

ONLINE TELEVISION USAGE AS AN EMERGING TREND AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN AMBROSE ALLI UNIVERSITY, EKPOMA, EDO STATE

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Abstract

This study examined online television usage as an emerging trend among undergraduate students in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma in Edo State, Nigeria. The study interrogated how frequent undergraduate students employed online television, the relationship between online television usages, as well as how online television encouraged or discouraged undergraduates in their academic performance. The study utilised the uses and gratification theory as the theoretical framework and employed survey methodology as the research design. Data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings underscored that undergraduates use online television very frequently, as the frequent usage of online television by undergraduate students is based on the flexibility, accessibility as well as the rise of streaming platforms that allow viewers to watch content on-demand. The study also found that despite the fact that online television usage among undergraduate students contribute to their academic performance, excessive usage and consumption of online television poses serious challenges that may lead to distraction and poor academic performance and failure in class. The study recommended that the university should conduct periodic surveys to track the frequency and duration of online television usage among students to regulate and strike a balance between academic activities and excessive usage of online television usage, as undergraduate students should always make sure that they focus most of their online television usage on academic purposes and activities, as this will foster a positive relationship between learning, distraction and leisure.

Keywords: Online Television, Emerging Trend, undergraduates, Academic Performance, Ambrose Alli University

Introduction

That the audio-visual power of television has enable it to combine sight and sound that made it undisputed medium of information dissemination, is not in doubt. Its long history of transformation that metamorphosis from black and white to colour and analog to digital, is a testament to its effectiveness and reliable means of information dissemination and consumption. According to Lotz (2018), television is a widely used medium for transmitting and receiving moving images and sound. It has long served as a tool for entertainment, education, and information dissemination. Since its emergence, television has enormously impacted cultural and social norms, public opinion, and worldwide perspectives. With television, audiences engage with different ideas, explore different viewpoints and connect internationally. Again, television brings about a platform for education, providing opportunities for new knowledge and skills acquisition. It frequently entertain and engage audiences, serving as a valuable means of relaxation in a busy world (Smith, 2017).

With the global adoption of the internet, the television industry underwent a transformation. Online television refers to the use of internet-enabled devices to access television content, including live broadcasts, on-demand videos, and streaming services. Unlike traditional television, online television allows viewers to access content on multiple devices, such as smartphones, smart TVs, and computers (Curtin, Holt, & Sanson, 2023). Online television has disrupted traditional broadcasting by giving viewers unprecedented control over what, when, and how they watch programs (Tryon, 2018). The rise of online television can be traced back to the mid-1990s, with early experiments such as the Internet Television Network (ITN) and Microsoft's Netshow Software. The launch of YouTube in 2005

and the subsequent growth of streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video in the late 2000s transformed the landscape (Lotz, 2018). The rapid rise of online television services has also contributed to "cord-cutting," a trend where consumers move away from traditional cable and satellite TV subscriptions in favor of streaming services (Smith, 2017). Online television offers several advantages over traditional broadcasting. Its convenience allows users to watch programs at their preferred time and on any device, making it particularly appealing to younger audiences, including university students. Online television's flexibility gives viewers more control over their viewing schedules, enabling them to watch content on demand rather than adhering to fixed broadcast times. Online television provides access to a wider variety of content, including international programming and niche genres that may not be available on traditional platforms. Streaming services employ algorithms that recommend content based on viewing history, allowing users to discover new shows and movies more easily (Tryon, 2018). Many streaming platforms offer affordable subscription plans, making online television an economical alternative to traditional cable, especially for students on tight budgets.

Online television plays important role in the lives of university undergraduates. It gives access to educational messages, such as documentaries and research materials that support their academic pursuits. Moreover, online television aids social interactions, as undergraduates can discuss trending shows and share recommendations with peers (Curtin, Holt, & Sanson, 2023). The flexibility offered by online television is particularly beneficial for students managing busy schedules, enabling them to balance entertainment and academic responsibilities (Smith, 2017). For many students, online television is also a cost-effective

entertainment option. Many streaming platforms offer affordable subscription models that are more accessible than traditional cable packages. Furthermore, online television allows students from diverse locations, including remote areas, to access the same content, reducing geographical barriers and fostering inclusivity (Evans, 2020).

As a traditional medium for entertainment and information, television has evolved significantly in the digital era. The emergence of online television has transformed how viewers consume content, offering more control, flexibility and access to diverse programming. University undergraduates, in particular, have embraced online television for its convenience, affordability, and ability to facilitate both academic and social engagement. As online television continues to grow, its influence on cultural consumption and social interactions will likely become even more profound.

Statement of the Problem

The over reliance on online television by university students has generated a lot of questions about how important it is to academic performance, social behaviour and personal development. As online television brings about easy access to educational content, it also serve as distractions that may affect time management and concentration. Moreover, the broad spectrum of content available on these platforms ranging from educational documentaries to addictive TV shows requires an examination of how students balance their academic responsibilities with their consumption of entertainment media. Given the rapid growth of online television usage, particularly among university students, there is a need to assess its overall impact and identify potential areas of concern. As observed by Chen and Lee (2020), there is a widespread adoption of streaming platforms such as Netflix, YouTube, and Hulu, which few studies have thoroughly examined the factors driving this trend or its impact on traditional television viewing, students' usage and academic performance. With this, concerns have been raised regarding the potential for online television to contribute to sedentary lifestyles, reduced attention spans and diminished academic focus among undergraduates (Kim & Park, 2021).

In view of the above, the question is, does online television contribute positively to undergraduate students' educational outcomes, or does it act more as a source of distraction? Again, what is the relationship between online television consumption and undergraduates' academic performance? Answering these questions and more are the focus of this study

Research Questions

1. What is the frequency of Ambrose Alli University undergraduate usage of online television?
2. What is the relationship between online television consumption and academic performance among Ambrose Alli University undergraduates?
3. To what extent do online TV encourages Ambrose Alli University undergraduates to perform academically?

Conceptual Clarification

Online television is broadly defined as the distribution of television content via internet-based platforms, allowing viewers to access live streams, on-demand videos, and user-generated content on various devices such as smartphones, tablets, computers, and smart TVs (Lobato, 2019). Unlike traditional TV, which relies on scheduled broadcasting and linear programming, online television offers a flexible, user-controlled experience. This allows viewers to choose what to

watch, when to watch, and where to engage with content (Harrison & Hefner, 2019). With regards to the definition of online television, scholars have underscore several defining features of online television. They include on-demand accessibility, interactivity, content diversity and personalization, as well as multiplatform use (Lobato 2019; Jenkins, 2006; Huang & Rust, 2021; Harrison & Hefner, 2019).

Online Television and Undergraduates' Academic Performance: An Overview

The proliferation of digital technologies has significantly transformed traditional media consumption, with online television emerging as a prominent trend among undergraduates worldwide. As internet accessibility and streaming platforms become increasingly prevalent, a shift from conventional broadcast television to online streaming services is evident among young adults pursuing higher education (Chen & Wellman, 2019). This demographic demonstrates a preference for on-demand content, coupled with the flexibility and diversity offered by online television platforms, which cater to their varied interests and lifestyles (Khan et al., 2020).

The massive usage of online television among undergraduates did not only show changing media consumption patterns but also influences their academic performance, social interactions, and entertainment choices. Understanding this emerging trend is crucial for media scholars and educational institutions aiming to adapt to evolving digital habits and optimize media literacy initiatives (Johnson & Lee, 2021). Consequently, studying online television usage among undergraduates brings about valuable insights into the broader dynamics of digital media adoption within the youth segment in the contemporary digital age. Even in the face of all these benefits, scholars have raised concerns regarding the potential negative implications of increased online television usage. Kim and Park (2021) argue that excessive screen time associated with online streaming can contribute to sedentary lifestyles, which are linked to health issues such as obesity and decreased physical activity. Moreover, there is evidence that underscore that excessive usage of online television may affect academic performance and attention spans among undergraduates (Chen & Lee, 2020). Their study indicates that students who spend more time on online streaming platforms tend to experience reduced study time and lower academic achievement.

Moreover, media literacy research underscores that different messages available online aids critical viewing skills, which are often underdeveloped among students (Williams & Johnson, 2018). As such, the move towards online television consumption underscores the need for educational interventions to aid media literacy and responsible viewing behaviors among undergraduates.

Online Television Services and Platforms

Online television services and platforms have fundamentally transformed how audiences access and consume television and film content. Unlike traditional broadcast and cable television, streaming services provide on-demand access to a different library of content via the internet. This shift allows viewers to watch shows, movies and other media anytime and on various devices, including smartphones, tablets, computers and smart TVs. Main feature of online television services include the ability to offer entire seasons of shows or extensive libraries of content for uninterrupted viewing,

often referred to as binge-watching (Lotz, 2020). Major streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, Disney+, sling TV, YouTube are examples of online television services and platforms and are known for their extensive content libraries and the ability to deliver content without traditional commercial interruptions. These platforms employed subscription-based models, where users pay a monthly fee for access, though some also offer ad-supported tiers (Smith, 2017).

A major important effects of online television services is the increased consumer control over viewing schedules. Unlike traditional TV, where programming is scheduled and viewers must adhere to broadcast times, streaming platforms does not compel users to a particular time to watch content as viewer watch content at their own will. This flexibility is enhanced by features like content recommendation algorithms, which suggest new content based on a user's viewing history, thereby encouraging viewers' involvement and discovery (Hobbs, 2019). Online television platforms have also contributed positively to content production and distribution. The contest among platforms has led to reasonable investments in original content production. One good example is Netflix's commitment to producing exclusive shows and films which has reshaped the entertainment industry, impacting on how and where content is developed and distributed (Tryon, 2018). This content creation strategy aims to attract and retain subscribers by offering unique programming not available on other platforms.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies examining online television usage among undergraduates abound and they have yielded valuable explanations into the patterns, motivations and consequences associated with this media consumption behaviour. Nguyen and Nguyen (2020) conducted a quantitative survey involving 500 university students across different institutions to examine the frequency and preferred platforms of online television. They found that over 78% of respondents used online streaming weekly, with YouTube and Netflix being the most popular platforms. The study also revealed key motivators such as convenience, variety of content, and cost-effectiveness.

Another study conducted by Nielsen Company in 2018 found that 62% of 18-24 years old watch television on their computers, smartphones or tablets, with 45% of them using online streaming service to watch television. Moreover, Ugboaja, et al. (2022), conducted a study to ascertain students' exposure and content preference of online television streaming in North central Nigeria and they discovered that 74.9% of the students sampled prefer streaming media content at night after they are done with their academic activities. The study also underscored that majority of the students prefer Netflix to other online streaming platforms.

In a similar study, Kim and Park (2021) used a mixed-method approach, using an admixture of surveys with focus group discussions, to examine the effects of online television on students' academic performance and lifestyle. Their findings revealed that students who spent more than three hours daily on online streaming platforms reported lower academic achievement and increased sedentary behavior. Notably, the study found a significant correlation ($r = -0.45$, $p < 0.01$) between the time spent on online television and GPA scores, suggesting an adverse effect on academic outcomes.

In a longitudinal study, Smith and Lee (2021) tracked media habits of 300 undergraduates over one academic year to

observe changes in viewing patterns and their implications. The research demonstrated a steady increase in online television consumption, with a 20% rise in weekly viewing hours. The study also noted a shift in content preferences towards binge-watching series, which was associated with sleep disruption and decreased physical activity among participants.

In the same vein, Williams and Johnson (2018) evaluated the level of media literacy among students in relation to their online viewing habits. Their findings indicated that students with higher media literacy skills were more likely to critically evaluate content and limit their screen time, whereas those with lower literacy levels tended to engage in passive consumption, often exceeding recommended screen time limits.

Generally, empirical evidence underscores that online television has become a major form of media among undergraduates, due to its convenience and content diversity. Be that as it may, these researches collectively point to possible negative results such as poor academic performance, health issues and the need for improved media literacy. Despite these insights, there remains a paucity of longitudinal and experimental studies that can establish causal relationships, highlighting an area for future research.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) posits that individuals actively use media to satisfy specific needs and desires. Developed in the 1940s and further expanded upon by scholars like Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in the 1970s, the theory brings about a framework for understanding the reasons for media usage. It suggests that media users are aware of their needs and as such select media that will assuage or satisfy those needs. This makes a user an active agent in the media experience, as they select, use, interpret and respond to media message in ways that are unique to them. The theory posits that people are not passive media message users as they consume media messages based on personal desire. Instead of concentrating on how media influences audiences, the theory looks at how individuals use media to satisfy their desire. This theory is based on the idea that media consumption is intentional and driven by specific needs such as seeking information, entertainment, emotional connection or social interaction (Cha, 2014; Katz & Coen, 2019). With regards to university undergraduate, online television usage fits well within this framework. After long period of studying or attending lecture, students always resort to online television for relaxation or liesure. Streaming platforms like Netflix or Hulu offer a vast selection of shows and movies, allowing students to relax and unwind. This serves as a way to escape the stress of their academic workload and enjoy content that is tailored to their personal tastes as well as academic activities (Kruger & Petty, 2020).

Aside from entertainment, students also employ online television for information purpose. Many educational programmes, news outlets and documentaries are easily accessible online, aiding students to stay informed about current events or learn more about topics related to their academic interests. Whether it's watching a documentary for a class or staying updated on global news, online television provides a flexible and convenient way to gather information (Katz & Coen, 2019; Feng & Xie, 2022). Online television also plays a role in social interaction among students. Popular shows or series can spark conversations with peers, whether in person or online, fostering a sense of connection through

shared interests. Students often discuss recent episodes, recommend series to one another, or debate the merits of different storylines, creating a communal experience around media consumption. In this way, online television becomes a tool for building relationships and maintaining social bonds (Lu & Lo, 2017). Moreover, students use online television to pass time between their academic commitments. When there are breaks between classes or moments of downtime, watching short videos or episodes can provide a quick and easy form of entertainment. The convenience of being able to watch content on various devices, laptops, tablets, or phones means that students can engage with online television whenever it suits their schedules, making it a flexible medium for filling idle moments (Kruger & Petty, 2020).

In essence, UGT explains how university students employed online television not only for entertainment but also for information, social interaction and as an aid to academic learning. This shows the active role that individuals play in choosing media that fits their personal needs and lifestyle.

Methodology

Survey method was the research methodology used in this study. Survey design entails the study of large and small population (or universe) by selecting and studying samples

Table 1: Respondent frequency of online television usage

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Very frequent	120	31.4	31.5	31.5
Frequently	211	55.3	55.4	86.9
Sometimes	40	10.4	10.5	97.4
I don't know	10	2.6	2.6	100
Total	381	99.7	100	

Field Report, 2026

Table 1 show respondent's usage of online television with 120 respondents representing 31.5% of the total sample said that they used online television very frequent, while 211 respondents or 55.4% of the total sample said that they frequently use online television, 40 respondents representing 10.5 % of

chosen from the populations to discover the relative incidence, distribution and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables (Orhewere & Aghomi, 2013). This design allows for the collection of numerical data that can be analysed statistically to identify trends, correlations, and patterns. The population for this study consisted all undergraduate students enrolled in Ambrose Alli University. This group represents the broader students' body that included a diverse range of academic disciplines and demographic backgrounds, within the range of 18-30 years of both sexes (bivariate) who are undergraduates from various departments and faculties. The population of the study was 88,000 undergraduates (Ambrose Alli University Management Information System, 2025). The researcher employed the Taro Yamani formula to select 400 respondents and questionnaire were administered to them, with regards to their usage of online television.

Results

Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 381 were returned valid and useable. The results are presented and analysed below:

the total sample said that they use online television sometimes, as 10 respondents or 2.6% of the total sample said they don't know the frequency of their online television usage. This shows that majority of the respondents frequently used online television.

Table 2: Responses on the relationship between online TV consumption and academic performance

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Positive	114	29.9	30	30
Negative	208	54.5	54.6	84.6
Indifference	43	11.2	11.2	95.8
I don't know	16	4.1	4.2	100
Total	381	99.7	100	

Field Report, 2026

Table 2 show the relationship between online television consumption and academic performance where 114 respondents representing 30% of the total sample said that there is a positive relationship between online television and students' academic performance, as 208 respondents or 54.5% of the total sample said that there is a negative relationship

between online television and academic performance. While 43 respondents representing 11.1% of the total sample remains indifference, and 11 respondents or 4.2% of the total sample said they don't know the relationship that exist between online television and students' academic performance.

Table 3: Responses on the extent to which online TV encourages undergraduates to perform academically

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
To a very great extent	61	16	16	16
To a great extent	90	23.6	23.6	39.6
To some extent	210	55.1	55.1	94.7
I don't know	20	5.2	5.3	100
Total	381	99.9	100	

Field Report, 2026

Table 3 discusses the extent to which online television encourages undergraduates to perform academically, as 61

respondents representing 16% of the total sample said that online television encourages undergraduates to perform

academically to a very great extent, while 90 respondents or 23.6% of the total sample said that online television encourages undergraduates to perform academically to a great extent, as 210 respondents representing 55.1% of the total sample said that online television encourage undergraduates to perform academically to some extent, while 20 respondents or 5.3% of the total sample said they don't know the extent to which online television encourage undergraduate students to perform academically.

Discussion of Findings

As indicated in Table 1, 211 respondents or 55.4% of the total sample said that they frequently use online television, while 120 respondents representing 31.5% of the total sample said that they used online television very frequent. The frequent usage of online television by undergraduate students is their convenience in consuming multiple episodes or an entire season of a television series in one sitting. This behavior has become increasingly common with the rise of streaming platforms that allow viewers to watch content on-demand. Studies underscore the fact that undergraduates frequently use online television due to its accessibility and on-demand nature. A study by Smith and Anderson (2018) found that 78% of college students frequently use streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, and YouTube for entertainment, whereas only 45% regularly watch traditional TV broadcasts. This demonstrates a clear inclination toward online platforms for media consumption.

The widespread use of mobile devices further explains the frequent usage of online television and online news consumption. As Schwaiger et al. (2022) note, smartphones and tablets have become the primary tools for accessing online television content among undergraduates. Mobile devices are optimized for mobile use, allowing users to consume news on the go. Media content, in their traditional television form, do not offer the same level of portability or convenience, making them less attractive to students who are constantly on the move and seeking quick updates.

There is a somewhat negative relationship that exist between online television consumption and academic performance among undergraduate students. Results from Table 2 shows that 208 respondents or 54.5% of the total sample said that there is a negative relationship between online television and academic performance. This figure constitutes majority of the total respondents sampled. This finding aligns with the result of Katz & Fiore (2019) research on the impact of online television watching on academic performance. The study examined the relationship between online television habits and academic performance among university students. They observed that students who frequently engaged in online streaming, especially binge-watching, tended to show a decline in their academic performance.

The study tracked a group of students over a semester and monitored how much time they spent on platforms like Netflix and Hulu. It was found that students who spent excessive hours streaming often had difficulty managing their time effectively, which impacted their ability to focus on their studies and complete assignments on time. The constant availability of online television made it easy for students to prioritize entertainment over their academic work. Many students admitted that they found themselves watching multiple episodes or entire seasons of shows, which left less time for studying. This tendency to binge-watch was associated with procrastination, where students would delay their academic tasks in favor of watching their

favorite series. As a result, their grades suffered, particularly when binge-watching occurred during critical periods like midterms or finals. In order to carry out their research, they observed a group of students over a semester, tracking the amount of time they spent on streaming platforms like Netflix and Hulu. The study combined quantitative data, such as the number of hours spent binge-watching and students' academic performance during the semester, particularly around critical periods like midterms and finals. In addition to tracking this data, the researchers gathered self-reported feedback from the students regarding how streaming affected their study habits. Some students admitted that excessive streaming led to procrastination, making it harder to manage their time effectively and prioritize academic tasks. This, in turn, impacted their grades negatively.

However, others noted that taking short breaks to watch shows helped them refresh and return to their studies with greater focus. Some students even used educational content from streaming platforms to supplement their learning, demonstrating that online television could have a positive impact when consumed mindfully. By using both quantitative tracking and qualitative self-reporting, Katz and Fiore were able to assess how online streaming habits related to academic success, offering a nuanced understanding of the issue.

Findings from Table 3 found that 210 respondents representing 55.1% of the total sample said that online television encourage undergraduates to perform academically to some extent. In line with this, Oliveira & Martinez (2021) illustrates how students utilize online television for educational purposes. They found that many university students turned to platforms like YouTube and educational streaming services for more than just entertainment. Instead, these platforms served as valuable resources for expanding their knowledge and learning new skills outside the formal classroom setting. Students frequently accessed educational content such as documentaries, instructional videos, and lectures on a variety of subjects. This kind of content provided them with supplementary material that complemented their academic studies. For instance, watching documentaries related to their coursework helped reinforce classroom learning, offering visual and contextual insights that made complex topics more understandable. The study highlighted that the interactive and engaging nature of online television made it a popular choice for learning. Unlike traditional textbooks or lectures, the dynamic and often visually rich content on streaming platforms captured students' attention and facilitated better retention of information. Educational series and expert talks on these platforms were seen as more accessible and less formal than traditional academic resources, which encouraged students to engage with the material more actively.

Oliveira & Martinez's research demonstrated that online television has evolved beyond its role as a source of entertainment. It has become an important educational tool that supports students' academic growth and enhances their learning experiences through accessible and engaging content. The data-driven approach means that their conclusions about university students' use of online television for educational purposes are based on evidence collected from actual student behaviors. Instead of making theoretical claims, the researchers relied on empirical data such as how often students watch educational content, what types of content they prefer, and how this impacts their learning experiences. For example, they might have tracked how much time students spent watching platforms like YouTube

or educational streaming services to gain insights into how these resources supported their studies.

Conclusion

That online television has contributed enormously to daily activities of undergraduate students and Ambrose Alli University undergraduates is not in doubt. It has served as a convenient and different sources of information. Its gratification extends beyond leisure, as undergraduate students employed it platforms for social interaction and academic enrichment. However, the frequent usage of online television by undergraduate students is based on the flexibility, accessibility as well as the rise of streaming platforms that allow viewers to watch content on-demand. Despite the fact that online television usage among undergraduate students contribute to their academic performance, excessive usage and consumption of online television poses serious challenges that may lead to distraction and poor academic performance and failure in class.

Based on findings, it is recommended that the university should conduct periodic surveys to track the frequency and duration of online television usage among students to regulate and strike a balance between academic activities and excessive usage of online television usage.

In addition, undergraduate students should always make sure that they focus most of their online television usage on academic purposes and activities, as this will foster a positive relationship between learning, distraction and leisure.

It is also recommended that undergraduate students avoid excessive usage of online television, despite the fact that it aid them sometimes in academic learning and problem solving via its multiple platforms.

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