

THE STREAMING SHIFT: FACTORS DRIVING STUDENT SUBSCRIPTIONS AT UiTM KOTA BHARU

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Abstract: *The rapid evolution of the media sector, driven by technological advancements, has significantly shifted consumer preferences from traditional television to online streaming platforms. This study, which adopts a cross-sectional approach, explores the factors that influence undergraduate students' online streaming subscriptions at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kota Bharu. It seeks to determine significant differences in subscription patterns based on demographic factors such as gender and academic program, as well as to analyse how cost, customer service, ease of use, and social trends are related to these behaviours. A total of 293 students were randomly selected using stratified sampling, and they completed a structured questionnaire. Through multiple linear regression analysis, it was found that ease of use, cost, customer service, and social trends significantly influence students' streaming subscriptions, accounting for 65.6% of the variance in their subscription behaviours. The results indicate that streaming platforms should focus on offering user-friendly designs, competitive pricing, high-quality customer support, and alignment with current social trends in order to attract and retain student users. This research enhances the understanding of*

consumer behaviour in the digital age and provides useful insights for streaming providers looking to improve their market strategies. Future studies could benefit from larger sample sizes and the inclusion of additional variables to further verify these conclusions.

Keywords: *Online Streaming, Student Subscriptions, Ease of Use, Cost, Customer Service, Social Trends*

Introduction

The entertainment industry, which encompasses a wide range of media, is a fundamental part of modern society. In recent years, the landscape has changed markedly with the rise of online streaming services. These platforms have reshaped how audiences' access and engage with content by offering convenience and breadth of choice, and this pattern is especially visible among younger cohorts such as university students, who increasingly favour streaming over traditional cable television (Raisinghani et al., 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted the sector and the wider economy, prompting temporary closures of theatres and production studios and accelerating the shift in viewing habits towards on-demand services (Adgate, 2021). In Malaysia, for example, Astro, one of the main satellite television providers, reported a decline in subscription revenue; commentators frequently linked this to pricing and customer-experience concerns, mirroring global pressures on legacy pay-TV (Tan, 2020). The longer-term move away from traditional television had already been documented before the pandemic (Damratowski et al., 2011).

Problem Statement

Malaysia is a highly connected, mobile-first market in which many young people stream on smartphones, creating favourable conditions for subscription video services (DataReportal, 2024). At the same time, households are juggling multiple platforms and increasingly adopting lower-priced, ad-supported tiers, which signals rising price sensitivity among younger consumers (Antenna, 2025; Deloitte, 2023). Empirical work consistently links affordability with Over-the-Top (OTT) adoption and continuation: lower fees and flexible plans are associated with stronger subscription intent (Gupta & Singharia, 2021; Nagaraj et al., 2021). Locally, declines in pay-TV revenue and subscriptions are often discussed alongside perceived value and cost comparisons with streaming, underscoring budget pressures in Malaysian households (Tan, 2020). Beyond price, user experience matters. The Technology Acceptance Model highlights perceived ease of use as a driver of adoption, and streaming research shows that intuitive interfaces and smooth navigation relate to cord-cutting and sign-ups (Davis, 1989; Camilleri & Falzon, 2020; Tefertiller, 2020). Social dynamics also shape outcomes, as peer cues and campus networks can raise the likelihood of trying or switching services (Lee et al., 2018). Despite this global evidence, there is limited empirical work that jointly tests how price, service experience, ease of use, and social influence shape the subscription decisions of Malaysian university students. This study addresses that gap by examining undergraduates at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kota Bharu.

Literature Review

Affordability has long been linked to a higher willingness to adopt streaming. Gupta and Singharia (2021) show that lower fees and flexible plans encouraged uptake during the COVID-19 period, and Nagaraj et al. (2021) also report price as a significant predictor of OTT

subscription intention. Recent consumer surveys indicate that price sensitivity remains high and that many households rebalance their subscriptions in response to cost increases, including shifts towards ad-supported tiers (Deloitte, 2023). Taken together, these findings suggest that students who manage tight budgets are likely to weigh price more heavily when deciding whether to start or continue a subscription (Gupta & Singharia, 2021; Deloitte, 2023).

Kaňovská (2010) explains that customer service is a core component of market orientation, while Haridas and Deepak (2020) find that e-service quality, timely responses, and effective problem resolution shape perceptions of value for streaming providers. In Malaysia, trade-press coverage around 2020 recorded declines in subscription and advertising revenue for legacy pay-TV, often discussed in public debates about perceived value and service delivery. These observations underline why customer service should be analysed alongside price and usability in the present study (Tan, 2020).

The Technology Acceptance Model posits that perceived ease of use influences intention and actual use (Davis, 1989). In streaming contexts, user-friendly interfaces and low-friction navigation are associated with cord-cutting and adoption decisions (Tefertiller, 2020). Camilleri and Falzon (2020) integrate TAM with Uses and Gratifications and report that ease of use and perceived usefulness are strong antecedents of streaming intentions. Because students in Malaysia commonly access services via smartphones, ease of use in mobile settings is particularly salient for this study (Davis, 1989; Tefertiller, 2020; Camilleri & Falzon, 2020).

Peer recommendations and social signals can raise the odds of adoption. Bapna and Umyarov (2015) report causal peer effects in a large online network, while Lee et al. (2018) find that social trends, together with cost and service factors, help to explain streaming choices among university respondents. In a campus environment where discovery often occurs via friends and social media, these effects are likely to be especially pronounced (Bapna & Umyarov, 2015; Lee et al., 2018).

Across existing studies there is broad convergence on four determinants: cost, customer service, ease of use, and social influence. However, three important gaps motivate this study. First, price salience remains high as providers experiment with ad-supported and bundled offers, but little is known about how Malaysian students weigh affordability against usability. Second, customer-service practices in local streaming markets are under-documented compared with global research. Third, peer-driven discovery in campus networks deserves closer examination given the strong influence of social cues in recent evidence. By focusing on UiTM Kota Bharu and a smartphone-heavy cohort, this study contributes local empirical data to these discussions.

Methodology

This cross-sectional study was conducted to explore the factors influencing online streaming subscriptions among undergraduate students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kota Bharu. The study population comprised 1,221 undergraduate students from various programs, including CS241, CS291, BA240, BA242, BA249, and BA250. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across these programs, resulting in a sample size of 293 students, determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire, which was distributed to the selected students. The questionnaire was designed based on previous studies and adapted to fit the objectives of this research. It consisted of six sections: demographic profile, ease of use, cost, customer service, social trends, and online streaming subscriptions. The questions were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 24.0. The analysis includes correlation analysis to examine the relationships between ease of use, cost, customer service, social trends, and online streaming subscriptions and multiple regression analysis is conducted to identify the most influential factors affecting online streaming subscriptions.

Findings

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis provided insights into the demographic characteristics of the respondents, revealing that the majority were female (73.62%), most were from the BA242 program (28.33%), and the predominant age group was 20-22 years (60.41%). Additionally, 67.2% of the respondents subscribed to online streaming services, with smartphones being the most commonly used device (84.3%).

Reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) was conducted to ensure internal consistency of the questionnaire items. Table 1 below shows the result of reliability test for this study. The value of Cronbach's Alpha for Cost, Customer Service, Ease of Use, Social Trends and Online Streaming Subscription were 0.865, 0.928, 0.923, 0.891, 0.860, respectively. Since all the values were greater than 0.7, hence the questions for variables were valid in the questionnaires. (Kline, 1999).

Table 1: Reliability Test results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Cost	0.865
Customer Service	0.928
Ease of Use	0.923
Social Trends	0.891
Online Streaming Subscription	0.860

Inferential Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was employed to explore the relationships between the variables. The results in Table 1 demonstrated significant positive correlations between online streaming subscriptions and all four factors. For Pearson correlation relationship, variable cost ($r = 0.665$) and ease of use ($r = 0.666$) shows moderate level while, customer service ($r = 0.716$), and social trends ($r = 0.740$) indicates that high level of relationship with online streaming subscription. These findings suggest that these factors are positively associated with students' decisions to subscribe to online streaming services.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation

Pearson correlation	Online Streaming Subscription	P-Value	Level
Cost	0.665	0.000	Moderate
Customer Service	0.716	0.000	High
Ease of Use	0.666	0.000	Moderate
Social Trends	0.740	0.000	High

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the most influential factors affecting online streaming subscriptions. Table 2 below shows the results of regression analysis.

Table 3: Results of Regression Analysis

Variables	B	Significant value
Constant	0.356	0.105
Cost	0.142	0.009
Customer Service	0.220	0.000
Ease of Use	0.177	0.001
Social Trends	0.369	0.000

The analysis revealed that social trends were the most influential factor ($\beta = 0.369$, $p = 0.000$), followed by customer service ($\beta = 0.220$, $p = 0.000$), ease of use ($\beta = 0.177$, $p = 0.001$), and cost ($\beta = 0.142$, $p = 0.009$). This suggests that social trends play a crucial role in students' decisions to subscribe to online streaming services, followed by the quality of customer service, ease of use, and cost considerations. Below is the final model for the regression analysis.

$$Y = 0.356 + 0.142X_1 + 0.220X_2 + 0.177X_3 + 0.369X_4$$

Where, Y = Student's Online Streaming Subscriptions, X₁ = cost, X₂ = customer service, X₃ = ease of use and X₄ = social trends

Conclusion and Recommendation

Demographic Influence

The analysis revealed no significant mean difference in online streaming subscriptions between genders, indicating that both male and female students equally engage in online streaming. This aligns with previous research suggesting that gender does not significantly influence the adoption of new technologies (Volkovich et al., 2014). Similarly, no significant mean difference was found among different academic programs, suggesting that the inclination towards online streaming is consistent across various fields of study.

Key Influencing Factors

1. **Cost:** Cost was identified as a significant factor, albeit with a lower impact compared to other variables. The moderate positive correlation indicates that while students are price-sensitive, they are willing to pay for services that offer good value. This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlight cost as a crucial determinant in the adoption of online services (Nagaraj et al., 2021). Recent studies also indicate that price

sensitivity is increasing due to economic pressures, making cost a more critical factor in subscription decisions (Smith et al., 2023).

2. **Customer Service:** High positive correlation between customer service and online streaming subscriptions underscores the importance of reliable and efficient customer support. The regression analysis confirmed that customer service significantly affects subscription decisions, emphasizing the need for streaming services to maintain high standards of customer interaction and support (Kaňovská, 2019).
3. **Ease of Use:** The study found a moderate positive correlation between ease of use and online streaming subscriptions. This suggests that students prefer platforms that are user-friendly and easy to navigate. The regression analysis further confirmed that ease of use significantly influences subscription decisions, supporting the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), which posits that perceived ease of use is a critical factor in technology adoption.
4. **Social Trends:** Social trends emerged as the most influential factor, with a high positive correlation and the highest impact in the regression model. This indicates that students' subscription decisions are heavily influenced by peer recommendations and social media trends. The findings align with the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which suggests that social interactions and trends play a pivotal role in media consumption behaviours (Lee et al., 2018). Recent studies highlight that social trends continue to be a dominant factor, with social media and peer influence significantly driving subscription choices (Brown & Smith, 2022).

Emerging Trends and Challenges

Recent studies have identified several emerging trends and challenges in the online streaming industry:

- **Subscription Fatigue:** There is a growing trend of subscription fatigue, where users are overwhelmed by the number of available streaming services and the cumulative cost of multiple subscriptions. This has led to an increase in subscription cancellations (Johnson et al., 2022).
- **Content Quality and Variety:** The breadth and quality of content remain crucial for retaining subscribers. Users are increasingly seeking diverse and high-quality content, which influences their willingness to maintain subscriptions (Miller & Davis, 2023).
- **Economic Factors:** Economic pressures, such as the cost-of-living crisis, have heightened price sensitivity among consumers. This has led to a decline in the overall budget allocated for streaming services (Smith et al., 2023).

Implications for Streaming Services

The study's findings have practical implications for online streaming service providers targeting the student demographic. To enhance subscription rates, providers should focus on improving the user interface to ensure ease of use, offer competitive pricing, and maintain robust customer service. Additionally, leveraging social media and peer influence can significantly boost subscription rates, as students are highly responsive to social trends. Addressing subscription fatigue by offering flexible subscription models and ensuring a diverse content library can also help retain subscribers.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should consider expanding the sample size to include students from other campuses and universities to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, exploring other potential factors such as content variety, streaming quality, and promotional offers could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of online streaming subscriptions.

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