Social TV: Second Screen and Audience Participation

The case of *The Voice of Italy*

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ABSTRACT

The vast popularity of social networks and mobile devices has led to a transformation of television, called Social television. Specifically, due to technological innovations, both public and commercial broadcasters are trying to respond through developing cross-media processes, expanding the actual content of their TV shows on social media (García-Avilés, 2012). They increasingly provide a growing level of interactivity, which enhance online audience participation in a variety of ways. In fact, social media allows a wide range of possible interactions, such as sharing, commenting, liking etc. While previous studies have documented audience perception of the integration of social networking sites into television contents, employing vary techniques of analysis (e.g., quantitative descriptive statistics, social network analysis etc.) with the focus on the frequency of tweets, qualitative investigations about audience's opinions have not been adequately addressed to this day. In this thesis, the dimensions of Italian audience participation on social media was explored. In particular, if and to what extent viewers of a certain TV show are engaged in online interaction with the content and with other viewers and how do they participate. I do so by examining the Italian version of the talent show *The voice* and its media platforms. The literature review discussed comprehends relevant theories about the topic of Social TV, which partly helped to guide the analysis. A qualitative analysis approach based on the conduction of focus groups was applied. Then a thematic analysis method was used to analyse the data and answer the research questions. In analysing the social media use of the audience, I identified five main themes, namely: program perception, perception of online content, information seeking patterns, communication patterns, motivations to interact. The findings of the research suggest that viewers of the TV show are not as engaged on social media as literature claims, the relationship between Italian audiences and broadcasters is still weak. However, media field is constantly changing and especially in the Italian television and media system there is a lot of room for improvement in the ability of broadcaster of engaging viewers. Online participation initiatives need to increase their efficiency and transparency with more clearly identified goals and following the taste of audiences. Hereby, this research will have a direct implication on the way audience perceive the online content and it can be considered as the first step in a larger one to develop and evaluate the interaction dynamics through second screen between audiences and TV shows.

KEYWORDS: *Social TV, interactivity, participation, sociability, audience, social networks*

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1. Introduction and Research Question

It is nothing new that television and social media are involved in our everyday lives; in fact, they are everywhere and have become an integral part of society. With the revolution of new media, it is growing increasingly apparent that *"the Internet is the fabric of our lives"* (Castells, 2001, p.1). The web and its features have affected everything – our lives, economics and communications, as well as television – morphing also into an addition to what TV offers.

It is in this context that social TV comes into play. The phenomenon of social TV is developing into a progressively visible and interesting part of our media landscape offering an example of the convergence between old and new media (Jenkins, 2006). The television viewing experience can be enhanced by using other devices called second screens (e.g., tablets, computers, and smartphones). Thus, by taking advantage of the smartphone and internet revolutions identified by Rainie and Wellman (2012), this experience has become more and more interactive, improved by the integration of social networking sites into television content and the following extension of it on multimedia platforms. Social media in fact fuel backchannel discussions and invite viewers to participate in the program (Van Es, 2016). Recent research for instance, (Nielsen, 2014, 2015; Accenture, 2015; SKO, 2013) highlights that social media are mushrooming across television screens as audiences use them to interact directly with related content while watching live series programs.

Most research on the topic of social television focuses on the measurements of the online conversations generated by the stated TV show. Only little attention is given to the viewers' perceptions of the online content used by the TV shows in order to engage them, and to their motivations and patterns of behaviour. To overcome these shortcomings and further expand the audience studies literature; this study aims to offer insights into the field of Social TV and audience reception studies.

As the project is entailed in the audience studies tradition, the theoretical perspectives that inform this study are related to the concept of Social TV and participation. Social TV enables viewers to interact with television content, gradually developing new ways of participation and interaction. In particular, mobile devices have changed the ways in which audiences consume audio-visual content (Meikle & Young, 2012).

Recently, a heightened number of people use computers, smartphones or tablets, called second screens, whilst watching TV. In some TV shows, the accumulative audience at home can vote by SMS for a particular candidate or call to give their opinion. (García-Avilés, 2012). This progression provides this study with an interesting starting point for the analysis of the interactions between television shows and the audience. In short, this study will focus on the audience perspective in

order to analyse viewers' attitudes and behaviours in relation to the content of the programme *The Voice of Italy*[1]. It will explore the extent and how they respond in terms of participation and interaction with the content of the social TV, through the participative tools integrated into the official Facebook page of the programme *TVOI*. These are the research questions that will be answered:

RQ1: *To what extent does the audience of The Voice of Italy participate and interact with its online content on Facebook?*

RQ2: *How do participants interact with the contents of the Facebook page of The Voice of Italy?*

Italy has been chosen as a result of the interesting development in the media landscape throughout the years that has perhaps influenced the media usage of the citizens among Italian audiences (Barra & Scaglioni, 2013 and 2014) as will be explained below in 1.1. Therefore, the study aims to define whether the existing model of online interaction with the program *TVOI,* defined as the way in which it uses its social media platforms and its online content in order to engage the audience, is effective or not. To achieve this aim, a qualitative analysis will be used, and four focus groups will be held in Italy, in order to allow participants to communicate their perspectives in further detail.

1.1 The Context of the Italian Television System

Before going into the research, the Italian media landscape will be described in order to intertwine the findings of this analysis with the context.

The Italian television system is based on a dual system. On one side, there is the public service broadcasting[2] which is formally under the control of the Government and includes three main TV channels (Rai 1, Rai 2 and Rai 3). While on the other, there are the commercial networks (Canale 5, Italia 1, Rete 4) whose owner is the politician and entrepreneur Silvio Berlusconi. Commercial television has been a big innovation in the country system, because it has brought a proliferation of channels and a market segmentation (Barra & Scaglioni, 2013). Indeed, "*the networks rapidly oriented Italian viewers towards an idea of pluralism in television that liberated them from the "one-service- fits-all" RAI model*" (Barra & Scaglioni, 2013, p. 81). Although these

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[1]From now on I will refer to it with the acronym *TVOI*

[2]From now on I will refer to it with the acronym PBS

six channels gain half of the Italian audience, according to Frt[3], there are currently 640 channels in Italy. However, this pluralism is not a positive characteristic, because this abundance of choice contributed to block, for years, the technological development and the introduction of the pay-TV and the TV-on demand like Netflix, which arrived in Italy as recently as October 2015.

As Syvertsen has shown (2004), during the height of the networked television era in the US, several techniques were developed in order to satisfy the main goal of keeping people watching. The central idea was that viewers deserved more entertainment than they were given by PBS. This range of techniques were later adopted by the European new commercial television and so Berlusconi's commercial networks followed this fad. One of the significant aspects in Berlusconi's TV concerned the genres. The arrival of the commercial television in Italy marked the end of the so-called "years of lead" (anni di piombo); a difficult period of social conflict, terrorism, and austerity politics after the oil crisis. Commercial television would therefore satisfy the Italians' demand for pure entertainment, offering distraction and a way of escaping from reality (Barra & Scaglioni, 2013). The changes associated with convergence and digitalization, were challenged within public broadcasting institutions which began to lose out to the new competitors. Therefore, even if public broadcasters were not interested in participation formats, because they considered them commercial and of low quality, they gradually began to adapt their programme mix to the idea that the most important goal was to maintain high viewing figures and serve the audience with what they wanted, namely entertainment (Syvertsen, 2004).

In this consolidated scenario, after the gradual introduction of entertainment shows by all the channels, an important further step was made by the digitalization process that introduced smartphones and tablets into the everyday life of Italian people (Nie, 2001). The wide diffusion of these personal screen devices has been increasingly included in the TV viewing experience, deeply changing the experience of watching audio-visual TV content. This has forced TV broadcasters to change their position from merely entertaining and informing the audience to tying communities, giving space to their interests online, inviting user-created content onto their platforms, and facilitating their discussions online (Livingstone, 2004). Nowadays, we are witnessing a propagation of smartphone and tablet applications that make the experience of watching TV more interactive and social. According to the Censis annual research (2016), in 2015, television continues to have an audience share which coincides substantially with the totality of the population (96.7%), smartphones are regularly used by over half of the Italian population (52.8%), and tablets are in the hands of more than a quarter of Italians (26.6%). Thus, in the convergent media landscape (Jenkins,

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[3]The association of the radio and television companies

2006), both public and commercial channels are spreading onto many screens, distributing their contents, which are shared socially and renovated, through several platforms.

Many television shows are trying to integrate the possibilities offered by the Internet into their programs. Now, almost every television show has its own social media platforms, giving the opportunity for the audience to chat online and discuss different topics related to the content of the program. For instance, it has been observed that the audience has an aptitude for using phones, laptops and tablets during the viewing of a program. Media multitasking enables users to engage in multimedia activities using multiple screens on a single media platform or with multiple media devices while watching television (Shin, An, & Kim, 2015). This current digital society is subjected to changes in media consumption patterns and expectations (Hampton, Goulet, Raine, & Purcell, 2011). The ideal model of "watching TV with my family" described by Lull (1990) has long been recognized as outmoded and misguided giving way to an "always connected while watching TV" model (Marineli & Andò, 2014). This is evident in my interviewees' statements: *"yes, maybe I'm also playing games on my phone while watching the program"* (Arianna, 24 years old); *"due to the fact that we all watch the same programs we comment on them through the smartphone something like "did you see…?"* (Martina, 24 years old). Therefore, according to Smith and Boyles (2012) multitasking on multiple screens has come to define the TV-watching experience because connected viewers have begun to incorporate their mobile devices into their television-watching experiences. Hence, Italian television gradually intertwined TV content with social media. A research done in Italy by Nielsen in 2015 reports that it has been registered that there is both an increased habit among the Italian citizens to comment about TV programmes on social networks and a more enthusiastic attitude of the broadcasters with initiatives that foster audience participation.

We should bear in mind that all these changes occurred in a context of general retreat of media consumption due to the crisis. The decrease in financial resources has forced Italians to make choices within their own consumption. However, digital tools have had an expansive phase in contrast and we have seen a real boom of smartphones and mobile connections. The digital divide problem has been long debated in Italy, but today the gap appears largely overcome. While nearly a quarter of Italians remain anchored to a diet based only on audio-visual media (TV and radio), in 2015 almost two out of three Italians used the web regularly, almost every day, with a peak of around 85% among the under 30's (Censis, 2016).

To fully understand the case of *TVOI*, the following paragraph (1.2) will briefly introduce the description of its content and its online content on Facebook, the main social media platform used by the program.

1.2 *The Voice of Italy*

The voice is an internationally famous Dutch television programme, first broadcast in 2010 in the Netherlands. As it registered a huge success, the format has been exported to several countries including Italy, where it was first broadcast on the PBS's second channel, Rai 2, in 2013 (Barra & Scaglioni, 2013). It is a talent show in contrast to the same old 'useless' reality shows, like *Big Brother*, merging the world of the television with the music business. In this context, the adoption of a social media strategy during *TVOI* has helped to attract and involve a young and well-educated audience.

   TVOI, unlike other talent shows, puts aspiring singers on stage in front of a panel of judges composed of four personalities of the Italian music scene, known in the programme as the "coaches". They sit with their backs to the singer on stage, on large red armchairs with a red button in front, which conceal the person performing. This is in order to not be affected by the physical appearance of the contestants, but rather only by their voice (hence the title of the program). When a coach likes the voice they press the red button, and the chair turns around revealing the contestant. At this stage, if the contestant has successfully attracted the approval of more than one judge they, not the judges, choose which 'coach's' team they would like to join after listening to the judges respective pitches. If only one judge chooses them, the contestant must select the same as 'coach'. Obviously, if none of the judges press the button they do not pass onto the next stage. The show is divided into five stages: blind auditions; the battles; knockout; live show; live direct. The winner of the talent show, chosen by the 'tele voting' from home via fixed or mobile phones, wins a record contract worth a value of €200,000 with Universal Music Italy.

   During its seasons many supplementary extensions for *TVOI* have been developed, giving the audience second-screen extras, such as: the official site, social networking platforms, and a free official app, especially designed for the programme launched by the most important online stores. It encapsulates many functions and provides the audience with an extended experience, made up of the latest news on the show and original backstage photos and videos. In the academic discourse on social TV, social media are heralded as the expected companions to television. In this paper, indeed this assertion will be analysed by interrogating their use in the live shows of the popular reality TV *TVOI* over the course of its seasons.

   The program has increasingly involved social media platforms in the viewing experience, with a result of a fully integrated and engaged audience. Thus, it is the most emblematic and representative program to use for this analysis, as it has contributed to the strong affirmation of social TV in Italy, generating a high traffic of conversation and spreading the term Social TV (Andò & Comunello, 2012). According to van Es (2016), *The Voice*'s producers started to use social media so to

encourage live viewing and increase audience loyalty through engagement. She identifies four different types of social media use: promotional; affective; functional; and phatic. These categories are evident also in *TVOI* where for instance the contestants' and the coaches frequently tweet and post throughout the broadcast. In addition, the official Facebook page stimulates viewers to engage with the show by prompting responses to discussions and questions as well as by offering additional untelevised content.

Similarly, for the affective practice of prompting activity on social media platforms, the program strategically places hashtags throughout the show and displays coaches' tweets in the bottom of the screen during the blind auditions. These practices are called "para-social interaction" and lead to the audience having a "direct line" to the contestants and coaches through social media and making them feel as the performers belong to a circle of peers (van Es, 2016).   For the functional use of social media, on the Facebook page of *TVOI,* posts sponsoring contests and auditions are available and users can upload video auditions of themselves.

Finally, *TVOI* also uses social media platforms with a phatic purpose. The primary function of social media is to keep communication channels open (van Es, 2016). In *TVOI's* Facebook page there are several posts in which viewers are asked to respond to questions with their opinions regarding the narratives or the content, simply to keep them involved. In this project these four categories are going to be analysed in terms of their efficacy in returns of responses and interactions from and with the audience.

1.3 Social and Scientific Relevance

The rapid technological development which occurred after World War II in the television industry, contributed to a new understanding of television as a means of mass media communication. This spurred interest among scholars and increased research efforts in the field of television studies (Miller, 2010). Social television has been an increasing trend over the past few years; audience participation in European broadcasting registered a sharp increase in the nineties, when viewers were placed at the centre of the programming (García-Avilés, 2012). For instance, the role of the audience began to be considered in an innovative way and so viewers got the chance of being engaged with programs through new media technologies (Deery, 2003).

It is in this scenario that the relatively recent advent of Social TV fuels the research interest raising new questions in order to understand the dynamics as well as changes and challenges of this new phenomenon. Hereby, social TV and second screen technologies have become popular concepts within academia and practitioners, but, how do participants interact with the contents of the Facebook page of *TVOI* and what are the different levels of engagement*?* While the spread of

the phenomenon is carefully monitored in terms of the measurements of the amount of conversation (Giglietto & Selva, 2014), there is a lack of knowledge on the relationship between the concept of second screen and its implication for audience research as well as public opinion. For instance, about the kind of content that drives social media engagement during a show.

From a scientific perspective, the result could arouse people's awareness of Social TV and the new possibilities of interactions for the audience through second screen. In its attempt to fill in the gap in literature on Social TV, this thesis will contribute to the academic research in the field of media, leading to a better understanding of the topic as it will help clarify whether viewers of a TV show are as engaged with the program as literature claims and the modalities of this engagement. In fact, the connection between the audience perception of the integration of social networking sites into television contents is not fully developed yet (Giglietto, 2013). This is a result of the fact that most of these studies focused on the analysis of tweets, employ various techniques of analysis from quantitative descriptive statistics to social network analysis. The study conducted by Shamma, Kennedy, and Churchill (2009) highlights the importance of going beyond quantitative analysis and dig into the actual contents of Tweets (Giglietto, 2013). Hereby, this research will have a direct implication on the way the audience perceive the online content and it can be considered as the first step in a long walk to develop and evaluate the interaction dynamics through second screen between audiences and TV shows.

From a social point of view, the current findings of this thesis could be used to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of interaction and participation of the audience of *TVOI* with its online content. Nowadays, the spectators are an important part of the television structure (García-Avilés, 2012; Arrojo, 2015). Social TV, with its features to generate conversations on social networks about televised content, is able to create a virtual reality. This has forced programmers to consider these virtual communities and to modify the online content in order to give inputs to audience's interactions, to enhance program loyalty and attract new viewers (Guo & Chan-Olmsted, 2015). As van Es (2016) notes, incorporating social media into programming is a difficult process for television producers, which can be prone to some mistakes. For example, the "tweet-peat" experiments conducted by Fox in 2009, where tweets were brought into a television broadcast for the first time, were not well received, because the overlaid tweets obscured important on-screen actions. Thus, on the one hand, there are the potential uses of social media for the audience, and on the other, the ambitions of television producers. The findings of this thesis will make one of the beneficiaries of this study the TV content producers who will be provided with audience opinions about the online content. In fact, this research is socially significant as it can be useful for TV productions to see how viewers feel about TV programs using social media, which content they find

appealing and engaging but also which content they find annoying. In this way, this research is able to make suggestions for new and improved social media strategies to be used by TV productions as well as suggestions for future research regarding techniques for audience engagement.

Furthermore, from an economic perspective, by studying in detail the current online model of interaction of *TVOI* and its effects, this thesis project can offer insights and examples on the use of interactive features by TV programs in their social media platforms. And even though the research only focuses on this specific program, its conclusion could be applied to other popular television shows, since it contains elements shared with other programs, but also with other genres and formats.

Thus, the research will suggest new ways of engaging the audience, how to create a successful model of online interaction for TV programs and how to implement their social media platforms based on the patterns found in this research related to the preferences of viewers, their behaviour and their motivations to interact.

2. Theory and Previous Research

This chapter includes a review of significant theories mainly drawn from the audience studies. Among previous studies we can find several research projects on audience participation in social television. While most of them are based on the quantitative method with a focus on the amount of interaction observed on social media platforms, only little attention is given to viewers' perceptions of the online content and the way the show engages them. Some previous research and empirical studies on participation and interactivity between audience and television broadcasters are explained here in order to address the subject of the study and build upon relevant theoretical framework.

2.1 Previous Empirical Research

Before discussing significant theories on Social TV, it is relevant to present previous empirical studies and take them as a starting point, in order to fill the gap of existing research. Sociability, interactivity and participation are the key concepts informing the Social TV topic and they will be presented here.

2.1.1 Sociability in Social Media

Many studies focus on the use of social media as a means of connection between viewers of a TV show. Harrington, Highfield and Bruns (2013), conducted research on the Eurovision audience on Twitter. Although the Eurovision Song Contest already contains a degree of interactivity for its audience, for instance through public voting, social media resulted in playing an important role. The authors suggest that there are a number of different and overlapping dimensions between Twitter and live broadcasting. The most important dimension is the way that Twitter provides users a space for live discussions of the television programme. Users are able to offer their own commentary on the broadcast event, to engage with other viewers and perhaps to see those comments become part of the television broadcast itself, as it is increasingly common in some TV programs to show them on the screen.

By the same token, Deller (2011) argues that Twitter has become an important backchannel for television shows, as its topic related posts frequently appear on Twitter's trending topics. Her research looks at examples of Twitter users engaging with the news and discussing television programs. For instance, the use of Twitter during the Iranian elections in 2009 to spread information about what was happening in the country brought the hashtag #iranelection among the top 21 trending topics of the year. Deller (2011) also finds during the 2009 *X Factor* final, that twins John and Edward Grimes made the trending topics frequently, under their nickname 'Jedward'.

The fact that people have discussions about television programmes on Twitter is also highlighted by the market research made in 2012 by Accenture. The research reveals that individuals are enthusiastic about using social media to engage with TV shows, especially when they see hashtags prompted on the screen (Broadcast Engineering, 2012). Another research conducted in 2014 by Discovery Communication, posits that TV companion apps are most relevant for fan and cast interaction, as they provide extra content and access to a highly-engaged community but they are not the first destination for social interaction around TV.

In 2015 Nielsen monitored 231.000 episodes of 10.600 TV programs in Italy, and its research reveals that viewers posted 44 million tweets. *Miss Italia* and *Sanremo* resulted in being the most social programs. In fact, another research conducted in 2016 by Social TV observatory shows that second screening is one of the most popular activities while watching TV in Italy. The audience declared using them mainly to stay in touch with their friends and family, and their preferences for doing so are: Facebook (65%), WhatsApp (42-43%), Messenger (18%), Twitter (15%) e Instagram (3-4%).

2.1.2 Interactivity in Social Media

Although it is a relatively new phenomenon, several studies are investigating the practice of using Twitter as a real-time backchannel for posting comments and thoughts while watching a TV program (Harrington et al., 2013; Deller, 2011; Giglietto & Selva, 2014; Ji & Raney, 2015). Most of them are focusing on quantitative content analysis of tweets produced during the broadcast of TV shows. According to Harrington et al. (2013), tweeting about television has always been a social media form since the arrival of the new active feature of the audience. Media studies also recognize social media as a medium that can catalyse social activities (i.e., audience discussion, interaction and fandom).

According to research conducted by Fox and Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) on the usage of more than one screen while watching television, 85% of active users on Twitter during primetime TV hours' tweet about TV and 90% of those who saw this content became active to further engage with the show. In fact, tweeting in synchrony with the airing has become a common practice among audiences. The most common reported activity of viewers while watching TV is using their mobile phones during commercial breaks. However, 19% say that they used their phone to read online conversations about the show, and another 11% were active posting their own online comments about the program they were watching (Nielsen, 2013).

Furthermore, recent research (Nielsen 2014, 2015; Accenture 2012; SKO 2013; Starcom 2015) highlights that social media are exploding across television screens as audiences use them to

interact directly with related content while watching live series programs. In the U.S., according to Accenture (2012), the audience interact via a variety of symbols, including the Facebook "Like" symbol (42 percent), QR codes (28 percent), Twitter hashtags (18 percent) and Shazam symbols (9 percent). Nielsen reports that there has been an increasing trend towards comments about TV programmes on social networks among Italian viewers too. In fact, in the discourse on social TV, social networks are heralded as the natural companions to television.

Although most of the studies are conducted on Twitter, it has been discovered by the research conducted by Brown (2014) for Facebook for Business, that Facebook is used by more people, more frequently, for longer periods of time compared to other social media platforms. This research reveals also that 85% of the viewers of a TV show are connected to Facebook during their favourite broadcast programs. And of that percentage 94% said that it is their preferred digital platform. Because of that, Nielsen launched at the beginning of 2016 a new tool for monitoring Facebook usage. It was found that Facebook usage in the U.S. peaks at the same time as TV viewing, in the evening during primetime. Nielsen provided charts for several different countries around the world, including Italy, where according to it the peak is between 9pm and 10pm (primetime 9.15pm-11.30pm).

2.1.3 Audience Participation in Social Media

Due to digitalisation, audiences developed several participating patterns. Social media in fact resulted in being a virtual space where viewers are engaged in discussions about different topics related to TV shows. In the study of Ji and Raney (2015) on the case of *Downton Abbey*, they assume that real-time data generated by social media might provide new paths for examining the role morality plays during consumption of the entertainment show. They examine how viewers use Twitter to express their moral thoughts about the TV series and so how moral judgments are made during media reception. In this research, Twitter emerges as a popular second screen application where users post comments about the TV programme that they are viewing.

Another relevant study in this field is the one of Giglietto and Selva (2014), which continues the analysis of the widespread phenomenon of the practice of using a second screen while following a TV show. They analyse tweets related to Italian political talk shows, and through content analysis they found that there is a relationship between typology of the broadcast scene, style of comments and the way in which audiences participate in online discussions, which usually take place on Facebook and Twitter.

Similarly, Guo and Chan-Olmsted (2015) investigate the phenomenon of second screen practice by testing motives for using social media to engage with television content. Their research

examines the social engagement experience by identifying three categories of factors: television program related perceptions, social media characteristics and audience attributes. Furthermore, they find that social engagement is an intricate process driven by multiple factors, like involvement, genre preferences, and affinity. Moreover, Rubin (1983) discovers that the major drivers for television audiences are escape, relaxation or simply entertainment, however it has been demonstrated that obtaining information and escape are more potent than the pure entertainment, leading the audience to be actively engaged in several audience activities before, during and post-viewing (Guo & Chan-Olmsted, 2015).

2.2 Social Television

As this project investigates Social TV and second screen, in order to fully understand the viewers' patterns of interaction and participation in TV content, we should present a bigger picture of the phenomenon of Social TV.

Several scholars describe television as "cultural forum" or "electronic hearth" (Newcomb, 1994; Tichi, 1991) referring to its social power. In fact, television watching has been a social practice since its beginning. However, the diffusion of the web and of social networks conjugated with television makes the TV experience much more interactive. Yet it goes without saying that Social TV builds on the increasing integration of television and technology to support sociable, computer-mediated group viewing experiences (Ducheneaut, Moore, Oehlberg, Thornton, & Nickell, 2008) as well as interaction with television content. As television and web converge, social networks become an integrating part of the television experience. Social TV shifted the traditional definition of TV to a new one that articulates the convergence of media (internet and television).

The last decade has witnessed an incremental interest in what we call Social TV, nevertheless, a common definition of the concept is still lacking. César et al. (2008) define Social TV as a means of communication, which allows distant viewers to interact with each other using numerous interpersonal communication modalities (e.g., open audio channel, instant messaging, emoticons, etc.).

Additionally, the study of Giglietto and Selva (2014) recognise the viewing activity as social, intertwined with the upsurge of social media, resulting to provide a relevant definition for the purpose of this project. They define social TV as the viewers' usage of second screen simultaneously with the action of watching television. In this way viewers access social media platforms, where they can interact and discuss with other viewers or with the authors of the TV program. These actions are also facilitated and fostered by the structure itself of Social TV, where the social channels (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) of a program are usually advertised on the

television screen, and most of the time an official #hashtag is also proposed in order to aggregate comments and have a fluid online conversations between viewers (Giglietto & Selva, 2014).

In this section these two pillars, sociability and interactivity, which build the concept of Social TV are discussed in further detail.

2.2.1 Television as an Off-line Social Glue

Within media studies, television has received significant attention. However, divergent scholars' opinions can be assumed from the literature. Some researchers address the negative effect of TV viewing on the individual's degree of involvement in other activities. Nie and Erbring (2000) worry about the fact that television might displace time usually spent in social interaction with friends and family. Similarly, Putnam (2001) has blamed television for an increased disconnection of people from one another and a consequent fall in civic engagement. Despite these perspectives, many scholars consider sociability as a main feature of television and its social uses.

Studies conducted by Lull (1990) and Morrison (2001) show that, although television viewing has often been criticized as an isolating and anti-social experience, it has been social since its beginning, gathering an audience around the television sets. Indeed, television viewing is considered as a social activity often conducted in groups (Sparkes, 1983), mainly in family settings (Cesar & Geerts, 2011). Academics like Silverstone (1994), argue that TV creates shared and common experiences with the purpose of bonding together viewers in a wider society. Furthermore, although people conduct widely diverse lives and activities, TV provides a common point or reference acting like a "social glue" that links strangers together (César, Bulterman, & Jansen, 2008; Lee & Lee, 1995; Chorianopoulos, 2007). Social glue generally denotes shared experiences that enhance social connections. These experiences may or may not involve media technologies like television (Willis, Roussos, Chorianopoulos & Struppek, 2009). In everyday experiences for the majority of TV viewers, audio-visual content serves as a starting point for beginning and supporting relationships. This can for instance involve "watercooler" discussions about yesterday's football match, or a popular TV quiz show (Harrington et al., 2013; Kubey, & Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). These interpersonal social interactions may be intensified if viewers have strong personal connections with the TV program (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Television is hereby considered as a facilitator for social interactions in society. Audience studies indeed, depicted TV as "*a technology of the social that works through encouraging intensity, intimacy and belonging, in which the screen is generative of affect, providing the interface for connection*" (Skeggs & Wood, 2012, p. 71).

Due to applications and services developed for digital platforms the interactive viewing experience has been heightened as will be explained in the next paragraph. Thus, in this context, it

is necessary to pay attention to how the concept of sociability evolved due to the changes introduced in society by the digitalisation process.

2.2.2 Sociability Online

As mentioned before, initially, the interaction between TV viewers was largely constrained by physical and geographical boundaries. New digital technologies (e.g. mobile devices) enable people to communicate with others thousands of miles and several time zones away and to meet people with similar views and interests online (Preece, 2000). Processes of digitisation and convergence have also profoundly changed the television scenery, becoming the characteristic features of the new media landscape. Concomitantly, the structure of television has been undergoing an in-depth transformation in order to foster audience participation (Cesar & Geerts, 2011). Hereby, television is gradually integrating social media in its already established mass media structure, extending itself through second screen applications and enabling second screens mediated group viewing experiences (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Van Dijck & Poell, 2013). These social interactions through second screens can also be explained by the concept of sociability.

A seminal work in the field of research on sociability is the study of Preece (2000) who considers sociability as a characteristic of mediated environments (e.g., social media) that supports and enhances social interactions among group members through new technologies and applications. At the very beginning social media and official applications of TV shows only provided users with the same contents that were broadcast. Now, TV broadcasters increasingly offer audiences content specifically produced for online platforms that aims to elicit social interactions among viewers. This is related to the fact that overall the internet has become a core part of social life. People of all ages are coming online in large numbers to talk with people living near like friends or colleagues, but also with unknown people living far, some of whom they will never meet. According to Preece (2000) people take advantage of these extra social experiences offered by the web 2.0, joining discussion groups about the latest events in a sitcom, tweeting, re-tweeting, publishing a post on Facebook, etc. Thus, the Internet facilitates connectivity and sociability among bigger as well as more dispersed communities (Nie, 2001).

Online sociability relates to how members of a community interact with each other via a supporting technology. Although several studies in the areas of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW) already focus on interactions among geographically distant co-workers, research evaluating how well social interactions are supported by technology in the context of television, is still lacking (Cesar, & Chorianopoulos, 2009). Some existing principles could be borrowed from CSCW, but the specific nature of social television, such

as enjoying a television program while chatting or using television content as an online conversation starter (Lull, 1980), need to be investigated in depth. For this thesis' purpose, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the social media pages of *TVOI,* some determinants of success of online sociability as identified by several scholars serve as a framework. A main criterion posited by Preece (2000) is the number of interactions people make on a specific platform. This number indicates how engaged people are with the community as well as how well the community satisfies its purpose. Reciprocity is another element of measurement of successful online communities (Kollok, 1998). Hereby, sharing can play a major role. Yet, Kollok also raises a concern over the sharing system as it can be considered generous but also a source of risk. Community members could be tempted to gather information from the community without contributing anything back, which undermines the success of online platforms.

This section has shown that the ways people watch and interact socially around television content are being radically transformed by social networking (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.), as well as new web applications with video content like YouTube, networked televisions and set-top boxes (e.g., Google TV, Apple TV), and online TV widgets (Cesar & Geerts, 2011). It is in the light of these renovations that the idea of interactivity comes into play.

2.2.3 Interactivity

Social TV is based on the sociability aspect as well on the concept of interactivity. Due to the interactive nature of the new internet based technologies, television productions can now communicate with their viewers. However, research on interactivity has produced divergent findings (Liu, 2003). Whereas some studies confirmed a high level of viewers' engagement in online content, other studies have found low level of interactivity (Bergström, 2008). A closer look at these studies reveals that the contradictory results may be due to the lack of similar conceptualization of interactivity. As Holmes (2004) asserts, there is no simple way of defining this concept, in fact, a variety of interactivity definitions can be found in the literature. It is usually associated with theories about new communication technologies, media convergence and the move away from one-way models of communication. Jensen (2005) discovers that at the moment, the most common form of interactivity is based on cross-media interaction. In fact, it has been common within the last years to produce interactive programs or interactive moments in TV shows. This means that another medium functions as a second screen between the viewer and the broadcaster.

According to César et al. (2008) the idea of using second screens in the television environment is not new. In 1996 a significant body of research emerged around the usage of second screen; Robertson Wharton, Ashworth, and Franzke (1996) had presented a system where hand-held

devices were used for interacting with television content. A further work supporting the possibility to date back interactive television is the study of Wellens (1979). The author asserts: *"interactive television represents means of linking individuals together by providing each with an electronically mediated representation of the other's voice and visual presence"* (p. 119). However, more recent studies consider second screen practice as an interactive activity performed on social media (e.g., posting comments, opinions or votes) in relation to the TV show running on television. Thus, second screens enable an innovative relation between TV channel's broadcasts and the audience (Arrojo, 2015; García-Avilés, 2012; Harrington et al., 2013). Hereby, television broadcasters are providing users with many possibilities of interaction, like the integration of Twitter updates during live shows (Shamma et al., 2009), Facebook applications that contain extra content as well as chats where viewers can comment while watching TV shows (Cesar & Geerts, 2011). Therefore, tweets, likes, and comments are becoming a vital part of television. Furthermore, as Jensen (2005) highlighted, mobile phones are the most popular return channel technique used for several activities while watching television (e.g., voting).

Other studies like the one of Shin et al. (2015) focus on the usage of second screen devices as information tools. A consequence of the proliferation of the applications for smartphones and tablets is that they make the experience of watching TV more complete, interactive and engaging. The larger amount of information obtained by the audience, fosters interactions and discussions, making the experience more social. The present project does not consider the mere informational characteristic of the TV show applications, but second screen devices as a means of communication between broadcasters and audiences.

This second screening interaction constitutes the basis of the concept of social TV (César et al., 2008; Mantzari, Lekakos, & Vrechopoulos, 2008; Mitchell, Jones, Ishmael, & Race, 2010). As before mentioned, due to technological improvements, with the introduction of Social TV distant viewers interact with each other using numerous interpersonal communication modalities (César et al., 2008). Furthermore, new communicative designs enhance the audiences experience with a rich set of possibilities for them to have interpersonal communication among peers as well as engage with their favourite shows.

In line with this, Arrojo (2015) considers the new phenomenon of social TV as a combination of two types of communication. The author identifies one vertical, in which television integrates audio-visual content, and one horizontal that enhances the role of the audience with the possibility to interact with the program towards cross conversations. In this new phenomenon of communication, the vertical content is adapted to the internal structure of the television program to promote the interactions among its viewers. The second type of communication (horizontal)

particularly highlights the characteristic of Social TV to allow viewers, through the use of the internet, to instantaneously give opinions about the TV show. Arrojo (2015) argues about these two levels of communication, discussing the traditional system of broadcasting audio-visual content, compared to the new system. Whereas in the traditional one, broadcasters plan the content with a predefined schedule and structure and the only feedback they receive from the audience is the quantitative data of the number of people who viewed the content. In the new system, viewers are able to communicate and interact in real time with other people who are watching the same TV show. Moreover, they can express their opinion about the channel that broadcasts the content, the producer who makes it, and the actors or hosts who participate in it, and so on.

These features of interactivity and participation, fostered by social TV, will be further discussed in the next paragraphs.

2.3 Participation Paradigm

Scholars of the audience studies field, agree on the emergence of new interactive and participative forms of watching TV programs due to the introduction of technological innovations. Thus, besides interactivity this project has also been informed by the concept of participation.

The concept of participation has been used in a wide variety of fields, and it has also obtained a large range of meanings (Carpentier, 2012). Media scholar Jenkins (2006) provides the most well-known definition of participation: *"The circulation of media content- across different media systems, competing media economies, and national borders – depends heavily on consumers' active participation"* (p. 3). The definition provided by García-Avilés (2012), which is embedded in the social TV discourse, is applied in this study. He defines the concept of audience participation as *"the feedback which the broadcasters provide through a combination of traditional systems and new technologies"* (p. 430). It thus includes tools such as voting by SMS for a particular candidate in a reality show, or calling in a talk show to give one's opinion.

But how social TV has challenged old paradigms in audience participation? In order to understand the ongoing and future developments, the activities and habits of the new participatory audience will be presented here.

2.3.1 The Evolution of Audience Participation Patterns

At first sight, the phenomenon of audience participation seems to have arisen in the digital age. The trend is clearly related to the emergence of the convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006). Jenkins considers the participative culture as the opposite concept of passive media spectatorship.

However, in the context of the European broadcasting landscape, audience involvement in

broadcast production is not restricted to the emergence of digital technology and convergence between platforms (Carpentier, 2001). In fact, even radio broadcasting audiences used to participate thanks to the traditional elements of participation (e.g., letters, phone calls). Already Hall in 1980 creates the encoding/decoding model based on the assumption of the participation of viewer in television content. The author considers the institutional structure of broadcasting as the creator of the message, then the audience receive it and elaborate it. As the production structures of television generate a discourse, they do not constitute a closed system, thus they draw topics, agenda, events which are part of the audience's lives.

Throughout the years, much has changed in our society, in fact several new technologies have contributed to the change in cultural and societal values and attitudes (Stohl & Cheney, 2001) which have led to faster-paced and more connected lives (Wajcman, 2008). In particular, communication technologies have increased in importance in people's lives (Bergström, 2015) and the synergies between television and the Internet has transformed the way television communicates with the audience. Furthermore, strategies of engaging viewers in programming were implemented by broadcast media companies, which began to identify audience participation as a strategic tool for connecting with their audiences. In this scenario, there is an increased buzz of online conversations between users on social networking sites (SNS). Therefore, on one hand the role of audiences is considered in an innovative way by broadcasters and on the other the opportunity for audience feedback and engagement with programs is increased (García-Avilés, 2012).

However, even though participation is not a new phenomenon, audience participation grew sharply from the nineties, when due to the increased capacity to process a large amount of viewer feedback, it was technically possible to engage the entire national population. For example, the TV chat formats exemplify an on-going dialogue with viewers, and how the use of text messages can compensate for the limitations of a one-way communication broadcast (Beyer, Enli, Maasø, & Ytreberg, 2007). Hereby, new technology means something different from the old ways of writing letters to television broadcasters or sending questions to the television production. Television staff are easily accessible and can be reached immediately. The former barriers of time and space are considerably lower with new technology (Bergström, 2008).

2.3.2 New Habits enhanced by Digital Technologies

Contemporary digital culture encourages active participation through the use of digital technologies (e.g., social media platforms, applications) which allow easier access to tools of sharing (Erstad, 2010). The new ways in which producers and audiences engage in ongoing public interactions about TV show contents create more inconclusive and fluid narrative flows (Gürsimsek & Drotner,

2014). Jenkins (2006) defines this technique that characterized interactions, *transmedia storytelling*. This strategy furthers the narrative with the distribution of extra content of a TV show by producers through media channels such as social media, digital gaming, the internet and other media forms. It also creates opportunities for narrative expansions through viewer-driven conversations and sharing within so-called second-screen experiences (Mittell, 2013). Then audiences consume this content and try to produce new interpretive paths in the process (Gürsimsek & Drotner, 2014).

According to Weeks and Holbert (2013), social media has changed the nature of television programs by providing platforms for viewers and organizations to engage with each other in a dynamic and multidirectional dialogue. When users connect with a television organization on social media, they receive updates and information about TV shows. Users can also comment on the episode of their TV series and interact with actors or directors of the program. Research in this field focus on the ways in which audiences engage with extra content provided by the broadcaster across a variety of platforms (Evans, 2011; Journet, 2010). A large number of these studies explore the narrative complexities of transmedia storytelling techniques (Clarke, 2010; Gray, 2010). But only few of them focus on the interactions between producers and audiences.

To define the new participation paradigms, we should focus on the tactics employed by viewers to make sense of such expanded serialized vastness. Media scholars agree that the advent of digital technologies as well as their continuous development impact on audiences' communicative patterns and routines (Andrejevic, 2008; Erstad, 2010; Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009). Especially with the production of multi-platform formats, the audience is expected to provide feedback to the programs. As a result, viewers are increasingly creating a dialogue with TV productions as well as with other viewers and enjoying the new experiences made possible by the social TV via second screen. In fact, in the new digital context marked by the introduction of social TV, audiences are not watching TV shows passively, but they develop new forms of viewing. In this respect, Reitz (2012) argues that audiences have embraced social media in order to communicate with others, interacting online with other viewers who are physically distant. Furthermore, they also started to communicate with media companies in several ways, for example, voting on their favourite contestant or expressing their opinion on the social media page of the show.

The growth in significance of connected viewers of a TV show, who communicate through social media, is becoming more commonly recognized by broadcasters, with many displaying Twitter hashtags on screen to allow the second screening audience to interact with the particular TV show broadcast that they are watching (Doughty, Lawson, & Rowland, 2011).

A 2012 research from Accenture reveals that 64 percent of U.S. consumers remember seeing

social media symbols while watching television and a third of them admit to interacting with social media after seeing the symbols on their TV screens (Broadcast Engineering, 2012). Another survey by Discovery Communication found that in 2014 Facebook was the most used platform for all social TV activities While Facebook is the first place where viewers go to connect about TV, Twitter is preferred for interacting with stars. This means that viewers of social TV found themselves departing from a one-way communication form into one which allows for an interactive experience.

Nowadays, watching television while using a second screen, such as a smartphone or a tablet is a viewing model that has grown rapidly in popularity. However, despite a great deal of theoretical assumptions about the impact of the new digital possibilities in relation to Social TV developments, there is still relatively little research into how audiences perceive and make use of the interactive facilities offered by new technologies.

2.4 New Audience

As this project investigates social TV and second screen, in order to fully understand the new viewers' patterns of interaction and participation in TV content, we should consider the nature of the current television audiences, which engage in second screen interactions.

2.4.1 Taxonomy of Audience

Academics involved in audience studies have always depicted audiences from the perspective of their assumed passivity, because their behaviour has always been perceived as based on the mere observation of audio-visual content on television without being engaged in any interactions with programs (Elliott, 1972). However, due to the digitalisation process and convergence, new audience theories have been developed.

Before the new millennium, audience research still considered viewers as mainly passive. For example, the study conducted by Roscoe (1999) suggests that although technologies provide us with enhanced functions that foster our interaction with contents, audience members are seen as receivers primarily. They basically look for packaged content ready to consume. In this respect, the audience can be considered as receivers rather than as active participants. Thus, an expansion of the term audience has been registered. More specifically, the audience, as traditionally perceived, is undergoing a radical change as showed by other studies.

For instance, Syvertsen (2004) discusses the relationship between broadcasters and audiences in the light of these changes, arguing that television nowadays considers its audiences as clients and players. If audience members before were considered just as citizens now viewers are treated like customers and players. The main focus is on turning viewers into players in order to

gain large audiences. Viewers now have the chance to amuse themselves and be engaged in the show. Furthermore, due to the perception of them as active, resourceful and competitive individuals, broadcasters give them the opportunity to show off on the internet and play an active role.

With the introduction of Web 2.0 the term audience knows a further expansion. Siapera (2004) explores the connection between television and the rise of the Web 2.0 analysing audience attitudes. The author recognizes a change in the way of being viewers in relation to the Web 2.0. In her conceptual work, she considers citizens not only as consumers of media products or the subject of reception, but as subjects involved in communicative, cultural and social processes. Many TV shows began to use online media platforms to engage audiences in their content in traditional ways using the current mode of broadcast channels. This openness of television to the new media audiences can amplify their consumption mode whereas broadcasters are able to increase their market.

Furthermore, by focusing on broadcasters' websites, Siapera (2004) seeks to identify the changes and continuities in audience notion, making a classification of six different ideas of public. They depend on their way of relating with TV websites and are: spectators, fans, consumers, citizens, education receptors and web surfers. Among these, the audience-as-spectators and audiencehood-as-fandom are the most relevant taxonomies of audience for this study, because they are closely related to the type of audience of *TVOI*.

In addressing the visitor as a spectator, TV show websites construct and strengthen the relationship with the audience. Television channels use their websites as an extension of themselves offering new content and opportunities for communication to the spectator-audiences. Due to the interactive potential of the new medium, viewers assist in making an amplification of the existing mode of relating to television through viewing and reacting to its programs. *"They can cast their vote, complain, congratulate, and offer new ideas regarding television programmes in a more direct and immediate manner than previously afforded by letters and telephone calls"* (p. 161).

The second interesting idea of public identified by Siapera, is the audiencehood-as-fandom. While as spectators, audiences may limit themselves to the viewing activity, as fans they are more keen on and engaged in TV shows, and they also place emotional importance on programs. Rubin and Perse (1987) suggest that an involved television viewer may feel affective toward characters and hosts of the show. For instance, Haridakis and Hanson (2009) find affinity to be one of the antecedents that predicted video sharing behaviour on YouTube. Thus, fans are a step further away from just spectatorship; they form communities online independent from broadcasters, and because of that, studies have shown that they have acquired a degree of power over their favourite shows (Baym, 1998).

TV channels draw together fans creating official pages, in so doing they are able to retain control of their own programs and coordinate the activities of fans by centralizing the exchange of opinions and ideas. For this reason, television has made use of the technical potentialities of the new medium to propagate itself, amplifying the offline mode. This expansion of notion of audience identified by Siapera (2004), can be considered a response of television to the challenge of the internet.

2.4.2 Active Audience

Media studies have produced a wealth of new knowledge about TV show audiences. As mentioned above, the majority of current studies assumes that social TV led to a new typology of audience which has been depicted by academics as active. The definition of active audience taken into account in this thesis is associated with the understanding of viewers as not passive receptacles for imposed meanings, but rather members actively involved in making sense of messages (Hall, 1980). Furthermore, the active involvement presents on a cognitive as well as on an emotional level, and has several interrelated dimensions: perception, comprehension, interpretation, evaluation, and response.

Harrington et al. (2013), posit that the notion of an active audience is deeply rooted in media studies. These new audience studies promoted the idea of the active audience as a rejection of the classical critical theories (e.g., the Frankfurt School), where the emphasis on the activity feature is in contrast with the thesis that audience is a victim of the system. Ang (1996) indeed, argues that popular television is a site of cultural democracy rather than cultural oppression, because audiences are active in their pursuit of pleasure from watching TV shows and making their own choices. They produce a strong demand to participate or voice an opinion. The author also suggests that the new figure of the active audience in their engagements with media can be taken as a marker of the transition from the modern to the postmodern.

In contrast to other media theories that disempower audiences, Hall (1980) elaborates a model called encoding/ decoding, which claims that TV and other media audiences are presented with messages that are decoded and interpreted in different ways depending on the personal cultural background and personal experiences. Therefore, a step forward has been made in the consideration of audiences as his model advances the idea that audience members can play an active role in decoding messages.

According to Sundet and Ytreberg (2009), active attitude toward participating is an innate disposition of audiences. This means that this supposed activity is not something new generated by the current media situation, rather, social media are tools for satisfying the natural disposition of

viewers to participate. Nevertheless, we should contextualize the concept of active audience in the digitalisation framework, where viewers might want to communicate (verbally or non-verbally) with others while watching TV (Ducheneaut et al., 2008) and to comment with friends at specific moments of a television show (Cesar & Chorianopoulos, 2009). Thus, becoming an active node that might add value and distribute media content (Cesar & Chorianopoulos, 2009). In both live or scheduled shows, the actors, participants and narratives are discussed and commented through social media by connected viewers. While TV provides a context, the social networking activity of the viewing audience is a catalyst to a new, more engaged audience (Doughty, Rowland, *&* Lawson, 2012*)*. Viewers may see themselves as integrated into the media ecosystem instead of being passive consumers of media messages (Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2010).

Alongside this transformation in the audience, TV-viewing behaviour has evolved (Han & Lee, 2014). The spread of social media provides its users with new opportunities to contribute more actively to the media sphere. For contribution to television programs, one of the main facilitators has become hand held devices, which audiences use to interact with TV shows' SNSs during television viewing. Thus, through second screens social media become a kind of virtual space connecting the active audiences of specific TV shows and amplifying their activities.

2.4.3 Social Media Engagement

One of the main characteristics of this new TV-viewing behaviour is the use of text-based media, such as social media or instant messaging, during linear TV viewing, which has registered a sharp increase in the last decade (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Harboe, 2009). The term linear TV is used by Han and Lee (2014) to refer to the habit of watching a scheduled program at the particular time it is offered, on the particular channel on which it is presented. With linear television, the experience of watching a program together is heightened because social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) has become a metaphorical *"watercooler in the cloud"* (Harrington et al., 2013, p. 406). In fact, as SNS conversations occur instantly, they become a kind of virtual lounge room, where active audiences of TV shows are connected and get their activities amplified even further. Thus, the conversations about TV shows are not restricted anymore to the group of people sitting in the same living room, but take place between people around the globe. Hereby, TV viewers share their viewing experiences in real-time through computer-mediated communication, which creates a common viewing experience among connected viewers (Wohn & Na, 2011).

This new phenomenon leads to new patterns of TV consumption based on the instantaneous sharing of TV viewing experiences among viewers through the social media. This current practice of text-based media involvement during linear TV viewing is also supported by the report from

Ericsson ConsumerLab (2012). It investigates TV viewing habits in the US, the UK, Germany, Spain, Sweden, China, and Taiwan, showing that 62% of TV viewers in these countries use social media such as Facebook or Twitter while watching TV, and that over 45% chatted on MSN, Skype, or Facebook while watching TV.

By the same token, Wohn and Na (2011) notice that television programs are often Trending Topics on Twitter. According to the authors, the fact that the Trending Topic on a specific TV show occurs at the time of its airing is evidence that people are tweeting while they are watching the television program. They also investigate whether or not people who post messages on Twitter are just posting or actually interacting with other people. Their findings indicate that people are using Twitter to express their opinions and ideas. Consequently, Doughty et al. (2012) claim that the networks formed by viewers engaging in second screen activity can be interpreted in different ways.

Every TV show has an official hashtag that audiences use when they tweet about the program. This tweet then becomes visible to other viewers who follow or search for that hashtag. This makes it possible to trace individual participating viewers as well as connections among them (e.g., through retweets, replies). The use of hashtags and retweets suggests that although users are not necessarily directly interacting with a specific person, they want to be part of a larger group. A connection between users in the context of retweets and mentions contributes to a 'conversational ecology' (Boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010) and shows that conversational connection could exist between the users.

Besides the modalities used by viewers to participate, the reason why individuals use a particular form of media to interact during television viewing, has been the topic of many scholars' research. The uses and gratifications (U&G) theory of Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) is the most well-known research on the modalities and motivations of people using media to satisfy particular needs. The studies in this field highlight two different types of needs as major use motivations, namely: information needs like information, surveillance and learning (Conway & Rubin, 1991; McQuail, 1972; Rubin, 1983; Greenberg, 1974) and entertainment needs such as entertainment, arousal and diversion (Bantz, 1982; Conway & Rubin, 1991; McQuail, 1972; Rubin, 1983).

However, due to the expansion of new media, new studies reveal new motivations. According to Quan-Haase and Young, (2010) interactivity is the distinguishing feature of new media from traditional media. This leads to the discovery of social needs which include: socialization, sociability, social connection and social utility. Furthermore, as social media like Facebook facilitates interactions among people by providing a forum where to share, and exchange information and opinions in virtual communities, the motivation of sharing is also a new discovery.

Han & Lee (2014) identify five major use motivations of text-based media: communication about the impressions of a broadcast; information sharing and seeking; feelings of co-viewing; curiosity about others' opinions and program recommendations.

2.5 Online interaction patterns

Theories which identify classification of interaction and several usages of second screen as well as participative tools used by TV shows are presented in the two following sections. The study will build upon them after the verification whether these elements are mentioned by participants in the focus groups. If the findings of this project have no match with these theories, they will add further insights to the existing literature.

2.5.1 How Audience Interact

Both Stefanone et al. (2010) and Arrojo (2015) discuss about convergence and the changing relationship between audiences and new media. More specifically, they discuss how the convergence between the old medium of television and the new medium of social media has increasingly empowered audiences to interact with television content (cf. also Jenkins, 2006).

The concept of interactivity has already been extensively explained, so here theories describing different types of interactions adopted by viewers while watching TV, will be presented.

Academics proposed several classifications of them. According to Doughty et al. (2011, 2012), it can be a social sharing mode, where the screen connects the viewer to the wider co-viewing audience, or a control device for tailoring the viewing content. Similarly, César et al. (2008) identify four different usages of second screen in an interactive digital television environment: control, enrich, share, and transfer television content. More specifically, they talk about content selection and sharing, based on the usage of information shared by other peers in order to make decisions on what to watch; direct communication via chat, audio, or video with other peers; community building related to commenting about a television program with a large community and status update based on the willingness of making available to others what you are currently watching.

Similarly, Liu and Shrum (2002) propose three dimensions of interactivity: active control, which describes a user's willingness to participate in the communication; two-way communication, which is related to the bi-directional flow of information; and synchronicity, which corresponds to the speed of the interaction. This type of interactivity has been made possible by digitalisation which provided people with new technological devices called second screen used alongside the traditional media like TV. For instance, viewers can use their mobile phone for sending messages that will later appear as an overlay of the television content, as a broadcast chat, or to allow the end- user to

become a participant in the show. In fact, as Jensen (2005) highlights, the mobile phone is currently the most popular return channel technique and it is used for several activities during the television watching session.

2.5.2 How TV Programs Operate

When it comes to TV programming, participatory audiences can be related with the rise of reality TV, where the TV viewer has been empowered. Phrases such as '*You* decide!' (*Big Brother*), 'But this time *you* choose!' (*Pop Idol*) spread in contemporary TV, highlighting the new participatory relationship between viewers and reality TV shows (Holmes, 2004).

Reality TV, in particular, has been the first kind of program to experiment the TV's overflow on to the internet in order to construct a more fluid participatory interaction between text and viewer (Brooker, 2002). Although interactivity in reality TV has involved viewers through the expression of their votes, we should bear in mind that this type of interaction, usually possible in programs like *Big Brother*, *Pop Idol, Fame Academy* etc., is based on the use of technologies like mobile phone (text messaging) and conventional telephone.

These mainstream TV programs operate official Twitter accounts, and viewers are encouraged to follow and interact with them. These accounts are active throughout the week, and interact with viewers during the live shows, asking and answering questions and sometimes playing quizzes and games (Deller, 2011). Arguably, what is relevant for this project is that these reality programs take the concept of audience feedback making it central to the organization of the program articulating it across social media.

The concept of interactivity, that this project seeks to investigate, is present on social network platforms. The level of interaction while watching television is a very relevant factor regarding social TV, according to Arrojo (2015). The data show that in general the audience is really looking for a form of direct participation regarding audio-visual content. The interactions on social networks related to content aired on television, increased by 171% during 2012 (Ghuneim, 2012). An additional study, published by Ericsson (2013), confirms that 62% of viewers use social media platforms while consuming television content and 42% post comments on what they are watching in real time (Ericsson 2013).

Television broadcasters have always wanted to generate an interactive viewer experience and the advent of new technologies have enabled the development of new skills in order to design new channels of communication. Social media are a powerful tool for broadcasters because processes of transparency are intertwined with the digital presence of the program. Thus, through interaction and dissemination of content, social media can help to establish authentic relationships

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between the audience and the broadcasters (Reitz, 2012). The interactive nature of social media allows broadcasters to actively develop dialogue with their viewers, to understand their needs and to engage them with extra content. García-Avilés (2012) analyses participative tools used by TV shows in order to establish an online connection between audiences and broadcasters. The elements analysed are: strategies that encourage debate such as forums and chat services; tools for sharing content through social bookmarking and links to social media such as Twitter and Facebook, where users exchange and distribute content; applications for sending videos and pictures; and elements for evaluating news, such as ratings. In this study these participatory tools will be implicitly analysed in the context of Facebook in order to discover whether the strategies that encourage debate and sharing actions are successful on the audience engagement or not.

3. Research Design and Argumentation

3.1 Choice of Method

As already said, previous studies on Social TV were focused on particular countries and have used different types of analysis. However, they investigate audience perceptions and opinions only marginally. By focusing exclusively on inputs offered by the audience of the program, this study aims to offer a new angle of investigation. The model proposed in this project is going to assess, using a qualitative analysis, my research questions. The intention of this study is to examine the interactions between the TV show *TVOI* and the Italian audience. These interaction activities include: the discussion on the involvement in extra content provided by the show on Facebook; communication between members of the audience through second screens and interaction on the media platforms of the show.

3.1.1 Qualitative Analysis

The approach applied to this study seeks to incorporate the strengths of qualitative research, in terms of gathering rich and contextualized materials and to generate additional insights through the interaction of the focus groups participants. The main reason for choosing a qualitative method is the nature of the research problem, in fact according to Strauss and Corbin (1998) qualitative research is useful to catch intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thoughts and emotions that are difficult to obtain through other research methods and to obtain knowledge about a phenomenon through the eyes of someone else (Jonker & Pennink, 2010). Therefore, as it attempts to understand some behaviours and opinions of people, lends itself to finding out what people are doing and thinking through the come out into the field. Consequently, a qualitative research approach can be considered as a systematic search for the unknown (Jonker & Pennink, 2010), as it has been practised here.

In contrast to the majority of existing studies, this research wants to approach the topic inductively, thereby allowing the participants to guide the direction of the findings. The employment of qualitative method gives participants a great deal of freedom and the opportunity to communicate their perspectives in detail. Furthermore, due to *"the ability of the focus groups to produce more in-depth information on the topic at hand"* (Morgan, 1996, p. 137), participants can spontaneously use their own vocabulary and frameworks to explain their meanings, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and experiences (Flick, 2009). In this way the research goal to explore a specific phenomenon from the perspective of those involved is satisfied.

Moreover, the decision to rely on qualitative analysis has been taken in regard to the absence of the use of this method in previous studies done in the field. Previously, the topics of Social TV

and second screen have been based mainly on quantitative studies that have addressed the relationship between a program and its social media platforms. For example, the frequency of tweets has garnered the spotlight on the issue, whereas there is a scarcity of qualitative investigation about audience's opinions concerning the content. This is not to say that statistics about second screen audience's habits should be downgraded, but rather that the focus should be shifted to other aspects of it.

In contrast to quantitative methodology, which starts by testing theoretical notions or a model, qualitative methodology has as point of departure sensitizing concepts. In this case as the study addressed a gap in research on the Social TV and second screen as perceived by Italian audience of *TVOI*, theoretical knowledge about a specific phenomenon is incomplete. Thus, it is necessary the understanding from the inside out offered by the qualitative research while quantitative methodology strives to examine a phenomenon from the outside in (Jonker & Pennink, 2010). In this way, a qualitative method makes it possible, through a non-mathematical process of interpretation, to discover concepts and relationships in raw data and then to organize the findings into a theoretical explanatory scheme (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Furthermore, a qualitative analysis is more suitable and interesting on this topic, than a quantitative one, because it can provide valuable and in depth insights that otherwise could not be obtained from a quantitative analysis. As the goal is not to generalize the results, but to discover the hidden motivations that drive the audience to interact or not with *TVOI* and to understand the complex interaction structure and tools used, a qualitative analysis results in being the most suitable.

3.1.2 Focus groups

In order to provide empirical and coherent answers to both the research questions, the analysis is based on the conduction of four focus groups. In addition, a complementary tool in the form of a short questionnaire, that respondents have to complete at the end of the session, has been used to support the data. In fact, according to Neuman (2011), a survey questionnaire is an effective way to collect peoples' opinions, feelings, and attitudes. The combination of these two different research methodologies aims at establishing an exploratory path which leads to a better and wider understanding of the topic of Social TV and second screen related to the program *TVOI*.

The topics discussed in the focus groups were about the audience modality of following *TVOI*, the usage of media platforms (e.g., social media and official site), the interactions with other viewers of the show and the possibility of the extension of the interactions with contestants and judges through social media. Furthermore, as the motivations and drivers that push viewers to be

engaged with extra content - provided on the media platforms by the program- resulted in being an interesting perspective, they were also implicitly investigated during the focus groups sessions through a ranking activity. Within the survey questionnaire any trends in the media diet of the target groups were sought out.

As the aim of this empirical study is to analyse the level of social media engagement of the audience of *TVOI*, focus groups allowed the researcher *"to uncover the why behind the what, in participant expression"* (Threlfall, 1999, p. 105), while getting to the core of their opinions. The *why* refers to viewers' motivations and behaviours acted by the subliminal human psyche, which can be examined by focus groups (Threlfall, 1999). The use of focus groups triggered interesting group dynamics, for instance group participants interrupted or completed each other's sentences and they could also tell stories or jokes. Therefore, they were able to help each other to remember details, anecdotes and stories, that during an individual interview would have been missed (Morgan, 1996; Parker & Tritter, 2006). The use of focus groups further contributes to this research, because with the feature of creating a discussion among the viewers of the program, they also generate a useful site which allows the researcher to go beyond the individual thought and analyse the relations that a show can create among its audience.

However, this methodology is not an easy option, and the moderator has to struggle in order to find appropriate ways to approach participants and achieve good-quality data. One of the ways to reach this aim is the presence in the focus group agenda of some activities that are enjoyable and complementary to the questions. They provide a different way of gathering data and are beneficial for deep reflections about a specific sub-topic (Colucci, 2007). In order to have engaging materials to foster participation during the focus groups sessions, the online activities of the *TVOI* (Facebook page), have been observed during the planning of the focus groups sessions. In this way it was possible to show a video and to organize three stimulating activities.

The choice of the specific country of Italy, where to conduct the study, is related to the fact that it enables the research to reflect on the topic in relation to the specific institution or country. In recent years, the Italian television scenario has become fully convergent, and social TV has rapidly spread. Thus, Italy has been chosen because of the interesting and unique television system (cf. introduction), which provide a stimulating case to analyse. In this way, it might be possible to highlight the peculiarities it has related to the national media system. While, the choice for this programme has two main reasons. The first reason is the success of the programme in Italy, which according to the Nielsen weekly ratings, made on the last week of February 2016, *TVOI* was in first

position with 64.600 tweet and 4.859.800 impression[4]. While the second reason is strictly related to the type of program. *TVOI* is a talent show, and thanks to the Nielsen Twitter TV Ratings[5], it has been discovered that most of the tweets are generated by talent and reality shows.

3.2 Units of analysis

In this project four small focus groups of five people each have been conducted in Italy, more specifically in Giussano, near Milan. This amount of people was estimated to lead to a satisfying level of interaction and conversation during the sessions. The goal was to listen to all the voices avoiding the possibility of overcrowded groups where a dominant person monopolizes the conversation or a shy person does not participate with his valuable contribution. Parker and Tritter (2006) assert that interaction is what counts in focus groups, so in order to create a kind of synergy between participants and to encourage all of them to participate in the discussion, I recreated a comfortable environment in the chosen location. Furthermore, I applied three different group activities to foster interaction.

3.2.1 Sampling Criteria

The criteria people had to meet in order to participate in the focus groups was to be part of the specific age group 18-30. This was because this age group, called Millennials, composed by people born between the 80's and 2000, is more inclined to use new technologies and digital media (Strauss & Howe, 1991). In fact, according to Auditel (2015) the last edition of *TVOI*, identified as the target audience Italians of the age range 15-34. This choice is also supported by Censis (2016) research, which reveals that the strong diffusion of social networks attracts 77.4% of people under 30.

Other criteria include to be a viewer of the program *TVOI*, to have a certain familiarity with social media and to have a Facebook account but also other social media accounts were accepted. It was easier if they lived near Milan or in Milan. Participants were asked to sign the consent form (See Appendix E) that asked for recording permissions prior to the start of the discussion. Eventually, as respondents had to participate in a focus group of 45 minutes plus ten additional minutes to complete the survey questionnaire, an incentive for the participation was offered in the form of a lottery, in this case an iTunes voucher. Reflecting on the approach, the limitations will be discussed in the last chapter of this project.

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[4] Number of visualizations of tweet related to a program

[5] It is a tool for measuring the total reach of TV-related conversation on Twitter

3.2.2 Sampling Strategy

A combination of hand-picking and snowball sampling methods have been used, as 20 participants, viewers of *TVOI,* active online and living in Italy were required. The participants were recruited using the researcher's personal network. The recruitment was done online, by posting messages on the social media wall page of *TVOI* and the researcher wall, but the most effective action was to contact them individually on Facebook. Thus, people meeting the requirement from my own personal network were contacted. If they were willing to participate, they were asked to refer to other potential participants.

3.2.3. Participants

In this study, due to the use of snowball sampling I gained the access to groups of friends, thus creating affinity groups. This may have affected the interactions, because this friendship eases the process of relationship building and participants felt comfortable with each other since the beginning of the session. Some scholars have observed that focus groups run better when participants know each other beforehand (Acocella, 2011; Jansz, Slot, Tol, & Verstraeten, 2015; Liebes & Katz, 1990). Therefore, according to Lederman (1990), homogeneity in focus group participants is significant because people who share similarities are assumed to give strength to the other's individual perspective. This will be further discussed among the limitations of the present study.

In this qualitative study the bulk of the analysis is interpretative, however I considered appropriate to quantify some data and background information about the participants. A total of 22 participants aged between 18-30 took part in this study, 16 females (80%) and 4 males (20%) across the focus groups. The focus group participants ranged in age from 18-30, with an average age of 25 years. Most participants were 23 and 24 years old. Table 1 lists the number of participants per age and gender. A more detailed overview of the focus group participants is provided in Appendix A.

Table 1. Composition of focus groups

Age	N. of participants	N. of female	N. of male
18	1	1	0
21	1	0	1
23	5	4	1
24	5	5	0
25	1	1	0
27	3	2	1
28	2	2	0
30	2	1	1
Total	**20**	**16**	**4**

3.3 Data Collection

All focus groups were moderated by the Master student. The sessions lasted an average of 45 minutes and used the same protocol (See Appendix B). The topic of Social TV and second screen was then introduced to the group and the discussion started with some warm-up questions. At the beginning, the moderator did not exercise a high degree of control. Morgan (1996) calls the attention on this kind of structured control, which has two advantages, the former is the full control over the discussed topics, avoiding discussions about less important issues, the latter regards the possibility to manage the group trying to get everyone to participate equally. But in some parts of the session, I realized that the discussion was not productive, so I politely put the conversation back onto the target topic, as an attempt to maintain a certain level of control without intervening too much and encouraging participants to contribute through open questions.

The focus groups sessions revolved around three main topics: participants' interest in the online content, the communication with other viewers and their motivation to interact or not (See Appendix B). For example, the moderator asked questions relating to the preferred online content of the program. Participants discussed their ideas on *TVOI* and then were shown five different types of online content.

After having determined the purpose of the focus groups, to foster engagement, some media materials like videos, images and slides (See Appendix B) were collected during the observation of the online activities of the program conducted in the planning of the sessions. These materials have been used in the discussions and three activities were based around them.

The video (See Appendix B) was mainly used to understand participants' perception of that specific content and their involvement in it. Whereas, two other activities were based on ranking dynamics. The video activity consisted of ranking five strings, which represented the five different types of online content (gifs, videos the best of, videos of performances, links to extra articles, links to contests). This activity was mainly used to understand deeper the perceptions and preferences of the participants. The second activity consisted of showing them a slide with four different posts published by *TVOI* on its Facebook page, which they had to rank according to the one that inspired them to comment. A third activity followed the second in which the participant created a comment for the post they ranked first.

While the previous activity was designed because of its usefulness in order to have ideas on the motivations that push them to interact online with the content, this projective technique was used because I expected participants to be reluctant to express their opinions or ideas (Colucci, 2007), thus I relied on the possibility to grasp their perception about the program and the relative online content through their comments.

Calder (1977) identifies focus groups based on the type of knowledge they produce, which is categorised into everyday knowledge and scientific knowledge. While the first one is recognisable from the terms and language people use to make meaning of their everyday world, the scientific knowledge is based on the use of numerical measurement (Calder, 1977). In the present research the knowledge produced through the group discussions can be considered as everyday knowledge. This is partly because the participants were not necessarily experts in the topic of Social TV and therefore their terminology and language used, in expressing their thoughts and opinions, were not often based on scientific measurements.

All focus groups have been audio taped and transcribed verbatim. And the transcripts were also translated from Italian to English. Furthermore, as a questionnaire was scheduled to complement with focus groups, participants were given the survey to answer about their media habits after the end of the focus group. The questionnaire (See Appendix C) was complementary of the focus group analysis and asked participants about their opinions, characteristics, and present behaviours. It enabled the researcher to gather extra information about media habits of participants supporting the focus groups data, and its findings were intertwined with the insights obtained from the focus groups. The use of a survey questionnaire as a complement of the focus groups method, provided the necessary foundation to adequately answer the research questions, increasing the quality of the final result and providing a more complete understanding of the new patterns of participation and interaction with a TV show.

3.4 Data Analysis - Thematic Analysis

The aim of this study is to conduct an in-depth examination of audience attitudes, experiences and perceptions, regarding television viewing, and social television. The qualitative data collected during the analysis, is going to satisfy the goal of the research.

The transcribed data were analysed using the thematic analysis, in order to be able to define emerging topics and themes from the group discussions regarding the participants' perception of the TV shows' online strategies. This methodology has the ability to not only generate theory, but also to ground the already existent theory in data. Strauss and Corbin's (1998) steps of analysis were systematically followed in order to maximize reliability of the findings.

After the segmentation and reassembling of the data with the aim of transforming them into findings (Boeije, 2010), they were transformed into descriptions and interpretative explanations of the research project. Thus, the first step was the open coding to conceptualize and categorize the data, then through the axial coding, the categories were identified through the comparison of fragments of transcripts with similar codes. Then as the goal of the thematic analysis is to go

beyond the simple description of what happens in the data, through the selective coding a core category, that includes all of the data, has been selected in order to answer the previous RQs. Thematic analysis allows to conduct a deep exploration with the identification of themes so this method is perfect for the aim of this analysis, because it wants to explore in-depth the issue previously addressed without any generalization.

We should bear in mind that the researcher got familiarized with the data, before starting the formal coding procedure (e.g., through the moderation of the focus groups and the verbatim transcription of the data). In fact, from the beginning stages, the researcher was able to spot some recurring patterns and to note down some initial ideas. According to Charmaz (2006), the entire transcript data set was coded manually by underlining relevant and interesting aspects and giving them codes, which were written in the paper margins. It resulted that some data extracts were left out from the study while others had one or more codes, depending on their relevance for the research questions. After working systematically through all of the transcripts, the derived codes were collated into one long Microsoft Word table. Additionally, the results of the questionnaire, which participants filled in at the end of the focus groups, were examined to support the findings of the discussions.

3.5 Reliability

According to Curtis and Curtis (2011), the reliability of a study refers to the quality of the method and it *"measures the extent to which the analysis of data yields reliable results that can be repeated or reproduced by different researchers"* (p. 13). Several measures were taken in order to increase the reliability of this study.

First, to a certain extent this study was standardized in terms of following the same protocol in the conduction of all four focus groups, and using the same place as a setting. However, as each discussion group was different from the others (e.g., in the composition of participants), some conversations led to unexpected new data. As previously mentioned, the thematic analysis was standardized by a five-step thematic approach, in order to make sure the analysis of this study would be understandable as well as replicable for other researchers. At this point we should mention the fact that during the moderation of the focus groups as well as during the analysis, the researcher avoided any preconceptions. Lastly, all data from the focus groups were transcribed completely. Two researchers coded the data who found the same categories in 85% of the data. In this way, the results from the analysis were partly interpreted from a double perspective, which strengthens the reliability of the results.

4. Results

In this chapter, the findings from the analysis of the focus group discussions are presented. As previously mentioned, to clearly answer the two research questions, an inductive thematic analysis was conducted. The reactions and responses of the participants regarding *TVOI* use of social media will be presented, in order to answer the main research question, *"To what extent does the audience of The Voice of Italy participate and interact with its online content on Facebook?"*. Then the second research question *"How do participants interact with the contents of the Facebook page of The Voice of Italy?"* is answered through the responses of the participants regarding their motivation and habits of interaction. The analysis led to the identification of 5 themes, namely: program perception, perception of online content, information seeking patterns, communication patterns, and motivations to interact. These themes are relevant to answer the research questions proposed as they embedded the extent and the modalities of participant interactions.

Before the main findings are reported, a short discussion on participants' perspectives about *TVOI* and the current television system is presented below. It is important to explain this because during the focus groups it was noticed that while some participants had a narrow and basic view on the topic, others had a broader perspective. Depending on their opinions on social media, television and TV shows, some participants had more to say about their interactions and involvements with the online content of the program than others.

4.1 Program Perception

As presented in Chapter 2, Social TV is described as a system that through second screen practice enables the interaction between viewers and the producers of a TV show (Giglietto & Selva, 2014). Instead of presenting the respondents with this definition, I allowed them to discuss openly the program *TVOI* and the current Italian television system asking them what they liked about the program and if they could identify an evolution in the television system in the last ten years. Interactivity was not one of the first features that came to their minds, while they were more focussed on the type of programs broadcast now as well as the large amount of channels. However, the categories coming out of this content are: innovativeness, genre preference and program affinity.

4.1.1 Innovativeness

In general, when I asked the participants why they watched *TVOI* and what they liked about the program, a significant number of them expressed their preference for the format. Most of them highlighted the particular structure of the show in which the judges are not allowed to see the singer on stage. As one respondent (Laura, 23 years old- focus group 2) explained, finding the agreement

from the others in her group:

> *Laura: "well, I liked the judges, because there were J-Ax and Piero Pelù… so principally because of them and their personality, and then I also liked the fact that especially at the beginning all the judges are turned away from the contestants and you (the viewer) can see the singers face but the judges can't see them and they have to choose based on the voice and not on the physical aspect, this is the reason why I watched it principally"*

Thus, from the respondents, it seems clear that there is a consensus on the fact that the program is different from the others as it was remarked by Ilaria (27 years old- focus group 1): *"that is what made it different from X-Factor"*. Most of them mentioned that among the large amount of talent shows already in existence, this format is new and more modern. For example, one respondent (Martina, 24 years old- focus group 1) asserted: *"yes, the idea of the format is nice and new …"*

In focus group 3, however, the discussion was more focused on the amount of channels and programs that are present in the Italian television system. Furthermore, one respondent (Tiziano 30, focus group 3) addressed the theme of the "war" between different channels and broadcasting companies. But prior to this he asked if my question about the changes in the current Italian television system was to be intended in a positive or in a negative way. As I did not want my perspective to interfere with the data I allowed him to explain his opinion.

> *Tiziano: "how has it changed in a positive way or in a negative one?"*
> *Me: "I don't know… what do you think?"*
> *Tiziano: "I think that... I think that… I'm talking about the Italian television, in the rest of the world I don't have any clue, but in Italy there is now a war between the several different companies and especially between the public television and the private one, I can say that ... I think there are too many talent shows, and they are in conflict with each other, because they are broadcast on the same days on different channels and … and it is not a genuine television, not real. Now everything is post-produced, written by authors etc… and so I prefer to watch a movie more than anything else. But I can also say that this year I started to watch The Voice and I like it. I think it's OK to watch it and spend those two/three hours in order to pass the time and to be amused"*

This is likely linked to his occupation in television production. His opinion was a common perception of the Italian television system among his group. Thomas (28 years old- focus group 3) later on identified as a major change in the current television system the relocation of several TV shows on the commercial television, expressing his opinion about the willingness of broadcasters to gain more visibility and to attract younger audience:

Thomas: "maybe… what makes a lot of the difference is… I'm not sure if I'm saying the right thing, if I think for instance about the Isola dei famosi (Celebrity Survivor) or XFactor, before they were… I mean they were broadcast on the public television, now XFactor is broadcast by Sky… etc… so in my opinion it means more visibility, or probably a younger target audience … and the same for Celebrity Survivor or The Voice, we watched it by chance, otherwise I don't know if we would ever ever ever… run into it"

In the discourse about Social TV, interactivity is considered to be a significant characteristic (Lister et al. 2009). Television, indeed is gradually integrating social media in its structure, extending itself through second screen applications and guaranteeing second screens mediated group viewing experiences (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Van Dijck & Poell, 2013). Although respondents identified the *TVOI* format as new, this interactivity aspect did not come out immediately as one of the main features. Furthermore, the way they reflected upon this, differed among the younger and older participants. Younger participants were more inclined to identify interactivity features by themselves, even if only two participants (Ilaria 24 years old- focus group 2 and Federico 21 years old- focus group 1) stated it in an explicit way:

Ilaria: "they tend mostly to make people interact"
Federico: "I remember for instance, last year there were hashtags like #pieropelù and similar that engaged the audience"

Their responses suggest that their perception on *TVOI* is broad and supports the study conducted on Social TV by Jensen (2005) who discovered that it has been common within the last years to produce interactive programs or interactive moments in TV shows. While in the third group in which there were the oldest participants of my sample, only Marta (27 years old- focus group 3) said spontaneously:

Marta: "I have difficulties to interact while I am watching the program, I am not able to watch the program and meanwhile be on Facebook or Twitter… either I watch the program or use the social media, for me it's difficult to interact, because one thing distracts me from the other"

Me: OK, and as you introduced the argument, do you think that now the programs are more interactive than before or…?

Tiziano: they are structured in this way in order to make the digital interaction

So here, she implicitly expressed that the current programs provide viewers with social media where they can interact with programs or with other viewers. And after my explicit question about the interactivity feature also one other member (Tiziano 30 years old- focus group 3) of the group recognized it. This reveals that during the four focus groups, interactivity mostly came up through extensive discussions on the changes in the current television system. Furthermore, from this group the discussion went far from the mere identification of television and the new TV shows as interactive.

According to Bergström (2015) from the early 2000s digital technology started to have profound influence on media production, and broadcast media companies began to identify audience participation as a strategic tool for connecting with their audiences. Thus, this opinion discloses a negative perception of interactivity and of the effort put by television production in the involvement of the audience in extra content or discussions through social media.

4.1.2 Genre Preference

The generic perceptions of *TVOI* among participants of the focus groups were strongly based on a funny program which can provide viewers with entertainment. The first replies to the question on the motivations that led them to watch *TVOI* were based on the funny aspect of the program, due to the content and the structure of the show, as Francesca (23 years old- focus group 4) explained: *"I think it's funny, it is an easy program…"*. One respondent (Nicoletta 28 years old- focus group 3) declared: *"(we started watching) by chance, and we enjoyed it… also because I had never thought I would like a musical program"*.

According to Youn (1994), viewers are predisposed to like one specific program type or genre. TV genre is claimed to be an important predictor in viewing choice because TV productions rely heavily on imitation (Bielby & Bielby, 1994) as Federico (21 years old- focus group 1) remarked: *"I noticed that usually the tendency is to copy and never to create something new"*. Furthermore, some of them considered the fact that *TVOI* does not require a high level of attention

as an advantage such as Tiziano (30 years old- focus group 3) who declared: *"and this is, if I can say… the advantage of the musical program, that you can do other stuff"*. Nevertheless, later in this chapter the findings about to the low level of attention required by the program in relation with the viewers' interactions will be explained.

Furthermore, participants considered *TVOI* humorous also because it allows audience to watch the program in company. Almost all the respondents confirmed watching the TV show with someone else who may be a friend, a member of their family or their partner. The companionship is a well-grounded topic in the literature about the Social TV, where the social uses of television have been documented by many scholars. The studies conducted by Lull (1990) and Morrison (2001) show that television has been social since its inception gathering audiences around the television sets. For instance, families are used to watching television together in the living room, making TV a social medium in the small family group (Cesar & Geerts, 2011).

These studies are verified by my participants' responses (Martina 24 years old- focus group 1 and Silvia 24 years old- focus group 1):

> Martina: *"yes, but also the Wednesday that we met at her place we watched the whole episode of The Voice all together"*
> Silvia: *"me and my sister always watch together; it's me, her and our boyfriends, we are always in company, so never alone"*
> Martina: *"me too, with my mum usually"*

Many studies have reported that television viewing is considered as a social activity often conducted in groups (Sparkes, 1983), so it can be seen as playing a central role in the way individuals interact when they are all together, for instance through group viewing and television talk. My respondents confirmed these findings highlighting the recreational aspect of singing all together with the group:

> Silvia: *"there are songs that more or less we all know"*
> Martina: *"so you can sing all together, with the group"*

Going in depth into the discussion, they later elaborated on the argument by identifying, as a major aspect and motivation to watch the program, the presence of the judges. As one respondent (Sophie 23 years old- 4 focus group) said:

Sophie: "I don't agree, in my opinion the most important and engaging aspects of the program are not the performances, but the judges… otherwise you can watch another program, really, otherwise you can watch… XFactor"

Her opinion supports prior study of Russell et al. (2004) which uncovered that television program connectivity is strictly related to the repeated viewing, which may end up engaging its audience in para-social relationships with the characters in the show. This theory is also reflected in this discussion between Matilde (24 years old- focus group 4) Harriet (18 years old- focus group 4) and Francesca (23 years old- focus group 4):

Matilde: "yes, but in my opinion…I personally watch The Voice not only for the performances, otherwise I can also watch XFactor or Amici"
Harriet: "yes, exactly"
Matilde: "I watch the program maybe because I like that specific judge or I think the other one is funny, I watch The Voice also for these reasons…"
Harriet: "yes"
Matilde: "I think that the choice of the judges is important"
Francesca: yes, it's fundamental"
Matilde: "because if you don't choose the judges who are able to entertain the audience and who can make some jokes and stuff like that… the program doesn't work"
Francesca: "yes, and it's also important that judges act a role, for instance before the role of the alternative judge was interpreted by J-Ax and now there is Emis Killa, but I don't like him and this is the reason why before I was really keen on the program and now not too much…"

However, while 19 of the respondents agreed on the influence of the presence of the judges with their attachment to the program (some of them watched the last season only for the presence of a specific judge), only one respondent in focus group 4, Giorgio (23 years old) avoided saying something about the figures of the judges for the whole session. He asserted that the core business of the show is based on singers' performances, and he really appreciated the opportunities given by these talent shows to contestants.

4.1.3 Program Affinity
Affinity is defined as the level of importance an audience attaches to media content (Rubin, 2009).

This means that it is the perceived importance of watching favourite television programs in audiences' daily lives. This category, which comes out from the analysis of the focus groups, is important because it revealed to be a predictor of some behaviours related to online interactivity which will be later on presented.

Almost all of my respondents watch the entire episode always in real time according to the TV scheduling. Three of them declared their habit of recording the episode as Nicoletta (28 years old- focus group 3) said: *"otherwise it also happened that we registered it with Sky"*. Some of them stated starting to watch *TVOI* by chance, but then to continue watching because they enjoyed the program.

> *Vanessa: "I started to watch it because, the first time, there was nothing else on television, I liked the format and I have always liked the judges"* (Vanessa 25 years old- focus group 2)

However, there is a general tendency to prefer the last edition due to the presence of their favourite judges. In fact, some of the participants did not report a high level of affinity as Laura (28 years old- focus group 2) asserted: *"...but I was very keen on the show during the season with J-Ax as a judge"*. Marta (27 years old- focus group 3) revealed:

> *Marta: "(a friend) asked me if I was watching and I said that I forgot that today is Wednesday, because you can forget it and then you switch on the television..."*

Her view implicitly means that she is not so keen on the program to include it in her daily life and routine.

In the next paragraphs the other themes will be presented and the findings will reveal if this affinity is also reflected in the online habits of viewers.

4.2 Perception of the Online Content

In an attempt to start shaping my first research question *to what extent does the audience of The Voice of Italy participate and interact with its online content on Facebook?,* the findings in relation to the participants' perceptions of the online content of *TVOI* are here presented.

As previously discussed in the literature review, due to processes of digitisation and convergence, the television scenery has changed profoundly. This led to a deep transformation of the structure of television (Cesar & Geerts, 2011), where interactivity plays a fundamental role (Lister et al., 2009) in order to foster audience participation. These substantial changes are evident

for instance in new program content and reception. However, to what extent are these social media strategies valid in engaging viewers? The research on Social TV is mostly focused on the amount of interaction observed on social media platforms. While only little attention is given to viewers' perceptions of the online content and the way it is used by the show in order to engage them. Thus, it is important to know what perceptions of the online content viewers of the TV show *TVOI* have, as it is also the starting point for the discourse on interaction.

4.2.1 Expectations

One of the categories that came out in this theme is about the expectations that audiences have in respect to social media pages of the program *TVOI*. The results suggest that one important role which social media play is to engage viewers. Most of the participants declared to appreciate funny content published by the program and one of them (Silvia 24 years old- focus group 1) highlighted the fact that she did not expect judges to reply to viewers' comments.

> *Silvia: "and what I really liked, which I never saw coming, were the judges' replies to the comments. I really liked it and I never saw it coming"*

In this fragment, Silvia is referring to the participation of the judges in the online discussion, through direct replies to the audience, indicating that she likes it when the judges interact directly with the audience. This implies that viewers are used to impersonal posts published by the television production, however, among the amount of conversations between the authors of the TV program and its audience they like to be in contact with the protagonists of the show.

The fact presented by Silvia only happened in the last season of the show, with some specific judges who posted during the show and some other participants expressed their disappointment for the lack of interactivity of the judges this year as (Vanessa 25 years old- focus group 2) declared: *"but the judges encouraged you to participate online through Twitter for instance or to comment on Facebook but not this year unfortunately…"*

However, from the results we can also understand that another important function of the social media, on which audience rely, is to inform. The findings of the group discussions indicate that audience value *TVOI* on social media when they would be informed on different entities. For instance, the open coding reveals that viewers perceive the social media page of the program as an opportunity to be informed on the show, contestants, judges, talents chosen and in general being kept up to date. An example of this can be seen below where Silvia (24 years old- focus group 1) explains what where her expectations:

Silvia: "well, yes of course I wanted to see all the talents they had chosen, for instance, each time a coach chose a talent it was said ... I don't know... Matteo is in Pelù's team... Francesco is in J-Ax's team..."

In addition, some of the respondents identified contestants' performances as one of the main contents they expected to find on social media. This is well expressed by Nicoletta (28 years old- focus group 3):

Nicoletta: "I would have watched it only for this reason, only to see... to see again some performances that I enjoyed, with the expectation to see them"

This information regarding the role played by the Facebook page of *TVOI* will be explained in depth in the next theme.

4.2.2 Online Content Preferences

During the focus group sessions some viewers' preferences regarding the online content of the program came into the discussion. The distribution of extra content of a television show by producers through social media, is identified by Mittell (2013) as an opportunity for narrative expansions through viewer-driven conversations. A general overview of the findings confirms that the audience is aware of the large amount of online content provided by *TVOI* through its social media platforms. As Giorgio (23 years old- focus group 4) posited: *"yes, sure, especially in these talent shows in which there is a performance where you can listen to the singer again, if you liked him/her or if you missed it you can go and watch only the performance of your favourite singers avoiding the whole episode".*

In regards to the online content category, I was able to lead them into going further in depth in the discussions through a ranking activity (See Appendix B) and some of their preferences were revealed. Almost all of them declared that video is their favourite online content, in fact 19 participants out of 20 identified videos as an unmissable content on the Facebook page of *TVOI*. Going deeper, 12 chose "video the best of" and 7 "video of performances", leaving only one respondent who preferred gifs.

Participants who preferred videos about performances, explain how their interest was motivated below:

Stefania: "yes, and anyway the video of the performances... the program is based on the

performances"

Thomas: "well, yes this is the goal, I mean the goal… The Voice is about people who sing…"

Tiziano: "they are… yes the program is based on them"

(Stefania 30 years old, Tiziano 30 years old, Thomas 27 years old- focus group 3)

These responses highlight their perception of the program as strongly based on the singing performances and their main interest is to have the possibility to watch extra content related to them. Thus they really appreciate when they are able to find online videos about their favourite singers or about the best performances they saw during the episode. While two participants (Nicoletta 28 years- focus group 3 and Laura 23 years old- focus group 2) explained their preference for "video the best of", we can see in their motivation that both of them still prefer the performances:

Laura: "because video of performances, watching all the performances is boring, I'm more interested as I think everyone, in the best singers so more than the video of the performances I prefer the best of intended as the best singers"

Nicoletta: "I put the best of in first position, because from it I would have gone… the performances are after in my opinion, I mean I watch the best of, and then I am going to search for the entire performance among the ones I saw"

Only one participant (Thomas 27 years old- focus group 3) declared his lack of interest in "video the best of" which he put in penultimate position even if his favourite contents are videos in general.

Thomas: "no, I put the videos of the best of… because if I watch the episode I am not interested in watching them"

This popularity of video content is explained by several factors, for instance the possibility of watching again some funny moments which happened in the episode, as Tiziano (30 years old- focus group 3) remarked:

Tiziano: "or maybe, if something interesting happens during the episode, some (online) newspapers publish the news with the video, I usually watch it"

Another factor identified by participants is the the ability of summarizing the narrative of the episode as for instance, Ilaria (27 years old- focus group 1) explained: *"they can recap better than articles"*. Furthermore, a motivation that lead to the popularity of videos is their immediacy, for instance, Tiziano (30 years old- focus group 3) and Martina (24 years old- focus group 1) asserted:

Tiziano: "because it's a type of content that people want to see immediately…"

Martina: "videos are more direct, from FB you open it and you watch it, if I have to go to open a link of an article and read it, I don't open it and I don't read it."

From her opinion we can assume that there is a direct correlation between videos and Facebook. An important aspect evident here is the popularity of videos over articles. Several participants declared that they were not motivated through Facebook to open links to articles.

Me: "why are you more interested in videos than in articles?"
Sophie: "because I would never read an entire article"
Harriet: "me neither"
Sophie: "no, never"
(Sophie 23 years old and Harriet 18 years old- focus group 4)

One of them (Martina 24 years old- focus group 1) highlighted the fact that it is important the title of the posts or of the articles to motivate her to open the link:

Martina: "maybe if the title is captivating you can also go to read it, but it should really be something super interesting, while the video maybe you just open it immediately and you watch it"

Gifs resulted to be a controversial content and in the findings divergent opinions about them have been registered. Most of the participants have them in middle positions in the ranking order, only one person declared to love them and preferred them over videos. 8 participants put them in second position and were motivated by the funny aspect of this type of content:

Me: "and what about the gifs?"
Federico: "very funny"

> *Arianna: "they make me laugh, I really like the jokes"*
>
> *Federico, Silvia: "exactly"*

(Federico 21 years old, Arianna 24 years old- focus group 1)

While 4 of them considered it as the last content they want to see on the Facebook page of the program. As Laura (28 years old- focus group 2) firmly stated: *"I hate gifs"*. Furthermore, one of them (Laura 23 years old- focus group 2) misunderstood the type of content confusing gifs with cartoons, and when she realized that her interpretation was wrong she decided to move them into the last position:

> *Laura: "OK I move gifs into the last position"*
>
> *Me: "why?"*
>
> *Laura: "because I hate them"*
>
> *Me: "why?"*
>
> *Laura: "yes, because they are so stupid and also, OK, I see the movement once but why do I have to see it repeatedly? I don't see the point. Anyway I thought that gifs were like cartoons...no, no I don't like them at all"*

The content that resulted in being the least interesting for participants are links to other singing contests, which was considered the last content that they want to see on the Facebook page of *TVOI* for 13 participants out of 20 and was placed in penultimate position by another 6 of them. Some of them addressed their motivation for this as the lack of interest in them because they themselves are not singers:

> *Me: "Ok, so why did you put the links to contests in the last position?"*
>
> *Vanessa: "I'm not able to sing"*
>
> *Laura: "I'm not interested at all, as I am also not able to sing, I'm tone-deaf, I'll never participate in a program like that"*

(Laura 23 years old, Vanessa 25 years old- focus group 2)

Others like Harriet (18 years old- focus group 4) said:

> *Harriet: "I think that if you are really passionate about singing and you want to participate at The Voice and in general to other contests you know how to find the link"*

Her opinion implicitly means that she is not interested in this type of content as the majority of the viewers of the program and the individual people that are interested in this type of content can easily find it through other ways. The explanation of Giorgio (23 years old- focus group 4) is outstanding:

> *Giorgio: "in my opinion because this type of content engages less people and so it wouldn't create any added value to the Facebook page, also because if someone wants to participate to the program he/she has already liked the page… the other 4 types of content are more useful in the way that someone likes or shares it and other people see it so it is like word of mouth to increase the popularity"*

Thus, he is expressing his point of view generalizing and from the production perspective. In contrast with the others opinions in fact, he is considering this type of content less interesting because it does not attract many people as the other four but only an elite.

4.2.3 Video Impressions

This category came from the amount of codes which are strictly related with video content. As already said in fact, videos are the overwhelming favourite online contents of viewers of the TV show *TVOI*.

Among the vast array of interactions enabled by the use of a second screen while watching TV, César et al. (2008) identify an interactive mode, where additional content is provided to the viewer. During the focus group discussions at some point, in order to obtain direct insights about viewers' perceptions of a specific type of content published by *TVOI* on its Facebook page, I engaged my participants by showing them a video (See Appendix B). The video is created using a mix of the best moments of an episode in a 3 minute video. At first sight, in general, a divergence in opinions about the appreciation of it has been registered. While some participants considered it very funny and a source of extra entertainment others are annoyed by it. In two groups the general perception of the video shown was really positive. As presented below:

> *Martina: "yes, it's really funny"*
> *Silvia: "exactly, I really like the jokes between the judges"*
> *Federico: "yes, when they tease each other"*
> *Silvia: "exactly, so yes I'd really love to see more of them"*

(Martina 24 years old, Federico 21 years old, Silvia 24 years old- focus group 1)

Laura: "no, these videos are funny, ... I watch them, they are funny but they are not useful to understand what happened during the episode "

Raffaella: "yes, and they make you want to watch the program, they chose the funniest moments of the episode and they put them together and they are made in a good way, they are funny, so you say OK next time... maybe even if you don't see the season from the beginning you can start to watch it"

(Laura 23 years old, Raffaella 23 years old- focus group 2)

As we can assume from these responses, Laura went more in depth compared to the previous group, adding to the fact that the video is funny, also the informational aspect that is not presented in these kind of videos. On the basis of this reflection participants provided me with some suggestions for the creation of more interesting videos which will be presented in the last section of this chapter. On the other hand, Raffaella raised an interesting aspect, declaring that in her opinion this kind of video encourages a person to start watching the program. In fact, according to Erstad (2010), one of the advantages of the contemporary digital culture is the possibility to actively participate through the use of digital technologies (e.g. social media platforms, applications) which allow easier access to extra content about TV shows. However, the two other groups were not so positive in their perception of the video. As clarified below, some respondents recognized the video as a promo that was neither captivating or engaging. One respondent also highlighted the fact that this video would have discouraged her from watching the episode in full.

Nicoletta: "if I had seen this video I wouldn't have watched the episode"

Tiziano: "I don't like the way it is made"

Nicoletta: "and if I haven't watched the episode and I watch the video, I don't want to watch the episode anymore, because apart from Charles what did they show"

Tiziano, Marta: "nothing"

Me: "so don't you find it funny as an extra content?"

Marta: "no"

Nicoletta: "it's not captivating"

Tiziano: "it seems more like a long promo"

Me: "so, it's not engaging?"

Nicoletta: "no"

(Tiziano 30 years old, Marta 27 years old, Nicoletta, 28 years old- focus group 3)

In this group it is clear that the main interest is concerning contestants' performances, while all the funny jokes between judges and idle moments are engaging only during the viewing of the program live on television. When concerning extra content to watch online they care mainly about performances as Nicoletta remarks later on in the discussion: *"if during the episode there are these digressions, I don't care because I'm already watching the episode, but if you have to create a video for those who didn't watch it and want to watch it in streaming, you should do something that engages and encourages them to watch it"*

This focus on video of performances is also present in the discussion of the last focus group, where Giorgio remarked his preference for performances rather than these 3 minute videos and Francesca goes beyond this adding that these kind of videos are basically without narrative content.

Giorgio: "no, sincerely when I see these videos, I don't watch them because I am not interested in them, if I have to watch something again, I'll watch the performances of the contestants, and not these jokes"

Francesca: "these are videos without content, but in fact in my opinion, they are suitable for those who watch it always without missing any episode and so they know the narrative, not for people that miss an episode and want to see what happened and watch this video, because they don't have content, but I really like them. I want to watch them always, they are funny after all, aren't they?"

(Giorgio 23 years old, Francesca 23 years old- focus group 4)

Thus, from these negative perceptions, we can assume that viewers are also interested in recap or summary videos, in fact some of them referring to the lack of content suggested the impossibility to understand the narratives.

4.3 Information Seeking Patterns

This theme came from codes related to the participants' way of gathering online information about the program. A general overview of the results suggests that they want to be amused by the program, but they also want to stay up to date through social media. This confirms the theory of Weeks and Holbert (2013) who consider the connection of the audience with a television organization on social media useful for receiving updates and information. From the focus group discussions, it is possible to assume the main sources used by viewers and their perception of them, but also their attitude and habits in looking for information about the program online.

4.3.1 Sources

Brown (2014) discovers that Facebook is used by more people, more frequently, for longer periods of time compared to other social media platforms. This research reveals also that 85% of the viewers of a TV show are connecting on Facebook during their favourite broadcast programs. This information role played by the Facebook page of *TVOI* is confirmed by almost all of the participants who identified it as the most popular and trustworthy media outlet for information seeking about *TVOI*.

> *Tiziano: "yes, let's say that it is a sort of gossip world Facebook, if you want to know everything you look on it"*

> *Martina: "I only look at the FB page"*
> *Ilaria: "I only care about the FB page"*
> *Arianna: "yes, nowadays I think it's the most well-known"*

(Martina 24 years old, Ilaria 27 years old, Arianna 24 years old- focus group 1)

However, there has also been registered a division in opinions on the most popular platform for information seeking, Federico (21 years old- focus group 1) explained that he does not have a specific favourite platform, but like Martina (24 years old- focus group 1), he uses Instagram:

> *Federico: "I don't have a specific point of reference, I just read everything that is on the internet, because you can find the content not only on FB"*
> *Federico: "I usually look at Instagram instead of Facebook"*
> *Martina: "on FB or Instagram, depends on the social that I open first… but usually FB"*

Some of the groups compared Facebook with Twitter and also regarding this topic different opinions came out. Some of them preferred Facebook because they are more familiar with this social media:

> *Marta: "yes, (I prefer Facebook) more than Twitter, because Twitter has got a different structure"*
> *Tiziano: "yes, it's (Twitter) more professional and is for companies, they use it for press releases"*
> *Marta, Nicoletta: "yes"*

55

> *Tiziano: "yes, I would define it (Twitter) as more professional"*
>
> *Matilde: "I don't like Twitter, it's too complicated to use it"*
>
> *Francesca: "and I don't like that you can only write few words"*

Others retain Twitter the best platform for interactions as Giorgio (23 years old-focus group 4) explained:

> *Giorgio: "I use Twitter"*
>
> *Giorgio: "in my personal opinion the social that attracts more people is Twitter, because with the tendencies at the moment of the broadcasting… I see a lot of tweets"*

These discourses both confirm and reject the results of the survey of Discovery Communication (2014) according to which Facebook is the most used platform for all social TV activities.

An interesting finding regards YouTube, which is considered to be the best platform for watching online videos of parts of the episodes by 7 participants. As explained below by some of them:

> *Marta: "I go directly on YouTube"*
>
> *Francesca: "I usually watch YouTube"*
>
> *Thomas: "last night we watched on YouTube the blind audition in which there was Charles, the black guy, because we didn't see the episode, it was one of the first episodes, we said OK let's go watch him because he passed the battle so we wanted to see how was his performance"*
>
> *Vanessa: "if I am really impressed by one performance I look for it on the internet, more specifically on Youtube…"*

Laura (23 years old- focus group 2) expressed also her preference for YouTube over Facebook, because of the immediacy in finding specific videos she is interested in: *"I don't remember, probably… but it was easier on YouTube because it was immediate I didn't have to scroll the page"*

Another source identified among focus groups is the Official Rai Site, while some of them were familiar with the possibility of streaming the episode and some clips, one of my participants was completely unaware of its existence, unlike Federico (21 years old- focus group 1) and Sophie (23 years old- focus group 4):

> *Federico: "yes, also because on the site where there is the link for the streaming you can choose if you want to watch the whole episode or little clips"*
>
> *Sophie: "no, maybe I watch on Rai TV in streaming the episode I missed…"*
>
> *Nicoletta: "For instance, I'm not able to use those programs like …where you can watch the stuff… how are they called?"*
>
> *Marta, Tiziano: "streaming"*
>
> *Nicoletta: "yes, I am not able to use them, I've never tried them, because I don't have the patience to understand which one is the best"*
>
> *Me: "yes, but for The Voice there is the Rai site that allows you to watch it in streaming"*
>
> *Tiziano: "yes, it also allows you to decide if you want to see only some clips or the whole episode"*
>
> *Nicoletta: "ah, I didn't know that"*

(Nicoletta 28 years old, Marta 27 years old, Tiziano 30 years old- focus group 3)

4.3.2 Habits

While participants expressed their favourite sources, it was inevitable to gain also some findings about their attitude and habits in searching content and extra information about the program online.

The findings suggest that they have different habits concerning the recovering of the information if they missed the episode on television. Some of them watch the whole episode in streaming on the Rai site:

> *Laura: "yes, I used the site to watch the episodes I missed. I did it three times at the beginning…"*

However, some of them prefer to watch only some fragments rather than the whole episode:

> *Me: "But do you prefer to watch the whole episode in streaming or to watch some fragments on YouTube?"*
>
> *Arianna: "yes, the whole episode"*
>
> *Martina: "I watch the fragments; I have never seen the whole episode, not in real time on television"*

(Martina 24 years old, Arianna 24 years old- focus group 1)

Some of them also declared to rely only on Facebook to discover the main moments which happened during an episode, such as Arianna (24 years old- focus group 1) and Raffaella (23 years old- focus group 2) who explained:

Arianna: "...you can always be informed (via Facebook) even if you don't see the episode. Maybe one night you miss the episode but you can still be informed, through social media, of the most important fragments of the episode."

Me: "OK, now let's talk about the online content. Who of you has ever visited the Facebook page?"

Raffaella: "I did it at the beginning to watch part of the episodes I missed and to see who the judges had chosen"

But some of them do not want to discover the winner of the contest through Facebook, as Silvia (24 years old- focus group 1) said: *"for sure I am not interested in discovering the winner on FB, you have to watch it in real time from the television",* while Martina (24 years old- focus group 1) explained:

Martina: "...I do it...I mean, maybe I didn't see the end of the episode and so in the morning when I wake up (for any talent shows in general), the first thing I do is to see who has been eliminated, what happened"

It has been registered a general appreciation of extra content provided by *TVOI* on its social media platforms also if participants missed the episode on television as Martina (24 years old- focus group 1) and Arianna (24 years old- focus group 1) said:

Me: "but do you look at them only if you watch the episode or do you appreciate them also as an extra content?"

Martina: "no, well also without having seen the whole episode"

Arianna: "yes, also without seeing the whole episode"

Nevertheless, typing the hashtag for searching content is one of the main habits among participants. They use this feature on Twitter and Instagram as expressed by Giorgio (23 years old- focus group 4) and Federico (21 years old- focus group 1):

Giorgio: "... I often type the hashtag and look at the comment, not only with The Voice but also with other programmes... "

Federico: "yes exactly, I used the hashtag on Instagram"

Going in depth in the discussion, some of them also show interest for judges' and contestants' Facebook pages. While Nicoletta (28 years old- focus group 3) said:

Nicoletta: "... I sometimes do like that ... when I watch XFactor or The Voice I want to look if the contestants have the public Facebook page out of curiosity"

Others spoke about the Facebook pages of the judges and affirmed to follow them. One of them Ilaria (24 years old- focus group 2) asserted:

Ilaria: "when the program starts usually if I start to follow the program I follow the judges on Twitter and during the program I have the phone in my hands, I mean, I am used to it, I leave the Twitter page open on the hashtag of The Voice and I scroll down the page"

However, she is the only one among the whole sample to have this high level of interactivity, most of the participants in fact admitted to follow judges' pages but from last year. The reason of these findings can be related to viewers' attachment to the specific figure of the judge, but also to the fact that last year the judges were more interactive and constantly posting on their pages live.

Me: "and do you also watch the judges' FB pages?"
Martina: "no"
Silvia: "not this year, last year yes"
Arianna: "last year yes"
Federico: "yes it's true"
Ilaria: "because there was Piero Pelù"
Marta: "I followed Pelù, I still follow him even if he is not a judge anymore"

Others continue to follow a judge even if he is not involved in the program any more. This attitude to follow a judge independently from the program is well expressed by Silvia (24 years old-

focus group 1) who posited:

> *Silvia: not concerning The Voice, but for instance I looked at all the photos from the first to last on the judge's page… this is what I'm used to doing sorry!*

In the current digital context audiences are developing new forms of watching television, indeed socializing and interacting are two actions now possible for television viewers. The following sections focus on the second research question and discuss how and under which motivations the audience is active through communication and interaction on the social media pages of *TVOI*.

4.4 Communication patterns

In this scenario where viewers are supposed to be active, we should investigate it in the context of digitalisation. Chorianopoulos and Lekakos (2008) discover viewers inclination to communicate (verbally or non-verbally) with others while watching a TV show and to comment with friends during specific moments of it. The findings of this thesis however, suggest that my participants prefer discussing programmes offline, in face-to-face situations and in general are not as interactive as they are described in the theory. Thus, categories regarding offline companionship and their perceptions of online interactions have been found.

4.4.1 Activities Liveness

Media scholars agree that the advent of digital technologies impact on audiences' communicative patterns and routines (Andrejevic, 2008; Erstad, 2010). During the discussions participants expressed their habits while watching *TVOI*, most of them declared to do activities unrelated to the program. Two of them (Stefania 30 years old- focus group 3, Arianna 24 years old- focus group 1, Matilde 24 years old- focus group 3) admitted to playing games on their smartphones:

> *Stefania: "and you watch it sometimes, and then I play with games on the phone"*
>
> *Arianna: "… maybe I'm also playing games on my phone while watching the program, I am not necessarily always online"*
>
> *Matilde: "anyway, I am always online, by online I mean chatting with maybe some of my colleagues who are watching it and I ask if they saw it etc…"*

Two of them said that they read during the live show of the program. Silvia: *"I also read a book while watching it"*. Or like Tiziano (30 years old- focus group 3): *"I read F1 magazines"*. This could be related to the affirmation of many that *TVOI* does not require a high level of attention, as explained above.

Nevertheless, some of them are online while watching television. Martina (24 years old-focus group 1) declared to be always online, while Laura (23 years old- focus group 2) said: *"I don't (go online). Maybe I am not very keen on The Voice to be online during the broadcasting, because I have done it...but with another program…"*. Thomas (27 years old- focus group 3) asserted: *"in my case, it's difficult (to be online) while I am watching the program… maybe more during the commercial breaks, during a break or an idle time during the program"* confirming the Nielsen research conducted in 2013, which reported using mobile phones during commercial breaks as the most common activity of viewers while watching TV.

Reitz (2012) argues that audiences have embraced social media in order to communicate with other viewers who are physically distant. Most of my respondents declared to use WhatsApp to exchange opinions with their friends.

> *Marta: "… I'm talking with my friend on WhatsApp"*
> *Martina: "we comment with them through the smartphone something like 'did you see…?'"*
> *Ilaria: "… maybe while the contestant is singing you can text your friends…"*

Studies such as that conducted by Boyd & Ellison (2008) shows that one of the main characteristics of this new TV-viewing behaviour is the use of text-based media, such as social media or instant messaging, during linear TV viewing. However, only few of the respondents asserted to share their viewing experiences in real-time through computer-mediated communication during the focus group sessions, while the survey questionnaire shows a different prospect. In fact, to the question: *Which kind of TV program do you comment most on social networks?* Only 7 out of 20 answered "none", while the two most popular types of program resulted to be entertainment and sport.

4.4.2 Perception of Online Interactions

Besides a scarce interest in online interaction intended as commenting and conversing with other viewers of the program, from the focus groups discussions their perceptions and opinions about online interactions came out.

Commenting was found to be the least done activity, and participants gave interesting

explanations for this scarce interaction. First of all, some of them considered the fact that if you are online while watching the program you cannot follow it properly:

> *Stefania: "because in my opinion acting in this way you can't follow the program, you aren't watching it, you are distracted, because you hear something, you hear the program but you are there with the phone focused on replying to what the other person said"*

Nicoletta goes further referring to the fact that she is not interested in seeing her comment read out during the show.

> *Nicoletta: "… for me it's difficult, either I watch the program or I write my comment with the hashtag, and I also don't care if Federico Russo reads it on air"*

This is in contrast with what Highfield and Bruns (2013) discover. They posit in fact, that the audience now is able to express their own opinion on the event broadcast, to engage with other viewers and to see their comments become part of the television broadcast itself, as is increasingly common in some TV programme to show them on the screen. Others said:

> *Harriet: "I also think that the comments on Facebook are useless"*
> *Laura: "I don't know… sometimes… I don't know, because they seem to me… it seems to me to waste my time"*
> *Silvia: "well… because to comment is…"*
> *Federico: "something a little be useless"*
> *Silvia: "yes it's useless, but I am also interested in what my friends say, I'm interested to confront my opinion with theirs…I honestly don't care about having a discussion with people that I don't know"*

From these opinions we can see how the main perception of commenting is seen to be a useless activity and a waste of time. Furthermore, Silvia goes into depth explaining that fundamentally there is a lack of interest in engaging into conversations with strangers. This aspect has been registered also in other participants' opinions. As we can see below:

Laura: "if I start to comment, the interaction starts and the conversation will be long and I am not able to keep up with these things. And I also read a lot of s**t from ignorant people and I get nervous and I say; OK, I close everything now"

Raffaella: "yes, it isn't worth replying"

Laura: "and there are also a lot of people who get aroused by meaningless stuff, for instance when the nun won, there was a big discussion and I thought how can you keep up with this stuff? To quarrel online just because a nun won a talent show… I don't see the point. And I also dislike all the various types of comments, especially insults and so, in the end, I get angry and I close Facebook because just reading is a waste of time for some of the content that people write"

Ilaria: "so I write the at (@) sign, the name of the judge, the hashtag and then the comment but I am not going to interact with other people because, I agree with what she (Laura) was saying, for the low-level of communication and because then the comments become really annoying"

This is in line with the theory of Doughty et al. (2012) who assert that this use of hashtags and retweets suggests that users are not directly interacting with a specific person, however a conversational connection could exist between the users even if it is not direct. These findings are supported by other previous research. For instance, Wohn and Na (2011) investigate whether or not people who post messages on Twitter are just posting or actually interacting with other people. Their findings indicate that people are using Twitter to express their opinions and ideas. However, these observations indicate a disagreement with the previous study of Han & Lee (2014), who identify five major use motivations of text-based media among which information sharing and seeking and feelings of co-viewing.

Nicoletta: "…I don't have any interest in what other people are saying about the contestants etc… and maybe to reply"

Stefania: "it's not about replying, the problem is that people… when you start to comment on Facebook or Twitter, there are people that get angry, so you may risk leaving a comment once a month and… and you risk to receive insults that you can't understand, 'what are you watching'… 'you aren't watching the program' …so I avoid it also because I'm not a patient person and I can insult people back if they insult me… and in the end you fight, but fighting for a musical program it seems to me absurd, but there are some super excited people…"

Nicoletta: "but I also think that it is ridiculous to start discussing and arguing with a person

who you don't know who he/she is"

Stefania: "you don't know who he/she is"

In these discussions the low quality of online conversations and the ridiculousness of fighting online with strangers came out as the main reasons to demotivate them from starting a discussion online. Thus, these findings reject all the theories about the possibility of interaction between viewers of a TV show, created by new technologies. As the theory of Preece (2000) supported that social media enables people to chat with friends thousands of miles away.

However, Preece (2000) also posits the theory that social media enable a person to meet people online with similar views and interests. And this was somehow confirmed by the participants who stated to read comments of other viewers of *TVOI* in order to look for like-minded opinions on contestants and performances.

Federico: "yes sometimes, maybe you see an interesting photo, maybe a photo of a singer framing the moment while he was singing… or stuff like that, you are curious to read if he is appreciated or not and if people think the same as you"

Silvia: "maybe yes, I would read the comments, obviously not all of them, the first ten comments… to see what people think about the program or a singer"

Going in depth in the discussions in two focus groups participants' perceptions of the social media power came out. Some of them believe that the program takes into account viewers opinions and shape the program on them, and this is why they are motivated to interact, while others do not believe that their opinions can influence the narrative of the show.

Me: "don't you think that the program can read what you write and can change something?"

Tiziano: "unfortunately, it is a pre-registered event"

Me: "yes, I mean for the future editions, if you don't like something, like a judge, the program doesn't reconfirm he/she for the future seasons"

Tiziano: "… I think till a certain point"

Stefania: "no"

Nicoletta: "I have never thought that the program could really take into account the audience requests"

> *Tiziano: "exactly, I don't think that the program takes into account a comment written by a viewer of the program on Facebook, because also the competitors could write something like the program is awful don't broadcast it anymore"*
>
> *Nicoletta: "yes, exactly, I've always thought that till now they only take into account how many followers, but…I don't think there is really somebody from the production company who reads all the comments"*
>
> *Tiziano: "no, unfortunately there is… but on live events, not on the pre- registered programs"*
>
> *Giorgio: "I think it makes sense, because if a singer is not good and receives all bad comments he/she'll be eliminated from the program, I don't trust the meritocracy… if someone is not good in singing and the audience doesn't like him/her and he/she is not followed on the social media the program eliminates him/her and he/she doesn't arrive at the final … it's an obvious consequence for me, if someone has got all negative comments on the social media it's difficult to go on in the show till the final"*

About this topic another negative perception was the one highlighted by Tiziano who asserted that he noticed that programs now boast themselves because of the social media interactions.

> *Tiziano: "... they can have information about the range of the age of the audience, but ... this is more useful for the broadcasters in order to analyse the data etc… but on an editorial level, they boast themselves on the fact that there are a lot of Tweets or many likes on the social media pages. For instance, we were watching Dancing with the Stars and the host Milli Carlucci said: this is the most tweeted program, so they also use these data when they sell the advertising spaces, saying that it's not only watched on television, but also in terms of interaction on the social media is very popular"*

However almost everyone said that face-to-face conversations about the program were more spontaneous, such as Harriet (18 years old- focus group 4)

> *Harriet: "because it's more spontaneous, I can comment and my mother next to me replies to me"*

4.4.3 Social Media Engagement
According to Weeks and Holbert (2013), social media has changed the nature of television by

providing platforms for viewers to engage in extra content and in a dynamic and multidirectional dialogue. Although respondents revealed a lack of interest in discussing the program online with strangers, most of them showed an interest in reading comments to see what other people think and they also look for like-minded comments:

Francesca: "I also think that everyone has an idea about a person, so I say let me see if the others share my thoughts, and so I go to read comments in order to see what they think, also for this, I think like this… what do the others think? Why do they think like this?"
Me: "do you read their comments or not?"
Silvia: "yes maybe sometimes I read something but I am not too interested"
Federico: "yes, reading the comment of other people yes"
Martina: "I always read them and sometimes I like comments of other people but I don't reply to them"

This means that basically they are interested in other people's opinions, but they do not want to be in direct contact and have direct discussions with them.
One of them (Stefania, 30 years old- focus group 3) highlighted the fact that she is not interested in sharing posts because it seemed to her that other viewers are just not interested in this type of content.

Stefania: "no, maybe some… sometimes (I decided) maybe to share… but not too much, and I also realized that… but it's not because I want a lot of likes on what I share, but I realize that people don't care"
Me: "OK, and did you do it in real time or the day after?"
Stefania: "no, not in real time… the day after"

These findings support Han & Lee (2014) identification of curiosity about others' opinions as one of the five major use motivations of text-based media. However, the opinion of Stefania is in contrast with the study of Quan-Haase and Young (2010), who discover the social needs as driver of using social media. As social media like Facebook facilitates interactions among people by providing a forum where to share, and exchange information and opinions in virtual communities, they identify as a driver the motivation of sharing.

4.4.4 Offline Companionship

Sociability is one of the main features of TV and the social uses of it have been documented by many scholars. Viewers communicate and interact in real time with other people who are watching the same TV show. As already said they prefer discussing programs face-to-face than via social media because it is more spontaneous.

> *Thomas: "also because it doesn't really come to my mind to pick up the phone in order to go on the Facebook page of The Voice in order to comment and reply to… no, she is in front of me I can talk with her"*
> *Arianna: "so instead of chatting on the phone…"*
> *Martina: "you still have someone with whom exchange opinions"*
> *Silvia: "yes, you can talk with people in the living room with you"*
> *Me: "so do you usually discuss about the program while watching it right?"*
> *Ilaria, Silvia, Arianna: "yes, yes"*
> *Martina: "yes, also shout at the television"*

They can shout and exchange opinions with people in the same living room and the familiarity with the person to whom they are talking is considered important as explained below:

> *Me: "and what about when you talk with someone who is in the living room with you: is It different?"*
> *Laura: "sure!"*
> *Me: "in which sense?"*
> *Laura: "yes, first of all it is based on a dialogue, so not on tit-for-tat based on messages, as it is a dialogue we can argue in a serious way our positions and if we are not agreeing it's OK, without insulting each other. But anyway yes, it's completely different also because I am commenting with a person who I know, not with unknown people.*
> *Vanessa: "yes, but also if you know the person next to you, you already know his/her taste and how he/she is and you can understand that some comments that he/she makes are related to his way of being"*

    This discussion validates the theory which assumes television to be central in the way through which individuals interact when they are in groups. They like to have constructive conversations and to comment on TV shows but with familiar persons. This is also highlighted in

one focus group when one participant (Giorgio, 23 years old- focus group 4) asserted to not be used to commenting on the program with the person in the living room with him. The other four group participants considered it an unusual attitude and defined him as shown below:

Me: "OK, and do you usually watch it alone or with someone else? In the same living room, same location"

Giorgio: "with whom is at home"

Francesca: "yes, and then I comment obviously"

Giorgio: "no I don't"

Matilde: "no, you don't say anything and you stay silent?"

Giorgio: "no, I don't comment"

Sophie: "so you stay silent all the time while you are watching The Voice?"

Francesca: "a little bit antisocial"

Sophie: "sociopathic"

Giorgio: "yes, but this is because I am rarely with a person interested in the program"

As we can see participants took for granted the habit of discussing the program while watching it. This is in line with all the theories on sociability and in particular with the study of Rubin and Perse (1987) who suggest that an involved television viewer talks about the show with others (i.e., behavioral involvement) during and after the exposure.

4.5 Motivation to Interact

It is important to know the motivations that lead audiences to interact with online content of *TVOI*, and since this is based on the information given by the actual audience of the show (aged millennials), measuring the real effects on viewers' engagement becomes more reliable. The motivations in this sense, relate to the reactions and responses of the participants. Thus, a high level of engagement could be the result of positive or negative reactions and responses of participants.

4.5.1 Influencer Tools

In this category characteristics that enhances viewers' participation and interactions are presented. According to research the presence of the hashtag on the television screen influence viewers to interact. For instance, Accenture reveals that 64 percent of U.S. consumers remember seeing social media symbols while watching television and a third of them admit to interacting with social media after seeing the symbols on their TV screens (Broadcast Engineering, 2012). The findings for this

code registered a divergence in opinions, some of them depicted it as very useful to reach the content they are looking for, as Giorgio and Federico explained:

> *Giorgio: "While the hashtag works… works very well, because you can intercept everything… all the comments that you can't find on Facebook… and… maybe also looking at them now you can reconstruct the narrative of the episode*
> *Giorgio: no, on the page you can find the content promoted by The voice or retweeted by the program, so with the hashtag you can easily find all the comments in real time but also later on"*
> *Federico: "yes exactly, it occurred to me to type the hashtag on Instagram"*

However, in a couple of cases participants declared to feel annoyed by its presence and they hate it.

> *Me: "and for instance, the hashtag on the screen does it encourage you…?"*
> *Nicoletta: "no, I'm irritated by it"*
> *Thomas: "no, also because I'm ignorant, I don't know how to use it"*

In a focus group, Tiziano (30 years old, focus group 3) explained in depth the reason of his rejection for it.

> *Tiziano: "concerning the hashtag we should open a big discussion, because there are a lot of stupid people that continuously publish posts with hashtag… I don't know #Pelù, you go to see something and… I mean you type the hashtag and you find all different stuff and posts not related to the topic…"*
> *Me: "yes, but if you want to tweet something about the program you have to use the official hashtag"*
> *Tiziano: "OK, but it also happens that people use the wrong hashtag, so there is a dispersion… and you get angry"*
> *Tiziano: "yes, maybe posts not related to the topic, because now it's a trend to use the hashtag"*
> *Marta: "I am really irritated by these hashtags…I mean each time there is a program they say… go on the Facebook page… then hashtag… I think how lame is that hashtag... I am really irritated, instead of being intrigued to watch what has been posted with it, or being encouraged to post something… no, I can't"*

Even if the findings about habits, previously presented, show that judges' attachment is unrelated to the program, the online content about the program has registered an influence on people's interactions. In fact, it is evident how their online activities during the program and their responses to viewers' comments can motivate the audience to interact.

> Silvia: "we read the comments or the post published in real time with the episode… because J-Ax last year published in real time."
> Federico: "also Facchinetti"
> Silvia: "yes, Facchinetti too"
> Arianna: "it was really interesting"
> Federico: "yes, he talked about his dad, it was funny"
> Martina: "yes, it's true, last year Facchinetti… it's true"

Thus, as the findings show that the figures of the judges are important in motivating viewers to watch the program as well as to motivate the viewers of the TV show to interact on social media.

4.5.2 Patterns of Interaction

Furthermore, as already said in the theoretical framework, social media pages of television shows provide viewers with new content, recreating a virtual environment online, where the audience can have a richer extra social experience. One of my participants (Giorgio 23 years old- focus group 4) confirmed the fact that due to social media, there is now the possibility for programs to stay in touch with their audience for a longer time than just the live episode.

> Giorgio: "I personally think that television changed in the way that the program is not any more restricted in the time frame of the episode on television, but it lasts the whole week, till the next episode. This is because there is the possibility to watch again some contents, you can watch only what you liked… and sharing and spreading the word… it is possible to grab the attention of more people than before"

This finding is in line with literature, which found that current TV programs operate official Twitter accounts, and viewers are encouraged to follow and interact with them. These accounts are active throughout the week (Deller, 2011), uploading engaging content to create suspense and interact with viewers. Hereby viewers are aware of the strong presence of *TVOI* on its social media

pages, they appreciate extra content and ask to have more of it as Silvia (24 years old- focus group 1) and Federico (21 years old- focus group 1) asserted:

Silvia: "exactly, so yes I'd really love to see more of them"
Federico: "I agree; I mean not only videos about jokes but in general more extra content"

Some of them who declared interacting or following the social media pages during the live airing of the program also affirmed to appreciate the content posted live by the program. As it is evident in the discussion between Federico (21 years old- focus group 1) and Martina (24 years old-focus group 1):

Federico: "I remember for instance, with XFactor, even if it is not The Voice, there was that one with the wig… what is his name?"
Federico: "Elio right? That each episode he created…"
Martina: "a new different social media"
Federico: "so each time I used to go to look at it"

However, as we can see he used another program as an example of live interactivity. This could suggest that *TVOI* is not interactive enough during live episodes. But later on in the discussion they come back to the topic expressing their appreciation when a funny moment of the episode is reported on the Facebook page in gif or cartoon form. But as before he did not provide concrete examples from the program in question:

Federico: "for example, if you watch the episode and you see a judge who makes something stupid and funny"
Martina: "and the program creates the gif about that…"
Federico: "yes, it's funny and you can appreciate it"
Me: "yes, so you look on the FB page if they post it?"
Federico: "yes, exactly"

Some findings lead us to determine the level of engagement of viewers with social media. The main activity that they admitted doing on the social media pages (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) of *TVOI* is liking posts or photos. Sharing is another common activity, while commenting is the activity that they do least.

Me: "the three of you who watch the FB page and you who use Instagram, in this last edition but also in the previous… Have you ever commented, liked or shared?"

Silvia, Arianna: "no"

Me: "none of these three possible actions?"

Martina: "yes, like yes"

Federico, Arianna, Silvia: "yes like yes"

Martina: "yes, I like it but I have never commented something"

Silvia: "or maybe also sharing the gifs or a video and tagging your friends"

Federico: "I also have never commented"

Ilaria: "I like the retweet function on Twitter, I mostly use that."

Their responses show that the type of interaction with *TVOI* is primarily 'liking', which was prevalent within most of the group discussions. In fact, most participants went as far as to like a post or a photo, and very few, like Silvia, declared commenting by tagging a friend. As confirmed also by Laura (23 years old, focus group 2): *"I'm not used to commenting but I like posts"*. Applying the four major pillars of community relationship management, namely connectivity, conversation, content creation, and collaboration (Ang, 2010), liking a post was considered the lowest stage of viewers' engagement. These findings are also confirmed by the questionnaire participants filled after the focus group sessions, 16 of them declared to use Facebook just to look at other users' content.

4.5.3 Motivational Content

Although most of the respondents are enthusiastic about extra content and the new possibilities of interaction enhanced by social media, some of them such as Tiziano (30 years old- focus group 3) held up the slowness of broadcasters in uploading new contents as the cause of why they do not interact online.

Me: "OK, and did you do it in real time or the day after?"

Stefania: "no, not in real time… the day after"

Tiziano: "..also because the broadcasters are very slow in publishing online contents"

Furthermore, they also cited some other programs like *Masterchef*, comparing the pace of publishing content online and linking this fact to the broadcaster company, as Marta (27 years old- focus group 3) remarked:

> *Marta: "yes, I think that for The Voice you are right, but I remember that with Masterchef they were quite fast"*
>
> *Tiziano: "yes, but in Sky(Tv) they are fast…"*

With his statement, Tiziano meant that the commercial television is faster and in a certain way more avant-garde than the PBS. However, another participant, Laura (23 years old- focus group 2) provided me with another example of *Pechino Express* which was very interactive in her opinion. As it was broadcast on the same channel as *TVOI,* the reason of the slowness in publishing may be found not in the channel but in the television production.

> *Me: "OK you told me that with other programs you were interactive, for instance with Pechino Express you were online in real time, why did you do it?"*
>
> *Laura: "because the content on Facebook was very funny and interesting, you know that they uploaded the…"*
>
> *Me: "yes, the cartoons"*
>
> *Laura: "yes, they were very funny especially the jokes with Costantino della Gherardesca and even me that I was not very social at that time I was online waiting for them to be posted"*

Tiziano (30 years old- focus group 3) highlighted an interesting perspective:

> *Tiziano: "it also happened the other way around, maybe I am on Facebook and I read a post of a friend who writes: horrible the performance of ... The Voice, so maybe I want to watch what happened, or maybe Carrà is dressed in a weird way"*

From his opinion we can assume that posts on social media platforms from other viewers of the TV show, can actually engage people to switch on the television or to watch extra content on internet. This is in line with the study of César et al. (2008) who talk about content selection and sharing. According to them, as the participants use information shared by other peers in order to make decisions on what to watch, like status updates on what they are currently watching. Supported later on by the other focus group participants (Nicoletta 28 years old, Marta 27 years old- focus group 3):

> *Nicoletta: "For instance, I didn't watch the Celebrity Island on Monday, while the other*

episodes I did and that fact about Mercedes happened, so I watched the video"
Marta: "yes, me too"
Nicoletta: "yes, if the post hadn't been published I wouldn't have watched it, I didn't care about the fact that I missed the episode, I saw the post and I thought oh maybe I missed the most interesting episode."

These findings are also supported by the study of Han & Lee (2014), who identify five major use motivations of text-based media among which program recommendations by other viewers.

Through a ranking activity I gained some preliminary opinions about their preferences, then going in depth in the discussion, participants were able to explain their motivation and perceptions. For instance, they are more inclined to reply to a post published by the program if it embedded a question.

Me: "well, what do you think about the posts in which the program asks you something?"
Laura: "well they are engaging"
Me: "and will you reply?"
Laura: "no I won't but they are more engaging of course"

This highlights that even if they are still reluctant to comment, they want to express their opinions and show their preferences to the broadcaster companies and to their peers.
One (Francesca, 23 years old- focus group 4) of them gave the presence of a direct question as the reason she put that content in the first position of her ranking:

Francesca: "because it is the one that encourages you to reply, first of all there is a direct question, so a direct question is not just a post published that you say OK. I'll comment because I have to say something, but I feel engaged by this post in some ways because it is asking me a question, I like in particular one team so I would say in my opinion he should win because… I don't know... and in my opinion it is the most engaging post among these"

4.5.4 Suggestions for New Content

During the focus groups discussion participants were also able to suggest some content that they would like to see on the social media page of *TVOI*.
As the main theme of discussion, as mentioned before, is the presence of the judges, one participant expresses her willingness to watch some videos made by them:

Laura: "I don't know, probably, maybe if they create some videos only with the judges... I don't think they exist"

Me: "what do you mean with video with the judges?"

Laura: "I mean video about the judges with interviews where they talk... just because I like it... I'm usually keen on people when I watch a program, for instance, I don't know... I'm talking about the edition when there was J-Ax as a judge"

Me: "yes, yes"

Laura: "if maybe he had created a video of 40 seconds and because I really like him, probably I would have watched it"

However, participants are also interested in contestants and their personal story as highlighted by one participant:

Thomas: "for instance, citing Charles in this case, maybe if they create a video about him illustrating the story of his life, maybe it would be interesting, and the same for any other, maybe I would have been intrigued... intrigued to know his story"

A third interesting suggestion came out thanks to the advantage given by the focus group technique to make participants interact and inspire each other. In one focus group it was not clear what links to contest was and it was understood by one participant as videos about the rehearsals of contestants. So later on in the discussion Raffaella (23 years old- focus group 2) expressed her preference for this type of content that otherwise in a singular interview would not have come out.

Raffaella: "maybe what she said before, at the beginning, when she misunderstood about the link to contests, maybe it's interesting to watch videos about their preparation for the exhibitions, like the backstage... which is not only based on their personal story which can be interesting only for some people, but maybe how they prepare themselves, what they do or how effectively the judges become coaches"

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This thesis set out to explore the Social TV topic and second screening practices in Italy concerning the TV show *TVOI*. Due to digitalization processes, broadcasters were able to enhance viewers' participation, expanding the actual content of their TV shows on social media.

This study aimed to find out if viewers of a particular TV show interact with the content and with other viewers and in which ways. Data gathered through focus groups has provided a preliminary view on five main themes, namely: perception of online content, communication patterns, motivations to interact, program perception and information seeking patterns. While the first three themes were expected due to deductive assumption from the theory, the last two themes came out inductively.

The theoretical framework used was based on various media studies, television studies and audience studies and resulted in being the most suitable in order to conduct a qualitative research. The focus group technique used in this project is considered to be the best research method possible for this thesis. Participants of both genders told me after the sessions to have found the discussions fun and interesting. Some also mentioned that they liked participating with friends because it seems to them to be the same as having an ordinary conversation rather than participating in research. This suggests the advantage offered by focus groups to gain deep insights observing group dynamics among respondents. And through a thematic analysis was possible to find the themes which answered the research questions.

As part of the goal of this research was to compare existing literature on Social TV and second screen, with the actual findings, the study accepts or challenges these assumptions and reveals which strategies actually work.

5.1 To what extent does the Audience interact?

What the data connected to these themes confirmed is the initial understanding that viewers of a TV show are not as engaged on social media as literature claims; the relationship between Italian audiences and broadcasters is still weak. However, we should bear in mind that as this is a qualitative analysis the results could not be generalized to the whole Italian audience of *TVOI*.

Although a lot of research has supported a very active audience, this study provides few empirical evidence of this kind of attitude. Participants mainly connect on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, but only few of them declared to follow these social media platforms of the program. As videos are the principal content viewers are interested in, also YouTube is one of the popular platforms used by the respondents.

Few of them interact online live with the program, but the main problem addressed directly and indirectly by many of them is the slowness of the broadcasters to publish online content. In fact, several times during the discussion participants made examples of their online interactions referring to other programs. They would like to have more content live, for instance a cartoon, immediately after a nice incident or scene occurred during the airing, so they would be more engaged because of the possibility to comment in real time. The main interaction participants declared to be involved in is liking content posted on social media, but they do not push themselves further.

Concerning communication patterns the general trend registered is a lack of interest in engaging discussions online with strangers. However, discussing the program face to face with friends and family is a popular activity the participants of the focus groups declared to be involved in. The reasons addressed were mainly the low quality of the online conversations while face to face discussions are more spontaneous and constructive.

These results suggest that viewers are aware of these new possibilities of interaction provided by the use of digital technologies (Erstad, 2010) but still are loath to undertake these new viewing patterns. Furthermore, some of them consider the broadcasters responsible for their lack of interest in being interactive. Broadcasters should consider social media more important strategic elements and ascribe them a significant role in the relationship with their viewers. For instance, they should be quicker in publishing content. Furthermore, instead of publishing posts with general questions, they should provide specific themes about which audiences can discuss in a profitable way. All broadcasters however are still experimenting with them and need to find the right direction in order to gather as much audience as possible.

5.2 How does the Audience interact?

The modalities of audience engagement were sought out through the focus groups. The general pattern of online interaction with the content followed by participants is based on the research of videos on YouTube. A large number of them in fact showed their interest for videos of contestants' performances which are easily found on YouTube. The main reason that induced participants to look for videos about the program on YouTube rather than Facebook, was because of the immediacy. On Facebook in fact, there are several different contents, most of the time not related to performances, so they find scrolling down the page annoying. Thus, we could suggest to the production of *TVOI* to create a dedicated section on Facebook where all the performances are collected, in order to gather more audience appeal.

As mentioned before, the findings reveal a lack of interactions with the social media of the program, from the focus group discussions we can assume that it is due to the feeling among

viewers that their interactions are with the production and not with real people from the show. Some of the examples they provided concerned judges' posts and replies to fans. While some of the suggestions for more contents were all about judges' interviews, contestants training sessions and their personal story. Broadcasters should consider the possibility to allow judges and contestants to be interactive during the live episodes, for instance through live chats, and live posting or live videos in the case of pre-registered programs.

Nevertheless, media field is constantly changing and evolving and especially in the Italian television and media system there is a lot of room for improvement in the ability of broadcasters of engaging viewers. This study could position itself between studies supporting active audience attitudes and the research on viewers' passivity. In fact, even if participants declared to be not too much interactive, they still wanted to have engaging content and they had proposal for new contents. Furthermore, these findings suggest that although programs are usually active online throughout the week (Deller, 2011), uploading engaging content, viewers of *TVOI* do not consider the program as much interactive. Thus, online participation initiatives need to increase their efficiency and transparency with more clearly identified goals and following the taste of audiences.

5.3 Limitations

Although the method used for this research was useful and successful in answering the research questions, some limitations of this study require mentioning.

The first two limitations are related to the sample. First of all, I tried to have an equal number of female and male participants in order to avoid possible impact on the findings of the study. However, the final sample was composed by 4 males and 16 females. For future research it is advised to have a balanced amount of males and females. However, as before mentioned, the focus groups are considered the best research technique possible for this thesis. Therefore, the unequal number of males and females is considered a minor disadvantage of using focus groups in comparison to its advantages.

Another limitation concerning the sample is related to the fact that some of them were familiar with the topic of Social TV and second screen due to their work or educational background. This is seen as a limitation because it has been noted that they tended to orient their arguments from the broadcasters' perspective rather than an audience perspective. Thus, this could lead to some bias in the results as they could have been giving arguments and reasons that they believed I wanted to hear.

Other limitations concern the unit of analysis. Since this thesis looked at Facebook content in the context of television, I cannot generalize that the results would apply to other social media

content although there is no reason to believe it would not. Still, this limitation should be borne in mind when designing future research. Limitations of this study also include the fact that only one type of programme is examined: futures studies should investigate interaction patterns in other genres such as TV series, or big live events, which could reveal different patterns in terms of how audiences interact.

The potential influence of the moderator is one of the main limitations of this study that should be taken into account. The moderator made all efforts to not interfere inappropriately with the discussion, limiting personal opinions and experiences and allowing the participants to guide the direction of the conversation. However, when looking at the transcripts in retrospective, there were a couple of occasions where the moderator could have allowed the discussion to continue further without stepping in.

Lastly, although the method of peer reviewing with my supervisor was used, thus we coded the transcripts in order to have the reliability test, my interpretations were still essentially subjective. For future research in order for the interpretations to be a little less biased, and thus an enhanced reliability and validity of the research findings, member checks should be done.

5.4 Implications for Future Research

Overall, as explained, the current research is limited by some aspects, these give rise to suggestions for further research. Some advice for future research have already been proposed in relation to the limitations of this study. However, there are others suggestions that should be taken into account.

First of all, it may be beneficial to explore second screening interaction further from the broadcasters' perspectives. The research could be qualitative about their patterns of interaction with their public, supported by a statistical study on the effective responses generated by their posts. This could inform effective strategies that aim to enhance audience social media engagement.

Secondly, despite the fact that this qualitative research is not generalizable and limited to Italy, the findings suggest a few pragmatic considerations for broadcaster companies to use their social media platforms efficiently as an opportunity to attract and engage their public. Even if this study is conducted on the specific TV show *TVOI*, parts of the results could be applied to other programs. However, the way broadcasters upload online content, the way users perceive it and interact with the program online, are specific to this show only. For this reason, in future academic investigations, interaction between different genres and programs should be continued to be studied, as these media are constantly changing, becoming an increasingly dominant medium in our society. Within this suggested research some studies can focus on which genres or program types can better be benefited from the secondary screen. Furthermore, as new innovations are constantly brought to

the media market, research in this area would be of great importance for the TV industry.

Lastly, reflecting upon the outcomes of these findings, this study contributes to theory as well as practice. Future research could pick up from the findings of it and improve the conceptual model deriving from the research data accordingly, in order to create replications and further analyse the interactions between TV broadcasters and audiences. For instance, the theme perception of the online content can be further investigated in terms of viewers' patterns of interaction. This study, through participants' insights and tastes, tells broadcasters how to improve their way of approaching the audience and the type of content to upload. However, academia has yet a long way to go to reach a full understanding of the complex phenomenon of Social TV, thus future research can be conducted based on a collaboration between audiences and broadcasters. In this way, it could be possible to see which type of content broadcasters are interested in publishing and how often, as well as their patterns of interactivity, whether they are efficient in publishing in real time or not. On the other side it is also possible to discover if viewers' responses can be used to evaluate television programs, or predict the program's ratings. By looking at the quantity of posts at a given time and then analysing the qualitative content of them, one could start to see patterns of what viewers are interested in.

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Graph 1 - Interviewees' data

An overview of the anonymous respondents in terms of gender, age, level of education and occupation. The place of residence was not asked as they all live in the same area in the north of Italy, near Milan.

FOCUS GROUPS	NAME	GENDER	AGE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	OCCUPATION
1	Silvia	female	24	High school	Secretary
	Arianna	female	24	High school	Secretary
	Federico	male	21	High school	Student
	Ilaria	female	27	Bachelor degree	Secretary
	Martina	female	24	Bachelor degree	Nurse
2	Laura	female	23	Bachelor degree	Journalist
	Ilaria	female	24	Master degree	Psychologist intern
	Vanessa	female	25	High school	Waitress
	Laura	female	28	Master degree	Social worker
	Raffaella	female	23	Bachelor degree	Designer intern
3	Nicoletta	female	28	Bachelor degree	Store Manager
	Thomas	male	27	High school	Banker
	Stefania	female	30	High school	Secretary
	Tiziano	male	30	High school	Employee in TV production
	Marta	female	27	High school	Hairdresser
4	Harriet	female	18	Middle school	Student
	Sophie	female	23	High school	Student
	Giorgio	male	23	Bachelor degree	Auditor
	Matilde	female	24	Master degree	Sales manager

Francesca	female	23	Bachelor degree	Secretary

A focus group guide for the discussion was used as a measurement instrument in this thesis.

Instructions to guide the focus groups:

Welcome+ A briefly description of the aim of the research and how this focus group will work

Warm-up questions:
1. Let's start asking you why you watch the show? *(do you like the content? What you like/what not?)*

2. How do you think has television (e.g., television programs, television channels) changed in the last 10 years?

3. Do you observe the same characteristics also in *The Voice*?

Discussion topic 1: if they find interesting the content online

- Who of you has visited the FB page? (what did you expect to find on it when you visited it?) How did it compare to your expectations?

- Those of you who have not visited it, have ever run into online content about the programme from other sources, not from the official page of the program? *(if yes which type, why interesting and why they didn't go on the official page)*

-If you want to look for some information about the program or you miss the last episode where do you find the missing information? *(site, FB, independent blog not under the control of the show? On the judge's FB pages? Why? More reliable?)*

-Show the video: http://thevoiceofitaly.rai.it/dl/siti/media/TVOI-In-Case-You-Missed-It-3-ca594598-eb3d-473f-bc7d-75dd3979ef38.html Do you think is it useful to have online a video titled "In case you missed" that resume the last episode?

- What do you think *The Voice* should include in its FB pages? (*Ranking activity*)

funny gifs from the episodes,
videos the best of,
link to article with more information about judges, contestants etc.
videos of performances
information with link for subscription to contests

Discussion topic 2: if they communicate with other viewers

- Are you usually online when you are watching it? *(if yes doing what? Talking with friends? About the program? Looking at FB?)*

- Do you watch The Voice alone or with other people?
- Do you comment the post on the Facebook page or like or share? *(And do you do an independent comment or is it a reply to other viewer's comment? And is it a real time activity or do you do that the day after? / If not why? Anyway do you discuss the content with other viewers not online? Why don't you do the same online?)*

Discussion topic 3: what motivate them to interact/or not

-What makes you visit the FB page?

-Which of these four posts will encourage you most to interact posting a comment? (*Ranking activity*)
Show 4 different type of online content present on the FB page
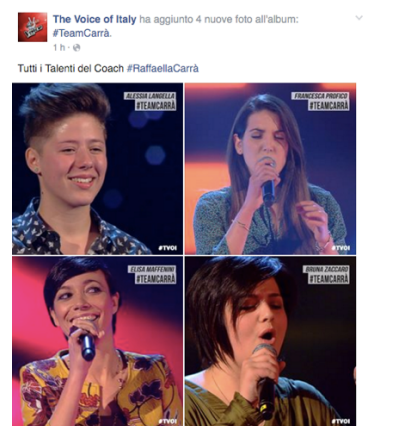
4 posts:

1.

The program creates a cartoon related to a funny situation happened during one episode. (there was a very famous singer from the 90s and one of the judge didn't recognize her and he also didn't know who she was)

"I don't understand sorry…
She is the one who sang this song!!!
So the stupid person who didn't turn around was me!"

2.

The program is just presenting all the contestants chosen by one of the judge. Without asking any questions

3.

The program is presenting the four teams of each coach and then it asks: Which is the strongest team in your opinion?

4.

The program is asking if the audience is liking the 4th episode.
And they also remind to download the app

ok and now that you rank them comment the one you put first (you can use hashtag, at sign, smiles etc.)

Survey questionnaire:

1. How many hours **per day** do you spend watching TV?

    - 0-1

    - 1-3

    - 3-6

    - 6-9

    - more than 9

2. How much time **per week** do you spend on social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)?

    - 0-7 hours

    - 7-14 hours

    - 14-21 hours

    - 21-35 hours

    - more than 35 hours

3. What do you use social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) for ?

    - just looking at other users' content

    - interact (comment, chat, share, like) with your peers

    - looking for information about TV programs

    - interact (comment, like, share) with actors/singers/showmen/ TV programs

4. How do you usually hear about new TV shows? (Try to think about the TV programs you watched recently)

    - TV advertising

    - FB official page of the programme

    - Social network profile of the showmen involved in the show

5. Are you online even when watching television?

    - mostly

    - sometimes

    - never

6. At what point would you find yourself looking at a second screen?

- during a TV show
- during the advertising break
- both

7. Do you share what you watch on TV through conversation, text messaging, or the internet?

- no
- face to face conversations
- SMS or WhatsApp
- social media

8. Which kind of TV programme do you comment most on the social networks?

- sport
- film
- news entertainment (e.g. *The voice*, *Dancing with the stars*...)
- political talk shows
- none

9. About *The Voice*, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My thoughts are elsewhere during the broadcast of the program	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I am distracted while I watch the program	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I get bored during the first part of the program	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I am really involved in the program	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

10. Your gender?

- Male

- Female

11. Your age

12. Your level of education

- middle school

- high school

- bachelor degree

- master degree

Appendix D

Graph 1 – List of codes

Codes	Examples of Quotes	Number of Times
Record the episodes	*"I sometimes record the episodes and I watch them the day after"*	2
See the entire episode always in real time from TV	*"I have to see the episode always"*	2
No spoiler	*"well, generally people share it on Fb so you easily find it on your wall"*	2
Informality	*"it's more informal compared to other TV shows"*	1
Diversity	*"exactly, this is the nice thing, and mmm, principally for this, it's diverse"*	5
Interactive characteristics of The Voice	*"I remember last year for instance, there were hashtags #pieropelù and similar that engaged the audience*	7
Culturally relevant	*"in my opinion they are more cultural"*	4
New format	*"it's nice how it is made… I mean in terms of accepting people without seeing them"*	2
Program variety	*"now you see the most trash shows and then the most cultural ones"*	3
Many channels	*"there are also many more channels"*	3
Have fun	*"it's nice and funny and after all"*	1
Companionship	*"yes, but also the Wednesday that we met at her place we watched the whole episode of The Voice all together"*	9
Singing together	*"so you can sing all together, with the group"*	2
Judge presence	*"Silvia likes Emis Killa"*	13
Program doesn't request high level of attention	*"it's a program that doesn't request a high level of attention, so maybe while the contestant is singing you can text your friends…"*	6
See talent chosen on FB	*"well, yes of course, I wanted to see all the talents they had chosen"*	1
Reply to users' comments	*"I never saw it coming the judges' replies to comments. And I liked it"*	1
Videos of performances	*"yes, and anyway the video of the performances… mmm… the program is based on the performances"*	14
Immediacy of the videos	*"videos are more direct, from FB you open it and you watch it, if I have to go to open a link of an article and read it, I don't open it and I don't read it"*	3

Use of hashtag for searching content	*"yes exactly, it happened to me to type the hashtag on Instagram"*	3
Watch the whole episode or fragment if missed it on TV	*"yes the whole episode"*	5
Watch the extra content additional to the episode	*"so each time I used to go to look at it"*	3
Watch the extra content also without seeing the episode	*no, well also without having seen the whole episode*	2
Don't look judges' FB page in relation to the program	*"not concerning The Voice, but for instance I looked at all the photos from the first to the last one… this is what I'm used to do sorry! Ahah"*	6
Using Instagram of TVOI	*"I usually look at Instagram instead of Fb"*	5
Using YouTube of TVOI	*"YouTube"*	11
Rai site	*"and also, it happened to me to watch an episode of the program on the site of the Rai"*	7
FB is the most popular and trustworthy media outlet for information seeking about the TV show.	*"I only care about the FB page"*	5
Use of google	*"I don't have a specific point of reference, I just read everything is on the internet, because you can find the content not only on FB"*	4
More videos	*"yes, more videos in general, yes yes yes"*	2
More extra content	*"I agree; I mean not only videos about jokes but in general more extra content"*	1
Popularity of videos over articles/links	*"Sincerely, I wouldn't want to read it"*	7
The importance of the post titles	*"maybe if the title is captivating you can also go to read it, but it should really be something super interesting, while the video maybe you just open it immediately and you watch it"*	2
Divergent opinions about gifs	*"very funny"*	8
Appreciation of extra content when the program is aired	*"for example, if you watch the episode and you see a judge who makes something stupid and…"*	5
Always online	*"I'm always online"*	1
Reading a book	*"I also read the book while watching it"*	2
Playing games	*"yes, but less, maybe I'm also playing games on my phone while watching the program, I am not necessarily always online"*	2
WhatsApp conversations	*"maybe while the contestant is singing you can text your friends"*	4

Commenting is useless and a waste of time	*"yes it's useless"*	5
Lack of interest in engaging in discussion with strangers and the reasons why	*"but I am also interested in what my friends say, I'm interested in confront my opinion with them…I sincerely don't care to have a discussion with people that I don't know, I'm not interested at all in what they think and most of all I don't want to let them know what I think.""*	6
Less conversations respect to other programs	*"less, less"*	3
Liking	*"yes, like it but personally I have never commented something"*	11
Sharing	*"or maybe also sharing the gifs or a video and tagging your friends"*	6
Tagging	*"or maybe also sharing the gifs or a video and tagging your friends"*	3
Talk about the program while watching it	*"yes you can talk with people in the living room with you"*	13
Shouting at the television	*"yes, also shout at the television"*	1
Judges main topic of discussion	*"I like Emis Killa"*	10
Spoiler frightening if they missed the episode	*"for sure I am not interested in discover the winner on FB, you have to watch it in real time from the television ahah"*	2
Looking for like-minded opinions on the contestants.	*"maybe yes, I would read the comments, obviously not all of them, the first ten comments… to see what people think about the program or a singer"*	9
Interest to do not serious comments	*"yes, you don't have to write something too serious, because after all it is a funny cartoon, even if you reply with an ahahah and a short comment"*	1
Funny cartoons motivate people to comment	*"Yes, you also watch the program in order to have fun, so in this case this makes me laugh so I am motivated to interact with a comment"*	3
Direct questions motivate people to express preferences	*"because it is a direct question so you are involved and motivated to comment it"*	2
Posts without questions are not attractive	*"because it doesn't ask a question. It just says these are the contestants stop, if a post asks me a question is more probable that I will reply"*	4
Video with short contestant performances	*"yes, it's true, a video maybe of 20 seconds with 5 seconds each person it's not too much but you can have an idea of who is he/she and how he/she sings"*	2
Twitter	*"I use Twitter"*	17

Connection between FB and videos	*"if I am on FB I am more interested in videos"*	3
Look FB for curiosity	*"it was just curiosity"*	2
Program not restricted to the airing time	*"I personally think that television changed in the way that the program is not anymore restricted in the time frame of the episode on television, but it lasts the whole week, till the next episode. This is because there is the possibility to watch again some contents, you can watch only what you liked… and sharing and spreading the word… it is possible to grab the attention of more people than before"*	3
Videos to know better the judges	*"in my opinion they are created to reinforce the different personality of the judges, among the judges there is always the strictest one, the funny one... do you know what I mean? It is created to reinforce their figures but not to make the audience understand the dynamic of the episode, but I really like them"*	2
Divergent opinion about videos the best of as motivator to watch the program	*"and if I haven't watched the episode and I watch the video, I don't want to watch the episode anymore, because a part from Charles what did they show?"*	16
Follow social media pages of the judges	*"yes, when the program starts usually If I start to follow the program I follow on Twitter the judges"*	4
Second screening habits with *TVOI*	*"during the program I have the phone in my hands, I mean, I am used to it, I let the Twitter page open on the hashtag of The Voice and I scroll down the page"*	6
Looking for the FB pages of the contestants	*"I also googled the name of one of the two with short hair, Erika and I didn't remember the surname, and she also won the blind yesterday night, because I wanted to have a look at her Facebook page. I sometimes do like that if I have to be sincere, when I watch XFactor or how it happened for The Voice I want to look if the contestants have the public Facebook page for curiosity"*	3
Like on the FB page of the program	*"I don't have the like on the Facebook page, so even if I use Facebook I could have never seen it"*	4
Don't know about Rai site	*"ah, I didn't know that"*	1
Divergent opinions on the most popular platform of information seeking	*"I don't have a specific point of reference, I just read everything is on the internet, because you can find the content not only on FB"*	6
YouTube over FB for videos of performances	*"I don't remember, probably but it was easier on YouTube because it was immediate I didn't have to scroll the page"*	3

The posts you want to comment are not usually the ones you like most	*"at a first gaze you would say the first one but if you start thinking which comment do you want to do for each post, the third is the one where a comment comes easily to mi mind"*	5
Link to contests least interesting	*"because I am not interested in them I am not able to sing"*	11
Appreciate the possibility offered by internet	*"This is because there is the possibility to watch again some contents, you can watch only what you liked… and sharing and spreading the word… it is possible to grab the attention of more people than before"*	1
Hashtags are annoying	*"no, I'm irritated by it"*	3
Wrong use of the hashtag	*"concerning the hashtag we should open a big discussion, because there are a lot of stupid people that continuously publish posts with hashtag… I don't know #Pelù, you go to see something and… I mean you type the hashtag and you find all different stuffs and posts not related to the topic"*	4
PBS VS commercial networks	*"also because the broadcasters are very slow in publishing online contents"*	4
Divergent opinion about interaction with the content in real time	*"no, not in real time… the day after"*	7
Twitter over FB and vice versa	*"in my personal opinion the social that attract more people is Twitter, because with the tendencies at the moment of the broadcasting… I see a lot of tweets"*	8
Liking and commenting have different meanings to participants	*"yesss, like yesss"*	9
Posts too generic don't inspire comments	*"I don't know they seem to me too generic… I am not interested at all in the first one and the other two seem to me more generic than this one in which there are four people, so I would be interested in commenting concerning one contestant maybe saying she is amazing, I see her face and I can say she is amazing"*	1
Promotion of the app	*"because in my opinion this is a promotion for the application this post, it is asking if we are enjoying the episode, but I would not have been looking Facebook, because are you enjoying means that it has been posted during the episode… so I would not…"*	1
Photos help to comment	*"mmm… first of all I don't remember the singers chosen by the judges, for instance if you now ask me who is in the Carrà's team I don't know… I don't remember them, maybe then when I saw them I remember who they are… So if I read the post I can't say who is the best, so I would never comment it"*	1

Informative posts VS interactive posts	*"and so in my opinion is an informative post, not an interactive one, it is not like that post that say like what do you think about that? Here it says look these are the four talents of the team… I mean this is an informative post"*	1
Videos with the personal story of contestants	*"I have articles, because for instance citing Charles in this case maybe if they create a video about him illustrating the story of his life, maybe it would be interesting, and the same for any other, maybe I would have been intrigued… intrigued to know his story"*	3
Videos with judges created by them	*"I mean video about the judges with interviews where they talk… just because I like… I'm usually keen on people when I watch a program, for instance, I don't know… I'm talking about the edition when there was J-Ax as a judge"*	1
Videos about contestants' preparation and exhibitions	*"maybe what she said before, at the beginning, when she understood wrong about the link to contests, maybe it's interesting to watch videos about their preparation for the exhibitions, like the backstage"*	1
Chatting during the breaks	*"I watch the program then when there is the commercial break and I'm not interested at all into it I pick up the phone and I use it"*	3
Lower level of attention during the performances	*"but the performances you can listen to it"*	3
Second screening habits compared with other TV shows	*"I don't. Maybe I am not very keen on The Voice to be online during the broadcasting, because I did it but with other program, like Masterchef… no not Masterchef"*	5
Don't care if their comments are read during the live show	*"and I also don't care if Federico Russo read it on air"*	1
Programs boast themselves for the amount of social media interactions	*"on an editorial level, they boast themselves on the fact that there are a lot of Tweets or many likes on the social media pages. For instance, we were watching Dancing with the Stars and the host Milli Carlucci said: this is the most tweeted program, so they also use these data when they sell the advertising spaces, saying that it's not only watched on television, but also in terms of interaction on the social media is very popular"*	1
To watch/ like a post make sense VS commenting	*"no, the visualisation or like a…a… a video uploaded by The Voice on Facebook makes sense, but the comment itself like very good or… they can be hundreds and I don't read them"*	2
Low quality of online conversations	*"if I want to make a comment I just write an independent tweet with the hashtag but without responding to anyone because the level is really*	4

	low and so I am not encouraged to start a discussion with a person"	
Ridiculous to discuss/fight online	*"but I also think that is ridiculous to start discussing and arguing with a person who you don't know who he/she is"*	3
Online interactions distract you from the program	*"I have difficulties to interact while I am watching the program, I am not able to watch the program and meanwhile… or Facebook or Twitter… or I watch the program or the social media, for me it's difficult to interact, because one thing distract me from the other"*	4
Divergent opinions about social media power	*"if someone is not good in singing and the audience doesn't like him/her and it is not followed on the social media the program eliminates him/her and he/she doesn't arrive till the final episode"*	5
FB posts of other viewers encourage you to switch on the TV	*"it also happened to me the other way around, maybe I am on Facebook and I read a post of a friend who writes: horrible the performance of mmm The Voice, so maybe I want to watch what happened, or maybe Carrà is dressed in a weird way"*	3
Last season more interactive	*"we read the comments or the post published in real time with the episode… because J-Ax last year published in real time"*	10
Retweet function	*"I like the retweet function on Twitter I mostly use it"*	4
Commenting face to face is more spontaneous	*"because it's more spontaneous, I can comment and my mother next to me reply to me"*	2
Popularity of video contents	*"The core business of the program is videos"*	14

Graph 2 – Organigram

CONSENT REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT:

[Alessia Borgomastro, 430848ab@student.eur.nl, +310638477197]

DESCRIPTION

You are invited to participate in a research about social TV and second screens. The purpose of the study is to understand to whether people participate and interact or not with the online content of the *TV program The Voice Of Italy.*

Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you accept to be part of a focus group. In general terms, the focus group will be related to the online content of the program *The Voice Of Italy*

Unless you prefer that no recordings are made, I will use a tape recorder for the focus group.

You are always free not to answer any particular question, and/or stop participating at any point.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

As far as I can tell, there are no risks associated with participating in this research. Yet, you are free to decide whether I should use your name or other identifying information or not in the study. If you prefer, I will make sure that you cannot be identified, by pseudonym or general identification only mentioning age and gender.

I will use the material from the interviews and my observation exclusively for academic work, such as further research, academic meetings and publications.

TIME INVOLVEMENT

Your participation in this study will take 45 minutes. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

PAYMENTS

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation. But an ITunes voucher is offered in a form of lottery

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

If you have decided to accept to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. If you prefer, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact –anonymously, if you wish— Amanda Paz Alencar, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Faculty of History, Culture and Communication.

SIGNING THE CONSENT FORM

If you sign this consent form, your signature will be the only documentation of your identity. Thus, you DO NOT NEED to sign this form. In order to minimize risks and protect your identity, you may prefer to consent orally. Your oral consent is sufficient.

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study:

 Name   Signature   Date

I prefer my identity to be revealed in all written data resulting from this study

 Name   Signature   Date

This copy of the consent form is for you to keep.