

## ENGAGEMENT IN ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT: A PRELIMINARY STUDY AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN KLANG VALLEY

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Entertainment consumption is not new as our ancestors in general too spent their spare time for leisure, and some are common with today's entertainment such as sports, board games, swimming, and going to theatres (Fife, 2012). This paper focuses on online entertainment, which can be accessed through various gadgets and smart gadgets available today, such as smartphones, smart television, laptops, tablets, and many more. Types of online entertainment, platforms, the content available for access are manifold. In Malaysia, the smartphone internet users who engage in entertainment activities make up the majority with activities such as watching videos and movies, play games, and listen to music; are those below 20 years of age with the percentage of 88.4%, 92.3%, and 73.9% respectively (MCMC, 2019). The recent pandemic COVID-19 has caused a considerable loss to the media and entertainment industry with a surging drop of 55% followed by zero sales; ironically, it also causing changes in viewers behaviour drove a spike and demands for diversity and discretion from viewers makes the growth of entertainment platforms to increase too (Mizal, 2021).

Online entertainment not only functions as an entertaining tool as some other measure of entertainment can be educational, allowing some space for self-development in some dimensions such as learning processes, motivation with the sense of rewarding (Chao-Fernández, Gisbert-Caudeli & Vázquez-Sánchez, 2020). However, entertainment consumption too can cause other problems such as addiction and other health-related issues such as eye strain and fatigue due to disrupted sleeping patterns (Ganjoo, 2018; Agbaria, 2020). These occur when entertainment is consumed excessively and causing damage, especially to children's well-being, such as physical, verbal, and cognitive aspects. This paper presents the findings of a preliminary study of online entertainment engagement among adolescents in Klang Valley. This preliminary study was undertaken as part of the main author's doctoral work, which aims to explore violent entertainment addiction that predicts adolescents' aggressive behaviour that might last longer than in the adolescence phase.

### 2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative approach through written interviews via an online platform. According to Clark and Creswell (2015), qualitative research is a problem that involves phenomenon exploration consisted of participants' views asking broad and general questions. A set of questions were developed to gauge the adolescents' feedback on their online entertainment engagement. While there are many types of online entertainment, it consistently

evolved; this preliminary study was undertaken to explore adolescents' recent choice of entertainment.

The data collection for this study was undertaken within a month (May 2021) involving adolescents in Klang Valley, a city where the internet is widely available. The written interview questions were developed based on four sections: (1) profile of informants; (2) types of online entertainment engaged by the adolescents; (3) genre of entertainment engaged; and (4) source of information about online entertainment. These questions were listed in the google form survey with an open-ended question. This approach allows the informants to indicate their feedback without influencing the option (answers) to the question. The findings of this study were analysed by using thematic analysis, to identify the pattern of online entertainment engagement among adolescents. Thematic analysis is a method to identify, analyse, organise, describe, and report themes in a set of data and a rigorous one to produce insightful and trustworthy findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **3. RESULTS**

#### **3.1 Profile of Informants**

This preliminary study managed to gather feedback from 52 informants, aged between 13 to 17 years old. Most of the informants were female (42 informants), and the remaining were male. The informants who participated in this study were in the Klang Valley area such as Cheras, Kajang, Shah Alam, and Klang.

#### **3.2 Types of Online Entertainment Engaged by the Adolescents**

The written interview requested the informants to indicate types of entertainment that they often use, and the informants were allowed to name more than one entertainment. Following this open-ended question, among the most frequent entertainment indicated by the informants was 'streaming platforms' such as YouTube, Netflix, Iqiyi, Vlive, and others (40 out of 52 informants). The informants' second type of online entertainment was 'social media' including Instagram, Tik Tok, Facebook, Whatsapp, and others (25 informants). Finally, the third preferred online entertainment engaged by the informants was 'online gaming' such as Pubg, Mobile Legend, Special Force Group 2, Minecraft, and others. Notably, one informant indicated 'online reading' as one of her entertaining activities, and one informant enjoyed 'online shopping'.

#### **3.3 The Genre of Entertainment Engaged by the Adolescents**

This study further requested the informants to indicate the preferred genre of entertainment, and they were allowed to indicate more than one answer. The findings of this study revealed that informants favoured 'comedy genre' (22 informants), followed by 'romance genre' (17 informants), 'music genre' (11 informants), and 'family genre' (10 informants). Notably, several informants listed the 'thriller genre' (17 out of 52 informants), including murder, horror, and mystery sub-genres.

#### **3.4 Source of Information about Online Entertainment**

Finally, the informants were asked about the source of information about online entertainment. More than half of the percentage of the informants (32 informants, 61.5 percent)

know about online entertainment from their ‘friends. 28 informants indicated that their ‘siblings and relatives’ informed them about the online entertainment, and 18 informants were influenced by the ‘social media. ‘Parents’ were also listed as the ones that influenced them about online entertainment (9 informants). Notably, 9 informants explore online entertainment themselves.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed a pattern of online entertainment engaged by adolescents nowadays. The top three preferred online entertainment were a streaming platform, social media, and online gaming. This finding is consistent with Chassiakos et al. (2016) that streaming platforms such as online video game streaming can be of hobby and problematic use (Cabeza-Ramírez, Muñoz-Fernández, & SantosRoldán, 2021). While this study discovered that only one informant engaged in online shopping, this finding is in line with Sramova and Pavelka (2019). Further, this study found that many adolescents preferred comedy, romance, music, and family genres. However, adolescents’ involvement in the romance genre may be exposed to unsuitable content (e.g., sexual scenes, language usage, and others). Similarly, indecent content can exist in music (songs, music videos, soft pornography, sexual language usage, inappropriate language, and others). Finally, this study discovered that adolescents were mostly influenced by their friends, and this is consistent with Brady (2017) in his discussion about Social Learning Theory.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

The trend of adolescents’ online entertainment engagement has been increasing as the dependence on the internet now is increasing and essential in many lives’ aspect. The younger generation is more technology savvy makes them easily exposed to various forms of entertainment. Their vulnerability will make this generation to be easily manipulated and influenced by people and industry evolve around them. Hence their vulnerability will further increase their use in online entertainment, exploring different forms of online entertainment and exposed to negative entertainment that is unsuitable for children, such as those with explicit content, violence, harsh and inappropriate language. Also, the thriller genre which often is exciting too has increasing popularity and receives high demand even among adolescents. The industry has taken this as an opportunity for profit and a higher number in the audience. Even though most streaming platforms filter entertainment content according to age but does not make it inaccessible to children. High demand for the thriller genre can influence adolescents’ values, beliefs, and behaviour. In a study conducted by Marzo et al. (2019), 78.41% of adolescents in the authors’ sample prefer violent video games, and they lack altruism. The long-term impact on the scale of society is terrifying adolescent behavioural problems that can be prolonged until adulthood (Henriksen et al., 2020). Excessive consumption potentially leads to addiction which finally leads to aggressive behaviour as they learn the actions from the entertainment, they engage in. All parties, including parents and even authority, are responsible for children’s well-being.

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