

“Coping with COVID-19: How Streaming Services Proved to Be An Escape From Our Harsh Reality”

by

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected people from all walks of life in various ways, and it has affected the way we consume media. Some spent more time on social media, others played more video games, but many sought refuge in streaming services and the content they offered. Analyzing this aspect of the pandemic has been done before through various surveys on a much larger scale, and analyzing it is particularly important because it shows how people's habits changed since the pandemic began. This study is aimed to compare and contrast the streaming habits of people before and since the pandemic began. To achieve this, students at Saint Peter's University in Jersey City, NJ were surveyed about their streaming habits before and after the pandemic began, as well as a wide variety of people via social media. Previous research suggests that people around the world spent more time on streaming services, as well as on the internet in general. The results of this study suggest the same, with a large focus on college students, but including adults as old as 75 years old. This study showed that since the pandemic began, there was an increase in time spent on streaming services, and the amount of streaming services that people used.

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Literature Review

The entertainment industry has suffered a great deal during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the closures of movie theaters and live performance theaters, the entertainment industry as a whole had taken a massive hit. Sarah Moon's (2020) research suggests that entertainment industries around the world are feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Egyptian rock band Massar Egbari held an online concert streaming on their Facebook and Instagram accounts, and the Egyptian Football Association temporarily suspended the Egyptian League. Austrian opera house Wiener Staatsoper began streaming operas on its website to be able to provide people with entertainment. South Korean K-pop artists have had to cancel shows and tours, and major entertainment-based corporations including Facebook, Twitter, Netflix, and Apple have canceled appearances, panels, and various events. Moon's study provides insight into how the COVID-19 pandemic had a rippling effect on the entertainment industry across the globe, rather than just one small portion of it. Her research gathers information about how many countries' entertainment industries suffered in all aspects, including sports, movies, and live performance. This research and insight shows how little entertainment was available during the beginning phases of the pandemic, and a major reason why many turned to streaming.

Lemenager, Neissner, et al. (2021) observed online media consumption habits in Germany. They conducted an online survey in which 71.4% of respondents felt that they increased their online media consumption during the pandemic. Out of all areas of online media consumption, Lemenager, Neissner, et al. noticed the largest increase in the area of streaming. Female respondents as well as younger respondents were more likely to engage in increased

streaming. This study shows that increases in streaming wasn't just a local or national trend, but rather an international phenomenon and a mutual way of coping with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fernandes, B., Biswas, U. N., Mansukhani, R. T., Casarín, A. V., & Essau, C. A. (2020) collaborated on a study that took data from various countries, including India, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and the Philippines. The study reports that adolescents used the internet, social media, and streaming services as a form of escapism. The researchers took a look at adolescent media consumption habits before and since the beginning of the pandemic. Many of the adolescents reported high scores of escapism, depression, and loneliness. This article makes the issue much more global, as the results come from four different countries.

Sheth (2020) dives into how consumers have had to shift the way they do things because of the pandemic. He questions if these new ways of doing things, such as watching TV and movies via streaming, ordering groceries online, and shopping for other goods online, will stick and become a part of the new normal rather than a fad that will fade away with time. While not a traditional study showing how the pandemic affected people's streaming habits, it provides future insight to the possible future of streaming. Streaming has been on the rise for the past decade, and it's been increasing in popularity and subscriptions as the years have gone on. This could hint that this overall increase in streaming could be here to stay, rather than a fad to fade out.

Pahayahay & Khalili-Mahani (2020) studied how media can help people cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a survey they distributed, nearly 60% of respondents selected streaming services as their preferred method of coping with the isolation that came with the pandemic. Respondents who considered their mental health to be "not good" were also twice

as likely to use streaming services as a coping mechanism. This study showed the reasoning behind why many people chose to stream, and how it can be beneficial in helping people through the rough time of the pandemic.

Sun, Y., Li, Y., Bao, Y., Meng, S., Sun, Y., Schumann, G., Kosten, T., Strang, J., Lu, L., & Shi, J. (2020) conducted a study in China about people's addictive internet and substance abuse during the pandemic. They distributed a survey, in which 46.8% of over 6,400 respondents reported that they were much more dependent on using the internet, and 16.6% of the respondents felt that they spent more time on the internet during the pandemic. Substance abuse is discussed heavily throughout the journal, further showing the damage that the pandemic had on people beyond just catching COVID-19. It's evident that there was increased use of the internet and the various services it offers, including streaming services. This study more clearly demonstrates from an international angle that there was widespread increased use of the internet in people's day-to-day lives.

A report by the BBC (2020) suggests that adults in the UK spent an average of 40% of their waking hours in front of a screen. In addition to this time spent in front of a screen, the average time spent per day was one hour and 11 minutes, double what it was before the pandemic. Twelve million customers signed up for a new streaming service (Netflix, Disney+, Hulu, etc.). This article takes an in-depth look at the media consumption habits in the United Kingdom, giving specific statistics for before and after the pandemic began. It provides more global insight that people are increasing their time spent in front of screens, whether on streaming services, browsing social media, or playing games.

Emilia Benton (2022) wrote a medically-reviewed article for *Psych Central* in which she goes into detail about how watching movies can be beneficial to our health. While movies may keep us entertained, Singer details that cinema therapy “allows us to use the effect of imagery, plot, music, etc. in films on our psyche for insight, inspiration, emotional release or relief and natural change.” Watching movies can encourage emotional release, help us make sense of our own lives, and can bring us a sense of relief. While not a scholarly journal, this medically-reviewed article proves how watching movies can prove to be beneficial. This article’s finding could seemingly tie into why people tended to spend more time on streaming services: to feel better.

Rahul Malhotra (2022) wrote an article for *Collider* about how Matt Reeves’ movie *The Batman* grossed over \$700 million worldwide, as of April 3, 2022. Movie theaters have been making a return, and their importance is slowly but surely increasing. *The Batman*’s worldwide box office gross numbers are evidence of this return in action. It’s the highest grossing film since *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, as well as the highest grossing movie of 2022. The film is \$100,000 short of being Matt Reeves’ highest grossing film, and it’s the fourth highest grossing film starring Batman.

Matthew Biggin (2022) wrote an article for *ScreenRant* about how Jon Watts’ movie *Spider-Man: No Way Home* surpassed \$1.69 billion at the worldwide box office, becoming the sixth highest grossing film of all time. The Marvel Studios film became the first film to cross \$1 billion at the box office since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The last film to cross this benchmark was JJ Abrams’ 2019 film *Star Wars Episode IX: The Rise of Skywalker*. It’s the

highest grossing Spider-Man movie of all time. This movie is proof that movie theaters can thrive during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that theaters are coming back for good.

Research Question

How did the COVID-19 pandemic change people's streaming habits, and how does it compare to their streaming habits before the pandemic began?

Methodology

To complete this study, there were two separate phases of research. The first phase involved surveying a convenience sample of 51 students at Saint Peter's University in Jersey City, NJ in November 2021 about their streaming habits before the pandemic began (approximately before March 2020) and after the pandemic began (approximately since March 2020). These students were all undergraduate students, and they ranged from freshman to senior year, with nearly half of the respondents being seniors. These participants ranged from the ages of 18 to 43 years old, and over half of those surveyed were between the ages of 20 and 21. This sample consisted of 30 males, 18 females, and 3 people who identify as nobinary. Additional research was conducted about the worldwide impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the entertainment industry, adolescents, and people worldwide.

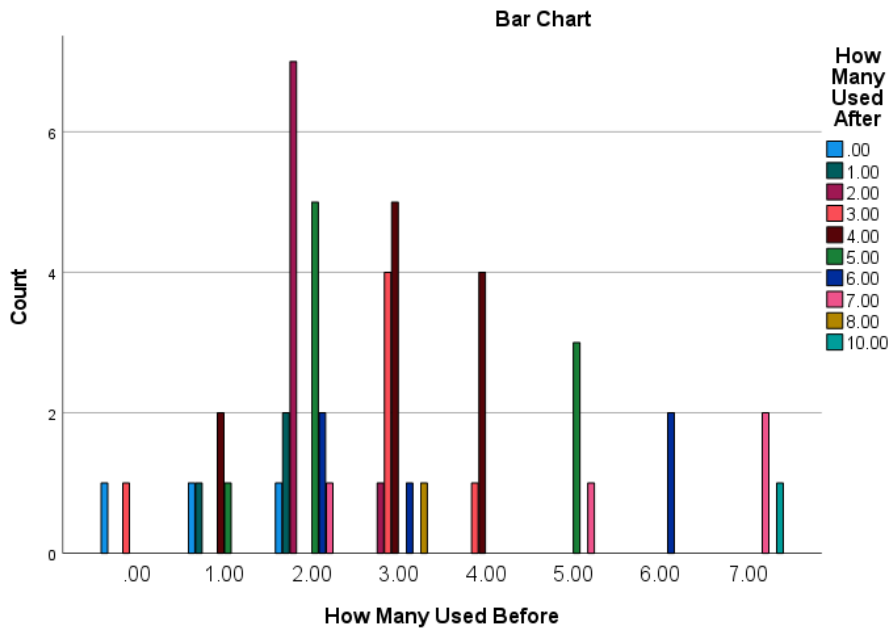
The first half of the survey asked participants about the amount of streaming services they used, who paid for these services, which ones they used, which service was their favorite, and the device(s) they used to watch these streaming services on. This portion of the survey was divided into two sections: a "before the pandemic" section, and a "since the pandemic" section. Both of these sections featured the same questions, so as to get an accurate measurement of these streaming habits before and since the pandemic began. The second half of the survey was

composed of statements that the participants had to select whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that was made. The final portion of the survey consisted of two short-answer questions: “What kinds of experiences did you have during the pandemic that would make you turn to streaming services as a way to feel better? Did this happen often?” and “Why do you tend to use streaming services for as long/short as you do? Do you feel that the pandemic played a role in this?”

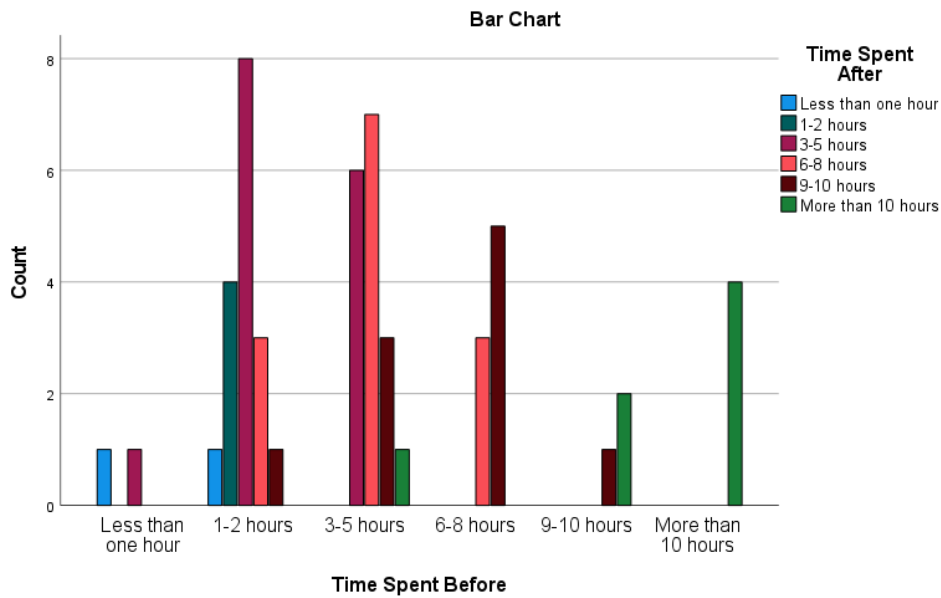
The second phase of research involved a second convenience sample of 51 respondents with surveys distributed via social media and instant messaging using Google Forms. These respondents consisted of 31 females, 19 males, and one respondent who preferred not to answer, ranging from 18 - 75 years-old. This survey was distributed in March 2022. The survey distributed was exactly the same as the previous one distributed, but with an additional seven questions about movie theaters, to gain an additional perspective on people’s mindsets in terms of viewing entertainment. Some additional research was conducted about individual movie box office earnings. After getting the results from the surveys in both phases, age categories were created for each phase to see if age had any sort of effect on certain responses.

Results (Phase 1)

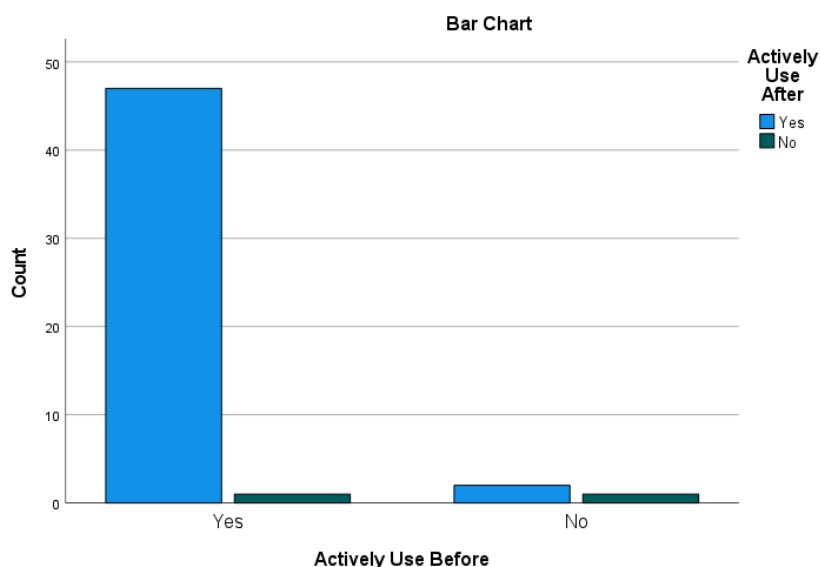
The first section of the survey allowed for comparisons between the before and since the pandemic began. For example, the amount of streaming services that people used before and after the pandemic began showed that 41.2% of respondents increased the amount of streaming services that they used after the pandemic, while 47.1% of respondents kept the amount of streaming services they used before and after the pandemic began the same.



The amount of time that people spent per week on streaming services fluctuated before and after the pandemic began. Over half of the respondents (60.8%) reported that they had increased their time spent on streaming services after the pandemic had already begun, while 37.3% of respondents reported that their time spent on streaming services remained about the same.



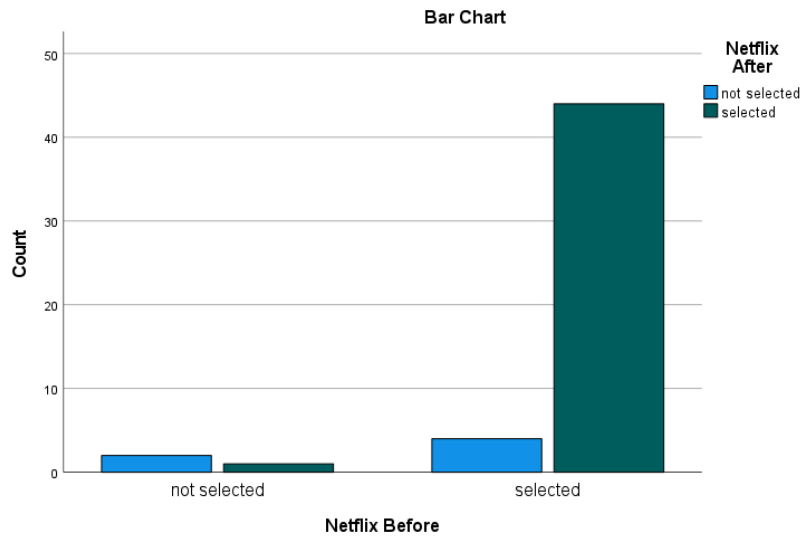
When asked if people actively used streaming services before and after the pandemic, respondents were very one-sided with their answers. 94.1% of respondents said that they actively used streaming services before the pandemic, while the remaining 5.9% of respondents said they didn't actively use streaming services. There was a slight increase in active use in streaming services, as 96.1% of respondents said they actively used streaming services after the pandemic began, and the remaining 3.9% of respondents said they didn't use streaming services.



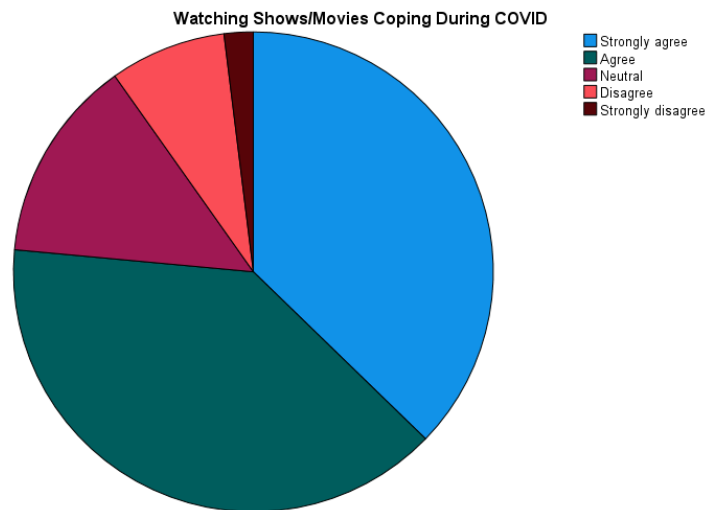
One of the open-ended questions present on the survey asked respondents of their favorite streaming service to use, both before and since the pandemic began. Before the pandemic, Netflix seemed to rule Saint Peter’s University students’ preference, as 60.8% of respondents listed Netflix as their favorite streaming service to use. This carried over after the pandemic had already begun, but there was a sharp decline to 37.3% of respondents picking Netflix as their favorite streaming service. There were a lot more responses for other streaming services after the pandemic had already begun, with services like HBO Max, Hulu, and Disney+ getting increased favoritism among students. Hulu rose from 3.9% of respondents choosing it as their favorite streaming service before the pandemic to 13.7% favoritism since the pandemic began, while Disney+ also rose from 3.9% favoritism before the pandemic and 9.8% favoritism since the pandemic began. HBO Max had a slight increase, going from 7.8% of respondents’ favorite streaming service before the pandemic to 11.8% favoritism since the pandemic began.

As previously stated, Netflix was a particularly popular streaming service among respondents. 94.1% of respondents used Netflix before the pandemic, but after the pandemic the

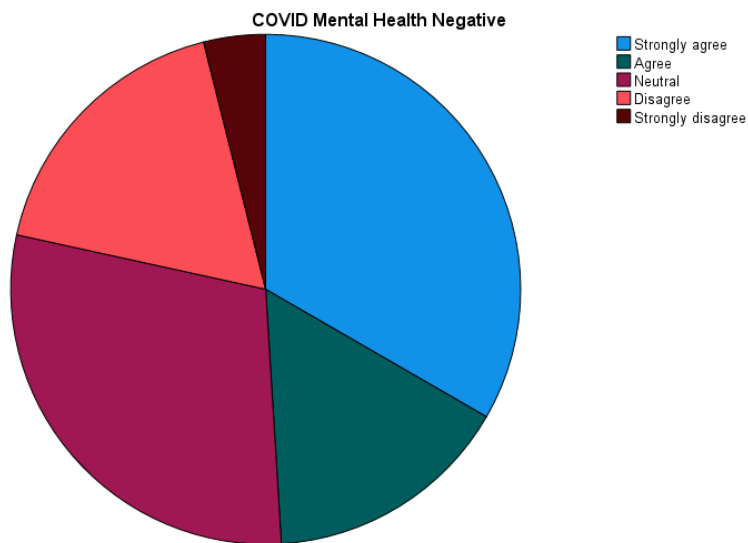
amount of respondents who used Netflix decreased to 88.2%. This mirrors the decline of respondents selecting Netflix as their favorite streaming service after the pandemic.



Using TV shows and movies as a coping mechanism throughout the COVID-19 pandemic was a popular trend. 76.5 % of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. 13.7% of respondents responded neutrally to this statement, 7.8% of respondents disagreed, and only 2% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

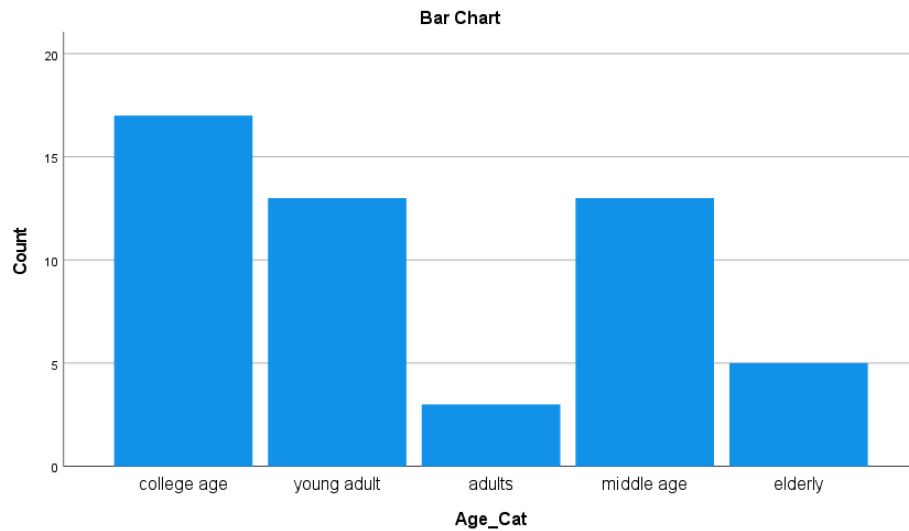


Respondents were asked how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their mental health, whether positively or negatively. When asked if they COVID-19 pandemic affected their mental health negatively, 33.3% of respondents strongly agreed, and 15.7% of respondents agreed that their mental health had been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. 29.4% responded neutrally, 17.6% disagreed, 3.9% of respondents strongly disagreed.

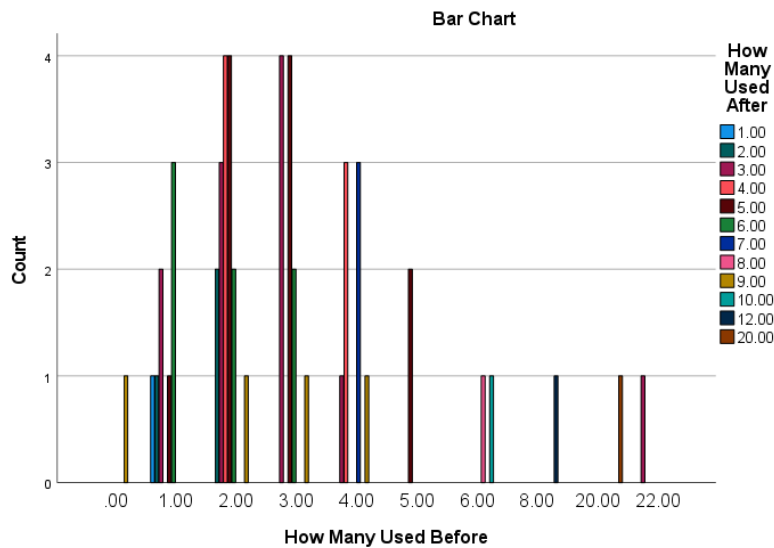


Results (Phase 2)

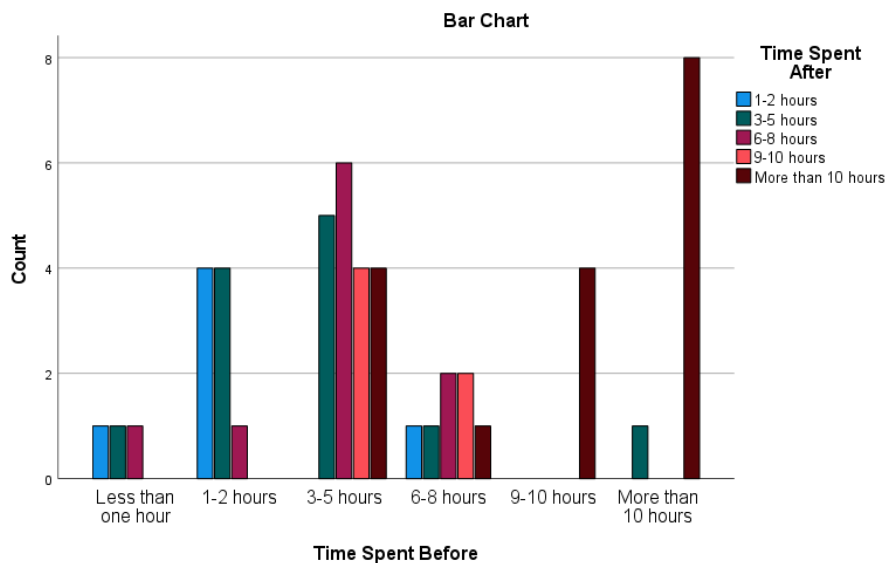
After looking at various variables and comparing some data before and after the pandemic began, age was a factor to be looked at in comparison to other variables. Age groups were sorted from [1] college age (18-22), [2] young adults (23-30), [3] adults (31-40), [4] middle aged (41-55), and [5] older/edlerly (56+).



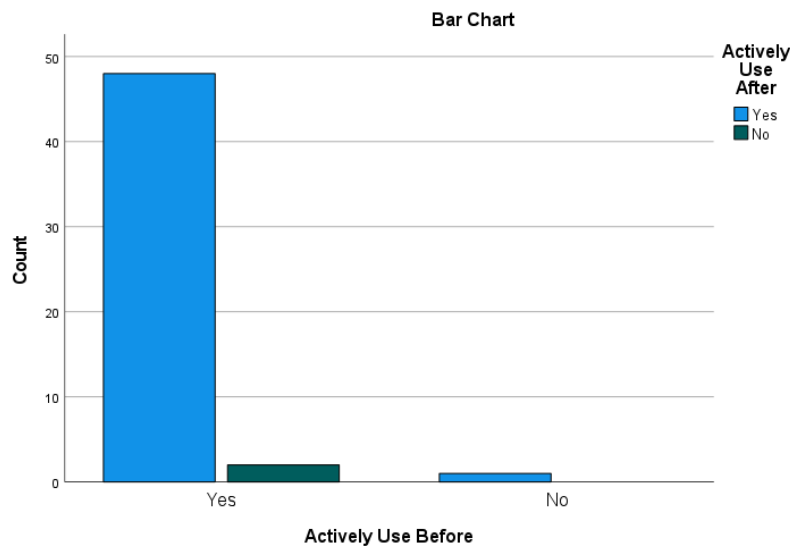
When respondents were asked about how many streaming services they used before and after the COVID-19 pandemic began, answers varied. Nearly three quarters (70.6%) of respondents reported that they had increased the amount of streaming services that they had used, and just over a quarter (25.5%) of respondents reported that the number of streaming services they had used had stayed the same before and after the COVID-19 pandemic began. Only 3.9% of respondents reported that they had decreased the amount of streaming services that they used.



Respondents were asked approximately how many hours they spend on streaming services each week. 56.9% of the respondents reported an increase in time spent on streaming services per week since the beginning of the pandemic. 37.3% of respondents reported that the time they spent on streaming services each week didn't change since the pandemic began, while 5.9% of respondents reported that their time spent on streaming services decreased since the pandemic began.

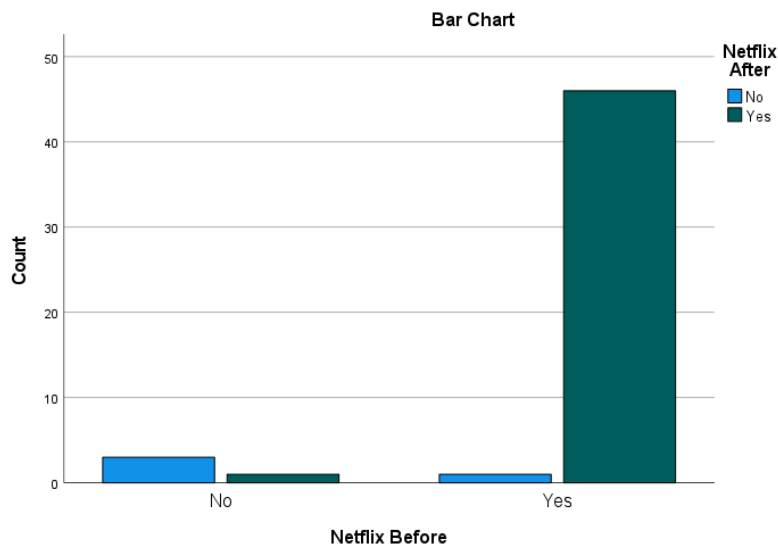


Respondents were asked if they actively used streaming services before and after the pandemic began, and the responses were very one sided. Before the pandemic began, an overwhelming majority of respondents (98%) said that they actively used streaming services while only 2% reported that they didn't actively use streaming services. After the pandemic began, a slightly lesser percentage (96.1%) reported that they actively used streaming services, while 3.9% of respondents reported that they didn't actively use streaming services.

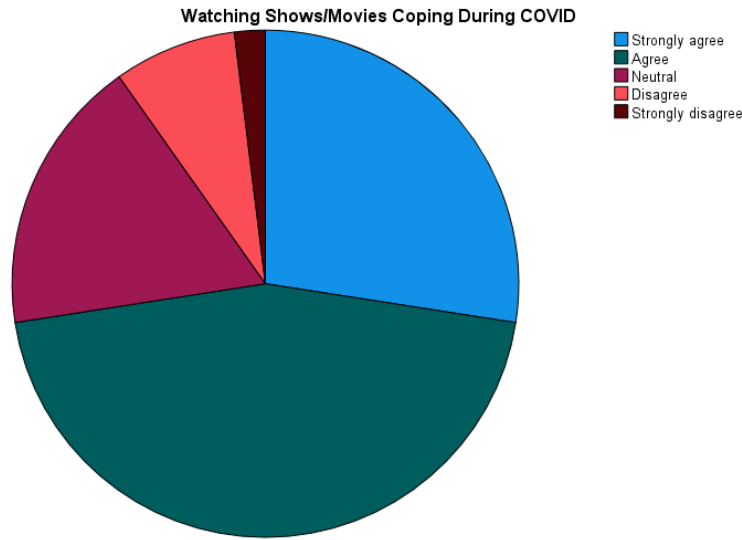


When respondents were asked about their favorite streaming services, varying answers were given. Before the pandemic began, Netflix seemed to be the majority favorite (60.8%), followed by Hulu (25.5%), Crunchyroll (3.9%), and then Disney+, Apple TV+, Tablo, Amazon Prime Video, and no selected favorite (2% each). After the pandemic began, respondents reported much more diversity in their favorites. Netflix was tied with Hulu for the top spot (23.5% each), followed by HBO Max (19.6%), Crunchyroll and Disney+ (5.9% each), Amazon Prime Video, Discovery+, and multiple favorites (3.9% each), and ending with Tablo, Paramount+, and Apple TV+ (2% each).

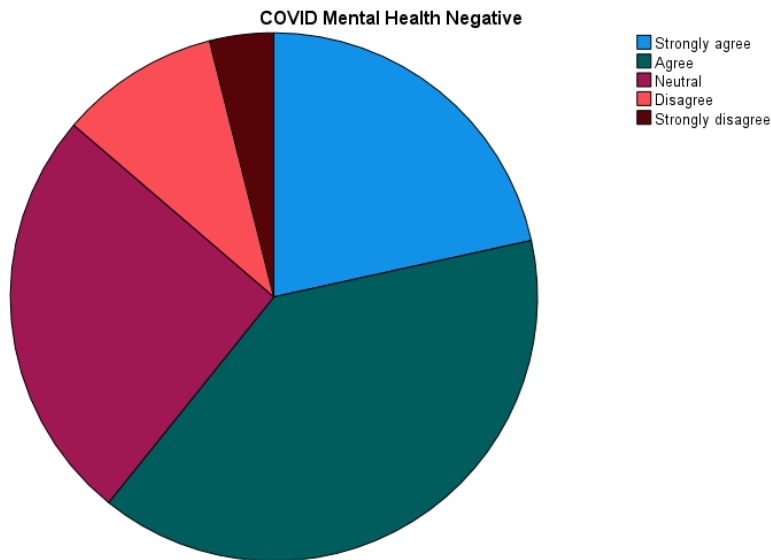
As previously mentioned, Netflix was vastly popular amongst respondents. For both before and after the pandemic, the amount of respondents that had access to and used Netflix remained the same (92.2%), and the same went for those who didn't use Netflix (7.8%). Interestingly, one respondent who used Netflix before the pandemic began, stopped using it after the pandemic began, and one respondent who didn't use Netflix before the pandemic began began using it after the pandemic began.



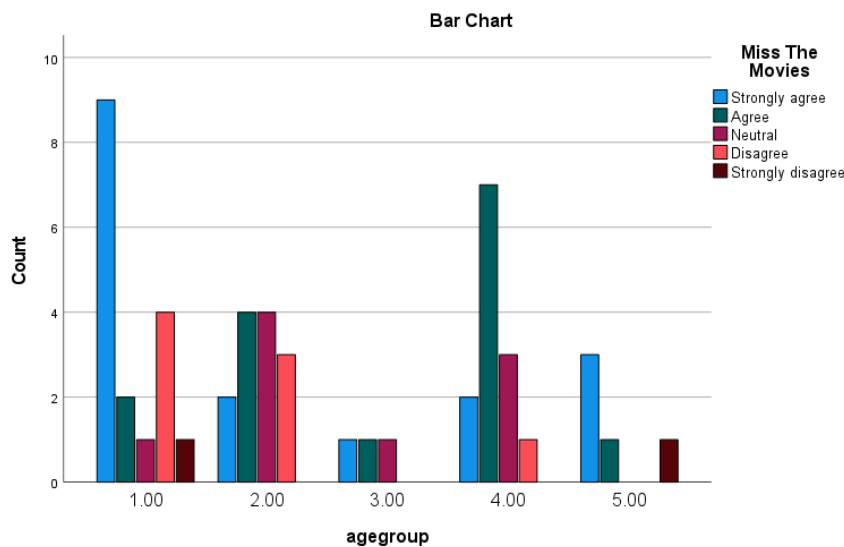
Using movies and TV shows as a coping mechanism during the COVID-19 pandemic was a common trend amongst the Phase 2 group. Nearly three quarters of the respondents either agreed (45.1%) or strongly agreed (27.5) with this statement (72.6% combined), and 17.6% of respondents felt neutral about the statement, while 7.8% of respondents disagreed and 2% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.



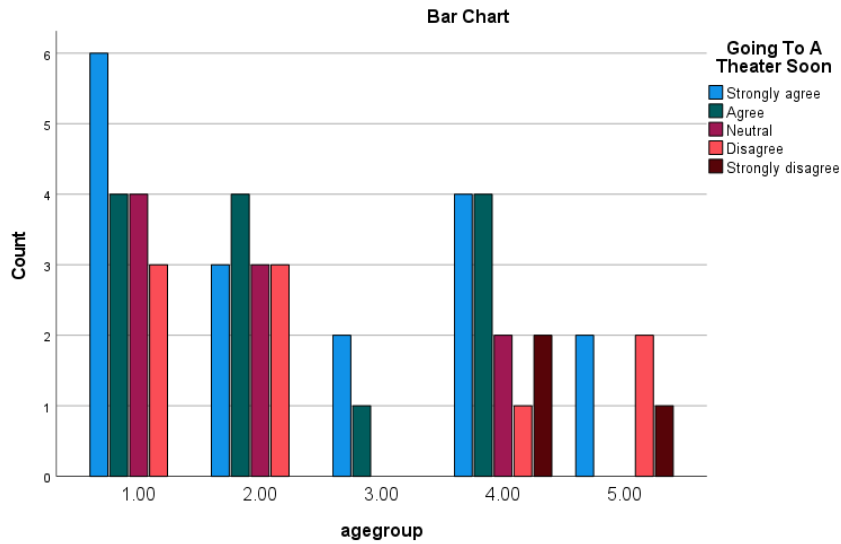
The COVID-19 pandemic has affected many people’s mental health. It presented people with challenges and hurdles unlike any they’d faced before. Over half of the respondents (60.8% combined) agreed (39.2%) or strongly agreed (21.6%) that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their mental health negatively, just over a quarter of the respondents (25.5%) felt neutral about the statement, while 9.8% disagreed and 3.9% strongly disagreed.



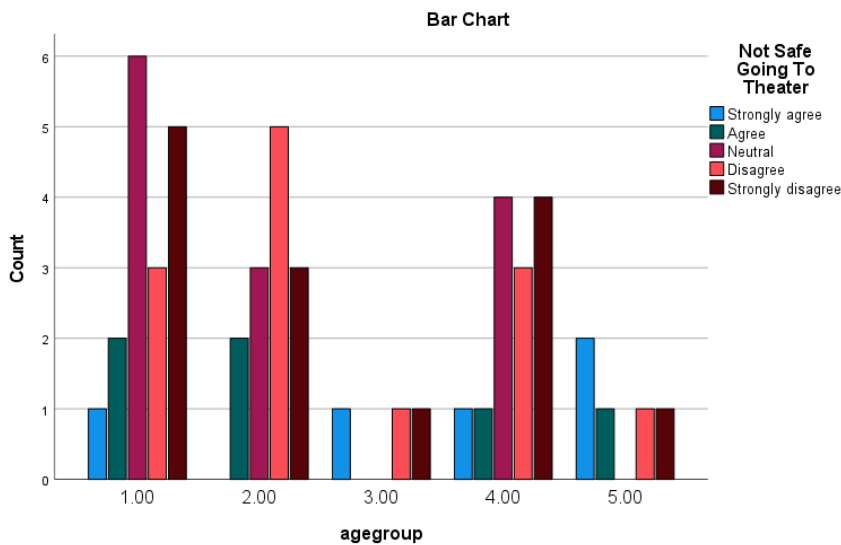
Respondents were asked if they missed going to the movies, and the results were one-sided, overall. A third of the respondents (33.3%) strongly agreed, while just over a quarter (29.4%) agreed that they missed going to the movies, and 17.6% of respondents felt neutral about missing the movies. 15.7% of respondents disagreed, while only 5.9% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement about missing going to the movies.



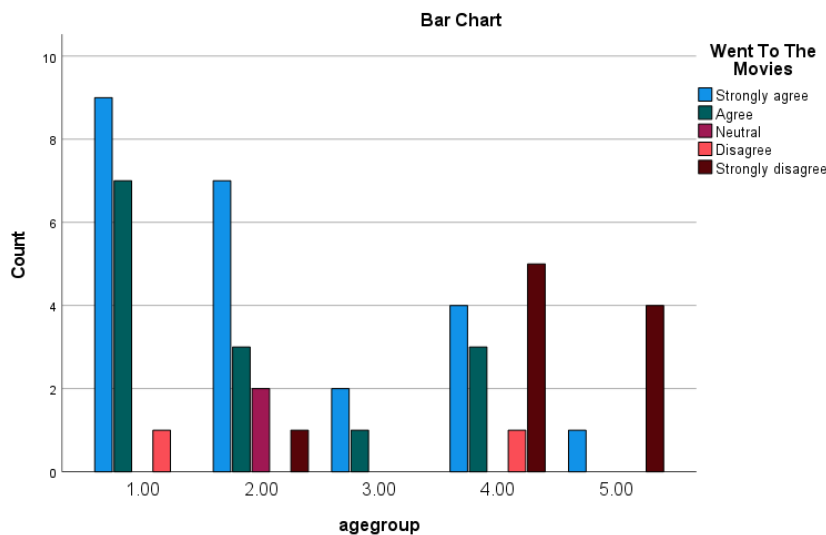
When respondents were asked about if they intended on going to a theater soon, responses varied. A third of the respondents (33.3%) strongly agreed that they intended on going to a theater soon, just over a quarter of the respondents (25.5%) agreed that they intended on going to a theater soon, and 17.6% felt neutral. 17.6% of the respondents disagreed with going to the theater, and 5.9% of respondents strongly disagreed.



Respondents were asked if they felt safe going to the movie theaters. With the threat of COVID-19 still looming, responses varied, especially amongst the age groups. Only 9.8% of respondents strongly agreed, 11.8% agreed, and 25.5% felt neutral about not feeling safe going to theaters. Another quarter of respondents (25.5%) disagreed with the statement, and that largest chunk of respondents (27.5%) strongly disagreed that they didn't feel safe going to theaters again.



Respondents were asked if they had attended a movie theater recently. Nearly three quarters of respondents (72.5%) reported that they had gone to a movie theater recently, while just under a quarter of respondents (23.5%) reported that they hadn't gone to a movie theater recently. The remaining 3.9% of respondents responded neutrally. Older respondents were much more reluctant to go than younger respondents ($P < .001$; $r = .51$).



Discussion (Phase 1)

When it came to the amount of streaming services people used before vs. after the pandemic began, it was surprising to see that more respondents kept the amount of streaming services they used the same. While 41.2% of respondents did increase the amount of streaming services they used, it was interesting to see that nearly half of respondents didn't change the amount of streaming services they used. Many people were out of work or financially struggling, so it makes sense that nearly half of respondents kept the streaming services they had access to the same. It would cost people more money to use more streaming services, so while this came as a surprise initially, it makes a lot of sense upon further analysis.

With lots of newfound time, it also makes sense that people would spend more time doing something else as a way of escapism from the harsh realities of the real world, to fight off boredom, or because they finally have time to watch that TV show or movie they've wanted to watch for a while. The fact that 31 of the 51 respondents (60.8%) reported that they had increased their time spent on streaming services made sense, and it somewhat ties into the amount of streaming services that people use. While nearly half of respondents (47.1%) kept the amount of streaming services they used after the pandemic as the same before the pandemic, it made sense that the majority of respondents would report that they began spending more time on these streaming services. These streaming services cost money, and the more one has, the more expensive it can be. However, time doesn't cost people any money, and many people seemed to have more time after the pandemic, so it makes sense that more respondents would report an increase in time spent on streaming services rather than using more streaming services.

Netflix's reigning popularity came as a surprise. With many streaming services in the ring competing alongside Netflix, one might assume that Netflix's popularity is waning in the midst of the rising popularity of streaming services such as Disney+ and HBO Max. That didn't stop the majority of respondents reporting that they used Netflix before and after the pandemic began, and that Netflix was still the preferred streaming service before and after the pandemic began amongst respondents. The numbers for Netflix's popularity did drop, both in favoritism (decreased from 60.8% favoritism to 37.3% favoritism) and use (participant use/access declined from 94.1% to 88.2%) among respondents since the pandemic began. With the wide variety of streaming services available to the public, including Hulu, Disney+, and HBO Max to name a few, it makes sense that these numbers for Netflix would decrease after the pandemic began.

Over three quarters of respondents (76.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that they used movies and TV shows as a way to cope with the pandemic. This piece of data didn't come as a surprise. Seeing how people around college age can get bored or dragged down by the world around them is a major factor in the escapism factor of streaming. Pahayahay & Khalili-Mahani's (2020) article dove into using streaming services as a coping mechanism. This study confirms and reinforces that conclusion, according to the data collected during Phase 1.

Nearly half of respondents (49%) felt that the COVID-19 pandemic affected their mental health negatively. Still, the fact that less than half of the total respondents for Phase 1 reported their mental health being affected negatively came as an unexpected result. The COVID-19 pandemic was a difficult time for many people, and to see that less than a quarter of respondents (21.5%) reported that they disagreed or strongly disagreed that the pandemic had a negative affect on their mental health came as a number that was higher than expected. Since the pandemic had been widely portrayed as this major event that affected everybody in a terrible manner, to see the numbers as low as they were for people agreeing and strongly agreeing came as a shock.

Discussion (Phase 2)

Nearly three quarters of respondents (70.6%) reported that they had increased the number of streaming services that they used. Since the pandemic began, not a single respondent in the Phase 2 group had reported using no streaming services, so each respondent was using at least one streaming service since the pandemic began. This number is much higher than the 41.2% of respondents that reported increasing the amount of streaming services that they used since the pandemic began for the Phase 1 group. This was both expected, yet surprising at the same time.

Streaming services cost money, and the more that people tend to use, the more money it's going to cost. The COVID-19 pandemic was a financially strenuous time for many people, so seeing the numbers so high for people increasing the streaming services they used came as a surprise (especially since Phase 2 respondents reported using upwards of 20 and 22 streaming services, while Phase 1 respondents reported using upwards of seven to ten streaming services).

Over half of the respondents (56.9%) reported that they had increased their time spent on streaming services. This was only slightly less than those of the Phase 1 group (60.8%). Similar to the amount of streaming services that people used after the pandemic, not a single respondent reported spending less than an hour on streaming services per week throughout the whole Phase 2 group. A third of the respondents (33.3%) in the Phase 2 group reported spending more than 10 hours per week on streaming services since the pandemic began. Only 13.7% of respondents in the Phase 1 group reported spending more than 10 hours per week on streaming services since the pandemic began.

When it came to respondents actively using streaming services since the pandemic began, an overwhelming majority of the Phase 2 respondents (96.1%) reported that they actively use streaming services. This was, however, a slight decrease in respondents who reported actively using streaming services before the pandemic (98%). The number of respondents that reported actively using streaming services since the pandemic began is the exact same number of Phase 1 respondents that reported actively using streaming services since the pandemic began. These results could be a sign that streaming is a medium that is here to stay, just as Sheth's (2020) study aims to predict whether these new online ways of doing everyday activities will stay for the long run. The overwhelming majority of both phases suggests that streaming services are still

vastly popular, and that they were not just a phase of entertainment, but possibly the future of entertainment.

The favorite streaming services of the Phase 2 group were very one-sided before the pandemic began. Like the Phase 1 group, 60.8% of respondents listed Netflix as their favorite streaming service, and 92.2% of respondents reported that they had Netflix both before and since the pandemic began. However, since the pandemic began, Netflix's favoritism with the Phase 2 group dropped sharply to a mere 23.5% favoritism, tied with Hulu. Since the pandemic began, the favorites that the Phase 2 respondents listed had four new entries between before the pandemic began and since it began. These new favorite streaming services included HBO Max, Peacock, Discovery+, and Paramount+. The Phase 1 respondents only had two new favorite streaming services since the pandemic began: Discovery+ and Funimation. The diversity in favoritism between both groups could be supportive evidence that streaming services are here to stay, similar to what Sheth's study predicted.

Nearly three quarters of the respondents in Phase 2 (72.6%) felt that they used movies and TV shows to cope with the hardships of the pandemic. The Phase 1 group, however, had over three quarters of the respondents (76.5%) report that they used movies and TV shows as a way to cope during the pandemic. This data supports Pahayahay & Khalili-Mahani (2020) about using media to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only does it support Pahayahay & Khalili-Mahani's findings, but also Fernandez, Blossom, et al.'s collaborative study (2020) which looked into adolescents using streaming services, social media, and the internet as a whole as a form of escapism. This pertains to both Phases 1 and 2, as both groups consist of a heavily adolescent/young adult population.

It's no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic affected people all over the world, both physically and mentally. According to the Phase 2 group, 60.8% of respondents felt that the COVID-19 pandemic affected their mental health negatively. These numbers were much higher than the Phase 1 group, in which 49% of respondents reported that the COVID-19 pandemic affected their mental health negatively. The Phase 2 group's numbers didn't come as a surprise, and to further solidify this, 13.7% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative effect on their mental health. This number is much lower than the Phase 1 group's numbers, with 21.5% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that the COVID-19 pandemic affected their mental health negatively.

After splitting up the ages of those surveyed into groups, the Phase 2 group's responses to movie-theater-based questions were analyzed on the basis of age groupings. When respondents were asked if they missed going to the movies, just below two-thirds of the respondents (62.8%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they missed going to the movies. 17.6% of respondents felt neutral about missing the movies, and 19.6% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they missed the movies. Although the correlation was not significant, it's interesting to see the results for the older group (indicated by the 5.00 on the x-axis) and how the majority of them agreed or strongly agreed that they miss going to the movie theaters.

When Phase 2 respondents were asked if they intended on going to the movies soon, 58.8% of respondents reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that they intend on going to the movies soon. Interestingly enough, this number of people who intend on going to the movies soon is less than the number of respondents that reported missing going to the theaters (62.8%). When analyzed by age groups, each group has varying responses except for the adult group

(indicated by the 3.00 on the x-axis), which has all respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that they miss going to the movies. The older group is interesting as well because the amount of respondents that disagreed or strongly disagreed is more than the amount of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed. This could be due to no movies of interest to the respondent releasing, or concerns over their health.

On the topic of health, Phase 2 respondents were asked if they felt unsafe going to the movies. 21.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, and 52.9% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed. 25.5% felt neutral about not feeling safe going to theaters. There was only one category of respondents that had more agreements than disagreements: the older group. While there were only five respondents in this category, three of them either agreed or strongly agreed that they don't feel safe going to a theater. This is tied with the "college age" group (indicated by 1.00 on the x-axis) for most respondents to agree or strongly agree with this statement, and the college age group had 17 respondents, the most respondents of any age group in the survey. It also makes sense that the older group would have more agreements than disagreements in regards to feeling unsafe going to a movie theater, as they are much more at risk of contracting and having a fatal reaction to the COVID-19 virus.

When asked if they had attended a movie theater recently, Phase 2 respondents were very one-sided with their responses. Almost three quarters of respondents (72.5%) reported going to a movie theater recently, while less than a quarter (23.5%) of respondents reported not going to a movie theater recently. The majority of each age group tended to agree or strongly agree that they've gone to a movie theater recently, except for one: the older group. Since those older in age are more likely to pass away due to exposure to COVID-19, especially those

immunocompromised, it would make sense that those older in age would not feel safe going to a movie theater, a public place where many people gather in an enclosed space.

With all these questions about movie theaters, and their return being a topic of debate, it makes sense to get an insider perspective. Kevin Guevara, Supervisor/Head of Human Resources for AMC Newport 11 located in the Newport Mall in Jersey City, NJ, was interviewed and asked about how his movie theater has been doing since they reopened in October 2020. Guevara says that his theater has been experiencing a lot of growth since reopening, and that big blockbuster movies like the Marvel movies, horror movies, and action/sci-fi movies have been a big help in helping his theater grow. He attributes *Spider-Man: No Way Home* to a lot of the growth his theater has experienced, and this movie was a key factor in reestablishing movie theaters as a form of entertainment. It was the first movie since 2019 to cross \$1 billion at the box office, and it became the sixth highest grossing movie of all time.

His theater reopened to 100% capacity back in the spring/summertime of 2021, and attendance has just been increasing. According to Guevara, “There is an absolute increase in crowd since the pandemic, especially once we opened back up to 100% occupancy this last spring/summer 2021. People generally miss going to the movies and one of the largest factors in our momentum is the big name films that come out, without that we would not have crowds, we tend to drop in attendance in between the big name movies (Marvel, James Bond) and it can get incredibly slow without them. However in general it has been steadily gone up within just these last 6 months.”

Guevara believes that many people missed going to the movies, to what he calls the “theater experience.” 62.8% of Phase 2 respondents reported missing the movies, and Guevara

believes that the main reason people missed going to the movies was this “theater experience.” He describes this as the experience of going to a movie theater with friends, buying the snacks, and sitting down in a movie theater and enjoying a movie with a crowd. “It is like the difference between streaming music and owning Vinyl records, each has their own crowd but it is hard to beat novelty.” Guevara said. “The truth is if you sit down at home to watch a movie it is not going to be anywhere near the same as going out with friends to see one in theaters.” He believes that the experience of watching a movie is something that many people seemed to miss, even when it came to movies available to both stream and watch in theaters at the same time like *The Suicide Squad*. While there was an alternative to watch this movie, many people decided to watch this movie in a movie theater, as Guevara said that the movie didn’t struggle as much as they had expected it to.

Despite all this growth and prosperity for movie theaters in the modern day, Guevara’s theater has met its fair share of struggles. One of the biggest struggles for Guevara’s theater has been movies switching to streaming-only releases. Some of the biggest examples of these movies are *Luca*, and *Turning Red*, both streaming on Disney+, Guevara’s theater had received promotional material for these movies including posters and cardboard displays, but they were not permitted to show these movies. This led to many customers being annoyed and upset that the promotional material for these movies were on display, but movie-goers were unable to watch these movies in theaters as his theater was not given the files to be able to play the movie. This proved to be an obstacle for Guevara’s theater, but not a major one, as they were still able to grow and profit off of other movies, snacks, and other various concessions.

Discussion Summary

From the research conducted, the data suggests that, overall, there was an increase in streaming since the pandemic began, both in services used and in time spent per week on streaming services. Interestingly enough, both phases suggested that Netflix was losing favoritism amongst viewers since the pandemic began. This mirrors the modern world, as Netflix has been losing lots of money in the stock market (so much that they've lost all their gains since the pandemic began, according to Whitten and CNBC), and membership has fallen. As the data also suggests, movie theaters are beginning to return as a form of entertainment that people enjoy and want to partake in.

Future Studies

If future studies are to be conducted on this topic, larger sample populations would be perhaps the most important factor. A sample of only 102 people is good for analyzing trends on a smaller scale. However, this study would largely benefit from a larger sample population to make more definitive conclusions about the trends being analyzed in this study. The survey distributed should also include some more questions about theaters, as the world grows farther away from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and closer to the pre-pandemic normalcy. The survey could also feature questions about the types of content that respondents prefer to watch, to get a better idea of what was trending before and since the pandemic began.

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Appendix A

Streaming and COVID Survey

Hello:

You are invited to participate in a research study on the use of streaming platforms during COVID-19. This study is being conducted by Joseph Caruso for a capstone research project in Research Writing [CU 400]. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary at all times. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to fill out the survey below. This survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

All of your responses to this survey will remain anonymous and cannot be linked to you in any way. No identifying information about you will be collected at any point during the study, and your survey will be identified only with a number. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. However, once you submit your completed survey, there will be no way to withdraw your responses from the study because the survey contains no identifying information.

There are no risks associated with this study. If you have any questions regarding the survey or this research project in general, please contact the Saint Peter's University IRB or Dr. Josh Feinberg at jfeinberg@saintpeters.edu.

By completing and submitting this survey, you are indicating your consent to participate in this study.

Age: _____

Academic Year (circle one): Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

Undergraduate or Graduate: _____

Gender (check one):

- Male
- Female
- Nonbinary
- Other: _____
- Prefer not to say

These questions apply to the Pre-COVID period

1. Did you have cable **before** the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately before March 2020)? (Circle one)
Yes No
2. Did you actively use any streaming services **before** the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately before March 2020)? (Circle one) Yes No
3. If yes, who was paying for the service(s)? (check all that apply)
 - Myself
 - A friend
 - A parent/legal guardian

- A sibling
 - Another family member (aunt, uncle, cousin, etc.)
 - Other (please specify) _____
4. How many streaming services did you actively use/invest in **before** the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately before March 2020)? _____
5. Please check off all of the streaming services that you have access to via your own payment, a family member, etc.
- Netflix
 - Hulu
 - Disney+
 - HBO Max
 - Peacock
 - Paramount+
 - Amazon Prime Video
 - Apple TV+
 - Discovery+
 - ESPN+
 - Crunchyroll
 - Other/not listed (please specify) _____
6. Approximately how many hours did you spend **each week** using these various streaming services **before** the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately before March 2020)? (check one)
- Less than one hour
 - 1-2 hours
 - 3-5 hours
 - 6-8 hours
 - 9-10 hours
 - More than 10 hours
7. What streaming service was your personal favorite to use **before** the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately before March 2020)? _____
8. What did you primarily use these streaming services for **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020) [check all that apply]?
- Watching live TV
 - I had a few shows/movies I enjoy watching on these streaming platforms
 - Keeping up with new TV shows/movies
 - A certain show/movie caught my attention
 - Other (please specify): _____
9. What devices did you use when using these streaming services **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020)?
- Mobile phone

- Tablet
- Laptop
- Desktop computer
- Smart TV
- Amazon Fire Stick
- Apple TV
- Other (please specify): _____

Post-COVID

10. Did you have cable since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately since March 2020)?
(Circle one) Yes No
11. Did you actively use any streaming services since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately since March 2020)? (Circle one) Yes No
12. If yes, who was paying for the service(s)? (check all that apply)
- Myself
 - A friend
 - A parent/legal guardian
 - A sibling
 - Another family member (aunt, uncle, cousin, etc.)
 - Other (please specify) _____
13. How many streaming services have you used/invested in since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately since March 2020)? _____
14. Please check off all of the streaming services that you have access to via your own payment, a family member, etc. since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately since March 2020)?
- Netflix
 - Hulu
 - Disney+
 - HBO Max
 - Peacock
 - Paramount+
 - Amazon Prime Video
 - Apple TV+
 - Discovery+
 - ESPN+
 - Crunchyroll
 - Other/not listed (please specify) _____

15. Approximately how many hours did you spend **each week** using these various streaming services **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately since March 2020)? (check one)
- Less than one hour
 - 1-2 hours
 - 3-5 hours
 - 6-8 hours
 - 9-10 hours
 - More than 10 hours
16. What streaming service was your personal favorite to use **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately since March 2020)? _____
17. What did you primarily use these streaming services for **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020) [check all that apply]?
- Watching live TV
 - I had a few shows/movies I enjoy watching on these streaming platforms
 - Keeping up with new TV shows/movies
 - A certain show/movie caught my attention
 - Other (please specify): _____
18. What devices did you use when using these streaming services **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020)?
- Mobile phone
 - Tablet
 - Laptop
 - Desktop computer
 - Smart TV
 - Amazon Fire Stick
 - Apple TV
 - Other (please specify): _____

General Statements (Pre-COVID and Post-COVID)

For each of the following statements, please circle the option that best fits your opinion on the statement in terms of how it relates to your personal experience(s).

19. I watched programs on streaming services often **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
20. I used cable often **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

21. I liked to watch a variety of shows and movies rather than limiting myself to a select few genres **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

22. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected my mental health in a positive way.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

23. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected my mental health in a negative way.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

24. Watching TV shows/movies have been a coping mechanism for me **during** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately March 2020 to present day).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

25. I have begun using streaming services often **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

26. I have been using cable often since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

27. I like to watch a variety of shows and movies rather than limiting myself to a select few genres since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

28. I had a lot of newfound time during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately March 2020).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

29. I was able to start new shows/finish shows I had already started before the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

30. During the pandemic, I watched some new series/films I wouldn't have normally watched (approximately since March 2020).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

31. I have been able to expand my taste in movies and TV shows since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

32. I feel like I increased my time spent on various streaming services **during** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

33. I feel like my time spent on streaming services is higher now than it was **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

34. I feel like my time spent on streaming services now is about the same as it was **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

35. I feel like my time on streaming services now is less than it was **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Essay Questions

36. What kinds of experiences did you have during the pandemic that would make you turn to streaming services as a way to feel better? Did this happen often?

37. Why do you tend to use streaming services for as long/short as you do? Do you feel that the pandemic played a role in this?

Appendix B

Streaming and COVID Survey

Hello:

You are invited to participate in a research study on the use of streaming platforms during COVID-19. This study is being conducted by Joseph Caruso for a capstone research project in Research Writing [CU 400]. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary at all times. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to fill out the survey below. This survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

All of your responses to this survey will remain anonymous and cannot be linked to you in any way. No identifying information about you will be collected at any point during the study, and your survey will be identified only with a number. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. However, once you submit your completed survey, there will be no way to withdraw your responses from the study because the survey contains no identifying information.

There are no risks associated with this study. If you have any questions regarding the survey or this research project in general, please contact the Saint Peter's University IRB or Dr. Josh Feinberg at jfeinberg@saintpeters.edu.

By completing and submitting this survey, you are indicating your consent to participate in this study.

Age: _____

Gender (check one):

- Male
- Female
- Nonbinary
- Other: _____
- Prefer not to say

These questions apply to the Pre-COVID period

1. Did you have cable **before** the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately before March 2020)? (Circle one)
Yes No
2. Did you actively use any streaming services **before** the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately before March 2020)? (Circle one) Yes No
3. If yes, who was paying for the service(s)? (check all that apply)
 - Myself
 - A friend
 - A parent/legal guardian
 - A sibling
 - Another family member (aunt, uncle, cousin, etc.)

- Other (please specify) _____
4. How many streaming services did you actively use/invest in **before** the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately before March 2020)? _____
 5. Please check off all of the streaming services that you have access to via your own payment, a family member, etc.
 - Netflix
 - Hulu
 - Disney+
 - HBO Max
 - Peacock
 - Paramount+
 - Amazon Prime Video
 - Apple TV+
 - Discovery+
 - ESPN+
 - Crunchyroll
 - Other/not listed (please specify) _____
 6. Approximately how many hours did you spend **each week** using these various streaming services **before** the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately before March 2020)? (check one)
 - Less than one hour
 - 1-2 hours
 - 3-5 hours
 - 6-8 hours
 - 9-10 hours
 - More than 10 hours
 7. What streaming service was your personal favorite to use **before** the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately before March 2020)? _____
 8. What did you primarily use these streaming services for **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020) [check all that apply]?
 - Watching live TV
 - I had a few shows/movies I enjoy watching on these streaming platforms
 - Keeping up with new TV shows/movies
 - A certain show/movie caught my attention
 - Other (please specify): _____
 9. What devices did you use when using these streaming services **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020)?
 - Mobile phone
 - Tablet
 - Laptop

- Desktop computer
- Smart TV
- Amazon Fire Stick
- Apple TV
- Other (please specify): _____

Post-COVID

10. Did you have cable **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately since March 2020)?
(Circle one) Yes No
11. Did you actively use any streaming services **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately since March 2020)? (Circle one) Yes No
12. If yes, who was paying for the service(s)? (check all that apply)
- Myself
 - A friend
 - A parent/legal guardian
 - A sibling
 - Another family member (aunt, uncle, cousin, etc.)
 - Other (please specify) _____
13. How many streaming services have you used/invested in **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately since March 2020)? _____
14. Please check off all of the streaming services that you have access to via your own payment, a family member, etc. **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately since March 2020)?
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 - Disney+
 - HBO Max
 - Peacock
 - Paramount+
 - Amazon Prime Video
 - Apple TV+
 - Discovery+
 - ESPN+
 - Crunchyroll
 - Other/not listed (please specify) _____
15. Approximately how many hours did you spend **each week** using these various streaming services **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately since March 2020)? (check one)
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- 1-2 hours
 - 3-5 hours
 - 6-8 hours
 - 9-10 hours
 - More than 10 hours
16. What streaming service was your personal favorite to use **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately since March 2020)? _____
17. What did you primarily use these streaming services for **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020) [check all that apply]?
- Watching live TV
 - I had a few shows/movies I enjoy watching on these streaming platforms
 - Keeping up with new TV shows/movies
 - A certain show/movie caught my attention
 - Other (please specify): _____
18. What devices did you use when using these streaming services **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020)?
- Mobile phone
 - Tablet
 - Laptop
 - Desktop computer
 - Smart TV
 - Amazon Fire Stick
 - Apple TV
 - Other (please specify): _____

General Statements (Pre-COVID and Post-COVID)

For each of the following statements, please circle the option that best fits your opinion on the statement in terms of how it relates to your personal experience(s).

19. I watched programs on streaming services often **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
20. I used cable often **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

21. I liked to watch a variety of shows and movies rather than limiting myself to a select few genres **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

22. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected my mental health in a positive way.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

23. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected my mental health in a negative way.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

24. Watching TV shows/movies have been a coping mechanism for me **during** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately March 2020 to present day).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

25. I have begun using streaming services often **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

26. I have been using cable often **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

27. I like to watch a variety of shows and movies rather than limiting myself to a select few genres **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

28. I had a lot of newfound time **during the beginning** of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately March 2020).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

29. I was able to start new shows/finish shows I had already started **before** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

30. **During the pandemic**, I watched some new series/films I wouldn't have normally watched (approximately since March 2020).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

31. I have been able to expand my taste in movies and TV shows **since the beginning** of the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020).

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

32. I feel like I increased my time spent on various streaming services **during** the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately since March 2020).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

33. I feel like my time spent on streaming services is higher now than it was before the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

34. I feel like my time spent on streaming services now is about the same as it was before the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

35. I feel like my time on streaming services now is less than it was before the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately before March 2020).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

36. I prefer to use streaming services over cable.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

37. I prefer to use cable over streaming services.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

38. I miss going to the movie theater.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

39. I have gone to a movie theater to watch a movie within the past year.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

40. I intend on going to a movie theater soon.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

41. I don't feel safe going to the movie theater.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

42. I prefer to use streaming services over going to the movies.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Essay Questions

43. What kinds of experiences did you have during the pandemic that would make you turn to streaming services as a way to feel better? Did this happen often?

44. Why do you tend to use streaming services for as long/short as you do? Do you feel that the pandemic played a role in this?
