

Pleasures of Transnational Cultural Modernity: Consumption of Television Reruns and Fan Practices

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Abstract: This paper seems to understand why and what do audiences seek in watching reruns of popular television shows. Is it because of television programming which relies on tested television shows to ensure high volume of audiences to be delivered to advertisers or do audiences themselves seek particular kinds of pleasure in watching reruns of their favorite shows? Why do we watch what we watch? The paper argues that the production, circulation and proliferation of television media texts via global economy is an exciting field of cultural enquiry to understand how these media texts are received, re-articulated and re-situated by audiences themselves.

Keywords: television, re-runs, fan practices, modernity, fandom, audiences.

Previous research on television watching practices in the field of cultural studies has explored the element of pleasure in consuming television, discussing the problematic overt emphasis on pleasure (Hill 2007) or the guilty-ridden pleasure of watching television itself (Morley 1986). The act of watching television or televisual content may be conscious or unconscious, where audiences may or may not reflect on the television text as a purveyor of ideology. Subsequently audience engagement and mode of viewing a genre such as news and current affairs will be distinctly different from other genres such as situation comedies. Battles and Hilton–Morrow (2002), for instance, argue that situation comedies rarely deal with political issues and largely depend on interpersonal relationships and individuated acts to pull the

narrative forward. In that sense audience expectation from situation comedies will tend to be different from other television genres. Popular psychology reports from a study conducted in 2012 suggest that watching reruns of our favorite television shows may boost our will power and may have restorative powers¹. As per the report, the participants in the study who were asked to write about their favorite shows performed better at structured tasks than those who were asked to list items in their room. The researchers concluded that watching reruns had a “measurable restorative effect from a familiar fictional world.”² Being a consumer of popular television shows has led me to think further on why and what do audiences seek in watching reruns of popular television shows. Is it because of television programming which relies on tested television shows to ensure high volume of audiences to be delivered to advertisers or do audiences themselves seek particular kinds of pleasure in watching reruns of their favorite shows? Why do we watch what we watch?

Transnational television content has been available in India from 1991 onwards via satellite, cable, direct-to-home and the Internet more recently.³ Before the convenience of watching television shows online, the repertoire of English-language shows produced in the US and UK available in India on cable was limited. Some of the longest running and most popular English-language drama and sit-com shows in India include but are not limited to Friends, How I Met Your Mother, Big Bang Theory, Baywatch, Seinfeld, Bold and Beautiful, Sex and the City, Will & Grace, Dharma & Greg, Small Wonder among others. India has never been a prominent exporter of transnational television content to international networks, barring Bollywood films. On the other hand, it has received much television content from the West. Rohit Chopra and Radhika Gajjala (2012) point out that transnational global media culture has inevitably brought to bear the concepts of concomitant cultural imperialism and homogenization of global culture in developing countries. However, some recent work on global media culture has been insightful in providing conceptual and theoretical maps of the complex spatial and temporal dynamics of media production, circulation and

reception among audiences. The production, circulation and proliferation of television media texts via global economy is an exciting field of cultural enquiry to understand how these media texts are received, re-articulated and re-situated by audiences themselves.

Reading the working of transnational media production practices into what Stuart Hall (1997) calls “global mass culture”, one can understand the unbound nature of media content circulating globally today when he says that it is:

...dominated by the modern means of cultural production, dominated by the image which crosses and re-crosses linguistic frontiers much more rapidly and more easily, and which speaks across languages in a much more immediate way... by all the ways in which the visual and graphic arts have entered directly into the reconstitution of popular life, of entertainment and of leisure... by television and by film, and by the image, imagery, and styles of mass advertising. Its epitome is in all those forms of mass communication of which one might think of satellite television as the prime example... its whole purpose is precisely that it cannot be limited any longer by national boundaries. (27)

Arjun Appadurai (1990) on global cultural economy and transnational ‘mediascapes’ observes that they are,

...image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as characters, plots and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places. (299)

The global cultural economy then in its transnational mode of operation is primarily influenced by and flows via the nodes of American cultural

production. David Kompare (2005) in his work tracing the historical emergence of reruns and repeat television in America remarks that a cultural and industrial history of reruns in the US points towards this phenomenon as a legitimate business practice in running of the television industry. He also goes on to argue that the format of repeat television in the US was to also construct a sense of national history and national past, something which is also discussed by Lynn Spigel (1995) in her work on popular memory and its negotiation with official historical past where televised heritage comes to stand in for heritage itself fostering particular notions of gender, class, race and ethnicity albeit in a teleological fashion.

Kompare further argues that television reruns should be seen as commoditized objects circulating in capitalist economies of cultural production thereby referring to the monetization of syndicated content, advertising revenues and a pre-tested and adapted audience for those programs. While this does explain the business logic of scheduling reruns of old television content, however it does not adequately explain the continued patronage, engagement and consumption of reruns by the audiences themselves. More specifically it does not sufficiently throw light on how transnational television content and its reruns find resonance with viewers in a country like India, long after the show has stopped running or the continued fan engagement and concomitant fan practices around certain shows. This requires an attempt to unravel the inherent logic of transnational television reruns of episodic narratives, the themes that make them timeless and the interrelated questions of cultural production and reception.

My query with respect to reruns of popular television shows is specifically to do with the American sitcom *Friends* which ran on NBC from 1994 to 2004, completing 10 seasons and 238 episodes. The show follows the everyday professional and love lives of six friends in their 20s living in Manhattan, New York. Each character is sketched with particular quirks such as the “control freak” chef, the “dumb but good-looking” actor, the “waitress obsessed with her looks”, the “nerdy paleontologist”, the “witty corporate

cog” and the “free-spirited masseuse and singer”. These characters are essentially performing as young people carrying out modern day professions in one of the most expensive cities in the world.

From New York to New Delhi

It has been more than 20 years since the show aired on television but according to the Broadcast Audience Research Council in India between January and June 2016, the show aired on Viacom 18’s Comedy Central (English entertainment channel), had 2.08 million impressions (Sathe 2012).⁴ Every few years there are rumors of the cast reuniting for another season⁵ or the release of the trailer of the film based on the show.⁶ More recently, an unofficial Facebook page by the name of David Schwimmer (name of one of the cast members) released a poster for the new season in 2018. At the time of writing this in August 2017, the post had been shared by 2,35,000 users on Facebook.⁷ This was eventually dubbed as a fake post since it was not made from an official account.

The sitcom works on syndication, and generates \$1 billion in syndication revenue for the Warner Bros every year and the cast of the show makes 2% of the syndication revenue each year as syndication royalties.⁸ In 2002, NBC negotiated to renew the show for its last season, and are reported to have paid each member of the cast \$1 million per episode for the last season.⁹ In 2002 the show was doing 24.7 million viewers per week, with a 12 rating with adults between the ages of 18 and 49 making these numbers. The sitcom made use of many revenue channels, including the first-run ad revenues, broadcasting syndication and DVD sales. While no current DVD sales revenue figures have been released, a report indicates that in 2003 2.1 million copies of Friends DVDs were sold for \$75 million.¹⁰

The show’s rights were acquired by Romy Now (an English-language television channel that broadcasts romantic comedies (American television shows and Hollywood films)) in 2014 and ran for a few months

after which the rights were also acquired by Comedy Central, which continues to broadcast the show in India. The show has previously run on Star World and Zee Café (English-language television channels that broadcast syndicated popular American television shows), sometimes simultaneously, with both channels showing different seasons. The content head for Romy Now defends their decision to acquire the old sitcom on the premise that it fits well within their “love and laughter” motto, additionally the programme scheduling is done in such a way that individual episodes can be watched every night of the week from Monday to Thursday and “binge-watched”¹¹ on Saturday in a marathon session.¹² The show also finds its audience not just on television but also on free online streaming websites and subscription-only portals such as Netflix, an online Video-on-Demand streaming website which bought the rights for streaming Friends for \$500,000 per episode.¹³ While Netflix does not divulge the number of subscribers streaming a show or their viewing patterns but a Netflix spokesperson has been quoted as saying that Friends draws as much online buzz as other contemporary shows about young adults.¹⁴

In addition to this, popular culture practices continue to refer back to the show and its continued presence in audiences’ lives. Comedy Central UK hosted a FriendsFest in 2014 where they recreated the sets from the show. An Indian couple living in the UK got engaged on the sets, with the couple recreating the proposal from one of the episodes of the show.¹⁵ A 2005 study carried out by linguistics professors in the University of Toronto revealed that the use of the word “so” in the show as an adverb intensifier prefix to emotions slowly found its way into mainstream vocabulary.¹⁶ The BuzzFeed India website has eleven web posts about the show Friends in the format of lists and quizzes. The show continues to be iconic among many generations, with phrases from the show making into everyday conversations, including but not limited to, “How you doing?”¹⁷ and “We were on a break!”¹⁸. The show’s mellow, light and youthful content continues to reverberate with audiences who still relate with the thematic contours of every episode which

more or less revolve around love, heartbreak, personal lows and professional hurdles.

The show, with its emphasis on the individual in a society, the hopes and ambitions, the individual struggles and challenges, is aspirational when it comes to living on your own, pursuing your dreams, dating woes etc. The characters do not engage with their immediate political environment, where current events only come in passing as a reference to a joke. Socio-economic issues are the individual's alone who must triumph over them to be a part of the society. The show is a capitalist dream – a new vacation, a new car, a new job, a new piece of jewelry, new-found love, all of these are the lampposts of high points in the character's lives. All the characters in the show are heterosexual (barring comic references to one of the character's father who is gay and performs in drag) and white.

The emerging question is that how can a show that aired in 1994 and ran till 2004 still continues to find relevance among audiences in India? A similar thought is articulated by Adam Sternbergh (2016, par. 4) who observes:

The world of Friends is notable, to modern eyes, for what it encompasses about being young and single and carefree in the city but also for what it doesn't encompass: social media, smartphones, student debt, the sexual politics of Tinder, moving back in with your parents as a matter of course, and a national mood that vacillates between anxiety and defeatism.

The Cultural Economy of Repetition

Where does then Friends fit into the current lives of the youth and more specifically where does it fit in the current lives of Indian youth who are watching it for the first time and/or watching the reruns? Taking off from this question I began having preliminary discussions with my students about

the show, their personal memory of watching it for the first time and their practices associated with the show. For many of my undergraduate media students in the ages of 18 and 21, their popular memory and memorialization around the show leads them to believe that it was perhaps their first brush with all things modern and progressive or all things American specifically. Even for my generation, those who were born in the mid-1980s, the show for us was a commencement of young adult life and independent decision-making, albeit with a dose of everyday humor. Subsequent discussions with my students regarding their television viewing habits led me to search for a community of audiences who still watched the show and continued to engage with it. Since I was looking for new and old audiences, I searched for online groups dedicated to the show. I found a group specifically for Indian fans of the show on a popular social networking website (Facebook) with over 87,000 members. It was a closed group and I had to send in a formal request for joining in. The description of the group reads as “Great TV Show which gets more funnier (sic) each time you see when not in great mood. Do watch any episode it really makes your day and you become friends to the characters in the even though you don’t know them personally.” For the purpose of this research I adopted the methodology of an online qualitative and quantitative survey along with online participant observation of the group community to study individual fan behavior and inter-personal fan practices.

Before carrying out the survey I wrote a time-bound post in the group in May 2017 asking interested members to write to me about their experience of watching the show and if they would be interested in taking part in the study. I received 87 messages from members who were interested in talking about the show and demonstrated interest in taking part in the study. After an exchange of messages about the show, their memories of it and their continued engagement with it, I emailed the survey to them. Out of the total 87, 83 members completed the survey. My respondents were both male and female, between the ages of 17 and 38, living in metropolitan cities of India. Most of the respondents remember watching their first episode of the show

when they were anywhere between 12 to 14 years of age on television (47%) and on DVD (22%). On television, the respondents recalled watching the show on Star World and Comedy Central in equal numbers, followed by Zee Café. 94% of the respondents admitted to still watching the show on a regular basis, with 55% watching it on television. During the initial interview exchange, some respondents admitted that they come across the show while surfing channels and do not specifically seek out the show during its scheduled hours. About 59% of the respondents said that they specially tuned in to watch the show.

The show came to an end in 2004 and Comedy Central has been running different seasons and episodes multiple times during the year, this is also evident from 88% of the respondents who claim that they have watched some episodes more than 5 times. Each episode is roughly 22 minutes, with 8 minutes of commercial break. While television (cable networks/DTH) continues to dominate as the medium of preference for watching all kinds of televisual content, 57% of the respondents used Video-On-Demand and online streaming services such as Netflix, Hotstar and Amazon Prime (Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hotstar are paywalled online streaming platforms which offer watching of television shows and films on their platform for a fee. Hotstar is an Indian platform whereas Netflix and Amazon Prime are international services). Revealingly 90% of the respondents admitted to watching television shows online (which may also include illegal and pirated streaming websites). 73% of the respondents admitted to streaming Friends episodes online, suggesting that it's not just programming of reruns on television but also voluntary seeking out of old episodes online for viewing.

In some of the detailed descriptions on why they like the show, the respondents explain the characters, humour, relatable situations, and context of the show, which has an undying appeal for them. Some responses also described the uniqueness of each character and the building of a relationship with the characters after all these years. Some respondents also admitted to

knowing the characters like their own friends and predicting how the characters will respond in a given situation. The show continues to be an important reference point even in the year 2017 for many of them. Many pointed out to the nonchalance with which the characters dealt with important life decisions and issues such as marriage, divorce, job loss, childlessness and dating failures. As one young female respondent said: “The show tells you to take life easy...Friends is easy on the head, not too complex and always funny.” Some of the respondents (9 females and 5 males) also shared that watching reruns of episodes they have seen before is reassuring, and the concerns and issues of the characters continue to find relevance in their life as well. Even though the show speaks of the American way of living, some of the cultural practices and issues finding prominence in the show such as finding a dream job, throwing a get-together, retail-therapy to address mood swings, dating troubles, falling in and out of love, resonate with them at a personal level, and consequent identification with the characters bringing them back to the show.

An overarching observation by women respondents was about how the show has had an impact on the way they dressed, and specially their hairstyle. A running joke in the show is one of the character’s overweight days when she was young and the constant fat-shaming that she went through when she was young. This is referred to time and again to remind the character (and perhaps the audience as well?) to not get over-weight in order to fit in and dwell on vanity if you want to be the most popular girl in your social circle. At least 27 women respondents variously mentioned “appearances”, “looks”, “hairstyle”, and “clothing style” in their detailed replies to what attracts them to the show.

In the survey I also asked the respondents to construct the image of Manhattan that they form in their mind while watching the show. Some recurring adjectives included “free” and “freedom” along with “love”, “open about sexuality”, “modern” and “young”. While it will not be wrong to suggest that the Manhattan of the show is hardly representative of Manhattan

in real life, it will be useful to discuss the lack of any racial and ethnic diversity on the show. There are no Hispanic or Black characters even peripherally present in the show or sexual diversity in terms of characters other than those of the heterosexual kind. There is also a discernible air of anti-intellectualism embedded within the show, where one of the characters who holds a doctorate and is a paleontologist is made fun of, stopped from discussing his work or publications, is branded as boring and is derided as “Not an actual Doctor”.¹⁹ None of the other characters ever speak about education, politics or issues plaguing the country or any other subject matter which could be considered “heavy”. Any references to the economy are limited to their own personal jobs and the amount of money they make. The show in that sense is largely conformist to idealized notions of good house, good job, and money to spend, with person to love and maintaining the status quo. It is not surprising that the one-page brief for the show was that the show will be about six friends who hang out at the coffee house.²⁰

In the year 1999, trying to emulate the popularity of the show in question, an Indian version of the show titled Hello Friends in Hindi aired for a total of 26 episodes before being discontinued. The show was very similar to the original, retaining similar character arcs and back stories but failed to be “real” or relevant to the audiences, much like cardboard cutouts. One of the group members I interviewed remarked that the show, “... was too good to be real, I mean how is this possible in India in the late 90s? The comedy was very forced and you can’t sound American-level cool in Hindi”.

Re-living the show: Online Fan Practices

The field of cultural studies and research on media texts as artefacts of culture has certainly helped transcend the previous assumptions around meaning-making and the ways of seeing and knowing. Much of the research in the field of cultural studies has firmly argued that the meaning of a text is not embedded in the text itself but the meaning is generated when the audience encounters the text and engages with it. While the first level of

production of a cultural text may be guided by the dominant mode and logic of culture industry production, it is in fact the second order of production (consumption) by way of which the audience receives, makes use of and interacts with the text (Certeau, 1984). Michel de Certeau calls this active consumption of texts as “poaching” (74). Henry Jenkins (1992) calls this active consumption “textual poaching” and fans as “active cultural producers” and notes the various ways in which fans may engage with a text, including recontextualization (where fans may add to the text’s narrative and offer explanations), cross-overs (cross-referencing other television programmes and characters) and personalization (fans inserting themselves in the narrative).

During the course of my survey, it emerged that for the audiences, post-viewing engagement with the show continues to be high with 92% of the respondents agreeing to having read news articles about the show as well as participating in online quizzes themed and centered around the show (76%). Subsequently I carried out online passive participant observation in the group over a period of three months, from May 2017 to July 2017 and kept a track of posts to the group by the members and their interactions with each other over those posts.²¹ The group exists as a space of socialization and creative expression, of demonstrating aesthetic and creative labour and continuing the show’s narrative by participative community media production. Some of the images circulated in the group are sourced from elsewhere on the Web and some are especially created by the members (more often than not the members mention if the fan art is an original piece of work) The members of the group primarily engaged with each other via the production, circulation and distribution of memes in the group. The members in the group interacted fairly regularly with at least 4 or 5 posts to the group every day. The group’s fan practices can be described as sharing of digital texts revolving in and around the show and the content can be categorized in to memes (including still photographs, screenshots and GIFs), quizzes, videos and personal statuses.

Digital memes are the hallmark of our online experience and interaction on the Internet and are a distinctive feature of contemporary popular culture. Memes have existed much before digital communication, when Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene*, published in 1976 defined “meme” as a unit of culture, be it a certain kind of behavior or style or even an idea that could spread within a given culture. Dawkins, in conceptualizing the meme, referred to it as a change in culture brought on by mutation on the basis of his theory of selection. The meme as we know now took its current shape and form after it was appropriated by users on the Internet when they drew cultural references from films, cartoons, music videos, video games, photographs etc. to depict an emotion, a phrase or a comment on an issue. The inherent qualities of the Internet meme are its reproduction, reappropriation, and distribution via the Web. It would not be wrong to suggest that the Internet memes we consume now are a meme of Darwin’s meme idea itself. The meme then while being an idea, is also a cultural artefact, and in this context, stands at the intersection with fan art production. Limor Shifman (2014) suggests a mimetic framework to study memes by “... incorporating several mimetic dimensions... and understanding memes... as groups of content units” (39). While analyzing the memes, it would be useful to look at the form, content, the ideology, stance and the textuality as well as the visuality of the memes.

The immersive fan memes included (i) collage of a scene from the show with the dialogues superimposed in the lower third of the photograph. Often these memes may either be originally created by the group members themselves or saved from other sources from the Web. Often group members also stressed on giving credit to the page or person who originally made the meme, thereby also bringing the idea of authorship to the meme itself, though that is an alien concept to the premise of the meme. Some of these posts have members commenting on that scene from the show with their own interpretation or opinion, some of these comments also involve drawing examples from the member’s own personal lives. The other category of memes on the page includes (ii) screenshots or GIFs (Graphic Interchange

Format) of a scene that stands as a referent to the episode itself or the specific scene in question. Such posts have members commenting with the dialogues in the said scene or their favorite part of the dialogue from the scene, with other member's reaffirming or suggesting why a character did what they did in the scene. A form of personalized meme category includes (iii) still photographs from the show with the creator's own message superimposed on the photograph. The content of some of these messages varies from 'Why I like this character?' or 'Why I like this couple on the show?'. More often than not the message also includes why they want something similar in their own lives. Another nostalgic memorialization via the meme included (iv) using every character's standard phrases superimposed on their photographs or screenshots. On such posts members usually up vote the phrases they like the best and also the ones they immensely dislike. Members also tag their friends from within the group drawing their attention to the post. Cross-over memes and those referring to other trending phrases or memes on the Web is also popular on the group with (v) juxtaposition of trending memes or phrases on the internet with the characters of the show. This kind of cross-referencing also included juxtaposing a screenshot and a dialogue from the show with another show and dialogue in a kind of cross-textual referencing. In one of the recent posts in July 2017 a lot of cross-textual references between another popular show Game of Thrones led to many such memes. Some memes also include (vi) members posting a screenshot from the show and suggesting alternate endings in the episode or an entirely new story and (vii) superimposing the names of the show's characters on stock images taken from the Internet or other popular culture references.

Members also share short video clippings of specific scenes that they like, captioned with their own take on the scene, inviting comments from other users and tagging their friends to take part in the conversation. Such posts lead to fascinating discussions on the member's own version of why a character behaved the way they did or disagreeing with other members on motives, statements and behavior of the characters. Another very popular way of engaging with the show on the group is sharing online quizzes

themed around the show with other members of the group. There are perhaps hundreds of online quizzes about the show available on the Web and on any given day at least one quiz is shared by a member. Among the various kinds of quizzes, members share quizzes about specific characters such as “Do you know him or her?”, “Are you more like him or her?”, “Which profession from the characters should you have had?” and “How much do you really know the show?” among others. Such posts lead to members posting their scores, sharing trivia about the show with others and posting explanations about the quiz. Members also post personal statuses from in and around the show, such as a long-standing joke from the show, or an unresolved conflict from the show, which they’d like other members to weigh in on. Some personal statuses also take the form of questions where members ask the group who they identify with the most or discuss a contemporary issue and wonder how the characters of the show respond to it. More recently, there have been cross-reference questions such as how a character from this show would have responded to a situation from another show if given a chance. Such posts attract passionate discussions, many disagreements and hypothetical arguments.

The pleasures of watching: Some Notes

The television culture industry may find reruns profitable, but for the audiences of the show, it remains iconic not just on television but also in their video-on-demand and online streaming choices where they consciously seek out the show. The show certainly obfuscates class conflict, racial inequality and alienation of labour. It squarely puts the onus of survival on the individual, where Monica, a budding chef needs to find her own footing while wading through endless catering jobs and compromises with multinational food corporations. While the show also obliquely refers to struggle, it only does that in passing, where Ross, an emerging scholar and academician negotiates the complex world of tenure and academia. Joey, a struggling actor, has to pull himself together to get regular acting jobs in order to keep his medical insurance (there is no mention of an actor’s union

or a recognized body that works for their welfare). Or someone like Rachel, who learns that she cannot always be her daddy's spoilt rich kid, but she'll have to be her own spoilt rich kid. Chandler on the other hand is the smart corporate whiz who saves enough for a rainy day, and still has unresolved issues with his father's sexuality and occupation as a drag performer. Phoebe on the other hand is the only character who is allowed to criticize mass production, standardization and commodification only because she is – as one of the characters in the show describes her – 'flaky'. She is unpredictable, weird and eccentric, someone who believes in ghosts, spirits and auras, and hence by extension most of her beliefs are untenable and to be brushed off. My respondents to the survey as well as those interviewed described watching the show as a leisurely activity and discussed the pleasures derived from the show at length. Barring a few – who did mention that the show brings forward the challenges of living in a city like Manhattan – none of the respondents chose to reflect on the socio-political issues underlining the show. For majority of them, the show was just that, situation comedy among six friends.

The undying appeal of the show is exactly this, footloose and fancy free, every man (or woman) for himself (or herself). Though one can rely on friends to bail us out and provide comfort, the state has no role to play, its presence is only a mild irritant, at best. The show is the representation of the best that 'American life' has to offer: freedom, autonomy and choice. The pleasures of watching the show are also inextricably linked with its long-standing popular culture presence on the Web. For the members of the fan group, the show and its characters are seamlessly integrated with their everyday digital practices of sharing jokes, memes and posts on social media, on the group and off it. The show is non-confrontational and equally liked by advertisers. In that sense the fact that the show makes no external reference to social issues, economy or polity, it continues to exist in suspended animation in a timeless space, much like a heterotopia, and perhaps that's the reason it continues to find relevance even 13 years after the last episode was aired. As one of the respondent's put it, "It is a clean show and touches a

chord every time, every human emotion and every conflict a person may go through is in the show”.

Before writing this paper, I assumed that the show’s audiences would lament the unavailability of other situational comedies and similar content produced in India or even similar content from the West. However, it does emerge that there is no dearth of content, with different shows finding their presence and following among the audiences viewing habits. This particular show however continues to be that familiar space most Indian audiences continue to return to, find relevant, seek comfort in, and identify with their life, not just as banal television but as a meaningful repository of love, relationships and friendship.

Notes

1. The study on watching television reruns and their psychological impact is discussed here, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-science-willpower/201209/watching-your-favorite-tv-show-can-boost-your-willpower>, viewed on 15th May 2017
2. A detailed discussion of the study is available here, <http://www.buffalo.edu/news/releases/2012/09/13646.html>, viewed on 15th May, 2017
3. For a more in-depth discussion on the Indian television experience post the 1990s within the framework of globalization, refer to Narayan, Sunetra Sen. *Globalization and Television: A Study of the Indian Experience, 1990-2010*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press. 2013. The book examines in detail the liberalization of the television space, opening up of the economy, rise in purchasing power, developments in telecommunication and the concomitant changes in audiences, channels, available content, revenue models etc.

4. BARC defines impressions as television viewership in thousands of a target audience who viewed a show, averaged across minutes, for more see, <http://www.barcindia.co.in/glossary-terms.aspx>
5. For instance, this report from 2016 on a reunion <http://www.cnbc.com/2016/01/14/friends-cast-to-be-reunited.html>
6. A report on the fake movie trailer can be accessed here <http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/television/fake-friends-movie-trailer-releases-online/>, viewed on 1st June 2017
7. For an online discussion on audience feedback please see this https://www.buzzfeed.com/andreborges/why-god-why-are-you-doing-this-to-us?utm_term=.xkOjPAexa#.wbn8LQRDZ, viewed on 1st May, 2017
8. Report on the earnings and loyalty figures of the cast, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/entertainthis/2015/02/27/youll-never-believe-how-much-money-the-friends-cast-still-earns-today/77593556/>, viewed on 1st May 2017
9. Report on the loyalty and syndication rights deal, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/12/business/friends-deal-will-pay-each-of-its-6-stars-22-million.html>, viewed on 1st May 2017
10. Figures on the revenue model and DVD sales figures, http://money.cnn.com/2004/04/27/news/fortune500/friends_dvd/, viewed on 1st May, 2017
11. Binge-watching is a relatively new term with reference to television shows first experienced due to easy availability of television episodes online. Rather than watching one episode per day or week (depending on the scheduling) on TV, audiences can also choose to watch more than one episode in one sitting online. This has also led television networks to run

back-to-back episodes, especially on the weekends to hold on to audience share.

12. Report on Rometry Now's assessment of the show, <http://www.indiantelevision.com/television/tv-channels/english-entertainment/romedy-now-banks-on-popular-90s-sitcom-friends-140619>, viewed on 15th May 2017

13. A comparative report on online streaming statistics of two popular shows, <http://www.vogue.com/article/seinfeld-vs-friends-streaming>, viewed on 16th May 2017

14. This article also discusses other transmedia activities around the show such as portals like Buzzfeed.com doing regular features and short stories on the show and its characters or quizzes

15. The article can be accessed here, <http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2016/09/01/a-friends-obsessed-indian-couple-just-got-engaged-in-monica-an/>, viewed on 15th May 2017

16. The study and its detailed discussion can be accessed here, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2005-09-07/features/0509060254_1_linguistics-intensifiers-roberts, viewed on 20th May 2017

17. This line spoken by Joey's character, appeared for the first time in the thirteenth episode of Season 4 titled 'The One with Rachel's Crush'.

18. This line spoken by Ross's character, appeared for the first time in the fifteenth episode of Season 3 titled, 'The One Where Ross and Rachel Take a Break'

19. For instance, in Season 10, episode thirteenth, Ross and Rachel are in the hospital where Rachel tells him not to call himself a doctor (with a PhD) since the word doctor means something in the hospital.

20. The article on the continued fan following of the show can be accessed here, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-2465332/Friends-Why-loving-hit-TV-20-years-on.html>, viewed on 20th May, 2017

21. The field site for the study was a closed Facebook fan group based on the show. Passive participant observation involved accessing the group daily and maintaining field notes of activities of the members including comments and posts

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