

Larry Webster

Just One More Episode: Developing and Using a Binge Viewing Index to Explore the Relationship Between Television Binge Viewing and Parasocial Interaction

Abstract

Television binge viewing is a growing phenomenon. From *House of Cards* to *The Walking Dead* and *Battlestar Galactica* to *Orange is the New Black*, viewers are settling in for extended viewing sessions for a myriad of reasons – entertainment, socialization, boredom, etc. An extreme form of television time shifting, bingeing gives the viewer control over the television content they consume and, more importantly, when they consume it. To date, relatively little scholarly research has been published on binge viewing. So little in fact, that there is no clear definition of what constitutes binge viewing. A Harris Poll in 2013 defined binge viewing as viewing two to six episodes of the same show at one sitting. This definition is not sufficient for studying the effects of binge viewing as there could be a wide variance in the effects of watching two episodes of a show at one sitting and watching six episodes in the same time period. This study proposes a binge viewing index (BVI), based on previous research of television viewing habits and research measuring binge drinking. The BVI is designed to measure the behaviors that are involved in binge viewing – quality, frequency and duration. These dimensions of binge viewing will create a measure that provides a more effective tool to explore the effects of binge viewing. As a first example of the use of the BVI, this study tests the relationship between television binge viewing and parasocial interaction. A sample of 400 adult television viewers in the U.S. will be surveyed using an online survey on Qualtrics, distributed through Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk crowd sourcing tool. The BVI should be a useful measure for an extensive amount of future binge viewing research.