

The Shift from Traditional Television to Streaming Platforms: Understanding the Rise of Netflix

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed the global media landscape, leading to significant changes in how audiences consume entertainment content. Traditional television broadcasting, which once dominated the entertainment industry, is increasingly challenged by digital streaming platforms that provide more flexible and personalized viewing experiences. Among these platforms, Netflix has emerged as one of the most influential streaming services worldwide. This conceptual paper examines the factors contributing to the growing preference for Netflix compared to traditional television. Specifically, the study explores the role of technological convenience, audience engagement, cultural influence, and educational opportunities associated with streaming platforms. By reviewing existing literature on media consumption and digital entertainment, the paper highlights how features such as on-demand viewing, personalized recommendation systems, diverse international content, and ad-free streaming enhance user satisfaction and engagement. In addition, streaming platforms are found to facilitate cultural exchange and informal learning through access to global films, series, and documentaries. Guided by Uses and Gratifications Theory, this study emphasizes that modern audiences actively choose media platforms that best satisfy their entertainment and informational needs. The findings suggest that Netflix represents a major shift in media consumption patterns, reflecting broader technological and cultural transformations in the digital era. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of streaming services for the future of television and media industries.

Keywords: Netflix, Streaming Platforms, Audience Engagement, Digital Media Consumption, Traditional Television

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed the global media and entertainment industry. Over the past two decades, traditional television broadcasting has experienced increasing competition from digital streaming platforms that provide more flexible and accessible viewing experiences. One of the most influential platforms in this transformation is **Netflix**, a subscription-based streaming service that allows users to watch movies, television series, documentaries, and original productions through internet-connected devices (Shattuc, 2019).

Traditional television broadcasting relies on scheduled programming where audiences must tune in at specific times to watch their preferred shows. This model dominated the entertainment industry for decades and shaped audience viewing habits and advertising strategies (Hilmes & Jacobs, 2021). However, the widespread availability of high-speed internet, smartphones, and smart televisions has led to a shift in how audiences

consume media content. Streaming platforms now allow viewers to access programs anytime and anywhere, significantly increasing convenience and flexibility.

Netflix has become a major player in the streaming industry by providing a wide variety of global content and investing heavily in original productions. The company has expanded its reach worldwide and has attracted millions of subscribers through its innovative content distribution strategies (Sun, 2022). Furthermore, the platform offers personalized recommendations and ad-free viewing experiences, which further enhance user engagement.

The growing popularity of Netflix reflects broader changes in audience preferences and technological advancement. Younger audiences, in particular, are more inclined to use streaming platforms because they offer on-demand content and greater control over viewing experiences (Jenner, 2021). Nevertheless, traditional television still maintains relevance, particularly among older audiences who are more familiar with scheduled broadcasting systems.

Therefore, this conceptual paper aims to examine the factors that contribute to the increasing preference for Netflix compared to traditional television shows. Specifically, the study focuses on technological convenience, audience engagement, cultural influence, and educational potential associated with streaming platforms.

Research Gap

Although numerous studies have examined the growth of streaming platforms and their impact on the entertainment industry, there is still limited conceptual research that integrates technological, cultural, and educational perspectives.

Most existing studies focus primarily on technological innovation or business strategies associated with streaming platforms (Sun, 2022). However, fewer studies explore how technological convenience, cultural exposure, and learning opportunities collectively influence audience preferences.

Therefore, this conceptual paper seeks to address this gap by synthesizing previous research and developing a comprehensive understanding of the factors that drive audiences to prefer Netflix over traditional television.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Evolution of Television in the Digital Era

Television has long been regarded as one of the most influential forms of mass communication. Historically, television broadcasting enabled the distribution of audiovisual content to large audiences and played a central role in shaping popular culture and public discourse (Hilmes & Jacobs, 2021). Traditional television networks controlled the scheduling, production, and distribution of programs, which limited viewers' ability to choose when and how they consumed media content.

However, the emergence of digital technology has transformed the media landscape by introducing new forms of content delivery. Internet-based streaming services allow users to access media content without relying on conventional broadcasting infrastructure. These services, commonly referred to as over-the-top (OTT) platforms, deliver audiovisual content directly to consumers via the internet (Wayne, 2021).

Netflix is widely recognized as one of the pioneers of the streaming revolution. Originally established as a DVD rental service, Netflix gradually evolved into a global streaming platform that provides digital entertainment across multiple devices. According to Sun (2022), the company's ability to adapt its business model and invest in original productions has enabled it to become a dominant player in the digital media industry.

The transition from traditional television to streaming platforms reflects broader technological advancements and changing audience expectations. As digital connectivity becomes increasingly widespread, audiences expect more flexible and personalized media consumption experiences.

Audience Engagement and Viewing Behaviour

One of the primary reasons audiences prefer streaming platforms is the increased level of control they have over their viewing experiences. Streaming services allow viewers to watch content on demand rather than following fixed programming schedules. This flexibility aligns with modern lifestyles where individuals prefer entertainment that can be accessed at their convenience (Jenner, 2021).

Another important feature of streaming platforms is content personalization. Netflix uses sophisticated algorithms to analyse user preferences and viewing history in order to recommend relevant content. Isa et al. (2019) explain that this personalized recommendation system enhances viewer engagement by helping users discover programs that match their interests.

In addition to personalization, streaming platforms also provide uninterrupted viewing experiences. Traditional television programming often includes commercial advertisements that interrupt the narrative flow of programs. These interruptions may reduce viewer satisfaction and engagement (Susanno et al., 2019). In contrast, Netflix allows users to watch programs without advertising interruptions, thereby enhancing the overall viewing experience.

Streaming platforms have also popularized the concept of binge-watching. Binge-watching refers to the practice of watching multiple episodes of a television series consecutively in a single sitting. According to Jenner (2021), binge-watching has become a defining characteristic of modern television consumption, particularly among younger audiences who prefer immersive storytelling experiences.

Cultural Influence of Streaming Platforms

Streaming platforms have also played a significant role in promoting global cultural exchange. Netflix provides access to films and television series from different countries, allowing audiences to experience diverse cultural perspectives. This global distribution of content has increased exposure to international media productions.

Alkhayat (2023) notes that Netflix has contributed to the globalization of entertainment by promoting cross-cultural storytelling and expanding the reach of non-Western media productions. For example, international programs such as Korean dramas and Spanish series have gained worldwide popularity through streaming platforms.

In addition, Netflix has influenced the way television content is produced and distributed. The platform invests heavily in original productions, which encourages media creators to experiment with innovative storytelling techniques and diverse narratives (Wayne, 2021). This investment has contributed to the diversification of television content available to audiences.

Furthermore, streaming platforms enable audiences to access content from multiple cultures and languages, thereby promoting cultural awareness and understanding. This accessibility has transformed media consumption into a more globalized experience.

Educational and Informal Learning Opportunities

Although streaming platforms are primarily associated with entertainment, they also provide opportunities for informal learning. Netflix offers a wide range of documentaries and educational programs that cover topics such as science, history, technology, and social issues.

Research suggests that audiovisual media can support language learning and cultural education. Alm (2021) explains that television series and films can serve as effective tools for language acquisition when accompanied by subtitles. By watching foreign-language programs, viewers can improve their vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening comprehension.

Similarly, Gouleti, Dimitriadis, and Kokonis (2020) found that students who watched foreign-language films with subtitles were able to identify unfamiliar vocabulary and understand contextual meanings more effectively. These findings demonstrate the potential of streaming platforms as supplementary learning tools.

Educational documentaries available on streaming platforms also contribute to knowledge dissemination and public awareness. Programs that explore scientific discoveries, environmental challenges, and historical events can enhance viewers' understanding of complex topics.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by **Uses and Gratifications Theory**, which explains how audiences actively select media platforms that satisfy their needs and motivations. According to Uses and Gratifications Theory, individuals use media to fulfil specific psychological and social needs, including entertainment, information, social interaction, and personal identity (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). In the context of streaming platforms, audiences may prefer Netflix because it offers greater convenience, diverse content, and personalized viewing experiences.

The theory also emphasizes that audiences are active participants in media consumption rather than passive recipients of information. Streaming platforms align with this concept because they allow users to select content based on their personal preferences. By applying Uses and Gratifications Theory, this study highlights how Netflix satisfies modern audience needs more effectively than traditional television broadcasting.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a conceptual research approach that focuses on analysing existing literature related to streaming platforms and audience behaviour. Conceptual research aims to synthesize theoretical perspectives and develop new insights based on existing knowledge. Academic journal articles, books, and research publications related to Netflix, streaming media, and digital media transformation were reviewed. These sources were analysed to identify key themes explaining the growing preference for streaming platforms compared to traditional television. The conceptual approach enables researchers to integrate findings from multiple studies and develop a broader understanding of emerging trends in media consumption.

DISCUSSION

The increasing popularity of Netflix can be attributed to several interconnected factors related to technological convenience, content diversity, and audience engagement. One major factor is technological accessibility. Streaming platforms allow users to access media content through various devices, including smartphones, tablets, laptops, and smart televisions. This flexibility enables audiences to watch content anytime and anywhere (Wayne, 2021).

Another factor is the diversity of content available on Netflix. The platform offers films and television series from different countries and genres, which attracts audiences with diverse interests. This global content library distinguishes streaming platforms from traditional television networks that often focus on regional programming.

Personalization is also a key factor influencing audience preference. Netflix's recommendation algorithms analyse user behaviour to suggest relevant programs, thereby enhancing user engagement (Isa et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the absence of advertisements contributes to a more immersive viewing experience. Continuous viewing without interruptions encourages binge-watching behaviour and increases audience satisfaction (Jenner, 2021).

Streaming platforms also contribute to cultural exchange and informal learning by providing access to international programs and educational documentaries. These features highlight the broader social and cultural impact of streaming media.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of streaming platforms such as Netflix represents a significant transformation in the global media landscape. Technological advancements and changing audience preferences have contributed to the increasing popularity of digital streaming services.

Netflix offers several advantages compared to traditional television, including flexible viewing options, personalized recommendations, diverse international content, and ad-free viewing experiences. These features make streaming platforms particularly attractive to modern audiences.

In addition to entertainment, Netflix also promotes cultural exchange and informal education through its global content library. Although traditional television continues to serve certain audiences, the dominance of streaming platforms indicates that digital media will play a central role in shaping the future of media consumption.

Future research should further explore the long-term implications of streaming platforms on media industries, audience behaviour, and cultural production.

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