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REASONS BEHIND WATCHING DATING REALITY TV BY  
YOUNG ADULTS IN POLAND

Dissertation submitted to Universidade Católica Portuguesa  
to obtain a Master's Degree in Communication Studies  
specialization in Media and Entertainment

By

Julia Maria Brochocka

Universidade Católica Portuguesa

September, 2024



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# Abstract

Reality television has become very popular around the world. Reality shows are usually based on the simple principle of showing common people in situations similar to real. Poland, like any other country, has also been affected by the popularity of reality TV. Reality shows, especially dating shows like *Love Island*, *Hotel Paradise*, *Love Never Lies* and *The Sanatorium of Love*, became a cultural phenomenon with high viewership. However, this phenomenon states the question: what motivates Polish viewers to watch these dating reality shows? By examining audience study theories such as Uses and Gratifications or Reception theory and understanding reality TV audience, their habits, and motivations, we conducted a survey and interviews among young adults in Poland. Both survey and interviews were based on prior research regarding reality television and their audience. Findings indicate that the majority of the responders watch those shows as they seek entertainment. Other less popular reasons are to pass time, relax, escape, socialize and because of participants in that shows. Some viewers watch dating shows for other reasons such as voyeurism, out of habit, for social learning or identification however this reason did not receive much support in this target group. Both the Uses and Gratifications theory and Reception theory were in line with the results of this study.

KEY WORDS: dating; reality TV; audience; motivations; Poland.

# Resumo

O gênero do reality show televisivo tornou-se muito popular ao redor do mundo. Os programas deste gênero são geralmente baseados no princípio simples de mostrar pessoas comuns em situações semelhantes às da vida real. A Polónia, como qualquer outro país, também foi afetada pela popularidade da TV de realidade. Especialmente os reality shows de namoro, como *Love Island*, *Hotel Paradise*, *Love Never Lies* e *O Sanatório do Amor*, tornaram-se um fenômeno cultural com muita audiência. No entanto, esse fenômeno levanta a questão: o que motiva os telespectadores polacos a assistirem a esses reality shows de namoro? Ao examinar teorias de estudo de audiência, como a dos Usos e Gratificações ou a Teoria da Recepção, e compreender

o público da Reality TV, os seus hábitos e motivações, conduzimos um inquérito e entrevistas com jovens adultos na Polónia. Tanto o inquérito como as entrevistas basearam-se em pesquisas anteriores sobre televisão de reality e o seu público. Os resultados indicam que a maioria dos respondentes assiste a esses programas em busca de entretenimento. Outras razões menos populares são passar o tempo, relaxar, escapar, socializar e por causa dos participantes nesses programas. Alguns telespectadores assistem a programas de namoro por outros motivos, como voyeurismo, hábito, aprendizado social ou identificação, no entanto, essas razões não receberam muito apoio nesse grupo-alvo. Quer a teoria dos Usos e Gratificações, quer a teoria da Recepção estavam em consonância com os resultados deste estudo

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** reality shows; namoro; motivações; audiência; Polónia.

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# 1. Introduction

Reality television has become one of the most popular forms of entertainment around the world. Formats such as *Survivor*, *Keeping Up With The Kardashians* or *Love Island* bring millions of people in front of screens every year (Gitnux, 2023). Reality shows are based on the simple principle of showing common people in unscripted and unrehearsed settings (Mead, 2006). Even though this genre of television is often criticised, reality TV has become a powerful market. Many young viewers watch reality shows more than anything else on television (Hill, 2005).

Among the numerous subgenres within reality TV, dating reality shows have gained significant attention. According to Ginux (2023), around 39% of reality shows are dating or relationship shows making it the most popular genre. The principle of those shows is an unscripted and personal glimpse into the lives of people looking for love or romance followed by the dramatic narrative and “real” emotions (Ryan-Christensen, 2020).

Poland, like any other country, has also become affected by this trend. The first reality show, was broadcasted by a TVN channel, was called *Agent*, under the license of the Belgian *De Mol*. From the very beginning, the program became very popular among the viewers (Kujawiński, 2014). Nowadays dating reality shows such as *Love Island*, *Hotel Paradise*, *Love Never Lies* and *The Sanatorium of Love* have become a cultural phenomenon and generating a high viewership.

Reality television has always been criticized as a form of programming as for instance a “cheap form of Trash TV” aimed to entertain masses as its often “associated with low production values, high emotions, cheap antics and questionable ethics” (Kavka, 2012, p. 12). Despite the frequent criticism regarding this genre, more and more formats premiere each year. This sensation states the question: What motivates Polish society to watch these dating reality shows?

To understand the motivational factors behind watching reality TV and dating reality TV shows, it is necessary to underline sociocultural motives. The Uses and Gratifications theory will be used to understand how individuals use media to satisfy various needs (Huang, 2009). Furthermore, by examining audience study theories such as Reception theory we can better understand how dating reality television audience interpret its content.

Thus, research question for this television study in the field of audience studies will be:

**RQ:** What motivates young Polish adults to watch dating reality shows?

The potential hypothesis for motivational factors for watching reality TV shows in Poland could be:

H1: Those shows allow viewers to escape from their own reality and have a break from their stressful life.

H2: Viewers might watch it for entertainment - to enjoy the drama and conflicts

H3: Reality TV shows are a reason to socialize with friends and family.

In order to answer the research question, mixed method approach will be employed, as a survey and interviews will be conducted among people in Poland. The above-mentioned factors will be used as potential choices of why respondents watch reality TV shows. The questions will be covering demographical information of the respondents as well as if and what kind of reality shows are they watching. The online survey collected 641 answers, of which 46 were eliminated, as the respondents were either not in the age group for this study, or they were not watching dating reality television.

Based on the survey results, semi-structured interviews expand its findings with nine participants aged between eighteen and thirty-five who are watching dating reality television, being asked questions to investigate the complex motivations behind consuming these formats.

The first chapter of literature review will provide an overview of reality television and dating reality shows to establish a broad understanding of the topic. The subchapters will cover topics such as: what is reality TV, what kind of subgenres it has, and its history. Moreover, the dating

reality genre will be discussed, highlighting the most popular dating reality shows in Poland and ethical issues and criticism associated with it.

The second chapter will discuss audience studies relevant for this research to better understand viewers' habits and preferences. Moreover, the profile of reality television audience and their watching habits will be examined. Additionally, the ironic consumption, camp sensibility and guilty pleasure will be defined and analysed. Lastly, the profile of dating reality show audience will be presented.

The final chapter will explore reasons behind television consumption and why people watch reality television and dating reality programs. Furthermore, prior research on the motives for watching reality TV and dating reality show will be presented.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Reality TV

#### 2.1.1 What is Reality TV?

Reality TV (RTV) is a genre of television programming that shows “real-life” events and unscripted situations of participants usually portraying the life of the individuals in particular situations such as facing personal challenges, competing against each other, or living together (Hill, 2005).

Scholars offer a variety of other definitions of Reality TV. For instance, Kavka in her book *Reality TV* defines reality television as “unscripted shows with non-professional actors being observed by camera in preconfigured environment” (2012). Nabi, Biely, Morgan & Stitt (2003) defined reality-based television programming as

programs that film real people as they live out events (contrived or otherwise) in their lives, as these events occur. Such programming is characterized by several elements: (a) people portraying themselves (i.e., not actors or public figures performing roles), (b) filmed at least in part in their living or working environment rather than on a set, (c) without a script, (d) with events placed in a narrative context, (e) for the primary purpose of viewer entertainment (Nabi et al., 2003)

Sociologist Danielle Lindemann mentioned in her book *True Story: What Reality TV Says About Us* that reality television's purpose is to entertain people. Furthermore, it has to feature non-actors and "make a claim to reality" (Lindemann, 2022). Meanwhile, Creeber (2001) stated that reality television is characterised by "camcorder surveillance or observational actuality footage". Furthermore, Creeber asserts that reality television show has to involve "first-person participant or eye-witness testimony" and commentary from a presenter (Creeber, 2001 p.135). Barton (2007, p. 11) argues that besides being non-actors, the contestants have to behave spontaneously "under the additional criteria that there has been some level of producer involvement in the show and that the documentation of their experiences is not limited to particular moments but is comprehensive in its capturing of events".

Thus, scholars can mutually agree that shows, in order to be considered reality TV, must include real people, not actors, the dialogues and emotions shown cannot be scripted and the main purpose of the show must be the viewer entertainment.

In theory, reality TV should display unscripted situations and real emotions. However, creators of the shows often get involved with the dynamic of the plot (Dubrofsky, 2009). They usually lead the narrative of the program by for example broadcasting only a small part of the footage (Dubrofsky, 2009). The term "structured reality" became popular to describe reality shows with elaborate camera techniques, manipulated storylines or overuse of editing (Staples, 2022). The definition of a "structured reality" (also known as Scripted Reality) from the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* states that those are "television programs in which people who are not actors are filmed in a situation that look like their real lives but have often been arranged by the programme's producers" (Dictionary of Contemporary English, n.d.). Structured reality TV introduces pre-planned plots and outcomes, undermining the authenticity that defines the core values of reality television. This subgenre of reality TV contradicts the definition, and main characteristics of this programming described by the above-mentioned authors, as more and more RTV shows are scripted or manipulated by producers. Thus, in

theory, this subgenre of reality TV goes against its foundational concept of its unscripted nature. Furthermore, even though the production wants to hide any trace of manipulation, some viewers are aware that montage and out-of-context sentences could be used for a dramatic purpose, for instance to create situations that will start a conflict or drama among the participants (Hill, 2005; Cummings, 2002; Kavka 2003).

According to Dovey, “Ordinary people and their dramatic experiences are the staple of Reality TV” (2000, p. 86). Reality TV gives producers a chance to present local individuals on their show without high costs like in movies or series. The participants often exhibit qualities and traits relatable to viewers to maintain the dramatic and entertaining elements that help to attract and retain audience attention (Boateng, 2023; Tsay-Vogel & Krakowiak, 2017). As they have to be non-actors/ ordinary people; the production goes through a long casting process in order to choose people who have a personality that will help to keep the show interesting. Thus, the more conflict the participant is creating, the more dramatic content the show will have. Also, how a participant approaches those disagreements contributes to popularity that he or she can gain from the public (Penzhorn & Pitout, 2007, p.66). Besides, the more popular a participant becomes after the season ends, the better the show’s viewership will be. That is why the casting directors focuses on the people who have the ability to create drama or to become a celebrity after the season of the show (Penzhorn & Pitout, 2007).

Reality television has always been criticized as a form of programming as for instance a “cheap form of Trash TV aimed to entertain masses or a postmodern ‘nightmare’ that took hybridisation and surveillance technology too far” and that “reality television is associated with low production values, high emotions, cheap antics and questionable ethics” (Kavka, 2012, p. 12). Furthermore, its legacy has led to the perception of reality TV as simplified television programming that appeals to the least educated and offers no social values (Kavka, 2012).

### 2.1.2 Reality TV as a genre

Scholars have struggled to categorise reality TV. Studies on reality television programming face challenges because there is no agreement on the criteria for what should be considered as reality TV. Initially, they put reality shows in the categories of documentaries, docusoaps or

entertainment shows. Later the categorization of reality TV by the television industry became very flexible and was categorized based on how it was beneficial for the industry. In the twentieth century, journalists, to name this genre, used terms like: “popular factual television, real people show, infotainment, topical features, on-scene reality shows, tabloid TV” before adopting the known today term, Reality TV” (Hill, 2005, p.45).

According to Hill (2005), there is not a single definition for reality programming. Because the reality genre consists of several different and historically rooted television genres, such as entertainment, lifestyle and documentary, they merged to create hybrid genres now known as reality TV (RTV) (Hill, 2005). Furthermore, there is a dispute among scholars regarding how to divide it into subgenres. Some scholars such as Roberts (2011) mention four subgroups of reality television: “Challenge, Talent, Makeover and Celebrity”. Bailey & Barbato (2003) also present four subgroups which are: Romantic, Quiz, Game and Talent. Others like Essany (2008) mentioned twelve subgenres: “Documentary, Celebrity, Competition, Personal Improvement and Makeover, Renovation and Design, Professional, Forced Environment, Romance, Aspiration, Fear Based, Sports and Undercover” (Essany, 2008, as cited in Kelly, 2013, p. 11). For the purposes of this research, Essany (2008) subgenres will be used to categorise reality programs.

Documentary Reality is characterised by its commitment to capturing real-life events as they are minimised or deprived of the use of editing and montage techniques. This approach highlights the authenticity of the show, which allows viewers to watch it without any or little occurrence of manipulation. Shows such as *The Real World* and *Say Yes To The Dress* are good examples of this category (Kelly, 2013; Tsintziras, 2021).

Celebrity Reality is focused mainly on a certain famous personality and his or her life (Kelly, 2013, p. 11). The premise is usually based on following the everyday life of a famous person (Mead, 2006, p.22). Some shows such as *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* featured the whole family and offer an intimate glimpse into their lives. Others, like for example *Simple Life*, showed two celebrities that are put in an unfamiliar environment. Those shows popularised a trend of celebrity culture while providing entertainment for viewers by putting familiar faces into the shows.

Competition Reality is characterised by the competitive nature of those shows. Usually, they include searching for talent such as cooking, dancing or singing but also game shows in which the participant has to compete against others for example in the wild environment or in tasks that require a good physique. In some of competition reality shows, viewers can influence the decision of who will get eliminated by online or telephone voting (Kelly, 2013). The examples of competitions shows are *American Idol*, *You Can Dance* and *Got Talent*.

In Personal Improvement shows, the participants are being “improved” physically or mentally or both (Kelly, 2013, p. 12). This includes changing the way they dress, their appearance or how much they weigh. This subgenre includes shows like *Queer Eye* or *Not to Wear* but also *Botched* or *Extreme Makeover*.

Renovation and design reality is characterised by improving living spaces (*Fixer Upper*), cars (*Pimp My Car*) or gardens (*Backyard Takeover*) (Kelly, 2013, p. 13). The host who is usually responsible for the renovation, presents the lucky participant, who will have their space, car etc. remodelled free of charge. Furthermore, the before and after clips of a renovation are presented to the viewer with the reactions of the participants.

Professional Reality is characterised by following people who do their everyday jobs. It can be divided into two groups, first where people are usually professionals in their daily workload like *Ice Road Trucker* or where people try to achieve something in their career like in *Next Top Model* (Kelly, 2013, p. 13). These show usually future day-to-day challenges of working in a particular profession.

Forced Environment Reality shows put participants in a setting that is usually created by producers. *Big Brother* is a good example of such a show. In a Fear-based shows, however, participants are put in a paranormal activity environment for a certain time (*Ghost Hunters; Most Haunted*) or they have to overcome fear to pass the task. Sport Reality usually features sports competitions between teams or athletes. *Ninja Warrior* is one example of such programming. Undercover Reality puts participants in unexpected situations (*Punk'd*) and follow their reactions through time (Kelly, 2013, p. 13-14).

Lastly, Romance Reality shows are characterised by creating romantic relations between participants or following couples' dates (Mead, 2006, p.21). The shows such as *Bachelor*, *Hotel Paradise* or *Love Island* are examples of romantic reality. In the following chapters more detailed descriptions of Romance/Dating reality TV will be covered.

Some reality shows can represent two or more subgenres of reality TV. For example, *Next Top Model* can be considered as a Professional and Competition show or *Simple Life* as a Celebrity and Forced Environment reality. Reality Television is often regarded as a hybrid genre, which integrates elements from several genres like game shows, talk shows, soap operas, talent shows, and documentaries.

As reality TV's main characteristics include non-actors, unscripted plots and filmed not necessarily on set, the question is what the differences between reality TV and the documentary genres are. Beck and al. (2012) state that the main aim is the purpose of the series. In documentary, the main goal is to inform viewers in a journalistic way about the person/group of people or situation. Reality shows however in fully made for entertainment reasons. Furthermore, they pointed out that in reality TV the environment is staged, and the event is initiated by the producers, while in the documentary everything is just observed (Beck et al., 2012). Furthermore, Campbell (2018) noticed that the difference between reality shows and docu-series is that reality TV, despiting its original description, is often scripted when docu-series are not.



Different authors are pointing out different precursors of reality TV. According to Kavka (2012), some researchers acknowledge that reality television was first introduced with *An American Family*. The show was created in 1971 in the United States by filmmaker Craig Gilberta and the 12-episode show was aired on public television (PBS) in 1973 (Kavka, 2012). The experimental show involved a group of filmmakers recording a normal American family (Pat and Bill Loud with their five children) for a limited period (end of May 1971 to January 1972) (Kavka, 2012). The main element that distinguished the show from all others aired on television, was its unscripted and observational format. Unlike every other show, *An American Family* documented real-life situations and interactions within the Lance family. The show also provided an intimate glimpse into their everyday life showing their struggles, celebrations, and conflicts. Furthermore, the show gained significant attention due to its raw footage of the family's private situations such as family members' coming out or the divorce of the parents (Kavka, 2012).

The project had its sequel - *American Family Revisited* (1983), as well as the episode that ended the story of the Loud family - *Lance Loud! A Death in American Family*. It presented the short time before the death of Lance Loud, who had been addicted to methamphetamine for over 20 years and diagnosed with HIV (Almo, 2003).

The show became a precursor of what we now know as "Reality TV", influencing the later concept of real-life documentary. It shaped the landscape of entertainment which subsequence in the existence of today's reality TV. Furthermore, the show gained interest as the first show that provides an unfiltered glimpse into the private life of a typical American family; however, it also started a discussion regarding ethical concerns regarding the invasion of privacy of the family (Kavka, 2012, p. 54)

According to Kelly (2013, p. 14), the first reality show was *Candid Camera*. First presented as a radio program in 1947 it moved to a television following year. The plot of the show was about ordinary people secretly recorded in unexpected situations. "When the prank has run its course, the victim was clued in to what was happening by the show's famous tag line: 'Smile! You're on Candid Camera!'" (Kelly, 2013, p. 15)

Other scholars also mention *Queen for a Day* as a first reality show (Roberts, 2011). The show premiered on television in 1956. The idea of the show was that women who took part in the program had to convince the audience that they were the most suitable to win the show. “The premise of this show was simple, and rested on women competing with other women to see who had the most terrible life” (Scheiner, 2003, p. 376).

Kavka in her book divides Reality TV into three different generations based on their distinctive features linked to historical and conceptual context. According to Kavka, first-generation Reality TV is divided into two parts: reality crime programs (flashing blue light TV) and British docusoaps both between 1990-1999 (Kavka, 2012; Dovey, 2000). The shows were characterised by low-quality video technology and everyday life subject matter which provided the viewer with behind-the-scenes access to police interventions and the everyday life of British society (Kavka, 2012).

The second generation of reality TV started in the year 1999 (Kavka, 2012). It was when reality TV shifted from police-themed shows to programming that we know today. The precursor for the second-generation programming is the show called *The Real World*. The show first aired in 1992 and was originally based on the idea of *The American Family*. It presented the unscripted life of people from different backgrounds who lived in the same household. The program initiated the concept of ‘intimate strangers’ (more about this topic in the next chapter), where the environment created by show executives creates intimate interaction between participants (Kavka, 2012). The show gained popularity and credibility for addressing social issues such as racism, sexuality or sexually transmitted diseases.

The year 2000 was a breakthrough for reality shows with *Big Brother* and *Survivor* premiering on a small screen (in the United States) (Wilson, 2004; Salibian, 2012). Those two shows provided audiences with new concepts and formats of reality shows. *Big Brother* was first introduced in the Netherlands in 1999 (Barić-Šelmić et al, 2017). The show became a sensation in over 60 franchise countries (Acuna & Mazzeo, 2023). The show premise was similar to *The Real World* – a group of strangers from different backgrounds live together in one house with cameras observing them 24/7. The difference between *The Real World* and *Big Brother* was that in *Big Brother* the viewers could contribute to the plot of the show by voting one of the

participants out until the winner remains. The finale of the American version of *Big Brother* in 2000 brought 50 million viewers in front of their screen (Thompson, 2009).

The American reality show, now called *Survivor*, was first introduced as *Expedition Robinson* in 1997 in Sweden. The American franchise of the show premiered in 2000 and became one of the most popular Reality TV shows (Mead, 2006). The idea of the show is to put two groups of participants in a remote, isolated and tropical locations where they have to find food and shelter for each other. Moreover, contestants have to win tasks and solve puzzles in order to not get eliminated. The contestants are voted out by others until only one remains. The winner gets 1,000,000 US dollars (Mead, 2006).

*Survivor* uses an exotic location as a backdrop to the emotional tensions and psychological machinations of the contestants who compete to win a million. The size of the prize money is a clue as to the scale of the show: there are big tasks, big fights, big tears, and big production values. (Hill, 2005, p. 30)

Those ‘gamedocs’, as called by some academics, characterise this generation as the line between on- and off-screen worlds has been blurred (Kavka, 2012). The “comprehensive surveillance” where participants are monitored by cameras 24/7 principally illustrates this era (Andrejevic, 2002). However, critics raised ethical privacy concerns that may encourage viewers' voyeuristic tendencies, especially in shows such as “Big Brother”. Furthermore, those programs were also criticised for casting the contestants based on their ability to create a conflict. For second-generation programming, producers would choose people from different backgrounds and statuses to fulfil the goals of “social diversity, wider appeal to the target audience and narratological basis for story arcs to come” (Kavka, 2012, p.119). Casting directors would purposefully select participants with pre-existing differences such as gender, race, class or sexuality as there is a higher probability that those differences will create a disagreement which will keep the viewer in front of the TV (Kavka, 2012).

Kavka's third generation of reality started in 2002 and it is characterised by contemporary celebrity culture (2012). This means that the third generation of reality shows is contributing to the celebrity-making process which makes non-talented reality show participants famous over the night. Furthermore, Kavka divides this celebrity production formats into three subgroups: the talent format, the no-talent format and the pre-existing celebrity format. The talent format

is when individuals become celebrities based on their talents. People such as singers, models, dancers etc who took part in the talent shows and gained fans based on their skills represent this subgroup. In the no-talent groups, celebrities are created through visibility on the show. These „celebrities” gained their popularity from being in reality TV without having any exact skills or talents. Those celebrities often take part in various reality shows in order to not be replaced and stay famous (Kavka, 2012). Reality show celebrities often jump from one show to another to maintain their recognition. Therefore, the pre-existing celebrity format is where names from other reality shows go after the show ends. As those individuals are usually minor celebrities, they desire to use another channel to remind viewers about themselves.

#### 2.1.4 Dating Reality TV

Dating reality TV, also known as Romance Reality, is a subgenre of reality television that is characterised by forming romantic relations between participants (Essany, 2008, as cited in Kelly, 2013, p. 13). Dating reality TV has grown in popularity, catching the audience’s attention globally with its mix of entertainment, drama, and romantic relationships. This genre has reformed the reality television landscape by showing a glimpse into the intimate and romantic relationships of the participants. Dating reality TV has become a cultural sensation, influencing societal norms and people’s relationship perceptions (Boateng, 2023).

Dating reality shows are often criticised for presenting unrealistic expectations of love. (Cholakov, 2023). Some people, however, believe that such shows are very entertaining and the interactions between contestants are often very relatable as viewers are experiencing the good and the bad side of participant relationships (Boateng, 2023). Audiences often connect with the participants and their emotions, whether it's the excitement of a new romance or the heartbreak from rejection. This emotional connection explains the genre's popularity of dating reality shows and its ability to reshape attitudes toward love and romantic relationships (Boateng, 2023). Furthermore, dating reality programs provide a platform for discussing issues related to relationships. Those shows create conversations about communication, trust, sex and abuse which opens a dialogue about the issues of modern dating (Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006).

Same as other reality shows, dating reality TV is often edited in a way to maximize drama and engagement (Amber et al., 2007, p. 491). As previously mentioned, producers intentionally select contestants with different personalities to create conflicts and alliances. Tasks, dates, and eliminations are beforehand planned to maintain viewer attention, providing a rollercoaster of emotions through the season. The significant aspect of dating reality TV is that it can create celebrities over the night. Contestants who became especially noticeable during the show often gained fame and a fan following. The recognition often leads to opportunities for participants to later pursue careers in entertainment, social media influencing, or entrepreneurship.

King (2005) names the programming in which a group of random people are brought together and placed in a scenery that encourages intimacy as ‘intimate strangers’ genre.

In my formulation, I would say that the ‘intimate strangers’ genre is so successful precisely because of the way it produces the ‘real’ in a reciprocal relation of mattering to viewer affect. It is in the RTV-inflected dating show, however, that the function of intimacy becomes most visible, for in this subgenre intimacy is directly thematized as both the content and the motor of the programme (King, 2005)

The dating/ romantic subgenre of reality shows goes back to the 1960s when *The Dating Game* first aired. The show featured three single men answering questions from a potential date that they couldn’t see. Women were asking questions and based on the answers they were choosing with whom they wanted to go for a rendezvous. The date was filmed and fully compensated by the production. The show stood out by breaking old-fashioned dating norms in which a man was supposed to ask a woman on a date and gave them a more active role in the process (Colker, 2019)

In 1983 another dating show named *Love Connection* became popular. In this show, the audience selected one of three singles who will go on a date with the main guest of the show. In 1999 show *Blind Date* premiered in the United States where a couple go on a blind date which was taped by a camera crew (DeRose et al., 2003).

Another important part of dating reality history was a show named *Who Wants To Merry a Multimillionaire?* The show premiered on Fox in the United States in 2000 (Chozick, 2018; Jurkowitz, 2000). The show featured a multimillionaire who would choose his future wife

among 50 female contestants. The winner not only received a cash prize but also married a wealthy bachelor on the same day that they win the show (Walsh, 2000). The program well represents a television wave called “Must Marry TV” described by Vejnaska (2002). “Must Merry TV” is a television trend that attempts to pair a woman and a man in a long-lasting romantic relationship through a game-show format” (McClanahan, 2007, p. 261).

Another breakthrough in a dating reality genre and an example of “Must Merry TV” is a show called *The Bachelor*. The show premiered in 2002 in the United States and to this day it is one of the most popular dating reality shows (Vaughan, 2021). The show features “25 young women competing for one man as a possible husband” (Roberts, 2011, p. 55). As for 2024, there were already 28 seasons of the US version (Robinson, 2024). However, only five couples got married and are still together after the show. However, many couples date or married other contestants after the show ended (Baldwin, 2024).

Due to a high viewership and popularity of this show many spin-offs of this show was later produced. *The Bachelorette* aired in 2003 and had the same premise as the original show, however, in this show men compete to win the heart of the mentioned bachelorette (Glebatis, 2007). The show is running to this day (as in 2024). Another *The Bachelor* spin-off was a *Bachelor Pad* later replaced by *Bachelor in Paradise* where previous *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* contestants competed to win a cash prize. *The Bachelor Winter Games* featured ex-contestants from the international version of the show, competing in winter sports. *The Bachelor Present: Listen to Your Heart* was another spin-off. In this show, single women and men from the music industry are competing to find love (Vaynshteyn, 2020). *The Golden Bachelor* where the lead bachelor is a 72-year-old man, will premiere later this year (Krolak, 2023). Furthermore, the main show has a lot of extra live episodes such as *Bachelor Live* or *Women Tell All* (Vaynshteyn, 2020).

In 2003 American TV channel FOX, based on ABC’s *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*, released a show called *Joe Millionaire*. “In *Joe Millionaire*, the bachelor is chosen for youth, attractiveness and articulacy, but crucially not for money – the women are told he has recently inherited \$50 million when in fact he is a lowly construction worker” (King, 2005). If the winner would still accept the bachelor after learning that he is not wealthy, they will share the price of

one million dollars. The show scored the highest rating among unscripted shows at that time with 40 million people watching the finale (Schneider, 2021).

In 2003 another significant show premiered. *Boy Meets Boy* was the first homosexual dating show. *Boy Meets Boy* premise was similar to *The Bachelor* however in this show, Jeff Getzlaff is looking for love between fifteen potential male contestants. The critics accused the show of its controversy by putting heterosexual men, pretending to be gay, among potential suitors (Walker, 2014).

Since then, many dating reality shows featured different sexuality (Spencer, 2023). For example, MTV released showed *Come One, Come All* where in the 8<sup>th</sup> season singles were described as “sexually fluid” or in *A Shot at Love with Tila Tequila* the main lead was bisexual (Richter, 2011; McCarthy, 2019).

The representation of intimacy is a big part of dating reality television. Nowadays, the understanding of intimacy is changing, and it has moved beyond physical interactions and entered the digital realm through the development of dating reality shows. Consequently, our focus is not only based on our relationships but rather, there is a growing fascination with the relationships of others (Boateng, 2023). “DRTS [dating reality TV shows] allows us to explore love as if we are tourists. They show us what love could be, training us to accept and engage in particular actions and behaviours in our quest for intimacy. This creates the inability to separate reality from television” (Boateng, 2023).

Dating reality shows often presents an intimacy between participants as well as their romantic connections which are created in a highly staged and publicized environment. These shows are designed to entertain and catch the audience’s attention, which is why they often offer a voyeuristic glimpse into the personal lives of participants. From first encounters to first kisses and other moments of connection, dating reality shows portray a spectrum of intimate experiences. People enjoy watching these „real” moments because they can relate to them, even if there are not entirely natural. Furthermore, dating reality shows use intimacy as a central component. Whether it's the nervous excitement after a first date or the hard decisions during eliminations, those shows use emotion with which the audience will relate (Boateng, 2023).

The analogy between reality TV and real-love, then, has effects in both directions: televised love rituals reveal something about the basic structures of intimacy and judgement underlying the appeal of reality TV, while reality TV offers to cleanse cultural love rituals, both of the nasty aftershocks of making a judgement and of the overabundance of choice. Both effects, of course, operate in the realm of collective fantasy, but are no less real for that (King, 2005, p.101)

### 2.1.5 Dating reality shows in Poland

Polish dating reality shows started airing on television in the early 90s. Since then, many different formats have stolen the hearts of many Poles. Dating Reality shows in Poland are mainly based on international licenses, however there are shows that were created in Poland. For example *Rolnik Szuka Żony* (Farmer Wants a Wife), *Ślub od Pierwszego Wejrzenia* (Married at the First Sight), *Love Island*, *Sanatorium Miłości* (Sanatorium of Love), *Hotel Paradise*, *Pierwsza Randka* (The First Date), *40 kontra 20* (40 vs. 20) are some of dating reality shows that are popular in Poland. Among those aired on television, *Rolnik Szuka Żony* is the most popular with an average minute rating of 3,7 million in 2021. The second most popular is *Sanatorium Miłości* with Average Minute Rate (AMR) (the size of the audience of a given program, expressed as the number of viewers) of 3,5 million (Szewczyk, 2022).

According to Barszcz (2021) Polish dating reality shows can be divided by 5 subgroups:

1. Date with a stranger (Blind date)
2. Classic first date situation
3. A folk programme (Farmer Seeks Wife);
4. Program for seniors (Sanatorium of Love);
5. A social experiment (Married at First Sight);

This classification however misses a space for formats such as *Hotel Paradise* (game dating reality show). This program presents nine singles who live in a villa based in a tropical location without access to the outside world. The show involves pairing up participants from the villa while at the same time eliminating those who are still single. Every now and then new singles join the program and people without a partner have to leave the villa (Błońska, 2022). The winner receives a prize money.

An example of a “date with a stranger” subgroup can be a *Randka w Ciemno* (Blind Date). It was the first dating reality show in Poland that aired on Polish national television in 1992 and

was hosted first by Jacek Kawalec (1992-1998) and later by Tomasz Kammel (1998-2005) (Albrycht, 2022). The show ran for thirteen years on TVP 1 channel and aired 627 episodes. The aim of the program was to introduce two people who had never met before. During each episode, viewers could watch two dates. In the first one, a woman chose her partner from among three invisible participants, separated by a wall, after asking 3 questions, and in the second one, a man chose a partner from among the women. The winning couple could win a joint domestic or foreign trip (Barszcz, 2021 p. 92).

*The First Date* is a show that could be put in a subgroup of “classic first date situation”. The show’s premise was to send two people, who were chosen based on psychological analysis, together on a date. At the end of the date, they could choose if they want to go for a second one (Kawalec, 2016). The show stopped being aired in 2017.

*Rolnik Szuka Żony* (Farmer Wants A Wife), first aired on Polish national TV channel in the fall of 2014. The aim of the program primarily assumes that the farmer - single men who aspire to finally start a family - chooses a candidate for a wife from among many women living in the city. In the first episode, the profiles of the farmers are presented so the women, who are interested in a particular farmer, can send them letters with a description of their personality and photographs. The five or six men who receive the most letters choose the candidates with whom they want to meet in person. After brief meetings and interviews, farmers together choose three women who are then invited to farms run by farmers, to get the realities of life in the countryside (Mikucki, 2016, p. 70).

*Sanatorium Miłości* is another popular dating reality show in Poland. This programme however is a Polish format created by Piotr Polaj-Poleski and Iwona Karpiuk (Ravindran, 2019). The show was first introduced in 2019 and quickly became very popular among Polish society. The concept of the program is to help lonely elderly people find their soulmates and make them experience the joy of life in old age. Twelve seniors over sixty years old take part in the program: six women and six men. For three weeks, the participants get to know each other and take part in various activities in the sanatorium. The host of the show is Marta Manowska (Ravindran, 2019).

*Ślub od Pierwszego Wejrzenia* is a similar program to a First Date. However, in this program experts and psychologists choose two people who will meet at their wedding. In the first episodes of this experimental show, three couples who never met before say “I do” in front of their families and friends. Later, each couple goes for a honeymoon and spends one month together before deciding if they want to stay together or have a divorce. The program is aired on a TVN and TVN 7 channel and is based on the Danish format *Gift ved første blik...* (Glińska, 2022).

Nowadays there are a significant number of dating reality TV shows aired on television. Not only Polish but also international formats are often broadcast on various channels. Furthermore, with access to video-on-demand and streaming services, Polish society has access to many popular programs from around the world.

### 2.1.6 Ethical Issues and Criticism

Even though reality TV has become very successful, it is still perceived as low-quality television (Lavie, 2020). This perception is unlikely to shift as long as the genre is primarily judged based on its worst examples. It is possible that some of the criticism towards reality TV came from how fast it has influenced and shaped the world, both in positive and negative ways. On one hand, we have witnessed its ability to reflect aspects of society. On the other hand, it highlights social problems (Staples, 2021).

First of all, it is important to mention the ethical issues surrounding observing participants “twenty-four/seven”. Society already gotten acquainted with the idea of observing people since the premiere of *The American Family* it is still an abuse of someone’s privacy (Gee, 2015). Even though the participants agree to be recorded, the production goes as far as filming them taking a shower or during intercourse.

(...) although adults are given a choice as to whether to participate in reality game shows or not, and sign consent forms allowing programme makers to film them twenty-four/ seven whilst taking part in the show, they are not necessarily aware beforehand of how emotionally difficult their experience might be, or how they may feel after filming has been completed and the programme has been aired (Hill, 2005)

Furthermore, other ethical issues such as aggression, sexism, stereotypes, racial and sexual orientation discrimination as well as promoting a generally accepted body appearance considered ideal by society are often endorsed by dating reality shows.

There were many cases where physical, emotional, or verbal aggression has been presented in a dating reality show (Coyne et al., 2010). In an episode of *Hotel Paradise Poland*, one of the participants got drunk and in the act of jealousy and anger, he broke a window in a villa which terrified other contestants (Kokot, 2021). Furthermore, an American Mankind Initiative – a men’s domestic abuse foundation, called out *Love Island* due to females’ toxic behaviour regarding men in the villa. The spokesperson of the charity told MailOnline that “Love Island has once again shown that when it comes to abusive behaviours against partners such as manipulation and gaslighting, it affects men as well as women as victims” (Fitzpatrick, 2023). Moreover, in various reality shows many instances of profanity can be noticed (Curry, 2004).

Another concern around various dating reality shows is the promotion of an “ideal” figure. Many contests-themed dating reality shows choose for their show participants with a great appearance and “perfect” body. Due to that viewers are feeling less confident about their own physiques. According to a study conducted by the Mental Health Foundation in 2019 in the United Kingdom, 24 per cent of people aged between eighteen and twenty-four years old feel anxious about their own body after watching the newest at the time series of *Love Island* (Busby, 2019). Furthermore, research conducted by YouGov showed that after watching *Love Island*, 30 per cent of 18-34 years-old females were thinking about starting a diet and 10 responders considered having a lip filler. Furthermore, 8 per cent of the female viewers were interested in breast enhancements, while 7 per cent showed interest in botox injections. As a response, to the allegation raised by critics regarding the lack of diversity regarding the body shapes of the participants, the creative director of the show, Richard Cowles, stated “First and foremost, it’s an entertainment show and it’s about people wanting to watch who you’ve got on screen falling in love with one another (...) Yes, we want to be as representative as possible but we also want them to be attracted to one another” (Cowles, 2019; Waterson, 2019).

Another controversial part of dating Reality TV is the use of humiliation as entertainment (Hájek et al., 2020). Shows are often edited in a way to perceive contestants as unwise for

amusement purposes. For example, in the Polish *Hotel Paradise* version as one of tasks during the show, the host asked participants to answer questions about general knowledge (Pamuła, 2024). The participants struggled with some questions; thus, this part of the show was edited in a “comical” way with music in the background, thereby encouraging audience laughter at their expense. Another example is a show called *Hell Date* (2007-2008). The show’s premise was to prank participants who thought that they were in a dating show. In real life the production sends them on a date with actors who create the character of a “Hell Dater” – the worst person to go on the date with. Until the end of the date, the participants were not aware of the prank. The whole “hell” date is recorded and at the end the actors reveal themselves (Ault, 2011). Thus, the whole idea of this show was to humiliate participants by putting them in an uncomfortable situation and recording their reactions just for viewers’ entertainment (Ault, 2011). Furthermore, in one of the episodes, the hell dater, gave biracial girl racist comments based on her not being black enough. The premise of the show was to prank other people, however, the comment regarding the appearance of the girl, was said while she was not aware of the prank. This raises another ethical issue in dating reality TV which is racism and lack of diversity. When dating reality shows are considered, especially the one from the 2000s, a group of young, attractive and white people comes to mind. The first black Bachelor only appeared in the 25th season of the show (Wagmeister, 2021).

Nowadays, racism is more articulated through cultural stereotypes (Pardo, 2013). The production often casts people of colour together with conservative white people to create a conflict. Furthermore, they often stereotype females of colour as “angry black women”. Rachel Lindsay, the first black bachelorette said that "I have been labelled an angry Black female in *Bachelor Nation* (...) It follows me around to this day" (Reilly, 2021).

Dating Reality show about people with mental disorders can also be taken under ethical consideration. The Netflix show *Love on the Spectrum* has a mission to help people with autism find love. The show gained recognition and received many awards such as the *International Emmy Award* in 2022 (DeVault, 2022). Each season focuses on a few individuals with a different spectrum of autism. Through episodes viewers can observe them meeting new people, going on dates and talking about them with their families and friends. The show was received positively by critics, audiences and the autism community however, some people find the show

problematic (Petterson, 2022). The show was criticised for infantilizing people with autism as well as over-editing the show. Furthermore, the producers were criticised for taking advantage of people with disabilities. Even though the cast is on the spectrum that allows them to make their own decision, some people still consider it as using them to gain profit (Petterson, 2022).

Another criticism regarding many dating reality shows is a lack of LGBTQ+ representation (Lovelock, 2016). Similar to coloured skin representation, LGBTQ+ groups did not receive any recognition in dating reality shows for many years. Recently it has changed, and more and more shows add same-sex couples to the shows. However, in some shows, it is difficult to apply due to logistic difficulties. For example, executive producer of *Love Island UK* Richard Cowles, that adding gay contestant to the island is “not impossible and it is not something that we shy away from ... but there is a logistical element which makes it difficult” (Cowles, 2021) (Davies, 2021). However, recently, television has created a space for LGBT+ members. Some shows such as *Finding Prince Charming* are based only on same-sex couples (Donnellan, 2023). The premise of this show is similar to *The Bachelor* with only male contestants. Furthermore, same-sex couples also appeared in *Love Never Lies Poland* – Polish Netflix show where couples come to prove they trust in the relationship or *Are you the one?* – where in eight seasons all participants were “sexually fluid” (Giorgis, 2019). Moreover, in the eighth season a transsexual contestant was featured in the show (Bernardini, 2020).

The inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in dating reality shows has not always been effectively managed by show producers. The 2004 show called *Something About Miriam* garnered significant criticism due to its controversial concept (Chilton, 2024). In this show, six handsome and conventionally attractive white men are competing for the affection of Miriam, a young and attractive woman from Brazil. At the end of every episode, Miriam eliminates one contestant until only two remain, from which she chooses her ideal partner to accompany her on a romantic trip. However, the contestants, during the whole program are not aware that Miriam is transgender, which was revealed in the last episode (Chilton, 2024). The contestants reacted negatively to the information, and later they all sued the production company for „conspiracy to commit sexual assault, defamation and personal injury due to the “psychological and emotional damage” they had suffered; all six eventually settled for an undisclosed fee” (Hobbs, 2023). Furthermore, the show faced significant backlash for its handling of transgender

identity and its objectification of contestants and also its impact on the mental health of those involved (Andersson, 2021). The criticism surrounding the show emphasised broader concerns about ethics, representation, and accountability within the reality TV industry.

The *Something about Miriam* incident is not the first occurrence where contestants have voiced apprehensions regarding the treatment they receive from production. For example, *Love is Blind* contestants sued the production company for “inhuman working conditions”.

(Producers of the show) intentionally underpaid the cast members, deprived them of food, water and sleep, plied them with booze and cut off their access to personal contacts and most of the outside world. This made cast members hungry for social connections and altered their emotions and decision-making (Payton, 2022 as cited in Spangler, 2022).

Jillian Harris who was a contestant in 2009 in *The Bachelor* compared her experience on a set to Stockholm Syndrome. She told Ashley Majeski (2017) for *Today Magazine* that "I forgot about my 'real' life so fast (...) I was like experiencing a really fabulous version of Stockholm Syndrome, with fancy meals hotels and clothes!" (Majewski, 2017)

Sarah Gertrude Shapiro, a producer of *The Bachelor*, said that her role involved getting the contestants to “open up, and to give them terrible advice, and to deprive them of sleep” (Max, 2016). The New York Times article by Max (2016) stated that producers of the show often manipulated contestants in order to make them cry. Furthermore, they confiscated their phones and did not allow them to contact the outside world to create a “bubble”. As a result, contestants became deeply involved in the show, and with the addition of alcohol, they exaggerated conflicts with other participants, leading to heightened tension and sensationalized storylines.

Moreover, contestants are often subjected to long hours of filming and conditions that can lead to physical and mental exhaustion (Patterson, 2015). Limited access to food and water, and inadequate breaks can take a toll on contestants' health and contribute to stress and fatigue (Schofield, 2023). The “Love is Blind” second season contestant Jeremy Hartwell stated that “he spent several days recovering from the effects of sleep deprivation, lack of access to food and water and copious amounts of alcohol that he was provided” (Spangler, 2022). Also, he complained about the low wages of the contestants, which were at the time lower than the minimum wage in Los Angeles.

Another example is a case of *L'Île de la Tentation* (French version of *Temptation Island*). In this case, 57 former participants sought 400,000 euro in compensation for a how they were treated during filming the show. The lawyer representing the contestant stated that the conditions in which the show was filmed were very intensive and participants had to work each day from 7am to 3am. Furthermore, some participants complained about sleep deprivation and overwork. In 2011 French court convicted the production company for violating labour law, and ordered them to pay between 15,000 and 17,000 euros to each of them (Chrisafis, 2017).

Additionally, contestants after the show are not receiving adequate support from the production (Dowling, 2019). They are often left alone facing the challenges of fame and public scrutiny on their own, without any access to mental health support. This lack of support can leave contestants vulnerable to depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. Two *Love Island* contestant took their own life after the show was aired. Following that, from 2018, the cast of the show are required to attend a meeting with mental health professionals and can attend up to eight psychotherapy sessions (Peele, 2022).

## 2.2 Audience

### 2.2.1 Audience studies

Reality television (RTV) has become an essential part of contemporary media, captivating attention of the audiences around the globe with its various programming formats and narratives (Bondebjerg, 2002). From talent shows to dating programs, reality TV offers a glimpse into the lives, experiences, and connections of people in extraordinary situations. Reality TV has gained significant attention from academics and media critics, however much of the discussion surrounding this genre has focused on its content or production. Yet, an important aspect of understanding reality TV's impact lies in studying its audience - the individuals who actively engage with this programming.

In this chapter, first, audience studies theories will be mentioned such as cultivation theory and hypodermic needle theory. Furthermore, a more detailed description of uses and gratifications and reception theories will be provided. The following subchapter will provide a profile of the reality TV audience, undertaking their demographics, traits and characteristics, activity and watching habits. Next, the ironic consumption, camp sensibility, and guilty pleasure of reality will be explained. Lastly, the characteristics of dating reality show viewers will be provided.

According to McQuail (1997, p. 1) audience “refers to the readers of, viewers of, listeners to one or other media channel or of this or that type of content or performance”. Moreover, he argues that audience can be defined in different ways: by region or location (as is the case with local media), through demographics (such as age, gender, political preference, or even income level), via type of medium (linking technology and institution) and content types (like music genres, topics of discussion and presentation styles); as well as time element (“daytime” versus “prime-time” audience). This shows how this simple term can have various meanings (McQuail, 1997).

Audiences in the media landscape are going through a transformation. How they interact with media, both in consumption and production, are evolving. This shift grants audience’s greater autonomy and a wider array of options while deciding when, where, and how they access media content (Napoli, 2012). Now people can watch their favourite movies, series and programs on various devices whenever they want, without previously checking TV guide magazines. Furthermore, new technologies that monitor audience habits and behaviour, are revealing new aspects of why television audiences consume different media (Napoli, 2011a). Those technologies allow us to identify trends such as which shows are popular at the time, which one’s people binge-watch, and which platforms they use to watch them. These changes open up new ways of understanding audiences, which allows organizations to fit them in their business models (Napoli, 2012).

Understanding audiences is important for creating content that fits their needs. Media organization has to gain information such as demographics, behaviour patterns and trends to improve audiences’ satisfaction as well as engagement. Furthermore, audience studies also measure content performance such as its viewership, overall feedback and audience reaction to

it (Napoli, 2011b). Gathered data shows trends and shifts in preferences that allow organizations to deliver content that appeals to the audience which results in growth in revenue.

Researchers developed many theories regarding audience studies to explore how individuals and groups engage with media content (Gray, 2016). Those theories allow us to understand more the complex relationship between audiences and media texts. They provide a background for understanding the media consumption and its impact on audiences. Furthermore, understanding audiences can contribute comprehending media's role in shaping cultural norms and social discourse.

One of the early studies of how the audience receives a message was the Hypodermic Needle theory (Finklea, 2017). This theory, also known as "Bullet Theory", became popular around the 1920s (Kenechukwu, 2015). It originated from a metaphor that a hypodermic needle can inject information, values or ideas into the mind of a passive audience that has an immediate effect. "The audiences were 'injected' with a one-way propaganda" (Kenechukwu, 2015, p. 117). Its premise asserts that media has a significant influence over the public (Finklea, 2017). The theory emerged from observing the influence of mass media during events like World War I and spread of propaganda. Furthermore, one of the examples of a hypodermic needle was the broadcast of Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* in 1938. *Wars of Worlds* was a radio show broadcast on CBS in the United States. Orson Welles converted a novel by Wells titled *The War of the Worlds* into a fake news radio report which caused hysteria as some listeners believed that New Jersey was invaded by Martians (Schwartz, 2015). This situation presented the power of the media over its audience. Moreover, this theory was also criticised by scholars as it is based on assumptions about human nature rather than empirical research findings (Kenechukwu, 2015).

Another early audience study is the Cultivation theory which was first introduced in the 1960s by Professor George Gerbner. The theory exams how viewers are influenced by television (Gerbner, 1969). Cultivation theory suggests that individuals who are exposed to media, for example television, perceive social realities based on the way how they are portrayed on TV (Perera, 2023). Moreover, this theory suggests that extensive television viewing can affect an individual's behaviour and how he or she perceives the world (Gerbner, 1969; Hammermeister

et al., 2005). This theory is essential for studying the effect of media on public especially in a long-term basis.

Two important theories that will be used for purposes of this research are the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Reception Theory. UGT postulates that audiences are actively looking for media that can fulfil their needs and Reception Theory focuses on how audiences interpret media based on factors such as demographics and experiences. Together both theories provide a foundation for our investigation of dating reality television audience behaviour.

### 2.2.2 Uses and gratifications

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) created in the 1940s and developed by Katz and Blumler in 1974, identify “reasons why, when, and how individuals seek out the media to satisfy personal wants and needs” (Mead, 2006, p. 7). The Uses and Gratifications’ approach

sought to interpret the motives for content choice and the satisfactions looked for and derived from media in terms of everyday social circumstances and needs - for instance, the needs of housebound housewives for advice and status reassurance or those of newspaper readers for their daily ration of security (McQuail, 1994 p. 318)

Based on the concept, individuals will tend to seek out a medium that fulfils their needs or interests such as entertainment, information, or socializing (Mead, 2006).

According to this approach, the following assumptions are made about the media and media users: members of the audience actively link themselves to certain media to satisfy specific goals and to gain gratification. Thus, the use of the media is goal directed; the media compete with other resources of information and entertainment in order to satisfy the needs of the audience; audiences are able to alter the media in such a way that their needs are more easily met; and audiences are also aware of their needs and can therefore offer specific reasons for using a particular medium (Ivala, 2007, p. 31)

Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) state that viewers' needs are influenced by their “social situations and psychological dispositions” (Katz et al., 1974). Furthermore, those needs were categorised by academics (Katz et al., 1973) in five groups:

1. cognitive needs
2. affective needs
3. personal integrative needs

4. social integrative needs
5. escapist needs (tension free needs)

First needs, cognitive needs, concern about gaining knowledge and information as well as understanding people's social environments. Those needs explain that the audience chooses particular media because they are looking for information and facts, as the media is known for publishing facts (Penzhorn & Pitout, 2006, p.89). Affective needs relate to gaining a pleasurable experience from media. Audiences choose different media to fulfil their emotional needs and desires. Therefore, people engage with the media e.g. entertainment reasons (Penzhorn & Pitout, 2006, p.89).

The Personal Integrative needs category "concerns self-esteem, personal stability, need for self-respect, self-confidence, integrity and social status and others in the same category" (Kasirye, 2021). Thus, people are using different media to boost their credibility and enhance their social status. Social integrative needs relate to using media to interact with family and friends. For example, people are watching a show that is popular so they can later talk about it with friends. Lastly, Escapist Needs relate to using media to escape from certain situations. For example, the audience watch a particular show to not think about their financial situation or the overload of work (Kasirye, 2021, p.1-3; Penzhorn & Pitout, 2006, p.89)

The UGT theory by Katz and al. (1974) was established on five assumptions (Mead, 2006):

1. Media users are active, and their use is goal oriented.
2. Linkage to gratification and medium choice is done by the user.
3. Mediums compete for user needs satisfaction.
4. Users have enough self-awareness of their media use to be able to provide researchers with information on that use.
5. The value of media content can be assessed by the user

The UGT theory highlights that individuals can interpret a media text differently than other media audiences. Furthermore, they may interpret in another way than the communicator intended to which highlights the role of the audience in the construction of the meaning of the particular media (Ivala, 2007). UGT theory acknowledges that individuals use media in

different ways, but also highlights the patterns and behaviours in how people seek gratifications via media (Williams 2003). Furthermore, it separates the expected gratifications people look for before engaging with media and the actual gratifications they experience after engaging with media (Bryant & Heath 2000; Penzhorn, Pitout, 2006, p.356). The theory also examines how media audiences select, use, and respond to media content. By understanding the patterns and motivations behind media consumption, researchers and media professionals can understand better audience preferences; to choose or improve content so it better meets audience needs (Mead, 2006). This understanding can impact strategic decisions in the development, sales and marketing of its content. By identifying which types of content meet the needs of which audience segments, media professionals can provide actions that will drive audience loyalty and growth. Additionally, these insights allow media organizations to recognise and stay ahead of trends to adapt to changing audience demands over time.

However, there are a few limitations to this theory. First, we have to take into consideration the content that is available to people is shaped by media. As Elliot mentioned (1973) it is more a "matter of availability than of selection". For example, many people have limited access to media other than national television channels or radio which prevents them from choosing the media that would meet their needs and desires. In that case, is more of a choice of media rather than an individual what and when they will watch. Secondly, often, individuals interpret media as media production wants them to be interpreted. Furthermore, McQuail (1994) wrote that early research and theories have turned out to be unsupportive or less valuable for understanding how audiences behave. Especially, the focus on needs has been reduced because of difficulties with defining and measuring them. There is also less expectation that categorising audiences based on their perceived use and gratification will shed light on how they are affected by media.

(...) the main critique of the theory lies in the fact that, the assumption of people knowing their needs and gratifications is not certain because it is practically impossible for people to be knowing all their needs and gratifications because some of them come along the way when they are using the media platforms and not thought about before. An example may be, one can decide to watch a certain media program to escape an unpleasant situation that could have annoyed them but altogether at the end of the program, the reaction may fail to change or it could even result into a different need or gratification. (Kasirye, 2021, p. 4)

Scholars criticized the uses and gratifications theory because it is very individualized and concentrate only on the psychological satisfaction gained from individual media use and that

the social context of use of media needs to be more highlighted. Furthermore, more attention should be given to media content, and why audiences engage with it rather than the meaning they extract from it (Glo, 2023).

However, Uses and Gratification Theory also explains the reasons why reality TV is so popular. The idea of reality TV programs is that they are set in authentic conditions or situations featuring real people participating in them without scripts (or partially scripted). This theory explains reasons for watching reality TV and what the audience seeks to satisfy their needs. Some reality TV present different ways of living, cultural aspects or individual relationships. Some programs give practical information related to life skills such as cooking, home improvement or fitness. Furthermore, some reality TV focuses on social interactions, relationships and culture, allowing viewers to see how some society groups function during their everyday lives. By using the Uses and Gratification Theory, we can understand how people watch reality TV based on their preferences and needs. This knowledge can allow creators to customize content towards meeting consumers' expectations for lasting involvement and satisfaction.

### 2.2.3 Reception Theory

Reception Theory (also known as encoding-decoding model) is a theory created by Stuart Hall in 1973. The premise of this theory explains how media producers *encode* programs' message/meaning which is later *decoded* by the audience.

In particular, the production of meaning does not ensure consumption of that meaning as the encoders might have intended because television messages constructed as a sign system with multi-accentuated components are polysemic. In short, television messages carry multiple meanings and can be interpreted in different ways (Ivala, 2007).

Thus, media text can have multiple meanings depending on the background and perspectives of the viewers. The Hall theory states that audiences decode media in three ways:

1. Dominant Reading (interpretation) – The audience decodes the content as the producers intended to.

2. Negotiated Reading – The audience recognises the producer’s view but also brings their perspectives on it.
3. Oppositional Reading – The audience decodes the content oppositely to what producers intended to

The study underscores that the audience has an active role in creating meaning in the context. To decode the message, it is essential to not only analyse the media text but also to take under consideration social and cultural experiences that shape how this meaning is produced (Penzhorn & Pitout, 2006, p 88). Factors such as age, gender, culture or experiences can affect how audience decodes the message.

While the encoding/decoding model underlines the possible ways the viewers might interpret a message while taking under consideration the social and cultural context of the audience, it is limited to recognise to what extent the receiver shares the code of the message – as it might be either dominant, negotiated, or oppositional reading of the message (Hall, 1973; Ross, 2011, p.2). Furthermore, this theory includes investigating how societal norms, values, and expectations shape audience interpretations and responses to media texts such as reality TV.

Hall’s reception theory's emphasis on audience interpretation, can provide a deeper understanding of why people watch reality TV and how they engage with the genre. By recognising the diverse ways audiences perceive reality television, academics can gain a broader view of the genre's appeal and impact on its viewers.

#### 2.2.4 Reality TV audience

##### **Demographics**

There is a lack of international studies that investigates the demographics of reality TV viewers. Based on a few reports from around the world few assumptions regarding the profile of the RTV audience can be made. First of all, reports indicate that the majority of the viewers are women (Geetha & Pavithra, 2019; The Australian Communications and Media Authority

*Report: Viewer response to reality television in Australia, 2021; Blogier, 2023).* Furthermore, those reports state that the majority of viewers are young people.

A report indicating reality TV viewers in Poland was conducted in 2023. As Poles are the target group for this study, this report is essential for further investigations. Based on „Target audience: Reality TV fans in Poland” from 2023 created by Consumer Insights by Statista, the profile of an average Reality TV viewer in Poland can be made. The Report was based on an online survey, and the sample group were internet users between 18 and 64 years old.

The report indicates that the majority of reality TV viewers are Millennials – people born between 1981 and 1996 (Geiger, 2024) with 46 per cent of total viewers. The second biggest group was Generation X (1965-1981) with 24 per cent, followed by Generation Z (1997-2012) with 23 per cent. Furthermore, the majority of Polish reality television fans are women (63%). The study found also that the majority of the responders have a higher education (57%) while 35 per cent of the responders finished only high school. However, in the first group, people who finished a master’s degree are 28 per cent, followed by people with a technical education (15%) and bachelor’s degree (14%). In addition, the majority of viewers live in large cities or medium-sized towns.

In conclusion, the demographic profile of a reality TV viewer in Poland is:

- Women
- Millennial
- With a high or medium annual household income
- Straight
- Living in a large city

Regarding lifestyle and values, reality TV viewers in Poland highlight “a happy relationship” as the most important aspect of life (64%). Furthermore, many responders also state that “an honest and respectable life” (61%) as well as “safety and security” are important life values (“Target Audience: Reality TV Fans in Poland,” 2023).

Reality TV fans are more likely to have a hobby than other responders. Popular hobbies include cooking, travelling, reading and outdoor activities. Another interesting data is that 35 percent of reality TV fans also follow football, 7 per cent more than all responders. Most of the reality TV fans have also center political views (32%). The Left and Right attitudes received equal responses of 25 per cent each.

## Traits and Characteristics

In 2004 Steven Reiss and James Wiltz conducted a study titled "Why People Watch Reality TV" to understand characteristics of reality TV viewers. In this article, the authors highlighted that people have 16 basic desires in their lives (see Table 1). Each individual prioritizes the 16 basic desires in different ways. "When a basic (end) goal is obtained, people experience a joy (an intrinsically valued feeling)" (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004, p. 367). Individuals aim to boost their experiences of the 16 joys that are principal to them based on their Desire Profile.

**Table 1**

*16 Basic Desires From Well-Being, Motives and Experiences in Live and Online Game Settings: Case of Contract Bridge by T.Brkljacic, L. Lučić, I. Sučić, 2021, Research Anthology on Business Strategies( adapted from Reiss & Wiltz, 2004)*

Motive	Explanation	Intrinsic Feeling
Power	Desire to influence	Efficacy
Curiosity	Desire for knowledge	Wonder
Independence	Desire to be autonomous	Freedom
Status	Desire for social standing	Self-importance
Social Contact	Desire for peer companionship (desire to play)	Fun
Vengeance	Desire to get even (compete, win)	Vindication
Honor	Desire to obey a traditional moral code	Loyalty
Idealism	Desire to improve society (altruism, justice)	Compassion
Physical exercise	Desire to exercise muscles	Vitality
Romance	Desire for sex (courting)	Lust
Family	Desire to raise own children	Love
Order	Desire to organize (rituals)	Stability
Eating	Desire to eat	Satiation
Acceptance	Desire for approval	Self-confidence
Tranquility	Desire to avoid anxiety	Safe, relaxed
Saving	Desire to collect, value of frugality	Ownership

The finding of the reality television study by Reiss & Wiltz confirmed that Reiss's 16 basic desires (Table 1) and values are linked to viewing and enjoying reality television shows. The result also indicated the main motivation for watching reality shows among the responders is "status". The more people are „status-oriented" the bigger the chance that they watch reality television. (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004). The reason why is that:

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. Further, 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 (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004).

Furthermore, the study lists that reality TV viewers are often motivated by vengeance which is associated with an enjoyment of competition. Additionally, individuals who stay away from conflict, anger, and competition may choose not to watch reality TV shows, as these programs frequently show situations of conflict or rivalry. People who watch reality shows are also considered more sociable. Moreover, the reality TV audience tends to be less driven by a sense of honour (morality) and more about romance. Lastly, the study found that even though people who watch reality shows are often considered as less intelligent and lazy, the study found no support for those hypotheses. "Both viewers and nonviewers were equally motivated by curiosity, and the same was shown for the motive of physical exercise" (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004, p.374).

When thinking about reality TV audience, the first thing that may pop out is that they are considered as a group of people with lower intelligence and a lot of free time. Craigh Hight (2001) in his article titled *Debating Reality TV* argues that:

viewers are variously assumed to be lower in intelligence, lacking in judgement and/or taste, unthinking voyeurs, unwitting dupes of commercialist broadcasters, in danger of mistaking reality-TV programmes for 'reality', and essentially in need of being saved from these forms and redirected back to traditional authoritative, public service forms such as documentary proper. (Hight, 2001)

Jain & Roy (2015) indicate that personality has a significant impact on reality show watching motives. The authors used the model of the Big Five that describes personality traits. The model identified five factors: agreeableness (representing good nature), conscientiousness (representing reliability), extraversion (representing sociability), neuroticism (representing emotional instability), and openness to experience (representing curious nature) (Jain & Roy, 2015). Neuroticism was found to have an important impact on all reality show watching motives. Many reality shows can trigger a neurotic persona due to its unpredictability. As reality TV is often based on drama, conflict, and unexpected plot twists, the viewers can react with strong emotional responses. For highly neurotic individuals, this may impact their tendency towards anxiety and frustration. Moreover, reality TV shows often blur the line between reality and fiction. This can create a stressful situation that may further engage neurotic viewers. Furthermore, for individuals who are seeking to experience intense emotion, those shows can become a form of emotional escapism (Aubrey et al., 2012).

Neurotic people tend to be worried about how others will judge them. Then you have “Here Comes Honey Boo Boo” -- here’s the family who’s the epitome of ‘we don’t care.’ That would be an enjoyable thing to watch for a person who’s walking around thinking ‘I have to think about what people say. (Saltz., 2012)

TODAY.com conducted a survey in which approximately nearly 19,000 people participated in. The study findings indicated that people who watch reality TV think about themselves as extroverted (70%). Furthermore, they consider themselves as having low self-esteem. Also, 24 per cent of reality TV viewers perceived themselves as neurotic people, compared to 14 per cent of non-viewers (Hazlett, 2012).

Report finds that people are often embarrassed for watching reality shows (Watson, 2021). For instance, 34 per cent of Australians lie about watching reality TV because they fear being judged (Watson, 2021). This can be associated with self-consciousness - a trait that involves a severe awareness of oneself, particularly in social situations, which can make individuals sensitive to how they are perceived by others (Gotter, 2017). The feel of the guild of watching reality TV is based on the severe criticism that this genre is facing. As mentioned, Reality TV is often called “Trash television” which is “dumping down” the society (Orbe, 2008). Due to that, people fear telling their significant others what kind of shows they are watching. Even

though many people are aware of the low quality and lack of educational value of those shows, people still want to consume those shows for their entertainment.

The study by Lull and Dickinson (2016) shows that reality TV viewers are more likely to be narcissistic. “Narcissism is a personality trait characterized by a grandiose sense of self-importance, vulnerability to criticism, sense of entitlement and uniqueness, lack of empathy, tendency to exploit others, strong preoccupation with fame and success, exhibitionism, and envy” (Lull & Dickinson, 2016). The Narcissistic Personality Inventory measures subclinical narcissism based on 40-item questionnaire. The results indicated that people who watch reality TV are more likely to be narcissistic. Moreover, the authors suggest that some individuals with narcissistic tendencies may choose media that shows individuals who are similar to them, while other reality TV viewers may perceive narcissism as standard behaviour and start behaving more narcissistically.

### **Audience Activity**

Audience activity is mainly based on their needs. Uses and Gratification theory indicates that audiences choose media according to their needs and desires. Consequently, reasons for watching determine audience activity (Rubin & Perse, 1987). According to Rubin (1984, as cited in Godlewski & Perse, 2010), there are two types of viewing television. The first is ritualistic viewing where the audience watches the media out of habit. The ritualistic viewer watches television “to pass time; for companionship, relaxation, arousal, and escape; and is characterized by a nonselective, uninvolved, and less-active use of television” (Godlewski & Perse, 2010, p.150). Furthermore, this kind of viewer emphasises television as a medium, and not particularly on its content.

The second type of television viewing is instrumental viewing. This kind of viewing emphasizes more the content of a program, with the audience specifically selecting the content and engaging with it. This type of viewing is considered more active (Godlewski & Perse, 2010).

An active audience viewer is the one who engages with the content of the show (Tincknell & Raghuram, 2002). This engagement can refer to interactive opportunities of the show. Those can include for example voting for participants (Holmes, 2004). Many competition-based

shows such as *Got Talent* or *Hotel Paradise* allow viewers to vote for their favourite competitors for them to stay on the show and later on win the competition. Furthermore, many reality TV programs have their websites or social media profiles where viewers can find more information about the show. For example, on the *Master Chef* website, all recipes from the show can be found or on *The Bachelor* website, you can find more information about every participant. Furthermore, some shows such as *Love Island* even have their mobile app. Viewers can use the application to take part in various types of quizzes, and surveys, as well as get to know the participants better, watch additional video materials and read not published anywhere else content. Users of the app can vote for their favourite contestants, choose the tasks that the villa residents will have to complete, pair the villa residents, decide which of them should go on a romantic date together, or indicate who should leave the show.

Moreover, there are many dedicated groups, chatrooms, and forums for the audience to interact with the show. Some viewers comment live with other fans about what is happening in the show at the moment of its broadcast. Together they are commenting, analyzing, and sharing their opinions about the episode (Holmes, 2004).

The interactivity of the shows not only enhances the viewing experience for its viewers but also makes it more immersive and personalized by allowing active audiences to be included in its decision-making process. Furthermore, interactivity is important for the show producers as it turns its target audience into fans (Kresnicka, 2016).

The interactivity of reality TV shows might impact the gratifications that viewers obtain from these shows. The audiences are using the internet to participate in activities such as voting to change the outcomes of the shows. This kind of interactivity lets viewers take control of their media experience. Viewers that take part in online voting, have higher mental engagement as they carefully consider their choices. This allows viewers to engage with the shows they watch, turning them from passive recipients into active creators of the content (Godlewski & Perse, 2010).

### 2.2.5 Watching habits

The study conducted by Lundy et al. (2008) shows that reality TV viewers rarely watch shows alone. The results of the study conducted on college students show that they often watch RTV with their roommates, friends, and family. Even though television is considered an element that breaks social connections as many people choose to watch television programs instead of socializing with others, this result shows that reality TV has a positive impact on social connections (McKenna & Bargh, 2000). Students not only watch those shows together but they create a conversation about it. Furthermore, some students respond that they even watch RTV not because they like it but because they want to be included in the conversation about it (Lundy et al., 2008).

In 2007 the first video-on-demand streaming service was introduced to the public called Netflix. Netflix.com is website on which paying subscribers can watch some of their favorite movies, series and programs (Wayne, 2021). As subscribers have access to the whole season of their beloved shows, a new pattern of behaviour emerged. Binge watching can be defined as „watching between two and six episodes of a TV show in one sitting” (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020). However, other definitions are not indicating how many episodes must be watched in order to be considered as binge watching. Cambridge Dictionary defines binge viewing as “to watch several episodes of a television series or programme, one after another” (2024) and Merriam-Webster dictionary as “to watch many or all episodes of (a TV series) in rapid succession” (2024). However, with the rise and development of streaming services such as HBO Max, Disney +, Prime Videos, and Apple TV this phenomenon also became a more popular way of consuming media (Trouleau et al., 2016, p. 1223-1224).

A survey reported that 50% of adult viewers aged 45 or younger could binge-watch an entire season of their favorite series in a single sitting. The popularity of uninterrupted watching has been revealed in commercial survey studies. For example, 70% of viewers in the US binge-watch five episodes, and 80% of millennials binge-watch six episodes at a time. Netflix users, on average, finish a season of their favorite shows in less than a week (Chang & Peng, 2022)

The study made by OnePoll in 2016 found that 25 per cent of Reality TV viewers admit that they binge watching reality TV. „Younger respondents proved more likely to binge watch, with 47% revealing they have watched several hours [of the show] in one sitting” (OnePoll, 2016).

Binge watching allows viewers to dive into the world of the reality TV program. By binge watching the viewers engage and involved more with a show (Erickson et al., 2019). This viewing habit offers instant gratification, as viewers can quickly find out what happens next and are not left on cliffhangers. Furthermore, they don't have to wait the whole week for another episode.

However, binge-watching can also have a negative outcome. „Binge-watching was positively and significantly associated with multiple mental health problems including stress, loneliness, anxiety, depression, and insomnia” (Alimoradi et al., 2022, p.8). Furthermore, people who excessively binge watch are characterized by a high level of neuroticism (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020). Moreover, binge watching has a negative impact also on physical health. According to Lilian Cheung (2014), binge watching is associated with being overweight and obesity. It also can increase the risk of diabetes (Bell, 2014).

Data presented by Frisby suggest that reality show viewers often participate in some form of social comparison (2004). Social comparison theory was first defined by Festinger in 1954. This theory aims for people to continuously compare and evaluating themselves to other people. This practice is often done unconsciously, without the realization of the individual. Furthermore, there are two types of comparisons "downward" and "upward". The first type occurs when people are comparing themselves to others who are "lacking". The second comparison happens when people compare themselves to someone else and perceive themselves as deficient (Peek, 2018).

The study by Baruh (2010) revealed that individuals who feel the necessity to judge themselves tend to watch more reality television. Furthermore, this study discovered that unscripted TV programs that reveal the private life of a person or family attracted more viewers who enjoyed voyeuristic content as they often have strong comparison tendencies (Baruh, 2010). Moreover, the study by Ramdhany (2009) found that the more students were watching reality television, the less they were satisfied with their lives.

## 2.2.6 Ironic consumption & camp sensibility

McCoy and Scarborough (2014) mention that some television viewers watch TV “ironically”. Ironic viewing can be defined as viewing a “bad” television while still taking pleasure from watching it. “The ironic viewer does not take the “text” of the program at face-value but finds pleasure by changing and inverting the meaning of it” (McCoy & Scarborough, 2014, p.45). Thus, the viewer is adopting an ironic stance regarding the television show.

Douglass (2013) addressed that this way of watching television often applies to reality TV. She stated that “Reality TV shows use idiotic, arrogant, or self-destructive behaviours which we are urged to judge, and which are designed to make us feel much better about ourselves: however dumb or selfish we were today, at least we weren’t like that” (2013, p.149). Douglass also mentioned that “ironic viewing” is what makes reality TV shows so popular. The production is aware of that phenomenon and are creating a content that is “excessive and kitschy” so the “superior viewer” could make fun of participants (Douglas, 2013). Furthermore, viewers are gaining pleasure by guessing which part of the reality TV program is unscripted and which is scripted. The industry is creating this environment, so the viewers keep on solving the puzzle of what is real and what is not (Douglas, 2013).

Another form of reception mentioned by McCoy and Scarborough (2014) is “camp sensibility”. Sontang (1999) introduced this concept as something “so bad that it became good”. The media can be enjoyed when the “seriousness” of it fails. McCoy and Scarborough stated that camp sensibility occurs “when an object, that is so full of exaggeration and extravagance that it cannot be taken seriously, is esthetically redeemed as camp” (2014, p. 45). Therefore, the difference between ironic consumption and camp sensibility is that camp sensibility is not a concept in which the viewer is making fun of the media but instead, he or she admires it for it being ludicrous. “A camp sensibility is a kind of admiration of the vision of the producers, even if the final product is a failure” (McCoy & Scarborough, 2014, p. 51).

### 2.2.7 Guilty Pleasures

The term “guilty pleasure” came from connecting two words: “guilt” and “pleasure”. Therefore, it connects a negative and a positive emotion. The term became more popular in the twentieth

century when people started discussing their preferences for the less sophisticated or socially accepted things (Dictionary.com, n.d.).

(...) there are three barriers that tend to urge a guilty response to pleasure: (1) embarrassment caused by enjoying something that is outdated and unfashionable (...); (2) discomfort felt in the presence of something that is “over-the-top” and exaggerates its sentiments until it becomes unconvincing (...); or (3) shame evoked by desiring an object that contains content that compromises one’s politics, beliefs, or sense of uniqueness and individuality (...)(Reid, 2022)

Thus, guilty pleasure can be defined as: “something pleasurable that induces a usually minor feeling of guilt” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Academics such as Baruh (2010) and Pozner (2010) stated that the term “guilty pleasure” is frequently linked to watching reality television (Panek, 2013). As reality TV often catch our attention with ongoing drama, this mindless activity brings a feeling of guilt as viewers could spend this time on something more important. Goffin and Cova (2019) noted that today’s studies often associate guilty pleasures with shame or embarrassment rather than with guilt. People often feel rather ashamed of watching Reality TV programs; however, it does not stop them from watching it. As mentioned before, Reality Television viewers are often ashamed to admit to their family and friends that they watch unscripted television.

McCoy and Scarborough noted that “guilty pleasure” occurs when “the viewer feels uncomfortable and somewhat ashamed of watching “bad” television but feels like it is something they cannot resist doing” (2014, p.48). Thus, the guilty pleasure can be associated with a lack of self-control (Meier & Reinecke, 2021).

Even though “guilty pleasure” is often associated with reality TV we cannot use this term to define reality television as “guilty pleasure” is subjective and personal (Silverstein, 2024). What gives one person enjoyment may not bring the same feeling to another person. Furthermore, some people can enjoy reality television without any guilt or shame. Moreover, the shame of a “guilty pleasure” came rather from social stigma and subjective cultural and gender roles than from personal views (Goffin & Cova, 2019). Watching guilty pleasure TV also has a positive impact on people’s mental health. In the article by Nelson (2021) about how guilty pleasures affect mental health, psychologist Aniko Dunn stated that who indulge in guilty pleasures have “increased positive emotions and reduced negative ones”. Furthermore, in the same article,

sociologist Deborah J. Cohan, PhD stated that “guilty pleasures” are good for us because “the area of the brain dubbed the reward pathway releases dopamine, which is the feel-good chemical responsible for our good mood and feelings of health and well-being” (Nelson, 2021).

### 2.2.8 Dating reality TV audience

There is a lack of research regarding who is and what are the characteristics of dating reality TV audiences. Most academic journals study the reality TV audience without dividing it into subgenres. The reasoning might come from this genre being quite new and having been popularised quite recently.

Roberti, in his study *Demographic Characteristics and Motives of Individuals Viewing Reality Dating Shows* (2007) mentioned that the main characteristic of dating reality television viewers is “sensation seeking”. He describes sensation seeking as “a trait defined by the seeking of varied, novel, complex, and intense sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take physical, social, legal, and financial risks for the sake of such experience” (Zuckerman, 1994, p. 27; Roberti, 2007). Therefore, individuals who seek sensations often choose activities that increase their stimulation levels and dating reality shows often fulfil this need with its entertaining content (Roberti, 2007).

Furthermore, Roberti conducted the research to answer his research questions “Do demographic characteristics differ between individuals that do and do not view television dating shows?” and “Do differences in adult attachment styles or personality characteristics occur for individuals that do and do not view television dating shows?” (Roberti, 2007, p. 121). The research indicated that like for all reality television, women are the majority of the viewers. The study by Vandebosch and Eggermont (2011) confirmed that data. Furthermore, people who declare their marital status as singles are most interested in watching television dating shows. From the findings, it is clear that undergraduate, graduate and trade/vocational education participants watch these shows more than those who only attend high school. Everybody whether employed or unemployed watches television dating shows (see Table 2) (Roberti, 2007).

**Table 2**

*Demographic characteristics of individuals who view and do not view television dating shows*

	Do Not View (n = 188)	Do View (n = 413)	p Value*
<b>Gender</b>			
Males	63	92	
Females	125	321	
<b>Mean age (SD)</b>			
Males	34.2 (8.0)	27.0 (5.9)	.0001
Females	32.5 (9.7)	26.2 (7.9)	.0001
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
African American	8 (1.3%)	21 (3.4%)	.098
Hispanic/Latino	4 (0.7%)	16 (2.7%)	
Asian/Pacific Islander	8 (1.3%)	4 (0.7%)	
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
White/Caucasian	164 (27.3%)	364 (60.6%)	
Other	4 (0.1%)	8 (1.3%)	
<b>Marital status</b>			
Single	64 (10.6%)	289 (48.1%)	.001
Married	100 (16.6%)	76 (12.6%)	
Widowed	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
Divorced	4 (0.7%)	12 (2.0%)	
Living together	20 (3.3%)	36 (6.0%)	
<b>Educational status</b>			
Some high school	0 (0%)	4 (0.7%)	.001
Undergraduate degree	9 (1.5%)	121 (20.1%)	
Graduate degree	36 (6.0%)	128 (21.3%)	
Trade/Vocational school	143 (23.8%)	160 (26.6%)	
<b>Employment status</b>			
Not employed	16 (2.7%)	105 (17.5%)	.001
Part time employment	61 (10.1%)	140 (23.3%)	
Full time employment	111 (18.5%)	168 (28.0%)	
Retired	0 (0%)	0 (2%)	

\*Chi-square goodness-of-fit test for categorical data and *F* test for continuous data.

From “Demographic characteristics and motives of individuals viewing reality dating shows” by J. W. Roberti, 2007 *The Communication Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714420701350403>

Moreover, experience-seeking and disinhibition were identified as personality traits of dating reality TV viewers. Experience seeking is defined as “the seeking of arousal through the mind and senses” (Zuckerman, 1984, p. 286). “Experience seekers look for a variety of experiences

that are unique, rather than dangerous. These experiences may affect sensation seekers emotionally, intellectually, or interpersonally, through all five senses (...)” (Carter, 2019).

Experience seekers are rather looking for novelty rather than danger (Carter, 2019). Therefore, dating reality television might fulfil their needs with new drama every episode. Disinhibition, however, is all about being spontaneous and impulsive. Disinhibition is also often associated with a lack of self-control (Mullins-Sweatt et al., 2019).

## 2.3 Watching TV

### 2.3.1 Why people watch TV

#### *2.3.1.1 History of watching TV*

Since the invention of television its content, as well as consumption, evolved many times. Dhoest and Simons (2016) mentioned that scholars often divide the history of television into three groups. The first era known as the “era of scarcity” or “TV I” is the era in which broadcast television was introduced (Dhoest & Simons, 2016). During this period, only a few programs on few channels were broadcast on the TV screens for a limited time during the day. Thus, this era is characterized by the low power of the public on what they could watch as the programs were broadcast only during particular times (Dhoest & Simons, 2016).

The second era, called by scholars the “era of availability” or “TV II” is a period during which more television channels were available for the viewers, thus, they had a bigger impact on the choice of what they want to watch (Dhoest & Simons, 2016). Furthermore, this type of control was increased due to the availability of technology such as video cassettes recorded on which the viewer could record the content and watch it whenever he or she wanted to. Moreover, during this time more specialised channels, like for example news channels, were created (Dhoest & Simons, 2016).

The third era also known as the “era of plenty” or “TV III” is the period of television as we know it today. This era is characterised mainly by diverse television content as the numerous channels broadcast a variety of national and international content, from soap operas to documentary shows. Furthermore, in this era the development of technology, allows viewers not only to record the content but also to access the video on demand where they can buy or rent video content such as movies, shows or series (Dhoest & Simons, 2016). Also in this era, the development of streaming services is notable. The rise of popularity of websites such as Netflix or Disney+ remarkably changed the way how television is consumed (Mansa, 2023). Moreover, due to the development of technology, television is more often consumed on different devices. Viewers, especially the younger ones, more often consume TV content on their phones, laptops or tablets rather than on typical TV devices (Sobral, 2019).

#### *3.1.1.2 Socializing by TV*

Watching television is one of the most popular ways of spending free time (Snodgrass, 2024). Since its existence, it has become a standard way of leisure, especially for families. However, in the last few decades, this activity shifted, from bringing people together to separating them. In the first era of television, watching TV had been considered as a socializing factor (Nathan et al., 2008). During that time, people in each country could only watch the content accessible on a few available at the time channels. Therefore, whole families gathered to watch the television together.

Furthermore, television is used to create a conversation. As people watched the same content, they conversed about it at work, in shops or on public transport (Nathan et al., 2008). However, with the shift in technology, such as being able to watch TV on devices other than television sets as well as video-on-demand and streaming services, people started to watch television separately (Nathan et al., 2008). Furthermore, many households had more than one television set device at home, for example, in 2011 more than half of U.S. households had more than three TV sets (Saxbe et al., 2011). This shows that individuals nowadays rather watch television alone.

Even though nowadays people tend to watch television unaccompanied, Social TV viewing has become more popular, especially during the COVID-19 outbreak (Kim et al., 2021). Social TV is “the simultaneous act of watching TV and communicating with others via communication technologies about the TV content” (Kim et al., 2021, p.1). Thus, Social TV is when people call or text each other’s to comment on the content of a show, or they post about it on their social media to share it with a wider group of people while watching TV. According to a study by Kim et al. (2021) people use other communication platforms while watching television for socializing reasons, when for example gatherings are restricted or scheduling a meeting is demanding.

Furthermore, second screen-usage became a new phenomenon among people watching television. Second screen usage refers to watching television and using the internet at the same time on two different devices (Johnen & Stark, 2015). Viewers, while using both screens, switch their attention from one device to another. People use more than one device to, among others, kill boredom or seek information. Thus, in this situation, the relationship between the internet and TV is rivalrous as both mediums compete for the attention of the viewer (Johnen & Stark, 2015).

### *3.1.1.3 Reasons behind watching TV*

Many studies were conducted to understand why people in general watch television on a TV set. Now, television is defined not only as video content broadcasted on a physical television set but also as “programming distributed over the Internet that is designed to be viewed in the same format as broadcast television” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Thus, motivations for watching television regarding the device being used, will be taken into account in this chapter.

According to a study by Luders (2022), enjoyment is the main indicator of why people watch TV programs on streaming services. The study by Camilleri and Falzon (2020) finds that people are using streaming services so it can distract them from a bad mood. Furthermore, the respondents indicated that watching TV on streaming services helps them to relax and “satisfy their needs for information and entertainment” (Camilleri & Falzon, 2020). Furthermore, the

authors stated that people use streaming technologies out of habit to disrupt their daily routine. (Camilleri & Falzon, 2020).

Bellman et al. (2010) mentioned Rubin's (1983) five factors for watching TV. Those factors are entertainment, pass time/habit, information, escape and companionship. Furthermore, McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972, as cited by Rubin, 1983) suggested four types of interaction topology between people and television which are: diversion, personal relationships, personal identity, and surveillance. Moreover, Rubin stated that Greenberg (1974) believed that there are seven motivations for television viewing, which are: "habit, relaxation, companionship, passing time, learning, arousal, and escape" (1983).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Rubin (1984, as cited by Godlewski & Perse, 2010) describes two types of TV viewers – ritualistic and instrumental. Ritualistic viewer "uses television out of habit and to pass the time when there is nothing better to do, to occupy idle time, and to relieve boredom and for entertainment - because television viewing provides amusement and enjoyment". Therefore, for this type of viewers, watching television is a routine activity, more than looking for and engaging content. For ritualistic viewers, television is often used as a background noise. These types of viewers are often passive viewers, however, the television plays an important part in their lives (Patino et al., 2012).

The second type of viewer is an information seeker. This type uses television mainly for learning purposes. Thus, this viewer often watches programs such as news, game shows and talk shows. "The informational viewers" use the TV in contrast with "habitual viewers" who use TV to gain knowledge about "people, places, and events and to instrumentally use this information in interpersonal interaction" (Rubin, 1981, p.16). The instrumental motivation involves the viewer choosing and selecting a specific program, rather than watching whatever is broadcasting at the time. Those viewers often use information as a reason for social interaction to, for example, discuss it with family and friends or share different facts from around the world. This knowledge often serves as a conversation starter, which helps to build a connection with other people. Additionally, it provides a base for creating an engaging conversation (Patino et al., 2012).

McQuail (1987) however, stated four motives for viewing television: to gather information, personal identity, social integration, and entertainment. The first motive – information gathering - implicates watching television to gather information and to learn from it. The second motivation is personal identity relating to self-perception. Another motive, the desire to integrate, means that viewers watch television to interact with others and to feel a sense of belonging. Finding enjoyment and spending free time define entertainment motivations (Patino et al., 2012).

Another reason behind watching television is known as FOMO, meaning “fear of missing out”; it can be defined as a “pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent” (Przybylski et al, 2013). Conlin et al. (2016) state that FOMO can have an impact on TV watching behaviours. The authors put the American football event called *Super Bowl* as an example of a program that many people watch in order to not be left out. Furthermore, people often watch the shows that are popular at the moment to be able to create a conversation with peers. “This is particularly evident in serial dramas, where plot points and twists are likely to be prematurely revealed the longer a person waits to watch current episodes” (Conlin et al.,2016, p.162). Furthermore, often memes, clips or jokes about popular shows or movies are posted by others on social media, which can make those who haven’t seen it yet feel excluded. Moreover, streaming services increased the feeling of FOMO in society by releasing new episodes every week which created a sense of urgency and eagerness among viewers. Therefore, FOMO can be linked to the motives regarding social integration.

### 2.3.2 Prior research on reality TV viewer motivations

The uses and gratifications model shows that viewers’ motivations for watching television are associated with the consumption habits and content of the media. Consequently, the reasons behind watching different television genres can differ (Woods & Ebersole, 2007). Woods and Ebersole, stated that “It appears that the nature of the audience of reality programming deviates somewhat from that of the "typical" television viewer” (2007, p.5).

Academics still struggle to recognise the motives behind watching reality television. However previously collected data shows that reasons are quite varied (Aubrey et al., 2012). As there are

numerous subgenres of reality programming such as crime, romance, competition or makeovers, it is challenging to find a motive that will include the whole genre reality TV. The study conducted by Patino et al. (2012) indicated that the main motivation of adolescents watching reality TV is to satisfy their need for entertainment and excitement. Furthermore, the results of their study show that people watch reality TV to watch their beloved participants and “to see real people in real-life situations”.

Nabi et al. studied the reason behind watching reality TV in their article *Reality-based Programming and the Psychology of its Appeal* (2003). Findings reveal that systematic viewers of reality television consume it for its entertainment values, rather than to obtain information. However, the casual viewer often watches this kind of programming out of boredom (Nabi et al., 2003). Heering, in her research (2012), found that the main motives for watching reality TV are entertainment, relaxation and voyeurism. Moreover, reality shows are often watched due to the identification of viewers with the characters, “they think they understand what the characters are going through or they feel part of the action” (Heering, 2012, p. 18).

Papacharissi and Mendelson (2011) studied the motivational factors behind watching reality television of college students. For this group, reality TV watching is a passive activity as they are watching those kinds of shows to “fill the time” when there is nothing else to do. The finding stated that this passive activity was incorporated into the daily routines of the students which consequently had turned into a ritual. The finding also indicated that entertainment and pass time were the most popular motives for watching reality TV. The secondary needs of the responders were social interaction and companionship (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011).

Woods and Ebersole (2007) in their literature review mentioned that the main motive behind watching RTV is the excitement behind predicting who will get eliminated or win the program. They also cited that according to E-Poll (2002), the main motivation of the viewers to watch reality TV was to eliminate contestants. Another reason was "to see people face challenging situations" and "imagining how I would perform in similar situations" (Woods & Ebersole, 2007, p.6). Furthermore, Woods and Ebersole (2007) mentioned that recent reality TV shows integrated other media in order to create interactivity of the shows. They implied internet voting apps, websites etc. for the audience to be involved and have control over the show's plot.

Another motive to watch reality TV mentioned by Woods and Ebersole is voyeurism (2007). Reality shows often rely on participants in an intimate situation. This fascination with watching strangers creates a sense of guilt, as viewers feel like they are watching something that is forbidden. As we saw in chapter 2.2.7 about guilty pleasures the theme of guilt is again associated with dating reality shows. Therefore, more about voyeurism will be revealed in the next subchapter.

Findings from this study (Woods & Ebersole, 2007) stated that the most popular motive for watching reality shows was also personal identification. Viewers identify with the characters of the show and like to imagine what would they do in this situation. Other popular motives, as previous authors suggested, were entertainment, relaxation and passing time. Another revealed motive was companionship. Viewers watch reality television to spend some time with friends, family or significant others or to be able to join the conversation about the show. Woods and Ebersole suggest a new motivation that was not mentioned in previous research (2007). This motivation is “humour”. Many responders of their study stated that they watched their favourite show because they found it funny. The humour was mainly based on the aspects of the perceived lack of intelligence of the participants. This form of entertainment focuses on the foolish decisions of the participants as well as their naivety and misunderstanding. The viewers relish the absurdity of those situations and the exaggerated nature of the characters' actions, because they often find it funny (Woods & Ebersole, 2007).

In Patino et al. study (2012) a group of adolescents were investigated. The finding shows that adolescents choose reality TV to fulfil their need for excitement and entertainment. The second motive involved watching a show to see their favourite participants. Another popular answer was to see real in authentic life scenarios and to be involved in conflicts and competitiveness in the shows (Patino et al., 2012).

Moreover, Patino and al. divided the reasons behind watching reality television, which were mentioned by the study group, into eighteen categories (2007, p 139). Those categories are:

1. Achievement – the shows involve the careers or aspirations of the viewers
2. Aesthetic Appeal – the program is aesthetically alluring to the viewer
3. Audience Participation – viewers can for example vote out contestants

4. Participants/ Characters – viewers like one or more participants of the show
5. “Cinderella” – the program improves the contestants’ situations (make them famous, do their makeover)
6. Common Interests – the show includes the interest of the viewer
7. Competition – the competitive aspect of the program
8. Drama – the program includes dramatic situations
9. Education – The program educates viewers
10. Entertainment/excitement – the viewer gains entertainment from a program
11. Uniqueness – the program is different from other programs
12. Humour – the viewers find the program funny
13. Identification – the viewer identifies with a participant
14. Inspiration – the show motivates viewers
15. Physical Appearance – the viewer enjoys the appearance of the participants
16. Relationships – the program shows the dynamic of the relations between contestants
17. Other

The results indicate that adolescents’ motivations to watch reality TV mainly focus on fulfilling their need for entertainment and excitement with this motive being the most frequently chosen answer (31.7%) (Patino et al., 2012). Furthermore, adolescents watch reality programs to follow their favourite participants and to watch people in real-life scenarios. Adolescents also enjoy the competitive aspects of the show and learning more about their subject of interest (Patino et al., 2012).

Furthermore, based on the study, authors create a hypothesis regarding the humoristic aspects of reality TV as a motivation for watching them. The authors stated, “that the importance of the humour motivation may decline with age and the importance of drama as a viewer motivation may increase with age” (Patino et al., 2012, p. 141).

Lundy et al. (2008) stated that the focus group that they worked with, mentioned escapism as a common reason for watching reality shows. Moreover, “they felt that RT offered an opportunity to sample other lifestyles and realities than their own. Participants discussed living vicariously through the characters in reality programs” (Lundy et al., 2008, p. 220-221). Students also

mentioned that reality television makes them deliberate what would they do if they were in participant situations shown in the program as those situations are often relevant to them (relationship issues, racism etc.).

Another motive mentioned by this focus group is a “perception of the discrete nature of each episode” (Lundy et al., 2008, p. 221). College student states that reality TV is an easy watch for them as they don’t have to watch every episode to enjoy the show. Moreover, they stated that they don’t have to focus on the plot to understand what is happening in the show in comparison with movies or series. Moreover, participant asserted that this genre is suitable for their lifestyle. Busy college students rarely have time to follow any other genre of television, so reality TV programs - that doesn't require their full attention – are a good fit. Thus, reality shows are often convenient for their viewers (Lundy et al., 2008).

Based on this analysis of the prior research, it is noticeable that some motives repeat themselves among different authors and some do not. For example, entertainment/excitement was mentioned by all authors (Patino et al., 2012; Woods & Ebersole, 2007; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011; Heering, 2012; Nabi et al., 2003). Thus, the hypothesis for this study is that the most common reason why people watch reality TV is entertainment.

### 2.3.3 Prior research on dating reality TV viewer motivations

As the topic of reality television is recent, the number of works examining dating reality shows is limited. Thus, the prior research regarding this topic is limited to a few publications.

Roberti (2007) studied the motivations of people watching dating reality television. First, he mentions, a previous study by Mizuno (1978) saying that when adolescents watch TV more often, the more the higher chance they will choose stimulating content. Furthermore, girls are more likely to choose shows that include erotic content, as noted by Vanwesenbeeck (2001). The erotic content in reality TV is mostly noticeable in dating shows such as *Too Hot To Handle* or *Temptation Island*. Thus, this might explain why more women are watching dating reality TV. Furthermore, this comes to previously mentioned voyeurism.

Nabi et al. (2003) mentioned two hypotheses regarding the reasons for watching reality TV in the U.S. population. First is the voyeuristic nature of those shows. People enjoy observing the life of the participants and their personal experiences. The second hypothesis is that they enjoy it due to its novelty. The show is attractive because it is different from traditional television. It also features real people and offers surprising situations. It is crucial to note that, while investigating those hypotheses, in its strictest meaning voyeurism involves observing an unaware individual for sexual pleasure. However, voyeurism in reality television can be considered as an innocent guilty pleasure rather than harassment (Nabi et al., 2003). As dating reality shows often depend on viewers watching participants in forced intimacy they often have to sleep in the same beds or rooms with another participant and are not allowed to leave the “villa” they live in. Furthermore, these shows are often designed to make viewers feel guilty of watching it. Dating reality shows allows viewers to observe situations that normally should be private, which often brings viewers in front of their TV (Woods & Ebersole, 2007).

Roberti (2007) also mentioned that the reason why people choose to watch dating reality shows is social learning. Thus, viewers want to gain more knowledge about dating and relationships. Viewers want to acquire dating advice or educate themselves about sexual activity. Consequently, dating reality shows can change the perceptions of individuals about relationships and sex (Roberti, 2007).

According to his study (Roberti, 2007), one of the main motives behind watching dating reality shows is excitability. Excitement and sensation-seeking were the stronger predictors of viewers who watched this kind of programming. Another popular motive was an Escape. This motive suggests that dating reality TV is a “leisure activity that provides entertainment and distraction” (Roberti, 2007). Lastly, the “habit” was underlined as a motive of why individuals watch romance shows (Roberti, 2007).

## 3. Methods

### 3.1 Introduction to methods

Understanding the motivation of people behind viewing dating reality shows, is a subject that only a few scholars have explored, and none of them were targeting viewers in Poland. Thus, understanding the motives why young Polish inhabitants watch this kind of programming requires a comprehensive approach. This chapter provides and a detailed description of a process of accessing data essential for answering the research question of “What motivates young Polish adults to watch dating reality shows?”. By exploring the factors influencing the viewership of dating reality shows, this research aims to contribute to audience studies by comprehending audience preferences for those programs. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of why young adults chooses this programming can explain the complexity of the viewer engagement with this genre. Thus, it allows us to understand why, although often called “trash TV”, this genre gathers such a big number of viewers in front of their screens.

To capture a wide range of viewing motivations for dating reality TV, mixed methods are used as they comprise qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2014). This approach allows to discover a deeper understanding of human behaviour and their needs. Both online survey and semi-structured interviews with people between 18 and 35 years old in Poland were conducted to understand more about the phenomenon of dating RTV. By integrating those two methods, this study seeks to provide the answer to why this programming is so attractive. Furthermore, it helps to understand the human nature and their patterns in the realm of television media.

This chapter will first provide the sample and procedures for this study. In this section, the description of why this target group was chosen and the process for gathering participants will be explained. Next, the research design will be presented. In this part, the rationale behind choosing this method will be provided as well as the design of the research including the questions for both interviews and survey. Next, the data analysis method will provide an explanation of how gathered data will be analysed. Lastly, the ethical consideration section will include ethical issues such as the privacy of the participant and confidentiality of their responses.

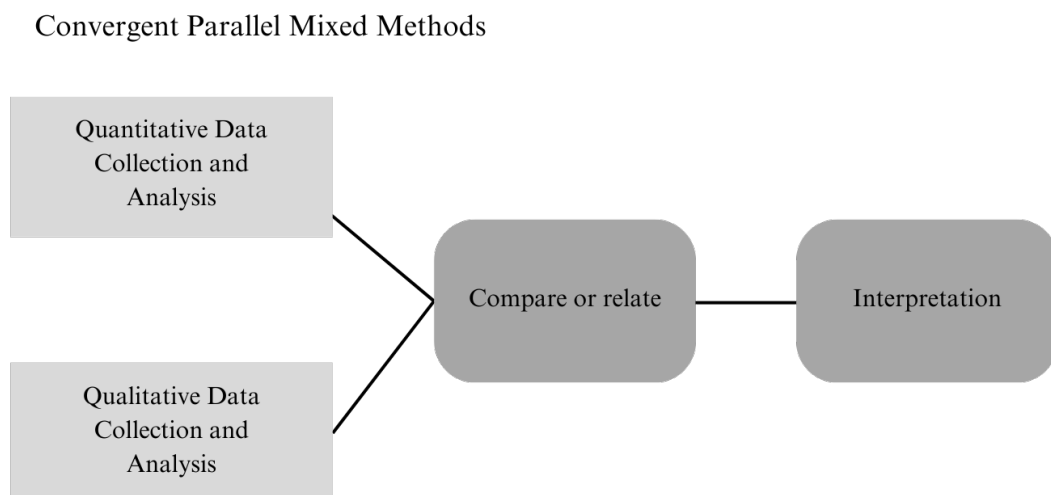
### 3.2. Mixed Methods

Mixed methods are also called by scholars as “the third path”, “the third research paradigm” or “the third methodological movement” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The definition of mixed methods by Tashakkori and Teddlie define this term as "a type of research design in which QUAL [qualitative] and QUAN [quantitative] approaches are used in types of questions, research methods, data collection and analysis procedures, and/or inferences" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 711). This method was chosen for the study as a mixed approach can collect different types of information. Thus, it can provide a stronger understanding of the problem – in this case, motives behind watching dating reality shows – than by just applying one qualitative or quantitative method and will provide a deeper understanding of topic and enhance the overall analysis (Creswell, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, a convergent parallel mixed method for collecting data will be used (see Figure 2) (Creswell, 2014). This means that qualitative and quantitative data will be collected at the same time. The reasoning behind this data collection is the limited time for completing the research.

**Figure 2**

*Convergent parallel mixed methods by Creswell (2014)*



## 3.3 Sample and Procedure

### 3.3.1 Target group

As the title of this study is *Reasons behind watching dating reality TV by young adults in Poland* the target group are young adults from Poland. Young adults were chosen as a target group for this study due to their high engagement with this genre. As mentioned before, the biggest groups that are watching reality TV in Poland are Generation Z and Millennials. As of the year of writing this study (2024) Generation Z age is between 12 and 27 years old and for Millennials between 28 and 43 years old. Thus, the group of young adults contain both of those generations. The term “young adults” has different definitions based on the context and criteria. For the purpose of this study people aged between eighteen and thirty-five years old were considered as young adults. Furthermore, participants had to be from Poland, thus data collection was conducted in Polish and later translated.

Polish society was chosen as the target group for this research due to the high popularity of those shows in this country (Kozielski, 2023). Furthermore, it is a country with broad access to various streaming services, not only local but also international. Thus, they can access various shows recognised as dating reality TV.

Only people who watch dating reality shows were taken into consideration for this study. Viewership was defined as watching more than one full episode of any reality show under the category of dating/romance in order for a participant to provide meaningful insights into why they choose to watch this programming.

### 3.3.2 Procedure

#### **Quantitative Method**

Data for a quantitative method, which was an online survey, was collected from participants who voluntarily decided to take part in this study. Furthermore, all participant who agreed to take part in the survey were assured their right to remain anonymous. The online survey was

created in Google Forms format and shared through a link, thus, the participant needed an internet connection to complete it. To collect responses, the link to the questionnaire was shared through social media accounts like Instagram and Facebook and communication platforms such as WhatsApp and Messenger. Furthermore, participants were encouraged to repost the survey on their social media or to recruit others who fit the target group for this study. This type of sampling is called convenience sampling. Convenience sampling occurs when “members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study” (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2). Thus, this sampling is considered as easy as it includes participants who are easily accessible for the researcher (Etikan et al., 2016).

To calculate the sample size, first, the population of Poles between 18 and 35 years old had to be determined. The population of this age group was calculated based on the data from a *Główny Urząd Statystyczny* (Central Statistical Office) website (GUS, n.d.). The data shows an approximate number of populations of Poland for each age group. According to this data, there are approx. 7 525 510 Poles in this group. The sample size was calculated according to the Sample Size Calculator on the website *Calculator.net* as this calculator was recommended by scholars as useful for determining the size of a sample (Memon et al., 2020). With a confidence level of 95% and 5% margin of error, the sample size for this study should total 385 or more responses. At the end of the data collection the number of responses collected total 637. However, as the data collection process was informal and conducted via social media, this sample may not be fully representative. Thus, it can be considered as an expressive sample of the involved participants.

The quantitative method was used for this study as it is a highly effective research method. The online survey can collect numerous responses from participants from different demographic backgrounds. The online surveys are easy to fill and send, therefore, they require minimal time and effort from a participant. Moreover, they are cost and time efficient. Furthermore, online surveys provide data that is easy to analyse (Rea & Parker, 1992). The collected information can be easily divided into categories to identify patterns and trends. As each candidate is asked the same question, the data is easy to be compared based on for example demographics. Moreover, a survey was a method used by many scholars who studied the motivations behind

watching reality TV or dating reality TV (Woods and Ebersole, 2007; Roberti, 2007; Patino et al., 2012; Nabi et al., 2003; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007).

### **Qualitative Method**

To understand better the results of the survey, semi-structured interviews with dating reality shows viewers were conducted. The participants for this interview were recruited via social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Within the group of people who expressed their willingness to take part in this study, only nine participants were selected, based on their variety of gender and age. This approach was chosen to receive a broad variety of motivations for watching dating reality TV (DRTV) from different perspectives based on age and gender. Furthermore, participants who were between eighteen and thirty-five years old were selected as this is a target group for this study. Table 3 presents the age and the gender of each participant. Since the interviews were anonymous, each participant received a number that represented their identity in this study (see Table 3). Three participants are male and six are female and they age ranged from 21 to 35 years old.

**Table 3**

*Age and gender of the interview participants*

	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Participant 1	35	Female
Participant 2	32	Female
Participant 3	27	Male
Participant 4	24	Female
Participant 5	26	Male
Participant 6	25	Female
Participant 7	33	Female
Participant 8	31	Male
Participant 9	21	Female

The interviews were conducted through Microsoft Teams meetings. All interviews were recorded with consent from the participants. Each participant received a link to a meeting which they could access the video call. The interviews started with both interviewer and participant introducing themselves. Interviews took between 10 and 25 minutes depending on the need for follow-up questions. During these semi-structured interviews, participants were asked 14 core questions regarding their motivations, opinions and viewing habits concerning dating reality television.

After each interview ended, the transcription of it was created with the use of Microsoft Teams. Each transcription was then cleaned up and analysed in order to find their common patterns. Furthermore, the online survey includes two open-ended questions that qualified as qualitative data. The questions were not mandatory for survey participants, but they can complement the answers from interviews.

## 3.4 Research Design

### 3.4.1 Quantitative design

The purpose of this online survey was to collect data such as the motivations and habits of Polish people behind watching dating reality television. The online survey was created via the Google Forms platform and shared via social media and messaging platforms.

The survey started with a message which explained the purpose of the study, and how much time it would take to fill the questionnaire. Furthermore, it ensured the participants about the anonymity and how the data will be used.

The first section of the survey collected demographic information from participants such as their age, gender, civil status, the population of the city/ town they live in and educational level. If their answers regarding age were different from “18-35” the participant was eliminated from the survey. Next, in section 2, the participants had to state if they were watching dating reality shows. If the participants stated that they had seen them, they were sent to section 3. Participants who stated that they were not watching this kind of shows were sent to another question, where

they were asked if they had seen any of the show from the list of reality dating shows that are popular in Poland. If they confirmed that they have seen more than one episode of one of the mentioned shows they were sent to section 3 of the survey. In section 3, participants could choose which shows from the list they have watched, and which is their favourite and justify their choice. Next, they were asked about their watching habits.

The next part of the survey was the most significant for this study. The Likert Scale was used to measure 27 reasons behind watching dating reality shows. Likert scale is a scale presented by Rensis Likert in 1932 (Likert, 1932). The Likert scale can have a different format depending on the purpose of the study. However, in this case, the 5-point scale was used with possible answers of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree (Joshi et al., 2015). The reasons for watching dating reality television for this section were divided into ten motives that were mentioned by different academics (see Table 4) (Heering, 2012; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011; Woods & Ebersole, 2007; Roberti, 2007; Patino et al., 2012; Nabi et al., 2003; Lundy et al., 2008).

**Table 4**

*Motives and reasons for watching dating reality TV*

<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
1. Entertainment/ Excitement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they entertains/excites me</li> <li>• I like the drama and conflict that occurs in these programs</li> <li>• I enjoy watching the unexpected twists and turns of the story</li> <li>• I like to make fun of the participants</li> <li>• I watch them for humorous reasons</li> <li>• I never know what I might see in an episode</li> </ul>
2. Voyeurism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I like to look into the private lives of participants</li> <li>• Watching such programs excites me (naked or intimate scenes)</li> </ul>
3. Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I identify with one or more the participants</li> </ul>
4. Relaxation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They relax me after a hard day</li> <li>• They are easy to look at and do not require much mental involvement</li> </ul>

5. Pass Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have nothing else to do</li> <li>• They kill my free time</li> </ul>
6. Socializing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I like to talk about this program with friends</li> <li>• This is how I spend time with my loved ones or friends</li> <li>• I like to comment and post about the show on social media</li> <li>• They make me not feel lonely</li> </ul>
7. Social Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm curious to see how the participants handle dating situations.</li> <li>• They make me feel better about myself (based on watching participants engaging in undesirable behaviour)</li> </ul>
8. Escapism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are a form of escape from everyday problems</li> </ul>
9. Habit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are a great background noise when I'm doing something else</li> <li>• It's my habit</li> </ul>
10. Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I like to watch the participants completing the tasks</li> <li>• I want to see real people in real situations</li> <li>• I like to see the developing relationships among the participants</li> <li>• I like to bet on who of the participants will end up together / win the program</li> <li>• Participants in these programs are attractive</li> </ul>

Furthermore, the survey collected information regarding the viewing habits of the participants. They were asked about the frequency and duration of dating reality television consumption as well as if they watch it on TV or streaming services. Moreover, participants were asked to indicate which shows they had seen, and which was their favourite. The last part of the survey contained questions regarding “guilty pleasures”, “FOMO” and the perception of realism of these shows.

### 3.4.2 Qualitative design

The qualitative methods, in this case, online interviews, was used as a method in this research to better understand the motives why Poles chose to watch this program. Therefore, nine participants, aged between eighteen and thirty-five, who watch dating reality shows were asked

questions to understand the complex motivations behind consuming those formats. Those semi-structured interviews will expand the findings from the survey.

The semi-structured format of the interviews was chosen as it allows the interviewee the bigger possibility to explore the important for them topics. In this case, it allowed for the addition of follow-up questions to investigate why the participant gave a certain answer. Furthermore, it gives the interviewer more control over where the conversation is going and to dig deeper towards topics that are relevant for this research. (“The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research,” 2014)

The interview questions will focus on themes identified from the literature review and survey questions. They will explore not only motivations but also the habits and perceptions of DRTV viewers (see Table 5)

**Table 5**  
*Interview questions*

Question	Follow-up question
What was the first dating show that you have watched?	
What made you watch a dating reality show for the first time?	
Do you have a favorite dating show?	If so, which one?
What makes you turn on this show?	Why you like it?
What emotions do you feel while watching this show?	
How often do you watch dating reality shows?	
Do you see any changes in your perception of dating and relationships after watching these shows?	
Do you watch these shows alone or with others?	Whose company do you prefer and why?
Do you discuss dating reality shows with friends or family?	What are those conversations like?
Do you think you are invading others' privacy by watching dating reality shows?	

Do you tell others that you watch these types of shows, or do you tend to keep it to yourself?	
Do you ever identify with the participants? For example, during a breakup?	
Have you encountered criticism or negative opinions about watching dating reality shows?	How do you react to them?
Are there stereotypes about viewers of dating reality shows that you think are true not?	
Do you plan to continue watching dating reality shows?	Why or why not?

### 3.5 Research Analysis

#### 3.5.1 Quantitative data

The quantitative data collected from the online survey was analysed firstly by Google Forms itself. The website automatically collected and stored data in real time and provided the primary analysis of the data. Google Forms calculates the percentage for each answer and provides visuals such as charts and graphs. After finishing collecting the responses for the survey, the gathered data was exported to Excel for further analysis. Then, the correlations and comparative analysis were performed to see how data changed with gender, education level and other variables.

The statistics were later visualized by bar charts and graphs to illustrate the findings and highlight key trends. Furthermore, the tables were made to provide the comparative analysis to visualize the main correlations. The open-ended questions were analysed together with quantitative data from the interviews.

#### 3.5.2 Qualitative data

First the interviews were translated with the help from OpenAI (2024). Taylor (2023) suggested stated that ChatGPT is a useful tool for translation due to its high accuracy. The translation was then verified. The interviews and open questions answers were colour-coded by the themes

based on previously mentioned motives for watching dating reality shows. The themes will be grouped to see which are mentioned the most often. Then the themes were used to complement and interpret the quantitative findings. Thus, for each motive (if mentioned) the answers from the interview will be connected to fulfil why for example people find reality TV entertaining. Furthermore, direct quotes from responders will be provided to enrich each motivation.

### 3.6 Ethical Consideration

Participation in the survey and interviews was fully voluntary and all participants agreed to take part in it. All participant could at any moment withhold their partaking in this study without any consequences and obligations to provide a reason for leaving. Furthermore, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study and that their answers were used for academic purposes only.

All interview participants were assigned an identification number (participant 1, participant 2... etc.) to maintain their anonymity. Their identities were not disclosed throughout the whole process of this study as only their age and gender were visible to the readers. Furthermore, the participants were not at any stage of the interview judged or stigmatized based on their opinions and answers.

For the survey, no other data than demographics (age, gender, civil status, population of the city, educational level) was collected to keep participants anonymous. All people who participated in the study could find this note at the beginning of the survey that describes the purpose of the study and who is conducting it. Furthermore, the time of the study, as well as its anonymity, was affirmed to the participants.

## 4. Results

## 4.1 Quantitative results

### 4.1.1 Demographics

The online survey collected 641 answers, of which 46 were eliminated, as the respondents were either not in the age group for this study, or they were not watching dating reality television. Most of the responders were female as only 6.7 per cent (40) of the responders were male.

The ratio of female responses confirms previous studies that more women than man watch reality television (Geetha & Pavithra, 2019; Blogier, 2023).

**Table 6**

*Demographics of survey responders*

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b> (percentage from male group)	<b>Female</b> (percentage from female group)
<b>Participants</b>	595	40	555
<b>Marital status</b>			
Single	160 (26.9%)	16 (40%)	<b>144 (25.9%)</b>
Married	122 (20.5%)	4 (10%)	118 (21.3%)
Divorced	4 (0.7%)	2 (5%)	2 (0.4%)
Informal Relationship	<b>309 (51.9%)</b>	<b>18 (45%)</b>	291 (52.4%)
<b>Education level</b>			
PHD	4 (1%)	1 (2.5%)	3 (0.5%)
Master's Degree	<b>256 (43%)</b>	11 (27.5%)	<b>245 (44.1%)</b>
Bachelor's Degree	180 (30%)	12 (30%)	168 (30.3%)
General Secondary Education	152 (25.5%)	<b>16 (40%)</b>	136 (24.5%)
Other	3 (0.5%)	0	3 (0.5%)

### Place of Residence

Village	80 (13.5%)	5 (12.5%)	75 (13.5%)
Town up to the population of 10000	27 (4.5%)	1 (2.5%)	26 (4.7%)
Town with population between 10000 and 100000	102 (17.1%)	6 (15%)	96 (17.3%)
City with population higher than 100000	<b>386 (64.9%)</b>	<b>28 (0.7%)</b>	<b>358 (64.5%)</b>

The majority of dating reality shows viewers in our survey have a higher education level. The total of 43 per cent of the responders have a master's degree, and 30 per cent have a bachelor's degree (179). The third biggest group had a general secondary education with 25.5 per cent (142). As for the size of the city that they live in, 13.5 per cent of the responders answered that they live in a village. Total of 4.5 percent of the responders lives in a town up to the population of 10,000 and 17.1 per cent in a town with population between 10,000 and 100,000. The bigger group were people who live in a city with population higher than 100,000 inhabitants – 64.9 percent.

Lastly, the biggest group of responders who watch dating reality television are in informal relationships (51.9%). Furthermore, the second group comprises singles who are representing 26.8 per cent of the responders. Married people take 20.5 per cent of the responders. Only four of the answerers were divorced (0.7%). Thus, 70.5 per cent of the responders are in some kind of a relationship.

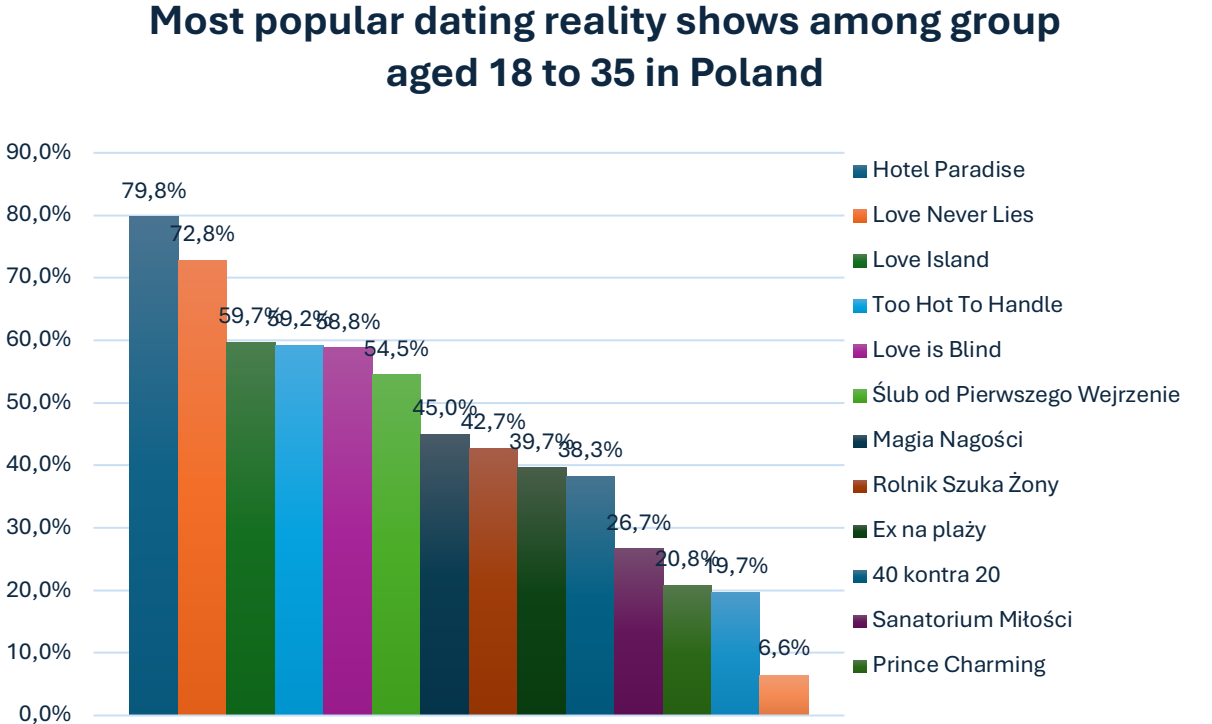
#### 4.1.2 Watching habits

When asked if they watch dating reality television, nine responders (15.1%) said that they did not. However, when the same group were asked if they have seen more than one episode of listed reality shows they said they did in fact watch them. This shows that some people are not aware that the show they watched was called a dating reality show.

According to the survey the most popular show among the responders is *Hotel Paradise* (see Figure 3). This Polish format based on American *Paradise Hotel* is broadcasted every day from Monday to Friday for two to three months, depending on the length of the season. In this show nine singles live in a villa based in a tropical location and without access to outside world with a goal of creating a romantic relationship. Every now and then new singles are joining the program and people without a partner have to leave the villa (Błośka, 2022). A total of 79.8 per cent of responders participating in the survey stated that they watched this program. Second most popular is *Love Never Lies* with 72.8 per cent of the responders who have seen this show.

Third most popular is *Love Island. Wyspa Miłości*. This show is very similar to *Hotel Paradise* however, *Hotel Paradise* is more focused on a game and strategy and *Love Island* more on a viewer’s entertainment and emotional journey of the participants.

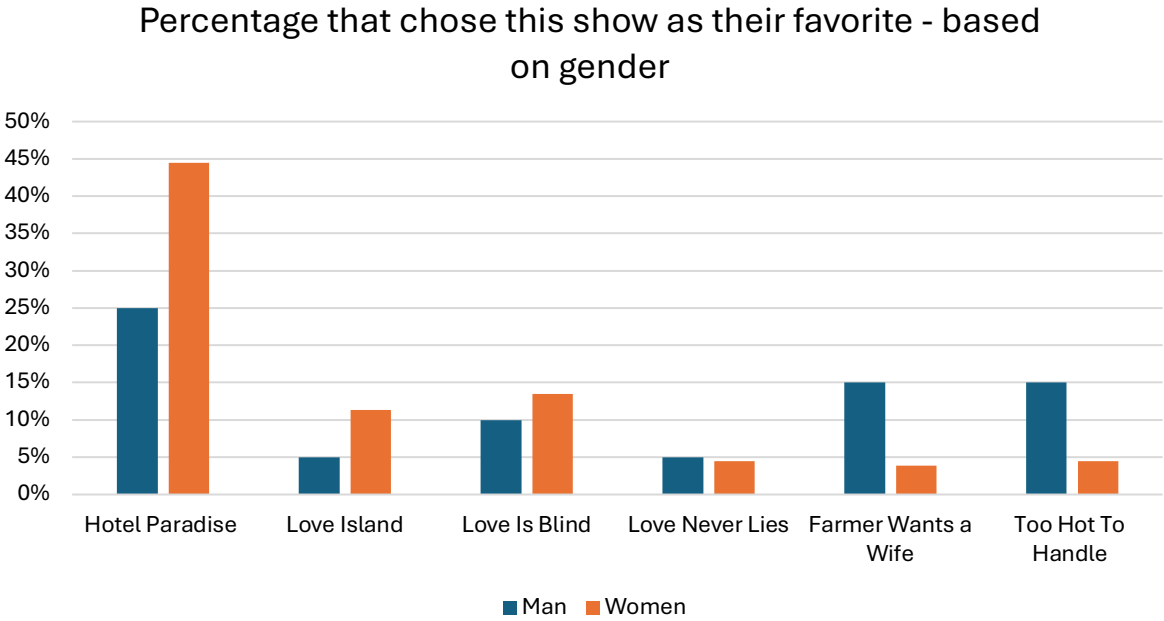
**Figure 3**  
*Most popular dating reality shows - based on survey data (n=595)*



The next two shows are international Netflix’s formats: *Too Hot to Handle* and *Love is Blind*. Two drastically different shows receive similar viewership from young Polish audience. In the first show participants in a villa are banned from any physical/sexual relations and a rule break leads to the reduction of the prize money, while in *Love is Blind* participants are looking for a future significant other without being able to see each other in order to create a genuine connection.

Regarding the choice for the favourite program, a significant majority of responders stated that their favourite show is *Hotel Paradise* (43.2%) (see Appendix A). Second largest group are *Love is Blind* fans (13.3%) and third *Love Island. Wyspa Miłości* (9.2%). 8.1 per cent of the responders stated that they do not have a favourite show.

**Figure 4**  
*Favorite reality show of men and women (n=595)*



When divided by genders, men’s favourite dating reality show was *Hotel Paradise* (25%). The second most popular among males was *Farmer Wants a Wife* and *Too Hot to Handle* (each scored 15%) (see Figure 4). Fourth most popular is *Love is Blind* (10%). Same as men women favourite program was *Hotel Paradise* (44.5%). Their second favourite was *Love is Blind* with 13.5 per cent of the votes, and third *Love Island* with 11.3 per cent votes. On the fourth place

both *Love Never Lies* and *Too Hot to Handle* both scored 4.5 per cent. This shows that more men than women prefer *Too Hot To Handle* and *Farmer Wants a Wife*.

The majority of the respondents watch dating reality shows between one and two hours per week (41%) (see Appendix B). However, many responders stated that they watch them for more than three hours per week (35.8%). Rest (23.1%) watches these shows for less than an hour a week. Furthermore, half of male responders watches these shows for less than an hour a week when for women viewers the most common length is from one to two hours per week (42.5 % of women).

The study shows that the number of watched episodes in one sitting depends on circumstances, as 42.2 per cent of responders answered that they sometimes watch only one episode and sometimes more than one. A quarter (25.5%) of responders answered that they usually watch one episode at a time and another quarter (24.7%) two or three episodes in one sitting. Only 7.6 per cent answered that they watch more than 3 episodes in the row.

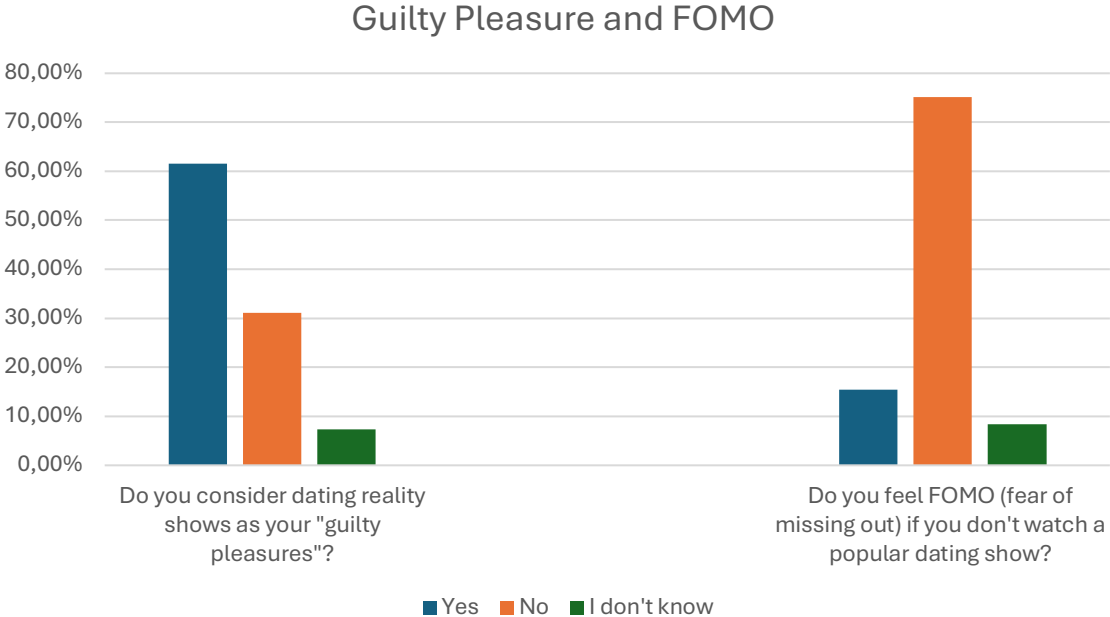
Furthermore, the majority of the respondents stated that they watch dating reality TV programs on streaming services (81.3%) rather than on traditional television (18.7%). This shows that young adults prefer the convenience of streaming services that allows users to watch the desired show whenever it suits them. Moreover, with the growth of technology and internet accessibility more people choose to use video-on-demand services rather than traditional TV. In 2021, almost half of television viewers in Poland were people older than 55 years old (Reisner, 2021). This suggests that younger people more often choose to watch TV on streaming services.

The study also shows that people tend to watch dating reality TV alone (see Appendix C). More than half (53.6%) of the responders stated that they watch these shows alone. This signals the shift from a past, when watching television was a social activity. However, 29 per cent still watches this kind of shows with their partner. This applies to 37.5 per cent of men who stated that they watch those programs with their significant other. Other 15.3 per cent watch dating reality with their friend or a family member and only 1.8 per cent watch it with a bigger group of people.

An expressive majority (72.8 %) considered those shows to be scripted to some extent. A total of 23.9 per cent of the responders stated that those shows are fully scripted and only 3.4 per cent believe that they are unscripted. Furthermore, survey responders also considered emotions and conversations shown in these programs as somewhat fake. Again, an expressive majority of the responders (73.3%) stated that the participants’ emotions and their conversations are to some extent real and 19.3 per cent that they are fully real. Another 7.4 per cent considered that they are not fully real.

Furthermore, the majority of a responders agreed that they consider watching dating reality shows as their “guilty pleasure” (61.5%) (see Figure 5). Less than one third (31.1%) said they do not consider them as their guilty pleasure and 7.4 per cent stated that they don’t know. As most of Polish young adults consider watching dating reality television as a guilty pleasure, it seems to explain why most people watch these shows alone. As mentioned before “guilty pleasure” is something that give people a pleasure, despite feeling ashamed of it. In order to not let anyone else know that they watch these shows, most people rather watch these programs alone.

**Figure 5**  
*Guilty Pleasure and FOMO (n=595)*



Moreover, a vast majority of the responders (75.1%) does not feel “fear of missing out” (FOMO) when missed, a popular at the time, dating reality show. Only 16.5 per cent stated that they feel like they are missing something when they have not seen a particular show and 8.4% per cent have no opinion about this issue.

When asked how they watch dating reality show, the vast majority of the participants in the survey responded that they watch it on streaming services (81.3%). The remaining 18.7 per cent watch those shows on traditional TV. Then, participants were asked with who they usually watch dating shows, and more than half (53.6%) indicated that they watch those shows alone. The second biggest group stated that they usually watch them with their partners (29.2%). Moreover, 7.7 per cent watch DRTV with their friend and 7.6 per cent with their family members. Only 1.8 per cent watch those shows in a bigger group (3 or more people).

Lastly, 72.8 per cent of the responders agreed with the statement that they think those shows are scripted to some extent. Almost quarter of responders (23.9%) indicated that they consider that the shows are scripted and 3.4 per cent stated that they think that they are not scripted at all. Furthermore, 73.3 per cent of the responders thinks that emotions and controversies displayed on the show are to some extent real. Total of 19.3 per cent stated that they are real and only 7.4 per cent think that they are not.

#### 4.1.3 Reasons behind watching dating reality TV

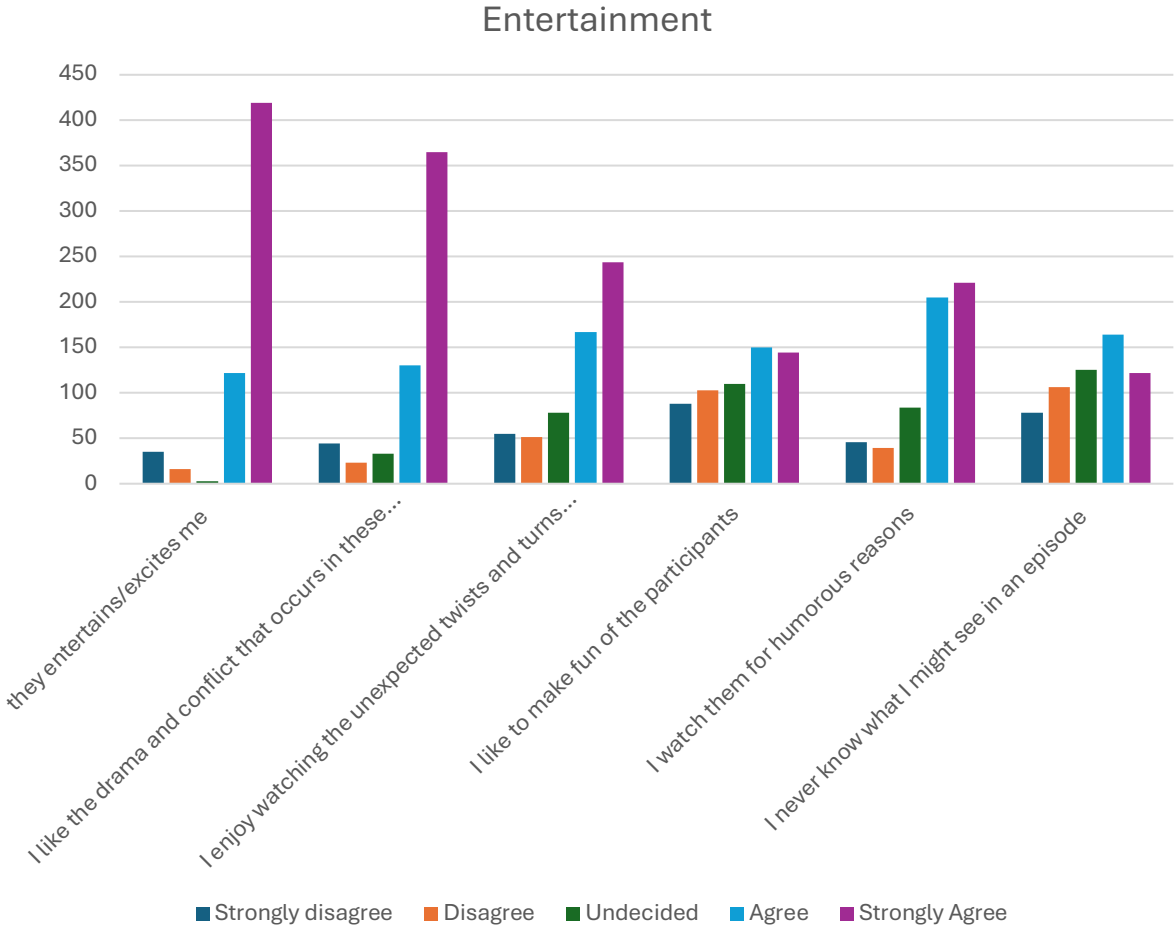
In order to collect the data on why people watch dating reality television, the 5-point scale was created with possible answers of strongly disagree, strongly agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The Likert Scale was used to measure 27 reasons why young Polish people watch dating reality shows. Each sentence started with “I watch dating reality shows because...”.

The first category motive presented in the questionnaire explaining watching dating reality television was Entertainment (see Figure 6). Under this category, six sentences were included.

The first reason of watching dating reality TV for this scale was “they are entertaining”. This reason received the most positive answers. 419 responders stated that they strongly agree with this reason and 122 said that they agree. Thus 90.9% of responders agreed that entertainment is the reason why they watch these shows. Only 35 (5.8%) responders stated that they strongly disagree with this sentence and 16 (2.7%) that they disagree.

The second reason was “I like the drama and conflict that occurs in these programs”. This sentence also scored high with “strongly agree” answers. A total of 365 responders indicated that they strongly agree with this sentence. Furthermore, 130 responders stated that they agree. Thus, total of 495 responders (83.2%) stated that they are positive about this answer.

**Figure 6**  
*Entertainment motive*



Third reason was “I enjoy watching the unexpected twists and turns of the story” to which 244 responders (41%) stated that they strongly agree with and 167 (28%) that they agree with. 78 responders were undecided and total of 106 stated that they disagree or strongly disagree with this reason. Next reason is “I like to make fun of the participants” with which 144 responders (24.2%) strongly agreed with and 150 (25.2%) agreed with. However, 103 (17.3%) stated that they disagree and 88 (12.8%) that they strongly disagree with this sentence.

The following reason behind watching DRTV was “I watch them for humorous reasons”. For this reason, the majority of the responders answered positively with 221 (37.1%) stating that they strongly agree and 205 (34.5%) that they agree. Furthermore, 14 per cent of responders were undecided regarding this question and the total of 85 (14.2%) stated that they disagree or strongly disagree with that.

Lastly, “I never know what I might see in the episode” scored 122 (20.5%) responses for “strongly agree” and 164 (27.6%) for “agree. For this sentence 125 (21%) responders stayed undecided and 106 (17.8%) stated that they disagree and 78 (13.1%) that they strongly disagree with it.

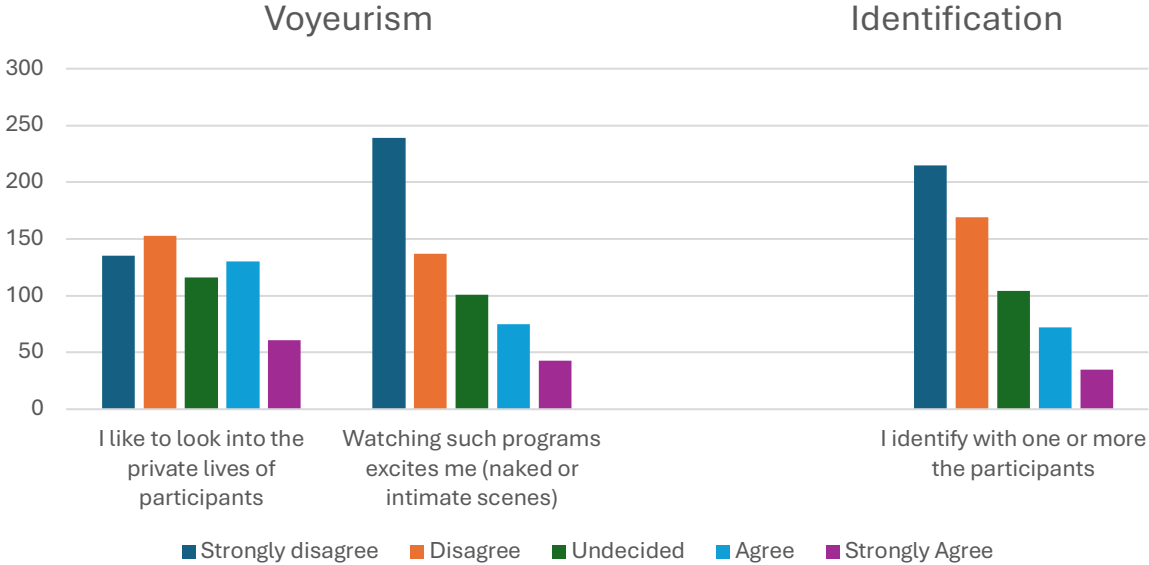
For each question under entertainment motive, the positive answers score more than negative one. This shows that the entertainment reasons are a strong motivator for young Polish adults to watch dating reality television shows.

The second motive was voyeurism. Voyeurism is a “a practice of taking pleasure in observing something private” and “becoming aroused by watching another person or people in a state of undress and/or engaging in sexual activity” (Pichardo, 2023; Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Thus, under this motive two sentences were included.

For the first sentence “I like to look into the private lives of participants”, responders answered that they rather disagree with it, as 135 (22.7%) responders marked that they strongly disagree and 153 (25.7%) as they disagree (see Figure 7). 191 (32.1%) responders stated that they agree or strongly agree with this reason. That is, more people disagreed (48.4%) than agreed (32.1%) with that sentence.

Similarly, the second sentence, “watching such programs excites me (naked or intimate scenes)”, scored rather negative response with 239 (40.1%) strongly disagreeing with this sentence. Furthermore, 137 (23%) stated that they disagree with it and 101 (16.9%) was undecided. A total of 118 responders (19.8%) shown some voyeuristic tendencies.

**Figure 7**  
*Voyeurism and Identification motives*



The third motive for watching DRTV is identification. Only one sentence was included in the survey regarding this motive, and it was “I identify with one or more the participants”.

According to data this rather is not a reason for this target group for watching dating reality shows as 215 (43.5%) stated that they strongly disagree and 169 (28.4%) that they disagree with this sentence.

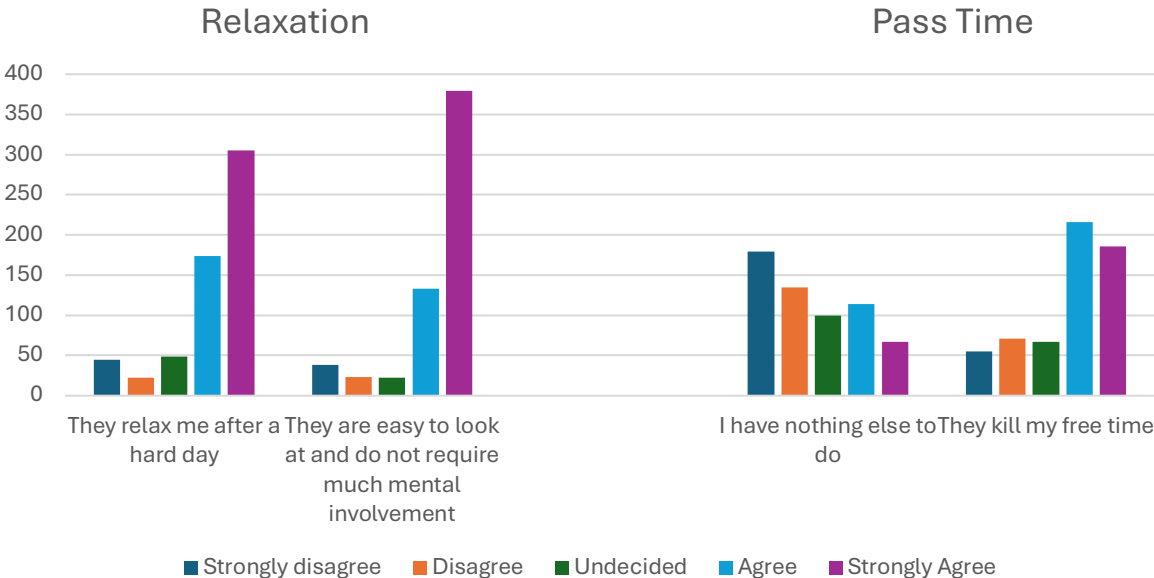
The following motives were relaxation and pass time (see Figure 8). The relaxation motive included two sentences within the survey. First was “they relax me after a hard day”. This reason received many “strongly agree” answers – 305 (51.2%). Moreover, 174 (29.2%) responders agreed with this sentence. Only 77 (12.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with it. The second reason behind “relaxation” motive “they are easy to look at and do not require much

mental involvement” received a similar score. 379 (63.7%) strongly agreed with this sentence and 133 (22.3%) agreed with it. Thus, 61 (10.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with it. This shows that relaxation is a significant motive behind watching dating reality TV.

As for the pastime motive, also two sentences were included in the survey. First reason for watching these shows was “I have nothing else to do”. Only 67 (11.2%) responders strongly agreed with it. Moreover, 114 (19.1%) agreed with that sentence. Thus, 179 (30%) strongly

**Figure 8**

*Relaxation and Pass Time motives*

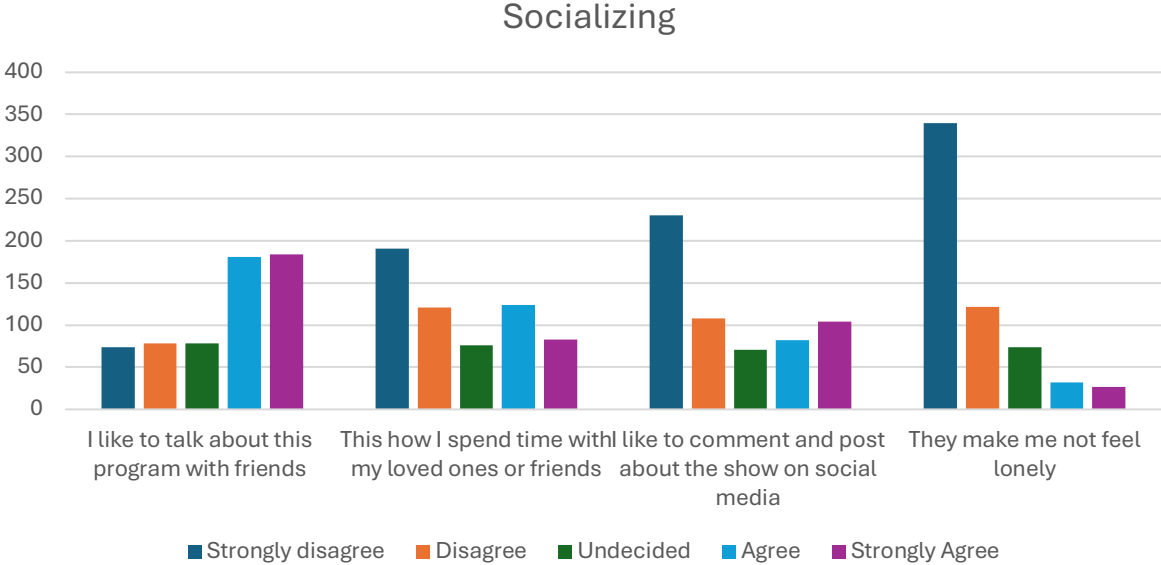


disagreed with it and 135 (22.7%) disagreed. Different answers are in the case of “they kill my free time”. Here, 186 (31.3%) of responders strongly agreed and 216 (36.3%) agreed with that sentence. Only 71 (11.9%) disagreed and 55 (9.2%) strongly disagreed with it.

Next motive was socializing (see Figure 9). Under this motive 4 sentences were included in the survey. First, “I like to talk about this program with my friends” received many “agree” and “strongly agree” answers, in total 365 (61.3%). However, for the sentence of “this is how I spend time with my loved ones or friends” majority of the responders did not agree with it as 191 responders marked “strongly disagree” and 121 “disagree”. Thus, in total 312 (52.4%) did not agree that it is a reason why they watch dating reality TV; 76 (12.7%) were undecided.

The majority of the responders didn't agree with two following sentences. The reason of "I like to comment and post about the show on social media" received 230 (38.7%) "strongly disagree" answers and 108 (18.1%) disagree answers summing 56.8%. The sentence "they make me feel less alone" was one with the most "strongly disagree" answers in the whole survey as its received 340 of them (57.1%). That sentence also received 122 "disagree" answers, which with "strongly disagree", totals for 77.6% of the answers. Therefore, these socializing reasons are said not to be strong motives behind watching dating reality television.

**Figure 9**  
*Socializing motive*

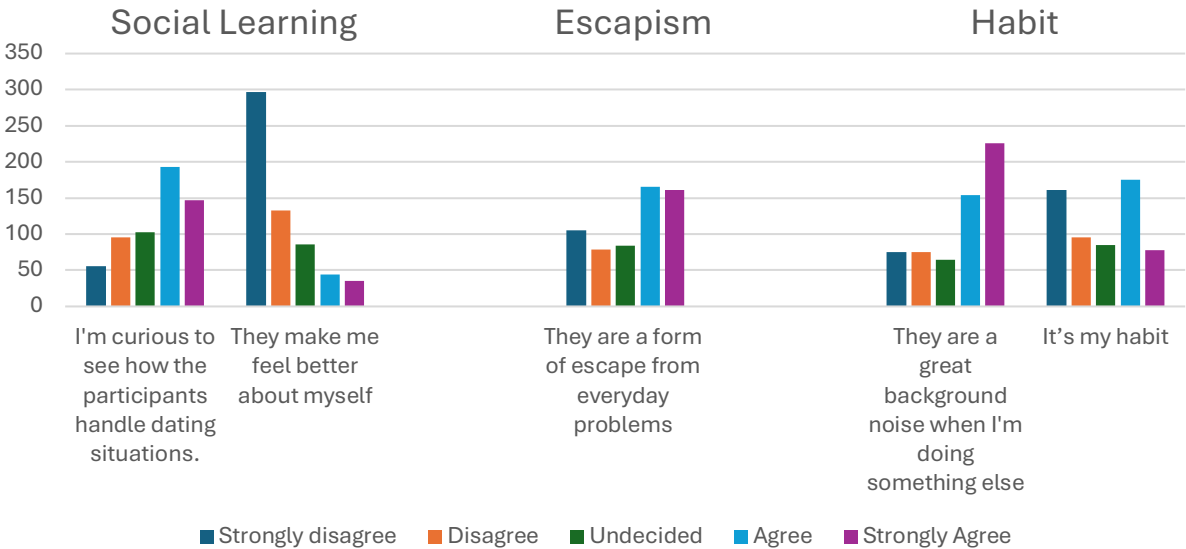


Next there is a motive of Social Learning (see Figure 10). Under this category there were two sentences included in the survey. The majority of the responders agreed with the sentence of "I'm curious to see how the participants handle dating situations" with 193 (32.4%) stating that they agree and 147 (24.7%) that they strongly agree with this sentence. In total 25 per cent of responders did not agree with that point. Responders also did not agree with second sentence of "they make me feel better about myself" as 297 (49.9%) strongly disagreed with it. Furthermore 133 (22.4%) disagreed with this sentence and only 13 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with it.

Another motive in a question with Likert scale, was Escapism. Many responders agreed with Escapism as a reason for watching dating reality shows. Under this motive, 161 (27%) strongly agreed and 166 (27.8%) agreed with that reason. However, 30 per cent of the responders strongly disagreed or disagreed with that sentence (see Figure 10).

Furthermore, the data shows that many people watch these shows out of habit. 226 (38%) of responders “strongly agreed” with the sentence that “they are a great background noise when I’m doing something else”. Furthermore, 154 (25.9%) agreed with that. Only 75 (12.6%) of responders disagreed and the same number strongly disagreed with it.

**Figure 10**  
*Social Learning, Escapism and Habit motives*



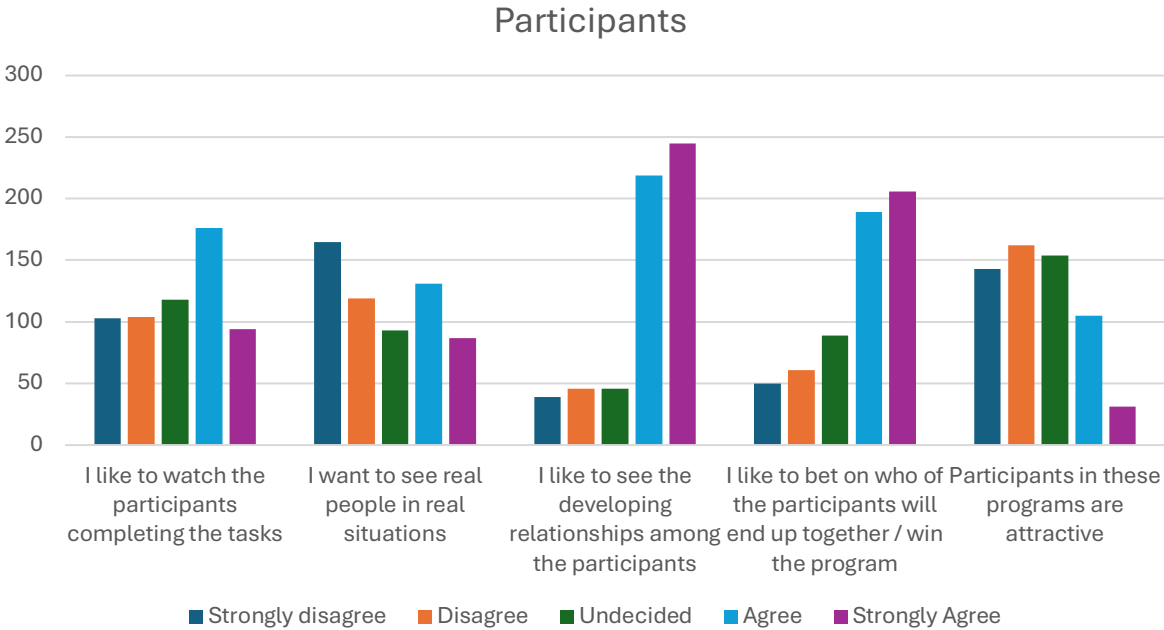
For the second sentence there is a dispute if the people polled agree or disagree with it. In total 253 (42.5%) responders agreed or strongly agreed with the sentence of “it’s my habit”, however, 257 (43.2%) marked that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with that sentence. The answer with a highest score was “agree” with 175 votes and second was strongly disagree with 161 votes. Thus, responders neither agree nor disagree with that reason for watching DRTV.

The last motive was “participants”. Under this motive there were five sentences (see Figure 11). First sentence was “I like to watch the participants completing tasks”. The majority of the

responders marked “agree” (30%). Furthermore 15.8 per cent stated that they strongly agree with this point. In total 34.8 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with that reason. For the sentence “I want to see real people in real situations” more respondents disagreed with. 165 (27.7%) strongly disagreed with that point and 119 (20%) disagreed with it and in total 36.6 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with it.

However, with the reason of “I like to see the developing relationships among the participants” the majority of the responders agreed with as 245 (41,2%) marked “strongly agree” and 219 (36,8%) “agree”. Only 14.3 per cent somehow disagreed with that reason.

**Figure 11**  
*Participant motive*



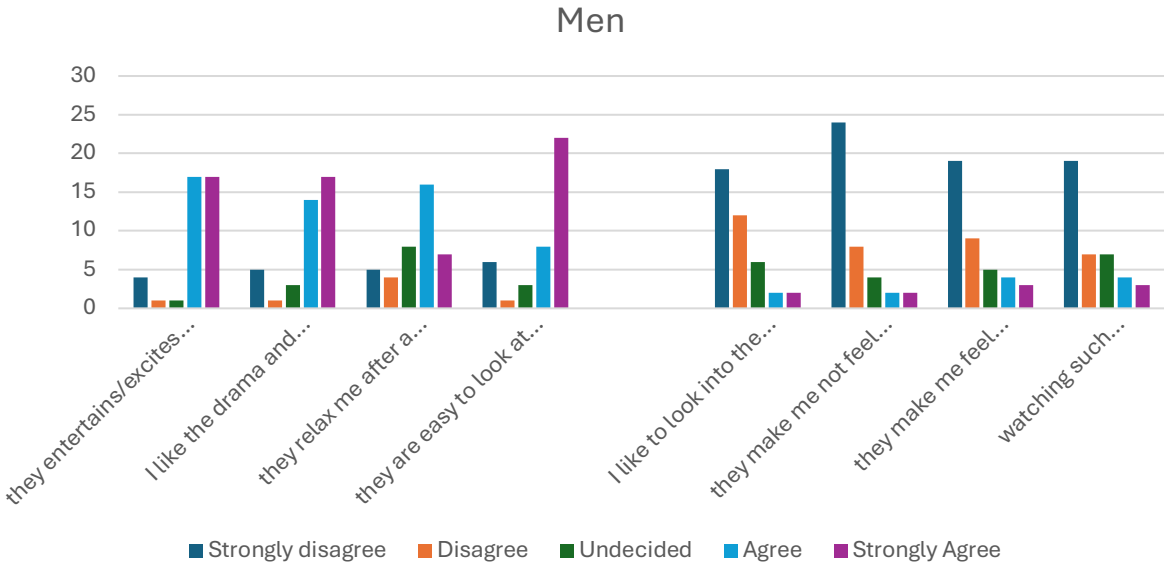
The next sentence received a similar score. For “I like to bet on who the participants will end up together with / win the program” majority chose that they strongly agree with (34.6%). Second biggest group were people who agreed with that sentence – 189 (31.7%). Thus, responders who to some extent agree with that sentence are around 68 per cent.

The last sentence was “participants in these programs are attractive”. More people did not agree with this sentence as 143 (24%) marked “strongly disagree” and 162 (27.2%) “disagree”. With

25.8 per cent of responders staying undecided only 22.9 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with that reason.

While looking to the responses from male viewers, although the number of surveyed men was small, there are four reasons that they significantly agreed with. Those are “they entertains/excites me”; “I like the drama and conflict that occurs in these programs”; “they relax me after a hard day” and “they are easy to look at and do not require much mental involvement”. Thus, men watch these shows mainly for entertainment and relaxation reasons. The reasons which they disagree the most are “I like to look into the private lives of participants”; “they make me not feel lonely”; “they make me feel better about myself” and “watching such programs excites me (naked or intimate scenes)”.

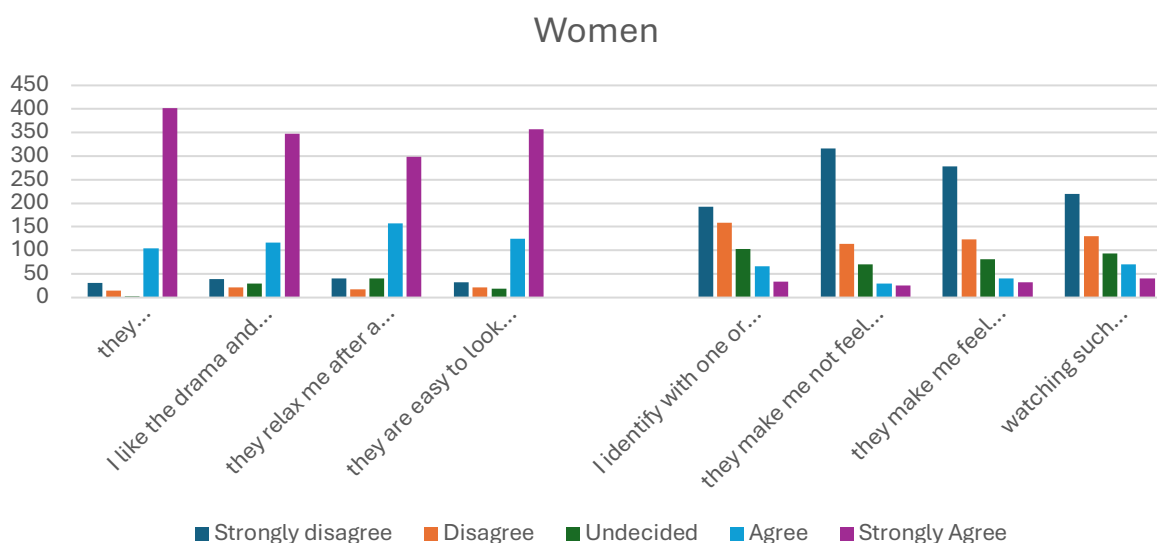
**Figure 12**  
*Men most agreed and disagreed sentences*



The responses of female viewers are very similar to the ones of males (see Figure 12 and 13). Same as for men, women agreed the most with sentences: “they entertain / excite me”; “I like the drama and conflict that occurs in these programs”; “they relax me after a hard day” and “they are easy to look at and do not require much mental involvement”.

**Figure 13**

*Women most agreed and disagreed sentences*



Thus, women also are motivated by entertainment and relaxation to watch dating reality television.

## 4.2 Qualitative results

### 4.2.1 Survey results

The online survey had two open-ended questions. First question asked why the responders choose the program that they picked as their favorite. As this question was not obligatory for the survey participants, only 389 people answered it.

Out of all responses 46 contained the same theme which was “drama”. In polish “drama” is a word, which originate from English word “drama” or “dramatic”. *Wielki słownik języka polskiego* (The Great Dictionary of the Polish Language) define it as “a series of events arranged like a theatrical drama”. It is a word that often describes a situation that is filled with conflict or complicated. Thus, in this case, the series that they chose had a lot of dramatic actions and twists. Furthermore, two people wrote that the series is “dramogenny”. This is a made-up word that means that the series creates a lot of “drama”. In the open question, responders mentioned “drama” in various ways such as:

“It has the most interesting format and rules for me, and I also like the time and frequency of the episodes. Additionally, I enjoy when there are ‘dramas’ between the participants, and in my opinion, *Love Island* has the most of them.”

“(…) *Love is Blind* has plenty of dramatic moments, unexpected twists, and tension that keeps viewers on edge. Watching relationships evolve from the first conversations through engagements to the decision about marriage is fascinating. Viewers witness a process that normally takes place off-camera.”

“Because there’s a lot of drama, there are a lot of funny and different people, often even toxic and controversial; it’s just interesting and fun to watch, and there are often funny and amusing situations.”

“I like Polish reality shows. Additionally, *Hotel Paradise* isn’t boring, meaning it has the most action, drama, etc.”

The „drama” motive behind watching those shows, can be put in the category of entertainment as it is something that keeps a viewer excited and curious. Furthermore, many people mentioned participants as why they like the show the most:

"Because it features a collection of the ‘best’ people from all the most popular shows that I watch."

"The vacation vibe, people going all out, seemingly primitive, but at the same time, you can see some transformations in them."

"They usually choose cool young people, totally natural, and later I like to follow them on Instagram and see, for example, if a particular couple is still together."

"Very extreme characters, behaviors so ridiculous that you can laugh at them."

"The format is interesting for the first few episodes. Also, the selection of characters, who represent every typical archetype in the group."

"It features young, attractive people."

Many people mentioned the word “odmóżdzenie” which in a direct translation means “decerebration” or “brain eraser”. This word is often used to describe an activity that require little to no intellectual effort. Also, it is used to describe forms of entertainment, such as “trash” television shows, reading gossip sites, or any other activity that is mentally unstimulating. By saying that something is "odmóżdżające," responders imply that watching dating reality shows, even though is enjoyable, offers little to no mental effort. Thus is a type of escapism and relaxation. In the context of escapism this word refers to doing something that allows you not

to think about the hardship in their lives, however in a relaxation context it allows viewers to relax by focusing on something that does not require any mental or physical effort. The word “odmóżdzenie” was used 14 times as a reason why responders choose a show as their favourite and again 11 times when asked if there is any other reason why they watch dating reality TV.

#### 4.2.1 Interview results

The interviews inspected the more in-depth reason why people watch dating reality shows. The theme that was mentioned the most in the interviews was Entertainment/Excitement (see Table 7). It was mentioned eighteen times as a reason for watching dating reality shows by eight different participants, or all but one of the interviewed.

**Table 7**

*Entertainment - quotes from interviews*

Entertainment	“(it is my favourite shows because it was) funny, it had a good sense of humor”
	„Most people see it as simple entertainment”
	“it’s just entertainment and the nudity adds shock value”
	“(while watching this show I feel) mostly positive emotions, related to amusement”
	“Because the participants in that show are the dumbest, so you can laugh at them”
	“What kind of emotion is it? Joy? Entertainment?”
	“Another reason is that there’s a lot of drama”
	"Hotel Paradise," because it has the best drama and arguments.
	“Another thing is that the more moments that keep me in suspense, the better”
	“Mainly excitement. Frequent plot twists, partner changes, and betrayals influence why I watch these types of shows”
	“Because, in the end, it’s a form of entertainment”
	“I’m ashamed to watch it, but these shows provide entertainment”
	“Because even though I find it embarrassing, they still provide entertainment”
	“there was a lot of fun to be watching the participants being idiots”
	I watched for the drama
	“The more they fought, the dumber they were, the more it entertained me.”

	“I watch these shows simply for the action”
	“I feel a lot of emotions. Mostly, I think, excitement”

Second most mentioned theme was socializing (see Table 8). Participants do not directly mention it as a reason behind watching those shows but it plays a significant role in their viewing habits. According to the results they watch those shows as a way of spending time with friends or family. Furthermore, some participants noted that they watched a show because they have heard about it from others or on social media and the curiosity led them to watch the shows and become a part of the conversation. The socializing theme of watching reality television suggests that people rather watch these shows with others even though it is not always possible. The results show that they choose to watch with others to be able to comment on the plot, or just as a bonding experience.

**Table 8**

*Socializing - quotes from interviews*

Socializing	“Mostly with others or simultaneously with someone, so we can discuss what’s happening. Usually with my sister.”
	“Everyone watched it, it was a cultural phenomenon.(...) Everyone in Poland watched it, no one questioned why.”
	“ I watch with someone when we can’t decide on what to watch”
	“if something good and new comes out, I might watch it with someone”
	“I always watch with my wife (...)It’s also a kind of way to spend time together”
	“Also, word of mouth because everyone around was watching it, so I was just curious about what everyone was talking about”
	“Only with my friend. We spend time together that way”
	“I like watching with friends, especially my girlfriends, because I can comment aloud and share experiences while watching“
	“Mainly with my partner; she initiates it. Sometimes I get hooked on a show and suggest we watch another episode, but usually, she picks. Why? Because we’re embarrassed together. It’s a way to spend time together”
	“So, it was clips on TikTok that got me interested, and that encouraged me to watch the show called "Single’s Inferno."

Next popular theme mentioned by the responders was pastime. Pastime was mentioned ten times in eight interviews (Table 9). Majority of the responders mentioned that they watched the shows because they are bored and have nothing better to do. In the age of streaming services, where the episode of a favorite DRTV can be played in less than two minutes, viewers often choose to spend their free time watching those shows. Furthermore, the format of these shows, where episodes end with a cliffhanger, makes viewers want to watch more which is filling up more of their free time. Moreover, responders mentioned the COVID-19 lockdown as a reason why they watched their first dating reality show. During that time many people struggled with extra free time when stuck at their houses which concluded in watching dating shows. Thus, it is an easy way to pass the time when boredom comes.

**Table 9**

*Pass Time - quotes from interviews*

Pass Time	“I started watching it to kill time and boredom”
	“Out of boredom”
	“I won't lie, the pandemic was a driving force. Spending too much time in front of the TV, always looking for something new, something with several seasons to fill up the excess free time.”
	“What’s it to them how I spend my free time?”
	“I think it was curiosity and boredom”
	“Absolute boredom”
	“The first one was "Love Is Blind." It was during COVID-19, and I had already watched everything else. It was a last resort, so to speak.”
	“Well, I heard it was a good time-killer”
	“Complete boredom. I watch it to kill time.”
	“We watch them mostly out of boredom”

Next often mentioned theme was Relaxation (see Table 10). It was mentioned by six out of nine interviews thus the majority of the responders watch these shows to relax after a hard day as these shows are often easy to watch, require minimal mental effort and allow viewers to do nothing while being entertained by those shows. Furthermore, the format of these shows does not require viewers to follow the plot or focus on the details. The shows often allow viewers to leave the room without missing any important part. Moreover, it is a way to decompress after work or school as these shows are not keeping the viewers in suspense. It is a perfect way to take a mental break.

**Table 10***Relaxation - quotes from interviews*

Relaxation	“I watch them when I’m tired because they don’t require any engagement from me. My brain doesn’t have to work hard, and they don’t require much focus.”
	“I plan to keep relaxing with these shows because they don’t cause me any stress at all”
	“to relax because they don’t require any critical thinking.”
	“I need something that doesn't require much mental effort or focus.”
	“Mostly positive emotions, related to amusement and relaxation”
	“Because, in the end, it’s a form of entertainment and relaxation. I like this kind of relaxation. I’ve done everything I needed to do today, and sometimes I like to”
	“It’s easy to watch when you don’t want to think and you’re tired.”
	“but I would say that I also relax to some extent while watching them”
“We watch them mostly out of boredom or as a form of relaxation.”	

Lastly, other motives such a “voyeurism” and “escapism” were both mentioned three times by three participants each. Motive of “participants” was mentioned six time by four different interviewees. “Identification” and “social learning” were mentioned by only one responder each.

However, same as for interviews, there was one word that was used ten times in seven interviews. Again, this word is “Odmóżdzenie”. In the table below (Table 11), the translated to English version of that word were marked in italics.

**Table 11***"Odmóżdzenie" - quotes from interviews*

“Odmóżdzenie”	Most people see it as simple entertainment, <i>brainless entertainment</i> .
	It’s just a <i>braineraser</i> .
	I might watch it with someone to <i>erase the brains</i> .
	The desire to <i>unwind</i> .
	Not everyone has to listen to self-development podcasts or read tons of books and learn a seventh foreign language. Sometimes you <i>can unwind</i> , and it’s no shame.

	Usually, I just want to <i>switch off my brain</i> .
	People asking why I watch such crappy shows, saying it's <i>brain-numbing</i> . Well, that's the point.
	The desire to <i>switch off my brain</i> .
	They don't require thinking, so it's a moment <i>to unwind</i> .
	I think that's often true, but there are also some normal people who just want <i>to unwind</i> .

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Findings

The results about demographic of dating reality audience, indicated that women rather than men are the main dating reality show viewers. This confirms study by Roberti (2007) who made the similar claim, and the results are for reality television in general, which are also more popular with women (Geetha & Pavithra, 2019; Blogier, 2023). Furthermore, the survey also revealed that the majority of the responders has a higher education, however this could be a result of convenience sampling.

Moreover, some responders had an issue with recognizing if the shows that they have seen are dating reality shows. As previously mentioned, the reality television subgenres are hard to categorise due to the number of different formats. Because due to a rising popularity of the streaming and video-on demand services such as Netflix, MAX or Disney+ it is hard to analyse the watching habits of viewers and their reasoning behind watching dating reality shows. Due to such a diversity of dating programs, viewers could have different motivations for watching different shows. For example, *Love on the Spectrum* viewers could watch this show for social learning reasons, while the same people can watch *Too Hot To Handle* for voyeuristic reasons. This lack of dispute by academics of how to divide reality television shows, leads to both of those shows being in the same category.

According to the results Entertainment / Excitement, Voyeurism, Identification, Relaxation, Pass Time, Socializing, Social Learning, Escapism, Habit and Participants are, more or less,

reasons why young Polish adults watch dating reality shows. These motivations support the main principles of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). Based on this concept, individuals will tend to seek out a medium that fulfils their personal wants and needs. Thus, the first need that dating reality shows are fulfilling are the affective needs that relate to gaining a pleasurable experience from media to fulfil their emotional needs and desires. Therefore, people engage with the media for entertainment reasons (Penzhorn & Pitout, 2006, p. 89). Furthermore those shows fulfil the social integrative needs that relate to using media to interact with family and friends and escapist needs relate to using media to escape from certain situations.

According to results of both survey and interviews, the most common motive is “Entertainment/Excitement”. The sentence “I watch dating reality shows because they are entertaining” was the most agreed-upon reason for watching those programs. Similar results could be found in a study conducted by Patino et al. (2012) indicating that the main motivation of adolescents watching reality TV is to satisfy their need for entertainment and excitement.

Comparable outcomes can be found in the interviews. Entertainment or excitement was the most popular theme in the talks with dating reality show viewers. The responders in both survey and interviews often mentioned “drama” as the reason why they like to watch those programs. They really enjoyed the conflicts, plot twists and cheatings as well as the humoristic aspects of those shows such as funny hosts or commentators. According to Patino et al. “that the importance of the humour motivation may decline with age and the importance of drama as a viewer motivation may increase with age” (2012, p. 141). The responders stated that they like to make fun of the participants. Dating reality shows often (but not always) cast “simple” people for their programs because individuals who are less aware are more likely to create an entertaining content for viewers. Furthermore, they often add humoristic value to the show due to their unintentional humour based on their lack of knowledge or their naive behaviour. This may refer to data presented by Frisby (2004) that suggest that reality show viewers often participate in some form of social comparison. Thus, they might compare themselves to the participants to feel superior. However, when asked if watching those shows make them feel better about themselves, majority of the responders strongly disagreed with this sentence.

Another strong reason behind watching these shows for this target group is relaxation. Majority of the responders strongly agreed with the sentences that dating reality shows relaxes them after a hard day and that they are easy to look at and do not require much mental involvement. In the times where people are always in a hurry and many of them spends the majority of time working or taking care of their families, the need for a relaxation is in high demand. Dating reality shows are a great way to relax for overworked and overstimulated people as they are a perfect blend of entertainment and mental and distraction. The simplicity of the plots and predictability of those formats with the possibility of turning them on only for a few minutes, can allow people to unwind after a long day. Thus, people often choose to turn on those shows to reduce stress by enjoying the entertaining nature of that genre.

Survey participants also agreed that they watch dating programs to kill time. However, they did not agree with a reason that they turn them on because they have nothing else to do. They said that they watch them because they are bored and that they have to somehow fill their free time.

The majority of the responders also agreed that they considered watching dating reality shows as a guilty pleasure. Thus, even though viewers are aware that those programs are not the most sophisticated, they still gain enjoyment out of them. However, as guilty pleasure is something that people are ashamed of, 84.9% of the responders stated that they are not ashamed to confess to their friends and families that they watch those kinds of shows. This reveals that people feel ashamed of themselves and their own judgement rather than a judgement of the others.

Responders also agreed that they watch those shows as a form of escapism. The majority of survey responders agreed that those shows are a form of escaping everyday problems. One of the interviewees stated that “everyone needs a moment to escape from their own problems and focus on the issues of others, in this case, the participants.”

Referring to the escapism, the word “odmóżdzenie” was mentioned many times not only in interviews but also as an additional reason in the survey. “Odmóżdzenie” in a direct translation means “decerebration” or “brain eraser” and it’s a word that is often used to describe an activity that require little to no intellectual effort. It is often used to label forms of entertainment, such as “trash” television shows, reading gossip sites, or any other activity that is entertaining and at

the same time is mentally unstimulating. “Odmóżdzenie” is a form of both escapism and relaxation as people use it to escape from the reality and at the same time relax as it does not require much mental or physical effort.

The contrast between survey and interview responses can be noticed with “socializing” as a reason for watching dating reality television. Survey responders rather not agreed with sentences linked to socializing factors of those shows Viewers watch reality television to spend some time with friends, family or significant others or to be able to join the conversation about the show (Woods & Ebersole, 2007). However, in the survey, the majority of the responders (75.1%) say they do not feel “fear of missing out” (FOMO) when they do not watch a particular dating reality show.

The majority of the responders rather disagreed with both “voyeurism” and “identification” motives. Responders rather disagreed than agreed with that they like to look into the private lives of participants. Few people mentioned voyeurism in the interviews. Participant 1 stated that she chose a particular shows (*Too Hot To Handle* and *FBoy Island*) as her favourite because “there's the most erotic and sexual tension there”. Other interviewee also mentioned that she enjoys *Too Hot To Handle* and *The Perfect Match* the most due to participants being intimate with each other. Studying the motivations of people watching dating reality television, Roberti (2007) stated that the more adolescents watch TV, the higher the chance they will choose stimulating content. Furthermore, girls are more likely to choose shows that include erotic content. Viewers want to acquire dating advice or educate themselves about sexual activity. Consequently, dating reality shows can change the perceptions of individuals about relationships and sex (Roberti, 2007).

As for Social Learning the responders rather agree that they like to see how participants handle some dating situations. However, they rather strongly disagreed with that those shows make them feel better about themselves (only 13% agreed or strongly agreed). Lastly, the survey responders had a mixed response for each sentence under category of participants. Thus, people under this category more agreed with the fact that they watch those shows because they like to watch them competing and see how their relation will develop rather than due to attractiveness of the participants or to watch them in real life situations.

According to the interviews some people choose the program due to participants that are in the show. They mentioned the “bizarreness” or “stupidity” of the participant as the reason for watching them. One of the participants stated that “(I watch that show) because in this show, the participants are the dumbest, so you can laugh at them”. One of the responders mentioned that “(I choose this show as my favourite) mainly because there are good-looking people there. Maybe you could say I'm shallow and superficial, but I just like looking at nice things". Thus, some people enjoy participants attractiveness and mark it as a reason for watching those shows (even though the majority disagreed with this point in the survey).

Furthermore, in line with Reception Theory, the results of this study shows how different viewers interpret the content of those shows. As some Polish viewers provide a dominant reading where they enjoy the content as producers intended which is a light entertainment with some amount of plot twists and drama. For others, the negotiated reading occurs, where they enjoy the shows however they are aware that the shows are to some amount scripted, and that the occurring drama is exaggerated by montage and out of context statements. The rest could adopt an oppositional reading where they watch those shows not for drama and entertainment but to watch it ironically.

In conclusion, all ten motives (Entertainment/ Excitement, Voyeurism, Identification, Relaxation, Pass Time, Socializing, Social Learning, Escapism, Habit and Participants) are valid reasons behind watching dating reality shows. Therefore, different people have different reasons why they choose those shows to watch. However, the most popular reason was “entertainment” with the majority people agreeing with sentences under that category. Other most prevalent reason was relaxation, socializing and pastime.

## 5.2 Limitations

There were various limitations for this study. First was a lack of prior research regarding dating reality shows and their audience. Therefore, the majority of the data used for this study was based on reality shows in general, which is also a topic with not much existing research.

Furthermore, that data found was usually based on Western countries, leading to lack of research regarding Polish viewership.

Another limitation for this study was a limited access to diverse group of participants. As participant for both survey and interviews were recruited online, mainly via social media, the group with limited access to internet or people who has no social media account could not take part in this study. Furthermore, as the recruiting was done strictly online with the link to the post, the author has no impact on who will take part in the survey. Thus, the majority of the responders were female. However, the big number of collected answers could compensate the fact that this research had a character of convenience sampling. Additionally, due to limited time and no budget for this research, the author was not able to find more dating reality shows male viewers to receive more diverse results.

Another limitation is in the translation of key concepts. As the data were collected in Polish and then translated to English, some expressions were difficult to translate, and they could lose their original meaning. This which could impact the validity of data and how the reader understand certain concepts such as the above mentioned “drama” and “odmóżdzenie”.

### 5.3 Future Research

As this research provides insights why young Polish adults watch dating reality television, there some areas of this topic that could be taken under further investigation to better understand this phenomenon.

First, the similar study could be run in the broader age group. This research could provide the differences between different age groups and what motive is the strongest for each of them. Furthermore, this could show which format is the most appealing for each group. Moreover, the viewer could also be divided for regions to understand the differences of watching habits between for example people from west and people from east.

Another aspect that could be investigated more is the differences between watching those shows on traditional television set and on streaming services. This could show the difference of

watching habits and preferences between viewers who have to wait and be in the presents of TV set at the time of the program and people who plays those shows whenever and wherever they want to.

Lastly, future research could include the role of social media into dating reality television watching. As social media became an important aspect of reality television, the future research could include how it shapes viewers experience and habits (such as second screen-usage) of dating reality programs.

## 6. Conclusion

Reality television became a global phenomenon in a quarter of a century. Today, RTV still scores high in viewership offering a wide range of formats to fulfil need of different viewers. Among those, romance/dating subgenre became one of the most popular with catching audience's attention with its heartbreaks, conflicts and plot twists. Despite being frequently criticized as a low-quality entertainment, dating reality television continuously attracts immense number of viewers. This brings the question: Why are people watching these shows? Thus, the aim of this research was to explore what drives young Polish adults aged 18-35 to watch dating reality shows.

The reasons for watching dating reality television were divided into 10 motives that were chosen based on them being previously mentioned as reason why people watch reality television by different academics (Heering, 2012; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011; Woods & Ebersole, 2007; Roberti, 2007; Patino et al., 2012; Nabi et al., 2003; Lundy et al., 2008). Those motives were: Entertainment/ Excitement, Voyeurism, Identification, Relaxation, Pass Time, Socializing, Social Learning, Escapism, Habit and Participants. The findings revealed that the most popular reason why this target group watch dating shows is because they are looking for entertainment. Responders agreed that they enjoy the drama of these shows as well as unexpected twists as well as they watch it for humoristic reasons and to mock the participants. Furthermore, many viewers turn on those shows to relax as they do not require much mental involvement or kill the time when they are bored. The finding reveals that even though

approximately half the viewers watch those shows alone, the other half use them to socialize with friends or family. Furthermore, many responders mentioned “odmóżdzenie” (brain easer or brain draining) as another factor why they watch those shows. “Odmóżdzenie” is a Polish colloquial term that refers to the activities that are seen as intellectually unchallenging like watching TV shows or scrolling social media. People often use this term to describe something that can be mindless and easy to consume. Therefore, it can be considered as a form of relaxation and escapism. The findings also revealed that Poles are not ashamed of watching those shows even though the majority of them considered it as their guilty pleasure. Many people agreed with the fact that they turn on those programs as they background sound when they do something else. People also agree that they watch those programs because they like to see the developing relationship among participants and to bet on who will end up together or win the program.

Results shows that participants rather do not agree that they watch those programs due to voyeuristic reasons, neither because they identify with the participants. Furthermore, they indicated that watching those show does not make them feel better about themselves or that it does make them feel less alone.

Based on prior research, three hypotheses were stated at the beginning of writing this dissertation. Based on the results of the study, all hypotheses were confirmed as true with the second hypothesis being the most agreed on within this target group.

H1: Dating reality shows allow spectators to escape from their own reality and have a break from their stressful life.

Answer: Based on the results of the study, responders rather agreed with escapism being a reason for watching dating reality shows. Under this motive, 161 (27%) strongly agreed and 166 (27,8%) agreed with the sentence that “I watch dating reality shows because they are a form of escape from everyday problems”. Thus, dating reality TV provides a temporary escape for young Polish adults from their daily stresses as it’s a form of media that keeps the viewer entertained without much mental involvement.

H2: Dating reality shows viewers might watch it for entertainment - to enjoy the drama and conflicts

Answer: Results indicated that entertainment is the main reason why young Polish adults watch this type of programming. Findings shows that entertainment is the most agreed on reason for watching dating reality television both by men and women with 90.9% of responders agreeing or strongly agreeing with this reason. Conflicts, drama and unexpected twists and turns it what brings polish audience in front of their screens.

H3: Dating reality shows are a reason to socialize with friends and family.

Answer: Socialising received rather mixed responses from the participants. The survey indicated that 53.6% of people watch those shows alone. Thus 46.4% watch it with some company. Even though the responses in the survey regarding socializing reason were rather negative, the survey indicated that many people watch those shows with friends, partners or other family members. Thus, even though many people watch these shows in company, it might not be a reason why they watch those program but more that indicated their watching habits.

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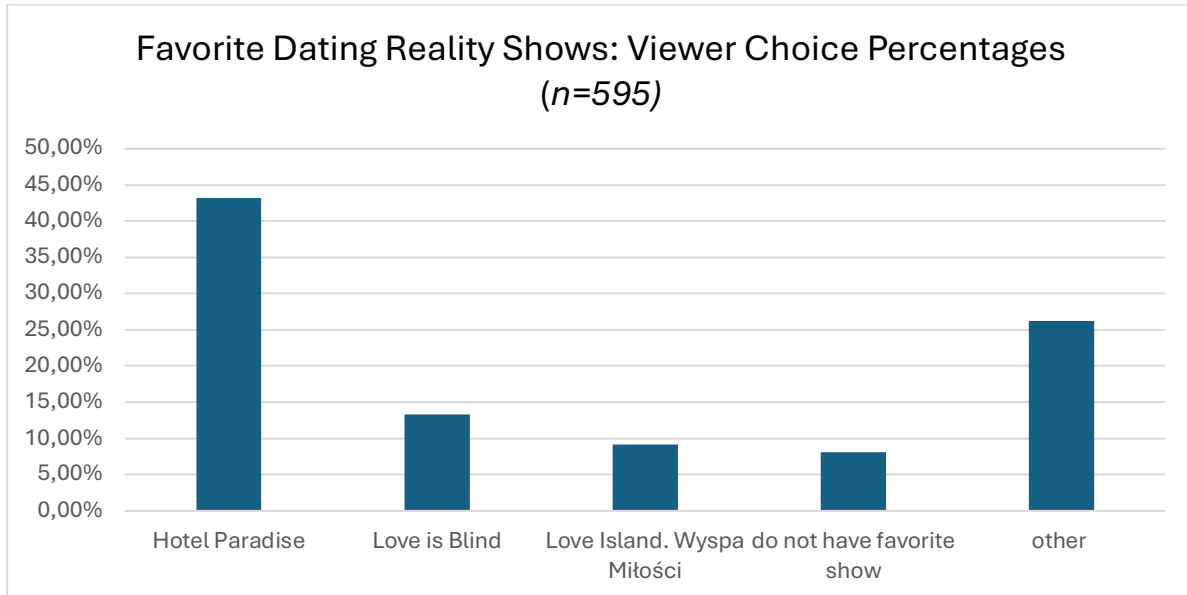
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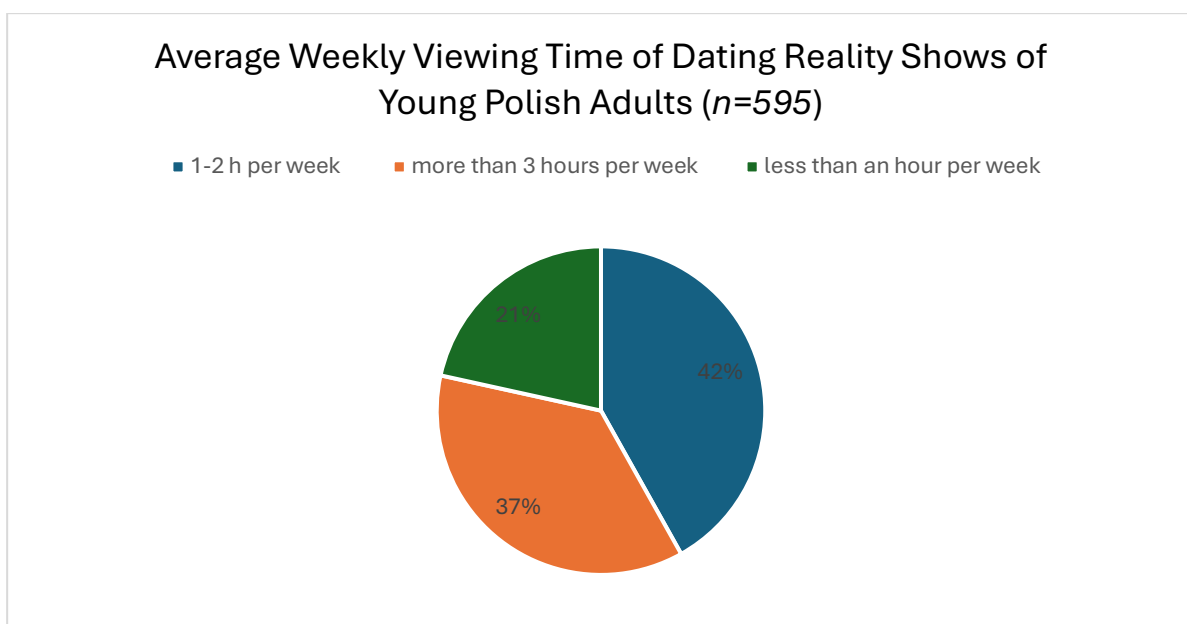
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# Appendixes

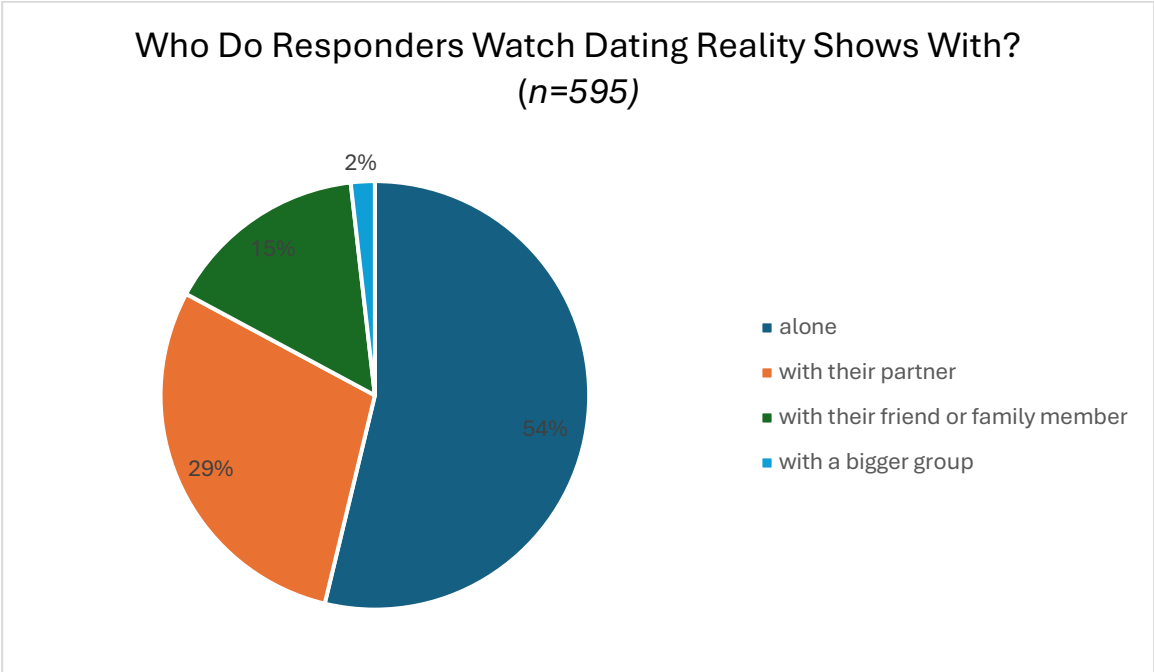
## Appendix A - Favorite Dating Reality Shows: Viewer Choice Percentages



## Appendix B - Average Weekly Viewing Time of Dating Reality Shows of Young Polish Adults



Appendix C - Who Do Responders Watch Dating Reality Shows With?



## Appendix D - Interviews scripts (English and Polish)

Color coding:

1. Excitement / entertainment
2. Voyeurism
3. Identification
4. Relaxation
5. Pass time
6. Socializing
7. Social learning
8. Escapism
9. Habit
10. Participants
  
11. Odmóżdzenie – marked as translated

Interviews were translated with ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2024).

### Participant 1

**Julia:** What made you watch your first dating reality show? What show was it?

**Participant 1:** I think it was Hotel Paradise. I started watching it to kill time and boredom. Mainly out of boredom.

**Julia:** Do you have a favorite dating show now? If so, which one and why?

**Participant 1:** My favorite is probably FBoy Island, and second is Too Hot To Handle because it has the most sexual and erotic tension, and the weirdest people. FBoy Island was funny, it had a good sense of humor. It stood out in that way compared to other dating shows. It was genuinely the funniest.

**Julia:** Why do you watch these shows?

**Participant 1:** I watch them when I'm tired because they don't require any engagement from me. My brain doesn't have to work hard, and they don't require much focus.

**Julia:** How often do you watch these shows?

**Participant 1:** Mostly in waves. When a new show or season of my favorite show comes out, I binge-watch it. Otherwise, I might go months without watching anything and then spend 3 days binge-watching an entire season.

**Julia:** Do these shows change your perception of dating and romantic relationships?

**Participant 1:** No. I know it's television and most situations are staged, so generally no.

**Julia:** Do you ever identify with the participants?

**Participant 1:** No, because it's all television. I assume it's all kind of fictional, like a movie.

**Julia:** Do you watch these shows alone or with others, and with whom most often?

**Participant 1:** Mostly with others or simultaneously with someone, so we can discuss what's happening. Usually with my sister.

**Julia:** Do you discuss these shows with friends or family?

**Participant 1:** A bit.

**Julia:** What do your comments usually focus on?

**Participant 1:** We usually talk about how stupid they are or how the guys are jerks. Or about someone sleeping with someone else or not, and plot twists.

**Julia:** Do you tell others you watch these shows, or do you keep it to yourself?

**Participant 1:** I don't boast about it in a larger group. But I see more people openly watching and talking about it, so I mention it more openly too.

**Julia:** Have you faced any criticism for admitting you watch these shows?

**Participant 1:** No, because it turns out everyone watches them.

**Julia:** Do you think there are any stereotypes about viewers of these shows, and are any of them true?

**Participant 1:** I used to think the stereotype was that only dummies without a life watched these shows. But now I see that many of my friends watch them too, so I don't think so. Most people see it as simple entertainment, brainless entertainment.

**Julia:** Do you plan to continue watching these shows, and why or why not?

**Participant 1:** Of course! I'm waiting for the new season on July 19. I plan to keep relaxing with these shows because they don't cause me any stress at all.

**Participant 2**

**Julia:** What made you watch your first dating reality show and what show was it?

**Participant 2:** The first was Big Brother. The concept wasn't exactly dating, but people hooked up there too. **Everyone watched it**, it was a cultural phenomenon.

**Julia:** And why did you watch it?

**Participant 2:** **Everyone in Poland watched it, no one questioned why.**

**Julia:** What's your favorite show now and why?

**Participant 2:** Out of all I've seen, I probably like Naked Attraction the most.

**Julia:** Why?

**Participant 2:** Because it's the most shocking and unexpected. But I generally don't buy these shows as real, **it's just entertainment and the nudity adds shock value.** But it gets boring after a few episodes, still more interesting than people just talking on a beach.

**Julia:** Why do you watch dating reality shows?

**Participant 2:** **Out of boredom** and **to relax because they don't require any critical thinking.** It's just a **braineraser**

**Julia:** What emotions do you feel while watching?

**Participant 2:** Embarrassment, sometimes shock, and sometimes it's funny.

**Julia:** How often do you watch these shows?

**Participant 2:** Rarely. I don't remember the last time I watched one. **Usually, I watch with someone when we can't decide on what to watch.**

**Julia:** Do these shows change your perception of dating and romantic relationships?

**Participant 2:** No, because I still see them as totally fictional and staged. They don't reflect anything real.

**Julia:** Do you discuss these shows with friends?

**Participant 2:** Only while watching. The topic usually ends after that.

**Julia:** Do you feel like you're invading someone's privacy by watching these shows?

**Participant 2:** Not really. Maybe more with Big Brother, where they were constantly watched and might forget about the cameras.

**Julia:** Do you admit to your friends that you watch these shows?

**Participant 2:** Not really. I might mention something that happened in a show but I don't discuss it much with friends or family.

**Julia:** Have you faced criticism for watching these shows?

**Participant 2:** Not really, because everyone watches them. It's a bit of a guilty pleasure.

**Julia:** Do you think there are stereotypes about viewers of these shows and are any true?

**Participant 2:** Not really. These shows are popular because everyone needs a break from their own problems and to focus on others. Watching these shows doesn't reflect intelligence or level. I'd be surprised if my dad watched them, but that's more about stereotypes.

**Julia:** Do you plan to continue watching these shows and why?

**Participant 2:** Sure, if something good and new comes out, I might watch it with someone to erase the brains. But I don't usually watch them alone because I know they're too staged. A friend who participated in an American format and a friend who edits these shows told me how staged they are. I work in the film industry and have seen producers instruct participants on how to react to calls.

**Julia:** Does knowing how staged they are affect your decision to watch?

**Participant 2:** Yes, because reality shows aren't real. Everything is edited for reactions, and relationships are staged. Maybe if a show was truly unscripted, I'd watch more. That's why I like Naked Attraction, it seems less staged.

### **Participant 3**

**Julia** What made you watch your first dating reality show, and what show was it?

**Participant 3** I won't lie, the pandemic was a driving force. Spending too much time in front of the TV, always looking for something new, something with several seasons to fill up the excess free time. It was "Hotel Paradise," probably because I already had access to Player where it was available.

**Julia** Do you have a favorite dating show? If so, which one and why?

**Participant 3** "Hotel Paradise." I think I watch it out of sentiment, and the fact that my wife and I started watching it together from the beginning makes us treat it like a series where the plot and characters change.

**Julia** What makes you turn on such a show?

**Participant 3** The desire to unwind. To take a break from reality and indulge in the nosy curiosity of peeking into someone's daily life (because that's a bit what the show is about).

**Julia** What emotions do you feel when watching this show?

**Participant 3** I definitely get emotionally invested. It's simple, you pick a few favorites and secretly cheer for them to go as far as possible. Their win feels like my own (in a way), and when they lose, I always look for someone to blame and consider it a great injustice by the TV.

**Julia** How often do you watch dating reality shows?

**Participant 3** Honestly, it depends on the airing schedule. In the case of "Hotel Paradise," I know when the premiere is and when it's on, so that's when I watch. If I know there's a break, say a month or two, I take a break myself to "miss" the show.

**Julia** Do you see any changes in your perception of dating and romantic relationships after watching these shows?

**Participant 3** No, it's a show and often completely disconnected from real feelings. It's meant to be entertainment, not romance.

**Julia** Do you watch these shows alone or with someone? Who do you prefer to watch with and why?

**Participant 3** I always watch with my wife. She even gets mad if I see a teaser alone. It's also a kind of way to spend time together.

**Julia** Do you discuss these shows with friends or family? What do you usually comment on?

**Participant 3** With family, yes. Not with friends because many people are ashamed to admit they watch such shows. They fear they'll be seen as less intelligent because they spend an hour or two watching disconnected people trying to fall in love on a show. It's more pathetic to hide it, in my opinion. It's funny when someone pretends not to know anything about a format but then follows the participants on social media. It's senseless.

**Julia** Do you think you invade the privacy of the participants by watching dating reality shows?

**Participant 3** Yes. But they agree to it by signing contracts and documents. That's the price of fame, so I don't feel bad about it.

**Julia** Do you tell others that you watch these shows, or do you keep it to yourself?

**Participant 3** I admit it. I don't care what someone might think. It amuses me when people hide it. Not everyone has to listen to self-development podcasts or read tons of books and learn a seventh foreign language. Sometimes you can unwind, and it's no shame.

**Julia** Do you ever identify with the participants? For example, during a breakup?

**Participant 3** No, absolutely not. It's a different level. Besides, they know millions of people will be watching, so they can't fully behave naturally. It's about entertainment and often the money that comes with it afterward. I know this because I have a friend who won such a show, but he was a completely different person in real life. That was the convention and his idea, and it worked. Today he sells solar panels, so it was a short-sighted plan.

**Julia** Have you faced criticism or negative opinions because you watch dating reality shows? How do you react?

**Participant 3** Yes. I don't care. **What's it to them how I spend my free time?** I don't think I'm hurting anyone or becoming backward. It's a show for an hour, then I'm back home and not on Bali or another paradise island.

**Julia** Which stereotypes about viewers do you think are true, and which are unfair?

**Participant 3** Probably the biggest one is that viewers of such shows are usually simple, poorly educated people or unhappy loners.

**Julia** Do you plan to continue watching dating reality shows? Why or why not?

**Participant 3** Probably. It's a way to spend free time and, as I said, a continuation of a series. If I get bored, I'll stop, but it's a bit like getting hooked into a cycle where you watch a weaker season and then want to watch the next one hoping it will be better, and you get stuck in a loop.

#### **Participant 4**

**Julia** Tell me, what made you watch your first dating reality show and what was the show?

**Participant 4** I think it was curiosity and **boredom.** Also, word of mouth because **everyone around was watching it, so I was just curious about what everyone was talking about.** But which reality show it was? I don't remember.

**Julia** Okay, do you have a favorite dating show? If so, which one and why?

**Participant 4** Currently?

**Julia** Yes.

**Participant 4** It's "Perfect Match" because it's like a combination of all the dating reality show universes.

**Julia** And why else would you say it's your favorite?

**Participant 4** Maybe because I already know most of the cast, so I'm emotionally closer to them, more invested in their fates, which of course increases the show's viewership with such moves.

**Julia** And when you turn on such a show, what drives you? What makes you start it?

**Participant 4** Usually, I just want to switch off my brain. I need something that doesn't require much mental effort or focus. Sometimes I play it out of habit when I'm making dinner, crocheting, or just scrolling through my phone.

**Julia** And what emotions do you feel watching these shows?

**Participant 4** Mostly positive emotions, related to amusement and relaxation, sometimes just disbelief at how stupid people can be and what they're doing, thinking I would never act like that. Then I think it's funny. But it's mostly the type of brain-off entertainment that brings me mental bliss.

**Julia** Do you see any changes in your perception of dating and romantic relationships after watching these shows?

**Participant 4** Has it changed my approach? I don't think so. Maybe I see that group of people who behave like that in romantic relationships a bit differently. With a bit more understanding, maybe, but I just start to understand why they act that way, as the way and type of values they hold differ from mine. I wouldn't act like they do, but at least I might understand their actions better.

**Julia** Do you ever identify with the participants?

**Participant 4** Usually not, but once on "Too Hot To Handle," there was a participant, I think in the first season. He was just so annoyed that everyone was breaking the rules, thinking it wasn't that hard to follow them, and wondering why they were acting like idiots. Whenever there's such a character in the cast, I identify with them.

**Julia** Mhm, so when there's someone a bit "more normal"?

**Participant 4** Yes, whenever someone shows any signs of common sense.

**Julia** Do you think you're invading the participants' privacy by watching these shows?

**Participant 4** No, definitely not. Only because I know they had to consent to participate in the show, so they allowed us to peek into this part of their intimate life. But if I were to watch someone in such a situation without their consent, that would be very inappropriate and wrong.

**Julia** Do you watch these shows alone or with someone else, and if with someone, who?

**Participant 4** I usually watch them alone, but sometimes with my best friends.

**Julia** Do you discuss these shows with your friends often or at all?

**Participant 4** Yes.

**Julia** And what are those conversations like?

**Participant 4** We usually talk about some decisions made by participants, like when I watched two seasons of "Hotel Paradise," I discussed with my friend what everyone did. If there's a good season of "Too Hot To Handle," we also talk about what happened in the latest episode.

**Julia** Do you tell others that you watch these shows, or do you prefer to keep it to yourself?

**Participant 4** Totally! I'm that person who has no problem admitting I watch a new show.

**Julia** Have you faced criticism or negative opinions for watching these shows?

**Participant 4** Yes, even today.

**Julia** What kind of criticism, and how do you react to it?

**Participant 4** People asking why I watch such crappy shows, saying it's **brain-numbing**. Well, that's the point. **Maybe also because I'm single, so I use these shows as a way to spend time alone.** I don't like silence, so I have something talking in the background, like how it used to be radio, but now it's dumb dating reality shows. I usually respond to the criticism by saying it gives me pleasure. I don't watch it with reverence, just for relaxation, so I have no problem with it. If the person criticizing has a problem, that's not my problem.

**Julia** Okay, which stereotypes about viewers of these shows do you think are true?

**Participant 4** Definitely that all of them are incredible gossipers and nosy and love to know everything.

**Julia** And do you think these are true?

**Participant 4** For sure! If you watch such shows, you probably like gossip.

**Julia** Okay, last question, do you plan to continue watching such shows and why or why not?

**Participant 4** Absolutely, and my first argument is that only half of the second season is out, and I'm waiting for the second half.

**Participant 5**

**Julia** So tell me, what made you watch your first dating reality show and what was the show?

**Participant 5** Absolute boredom. And it was "Hotel Paradise."

**Julia** Do you have a favorite show now?

**Participant 5** Yes, it's "Too Hot To Handle."

**Julia** Why?

**Participant 5** Because the participants in that show are the dumbest, so you can laugh at them.

**Julia** What makes you turn on such a show?

**Participant 5** The desire to switch off my brain and make myself feel better and a bit smarter.

**Julia** And what emotions do you associate with it?

**Participant 5** Well, it's funny, so I feel... What kind of emotion is it? Joy? Entertainment? And of course, there's second-hand embarrassment. Feeling embarrassed for those people.

**Julia** How often do you watch these shows?

**Participant 5** A few times a year when a new season comes out.

**Julia** Do you see any changes in your perception of dating and romantic relationships after watching such shows?

**Participant 5** I don't think so. Maybe it just makes me realize that such people exist in this world, and I might come across such a person on a dating app, for example.

**Julia** Do you ever identify with any participant or multiple participants?

**Participant 5** No, I never find myself identifying with any participant.

**Julia** Do you think you're invading the participants' privacy?

**Participant 5** No, they agreed to it.

**Julia** Do you watch these shows alone or with someone else?

**Participant 5** Only with my friend. We spend time together that way. Then the second-hand embarrassment isn't as big.

**Julia** Do you discuss these shows with friends or family?

**Participant 5** No, not really. I only discuss them with that friend while watching, so in real-time.

**Julia** Do you admit that you watch these kinds of shows?

**Participant 5** Not to brag about it, no. I don't brag about it.

**Julia** Alright, what stereotypes about viewers do you think are true, and which are unfair?

**Participant 5** I don't know, like that only rural people in Poland watch it. That's not true. Everyone watches it, they just don't admit it.

**Julia** Do you plan to continue watching these shows?

**Participant 5** Only when my friend visits me again.

## **Participant 6**

**Julia** Hi, I see everything is working, so we can start.

**Participant 6** Great, I'm ready.

**Julia** Tell me, what was the first dating reality show you watched?

**Participant 6** "Too Hot To Handle."

**Julia** And why did you choose that show as your first?

**Participant 6** Because I was intrigued by the fact that the participants, despite being prohibited from having intimate interactions with each other, still do it.

**Julia** What's your favorite show of this type?

**Participant 6** I have three. The first is "Too Hot To Handle," but I also really like "Hotel Paradise," which I watched for many years. The third is my new discovery called "Perfect Match."

**Julia** Why would you say these are your favorites?

**Participant 6** "Too Hot To Handle" and "Perfect Match" mainly because the contestants look very good, are well-presented, and are athletic, so it's nice to watch them. Another reason is that there's a lot of drama and intimate moments. "Hotel Paradise," because it has the best drama and arguments. The people who come there are an interesting type of people.

**Julia** What influences your choice of the program you watch? Why do you decide to turn on one and not another?

**Participant 6** Mainly because there are attractive people. Maybe it's shallow and superficial, but I like looking at nice things. For example, "Love is Blind" didn't appeal to me because people can't see each other. I believe the physical aspect plays a very big role in creating relationships, especially partnerships. Another thing is that the more moments that keep me in suspense, the better.

**Julia** What emotions do you feel when watching such shows?

**Participant 6** Mainly excitement. Frequent plot twists, partner changes, and betrayals influence why I watch these types of shows.

**Julia** How often do you watch such shows?

**Participant 6** Mmm, since there aren't many that I actually watch, I watch them mainly when a new season comes out. But when a new season is out, I binge-watch it sometimes in one day. Now I've been watching "Perfect Match" for three days straight.

**Julia** So if you start a new show, do you usually watch it all at once? If you have the opportunity, of course.

**Participant 6** Yes, yes, yes, yes, I watch it all at once because the episodes totally keep me in suspense, and each ends in a way that I have to see the next one. Yesterday, for example, I went to sleep out of reason, not because I wanted to.

**Julia** Okay, and do you notice any changes in your perception of dating and relationships after watching such shows?

**Participant 6** Yes, yes, yes, yes, I think these kinds of shows affect how I perceive potential relationships with other partners. They seem less credible to me because of such shows. I also have more concerns because if someone is willing to do that on air in front of millions, my potential partner, with an audience of just me, can lie to me even more.

**Julia** So you'd say it affects your level of trust in another person?

**Participant 6** Definitely.

**Julia** Do you watch these shows alone or with someone?

**Participant 6** It depends. I like watching with friends, especially my girlfriends, because I can comment aloud and share experiences while watching. But if no one is around, and I know a new season is out, I'll watch it alone.

**Julia** Do you often discuss or talk about these shows with friends or family?

**Participant 6** With my sister.

**Julia** What are those conversations like?

**Participant 6** We mostly judge how someone looks, who's paired with whom, and why we think a certain couple is good or not. We also express a lot of empathy towards girls who are hurt by stupid boys.

**Julia** Do you think watching such shows invades someone's privacy?

**Participant 6** No, because I know they agreed. They wanted to come and show themselves.

**Julia** Do you usually admit to watching dating reality shows? For example, would you tell a newly met guy that you watch these kinds of shows, or not?

**Participant 6** No, he doesn't know I'm currently watching "Perfect Match." If he asks what I'm doing, I say I'm watching some movies with a friend.

**Julia** Okay, so you don't admit it?

**Participant 6** No, I keep it to myself and my closest friends.

**Julia** Would you say you identify with the participants in these shows? In any situations, for example?

**Participant 6** I identify with these people and their problems, for example, with girls having trust issues because they were hurt by their partners.

**Julia** Have you ever encountered criticism or negative opinions when you said you watch such shows?

**Participant 6** I have. My ex-boyfriend always criticized me when I said I wanted to watch. He got annoyed that I wanted to watch what he called stupid stuff.

**Julia** Do you think it's your guilty pleasure?

**Participant 6** Definitely! Watching them gives me pleasure and fulfills my needs, even though I know it's not high-quality television.

**Julia** What stereotypes would you mention about viewers of such shows?

**Participant 6** That they are unintelligent, have no goals in life, enjoy ridiculing others, and watch to feel better about themselves. I'd say that's the type of person who watches these shows.

**Julia** Do you think any of these stereotypes are true?

**Participant 6** I think in some cases, yes, but not always. I wouldn't say I have no goals in life or that I'm unintelligent.

**Julia** Do you plan to keep watching dating shows and if so, why?

**Participant 6** Definitely! For example, today after we finish talking, I'll finish the season of "Perfect Match." Why? Because, in the end, it's a form of entertainment and relaxation. I like this kind of relaxation. I've done everything I needed to do today, and sometimes I like to turn off my brain. I think with this kind of show, you don't need to be very focused, and it doesn't require my full concentration. I'll continue watching because it's a form of relaxation for me. It gives me pleasure.

**Julia** Well, that's all, thank you very much for the interview.

## **Participant 7**

**Julia** What made you watch your first dating reality show, and what show was it?

**Participant 7** The first one was "Love Is Blind." It was during COVID-19, and I had already watched everything else. It was a last resort, so to speak.

**Julia** What's your favorite show and why?

**Participant 7** Well, it's probably "Love Is Blind" because the people are more normal. They are educated and have normal jobs, not like the shallow people on other shows.

**Julia** What emotions do you feel when watching this show?

**Participant 7** Embarrassment, hahaha. No, seriously, I'm ashamed to watch it, but these shows provide entertainment. It's easy to watch when you don't want to think and you're tired. You can just watch stupid people on the screen.

**Julia** What makes you turn on such a show?

**Participant 7** Mainly boredom, but I would say that I also relax to some extent while watching them. They don't require thinking, so it's a moment to unwind. For example, after a long day, when I don't want to think or stress about a plot, it's a great thing to watch.

**Julia** How often do you watch such shows?

**Participant 7** About 2 or 3 times a year. I watch "Love Is Blind," but recently, when I was sick, I watched the entire "The Perfect Match" and "Dated and Related."

**Julia** Do you notice any changes in your perception of dating and relationships from watching these shows?

**Participant 7** I'm very happy to be in a long-term relationship and not have to date or meet people like those on the shows. They represent dating today very negatively.

**Julia** Is there anything you'd fear about dating because of these shows?

**Participant 7** That everyone has too many options and can't commit to any relationship. It's all like fast food – quick and temporary. And generally, that our generation is lost, looking at these people.

**Julia** Do you watch these shows alone or with someone?

**Participant 7** Alone. I'd be embarrassed to watch it with anyone other than my sister. When my boyfriend walks into the room, I mute the sound.

**Julia** Do you discuss these shows with friends or family?

**Participant 7** Mainly about the drama that happened on the show and how people behaved.

**Julia** Do you think watching such shows invades others' privacy?

**Participant 7** No, they went there voluntarily. They even agreed to be filmed at night in the rooms, so I don't feel bad about it at all.

**Julia** You mentioned earlier that it's embarrassing to watch these shows. Do you admit to friends that you watch them?

**Participant 7** Definitely not.

**Julia** Do you think it's your guilty pleasure?

**Participant 7** Because even though I find it embarrassing, they still provide entertainment.

**Julia** Do you ever identify with any participant?

**Participant 7** Not really.

**Julia** Have you ever faced criticism for watching such shows?

**Participant 7** Of course. Mainly for wasting time on them.

**Julia** Which stereotypes about viewers do you think are true, and which are not?

**Participant 7** Well, it's said that mostly stupid people watch them. I think that's often true, but there are also some normal people who just want to unwind. So, that's not the only stereotype that comes to mind.

**Julia** Do you plan to continue watching such shows in the future? Why or why not?

**Participant 7** I don't plan to. But will I watch them? Probably yes.

## **Participant 8**

**Julia** What made you watch your first dating reality show, and what show was it?

**Participant 8** Geez, I think it was one of the Polish ones, but I can't remember if it was "El Dursi" or the other tattooed one, so either "Love Island" or "Hotel Paradise."

**Julia** Okay, and what made you watch it?

**Participant 8** Well, I heard it was a good time-killer, meaning there was a lot of fun to be watching the participants being idiots. But mostly, I watched for the drama because it amused me. The more they fought, the dumber they were, the more it entertained me.

**Julia** Wonderful, do you have a favorite show? If so, which one and why?

**Participant 8** I got most hooked on "Love Never Lies." I mean, I was most engaged in that one. I know it was scripted. It was interesting how they lied to each other and had really stupid views on their relationships. Well, maybe not everyone. But that's the point, as I said, the more controversial and the more they fought over trivial things or cheated, the more interesting it was. Oh, and I also really like "Naked Attraction" because it's such a convoluted idea for a dating show, making it super interesting. Plus, it seems less scripted.

**Julia** Mhm, what makes you turn on such a show?

**Participant 8** Complete boredom. I watch to kill time. There's no other value to it. It's not like I'm waiting for a free moment to watch an episode or eagerly awaiting the next episode's premiere. I watch only when I don't know what else to do with myself.

**Julia** Okay, what emotions do you feel when watching such a show?

**Participant 8** Embarrassment with myself, then embarrassment for the participants. And probably some joy from laughing. It's just entertainment.

**Julia** How often do you watch such shows?

**Participant 8** I think I can watch about four seasons a year. It depends on what Netflix suggests.

**Julia** Do you notice any changes in your perception of dating and romantic relationships after watching such shows?

**Participant 8** I see that I'm definitely not as stupid as some people. I view my relationship the same, but sometimes I see myself in a better light because someone is a bigger idiot than me. So it's somewhat reassuring?

**Julia** Have you ever identified with any participant in such a show?

**Participant 8** Not really.

**Julia** Okay, do you feel that you are invading the participants' privacy by watching these shows?

**Participant 8** No. I feel like they choose to make fools of themselves to become popular. So that's the price they consciously pay to gain attention and make a business out of their participation.

**Julia** Do you watch these shows alone or with someone, and who do you prefer to watch with and why?

**Participant 8** Mainly with my partner; she initiates it. Sometimes I get hooked on a show and suggest we watch another episode, but usually, she picks. Why? Because we're embarrassed together. It's a way to spend time together.

**Julia** Do you sometimes discuss the plots of these shows with friends or family?

**Participant 8** I have two sisters who also watch such shows, so we sometimes talk about them.

**Julia** What do you usually comment on?

**Participant 8** Mainly wondering why we still watch them, haha. But also what happened in the season finale, for example.

**Julia** Do you admit to others that you watch such shows, or do you keep it to yourself?

**Participant 8** I don't admit it.

**Julia** Have you ever faced criticism for watching them?

**Participant 8** Maybe someone said it was stupid, but I don't care too much.

**Julia** Which stereotypes about viewers do you think are true, and which are not?

**Participant 8** I've never met someone who watched these shows seriously, fully immersing themselves and becoming part of that world. So I think everyone watches for the same reasons I do, even if they don't admit it. So, the stereotypical viewer is someone who is a level above the show but still enjoys this type of entertainment for some reason. I wonder what a person who watches it seriously would be like. Those people would be below the show's level, meaning those who think they are definitely less attractive than the participants

and never had a chance to be in such a place. I think these are people who are unhappy in relationships and looking for some benchmark.

**Julia** Do you plan to continue watching such shows and why or why not?

**Participant 8** I feel like the format is a bit exhausted, and I don't know if they can come up with something new with interesting twists instead of another similar season. But I assume they'll come up with something that will tempt me again.

## **Participant 9**

**Julia** Okay, what made you watch your first dating reality show, and what show was it?

**Participant 9** So, it was clips on TikTok that got me interested, and that encouraged me to watch the show called "Single's Inferno."

**Julia** Do you have a favorite dating show? If so, which one and why?

**Participant 9** I don't think I have a favorite, but I really liked that show.

**Julia** When you turn on such a show, besides being convinced by content on social media, why do you watch these shows?

**Participant 9** I watch these shows simply for the action. I'm also curious about how relationships between the participants will develop.

**Julia** What emotions do you feel when watching these shows?

**Participant 9** I get really into them, I admit. I feel a lot of emotions. Mostly, I think, excitement.

**Julia** Do you ever identify with any of the participants on these shows?

**Participant 9** No, never.

**Julia** Do you see any changes in your perception of dating and romantic relationships after watching these shows?

**Participant 9** When I see cheating and lying, I wonder if my partner could do that to me one day, but other than that, no.

**Julia** Do you watch these shows alone or with someone?

**Participant 9** Mostly alone, because I like Korean shows and I know not everyone likes them.

**Julia** Do you feel like you are invading the participants' privacy by watching these shows?

**Participant 9** Not really.

**Julia** Have you ever faced criticism for watching a dating show?

**Participant 9** Quite the opposite, no, because all my friends watch them too.

**Julia** Do you think the stereotypes about viewers of such shows are true?

**Participant 9** I think not. People often say that these shows are stupid, so the people who watch them are not very smart, but that's not true. We watch them mostly out of boredom or as a form of relaxation.

**Julia** And tell me, do you plan to continue watching these shows? Why or why not?

**Participant 9** I think so. If I find something that hooks me the same way, I'll gladly watch it.

## **Uczestnik 1**

**Julia** Co skłoniło Cię do obejrzenia pierwszego randkowego reality show? Jaki to był program?

**Uczestnik 1** Nie wiem, czy to nie był Hotel Paradise, tak mi się zdaje, że zaczęłam od hotelu paradise. I co mnie skłoniło? **Zaczełam oglądać dla zabicia czasu i nudy.** Tak tak, głównie z nudów.

**Julia** I czy masz teraz swój ulubiony program randkowy? Jeśli tak, to który i dlaczego?

**Uczestnik 1** Pierwszy to chyba FBoy Island a drugi to jest Too Hot To Handle dlatego że jest tam najwięcej **jakiś erotycznych i seksualnych napięć** i są tam najdziwniejszy ludzie uważam. W FBoy Island podobało mi się to **że ten program był zabawny, tam było dobre poczucie humoru.** Nie wiem, jakoś wyróżnił się pod tym względem na tle tych wszystkich innych programów randkowych. Ten był taki autentycznie, w jakiś sposób najzabawniejszy.

**Julia** Co powoduje to, że włączasz takie programy?

**Uczestnik 1** **Ja je oglądam, jak jestem zmęczona, bo one nie wymagają ode mnie żadnego zaangażowania.** Mojego mózgu w żaden sposób nie musi się wysilać. No i nie wymaga to mojego skupienia większego.

**Julia** Dobra, a jak często oglądasz takie programy?

**Uczestnik 1** No raczej falami. Jak się pojawi nowy program albo nowy sezon mojego ulubionego programu to włączam. I najczęściej wtedy siadam i oglądam naraz cały. A tak to mogę wiele miesięcy nic nie oglądać i potem spędzić 3 dni bingewatchując cały sezon.

**Julia** Czy widzisz jakieś zmiany w postrzeganiu przez ciebie randek oraz relacji romantycznych przez takie programy?

**Uczestnik 1** Nie. Wiem że to jest telewizja i większość sytuacji jest tam ustawiona więc generalnie to nie.

**Julia** A czy zdarza ci się też utożsamiać z uczestnikami?

**Uczestnik 1** Nie, nie, bo to jest wszystko telewizja. Zakładam, że to jest wszystko jakieś takie fikcyjne, no jakby filmowe i nie jakoś nie.

**Julia** A czy oglądasz te programy raczej samodzielnie czy w towarzystwie i z kim najchętniej?

**Uczestnik 1** Chyba najczęściej w towarzystwie, albo równolegle z kimś i wtedy możemy omawiać, co się dzieje. No chyba z siostrą najczęściej oglądam

**Julia** Czy dyskutujesz o takich programach ze znajomymi lub rodziną?

**Uczestnik 1** No, tak trochę.

**Julia** I jak najczęściej wyglądają takie komentarze? To znaczy o czym najczęściej rozmawiacie?

**Uczestnik 1** Mm, chyba o tym że oni są głupi? Albo że faceci są złamanymi dupkami. Lub omawiamy to że ktoś się ze sobą przespał, albo nie przespał, jakby raczej tego typu rzeczy. I plot twisty!

**Julia** Czy mówisz innym, że oglądasz tego typu programy, czy się do tego nie przyznajesz?

**Uczestnik 1** W szerszym gronie raczej się tym nie chwale. Ale widzę też że coraz więcej ludzi to ogląda faktycznie i mówi o tym otwarcie. I z moich obserwacji wynika, że znajomi rozmawiają o tym coraz bardziej śmiało. Jak społeczeństwo o tym mówi to i ja przez to też śmiało wspomina, że oglądam takie rzeczy.

**Julia** A spotkałaś się z krytyką, jak już się przyznałeś do tego?

**Uczestnik 1** Nie, nie, nie. Bo się okazuje, że teraz wszyscy to oglądają.

**Julia** A czy uważasz na przykład, że są jakieś stereotypy dotyczące takich widzów i uważasz, czy może któraś są prawdziwe?

**Uczestnik 1** No właśnie o to jest chyba w nawiązaniu do tego, co właśnie powiedziałem, że kiedyś myślałam, że są stereotypy, że ogląda to banda jakiś tłumoków, którzy nie mają życia i nie mają ze sobą robić, po czym okazuje się, że ja to oglądam i ogląda wiele moich znajomych, więc nie wydaje mi się, że większość ludzi podchodzi do tego, jak do takiego bardzo taniej prostej rozrywki i takiego odmóźdzacza.

**Julia** I czy planujesz kontynuować oglądanie tych programów i dlaczego, albo dlaczego nie?

**Uczestnik 1** Oczywiście! Czekam teraz na 19 lipca, bo nowy sezon wchodzi. Dlaczego? No dlatego, że planuje się na pewno dalej relaksować przy tych programach, bo faktycznie jakby nie wywołują we mnie najmniejszego napięcia te programy.

## Uczestnik 2

**Julia** Co skłoniło cię do obejrzenia pierwszego randkowego reality show i jaki to był program?

**Uczestnik 2** Pierwszy to był Big Brother. Teoretycznie zamysł programu nie był randkowy, ale tam też kręcili ze sobą. **I wszyscy go oglądali**, to było zjawisko kulturowe.

**Julia** A dlatego go oglądałaś?

**Uczestnik 2** **Po prostu cała Polska to oglądała i tyle. Nikt się nie zastanawiał i nikt nie pytał, dlaczego?**

**Julia** A jaki jest teraz Twój ulubiony program i dlaczego?

**Uczestnik 2** Ze wszystkich które widziałam najbardziej lubię chyba Magię Nagości

**Julia** A czemu?

**Uczestnik 2** Chyba dlatego, że jest najbardziej szokujący i taki nieoczywisty. Ale generalnie nie kupuję tych programów jako prawdziwych, **a tam to jest bardziej po prostu rozrywka i ta nagość daje taki efekt szoku**. Jasne, ale po paru odcinkach to już się nudzi, ale i tak bardziej ciekawe niż po prostu ludzie, którzy sobą gadają na plaży.

**Julia** Jak już włączasz jakiś program reality show randkowy to dlaczego?

**Uczestnik 2** **Była z Nudów** i **żeby się zrelaksować, bo nie wymaga w ogóle żadnego krytycznego myślenia, ani w ogóle myślenia**. Bo po prostu to jest taki **odmóżdżacz**.

**Julia** A jakbyś jak już oglądasz taki program, to jakie czujesz emocje z nim związane?

**Uczestnik 2** Zażenowanie. Czasami szok. Tak i czasami jest śmiesznie.

**Julia** A jak często oglądasz takie programy?

**Uczestnik 2** No szczerze mówiąc megarzadko, bo ostatni raz nie pamiętam, kiedy oglądałam. **Zazwyczaj jak włączam tego typu programy to dlatego że z kimś chcemy coś obejrzeć i nie wiemy co**.

**Julia** Czy widzisz jakieś zmiany w postrzeganiu przez ciebie randek oraz relacji po obejrzeniu do tych programów, czyli na przykład?

**Uczestnik 2** Nie, bo dalej traktuję jako totalnie fikcyjne i wyreżyserowane. W sensie uważam, że ta sytuacja jest sprowokowana i nie oddają one nic realnego.

**Julia** Czy dyskutujesz o takich programów ze znajomymi?

**Uczestnik 2** Tylko w czasie oglądania. Potem raczej temat się kończy.

**Julia** A czy masz na przykład takie wrażenie, że naruszasz czyjąś prywatność? Oglądając takie programy?

**Uczestnik 2** Raczej nie. Może w przypadku Big Brothera bardziej było coś takiego, że nie są oni non-stop podglądani i może czasami jakoś było takie poczucie, że mogli zapomnieć, że kamery są w domu albo wydawało im się, że akurat ten ta rozmowa nie trafi na wizję a tak nie było.

**Julia** A czy przyznajesz się swoim znajomym, że oglądasz tego typu programy?

**Uczestnik 2** W sumie nie. Czasami może wspomnę, że w jakim programie była jakaś akcja ale raczej o tym ze znajomymi czy rodziną nie rozmawiam.

**Julia** Czy spotkałaś się właśnie z krytyką, że obejrzałaś tego typu program?

**Uczestnik 2** Raczej nie, bo wszyscy je oglądają. Każdy widział któryś z tych programów, bo to trochę jest takie guilty pleasure.

**Julia** Czy uważasz na przykład stereotypy dotyczące właśnie widzów takich show jako prawdziwe?

**Uczestnik 2** A nie, nie wydaje mi się. Są one bardzo popularne, dlatego, że właśnie wszyscy je oglądają i każdy potrzebuje takiego momentu, żeby uciec od swoich problemów i skupić się na problemach innych, w tym przypadku uczestników. Uważam, że oglądanie takich programów nie jest czymś co świadczy o inteligencji albo jakimś poziomie. Znaczą, zdziwiłabym się, gdybym może mój Tata je oglądał, ale to bardziej bym była jako zaniepokojona.

**Julia** No, ale właśnie mówisz zaniepokojona, bo to jest kwestia stereotypów?

**Uczestnik 2** Może tak może w sumie zależy, kto ogląda, jak to oglądają dziewczyny to mnie totalnie nie dziwi. Faceci już trochę bardziej. Nie znam nikogo, kto by się przyznał w sumie, ale gdyby ktoś miał, to bym się zastanawiała czemu? Bo wydaje mi się, że to jest bardziej tak

stylu komedii romantycznej, jest po prostu gatunek, który wydaje mi się nie da facetów. Jest to po prostu mało męskie i trochę dziwne.

**Julia** Czy planujesz kontynuować oglądanie takich programów i dlaczego?

**Uczestnik 2** Totalnie, jak się pojawi **coś dobrego nowego to sobie wiesz, mogę z kimś** puścić i obejrzeć na **odmóżdzenie**. Ale raczej na co dzień sama nie puszcze sobie takiego programu ponieważ wiem że jest to za bardzo wyreżyserowane. Mam jednego znajomego który brał udział w amerykańskim formacie i opowiadał, jak wygląda to naprawdę. Plus mój kolega to montuje. Sama pracuje w branży filmowej i producenci potrafili przy mnie zadzwonić do uczestnika i powiedzieć mu że zaraz odbierze telefon od dziewczyny i ma tak i tak na to zareagować.

**Julia** No właśnie, a taka świadomość tego, że to jest wyreżyserowane, wpływa na twój, jakby decyzję czy obejrzysz to czy nie.

**Uczestnik 2** Tak, bo to się nazywa reality show, ale nie ma nic wspólnego z realizmem. Wszystko jest zmontowane po to żeby wywołać reakcje, a wszystkie relacje między uczestnikami są ustawione. Może gdyby powstał program w którym rzeczywiście producenci nie ingerują w to co się wydarzy to może wtedy chętniej obejrzałabym taki program. Dlatego lubię Magie Nagości, ponieważ widać, że ingerencja produkcji jest tam niewielka. Później tylko idą na randkę i nigdy ona nie wychodzi z oczywistych powodów, bo to jest dziwaczny zamysł.

### **Uczestnik 3**

**Julia** Co skłoniło Cię do obejrzenia pierwszego randkowego reality show i jaki to był program?

**Uczestnik 3** Nie ukrywam, że pandemia była takim motorem napędowym. Spędzało się zbyt dużo czasu przy telewizorze i człowiek szukał cały czas czegoś nowego czegoś co, ma kilka sezonów jakąś kontynuację **tak żeby zapchać sobie nadmiar wolnego czasu**. Był to Hotel Paradise ze względu chyba na fakt, że miałem już wykupiony dostęp do player i tam się znajdował.

**Julia** A czy masz swój ulubiony program randkowy? Jeśli tak to który i dlaczego?

**Uczestnik 3** Właśnie Hotel Paradise. Chyba z sentymentem już to oglądam i fakt, że zaczęliśmy razem z żoną od początku sprawia, że jakoś traktujemy to jako kontynuację jakiejś serii gdzie zmienia się fabuła i bohaterowie.

**Julia** Co powoduje, że włączasz taki program?

**Uczestnik 3** Chęć odmóżdzenia się. Oderwania na chwilę od rzeczywistości i takiej wścibskiej ciekawości zaglądania komuś do jego codziennego bytu (bo na tym trochę polega ten program)

**Julia** Jakie odczuwasz emocje oglądając ten program?

**Uczestnik 3** Zdecydowanie emocjonalnie podchodzę do oglądania tego programu. To proste, wybiera się kilka osób, które są faworytami i z tyłu głowy kibicuje się im żeby doszli jak najdalej. Ich wygrana traktuje jak swoją (w pewnym sensie) przegraną zawsze szukam winnych i uważam to za wielką niesprawiedliwość telewizji.

**Julia** Jak często oglądasz randkowe reality shows?

**Uczestnik 3** Szczerze w zależności od emisji w programie. W przypadku hotelu to po prostu jak wiem, kiedy jest premiera i kiedy będzie leciał to wtedy włączam. Jeśli wiem, że jest przerwa nie wiem miesięczna albo dwumiesięczna to robię sobie detoks żeby „zatęsknić” za tym programem.

**Julia** Czy widzisz jakieś zmiany w postrzeganiu przez ciebie randek oraz relacji romantycznych po obejrzeniu tych programów?

**Uczestnik 3** Nieee, to jest show i często jest to zupełnie odrealnione od prawdziwych uczuć. Tam ma być rozrywka a nie romantyzm.

**Julia** Czy oglądasz te programy samodzielnie, czy w towarzystwie? Z kimś najchętniej oglądasz je i dlaczego?

**Uczestnik 3** Zawsze oglądam z moją żoną, wręcz jest zła jak jakąś zajawkę widziałem sam. Fajne to, jest to też pewnego rodzaju forma spędzenia wspólnie czasu.

**Julia** Czy dyskutujesz o takich programach ze znajomymi lub rodziną? Co najczęściej komentujecie?

**Uczestnik 3** Z rodziną tak, ze znajomymi nie bo wiele ludzi wstydzi się przyznać, że ogląda takie programy. Boją się moim zdaniem, że będą postrzegani jako głupsi, bo w ramach

wolnego czasu poświęcają swoją godzinę lub dwie na oglądanie jak odklejeni ludzie próbują zakochać się w sobie w ramach jakiegoś show. To jest chyba bardziej słabe niż to, że się do tego nie przyznają. Bardziej bawi mnie to jak ktoś udaje, że totalnie nie wie o co chodzi w jakimś formacie a potem okazuje, że nie wiem obserwuje uczestników w mediach społecznościowych. Bezsensu

**Julia** Czy uważasz, że naruszasz prywatność uczestników oglądając randkowe reality shows?

**Uczestnik 3** Tak. Ale oni się godzą na to podpisując umowy i dokumenty. Taka też jest cena sławy, więc nie jest mi z tym jakoś źle.

**Julia** Czy mówisz innym, że oglądasz tego typu programy czy raczej się do tego nie przyznajesz?

**Uczestnik 3** Przyznaje się. Mam to w dupie co ktoś może sobie pomyśleć, ale śmieszy mnie to jak ktoś to ukrywa. Nie każdy musi słuchać podcasty o samorozwoju lub czytać masę książek i uczyć się siódmego języku obcego, czasem można się tak **odmóżyć** i to żaden wstyd.

**Julia** Czy zdarza się, że utożsamiasz się z uczestnikami? Np w trakcie rozstania?

**Uczestnik 3** Nie, absolutnie. To jest inny poziom. Z resztą oni sobie zdają sprawę, że będzie ich oglądać miliony osób, więc nie do końca też mogą zachowywać się naturalnie. Chodzi o rozrywkę i często o pieniądze idące za tym w późniejszej karierze. Wiem o tym, bo sam mam znajomego który wygrał tego rodzaju program, ale była to zupełnie inna osoba niż na żywo. Taka była konwencja i jego pomysł i przyniosło to skutki. Dziś sprzedaje fotowoltaikę więc krótkowzroczny plan.

**Julia** Czy spotkałeś się z krytyką lub negatywnymi opiniami ponieważ oglądasz randkowe reality shows? Jak na nie reagujesz?

**Uczestnik 3** Tak. Mam to w dupie. Co ich obchodzi, **jak ja spędzam wolny czas**. Nie uważam, że komuś robię krzywdę albo nie wiem staje się zacołany. To jest show godzina a potem dalej jestem u siebie w domu a nie na bali lub innej rajskiej wyspie.

**Julia** Jakie stereotypy dotyczące widzów uważasz za prawdziwe, a jakie za niesprawiedliwe?

**Uczestnik 3** Chyba największy ze widzowie takich programów to zazwyczaj prości słabo wykształceni ludzie lub nieszczęśliwi samotnicy.

**Julia** Czy planujesz kontynuować oglądanie randkowych reality shows? Dlaczego lub dlaczego nie?

**Uczestnik 3** Pewnie. To forma spędzania wolnego czasu i tak jak mówiłem pewnego rodzaju kontynuacja jakiejś serii. Jak mi się znudzi to wtedy przestanę, ale trochę z tym jest tak że jak trafi się słabszy sezon to chce się oglądać następny żeby mieć poczucie że ten będzie lepszy i wpada się w takie trochę błędne koło z którego nie można wyjść.

#### **Uczestnik 4**

**Julia** Powiedz mi, co skłoniło cię do obejrzenia twojego pierwszego randkowego reality show i jaki to był program?

**Uczestnik 4** Wydaje mi się, że skłoniła mnie ciekawość i **nuda**.  
**I też taki szeptany marketing, bo wszyscy naokoło oglądali, więc też po prostu byłam ciekawa, o czym wszyscy mówią.**

Ale co to był za pierwszy reality show? Nie pamiętam.

**Julia** Dobra, a czy masz swój ulubiony program randkowy? Jeśli tak, to który i dlaczego?

**Uczestnik 4** Aktualnie?

**Julia** Tak

**Uczestnik 4** Jest to Perfect match. Bo po prostu to jest jak połączenie wszystkich uniwersum randkowych reality show.

**Julia** I właśnie dlaczego jeszcze byś powiedziała, że to jest Twój ulubiony?

**Uczestnik 4** Może to, że ja z marszu **znam przynajmniej większość obsady, więc też jestem z nimi bliżej emocjonalnie**, bo po prostu jestem z nim bardziej związana, co też oczywiście automatycznie powoduje, że jestem bardziej zainteresowana ich losami, no więc zyskują na oglądalności takimi ruchami na pewno.

**Julia** A jak włączasz właśnie jakiś taki program? To co kieruje tobą? Jakby co powoduje, że go odpalasz?

**Uczestnik 4** Zazwyczaj po prostu chodzi mi o to, że chce się **odmóżyć**. **Potrzebuję czegoś, co nie będzie wymagało ode mnie. Nie wiadomo, jak wiele pracy neuronów i skupienia.**

Czasami puszcza je tak z przyzwyczajenia bo robię sobie obiad, albo nie wiem robię na szydelku, czy po prostu oglądam telefon w międzyczasie.

**Julia** I jakie emocje odczuwasz, oglądając takie programy?

**Uczestnik 4** No właśnie, zazwyczaj są to stricte emocje pozytywne, które wiążą się raczej z rozbawieniem rozluźnieniem, a tymczasem po prostu niedowierzaniem, jakimi ludzie są głupi i co oni tam robią i że przecież ja nigdy w życiu bym tak nie zrobiła.

A potem sobie myślę, że to w sumie śmieszne.

Ale, że właśnie raczej jest to ten typ odmóżdźacza, który sprawi mi mentalną błogość.

**Julia** Czy widzisz jakieś zmiany na przykład w postrzeganiu przez ciebie randek oraz relacji romantycznych po obejrzeniu tych programów?

**Uczestnik 4** Czy zmieniło to jakieś moje podejście? Wydaje mi się, że nie.

Że może trochę inaczej postrzegam po prostu tą grupę, która faktycznie się tak zachowuje w relacjach romantycznych.

Nie wiem, trochę większym nie może zrozumieniem, ale zaczynam po prostu rozumieć dlaczego tak a nie inaczej się zachowali, bo jednak no powiedzmy, że sposób i rodzaj wyznawanych wartości się między nami różni.

Bym tak nie zrobiła jak oni, ale przynajmniej może zaczynam bardziej rozumieć ich działania.

**Julia** A czy zdarza ci się, że utożsamia się z uczestnikami?

**Uczestnik 4** No zazwyczaj nie, ale właśnie w Too Hot To Handle kiedyś był taki uczestnik, w pierwszym sezonie chyba. I on po prostu był już taki jest wkurzony, że wszyscy łamią zasady, że to przecież nie jest takie trudne, żeby się ich trzymać, i że czemu zachowują się jak idioci. Zazwyczaj pojawia się tego typu postać w obsadzie to się z nim/nią utożsamiam

**Julia** Mhm, czyli jak jest tam ktoś taki jakby “normalniejszy”?

**Uczestnik 4** Po prostu wtedy jak ktoś przejawia jakiegokolwiek oznaki rozumu.

**Julia** Czy uważasz, że naruszasz prywatność uczestników, oglądając takie programy?

**Uczestnik 4** Nie no co ty. Tylko i wyłącznie dlatego, że wiem, że żeby wziąć udział w tym programie, musieli wyrazić wszystkie zgody, więc oni zezwolili na to, żebyśmy byli wpuszczeni do tej części ich intymnego życia. Ale czy jeżeli kogoś powiedzmy, miałabym oglądać w takiej sytuacji, wiedząc, że to nie ma co do tej drugiej osoby? Absolutnie tak, to byłoby bardzo nie na miejscu i bardzo złe

**Julia** A oglądasz te takie programy raczej samodzielnie czy w towarzystwie i z kim jeśli z kim?

**Uczestnik 4** Jest to zazwyczaj oglądam je sama, a jak to zazwyczaj z moimi parami przyjaciół?

**Julia** Czy dyskutuje, że takich programach właśnie ze znajomymi często albo w ogóle?

**Uczestnik 4** Tak

**Julia** I jak wyglądają te rozmowy?

**Uczestnik 4** Zazwyczaj rozmawiamy a propos jakiejś decyzji uczestnika, na przykład jak oglądałam dwa sezony hotelu Paradise to na bieżąco z przyjaciółką dyskutowałam, co tam co zrobił. Jak jest jakiś fajny sezon np Too Hot To Handle też raczej zdarza nam się powiedzieć, co tam się wydarzyło w ostatnim odcinku.

**Julia** A czy na przykład mówisz innym, że oglądasz tego typu programy, czy raczej wolisz zachować to dla siebie?

**Uczestnik 4** Totalnie tak! ja Jestem tą osobą, która nie ma problemu z tym, żeby powiedzieć, że oglądam jakiś nowy program.

**Julia** A, czy spotkałaś się z krytyką lub negatywnymi opiniami, ponieważ właśnie oglądasz to programy?

**Uczestnik 4** Tak chociażby dzisiaj właśnie

**Julia** No i jak właśnie jaka to jest krytyka, jak na nią reagujesz?

**Uczestnik 4** Że po co? Po co oglądasz taki gówniany program? Przecież to **odmóżdżające**. No właśnie o to chodzi. Może to też jest na przykład ten wątek po prostu, że jestem osobą, która nie jest w **relacji więc używam tych programów jako samotne spędzanie czasu**. Nie lubię też tej ciszy, więc puszczam sobie coś w tle, co po prostu sobie gada, jak kiedyś to było radio, a teraz to są właśnie głupie reality show randkowe.

Jest zazwyczaj odpowiadam na ta na tą krytykę tym, że mi to sprawia przyjemność.

Nie oglądam tego z namaszczeniem, tylko raczej właśnie z rodzaju odprężenia się, więc ja nie mam z tym problemu. Jeżeli ta osoba ma, no to, to nadal nie jest to mój problem.

**Julia** Dobra, a jakie stereotypy dotyczące takich widzów uważa za prawdziwe?

**Uczestnik 4** No że na pewno wszyscy to są plotkary niesamowite i że są wścibscy i że lubią wszystko wiedzieć.

**Julia** I uważasz, że są one prawdziwe?

**Uczestnik 4** To na pewno! Jak się ogląda takie programy to chyba nie da się nie lubić plotek.

**Julia** Dobra ostatnie pytanie, czy planujesz ogląda kontynuować oglądanie takich programów i dlaczego? Albi dlaczego nie?

**Uczestnik 4** Absolutnie mam zamiar i mój pierwszy argument jest taki, że dopiero wyszło tylko pół drugiego sezonu I czekam na drugą połowę

## **Uczestnik 5**

**Julia** To powiedz mi tak, co skłoniło cię do obejrzenia pierwszego randkowego reality show i jaki to był program?

**Uczestnik 5** **Absolutnie nudy** I było to hotel paradise.

**Julia** A czy masz teraz swój ulubiony program?

**Uczestnik 5** Tak, jest to Too Hot To Handle

**Julia** A dlaczego?

**Uczestnik 5** Bo w tym programie uczestnicy są najgłupszy więc można się z nich pośmiać.

**Julia** Co powoduje to, że włączasz taki program?

**Uczestnik 5** Chęć **odmóżdzenia się** i sprawienia, że poczuje się lepiej i poczuje się trochę mądrzejszy.

**Julia** I jakie łączysz z tym emocje?

**Uczestnik 5** No jest zabawne, więc czuję...  
Jak jaka to jest emocja? **Radość? Rozrywkę?**

No i oczywiście jest to second hand embarrassment. Czyli wtyd za tych ludzi.

**Julia** Jak często oglądasz te programy?

**Uczestnik 5** Kilka razy w roku jak właśnie jakiś nowy sezon wyjdzie.

**Julia** Czy widzisz jakieś zmiany w postrzeganiu przez ciebie randek oraz relacji romantycznych po obejrzeniu takiego programu?

**Uczestnik 5** Wydaje mi się, że nie. Może uświadamia mnie to tylko że tacy ludzie żyją na tym świecie i zdarza mi się, że trafie na taką osobę np. na aplikacji randkowej.

**Julia** A zdarza Ci się, że utożsamiasz się z jakimś uczestnikiem albo z kilkoma?

**Uczestnik 5** Nie, nie zdarza mi się, żebym się miał utożsamiać z jakimkolwiek uczestnikiem.

**Julia** Czy uważasz, że naruszasz prywatność uczestników?

**Uczestnik 5** Nie, przecież się na to zgodzili

**Julia** I oglądasz te programy sam czy raczej w towarzystwie?

**Uczestnik 5** Tylko z moją przyjaciółką w sumie. Spędzamy w ten sposób razem czas. Wtedy też ten second embarrassment nie jest aż taki duży

**Julia** Czy dyskutujesz o takich programach ze znajomymi lub rodziną?

**Uczestnik 5** Nie, raczej nigdy. Dyskutuję tylko właśnie z tą znajomą, ale w czasie oglądania, czyli tak na bieżąco.

**Julia** Czy przyznajesz się, że oglądasz tego typu programy?

**Uczestnik 5**

To tak, żeby się chwalić, to nie. Chwalić się nie chwale.

**Julia** Dobra, a jak jest stereotypy dotyczące widzów? Uważasz za prawdziwe, a jakie niesprawiedliwe?

**Uczestnik 5** Nie wiem no, że ogląda to tylko wieś w Polsce. To nieprawda. Wszyscy to oglądają, tylko nikt się nie przyznaje.

**Julia** Czy planujesz kontynuować oglądania takich programów?

**Uczestnik 5** Tylko jak moja przyjaciółka znowu mnie odwiedzi.

## **Uczestnik 6**

**Julia** Cześć, widzę, że wszystko działa więc możemy zaczyna

**Uczestnik 6** Super jestem gotowa

**Julia** Powiedz mi, jakie był pierwszy randkowe reality show, który obejrzałeś?

**Uczestnik 6** Too Hot To Handle

**Julia** I dlaczego wybrałaś ten program jako pierwszy?

**Uczestnik 6** Ponieważ zaciekało mnie to, że uczestnicy pomimo tego, że mają zakaz współżycia ze sobą i interakcji między sobą intymnych, to i tak to robią.

**Julia** I jaki jest twój ulubiony program tego typu?

**Uczestnik 6** Mam trzy. Pierwszy to właśnie Too Hot To Handle, ale również bardzo lubię Hotel Paradise, który oglądałam przez wiele lat. A trzeci to moje nowe odkrycie i nazywa się Perfect Match.

**Julia** Dlaczego powiedziałaś, że to są twoje ulubione?

**Uczestnik 6** Too Hot To Handle i Perfect Match głównie dlatego, że kandydaci bardzo ładnie wyglądają, bardzo ładnie się prezentują i są wysportowani, więc miło się na nich patrzy. Druga kwestia jest taka, że dużo jest dramatów i właśnie zbliżeń intymnych. A Hotel Paradise, ponieważ są tam najlepsze dramaty i kłótnie. Oraz ludzie którzy tam przyjeżdżają, jest to ciekawy rodzaj człowieka.

**Julia** I co wpływa na twój wybór programu, który oglądasz? Dlaczego postanawiasz włączyć ten a nie inny.

**Uczestnik 6** Głównie dlatego, że są tam ładni ludzie. Może można stwierdzić, że jestem płytką i powierzchowną, ale lubię patrzeć na ładne rzeczy po prostu. Na przykład Love is Blind. Nie czułam tego nie kręciło mnie to, że ludzie siebie nie widzą, ponieważ wychodzę z

założenia, że aspekt fizyczny odgrywa bardzo dużą rolę w tworzeniu relacji szczególnie tych partnerskich. A druga rzecz jest taka, że im jest więcej momentów, które trzymają mnie w napięciu, tym lepiej dla mnie.

**Julia** A jakie emocje czujesz oglądając takie programy?

**Uczestnik 6** Głównie ekscytacje. Częste zwroty akcji oraz zamiany partnerów oraz zdrady mają wpływ na to, dlaczego oglądam tego typu programy.

**Julia** A powiedz mi, jak często oglądasz takie programy?

**Uczestnik 6** Mmm z racji na to, że nie mam niewiele tych, które faktycznie oglądam, to oglądam raczej wtedy, kiedy wychodzi nowy sezon. Ale też jak wychodzi nowy sezon, to oglądam ciurkiem tak, że czasem potrafię w jeden dzień obejrzeć cały sezon. Teraz Perfect Match będę oglądała 3 dzień z rzędu.

**Julia** Czyli jeśli zaczniesz nowy program, to zazwyczaj oglądasz go cały od razu? Jeśli masz taką możliwość, oczywiście.

**Uczestnik 6** Tak tak tak tak od razu oglądam cały, ponieważ odcinki trzymają w napięciu totalnie i każdy kończy się tak, że muszę zobaczyć kolejny. Wczoraj na przykład, poszłam spać z rozsądku a nie dla tego, że chciałam.

**Julia** Dobrze, a czy postrzeganych jakieś zmiany w swoim postrzeganiu randkowania i związków jak oglądasz takie programy?

**Uczestnik 6** Tak tak tak tak uważam, że tego typu seriale wpływają na to, jak ja postrzegam moje potencjalne wchodzenie w relacje z innymi partnerami. Są dla mnie oni mniej wiarygodni przez takie programy. Mam też więcej obaw, ponieważ jak widzę, że ktoś jest w stanie zrobić to na antenie przed milionem ludzi, to mój potencjalny partner, gdzie widownie ma tylko mnie - jedną osobę, to jest w stanie kłamać mi jeszcze bardziej.

**Julia** Czyli powiedziałeś, że wpływa to na twój stopień zaufania do drugiej osoby?

**Uczestnik 6** Zdecydowanie

**Julia** A powiedz mi, czy oglądasz te program raczej sama czy w towarzystwie?

**Uczestnik 6** To zależy. Lubię oglądać w towarzystwie szczególnie moich koleżanek, ponieważ mogę wtedy komentować na głos i dzielić się doświadczeniami i przeżyciami, które doświadczam podczas oglądania. Ale jeśli nie ma nikogo obok mnie, kto mógłby obejrzeć, a wiem, że wyszedł nowy sezon to obejrzę go sama.

**Julia** A często rozmawiasz albo czy w ogóle rozmawiasz ze znajomymi lub rodziną na temat takich programów?

**Uczestnik 6** Z moją siostrą.

**Julia** Jak wyglądają takie rozmowy?

**Uczestnik 6** No raczej oceniamy, jak ktoś wyglądał i w jakiej jest parze i dlaczego uważamy, że dana para jest fajna czy też nie? No i też wyrażamy jakby dużo empatii w stosunku do dziewczyn, które są ranione przez głupich chłopaków.

**Julia** A czy myślisz, że oglądając takie programy, naruszać czyjąś prywatność?

**Uczestnik 6** Nie, ponieważ wiem, że oni się zgodzili. Oni chcieli tam przyjść i się pokazać.

**Julia** A czy raczej się przyznajesz do tego, że oglądasz randkowe reality shows? Na przykład nowo poznanemu chłopakowi, powiedziałaś od razu, że oglądasz tego rodzaju programy, czy raczej nie?

**Uczestnik 6** Nie, on on nie wie, nie wie, że oglądam Perfect Match aktualnie. Jak się pyta, co robię? to mówię, że oglądam jakieś filmy z koleżanką.

**Julia** O K, czyli nie przyznajesz się?

**Uczestnik 6** Nie trzymam to jednak dla siebie i dla najbliższych mi przyjaciół.

**Julia** A czy powiedziałaś, że utożsamiasz się z uczestnikami tych programów? W jakich sytuacjach na przykład?

**Uczestnik 6** Utożsamiam się z tymi ludźmi i z ich problemami, na przykład z tym, że dziewczyny mają problemy z zaufaniem, bo zostały zranione przez swoich partnerów.

**Julia** A czy na przykład spotkałaś się kiedyś z krytyką lub negatywną opinią? Jak powiedziałaś, że oglądasz takie programy?

**Uczestnik 6**

Spotkałam się, mój były chłopak zawsze jak mówiłam, że chcę obejrzeć, to mnie strasznie krytkowały się na mnie. Denerwował, że chce go nazwać takie tak zwane głupoty.

**Julia** A uważasz, że to jest twoje takie trochę Guilty Pleasure?

**Uczestnik 6** Zdecydowanie! Oglądanie ich sprawia mi przyjemność i zapełnia moje potrzeby chociaż wiem, że nie jest to wysokiej rangi telewizja

**Julia** I jakie byś wymieniła stereotypy dotyczące właśnie widzów takich programów?

**Uczestnik 6** No to są osoby, które są mało inteligentne, które nie mają celu w życiu, które lubią się pastwić nad innymi, więc oglądają to, żeby pomyśleć sobie o dobrze, powiedziałabym, że taki raczej typ człowieka to ogląda.

**Julia** I uważasz, że któreś z tych takich stereotypów są prawdziwe.

**Uczestnik 6** Yy, no, myślę, że w niektórych przypadkach tak, ale nie zawsze, ponieważ ja nie powiedziałabym, że nie mam celu w życiu albo że jestem mało inteligentna.

**Julia** Czy planujesz nadal oglądać programy randkowe i jeśli tak, to dlaczego?

**Uczestnik 6** Jak najbardziej na przykład dzisiaj, jak skończymy rozmawiać, to dokończę sezon Perfect Match. Dlaczego? Ponieważ koniec końców jest to forma rozrywki i relaksu ja lubię taką formę relaksu. Zrobiłam już dzisiaj wszystko, co miałam zrobić i lubię czasem wyłączyć swoje myślenie. Uważam, że przy tego typu serialach nie trzeba być za bardzo skupionym i nie wymaga to tak mojej pełnej koncentracji. I będę kontynuowała oglądanie tego, ponieważ jest to właśnie dla mnie forma relaksu. Sprawia mi to przyjemność.

**Julia** No to tyle dziękuję bardzo za wspólny wywiad.

## **Uczestnik 7**

**Julia** Co skłoniło Cię do obejrzenia pierwszego randkowego reality show i jaki to był program?

**Uczestnik 7** W sumie pierwszy to Love Is Blind, jak był COVID-19 i nie było nic innego już wszystko obejrzałam. To był last resort tak zwany

**Julia** I jaki jest twój ulubiony program i dlaczego?

**Uczestnik 7** Dobra, no to chyba to Love Is Blind i dlatego, że są ludzie bardziej normalni. Wyedukowani z normalnym zawodem a nie takie pustaki jak w innych programach.

**Julia** I jakie emocje odczuwasz oglądając ten program?

**Uczestnik 7** Wstyd hahaha. Nie, serio, wstydę się, że to oglądam, ale zapewniają mi te programy rozrywkę. Jest to łatwe do oglądania jak się nie chce myśleć i jest się zmęczonym, że można sobie puścić i oglądać głupich ludzi na ekranie.

**Julia** I co powoduje, że włączasz taki program?

**Uczestnik 7** Czyli głównie z nudy, ale powiedziałam, że na przykład też się relaksuję w jakimś stopniu jak je oglądam. Też nie zmusza do myślenia, więc to taka chwila odmłodzenia. Czyli na przykład po długim dniu, jak nie chcę myśleć, nie chcę się denerwować ani stresować fabułą serialu. To to jest świetna rzecz.

**Julia** A jak często oglądasz takie programy?

**Uczestnik 7** Mniej więcej 2 lub 3 razy w roku. Oglądam właśnie The Love is Blind ale ostatnio jak byłam chora obejrzałam całe The Perfect Match i Dated and Related.

**Julia** Czy widzisz jakieś zmiany w postrzeganiu przez ciebie randek i relacje w oglądaniu takich programów?

**Uczestnik 7** Bardzo się cieszę, że jestem w długiej relacji i nie muszę chodzić na randki z takimi ludźmi spotykać. Reprezentują oni randkowanie w dzisiejszych czasach bardzo negatywnie.

**Julia** A jest coś czego byś się obawiała w randkowaniu przez takie programy?

**Uczestnik 7** Że wszyscy mają za dużo opcji i nie potrafią się w ogóle zdecydować i zobowiązać się do żadnej relacji. Wszystko to jest jak fast food – szybko i na chwilę. I generalnie, że nasze pokolenie jest stracone, patrząc na te osoby.

**Julia** Czy oglądasz raczej takie programy samodzielnie czy w towarzystwie?

**Uczestnik 7** Samodzielnie. Wstydziłabym się obejrzeć to przy kimś innym niż moja siostra. Jak mój chłopak wchodzi do pokoju to wyciszam dźwięk.

**Julia** A, czy dyskutujesz właśnie ze znajomymi rodziną o takich programach?

**Uczestnik 7** To o czym on głównie jest. Głównie o jakiejś dramie, która tam zaszła w tym programie, kto jak się zachował.

**Julia** A czy uważasz, że oglądając takie programy naruszasz prywatność innych?

**Uczestnik 7** Nie, sami tam poszli. Pokoje też nagrywane w nocy się na to zgodzili, oni tam sami poleźli, w ogóle się nie muszę źle z tego tytułu czuć.

**Julia** Wcześniej wspomniałaś, że to wstyd oglądać takie programy. Czy przyznajesz się znajomym, że je oglądasz?

**Uczestnik 7** Zdecydowanie nie

**Julia** A uważasz, że to twoje Guilty Pleasure?

**Uczestnik 7** Bo chociaż uważam że to wstyd to dalej zapewniają mi rozrywkę.

**Julia** Czy zdarza ci się utożsamiać z jakimś uczestnikiem?

**Uczestnik 7** Raczej nie

**Julia** A, czy spotkałaś się z krytyką, ponieważ obejrzałaś taki show?

**Uczestnik 7** Wiadomo. Głównie, że na to tracę czas.

**Julia** I jakie stereotypy dotyczące widzów uważasz za prawdziwe, a jakie nie?

**Uczestnik 7** No nie wiem, no mówi się, że większość ludzi to głupich ogląda. Wydaje mi się, że tak rzeczywiście jest, ale też jest trochę normalnych ludzi, którzy po prostu mają ochotę się odmóżyć, więc to nie jest jedyny, który przychodzi do głowy.

**Julia** Czy planujesz kontynuować oglądanie takich show w przeszłości? Dlaczego i dlaczego nie?

**Uczestnik 7** Nie planuję. A czy będę oglądać? Pewnie tak.

## **Uczestnik 8**

**Julia** co skłoniło cię do obejrzenia pierwszego randkowego reality show? Jaki to był program?

**Uczestnik 8** Kurczę, wydaje mi się, że no to będzie jedno z tych polskich, tylko nie pamiętam, czy to była El Dursi, czy ta druga wydziarana, więc albo w Love Island albo Hotel Paradise.

**Julia** Dobra, a co skłoniło cię do obejrzenia do?

**Uczestnik 8** A on, bo słyszałem, że to jest **dobry czaso-pochłaniacz** w sensie, że **jest dobra beka z uczestników, że są kretynami**. No, ale przede wszystkim ja to oglądałem **dla aferek, bo mnie to bawiło. Bardziej się kłócili, im bardziej się bili, im bardziej byli głupi, tym bardziej mnie to jarało.**

**Julia** Cudownie, a jakie czy masz swój ulubiony program? Jeśli tak, to który i dlaczego?

**Uczestnik 8** Najbardziej mnie wkręciło chyba Love Never Lies, w sensie tam byłem najbardziej zaangażowany. Ja wiem, że to było wyreżyserowane. Nie wiem jakby ciekawe było to, że się okłamywali każdy miał strasznie durne pojęcie i spojrzenie na swoją relację. No dobra, może nie wszyscy. Chyba o to chodziło w sensie. No tak jak powiedziałem, im bardziej to było kontrowersyjne i bardziej się kłócili o jakieś duperele czy nie wiem, zdradzali, tym bardziej to było ciekawe. O I jeszcze bardzo lubię Magię Nagości bo to tak zawiły pomysł na program randkowy przez co jest mega ciekawy. Plus wydaje się takie mało wyreżyserowany.

**Julia** Mhm, a co skłania Cię, że włączasz sobie taki program?

**Uczestnik 8** **Kompletna nuda. Oglądam, żeby zabić czas.** Tak to nie ma żadnej innej wartości. Nie jest tak, że czekam na chwilę wolną, żeby włączyć odcinek, czy nie wiem, na premiera kolejnego odcinka. Oglądam tylko w momencie, w którym już nie wiem co ze sobą zrobić.

**Julia** Dobra, a jakie odczuwasz emocje oglądając taki program?

**Uczestnik 8** Zażenowanie sobą, potem zażenowanie innymi w sensie, uczestnikami programu. No I pewnie też **jakaś radość, która spowodowana jest śmiechem. To zwykła rozrywka**

**Julia** I jak często oglądasz takie programy?

**Uczestnik 8** Myślę, że w roku Jestem w stanie obejrzeć 4 sezony. Zależy co mi tam Netflix podsunie.

**Julia** Czy widzisz jakieś zmiany w postrzeganiu przez ciebie właśnie randkowania i relacji romantycznych po oglądaniu takich programów?

**Uczestnik 8** Widzę tylko, że nie Jestem na pewno takim kretyńcem jak inni.

A swoją relację postrzegam tak samo, może czasami jest sytuacja, w której widzę siebie w lepszych barwach, bo jakby ktoś jest większym kretyńcem niż ja. Więc jest to jakoś pocieszające?

**Julia** Uczy zdarzyło Ci się że utożsamiałeś się z którymś z uczestników takiego programu?

**Uczestnik 8** Raczej nie

**Julia** Dobra, a czy masz takie wrażenie, że naruszasz prywatność uczestników oglądając takie programy?

**Uczestnik 8** Nie. Mam wrażenie, że to oni decydują się, by zrobić z siebie idiotę, aby być właśnie popularnym. Więc to jest cena, którą Jestem przekonany, że oni świadomie płacą za to, żeby sobie robić zasięgi potem i robić biznes na swoim uczestnictwie w tym.

**Julia** Czy ty oglądasz raczej te programy sam czy w towarzystwie i z kim najchętniej i dlaczego?

**Uczestnik 8** Głównie z moja partnerką, to ona to inicjuje. Czasami się wkręcę w któryś to proponuję żebyśmy obejrzeni jeszcze jeden odcinek ale zazwyczaj to jednak ona wybiera. Dlaczego? **Bo jesteśmy wtedy zażenowani we dwójkę. Jest to jakiś rodzaj spędzania razem czasu.**

**Julia** A właśnie czy na przykład dyskutujesz czasami fabuły takich programów ze znajomymi albo z rodziną?

**Uczestnik 8**

Mam dwie siostry, które też oglądają takie programy więc zdarza nam się o nim rozmawiać

**Julia** I co najczęściej komentujecie na przykład?

**Uczestnik 8** Głównie zastanawiamy się, dlaczego to dalej oglądamy hahah. Ale również co się wydarzyło w finale na przykład sezonu.

**Julia** A przyznajesz innym, że oglądasz tego typu programy, czy raczej zostawić to dla siebie?

**Uczestnik 8** Nie przyznaję się.

**Julia** A czy spotkały się z krytyką w związku z tym, że oglądasz je?

**Uczestnik 8** No może zdarzyło się że ktoś powiedział że jest to głupie ale nie przejmuję się tym za bardzo.

**Julia** Jakie stereotypy dotyczące widzów uważasz za prawdziwe, a jakie za, a jakie nie?

**Uczestnik 8** Nigdy się nie spotkałem z osobą, która by to oglądała tak w pełni na poważnie i kiedy zabrać przeszła jakąś pełną immersję i stała się częścią tego świata, więc raczej wszyscy, jeśli to oglądają, to oglądają z tych samych pobudek, co ja, bo ktoś tego nie przyznaje. No ale no wchodzi na to, że według mnie w takim razie stereotypowym widzem jest człowiek, który jest poziom wyżej niż ten program. No ale z jakiegoś powodu właśnie takiej nie inny typ rozrywki lubi sobie włączyć. Myślę jakby wyglądała osoba, która by to oglądała na poważnie, ale to w takim razie są osoby, które są poniżej tego poziomu, czyli nie wiem osoby, które twierdzą, że są na pewno mniej atrakcyjne wizualnie niż uczestnicy i osoby, które nigdy nie miały okazji, aby być w takim miejscu. Ale to sobie myślę, że są to ludzie, którzy są nieszczęśliwi w związkach i szukają gdzieś sobie jakiegoś wyznacznika.

**Julia** Czy planujesz kontynuować oglądanie takich programów i dlaczego tak albo dlaczego nie?

**Uczestnik 8** No mam wrażenie, że wyczerpał się już trochę format i już nie wiem, czy są w stanie wymyślić coś nowego co będzie miało dziwne twisty żeby nie robić kolejnego takiego samego sezonu. No, ale zakładam, że wymyślą coś, co znowu mnie kusi.

## **Uczestnik 9**

**Julia** No dobra, co skłoniło cię do pierwszego wejrzenia randkowego reality show i jaki był to program?

**Uczestnik 9** Więc tak skłoniły mnie urywki z tiktoka, i to mnie zachęciło, żeby obejrzeć ten serial i nazywa się Single's Inferno

**Julia** Czy masz swój ulubiony właśnie taki program? I jeśli tak, to który i dlaczego?

**Uczestnik 9** Nie mam chyba ulubionego, ale ten program mi się bardzo podobał

**Julia** Jeśli już włączasz taki program, to oprócz tego, że zostałeś przekonana przez właśnie content na social media, to dlaczego oglądasz takie programy?

**Uczestnik 9** Oglądam takie programy, po prostu przez akcję. Jestem też ciekawa, jak coś potoczą się relację między uczestnikami.

**Julia** Jakie odczuwasz emocje oglądając takie programy?

**Uczestnik 9** Wczuwam się w nie, nie ukrywam. I czuje dużo emocji. Przede wszystkim myślę że ekscytacje.

**Julia** A czy zdarza ci się, że utożsamiasz się z niektórymi uczestnikami tego programu?

**Uczestnik 9** Nie, nigdy

**Julia** Czy widzisz jakieś zmiany w postrzeganiu przez ciebie randek oraz relacji romantycznych przez oglądania takich programów?

**Uczestnik 9** Jak widzę zdrady i kłamstwa to zastanawiam się czy mój partner któregoś dnia też mógłby mi tak zrobić ale poza tym to nie.

**Julia** Czy oglądasz te programy samodzielnie, czy raczej w towarzystwie?

**Uczestnik 9** Raczej sama, bo lubię koreańskie programy a wiem że nie wszystkim one podchodzą

**Julia** Czy masz wrażenie, że naruszasz prywatność innych oglądając takie programy?

**Uczestnik 9** Raczej nie.

**Julia** Czy spotkałaś się z krytyką w związku z oglądaniem jakiegoś show randkowego?

**Uczestnik 9** Wręcz przeciwnie, nie, bo wszyscy moi znajomi też je oglądają.

**Julia** A uważasz, że stereotypy dotyczące właśnie takich widzów, są prawdziwe?

**Uczestnik 9** Myślę że nie, zazwyczaj mówi się że te programy są głupie to i ludzie którzy je oglądają są nie najmądrzejsi ale to nie prawda, oglądamy je głównie z nudów albo jako forma relaksu.

**Julia** I powiedz mi, czy planujesz kontynuować oglądanie tych programów? I dlaczego tak? Albo dlaczego nie?

**Uczestnik 9** Myślę że tak, jak znajdę coś co mnie tak samo wciągnie to chętnie ten program obejrzę.

## Appendix E - Survey questions

Survey questions were translated from Polish with ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2024).

### Why Do Young Poles Love Dating Reality TV?

Hello and I would like to invite you to participate in a survey about how young adults in Poland watch dating reality shows. My name is Julia, and I am a master's student in the Communication Department at Universidad Catholica Portuguesa. The purpose of this survey is to understand the motivations and reasons why these programs are so popular among viewers between the ages of 18 and 35.

The survey is fully anonymous and will take about 10 minutes to complete. The data collected will be used for research purposes only.

Thank you for your time

#### I. Demographics

##### 1. Age

- Below 18 years old – eliminates the responders
- 18-35 years old
- Above 35 years old – eliminates the responder

##### 2. Gender

##### 3. Education

##### 4. Population of the city/ village you live in

##### 5. Marital status

#### II. Do you watch dating reality shows?

##### 1. Do you watch dating reality shows? (you've seen more than one whole episode)

- Yes
- No -----→ Have you seen more than one episode of any of these shows:

Rolnik Szuka Żony  
Sanatorium Miłości  
Ślub od Pierwszego Widzenia  
Hotel Paradise  
Long Island. Wyspa Miłości  
40 kontra 20

- Love on the Spectrum
- Too Hot To Handle
- Love is Blind
- The Bachelor
- Ultimatum
- Magia Nagości
- Love Never Lies
- Prince Charming
- Ex Na Plaży
- Fboy Island
- Or other
  - Yes – next question
  - No – eliminates the respondent

2. Which of these programs have you seen? (you can choose more than 1)

- Rolnik Szuka Żony
- Sanatorium Miłości
- Ślub od Pierwszego Widzenia
- Hotel Paradise
- Long Island. Wyspa Miłości
- 40 kontra 20
- Love on the Spectrum
- Too Hot To Handle
- Love is Blind
- The Bachelor
- Ultimatum
- Magia Nagości
- Love Never Lies
- Prince Charming
- Ex Na Plaży
- Fboy Island

3. Which show is your favourite?

- Rolnik Szuka Żony
- Sanatorium Miłości
- Ślub od Pierwszego Widzenia
- Hotel Paradise
- Long Island. Wyspa Miłości
- 40 kontra 20

Love on the Spectrum  
Too Hot To Handle  
Love is Blind  
The Bachelor  
Ultimatum  
Magia Nagości  
Love Never Lies  
Prince Charming  
Ex Na Plaży  
Fboy Island

4. Why do you like this show the most?  
Open question
5. How many hours a week you watch dating reality shows
6. How many episodes you usually watch in one sitting
7. On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is 'strongly disagree' and 5 is 'strongly agree')  
how do you agree with the following sentences?

I watch dating reality shows because:

- they entertains me
- I like to see the developing relationships among the participants
- I'm curious to see how the participants handle dating situations.
- I like the drama and conflict that occurs in these programs
- I identify with the participants
- They give me a topic for conversation with friends
- This is how I spend time with my loved ones
- They are a form of escape from everyday problems
- They relax me after a hard day
- They are easy to look at and do not require much mental involvement
- I like to comment and evaluate the behaviour of participants
- They are a great background noise when I'm doing something else
- I enjoy watching the unexpected twists and turns of the story
- I like to make fun of the participants
- I like the aesthetics of these programs, such as costumes, locations
- I like to bet on who of the participants will end up together / win the program
- Participants in these programs are attractive
- I like to look into the private lives of participants
- I have nothing else to do
- They kill my free time
- I watch them for humorous reasons
- They make me not feel lonely

- It's my habit
  - They make me feel better about myself
  - I like to watch the participants completing the tasks
  - I want to see real people in real situations
  - Those programs excite me (intimate scenes, sexual connections)
  - I never know what I might see in an episode
6. For what other reasons do you like to watch reality dating shows  
Open question
7. Do you think that watching these programs is your "guilty pleasure"  
(something that gives us pleasure, but we are ashamed of it)
- Yes
  - No
  - I don't know
8. Are you ashamed to admit to loved ones that you watch these kinds of  
programs?
- Yes
  - No
  - I don't know
9. Do you feel FOMO (fear of missing out) if you don't watch a popular dating  
show? (not understanding internet jokes, popular memes, not being able to join  
the conversation about them)
- Yes
  - No
  - I don't know
10. Usually, I watch dating reality shows...
- On TV
  - On Streaming Services
11. Usually, I watch these shows
- Alone
  - With my partner
  - With my friend
  - With my family
  - In a bigger group (3 people and more)
12. Do you think that those programs are scripted?
- Yes
  - No
  - To some extent yes
13. Do you think the emotions and controversies on the show are real?
- Yes
  - No
  - To some extent yes