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Comparing Binge-Watching Motivations in South Korea and United States:
Westernization of South Korean Entertainment Media

Sohyun Ribeiro

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Comparing Binge-Watching Motivations in South Korea and the United States: Westernization of South Korean Entertainment

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Asian cultures have been heavily influenced by Western culture due to globalization. Video on demand (VOD) services provide a means to quantify the westernization of Asian cultures, especially those within South Korea. As the majority of current binge-watching studies have been conducted utilizing U.S. samples, there is a need for comparative research between the two cultures, to see if westernization can be quantified via these means. The current study examined the relative levels of five Korean binge-watching motivations (enjoyment, efficiency, recommendation of others, perceived control, fandom) and eight American binge-watching motivations (escape, information, engagement, relaxation, passing time, hedonism, social, habit) sourced from prior research, among a Korean ($n = 113$) and American ($n = 193$) sample. Results indicated that both Americans and Koreans scored highly on enjoyment and engagement. Americans scored higher on nine out of the 13 motivations: efficiency, recommendation of others, fandom, escape, relaxation, passing time, hedonism, social, and habit. Koreans scored higher on two out of the 13 motivations: information and perceived control. Also, Americans binge-watched more frequently than Koreans. In conclusion, the outcome of the study suggests where society is going with VOD services and binge-watching as a deeper understanding of binge-watching in a cross-cultural setting. Future researchers should consider a qualitative study to overcome the limited range of TV viewing motivational scales and a random sampling, assuring diversity in sample groups.

Keywords: binge-watching, television, South Korea, the United States

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Introduction

Due to globalization, Western and American culture have influenced the South Korean economy, society, and culture (Lewis & Sesay, 2013). This influence is observable by looking at video on demand services (VOD) such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime. Ever since the advent of VOD, the number of people who take advantage of these services has been increasing. According to Nielsen Ratings, approximately 361,000 people in the United States watched the entirety of *Stranger Things* season 2 on the day it was released (Koblin, 2017). This constitutes a “binging” of media content—or watching a significant amount of content in a single sitting. Despite this behavior, it appears that many people may be unaware of just how much media they consume through VOD services. As VOD services continually expand to offer more content available anytime throughout the world, binge-watching is fast becoming a cultural phenomenon that can occur across borders.

Therefore, the goal of this study is to explore how cultural convergence and distinct indulgence versus restraint (IVR) and long-term orientation (LTO) index scores may beget different binge-watching motivations between South Korean and American media audiences. This will be accomplished through an online survey distributed among Korean and American audiences to capture their binge-watching habits, motivations, and reported benefits. With the application of uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973), the participants’ self-reported responses were explored and analyzed. Findings from this investigation will help construct an enhanced comprehension of both culture’s binge-watching motivations and behaviors from a cultural frame.

Literature Review

The Binge-Watching Phenomenon

According to Nielsen's 2013 survey, 88% of Netflix users and 70% of Hulu Plus users reported that they stream three or more episodes of the same television show in one day (Nielsen, 2013). Netflix's survey showed that 48.6% of adult respondents, aged 18 and older, stream TV shows at least once a week (Trouleau et al., 2016). Among them, 61% reported that they regularly binge-watch two to three episodes of a TV show in a row. However, Nielsen ratings estimated that 361,000 people in the U.S. watched all nine episodes of season two of *Stranger Things* on the first day it was released (Koblin, 2017). Annalect (2014) discovered that only 30% of television viewers identified themselves as binge-viewers while 63% of them were actually binge-viewers who watched more than three episodes in a row. This reported behavior serves as one signifier that binge-watching (also called marathon watching, celebration watching, and having a movie marathon) is prevalent in the U.S.

Binge-watching is a relatively recent phenomenon in the 21st century, where video on demand (VOD) services have become more widely available (Shim et al., 2018) and are quickly displacing cable as a primary source of entertainment internationally. To define "binge," the term signifies an unrestrained and excessive amount of consumption in succession (Merriam-Webster, 2016; Cambridge Dictionary, 2013). In terms of the operationalization of binge-watching, there is inconsistency among researchers. Some have operationalized binge-watching as "watching two or more episodes of the same TV series in one sitting" (Sung et al., 2018, p. 413; Pittman & Sheehan, 2015) whereas other researchers have defined binge-watching as watching more than three episodes in one sitting (Annalect, 2014; Deloitte, 2015). Annalect (2014) made this definition more specific by noting that the three episodes watched in succession must be from the

same show. Other non-academic sources citing variation in episode lengths have defined binge-watching as watching multiple episodes of one program for several hours in one sitting. (MarketCast, 2013; MarketWatch, 2013). In sum, no precise definition of binge-watching yet exists, and this issue is further complicated by the fact that relatively few studies focusing on binge-watching behavior have been performed. The current study will define binge-watching as “two or more episodes of a television series in one sitting” based on Sung et al.’s (2018) definition. As an episode number consensus for binge-watching does not currently exist, this investigation will apply the pre-existing measurements, which have a stated range of two to three episodes in one sitting (Sung et al., 2018; Kang et al., 2018; Pittman & Sheehan, 2015).

The binge-watching behaviors are bolstered by online streaming services, like Netflix and Hulu that provide immediate access to thousands of hours of content on demand. In 2016, Netflix made a foray into the global world by opening services to South Korea (Jung, 2018). As other Korean web-based media platforms such as TV Cast and Naver have been continuously rising (Kang, 2017), binge-watching behaviors among Korean audiences are expected to rise as well (Cho, 2017; Cha, 2019). The increasing prevalence of binge-watching raises the questions of why more people are binge-watching and what kind of motivations are behind their binge-watching behavior. These questions will become increasingly relevant as streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, and various network-sponsored options become more common.

Entertainment Media in the United States

The entertainment media industry in the U.S., which includes book publishing, music, and film, has generated billions of dollars in revenue, making it the largest in the world (SelectUSA, n.d.). The industry represents a third of the worldwide media and entertainment (M&E) industry at \$717 billion, according to SelectUSA (n.d.). While subscription TV gained

revenues of US \$94.6 billion in 2018, it is expected to only generate US \$81.8 billion by 2023, due to the rapid growth of VOD services (PwC, 2019). The U.S. recording music industry is also the largest global music market in the world—being worth \$22 billion in 2019 (SelectUSA, n.d.). Media consumption of people in the U.S. is substantial. According to a recent study (Nielsen, 2018), American adults who are 18 and older spend more than 11 hours a day interacting with media via TV, smart phones, and laptops. These reports indicate that Americans have high demand for more media content, and the U.S. entertainment market is poised to meet that demand. As more U.S. entertainment media content is produced and distributed around the globe, several countries have seen increases in the consumption of American media content, including South Korea (Lee & Han, 2006). During the late 1990s, the market share of Hollywood films in Korea reached 70 to 80%, which dropped to 40% in 2005. Despite the drop, however, the influence of the U.S. media still remains considerable in South Korea (Lee & Han, 2006).

Entertainment Media in South Korea

History. In 2018, the South Korean pop (K-pop) music entertainment industry's revenue grew 17.9% (Kelley, 2019), building a \$5 billion global industry (Wang, 2018). Previously, Korea was merely a country in which people were more preoccupied with foreign commodities and cultures—such as Chinese, Japanese, and American culture—rather than with its own (Joo, 2011). For example, during the colonization of Japan between 1910 and 1945, Koreans were fearful of cultural assimilation enforced by the Japanese (Rhee, 1992; Joo, 2011). Japanese colonialism was based on the ideology of Japanization and the assimilation of the Korean culture and people into Japanese culture (Rhee, 1992). Soon after the Japanese colonization ended in 1945, a ban on Japanese popular culture was initiated by the Korean government (Joo, 2011). However, the foreign influence continued due to the Korean War and the division of North and

South Korea (Stueck, 1997). Leaving behind massive damage to the economy and people during the separation of North Korea, the United States and China made an armistice in 1953 (Stack, 2018), which allowed a continuous influence from the U.S from then onward. Yet, the South Korean people continued to find a way to rapidly advance their economy as the noncommunist Republic of Korea (Bridges, 2008). Korean popular culture started to expand in the late 1990s (Shim, 2006; Joo, 2011) as the economy settled down and foreign influence continued due to globalization and media liberalization (Shim, 2006).

Because of media liberalization, the 1980s and 1990s were a critical time for Korean media to establish a foothold in the business (Shim, 2006). In 1998, the Korean government decided to gradually remove the ban on Japanese popular culture (Joo, 2011). That same year, when the Korean government began to authorize the distribution of Hollywood films in movie theaters under U.S. pressure, the Korean film industry suffered (Shim, 2006). Between 1991 and 1994 the total number of films that were produced annually in Korea dropped from 121 to 63; furthermore, by 1994, more than ten film importers had to close down (Shim, 2006). In terms of the music industry, a large K-pop fan base in Asia was created due to an Asian music TV channel, Channel V, that featured K-pop, raising the boy band H.O.T and their songs to the top of the pop charts in China and Taiwan in the late 1990s (Shim, 2006). Despite some difficulties with films, overall, foreign media's dominance awakened Koreans to the importance of culture and its industrial development (Shim, 2006). Therefore, the Korean film, *Sopyonje*, which unprecedentedly received global attention and popularity, reinforced the importance of culture as the film brought global attention to South Korea and its culture (Shim, 2006).

Nevertheless, the phrase, *Korean wave* (i.e. Hallyu), began to rise in the early 2000s when a Korean television drama, *Winter Sonata*, arrived in Japan (Hanaki et al., 2007; Shin &

Kim, 2013). According to Hanaki et al. (2007), *Winter Sonata* influenced a number of Japanese middle-aged women to have more positive images of South Korean cultural aspects such as language, fashions, and the people as a whole. Due to this television show, Korea could grow to be a global leader through the market of its popular culture such as K-dramas, K-Pop, movies, and celebrities (Shim, 2006), becoming a place of not only local, but global encounters and interactions (Joo, 2011). To this day, the distribution of Korean TV dramas to countries overseas is on the rise, especially via online streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, and Dramafever (Ju & Lee, 2015).

Likewise, Korean films and music have been reaching out to the world (Ewing, 2020; Boman, 2019; Doré & Pugsley, 2019). The film, *Parasite* (2019), has earned a plethora of worldwide awards, including a Golden Globe in the U.S. and a Palme d'Or from the Cannes Film Festival in France. In 2020, the movie also made history as the first non-English-language film to win Best Picture at the Oscars. When it comes to Korean music, numerous K-pop artists have also gained global attention (Doré & Pugsley, 2019). For example, Psy's song "Gangnam Style" reached more than 2-billion views on YouTube in 2016, and Bangtan Boys' (BTS) song "Dope" attracted more than 200 million on the same platform in 2017 (Doré & Pugsley, 2019). Despite the Korean language lyrics, BTS topped the U.S. Billboard charts (Doré & Pugsley, 2019) and won prestigious prizes at the Billboard Music Awards and the Mnet Asian Music Awards in 2018 (Boman, 2019).

Media convergence. As Korean pop culture has been increasing in prominence around the globe, it is important to understand its history of media convergence. In his book, Jenkins (2006) defined cultural convergence as "a shift in the logic by which culture operates," (p. 283) highlighting the content's flow throughout media channels. This indicates that Korea's cultural

convergence is a change in the logic by which Korean culture operates, implying that it is not merely a technological change. Therefore, there has been a change in how the Korean cultural system not only functions but influences its media as a function of culture. Jenkins and Deuze (2008) approached media convergence in relation to business mechanisms. Convergence occurs when both a top-down process driven by corporate entities, such as media companies, and a bottom-up process driven by private consumers are involved (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008). This means that media convergence meets the need of both corporate and private consumers of media. According to Jenkins and Deuze (2008), when these two forces meet, they reinforce each other, influencing each other's values, behaviors, and ideologies as they build closer relationships. Literature shows that scholars have tied South Korea's cultural convergence with globalization (Lewis & Sesay, 2013; Tsui & Tollefson, 2017), westernization (Bissell & Chung, 2009; Lewis & Sesay, 2013), and Americanization (Park, 2009). All three terms—Americanization, westernization, and globalization—are closely related to one. First of all, globalization can broadly explain westernization and Americanization. Because of globalization, which involves contact with other cultures, Korea has been exposed to Western and American culture, changing the Korean economy, society, and culture (Lewis & Sesay, 2013). The westernization of Korea is the most palpable demonstration of its globalization, which can be seen in the dissemination of commodities, knowledge, ideologies, social institutions, and images that originated in the West (Lewis & Sesay, 2013). Park (2009) also explained that South Korea has accepted Americanization since the 1950s, and, when it comes to globalization, the United States has been influencing Korean society in the areas of economy, politics, and psychology.

The westernization of South Korean entertainment media. The westernization of South Korea began as early as the Japanese's rule over Korea, according to previous literature of Lewis

and Sesay (2013). In 1936, one of Korean's intellectuals lamented the rapid change of the Korean people's daily life, which was superficially imitating American and European lifestyles (Lewis & Sesay, 2013). In 1995, an "era of globalization" in South Korea had begun, as the former president Kim Young Sam declared when he started the "Segyehwa" project (Tsui & Tollefson, 2017, p. 38). Segyehwa can be translated as becoming globalized, and it was implemented in the following areas: economy, politics, mass media, national administration, the environment, Korean culture, and education (Tsui & Tollefson, 2017). Among these areas, President Kim particularly prioritized the reformation of education with English as an international language, making it as a required subject starting in the third grade (Tsui & Tollefson, 2017).

In contemporary Korean culture—film, drama, K-pop—globalization is still apparent (Hogarth, 2013). According to Hogarth's (2013) article, in those platforms, celebrities and stars tend to imitate their Western counterparts' styles, such as fashion and performance. For instance, lyrics of K-pop music often have English words (Hogarth, 2013) and a few film companies have made partnerships to have their shows put on Netflix (Dwyer et al., 2018).

While accepting Western culture for almost a century has helped Korea modernize, many Koreans still worry that the Western culture would obscure the identity of Korean people (Lewis & Sesay, 2013). Perhaps, this could be the reason that Korea's leisure culture remains less westernized than other cultural aspects, as seen in the examples of drinking customs, K-pop lyrics, K-dramas, and many Western-style arts in Korea that still have Korean contents (Lewis & Sesay, 2013).

Korean's westernization has been ongoing under the influence of globalization, although several aspects of Korean culture remain close to its traditional values (Lewis & Sesay, 2013).

This westernization leads this study to examine if Korean traditional cultural values would affect Korean's binge-watching motivations and frequencies. It is also crucial to explore the different motivations for binge-watching between Koreans and Americans and if Koreans' habits have been influenced by Korea's westernization over the past century.

Indulgence difference between Americans and Koreans. In relation to different cultural values, more specific differences in degrees of pleasure and gratification between Americans and Koreans exist. According to the cross-cultural study of Hofstede et al. (2010), people in South Korea indulge less than people in the United States. Based on factor scores from three items—happiness, life control, and importance of leisure—the researchers ranked 93 countries' indulgence versus restraint (IVR) index scores (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 280). With an IVR index score of 29, South Korea was one of the restrained societies, whereas the U.S. was one of the indulgent societies with a score of 68. Hofstede and his colleagues (2010) defined indulgence as “a tendency to allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun” and restraint as “a conviction that such gratification needs to be curbed and regulated by strict social norms” (p. 281). Restrained societies tend to not emphasize leisure time and to control their desires and gratification in enjoying life and having pleasure (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hofstede, 2011). This indicates South Koreans would seek less leisure time and regulate the level of gratification from having pleasure and enjoying life; on the contrary, Americans would seek more leisure time and control less of their gratification in having pleasure and enjoying life.

Considering the different binge-watching motivation between American and Korean audiences, the disparity of their IVR index scores may indicate that Americans may find more pleasure in binge-watching, scoring higher on most of the eight American motivations and some of the five

Korean motivations: hedonism, escape, engagement, relaxation, passing time, social, enjoyment, recommendation of others, and fandom (Table 1).

Long-term and short-term orientation between Americans and Koreans. According to Hofstede (2011), Americans and Koreans share different life orientations: short-term orientation vs. long-term orientation, respectively. People of short-term orientation value “freedom, rights, achievement, thinking for oneself,” and short-term goals; while people of long-term orientation value “learning, accountability, self-discipline,” and lifelong goals (Hofstede et al, 2010, p. 251) Based on factor scores from three items—national pride, importance of service to others, and thrift as a desirable trait for children—the researchers ranked 93 countries’ long-term orientation (LTO) index scores (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 253). With an LTO index score of 100 (out of 100), South Korea ranked first, whereas the U.S. was clearly within the range of short-term oriented societies, with a score of 26. Therefore, Americans and Koreans may also show dissimilarities in some of binge-watching motivations, which represent their individual characteristic differences in this regard. However, studies have questioned the validity and reliability of Hofstede’s model of six dimensions of national culture (Venaik & Brewer, 2013; Schmitz & Weber, 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the possibility of the invalidity of applying these dimensions to this study.

The Differing Motivations of Binge-Watching between Americans and Koreans

Motivations of the U.S. audiences. Recent research on binge-watching has identified several potential motivations for binge-watchers as reported by samples in the United States. Rubenking and Bracken (2018) measured how much participants use television viewing to manage emotional reactions such as excitement, relaxation, entertainment, frustration, and boredom. They suggested that one rationale for binge-watching could be to regulate emotions

(Rubenking & Bracken, 2018). However, binge-watching motivations have not been studied in depth and, much like the definition of binge-watching, there is a lack of consensus on what motivates individuals to binge-watch. Many studies have borrowed motivational factors from prior research on television viewing and have sought to apply them to binge-watching. For example, based on motivational factors found in prior research, Sung et al. (2018) used seven motivations for binge-watching among U.S. samples, including: “social interaction, entertainment, passing time, relaxation, escape, information, and habit” (p. 417). Among these seven, Sung and colleagues (2018) discovered that entertainment was the only significant predictor of binge-watching behavior among participants. Furthermore, entertainment was the only vital predictor of binge-watching for people with a low level of binge-watching (i.e. light binge viewers) (Sung et al., 2018). For those with a high level of binge-watching (i.e. heavy binge viewers), both passing time and entertainment were revealed to be vital predictive motivations (Sung et al., 2018). This is a necessary first step in the study of binge-watching motivations, but the lack of significant relationships among the other potential motivating factors may suggest that binge-watching is prompted by different motivations than television watching. Another study conducted in the U.S. by Pittman and Sheehan (2015) revealed that engagement factor was the binge-watchers’ strongest psychological motivation for all three types of binge-watching behaviors they measured, which were “frequency of binging, planning ahead to binge, and watching a series over one or two days” (para. 35). Wagner (2016) discovered that participants often chose “multitasking, avoiding spoilers, social currency and escapism” (p. 35) as their motivations in his interviews. While several motivational factors such as entertainment, engagement, relaxation, passing time, and social were thought to show significance with binge-watching behavior, not all of them did.

Motivations of South Korean audiences. Korean audiences showed slightly different motivations of binge-watching than Americans. Shim and Kim (2018) conducted a study among 785 binge-watchers in South Korea and found 5 significant motivations for participating in the behavior: enjoyment, efficiency, recommendation of others, perceived control, and fandom (see Table 1). The researchers concluded that those five motivations were highly correlated with one another and that they were not mutually exclusive (Shim & Kim, 2018). Also, the greater enjoyment, efficiency, and fandom the binge-watchers reported, the more frequently they binge-watched (Shim & Kim, 2018). Within the entertainment variable, those who sought for high sensation (e.g. emotional arousal) watched more than those who sought for low sensation (Shim & Kim, 2018). Those high sensation seekers were more likely to binge-watch when they had more enjoyment and were given recommendations by others on what to watch. Interestingly, the degree of enjoyment did not impact low sensation seekers (Shim & Kim, 2018). The researchers discovered that participants' willingness to build a relationship with the characters and the writers of the show (i.e. fandom; similar to Perse and Rubin's (1989) parasocial relationships) led to more engagement in binge-watching. The research highlighted that those who had a high need for cognition were more likely to engage in binge-watching than those who had a low need for cognition (Shim & Kim, 2018). However, Shim and colleagues's (2018) study showed that there was no correlation between a negative attitude and need for cognition (e.g. inherent motivation for information).

Table 1. *Different motivations between American and Korean binge-viewers*

Motivations among American binge-viewers ^{ab}		Motivations among South Korean binge-viewers ^c	
1	Escape	1	Enjoyment
2	Information	2	Efficiency
3	Engagement	3	Recommendation of others
4	Relaxation	4	Perceived control
5	Passing time	5	Fandom
6	Hedonism (i.e. entertainment)		
7	Social		
8	Habit		

^aPittman & Sheehan (2015) ^bSung et al. (2018) ^cShim & Kim (2018)

While only a handful of binge-watching studies conducted in South Korea exist, especially on attitudes, Shim et al. (2018) investigated how viewers' negative attitudes and personality traits affected their binge-watching. The researchers found a discrepancy; the more negative individuals considered binge-watching to be, the more they were prone to participate in it (Shim et al., 2018). This is an interesting finding because it suggests that perhaps individuals harbor some guilt or shame associated with their binge-watching behavior, causing them to reflect negatively on a behavior that they, by their own admission, participate in habitually. Other results of Shim et al. (2018) indicated a correlation between immediate gratification and binge-watching behavior. Individuals who reported a higher tendency toward instant satisfaction binge-watched more (Shim et al., 2018).

While enjoyment was a mutual binge-watching motivation between Americans and Koreans, unique motivations were discovered among Korean audiences, such as efficiency, recommendations of others, perceived control, and fandom (Table 1). Because motivational differences appear to exist between Korean and U.S. audiences, it is noteworthy to compare the two within the same study design. Only a handful of current studies identify and report on Korean binge-watching (Shim et al., 2017; Shim & Kim, 2018), but what has been reported thus

far demonstrates notable differences from U.S. audiences, which may be rooted in the distinctive cultural values that exist between both societies despite their cultural convergence.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) first introduced uses and gratifications theory (U&G), which states that individuals use media to fulfill a variety of different needs. Their study established the agentic perspective of U&G: media consumers are active users, and they actively look for media that will help gratify their needs (Katz et al., 1973; Rubin, 2009). Katz and his colleagues (1973) analyzed the existing studies in regards to U&G and structured the needs and gratifying motivations of media users. The anticipated principal elements were to be the individual's psychological and social environment, needs, expectations, and attitudes (Rubin, 2009).

Other principal elements were the media, alternatives to media usage, communication behavior, and consequences of behavior (Rubin, 2009). Katz and his colleagues (1973) pointed out that the earlier findings of uses and gratifications—surveillance, correlation, entertainment, and cultural transmission (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960)—did not fully encompass the U&G functions. Instead, they claimed McQuail, Blumler, and Brown's findings (1972) are an improved interpretation of media in four categories: “diversion (including escape from the constraints of routine and the burdens of problems, and emotional release); personal relationships (including substitute companionship as well as social utility); personal identity (including personal reference, reality exploration, and value reinforcement); and surveillance” (p. 512–513). McQuail and colleagues (1972) reinforced a stronger concept of the uses and gratifications motivations. The four categories were later developed in the studies of the U&G theory on television and the Internet. U&G research on media evolved from primitive communication

platforms such as radio and newspaper to contemporary ones such as television, the Internet, and social media. This development is critical as various types of binge-watching occur because of television, Internet, and social media.

Television. Contemporary research has struggled to define all potential uses and gratifications for television viewing because the medium has diversified its genres and formats over the years. However, before its diversification, some early studies identified TV viewing motivations (Greenberg, 1974; Rubin, 1983). In 1974, Greenburg extended McQuail and his colleagues' (1972) typology of four categories. Greenburg (1974) identified seven initial viewership motivations of television viewing: habit, relaxation, companionship, pass time, learning, arousal, and escape. Rubin (1983) found that television viewers belong in two categories: entertainment and passing time in the first category and information-seeking in the second. As a result, he identified five gratifications: pass time/habit, information/learning, entertainment, companionship, and escape (Rubin, 1983). In recent research, Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007) explored reality television shows' uses and gratifications. The study found that more people built connections with the reality show when it was more realistic (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007). Also, individuals were more likely to build higher levels of rapport when people watched reality TV as well as TV to pass time or for relaxation, entertainment, social interaction, and companionship (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007).

Internet. A large amount of contemporary U&G research explored the Internet to find the gratifications people desire that may be different from those found from television (Ruggiero, 2000; LaRose & Eastin, 2004; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Ruggiero (2000) identified three characteristics of the Internet that distinguish it from traditional media platforms: interactivity, demassification, and asynchronicity. An important finding was that interactivity supported the

core U&G assumption of agentic perspective, which considers media users as active consumers (Ruggiero, 2000). Also, demassification was defined as the user's ability to choose from a variety, emphasizing the user's control over the Internet. Sundar and Limperos (2013) looked at how older U&G elements are applied to measuring gratifications from more recent media. They claimed that current research has been developing slightly different gratifications than older research (Sundar and Limperos, 2013). The study of LaRose and Eastin (2004)—which looked at various online activities such as e-mail, online chat, and websites—highlighted the aspect of social interaction on the Internet. As new Internet media platforms have been introduced, this social aspect can relate to binge-watching behavior because it has become a social phenomenon.

Binge-watching with a social aspect. Some of the existing studies on binge-watching recognized the social aspect of the phenomenon (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015; Mikos, 2016; Sung et al., 2018). Pittman and Sheehan (2015) highlighted that the more social interaction individuals desired, the more binge-watching they participated in. The researchers predicted evolving binge-watching behavior may begin to mimic widely-spread social interactions like the Super Bowl, a televised event in which people gather around to watch an annual football championship game as a largely social experience (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015). Mikos (2016) claimed that binge-watching behavior is not only a social but a cultural phenomenon that individuals of a culture integrate into their lives according to their needs. As this study investigates the different motivations of individuals in two distinctive cultures, the social aspect of binge-watching may play an important role in explaining the possible differences.

Furthermore, binge-watching is a phenomenon where both television and the Internet are involved. As the motivations for television and the Internet differ, this investigation will explore the motivations for binge-watching with the features of both media platforms. According to

U&G theory, individuals have more control over the Internet than television, which is relatively more of a passive behavior. Individuals make their own conscious choices on what they see and read during their usage of media (Rayburn, 1996). This suggests that U&G theory is applicable to binge-watching via streaming services such as Hulu and Netflix where people can have control over the types of shows they watch and the length of viewing. Also, this theory can support why binge-watchers experienced gratifying motivations from binge-watching: entertainment, social interaction, relaxation, passing time, and escape (Sung et al., 2018). Therefore, the uses and gratifications theory would make it possible to explain how the viewers feel before and after binge-watching and why they look forward to binge-watching within the gratifying motivations that other studies have already revealed.

Research Questions

Existing binge-watching studies have predominantly covered audiences in the United States and focused on their motivations for binge-watching. This study aims to reveal how differently American and Korean audiences binge-watch and what different motivations for binge-watching they have. As Korean culture has adopted Western culture over the past century (Lewis & Sesay, 2013), and Hofstede et al.'s (2010) study revealed the U.S. as an indulgent country and Korea as a restricted one, it is probable that there may be not only similar but also distinctive perceptions on the binge-watching phenomenon between the two cultures. Even though existing literature on binge-watching already provides a groundwork for this comparatively new phenomenon in society, there is little research available on other cultures and the phenomenon. Here are five research questions that this study seeks to answer:

RQ1: As the United States and South Korea have distinctive IVR index scores, will American's binge-watching motivations be different than Korean's?

RQ2: Where does the biggest motivational discrepancy lie in the American sample?

RQ3: Where does the biggest motivational discrepancy lie in the Korean sample?

RQ4: Between Americans and Koreans, who binge-watches more frequently?

RQ5: How do Americans and Koreans feel after binge-watching?

The primary objective of this research is to investigate how a westernized South Korean culture may explain the similarities and differences in binge-watching motivations between South Korean and American media audiences. The uses and gratifications theory will strengthen the measurement of the motivations and frame the structure of this research. It may have a significant impact on how different societal and cultural values affect binge-watching in the United States and South Korea. This may in turn assist in finding a solution to problems caused by binge-watching in both countries.

Methods

The current study used an online survey to gather binge-watching habits, motivations, and reported benefits of binge watching among samples in the United States and South Korea. Quantitative analyses were employed to determine how individuals in both countries differed in motivations to repeatedly use media content and the self-reported benefits derived from binge-watching. Uses and gratification theory was used to determine the binge-watching motivation categories used in the current study. Through the lens of cultural convergence, benefits and motivations of both participant groups were examined cross-culturally. This cross-cultural analysis aims to codify the behavioral and motivational differences that exist between American and South Korean participants.

Participants

The Brigham Young University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study's use of human participants, the administration of a survey focusing on their perceptions on binge-watching, and all other procedures associated with this manuscript. A total of 383 participants ($n = 240$ Americans, $n = 143$ South Koreans) between the ages of 18 and 65 were surveyed via Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk) and snowball sampling. The American sample was gathered via mTurk, while the Korean sample was secured via snowball sampling across social media platforms, text messages, and email. Of the 383 participants who attempted to take the survey, 77 were removed from the statistical sample as they could not meet the qualifications to participate or they dropped out during the process. Therefore, the final sample size for the study was $N = 306$ (American $n = 193$; Korean $n = 113$).

All mTurk participants (i.e. American) were compensated around \$1 through Amazon Mechanical Turk while snowball sampling participants (i.e. Korean) were given the opportunity to enter into a raffle for one of 10 \$25 Amazon.com gift cards.

Demographics Data

A full demographic breakdown of the sample is included in Table 2. The mean age for the total sample was 29.41 ($SD = 8.75$). The sample consisted primarily of adults between ages of 18 and 30 (74.8%, $n = 229$). The next age group between 31 and 45 (16.3%, $n = 72$) was much smaller than the first, and people aged 45 and older contributed the smallest portion of the participants (6.9%, $n = 21$).

The sample's gender proportion was fairly even, having slightly more females (52%, $n = 159$) than males (48%, $n = 147$). The study contained a large portion of single participants (67.6%, $n = 229$), followed by married ones (30.1%, $n = 92$). In terms of race, most of the sample reported being White (48.7%, $n = 149$) or Asian (41.8%, $n = 128$). The majority of the sample reported their highest level of education to be a bachelor's degree (53.9%, $n = 165$), followed by high school (26.5%, $n = 81$) and an associate's degree (12.4%, $n = 38$). A full aggregate breakdown of demographic information from the survey is included in Table 2, while Tables 3 and 4 separate the sample by American or Korean.

Table 2.

Aggregate Demographic Information

		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Country of Origin:	United States	193	63.1%
	South Korea	113	36.9%
Gender:	Male	147	48.0%
	Female	159	52.0%
	Other	0	0.0%
	Prefer Not to Answer	0	0.0%
Age:	18–30	229	74.8%
	31–45	50	16.3%
	45–60	18	5.9%
	61 and older	3	1.0%
	Missing	6	2.0%
Marital Status:	Married	92	30.1%
	Single	207	67.6%
	Widowed	2	0.7%
	Divorced	4	1.3%
	Separated	1	0.3%
Race/Ethnicity:	White	149	48.7%
	Asian	128	41.8%
	Black/ African American	23	7.5%
	Native American/American Indian	5	1.3%
	Pacific Islander	1	0.3%
	Hispanic/Latino	15	4.9%
	Other	3	1.0%
Education:	High School	81	26.5%
	Associate's degree	38	12.4%
	Bachelor's degree	165	53.9%
	Master's degree	16	5.2%
	PhD or other terminal degree	2	0.7%
	Other	3	1.0%
	Missing	1	0.3%

Note. "Race/Ethnicity" allowed for multiple answers, therefore, reported percentages will exceed 100.
N = 324.

Table 3.

American Demographic Information

		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Country of Origin:	United States	193	100.0%
	South Korea	0	0.0%
Gender:	Male	112	58.0%
	Female	81	42.0%
	Other	0	0.0%
	Prefer Not to Answer	0	0.0%
Age:	18–30	133	68.9%
	31–45	43	22.3%
	45–60	13	6.7%
	61 and older	3	1.6%
	Missing	1	0.5%
Marital Status:	Married	60	31.1%
	Single	126	65.3%
	Widowed	2	1.0%
	Divorced	4	2.1%
	Separated	1	0.5%
Race/Ethnicity:	White	149	77.2%
	Asian	15	7.8%
	Black/ African American	23	11.9%
	Native American/American Indian	4	2.1%
	Pacific Islander	1	0.3%
	Hispanic/Latino	15	7.8%
	Other	3	1.6%
Education:	High School	62	32.1%
	Associate's degree	30	15.5%
	Bachelor's degree	91	47.2%
	Master's degree	9	4.7%
	PhD or other terminal degree	1	0.5%
	Other	0	0.0%
	Missing	0	0.0%

Note. "Race/Ethnicity" allowed for multiple answers, therefore, reported percentages will exceed 100.
n = 193.

Table 4.

Korean Demographic Information

		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Country of Origin:	United States	3	2.7%
	South Korea	109	96.5%
	Missing	1	0.8%
Gender:	Male	35	31.0%
	Female	78	69.0%
	Other	0	0.0%
	Prefer Not to Answer	0	0.0%
Age:	18–30	96	85.0%
	31–45	7	6.2%
	45–60	5	4.4%
	61 and older	0	0.0%
	Missing	5	4.4%
Marital Status:	Married	32	28.3%
	Single	81	71.7%
	Widowed	0	0.0%
	Divorced	0	0.0%
	Separated	0	0.0%
Race/Ethnicity:	White	0	0.0%
	Asian	113	100%
	Black/ African American	0	0.0%
	Native American/American Indian	0	0.0%
	Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
	Hispanic/Latino	0	0.0%
	Other	0	0.0%
Education:	High School	19	16.8%
	Associate's degree	8	7.1%
	Bachelor's degree	74	65.5%
	Master's degree	7	6.2%
	PhD or other terminal degree	1	0.9%
	Other	3	2.7%
	Missing	1	0.9%

Note. "Race/Ethnicity" allowed for multiple answers, therefore, reported percentages will exceed 100.
n = 113.

Procedure

This survey was conducted exclusively online using Qualtrics software. The experiment consisted of a set of open-ended and multiple-choice questions that lasted 15 to 20 minutes in total length. Below is a full explanation of each step of the process.

Recruitment tool. Upon the approval of the Brigham Young University Institutional Research Board, a project with a brief survey description was posted on the Amazon mTurk job listing page. Within the description, it was specified that participants must have binge-watched in the past or currently binge-watching in their viewing behavior. The anonymous Qualtrics survey link was shown to the participants if they continued to participate with a survey code.

Korean participants were recruited via snowball sampling using text messages, emails, and social media. It was clearly indicated in the introduction message that Korean participants should have lived in South Korea from age 3 to 16 to authenticate their validity as Korean natives. Those who met the qualifying criteria and chose to participate were asked to click on an anonymous Qualtrics survey link that connected to a Korean language version of the survey instrument. At the end of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to be considered for a gift card raffle.

The survey started with three screening questions, initially asking if they were 18 or older and if they agreed to the stated terms for participation. Then, they were asked if they have ever binge-watched or currently are binge-watching a show. Solutions to risks were also specified that all survey responses will be anonymous and confidential, available only to the researchers and research consultants. It also explained they could stop the survey at any moment in the consent statement at the very beginning of the survey.

Measures

Behavioral motivations. Viewing behavior was identified as binge-watching if the participants watched “two or more episodes of the same TV series in one sitting” — a criterion determined by synthesizing the standards noted by Sung et al. (2018, p. 413) and Pittman and Sheehan (2015, p. 4). Based on their studies, this investigation also applied the equivalent definition: two or more episodes of a show in a single sitting. Participants were asked to self-report their level of agreement with statements designed to measure the thirteen types of motivations within binge-watching (Table 5). Eight of the thirteen were found among American binge-watchers by Sung et al. (2018) and Pittman and Sheehan (2015): escape, information, engagement, relaxation, passing time, hedonism, social, and habit. The rest, five of the thirteen, were found among Korean binge-watchers by Shim and Kim (2018): enjoyment, efficiency, perceived control, recommendation of others, and fandom. In total, respondents answered 52 different statements and provided their levels of agreement to each of the statements in order. For all statements, the 5-point Likert scales were anchored with (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Additionally, all statements were noted to begin with “I binge watch...”

Escape. Three statements of escape were obtained from Sung et al.’s (2018) study and included, “So I can get away from what I am doing,” “So I can forget about school, work, or other things,” and “So I can get away from the rest of the family or others.” The composite scale was deemed reliable ($M = 3.00$; $SD = 1.14$; $\alpha = 0.81$).

Information. Three statements of information were obtained from Sung et al.’s (2018) study and included, “So I can learn about what could happen to me,” “So I can learn how to do things, which I haven’t done before,” and “Because it helps me learn things about myself and others.” The composite scale was deemed reliable ($M = 2.41$; $SD = 1.14$; $\alpha = 0.88$).

Engagement. Five statements of engagement were extracted from Pittman and Sheehan's (2015) research: "Because the content is more interesting that way," "Because the content is very entertaining," "Because I feel more engaged when I binge-watch," "Because I feel more engaged with the characters when I binge-watch," and "Because binge-watching helps me follow the intricate story lines." The composite scale was deemed reliable ($M = 4.16$; $SD = 0.70$; $\alpha = 0.802$).

Relaxation. Three statements of engagement were extracted from Pittman and Sheehan's (2015) research: "Because it is more relaxing," "Because it helps me to unwind," and "Because it is restful." The composite scale was deemed reliable ($M = 3.70$; $SD = 0.90$; $\alpha = 0.78$).

Passing Time. Three statements of engagement were extracted from Pittman and Sheehan's (2015) research: "Because it is there," "Because I have nothing better to do," and "Because it gives me something to do to occupy my time." The composite scale was not deemed reliable ($M = 3.62$; $SD = 0.89$; $\alpha = 0.66$).

Hedonism. Three statements of engagement were extracted from Pittman and Sheehan's (2015) research: "Because of the sexual content," "Because of the violent content," and "Because I want to be one of the first people to see the entire series." A factor analysis was performed ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 0.93$, $\alpha = .73$), which was improved after the last item was removed ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.98$, $\alpha = .86$).

Social. Six statements of engagement were extracted from Pittman and Sheehan's (2015) research: "Because binge watching makes me feel less lonely," "Because binge watching means I won't have to be alone," "When there is no one else to talk to or be with," "With family and friends," "When friends come over," and "So I can talk with others about it." As Sung et al. (2018) included different statements than Pittman and Sheehan's (2015) in their social scale, this study also adapted their five statements. The statements include, "To have more influence on

other people,” “To compete against others,” “To feel more important than I really am,” “To be like other people,” and “To impress people.” The composite scale was deemed reliable ($M = 2.36$; $SD = 0.79$; $\alpha = 0.85$).

Habit. Four statements of engagement were extracted from Sung et al.’s (2018) study and included, “Because it is a habit,” “Because it is just something to do,” “Just because it is there,” and “Because I just like to watch.” The composite scale was not deemed reliable ($M = 3.48$; $SD = 0.86$; $\alpha = 0.677$).

Enjoyment. Four statements of engagement were extracted from Shim and Kim’s (2018) study and included, “Because some programs are more interesting that way,” “Because I can watch entire series of programs in one sitting,” “Because binge-watching a whole series is usually more enjoyable,” and “Because I prefer watching series of episodes continuously.” The composite scale was deemed reliable ($M = 4.09$; $SD = 0.78$; $\alpha = 0.84$).

Efficiency. Four statements of engagement were extracted from Shim and Kim’s (2018) study and included, “Because binge-watching can lessen the total time spent on watching a series,” “Because binge-watching is more efficient,” “Because binge-watching is more convenient,” and “Because binge-watching is useful.” The composite scale was deemed reliable ($M = 3.37$; $SD = 0.96$; $\alpha = 0.82$).

Recommendation of others. Four statements of engagement were extracted from Shim and Kim’s (2018) study and include: “Because I found programs with good reputations that were worth watching,” “Because I heard about some popular programs,” “Because I heard about some programs are must-watch,” and “Because some programs are fun to binge, according to word-of-mouth.” A factor analysis was performed to measure validity ($M = 3.62$; $SD = 0.90$; $\alpha = 0.81$).

Perceived control. Two statements of engagement were extracted from Shim and Kim's (2018) study and include: "Because I can freely choose the scenes I want to watch," and "Because I can skip to the end to selectively watch the highlight of an episode." A factor analysis was performed to measure validity ($M = 2.95$; $SD = 1.27$; $\alpha = 0.80$).

Fandom. Three statements of engagement were extracted from Shim and Kim's (2018) study and include: "Because it became habitual for me to binge-watch TV programs starring certain actors/characters," "Because I am a fan, so I like to save my favorite TV programs to watch later," and "Because binge-watching helps me better engage with my favorite TV program's fan community." A factor analysis was performed to measure validity ($M = 2.97$; $SD = 1.10$; $\alpha = 0.78$).

Emotions. The majority of recent binge-watching studies have not looked at binge-viewers' diverse emotions other than negative ones such as guilt (Wagner, 2016). This research included a total of eight emotions—happy, anxious, fulfilled, tired, guilty, disappointed, relieved, and relaxed—for participants to answer in a five-point scale from "does not describe my feelings" (1), "slightly describes my feelings" (2), "moderately describes my feelings" (3), "mostly describes my feelings" (4), to "clearly describes my feelings" (5).

Table 5.

*Binge-watching U.S. (US) and Korean (K) Motivation Scale**"I binge-watch . . ."**Escape (US)*

So I can get away from what I am doing.
 So I can forget about school, work, or other things.
 So I can get away from the rest of the family or others.

Information (US)

So I can learn about what could happen to me.
 So I can learn how to do things, which I haven't done before.
 Because it helps me learn things about myself and others.

Engagement (US)

Because the content is very entertaining.
 Because I feel more engaged when I binge watch.
 Because I feel more engaged with the characters when I binge watch.
 Because binge-watching helps me follow the intricate story lines.

Relaxation (US)

Because it is more relaxing.
 Because it helps me to unwind.
 Because it is restful.

Passing Time (US)

Because it is there.
 Because I have nothing better to do.
 Because it gives me something to do to occupy my time.

Hedonism (US)

Because of the sexual content.
 Because of the violent content.
 Because I want to be one of the first people to see the entire series.

Social (US)

Because binge watching makes me feel less lonely.
 Because binge watching means I won't have to be alone.
 When there is no one else to talk to or be with.
 With family and friends.
 When friends come over.
 So I can talk with others about it.

To have more influence on other people.
To compete against others.
To feel more important than I really am.
To be like other people.
To impress people.

Habit (US)

Because it is a habit.
Because it is just something to do.
Just because it is there.
Because I just like to watch.

Enjoyment (K)

Because some programs are more interesting that way.
Because I can watch entire series of programs in one sitting.
Because binge-watching a whole series is usually more enjoyable.
Because I prefer watching series of episodes continuously.

Efficiency (K)

Because binge-watching can lessen the total time spent on watching a series.
Because binge-watching is more efficient.
Because binge-watching is more convenient.
Because binge-watching is useful.

Recommendation of others (K)

Because I found programs with good reputations that were worth watching.
Because I heard about some popular programs.
Because I heard about some programs are must-watch.
Because some programs are fun to binge, according to word-of-mouth.

Perceived control (K)

Because I can freely choose the scenes I want to watch.
Because I can skip to the end to selectively watch the highlight of an episode.

Fandom (K)

Because it became habitual for me to binge-watch TV programs starring certain actors/characters.
Because I am a fan, so I like to save my favorite TV programs to watch later.
Because binge-watching helps me better engage with my favorite TV program's fan community.

Results

The current study sought to perform a series of comparative analyses of binge-watching motivations between American and Korean samples, to determine what differences, if any, exist between them.

Binge-Watching Frequency and Behavior

Participants self-reported their binge-watching activities by answering the following questions: “Last time you binge-watched, how long did you binge-watch?,” “On a typical week, how many days do you usually binge-watch?,” “When do you usually binge-watch?,” “Which day are you likely to binge-watch?,” “How do you typically binge-watch?,” “Then, please indicate how much you use those selected platforms for binge-watching,” “Now, tell us why you use that platform the most over the others,” and “What device do you usually use to binge-watch?” Some questions showed significant differences between the two countries of interest.

Weekly binge-watching frequency. Participants were asked how many times they binge-watch per week. The table below shows the summary of both audiences’ frequencies. This variable is further discussed in the results section, as it was related to RQ4.

Table 6.

Participants’ binge-watching frequency

	U.S.			Korea		
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Frequency	193	2.20	1.28	111	1.66	1.11

Number of episodes that were viewed last time. With a drop-down menu, participants could report how many episodes that they watched last time they binged from “1” to “81 or more.” An independent samples t-test was conducted, and the results positively showed

American participants ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 3.68$) watched more episodes than Korean participants ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 3.53$); $t(303) = 2.15$, $p = 0.032$).

Binge-watching an entire season of a show in one sitting. A chi-square analysis was conducted, and the results showed there was a significant difference between Americans and Koreans. Americans were more likely than Koreans to have binge-watched an entire season of a show in a single sitting, $\chi^2(1, N = 306) = 6.16$, $p = .013$.

Table 7.

Answer to “Have you ever binge-watched an entire season of a show in one sitting?”

	U.S.		Korea	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Yes	130	67.4 %	60	53.1 %
No	63	32.6 %	53	46.9 %
Total	190	100 %	116	100 %

Media platform and genre preferences. Additionally, participants were asked which media platforms they tended to watch streaming content on, and what their favorite genres were. Frequency data for these responses are reported in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8.

Summary of participants’ binge-watching platforms

	U.S.		Korea	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Netflix	171	88.60 %	83	73.45 %
Hulu	89	46.11 %	7	6.19 %
Amazon Prime	100	51.81 %	7	6.19 %
Disney +	32	16.58 %	3	2.65 %
DVDs/ Blu-rays	21	10.88 %	6	5.31 %
Broadcast TV/ TV reruns	24	12.44 %	22	19.47 %
Network websites	25	12.95 %	47	41.59 %
Other	19	9.84 %	22	19.47 %

Note. Multiple answers were allowed, therefore, the total of reported percentages will exceed 100. $N = 306$.

Table 9.

Summary of participants' favorite show genre

	U.S.		Korea	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Action/Adventure	117	60.62 %	49	43.36 %
Anime	68	35.23 %	26	23.01 %
Crime	82	42.49 %	34	30.09 %
Classic	28	14.51 %	17	15.04 %
Comedy	88	45.60 %	48	42.48 %
Drama	104	53.89 %	89	78.76 %
Documentary	63	32.64 %	19	16.81%
Sci-Fi & Fantasy	97	50.26 %	40	35.40 %
Reality Shows	45	23.32 %	39	34.51 %
Thriller	72	37.31 %	28	24.78%
Horror	49	25.39 %	6	5.31 %
Other	2	1.04 %	3	2.65 %

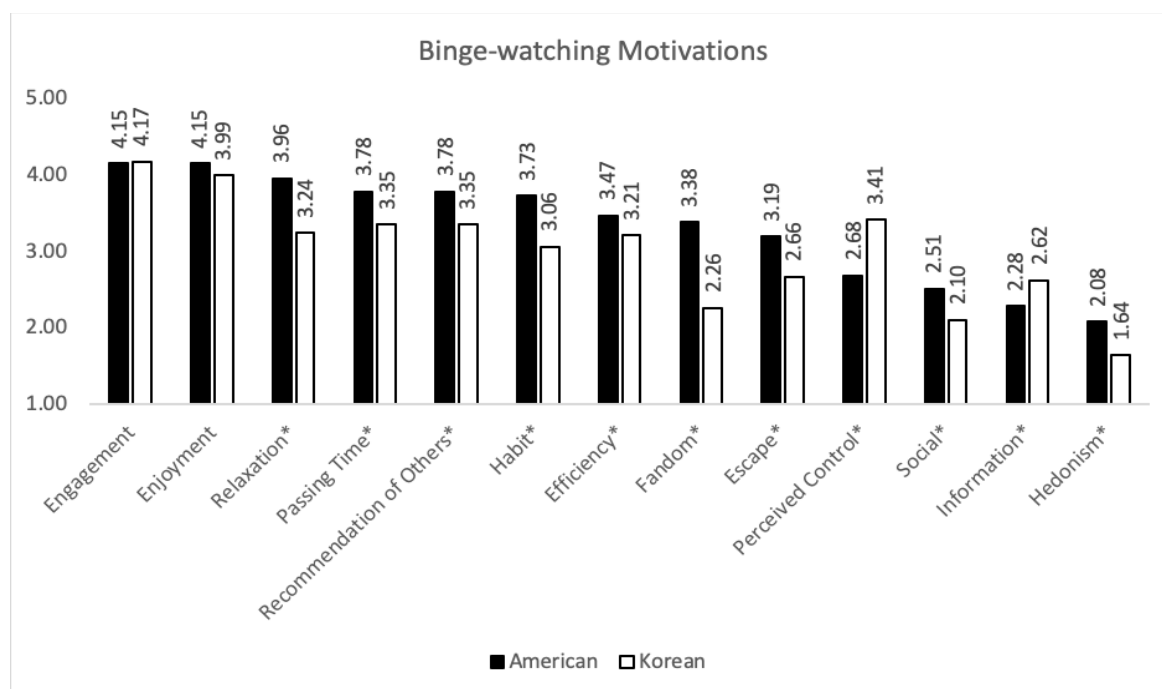
Note. Multiple answers were allowed, therefore, the total of reported percentages will exceed 100. *N* = 306

RQ1 Results

RQ1 asked if American binge-watching motivations would be different from Korean binge-watching motivations due to cultural disparities, such as Korean culture's westernization and indulgence versus restraint (IVR) index scores. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare participants' country of origin in binge-watching motivations. As shown in Figure 1, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare how participants' country of origin was associated with binge-watching motivations. The difference on 11 of the motivation scales were found to be significant, confirming a distinct difference between both audiences. Americans had higher means on nine scales while Koreans had higher means on two scales.

There was a significant difference in the scores for American escape ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.08$) and Korean escape ($M = 2.66$, $SD = .98$), $t(304) = 4.25$, $p < 0.001$; American information

($M = 2.29$, $SD = 1.18$) and Korean information ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.03$), $t(304) = -2.58$, $p = 0.011$; American relaxation ($M = 3.96$, $SD = .78$) and Korean relaxation ($M = 3.2$, $SD = .92$), $t(304) = 6.93$, $p < 0.001$; American passing time ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .89$) and Korean passing time ($M = 3.35$, $SD = .85$), $t(304) = 4.19$, $p < 0.001$; American hedonism ($M = 1.89$, $SD = 1.12$) and Korean hedonism ($M = 1.62$, $SD = .69$), $t(304) = 4.96$, $p = 0.008$; American social ($M = 2.51$, $SD = .84$) and Korean social ($M = 2.10$, $SD = .61$), $t(304) = 4.96$, $p < 0.001$; American habit ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .84$) and Korean habit ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .71$), $t(304) = 7.14$, $p < 0.001$; American efficiency ($M = 3.47$, $SD = .94$) and Korean efficiency ($M = 3.21$, $SD = .98$), $t(304) = 2.27$, $p = 0.024$; American perceived control ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.25$) and Korean perceived control ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.18$), $t(304) = -5.02$, $p < 0.001$; American recommendation of others ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .91$) and Korean recommendation of others ($M = 3.35$, $SD = .83$), $t(304) = 4.13$, $p < 0.001$; American fandom ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .98$) and Korean fandom ($M = 2.26$, $SD = .89$), $t(304) = 9.97$, $p < 0.001$.



* $p < 0.05$

Figure 1. Mean Difference of binge-watching motivations between American and Korean audiences.

There was no significant difference for engagement, $t(304) = -.255$, $p = .799$, despite Koreans ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .69$) attaining slightly higher scores than Americans ($M = 4.15$, $SD = .70$). Also, there was no significant effect for enjoyment, $t(304) = 1.71$, $p = .088$, despite Americans ($M = 4.15$, $SD = .75$) attaining higher scores than Koreans ($M = 3.99$, $SD = .81$).

These results show that American participants reported that they are motivated to binge watch mostly to relax, pass time, escape, on the recommendation of others, out of habit, because of the efficiency of binge watching, out of fandom, for social purposes, and out of hedonism, compared to Korean participants. Korean participants' motivations exceeded American's only as pertaining to perceived control and information.

RQ 2 Results

RQ2 asked, where does the biggest motivational discrepancy lie in the American sample? The results of an independent sample t-test show that the fandom scale had the largest *t*-value difference; $t(304) = 9.97, p < 0.001$, demonstrating the biggest difference relative to the variation in the sample data. The American sample ($M = 3.38, SD = .98$) reported binge-watching more due to fandom than the Korean sample ($M = 2.26, SD = .89$). Therefore, fandom would be the most distinctive motivation of Americans compared to Koreans.

RQ 3 Results

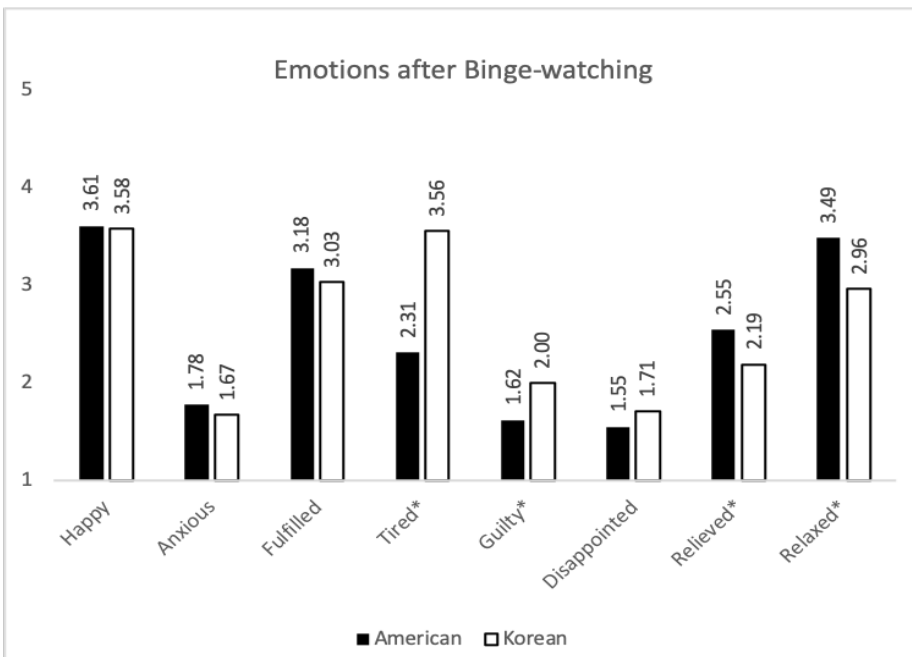
RQ3 asked, where does the biggest motivational discrepancy lie in the Korean sample? The results of an independent sample t-test show that the perceived control scale had the largest *t*-value difference; $t(304) = -5.02, p < 0.001$, demonstrating the biggest difference relative to the variation in the sample data. The Korean sample ($M = 3.41, SD = 1.18$) reported binge-watching related to more perceived control than the American sample ($M = 2.68, SD = 1.25$). Therefore, perceived control would be the most distinctive motivation of Koreans, compared to Americans.

RQ 4 Results

RQ4 simply asked who binge-watches more frequently between American and Korean audiences. The participants could choose one of the following answers: “once a week” (1), “twice a week” (2), “three times a week” (3), “more than three times a week” (4), and “it is a regular routine (almost every day)” (5). An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare participants’ country of origin and their frequency of binge-watching per week. Americans ($M = 2.20, SD = 1.28$) reported binge-watching more frequently than Koreans ($M = 1.66, SD = 1.11, t(302) = 3.86, p < .001$).

RQ 5 Results

RQ5 asked how Americans and Koreans feel after binge-watching. Participants could answer a five-point Likert scale from “does not describe my feelings” (1) to “clearly describes my feelings” (5). Four out of eight emotions showed a significant difference in an independent sample t-test: tired, guilty, relieved, and relaxed (Figure 2). Koreans reported feeling more tired ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.57$, $t(304) = -7.29$, $p < .001$) and guilty ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.34$, $t(302) = -2.75$, $p = .006$) than Americans ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.22$; $M = 1.62$, $SD = 1.05$). Americans reported to feel more relieved ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.42$, $t(302) = 2.46$, $p = .015$) and relaxed ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.16$, $t(304) = 3.92$, $p < .001$) than Koreans ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.14$; $M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.11$).



* $p < 0.05$

Figure 2. Means of emotions between Americans and Koreans after binge-watching.

Discussion

By analyzing the responses of 306 binge-viewers, this study explored the differences in 13 separate binge-watching motivations among American and South Korean audiences. The findings show that there are motivational disparities in binge-watching between the two audiences, most of which were found to be significant. The binge-watching motivations that showed the biggest discrepancy in each audience were also revealed: fandom (U.S.) and perceived control (Korea). As video on demand (VOD) services such as Netflix and Hulu are rapidly expanding and infiltrating individuals' lives in both countries, these results shine a light on how individuals in both countries are differently motivated to binge-watch. Since Netflix has spread to South Korean audiences in the past few years (Jung, 2018), the binge-watching phenomenon has seemed to be amplified in the country (Cho, 2017). People now do not have to watch television in a traditional way, waiting for their favorite show to air at a certain time of the day or week; instead, they can now watch several episodes in a row anywhere and at any time via the Internet. Such convenience and control over consuming media can highly motivate individuals to binge-watch (Shim & Kim, 2018).

Fandom

Contrary to Shim and Kim's (2018) study, which had established five significant binge-watching motivations among their Korean sample, this study shows fandom was found to be more notable within the American sample. Also, it was revealed that American participants reported higher degrees of binge-watching motivations than Korean participants on seven other scales: relaxation, passing time, escape, recommendation of others, habit, efficiency, social, and hedonism. Prior studies (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede et al., 2010) have shown that individuals in the U.S. seek for more gratification of their desires to enjoy life and have pleasure than

individuals in South Korea. As the eight motivations that Americans scored significantly higher than Koreans were linked to pleasure-seeking and self-indulgent motivations, the current study's findings corroborate Hofstede et al.'s (2010) claims. As predicted, Americans found more pleasure and gratification in binge-watching than Koreans—even scoring higher than Korean audiences on all gratifications except two.

Information and Perceived Control

Yet, two variables—information and perceived control—were found to be significantly more important to Korean audiences than American audiences in this study. This finding is conflicting because perceived control was the only scale out of the five scales of Korean binge-watching motivations, which the previous binge-watching study with Korean audiences discovered (Shim & Kim, 2018). Also, while this study finds that Koreans' binge-watching behavior was more significantly associated with information than Americans', the information factor was actually investigated mainly with American audiences in relation to binge-watching (Sung et al., 2018; Conway & Rubin, 1991). This is noteworthy since no other study has found a significant reason why people binge-watched TV primarily for gaining information in a cross-cultural study.

Furthermore, Koreans' higher scores on information and perceived control can be supported by Hofstede's long-term and short-term orientation index, in which South Korea was verified to have the strongest long-term orientation out of 93 countries in the world (Hofstede et al., 2010). Since people from long-term orientation societies value learning, accountability, and self-discipline, Koreans also place importance on acquiring knowledge, responsibility, and self-control. This may explain why the information motivation appeals more to Koreans, who tend to look for long-term learning from binge-watching. Their higher perceived control can be also

clarified by self-control that they demonstrate while binge-watching. These connections may support the fact that some long-established Korean cultural values are still somewhat deeply rooted in Koreans' consciousness, while many of them have changed due to the westernization of South Korea.

However, this study found that there was not a significant difference in engagement and enjoyment between American and Korean audiences—in this case, both reported very high scores. In other words, engagement and enjoyment would be the most salient motivations observed in both audiences, which could be explained and supported by the westernization of South Korean culture. Even though several aspects of Korean culture yet remain close to its traditional values, Koreans have been influenced by Western culture in the past century (Lewis & Sesay, 2013). Therefore, it is not extraordinary for South Koreans to share common binge-watching motivations with Americans.

Binge-Watching Frequency

When it comes to binge-watching frequency, Americans were found to binge-watch more frequently than Koreans. This result is intriguing as most of existing binge-watching studies recruited participants exclusively from the U.S., and only a handful of cross-cultural binge-watching academic studies currently exist (Shim et al., 2018; Sung et al., 2018; Pittman & Sheehan, 2015; Kang et al., 2018; Rubenking & Bracken; Wagner, 2016; Shim & Kim, 2018; Mikos, 2016). American's binge-watching frequency has not yet been compared with others. This also parallels Hofstede et al.'s (2010) finding that the U.S. belongs to the indulgent societies, where pleasure and enjoyment in life are often sought. As Americans are more likely to indulge in the pleasure and gratification of enjoying life, they tend to binge-watch more as an entertainment mechanism.

Emotions after Binge-Watching

When it comes to emotions, this study's results show that Koreans feel more tired and guilty than Americans after they binge-watch, and Americans feel more relieved and relaxed than Koreans. As previous studies examined negative emotions in relation to binge-watching, such as guilt (Rubenking & Bracken, 2018; Wagner, 2016), guilt has been identified as significant once more. Wagner (2016) discovered people who binge-watched via streaming services felt high levels of guilt, but this study uniquely observed a distinction in Korean audiences when compared to American audiences. Also, studies often looked at how binge-viewers use television to regulate positive and negative emotions (Rubenking & Bracken, 2018; Tefertiller, 2018). Yet, many positive emotions after binge-watching have not been sufficiently examined in the literature. The current results indicate positive associations between binge-watching and various emotions, contrary to what Tefertiller's (2018) study found (a connection between binge-watching and unhealthy emotional traits was not discovered).

Mean Comparisons

Lastly, when the means of the 13 motivations were compared with the means of the main previous binge-watching studies (Shim & Kim, 2018; Pittman & Sheehan, 2015; Sung et al., 2015), some differences were revealed (Figure 3 and Figure 4). Among the five Korean motivations, fandom showed the most discrepancy, while the other four seemed to share similar means. Among the eight American motivations, the current study showed higher means for seven motivations: engagement, relaxation, passing time, hedonism, social, information, and habit. Since none of these studies had representative samples, it may indicate a call for additional research with a higher quality sample selection, which could more accurately reflect the binge-watching population as a whole.

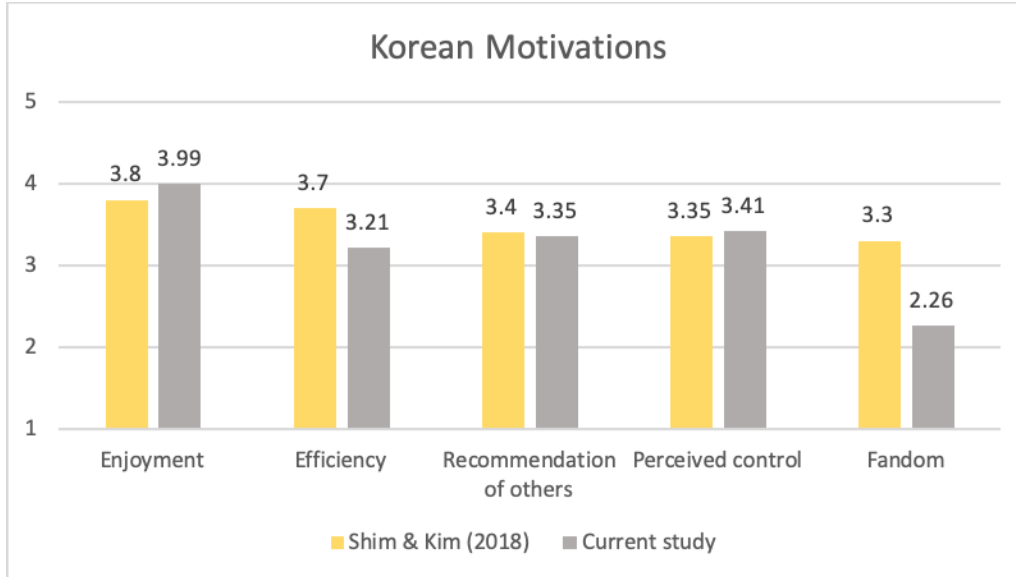


Figure 3. Mean comparisons of Korean motivations between the previous and current studies.

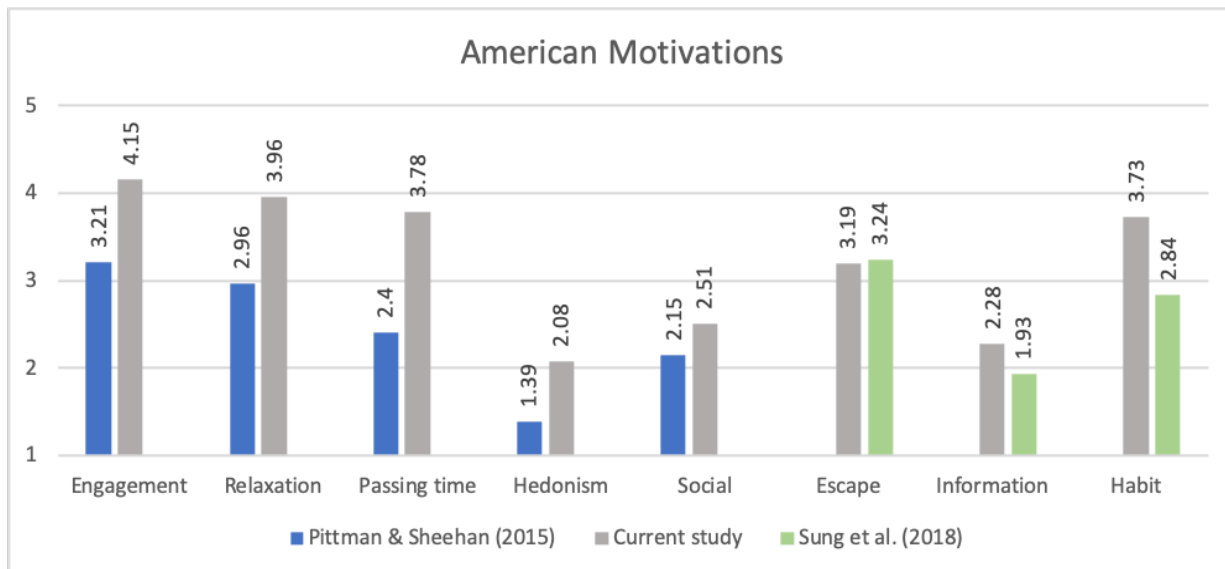


Figure 4. Mean comparisons of American motivations between the previous and current studies.

Limitations

The current study is not without its limitations. There is a chance of sampling bias, since the American and Korean samples were recruited separately from a crowdsourcing website, Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk), and snowball sampling via social media respectively. Usually, workers from mTurk are more technologically savvy than those who are not on mTurk, as it is their full- or part-time job. Almost 70% of these randomly chosen participants were between the ages of 18 and 30, who represent a demographic with a higher percentage of digital natives than older ones (Helsper & Eynon, 2010). Therefore, there is a likelihood that this study excluded people who may not be as technologically savvy, which cannot reflect the general population of both American and Korean societies. Also, the participants from snowball sampling may not have been representative of the population of South Korean binge-viewers. As the researchers had no control over how the individuals were chosen, the appropriate distribution of the population was not guaranteed. Moreover, the Korean sample size ($n = 113$) was smaller when compared to the American sample size ($n = 193$).

Another limitation of the study was the restriction of the U&G. By its nature, U&G relies on self-reports of motivations and behaviors, and self-report scores are subject to social desirability and other types of bias. Additionally, prior television consumption studies, relying on U&G, contained measurements of certain U&G motivational scales. Many of the initial viewership U&G motivations of television viewing studies, such as habit, relaxation, companionship, pass time, learning, arousal, and escape (Greenburg, 1974), are still used in numerous studies. However, these categories may not accurately reflect the motivations of binge-viewers in the 21st century, as the binge-watching phenomenon is relatively new and has not been comprehensively studied with extensive motivations.

Finally, the composite scales of passing time and habit were not deemed reliable. As passing time ($M = 3.62$; $SD = 0.89$; $\alpha = 0.66$) and habit ($M = 3.48$; $SD = 0.86$; $\alpha = 0.677$) had Cronbach's Alpha scores lower than 0.7. This indicates that the internal consistency of the two composite scales was not valid and reliable enough, compared to other 11 scales.

Conclusion

Since the advent of video on demand (VOD) services such as Netflix and Hulu, the number of people who take advantage of the services has consistently been on the rise. Given abundant choices and control over media consumption as well as the advancement of technology, it is likely that the binge-watching phenomenon will continue expanding and becoming more prevalent around the globe. American and Korean individuals have different cultural values as shown in their distinctively different IVR and LTO index scores and knowing what motivates these individuals to binge-watch television—from relaxing to watching the show due to fandom—may highlight some common ground and disparities among the people in the U.S. and South Korea.

This study is among the first to explore the binge-watching phenomenon in a cross-cultural setting from the U&G perspective. Findings determined that Americans are more likely to binge-watch because of relaxation, passing time, recommendation of others, habits, efficiency, escape, social aspects, hedonism, and especially fandom; whereas Koreans are more likely to binge-watch because of information and perceived control. These results highly corresponded with Hofstede et al.'s (2010) findings, which revealed that people in the U.S. seek more pleasure and gratification to enjoy life than people in South Korea. Koreans' long-term orientation values such as learning and self-discipline also explain their strong motivation for information and perceived control. In conclusion, the results will help better understand how binge-watching

behaviors are diverse when compared with other cultures and unlike other characteristics of existing television viewing behaviors. However, in future studies, extensive binge-watching motivations of viewers may be explored via a qualitative study, as the U&G had limited range of motivational scales from investigating TV viewing. Also, to reduce the possibility of sampling bias, future research could conduct stratified random sampling, recruiting more diverse sample groups.

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