

Hate-watching

By Ravi Sondhu

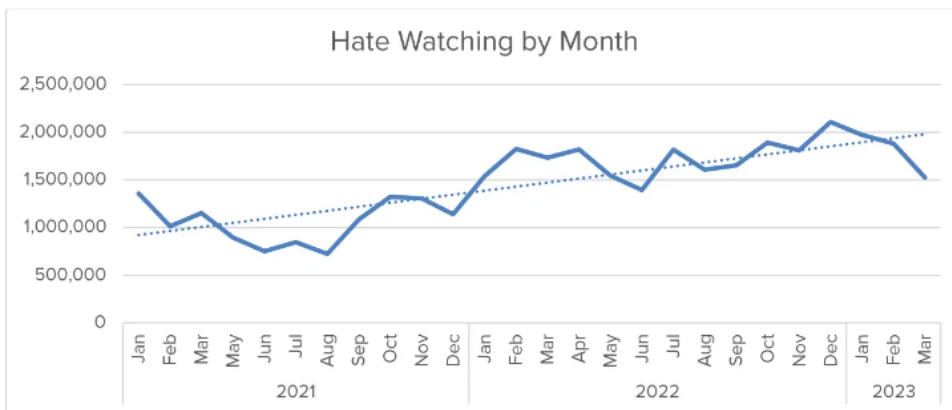
Hate-watching is the act of consuming media with the sole intent of acquiring amusement from the mockery of its content. According to a BuzzFeed poll, the top shows people love to hate include *The Vampire Diaries*, *Gossip Girl*, *Riverdale*, *Glee*, *Emily in Paris*, *Pretty Little Liars*, *Grey's Anatomy*, and *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*. There are many reasons why we hate TV shows like these and for one, there is always *that* character – the whiny, insufferable one that makes us so damn angry we want to pull out our hair. If not that, then the storyline makes zero sense, or the acting is subpar, or the lighting is off – whatever makes you tick! Maybe we go so far as to hate ourselves for watching such awful and cringy garbage (reality TV like *The Bachelor* and *Farmer Wants a Wife* come to mind). Perhaps it's just so problematic and ridiculous that we drive ourselves crazy wondering how the show even got past the elevator pitch phase, not to mention how the hell it got renewed for a second season. But why must we subject our eyes, ears and minds to this utter filth? Why not just turn it off, or find something else? To understand why we hate-watch, and what good or bad can come from it, we must first understand the emotion of hate itself.

"Hate is a strong word". Everyone has been reprimanded with this one before, especially during childhood when screaming out "I hate Timmy!" was met with the same reaction one would receive if they had uttered out a string of swear words. But hate *is* a strong word because it's a strong emotion. A study published in the *European Journal of Social Psychology* explored the ways in which we conceptualize feelings of hate versus feelings of dislike and the research found that intensity and morality are what separates the two. When you hate something, it's the clash of beliefs and values that fuels the fire. It's the strong desire to eliminate the obstacle, as opposed to simply avoiding it. In terms of hate-watching, what so offends us to our core is what keeps us clicking *next episode*.

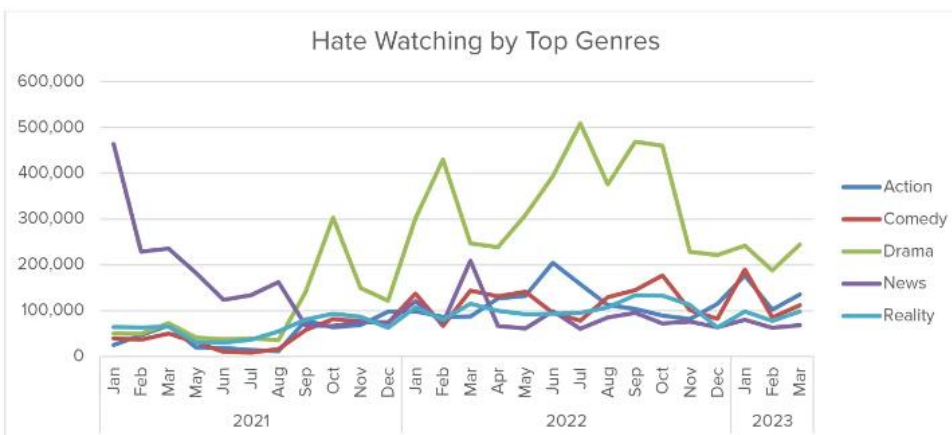
So what are the benefits? For starters, hating is a bonding experience. What better way to make friends than unite over our shared hatred for this character, or that storyline? When our hate is validated by someone else in this context, stronger connections can be built because we face a common enemy. Additionally, hating something as harmless as a TV show is a great outlet for suppressed emotions. In fact, intense emotional reactions like hate can actually result in the release of "happy hormones", such as serotonin, oxytocin, and dopamine. As well as this, exploring the things on TV that make us angry can aid us in being more self-aware in real life. Or maybe we just enjoy reveling in that "it's so bad it's good" feeling.

Putting aside the positives for now, the fact that we are actively putting time in to make judgements and focus on the bad parts is something that can't be ignored. Frequently concentrating on the negatives could lead us to become more cynical and pessimistic in other areas of our lives - when do we go from just hating a TV show to becoming a hateful person? It's a fine line to walk and one that must be navigated with care. Hate-watching can encourage elitism because in a twisted way, we *enjoy* the idea that we are better than certain people. Even in terms of the execution of a show, one thing everybody thinks when they hate-watch is something reminiscent of *I could have done this a thousand times better*. It doesn't really matter whether we actually could, but the pleasure we find in the finality of the statement keeps us satisfied.

In short, hate-watching is an activity in which one elicits entertainment from poking fun at a TV show. While hate is a nuanced emotion, it is ultimately the result of conflicting values that amplify our dislike into an emotion as strong as hate. We may hate a certain TV show because what we're seeing on the screen doesn't align with our own ideas about what is right, or good, or appropriate. The characters may do things that leave us enraged while simultaneously making us wonder about what choices we would make in their position. Classic horror film situation – don't go into the creepy, abandoned house by yourself! One thing to keep in mind is that hate-watching can have both positive and negative effects. On the plus side, getting a laugh out of the stupidity of a show with friends can actually augment our relationships with other people, building on our social connections. Intense emotions such as hate can also release what are known as "happy hormones", which can help improve our mood. However, hate is definitely something to be taken in small amounts. When we hate-watch, we are being critical and making judgements, which is fine when directed at a TV screen, but not so fine when it leaks into other aspects of our lives. In the end, hate-watching could be considered a healthy pastime, but one done in moderation with an understanding of why we do it.



Source: Canvs Landscape Reporting, Network Level Data, January 2021 – March 2023



Source: Canvs Landscape Reporting, Genre Level Data, January 2021 – March 2023