

## NETFLIX CRAZE: EXPLORATORY RESEARCH ON THE USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF NETFLIX IN THAI SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT

*Netflix, a video streaming application service, has been one of the most useful websites for Thai people during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This phenomenon can be observed through the lens of marketing professionals to gain more consumer insights into the reasons Thai audiences consume the application. Specifically, this research aims (1) To explore important motivations that influence Thai people on their use of Netflix and (2) To explain the uses and gratifications of Netflix in Thai society. Furthermore, this research utilized a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with Thai Netflix consumers. Using the theoretical approach of Media Uses and Gratification Theory, where cognitive, affective, and personal integrative motives can affect the media satisfaction level, the study found that Thai consume Netflix because of (1) Language learning, (2) Emotional currency, and (3) Fear of Missing Out. This further concludes that Netflix offers a variety of shows where the audience can control their consumption based on their preference which satisfies them to use the platform more often. The value for money, accessibility of usage, and freedom that the website provides, specifically with changing landscapes, contribute to the reasons why Thai people use Netflix as their source of video information and entertainment.*

*Keywords: Marketing Communications, Uses and Gratification Theory, Netflix, COVID-19 Pandemic, Qualitative Method, In-depth Interview, Thailand*

### INTRODUCTION

Netflix is the king of streaming video worldwide. It is now attempting to increase its lead with a significant push in Asia, especially its fastest-growing region, Thailand, to continue to dominate the market. The platform focuses on home-based entertainment for consumers, which is an effective business model for the company. By subscribing to their service, they offer "access to a comprehensive library of more than a thousand movies, television,

and other filmed entertainment titles" (Otero & Xylouri, 2016). People are switching from regular television programs to watching online episodes and often engage in binge-watching activities. Hence, video-on-demand (VDO) platforms like Netflix are changing the watching behavior patterns of consumers (Reisa & Irwansyah, 2021).

The concept of binge-watching or watching more than one episode in one sitting that will consume the content has been widespread. Famous video provider Netflix makes television shows and series more accessible to consumers

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who can watch their favorite series or programs with as many episodes as possible (Davis, 2016).

Thai society is now seeking media gratifications more often than it provides various motivations and influences people to get into binge-watching shows. Viewers have more power and can watch on-demand entertainment whenever they want (Panda & Pandey, 2017). Entertainment has always been a way to escape the stresses of everyday life, and binge-watching is no exception. Some people use Netflix to improve their well-being through binge-watching, eliciting uplifting feelings from entertaining movies, and practicing re-evaluation when viewing dramatic content (Davis, 2018). There are many movies, films, and even series on Netflix with different genres that will undoubtedly attract people with varying interests in movies to use Netflix as an outlet to relieve tension or boredom.

However, Starosta & Izydorczyk (2020) claimed that binge-watching has two aspects. The first concerns entertainment, joyful feelings, cognition, and leisure. The second viewpoint is concerned with the negative effects of excessive binge-watching and the symptoms of behavioral addiction. Individuals can feel fulfilled by it as a reward after completing a task. However, understanding the emotional impact of watching Netflix can depend on individual characteristics such as personality and viewing habits.

Aside from the emotional and social integrative focus of Netflix, further study by Alm (2021) concludes that Netflix can also be utilized as a language exposure tool by watching international movies and TV series with subtitles. These videos, which provide entertainment and exposure to the second languages of the learners, are available to all language learners.

Based on Katz et al. (1974), In terms of conceptualization, viewers' goals include catching up, unwinding, achieving a sense of closure, including diverse viewpoints, and enhancing the viewing experience. (Steiner & Xu, 2020). The Uses and Gratification Model starts with evaluating the Thai Audience on specific needs such as Cognitive, Affective, and Personal Integrative. After that, the media sought, and when a need is gratified, there will be a continued use.

This motivation in watching Netflix is a drive to understand the ongoing craze to use the platform. Thai motivation lingers because the platform and shows are mostly trending online, where their friends and colleagues talk about it. Contents and marketing efforts also affect the decision to subscribe to the brand, specifically during the COVID period (Thaiudom, 2021). Exploration and understanding of the phenomenon add to the expanding knowledge in this area.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study sought to:

1. Explore the Uses and Gratifications of Netflix in Thai Society.
2. determine the factors that lead to Thai Netflix Consumer Gratifications.
3. evaluate Netflix usage in Thailand through the Uses and Gratifications Theory.

## METHODOLOGY

This research focuses on a qualitative approach to identify Thai people's online behavior on Netflix. Seven participants had been invited. The interviewees are both male and female, aged between 20 and 35. Meanwhile, all our participants had been using Netflix for over a year. To ensure all the participants met the criteria, we used judgmental sampling to select the candidates based on occupation, age, and user experience. This research used an in-depth, semi-structured interview to understand why Thai people like watching Netflix.

The research instrument question guideline is based on the existing literature on Netflix and Uses and Gratification Theory. The question includes two parts: the frequency of Netflix usage and the needs of Netflix usage. After transcribing, the Uses and Gratification Theory was used as the theoretical framework for all data analysis. This processing method lets the researchers understand Thai people's Netflix online behavior.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Thai Consumer Demographics

The participants' demographics are between 20-35 years old during the interview. In addition, the participants have been selected under the judgmental sampling method, wherein they fall under a particular selection criterion. In terms of occupation, participants have a variety of professions like electrical engineer, concept artist, animator, maintenance business owner, trainer, and self-employed. Furthermore, all the interviewees hold a bachelor's degree.

Two of them explained that they usually watch Netflix on holidays or when free after work. For the time average, most of them spent 2-4 hours watching Netflix, while some samples answered 6-8 hours or might spend more time depending on what they are watching. The frequency of usage of the Netflix platform determines their exposure to content that provides them with movies, online series, and documentaries relevant to their watching habit. Each sample indicated that they use many devices. Most of them answer that they prefer to watch Netflix on Television or iPad because it gives a similar feeling to watching a movie at the theatre. The portability of the online streaming platform also affected how they patronize Netflix because they can watch it anywhere and anytime.

### 2. Uses and Gratifications of Netflix in Thai Society

#### 2.1. Cognitive Needs

According to the interviewees, the most prominent need is to learn a new language and to learn the cultures of other people, meaning that the need to acquire a new set of knowledge, which enhances his need for others and their values, perceptions, and beliefs towards the view of the society through the lens of Netflix. Adding to that identifying the social structure of foreign countries and building an informative background on the customs, traditions, and cultural identity that characterize each community separately.

Additionally, there is a desire to utilize and study different languages to advance the English language, which is one of the most extensively used languages in contemporary culture. Netflix platform has succeeded in using multiple options, such as the translation option, during the presentation of dramas and programs to improve their language, especially the youth to middle age, which is the focused sample of the research.

On the other hand, learning and acquiring the cultures of other people and the way they live is also a fascinating thing to experience through Netflix. However, they admitted this aspect took a smaller share of the participants and motivation to use the platform. In this idea, we can understand that most Thai participants are acquiring language exposure more than looking for shows such as documentaries that deepen their knowledge of a specific field.

#### 2.2. Affective Needs

Netflix expanded the production and presentation of many series, films, and programs, which enhanced comfort and offered sufficiency in terms of entertainment. The feelings that the Thai lack during quarantine, like connections and emotional attachments, can be found on various shows that Netflix offers on their platform. Most of the samples agreed that fun and entertainment are among the most important emotional needs when using the Netflix platform since most are looking for the emotional aspect, specifically during our global pandemic. Then, psychological comfort and stress-free time were the secondary reasons since most interviewees admitted that their working time contributes to their stress. They are looking forward to a weekend or when they can watch their favorite show.

In the sense of affective needs, we can understand that most Thai are into watching series that provides them emotional affection and something that satisfies their human-level connection, such as laughter from comedy shows, love stories, horror, and feeling of fear. The application of Netflix is a positive tool for making subscribers feel comfortable in an enjoyable way from various emotions portrayed on the platform.

People are emotional beings, and various shows that tickle their affection needs can boost the platform's marketability.

### 2.3. Personal Integrative Needs

Netflix uses a stimulating and attractive method during its presentation of series, movies, and programs, stimulating the desire to participate in this platform. The need for confidence, assurance, and credibility plays another factor of interest in using the platform. They foster high confidence and trust in the platform because of its credibility throughout its usage. They even claimed that they might stay on the platform as long as it is there. The platform has been producing quality content that promotes continuity of use, and users must pay attention in waiting for another series or show to watch.

Interestingly, they said that the platform could also foster personal identity through various stories and films that motivate people. This is an integral part that produces confidence and self-assurance to viewers through the lens of the movies and series as reflected in real-life scenarios.

### 3. Netflix Usage in Thailand through the Uses and Gratifications Theory

In Thai society, Netflix has proven the importance of fulfilling certain levels of needs to manifest their importance in their daily lives. These gratifications are vital indicators for the continuity of usage and brand loyalty in using Netflix as their streaming platform. They view it as a "buffet" of movies where they can watch and enjoy their time to gain knowledge and entertainment. These factors allowed them to be satisfied with the platform.

They agreed that Netflix does provide their needs in the aspects of learning, emotional affection, and personal integrative in terms of credibility and confidence in its content while also connecting to social media about the current trends; fear of missing out always plays as an additional factor. When gratified, these aspects are an excellent determining asset in the continued use of the platform.

### CONCLUSION

The popularity of Netflix among Thai audiences and how marketers can use it is a vital part of this exploratory study. Based on the results, Thai people do understand their motivation for their use of Netflix; meanwhile, it is noticed that consumers have specific wants and needs and must consider continuously refining and developing Netflix products.

Marketers can use this information from the findings to further explore and understand the key things that can contribute to the attraction of Thai audiences to Netflix shows. Language learning, culture, and emotional appeal create a great magnet that can also target the working class to patronize the platform, specifically in their free time. We can also highlight that Thai is always looking forward to a new release, and they put high credibility and trust in the program.

Key findings summarized main factors as follows, "Language and Culture," "Reduce Loneliness and boredom," and "Low cost." Meanwhile, "Convenience" can also motivate users to watch Netflix. In terms of uses and gratifications theory, the results showed that most of them spend 2-4 hours on Netflix and are more likely to watch if they are gratified or what they are interested in. The respondents gave higher satisfaction through the customer experience aspect. They feel convenient and secure when they use Netflix applications.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The study contributes important factors to understanding the use of Netflix among Thai people. With the study, here are the recommendations and set of limitations for further study and research development:

1. Marketing professionals can leverage their promotions and advertisements through case studies involving consumer insights, specifically in Thai demographics, which are anchored with personal experiences and cultural reasons.
2. Consumer insights studies provide a wide variety of implications on both the marketing



and sales industry as an exploration of Thai consumer interests reveals an important purchasing decision.

3. Providing another view on Thai demographics that are not set in this study, such as gender, age, and profession, can also impact the results of further studies to create a diversity of results.

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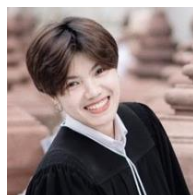
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