

Impacts of Binge-Watching on Netflix during the COVID-19 pandemic

Impacts of
Binge-
Watching on
Netflix

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of the study is to dive into various binge-watching habits of Netflix users amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Consumers find themselves amidst the COVID-19 lockdown with more free time to indulge in these viewing habits. This study investigates motivational factors, amount of media consumption and negative attributes associated with binge-watching on Netflix during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Design/methodology/approach – This study has employed an exploratory research design and obtained primary data via an online survey using a semistructured questionnaire. Convenience sampling has been used to choose a sample ($n = 105$) of Netflix binge-watchers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Both sample selection and survey administration have been done through social media messaging services owing to the COVID-19 lockdown measures.

Findings – The results indicate that most of the respondents use smartphones for binge-watching on Netflix. Moreover, they have expressed that a wide range of shows available on Netflix incline them to engage in marathon viewing. However, the respondents spend just over 70 h per month binge-watching on Netflix. Finally, the majority of respondents have flagged “one more episode” syndrome as the most challenging aspect of being marathon viewers on Netflix during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Originality/value – This is one of the few papers to exclusively focus on the impacts of binge-watching on Netflix during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings will originate the value with novelty and important implications to the Netflix consumers, telecom service providers and payment gateways.

Keywords Binge-watching, Consumption, COVID-19 pandemic, Digital media, Lockdown, Marketing, Marathon viewing, Netflix, Streaming

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

It is no secret that Netflix, Inc. is the champion in the online streaming revolution. Its streaming platform allows users to watch ad-free content anytime and anywhere over the Internet.

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Its content library includes television shows, documentaries and feature films covering a wide range of genres and languages. As of now, Netflix has over 208m paid subscribers worldwide, 74m of whom are in the USA (Netflix, Inc., 2021). Such unlimited access to digital content has given rise to a growing trend known as “binge-watching”; the consumption of multiple episodes of a show in one sitting. For instance, Nielson has reported that 361,000 Netflix subscribers have seen all nine episodes of Stranger Things season 2 in one sitting within 24 h of its release (Abrams, 2017). The numbers continue to grow, especially now when people are quarantined in their homes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Subsequently, Ofcom (2020) has reported that, amidst cinema hall closures and lockdowns, adults are spending a total of 1 h and 11 min on streaming services per day. That is double what they consumed before the pandemic. In addition, Netflix has been the streaming platform of choice for 46% of the UK adults surveyed. But, it is unclear as to how much binge-watching they are doing on Netflix and the accompanying effects it has during the COVID-19 lockdown. To shed some light on this, the study has attempted to determine the positive and negative impacts of binge-watching on Netflix during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the time spent behind these marathon viewing sessions has also been investigated.

In this study, the following research questions have been developed with respect to the gaps in the existing literature. The research questions are as follows:

- RQ1. What are the motivational factors that drive marathon Netflix usage?
- RQ2. How much time is spent binge-watching on Netflix?
- RQ3. Which negative aspects are linked to binge-watching on Netflix?

Before moving on, there is a need to address how these research questions were developed. The foundation for this study has been laid out based on the recommendations made by previous authors who have investigated this field. For instance, Pittman and Sheehan (2015) have advised that it is essential to undertake research to further expand on different types of motivations related to binge-watching television shows. However, future research should look into the relationship between binge-viewing and psychological variables over time (Wheeler, 2015). Moving on, research on undergraduate students has stressed that future research is essential if we are to proceed to conceptualize binge-watching as both, a measure of duration and frequency, as no variable in this study has been a predictor of both (Merrill and Rubenking, 2019). Furthermore, Walton-Pattison *et al.* (2016) have suggested that more investigation is needed where specific factors from television shows, such as genre and length, are taken into account. Finally, it has been stressed by Flayelle *et al.* (2019) that problematic as well as emotional factors are associated with binge-watching and need to be assessed. Flayelle *et al.* (2017) have also warranted the need to identify the key positive and negative psychological processes involved in this phenomenon.

Literature review

The concept of binge-watching

A dynamic trend that has emerged among digital media consumers is binge-watching. The term “binge” is associated with excess consumption, such as overindulgence of food, beverage or digital media (Anghelcev *et al.*, 2021). Even though the description of binge-watching is still evolving, it is defined as the will to watch multiple episodes of a television (TV) program in rapid succession, typically by utilizing DVDs or digital streaming. Additionally, Netflix, Inc. and Harris Interactive offer another description of binge-watching as watching between two and six episodes of the same television show in one sitting. This emerging concept has many benefits and drawbacks, such as gratifying consumer needs and digital media addiction, respectively (Panda and Pandey, 2017).

Binge-watching is a product of technological evolution, which represents a shift from scheduled television to greater viewing autonomy. The origin of binge-watching lies in the advent of DVDs, which has given consumers a certain degree of control over their digital media consumption. Today, in the age of streaming services, consumers can engage in marathon viewings of their favorite content (Merikivi *et al.*, 2020). However, nonstop consumption of digital media has recently given rise to scientific debate owing to the loss of control many people experience and the negative consequences of this behavior. Some examples include avoiding important tasks, sleeping issues, fatigue, withdrawal from socializing and other health issues (Steins-Loeber *et al.*, 2020). Hence, getting this habit under control is vital to the long-term healthiness of digital media consumers.

Netflix consumers amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures had a mixed impact on Netflix Inc.'s business model. On the one hand, Netflix experienced an increase in its viewership since consumers were put into quarantine at home. On the other hand, the shutdown in film and TV productions forced by lockdown measures was bad news. Streaming services rely on producing and delivering exclusive content to differentiate themselves from competitors (Seetharaman, 2020). Despite the lower amount of original content, adults are spending more than an hour on streaming services every day. Netflix is the platform of choice during the pandemic with a 34% share in video streaming distribution in American households (Nielson, 2020). It is apparent that more free time at home is leading to more streaming, especially nonstop streaming of content on Netflix.

However, the amount of binge-watching or nonstop viewing along with its accompanying effects is unclear. Marathon consumption of Netflix in the middle of a pandemic is expected to have both positive and negative outcomes. Previous studies on general binge-watching indicate that the practice has advantages and drawbacks for viewers, such as relaxation and isolation, respectively (Merikivi *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, understanding the motivations and temporal investment behind endless pandemic streaming is also important.

Consumers' motivations for binge-watching on Netflix

The present study has examined the motivations behind nonstop Netflix usage among consumers. This phenomenon with respect to the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) has shed light on binge-watching. According to this theory, consumers of digital media have specific wants and needs, and they continuously seek to satisfy via mass media activities (Elliott and Quattlebaum, 1979). Multiple studies have used this theory as a foundation to investigate binge-watching. While exploring college students, Panda and Pandey (2017) have focused on six sociocognitive motivations and three marketing-related reasons for spending more time binge-watching. Moreover, Susanno *et al.* (2019) have also used the UGT while investigating motivational factors behind spending more time binge-watching among Netflix subscribers in Jakarta, Indonesia. For this study, it is expected that the factors that incline consumers toward nonstop Netflix usage might be similar to the sources above. Moreover, having more free time due to the COVID-19 lockdown is likely to drive motivation among consumers.

Temporal investment of consumers for binge-watching on Netflix

Moving on, it is quite clear that binge-watching essentially requires a significant temporal investment. Relatively, very few studies have taken into consideration the frequency and duration of marathon media consumption. Papachirissi and Mendelson (2007) have narrated that a single medium serves distinctive gratifications for regular versus periodic or occasional viewers. This attention to the temporal aspects of digital media usage is

increasingly prominent as more technologies become a part of our daily lives. [Davies \(2007\)](#) has stated that time is an important variable that needs consideration. Impact studies consistently have observed that time spent with a medium has an effect on its users or clients.

Historical evidence supports that binge-watching can lead to loyalty toward a show. In total, 73% of fans who stream the first season of *Breaking Bad* finish every episode and the percentage rises for the following seasons ([Jurgensen, 2012](#)). Therefore, there is a need to investigate the temporal aspect of binge-watching. This study has attempted to do that by measuring how many hours they spend per month on Netflix during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Negative consequences of binge-watching on Netflix

Finally, as with any technological aspect, the adverse effects of binge-watching on Netflix need evaluation. Past reports have attributed binge-watching to be a probable addictive disorder. The available evidence suggests that excessive binge-watching might lead to the impairment of daily functioning, disturbance in social life quality and sleep cycle ([De Feijter et al., 2016](#)). Ultimately, binge-watching leads to what is known as goal conflict. This is a condition where two or more goals compete against each other and cause conflict in a person's mind. For instance, the goal of getting enough sleep is offset by the goal of watching "one more episode" before bedtime. Goal conflict between entertainment and obligations eventually reduces the positive effects of digital media consumption ([Starosta and Lzydorzcyk, 2020](#)). In addition to the ones mentioned above, more drawbacks of binge-watching Netflix in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to emerge in this research.

Research methodology

Netflix launched its services in Bangladesh in 2016. According to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), Netflix earns about \$21.6m from subscribers in Bangladesh ([Shayan, 2020](#)). Consumers of Netflix were the main target of this study. This is because Netflix is the only streaming giant legally available in Bangladesh. Citizens cannot officially avail other services such as Amazon Prime, Hulu, Spotify and Tidal in the country ([Shayan, 2020](#)). Hence, consumers of other over-the-top (OTT) platforms could not be incorporated into the study.

The study follows an exploratory research design with a cross-sectional time horizon. Such a design is ideal for gaining new insights by taking a "snapshot" of a specific target group at a given point in time ([Saunders and Lewis, 2012](#)). Primary data and information regarding demographics, usage patterns, motivations and drawbacks of the respondents' Netflix consumption have been obtained as per the objectives of this study. Additionally, secondary information was gathered for in-depth literature review from authentic sources such as peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings and books. Furthermore, secondary information was also used for extensive comparison with the primary data of this study.

Respondent selection criteria

The target group of respondents in the study is Netflix binge-watchers during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. Analysis of authentic secondary sources revealed that no database exists for Netflix binge-watchers in the country as a sampling frame. Since the target population size is unknown, the use of probability sampling techniques for determining the representative sample size was hindered. Furthermore, strict COVID-19 lockdown measures also made it difficult to employ probability sampling techniques. Therefore, to minimize health risks and follow lockdown protocols, the convenience sampling technique was chosen to select the sample size for the study. It is a certain type of nonprobability sampling

technique that focuses on primary data collection from conveniently available members to contribute to the study (Michalos, 2014). The convenience sampling technique is a simple, proven and effective research method that involves exploration (Malhotra, 2019; Saunders and Lewis, 2012; Zikmund *et al.*, 2009; Zikmund, 2000; Kothari, 1985). Social media is a hub for tech-savvy individuals. Such people are expected to be users of technological services such as Netflix, especially during the COVID-19 lockdown. Therefore, the study determined a sample size from Dhaka city, the capital of Bangladesh via Facebook since it is the most popular social media channel in Bangladesh with 35m users in early 2020 (Sultan and Sharmin, 2020). Upon initial analysis, many of the Facebook friends (consisting of peers and colleagues) of the first author were found to exhibit tech-savvy behavior. This included posting and sharing content about online streaming, TV shows and so on. It was evident that these individuals were potential Netflix binge-watchers during the pandemic. However, little to no activity of this sort was observed among the Facebook friends of the corresponding author. Thus, the first author's Facebook friends were initially targeted. Ultimately, the 307 Facebook friends of the first author were asked target requirement questions (Appendix) via individual chat on Facebook Messenger. Through this process, 166 binge-watchers of Netflix were identified. However, 149 of them were willing to participate in the survey. Eventually, after a follow-up in one week, 105 participants successfully filled up the survey. The response rate was 70% for the study. Fincham (2008) reported that a 60% response rate should be the goal for researchers, while 70% is also possible through follow-ups. Hence, the study did not seek any further follow-ups since it reached more than an acceptable response rate.

Survey items and questionnaire design

The study collected primary data through an online survey due to the COVID-19 lockdown. A semistructured questionnaire with open-ended and closed-ended survey items in Google Forms was deployed online to obtain insights for the study. Some of the significant advantages of using online surveys include flexibility, convenience, low cost of administration and controlled sampling (Evans and Mathur, 2005). Given the strict COVID-19 lockdown measures, it is an essential tool for data collection. An initially developed questionnaire based on different items or variables identified from the literature review was deployed among conveniently selected ten Facebook friends of the first author and a marketing expert for pretesting the questionnaire, and after analyzing their valuable feedbacks, the authors finalized the questionnaire for the online survey. The final questionnaire (Appendix) was developed in two segments. The first segment of the questionnaire consisted of the target requirement questions such as "Are you binge-watcher on Netflix during the COVID-19 pandemic?" and "Are you willing to participate in the survey?" As mentioned earlier, through these questions, the authors found 166 Netflix binge-watchers out of 307 Facebook friends of the first author during the COVID-19 pandemic. But, 149 of them were willing to take part in the survey. Only the 149 willing participants were given the second segment of the questionnaire that contained questions regarding demographic characteristics and Netflix binge-watching habits of participants. These questions regarding binge-watching habits (motivations, temporal investment and negative consequences) on Netflix were developed with respect to the research questions that were derived from the gaps identified in the literature review. The second segment of the questionnaire consisted of questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 that are aimed at determining the demographic factors, Netflix account ownership and device preference of the respondents. Furthermore, questions 6 and 11 were constructed according to Flayelle *et al.* (2017), who suggested identifying the key positive and negative psychological processes involved in this phenomenon. Moreover, question 7 was developed by Pittman and Sheehan (2015), who warranted the need to study motivations related to binge-watching television shows. Moving on, questions 8, 9 and 10 were developed by Merrill and Rubenking (2019), who stressed conceptualizing binge-watching as a measure of duration and frequency.

Data analysis and findings

The data for this research have been obtained from 105 Netflix binge-watchers from different age groups and backgrounds residing in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Owing to the COVID-19 lockdown and quarantine situation, an online survey constructed on Google Forms had been deployed to the participants, and their responses have been recorded accordingly. For data analysis, Microsoft Excel has been used to determine various aspects such as mean and standard deviation. It has also been used to calculate the total number of hours spent behind binge-watching per month. In the following analysis, the study has presented key insights provided by the target group of respondents.

Demographic distribution of respondents

[Table 1](#) illustrates the demographic profile of the respondents who have participated in this study. According to survey results, 82.9% of the respondents were male while 17.1% of them were female. The age of respondents ranged from 20 to 34 years old. Despite having provisions for older age groups [ages between 35 and 60+ years in the questionnaire ([Appendix](#))], no response was recorded in those categories. Professionally, 63.8% of the respondents were students, 25.7% of them were working professionals and 10.5% of them were unemployed. Finally, 51.4% of them have personal Netflix subscriptions while the rest depend on subscriptions of peers (friends, family members and colleagues).

Devices used for nonstop Netflix consumption

As shown in [Table 2](#), the most popular device for marathon Netflix usage among the respondents is the smartphone (65.7%), followed by laptops (45.7%) and desktop computers (43.8%). This indicates that most of the respondents prefer portability.

Satisfaction level of binge-watching on Netflix

According to [Table 3](#), 52.4% of the respondents have narrated that they are “fairly satisfied” regarding the overall experience of binge-watching on Netflix, while 33.3% of them are “very satisfied.” This signifies that the general level of satisfaction associated with marathon usage of Netflix is relatively high among the respondents of the target group.

Variables	Options	(%)
Gender	Male	82.9
	Female	17.1
Age range	20–24 years	61.0
	25–29 years	31.4
	30–34 years	07.6
	35–39 years	0.0
	40–44 years	0.0
Profession	Student	63.8
	Working professional	25.7
	Unemployed	10.5
Ownership of Netflix subscription	Users' own account subscription	51.4
	Subscription from the accounts of users' friends, family members and colleagues	48.6

Table 1.
Demographic
distribution of
respondents

Source(s): Online survey

Motivational factors that drive marathon Netflix usage

Table 4 illustrates the factors that incline the target group toward overusing Netflix as an entertainment platform. The streaming service’s wide range of shows has been deemed as the most significant factor (68.6%), followed by relief from boredom (49.5%).

The amount of time spent binge-watching per month

Table 5 demonstrates the various temporal variables linked to excessive Netflix media consumption among the target group. It has been revealed that 43.8% of the respondents have used Netflix for 6 days per week. Consequently, 54.8% of the participants have reported that they usually have seen 2–4 episodes in succession or in one sitting. The most common length of a TV show episode consumed is 45 min (63.8%). From these findings, it can be approximately determined how much time the sample spent behind binge-watching on Netflix per month.

The number of hours spent per month binge-watching is calculated using the mean values (\bar{x}) taken from Table 5. These values are plugged into the equation below to get the desired result.

$$B = (w \times 1 \times e \times 4) / 60$$

where,

B = Number of hours binge-watched per month

w = Days per week usage of Netflix

l = Number of episodes seen in one sitting

e = Approximate length of each episode seen

4 = Number of weeks in a month

60 = Number of minutes in an hour

Devices	*No. of responses	(%)
Smartphone	69	65.7
Laptop	48	45.7
Desktop computer	46	43.8
Television	37	35.2
Tablets	09	08.6

Note(s): *Multiple responses were present
Source(s): Online survey

Table 2.
Devices used for
nonstop Netflix
consumption

Satisfaction levels	(%)
Very satisfied	33.3
Fairly satisfied	52.4
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	10.5
Fairly dissatisfied	02.9
Very dissatisfied	01.0

Note(s): *Multiple responses were present
Source(s): Online survey

Table 3.
Satisfaction level of
binge-watching on
Netflix

Table 4.
Factors that influence
marathon
Netflix usage

Influential factors	*No. of responses	Percentage (%)
Wide range of shows on Netflix	72	68.6
Relief from boredom	52	49.5
Relief from stress	37	35.2
Show recommendations from Netflix	34	32.4
Friend/peer influence	24	22.9
Escaping reality	21	20.0
**Others	04	04.0

Note(s): *Multiple responses were present****Other categories include the responses:** “ability to browse and watch instantly,” “have all episodes organized for you” and “easily accessible and less hassle”**Source(s):** Online survey**Table 5.**
Amount of marathon
Netflix media
consumption

Parameters		Percentage (%)	\bar{x}
Weekly usage (days per week)	6	43.8	4.57
	5	15.2	
	4	11.4	
	3	13.3	
	2	16.2	
Level of binge-watching (episodes in one sitting)	2–4	54.8	5.57
	5–7	20.2	
	8–10	08.7	
	10+	16.3	
Approximate length of episodes watched (minutes)	22	19.0	43.19
	45	63.8	
	60	17.1	

Note(s): \bar{x} and σ calculated from all 105 responses**Source(s):** Online survey

The study can concur that 5.57 episodes (l), which are 43.19 min each (e), equate to roughly 240 min of binge-watching on Netflix in one sitting. If a respondent spends 240 min on Netflix in one sitting every day for 4.57 days in a week (w), then that translates to about 1,100 min of binge-watching in one week. Therefore, if there are 4 weeks in a month, the total monthly consumption stands at 4,400 min or 73 h of binge-watching per month (B).

Negativity linked to binge-watching on Netflix

[Table 6](#) depicts what respondents believe to be the negative aspects of being a compulsive Netflix user. The most prominent element reported is “one more episode” syndrome (64.8%). It is evident that there is a powerful urge among users to squeeze in an extra episode while watching Netflix. Moreover, addiction and lack of sleep have also been reported by 57.1 and 53.3% of the respondents, respectively.

Discussion on the findings

Device usage

The majority of the respondents have reported using smartphones to binge-watch on Netflix amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings of the study are different from other secondary sources. [Ofcom \(2015\)](#) has reported that in the United Kingdom, on-demand

content has been viewed by the online population on multiple platforms such as computers (33%), tablets (23%) and smartphones (21%). Furthermore, [Walton-Pattison et al. \(2016\)](#) have highlighted that only 8% of their respondents in the United Kingdom have used smartphones for binge-watching, while 75% of them have used televisions. It is evident that big screen devices are preferred in a developed setting while smaller, portable devices are favored in a developing context.

Motivational factors

The results of the study indicate that a vast collection of programming and relief from boredom are the key motivational factors when it comes to binge-watching on Netflix. However, that is not the case in other studies. For instance, Indonesian research on Netflix subscribers in Jakarta has revealed that attractive pricing and social engagement are the main factors behind using the platform ([Susanno et al., 2019](#)). Moreover, [Panda and Pandey \(2017\)](#) found that social engagement and advertising influence are the main motivational factors behind excessive Netflix usage among American college students. Hence, it can be observed that influential factors vary significantly from country to country.

Time spent per month

Some important assumptions have been made while calculating the time spent binge-watching per month. Firstly, the 73 h refer to the majority of the respondents, and not everyone, as levels of binge-watching, vary from person to person. Secondly, it has been assumed that a respondent experiences one sitting in a day while, in reality, there may be more sittings within a day. Finally, it has been assumed that a respondent uses Netflix for 4.57 days per week, whereas there might be lapses or “off-days” in reality. An earlier contrasting study has measured binge-watching frequency from a sample size of 86 people. In total, 49% of this sample consisted of Netflix subscribers. The mean level of binge-watching has been found to be 1.42 days per week and 2.94 episodes in one session ([Walton-Pattison et al., 2016](#)). These numbers are lower than the present study’s findings.

The present study makes a vital contribution to the temporal aspect of binge-watching on Netflix during COVID-19. It measured the number of hours spent by respondents binge-watching per month.

Negative impacts

Findings of the study highlight “One more episode” syndrome as the primary problem of binge-watching on Netflix. This refers to the indulgence of watching just one more episode without stopping ([Pierce-Grove, 2017](#)). In contrast, other studies reported different negative impacts. [Flayelle et al. \(2017\)](#) have taken a qualitative approach toward understanding binge-watching

Negative aspects	*No. of responses	Percentage (%)
“One more episode” syndrome	68	64.8
Addiction	60	57.1
Lack of sleep	56	53.3
Time wastage	36	34.3
Anxiety	19	18.1
Isolation	18	17.1
**Others	02	02.0

Note(s): *Multiple responses were present

**Other categories include the responses: “no negative effects” and “plot gets convoluted”

Source(s): Online survey

Table 6.
Negative attributes of
binge-watching on
Netflix

through a focus group of seven Belgian individuals. Respondents agreed that binge-watching a TV series could be problematic and divert attention from other tasks. Moreover, another study by [Shim et al. \(2018\)](#) on the immediate gratifications of binge-watching has demonstrated that the more negatively users perceive binge-watching, the more they are likely to engage in it.

Theoretical contributions of the study

The study makes important contributions to the UGT and the Goal Conflict Theory (GCT). It has uncovered novel theoretical insights linked to the new phenomenon of binge-watching on Netflix amidst the COVID-19 lockdown.

In accordance with the UGT, the study can concur that binge-watchers feel most gratified through the vast content library on Netflix. Watching a variety of shows gives them fulfilment, which offers relief from boredom and stress caused by the COVID-19 lockdown. Previously, other researchers have also applied this theory but found different gratifications. For instance, [Steiner and Xu \(2020\)](#) have found relaxation and cultural inclusion to be the most significant gratifications of binge-watching among TV and online viewers. Likewise, [Pittman and Sheehan \(2015\)](#) have deduced that Netflix users are highly gratified due to the engaging storylines presented by TV shows. Altogether, the present study further adds to the UGT. It has uncovered new gratifications regarding the new phenomenon known as binge-watching on Netflix amidst the COVID-19 lockdown.

Moving on, a degree of goal conflict exists within this new phenomenon. The study has unearthed strong inclinations toward “one more episode” syndrome and lack of sleep among the respondents. Evidently, the goal of binge-watching offsets the goal of getting sound sleep. It is no secret that conflicting goals, such as these, reduce the overall mental and physical well-being of consumers. Previously, other studies have uncovered different goal conflicts. For example, [Granow et al. \(2018\)](#) have studied the psychological well-being of marathon viewers and found a strong goal conflict between binge-watching and daily tasks. Similarly, [Ramayan et al. \(2018\)](#) have highlighted that binge-watching has a conflicting impact on the goal of socializing with others. All in all, the present study enlightens the concept of goal conflict by discovering novel conflicts within the marathon usage of Netflix in the midst of COVID-19.

Overall, with more free time during the COVID-19 lockdown, it is clear that there is a strong need among the respondents to escape from boredom and stress. Binge-watching a wide range of shows may be relieving, but it is also ushering in higher levels of addiction and anxiety. Habitual control over nonstop Netflix usage is a must to combat time wastage in the middle of a Covid-19 lockdown.

Implications for theory and practice

Practical implications

The study has identified that nearly half of the respondents do not possess a personal Netflix account (48.6%) and rely on peer subscriptions. This is an opportunity for international payment service providers in developing nations to capitalize on Netflix’s growing popularity and ensure that consumers will become independent. Flexible payment options need to be introduced for potential young subscribers. Furthermore, since Netflix is predominantly used on smartphones, there is an opportunity for local telecom service providers such as Grameenphone, Banglalink, Teletalk, Airtel and Robi to introduce high-speed mobile data packages that can cater to young consumers. This will ensure that users of Netflix are well connected when it comes to streaming episodes over the Internet.

Social implications

The findings have revealed that Netflix binge-watchers find solace on the platform during an ongoing pandemic. Evidently, binge-watching on Netflix contributes to escaping reality and

seeking relief from boredom caused by the lockdown. Such a digital companion is invaluable in combating the stress caused by COVID-19. On the other hand, it is clear that a significant amount of their time (73 h per month) is being spent behind Netflix owing to factors such as “one more episode” syndrome and addiction. Therefore, there is a need for customers to gauge their usage. Since smartphones are the device of choice, it is recommended that Netflix users set restrictions via applications such as Apple’s “Screen Time” to prevent nonstop consumption of the streaming service.

Conclusion

The competition among streaming service providers is intensifying. The streaming wars will benefit their users in terms of better and more original content. Amidst a global pandemic such as the COVID-19 outbreak, Netflix brings relief to consumers stuck indoors due to the lockdown and the quarantine period spent at home. However, they must be careful so that recreational streaming does not turn into compulsive streaming. Regulating digital media consumption is of utmost importance. The key findings of this study suggest that the respondents use smartphones primarily to binge-watch on Netflix. The availability of a vast range of shows has been attributed as the primary motivational factor, while the “one more episode” syndrome has been flagged as the biggest challenge of binge-watching on Netflix during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study happens to be one of the few pieces of research exclusively focused on Netflix binge-watchers amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Altogether, this study has attempted to unravel multiple issues surrounding binge-watching on Netflix during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results have important implications for Netflix Inc.’s marketing strategy and its consumers, along with telecom service providers and payment gateways.

Limitations and future research opportunities

This study has its fair share of limitations, especially during a global pandemic such as the COVID-19 pandemic. First and foremost, the relatively limited sample size has been confined to Dhaka city, which may not reflect the country’s entire scenario. Strict movement restrictions during the COVID-19 lockdown and quarantine situation have made it difficult to enlarge the sample through probability sampling techniques. Secondly, researchers have the opportunity to do further research on demographic factors, such as income and relationship status of Netflix binge-watchers in near future. Additionally, measuring the amount of binge-watching by genre (category) of shows, such as action, comedy, drama, horror, fantasy, mystery, thriller, romance and so on, is another aspect to be studied by future researchers. Therefore, future research can be conducted on a countrywide sample by incorporating all the factors in the binge-watching domain. Furthermore, binge-watching habits of Netflix and other OTT platforms can be measured by comparing with the data collected from different countries. Quantitative research can also be undertaken using a large-scale representative sample size identified through a probability sampling technique and applying inferential statistical tools with testing hypotheses and comparing with relevant theories in this domain rigorously. In addition, a mixed-methods research design (both quantitative and qualitative research) can be utilized incorporating both surveys and in-depth interviews in future research.

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Target requirement questions

(Asked for initial identification of Netflix binge-watchers eligible to participate in the main survey)

A. Binge-watching refers to viewing multiple episodes in one sitting. Are you binge-watching on Netflix during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Yes
- No

B. If your answer is 'Yes' in response to question number 1, are you willing to participate in the online survey titled 'Impacts of Binge-Watching on Netflix during the COVID-19 Pandemic'?

- Yes
- No

Main questionnaire

(Only distributed to those who responded 'Yes' to both target requirement questions)

Instructions: Thank you for giving us your consent to participate in this online survey. We are conducting research titled 'Impacts of Binge-Watching on Netflix during the COVID-19 Pandemic'.

The following online survey will allow us to understand this phenomenon with your meaningful insights. There are 11 questions in total regarding demography and your Netflix watching habits in the questionnaire. You are requested to put a tick mark in the box as the appropriate answer(s) to each question of the questionnaire. However, you can answer in the blank space under the specific questions with your suitable and valuable opinions.

At no point in this online survey, you will be asked to submit any personal information (e-mail, phone number, and so on). We are following strict ethical guidelines as per international research standards. All data collected for this study will be confidentially managed to maintain the full privacy of the respondents.

If you have any questions regarding this online survey, please direct them to either the first author (Kazi Turin Rahman, MBA in Global Business, Coventry University, United Kingdom, e-mail: <kaziturino@gmail.com>) or the second and corresponding author (Prof. Md. Zahir Uddin Arif, Professor & Ph.D. Supervisor, Department of Marketing, Faculty of Business Studies, Jagannath University, Dhaka-1100, Bangladesh, e-mail: <mjarif2004@yahoo.com>, <arif@mkt.jnu.ac.bd> and <mjarif2006@gmail.com>).

1. Please state your gender.
 - Male
 - Female

2. What is your age range?
 - 20-24
 - 25-29
 - 30-34
 - 35-39
 - 40-44
 - 45-49
 - 50-54
 - 55-59
 - 60+

3. Please state your profession.
 - Student
 - Working professional
 - Unemployed

-
4. Do you currently have a Netflix subscription?
- Yes, I have my own subscription
 - No, I use the account of my friend/family member or colleague
5. Which platforms do you use for binge-watching on Netflix? (Multiple answers applicable)
- TV
 - Laptop
 - Desktop PC
 - Smartphone
 - Tablet
6. Overall, how satisfied are you with binge-watching on Netflix?
- Very satisfied
 - Fairly satisfied
 - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - Fairly dissatisfied
 - Very dissatisfied
7. Which factors influence or motivate you to binge-watch on Netflix? (Multiple answers applicable)
- Wide range of shows on Netflix
 - Show recommendations on Netflix
 - Friend/peer influence
 - Relief from boredom
 - Escaping reality
 - Relief from stress
 - Others: _____
8. Please indicate your weekly marathon usage of Netflix.
- 2 days per week
 - 3 days per week
 - 4 days per week
 - 5 days per week
 - 6 days per week
9. What is your level of binge-watching on Netflix?
- 2-4 episodes in one sitting
 - 5-7 episodes in one sitting
 - 8-10 episodes in one sitting
 - 10+ episodes in one sitting
10. Approximately, how long is each episode that you binge-watch on Netflix?
- 22 minutes
 - 45 minutes
 - 60 minutes
11. In your opinion, what are the negative consequences of binge-watching on Netflix?
(Multiple answers applicable)
- 'One more episode' syndrome
 - Time wastage
 - Addiction
 - Isolation
 - Anxiety
 - Lack of sleep
 - Others: _____

About the authors

Kazi Turin Rahman is an MBA graduate in Global Business from Coventry University, UK, with distinction. Additionally, he is a BBA graduate from BRAC University, Bangladesh, majoring in Finance and Marketing. He has had the privilege of working in various reputed organizations such as BRAC University, BRAC Bank Ltd. and Kantar Research Bangladesh. Another key accolade of him is being a Bangladeshi Youth Delegation member to India in 2014. The delegation called on the then President of India, Pranab Mukherjee. His primary research interests include marketing, consumer behavior, human–technology interaction, etc.

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