

# Playtime isn't over

## Entertainment in the time of COVID

July 2020

### Life at Play

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*\*Please note that due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the situation across markets continues to change rapidly. Data reported in this update covers up to and inclusive of 6th July 2020.*



# Setting the scene

People have never had so many choices when it comes to in-home entertainment. If COVID-19 had happened 10 years ago, life in lockdown would have looked very different. After all, some of us still remember renting videos from the local library, or getting rentals in the post from services like Love Film. On top of this, smartphones were yet to go mainstream, and mobiles came with an 'internet button' which struck terror into our hearts for one accidental press could instantly double the phone bill.

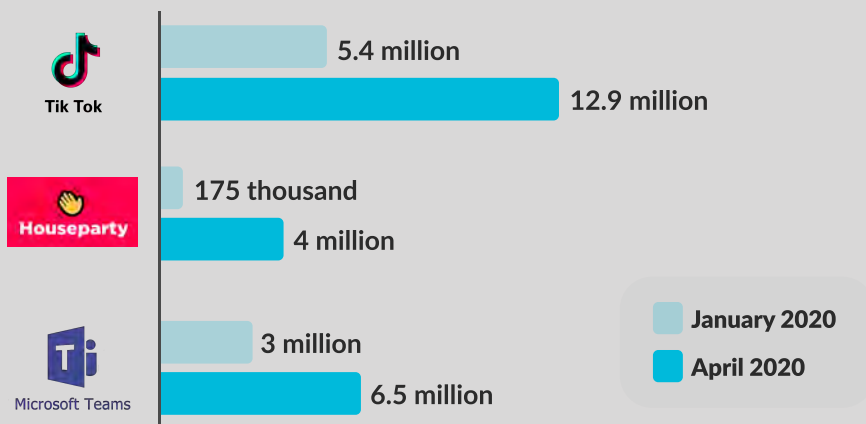
Technology has allowed life to continue on - people have worked from home, socialised virtually and have been able to keep busy while stuck at home. The most popular activities have definitely been digitally-driven - the world is both consuming and creating more content than ever before.



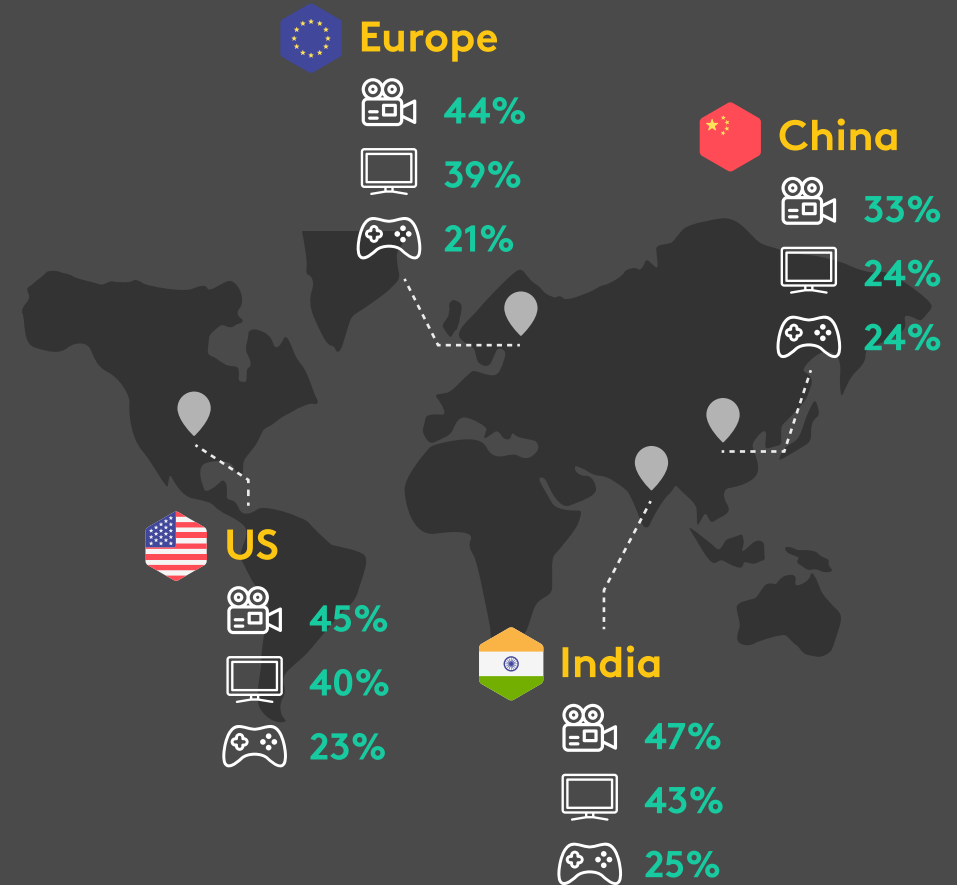
**40%**  
of people in Europe  
and the US have  
increased how much  
time they spend on  
social media

Since the beginning of March 2020, TV/Movies is the second most popular activity that consumers have increased their time doing - followed closely by browsing online and on social media. This was relatively consistent across all markets - except, once again China stood out for the fact that only 1 in 4 increased the amount of time they spent on social media compared to 40% in Europe and the US. This could be because before the pandemic, consumers in China already spent more time on these activities. This shows the level of penetration these industries are gaining while countries are in lockdown.

#### THERE HAVE BEEN SOME BIG WINNERS IN THE ONLINE SPACE...



#### BIGGEST ENTERTAINMENT INCREASES

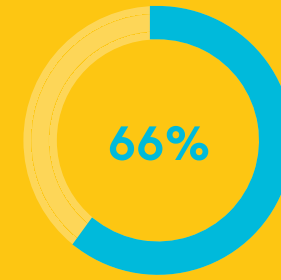


- increased time spent watching TV/Films
- increased time spent online and on social media
- increased time spent gaming

# The year of the stream

While traditional TV and films still take the top spot in time spent - when it comes to where consumers are putting their money, it's all about on-demand. Globally, the greatest increase in spend during lockdown went to movie streaming and on demand TV subscriptions - both of which are massively over-indexing. Just look at the very fortuitous European launch of Disney+ which lead to 22m new subscribers in just a few weeks, almost doubling its overall user base.

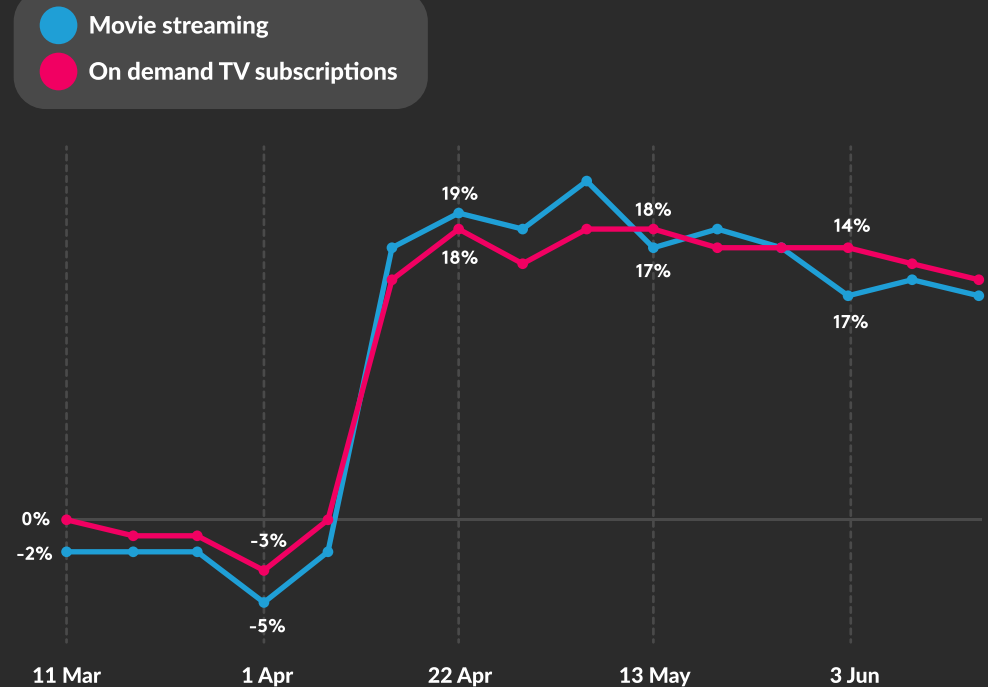
When it comes to paid-for streaming subscriptions, almost every country saw a huge spike in spend mid-April - this is clearly the point when consumers ran out of ways to spend their time, or exhausted the content they already had access to.



**66%**  
of consumers say  
subscription  
services are their  
favourite ways to  
view video content

## ENTERTAINMENT PURCHASE INDEX (GLOBAL)

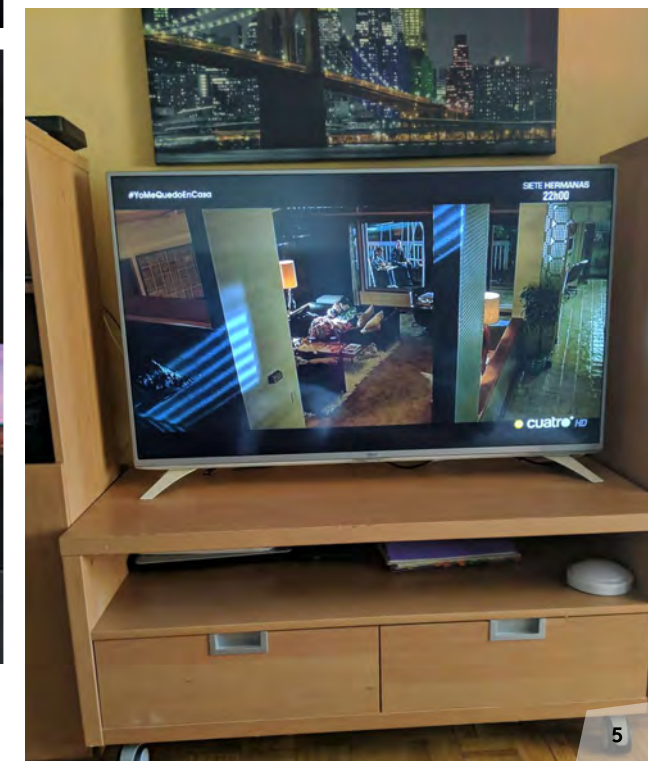
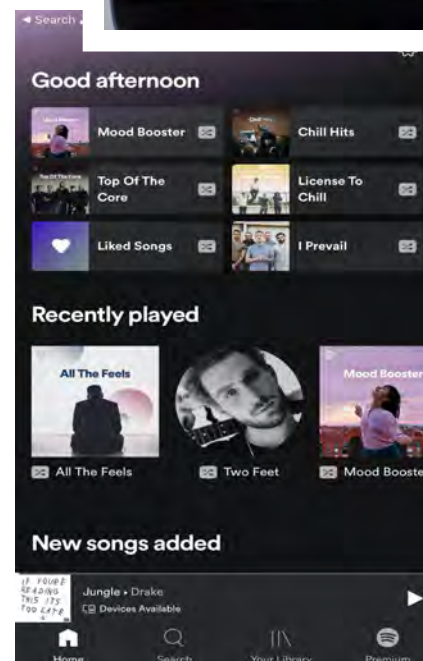
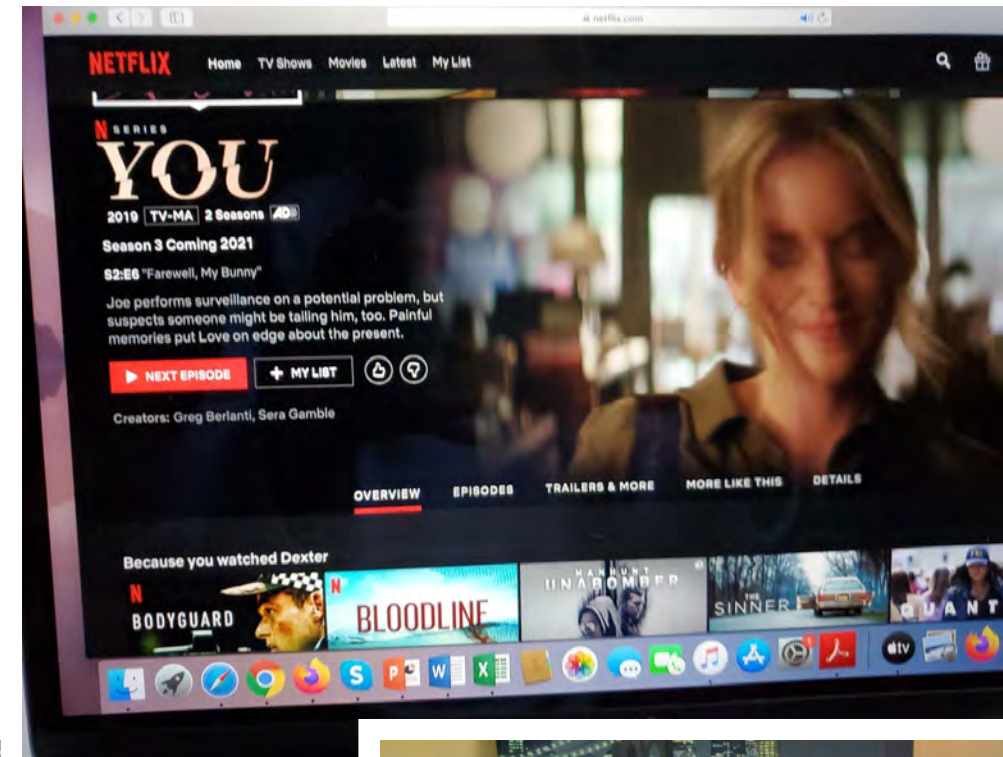
(% more - % less)





China followed a different path though - consumers have actually been spending less money on these services, despite having been in lockdown the longest. Netflix isn't actually available in China but that doesn't mean these services in general aren't - they have platforms like iQiyi (owned by Baidu), Youku (owned by Alibaba), and Tencent Video instead.

Brands have different challenges to address here though - for example stricter regulations and rules over what content can be shown, often limit the amount of foreign content meaning they have to funnel even more money into creating it locally. Those same regulations create another problem for local brands, often even more difficult to solve: a higher than average rate of illegal streaming as consumers turn to VPNs or affordable signalling devices which allow them to circumvent censorship and access foreign content.



In general, consumers in China tend to favour shorter form content platforms - think TikTok and Youku - particularly those that allow the user to create, share and engage with the content.

For the rest of the world, streaming subscription services have been booming thanks to months-long lockdowns. Two thirds (66%) of consumers say subscription services are their favourite ways to view video content, whereas less than a third (30%) actually prefer watching online for free - what does this tell us? That people are clearly happy to pay, assuming they get the content they want. But with restrictions continuing to ease, as well as the prospect of a global recession, discretionary spend is already going down - so how can media brands continue to keep consumers happy and prevent them from cancelling their accounts?

“

**It was recommended by a friend to me as a series that contains comedy, crime, action and drama. My friend knew that I like such stuff and they were right! I absolutely fell in love with it after I watched just a few episodes of it.**

**Male, 33, US**

“

**It was recommended on Netflix, I watched the trailer and was intrigued - it's also by Harlan Coben and I've watched his other shows and enjoyed them.**

**Female, 43, UK**

“

**It looked interesting. I didn't have anything in mind when I started searching, but I came across this film and decided to give it a shot.**

**Male, 25, US**





“

There is always a demand for new content - just the way my toothpaste says “New” on it every time I buy it despite it being the same toothpaste I have used for 30 years. Based on data and residual value, in the short term we’re seeing greater viewership known and older content, especially for episodic content. It is based on this, that the lockdown has not increased the demand for content on its own. What it has done is create more time to view the content as people discover shows that they were previously unable to watch or commit to.

With the extra time, people are able to uncover more by watching shows that are buzzworthy on social media and be recommended shows based on past viewership, which isn’t always new content. Shows like Narcos, Breaking Bad on Netflix, Fresh Prince of Bel-Air and Rick and Morty on HBO Max, The Simpsons on Hulu, etc along with Friends on HBO Max shows there is strong viewership desire for content that may have already been seen but is highly popular with a new generation of viewers.

So, while new shows, especially time sensitive shows like Bill Maher or Hasan Minhaj’s Patriot Act, will get a lot of the buzz, the data indicates that older shows are necessary. The lockdown just increased viewership minutes and of that, new shows will garner the headlines.

The expectations are relevant in relation to driving acquisition of new customers. If content is new and served up only on specific streaming platforms, you have a high probability of addressing the population of people who are trying to cut their spend.

Separately, but linked, is the notion that based on demographic consumption, older content would be new content to younger viewers. For those born post 2005, for instance, shows like Friends would be completely new to them. The same holds true with kids content where the turnover is higher, given the limited and discrete nature of the age group that shows like Sesame Street attract.

However, the nature of the “streaming wars” concept does require new platforms like HBO Max or Disney Plus to drive platform brand awareness through the buzz that new shows drive organically. As such, few people on Twitter for instance, will ask, “Wow did you see when Ross kissed Rachel?” but many will ask if you saw the latest episode of Mandalorian.



**Rohith Nandagiri**

Data Insights and Operations Director at HBO Max





# Emotional viewing

How people choose to spend their time depends on a number of factors - but with their normal routine out the window, mood is becoming an even greater driver of these decisions. While the assumption is that the majority of consumers are bored in lockdown, most entertainment moments are actually driven by positive moods. After all, it's called entertainment for a reason.

Streaming, gaming, social media... they're not only ways to keep someone busy, but as a way to boost their mood and switch off from the world around them. In fact, 28% of these occasions are connected to happy/great, 20% are fine/neutral and 9% are calm/relaxed.

On top of this, at the moment of choice, 43% didn't consider any other entertainment choice. That means that nearly half of the time, consumers made no hesitation when deciding what to do - once lockdowns are over, will consideration sets increase or decrease now that they have less time at home to fill?

## IN-THE-MOMENT BEHAVIOUR

When engaged in streaming, gaming or social media



**28%** Happy/great



**20%** Fine/neutral



**9%** Calm/relaxed



We know that consumers are eager to re-engage with the world, but not everything will bounce back to normal. After all, many have found they actually prefer the lockdown-version of certain experiences. For example, it won't be hygiene that will put consumers off going back to the cinema, it will be convenience. Being able to stream film premieres in the comfort and control of your own home is a more enticing offer than going to the cinema.

New releases, sponsorships and activations may all look very different as people consume more media and entertainment at home. Subscription packages will need to become more agile and versatile as consumers seek more and more bespoke packages.

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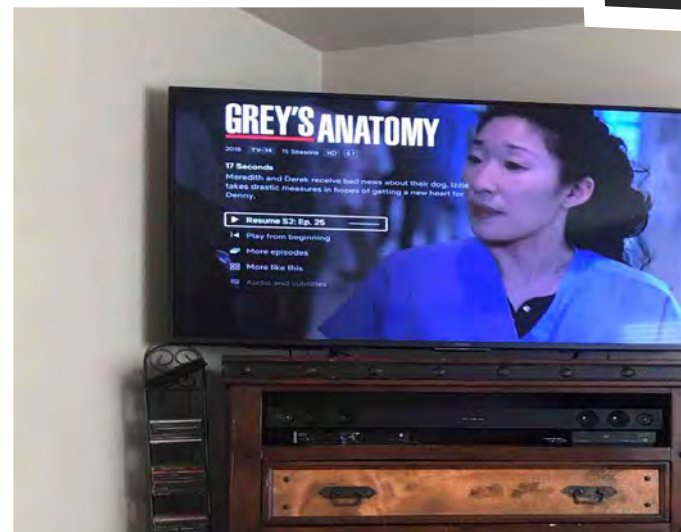
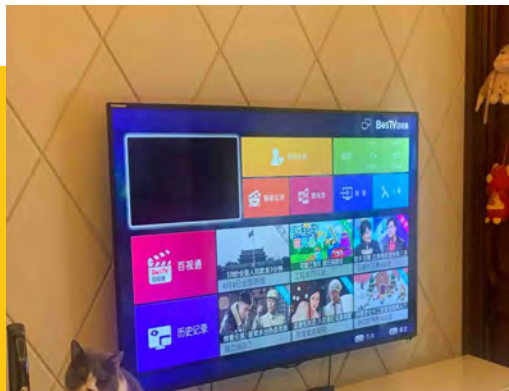
**I have watched so many TV programs and videos. As I don't want to be scared by the news, I'm re-watching programs that I have seen already that made me feel good.**

**Male, 27, China**

“

**You can't go out while staying at home. Naturally, you have a lot of free time. This time is a good time for the family. The family sits down and we talk, play cards and games, and eat together. These are all things I didn't have time to do before.**

**Female, 49, China**



“

**I feel like I've seen everything on Netflix and Amazon Prime. I'm getting bored and want to see new content already.**

**Female, 33, US**

# Invite-only socialising

Despite less than 10% of our bees living on their own, 46% of all entertainment occasions are spent alone. This isn't too surprising given that we also know that 60% of drinking moments and over 40% of eating moments are also spent alone. These moments are massively underestimated - it's time used for ourselves, where the influence of others is weakened. This is why our emotional context when alone is incredibly valuable information for brands.

The second most popular way to spend these moments are with partners/spouses (34%). When looking at streaming services, people who are tired are more likely to be watching with their partners, whereas those feeling relaxed are more likely to watch on their own. This is clearly a good activity for couples to do - requiring minimal energy and effort while spending time together. For those watching alone, it's more about taking some 'me time' and switching off from the world.

“

I really like playing this game with my wife, we've always been into gaming and it's nice to spend time together while doing something we both love.

Male, 40, UK



Entertainment occasions  
spent alone

46%



Entertainment occasions  
with a partner/spouse

34%

# Virtual connections

In such a short amount of time, Zoom became a household brand, being used for both business and personal get-togethers. However, it's not the only way consumers have been keeping in contact - some of whom even use the gaming app House Party for simple video chats, without even playing the games!

With a serious lack of socialising on the cards (pun intended!), brands have been quick to launch and promote their services that can help people stay in touch. BBC Together, HBO Scener, Netflix Party, AndChill.tv, Rave, Facebook Watch Party... all are examples of how companies are listening to consumers' needs and making it easier for them to stay connected to each other.

“

I am simply spending a lot of time on social and community sites because not going to work in this period means I have much more free time and therefore I can devote myself more to pastimes. Browsing, chatting and exchanging opinions with others is something I really enjoy doing, which helps to feel closer even if distant.

Female, 47, Italy

“

My brother lives in Canada, and although my parents aren't far from me, I can't see them because they're shielding. Thankfully we can video chat every week and check in on each other. I don't know what I'd do without that!

Male, 32, UK





# New vs engaging: getting the balance right

Only 46% of entertainment moments are spent with the consumer fully focused on that activity - while 38% are mostly focused but doing other things at the same time. The rest are barely paying any attention at all. Other than reading, not a single activity is able to gain even 50% of consumers' full attention.

Clearly, consumers like to multi-task - the challenge this presents for brands is how to ensure they're the ones providing the content people are actually engaging with, rather than having on in the background.

Netflix recently announced the decision to delete accounts that are left inactive - this is because it's not enough to have to use empty, superficial metrics as a measure of success. The companies truly succeeding are the ones who can engage with its customers.

## FULL ATTENTION BY ACTIVITY



Reading



Social media



Watching TV/films



Watching streaming services



Music/podcasts



Gaming (mobile/console)



Cooking/baking



Playing board/card games



Two thirds of all content being watched is something the person hasn't seen before - that's not to say it's newly released or created, but it is new to the consumer. Entertainment brands are under incredible pressure to release a variety of new and interesting content on a regular basis, especially during lockdown when more time is being spent watching them. This is even higher in countries still under lockdown like UK (75%) and Spain (76%).

The desire for fresh content has always been high, and streaming platforms have shown they could keep up with lockdown demand. Many have brought forward release dates, and added new titles to pad out their offering - but this can't go on forever. Soon, the months without filming will catch up with them, and it won't take long before the lag leads to an exodus of subscribers.

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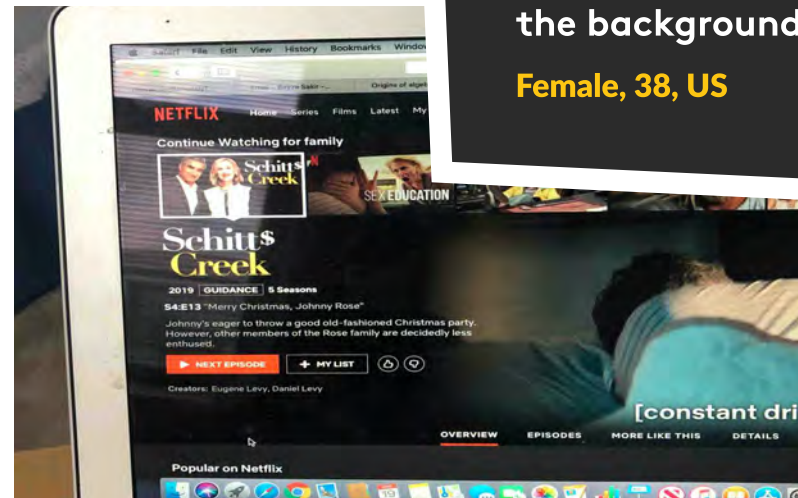
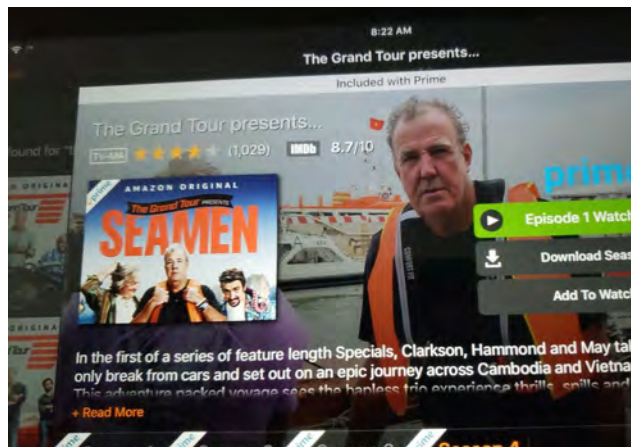
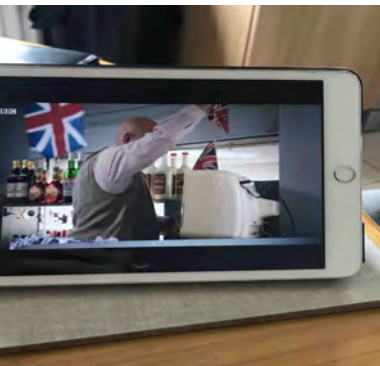
**My wife had previously watched *Lost* in its entirety and was greatly influenced by it. When she narrated the story to me verbally I found it equally compelling and was interested in watching it with her. She was supportive in wanting to watch the whole of it with me from scratch so we are giving it a go :-)**

**Male, 33, UK**

“

**I considered reading a fiction book, but decided to stick with doing a crossword. I do have the TV on in the background though.**

**Female, 38, US**

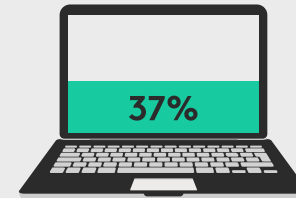


Repurposing old content has been a clever way for companies to keep their costs down, but provide more variety, especially while there's limited in-house production. There's also an element of nostalgia marketing here - particularly for older audiences. Older consumers tend to be less 'digitally savvy' in general, but lockdown has meant they've increased their online behaviour at the same rate as younger audiences - this has opened up a new world for them, and familiarises them with the new services available to them.

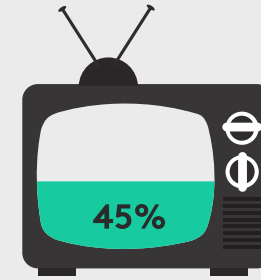
One thing brands must keep in mind when adding old titles to their feeds, is whether specific films and series have a place in modern society? Despite their popularity, shows like Friends have come under increased scrutiny over the past few years for its lack of diverse representation, as well as its problematic language and jokes towards the LGBTQAI+ community.

HBO Max temporarily removed 'Gone with the Wind', then brought it back with a disclaimer saying that the film 'denies the horrors of slavery'. Comedy sketch show 'Little Britain' has been taken down from BBC iPlayer, Netflix and BritBox for its use of blackface.

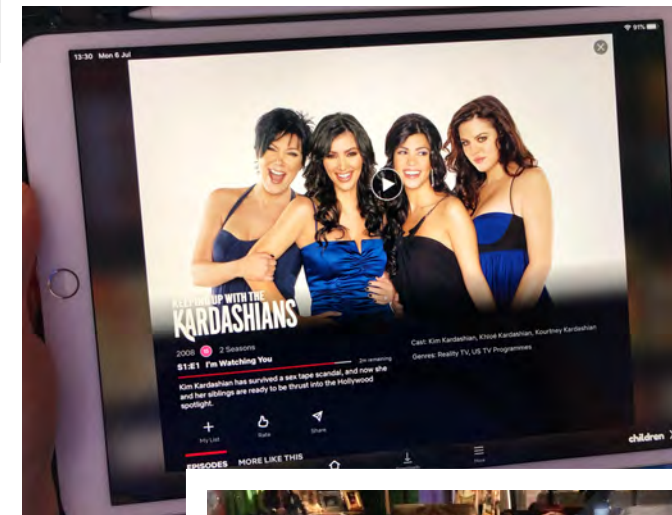
Aged  
45+



**37%** have  
been spending  
more time  
online



**45%** are  
spending more  
time watching  
TV/films



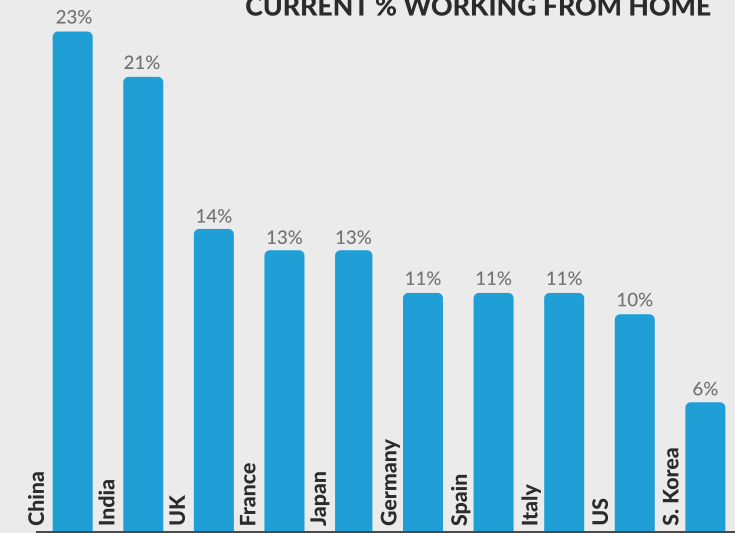
# The commuter conundrum

While in-home entertainment has flourished, out of home media consumption remains a big question mark for brands. Without understanding how people plan to spend their time outdoors - or even if they're ready to get back out there - it's hard for businesses to adapt their services.

The time spent commuting has historically been an occasion poised for entertainment brands - music, TV and film, and games... Not only are these a great way to spend the 2-3 hours of daily travelling, but people are also willing to use paid-for services to account for a lack of signal and data access.

In response to the pandemic, companies have extended their work from home policies, with some getting rid of their physical office altogether! So, if consumers are no longer commuting, how will they spend this sudden gift of time? Will their morning stay dedicated to playing Candy Crush or would they rather dedicate more time to eating breakfast?

CURRENT % WORKING FROM HOME



**14%**  
of Brits are currently  
working from home,  
compared to 30% at  
the end of March 2020



The good news for brands though, is that commuting is not over - the likelihood is that people will opt for a mix of working from home and commuting in. On top of this, they do have time to prepare given the fact that the number one reason for consumers staying inside is to avoid germs/COVID (25%), only 13% are doing so to follow government guidelines. This means that even beyond official 'lockdown', if fear of the virus is still high, people will stay home.

The bad news is that, while it's not gone completely, it will look rather different. For example, we're expecting fewer people to use public transport, choosing cycling and driving instead. Many cities are investing heavily in more bicycle-friendly roads as a result of COVID - what does this mean for streaming services? Would consumers who used to watch their favourite TV show on the bus now prefer an audiobook or podcast while cycling into the office? Or would they rather no media at all, allowing them to put their full attention on the road?



**13%**  
of people stay  
indoors to follow  
government  
guidelines

“

Before, I used to listen to the radio a lot going and returning from work. Now that I'm at home (I've lost my job) I don't listen to the radio anymore, but I listen to my favorite hits and sing them via the youtube app! With the ability to read the lyrics to sing my favorite songs... it remains my favorite!

**Female, 38, US**

“

I'm taking more time in the morning to get my day off to a good start. So I am more relaxed while I have my devotional time. And I am enjoying music to go along with it.

**Female, 56, US**

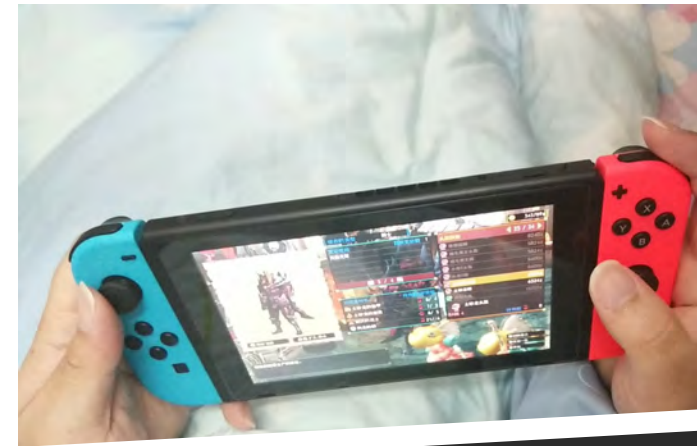
# Future releases

The line between the physical and virtual will forever be blurred; as a society, we've proved that we can continue even when face-to-face contact is restricted. However, that doesn't mean that this will continue indefinitely.

The digital world has truly cemented its place in consumers' lives, moving beyond convenience into re-creating and enhancing various experiences - whether that's a catch up with a colleague or watching a film with your friends.

Understanding both the offline and online arena - as well as how those two seemingly opposite arenas interact to bring joy to consumers around the world is essential for brands.

Entertainment comes with a vast array of definitions - and the choices we make in choosing these moments are driven by more than simply whether we can leave the house or not.



*Streetbees' new Life at Play solution explores all media habits, uncovering what consumers engage with and why. By analysing thousands of occasions, Life at Play is able to detect and size entertainment spaces and opportunities. If you want more information about how Streetbees can help you navigate the evolving consumer landscape, get in touch via [www.streetbees.com/LAP](http://www.streetbees.com/LAP)*



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Real life behaviour captured at the moment a consumer makes a decision. Never rely on claims.

**Get close to consumers at scale**

Access rich data with photos and videos from millions of demographically representative consumers.

**AI driven growth**

Streetbees identifies hidden growth opportunities by applying AI to millions of real life observations from real consumers.

**3.4 Million**

BEES

**2.2 Billion**

DATA POINTS

**189+**

COUNTRIES

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