifications theory parts ways with the “hypodermic needle” approach, as developed by Gerbner and colleagues. This results a shift from the traditional viewpoint of ‘powerful-media-effects’ theories, in which an audience is depicted as passive, and easily manipulated by media influences (Mondi et.al 2008, p.2). This approach assumed a homogenous audience in which the audience was passive during the viewing process. In contrast, Uses & Gratifications theory posits that the audience uses media outlets in order to satisfy certain needs and desires. In other words, individuals actively seek out certain forms of media in a goal-directed and rational way that will provide them with the gratifications for which they are longing (Brown et al, 2012).

According to Blumer & Katz (1974) the gratifications that individuals experience from media use are both psychological and social in nature. Uses & Gratification theory creates a conceptual shift in focus from what the media does to people, to what people do with the media. Such a perspective of the uses and gratifications approach evolved as a reaction to a mechanistic view of media effects. It raised an important question as to how does the media influence people (Rubin, 2002)? New questions were being asked such as: how do people use the media? Why do people use the media? Cultivation does not view the audience as actively constructing their viewing experience, but passive receptacles of mediated messages (Cheery, 2008.P, 22).

The theory of Uses and Gratification is based on the belief that media cannot manipulate an individual unless that person has some use for that media or its messages (Mondi et.al 2008, P.2). There are various studies which have been conducted, in order to determine and categorise the needs gratifications obtained from media consumption. Since this study is only focusing on youth perception of television (reality shows) and how the youth viewers satisfy their needs of their own by watching reality shows via 'Roadies' and 'Splitsvilla', the uses and gratifications research theory is adopted for the purposes of this study. Many scholars such as Lin (1999:79), Bryant and Heath (2000:362) and Hunter (2005) elect to apply the five categories of needs as identified by Katz, Gurevitch and Haas, namely cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs, social integrative needs and escapist needs. Cognitive needs involve the strengthening of information, the acquisition of knowledge and the understanding of the environment and the world through the texts of the reality programmes. Another dimension that is also satisfied in obtaining information is curiosity and exploratory drives (Heidi, 2009: Bryant & Heath, 2000). The novel experience spawned by reality television programmes supplies diverse possibilities of knowledge achievement and is unquestionably able to satisfy the cognitive needs of reality programme audiences. Affective needs which refers to search for emotional fulfillment, pleasant feelings and aesthetic experience (Mondi et.al, 2008, P.2). The pursuit of pleasure and entertainment is one of the most basic motivations for media consumption (Heidi 2009, Hunter, 2005). Personal integrative needs relate to the confirmation of credibility, confidence and stability as well as the status of the individual (Heidi, 2009). The personal integrative needs originate from the individual's desire for self-esteem (Heidi, 2009, Severin & Tankard, 1992). The desire for affiliation and social contact is addressed in the social integrative needs. Individuals continuously search to strengthen contact with family, friends and the world (Bryant & Heath 2000). Many viewers send personalised messages to their loved ones.

Once again, the website also serves as an avenue for social contact. The fifth need gratification, escapist needs, refers to the desire to escape, to release tension and seek diversion (Heidi 2009, Severin & Tankard, 1992).

### **Contextualising the Problem Under Study:**

The Study has taken into account two reality shows. One is Roadies, an adventure reality series and the other is Splitsvilla, a dating reality show- both run on MTV India, and are based on themes and concepts that deal with planning and plotting against each other to win over the contests and show explicit scenes of violence, voyeurism, superfluous competitions, flirtations, jealousy, hedonism, intoxication, Sex-appeal, impulsivity, false identification, lying, cheating, abusing and ditching their own family members and friends. These shows also glamorize vulgarity, materialism in the content of the shows and comprise plenty of sex texts, conflict, shame, intoxication and narcissism. In addition to this, the shows also have the element of inspiration and stimulation. In some of the episodes of these reality shows, well influential youth personalities are invited upon the shows to motivate the contestants. Similarly, sometimes differently abled personalities are also invited on the shows to demonstrate their capacity/talent that would directly prompt the contestants of the shows and indirectly and optimistically to instigate the youth viewers. These reality shows also unequivocally support the issues related to the youth. Hence, the reality shows undertaken for the study have both positive as well as negative side and the shows have directly targeted the youth audiences of India and its neighbours.

Like most of the reality shows, these two shows are also adaptations from their original American formats. MTV Roadies is the Indian version of 'Road Rules' (1995) and Splitsvilla an Indian version of American reality show 'Flavour of Love'. Although, the makers of these shows back in India have often disagreed when it comes to the western adaptation of its programmes, but the concepts of the Indian version of these reality shows seem to be incalculably similar to that of the western version. Hence, the shows are apparently an adaptation of the western reality shows having elements of popular culture.

Despite its apparent role as a purveyor of popular culture, MTV has been largely ignored by academics (Jones, 2004). While a few scholars have conducted content analyses of the network's contents (Smith, 2005), little has been done to understand what role the network and its

programming play in the lives and minds of its youth viewers. Similarly, while the body of scholarly work on reality television is growing, there seems to be a critical gap in understanding how youths relate to and learn from it.

It is thus reasonable that there needs to be a greater understanding of how these programs, created by a Television network hoping to exemplify the youth experience, were perceived (Potratz 2007, p.54). MTV's evolution and development over several generations of youth has proven more interesting than its immediate impacts on popular music, visual style, and culture. Unfortunately, there has been too little scholarly focus on the longer-term consequences of MTV (Jones 2005, p.1). Since MTV India has been largely concentrated in addressing the youths' issues and tries to bring what youths likes and dislikes, the two reality shows of MTV India under study, Roadies and Splitsvilla are appropriate reality shows to be studied to understand the perception of the youths. Moreover, these are the two youth-based reality shows which claimed to be highly popular among the youths.

### **Research Design:**

The research design is purely based on survey. According to Agarwal & Gupta (2002) the Uses and Gratifications approach relies heavily on survey based on the actual responses of audience members (p.41). Hence, survey design has been adopted to extract responses from the youth viewers.

The researcher takes the help of the following **research questions** (RQs) to understand the problem under study.

1. How do young viewers perceive the content of the two MTV reality shows?
2. What is the level of popularity of the shows among the youths?
3. Do they gratify their need of watching the outside world through these shows?

**Universe of the study:** Gangtok is located in the Eastern Himalayan range at an elevation of 1,650 m (5,410 ft). It is one of the least populated states in India. The population of Gangtok is approximately 1 lakh. It is the capital of Sikkim. The city of Gangtok is the largest city in the state of Sikkim and an important commercial centre and place for higher studies. This is the only city in Sikkim where there are plenty of government-private colleges and universities where youths from different parts of Sikkim, India and as well as from neighboring nations come to

spend years to study different courses. In order to conduct a survey, the researcher has chosen all the colleges and universities from Gangtok. Selected colleges and universities are Sikkim Government College Tadong, Sikkim Government College Burtuk, Sikkim Government Law College, ICFAI University, Sikkim University, Manipal University, Damber Singh College and Harka Maya College.

### **Method of the study**

Quantitative methods are sometimes argued to be more objective than qualitative ones. Qualitative methods are too subjective, which rely so much on the individual researcher's point of view (Priest 2010, p 7). In this study, the quantitative aspects of the problem under consideration have been explored by the researcher. However, qualitative interpretation of the findings has also been incorporated by using cognitive and affective variables within the ambit of the study. The variables have been identified after generalization of the questionnaire.

### **Dimension**

The time dimension of a research design can either be cross-sectional or longitudinal. Longitudinal designs are used when data is collected at different stages over time. Cross-sectional research is data collected at a single point in time (Du Plooy 2001:85). This research study applies a cross-sectional research design where data is gathered once off during a short period.

### **Measures**

The variables of interest in this study were:

1. Perceived Reality
2. Reality Entertainment
3. Relaxation
4. Habitual Timespending
5. Companionship
6. Social Interaction

## Reliability

Talking about random error, which seems to be very common concern in research, particularly when utilizing paper-and-pencil questionnaires, and can greatly impact a study's reliability (Mullings, 2012, P.26). However, there are quite a few procedures that can be used to take advantage of reliability in a study. Administering the test twice—test-retest—was not an option for the researcher, nor was the split-half method. Instead, the researcher developed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire based on closed-ended questions using several guidelines that influenced its reliability by generalising the questionnaire. In this study, the researcher used 3 scale points in the paper-pencil closed ended questionnaires which helped Gangtok youth to select their level of agreement and disagreement on several statements. Also, the questions were definite and brief and completed by youths in a relaxed and recognizable situation. These efforts contributed to the reliability of this study.

## Data Analysis:

After the data was verified, several reports and analyses were created, including a general summary of the results, mostly to understand the type of youth that was being surveyed, and several comparison reports. The data collected through the survey provides the answers to the research questions formulated in this research. These reports allowed the researcher to determine the prime reasons of watching MTV reality shows Roadies and Splitsvilla and its uses and gratifications in terms of cognitive and emotive needs. This collected data also permits the researcher to resolve the youth awareness and insight of MTV India reality shows Roadies and Splitsvilla, and how they perceive the contents of these reality shows. It also tries to explore the level of gratification derived by watching these shows.

**Table1: Youths TV viewing per week**

<b>HOUR</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
>05	140	130	270	69.2
05 to 10	20	34	54	13.8
10 to 20	20	20	40	10.2
<20	16	10	26	6.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

The consumption pattern of TV by the youth audience of Gangtok per week has been tested in a survey by using closed ended question. Out of 390 samples, 270 samples watch TV less than for 5 hours in a week including 140 girl samples and 130 boy samples. Similarly, 54 samples watch TV for 5 to 10 hours in a week that include 20 girl samples and 34 boy samples and 40 samples watch TV for 10 to 20 hours per week. There are 26 samples who watch TV more than for 20 hours in a week. That means the highest students TV viewing fall under less than 5 hours category that is of 69.2%. The numerical result in data shows that the youth in Gangtok are not heavy TV viewers but they watch their favourite shows on TV.

**Table 2: Youths MTV Consumption.**

<b>HOURL</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
>02	100	60	160	41.2
02 to 05	60	94	154	39.48
>5 to <10	20	30	50	12.82
>10	16	10	26	6.66
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

In terms of consumption of MTV India television, the researcher asked students to indicate how many hours do they watch MTV India per week. It has been found that 41.2% of total sample watch MTV India for less than 2 hours in a week, followed by 39.48% sample who watch MTV India for 2 to 5 hours in a week. 12.8% sample watch MTV India for 5 to 10 hours per week and only 6.6% of total sample revealed that they watch MTV India for more than 10 hours in a week. Habit of watching MTV India between the both boys and girls appeared to be fairly balanced in terms of percentage. All and all, it has been found that MTV India channel is often being watched by the youth in this part of the world.

**Table 3: Consumption pattern of the reality shows Roadies and Splitsvilla.**

	<b>Splitsvilla</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>Roadies</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>(%)</b>
	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>			<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>		
Never miss out	154	120	274	70.25	144	136	280	71.79
Watch Sometimes	42	74	116	29.74	52	58	110	28.20
Never	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

watch								
Total	196	194		100%	196	194	390	100%

**Table: 3** revealed the consumption pattern of the two MTV reality shows under study: Roadies and Splitsvilla by the youth samples. It is to test insanity of the youth about the popular reality shows of MTV India. The survey discloses the fact that out of 390 samples surveyed, 274 (70.25%) samples never miss out the show ‘Splitsvilla’ whereas 116 samples agreed to the fact that they watch ‘Splitsvilla’ intended for sometimes. Similarly, 71% of samples ascertained that they never miss out MTV reality show ‘Roadies’ while 28% watch the show meant for sometimes. Out of 390 samples surveyed, none have ticked the option of ‘Never watch’ provided by the researcher in a questionnaire which they had personally and individually filled up during the survey. It indicates that the total samples do watch the reality shows Roadies & Splitsvilla. It has also been found out that the girl viewers watch the MTV reality show relatively more than that of the boy viewers.

**Table 4: Perception of Reality Shows.**

Reality TV shows	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I can't say	%
They are real	136	34.87	186	47.68	68	17.43%
They are unscripted	114	29.23	206	52.82	70	18%
They are highly manipulative	290	74.35	54	13.84	46	11.79%

This section provides data about the youth’s perceptions of reality television. 34.87% of respondents indicate that the reality shows that they watch on television is real but 47.68% respondents disagree with the statement. Only 29.23% believe that the reality TV shows are unscripted but 52.82% members strongly disagree with the statement and only 17.43% of respondents feel that they cannot say anything about it. Similarly, 29.23% of respondents specify that the reality shows are unscripted but 52.82% of respondents disagree with the statement that the reality shows are unscripted and only 18% of respondents are in no position to tell whether the reality shows are scripted or unscripted. Correspondingly, 74.35% of the respondents agree to

the statement that the reality TV shows are highly manipulative followed by 13.84% respondents who disagree they are highly manipulative. 11.79% of total respondents can't say about the statement.

**Table 5: Youth's statement of watching Reality Shows.**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>I can't say</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Characters of reality shows are more interesting than those in fiction programme.</b>	326	83.58 %	42	10.79 %	22	5.64%
<b>It is more entertaining than fiction shows on TV.</b>	342	87.69 %	18	4.61 %	30	7.69%
<b>It relaxes me and put me in a good mood.</b>	180	46.15 %	136	34.87 %	74	18.97%
<b>It gives me something to occupy my time.</b>	204	52.30 %	100	25.64 %	86	22.5%
<b>It makes me feel less lonely, so I won't have to be alone.</b>	216	55.38 %	140	35.89 %	43	8.71%
<b>So I can talk with other people about what's on TV.</b>	114	54.87 %	146	37.43 %	30	7.69%
<b>I find the contestant of these shows really attractive.</b>	196	50.25 %	130	33.33 %	64	16.41%

83.58% of total respondents agree with the statement that the characters of reality shows are more interesting than those in fiction programme while 10.29% of respondents don't agree with the statement. 87.69% of respondents indicate that the reality shows are more entertaining than fiction shows on TV. Only 4.61% disagree with the statement. 46.15% samples agree that reality shows relax them and put them in a good mood whereas 34.87% disagree with the statement that the reality shows relax them and put them in a good mood. 52.30% of total samples agree to the

statement ‘it gives me something to occupy my time’ while 25.64% disagree to the statement and 22.5% of total samples can’t say about it. To the statement ‘It makes me feel less lonely, so I won’t have to be alone’, 55.38% of total respondents agree to the statement while 35.89% totally disagree and only 8.71% can’t say about it. 54.87% of total samples agree that they can talk about the reality shows with other people while 37.43% don’t talk about it with other people. To the statement ‘I find the contestant of these shows really

**Table 6: Seeking gratification from Roadies and Splitsvilla.**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>I can't say</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>I relate myself to the contestants of these shows</b>	146	37.43%	158	40.51%	86	22.5%
<b>I like to imagine myself as contestants of these shows.</b>	164	42.5%	76	38.97%	74	18.97%
<b>I like to experience new things through these shows.</b>	182	46.66%	61	31.28%	86	22.5%
<b>I feel in sync with time by watching these shows.</b>	126	32.30	102	52.30%	60	15.38%
<b>I like the instant stardom that these shows give to common people.</b>	254	65.12	22	11.28%	92	23.58%

37.43% of total respondents agree that they relate themselves to the contestants of the reality shows Roadies and Splitsvilla while 40.51% totally disagree to this statement. 22.5% of total respondents choose the option ‘I can’t say’. To the statement ‘I like to imagine myself as contestants of these shows’, 42.5% of total samples agree to the statement whereas 38.97% of total samples disagree and 18.97% of total samples can’t say about the statement. 46.66% of total respondents like to experience new things through these shows while 31.28% don’t agree to the statement and 22.5% can’t say about it. 32.30% of respondents feel in sync with time by watching these shows but 52.30% of total respondents disagree to the statement. 65.12% of total

respondents like the instant stardom that these shows give to common people while 11.28% disagree to the statement and 23.58% of total respondents can't say about it.

### **Analyses of variables and youths' Gratifications:**

**Perceived Reality:** This variable in the research is measured with the statement; 'Reality shows are' followed by three options. The first option is 'they are real', the second option is 'they are unscripted' and the last one is 'they are manipulative'. The researcher used three point Likert scale to report how they perceived reality shows that they watch on television. This notion that is drawn from the youth is about a general conception of reality shows but not of the two MTV reality shows under study. From the data obtained in table: 5, it has been blatant that the youth population in this part of area despite being by and large glued to the reality shows developed a perception about the reality shows which is contradict to what these shows try to depict to its audiences. The data revealed that the youths do not deem reality shows as a delineation of reality, rather, they find that these shows are already scripted and highly manipulative. This result also supports the previous findings by various researchers on how the viewers of reality shows perceived the reality shows programmes on television by Nabi et al., 2003; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007; Hall, 2006. Their findings asserted that the viewers of reality television acknowledged the genre's disingenuousness and use of editing to increase shock and entertainment value, and ultimately boost ratings (as cited in Mullings, 2012, p.20). The report raises an important question about why the youth population still favour to watch reality shows to other shows on television regardless of knowing it's unreal nature, scripted content and highly manipulative scenes. Further exploration in this area is suggestible for future researchers.

**Reality Entertainment:** This variable was assessed with a question where the samples used 3 points scale to answer the question. The pursuit of entertainment is one of the most basic motivations for media consumption under affective needs of the uses and gratifications theory. The sharp paradigm shift on the viewing pattern of available television programmes from fiction shows to reality shows is due to an entertainment element that is absolutely offered by reality shows to the television audiences. The survey brought an interesting result about reality shows and its increasing popularity among the youth population. Majority of the respondents have a history of watching reality shows as these shows are more entertaining than the fiction shows accessible on the television. Entertainment value has been one of the escalating reasons for the youths to stick towards realty shows on television withstanding to plenteous shows from other

genres unreservedly accessible by the viewers at a click of remote. This outcome of result supports the findings drawn by Nabi et al., in their research. According to Nabi et al. (2003), viewers tuned in to reality television primarily because it was novel and had entertainment value (as cited in Mulings, 2012, p.21). It also shows that the young audience do fulfil their affective needs of watching the reality shows.

**Relaxation:** This variable was measured with a question on which the youth samples used 3 points scale to give response. The samples were asked to mark their answer by selecting agree/disagree/can't say (scale) as to why they watch reality shows in general followed by the sub-statement '**It relaxes me and put me in a good mood.**'. It is clear that young viewers do subscribe to reality shows to make themselves relax out of their busy life schedules and to create an excellent mood. However, this motive of watching reality shows on television is less appealing than the others motives because 46.15% samples give their agreement on the fact that reality shows do relax them and situate them in an exceptional mood but noticeably, 34.87% disagree to the statement that the reality shows relax them and put them in a good mood. Hence, the reality shows as the relaxing agent of media becomes one of the reasons of watching reality shows on television by the youth audience but it cannot be considered as a driving reason for watching reality shows.

**Habitual Time pass:** This variable was deliberated with a question on which the youth samples used 3 points scale to give response. Of all the motives that stimulate the youth viewers towards watching reality shows on television, habitual time-pass is one of them. More than half the samples surveyed were of the opinions that by watching reality shows bestow them something to occupy their time. The result also supports the previous research done by Papacharissi and Meldelson (2007) on 'An Exploratory Study of Reality Appeal: Uses and Gratifications of Reality TV shows' as their research exposed that one of the most salient motives for watching reality TV was habitual pass time. This result tells about the fact that the youth viewers of TV have become habituate of passing their times by watching reality shows on television.

**Companionship:** The variable 'companionship' was measured with a statement 'It makes me feel less lonely, so I won't have to be alone' in a design survey questionnaire where the respondents used 3 points scale to answer question. There are evident where the television audiences of all ages glued to any genres of television programmes to find their companionship. With the advent of new technologies and a new era, people tend to live busy life styles where

there are rare opportunities available for the personal and face to face communication. The process of communication has become partly mediated. The emerging trends of watching reality shows on television which have of course flooded in the forename of entertainment have no doubt brought an element of a companionship. Taking this development into consideration, the researchers tried to find out whether ‘companionship’ as an independent variable rouses the youth viewers to watch reality shows and it has been found that more than 55% of total respondents agreed with the statement that they feel less lonely while watching reality shows on television and they won’t to be left alone.

**Social Interaction:** This variable in the research is measured with the statement ‘So I can talk with other people about what’s on TV’ wherein the respondents give their answers in 3 scale point. Of the five categories of needs as identified by Katz, Gurevitch and Haas under the Uses and Gratification theory, ‘social integrative need’ is one of these. The social integrative needs are the desire for affiliation and social contact. Individuals repeatedly try to search to reinforce their contact with family, friends and the world they live in. Communication itself is a process of articulating one’s views through the media or verbal code. Social interaction takes place everywhere because it is the part of personal communication. At times, people talk about what is up on the television with the people in and around environment as they live in. There is no doubt that the reality shows have become the topic of discussion at every work place. Considering above piece of evidence that is apparent, the researcher tries to know about whether the youth audience of reality shows look at reality shows for the purposes of social interaction. The result establishes that the youth viewers watch reality shows so that they can talk about it with other people as they meet.

### **Exploring Research Questions:**

#### **RQ1. How do young viewers perceive the content of the two MTV reality shows?**

MTV, the world’s largest television network (Geary et.al, 2007), sometimes claims as the heart of youngsters. The young viewers are glue to the MTV India because of the contents it has built-in inside the reality shows. Roadies and Splitsvilla, two popular shows of MTV India have similar content included in the shows. The researcher tries to identify as to how the young viewers recognize the content of the two MTV reality shows Roadies and Splitsvilla. The result released the fact that despite 74.35% of total respondents agree that the reality shows are highly

manipulative in nature but 83% find the contents of these reality shows entertaining. The realism of reality shows is accepted only by 34.87% of total sample surveyed whereas 47.68% disagree with the statement that the reality shows are real. Fundamentally, the reality shows portray people in their natural setting (Mullings, 2012, p, 18). Moreover, the ‘real’ in reality shows has become the subject of several research studies as well (Mullings, 2012 p, 19). Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007) sought to uncover the perceived realism of reality television.

The finding of this research supports the findings brought out by the previous researchers like Nabi et al., (2003); Papacharissi & Mendelson, (2007); Hall, (2006) that offered viewers of reality television acknowledged this genre’s disingenuousness and use of editing to increase shock and entertainment value, and ultimately boost ratings. Distinctively, Orbe (2008) brings into focus that viewers follow a tendency to judge that contestants of the reality shows are oftentimes coached or directed by producers, and what is seen is manipulated through various Post production editing techniques that maximize the intensity of the product (p. 346). Fake, staged, exaggerated, contrived, and overboard were common terms used by viewers to describe the realism of reality television (Papacharissi & Mendelsen, 2007). Hence, the data supports the previous findings of the researchers.

Discussing about the explicit sexual contents of Roadies and Splitsvilla, and how the youth viewers perceive the content of these shows, it has been found that only 39.48% approved intimate contents of these shows. 47.48% of total sample surveyed don’t enjoy the salacious content of the shows. Additionally, 60.51% of total respondents deliberately or unconsciously learn some of the new vulgar words from the shows regardless of stringent censorship. 50.76% enjoy when the contestants use slang words in the shows. 67.69% agree that they take pleasure in watching the contestants engross in planning and plotting against each other in the shows and 81.53% enjoy adventure contents of the shows that the viewers experience from the tasks performed by the contestants. 59% of total respondents approved aggressive behaviours of the contestants in the reality shows and take pleasure watching it. Thus, the data suggests that the youth viewers of MTV India approved of contents of these reality shows but sexual content doesn’t find it appealing to the youth viewers of Gangtok.

## **RQ2. What is the level of popularity of the shows among the youths?**

The consumption habit of MTV television by the youths in Gangok can be determined in terms of findings. The findings say that 41.2% watch MTV for less than 2 hours in a week, followed by 39.48% samples who watch MTV for 2 to 5 hours in a week. While per week TV viewing patterns among the youths is of 69% who watch TV for less than 5 hours. From the finding, it can be said that the young viewers do watch MTV India for the selective programmes that they watch on the MTV channel. The level of popularity of the MTV reality shows Roadies and Splitsvilla can be traced out from the findings which revealed the data that 70% of total respondents never miss the show Splitsvilla and 71% also never missed the show Roadies. The finding also revealed that girls watch the reality shows more than the boys. Further, it has been found that the level of popularity of the MTV India and its two most popular reality shows, Roadies and Splitsvilla among the youth population is quite high.

## **RQ3. Do they gratify their need of watching the outside world through these shows?**

Roadies and Splitsvilla are the reality shows that fetch the outside world into a TV frame. These reality shows are the window from which the youth viewers despite living in a technologically isolated place like Gangtok, they can get to glance at the world that exist outside of their comfort zone. Bringing this reality into account, the researcher tries to understand whether their need of gratification of watching the outside world through Roadies and Splitsvilla can be fulfilled. The result implied that only 37.43% of total respondents like to experience fresh things through Roadies and Splitsvilla other than that 40.5% don't experience anything new via these reality shows. For this reason, it can be concluded that the youth viewers don't gratify their need of peeping and watching the outside world through Roadies and Splitsvilla. The survey result also discloses the fact that the youths of Gangtok do not consider these shows to see the world that exists outside of the world that they live in.

### **Conclusion:**

The history of the liberalisation process in India has been well documented by scholars, including the opening of the Indian media industry to private and foreign ownership, programming strategies and global management culture. (Rodrigues & Ranganathan, 2015 p.12). With the advent of foreign entertainment channels, there has been a tremendous growth in the content of entertainment and there appears this appealing genre of entertainment called 'reality

shows'. Ever since its arrival, the television viewers have seen to be shifted from the traditional mode of watching locally available TV programmes to Indian version of the foreign reality shows. The paradigm shift of traditional TV viewers has resulted in many scholarly concerns. Besides, the youth population power of India, that the world dribble over have also been targeted by the channel producers through their reality shows contents. There are plenty of shows which are mainly and only targeted at the youth audiences. In this link, the MTV India stands at the apex by calling itself as 'the voice of youngsthan'. This research gives a general idea of youth perception of reality shows on Indian television specifically focussing on the two most popular reality shows of MTV India Roadies and Splitsvilla. The two most watched reality shows on MTV India Roadies and Splitsvilla have enormous youth viewers and the youths have different perception about these reality shows. One of the attractions of reality shows like Roadies and Splitsvilla is the reality of it - unscripted and unplanned situations and reactions. But the survey result gives a clear picture about how the youths distinguish manipulative and scripted reality shows but despite the fact that the reality shows that they watch on TV are extremely manipulative and scripted, they have an urge to watch these shows. This study tries to explore about the youth viewers motives behind watching reality shows like Roadies and Splitsvilla. The survey result illustrated that the youth viewers of reality shows watch the shows because of its entertainment content. It has also been found out that by watching reality shows, the youth viewers tend to be relaxed. Reality shows are also used for companionship and social Interaction. Fashion trends display in the reality shows is also one of the reasons for the youth viewers to glue at TV. Voyeurism has little less to play a part in exciting the youth audience towards reality show viewing.

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