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## **Transformations of television consumption practices: An analysis on documentary viewing among post-millennials**

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### **Abstract:**

The adaptation of new infrastructure in the media industry, as well as the evolution of Web 2.0 and beyond, has decisively altered the ways of producing and consuming audiovisual content. The forthcoming generation of viewers are the post-millennials who have been born and raised within a digital world with completely different consumption patterns when compared to the previous generations. This comparative study aims to explore and assess the transformations of audiovisual consumption practices within the current digital environment. Specifically, the research focuses on examining audiovisual consumption patterns on documentary viewing utilizing focus group method; Greece and Cyprus were selected as case study locations, due to their interconnected culture and origins. The results are presented in a dual level; initially the ways post-millennials of Greece and Cyprus consume web & traditional documentaries are examined. Moreover, the patterns of audiovisual content consumption, comparing to previous generations, are explored.

**Key words:** Post-millennials; Television; Audiovisual Consumption; Web-Documentary; Greece; Cyprus.

## **Introduction**

Following the rapid evolution of technology in the era beyond digitalization, broadcasting content and, consequently, the audience's viewing habits have been decisively altered. All these changes have been the starting point for a number of academic studies regarding audience reception as well as the gradual alteration of television as a means for mass communication. In her recent research work, regarding Television 2.0, Riahnon Bury (2018) emphasizes on the continued legibility of television but also its hybridity: 'Television is not simply a medium in transition; rather its institution, texts, viewing and participatory practices are in the process of re-assembly, more specifically as a result of hybridization with the internet' (Bury 2018:204). Audience engagement, a concept suggested as a counterweight in the struggle of television to transform to an active medium, is served not only through behaviors and attitudes but also through platform media environments that extend beyond the television set (Askwith 2007). According to Daly (2010), the viewer of the new era should be called 'view-ser', since he/she does not only watch audiovisual content but also interacts with the viewing platform. Contemporary viewers are no longer the audience the current media system is designed to serve. In this perspective, first, what needs to be changed in the television content? Second, how should the content be transformed to meet the needs and demands of the new consumer?

Media industry is trying to keep pace with this evolution. New forms of digital storytelling – such as the interactive documentary – emerge from traditional audiovisual productions. This new kind of narration has converged documentaries with web applications and, in this context, television followed the same path. Recently, the field of new consumption practices of audiovisual content, as evolved in the web era, presents great interest for media researchers. On this basis, new consumption patterns and their effect on the way new television products should be designed to meet the new criteria is examined in this paper. Among the issues explored is how traditional methods can still affect digital storytelling modes.

This research is a part of a larger, on-going study initiated in 2014. Its purpose is to establish an understanding framework for audiovisual viewing behaviors and media usage which, consequently, aims to be a valuable tool for media professionals regarding young audiences. Possible transformations of television consumption practices in Greece and Cyprus are explored in this study. These two countries, holding similar cultural background, traditionally share transnational film and television content; on this ground, they constitute the ideal field for investigating TV consumption practices.

The question that arises is 'does the audience in both countries follow the same audiovisual consumption practices?' To this end, two focus groups have been conducted - one in each country – in order to examine how post-millennials consume audiovisual

content in digital and conventional form. Through this study, post-millennials' attitudes towards traditional as well as new audiovisual patterns will be evaluated. The main research question is: which are the new consumption patterns in Greece and Cyprus and in which ways they can affect the various forms of audiovisual content.

The main findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

New habits of viewing, like binge watching, second screening, content sharing and video on-demand have emerged; however, some of the traditional viewing habits still remain. Likewise, although interactivity may be thought as the 'mantra' of new media, nothing is perceived as more important than content itself. When consuming a story, post-millennials prefer linear content and get annoyed when they are forced to 'click' very often. Additionally, no matter how inspiring the viewing template may be, the new generation of viewers will not be lured to watch an audiovisual story irrelevant to their interests. Results, also, reveal an impressive resemblance of new viewing habits of young Greek and Cypriots; this confirms that technology drives global homogeneity within generation groups, creating cross-border patterns and attitudes. The Web is creating a global television audience cohort and not only has it offered new possibilities, such as time-shifting and downloading, but it has also changed global viewing routine, creating a great impact on social and individual habits of television watching worldwide.

### **Literature Review: New generation of viewers and the post-millennials**

Defining 'new media' and 'new media audience' was one of the most challenging points of this study, since there is a strong on-going academic discussion regarding determinant factors on the field. One of them is the features that characterize each generation and another one is the variables that define a medium as new by every generation.

While in sociological research the generational patterns have always been an object of study, regarding media audience research this topic seems rather understudied. Recently, media researchers through observation of the differentiated consumption patterns among generations caused by social and technological changes, focus their studies in this domain (Bolin, Göran and Skogerbø 2013).

Biological age is often used as audience segmentation variable in consumption studies since it is the most unambiguous variable used to define a generation. As an unquestionable personal characteristic, age imposes a clear impact on media consumption and the relation of audience with each medium (McManous 2018). Though age can be characterized as an indicator of a certain life course in different historical phases, nevertheless social parameters (such as education, family income, etc.) can influence media consumption as well (Weibull and Westlund 2013).

The 'father' of the generation theory, Karl Mannheim has defined generation as 'the certain location that certain individuals hold in the economic and power structure of a given society' (Mannheim 1952: 289). Typically, a generation is estimated as a period of fifteen to thirty years (MacManus 2018).

As Burnett (2010) states, every stage in life has different characteristics that affect people's behavior in general as well as their behavior in media consumption. According to Tapscott's research (2009), it is not age per se but generation that can affect motivation and media use. The decade in which a person was born defines his/her life phases and societal needs and, because of the technology evolutions that alter media landscape and transform media usage experience, it provokes and defines media consumption (Burnett 2010). For example, age is a decisive factor regarding how many hours someone watches TV; people who have retired have more free time to spend in media consumption than their children (Maniou 2013). In that framework, on the one hand, millennials, who are now the emerging workforce, and, on the other, university students, belong to different generations with different needs that follow different social patterns.

'New media' is a relative term since what is new for one generation may not be new for another. Television, radio, magazines and newspapers are considered to be old (traditional) media in comparison to the Web (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton and Robison 2009). Nevertheless, people born after the mid-nineties grew up in an already established digital environment. For them, Web is not a new medium but a medium that always existed! Buying a newspaper or watching the news on television may be the unprecedented.

Karl Mannheim had already pointed out this relationship between generation and media usage since 1928, talking about the phenomenon of 'fresh contact' (Mannheim [1928] 1952: 298):

As young people are lacking in experience compared to older people, fresh contacts will have a deeper impact on the young than on the old, and all later experiences then tend to receive their meaning from this original set, whether they appear as that set's verification and fulfillment or as to its negation and antithesis.

In this framework, generation X, which is consisted of the parents of today's post-millennials, is often called as 'TV Generation' (Strauss and Howe 1991). This characterization derives from the fact that these are people born when television was considered a 'new medium' and, as such, they are more likely to have a stronger attachment to it than the previous or the next generation. A simile of media consumption pattern is how one speaks the native language in comparison with other languages that have learned later on (Gumbert and Cathcart 1985). Moreover, media people are more familiar with are the ones they are accustomed to since their younger age.

Prensky's generational designation is based on this fact. According to Prensky (2001), young people born after 1994 are 'digital natives' in the digital world; they consider Web as their natural environment. They have been born in a society that interactive media already existed and their consumption practices are different than those of their parents (Podara, Maniou and Kalliris 2013). In contrast, digital immigrants (born after 1974) are trained in the use of media in the same way they are trained as in learning a foreign language. They adapt,

but they understand that to a certain extent they belong to the past. They are the ones who need to print a text in order to read it and they prefer to watch news on television, in contradiction to 'digital natives generation' which will read text on the screen and will mainly search news in the web.

Based on the existing literature, generational breaks and their used names vary, while there is also a controversy surrounding the birth dates of each generation. According to Strauss and Howe generational theory (1991), people born between 1982 and 2004 are called millennials; however, people born after the millennials do not have a generally accepted name yet. Apart from 'digital natives', as Prensky characterized them, they are also called 'Post-Millennials' or 'Homeland Generation', 'Generation Z', 'Digital Natives', 'Digital Generation', the 'Net Generation', or 'iGeneration' (Edmunds and Turner 2005; Combi, 2015; Dimock 2018; Strauss and Howe 1991; Tapscott 2009).

The distinction between millennials and the next generation is important. The later did not have to adjust to Web innovations as millennials did (Dimock 2018); Combi describes them as people who 'have never known a world without the Internet' (Combi 2015: foreword). In this research, the term 'post-millennials' is deployed for people who are now in university age and the way their viewing habits related with their social needs have evolved, in comparison to the millennials, is the aim of the study.

### **Consumption practices of millennials and post-millennials**

As far as television viewing is concerned, there are significant age-based differences. As Bury (2018) concludes, almost all viewers under 30 are engaged in online viewing (94.34%); regarding viewers aged over 60, only 20% of the television content was watched online although two-thirds of them had used a computer for a that reason.

Since 2003, when the massive phenomenon of social media had not yet been expanded, it was already apparent that teenagers were using the Web differently than their parents used to do. According to Livingstone (2003; 15-16), 'while to adults the Internet primarily means the world wide web, for children it means email, chat, games – and here they are already content producers'. Furthermore, Web 2.0 has offered to viewers the ability to share audiovisual content in several ways. While they consume it, they may post it simultaneously on their social media channels, comment and create a buzz about it.

Several behavioral characteristics of the Millennial Generation<sup>1</sup> - evident in all aspects, from work attitudes to information reception and entertainment - create a different pattern of social life and finally affect the way they consume audiovisual content (Kapoor and Solomon 2011; Reisenwitz and Iyer 2009; Sweeney 2006). Although millennials have embraced technology and feel comfortable with the change, they still preserve several traditional attitudes; e.g., consumer's resistance to online purchasing (Moore 2012). However, they interact with the content they consume and share it with their community and, as Jenkins *et al.* (2009, 5) state, sharing of digital content is a form of participatory culture; it is 'a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creation'.

Another pattern millennials present is the fact they use the traditional media as a starting point, before they go online (Geraci and Nagy 2004); research has shown that, although traditional television viewership is in decline, they still prefer to watch on television a live show and/or a sports casting (Anatole 2012). On the contrary, post-millennials are satisfied with the content they can find online (e.g., on YouTube) and they do not use as a starting point the traditional small screen (Newman 2016).

Multi-tasking and 'it's all about me' are two other behavioral characteristics which are considered as typical for the millennials (Tennant 2012). On this ground, although they rarely watch television, when they do so they keep a second screen (e.g. tablet, smartphones etc.) on their hands. This fact is partially explained by their multi-tasking behavior. This multiscreening viewing pattern has already been noticed since 2001 (Barkhuus and Brown 2009: 15). According to Hess *et al.* (2011), viewers use a second screen in order to find supplementary information about the program they are watching and/or to comment with friends, who at the same time watch the same program in another distant environment.

Several scholars argue that these new viewing habits have also contributed to the change of the social role of television as a social glue (watercooler effect<sup>2</sup>) (Barkhuus and Brown 2009; Harrison and Amento 2007; Putnam 2000; Stelter 2010). Water cooler discussions, although referring to early online viewing habits of older generations, later on seem to have been connected to social networking environments and it is not only the space but also the framework of discussion that has changed. Without a fixed television schedule, simultaneous monitoring of the same shows does not exist and it concludes to the loss of the content coherence (Putnam 2000). Nevertheless, from another point of view, VOD viewing habits enable digital watercooler effect. Viewers are able to participate in conversations, online and offline, on 'must-see television'. These conversational exchanges might have been missed out otherwise, if some of them were not ahead in the viewing schedule (Matrix 2014). This means that they use viewing as a way of being part of a community, a way of having fun and/or to keep up with friends' viewing habits. This can lead to the development of cross border audiences with the same characteristics (Schewe and Meredith 2004).

The audiovisual industry is trying to find new paths to respond to these changes. The characteristics of the millennial generation mentioned above are taken into consideration when new forms of audiovisual material are produced. Participatory cultures, multitasking behavior, and the younger audience's need to watch selective content are 'ingredients' of the new era of television production. It is not only the viewing platform but also the narrative techniques that are changing. New forms of digital storytelling go beyond the restrictions of conventional forms and require changes for the journalists since they must learn to use new tools such as virtual reality to tell their stories (Pavlik and Pavlik 2017). The Interactive Documentary format (i-Docs), which has emerged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is such an example since the viewer is positioned within the artifact itself playing an active role (Aston and Gaudenzi 2012). Herrero and García (2016, 414) argue that 'in the interactive context,

the director of the documentary loses some control of the narrative discourse, favoring user interpretation'. The term i-doc is expanded compared to web-doc, which according to Podara (2013) 'is the documentary film (linear or not) that uses as narrative tool supported by web facilities (photos, text, music, graphics, video games techniques); the viewing platform is the Web and the storytelling is developed by the active participation of viewer, who is also a user'. I-doc, although it uses the web as the main platform, it may include any digital platform (multi-platform, cross-media and transmedia proposals) that allow interactivity and employ other extra formats like app, book and/or TV (Aston and Gaudenzi 2012; Herrero and García 2016). It is a field that affords an opening up of new possibilities around 'experiential storytelling' and 'alternate realities', since it includes more immersive and participatory models with can widen the spectrum of content formats and modalities (Aston 2016; Pavlik and Pavlik 2017). Different storytelling approaches are featured in these productions, mainly simulation, game, virtual reality and narrative exploration (Pavlik and Pavlik 2017). Several software tools are deployed for prospective creators<sup>3</sup>; however, as Munday (2016) states, 'one of the most difficult processes in the production of an interactive documentary will be trying to figure of what to do with it once it's complete', since the viewing pattern is completely different. Social networks are used as a platform for reproducing and promoting this new genre and offers to users the opportunity to personalize the experience including some personal data from their accounts (Herrero and García 2016). Festivals are organized for creators on the emerging form of visual narration. (i.e. <https://www.doclab.org/tag/interactive/>, <https://filmfreeway.com/FilmgateInteractive>, <http://i-docs.org/> ).Also, many web docs have been nominated or awarded in Digital Emmys and Webby Awards.

Millennials and post-millennials share many common characteristics especially regarding technology enhanced practices; however, post-millennials is the first true digital native generation and the one that is almost constantly online, utilizing technology in a different manner (Berkup 2014). Raised with the social web, their existence is more connected to electronics and digital world (Singh and Dangmei 2016). They consume but also they provide information and, as Berkup (2014;224) argues, 'they play Internet-based games, socialize on Internet environment, like to be online 7/24, get information from Internet and share continuously something'. Nevertheless, the social uses of the Internet for them are a new extension of typical human engagement (Boyd 2014). It is mainly a way to be connected with friends and not a way to broadcast their lives widely and publicly through Facebook and Twitter (Taipale 2016; Linnes and Metcalf, 2017). In addition, they can carefully curate their identity and share only what they want others to know about them (Seemiller and Grace 2019).

They tend to have short attention-span and they are usually multitasking, interested in and elaborating more than one subject at the same time; this is the characteristic that can differentiate them, regarding news consumption. They present multiple media habits caused by the multiplatform distribution and their synchronic consumption habits (Casero-Ripollés 2012). They grew up in a world with television program that can be watched not

only in an actual television set, with on-demand content and they are comfortable navigating through a variety of online TV platforms and devices (Patch 2018). A majority of post-millennials when they are referred to 'watching television' they actually mean streaming online content; to this end, studies indicate they can spend more time on Netflix and YouTube as opposed to traditional TV (Seemiller and Grace 2019). Watching videos is used both for entertainment and gaining knowledge on their behalf. They consume a variety of moving images on multiple devices, and furthermore they produce their own audiovisual objects in a variety of forms and formats (Fanchi, Schneider, and Strauven 2018).

As Boyd (2014:181) suggests, 'youth must become media literate. When they engage with media – either as consumers or producers – they need to have the skills to ask questions about the construction and dissemination of particular media artifacts'.

## **Traditional television in Greece and Cyprus**

### ***Brief historical evolution of the Greek Television***

Broadcasting in Greece has a symbiotic relationship with the political controversies of the country – both radio and television were born and established under dictatorship regimes: radio was formed in the late 1930s under the Metaxa's dictatorship and television EIRT<sup>4</sup> was introduced after the mid-1960s under the Colonels' regime (Papathanassopoulos 1997). Moreover, the whole debate about the state control over electronic media in Greece focused on governmental interference in television program and management (Papathanassopoulos 1990). Greek broadcasting was established, as in most European countries, as a state monopoly. This was perceived as inevitable since both radio and television were established during dictatorial periods. However, the state monopoly was preserved after the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1974. According to the Constitution of 1975, 'radio and television will be under the direct control of the state', although direct control does not necessarily mean state monopoly (Alivizatos 1986; Dagoglou 1989)

Private television stations were introduced after 1989 in Greece, when ERT's<sup>5</sup> monopoly was questioned and – finally – abolished with the implementation of the Law 1866/1989, which allowed the establishment and operation of private television channels. The relevant law was introduced after a long period of political turbulence and parliamentary debate, following the media liberalization process that took place all around Europe (Pridham and Verney 1991). However, although around Europe the broadcasting sector was liberalised, in Greece (and in Cyprus, accordingly) it was rather privatised while the lack of implementing a sufficient regulatory framework has resulted in a status of relative autonomy of the broadcasting sector, evident even today.

### ***Brief historical evolution of the Greek-Cypriot Television***

Public service television in Cyprus was established in 1957, only three years before the country denounces British colonialism and became an independent Republic, under the auspices and guidance of BBC. In 1959 the Cyprus Broadcasting Service ceased to be a governmental department and was renamed as the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation under the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation Act 300A (Maniou 2017). For thirty five years the public channel *RIK* (CyBC) was predominating the country's broadcasting sector and it was only in 1992 that private television channels were allowed to operate, under the auspices of the Law 29 (1) 1992. At the same time, *RIK2* (CyBC 2), the second channel of public service broadcasting, was created, focussing mainly on entertainment content while the burden of informational programmes relied heavily on *RIK1* (CyBC 1) from there and onwards (Maniou 2017).

The Cypriot broadcasting sector was rapidly altered after 1990. Commercial broadcasting was introduced as a result of pressure by social forces and local authorities, as well as the general climate in regard to changes in European media policies (Christoforou 2010). But, while the Law 29 (1) 1992 allowed the introduction of private television channels, it failed to offer the legal framework for their operation and control (Chrysanthou 2008). However, the law laid down a maximum limit for advertising – no more than 10% of total daily broadcasting time and no more than ten minutes per hour of programming; this legislation was later changed and completed to meet the EU requirements and regulations (Sofocleous 2008). It was as late as 1998 that the Law 7 (1) was voted by the House of Parliament and Cyprus Radio-Television Authority was introduced, a regulatory body with wide powers and responsibilities regarding matters such as the establishment and operation of the private broadcasting sector. In short, the introduction of private channels occurred in a vague and fairly deregulated environment, since the existing laws provided only the basic framework for licensing and operation whilst they proved insufficient to deal with more perplexed issues of commercial broadcasting (Maniou 2017; Christoforou 2010;).

### **Methodology**

The research initiates from the following research questions:

- Q1:** In which ways post-millennials of Greece and Cyprus consume web & traditional documentaries?
- Q2:** Which patterns of behavior are observed in terms of audiovisual content consumption, comparing to previous generations?
- Q3:** What is the role of traditional viewing habits?

The term 'television consumption' in this work refers to traditional television consumption. In Greece and in Cyprus as well, watching television in a TV set means watching traditional broadcast channels (free-to-air) and, secondly, subscription TV programs whereas

consumption of content in new TV platforms (such as Netflix) are still in their early steps (Maniou and Seitanidis 2018).

This research employs the focus group method, which is a user-assessment method, based on qualitative data collected through a semi-structured questionnaire. The focus group is more akin to the day-to-day conditions in which people discuss, formulate opinion and change it – perhaps after discussion (Rabiee 2004). It is, also, a tool suitable for researchers who want to study the attitudes and perceptions of new audience, regarding viewing habits.

The sample consists of young people in the age group of the post-millennial / digital native generation. The Greek group participants consisted of eight people, aged eighteen to twenty five, and students of the School of Journalism at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The Greek-Cypriot group of participants consisted of eight people, aged eighteen to twenty five, and students of the Department of Journalism at Frederick University, Cyprus. According to Paschalidis and Milioni (2010), the majority of journalism students are positive about the use of new media practices and they have critical way of thinking about these changes. Based on this, journalism students who had attended lessons about web-documentaries and were considered as expertise in this area of studies were selected.

In the first stage of the research, all participants were asked to watch a specific documentary, in two different forms. In each country, they were randomly accustomed to two groups of four and every group was asked to watch a different documentary form. The first one was the linear documentary 'NEW LIFE'<sup>6</sup>, a traditional documentary with a typical storyline designed for television audiences. The second form was a non-linear, web-documentary presenting fifty short videos and designed for web-audiences. Both forms were produced based on the same footage. The participants had no guidance in advance regarding the ways they should consume it so as not to alter the research result. The time and place for watching the documentary was left at their choice.

In the second stage of the research, a discussion was held with each group separately, in which the participants were asked to describe the way they consumed the audiovisual content. They were informed that this discussion was video-taped and participated willingly. The conversation started with questions about their viewing habits in general. Based on previous literature research, we developed questions regarding viewing patterns that are considered both traditional and modern. Afterwards, the debate was led to the specific documentary that they had just watched.

When the conversation ended, researchers gave them the second form of the documentary and invited those who had watched the conventional to watch the online and vice versa. Finally, a general meeting was held with all participants and they were asked to answer comparative questions about the two forms of audiovisual content.

## **Findings - Discussion**

**Q1:** *In which ways post-millennials of Greece and Cyprus consume web & traditional documentaries?*

All participants tend to watch audiovisual content using either laptop, smartphone or other portable devices. All of them said they prefer to use laptops rather than other devices when they are going to watch a movie, a series' episode and/or a documentary. This is because they do not have to keep their hands engaged with the tablet or smartphone for a long time, thus it allows them to perform other tasks simultaneously. Additionally, they do not tend to spend a lot of time watching television but, when they do, they are focused and watch carefully unlike their parents who tend to watch passively.

My parents see without really watching while I am focused [...]. My mom can read a newspaper, wash dishes, etc at the same time. When I decide to watch, I really watch. (E.Y., Greece)

I do not want to watch something passively, just to spend my time. I do not do that on the computer either. When I watch something, this is what I really do. (T.T., Cyprus)

When watching television, they prefer live programs. They prefer to see something self-contained, commercials-free, while also they need to have the ability to stop and restart the flow of the program.

For example, I accidentally saw an episode of the famous Greek series 'The Island' on television. It was on repeat and my parents were watching it. I liked the story, so I searched on the channel's webTV and I watched all the episodes. I could not - of course - wait until next week to watch the next episode! (N.I., Cyprus)

Two participants of the Greek team stated they watch movies from the tablet only at night, because it is easier to fall asleep in this way. Only one said that he watches on a smart phone while he is traveling. Our results for the age range of young adults seem to resemble those of Bury (2018) regarding viewers aged 18-75. In her research on television 2.0, Bury argues that mobile viewing is by far the least popular mode, presenting a great percentage (70%) for the participants who had never used a mobile device for that purpose.

Moreover, 'second screening' does not seem to be so popular. The only case when they use a second screen is when a program is not interesting. Also, asynchronous communication is preferred, regardless of the program they are watching.

Participants said they might have their smartphone next to them, but they will rarely chat or check their Facebook profile while watching something really interesting. They also do not feel the need to share content via their social media accounts as they are watching it,

since they are not sure who else is watching it at the same time. Even in live sport broadcasts, they wait for the program to finish and then they chat about it with friends.

As far as documentary viewing is concerned, they seem to be rather selective.

I find it hard to choose to watch documentaries on the Internet in a random pattern. I do not watch documentaries for fun; I will only do it if I want to elaborate more on a subject.' (FO)

**Q2:** *Which patterns of behavior are observed in terms of audiovisual content consumption, comparing to previous generations?*

Generally, findings both for Greek and Cypriot participants indicate significant usage of Web, although Cypriot students tend to spend more hours online, as it was revealed from specific targeted questions that have also presented that Cypriot students are more active online than Greeks, practicing more content sharing and chatting.

In the Greek focus group, 87% of the participants stated they are connected online the whole of the day and their individual average use of Web is seven hours. Those who have said they spend more time on the Web, stated that they watch less television.

I do not watch television. I do not see the reason to turn it ON... But my parents rely on television both for entertainment and news information.' [F.O]

A great percentage (87%) of the Greek team said they will not share content or chat about the show during or after viewing. On the other hand, 75% of the Cypriot team said they were microblogging while watching an entertainment program, using especially Twitter and they tend to share content with their friends on social networks, as soon as the viewing ends (asynchronous communication). They do not use microblogging when they watch a documentary or sportscasting (i.e., programs that require commitment) as they do not want to be distracted. The same pattern is followed regarding the 'second screen' viewing behavior as well. They will use it only if they are not interested in what they are watching. For example, when they were asked to watch the conventional documentary, 87% of the Greek participants said they did not use a second screen during the viewing. Only E.E., who reported that she was not very interested in the documentary and while watching, she used a second screen (during the traditional documentary viewing).

Because I did not care about the content, I was enduring and listening to the end, while playing with my smartphone. I did not do this on the Internet, because there I had to choose videos for watching and I got more involved.' (E.E.)

**Q3:** *What is the role of traditional viewing habits?*

Although the two groups do not exhibit significantly different viewing habits, a very interesting finding could be noted, regarding the viewing content. Most of the Cypriot students (87%) said they were not interested in the content of the documentary they were invited to watch, and this was a hindrance to enjoying its consumption, either in a conventional or web form. In particular, they described it as 'boring' and 'monotonous'.

Although they were not very interested about the documentary, they actually watched the conventional form until the end, since they were curious to discover the story unfolding. Instead, in the online version of the documentary (where they were free to click on as many videos as they wanted and to make their own narrative journey) they only watched two or three short videos out of fifty.

They also seem to prefer the conventional storytelling, which 'has a beginning and an end'. The non-linear structure of the web documentary seems to distract both Cypriot and Greek students and does not allow them to engage with the storyline.

I prefer the conventional one. I want to see something with a beginning and an end. It does not matter if the director will cut something. If I have a question, I will look it up on the Web later. (P.X., Cyprus)

A.P. from Greece agrees:

When you watch the web documentary, you have to see all videos; otherwise you have the doubt that you may have missed something that was really worth it. While I was not interested in what I was watching, I was wondering if I missed any video that was really interesting.

Participants from both countries agreed that they would prefer to use the conventional documentary as a starting point. This was interpreted as watching the conventional documentary first and then going online if they wanted to delve into some parts of the story or to find out additional information:

In the online documentary you needed to have more time at your disposal to understand the general picture, while in the conventional documentary you have a certain and pre-fixed time frame. (E.E.)

The participants who first watched the online documentary were not satisfied, although there was more audiovisual material on the website. They said they would also like to watch the conventional documentary in order 'to understand the essence of the story'.

### **Conclusions, limitations and further research**

This study has shown that post-millennials do not watch television and they are always online. As Bury and Li (2015) point out, 'the era of single-mode and single-screen viewing is

over'; likewise, according to Hess et al. (2011), viewers use a second screen to find supplementary information about the program they are watching or to comment with friends, who watch at the same time, in another distant environment. The findings of this research indicate that when post-millennials watch television they do not have a second screen in their hands, because they watch actively and are truly interested in what they see. Chatting and/or posting while watching, seems to distract their attention. For the same reason, they prefer to share content with their friends after the end of the program. They choose asynchronous communication, although they have the ability to interact in real time.

Regarding their consumption patterns, the following significant changes can be noticed: Traditional viewing habits still hold a major role in the consumption documentaries, regardless of the platform used. Despite all these new viewing habits, this research has shown that conventional viewing habits still prevail. The new generation of viewers possibly shows a preference towards different audiovisual viewing platforms, but the way they consume a news story (e.g., documentary) remains the same.

Post-millennials prefer to consume a conventional documentary rather than an interactive one. They prefer a director guided narration instead of 'creating' their own story. This comes in contradiction with the existing literature review, regarding the fact that young consumers are used in interacting with the content they consume and gain their personalized information (Prenski 2001). A possible explanation may be that entertainment programs 'suffer from interactivity' (Vorderer, Knobloch, and Schramm 2001). Interactivity seems to have become a panacea and nowadays many producers use interactivity characteristics as a value-added feature; it has been noticed that, in several cases, viewers tend to get annoyed by interactive applications, which seem to distract them from the fun experience (e.g., a large part of the audience does not use the ability to choose a scene in a movie, since they prefer to watch it in a linear, passive way) (Vorderer, Knobloch and Schramm 2001).

Additionally, another interesting conclusion that emerged from this study is the correlation of structure and content, which proves that content remains the prevalent factor affecting viewing habits. No matter how inspiring the viewing template may be, new generation of viewers will not be allured to watch a story that is irrelevant to their interests. This finding is compatible with the millennials' notion of content viewing; they are used to be in control over their own media environment (Verini 2014), while they are no longer restricted in the available content aired by the traditional television channels.

In conclusion, several previous studies regarding viewing habits of the new generation of viewers have been confirmed by this research findings, which indicates that post-millennials of Greece and Cyprus present the same patterns as people of the same age around the digital-literate world. Accordingly, as this research indicates, the way audiovisual material is consumed by post-millennials of both countries is rapidly changing, since the available viewing material is more targeted to niche-markets. This action satisfies needs/uses and gratifications and is considered as active, in contrast to the habitual

medium usage 'whenever there is free time' where lack of control might be evident (Hearn 1989; Adams 2000).

Strategies for audience engagement, within a range of platforms, are deployed through changes in television's content and social interactions as well (Askwith 2007). Likewise, due to smart technology new viewing habits have emerged, such as second screening and content sharing (Kroon 2017; Wilson 2016). The aforementioned habits may alter the consumption process and enhance it as more active. However, the main difference is that young people nowadays rarely watch television. Bury and Li (2015) also concluded in their research that 'the younger the cohort, the less live television took place'.

This study presents certain limitations that could be investigated via future research. One limitation is the small number of participants, however at this point the indicators that have been received could be applied in a second step, since this research is a part of an ongoing project, which will lead to the generalization of future results. Moreover, the sample is limited to specific groups of audiences; e.g., younger age groups may exhibit different viewing habits. Prensky has predicted that, no matter how much digital immigrants may wish for it, post-millennials may not go backwards (Prensky 2001). Being that the scenario or not, we believe that television should keep reinventing itself, in order to adapt new wishes and demands of the new audience. To do so, there is a greater need than ever before for intimate, deeper knowledge of the audience; as such, this study can provide a valuable starting point to explore and assess the transformations of audiovisual consumption practices within the digital environment. In this framework, the research will be continued so as to further validate these findings via quantitative methods. The purpose will be to acquire data that can lead to specific guidelines of post-millennials media usage, which will be useful both to the academia and to the audiovisual production market.

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## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> A definition of millennials that is generally acceptable is that a millennial is thought to be a person born in or after 1982 (Howe, Neil, Strauss, William, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> 'Television shows often act as a conversation starter, enabling the 'water-cooler effect', where groups congregate and discuss a television show, automatically assuming everyone in the group has seen it.' (Nathan, Harrison, Yarosh, Terveen, Stead and Amento 2008:p.85)

<sup>3</sup> <http://i-docs.org/2014/07/15/interactive-documentary-tools/>

<sup>4</sup> EIRT in Greek stands for Greek Institution of Radio and Television.

<sup>5</sup> ERT in Greek stands for Greek Radio and Television.

<sup>6</sup> The documentary is dealing with the story of Ottoman-Greek refugees who after the massive exchange population between Greece and Turkey, in 1922 found shelter in Greece and built their life from scratch. This is a very important part of Greek history but has nothing to do with Greek-Cypriots' history.