

ABSTRACT

THE USES AND PREFERENCES FOR REALITY TELEVISION VIEWING AMONG AGE, SEX, AND RACE

This study examined the motives for (a) watching reality television, (b) watching specific reality subgenre programs, and (c) the appeal of audience interactivity among viewers of different ages, sexes, and races. A total of 353 participants (students and faculty) from a western university were surveyed to assess their reality television viewing and participation habits, preferences for certain reality subgenres, and motives for watching reality programming. Aside from demographics of each participant, results found several common motives for watching reality television, which included entertainment, passing time, and relaxation. African Americans were more motivated by entertainment, while Asian/Pacific Islanders by information. Younger age groups sought to pass time, while older age groups looked for entertainment in reality television. Viewers reported they preferred to watch talent contests (e.g., *American Idol*) and docusoaps (e.g., *Real World*). Finally, a positive correlation was found between audience participation and liking reality television, though participation was not a strong motive for viewing reality television.

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