

EXAMINING VIEWERS' EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS TO CONTESTANTS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES TO REALITY TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

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Abstract

This study delves into the emotional connections of reality television viewers with contestants and their experiences. It aims to understand how emotions influence viewers' involvement with reality TV shows, particularly in Southern Nigeria. The impact of emotions evoked by reality TV on viewers' perceptions of contestants' authenticity and likability is a key focus. The study explores the significance of emotional connections in the popular reality TV shows and their impact on viewers' experiences. Through a well-structured questionnaire and statistical analysis, the research reveals that emotional ties developed in reality television offer viewers a sense of belonging and create experienced, emotional bonds. The findings indicate that emotional connections strongly influence viewers' inclinations to continue watching the program and enhance their overall viewing experience. This study has substantial significance for producers and television networks, as it provides insights that can help create more intriguing television that resonates with consumers and drive casting decisions to increase diversity and representation of participants on reality TV series.

Keywords: Reality television, Emotional connections, Viewerst, Contestants, Television programming

Declaration of conflicting interests: The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Introduction

Reality television shows have become an increasingly popular and powerful kind of entertainment in recent years. These shows try to reflect real-life circumstances and experiences, typically including non-professional performers and competitors placed in various challenging or tragic conditions. Reality TV's ability to catch and hold audiences' attention can be linked to various elements, including its emotional appeal. Understanding the emotional factors underpinning reality TV's attraction can provide useful insights into the psychology of viewers and their reasons for consuming this sort of entertainment. One key feature of reality TV's emotional appeal is its capacity to provoke a wide range of feelings from viewers. Some of these feelings are excitement, suspense, surprise, revulsion, and empathy. According to the hypothesis of emotional contagion, spectators tend to copy and internalize the feelings shown by the participants, experiencing similar emotional highs and lows. This emotional connection with the events and persons on reality TV shows can produce a sense of vicarious participation, leading to heightened involvement and intention to continue watching. One study by

Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) studied the association between emotional involvement and enjoyment of reality TV shows. The researchers observed that viewers who felt emotionally attached to the participants reported increased satisfaction of the show. This emotional connection was also found to boost viewers' sense of reality, making them believe that the events and conversations on the television were realistic. Another study by Oliver and Raney (2011) evaluated the role of empathy in reality TV viewing. The researchers discovered that viewers who scored higher in dispositional empathy were more likely to indicate emotional connection and enjoyment of reality TV shows. This shows that persons who possess stronger empathy may be lured to reality programming due to their capacity to emotionally connect with the participants.

In addition to emotional connection, the perceived authenticity of reality TV broadcasts is also significant in understanding their emotional appeal. Perceived authenticity refers to viewers' belief that the events and conversations on the show represent real-life conditions realistically. A study by Tamborini and Bowman (2010) evaluated the influence of authenticity perceptions on emotional responses and enjoyment of reality TV shows. The researchers discovered that increased perceived authenticity was connected with greater emotional involvement and overall enjoyment of the program. Reality TV's emotional appeal might be ascribed to the utilization of specific production techniques and story strategies. For instance, storytelling tactics such as establishing tensions, suspense, and emotional cliffhangers assist to engaging viewers emotionally. The concept of elimination-based reality shows, particularly talent competitions like *American Idol* or *The Voice*, typically provokes emotional anticipation and empathy as contestants' aspirations and dreams hang in the balance. Reality television's emotional appeal can be explained by multiple interwoven aspects, including emotional involvement, perceived authenticity, and narrative methods adopted by the producers. The emotional connections built between viewers and participants mix with viewers' enjoyment and impression of the authenticity of events, resulting in a fascinating and captivating viewing experience.

Emotion refers to a complex psychophysiological state that influences behaviour and is defined by multiple components such as subjective sensations, physiological arousal, expressive conduct, and cognitive processes (Schwarz and Clore, 2003). It plays a key role in human experiences, decisions, and interactions, altering our perceptions and responses to the world around us. Reality television, as a popular genre, focuses largely on emotional connections to engage and captivate audiences. The relevance of emotional ties in reality television originates from its ability to provoke empathy, establish sympathetic characters, heighten drama, and build suspense, resulting in enhanced viewer engagement and loyalty (Holmes, 2004). Emotional ties contribute to the immersive experience of reality TV, making it more intriguing and enjoyable. Moreover, emotion-driven interactions can help participants expose personal experiences, vulnerabilities, and true emotions, enabling viewers to establish connections with them. One key part of emotional ties in reality TV is empathy. According to Hatfield et al. (1994), empathy requires understanding and sharing the emotional state of another person. When viewers observe candidates experiencing extreme emotions such as excitement, grief, or terror, they can sympathize with their feelings, building a relationship between the participant on screen and the spectator. This bond typically leads to higher watching, as audiences get emotionally invested in the individuals, generating a sense of connection or familiarity (Graby, 2009).

Emotional connections exploit our potential for identification and social comparison, which is vital for personal development and self-evaluation. Through reality TV, viewers can empathize with individual competitors depending on their personalities, experiences, or struggles. By seeing human achievements, disappointments, or emotional struggles, viewers may gain inspiration, motivation, or even validation in their own life (Huffington Post, 2016). Thus, emotional ties developed in reality television can offer viewers with a sense of belonging and create experienced, emotional bonds. In addition, emotional connections in reality TV contribute to the heightened drama and suspense that attract to viewers. By stressing emotional arcs, tensions, and power relations, reality TV producers create a polarized and emotionally charged environment, resulting in increased ratings and viewer engagement (Andrejevic, 2004). The portrayal of emotional moments, such as confrontations, betrayals, or heated rivalries, provokes emotional responses in viewers, fostering a desire to continue watching and see how things unfold. A study conducted by Ko et al. (2019) evaluated the significance of emotional connections in a popular reality TV show and found that emotional involvement strongly influenced

viewers' inclinations to continue watching the program. Emotional connections were associated with enhanced enjoyment, perceived realism, and social engagement related to the show. Emotion is a multidimensional phenomenon that plays a crucial role in our daily lives and interpersonal interactions. In reality television, emotional ties hold major relevance since they generate empathy, identification, and personal connections, leading to enhanced audience engagement and commitment. Producers purposefully create emotionally charged environments to evoke strong emotional responses from both the participants and spectators, boosting the immersive experience of reality television.

Statement of the Problem

Reality television has been a significant genre since the early 2000s, drawing big viewers with its frequently contentious and sensationalist content. While reality television has been condemned for its harmful impact on society, it continues to attract viewers and create cash for television networks. Reality television shows generally feature dramatic plots, interpersonal conflict, and emotional moments, which underscores the necessity of understanding the function of emotions in reality television. This research intends to examine viewers' emotional connections to participants and their experiences while watching reality television shows. Previous research has revealed that emotions play a vital influence in media consumption. According to Oliver & Raney, (2016), emotional reactions to media content are particularly essential in reality television, as viewers typically build emotional relationships with participants. This emotional connection may be influenced by elements such as relatability, likability, and perceived sincerity. Furthermore, recent research has indicated that emotions, such as empathy, might predict viewers' involvement and commitment to reality television shows (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009; Cohen, 2014).

While there is previous literature on the role of emotion in reality television, the current research intends to improve upon this body of work by particularly examining viewers' emotional ties to participants and their experiences. This study intends to evaluate how viewers' emotional responses to reality television shows influence their involvement with the show and their opinions of the participants. Additionally, the study intends to analyze the aspects that may affect viewers' emotional connections, such as the contestants' origins, personalities, and relationships with other contestants.

The findings of this research have important significance for reality television producers and television networks. Understanding viewers' emotional relationships to contestants can help producers create more intriguing television that resonates with consumers. Additionally, insights on the characteristics that influence viewers' emotional connections might drive casting decisions and ultimately increase the diversity and representation of participants on reality television series. This research intends to examine viewers' emotional connections to participants and their experiences while watching reality television shows. The study intends to build upon previous work on the function of emotion in media consumption and analyze how emotions influence viewers' involvement with reality television shows. The findings of this research have substantial significance for producers and television networks, as they can drive programming selections and improve the diversity and representation of reality television participants.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of emotions evoked by reality TV on viewers' perceptions of contestants' authenticity and likability.
2. How do viewers' emotional connections with reality TV contestants influence their overall viewing experience and engagement with the programme.
3. What emotional connections do reality television viewers in Southern Nigeria have with contestants?
4. How do these emotional connections impact viewers' overall experiences with reality television?

Literature Review

Reality television has gained enormous popularity over the years, catching the interest of millions of viewers internationally. With its unique format and unscripted nature, reality TV has become a dominant force in the entertainment business. This literature review intends to investigate prior studies on reality television,

concentrating on its rise and impact on viewers. Specifically, the analysis will dive into the role of emotion in reality television, assessing viewers' emotional connections to participants and their experiences.

Reality television has undergone exponential development since its inception in the late 20th century. A study by Tustin et al. (2017) emphasized the increase of reality TV as a result of the viewers' desire for unedited, relatable content. The study concluded that reality TV indicates a cultural shift towards voyeuristic entertainment, allowing viewers to experience the trials and sufferings of others. The rise of reality TV shows has been linked to their low production costs and strong viewer ratings (Mastro et al., 2016). Reality TV formats have proven to be more cost-effective, enabling networks to produce a range of series at decreased budgets. This economic feasibility has contributed to the growing appeal of reality television.

Impact of reality television on viewers

Research has begun to study the psychological impacts of reality television on its viewers. Vorderer et al. (2016) underlined that reality TV gives audiences with opportunity for parasocial interactions, enabling them to build emotional relationships with the participants. These parasocial interactions can be considered as a sort of entertainment that meets the viewers' demand for social interaction and affiliation. Studies (Rosaen and Dibble, 2019; Baldwin, 2018) have demonstrated that reality TV stimulates diverse emotional responses from viewers, including empathy, enjoyment, and identification. These feelings are typically a result of involvement with candidates, their personal experiences, and their individual journeys throughout the competition. The emotional experiences generated by reality television contribute to its enduring appeal and viewers' engagement in the outcomes.

Reality television has been related with the growth of certain views and attitudes among its viewers. Research by Eastin et al. (2017) indicated that heavy users of reality TV often have a heightened tolerance for unusual behaviors and a distorted perception of reality. This refers to the potential for reality TV to change viewers' perspective and attitudes based on the depictions and narratives given within the episodes. Reality television has developed dramatically in recent years, capturing people with its unscripted and relevant content. Previous research indicates that reality TV attracts to viewers due to its ability to generate emotional responses and build parasocial interactions with the competitors. The emotional connections developed through reality TV contribute to the viewers' interest in the experiences and outcomes of the participants. It is vital for future research to delve further into the psychological and social ramifications of these emotional linkages in order to acquire a thorough knowledge of the function of emotion in reality television.

Viewers emotions in reality television

Reality television has become a prominent genre in television programming, with programs such as *The Bachelor*, *Survivor*, and *Big Brother* earning huge popularity. The genre has been attacked for exploiting competitors and creating drama for entertainment reasons, but it has also been commended for its ability to depict the feelings and experiences of ordinary people. This literature study addresses the function of emotion in reality television by examining viewers' emotional connections to participants and their experiences.

Several studies have explored the emotional responses of viewers to reality television programs. In a study by Oliver and Raney (2011), viewers were found to experience a spectrum of emotions while watching reality television shows. These included happiness, disgust, rage, and empathy, among others. Similarly, a study by Hoeken and Jansen (2016) indicated that viewers had a variety of happy and negative feelings while watching reality television shows. These feelings were influenced by the substance of the show, the characters, and the viewers' personal traits.

Effects of emotional connections on viewers

The emotional ties viewers establish with reality television competitors have also been researched. A research by Oliver and Raney (2011) indicated that viewers felt a higher emotional connection to participants who were portrayed as sympathetic or likeable. This emotional connection was found to be associated to enhanced enjoyment of the show. Similarly, a study by Knobloch-Westerwick, Johnson, Westerwick, and Alter (2015) demonstrated that emotional reactions to candidates altered viewers' cognitive processing of the program.

Participants who experienced positive sentiments towards candidates were more likely to remember specifics about the program and to have a more positive view of the show. Other research has focused on the consequences of emotional relationships with reality television contestants on viewers' attitudes and behaviours. A study by Weber, Tamborini, and Westcott- Baker (2015) indicated that emotional relationships with contestants led to enhanced empathy towards others in real life. Similarly, a study by Hoffner, Buchanan, and Anderson (2017) indicated that viewers who felt emotionally linked to contestants were more likely to engage in online discussions about the show and to become interested in philanthropic causes sponsored by contestants.

Research on the role of emotion in reality television has explored both the emotional responses of viewers and the implications of emotional ties with participants on viewers' attitudes, behaviours, and pleasure of the program. These studies have substantial consequences for the entertainment business, as well as for the general public's knowledge of the impact of reality television on society.

Contestants as Key Sources of Emotional Connection

Reality television has become a vital aspect of television programming, and its popularity continues to rise internationally. It is distinguishable from other genres by its emphasis on everyday people's lives in highly exaggerated, emotionally charged circumstances, which tend to draw viewers in for its raw authenticity. Reality television contestants have a considerable role in increasing the emotional experience of this genre for viewers; hence, this literature review explores the impact of contestants on the emotional connection between viewers and reality television.

Reality television competitors are a key aspect of the genre's productions, with certain series designed around challenges that place players in severe emotional states, such as *Survivor*, *The Bachelor*, and *Big Brother*. Aftab (2013) contends that it is the unique blend of "self-display, sentiment and spectacle" that makes reality television so enticing to consumers. For instance, on *American Idol*, the contestants' emotional investment is visible in their reactions to their performances, praise, or criticism, while spectators have an emotional intellect towards their selected candidate. Thus, these participants not only entertain but also inspire emotions that build a genuine relationship with the audience.

Contestants' Experiences as a Source of Empathy and Identification

Contestants in reality television frequently have personal tales, which tend to be psychological, socio-economic, or physical problems that allow viewers to empathize with them, inspiring empathy (Aftab, 2013). The contestants' experiences typically evoke emotional resonance as many viewers can locate a piece of themselves in the story. For instance, in *The Biggest Loser*, viewers sympathize with the competitors due of their weight difficulties. It is obvious that the candidates' challenges and achievements become a form of identification and emotional connection, with viewers pulling for the underdog (Ahlers et al., 2011). Moreover, according to Weber (2011), the incorporation of emotional experiences in reality television stimulates viewers to join emotionally and empathize with the competitors' circumstances. The emotional connection that viewers build with reality television competitors is a fundamental component of the genre. Contestants provide a source of curiosity, dramatic arc, identification, and empathy, ending in a significant emotional experience for spectators. This emotional closeness transcends socio-cultural and cognitive contexts, and it is what makes reality television so addictive to audiences worldwide.

Methodology

Survey is employed as the research design for this study. Survey enables for effective data gathering from a big number of respondents and gives a tool to acquire information on viewers' emotional relationships to reality TV competitors. The poll was performed using an internet platform for convenience and larger reach. The survey approach is considered acceptable for this study as it enables for the collection of quantitative data on emotional relationships. Quantitative data is vital for statistical analysis, as it helps researchers to draw generalizable conclusions about the population of reality television watchers in Southern Nigeria. Additionally, surveys gather a tremendous quantity of information in a relatively short time, providing for a wider comprehension of viewers' emotional experiences during reality TV viewership. The demographic for this study

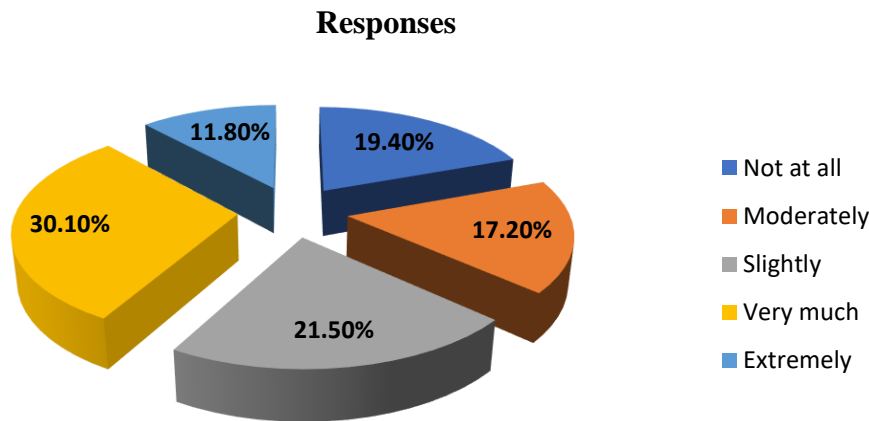
is reality television viewers in Southern Nigeria. The Taro Yamane table used for sample size determination. This table examines the population size, desired confidence level, and margin of error to calculate an acceptable sample size. A sample of 400 respondents was recruited from the population of reality television consumers in Southern Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a well-structured questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was meant to examine viewers' emotional connections to reality TV contestants and their experiences. It includes of both closed-ended questions (e.g., binary response items) and open-ended questions to gain qualitative insights.

The questionnaire underwent a validation process to confirm its validity and reliability. A pilot research conducted with a small sample of volunteers to examine the clarity, comprehensibility, and relevance of the questions. Based on the input collected, relevant modifications and enhancements were made to enhance the reliability and validity of the survey instrument. The survey instrument was administered online through several social media platforms, including online forums. Convenience sampling was adopted, where respondents were asked to willingly engage in the survey. The data collection phase was undertaken over a period of four weeks to guarantee a sufficient number of responses was received. Descriptive statistics was used to examine and summarize the data received from the survey. It involved calculating frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Inferential statistical approaches, such as correlation analysis, regression analysis, and analysis of variance (ANOVA), was applied to evaluate the correlations and associations between respondents' emotional connections and their overall experiences with reality television. Volunteers were provided with a brief description of the research aims, their rights as volunteers, and their freedom to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was acquired before survey completion. All acquired data were regarded as confidential, and respondents' identities were kept anonymous. Only aggregated data were reported to safeguard privacy.

Findings

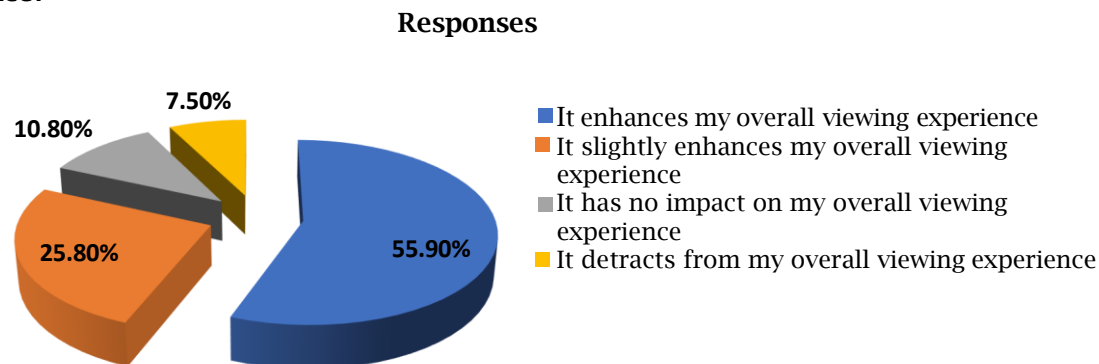
A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents and the researchers retrieved all 400 copies. This represented a 100 percent retrieval rate. It is based on the returned questionnaire that the following data were collected and analyzed.

Fig 1: Does emotions evoked by reality TV influence your perception of contestants' authenticity?



The above figure reveals that majority of the respondents agreed that emotions evoked by reality TV influence their perception of contestant's authenticity at various degrees of very much, slightly, moderately and extremely while only 19.40% disagreed. This implies that emotions evoked by reality TV influences the perception of contestant's authenticity.

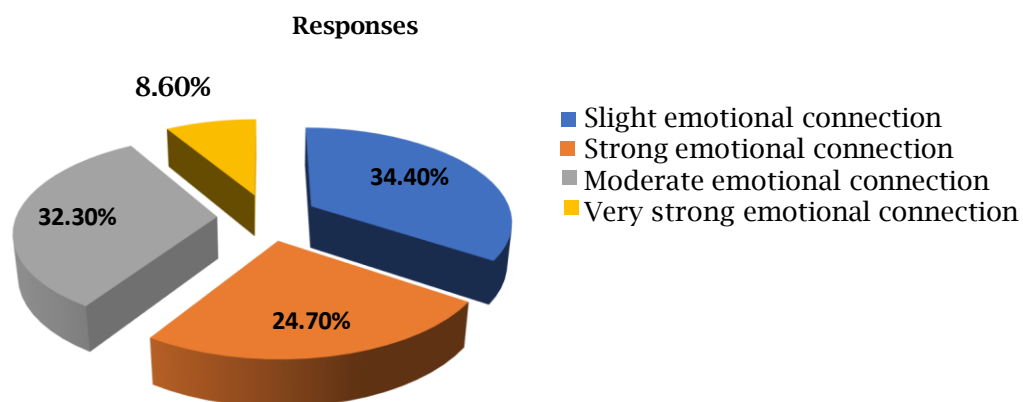
Fig 2: How do your emotional connections with reality TV contestants affect your overall viewing experience?



The above data shows that majority of the respondents representing 55.90% opined that their emotional connections with reality TV contestants enhances their overall viewing experience, 25.80% opined it slightly enhances their overall viewing experience, 7.50% opine it detracts from their overall viewing experience while 10.80% said it has no impact on their overall viewing experience. The conclusion of this is that TV audience's emotional connections with TV competitors affect increase their entire viewing experience. Therefore, there is an underlying relationship between emotional ties with reality TV participants and audience overall viewing experience.

The given data reveals the sentiments the respondents feel towards reality TV competitors. The e responders were asked to choose all that applies to them. However, most of the responders representing 55.90%, 31.20% and 26.90% express adoration, delight and sympathy towards the participants. Only a few of the responders feel adversely about the contestants. This means that reality TV program helps the viewers to analyze the participants in their natural behaviour and generate particular emotions for them most of which are good emotions.

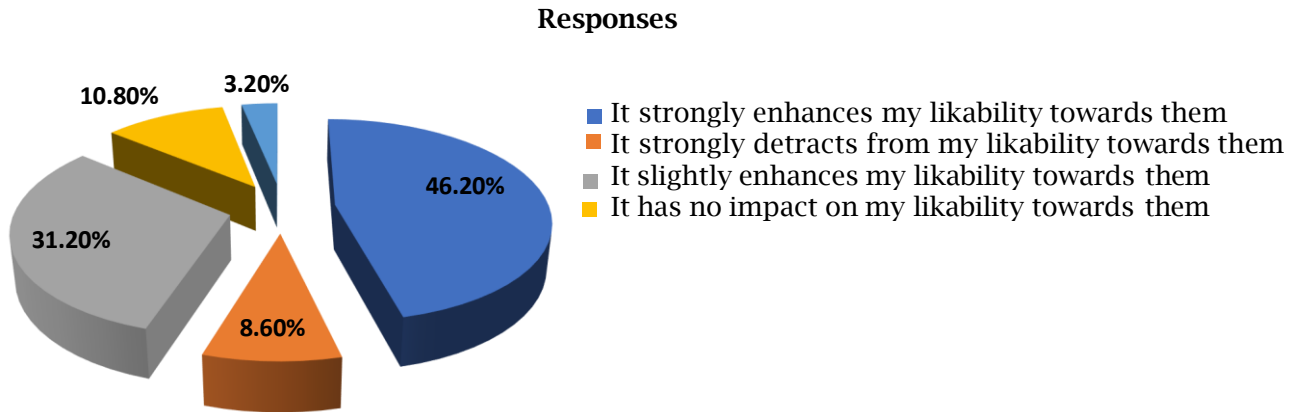
Fig 4: What kind of emotional connection do you have with reality TV contestants?



The above demonstrates that majority of the respondents representing 34.40% have a modest emotional connection with reality TV contestants while 32.30% of the respondents have a moderate emotional connection with TV contestants. However, 24.70% and 8.60% of the respondents have strong and extremely strong emotional connection with reality TV participants. This shows that there is a level of emotional connection between reality TV audience and competitors. The extent of emotional connection between them is depending on the personality of the candidates and the viewer. This is because individuals are more drawn to those who represent their reality,

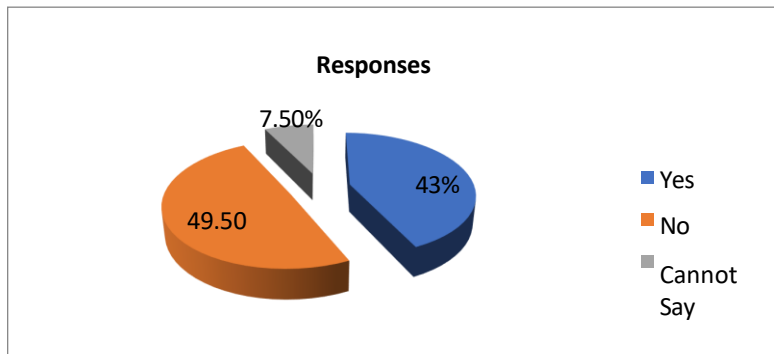
personality or objectives.

Fig 5: How do your emotional connections with reality TV contestants influence your likability towards them?



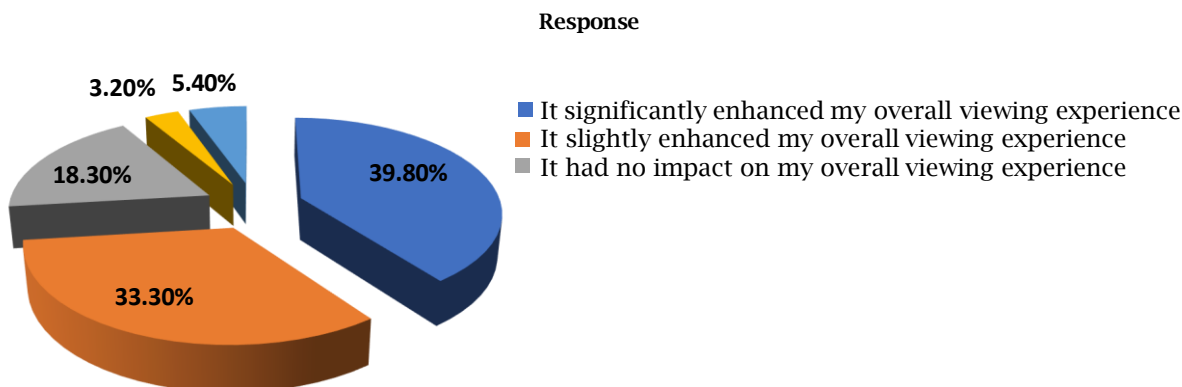
The above demonstrates that majority of the respondents representing 46.20% opined that their emotional connection with reality TV contestants substantially boosts their likability towards them while 31.20% said it marginally enhances their likability towards them. However, 10.80% of the respondents are of the view that their emotional connection with reality TV competitors has no impact on their likability towards them, 8.60% said it severely detracts from their likability towards them and 3.20% said it mildly detracts from their likability towards them. The conclusion of these findings is that there is a considerable association between emotional connection with reality TV competitors and audience likability towards them.

Fig 6: Have you ever formed a personal attachment or identification with a reality TV contestant?



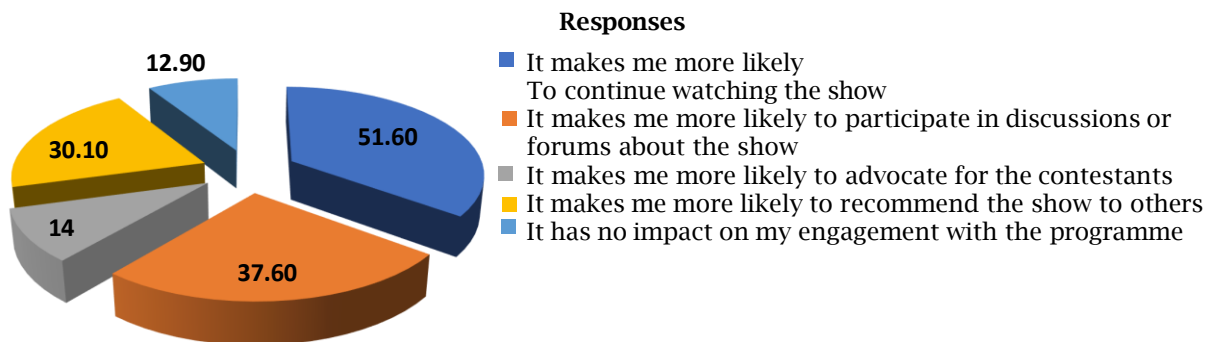
The above data reveals that majority of the respondents representing 49.50% said they have never formed a personal attachment or identification to a reality TV contestant but 43% of the respondents opined that they have formed a personal attachment or identification to a reality TV contestant while 7.50% could not say anything about it. This means that the number of respondents who had not acquired a personal attachment or identification to a reality TV participant is strongly related to those who have.

Fig 7: How has that personal attachment or identification influenced your overall viewing experience?



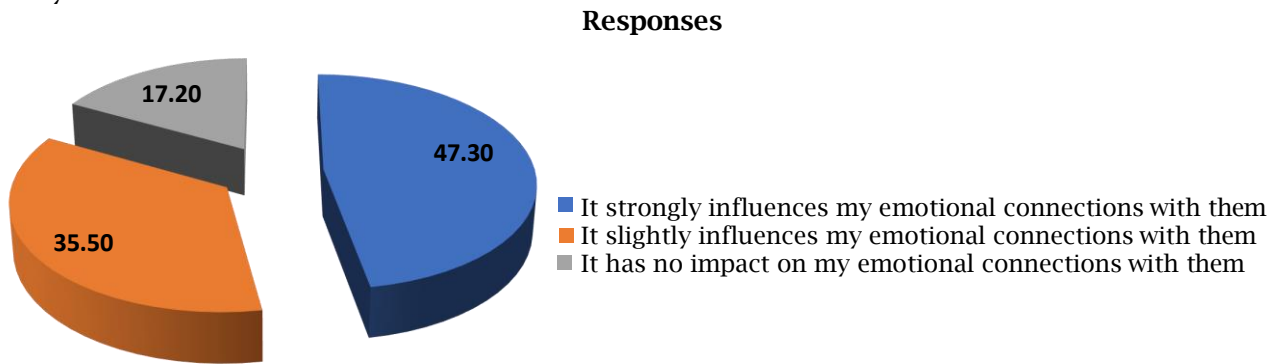
The above data shows that personal attachment or identification significantly enhanced the overall viewing experience of 39.80% of the respondents, 33.30% of the respondents said it slightly enhanced their overall viewing experience; 18.30% of the respondents said it had no impact on their overall viewing experience; 5.40% of the respondents said it significantly detracted from their overall viewing experience while 3.20% said it slightly detracted from their overall viewing experience. Whichever end of the divide the respondents were, it was apparent that personal attachment or identification influenced most of the respondents' viewing experience.

Fig 8: How do your emotional connections with reality TV contestants influence your engagement with the programme? (Select all that apply)



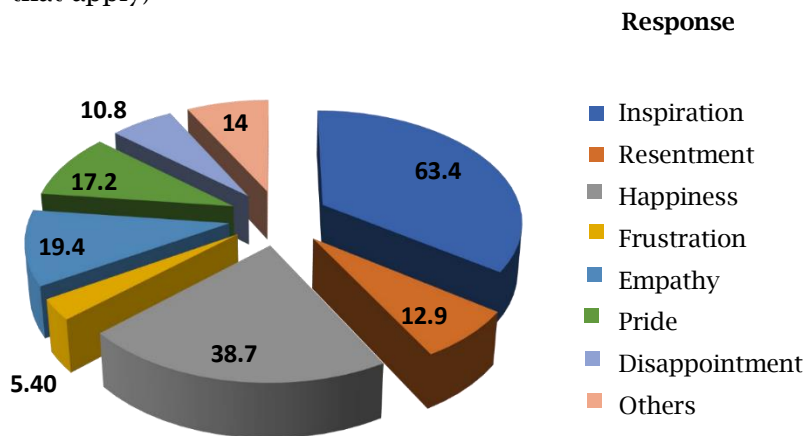
The above data shows that 51.60% of the respondents said that emotional connections with reality TV contestants makes them more likely to continue watching the show, 37.60% said it makes them more likely to participate in discussions or forums about the show, 30.10% said it makes them more likely to recommend the show to others, 14% said it makes them more likely to advocate for the contestants while 12.90% said it makes it has no impact on their engagement with the programme.

Fig 9: How does the cultural context of Southern Nigeria influence your emotional connections with reality TV contestants?



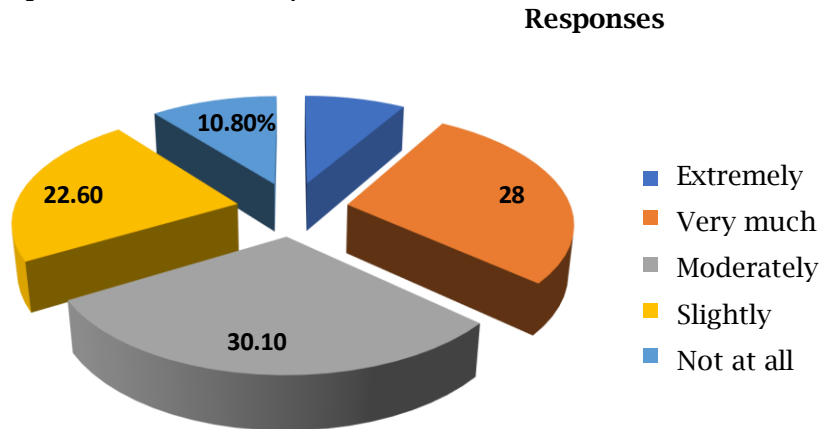
The above data shows that majority representing 47.30% said that cultural context of Southern Nigeria strongly influence their emotional connections with reality TV contestants, 35.50% said it slightly influence their emotional connections with them while 17.20% said it has no impact on their emotional connections with them.

Fig. 10: What specific emotions do you associate with reality TV contestants from Southern Nigeria? (Select all that apply)



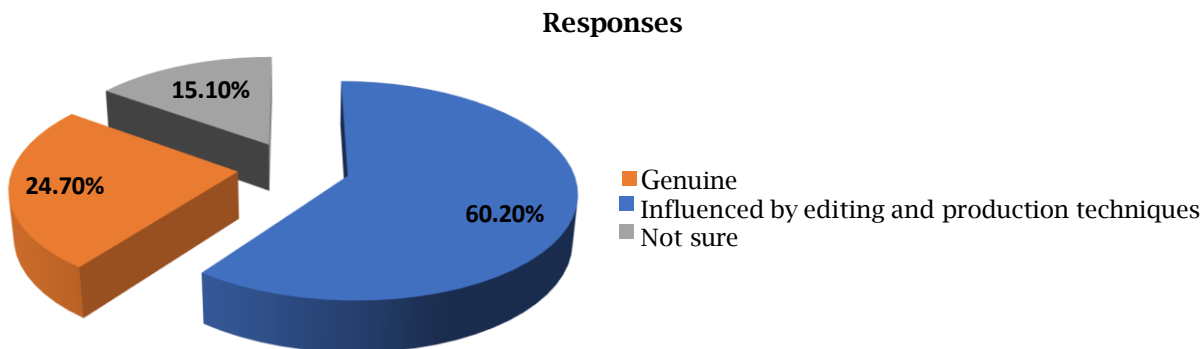
The above data shows that majority of the respondents representing 63.40% said that inspiration is the emotion they associate with reality TV contestants from Southern Nigeria, 38.70% said it is happiness while empathy, pride, others, disappointment and frustration takes prominence in that order.

Fig 11: To what degree does your emotional connections with reality TV contestants impact your overall experiences with reality television?



The above data shows that 30.10% of the respondents said that emotional connections with reality TV contestants moderately impact their overall experiences with reality television, 28% said it impact their overall experiences very much, 22.60% said it is slightly while 10.80% and 8.60% said they there is no impact and extreme impact respectively.

Fig 12: Do you believe that your emotional connections with reality TV contestants are genuine or influenced by editing and production techniques?



The above data shows that majority of the respondents representing 60.20% said that emotional connections with reality TV contestants are genuine, 24.70% said that emotional connections with reality TV contestants are influenced by editing and production techniques while 15.10% said they are not sure.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study accord with and complement the current literature on reality television and viewers' emotional relationships to contestants. The study shows some crucial insights into the relationship between emotions, contestant honesty, and overall viewing experience. The study's findings reveal that a majority of respondents felt that emotions elicited by reality TV influence their judgment of contestant authenticity. This fits with the literature that highlights the significance of emotion in reality television, where viewers create

parasocial ties and emotional connections with participants (Vorderer et al., 2016). The study validates the premise that emotional relationships with reality TV contestants enhance the entire viewing experience for the majority of respondents. This correlates with prior studies showing the psychological consequences of reality television and viewers' emotional responses, including enjoyment, empathy, and identification (Oliver and Raney, 2011; Rosaen and Dibble, 2019). The study's findings suggest that viewers generally feel positive emotions such as adoration, delight, and pity towards reality TV competitors. This fits with literature demonstrating that reality TV generally shows participants in a way that stimulates favorable feelings from the audience (Hoeken and Jansen, 2016). The study's assessment of the extent of emotional connection between viewers and reality TV competitors coincides with prior research that acknowledges the varied spectrum of emotional ties generated. The study emphasizes that the depth of emotional connections is depending on both competitor personalities and audience choices (Knobloch-Westerwick et al., 2015).

The study's conclusions about the association between emotional connection and likability match with earlier research. The stronger emotional connection, the greater the boost of likability towards candidates, underscoring the significance of emotional relationships in molding audience perceptions (Oliver and Raney, 2011). The study's observations concerning the establishment of personal attachment or identification with reality TV contestants agree with research highlighting the impact of candidates' personal tales in establishing emotional resonance and viewer engagement (Ahlers et al., 2011).

The study's findings regarding the impact of emotional connections on viewers' likelihood to continue watching, participate in discussions, and recommend the show align with the literature on parasocial interactions and the ripple effects of emotional connections on viewer behavior (Weber, Tamborini, and Westcott-Baker, 2015; Hoffner, Buchanan, and Anderson, 2017). The study's assessment of the role of cultural environment on emotional connections with reality TV competitors fits with research addressing the cultural and contextual aspects that shape viewers' emotional experiences (Eastin et al., 2017). The study's findings about the emotions associated with reality TV contestants accord with earlier research that emphasizes the diverse nature of emotional experiences in reality television (Oliver and Raney, 2011). The study's observations concerning the perceived authenticity of emotional relationships with reality TV competitors are consistent with the literature that acknowledges the significance of editing and production practices in altering viewer views (Weber, Tamborini, and Westcott-Baker, 2015). The study's findings add useful empirical information that confirms and extends existing understanding regarding the emotional interactions between reality TV viewers and competitors. The congruence between the study's findings and the literature highlights the robustness and generalizability of the discovered patterns in viewers' emotional ties to reality TV material.

Conclusion

The results of the research provide insight into the major influence of the emotional relationships that exist between participants and viewers of reality TV. Most respondents admitted that the emotions aroused by reality television considerably affect how truthful they believe competitors to be. Furthermore, it was revealed that emotional ties were vital for enriching the overall viewing experience, with appreciation, enjoyment, and sympathy being the most common reactions from viewers. The range of emotional connection levels that were seen-from marginally to extremely strong-highlights the complex nature of these interactions, which are shaped by the personalities of the competitors and the audience. Additionally, likability and emotional connection were found to be substantially connected in the study, demonstrating the important role that emotions play in influencing public impressions of reality TV participants.

Viewers' overall experience with reality TV has been proven to be greatly altered by their personal attachment to or identification with the contestants. The study indicated that human ties strongly influence the audience's emotional engagement, whether they are favorable or negative. The study also looked at the wider effects that emotional connections have on viewer conduct. Strong emotional connection to reality TV competitors have been related with increased possibilities of viewers sticking around, taking part in conversations, suggesting the show to others, and lobbying for the participants. Cultural environment played a key effect, especially in Southern Nigeria, as most respondents related inspiration to local reality TV competitors. Although a substantial majority agreed that emotional connections were genuine, a notable part understood that

editing and production methods may have an impact on these connections. The study continues by noting the intricate interplay of emotions, reality TV rivals, and audience involvement. Acknowledging and capitalising on these affective ties can help preserve reality TV's appeal and good impacts on viewers throughout the world.

Recommendation

Based on the research findings and conclusion, the following are hereby recommended:

1. The emotional consequences of editing and production methods should be considered by television producers and artists. For viewers to continue feeling the true emotional connections they crave, it is vital to establish a balance between entertainment value and authenticity.
2. More variety and inclusion of different cultural backgrounds in reality TV programming is advocated, considering the impact of cultural context on emotional ties. For a wider audience, this can give for a more relatable and inclusive viewing experience.
3. Producers and networks can profit from the considerable association between viewer behaviour and emotional relationships. It is feasible to improve the complete viewing experience and sustain interest in reality TV shows by putting tactics like interactive platforms, forums, and conversations into practice.
4. There is a requirement for ethical considerations in competition depiction because viewers' impressions are primarily affected by their emotional relationships. An environment that is encouraging and supportive for the audience can be produced by assuring fairness, empathy, and responsible storytelling.
5. The findings pave the path for additional inquiry into the long-term repercussions of emotional relationships generated by reality TV. The grasp of the persistent influence on the attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions of viewers can give substantial insights for industry professionals and researchers alike.

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