

# Consuming entertainment as Roamers: A study of generation Z's television viewership in the digital era

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## Consuming entertainment as Roamers: A study of generation Z's television viewership in the digital era

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Before the digital era, television was spotlighted for people who enjoyed audio-visual shows. However, in the digital era, television viewers in Indonesia have decreased. The ease of access to infrastructure, the Internet, and mobile technology devices makes viewers, especially Generation Z (Gen-Z), prefer shows that can be enjoyed flexibly anytime and anywhere. **Purpose:** This paper discusses the trend of television viewers for Gen-Z amid the "onslaught" of streaming platforms. **Methods:** This study uses a survey method on Gen-Z, interpreted descriptively and qualitatively. **Results:** Based on the data obtained, this research illustrates that Gen-Z viewers can be said to be roamers or viewers who enjoy broadcast shows that move between streaming platforms. The study results show that the digital era has changed Gen-Z viewers' behavior according to their technological devices and subscription streaming platforms. **Conclusion:** This research indirectly shows that the digital era and the presence of streaming platforms have made viewers increasingly fragmented, so television is not famous for Gen-Z to enjoy audio-visual shows, especially entertainment. **Implications:** The theoretical implication is that this roaming behavior may be a typical characteristic of Gen-Z. Future research could explore whether this behavior excludes Gen-Z or represents a broader trend among the emerging generation.

**Keywords:** Gen-Z; roamers; streaming platforms; the digital era; viewer fragmentation

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## INTRODUCTION

Television viewing behavior has shifted. It is due to many factors, such as the emergence of new technology, the development of media platforms, and, recently, the pandemic (Fatemi, 2022). Changes have occurred on several fronts, such as where and how people watch a program. Fatemi noted that the shift from scheduled viewing to streaming services has occurred significantly, especially for young people.

Data from Forbes shows that more than 50% of streaming viewers are under 35 years old, while viewers aged 60 and above only spend 14% of their entertainment time with streaming services, but those aged 15-29 say they spend 22% of their entertainment time with streaming services (Fatemi, 2022). Streaming service users tend to be younger users (Lüders et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, the pattern of television consumption has also changed. In recent years, digitalization has overgrown and caused a decline in the use of television. It can be seen from the decrease in the percentage of the population enjoying broadcasts on this medium in 2021. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), only 86.96% of Indonesians watched TV in the past week of 2021, and children dominated this. This percentage is lower than in 2018, which reached 93.21% (Data Indonesia, 2022).

From the above data, the tendency for scheduled TV viewership for those who are part of Gen-Z is relatively low. Gen-Z grew up

with advanced technology from the beginning of their lives. Social media, continuous connectivity, and on-demand entertainment and communication have been part of Gen-Z's life since early on, and they are considered standard (Dimock, 2019).

Television consumption patterns have shifted in recent years due to several factors, such as the emergence of new technologies, the proliferation of media platforms, and, more recently, the pandemic (Fatemi, 2022). The changes are evident in various aspects, such as where and how people watch programs. Fatemi states that the shift from scheduled viewing to streaming services has been significant, especially for the younger generation.

Gen-Z is the generation born between 1996 and 2010. The exposition of the generation indicates that each generation has different technology consumption behavior. Gen-Z is a generation that is familiar with the latest technology. Generally, social media is the primary source of access to news for the current generation. For their entertainment, they like to access digital content (movies, music, videos, and games) online (Tirto, 2017). Gen-Z cares about themselves, where they look for entertainment and references through social media (Evita et al., 2023).

In the age of information overload, gen-Z tends to choose information selectively and has various ways to get it faster. Nevertheless, their interest in certain content also fades quickly, and the range of Gen-Z attention becomes

increasingly short due to the nature of digital content, which, according to Beal, its main characteristic is the continuous renewal of content (Podara et al., 2022).

Viewer behavior also changes related to the fast renewal of digital media content and easy access to the medium. Audiences tend to wander from one media to another, from one platform to another, and from one piece of content to another. The concept of roamers is often used to describe this behavior. According to Hill, roamers refer to people's paths and traces while roaming the digital media landscape (Hill & Lee, 2022).

Roamers are defined by Hill & Lee as viewers with the ability to be virtually mobile and capable of accessing platforms, channels, and pirate sites with various devices, subscribing to digital services, and having the courage to navigate and technical setup daily. Hill & Lee imagine viewers as roamers across various entertainment platforms, such as Netflix, Disney Plus, Amazon Prime, YouTube, Twitch, and cable TV and national broadcast to facilitate understanding of this process. In the process, they follow the paths indicated by contemporary capitalist media and act as path-makers, creating new connections as they wander across the entertainment platforms. The use of the word "platform" here is to represent a digital industry involving computational infrastructure that enables the generation of user-driven content (Mukherjee & Singh, 2017).

This research presents the tendency

of television viewers for Gen-Z amidst the "onslaught" of streaming platforms. They are individuals born into the digital era with a culture deeply rooted in digital technologies. Streaming platforms trigger viewers to change entertainment shows (Wibowo, 2024).

Generation Z is characterized by the prevalence of attention deficit disorder and a significant reliance on technology (Perić et al., 2020). They represent a generation of individuals being experimented with and whose future remains unpredictable. The problem formulation in this research reflects the research objective to understand the shift in television viewer behavior in the digital era, especially Gen-Z. The main question is whether television is still popular as a technological device for accessing audio-visual shows. In exploring this problem, this research explores the extent to which the influence of digital technology has changed the preferences and viewing habits of Gen-Z.

#### RESEARCH METHOD

This research is descriptive qualitative research using a survey method. This method provides a deep overview of a particular situation, broadcasts, events, activities, individuals, or groups (Miller & Salkind, 2002). This research focuses on the behavior of young people in accessing broadcasts.

The decline in television viewers in Indonesia can be attributed to the increased mobility of technology and the Internet, allowing

broadcasts to be accessed conveniently through smartphones, tablets, or laptops from anywhere. Additionally, this study aims to investigate the extent of familiarity among young people born in the digital era using these digital technology devices. This research employs a mixed-method approach for data collection, utilizing both surveys and an in-depth interpretation of the survey results. The survey phase involves presenting a series of questions to respondents, specifically addressing the evolution of diverse broadcasts in the digital era, accessible through mobile devices and flexible streaming platforms. The subsequent data interpretation process involves scrutinizing and analyzing the gathered survey responses to derive meaningful insights and draw conclusions about the trends and preferences in digital media consumption

The selection of East Jakarta as the focal point for researching television viewership among broadcasting students in private universities is grounded in strategic considerations that aim for both relevance and depth in the study. Firstly, East Jakarta represents a dynamic urban landscape that mirrors the capital city's broader socio-economic and cultural trends. The decision to target students specifically is influenced by their role as early adopters of technology and key influencers in shaping media consumption patterns. Students, especially those within 24 people aged 20-21 years, are likely to have a strong connection with digital platforms, making them an insightful group to study when exploring the impact of technology

on television viewership. The second stage carried out is to interpret the data qualitatively. The data obtained is in the form of diagrams, which are then descriptively and analytically interpreted. Reference studies are also carried out to theoretically frame the findings obtained.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Watching practices has become a necessity for everyone, especially watching entertainment broadcasts. It is not separated from the individual need to amuse himself amid daily activities. Teenage viewers, especially girls in Surabaya, made watching an activity a habitus (Permatasari & Sadewo, 2018). It even shifts into part of their lifestyle. It shows that the practice of watching broadcasts is attached to everyday life.

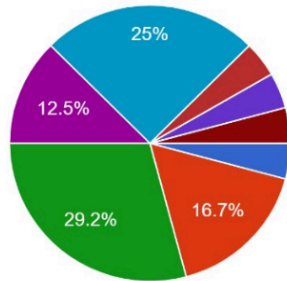
Watching culture has also become part of personal and individual activities, especially since technology brings new media (Saptya et al., 2019), such as portable smartphones can be used to meet everyone's need to watch. With the presence of this technology, the culture and practice of watching are increasingly easily found and done anywhere. Not necessarily at home, like watching television.

In this activity, everyone is interested in the broadcast to be consumed. Starting from comedy, movies, news, education, and so on. However, the ease felt in accessing the broadcast offered makes them not only enjoy one broadcast only. However, many broadcasts, even in one watch, for example, watching football broadcasts on a

tablet while watching Netflix broadcasts on a smartphone.

Although everyone can do this, especially with their current device, they still have the most interesting broadcasts. Based on the survey conducted on 24 Gen-Z respondents, Stand-Up Comedy is the most favored broadcast by the respondents, as shown in Figure 1.

In Figure 1, eight broadcasts are chosen through the survey in this research. Stand-up comedy is a genre of humor where the viewer is entertained by watching the comedian perform funny stories. Sometimes, in the broadcast, there are critiques related to social phenomena. Next, the film category is more to broadcasts those present various films such as those in the cinema or Box Office (Trans TV). The talk



Source: Author (2023)

**Figure 1** Most liked impressions shows

**Table 1** List of requested impressions

No	Shows name	Percentage
1	Stand-Up Comedy	29.2%
2	Movies	25%
3	Talk show	16.7%
4	Comedy/sketch comedy	12.5%
5	News	4.2%
6	Supernatural	4.2%
7	Educative	4.2%
8	Product/Technology Review	4.2%

Source: Author (2023)

show becomes a category where viewers are presented with entertainment broadcasts, such as the Tonight Show.

In addition, there are categories of comedies such as Lapor Pak sketches or Opera van Java. In addition to the four broadcast categories, respondents were also presented with other choices such as news, supernatural events (broadcasts that present mysterious things), educational broadcasts (such as Laptop si Unyil, On the Spot, or Si Bolang), and related content reviews (such as product reviews, technology, and others).

Stand-up comedy is the most favored broadcast by Gen-Z because of the closeness between them and the broadcast. The interest appears because they understand the concepts in the broadcast. It makes the intensity of Gen-Z in watching Stand-Up Comedy broadcasts high, especially compared to the elderly (Marlin et al., 2017).

Their understanding of the comedy concepts in the broadcast can make them feel entertained, even for a short duration. The viewer's fondness for the broadcast cannot be separated from the familiarity and likeability felt. Both can attract the viewer's interest in making decisions in choosing Stand-Up Comedy broadcasts (Permadi & Chaerowati, 2020).

Familiarity arises because there is a match between the experiences the viewer feels and the source of the information, in this case, from comics. Meanwhile, likeability arises because of interest in the comic's physical appearance,

behavior, or personal characteristics.

Familiarity arises from the match of the viewer's experience with its information source, in this case, from the comedian. At the same time, likeability arises from the interest in the comedian's physical appearance, behavior, or personal characteristics.

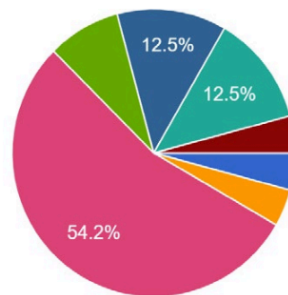
The viewer feels the familiarity because the content of the comedy performed by the comedians usually comes from everyday life. Even many comedians perform their material in the form of criticism and the voice of the community's anxiety (Cahyani, 2022). The closeness and understanding of the concepts of this broadcast is what makes Gen-Z have a higher interest in the broadcast. Especially when the comedian has a close story from the aspect of culture, tribe, or characteristic with the viewer, this can further support the viewer's interest and evoke their fondness for the figure of the comedian telling funny stories on stage.

Stand-up comedy broadcasts can be highly interesting because of the taste adjustment efforts formed for the viewer (Atmaja et al., 2019). The comedian's performance often includes short comedies that resonate with the community's everyday life, effectively capturing and representing the inner thoughts and emotions of the audience. This unique approach contributes to forming a distinct taste for the broadcast audience.

Although the film broadcast is in second place, the third and fourth placements contain comedy-related broadcasts. The third contains

Talk Shows (Tonight Show), and the fourth contains comedy sketches (Lapor Pak). The data shows that the interest in watching possessed by Gen-Z tends to watch content containing comedy (jokes and laughter). Although it is dominated by Stand-Up Comedy, other comedy broadcasts are also followed.

Broadcasts in the comedy genre generally have their market share. On Spotify, the comedy genre once occupied the seventh position of the Top Podcast Spotify Indonesia (Zakiroh et al., 2021). It shows an interest in the public in consuming comedy broadcasts, especially through new media that is easily accessible. Even though Stand-up comedy broadcasts are not in video form, the viewer's desire to consume the entertainment content is still high. It also shows that the story in the content is



Source: Author (2023)

**Figure 2 Least favorite Data Shows**

**Table 2 Top 5 list of shows that are less liked**

No	Shows name	Percentage
1	Wedding show	54%
2	Dangdut talent search	12.5%
3	Soap opera	12.7%
4	Variety Show	8.3%
5	News	4.2%

Source: Author (2023)

what they are looking for to meet the need for entertainment.

Moreover, while certain shows are well-received, others may not garner the same favorability. According to a survey, the least favored broadcast among the seven options revolved around the marriage of Atta Halilintar and Aurel Hermansyah, a high-profile celebrity couple widely recognized by the public. 54.2% of 24 respondents chose this answer. The survey percentage regarding the least liked broadcasts can be seen in Figure 2.

The data displayed in Figure 2 is interesting because Atta Halilintar's YouTube subscribers reached 30.1 million on February 4, 2023. The high number of subscribers does not impact Gen-Z viewers' interest in choosing broadcast programs to enjoy. Further, the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) called the RCTI television station to be asked for information about the broadcast. For the KPI, the broadcast neglects the point of public education (CNN, 2021).

Derived from the survey, Generation Z demonstrates awareness of the diminishing educational values in certain broadcasts. It is evident in the survey results, particularly in the preferences for the most and least liked broadcasts. Among the favored broadcasts, Generation Z respondents leaned towards Stand-Up Comedy shows, with the comedy genre dominating their choices. Conversely, for the least-liked broadcasts, they selected marriage-themed shows despite the involvement of highly

popular figures like Atta Halilintar and Aurel in the entertainment industry.

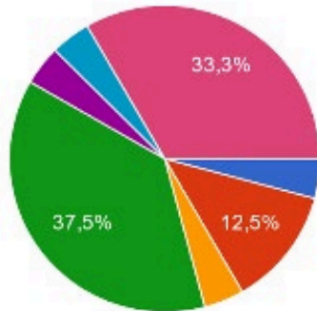
The KPI statement and Gen-Z awareness shown through the selection of broadcasts show an awareness of a decrease in the quality of broadcasts presented by the media. Even only a few broadcasts contain educational values (Artha, 2016). Meanwhile, the emergence of stand-up comedy, especially in Indonesia, is seen as an answer to the problem. This broadcast is considered a "smart" comedy because it brings the viewer to reflect and think critically (Marlin et al., 2017). This phenomenon makes stand-up comedy favored by Gen-Z. After all, there are educational values in it indirectly.

Gen-Z's awareness, coupled with the ease of accessing information, ultimately makes them choose new media. In this scenario, they increasingly enjoy entertainment through smartphone apps. They embody a role similar to an explorer, utilizing a single device to explore multiple applications offering multiple forms of entertainment.

The activities they do eventually create fragmentation of digital broadcasting viewers. Viewers worldwide experience fragmentation. The fragmentation can be seen in three forms: media-centric, user-centric, and viewer-centric (Herlina et al., 2019). Based on media-centricity, Gen-Z viewers are grouped according to the products they use to watch. For example, they watch stand-up comedy or films. Furthermore, they can also be grouped according to their media choices, such as through Netflix, YouTube, or

RCTI+ channels. Lastly, viewer fragmentation can be done by tracking data through certain software (viewer-centric).

The fragmentation can eventually be utilized by broadcasting media as material in practicing political economy. The fragmentation also occurs due to a shift in the culture of watching by Gen-Z. Gen-Z has a different taste than the previous generation in terms of the culture of watching. It is due to changes in the devices used to consume their shows. It differs from the previous generation, who relied on television to watch their favorite broadcasts. They even came to the cinema to watch the latest movies they wanted to watch. The emergence of internet technology through computers or smartphones changed the culture of watching in Gen-Z's life.



Source: Author (2023)

**Figure 3 Preferred Broadcast Media Data**

**Table 3 Preferred Broadcast Media**

No	Shows name	Percentage
1	YouTube	37.5%
2	Netflix	33.3%
3	Tiktok	12.5%
4	Television	4.2%
5	Radio	4.2%

Source: Author (2023)

Based on the researcher data in Figure 3 obtained through the survey, it is known that the most consumed broadcast media is YouTube. The data shows that YouTube is becoming a popular platform, especially for content with long video duration. Even the fascination of Gen-Z to consume YouTube is on its streaming facilities.

YouTube has become a popular broadcast media. Not only in Indonesia but globally. There are many genres that viewers can enjoy. They can even create their channel and profit from their content production. The facilities provided by YouTube through this presumption culture are also one of the factors that make YouTube popular. Hence, the content consumed comes from society's daily products or needs, such as product review content.

The high results of the selection of broadcast media are also based on the ease of the viewer selecting and choosing the broadcasts they like. Certainly, this is different from television, where viewers must follow the broadcast schedule aired. Through YouTube, they can watch any broadcast available there. Even if there is streaming or live content, the content can usually be watched again.

Aside from YouTube, the second result of the survey conducted is Netflix. It is different from YouTube. Netflix offers movie content to viewers. The movies presented by Netflix are not just old movies. However, there are also new movies, so viewers can enjoy the latest broadcasts without going to the cinema. Netflix

also presents other broadcasts, such as drama episodes and animation broadcasts.

As digital broadcast media, the Netflix market and YouTube are very different, so the survey results are also based on the content interests sought by the respondents. Figure 1 shows the data of broadcasts liked by Gen-Z. In that data, the most liked broadcasts by Gen-Z viewers are movies. It is following the broadcast media they use, namely YouTube and Netflix. Although YouTube does not only offer movie content, but some uploads also broadcast old movies. Even new movies only broadcast their trailers due to copyright issues.

The data also strengthens the phenomenon in which YouTube and Netflix broadcast media can facilitate viewers' needs. Not only that, but the second position of this data is a talk show, and the third position is news.

YouTube can facilitate the three shows because the broadcast media provides various shows and genres according to viewer needs. It makes YouTube more popular than other broadcast media.

However, Netflix is also favored by many viewers. Although its content tends to present movie shows and the like. However, the presentation given by Netflix can meet the needs of viewers. Just by subscribing according to the applicable provisions, viewers can enjoy various new movies presented by Netflix. Of course, the pleasure obtained differs from YouTube because the content published comes from various users. Netflix only serves movies

or videos with collaborated or products from the broadcast media. This finding also shows that the practice of watching by utilizing broadcast media has changed.

In the past, television was the only broadcasting medium that offered a variety of programs, ranging from movies to news to talk shows to soccer and so on. Broadcasting media has developed into many media but can be accessed through a single device, whether a laptop, computer, or smartphone.

Such changes have also formed a different culture among viewers. They are not only watching through a single broadcasting medium, but they watch multiple broadcasting media on a single device. Like a "roamer" searching for the best show they want to enjoy. They are like treasure hunters in the process of watching broadcasts.

Hill and Lee (2021) explained that the media industry has recognized how much viewers have become "roamers" in enjoying broadcasts. They create a route while watching shows on their device. At one point, they may use YouTube for media broadcasts. However, at the same time, they may suddenly switch to Netflix. It happens continuously according to their desires and the applications they provide on their device.

Even though television is at the bottom of the survey choices, it does not mean that viewers are leaving the media broadcasts. What can happen is that they watch YouTube on their smartphones while watching TV in their living

room or private room. For example, when an interesting program is on TV, they can leave the program they have opened on their smartphone. It can also happen when these Gen-Z viewers find what they seek.

On the other hand, the presence of YouTube or other social media that provide streaming facilities plays a role in showing the movement of viewers. YouTube is the most popular media because it provides streaming content and can provide long-duration videos, making it effective in enjoying complete entertainment or information (Nurhadi et al., 2020). Hill and Lee (2021) explained that “streaming” indicates customer-viewers’ movement in the entertainment flow. Viewers can follow the flow when they start consuming content. Especially in streaming shows, the viewer can be invited to interact. The viewer’s perceived interaction is another factor that makes YouTube more popular than other media broadcasts. Because with interaction, the viewer’s activity in enjoying the show can be poured out. Both through the comment column or in the form of likes.

Today’s viewers can become virtual mobile individuals. They can access platforms, broadcasts, and sites through different devices (Hill & Lee, 2021). For example, they access a website related to certain content. They also simultaneously watch broadcasts or listen while accessing the site. Their exploration shows the mobility to meet their entertainment or information needs.

Technological developments have changed the culture of watching done by Gen-Z. It happens as there are many variations of internet-based communication media that every user can utilize. Easy and accessible utilization anywhere makes society, especially Gen-Z, choose to utilize this technology and start leaving mass media as the main source of entertainment or information (Putra, 2019).

In exploring various types of media consumption practiced by Gen Z, this is viewed as a form of culture of use. This culture is an important part of the changes in viewing habits due to technological disruptions. Changes in viewer viewing practices have implications for changing the center of coordinates for sources of information or entertainment in the form of media (Turner, 2019). In the past, television was the main source of information or entertainment—the diverse range of programs provided by various channels entertained television viewers.

However, this condition has now changed due to the shift in the culture of use. Mass media technology has been replaced by various new forms of media, particularly through the Internet. Datafication, particularly about entertainment and viewing, encouraged the formation of different viewer backgrounds in fulfilling their entertainment needs (Turner, 2019). In this case, there is a change in Gen Z’s interest in watching. In the past era, the viewing pattern experienced by the viewer followed the broadcast programs presented on television. If

the mass media consumed were newspapers or radio, they would follow what was presented in the media.

Entertainment media channels that can be accessed via mobile and streaming make it easy for Gen-Z. This makes them watch more videos on smartphones and tablets, more likely to be personal computer users, and more likely to be young, college-educated, and affluent. This generation is the leading post-television generation with its characteristics (Strangelove, 2015).

However, the current condition differs in where viewers form their programs. Viewers can determine which programs they want to consume and which media they want to use. It requires them to engage in search and exploration activities. They can even recommend programs for their peers to watch. The results of these behaviors are eventually read and understood by artificial intelligence, which then builds their consumption patterns. Although viewers are in a position of freedom in exploring, ultimately, they are confined to their interests. It limits the entry of other broadcast programs that can be consumed, even though they can choose their media. The culture of exploration of Gen Z has also contributed to the destabilization of television institutions due to the hybridization that emerged from internet technology (Bury, 2017).

This research data shows that YouTube and Netflix are more preferred than television and radio. Even the findings show that internet-

mediated broadcasting media show higher results than mass media. The enjoyment of exploration in this usage culture changes how Gen-Z enjoys existing broadcasts. It is disrupted due to the emergence of internet-based broadcasting media.

The emergence of broadcasting media (such as Netflix) changes the culture of movie entertainment consumption everyone enjoys. Netflix is said to be a disruptive innovation. It is because, as a new broadcasting media, Netflix can enter the lower-class market and have a new foothold. Previously, viewers who wanted to watch movies, especially new releases, had to go to the cinema. However, Netflix can provide facilities where viewers do not need to go to the cinema. The viewer can even watch the movie repeatedly at any time (Anindita, 2021). Of course, by subscribing according to the applicable rules. Moreover, this is considered cheaper than watching at the cinema, let alone buying an original DVD.

Internet-based broadcasting media such as Netflix attract the interest of Gen-Z not only because they can explore. This new broadcasting media distributes multi-channel services between networks (Lotz et al., 2018). In this case, Netflix is noted to be a broadcasting medium. Instead, it also interacts with its users through available networks. Even Netflix can be found through social media that Gen-Z uses. It gives us proximity and makes the exploration by Gen-Z even easier.

## CONCLUSION

In general, watching has become an individual need for entertainment amidst daily activities. It has become part of everyone's lifestyle and personal activities, especially with the ease of technological access, such as smartphones. Various shows are offered for consumption, but surveys show that Stand-Up Comedy is the most popular among Gen-Z. It is due to the viewer's closeness, familiarity, and preference towards the show. In addition, the compatibility of experiences felt, and criticism related to social phenomena currently popular in society also attract viewers to Stand-Up Comedy.

Gen-Z's awareness, coupled with the ease of accessing shows through mobile technology devices (such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops), makes them prefer viewing media such as YouTube as the most popular platform. This phenomenon creates fragmentation of viewers amidst the onslaught of various digital broadcasts.

Finally, the concept of Hill and Lee is very important in understanding the behavior of Gen-Z viewers, namely roamers. This study can explain if the tendency of roamer behavior is very likely to start from gen-Z. This behavior is shown in how they choose something other than television as their preferred broadcast medium. However, they prefer broadcasting media that requires online viewing, such as YouTube, Netflix, and Disney+ Hotstar. Thus, the presence of streaming platforms creates a disruption that

shifts the popularity of television, which is increasingly declining for Gen-Z.

This research introduces the concept of "roamer behavior" among Gen-Z viewers, indicating a preference for various online platforms over traditional television. The theoretical implication is that this roaming behavior may be a typical characteristic of Gen-Z. Future research could explore whether this behavior excludes Gen-Z or represents a broader trend among the emerging generation. Understanding the factors and motivations behind roamer behavior can contribute to developing a theoretical framework that explains evolving media consumption habits in this digital age.

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