

Hooked on Screens: Examining the Motivational Factors on Binge-Watching Behaviour with Attitude as a Mediator

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of various media service channels has caused the binge-watching phenomenon among viewers and brought adverse effects on media psychology. Various scholars have examined the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) in understanding the motives of media consumption, but other motives require further examination. This study aims to examine the U&G motives (enjoyment, escapism, and social interaction) that influence the attitude and binge-watching behaviours through the extension of other motives (e.g., immersion and media appeal). The study applied quantitative research, with the use of purposive sampling to gather 280 valid responses via the online survey. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyse the data and test the hypotheses. The results corroborated that enjoyment, escapism, and media appeals were the predictors of binge-watching attitude, but social interaction and immersion were not. In addition, the attitude of binge-watching positively affects binge-watching behaviours. The study evidenced that attitude served as a mediator between the motives (enjoyment, escapism, media appeal) and binge-watching behaviour. This research contributed to the UGT and media scholarship, with evidence that media appeal (technological gratification) is a new motive. The findings of this study urge streaming services, media content producers, and governmental bodies to formulate media policies and digital literacy initiatives on binge-watching to avoid the negative media effects on the younger generations and society at large.

Keywords: *Uses and gratifications theory, attitude, binge-watching behaviour, media appeal, media psychology.*

INTRODUCTION

The rise of Over-the-Top (OTT) media service platforms (e.g., Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+) has significantly impacted the media consumption experience and led to common viewing habits, like binge-watching (Prabhavathy & SenthilKumar, 2025; Chan et al., 2022). Introduced as the viewing of at least three episodes from a series in a day, binge-watching has quickly evolved from an oddity to a trendy phenomenon for audiences (Starosta &

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Izydorczyk, 2020). This phenomenon was supported by Astro (2025), where their report highlighted that online streaming and engagement among the viewers is high, with 17.5 billion minutes streamed, indicating excessive binge-watching. This phenomenon has been linked to negative repercussions such as sleep deprivation, diminished academic and work performance/productivity, and health & psychological complications (Mahmoud & Wahab, 2021; Qayyoun & Malik, 2023).

Although the emergence of binge-watching appears to be accelerating, the implications of it on individual well-being and productivity remain an academic concern. In addition, the paradoxical influence of traditional broadcast and release schedules upon propensity to binge-watch demands further study (Milosavljević & Bajić, 2025). Despite this escalating interest in academic research, other motivational reasons that lead to binge-viewing are still not entirely clear and require further investigation.

For instance, prior research has started to examine the drivers of binge-viewing behaviour, and numerous studies found that common motives such as escapism (Ahmed & Mustafa, 2025), social interaction, and enjoyment are strong contributing factors of binge-watching (Aytas & Topatan, 2024; Chan et al., 2022) based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). UGT is based on the assumption that active media users are motivated to seek out specific gratifications to meet their needs (Katz et al., 1973). Although the UGT has been a well-established theoretical framework that is commonly applied in media and communication studies, but the theory is evolving, and other motives are emerging, such as fandom (Prihantoro, 2024), fear-of-missing out (FOMO) (Qayyoun & Malik, 2023), loneliness (Gabbiadini et al., 2021; Tengku Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen et al., 2023), freedom of watching, and accessibility (Ahmed & Mustafa, 2025) were observed in the past literature.

Besides, the review of the past studies that used the UGT has yielded inconsistent results. For instance, numerous past studies found that entertainment, escape/passing time, excitement, ease-of-access, and social interaction were the motives for young adults to have binge-watching behaviours (Aytas & Topatan, 2024; Cha & Chan-Olmsted, 2024; Qayyoun & Malik, 2023). However, Chan et al. (2022) found that escape is not a motive of Netflix binge-watching behaviour, but it is contrasted with the results of Gabbiadini et al. (2021), where they found that escapism is the strongest predictor of media characters and induced binge-watching tendencies, which is also in line with a study by Ahmed and Mustafa's (2025), where escapism have a positive impact on the time spent on binge watching, which urged the future researchers to re-examine the phenomena.

In addition, literature also argued that immersion (Tom Dieck et al., 2023) and technological motive (media appeal) are significant motives to be included due to the enhancement of digital technology. For instance, Chan et al. (2025a; 2025b) tested the media appeal motive and found that it is a significant motive in the context of watching *Mukbang* and social media addiction. Besides, Gan and Li (2018) also found that media appeal is a significant motive of UGT in impacting the continuous use intention of WeChat in China. With the gaps highlighted, this study incorporated the immersion and media appeal motives to expand the UGT framework.

Furthermore, although there are numerous past studies that established that attitude can serve as a mediating or intervening variable, these studies are mainly from the marketing and persuasion studies (Balroo, 2023; Wahida & Mohammad Shah, 2022). Although there were communication and media studies that examined attitude as a mediating variable on

the perception of mass communication news and altruistic behaviour (Liao et al., 2023), to the best of the authors' knowledge, the exact empirical evidence which examine attitude as a mediator between motivational factors and binge-watching behaviours required further investigation. Thus, this study incorporated the attitude as the mediator to close the attitude-behaviour gaps. Based on the discussion, this study aims to test the mediating role of attitude on the motivational factors (social interaction, enjoyment, media appeal, escapism, immersion) on binge-watching behaviours.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Underpinning

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) serves as the theoretical cornerstone of this study, yet it extends its application by exploring previously underexamined facets within the context of binge-watching. UGT presumes that individuals are proactive in choosing media that serve specific needs, rather than being passive users (Katz et al., 1973; Wei et al., 2024). This study builds on UGT by focusing on how enjoyment, escapism, and social interaction, with the extension of immersion and media appeal, are the motives for binge-watching. The novelty introduced is in positioning attitude toward binge-watching as an intervening variable, which offers a distinctive perspective on how motivational factors influence the attitude towards binge-watching consumption.

According to the UGT, people use media for social and psychological purposes (Katz et al., 1973). Although essential in making sense of what really causes the persisting phenomenon of infinite media consumption, the application of UGT to motivation towards binge-watching, particularly on how the specific gratifications influencing this trending viewing patterns (Wang & Aziz, 2025) is worth examining.

Hypothesis Development

Fostering sociability is among the motives for binge-watching (Ramayani et al., 2018). Social interaction allows fans to share storylines, characters, events, and themes, thereby increasing their cognitive and emotional involvement (Yu, 2025). Binge-viewing is not limited to a top-down consumption of media content, but it could create deeper relationships through participation/interaction and discourse with media content (Batos et al., 2024).

Furthermore, social interaction can contribute to either the positive or negative establishment of public attitudes toward binge-watching (Ramayani et al., 2018; Tse et al., 2025). For instance, Aytas and Topatan (2024) revealed that social interaction has a positive motivation for binge-watching, which aligned with the study of Fa'im Rosli and Mohd Mahudin (2024), where they corroborated that social interaction anxiety is the predictor of binge-watching. This finding is also aligned with Chan et al. (2022), where social interaction is a predictor of binge-watching behaviours, as viewers might not want to lose discussion/interaction with their social circles, which caused them to form the attitude and perform binge-watching behaviours (Flayelle et al., 2017). Thus, the following hypothetical assumption is formed:

H1: Social interaction is positively related to attitudes of binge-watching.

Enjoyment can be defined as a form of intrinsic emotional gratification derived when the audience consumes various forms of media, particularly in the form of watching for relaxation and leisure time (Camilleri & Falzon, 2021). This phenomenon is consistent with a

growing body of evidence that demonstrates the need for entertainment in affecting media use, and therefore the propensity for prolonged usage (Sebsbie & Tsegaye, 2025). For instance, Ramayani et al. (2018) found that entertainment is a main factor for binge-watching, which is aligned with the results by Aytas and Topatan (2024). This further supported the results of Sil et al. (2025), where when viewers experience enjoyment, it will make binge-watching harder to stop (attitude and behaviour). Congruently, numerous past studies have indicated that enjoyment will influence the binge-watching behaviour favourably (Bastos et al., 2024; Chan et al., 2022; Tengku et al., 2023; Yoo et al., 2020). Therefore, the study hypothesized that:

H2: Enjoyment is positively related to attitudes of binge-watching.

Media appeal (technological gratification), including elements such as high production value, compelling narratives, and overall quality of both visual and auditory content (Gan & Li, 2018). For instance, Nanda and Banerjee (2020) highlighted the need for inclusion of technology-related needs to further expand the UGT on binge-watching phenomena. This is further affirmed by the study of Flayelle et al. (2026), that on-demand streaming technology can promote binge-watching behaviours.

The content of media appeal can be constructed both narratively and visually, and can appeal more to the audience (Kong & Lou, 2026). For example, story themes, HD images, movie scene effects, and music all contribute to content credibility. Wooley et al. (2022) reported that the technological characteristics such as use of bright and/or suitable colours influences viewers' attitude and satisfaction. These media appeal characteristics attract viewers' attention, and subsequently lead to viewers engaging in binge-watching and social media addiction (Chan et al., 2025b; Gao et al., 2022). Thus, the study postulated that:

H3: Media appeal is positively related to attitudes of binge-watching.

Halfmann and Reinecke (2021) argued that the escape motive served as a coping mechanism to loneliness, distress, boredom, or other negative emotional conditions. Escapism, as defined in UGT, involves using media to relieve the pressure of everyday life (Yildirim Demirdöğen et al., 2024). Binge-watching behaviours are also motivated by the perceived ability of narratives to serve as a means of escape from reality (Yue & Cui, 2026), by which viewers can forget their worries while they are captivated by interesting characters and stories for emotion regulation. As shown by Gabbiadini et al. (2021), escapism may drive prolonged binge-watching. This is further supported by Ahmed and Mustafa (2025), and Ramadhani et al (2025) that escapism can increase binge-watching consumption on television and Korean drama. Based on the discussion, the study hypothesized that:

H4: Escapism is positively related to attitudes of binge-watching.

Immersion, refers to an intensified cognitive and affective involvement in media content (Alruwaili, 2025), and causes viewers to lose their sense of time and reality (Yan et al., 2023). For instance, immersion strongly predicts binge-watching (Anozie, 2020; Mahmoud & Wahab, 2021; Shao & Bernaza, 2023). This immersive involvement will fortify the habitual attitude as an entertaining and pleasurable action (Chang & Peng, 2022; Flayelle et al., 2017), thus enhancing the binge-watching behaviour. Therefore, the study assumed that:

H5: Immersion is positively associated with the attitude of binge-watching.

Attitude towards binge-watching is associated with binge-watch behaviour (Aytas & Topatan, 2024). Thus, when the viewers hold a positive attitude toward the binge-watching behaviour, they are more inclined to perform it (Abdul Latif et al., 2025). Besides, Liao et al. (2023) examined the mediating effect of attitude towards the mass media news on the public perception of media usage on altruistic behaviour, and the intervening role of attitude was ascertained. In addition, the study by Selamat et al. (2025) also evidenced that attitude can mediate between social media exposure and mental illness stigmatization. However, based on the best authors' knowledge, the exact empirical evidence which looks into how attitude functions as a mediator required further testing. This is because past literature which examined attitudes as an intervening variable are mainly derived from marketing perspectives (Anuba, 2023; Parveen & Chaudhary, 2025). Thus, the following hypotheses were constructed:

H6: Attitude of binge-watching is positively related to binge-watch behaviour.

H7: The attitude of binge-watching mediates the motives of (a) social interaction, (b) enjoyment, (c) media appeal, (d) escapism, (e) immersion, and binge-watch behaviour.

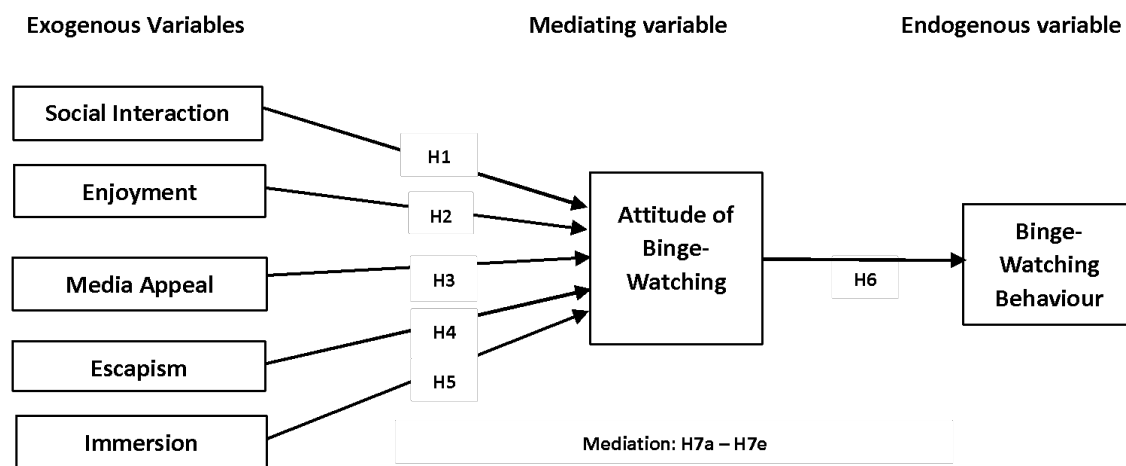


Figure 1: Research framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Quantitative research is a method of systematically gathering numerical evidence and analysing relationships between two or more variables (Slater & Hasson, 2025). This study intended to examine the motivational factors that may contribute to binge-watching, which was conducted using an online survey with a structured, extensive questionnaire (Koo & Yang, 2025).

Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was applied, which helps in intentionally selecting the respondents for the research (Campbell et al., 2020). Thus, the respondents have to indicate any experience of binge-watching in a screening question (Have you binge-watched a series or multiple episodes in a single sitting?). This technique ensures that all the respondents who have adequate knowledge and experience in the study are selected.

In addition, the sample size of this study was determined using G*Power analysis, commonly used in most quantitative methods (Kang, 2021). With the effect size of 0.15, a statistical power of 0.95, and six predictors, the minimum required sample was 146. To enhance the reliability and statistical power of the study, 280 valid responses were collected, which were sufficient for the statistical analysis.

Measurement

The questionnaire is structured into four sections (A, B, C, and D). Section A gathers demographic information from the respondents, including gender, age, income, level of binge-watching, and preferred platform. It also includes a screening question– “Have you binge-watched a series or multiple episodes in a single sitting before?”– to ensure that respondents meet the inclusion criteria of the study.

Section B contains items in measuring the exogenous variables: social interaction, enjoyment, media appeal, escapism, and immersion. Social interaction items were adapted from (Aytas & Topatan, 2024; Song et al., 2021). Additionally, the items measuring for enjoyment and escapism were adapted from (Panda & Pandey, 2017; Song et al., 2021). The media appeal scale was adopted from Gan and Li (2018), and immersion items were modified from Hamari et al. (2016).

Section D focuses on the mediating variable (attitude of binge-watching) and the endogenous variable (binge-watching behaviour). The items for attitude were adapted from Song et al. (2021), while the items for binge-watching behaviour are modified from Batos et al. (2024) and Song et al. (2021). Measurement items in Sections B, C, and D were presented as statements, with respondents were asked to express their level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). The Likert scale allows the respondents to express varying degrees of opinion rather than binary options (Koo & Yang, 2025).

Bias Control

To help control for possible social desirability bias in responses, authors have embedded some social desirability items within the survey (Fischer & Fick, 1993). This methodological procedural remedy of mixing the social desirability items within the survey will prevent the respondents from guessing the purpose and reduce the streamlined response patterns (Polas, 2025; Rodríguez-Ardura & Meseguer-Artola, 2020).

Data Collection Procedures

The data was collected through an online questionnaire using Google Forms. The survey was shared on WhatsApp, Instagram, as well as various social media channels, aiming to recruit current streaming service users and binge-watching participants. In order to maintain data integrity and privacy, the online survey opts for the “Limit to 1 Response” setting, and the responses will be taken for research purposes and safely archived following ethical rules for anonymity and confidentiality. The data was collected from February 2025 to July 2025.

RESULTS

Based on Table 1, the majority of the respondents were female (67.1%), with males accounting for (32.9%). More than half of the respondents are in the age range of 21-25 years old (54.6%), which is mainly young adults who are technology savvy. In terms of income, the majority of the respondents earned less than RM2000 (79.6%) and reported being moderate viewers when it comes to binge-watching. The common platform used for binge watching is Netflix, which comprised 66.1%.

Table 1: Respondents' demographic characteristics (N=280)

Variables		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	92	32.9
	Female	188	67.1
Age (years old)	<20	99	35.4
	21-25	153	54.6
	26-30	16	5.7
	31-35	6	2.1
	36-40	2	0.7
	>40	4	1.4
Income (RM)	<2000	223	79.6
	2001-3000	22	7.9
	3001-4000	13	4.6
	4001-5000	9	3.2
	>5000	13	4.6
How often do you binge-watch?	Light	73	26.1
	Moderate	146	52.1
	Heavy	61	21.8
Platform used to binge-watch	Netflix	185	66.1
	Disney + Hotstar	10	3.6
	Amazon Prime Video	10	3.6
	YouTube	64	22.9
	Others	11	3.9

As shown in Table 2, the Cronbach's Alpha, which measures internal consistency with a value of 0.70 and above, is considered good reliability according to Tavakol and Dennick (2011). Besides, Hair et al. (2022) suggested that the composite reliability (CR) value should be above 0.70, and the CR values range from 0.860 to 0.918, which exceed the 0.70 threshold.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is the convergent validity, which indicates the level to which a latent construct captures the variance of the indicators (Cheung et al., 2024). The acceptable value of AVE would be 0.5 and above (Hair et al., 2022). Based on Table 2, all the AVE values were above the 0.50 threshold and ranged from 0.598 to 0.789. Hence, the convergent validity was ascertained.

Table 2: Convergent validity assessment

Variables	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Attitude of binge-watching	ABW1	0.844	0.866	0.918	0.789
	ABW2	0.909			
	ABW3	0.910			
Binge-watching behaviour	BWB1	0.774	0.816	0.877	0.643
	BWB2	0.701			
	BWB3	0.876			
	BWB4	0.845			
Enjoyment	EN1	0.834	0.910	0.933	0.736
	EN2	0.848			
	EN3	0.858			
	EN4	0.888			
	EN5	0.859			
Escapism	ES1	0.845	0.867	0.904	0.654
	ES2	0.856			
	ES3	0.771			
	ES4	0.833			
	ES5	0.732			
Immersion	IMM1	0.835	0.840	0.891	0.671
	IMM2	0.800			
	IMM3	0.866			
	IMM4	0.772			
Media appeal	MA1	0.791	0.757	0.860	0.672
	MA2	0.840			
	MA3	0.828			
Social interaction	SI1	0.724	0.826	0.877	0.589
	SI2	0.763			
	SI3	0.711			
	SI4	0.842			
	SI5	0.790			

Discriminant validity ensures constructs are empirically distinct and is assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio (Henseler et al., 2015). Discriminant validity is established as all HTMT ratios are below 0.90 (Hair et al., 2022) (see Table 3).

Table 3: Discriminant validity using HTMT

	ABW	BWB	EN	ES	IMM	MA	SI
ABW							
BWB	0.820						
EN	0.689	0.722					
ES	0.554	0.617	0.621				
IMM	0.513	0.696	0.537	0.710			
MA	0.623	0.654	0.527	0.486	0.630		
SI	0.441	0.467	0.322	0.295	0.400	0.874	

Note: ABW = Attitude of binge-watching, BWB = Binge-watching behaviour, EN = Enjoyment, ES = Escapism, IMM = Immersion, MA = Media appeal, SI = Social interaction

Table 4 shows the results of the structural model assessment. The structural model was examined with 10,000 bootstraps as recommended by Hair et al. (2024). The significant paths would be Enjoyment ($\beta = 0.411, t = 7.300, p = 0.000$), Media appeal ($\beta = 0.196, t = 2.692, p = 0.004$), and Escapism ($\beta = 0.125, t = 2.306, p = 0.011$), which have a positive and significant influence on the attitude of binge-watching. In addition, the attitude of binge-watching ($\beta = 0.710, t = 19.615, p = 0.000$) has positive and significant relations with binge-watching behaviour. Therefore, H2, H3, H4, and H6 were supported. However, social interaction ($\beta = 0.076, t = 1.232, p=0.109$) and immersion ($\beta = 0.054, t = 0.837, p=0.201$) do not have a significant effect on the attitude of binge-watching, as the t-values are less than 1.645 (1-tailed; 95% confidence interval) and zero value is straddled between the lower and upper bound of the bias-corrected confidence interval (Hair et al., 2022) for the two paths. Thus, H1 and H5 were rejected.

As demonstrated in Table 4, the R^2 value of attitude of binge-watching is 0.470, which means that 47% of changes in attitude can be explained by the five motives, whereas the R^2 value of binge-watching behaviour is 0.504, which indicates that 50.4% of changes in the behaviour can be explained by the attitude. Besides, the effect size interpretation was based on Cohen (1988), where social interaction ($f^2 = 0.006$), enjoyment ($f^2 = 0.197$), media appeal ($f^2=0.030$), escapism ($f^2= 0.015$), and immersion ($f^2 = 0.003$) have trivial effects on attitude of binge-watching, but attitudes toward binge-watching behaviour have a large effect size ($f^2 = 1.016$).

According to Shela et al. (2023), the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is used to evaluate the collinearity between independent constructs in the measurement model. The VIF value of 3-5 is generally accepted and indicates no issue with multicollinearity (Shela et al., 2023). The VIF values of every path are acceptable as they all fall below the threshold of 3, which shows that collinearity is not a major concern in this study.

Table 4: Structural model evaluation

Paths	Std. Beta	Std. error	T	P	LLCI (5%)	ULCI (95%)	D	R2	f2	VIF
H1: SI -> ABW	0.076	0.062	1.232	0.109	-0.031	0.173	NS	0.470	0.006	1.930
H2: EN -> ABW	0.411	0.056	7.300**	0.000	0.319	0.506	S		0.197	1.617
H3: MA -> ABW	0.196	0.073	2.692**	0.004	0.077	0.315	S		0.030	2.421
H4: ES -> ABW	0.125	0.054	2.306*	0.011	0.033	0.210	S		0.015	1.930
H5: IMM -> ABW	0.054	0.064	0.837	0.201	-0.054	0.158	NS		0.003	1.979
H6: ABW -> BWB	0.710	0.036	19.615**	0.000	0.643	0.763	S	0.504	1.016	1.000

Note: ABW = Attitude of binge-watching, BWB = Binge-watching behaviour, EN = Enjoyment, ES = Escapism, IMM = Immersion, MA = Media appeal, SI = Social interaction, LLCI = Lower limit confidence interval, ULCI = Upper Limit confidence interval, S = Supported, NS = Not supported

**p < 0.01, *p < 0.05; 1-tailed test

As for the mediating effects, three paths have significant relationships, and the attitude of binge-watching as a mediator was established. Specifically, EN -> ABW -> BWB ($\beta = 0.292, t = 7.269, p = 0.000$), MA -> ABW -> BWB ($\beta = 0.139, t = 2.627, p = 0.009$), and ES -> ABW -> BWB ($\beta = 0.089, t = 2.283, p = 0.022$) are significant. However, the attitude of binge-watching does not mediate between SI ($\beta = 0.054, t = 1.230, p = 0.219$) and IMM ($\beta = 0.038, t = 0.823, p = 0.411$). Hence, H7b, H7c, and H7d were accepted; however, the t-values for H7a and H7e were less than 1.960 (2-tailed), and a zero value is straddled between the lower and upper bounds of the bias-corrected confidence interval (Hair et al., 2022). Thus, H7a and H7e were rejected.

Table 5: Indirect effects

Paths	Std. Beta	Std. error	T	P	LLCI (2.5%)	ULCI (97.5%)	D
H7a: SI -> ABW -> BWB	0.054	0.044	1.230	0.219	-0.034	0.138	NS
H7b: EN -> ABW -> BWB	0.292	0.040	7.269**	0.000	0.213	0.372	S
H7c: MA -> ABW -> BWB	0.139	0.053	2.627**	0.009	0.037	0.246	S
H7d: ES -> ABW -> BWB	0.089	0.039	2.283*	0.022	0.011	0.163	S
H7e: IMM -> ABW -> BWB	0.038	0.047	0.823	0.411	-0.052	0.130	NS

Note: ABW = Attitude of binge-watching, BWB = Binge-watching behaviour, EN = Enjoyment, ES = Escapism, IMM = Immersion, MA = Media appeal, SI = Social interaction, LLCI = Lower limit confidence interval, ULCI = Upper Limit confidence interval, S = Supported, NS = Not supported

**p < 0.01, *p < 0.05; 2-tailed test

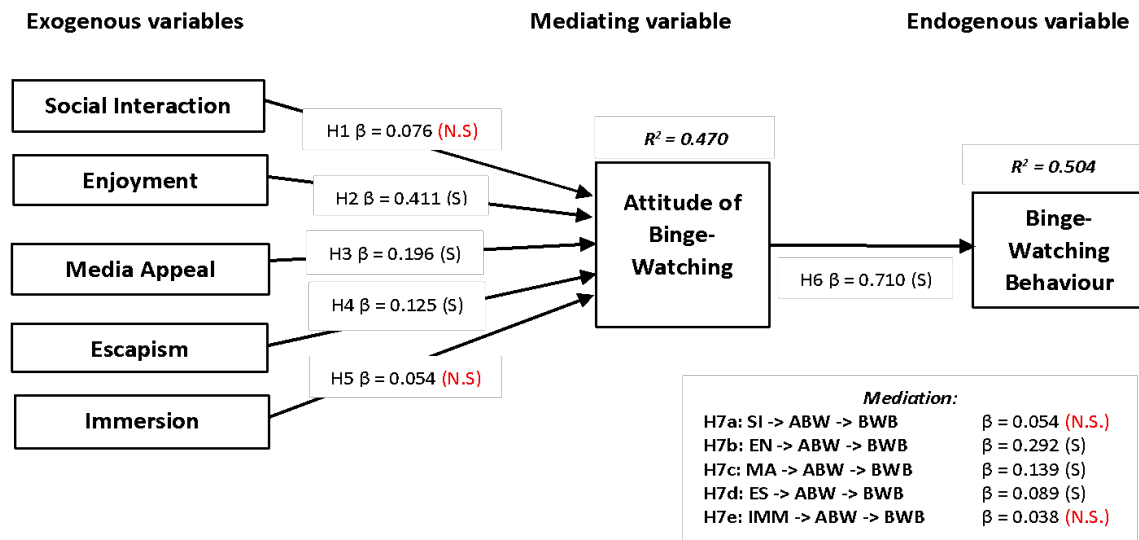


Figure 2: Structural model evaluation

The PLSpredict was used to assess the predictive power of the model (Shmueli et al., 2019). Shmueli et al. (2019) highlighted that the predictive power for a construct is high if all its PLS-SEM_RMSE is lower than LM_RMSE. As seen from Table 6, all the PLS-SEM_RMSE for the attitude of binge-watching are lower than the LM_RMSE, indicating a high predictive power; the binge-watching behaviour had a medium predictive relevance.

Table 6: PLSpredict evaluation

	Q ² predict	PLS-SEM_RMSE	LM_RMSE	PLS SEM - LM	Indication
ABW1	0.238	0.930	0.960	-0.030	High
ABW2	0.388	0.739	0.783	-0.044	
ABW3	0.410	0.766	0.801	-0.035	
BWB1	0.265	0.880	0.904	-0.024	Medium
BWB2	0.207	1.035	1.062	-0.027	
BWB3	0.363	0.812	0.786	0.026	
BWB4	0.312	0.946	0.950	-0.004	

DISCUSSION

This result indicated that enjoyment is a significant predictor of attitude toward binge-watching. Therefore, H2 is accepted. The result supports the notion of Sil et al. (2025), where binge-watchers' access to continuous enjoyment in an emotional environment will make it hard for viewers to stop. Similarly, numerous past studies also supported that one of the strong motivational elements to consume long-form streaming content is pleasure (enjoyment), because many respondents remarked they had turned to platforms such as Netflix and Disney+ to view the TV series and content (Bastos et al., 2024; Chan et al., 2022; Aytas & Topanta, 2024).

Moreover, media appeal, which is the technological gratification played a significant role in predicting the attitude of binge-watching. Hence, H3 is accepted. This is in line with Flayelle et al. (2026) together with Kou and Lou (2026) that on-demand streaming technology characteristics (visual aesthetics, narrative, and platform design) foster viewer retention and engagement in binge-watching. This further supports the results of Gan and Li (2018) that media appeal can motivate continuous use intention among WeChat users in China, whereas in this context is binge-watching behaviour.

Escapism is also significantly influenced by the attitude of binge-watching, which supports H4. This is also in line with UGT, which asserts that individuals use media to escape the tension and stressors in daily life (Katz et al., 1973; Yildirim Demirdöğen et al., 2024). Starosta and Izydorczyk (2020) have also recognized escapism as a common motivator of students and young adults to avoid academic responsibilities and social obligations. Indeed, the current findings are consistent with this perspective, as individuals binge-watch as a means of coping for mental and emotional escape (Yue & Cui, 2026).

However, social interaction was not a significant predictor of the attitude of binge-watching, and H1 is unsupported. This is opposed to the findings of Aytas and Topatan (2024) with Chan et al. (2022), who have highlighted that peer talk, social sharing, and online forums can influence binge-watching. The possible reasons for the contradicted results could be due to the personalization of streaming media by the young adult as the study comprised of many young viewers, where they just like to binge-watch the streaming genres they like, rather than share or discuss them with peers, as watching of the streaming media genres might be personal, unless their peers also have similar interest.

Similarly, immersion was not a significant predictor of attitude toward binge-watching; therefore, H5 is unsupported. This is contrary to numerous past research (Chang & Peng, 2022; Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020; Shao & Bernaza, 2023) that found immersion (i.e., getting cognitively absorbed into the story or emotionally connected to the characters) was the most important elicitor factor for binge-watching. A possible explanation could be due to the age, where the respondents were mainly young adults between 20 and 25 years old. For this age group, binge-watching could be done less intensively and more as a background noise, as this group of young adults is very agile and multitasking while binge-watching, resulting in less cognitive or affective immersion in the streaming media content.

Lastly, the attitude of binge-watching was significantly related to binge-watching behaviour, and H6 is supported. In line with our findings, Abdul Latif et al. (2025) asserted that positive attitudes towards binge-watching might lead audiences to perform the behaviours. The proposed structural model is further evidenced by the mediating role of attitude in influencing the binge-watching behaviour, which aligns with numerous past studies in media and communication that attitude can have intervening effects on media

outcomes (Liao et al., 2023; Selamat et al., 2025). Cumulatively, these results have provided support for the applicability of UGT in explaining the various motivations behind binge-watching among young and technology-literate Malaysian audiences.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study applied extended UGT to investigate the motivational determinants of attitude and behaviour of binge-watching among viewers. The results showed that enjoyment, escapism, and media appeal were positively and significantly related to the attitude of binge-watching. However, immersion and social interaction were found not to be significantly associated with attitude. Attitude of binge-watching was also identified as a mediating factor that influences the motives (i.e., enjoyment, escapism, and media appeal) on binge-watching behaviour. These findings evidenced the importance of psychological and technological gratifications as drivers of audiences' consumption of digital streaming materials and content.

Academic Implications

This study makes a number of theoretical contributions to the digital media landscape and the UGT framework. It provides theoretical enlightenment on UGT in the context of digital media applications, in particular, the new trend of binge-watching. Although the UGT has previously provided a fundamental base for comprehension of media consumption in various media channels, this study further contributes to the development of the theory by focusing on emerging critical gratifications in the digital era, namely immersion and media appeal.

The rise of digital streaming services, with its high production values, ongoing narratives, and algorithmic personalization had made media appeal and immersion more salient drivers for media consumption compared to traditional media. By empirically investigating these particular gratifications, this study adds nuance to UGT predictive utility by showing how an active audience chooses and consumes not just entertaining, but deeply engaging in the aesthetic contents that are enhanced by the technology.

Moreover, an important contribution is the empirical evidence that attitude can function as a mediator in the motivational paths to binge-watching behaviour. Many extant models of media usage typically examine direct relationships between specific gratifications and their usage and behaviour. Thus, by showing that consumer attitude can mediate these relationships, it brings a crucial cognitive element in enhancing media scholarship.

Practical Implications

The results of this study hold actionable implications for players in the digital media industry, such as streaming services, media content creators/producers, and policymakers. For the content creators, this study found that enjoyment and media appeal (technological gratification) were the predictors for the attitude and behaviour of binge-watching. Hence, content producers/creators should produce streaming video content that has higher quality cinematography, sound design, and have interactive visual/aesthetic elements to impress the viewers, such as incorporating the metaverse, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) in producing the broadcast content (Baía Reis & Ashmore, 2022; Pineda-Torres et al., 2025). This will make the viewers have a good perception and the joyful quality experiences (Eneche et al., 2025), and will further encourage viewers to watch the contents.

In addition, streaming services can also benefit by customizing content recommendations. For instance, the streaming services can include the features that allow users to control content flow, such as break reminders to cultivate responsible viewing habits. Besides, the streaming services can implement digital well-being prompts after extended watching in the context to avoid the negative consequences of binge-watching.

Lastly, the study also offers guidance to policymakers and regulators on strategies that can help reduce the potential negative impact of excessive binge-watching. For instance, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) should mandate digital literacy programs and campaigns to educate users about balanced social media use and its impact, particularly for young adults.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite these contributions, the present study has several limitations. First, because purposive sampling was employed, findings may not be generalizable. This suggests that future studies can apply random or stratified samples that can provide better representation.

In addition, another limitation is the demographic of the sample, which was over-represented with younger respondents (21–25 years old). Therefore, future research should investigate more diverse age and ethnic groups from different cultural settings (Sukmono et al., 2025) to capture generational differences so that comparison studies and multi-group analysis can be performed.

This study solely relied on the quantitative and self-reported questionnaire. Despite efforts to control data bias, future researchers can employ qualitative or mixed method approaches (e.g., interviews, focus groups) and longitudinal designs to gain deeper insights and capture changes in binge-watching phenomenon over time.

Although the study contributed to the UGT with the inclusion of the media appeal and immersion motives, the R^2 of 50.4% indicated there are other potential variables. Thus, variables such as anticipated regret (Bastos et al., 2024), genre stickiness (Cha & Chan-Olmsted, 2024) and control variables could be included in future research to add new insights and extend the UGT framework.

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