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The Effects of Binge Watching on Interpersonal Communication among Department of Communication and Liberal Arts (DCLA) Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to discover the effects and factors of binge-watching on interpersonal communication among students from the Department of Communication & Liberal Arts (DCLA) at Sunway University. A total of 12 participants were selected by employing purposive sampling from among DCLA undergraduates. A qualitative method was used to achieve the objectives of this study through focus group interviews. The effects and factors of binge-watching were assessed based on the Uses & Gratification Theory (UGT). The participants' feedback was transcribed and analysed by using McQuail's coding method that includes five categories which are entertainment, escapism, education, social, and character (Stoldt, 2013). The results suggest, entertainment as the main factor for binge-watching has positive effects on interpersonal communication among DCLA students who are more socialised with their fellow binge-watchers. It is hoped that future researchers will consider binge-bonding as a new area in the study of binge-watching.

Key Words: Binge-watching, interpersonal communication, students of DCLA

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a new emergence of television-viewing behaviour that currently involves individuals to indulge in their television show by consuming multiple amounts of episodes in which is called as 'binge-watching' (Merikivi, Mäntymäki, Salovaara, & Zhang, 2016). In this study, the definition of binge-watching is the 'process of watching two or more episodes of a television show in one sitting' (Stoldt, 2013). Collin's "Word of the Year" in 2013 was awarded to 'binge-watch' due to its heavy use and popularisation by online streaming providers and consumers, in which the streaming video on demand (SVOD) providers are deemed responsible for this phenomenon since they have started releasing the entire seasons of famous and current television shows and movies so that their customers can watch it on demand (Hume, 2015). In addition, binge-watching has become a relevant trend amongst university students since they have a current state of irregular schedules and general responsibilities that are lighter compared to working adults (Wheeler, 2015).

Netflix and iFlix has become widely available in Malaysia around early 2016 and these digital streaming websites are taking their place as the main source of video-on-demand entertainment amongst the locals. Instant gratification is provided to the consumers by the availability of television shows and films online in which causes the loss of anticipation. Hence, since this new type of media exchanges the loss of anticipation into full participation for the consumers to access the mass media content within their digital screens. According to Beuker (2016), binge-watching has removed the community aspect of television in which they form special bonds with others over the time the television show is being aired, in contrast to viewers watching it in their own time and isolated comfort. For members of a young demographic, SVOD and binge-watching are enabling them to enhance their participation in social conversations and cliques. In addition, research shows that Generation Y students follow their favourite shows in order to secure their position within their social groups that shares their same cultural competencies (Matrix, 2014). Digital streaming changed the course of television consumption habits and due to its overwhelming popularity; it has become taken advantage by digital streaming industries in which they produce more quality content in large quantities in a full season release per show. Based on Matrix (2014), SVOD has ushered in a mediate culture of instant gratification, infinite entertainment choices, and immersive experiences in televisual fantasies that combine realism and drama in the most intriguing ways. This study aims to focus on interpersonal communication since it is an important characteristic of a person's welfare which determines their effectiveness to participate in a social conversation with others and as well as the relationship formed by the person in terms of its environment and use of communication technology (Yengin & Kinay, 2016). The study explored the qualitative aspects of social conversations amongst students of Department of Communication and Liberal Arts (DCLA) from the School of Arts and it observed the impact on interpersonal communication due to binge-watching.

The trend of binge-watching has become a shared cultural phenomenon in modern-day society and its nature of being time-consuming and instantly gratifying can prove to be socially accepted due to the awareness made by the media entertainment community. Nevertheless, it is still under question whether individuals who commit the act of binge-watching may directly affect their social interaction or that it encourages them to engage in the activity in which causes them to be more sociable. Based on Merikivi, Mäntymäki, Salovaara, & Zhang (2016), the main motivators for binge-watching is due to the content of the entertainment, leisure, and boredom. Individuals are aware of the binge-watching as a time-consuming and isolating activity and may become a distraction that leads individuals away from productive activities, also it is found that many individuals prefer to binge-watch alone (Wagner, 2016). It comes to mind whether if certain binge-watchers set-off social engagements over their binge-watching session and that such activity can be observed as social degrading them. According to Winland (2014), studies find that students are spending lesser hours on their academia since they spend most of their hours online in addition to having current subscriptions to online streaming accounts. This study aims to explore and discover extensively about the phenomenon on binge-watching within an international background since its definition and usage is not as popular compared to Western countries. Moreover, it provided additional knowledge regarding the perspective of binge-watching towards interpersonal communication.

Based on the problem statements addressed earlier, the research has developed two research objectives which are to investigate the contributing factors to binge-watching among DCLA students, and to discover the effects of binge-watching on interpersonal communication among DCLA students. The significance of this research is to bring awareness about the meaning of 'binge-watching' within an international context and as well to understand the functions and implications regarding the activity. Majority of the literature review contains research studies from the Western perspective and consists sample within that demographic. This research study will fill the gaps of literature on the topic of binge-watching since there is a lack of research executed within an Asian demographic. Finally, this research study's significance will aid in the provision of more data and knowledge on binge-watching behaviours and how it affects an individual's social well-being in which can provide better and healthier viewing practises. The overall goal of this study is to ultimately discover the main factors on binge-watching behaviours and how it can foster or hinder interpersonal communication.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

'Binge' is a word often associated with negative connotation and it is commonly associated with excessive gratification and guilty pleasure. The phenomena of binge-watching contribute to sedentary behaviour, increases risk of obesity and interfere with healthy habits (Boni, Jambavalikar, Roy, Naggar, &

Shah, 2017). Binge-watching has become the new and current 'binge' of society and this viewing practise has become a normalised form of consuming media content such as television and film. Yakimova (2016) states that today's society has been inclined to a culture of instant gratification and that its modernisation has already been adapted throughout media platforms. The act of binge-watching requires undivided attention due to the voluntary participation of the viewer to consume more of the content. Furthermore, it is characterised as a viewing practise that requires active engagement since the viewers have control over time, although they are aware of time-consuming aspect about the activity. This begs the question in whereby binge-watching can affect an individual's social welfare with others since binge-watching has become part of their controlled routine (Tryon 2014). According to Pena (2016), a study found by MarketCast indicates that a large population of binge-watchers comes from younger generations and that the genders are both neutral among men and women. In addition, 62% of Americans verify that they engage in binge-watching and that the age demographics indicated that 75% of 18-39 year olds participate in that activity. As a result, majority of the millennial generation are found to be the largest population who engage in binge-watching. Furthermore, a research study on binge-watching on academics show that university students spend more than three hours on online streaming content and 29% have reached the point of spending eight hours in one sitting. Based on their academic coursework, it is found that 59% of university students indicate that binge-watching to be a distraction in their academic engagement.

Pena (2016) states that 'appointment viewing' was once the only way to view and enjoy television as they engage in a collected activity in whereby they have to set their times accordingly. This was once a common practise by television fans when traditional media was still popular and the digital platforms were not as ubiquitous as we know it today. Technology has risen and gave birth to streaming video-on-demand in which you can watch any media content as you wish, hence making this the dawn of the 'new media' consumption. The result of new media is binge-watching and allows viewers to be in control of their viewing experience, in which concentrates more on the topic of the television show and consume all the episodes in one go due to the accessibility provided by the internet (Yengin & Kinay, 2016). The 'society of controlled consumption' is practising binge-watching behaviours in which are caused by media industries that are currently influencing their customers to ignore the appointment viewing practise and follow the impulse that their instant gratification needs by the provision of quality content readily available online (Tryon, 2014). According to a research study by Wagner (2016), television factors relating to viewership that is associated with binge-watching. There are factors such amount and duration, social context for viewership, content platform used, television genre views, and viewing mediums are all important aspects of binge-watching characteristics. These factors usually take place during the fast-paced state of the modern-day generation since the dawn of the digital age since it provides a platform for television viewers to share their thoughts and opinions for places such as the

social media. Individuals continue to use the digital media platforms to be actively social in which they use to satisfy their needs by socialising with other individuals that are alike to them (Yengin & Kinay, 2016). The reasoning regarding the state of binge-watching being an isolated activity is because of the excessive time-consuming nature of the activity in which can divert the individual away from productive activities. According to Wagner (2016), it is found that majority of binge-watchers prefer to watch alone compared to being with others to watch along with them. It is most interesting to note that the research findings indicate that it contains numerous reasons behind binge-watching behaviours as it is also found that an individual can be motivated to binge-watch so that it can boost their social currency in preparation for social interactions (Wagner, 2016).

In addition, Wheeler (2015) states those 'binge-bonding' sessions with peers can be a social aspect of binge-watching as they gather to watch together collectively. Social pressures can be ones of the factors in which can be the root of the competitive aspect of binge-watching since people experience FoMO (fear of missing out) and that they want to be caught up with the latest trends such as social media discussions regarding a television show finale. FoMO (fear of missing out) in which is an apprehension that is associated with the fear of other people are having a pleasurable experience that one is not a part of. The concept of FoMO involves the feeling of missing a party, program, concert, class, or some other event that could result in being excluded from a conversation or moment (Conlin, Billings & Averset, 2016). FoMO prompts people to binge-watch their shows in three types which are week-by-week, half-and-half, and accelerated.

The uses and gratifications theory (UGT) approach to investigate the needs of people as an aspect of media consumption and selection (Pena, 2016). Based on Yengin & Kinay (2016), UGT is defined as communication model that understands the audience member's effectiveness to search for mass media content to gratify their needs. It consists of models which question the needs and motivations of the audiences as compared of those comprised by the social and psychological roots of the needs that moves towards the use of mass media. Pena (2016) found that binge-watchers are much more inclined towards instant gratification and escapism, whilst appointment viewers experience that social interaction gratification is fulfilled as they can interact with like-minded individuals regarding their similar shows and interests. UGT provides a different insight and perspective in which the individuals have various and different needs which drive selections that will only be satisfied by the media and the research framework inquired how and why individuals proactively seek these types of medias to satisfy their needs (Pena, 2016).

3. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative approach to examine the effects and factors of binge-watching on interpersonal communication among university students. This chapter outlines methodology that can be practical to achieve the research questions and objectives of this study. Therefore, systematic preparation

and thorough analysis of the methodology procedure was made to achieve the objectives of this research. The researcher conducted a focus group study to have first-hand inputs and opportunities to analyse the data gathered from the chosen participants. The purpose of choosing qualitative approach is to gain understanding of the motivations, reasons, and opinions on binge-watching and its effects on interpersonal communication (Qrca, 2017). The sample size for this research study were 12 undergraduate students at DCLA, Sunway University. The researcher conducted purposive sampling due to the nature of the research objectives and was based on the researcher's judgement by choosing the members of the population to participate in the study (Dudovskiy, 2012). Individuals who engage in binge-watching were chosen as participants to serve as the primary data source of the overall research. Focus group interview was the chosen method to collect data as the participants have common interest in the topic of discussion in which it eased the whole facilitation process in obtaining insightful data and information for the research. Before the researcher commenced the focus group interviews, participants were given an informed consent form to read and sign. The researcher informed participants that their personal information would remain anonymous, their participation in the survey was entirely voluntary, and that they did not have to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable. All participants signed the consent form before taking part in the focus group. The focus groups were audio recorded, transcribed, and thematically coded using theory-driven coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

McQuail's analysis of UGT in which identifies the five uses and gratifications categories, he does not outright define the categories. Theory-driven coding undergoes through three stages: designing the study with the theory in mind, developing a code and a theme, and using and validating the code. Second, themes and codes were developed. Since McQuail's coding method had already provided the uses and gratifications categories, initial codes were drawn from the data and prior research. As the data was coded, the thematic codes' definitions were adapted to match the raw data. During this stage, sub-categories were developed. The first set of questions was about binge-watching characteristics in which is designed to answer the RQ1 of this study. This section contains questions inquiring about the participant's definition of binge-watching, reasons why and how they binge-watch, experiences with binge-watching as a tool for escapism, satisfaction with binge-watching. Open-ended questions were being implemented in this section to discover the respondent's thoughts and opinions after binge-watching in order to find the factors on why they binge-watch in the first place. The second set of questions was about the effects on binge-watching on interpersonal communication in which is designed to answer the RQ2 of this study. The second set of questions was much more personal and dealt more with interpersonal communication and how binge-watching benefits them. This research study followed the procedures of 'Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews' by Richard Kreuger (2002). The two focus group interviews involved six participants each. The participants were selectively recruited based on primary criteria of being a binge-watcher and were called to gather at a

comfortable environment. After the interview was done, the researcher used systematic analysis, verifiable procedures, and appropriate reporting to identify the data. A private room is booked prior to the interview and the duration of the focus-group interview ranged from an average of 60 to 90 minutes. A free online transcribing software called 'Transcribe-O' was utilised to record the qualitative data collected from the two focus group interviews. Each of the two interviews that was recorded was uploaded on an online transcribe software service provider, as it was easier for the researcher to slowdown, fasten, or pause the recording as to ease the process for the researcher to transcribe.

The qualitative data for this research study was analysed by transcribing the interview responses from the chosen participants. Upon transcribing the responses, open-coding was applied to understand the pattern of binge-watching amongst the participants. The researcher analysed the transcribed text based on the themes which was developed from the theoretical framework. Based on Corbin & Strauss (1990), open coding is the interpretive process that breaks down the data analytically. It can bring new insights by breaking through standard ways of thinking about or interpreting the phenomena shown via the data. The two research questions consisted of seven questions each that expanded more about the factors and effects behind binge-watching. This systematic analysis begun while the focus group when the researcher takes notes and probes for further understanding and offer a summary of key questions and seek confirmation. Once all interviews are done, the researcher analysed the themes, interpretations, and ideas collected between the different interviews. The analysis is prepared by the researcher as a report by describing the findings and using the quotes within the interviews. The recurring themes by question and the overall message that are collected by the interviews.

The analysis of the two focus group interviews included data that contained meaning of the words and its similarities with others, the context of the answers, the internal consistency with the interactions, frequency and extensiveness of the topics discussed. The focus group interview opened a dialogue about binge-watching behaviour and thoughts from the participants as they share similar experiences with one another. This allowed the participants to understand more about binge-watching experiences through other participants and discussed how the effects it has on interpersonal communication. Through open coding, events/actions/interactions are compared with others to discover similarities or differences that are based on McQuail's five categories (Stoldt, 2013). To elaborate further, these conceptual labels are grouped together to form categories. The researcher has made distinctions among the categories based on McQuail's coding method, in which it is easy to identify the specific properties and dimensions of each distinction behind binge-watching. The use of open coding can make the questioning and constant comparisons break through subjectivity and bias. The fractured data can force preconceived notions and ideas to be examined against the data collected itself. The researcher then placed the data in a category where they do not analytically belong to, but via systematic

comparisons, the errors are eventually located and both data and concept shall be arranged into appropriate classifications (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Major findings obtained from the two focus group sessions in which are discussed further in relevance to this study's research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the contributing factors to the growing occurrences among DCLA students in binge-watching? Findings of this research showed that most the participants in the focus group interview point towards entertainment factors that lead to binge-watching. Escapism is the second factor on the reasons why they binge-watch. Social, character, and educational factors follow within this order based on the participants' feedback.

Entertainment Factors

People's intention to binge-watch is explained by their expectations of it being a rewarding and fun activity to do. In addition, it included experiences of automaticity (doing it without thinking) and they anticipated regret and goal conflict (they see binge-watching as an interference to other activities) – both associated with less binge-watching (Journal of Health Psychology, 2016). The fact that binge-watching has become an accessible activity for the participants has made them inclined to choose it over other things due to the absence of societal pressures that they face when they meet people. The factor in which the ease of accessibility for the choice of entertainment is the recurring theme of what most participants feel as stated below:

“Yes, on certain days because the fact that the process of it is quite individual... The very fact that I could be in my comfort of my room, under my blanket with some food and watch something entertaining could make me laugh.” Binge-watching is found to be an activity that participants prefer to enjoy, such as viewing a favourite show, can serve as a buffer against loneliness and rejection. It is known to be an effective emotional buffer and use it as a time-consuming activity. It is also important to note that certain elements in a show can be deemed as ‘binge-worthy’ and how the viewer's behaviour is affected by it. Elements such as; having a good conflict, suspenseful moments, and several plot twists (Snyder, 2016). However, participants in this study are committed to avoid spoilers so that they could be fully entertained when they binge-watch and most of them are motivated to do so in preparation against future spoilers:

“I use it as a distraction but I also use it because I am not the kind of person who likes spoilers. But if someone tells me they have a spoiler then I am more likely to pay more attention to it and what to know what it is, so I'd rather finish watching everything first so that if anyone is holding up spoilers, I'm prepared.”

Popular SVOD such as Netflix and iFlix has created a need for their audience by giving them an amount of numerous options to watch online. This is a strategy originally devised by Netflix to release an entire season of a television show to encourage binge-watching, as opposed to the traditional appointment viewing. They understand the customers and understand that when they watch shows continually, the psychological benefit of remembering the plot narrative and points can help with constant engagement (Boni, Jambavalikar, Roy, Naggar, & Shah, 2017). This factor of binge-watching in which they consume an episode in an accelerated manner is done by the participants of this study. "Having a binge-watching session can cancel out the non-important things that happen within a episode. So you just concentrate on what the story that is released." Furthermore, a study by Conlin, Billings & Averset (2016) found that these four factors in media consumption are related:

1. Influence by one's personality
2. Varies by television genre
3. Duration of a media offering
4. Desire to discuss the media content via social media platforms

Most participants mentioned that the factors of why they binge-watch is due to the genre of the selected television show and the duration of the media offering. They said that the content of the show could be interesting because of their preferred genre and the running time of the television show is heavily story-based in which drives the factor of binge-watching.

Escapism Factors

Digital metamorphosis has changed television culture drastically and the consumption patterns from weekly viewing has turned into on-demand viewing online anytime and anywhere they want it. Based on a study by Stoldt (2013), the main motivators of binge-watching is the narrative of the show that allows them to experience escapism and also the want to interact socially with friends, family, and online communities to share their knowledge of specific shows. Few people watch for educational purposes, but most of them watch for entertainment use (Stoldt, 2013). In this study, participants have been found to binge-watch because of procrastination in which is a product of escapism. They would rather choose to be satisfied whenever they feel that they have enough time based on their schedule: "For the past few years, I developed this habit of binge-watching during exam times because usually we finish off our classes and we have two weeks at hand to prepare for exams. Usually sometimes it's a good getaway to procrastinate."

In addition, another factor of escapism is rooted from stress. Participants engage in binge-watching as a form of relaxation. As most of the participants are current students, examination periods are apparently the season in which they tend to use binge-watching as an escape from their academic preparations. "For me it's to get away from stress, so basically it was important for the exam periods..."

They have also added in that binge-watching is meditative in nature as it becomes a form of transportation away from mental stress in which they enter a place of temporary worry-free and peaceful environment. “Because you want to forget your problems and you just find a fantasy world in whatever you watch. So you go into that world and not worry about anything else.” In a study of goal conflict findings by Presseau (2016), it is indicated that the participants who reported more binge-watching also reported binge-watching undermining their other goal pursuits. Binge-watching itself have conflicting or facilitating impact on the pursuit of other personal goals (socialising with others or preventing household chores or work). Linking back to this study, participants have goals that they tend to put off in order achieve other pursuits in which they find much more important. Family events are reported to be a recurring pattern in which the participants tend to neglect in order to binge-watch. They find that this goal pursuit is not as important as they find it to be. Therefore, participants could turn down even the most important life events to fully their current goal of gratifying their needs by binge-watching.

“I’ve missed a funeral once because of binge-watching. It was a distant cousin and we were supposed to get ready in the morning, but I binge-watch and I locked my door and I tend to wear my headphones and cancel out the world.”

Social Factors

This study found that most of the participants do engage in binge-watching due to the need of having social connections with others since the popularity of television shows has become a staple topic within casual conversations. Participants say that they often feel sad and isolated if they are unable to engage in conversations. Henceforth, this is factor in which triggers them to binge-watch in order to catch-up with the current television shows. “I really don't like feeling left out when all my friends have watched it and they discuss about it. I feel left out and isolated because I can't contribute to the conversation so I feel sad about.” Being up to date is an important factor among the participants and they link their satisfaction with social conversations that involve them. “I think I feel more satisfied if I am up to date, as long as I am on the same page as everyone else then I think I'm fine.” In addition, seasonal factors can play into account when it comes to television shows being released in specific periods. “I want to be as updated as anyone else is, I didn't want to be left out. Whenever I knew season comes out again, I would be caught up with it.”

It is found that people engage in half-and-half pace for dramatic series, and week-by-week for reality television shows. For some binge-watchers, intense reaction is prompted from the viewers while binge-watching a television show to catch up to existing episodes (half-and-half pace) due to the result of FoMO (Conlin, Billings & Averset, 2016). It is the driving factor in modern media consumption as it is the part of the pleasures of watching television and socialising with others in a cultural conversation.

Character-based Factors

An interest towards a fictional television character is another binge-watching factor that is considered by the participants of this study. Snyder (2016) talks about parasocial relationships and its influence on the viewer. Often found in the entertainment industry, these parasocial relations are formed easily due to the very little risk it holds. The only disappointment it can come from it is due to it forming a relationship with a show that has been cancelled or during a break in the middle of the season. Participants said that emotional connection towards the characters is a major factor in influencing their binge-watching behaviour. “..I feel like I can relate to their problems as well.”

Furthermore, it establishes a parasocial relationship among the participants and the narrative of the character becomes a topic of discussion in May then lead to social discussions. “Emotional connection to the characters so you want to look at character development and plot.”

Educational Factors

Lastly, most participants do not find educational purposes to intentionally binge-watch. However, there is still a present link in which they find useful in binge-watching that causes them to actively socialise. The cultural capital theory is a social theory conceptualised by one of the world’s leading social theorists, Pierre Bourdieu. He refers the theory to a collection of symbolic elements of a culture that individuals need to acquire in order to be a part of a social class (Routledge, 2016). The social class is classified as an aid to bridge interpersonal communication since it is the primary activity for individuals to share information to one another and participants agree that it requires cultural capital to appreciate certain television shows. “...I find that binge-watching is a sort of art form like you're watching art and it has a lot of cultural context to understand it. For me to acquire knowledge when binge-watching something, I tend to learn more going out and talking about it with my friends.”

Research Question 2: How does binge-watching affect interpersonal communication among DCLA students? Based on the responses from the focus group interviews, binge-watching does affect interpersonal communication in the context of socialising with other peers. The participants mentioned that they socialise with peers who binge-watch, hence they find it easier to communicate more effectively that leads to establishing a stronger interpersonal communication and relationships. Establishes closer communication among them. Social is the main effect compared to the other four categories which (Stoldt, 2013). The following effects are entertainment, educational, and character.

Social Effects

It is found in this study that there are strong social effects among the participants due to binge-watching. University students find it to be a solitary activity that they do in their own room or apartment and they also said that they binge-watch with other people in a non-traditional sense in whereby you watch beside them, but watch it individually and see who could finish it. This is the current finding that has appeared as a trend among binge-watchers in which they socialise about a television show that they both watch individually and within the pace of their interest. Participants in this study said that they binge-watch to get closer to someone they are far apart and it aids them to engage in social conversation because they find common ground (Petersen, 2017). This clearly indicates, there is high potential for establishing interpersonal communication which can be evident from the following conversation by the participants. "... I tend to talk really fast and I get excited about it. It just generally I feel really excited to talk about and it makes me really happy." To add further, it is found that they are selective in engaging with specific conversations that they find interesting. If they choose to interact, they tend to inquire about how others perceive the television in terms of the content that it provides. "If I'm interested in the same genre, I would like to engage in conversation. If it's out of my interest, I won't get in a conversation. I usually learn more about their point of view and if it is the same as me or not."

In terms of social media, tweets about television shows and their sponsors earn a large audience and trigger a variety of actions on and off Twitter and other platforms. These actions can relation to both viewing television by switching channels and advertising in their website. This can trigger people to seek it and engage with that content so that they can be active in social media interactions (Nagy & Midha, 2014). Participants do engage in social media discussion while binge-watching because of the interest made online about that television show. "I sometimes be on my phone. It depends if something interesting happens and I use Twitter a lot so I am doing something. I usually snapchat when I am watching a new show so at the same time, while I'm watching a show, I'm also using social media when I am watching a show." Furthermore, contemporary streaming services had changed the context of television viewing in which has a potential to affect social interaction during and after the session. In addition, under close examination of passive leisure activities while binge-watching, it is found that participants are using Whatsapp, engaging in social media, and eating. Social interaction during binge-watching is still found to be active even though it is done online. The participants state that they do not find Whatsapp or browsing the internet distracting. "...there would be times that I would get out and talk to someone and sometimes I chat with someone without pausing because I don't have interest in it anymore."

Currently, television fans are more active in creating social networks around television in order to share their similar interests and experiences about the content (Wagner, 2016). As mentioned earlier that educational factors do play

a key role in interpersonal communication, the acquired knowledge by the binge-watchers bring their discussions online and expand their social networks further because of it. “For me it’s more about the knowledge being shared among a specific community, basically people who shares similar interests” Finally, most of the participants do influence others to binge-watch as their passion for the show is reported to be important for their social well-being. Being validated as a person with good-taste in television shows is a motivator of influence to binge-watch. “I influence them because of that since it gives me some sort of approval in this world and some sense that I belong.”

Entertainment Effects

The main factor of binge-watching is found to be entertainment and the satisfaction experienced by the binge-watchers could lead to more entertainment. Participants say that they become more accustomed to long for more entertainment. “More satisfying when it comes binge-watching because one episode is not enough due to satisfaction and instant gratification.” Although binge-watchers tend to watch more episodes when they engage in the activity alone, a study found that many viewers tend to lack awareness of their own viewing behaviour. “...I can't predict how much time I spend on it so it becomes really unhealthy when I neglect eating and sleeping.” Furthermore, watching more than five episodes can cause a decrease in pleasure and an increase in passive leisure activity. Some participants would rather prefer binge-bonding with their family and friends since it is more entertaining. This provides a platform for nurturing interpersonal communication which occurs during binge-bonding sessions. “I binge-bond with my sister since we stay together... and we can instantly make a joke about the episode with someone. Its instant and you feel the connection. It's more fun. There is more communication with my sister.”

It is also an influence from current SVOD platforms in which has created a need for having social experiences and that appointment viewing can cause lost opportunities when it comes to social experiences as viewers may tend to miss an episode. To add further, Netflix has crafted a social experience in which coined a popular phrase called ‘Netflix and chill’. This phrase is about social experiences that take place at home in whereby you watch television shows or movies on Netflix with others (Boni, Jambavalikar, Roy, Naggar, & Shah, 2017). “When binge-watch alone, you have to wait to share the information. Binge-bonding is much more fun to me compared to alone.” Pena (2016) found that binge-watchers responded more strongly towards escapism and instant gratification, while appointment viewers feel that social interaction gratification is fulfilled as they got the opportunity to interact with others about the show that currently interests them. However, this study provides new evidence that binge-watchers would rather binge-bond with family members since they find it much more entertaining. This effect has also direct implications in fostering interpersonal communication. “I binge-bonding with family and tend to talk about the show

after it's done. There is a sense of connection... I aim to binge-bond when I want to bond with my family.”

Educational Effects

Binge-watching requires hours of attention and understanding as said by the participants. Based on Tryon (2014), viewers are found to be engaging in binge-watching behaviours due to the desire to gain ‘cultural capital’, this is explained by enriching their knowledge and gaining conversational currency in order to participate and belong to other peer groups in which they can initiate conversations with regarding television series. “This encourages to binge-watch more TV shows especially about knowledge and fitting in.” The content of the television show provides interesting information that the participants could refer to when faced a cultured conversation. Many of the participants’ credit cultural capital as the source of their social currency. “Especially when it comes to an upcoming celebrity who had their breakout role, this makes me know more about celebrity culture as well so maybe next time I can remember they appear in a TV series or a movie.” Being accepted in a conversation by accessing their cultural capital on some knowledge shared creates a sense of happiness among the participants. Therefore, it encourages them to continue spreading information through the knowledge they have acquired. The information acquired creates a high potential for initiating interpersonal communication which they can share with their peers. “... you would want to spread this information with other people.”

The cultural capital theory focuses on the area of knowledge as a symbolic element that one acquires from being within a social class. Likewise, the collection of the knowledge acquired can be the representative for the essence of communication and such opportunity to share the knowledge through the means of interpersonal communication. Hence, this theory can provide insight and understanding on how binge-watching can be the cause of the reasons on why individuals gain and share knowledge through television content and how they communicate to others. Majority of participant’s report that they have an increase of knowledge on language, in terms of jargons and slangs they have acquired in their exposure of content they have binge-watched. They add that subtitles are an important element in how they learn the languages and its effectiveness to understand what the context of the scene is. “...it’s easier for me to get how and what they find interesting and what is the current topic they are talking about. I feel there is where I get my cultural capital. I have a lot of international friends and at times it’s hard for us to find common grounds to talk on since we are all in our own countries.”

Character-based Effects

Parasocial relationships towards interesting characters can also encourage binge-watching behaviour as viewers who are attached to them has to keep on

watching to find out more about their characters (Snyder, 2016). Finally, it can be a main factor contributing to social media interactions as their favourite shows becomes a main topic of discussion and that binge-watching can be a process for them to engage and benefit in social interactions as soon as they can. Participants feel that they become more connected with the characters of the television show after they binge-watch and this effect has made them inclined to pick up the characteristics and mannerisms. "...we feel like connected to the character so you feel like you can relate with the character by picking up their act and slang." In addition, empathy towards a character that has high value amongst participants can cause social conversations regarding a certain event or development: "Coming to 'Game of Thrones', it's so action-packed, story and character driven, and you got characters that are developed so high that you have an affection to it... You get really engaged in that conversation because it's mutual."

5. CONCLUSION

This research paper examined the effects of binge-watching on interpersonal communication among DCLA students, using a qualitative approach by conducting focus group interviews. The effects and factors of binge-watching were analysed by McQuail's coding method in which separated the themes into five categories. The five categories are branched out from UGT's typology of needs and the entertainment factors behind binge-watching contribute to interpersonal communication. Findings showed that most the participants in the focus group interview point towards entertainment factors that lead to binge-watching as the intention to binge-watch is explained by their expectations of it being a rewarding and fun activity to do. Most participants mentioned that the factors of why they binge-watch is due to the content of the selected television show and the duration of the media offering. To add further, social effect is the primary findings on binge-watching effects based on the data collected. DCLA students find it to be a solitary activity that they do in their own and they also said that they binge-watch with other people. They also binge-watch to get close to someone they are far apart from and it aids them to engage in interpersonal communication to find common ground to establish a connection. The participants do influence others to binge-watch as their passion for the show is described to be important for their social well-being. Therefore, findings of this study indicate that entertainment factors of binge-watching have a direct impact on social effects amongst the students of DCLA. The social effects encourage interpersonal communication due to the culture of discussion that surrounds binge-watching.

This study has hopefully provided useful insights on the effects of binge-watching on interpersonal communication among DCLA students. The main limitation of this research is related to the participations which only involved year three students. Secondly, the focus group participants who are binge-watchers have personal biasness while engaging in discussions and may have affected the richness of the data. One of the recommendations for future research is to

conduct a longitudinal research to get a more diverse research when it comes to quantifying the socialisations that occur amongst the students. In addition, expanding to a larger group of respondents can give much more insightful data for researchers to analyse. Besides that, future research should consider binge-watching and appointment viewing as it is a separate area of television consumption styles. It is also recommended to conduct a larger sample size and consider the balance in communication. With a larger sample size, future research can investigate the differences of binge-watching behaviours among university students.

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