

THE USES OF OMANI YOUTH OF PAID TELEVISION SERVICES AND THE GRATIFICATIONS ACHIEVED

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Abstract

This study explores how young people in Oman engage with paid television services, looking closely at the reasons behind their use, the routines that shape their viewing behavior, and the gratifications they perceive from this form of media consumption. Guided by the Uses and Gratifications framework, the research adopts a descriptive-exploratory design and relies on an online questionnaire completed by 480 respondents aged 18–35 from different regions, educational backgrounds, and occupational groups.

The findings show that slightly more than half of the participants regularly rely on subscription-based platforms. Male viewers account for a larger share of active users, and most respondents prefer watching alone, usually two or three times a week and for about one to three hours per session. Netflix emerged as the most common service, followed by beIN Sports and YouTube Premium, while Smartphones and smart televisions were the devices most frequently used. Entertainment, relaxation, and the wish to escape advertising interruptions stood out as the strongest motivations for turning to paid services. These motives point toward a tendency among Omani youth to treat subscription-based platforms primarily as a source of leisure rather than as a tool for information gathering. The gratifications most often reported were enjoyment, exposure to different cultures, and productive use of free time. The analysis also revealed notable differences across gender, income, and age groups in both motivations and achieved gratifications.

Because research on paid television use in the Arab region remains limited, this study offers new empirical insight into the interplay between technology, culture, and youth media behavior in Oman. Its results may assist policymakers and media practitioners interested in understanding emerging viewing patterns and in developing content strategies that reflect the preferences and cultural expectations of young audiences in a rapidly changing digital environment.

Keywords: Omani youth, Media consumption, Viewing behavior, Entertainment and relaxation, Youth media behavior, Technology and culture, Digital environment

Introduction

Over the past decade, the rapid spread of high-speed internet and the steady improvement in broadband quality have significantly transformed how audiences watch and experience television. What used to be a fixed, scheduled medium tied to terrestrial, or satellite transmission has evolved into a fluid, on-demand environment. Digital technologies now make it possible to reach almost any program instantly through a growing number of streaming platforms and connected devices. In this new landscape *paid television services*—subscription-based systems that offer access to vast libraries of content for a regular

fee—have become one of the defining features of global media.

In this study, the term *paid television services* refers to audiovisual platforms that require payment in exchange for access to films, dramas, sports, and documentaries delivered via satellite, cable, or internet-based transmission. These platforms operate through a variety of business models, including monthly or annual subscriptions and pay-per-view options. Their emergence marks a decisive shift in the media economy: a move away from traditional broadcasting toward personalized, algorithm-driven experiences where viewers determine both timing and

content.

Globally, paid television is delivered mainly through three technological systems, cable television, direct broadcast satellite (DBS), and internet-protocol television (IPTV). In practice, however, these distinctions have begun to blur. The rise of internet-based-over-the-top(OTT)and subscription video-on-demand(SVOD) services has transformed the market, making streaming the dominant form of television delivery. By 2023, the number of paid-TV subscribers exceeded 980milliona clear sign that the sector remains robust despite the popularity of free-to-air and social-media video. Netflix alone more than doubled its global subscriber base—from 110 million in 2017 to over 220 million in 2022—illustrating the strength of the on-demand model (Stoll, 2022).

The scale of this change is further reflected in current market data. By 2024, the worldwide video-streaming industry had surpassed 670\$ billion in value and is projected to reach nearly 2.5\$ trillion by 2032 ,with an average annual growth rate approaching 18 percent . Paid television now represents about 36 percent of global television viewing—more than 1.8 billion subscribers—while cable holds 27.9 percent and traditional broadcast just 24 percent .Netflix continues to dominate with more than 200 million subscribers across the world (Durat, 2024). These data indicate both commercial growth and a broader cultural shift toward individualized, digital forms of entertainment that have become embedded in everyday life.

In the Sultanate of Oman, this global transformation has found favorable conditions. Expanding digital infrastructure, widespread Smartphone ownership, and affordable data packages have together created favorable conditions for the growth of subscription-based viewing. According to the *National Centre for Statistics and Information* (NCSI, 2021 97 ,(percent of Omanis own Smartphones capable of internet access, and around 70 percentof households have smart televisions. Reports from the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority(TRA) confirm steady increases in the use of streaming and on-demand platforms—evidence of both the country’s technological readiness and its openness to globally networked entertainment. While official national data on subscription numbers remain limited, market indicators and media coverage show an upward trend, particularly for platforms such asbeIN Sports ,which holds exclusive rights to many

international sporting events, and Netflix ,whose Omani subscriptions grew by 140 percent in early 2020 (Oman Observer, 2020). The combination of reliable broadband, multilingual content, and intuitive streaming interfaces has made these services part of the daily media routines of many Omanis, especially the young.

Yet this phenomenon extends beyond technology. Paid television is also reshaping cultural and social life—altering viewing habits, redefining leisure, and creating new avenues for cultural exchange through exposure to international content. For Omani youth, who make up more than 30 percent of the population, these services are sources of entertainment, information, and social engagement. They are also spaces in which identity and belonging are negotiated within a globalized media environment.

The present study therefore explores the patterns, motivations, and gratifications associated with Omani youths’ engagement with paid television services during 2024. Guided by the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) ,it examines how young audiences actively choose and use media to meet psychological, social, and informational needs. By connecting personal characteristics with viewing behavior and achieved gratifications, the research seeks to contribute to broader understandings of audience activity in a rapidly evolving communication landscape.

Ultimately, the study aims to provide insights that can inform national media policy and industry strategies in Oman, in line with the ambitions ofOman Vision 2040 , which emphasizes digital transformation, innovation, and youth empowerment. In doing so, it situates Omani media consumption within global patterns, showing how young viewers navigate between local cultural values and global media flows to construct meaning and connection in the digital era.

Theoretical Framework

1. Uses and Gratifications Approach

The *Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)* has long stood as one of the most resilient and widely applied paradigms in media and communication research. Emerging in the mid-twentieth century, the approach marked a decisive intellectual shift initiated by Katz and colleagues, who urged scholars to move beyond the traditional “effects” perspective and instead ask what audiences do with media. This transition repositioned the audience as an *active agent*—capable

of selection, reflection, and evaluation—rather than as a passive target of influence (Blumler & Katz, 1975).

Within this theoretical frame, the media user is viewed as a self-directed individual who recognizes personal needs, evaluates available media choices, and selects those capable of meeting psychological, social, or informational goals. Thus, UGT provides a comprehensive lens for exploring *why* individuals gravitate toward media platforms and *what gratifications* they gain from their use. In the context of this research, it explains how Omani youth interact with paid television and OTT (over-the-top) services to satisfy varied motives that range from entertainment and escapism to information seeking and social connection (Nasr, 2015).

Communication scholars traditionally classify audience motives into two broad categories: utilitarian and ritualistic. The first encompasses needs related to learning, discovery, and surveillance of the environment, while the second relates to pleasure, companionship, and relaxation (Makawi & Al-Sayed, 1998). These dual motives continue to shape media consumption patterns: informational programming corresponds to utilitarian uses, whereas fictional and entertainment content often meets ritualistic or emotional needs.

Expanding this view, Wenner (1985) further distinguished between *content gratifications*—the rewards derived from exposure to the message itself, such as acquiring knowledge or cultural enrichment—and *process gratifications*, which arise from the act of using the medium, including relaxation, identification, or interaction. This conceptual nuance remains strikingly relevant in today's streaming environment, where gratification is tied not only to what is watched but also to how it is accessed, navigated, and personalized through technological affordances.

2. Contemporary Applications in the Digital Era

As communication has converged across digital and mobile technologies, the scope of UGT has expanded to include new categories of gratification that reflect both *technological experience* and *user autonomy*. Contemporary audiences derive satisfaction not only from media messages but also from the interactive and customizable features that define digital platforms.

Studies in this field have demonstrated that gratification now extends to include convenience, control, and personalization. For instance, Camilleri

and Falzon (2020) integrated UGT with the *Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)*, revealing that ease of use, perceived usefulness, and enjoyment collectively determine ongoing engagement with streaming services. Their findings affirm that convenience and entertainment value are equally critical motivators in users' sustained adoption of digital viewing habits.

Other scholars, including Shin et al. (2024) and Tefertiller and Sheehan (2019), have shown that streaming users often report *hybrid gratifications* that combine emotional pleasure with the satisfaction of technological efficiency. These studies indicate that users perceive streaming platforms as empowering tools that grant flexibility and autonomy, allowing them to shape their own viewing schedules and to escape both advertising and time constraints.

3. Relevance to the Present Study

Building on these theoretical developments, the current research employs UGT to examine how Omani youth engage with paid television services—focusing on their motives for use, consumption patterns, and gratifications achieved. Given Oman's near-universal smartphone penetration (NCSI, 2021) and the widespread adoption of broadband streaming, it becomes especially pertinent to analyze how local viewers integrate global platforms such as Netflix and Shahid VIP into their daily cultural practices.

In extending the theory to the Omani context, this study emphasizes that gratifications are multidimensional—combining content-based satisfaction with technological convenience, cultural resonance, and identity reinforcement. It thus recognizes Omani youth as active, discerning media consumers who negotiate between global entertainment flows and local cultural values.

Through this approach, the research not only tests the continuing relevance of UGT in a non-Western, rapidly digitizing society but also contributes to its theoretical refinement. The study hypothesizes that traditional gratification domains—information, entertainment, and social interaction—remain foundational, while *new categories of gratification* emerge, linked to interactivity, personalization, and cultural identity affirmation.

Ultimately, the framework positions Omani youth as self-aware participants in the global digital media ecology—individuals who engage with technology to

satisfy needs that are simultaneously personal, social, and cultural. In doing so, it highlights UGT's enduring flexibility and its capacity to evolve alongside the changing realities of media consumption in the twenty-first century.

Literature Review

1. Uses and Gratifications Research on Television and Digital Platforms

Since its emergence in the 1970s, the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) has served as a powerful framework to explore how audiences actively select media content to meet their needs for information, entertainment, and social interaction. Classical UGT studies focused on traditional television, radio, and newspapers, but the expansion of digital technology has extended the theory to interactive and personalized media environments (Blumler & Katz, 1975; Palmgreen, Rosengren, & Wenner, 1985).

In Arab communication scholarship, UGT has been widely applied to examine youth media exposure and gratification-seeking behavior. For example, Al-Sal'ous (2020) and Al-Sayed & Diab (2021) both found that university students' viewing motivations for entertainment television or streaming platforms center on escapism, relaxation, and social identification. Similarly, Nasr (2015) emphasized that the value of UGT lies in its flexibility and adaptability across evolving media systems, including digital television and streaming platforms, where users act as co-creators of meaning rather than mere recipients of messages.

These foundational studies established that media gratifications are not universal; they are influenced by cultural, social, and technological contexts. As viewing environments became increasingly digital and mobile, researchers began to examine how audiences integrate new technological features—such as algorithmic recommendation systems, ad-free access, and time-shifting capabilities—into their consumption patterns.

2. International Studies on Paid Television and OTT Services

Recent years have witnessed an exponential rise in subscription-based and on-demand television services (OTT), reshaping audience behavior globally. Research across regions confirms that these services satisfy both traditional media gratifications (entertainment, information, relaxation) and new digital gratifications related to control, flexibility, and

technological convenience. For instance, Camilleri & Falzon, (2020) integrated the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) with UGT to explain motivations for using streaming services. They found that enjoyment, perceived usefulness, and ease of access strongly predict users' loyalty to online viewing platforms. Likewise, Sahu, Gaur, and Singh (2021) compared OTT and conventional TV audiences in India, concluding that OTT platforms fulfill psychological needs such as relaxation and autonomy more effectively than traditional TV, especially among younger, higher-income groups.

Ampon et al. (2023) conducted exploratory research on *Netflix* users in Thailand, revealing that binge-watching behavior is often associated with escapism, emotional comfort, and digital socialization through shared discussions on social media. This finding parallels Saravanan et al. (2021), who observed among Indian university students that prolonged streaming of web series fosters both enjoyment and stress reduction, suggesting that entertainment content doubles as a coping mechanism for modern youth. Tengeh and Udoakpan (2021) extended this inquiry to the African context, reporting that South African consumers increasingly substitute conventional television with OTT services due to perceived value, flexible scheduling, and high-quality localized content. Their study highlights that technological and cultural gratifications coexist—users adopt global streaming technologies while seeking locally relevant narratives.

3. Gratifications, Innovation, and Technological Affordances

Recent OTT research has also underscored the growing importance of innovation and user interface design as gratifications in themselves. Song (2021) found that success factors of *Netflix* and *Amazon Prime Video* include intuitive navigation, continuous recommendation algorithms, and flexible subscription models—all of which enhance viewer satisfaction by reducing cognitive effort and maximizing enjoyment. Similarly, Shin et al. (2024) discovered that in mobile contexts, factors such as network quality, device type, and subscription features shape users' viewing behaviors and satisfaction levels. The study emphasizes *mobility, accessibility, and personalization* as emerging gratification domains that extend the original UGT model. Durat (2024) provided updated global statistics, noting that video streaming

penetration exceeded 80% in most high-income markets by 2024, with mobile viewing accounting for nearly half of total viewing hours. These data contextualize the Omani experience within broader global transformations in digital consumption.

4. Arab and Omani Contexts

In the Arab world, particularly the Gulf region, the study of paid television and OTT consumption remains relatively limited, though recent research has begun to bridge this gap. Mustafa (2021) examined motivations for exposure to Arab VOD content, finding that entertainment, cultural connection, and avoidance of advertisements were the dominant gratifications. Al-Lawati (2020) found similar results among Sultan Qaboos University students in their use of *Oman Sports Channel*, where relaxation and national pride were key motives.

Oman's rapid digital transformation, combined with near-universal smartphone ownership and broadband access (NCSI, 2021), has made its youth one of the most digitally connected demographics in the Arab region. Yet, few empirical studies have analyzed their specific motivations for subscribing to paid television services or the gratifications derived from them. This research thus fills a critical gap by situating Omani youth within global OTT consumption patterns while acknowledging the distinctive cultural and technological factors that shape their behavior.

Across global and Arab studies, the literature converges on several insights:

1. Audiences are increasingly active, selective, and tech-driven in their viewing choices.
2. Entertainment and relaxation remain universal gratifications, but technological control and personalization now play crucial roles.
3. Cultural identity and local content influence adoption patterns in non-Western societies, demonstrating that OTT services are sites of cultural negotiation rather than homogenization.

Despite these advances, Arab research, especially from Oman, remains underrepresented in the global OTT literature. This study contributes to closing that gap by examining how Omani youth navigate between global and local media options, exploring how demographic variables (age, gender, income) intersect with motives

and gratifications, and testing whether Western-derived UGT frameworks hold explanatory power in an Arab context.

Research Problem

The global television industry has undergone a profound transformation during the last decade, moving from linear broadcasting toward subscription-based, personalized, and multi-platform viewing. This transformation has redefined the concept of television itself—technologically, economically, and culturally. Digital convergence has made it possible for viewers to access audiovisual content anytime and anywhere through smartphones, tablets, and smart televisions. Consequently, paid television services, including cable, satellite, IPTV, and over-the-top (OTT) streaming, have emerged as the dominant mode of viewing in many markets.

In the Arab world, this global shift coincided with the rapid diffusion of broadband internet, the proliferation of smart devices, and an expanding youth demographic highly responsive to digital trends. The Sultanate of Oman exemplifies this transition. According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI, 2021), 97 percent of Omanis own smartphones capable of internet access, and around 70 percent of households possess smart televisions. The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) reported a consistent rise in digital subscriptions and online content consumption between 2020 and 2024, confirming the deep integration of digital platforms into everyday Omani life.

Paid television and streaming platforms such as *Netflix*, *Shahid VIP*, *beIN Sports*, and *YouTube Premium* have gained traction among Omani viewers, particularly those aged 18–35. These services offer flexible access, on-demand convenience, multilingual content, and algorithmic recommendation systems that tailor programs to individual tastes. For youth audiences, this personalized media environment satisfies emotional and cognitive needs while redefining patterns of leisure, identity expression, and cultural consumption.

Despite these developments, academic inquiry into paid television use in Oman remains scarce. Most regional research focuses on social media or general internet use, leaving a gap in understanding how subscription-based audiovisual media are being adopted, perceived, and valued by Omani youth. This

study addresses that gap by examining the *uses* and *gratifications* achieved from paid television services, situating the phenomenon within Oman's socio-cultural and technological context.

The central research problem stems from a paradox: while Omani society exhibits high technological readiness and youth digital engagement, there is limited empirical evidence explaining the motivations behind paid television use or the gratifications achieved from it. Moreover, existing Arab studies often treat audiences as homogeneous, overlooking the diversity of youth experiences and the influence of demographic factors such as gender, income, and education.

Research Importance

This research holds significance on several levels— theoretical, empirical, and practical.

Theoretically, it extends the application of the Uses and Gratifications Theory into a context that remains underexplored: the Gulf Arab digital media environment. While UGT has been extensively validated in Western and Asian contexts, its integration with emerging technological and cultural variables in Oman offers an opportunity to test and adapt the model. Specifically, the study examines how *technological affordances*—such as ad-free streaming, content personalization, and binge-watching options— generate new forms of gratification that traditional television could not provide. In doing so, the study contributes to refining UGT for the algorithmic era of digital entertainment.

Empirically, this study fills a clear gap in literature. Few data-driven analyses exist on Omani audiences' engagement with paid television services. The findings will provide baseline evidence about subscription patterns, preferred platforms, and usage motives among youth, which future scholars can build upon to track longitudinal trends. The study also introduces quantitative evidence about demographic differences in usage and gratification patterns, thereby enhancing understanding of audience segmentation in Oman's media landscape.

Practically, the results carry implications for both policymakers and media practitioners. Understanding why and how youth use paid television services can inform national media strategies aligned with Oman Vision 2040, particularly the pillars of *digital transformation*, *knowledge economy*, and *cultural*

identity preservation. Insights into youth preferences and satisfaction will help Omani broadcasters, content producers, and regulatory agencies develop culturally relevant programming and sustainable business models capable of competing with global platforms. Additionally, the study offers guidance for educational and cultural institutions seeking to integrate digital media literacy into youth development initiatives.

This study is expected to contribute to media scholarship and practice in four keyways:

1. Empirical Contribution – It provides the first comprehensive dataset on paid television use and gratifications among Omani youth.
2. Theoretical Advancement – It refines UGT by incorporating *technological* and *cultural* gratifications that characterize digital subscription environments.
3. Cultural Insight – It offers an understanding of how global media exposure interacts with Omani cultural identity, contributing to debates on cultural globalization and localization.
4. Policy Relevance – It provides actionable insights for media policy and regulation, especially concerning national strategies for digital media development under Oman Vision 2040.

Research Objectives

This study draws on the Uses and Gratifications perspective, applying its core ideas—motives, patterns of use, and the satisfactions audiences gain—to the fast-growing world of paid television services. Building on recent extensions of UGT (Sundar & Limperos, 2013; Kim & Lee, 2024; Fernández-Torres, 2024), the research approaches Omani youth as active, purposeful users who make conscious decisions shaped by their needs and by what digital platforms allow them to do. In this view, gratifications are not limited to what appears on the screen; they also stem from how smoothly the technology works (easy navigation, personalization, ad-free control) and from how well the content resonates culturally—especially when it reflects local identity or Arabic narratives.

By combining these layers, the study seeks to determine whether the classic UGT categories—entertainment, information, and social interaction—still predict satisfaction in the context of paid television, and whether new kinds of gratifications rooted in interactivity and algorithmic recommendations are becoming more relevant for young people in Oman.

Guided by the problem and its importance, the study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

1. **Identify the key motives** that encourage Omani youth to subscribe to and use paid television services, whether for entertainment, information, social connection, or technological convenience.
2. **Examine how these services fit into daily life**, by analyzing viewing habits such as how often they watch, for how long, which devices they prefer, and which platforms dominate their choices.
3. **Assess the gratifications they obtain**, grouped into content-related (knowledge, enjoyment), process-related (convenience, control), and social or identity-related (connection, self-expression) categories.
4. **Explore how demographic factors**—including gender, income, education, occupation, and marital status—shape users' motives and the gratifications they report.
5. **Consider what these patterns mean** for media policy, cultural production, and the design of youth-oriented media strategies in Oman.

Research Questions

The study is guided by one central question:

How do Omani youth use paid television services, and what gratifications do they seek and obtain from them?

From this overarching question, several more specific questions arise:

1. What main motives—such as entertainment, information, social connection, or technological ease—drive young Omanis to subscribe to paid television platforms?

2. What viewing patterns define their use (duration, frequency, preferred platforms, preferred devices)?
3. What kinds of gratifications do they feel they receive—content-based, process-based, or social?
4. Do motives and gratifications differ significantly across demographic groups such as gender, age, education, or income?
5. How do the motives and gratifications identified in Oman compare with findings from other cultural settings?

Addressing these questions will help clarify how the media habits of Omani youth are changing and how these habits fit into wider social and cultural transformations.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive-exploratory design that combines elements of both quantitative media audience research and survey-based analysis. The approach is well suited to investigating uses and gratifications of paid television services among Omani youth, as it allows for the measurement of motives, viewing patterns, and satisfaction levels in relation to key demographic and technological variables (Camilleri & Falzon, 2020; Shin et al., 2024).

Given the study's focus on behavioral tendencies rather than causal relationships, a cross-sectional survey was selected to capture the diversity of user experiences during a specific period. This method has been widely used in international OTT and media-use studies (Sahu et al., 2021; Tefertiller & Sheehan, 2019), providing a reliable means of comparing local results with global patterns.

Population and Sampling

The study population comprises Omani youth aged 18–35 years, totaling 834,775 individuals, representing approximately 30.5% of Omani citizens, according to the most recent *National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI, 2021)* data.

To ensure representativeness across gender, geography, and occupational status, a non-probability quota sampling technique was employed. This design enabled the researchers to include participants proportionally distributed across Oman's eleven

governorates and diverse socioeconomic strata. The final sample consisted of 480 respondents, which exceeds the minimum sample size recommended by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for a population of this magnitude. The gender distribution was 57.7% male and 42.3% female, with participants representing a balance of students, government employees, private-sector workers, and self-employed individuals. Such quota-based designs are increasingly recognized as effective for digital audience studies where online data collection replaces traditional field surveys (Ampon et al., 2023; Saravanan et al., 2021).

Data Collection Procedures

The study utilized a structured electronic questionnaire distributed via Google Forms platform. Dissemination occurred through popular social media platforms widely used by Omani youth, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, and Instagram, between 26 March and 7 April 2023. This digital distribution method ensured broad geographic coverage and accessibility, aligning with best practices in recent OTT audience research (Song, 2021; Tengeh&Udoakpan, 2021).

The questionnaire included four major sections:

1. Demographic characteristics (gender, age, education, income, occupation, region).
2. Usage patterns of paid television services (frequency, duration, devices used).
3. Motives for use (informational, entertainment, social, and technological).
4. Gratifications achieved, based on satisfaction and perceived benefits.

To ensure content validity, the instrument was reviewed by five academic experts in media and communication at Sultan Qaboos University. Revisions were made according to their feedback to improve clarity and cultural appropriateness. A pilot test was then conducted with 10 participants from the target demographic to evaluate comprehension and timing. Results informed refinements to wording and response scales.

For reliability testing, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed for each scale using SPSS v.27. The "motives" scale yielded $\alpha = 0.81$, and the "gratifications" scale $\alpha = 0.84$ —both exceeding the 0.70 threshold considered acceptable in

communication research (Shin et al., 2024). These results confirm internal consistency across measurement items. Additionally, Pearson correlation tests assessed internal item consistency, revealing significant positive correlations between sub-items and total scale means. Such reliability levels are comparable to recent digital-media gratification studies (Camilleri & Falzon, 2020; Sahu et al., 2021).

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) were used to summarize demographic and behavioral variables, while inferential tests—including t-tests and ANOVA—examined differences in motives and gratifications across demographic groups (gender, age, occupation, and income). This approach follows similar statistical frameworks used in OTT-use studies in Asia and Africa (Ampon et al., 2023; Tengeh&Udoakpan, 2021), allowing for both cross-cultural comparison and contextual interpretation of the Omani data.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards set by Sultan Qaboos University. Participation was voluntary and anonymous; all respondents provided informed consent before completing the survey. No identifying data were collected, and participants were assured that results would be used solely for academic purposes.

Online consent was obtained via a pre-survey acknowledgment form, consistent with ethical requirements for digital research involving human participants (Saravanan et al., 2021).

Limitations

While the electronic survey facilitated broad outreach, the non-random sampling may limit generalizability. Nonetheless, the diverse representation of demographic and occupational categories enhances the study's credibility. Cross-sectional design also captures perceptions at a single point in time; longitudinal or experimental follow-ups could further validate findings. Despite these limitations, the study provides a robust quantitative foundation for understanding the motives and gratifications of Omani youth's paid-television consumption within a globalized digital ecosystem.

Findings and Discussion

1. Overview of Findings

The findings reveal that 56.8% of Omani youth watch

paid television services, while 43.1% do not, reflecting a steady increase in paid content consumption among young Omanis. This trend parallels global shifts in favor of subscription-based streaming models over traditional broadcasting (Durat, 2024). The availability of affordable smart devices, high-speed internet, and localized Arabic-language content are key factors encouraging adoption, aligning with trends observed in other developing media markets such as Thailand and South Africa (Ampon et al., 2023; Tengeh&Udoakpan, 2021).

Gender distribution shows that male respondents (38.1%) slightly outnumber females (18.7%) among paid-TV users, consistent with Shin et al. (2024), who found that male audiences tend to exhibit higher subscription rates for sports and action genres, while female users emphasize emotional engagement and lifestyle content. Occupationally, the highest proportion of viewers were government employees (20.8%), followed by students (13.9%), a demographic pattern reflecting both purchasing power and digital literacy levels.

2. Viewing Motives

The analysis of viewing motives reveals a dominant entertainment orientation, followed by informational, technological, and social motives. The top motive “*entertainment by watching movies, series, and matches*”, ranked first, with an average score above 2.8 on a 3-point scale. This finding resonates with El-Sayed and Diab (2021) and Mustafa (2021), confirming that Arab youth primarily consume streaming content for leisure, escapism, and emotional release.

Interestingly, the motive “*watching without interruptions or advertisements*” ranked second ($M = 2.77$), reflecting the growing appreciation for ad-free control, a gratification type increasingly central to OTT consumption (Camilleri & Falzon, 2020). Similarly, “*ease of access and subscription*” and “*content that matches personal interests*” both scored above 2.6, highlighting the value of personalization and convenience—the same gratifications emphasized by Tefertiller & Sheehan (2019) and Song (2021) in studies of Western streaming behavior.

The least significant motives were “*interacting with others about viewed content*” ($M = 2.17$) and “*overcoming loneliness*” ($M = 2.18$). This aligns with Sahu et al. (2021), who found that OTT audiences

prioritize solitary viewing over social interaction, marking a transition from “social television” to “personalized streaming.” Overall, ritualistic motives ($M = 2.51$) slightly surpassed utilitarian motives ($M = 2.49$), reaffirming the dominance of entertainment and relaxation over informational or cognitive pursuits—consistent with Arab and Asian viewing trends (Saravanan et al., 2021).

3. Gratifications Achieved

The highest achieved gratification was “*obtaining enjoyment and entertainment*” ($M = 2.91$), followed by “*increasing personal culture*” ($M = 2.75$) and “*filling free time*” ($M = 2.69$). This finding is consistent with previous studies (Song, 2021; Shin et al., 2024).

Omani youth also reported *informational gratifications*, such as “learning about different cultures” and “knowing global sports and artistic events,” indicating that globalized media exposure complements national cultural orientation. Such outcomes echo Tengeh&Udoakpan (2021), who observed that African audiences balance entertainment with educational content consumption. However, social gratifications—such as “interacting with others about content” or “finding solutions to personal problems”—were the least achieved, averaging below 2.3. This pattern is consistent with Li (2013) and Aqila (2017), who found social benefits of television to be secondary to personal, technological, and content-based gratifications.

In short, Omani youth use paid television services primarily for pleasure, relaxation, and cultural exposure, mirroring the global shift toward *self-directed media satisfaction* and *on-demand content control* (Camilleri & Falzon, 2020; Sahu et al., 2021).

4. Comparative Insights: Omani Youth in a Global Context

In Thailand, Netflix viewers showed high emotional and cognitive investment (Ampon et al., 2023); in India, university students treated streaming as emotional release (Saravanan et al., 2021); and in South Africa, cultural familiarity was a key subscription driver (Tengeh&Udoakpan, 2021). Omani youth display similar hybrid motivations—combining global entertainment with local cultural sensitivity. They seek high-quality production and technical efficiency while remaining selective toward Arabic or culturally compatible content, reflecting what Thussu & Zayani (2025) describe as “*cultural negotiation in*

mediated globalization.”

Moreover, the role of technological convenience, ease of access, device compatibility, and ad-free streaming, confirms the growing importance of what Shin et al. (2024) call “*network-based gratifications.*” These gratifications stem not from message content but from the medium’s technological affordances, confirming Sundar & Limperos’s (2013) affordance-based extension of UGT.

5. Statistical Relationships and Demographic Differences

Statistical tests revealed notable gender-based differences: male participants reported higher engagement with sports and action programming, while female participants gravitated toward drama and social narratives—echoing trends in Song (2021). Educational level and income also correlated positively with both frequency of viewing and subscription diversity, suggesting that higher socioeconomic groups are more likely to afford and explore multiple streaming platforms.

Age-related variations were minimal, but younger users (18–25) displayed greater technological comfort and experimentation with multiple devices, while older youth (31–35) exhibited more stable subscription patterns—consistent with Sahu et al. (2021) and Durat (2024) global statistics.

The data confirm that Omani youth exhibit a hybrid viewing identity, rooted in local cultural belonging yet shaped by global media flows. Their engagement with paid television services reflects the intersection of entertainment, technology, and identity.

Gratifications such as convenience, control, and personalization point to an evolved understanding of television not as a collective medium but as a customizable digital environment. As Camilleri & Falzon (2020) argue, this shift redefines the audience from “viewer” to “user,” emphasizing agency, interactivity, and self-determination.

These findings expand UGT’s explanatory scope in non-Western contexts, supporting the notion that cultural and technological gratifications are now interdependent users derive satisfaction from both the content’s meaning and from the digital interface that mediates it.

The Omani case illustrates that paid television services are not replacing traditional media but coexisting with them, offering youth new avenues for entertainment,

knowledge, and identity exploration. The research reinforces that UGT remains a valid framework for analyzing audience behavior in the streaming era, particularly when expanded to include technological and cultural gratifications (Shin et al., 2024; Camilleri & Falzon, 2020). The findings contribute both theoretically and practically to understanding how Omani audiences navigate globalized media ecosystems, balancing global accessibility with local values. For media policymakers, the data suggest opportunities for developing localized streaming services, promoting Omani cultural content, and enhancing digital literacy—strategies aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

Overall, the findings confirm that Omani youth engage with paid television services as active, selective, and digitally fluent audiences. Their motives and gratifications mirror global trends yet retain local inflections shaped by language, cultural values, and national identity.

From a theoretical perspective, the study supports the continued applicability of UGT while advocating its extension to include technological and cultural gratifications as core components. Practically, the findings hold implications for media producers and policymakers in Oman:

- Media industries should diversify Arabic-language and culturally resonant content to sustain youth engagement.
- Regulators should promote fair access and encourage local production within the expanding paid-media ecosystem.
- Educators and researchers can use these insights to develop curricula addressing media literacy, critical consumption, and digital citizenship among youth.

Conclusion

This study examined how Omani youth use paid television services and what gratifications they derive from such use. Drawing on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and its digital extensions, the research clarified how audiences in emerging media markets integrate global streaming culture within their local value systems.

Findings reveal that over half of Omani youth (%56.8) actively consume paid television content, mainly via

smartphones and smart TVs. Their dominant motivations include entertainment, convenience, and control, demonstrating that they are active and selective media users. Entertainment remains the most prominent gratification, followed by informational and technological needs, while social interaction is less significant. Gender and income influence usage patterns—males show greater engagement with sports and action genres, while females favor drama and lifestyle content. Higher-income participants are also more likely to subscribe to multiple services. These findings confirm that UGT continues to explain audience behavior effectively but must evolve to include technological (ease, flexibility, ad-free access) and cultural (identity, representation) gratifications.

The study reinforces UGT's relevance in an age of convergence and personalization. Traditional gratification categories—information, entertainment, social interaction, and escapism, remain valid, yet digital affordances now introduce new dimensions.

- Technological gratifications—such as convenience, autonomy, and control—are central to the viewing experience (Camilleri & Falzon, 2020; Shin et al., 2024).
- Cultural gratifications, including self-recognition and value alignment, reflect how audiences seek identity affirmation in globalized media (Thussu & Zayani, 2025).

Omani youth display a hybrid gratification pattern, oscillating between global and local preferences. Their choices blend enjoyment and information with cultural authenticity. The study thus supports an expanded UGT model encompassing four interconnected domains:

1. Content-based gratifications :enjoyment, information, relaxation.
2. Process-based gratifications :convenience, usability, and control.
3. Social gratifications :community and discussion.
4. Cultural-technological gratifications : personalization, representation, and identity alignment.

This model enhances the theory's explanatory power across diverse societies.

Recommendations:

For Media Producers and Broadcasters

- Develop local subscription-based platforms combining global production quality with Omani and Arabic content.
- Encourage co-productions with regional networks to strengthen cultural content and visibility.

For Streaming Services

- Emphasize user experience, ad-free access, personalization, and flexible pricing, as primary audience gratifications.
- Incorporate cultural sensitivity into recommendation algorithms to balance global and local viewing interests.

For Educational and Cultural Institutions

- Utilize OTT content in media literacy and education, promoting cross-cultural understanding.
- Foster critical media consumption, helping youth navigate algorithmic influence and cultural messaging (Saravanan et al., 2021).

This study bridges a significant gap in Arab media research by documenting how Omani youth engage with paid television in a global digital environment. Their media practices reflect agency, autonomy, and adaptation, as they combine global media exposure with cultural authenticity.

Omani youth exemplify the rise of a digitally empowered generation that negotiates identity through selective, personalized viewing. Their habits illustrate how technological access can coexist with cultural continuity.

Ultimately, the research reaffirms that Uses and Gratifications Theory, when expanded to include technological and cultural dimensions, remains a powerful framework for understanding media behavior in the twenty-first century. The Omani experience contributes to a wider global understanding of how audiences use digital media not only for entertainment but also for defining who they are in an interconnected world.

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