

Binge-watching and Academic Achievement Among University Students: A Case Study

Yassine Ben Abou¹, Dr. Abdelghanie Ennam²

¹PhD candidate in media studies at Ibn Tofail University (ITU), Morocco, Email: yassine.benabou@uit.ac.ma

²Full Professor of International Media, Communication, and Translation. Department of English Studies, Ibn Tofail University (ITU), Morocco, Email: Abdelghanie.ennam@uit.ac.ma

Abstract

With the advancement of subscription video-on-demand services (SVOD) such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video over the past few years, people's consumption of television has radically changed. Now, they can choose where, when, and how to watch their favorite TV series or program. There are no more controls by content, time, or place. As the way viewers consume television has changed, their viewing habits also have changed leading them to consume an entire series or a show in a single sitting or what researchers refer to as binge-watching. Since college students, in the high binge-watching category, spend a lot of time binge-viewing their favorite series rather than sticking to their academic obligations, they may get depressed and fail in their studies. The purpose of this article was to investigate the relationship between binge-watching and academic achievement. To understand students' behavior regarding their watching habits, a questionnaire was administered to 103 students from a liberal arts university in the Northeast of the United States. Data was collected through an online survey (Google Forms) and was analyzed using the statistical analysis software, SPSS. By understanding students' behaviors, stakeholders can apply policies and take measures that could help improve academic success and engagement among university students. Results showed that students had different perceptions of binge-watching and different motivations (i.e., escaping from reality). They also showed that students do not perceive binge-watching as affecting their academic performance.

Keywords: SVOD, Binge-watching, college students, perceptions, salient motives, academic achievement.

1. Introduction

The huge shift from Live/ Linear TV (the old way of watching television) to Subscription Video On-Demand Services such as Netflix and Amazon have radically changed people's consumption of television. Additionally, in recent years, Binge-watching, which is also known as "binge viewing" or "marathon viewing", has become a common phenomenon among different age groups, even famous personalities. Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton, Jennifer Lawrence, and Ellen

DeGeneres admitted binge-watching during live interviews. In the case of the former U.S. president, Barack Obama, there are some series that he binge-watched like House of Cards and The Good Wife (Jenkins, 2015). But Madmen and Breaking Bad were at the top of his binge-watching list (Shear, 2013). His wife, in turn, has been a big fan of the Scandal Series since she excessively consumed multiple episodes on a flight from Washington DC to Hawaii (Maresca, 2014). The two-time Oscar winner, Jennifer Lawrence enjoys watching The Homeland series (Larkin, 2014). The famous

talk show Ellen DeGeneres binge-watched the Netflix series “Orange is the New Black” and “Arrested Development” (The Ellen Show, 2013).

Deloitte, an American consulting company, conducted a survey and found out that 70 % of Americans watch many episodes of a TV program or a series in a single setting. The number is higher among Millennials (people born between 1983 and 1997) with 80% and Generation Z (people born between 1997 - 2003) with 90% (Deloitte, 2017).

In another study done by the famous digital video recorder company TiVo, 92% of 12,000 people surveyed said that they have been binge-watching shows and series (DTVE reporter, 2016). So, what does binge-watch mean?

The term “binge” is linked to overindulgence in something such as food (binge eating) or alcohol (binge drinking). Similarly, binge-watching is identified as the excessive consumption of TV series or shows in a single setting. Netflix defined binge-watching as watching 2-6 episodes of a show or a series successively (Netflix Inc, 2013). In 2013, Netflix adopted a new strategy by making an entire season available to the audience; they can choose and watch as many episodes of a series or a show as they want. Unlike traditional TV which obliges you to wait another week to watch the next episode, with Netflix people can consume different episodes simultaneously. Binge-watching became popular between 2011 and 2015 during which Netflix declared it as the new normal of watching a TV series or a show. There was a huge increase in subscribing to Netflix. From 2012 to 2020, the number went from 5 million to 165 million paying subscribers. Netflix is not only famous in the US, but it also became very popular in more than 190 countries with around 192.95 million subscribers as of July 2020 (Watson, 2021).

College students were found as the highest binging category (Neilson, 2013). Netflix has declared that 92% of college/ university students are subscribed to Netflix (Netflix, n.d.). This current study aims at understanding

this modern way of consuming television known as binge-watching and its relation to academic achievements among college students. Many studies have dealt with the concept of binge-watching; however, it has not been widely discussed concerning academic achievement. To do this, an online questionnaire was disseminated to 103 students from a Liberal Arts university in the Northeast of the United States and results were analyzed using the statistical software SPSS.

Conceptualizing binge watching

Although many researchers have investigated the phenomenon of binge-watching, they have not been able to establish a standardized definition of it. Jenner (2016) and Matrix (2014) noted that users are now able to schedule their time autonomously thanks to the advancement of technology such as DVR and DVD. Viewers are now able to consume several episodes of a series excessively instead of waiting another week to watch the next episode. Jenner (2016) emphasized that the radical change in television viewing led to a new phenomenon called binge-watching. Because of the implication of the term, some researchers referred to binge-watching as marathon viewing while others refer to it as the Effects of Netflix (Silverman et al., 2016). Even with the growing number of academic publications, there is still a need to give a consistent definition to binge-watching (Pierce Grove, 2016).

Despite the different definitions listed in many empirical studies, there is still a need for an empirically unified definition. Pioneers such as Merikivi et al. (2020) defined binge-watching as consuming more than one episode of the same series or show in one’s own space and time in a single sitting. Netflix defined binge-watching as watching from two to six episodes of a series or a show successively (Spangler, 2013). It has also been defined as consuming more than two episodes of a TV series in one sitting (Silverman et al 2016). Schweidel et al. (2016) define it as the consumption of more than two episodes of a TV show in a single sitting. In addition to this, Fayelle et al (2019) defined the term as consuming several episodes

in one setting. Vaterlaus et al. (2019) see that the challenge with these definitions is that TV episodes viewing vary in timing. In this case, we should take into consideration the duration when defining the term. For instance, the running time of an episode of a series (i.e., 40+ minutes) is longer than a sitcom (i.e., 20 min).

It is also important to differentiate between viewers who frequently engage in binge-watching versus viewers who rarely do. Sometimes viewers indulge in binge-watching without intention as when people frequently indulge in binge eating (Cassin et al, 2007). In this case, binge-watching's frequency should also be considered when defining the concept. Jenner (2016) stated, "At any rate, what exactly constitutes a (TV) binge is likely to be different for everybody and defined through highly individualized terms and practices" (p.256). Starosta et al (2020) examine eighteen studies published from 2013 to 2020 to define binge-watching, motivations, and the outcomes of the excessive consumption of multiple episodes of a television program. The authors concluded that it is hard to establish a unified definition of binge-watching and suggested that more research should be done to understand the behavioral patterns of this phenomenon. The way viewers conceptualize binge-watching may be different from one age group to another. Vaterlaus et al (2019) argue that college students do not share a common definition of binge-watching. For a better conceptualization of the concept, participants who have experienced binge-watching were asked about the way they define this phenomenon.

2. Theoretical framework, binge-watching gratifications, and effects.

This current study seeks to explore the phenomenon of binge-watching from a Uses and Gratification (U&G) perspective. U&G theory is based on three principles: audiences look for media content to satisfy some needs; they are aware of these needs and can reflect on them; and media fight against other forms of communication to fulfill those needs (Pittman

& Sheehan, 2015). Since consumers are self-aware, and based on U&G standards, they can maximize the gratifications they gain from their consumption of media by choosing how, when, and where to consume it.

Anghelcev et al (2021) adopted U&G theory in their study to explore the psychological effects of bingeing serial video content and to examine the level of gratification between people who binge-watch for a long time (more than six episodes) versus those who binge-watch for a short time (more than two episodes). To test their hypotheses, 370 US college students were recruited to fill out the survey. Results show that longer times spent binge-watching were based on the high level of narrative transportation, which means that people change their attitudes once they lose themselves in a narrative world. Results also show that those who find gratification by binge-watching are heavy binge watchers (binge-watching almost every day). The more time people spend consuming serial video content the more satisfaction they gain from the act of binge-watching in comparison to those who rarely engage in binge-watching.

Riddle et al (2018) also adopted the U&G framework in their study. They investigated the addictive side of binge-viewing and sought to uncover if unintentional binge-watching (indulging in binge-watching without a prior plan) is derived from addiction symptoms or personality traits. They recruited 171 undergraduate college students from a college in the Midwestern US to fill out their questionnaire during an academic semester (not a semester break). Results show that binge-watching was equal during weekends as well as weekdays. Impulsivity, which can be defined as the prompt involvement in something without forethought (Moeller et al, 2001), was the major reason for unintentional binge-watching (consuming more than two episodes without a prior plan). Students with an increased level of impulsivity will be more likely to consume TV programs excessively in comparison to those with low impulsivity. Therefore, people who are spontaneous in consuming TV programs may become easily addicted.

Another study using U&G theory was done by Waterlaus et al in 2019. The authors argue that college students do not share a common definition of binge-watching. They also emphasized that the campus environment helps students engage in binge-watching because it is easy for them to get together with their peers, and this may lead them to bad habits such as lack of sleep and lack of exercise. They randomly selected 408 college students aged 18-25 years old from a university in the western of the United States. Results show that successive viewing, time, and episode numbers were important components when trying to define binge-watching. Besides this, the college campus facilitated the act of marathon-viewing by easily getting together. Contributors recognized that binge-watching may cause health as well as mental problems. There were two opposing polls; one sees binge-watching as a way of making new friends while the other sees it as a social isolation.

Furthermore, Panda and Pandey (2017) employed U&G theory to explore the motives for binge-watching. They administered a questionnaire to 229 college students. They found that escaping reality was the main motivator; the more students find pleasure in binge-watching, the more they escape from reality and get addicted to TV shows. In this case, "Reality" means stress, exam pressures, and uncertainties with grades and future careers. In old research about television, being immersed in a show has always been recognized as the main source of gratification (Katz et al, 1973). In comparison with old television, the level of immersion into the narrative (dramas, action, sci-fi, etc.) has radically increased with new media that helped in creating the binge-watching phenomenon. More than this, some subscription video-on-demand streaming platforms such as Netflix paved the way for this immersion by coming up with an ad-free experience (Jenner, 2017). People get more engaged in binge-watching in a distraction-free environment.

In the same direction, Flayelle et al (2020) investigate the impact of marathon viewing on Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD). They dealt with binge watcher behaviors, free trials,

and SVOD's recommendations. The authors experimented on two kinds of households. Several households were given free access for a couple of weeks while other households were kept as a control group. Results show that households who were given the free trials were more likely to consume TV shows excessively because they were unwilling to subscribe. Also, they found out that content in the free trial is richer and more attractive than content when you subscribe. In addition to this, recommending content proved significant in helping people binge-watch by expanding by preference for existing content. So, streaming companies such as Netflix utilize the "Freemium business model" in which they allow users to utilize certain features and then charge them for upgrades. Therefore, this strategy is used by various conglomerates to attract people to use or consume content in a "cannibalistic" way.

Sung et al (2018) examined the salient motives that push people to binge-watch and the consequences they might have on their watching experience. 920 college students were recruited to fill out an online survey. Results show that more than 50 % rarely binge-watch. In addition, only enjoyment and entertainment proved significant out of the seven other motivations outlined in their literature review which are passing time, habit, relaxation, information, entertainment, escape, and social interaction.

In their comparative study, Cárdenas et al (2020) explore the binge-watching phenomenon by using two measures: The "Engagement and Symptoms Questionnaire" and the "Watching TV series Motive Questionnaire". These questionnaires were developed and administered in nine languages to college and university students (N= 12,626) across 17 countries: Spain, Mexico, Colombia, France, Belgium, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Australia, South Africa, Hungary, Italy, Germany, Luxembourg, Egypt, Iran, and China. The questionnaires were valid as an instrument across various geographical backgrounds. They had similar results concerning the behavioral, and motivational factors of binge-viewing (i.e.,

engagement, positive emotions) as well as the negative consequences (i.e., depression, anxiety). Although the people were from different locations, consuming subscription video-on-demand series and shows may have similar gratification as well as consequences.

Pang (2014) explained that peer influence may be another reason for binge-watching. People who are socially interacting find it amusing while talking about programs they are bingeing online, in person, or through phone calls. So as not to feel isolated, other friends who are not watching the program may start binge-watching to catch up with their friends and get involved in future discussions.

Castro et al. (2021) surveyed 11 Millennials from a Southern European country over 40 sessions viewed in their homes for 10 days (weekdays evenings and weekends). To measure their consumption of serial video content, they used a mixed approach: objective data (through a browser extension) and subjective data (questionnaire) and they chose some series from Netflix (e.g., 13 Reasons Why & Friends) as a case study. Their goal was to define the phenomenon of binge-watching, the motives that lead to binge-watching, and fluctuations of affective states. Results show that a binge-watching session lasts for 2 hours, and 10 minutes, and the participants binge-watch mainly in the evenings and nights for relaxation, escapism, and boredom relief.

3. Purpose of the current study

College students may binge-watch series or TV shows to forget about school stress, for social interaction and enhancing enjoyment. Yet, additional empirical studies need to be conducted to see if binge-watching influences academic achievement or not. Since college students are the category that most likely binge-watch (Panda & Pandey 2017), this current study aims to understand their binge-watching behavior and perceived effects. Hence, four research questions are answered in this study:

RQ1: How do college students conceptualize binge-watching?

RQ2: What are the salient motives behind binge-watching subscription video-on-demand series and shows?

RQ3: Does gender affect the binge-watching habits of college students?

RQ4: What are the perceived effects of binge-watching series and shows on college students' academic achievement?

4. Methods

4.1. Sample

4.1.1. Sample's characteristics

The sample included 103 students from a Liberal Arts college in the Northeast of the United States aged between 18 and 25 years old. The graphs include the characteristics of the sample. Most of the participants were females (71.8 %), first year (33 %), and reported they were non-Hispanic white (47.6 %). 97.1 % of the participants are taking 3-4 courses and all of them (100 %) reported that they stream SVOD series (see figures 1-4)

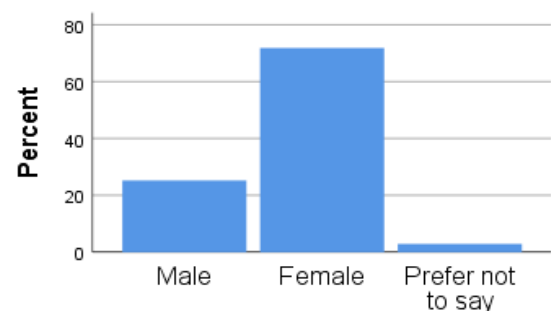


Figure 1. Students' gender

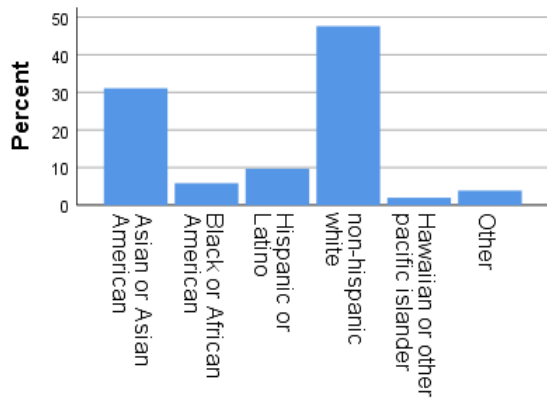


Figure 2. Ethnicity of students

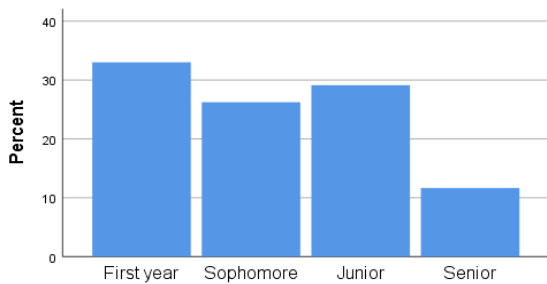


Figure 3. Students' classification in college

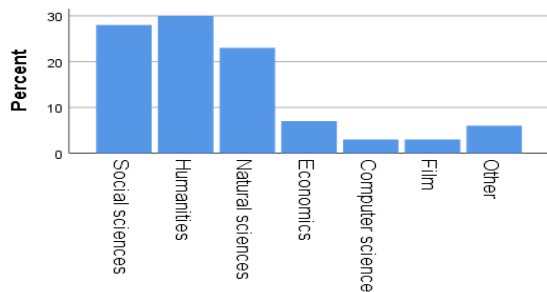


Figure 4. Students' academic major

There are various platforms that college students use to stream TV content. Most of the students surveyed use Netflix (36.3%), to access their favorite genres: dramas (43.1%), comedy (30.4%), and action (17.6%) series and shows. 24.3% prefer streaming the Netflix series, Sex Education, while more than half of the sample (51.5%) stream different content on other platforms such as Hulu (22.8%), Amazon Prime Video (22.5%), and Disney+ (3.4%). The majority use their laptops (56.9%) and smartphones (24%) as a medium of streaming content (see figures 5-8).

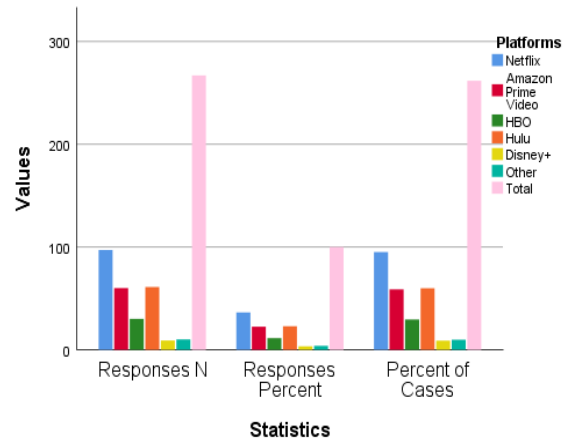


Figure 5. Students' favorite streaming platforms

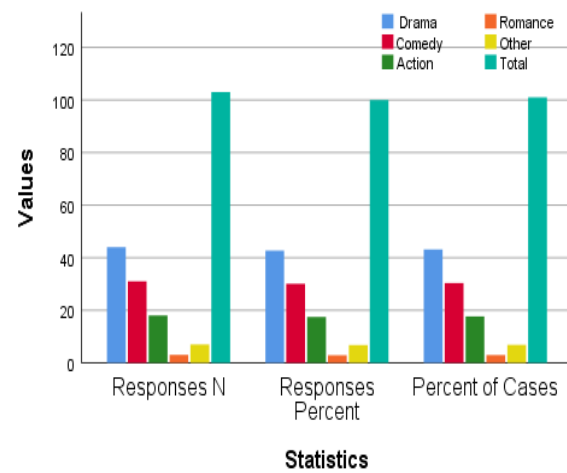


Figure 6: Students' favorite genres

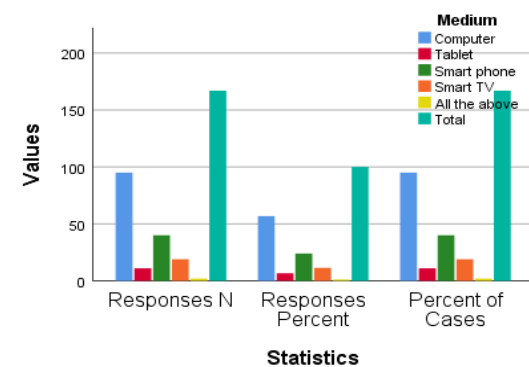


Figure 7. Medium of streaming media content

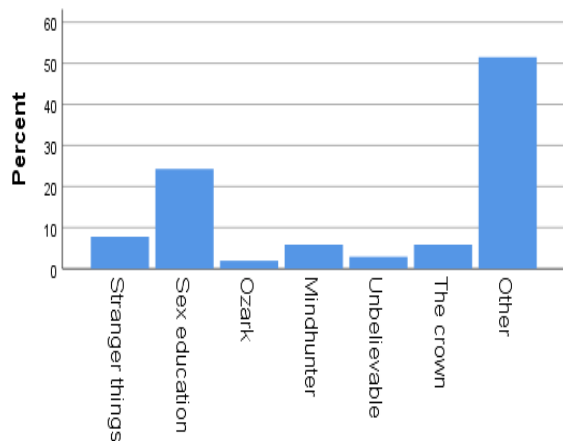


Figure 8. Students' favorite series

4.2. Procedures and data analysis

In May 2021, students from a Liberal Arts college received notifications on Facebook and email invitations to participate in an online survey. Also, the survey was sent to other professors who agreed to share it with their students. 103 college students aged from 18 to 25 years old responded to the survey (73% of females, 25.2% of males, and 2.9% prefer not to say their gender) and it took them, approximately, 10 minutes to fill the online form out.

Graphs 1 to 8 statistically describe the demographic variables such as ethnicity, gender, classification in college, students' favorite genres, streaming platforms, medium of streaming and content, and their favorite series. The purpose behind that was to measure the motivational reasons for binge-watching series and shows.

5. Results:

5.1. Research question 1: How students defined binge-watching

The first research question sought to understand how college students define binge-watching and why they may get involved in the practice. Out of 103 students, there were only 69 valid responses to a direct question: How would you define binge-watching? (See Figure 9), while 34 responses were missing.

College students frequently defined binge-watching as the number of episodes consumed in a single sitting or the successive amount of time people spend watching TV content. 44.9% perceived it as watching multiple episodes of a television program in rapid succession, typically using DVDs or digital streaming, 17.4% defined it as watching a series in one sitting for more than 2 hours, 15.9% see it as watching from two to five episodes in a single sitting and 8% defined it as watching an entire season of a series in one or a few days. Some participants think that binge-watching is the constant watching of Television in which you stop thinking of other commitments (8.7%), while others (4.3%) conceptualize it as an uncontrolled, addictive relationship to media, often used as a coping mechanism.

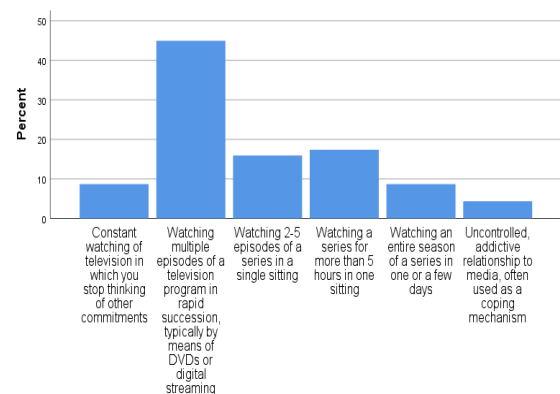


Figure 9. College students' conceptualization of binge-watching

5.2. Research question 2: The salient motives behind binge-watching subscription video-on-demand series and shows.

The second research question aimed at investigating the salient motives of binge-watching. Three multiple choice questions were asked: When I stream TV series, I feel..., I stream TV series to, and I stream TV series because of.

The second question aimed at understanding the salient motives behind binge-watching. Results indicate that college students binge-watch TV series and shows for a couple of reasons. 20.2% of cases binge-watch their favorite TV programs to feel less lonely, to

escape from reality (33%), to avoid doing homework (19.7%), and to forget about academic obligations (19.2%) [see Figure 10]. Humorous content (54%) and educational content (25.6%) were the important motivations for binge-watching among college students. However, sexual (9.1%), violent (9.1%), and dramatic content (2.3%) proved significant (see Figure 11). Being de-stressed and relaxed (31.4%) was another salient motive, in addition to being entertained (20.9%) and having nothing to do (30.4%) [see Figure 12]. Yet, some college students binge-watch because they see it as a normal thing among college students (8.4%), while others use it to cope with boredom (8.8%) [see Figure 12].

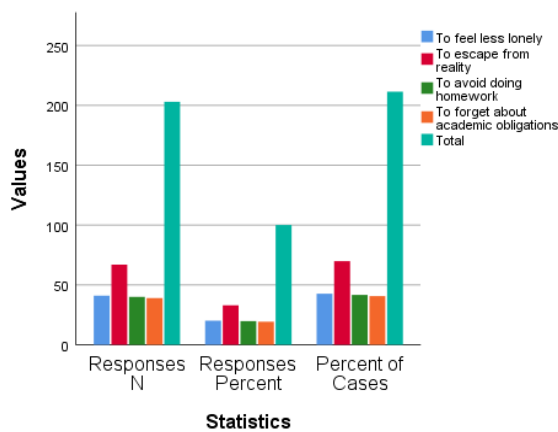


Figure 10. Salient motives for binge-watching

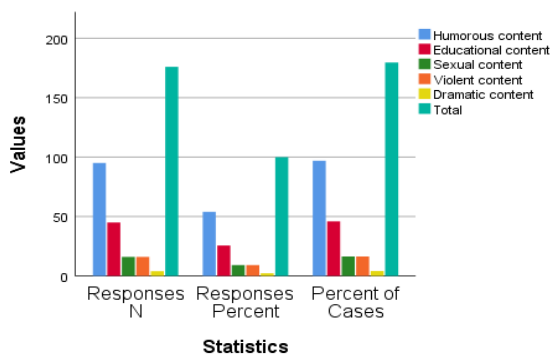


Figure 11. Genres that motivated students to binge-watch series

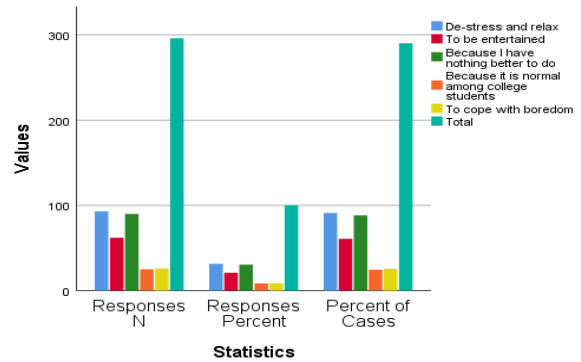


Figure 12. Salient motives for binge-watching

5.3. Research question 3: Does gender affect the binge-watching habits of college students?

The third question sought to understand if gender affects the binge-watching habits of college students.

5.3.1. Is there a correlation between the gender of a student and the type of TV content he/she streams most often?

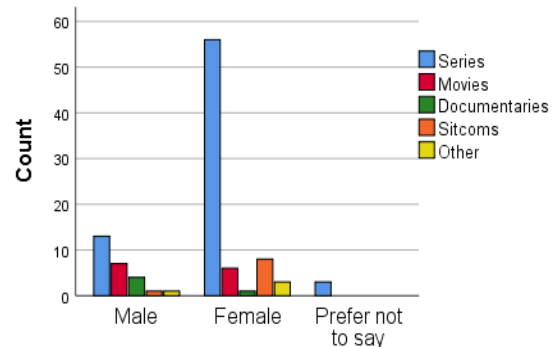


Figure 13. Relationship between students' gender and the type of TV content they prefer streaming.

54.5% of females prefer to watch series, 5.8% prefer movies, 1% prefer documentaries, 7.8% prefer sitcoms, and 2.8% prefer other content. 12.6% of males prefer watching series, 6.8% prefer movies, 3.9% prefer documentaries, 1% prefer sitcoms and only 1% prefer watching other content. However, all the students who prefer not to say their gender watch series.

Hypothesis:

- H0: There exists no significant correlation between students' gender and the type of TV content they stream most often.
- H1: There exists a significant correlation between the two variables.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.417 ^a	8	.026
Likelihood Ratio	16.293	8	.038
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.661	1	.197
N of Valid Cases	103		

a. 11 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .12.

The chi-square test indicates that the asymptotic significance p is less than 0.05, so we reject the null hypothesis H0, and we accept the alternative hypothesis H1. With 95% confidence, there exists a significant correlation between the gender of a student and the type of TV content that he/she streams most often.

5.3.2. Is there a correlation between students' academic major and the type of TV content they stream most often?

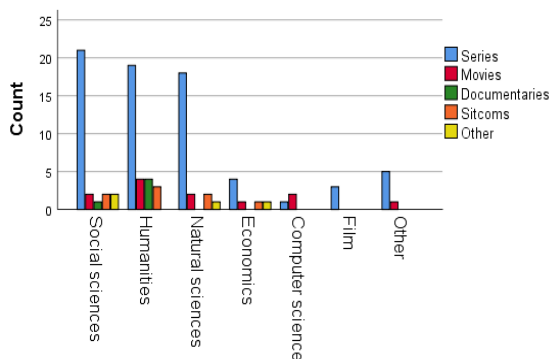


Figure 14: Students' academic major and the type of content they stream most often

Hypothesis:

- H0: There is no significant correlation between students' academic major and the type of TV content they stream most often.

- H1: There exists a significant correlation between the two variables.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.636 ^a	24	.541
Likelihood Ratio	21.801	24	.591
Linear-by-Linear Association	.748	1	.387
N of Valid Cases	100		

a. 32 cells (91.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .12.

The chi-square test indicates that the asymptotic significance p is higher than 0.05, so we accept the null hypothesis H0, and we reject the alternative hypothesis H1. With 95% confidence, the academic major does not affect the type of TV content streamed by students. Regardless of the different majors, all students prefer to stream series such as Sex Education and The Crown.

5.3.3. Is there a significant correlation between the gender of a student and his/her most-watched category?

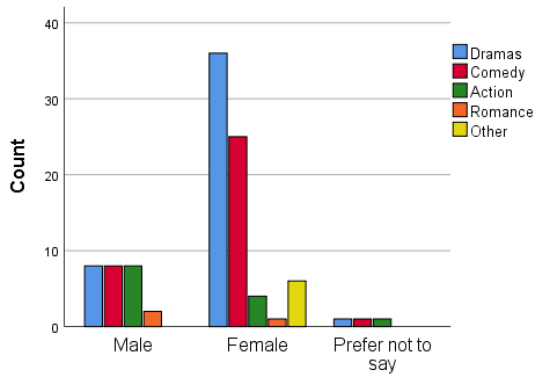


Figure 15. Relationship between students' gender and their most-watched category

Hypothesis

H0: There exists no correlation between the gender of a student and his/her most-watched category.

H1: There exists a correlation between the two variables.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.266 ^a	8	.027
Likelihood Ratio	17.363	8	.027
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.156	1	.282
N of Valid Cases	101		
a. 10 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .09.			

The chi-square test indicates that the asymptotic significance p is less than 0.05, so we reject the null hypothesis H0, and we accept the alternative hypothesis H1. With 95% confidence, there exists a significant correlation between the gender of a student and his/her most-watched category. 35.6% of females prefer to watch drama, 24.8% prefer comedy, 4% prefer action, and only 1% prefer romance.

Almost all males prefer watching drama (7.9%), comedy (7.9%), and action series (7.9%) equally. While only 2% of them prefer romantic series. Similarly, all students who preferred not to mention their gender watched drama (1%), comedy (1%), and action series (1%) equally.

5.3.4. Is there a significant correlation between students' gender and the number of classes they skipped in the last six months?

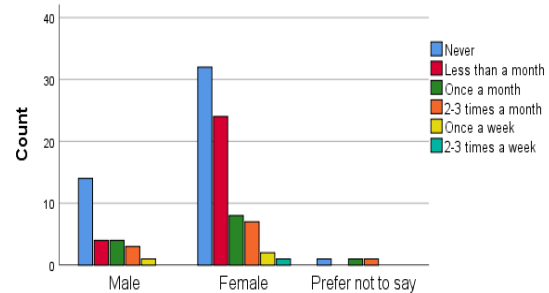


Figure 16. relationship between students' gender and the number of classes they skipped in the last six months.

Hypothesis

H0: There exists no correlation between students' gender and skipping classes.

H1: There exists a correlation between the two variables.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.974 ^a	10	.728
Likelihood Ratio	7.495	10	.678
Linear-by-Linear Association	.302	1	.583
N of Valid Cases	103		
a. 12 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.			

The chi-square test indicates that the asymptotic significance p is higher than 0.05,

so we accept the null hypothesis H0, and we reject the alternative hypothesis H1. With 95% confidence, there exists no correlation between a student’s gender and skipping classes in the last six months.

5.3.5. Is there a significant correlation between students’ gender and being academically distracted?

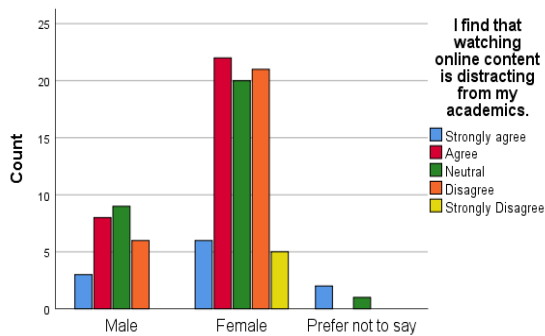


Figure 17. Relationship between students’ gender and academic distraction

Hypothesis

H0: There exists no correlation between students’ gender and being academically distracted.

H1: There exists a correlation between the two variables.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.563 ^a	8	.094
Likelihood Ratio	11.760	8	.162
Linear-by-	.015	1	.902

Linear Association			
N of Valid Cases	103		
a. 8 cells (53.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .15.			

The chi-square test indicates that the asymptotic signification p is higher than 0.05, so we accept the null hypothesis H0, and we reject the alternative hypothesis H1. With 95% confidence, there exists no significant correlation between students’ gender and being academically distracted.

5.3.6. Is there a significant correlation between students who spend watching more than ten hours binge-watching series and academic distraction?

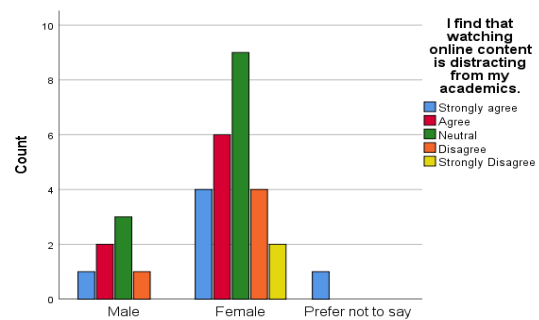


Figure 18. Relationship between students who spend more than 10 hours streaming TV content and academic distraction.

Hypothesis

H0: There exists no correlation between students who spend more than 10 hours consuming media content and being academically distracted.

H1: There exists a correlation between the two variables.

Chi-Square Tests				
Have you ever spent more than ten hours watching a series in a single sitting?		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
No	Pearson Chi-Square	9.897 ^b	8	.272

	Likelihood Ratio	9.018	8	.341
	Linear-by-Linear Association	.222	1	.637
	N of Valid Cases	70		
Yes	Pearson Chi-Square	5.355 ^c	8	.719
	Likelihood Ratio	4.675	8	.792
	Linear-by-Linear Association	.112	1	.738
	N of Valid Cases	33		
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	13.563 ^a	8	.094
	Likelihood Ratio	11.760	8	.162
	Linear-by-Linear Association	.015	1	.902
	N of Valid Cases	103		
a. 8 cells (53.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .15.				
b. 10 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .09.				
c. 13 cells (86.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.				

The chi-square test indicates that the asymptotic significance p is higher than 0.05, so we accept the null hypothesis H_0 , and we reject the alternative hypothesis H_1 . With 95% confidence, there exists no significant correlation between spending more than ten hours consuming media content in a single sitting and academic distraction.

5.3.7. Is there a significant correlation between students' gender and the number of hours they spend on academic coursework?

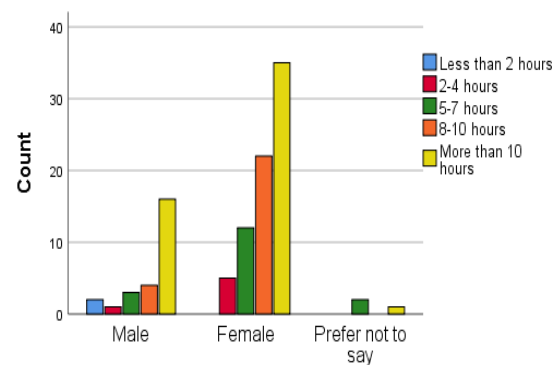


Figure 19. Correlation between students' gender and the number of weekly hours they spend on academic coursework

Hypothesis

H_0 : There exists no correlation between students' gender and the number of hours they spend on academic coursework.

H_1 : There exists a correlation between the two variables.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.650 ^a	8	.066
Likelihood Ratio	13.349	8	.100
Linear-by-Linear Association	.192	1	.661
N of Valid Cases	103		
a. 10 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.			

The chi-square test indicates that the asymptotic significance p is superior to 0.05, so we accept the null hypothesis H0, and we reject the alternative hypothesis H1. With 95% confidence, there exists no significant correlation between students' gender and the number of hours they spend weekly on academic coursework. 21.4% of females spend between 8-10 hours, 11.7% spend 5-7 hours, 4.9% spend 2-4 hours and nobody spends less than 2 hours studying a week. 15.5% of males spend more than ten hours, 3.9% spend 8-10 hours, 2.9% spend 5-7 hours, 1% spend 2-4 hours, and 1.9% spend less than two hours on academic coursework weekly. 1% of students who prefer not to mention their gender spend more than 10 hours, and only 1.9% spend 5-7 hours weekly on their academic coursework.

5.4. Research question 4: Perceived effects of binge-watching series and shows on college students' academic achievement.

The fourth research question aimed at understanding if there was any academic distraction caused by being involved in the act of binge-watching. College students responded to several multiple-choice questions like: On average, how many hours do you spend watching online media content? How many episodes of a series do you spend watching in a single sitting? On average, how many hours do

you spend on academic coursework? I find that watching online content is distracting from my academics. I feel more engaged in academic coursework than with online content. SPSS was used to test 18 variables and to see if there was any significant correlation between them.

5.4.1. Is there a significant correlation between the number of hours students spend watching media content and academic distraction?

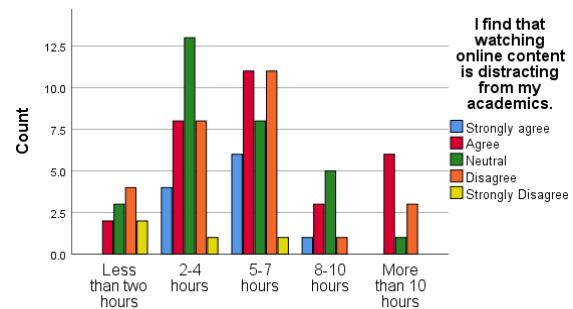


Figure 20. Relationship between the numbers of hours students spend binge-watching and academic distraction.

Hypothesis:

H0: There exists no correlation between the number of hours students spend watching online media content and academic distraction.

H1: There exists a correlation between the two variables.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.221 ^a	1 6	.210
Likelihood Ratio	20.281	1 6	.208
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.014	1	.083
N of Valid Cases	102		
a. 19 cells (76.0%) have expected count less			

than 5. The minimum expected count is .39.	Cases			
The chi-square test indicates that the asymptotic significance p is higher than 0.05, so we accept the null hypothesis H0, and we reject the alternative hypothesis H1. With 95% confidence, there is no significant correlation between the number of hours students spend watching media content and academic distraction.	a. 13 cells (65.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.			

The chi-square test indicates that the asymptotic significance p is higher than 0.05, so we accept the null hypothesis H0, and we reject the alternative hypothesis H1. With 95% confidence, there exists no correlation between the number of episodes college students stream and academic distraction.

5.4.2. Is there a significant correlation between the number of episodes students stream in a single sitting and academic distraction?

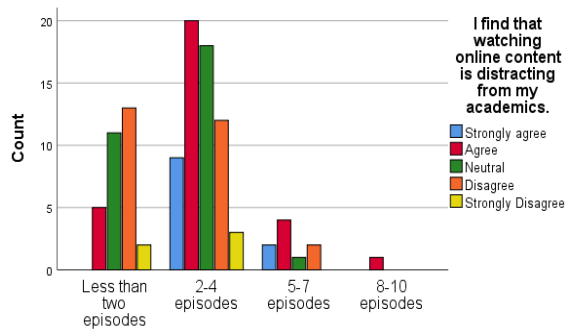


Figure 21. Relationship between the number of episodes students consume in a single sitting and academic distraction

Hypothesis

H0: There exists no correlation between the number of episodes students stream in a single sitting and academic distraction.

H1: There exists a correlation between the two variables.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.577 ^a	12	.166
Likelihood Ratio	20.172	12	.064
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.234	1	.001
N of Valid	103		

6. Discussion and directions for future research

By analyzing data collected from 103 college students from a Liberal Arts college in the Northeast of the United States, this study sought to understand how students perceive the phenomenon of binge-watching, the motivations that push them to binge-watch series and shows and to see if there are any academic distractions caused by binge-watching. U&G theory is used to discuss the results of this study.

6.1. How students defined binge-watching

College students' definitions of binge-watching deviate from previous definitions of binge-watching that relied on the consumption of the minimum number of episodes (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015; Panda & Pandey, 2017), and they rather focused on the length of time in their perception of binge-watching. College students mentioned that a binge-watching session required watching more than five hours in a single sitting which is approximately three hours more than an adult normal binge-watching session in the UK (Walton-Pattison et al., 2016). Schweidel et al. (2016) defined binge-watching as the consumption of more than two episodes of a TV show in a single sitting. In line with this, 15% of students defined the term as watching from 2-5 episodes of a series in a single sitting while 9% of college students see it as watching an entire season of a series in one or a few days. Riddle et al., (2018) related unintentional binge-watching with impulsivity. In congruence with this latter, some college students (8%) defined

binge-watching as the constant consumption of television in which students lose control of binge-watching and stop thinking of other commitments or duties. Consistent with Matrix's (2014) and Jenner's (2016) ideas that users are now able to schedule their time autonomously thanks to the advancement of technology such as DVR and DVD, college students (43%) see it as watching multiple episodes of a television program in a rapid succession employing DVDs or digital streaming. Following Riddle et al (2018) findings that people who are spontaneous in consuming TV programs may become easily addicted, 4.3% of college students surveyed defined binge-watching as an uncontrolled, addictive relationship to media, often used as a coping mechanism.

6.2. Motivations of binge-watching among college students

After the analysis of results, this study identifies humorous and educational content as the most watched categories by college students. Escaping from reality, enjoyment, being de-stressed and relaxed, feeling less lonely, avoiding doing homework, and forgetting about their academic obligations were the key motives for binge-watching. Similarly, a study which was done by Devasagayam (2014) has shown that binge-watching enabled viewers to stay connected with all episodes by following plots and characters. This way students can escape from reality, feel less lonely, and enter their fantasy world to interact with their mediated character. This is consistent with Panda and Pandey's (2017) definition of "Reality", which means exam stress and thinking about academic obligations and future careers.

College students' intrinsic motivation such as enjoyment has been enhanced by being continuously exposed to media (Bourdaa, 2011) and serials. The results show that being excited to consume TV content to forget about other duties and commitments helped students engage in the act of binge-watching.

Non-linear viewing would not have been possible without the existence of online Video-

streaming services like Netflix. Viewers are no longer required to wait one week to watch the next episode of a series or a TV show. However, with devices connected to the internet such as laptops and smartphones, college students can now, anytime, and anywhere, watch several episodes of their preferred program in rapid succession. College students' binge-watching habits are heavily influenced by their control over media consumption.

6.3. Possible effects of binge-watching on college students' academic achievement

To understand the effects of excessive consumption of TV content on the academic achievement of college students, different tests were run through SPSS software to see if there is any significant correlation between variables.

The obtained results indicate that there is no significant correlation between variables except between students' gender, the type of TV content they prefer streaming ($p=.026$), and their favorite genres ($p=.027$). All participants prefer streaming series. Still, all students who did not mention their gender stream series. Significantly, Males watch mostly drama, comedy, and action series. Whereas there exists a large differentiation between these three categories for females. Unexpectedly, females watch romantic series at a low frequency but almost the same as males.

There was no significant correlation between students' gender ($p=.094$), the number of hours ($p=.210$), and the number of episodes ($p=.166$) they spend binge-watching TV series and being academically distracted. In addition to this, there was no significant correlation between students' gender and skipping classes in the last six months ($p=.728$), and between students who usually spend more than ten hours bingeing series and being academically distracted ($p=.719$). Results also show that most college students [Females (34%) and males (15.5%)] spend more than ten hours on their academic coursework. This means that even if students spend more time binge-watching their favorite TV programs, they can stay focused on their studies and get their work done on time.

There are certain limitations to this study. Data was collected just from one university. First, students from different universities may have different motivations, conceptualizations, and different perceptions of binge-watching's consequences. In addition to this, students from one university may have more free time to binge-watch TV series and shows than students from other universities. Furthermore, my target university has a low admission rate and therefore attracts excellent students who might behave differently than average students. Including more samples from diverse institutions will help give a consistent definition of binge-watching and find reliable results. Berkowitz & Donnerstein (1982) pointed out that if results differ from one group to another in terms of functions and meanings of communication behavior, they might not generalize. Another limitation is that this current study took place during the time of COVID-19, which increased the amount of time that students are spending alone with fewer social opportunities.

7. Conclusion

Binge-watching has become popular among college students as subscription video on-demand services (SVODs) such as Netflix continue to grow. The purpose of this study was to understand how college students conceptualize binge-watching, what motivated them to binge-watch series, and to see if they were academically distracted by binge-watching series and shows. Data was collected from 103 students from a Liberal Arts college in the Northeast of the United States and was analyzed by statistical data analysis, SPSS. Results indicated that students had different perceptions of binge-watching and various motives (i.e., to escape from reality) that pushed them to consume TV content simultaneously. Results also showed that binge-watching does not affect college students' academic achievement.

Funding

There has been no significant financial support for this work.

Acknowledgment

I wish to thank my thesis supervisor Dr. Ennam, Abdelghanie, and Dr. Elizabeth Hepford for writing assistance, technical editing, language editing, and proofreading. Thanks, are also due to Dr. Youness El Ansari for his help with the data analysis software, SPSS.

Reference

- [1] Anghelcev, G. (2015). Unintended effects of incentivizing consumers to recommend a favorite brand. *Journal of marketing communications*, 21(3), 210-223. doi:10.1080/13527266.2012.747980
- [2] Anghelcev, G., Sar, S., Martin, J. D., & Moultrie, J. L. (2021). Binge-Watching Serial Video Content: Exploring the Subjective Phenomenology of the Binge-Watching Experience. *Mass communication & society*, 24(1), 130-154. doi:10.1080/15205436.2020.1811346
- [3] Berkowitz, L., & Donnerstein, E. (1982). External validity is more than skin deep: Some answers to criticisms of laboratory experiments. *American Psychologist*, 37(3), 245. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.37.3.245>
- [4] Bourdaa, M. (2011). Quality television: Construction and de-construction of seriality. In M. Perez-Gomez (Ed.), *Previously on: Interdisciplinary studies on TV series in the third golden age of television* (pp. 33e43). Sevilla, Espanha: Frame.
- [5] Castro, D., Rigby, J. M., Cabral, D., & Nisi, V. (2021). The binge-watcher's journey: Investigating motivations, contexts, and affective states surrounding Netflix viewing. *Convergence* (London, England), 27(1), 3-20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856519890856>
- [6] David, A. S., & Wendy, W. M. (2016). Binge Watching and Advertising. *Journal of marketing*, 80(5), 1-19. doi:10.1509/jm.15.0258

- [7] Deloitte. (2017). Digital media trends survey (12th ed.). Deloitte. https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/4479_Digital-media-trends/4479_Digital_media%20trends_Exec%20Sum_v_FINAL.pdf
- [8] Devasagayam, R. (2014). Media bingeing: A qualitative study of psychological influences. In D. DeLong, D. Edmiston, & R. Hightower Jr. (Eds.), *Marketing Management Association Spring Proceedings*. Chicago, IL, 40–44.
- [9] Digital democracy Survey: Deloitte: Research project. (2016, June 13). Retrieved March 10, 2021, from <https://www2.deloitte.com/tr/en/pages/technology-media-and-telecommunications/articles/digital-democracy-survey-generational-media-consumption-trends.html>
- [10] Elihu, K., Hadassah, H., & Michael, G. (1973). On the Use of the Mass Media for Important Things. *American sociological review*, 38(2), 164-181. doi:10.2307/2094393
- [11] Flayelle, M., Canale, N., Vögele, C., Karila, L., Maurage, P., & Billieux, J. (2019). Assessing binge-watching behaviors: Development and validation of the “Watching TV Series Motives” and “Binge-watching Engagement and Symptoms” questionnaires. *Computers in human behavior*, 90, 26-36. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2018.08.022
- [12] Flayelle, M., Castro-Calvo, J., Vögele, C., Astur, R., Ballester-Arnal, R., Challet-Bouju, G., . . . Billieux, J. (2020). Towards a cross-cultural assessment of binge-watching: Psychometric evaluation of the “watching TV series motives” and “binge-watching engagement and symptoms” questionnaires across nine languages. *Computers in human behavior*, 111, 106410. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2020.106410
- [13] Jenkins, N. (2015, October 28). Here's what Hillary Clinton likes to binge-watch. Retrieved March 10, 2021, from <https://time.com/4090271/clinton-colbert-tv-late-show/>
- [14] Jenner, M. (2016). Is this TVIV? On Netflix, TVIII and binge-watching. *New media & society*, 18(2), 257-273. doi:10.1177/1461444814541523
- [15] Larkin, M. (2014, January 22). Jennifer Lawrence fumes after reporter Spoils Homeland Season FINALE... but gets a Comforting hug from Damian Lewis. Retrieved March 09, 2021, from <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2543702/Jennifer-Lawrence-fumes-reporter-spoils-Homeland-season-finale-gets-comforting-hug-Damian-Lewis.html>
- [16] Lotz, A. (2017). *Portals: A Treatise on Internet-Distributed Television*. Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9699689>
- [17] Matrix, S. (2014). The Netflix Effect: Teens, Binge Watching, and On-Demand Digital Media Trends. *Jeunesse, young people, texts, cultures*, 6(1), 119-138. doi:10.1353/jeu.2014.0002
- [18] Maresca, R. (2019, January 10). Michelle Obama admits to binge watching ABC'S 'Scandal': 'I love Kerry WASHINGTON'. Retrieved March 09, 2021, from <https://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/gossip/michelle-obama-admits-binge-watching-abc-scandal-article-1.1598150>
- [19] Merikivi, J., Bragge, J., Scornavacca, E., & Verhagen, T. (2019). Binge-watching serialized video content: a transdisciplinary review. *Television & new media*, 21(7), 697-711. doi:10.1177/1527476419848578
- [20] Netflix, I. (2018, June 30). Netflix declares binge watching is the new normal. Retrieved MARCH 10, 2021, from <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/netflix-declares-binge-watching-is-the-new-normal-235713431.html>
- [21] Moeller, F. G., Barratt, E. S., Dougherty, D. M., Schmitz, J. M., & Swann, A. C. (2001). Psychiatric Aspects of Impulsivity. *The American journal of psychiatry*, 158(11), 1783-1793. doi:10.1176/appi.ajp.158.11.1783
- [22] Panda, S., & Pandey, S. C. (2017). Binge watching and college students: motivations and outcomes. *Young consumers*, 18(4), 425-438. doi:10.1108/YC-07-2017-00707

- [23] Riddle, K., Peebles, A., Davis, C., Xu, F., & Schroeder, E. (2018). The Addictive Potential of Television Binge Watching: Comparing Intentional and Unintentional Binges. *Psychology of popular media culture*, 7(4), 589-604. doi:10.1037/ppm0000167
- [24] Shear, M., Dr. (2013, December 30). Obama's TV PICKS: Anything Edgy, with hints of reality. Retrieved March 10, 2021, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/30/us/obamas-tv-picks-anything-edgy-with-hints-of-reality.html>
- [25] Schweidel, D. A., & Moe, W. W. (2016). Binge watching and advertising. *Journal of Marketing*, 80, 1–19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0258>
- [26] Silverman, R. E., & Ryalls, E. D. (2016). Everything Is Different the Second Time Around: The Stigma of Temporality on Orange Is the New Black. *Television & new media*, 17(6), 520-533. doi:10.1177/1527476416647496
- [27] Starosta, J. A., & Izydorczyk, B. (2020). Understanding the Phenomenon of Binge-Watching-A Systematic Review. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(12), 4469. doi:10.3390/ijerph17124469
- [28] Sung, Y. H., Kang, E. Y., & Lee, W.-N. (2018). Why Do We Indulge? Exploring Motivations for Binge Watching. *Journal of broadcasting & electronic media*, 62(3), 408-426. doi:10.1080/08838151.2018.1451851
- [29] TheEllenShow. (2013, September 23). Binge-Watching TV. Retrieved March 07, 2021, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwXvrgwnkyc>
- [30] Vaterlaus, J. M., Spruance, L. A., Frantz, K., & Kruger, J. S. (2019). College student television binge watching: Conceptualization, gratifications, and perceived consequences. *The Social science journal (Fort Collins)*, 56(4), 470-479. doi: 10.1016/j.soscij.2018.10.004
- [31] Watson, A. (n.d.). Topic: Netflix. Retrieved March 11, 2021, from <https://www.statista.com/topics/842/netflix/>
- [32] Walton-Pattison, E., Dombrowski, S., & Presseau, J. (2016). 'Just one more episode': Frequency and theoretical correlates of television binge watching. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 23(1), 17–24. doi:10.1177/1359105316643379