

Developments in Audience Interaction with Teen Television, 2007 - Present

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Television has long sought to capture teenagers and young adults as potential consumers with mixed success. The CW, which launched in 2006, quickly found its flagship program in fall 2007 with *Gossip Girl*, by taking advantage of the emerging trends of social media and digital interaction to successfully target the millennial generation. The network capitalized on this up to 2012 by devoting the majority of their schedule to similar “Teen TV” shows. However, during those same years, new media formats and new ways of watching television developed that eclipsed The CW’s initial use of digital media and saw a decline in its millennial audience.

The 2017 launch of *Riverdale* marks The CW’s first significant efforts to capture “Generation Z” viewers born since the late 1990s. As a modernized and diversified adaptation of the classic Archie Comics, the show is built to both create and capitalize on the social justice cultural discourse that now dominates the media landscape, particularly on social media. Further, by promoting binge watching immediately after its first season finale, the show has built an audience beyond traditional viewing practices. Studying *Riverdale* and its audience interactions, therefore, can help us understand how YouTube has affected teen television, and how making television operate under the rules of YouTube does a disservice to both audiences and creators.