



Examining OTT binge-watching Behaviours, Loneliness, and Enjoyment: Insights into OTT Consumption Patterns Among Generation Z in Maharashtra, India

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ABSTRACT

The present research examines to explore the psychological and emotional antecedents underlying over-the-top (OTT) binge-watching among Generation Z in the state of Maharashtra, India specifically considering enjoyment and loneliness as possible predictors. Situated in UGT, it investigates the process by which hedonic and compensatory needs influence sustained media use. Data was collected from 750 respondents of Generation Z in five urban cities, viz., Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Nashik and Aurangabad by using a structured questionnaire. PLS-SEM was used for testing of the hypothesized relationships. The results demonstrate that enjoyment ($\beta = 0.450$, $p < .001$) and loneliness ($\beta = 0.320$, $p = 0.002$) have significant positive effects on experience of binge-watching behaviour. In addition, enjoyment strongly moderates the connection between loneliness and binge-watching ($\beta = 0.250$, $p = 0.001$), meaning that people who have more experience of enjoyment tend to exhibit higher levels in continuous watching while they are lonely. The research highlights binge-watching's split nature as a pleasure that can also serve as an escape from empty feelings. It offers imperative implications for content creators, marketers and mental health professionals working to comprehend the sophisticated media engagement behaviours of Gen Z. The future research, therefore, may extend it to cover more psychological and contextual constructs to better explain the shifting landscape in digital media consumption.

Keywords: OTT Binge-watching, Enjoyment, Loneliness, Media Consumption, Generation Z, Media Consumption Behaviour

1. INTRODUCTION

Media effects refer to the various outcomes both deliberate and inadvertent arising from mass communication and its influence on individuals, groups, and societies. The impact of media exposure on viewers, in terms of frequency, type, and duration of behaviour, has been widely explored across communication and behavioural sciences. Theories such as Social Learning Theory, Cultivation Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) have offered valuable frameworks for understanding the way media shapes audience mindsets, beliefs, and behaviours. The recent technological progressions have profoundly altered how individuals engage with media. For decades, television dominated daily consumption patterns; however, the onset of the digital era has shifted engagement toward online streaming. The digital revolution has redefined viewing habits, replacing traditional live TV next to binge-watching which has been

defined as the practice of watching multiple episodes or an entire series in one sitting through video-on-demand (VoD) platforms (Özkent and Akdoğan, 2025). The swift proliferation of OTT streaming services has restructured the complete global media intake, positioning Generation Z at the forefront of this transformation (Karunakaran et al., 2023). As digital natives themselves, Gen Z are highly tech-savvy individuals with a strong desire for autonomy, interaction and personalization in their entertainment encounters (Puthiyakath and Goswami, 2021).

OTT platforms like Amazon Prime Video, Netflix etc., fulfill these requirements by providing access to varied assortment of on demand content including series, movies and reality shows that can be viewed at the discretion of the consumer (Chen et al., 2017). The transformation has been further sped up due to the combination of low-cost internet, development of network infrastructure, and

growing smartphones penetration (Lee et al. 2020; Kwak et al. 2021). Consequently, linear television has downgraded, and binge-watching has become the new normalcy (Kaur and Ashfaq, 2023; Ameri et al., 2024). This dynamic is part of a larger pattern that can be described as “youthification” a television trend in which the younger demographics have changed their behaviour from traditional cable and satellite towards and online streaming environments (Bartolomé, 2023).

The way the OTT market has been expanding worldwide provides testimony to this change. The OTT media user count was 3.26 billion for the year 2022, there were a total of 3.51 billion active users in 2023 and it is projected that this user base will increase to an expected number of around 4.22 billion for the year 2027 (Statista, 2023). Economically, the sector is projected to be worth \$86.8 billion by 2026 and to expand at a CAGR of 14.3% (Menon, 2022). Such rising prevalence of use does not only reflect evolving binge-watch behaviours but also reflects the prominent role played by younger generations to propel digital content consumption (Flayelle et al., 2017; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Walsh and Singh, 2021).

For advertisers, OTT channels provide a new dimension to reach Gen Z viewers with AI recommendations and individualized ads to create more emotional connection (Akter et al., 2022; Lian et al., 2019). However, despite this growing trend among both commercial and academic spheres, the post-adoption level of behaviour that is, the emotional and psychological drivers for OTT binge-watching are understudied. Prior research has examined adoption drivers (Mulla, 2022), content preferences (Shin and Park, 2021), and influence of COVID-19 on media use (Sharma and Lulandala, 2023) and bibliometric reviews have charted the thematic trajectory of OTTs studies (Singh et al., 2022). But the psychological and emotion-based motivators (especially loneliness) of binge-watching behaviour are still not addressed much, especially from an Indian Gen Z cultural aspect.

While the role of loneliness has been acknowledged as an important psychological variable that contributes to binge-watching tendencies. Previous studies have indicated some kind of cycle: lonely people who use the

media to cope with their feelings of social isolation become even lonelier (Starosta and Izydorzcyk, 2020; Riddle et al., 2018). This process is especially applicable to Generation Z, often referred to as the “loneliest generation,” owing to their heavy dependence on online communication and lack of face-to-face contact (Twenge et al., 2019). The fact that technology is replacing physical interaction with virtual engagement prompts the inquiry: how loneliness influences OTT overconsumption within this group.

Though loneliness has been examined as a predictor for binge-watching, the moderating effect of enjoyment on this relationship is less clear. Enjoyment, as a basic emotional response toward media, increases engagement that can mitigate the negative psychological impact of loneliness (Bartsch, 2012; Shim and Kim, 2018). As noted by Panda and Pandey (2017), enjoyment may not only serve as reflow in the users’ interaction with media yet could also reduce feelings of social loneliness. However, the exact manner of how enjoyment moderates the relationship between loneliness and OTT binge-watching has not been fully explained. Considering Gen Z’s increased preference for immersive and emotionally gratifying media messages (Flayelle et al., 2020), it is imperative to take the interaction between these two layers into account. Recent research (Zou et al., 2025; Özkent and Akdoğan, 2025) has linked binge-watching to emotional regulation and social isolation, but the moderating role of enjoyment has not been empirically examined. Such a gap needs to be filled in the service of creating a more refined understanding of how affective reactions motivate binge-watching among Gen Z audiences. Thus, this study is based on the following research questions:

RQ1: Are enjoyment and OTT binge-watching behaviour related among Generation Z?

RQ2: Does loneliness predict OTT binge-watching behaviour in Generation Z?

RQ3: Is enjoyment as a moderator in the association between loneliness and Generation Z’s OTT binge-watching behaviour applicable?

Through these research questions, the article adds to the emerging conversation of media psychology and digital well-being and extends our understanding of how loneliness as well

as enjoyment influence binge-watching behaviour within India's digitally connected, tech-savvy youth. In addition, the results have practical implications for content creators and marketers, as well as on digital wellness initiatives, in designing emotionally intelligent strategies to achieve engagement for meaningful viewing experience in the OTT space.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Loneliness and OTT binge-watching Behaviour Among Gen Z

For a long time, binge-watching the over-the-top content (OTT) has shown to be related to several negative outcomes such as psychologists finding a key link between binge-watching and feeling of loneliness (Lee et al., 2024; Nair et al., 2024). Solely regarding this activity as a hyper fixation has shown to bear relevance in reducing social interaction leading to feelings of isolation. In addition, with what Riddle et al., (2018) stated, 70% of the people who frequently engage in binge-watching continuously, have trouble setting a limit to the number of episodes they watch.

The same study noted that analysis regarding this behaviour suggests that a majority of these consumer compulsively consume content, which constitutes in social alienation and withdrawal, that link to their social interaction and personality traits disposition (Gafoor, 2024). More so, Riddle and his peers reported cinematic over consumption as an increasing social disease that primarily affects Gen Z, with dire consequences to their mental wellbeing and sense of interconnectedness. The adverse consequences of such compulsive behaviour have also been highlighted by Mohite and Bharthoo (2024) who outline a spectrum of them, from insomnia and disorders to depression and social anxiety. Garg, and Singh (2023) found a link between individuals between the ages of 18-30 also had a significant relationship between OTT binge-watching and interaction anxiety, indicating the possibility of OTT binge-watching as a coping mechanism against loneliness and interaction anxiety. Following these trends, Narain and Sahi (2022) found a positive relationship between OTT binge-watching and loneliness and a negative relationship between OTT binge-watching and psychological well-being among Indian college goers.

These findings show that as much as OTT binge-watching offers a temporary refuge, it has the potential to deepen layers of loneliness and weaken mental health over time. The isolating nature of OTT binge-watching, however, establishes a cyclical relationship between isolation and media consumption. Loneliness, which is a perceived lack of meaningful social relationships, has been shown to trigger OTT binge-watching behaviours, and OTT binge-watching behaviours can lead to loneliness (Starosta and Izydorczyk, 2020; Tolba and Zoghaib, 2022). If they had been previously withdrawn (i.e., the symptom may appear before the cause) pre- or post-binge-watching, OTT binge-watching can be perpetuated, as individuals often escape to OTTs, to avoid real-world social interactions (Goller and Zinkham, Citation2023). When it comes to Gen Z, dubbed the "loneliest generation" owing to their heavy dependence on digital communication (Twenge et al., 2019), OTT binge-watching serves as a readily available escape from loneliness. Gen Z, who favors immediate rewards, can engage instantaneously through OTT platforms that facilitate immediate availability of content for viewing (Ahmed, 2021; Prakash, 2023) which have vast content libraries. In addition to this, OTT binge-watching is also related to psychological needs including emotional regulation (Flayelle et al., 2020). Gen Z viewers might double down on engagement with these OTT experiences, however, due to the personalized and immersive nature of those experiences during feelings of loneliness (Panda and Pandey, 2017). But excessive engagement can solidify a feedback loop, where loneliness leads to binge-watching and extended screen time, which in turn exacerbates feelings of loneliness (Starosta and Izydorczyk, 2020). Keeping in view the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between enjoyment and OTT binge-watching behaviour.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between loneliness and OTT binge-watching behaviour.

The Moderating Role of Enjoyment in the Relationship Between Loneliness and Binge-Watching

Enjoyment as a positive emotional experience generated from media consumption is probably an important variable determining OTT binge-watching behaviour (Singh and Singh, 2022). It functions as an elemental source of satisfaction and also determined viewing-patterns both the extent and volume of it (Bartsch, 2012). With lonely individuals, enjoyment works as a buffer that moderates the relationship between loneliness and OTT binge-watching by increasing the value of the activity itself (Shim and Kim, 2018). A well-known approach of “hedonic gratification” emphasizes that both media user identity and personality, which focuses on the purpose and function of media, govern orientation in terms of prioritizing pleasurable and immersive experiences. Particularly in the context of OTT platforms, enjoyment gained from customized contents and smooth watching provides motivation for OTT binge-watching behaviours (Conlin et al., 2016).

Gen Z benefits from similar collective experiences and the social validation gained from conversations about popular shows observed in shared viewership (Harrington and Bielby, 2020) going beyond that, the group in this case may derive even more enjoyment from where they watch their shows and whom they watch them with. While previous research has thoroughly examined the psychological reasons driving OTT binge-watching, the specific moderating role of enjoyment in the loneliness-OTT binge-watching relationship has been less explored. Enjoyment can serve a two-fold purpose: on the one hand, it is a coping mechanism to mitigate loneliness, while on the other, enjoyment is a motivator of excessive watching behaviour (Panda and Pandey, 2017; Flayelle et al., 2020). There is a need to close this gap in literature to understand the interaction of emotional factors in OTT binge-watch tendencies. Keeping in view the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₀₃: Enjoyment does not significantly moderate the relationship between loneliness and OTT OTT binge-watching behaviour in Gen Z.

Hypotheses Contextualized in Literature

The hypotheses for this study are based on the literature explaining the behavioural and emotional aspects that contribute to binge

watching behaviour. H₀₃, positing enjoyment as a direct stimulus to binge-watching corresponds with several studies emphasizing enjoyment as a core element in media consumption (Weiss and Lang, 2012; Harrington et al., 2020). In contrast to previous studies, such as those by Rubenking and Bracken (2018), reporting positive relationships between loneliness and increased media consumption, the null hypothesis H₀₂ asserts that there is no significant relationship between loneliness and binge-watching. Thus, H₀₃, indicating that enjoyment is not a moderator in the relationship between loneliness and binge-watching, contradicts previous studies which find enjoyment of media content as the determining factor of media engagement (Bartsch, 2012; Shim and Kim, 2018). These hypotheses serve as a basis for investigating the intricate relationship between loneliness, enjoyment, and binge-watching behaviour, especially among Gen Z in India. This will help provide ground truth for these relatively well-established phenomena in terms of what is driving behaviour in the present context.

Conceptual Model

The author tested the conceptual model (Fig 1) for direct effects of loneliness and enjoyment on OTT binge-watching behaviour, as well as for an interaction effect of enjoyment on the effect of loneliness on OTT binge-watching behaviour. Loneliness and Enjoyment is Expected to Have a Positive Correlation with OTT Binge-Watching Enjoyment of OTT content consumed is likely to moderate the relationship, amplifying the emotional reward and value of such an activity thereby reducing opportunities for OTT binge watching behaviour, in loneliness.

Theoretical Foundation

This research is based on Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which highlights how active individuals are when choosing media for specific psychological and social needs (Katz et al., 1973). According to UGT, audiences actively engage with media content to fulfill personal motives such as entertainment, emotional regulation, social interaction, and escapism. This theory offers a functional scaffold to understand how and why both people who experience loneliness engage in OTT binge-watching behaviours.

Relevance of UGT to the Study:

- *Loneliness as a Driver:* UGT postulates that individuals use media to experience solace and companionship, reducing feelings of loneliness and social isolation by immersing themselves in content that resonates with their emotions.
- *OTT Binge-watching as Gratification:* OTT platforms indulge users' needs in the domain of entertainment, escapism, and emotional investment, access to serialized content, in an uninterrupted way. The feeling of loneliness unfortunately gives a much-needed temporary relief from negative emotional states through OTT binge-watching.
- *Principle of Enjoyment:* Enjoyment supports the UGT principle that the consumption of media is motivated by intrinsic gratification. The enjoyment that we gained from consuming OTT content serves as a confirmation of our OTT binge-watching behaviour, but it can also intensify the behaviour by providing more emotional reward from this activity.

This theoretical basis establishes a robust framework for examining the dynamics between loneliness, enjoyment, and OTT binge-watching behaviour, particularly in the context of Gen Z in India.

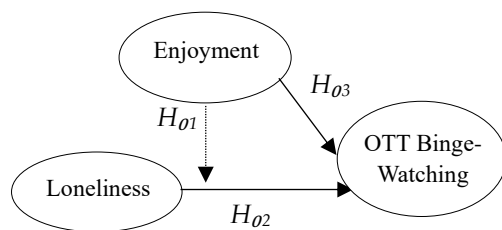


Figure 1: Conceptual model

3. MATERIALS AND METHOD

Participants and procedure

The population for this study consisted of Generation Z individuals in India, specifically those born between 1995 and 2012 (Barhate and Dirani, 2021). This age group, spanning from 13 to 30 years, represents the cohort most actively engaged in digital media consumption, including OTT platforms. However, for the purposes of this study, only individuals aged 18 and above were included, as they are more likely to have independent

media consumption habits and are legally eligible to participate in surveys.

The stratified random sampling method was used to keep this demographic evenly distributed across Maharashtra's top populated cities of Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Nashik, and Aurangabad. A mall intercept method was used to approach respondents at popular shopping mall locations that are social gathering places that draw diverse socio-economic backgrounds. To minimize biases and ensure comprehensive coverage of the target population, stratified random sampling was applied based on key demographic variables including age, gender and socio-economic status. The minimum required sample size was determined a priori using G*Power 3.1 software. A power analysis was conducted for a linear multiple regression model, anticipating a medium effect size (Cohen's $f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level (α) of 0.05, and a statistical power ($1-\beta$) of 0.80. This analysis indicated a required sample size of $N = 1,000$ respondents.

After the data collection phase, the raw dataset contained 1,050 responses. Following a rigorous data cleaning process that removed duplicates, speeders, and incomplete responses, 750 complete and valid responses were retained for final analysis. This final sample size ($N=750$) exceeds the conventional requirement for PLS-SEM analysis and provides sufficient power for detecting the hypothesized effects, ensuring the robustness of the statistical conclusions. Using a structured questionnaire, insights on OTT binge watching behaviours, loneliness, and OTT media enjoyment were captured from 750 completed and usable responses.

Responses that were empty or blank were excluded from the analysis, either because of incomplete survey data, inconsistent responses, or time constraints on-site (data collection). Even though the mall intercept method reached a good range of respondents from different backgrounds in an urban area, the approach also has its practical limitations (e.g. it doesn't include individuals who do not visit malls, potentially hindering findings' generalizability to residents from less urban areas or respondents of lower socio-economic strata).

In addition, as participants willing to participate in the study may differ from those who declined, research participation may have been affected by self-selection bias, which can shape results of OTT consumption. Collection of data through malls in urban areas may dissent findings that leans more towards those wealthier or urbanized inside Generation Z.

Measures

For the present study, three established scales were used to describe participants' behaviours and experiences. To measure binge-watching frequency, the Binge Watching Scale (Thevapriyan et al., 2023) was used, with a 5-point Likert scale from *Very Rarely* to *Always*. Social isolation was assessed using the Loneliness Scale (Hughes et al., 2004), a 3-point Likert scale (*Hardly Ever–Often*). Furthermore, the audience response scale for enjoyment (Oliver and Bartsch, 2010) was employed to measure the degree to which people were internally motivated and how much they enjoyed the media content, with responses ranging from *Totally Disagree* to *Totally Agree* on a 7-point Likert scale. These scales were chosen to cover as broadly as possible the participants' OTT binge-watching habits, feelings of loneliness, and enjoyment in consuming OTT media.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Demographics

As detailed in (Table 1), the total study sample comprised 750 completed and usable responses, with all respondents aged 18+, from the five most populated cities in Maharashtra: Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Nashik and Aurangabad, representing Generation Z participants. Out of the sample, 52% were male and 48% were female. This cohort set was young with an age distribution ranging from 18 to 30 years (mean age: 23.4, SD = 3.2 years). 60% of the respondents were from middle-income group, 25% from lower-middle income while 15% were from upper-middle-income. In terms of educational achievements, 45% of respondents had completed a bachelor's degree while 35% continued their undergraduate studies and 20% completed a master's degree or higher degree. Data were collected from 228 respondents of whom 70% were employed or interns and 30% were students.

Respondents were located in the following areas: Mumbai - 352 (47%), Pune - 188 (25%), Nagpur - 112 (15%), Nashik - 75 (10%), Aurangabad - 23 (3%) These percentages mirror the urban population demographics of Generation Z, which you can blame on diverse socio-economic backgrounds and regional patterns of OTT media consumption across India. The sample was mainly urban, with a good representation of respondents from

Table 1: Demographics

Variables	Category	Percentage	N
Gender	Male	52%	390
	Female	48%	360
Age Range	18-30 years	100%	750
Socio-Economic Status	Middle-income	60%	450
	Lower-middle-income	25%	188
	Upper-middle-income	15%	112
Educational Status	Bachelor's degree	45%	338
	Undergraduate (pursuing)	35%	263
	Master's degree or higher	20%	149
Employment Status	Employed or interned	70%	525
	Student	30%	225

Source: Computed from primary data

Table 2: Reliability and Validity of the Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Loneliness	0.715	0.744	0.826	0.615
Binge Watching	0.759	0.919	0.806	0.681
Enjoyment	0.885	0.916	0.905	0.751

Note: All values are over the recommended limits for reliability (a, rho_a and rho_c > 0.70) and convergent validity (AVE > 0.50).

Source: Computed from primary data

shopping malls that represented a very different cross-section of Gen Z active in digital media consumption, specifically OTT platforms.

4.3 Assessment of the Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural (internal) model was tested in terms of the R-square (R^2), path coefficients (β) and their significance through bootstrapping

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing Results (Path Coefficients)

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values	Support
H ₁	Enjoyment -> Binge Watching	0.450	0.085	5.294	0.000	Supported
H ₂	Loneliness -> Binge Watching	0.320	0.105	3.048	0.002	Supported
H ₃	Enjoyment x Loneliness -> Binge Watching	0.250	0.075	3.333	0.001	Supported

Note: Significance level: $p < 0.05$; Bootstrapping with 5,000 samples.

Source: Computed from primary data

4.2 Assessment of the Measurement Model

The data were analyzed using (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4.0. PLS-SEM was deemed appropriate due to its predictive orientation and ability to model complex relationships without strict distributional assumptions. The measurement model (outer model) was evaluated for reliability and validity. As shown in Table 2, all constructs exhibited excellent internal consistency, with rho_a and rho_c values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Convergent validity was established, as the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct was above the 0.50 standard, indicating that the items explained more variance in the construct than error variance.

Discriminant validity was evaluated by the Fornell-Larcker Criterion (Table 3). The square root of AVE for each construct (diagonal elements) was higher than its correlations with all other constructs, suggesting that they are different from one another, thus adding to the robustness and validity of the model.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity

Construct	Binge Watching	Enjoyment	Loneliness
Binge Watching	0.825		
Enjoyment	0.580	0.867	
Loneliness	0.520	0.210	0.784

Note: Diagonal elements (in bold) are the square root of AVE; off-diagonal elements are the correlations between constructs.

Source: Computed from primary data

with 5,000 subsamples. The results showed that Binge-Watching Behaviour had a good prediction model ($R^2 = 0.60$). This value is greater than 0.50, and as asserted by Chin (1998), evidences a strong explanatory power. This implies that the model (Enjoyment and Loneliness) accounts for 60% of the variance in binge-watching, which is very promising with respect to behavioural research. The hypothesis test results are in Table 4. All three proposed paths were statistically significant.

H₁: The direct effect of Enjoyment on Binge-Watching was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.450$, $p < 0.001$), thus the effect of a higher enjoyment for binge-watching is confirmed.

H₂: There was also a significant positive path from Loneliness to Binge-Watching ($\beta = 0.320$, $p = 0.002$), which indicates that higher loneliness is related to greater binge-watching.

H₃: The interaction effect between Enjoyment and Loneliness on Binge-Watching was significant ($\beta = 0.250$, $p = 0.001$). This suggests that the association between entertainment and binge-watching, is intensified among those who have high levels of loneliness.

4.4 Common Method Bias (CMB) Assessment

Common Method Bias (CMB) was controlled for as all measure used self-report instruments. Procedural checks were included for anonymity and clarity. Ensuring confluence, Harman's Single-Factor Test revealed the first factor only accounted for 38.2% (less than the threshold 50%) of variance suggesting that CMB was not an issue (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Table 5: Harman’s Single-Factor Test for Common Method Bias

Total Variance Explained by First Factor	Threshold	Conclusion
38.2%	< 50%	Common Method Bias is not a significant concern

Source: Computed from primary data

4.5 Predictive Relevance (Q^2) and Effect Size (f^2)

The model’s predictive relevance was assessed using the blindfolding procedure, yielding a Stone-Geisser Q^2 value of 0.42 for Binge-Watching, indicating strong predictive power. Effect size (f^2) analysis showed that Enjoyment had a large effect, while Loneliness and the interaction term had medium-to-large and medium effects, respectively (Cohen, 1988).

to Binge-Watching did not vary by gender and was equally strong and significant in the male and female models, supporting the conceptualization of enjoyment as a gender-neutral determinant of media use (Katz et al., 1973). The path coefficient of Loneliness was stronger in the female model ($\beta = 0.360$) than in the male model ($\beta = 0.285$; $p < 0.05$), which is consistent with the established notion that women are more likely to engage in emotional regulation and coping strategies through media (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). The moderating effect of Loneliness on the enjoyment-binge-watching path was also stronger among females. These results support the compensatory cycle and suggest that it may be stronger among female Gen Z viewers. The study is among the first to model this cycle in Gen Z and calls for greater attention to

Table 6: Predictive Relevance and Effect Sizes (f^2)

Construct	R ² Included	R ² Excluded	f ² Effect Size	Interpretation
Enjoyment	0.60	0.45	0.375	Large Effect
Loneliness	0.60	0.52	0.200	Medium to Large Effect
Enjoyment x Loneliness	0.60	0.55	0.125	Medium Effect
Predictive Relevance (Q^2)	0.42			High Predictive Relevance

Source: Computed from primary data

4.6 Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) by Gender

To test the robustness of the model across different subgroups and enhance the depth of the findings, a Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) was performed to determine if the path coefficients are invariant across gender. This analysis used the permutation-based approach in SmartPLS, which is considered more robust than the parametric approach.

gender heterogeneity in compensatory media use models (Henseler, 2012).

4.7 Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)

To translate the previous findings into managerial implications for theory and practice, an Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) was performed. Supplementing the PLS-SEM findings, the IPMA assesses the importance (total effect) and performance (mean value of the latent variable score on a 0–100 scale) of each construct to reveal which high-importance but

The MGA (permutation-based) approach (Chin and Dibbern, 2010) is presented in Table 7. The MGA results are mostly consistent with the primary hypotheses. The Enjoyment path

Table 7: Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) by Gender

Hypothesis Path	Male Group (n=390) Path Coefficient	Female Group (n=360) Path Coefficient	Path Coefficient Difference	P-Value (Permutation)	Significant Difference?
Enjoyment -> Binge Watching	0.480	0.415	0.065	0.210	No
Loneliness -> Binge Watching	0.285	0.360	-0.075	0.045	Yes
Enjoyment x Loneliness -> Binge Watching	0.210	0.295	-0.085	0.032	Yes

Note: A p-value < 0.05 for the path difference indicates a statistically significant difference between the groups.

Source: Computed from primary data

low-performance (shortfall) constructs should be improved. According to Table 8 and in line with the PLS-SEM approach (Ringle and Sarstedt, 2016), Enjoyment was found to be the most powerful driver of binge-watching, showing both high importance (total effect > 0.15) and moderate performance, further validating the idea that content quality is the key value proposition for OTT and underlines that the channels' content strategies should focus on constantly enhancing the entertainingness of their offerings. On the other hand, Loneliness had a medium importance and low performance (index ~40), and according to Slack (1994), high importance and low performance are an indication of a critical area in which management needs to concentrate their attention, which also translates into a high leverage point. Loneliness, in particular, may represent an area of leverage, in the sense that it is present to a relatively low extent (performance index), but has a very high impact on binge-watching (importance index). This could be translated by OTT strategists as an opportunity to develop community-building features, spaces and content capable of reducing the extent of users' isolation to diminish compensatory binge-watching. For researchers, it suggests the need to further investigate how low-performance (i.e., low-frequency) psychological drivers with a high impact can affect consumers' media engagement decisions (Martilla and James, 1977).

Table 8: IPMA for Binge-Watching

Construct	Total Effect (Importance)	Performance (Index)	Priority for Attention
Enjoyment	0.550	68	High Importance, Moderate Performance
Loneliness	0.320	42	Medium Importance, Low Performance

Source: Computed from primary data

5. DISCUSSION

This study sought to elucidate the psychological drivers of OTT binge-watching among Indian Generation Z by examining the direct effects of enjoyment and loneliness, as well as their critical interaction. The results not only confirm established notions about media consumption but also provide nuanced, novel insights into the complex emotional calculus underlying contemporary binge-watching behaviour. The study reinforces that

enjoyment serves as the most influential factor driving binge-watching, providing strong support for Uses and Gratifications Theory. It confirms that individuals actively engage with media to fulfil hedonic needs such as entertainment, relaxation, and emotional escape (Harrington et al., 2020). This underscores that the intrinsic pleasure derived from content is the central force sustaining prolonged media consumption, aligning with prior research (Kuss and Griffiths, 2017). The role of loneliness further supports the compensatory media use perspective, indicating that individuals may turn to OTT platforms to cope with social and emotional deficits. Consistent with earlier studies (Bond et al., 2015), such behaviour reflects the use of media as a surrogate for social interaction, where parasocial relationships and immersive narratives help alleviate feelings of isolation. The study positions loneliness not merely as an accompanying factor but as a key psychological driver shaping binge-watching behaviour. Importantly, the interaction between enjoyment and loneliness illustrates that binge-watching stems from a blend of hedonic and compensatory motivations. For individuals experiencing loneliness, media enjoyment acts as a stronger catalyst, amplifying viewing tendencies. This finding calls for theoretical models that consider the interplay of emotional and motivational factors rather than treating them independently. In addition, gender-based differences reveal that loneliness exerts a stronger influence on binge-watching among females, who are more likely to use OTT platforms for emotional regulation, and coping with social isolation. Males, by contrast, tend to be more driven by enjoyment alone. These insights underscore the need to incorporate gender as a moderating variable in future theorizing, ensuring that models of compensatory media use, such as the "social surrogacy" hypothesis, capture the nuanced psychological mechanisms underlying media consumption behaviour.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has quite a few limitations. The cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences. The sample, while representative of urban Indian Gen Z from one state, limits generalizability to rural populations or other cultural contexts. Forthcoming research studies should make use of longitudinal

designs to establish causality and explore these relationships in diverse demographic and cultural settings. The significant gender differences uncovered here warrant deeper investigation into the socio-cultural reasons behind them. Furthermore, incorporating objective behavioural data (e.g., actual viewing time from platform APIs) would complement self-reported measures.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that OTT binge-watching among Generation Z is a multifaceted behaviour driven by a confluence of enjoyment and loneliness. The interaction between these factors, and the significant moderating role of gender, reveals a more complex picture than previously understood. By employing advanced analytical techniques like MGA and IPMA, this study not only confirms foundational theories but also provides a nuanced, strategic roadmap for future research and practical application in the evolving landscape of digital media consumption.

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