

**Title:** Evaluation of Netflix's international marketing through marketing mix

**Research question:** To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

**Word count:** 3,726

# Content

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Methodology .....	2
	2.1 Analytical tools .....	2
	2.2 Data .....	2
	2.3 Others .....	3
3	Main body .....	3
	3.1 Marketing mix.....	3
	3.1.1 Process .....	4
	3.1.1.1 Payment methods.....	4
	3.1.1.2 Delivery process .....	6
	3.1.2 Products .....	9
	3.1.3 Price .....	13
	3.1.4 Promotion .....	16
	3.1.4.1 Social Media Marketing .....	17
	3.1.4.2 Word-of-Mouth .....	17
4	Conclusion .....	18
	References.....	20

To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

## 1 Introduction

When the first time I saw *The Social Dilemma*, I was fascinated by the insightful opinions it raised. It's a documentary produced by Netflix. That's also the first time for me to think about the negative sides of our daily-used technology. This also inspired me to give out a report on how we can properly live with technology. When I searched about the company, I got extremely surprised about Netflix's development history. In my opinion, that this is the most innovative company I have ever seen.

Founded in 1997, Netflix grew from a CD-renting company to one of the largest streaming platforms worldwide. Looking back into its surviving history, it first won the battle with Blockbuster in 2010 when Blockbuster announced its bankruptcy. Netflix changed its selling strategy as it sensed its consumers' purchasing preference while Blockbuster held doubts about it. In 2013, Netflix released *House of Cards* and entered the market of content production. This improvement can avoid restrictions of patent and copyright and prolong its contents' lifespan. And in July 2021, it officially announced to enter the market of gaming services by posting recruitment advertisement for Netflix Games Studio on its website. Up to now, Netflix provides services in over 190 countries. Despite the success it already made, some problems still exist in its marketing process. Not all its decisions lead to a satisfactory result. Marketing mix contains many scales that can be used to assess a company. Thus, this paper will use marketing mix to analyze Netflix's performance in the international streaming market.

After the breakout of the pandemic, people were generally more willing to spend time at home watching movies for entertainment rather than going outside for fun. Since Netflix competed with other companies under the same situation, the effects (e.g. financial, health) brought by the pandemic will not be considered in this paper.

To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Analytical tools

Business Management for use with the I.B. Diploma Program 3rd edition

4.5 The four Ps (product, price, promotion, place)

4.6 The extended marketing mix (for services)

4.7 International marketing

Purpose: To find accurate definition for analytical tools and apply them to data collected. To establish whether its strategies help Netflix survive in the market

Limitation(s): Knowledge from textbooks cannot be perfectly applied to real situations due to many uncontrollable factors for companies.

### 2.2 Data

#### a) The website of Netflix

Purpose: To get officially published data and other information such as payment methods and the price for existing subscription plans.

Limitation(s): As information keeps updating, it could be difficult to locate historical records.

#### b) Netflix's financial report

Purpose: To find quantitative data of Netflix's revenues and paid memberships.

Limitation(s): Regional information only contain categories of different continents rather than different countries. Quarterly data is recorded but not monthly data.

#### c) The website of Statista

Purpose: To gather sufficient data about Netflix's subscribers and how much market share Netflix's holds.

Limitation(s): Some of these are third-hand data. The credibility of some collected data is in question.

## To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

### 2.3 Others

#### a) Netflix's letters to shareholder (2018 Q3 to 2022 Q4)

Purpose: To find out what Netflix did during each quarter and how itself evaluated its performance

Limitations(s): The letter is for Netflix's shareholders to stabilize their investment and attract more potential investors, therefore it may be biased and may not show all negative results or just discuss those superficially.

#### b) Online articles

Purpose: To see how others evaluate certain decisions and their comments.

Limitation(s): The perspectives of some articles may be limited.

#### c) Google trends

Purpose: To see public's interest on different streaming platforms.

Limitation(s): Searching trends cannot directly represent public's viewing behaviors.

## 3 Main Body

### 3.1 Marketing Mix

As described in Business Management for use with the I.B. Diploma Program 3rd edition, "the marketing mix is the combination of various elements needed to successfully market a product" (Hoang, 2014, p345). In 1960, four Ps (product, price, promotion and place) was coined by Edmund Jerome McCarthy, and that is a more traditional description for marketing mix. For services-provided market, there are seven Ps in the marketing model, including people, process, product, price, promotion, place and physical evidence. These seven parts are interdependent and should collaborate efficiently with each other to achieve the success of a marketing plan. Based on the operating mode of Netflix, this paper will choose process, product, price, and promotion for further discussion.

## To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

### 3.1.1 Process

This is used to describe how a service is provided or delivered (Hoang, 2014, p444). Payment methods and delivery process are two main sectors Netflix needs to consider. Process is important as it can influence the existing customers whether to continue their subscription plans or not. Subscribers always come first, thus Netflix has a diversified payment methods and a distinct way of service delivery to better satisfy them.

#### 3.1.1.1 Payment Methods

Netflix offers a variety of payment methods for its subscribers. Some countries' payment methods are shown in Table 1 below. These can mainly be categorized into Credit and Debit Cards, Virtual Cards, Prepaid Cards, Netflix Gift Cards, Paypal and Partner Payments. Some certain methods are only available in certain countries and areas, e.g UPI AutoPay are available in India but not the other four countries. Exact payment methods can be found on Netflix's website, in Helper Center. To better adapt local markets, Netflix works closely with many local partners, especially in APAC. "The Global Payments Report estimates that digital wallets will make up 72 percent of e-commerce transactions in APAC by 2025." (Khatwani, 2022) This data reveals the importance of diversified digital payment methods. Following strictly with this trend, it also shows Netflix's effort to better entertain its subscribers.

To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

	India	Kenya	Singapore	United Kingdom	United States
<b>Credit and Debit Cards</b>	Visa				
	Mastercard				
	American Express				
	Diners-branded cards from HDFC Bank (credit only)				Discover
<b>Virtual Cards</b>	available				
<b>Prepaid Cards</b>	Visa				
	Mastercard				
	American Express				
					Discover
<b>Netflix Gift Cards</b>				available	
<b>PayPal</b>				available	
<b>Partner Payments (number)</b>	6		3	11	5
<b>UPI AutoPay</b>	Amazon Pay				
	BHIM				
	Google Pay				
	PayTM				
	PhonePe				
	Other				

**Table 1. Payment methods in India<sup>1</sup>, Kenya<sup>2</sup>, Singapore<sup>3</sup>, UK<sup>4</sup> and US<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Adopted from <https://help.netflix.com/en/node/24926/in>

<sup>2</sup> Adopted from <https://help.netflix.com/en/node/24926/ke>

<sup>3</sup> Adopted from <https://help.netflix.com/en/node/24926/sg>

<sup>4</sup> Adopted from <https://help.netflix.com/en/node/24926/gb>

<sup>5</sup> Adopted from <https://help.netflix.com/en/node/24926/us>

## To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

From 2020 to 2021, Netflix signed contracts with 16 more payment partners, adding more alternative choices for its subscribers. It is exciting to notice that this helped the number of new subscribers grow more than three times in 2022, and the number of signups with these payment methods even doubled compared with the same period in 2021 (Khatwani, 2022). Therefore, diversity is an effective strategy for payment.

### 3.1.1.2 Delivery process

Streaming market includes no physical steps when delivering its viewing services. A traditional way that most platforms tend to use or what the pace the public is more familiar with is to have three or four episodes released every week at a specific time, usually in the evening when people normally have more spare time to entertain themselves. Unlike those streaming platforms, Netflix sometimes releases a whole season of contents at once. But some of its contents are still released on a weekly basis because they have different licensing contracts.

This one-drop releasing can be a USP in the market. This means that subscribers can have a continuing experience for watching or set their own pace for entertainment. More potential subscribers can be motivated to finally order a plan by this as well. However, can this be a beneficial choice for Netflix?

In fact, this can cause problems for both viewers and its producing partners. Abrar Al-Heeti posted an article on CNET talking about her experiences with different streaming platforms. "... but I'm also overwhelmed when entire seasons are released all at once. If I don't want to feel out of the loop among friends and Twitter peers (who all easily finished the whole season of the hottest show over the weekend), I know I'll have to watch as many episodes as humanly possible during my evenings -- household chores and sleep be damned." (Al-Heeti, 2022). New contents produced come out more quickly than before, which means viewers



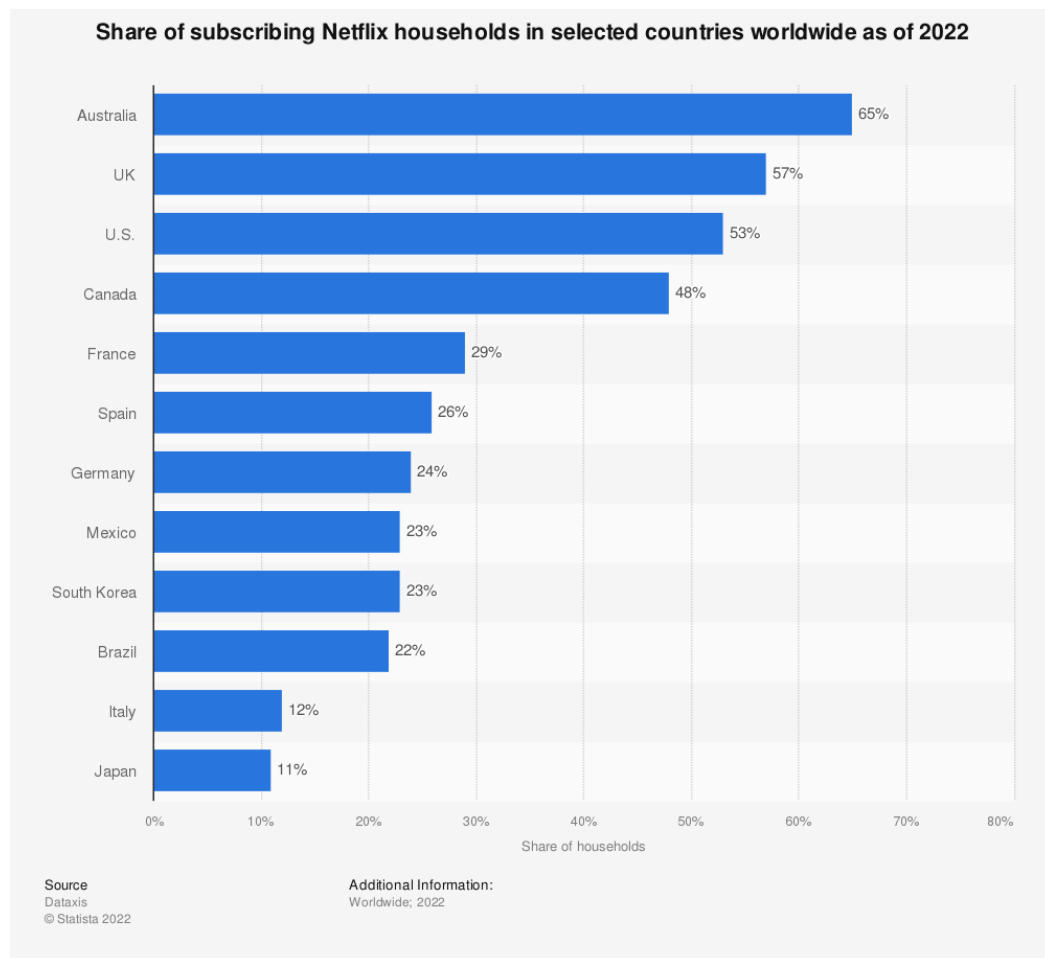
## To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

are facing a massive number of contents when choosing what to enjoy. In order to be better involved in the discussion group, or even to chat with friends, people need to spend more time watching the season to catch up with the trend. Mostly they have to sacrifice time for other tasks, which means their ordinary life pace can be destroyed.

One-drop releasing “was a revelation for viewers who’d enjoyed binge-watching their favorite series on DVD.” (Al-Heeti, 2022). But the situation has changed. In TV streaming market, this can also increase the possibility for the existence of spoil alert as many viewers will have discussions on social media. “When a Thrones episode airs Sunday night at 9:00 p.m. ET, spoilers abound on the internet before the episode even ends.” (Awad, 2016). If they do not want to be affected and pursue a pure viewing experience, viewers need to actively avoid any related topic in the next few weeks. In her article, she described this catching-up viewing behavior as a marathon. Spoil alert, together with unpleasant content discussion, making new-content viewing more stressful or even painful for those who want to enjoy the whole season at a relatively slow pace.

Not only subscribers may face a terrible experience with one-drop releasing, but also Netflix's producing partners (or distributors). For anime producers in Japan this is a totally new pattern. Without one-drop releasing, viewers will have more time to digest the plot and discuss it. This process is sometimes important to attract new members to watch through communication. One-drop releasing also leaves distributors with no time to improve the plot during the season. They can gather opinions from the viewers to gain more potential subscribers' attention if they released on a weekly or monthly basis. While one-drop releasing can create a consistency for episodes' style, this still remained as a risk for Japanese anime. As a result, it is reasonable that shown in Figure 1, only 11% of Netflix total subscribers come from Japan as of 2022, which leaves a huge space for growth.

To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?



**Figure 1. Share of subscribing Netflix households in selected countries worldwide as of 2022<sup>6</sup>**

As a result, looking in from the perspectives of viewers and distributors, this one-drop releasing cannot be considered as successful. Fortunately, Netflix announced to experiment different releasing schedules, hoping to increase its subscribers' satisfaction.

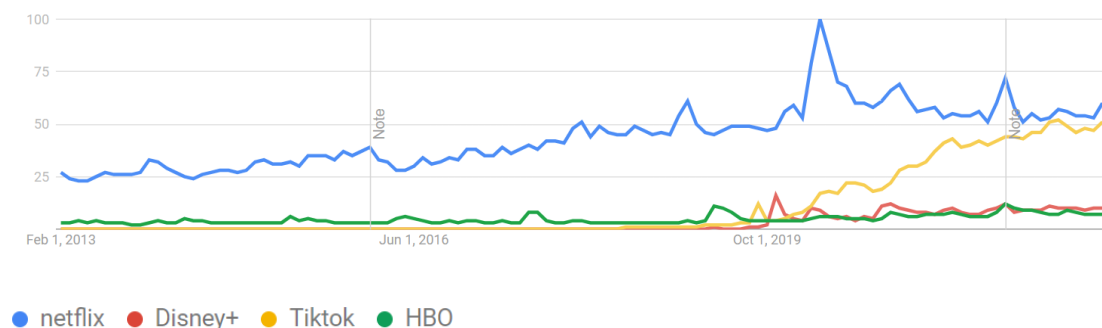
<sup>6</sup> Adopted from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/499844/netflix-markets-penetration/?locale=en>

## To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

### 3.1.2 Products

Products are goods or service that produced to satisfy the needs or wants of consumers (Hoang, 2014, p391). For start-up, Netflix's product was the service of DVD renting. When getting into the second decade of the 21st century, despite its new release of gaming service, online streaming is still the most important sector where Netflix makes profit. From March 2011, Netflix started to produce its original content and in February 2013, its first own-produced *House of Cards* was released and quickly caught the attention of the public.

Figure 2 is Google searching trends of Netflix and all its competitors mentioned in its letters to shareholders, from 02/01/2013 to 12/31/2022, containing searching records worldwide. Terms and relative topic are also included in the data, but are calculated differently.



**Figure 2. Global People's Searching Interest Over Time (02/01/2013 to 12/31/2022)<sup>7</sup>**

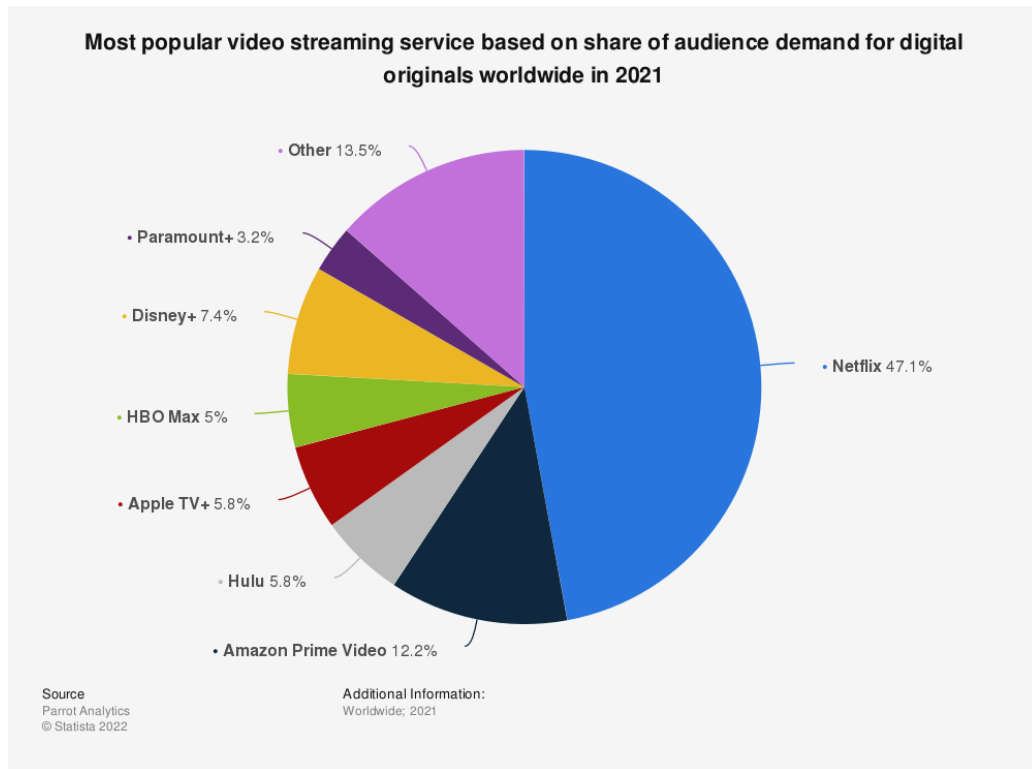
Despite some decreases and fluctuates, during the time range, Netflix-related terms all had much higher searching trends than the other three steaming service providers, with an average searching frequency at about 50 per week. This reveals that people showed more interest towards Netflix instead of Disney+, Tiktok or

<sup>7</sup> Adopted from

<https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=2013-02-01%202022-12-31&q=Netflix,%2Fg%2F11f5bxylc0,Tiktok,HBO&hl=en>

To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

HBO. At least Netflix successfully gained more public attention. And that's the first step: let people be familiar with this platform and its service.



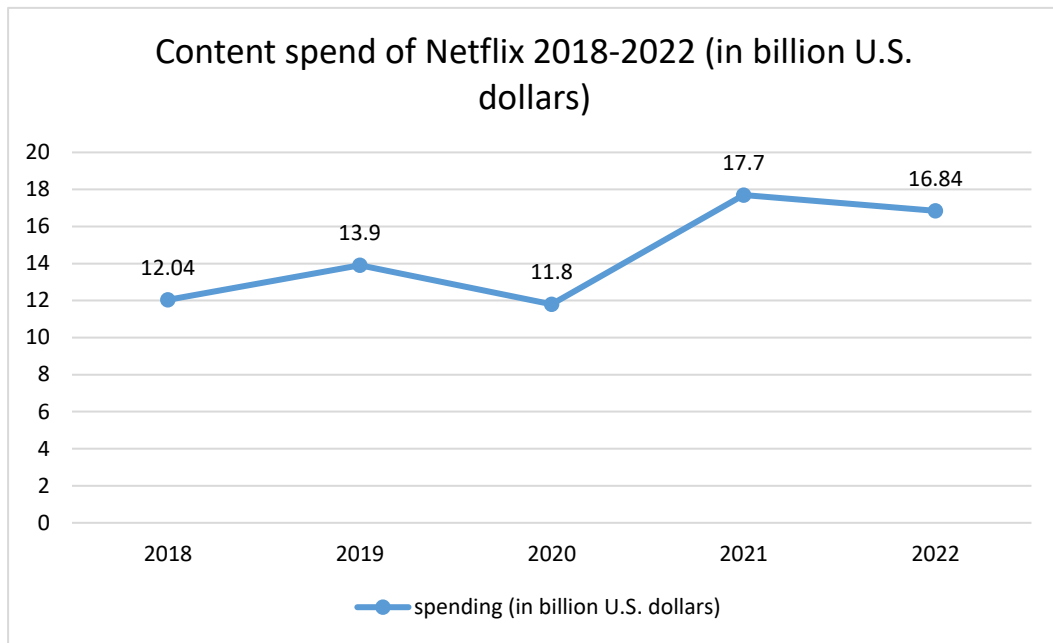
**Figure 3. Most popular video streaming service based on share of audience demand for digital originals worldwide in 2021<sup>8</sup>**

After a booming of streaming at the beginning of 2020, Netflix managed to retain the success through improvements of marketing mix. According to Figure 3 we can see that in 2021, Netflix served the most popular video streaming service, taking up almost half of the total share.

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<sup>8</sup> Adopted from  
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1035628/most-in-demand-streaming-services-global-share/?locale=en>

To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

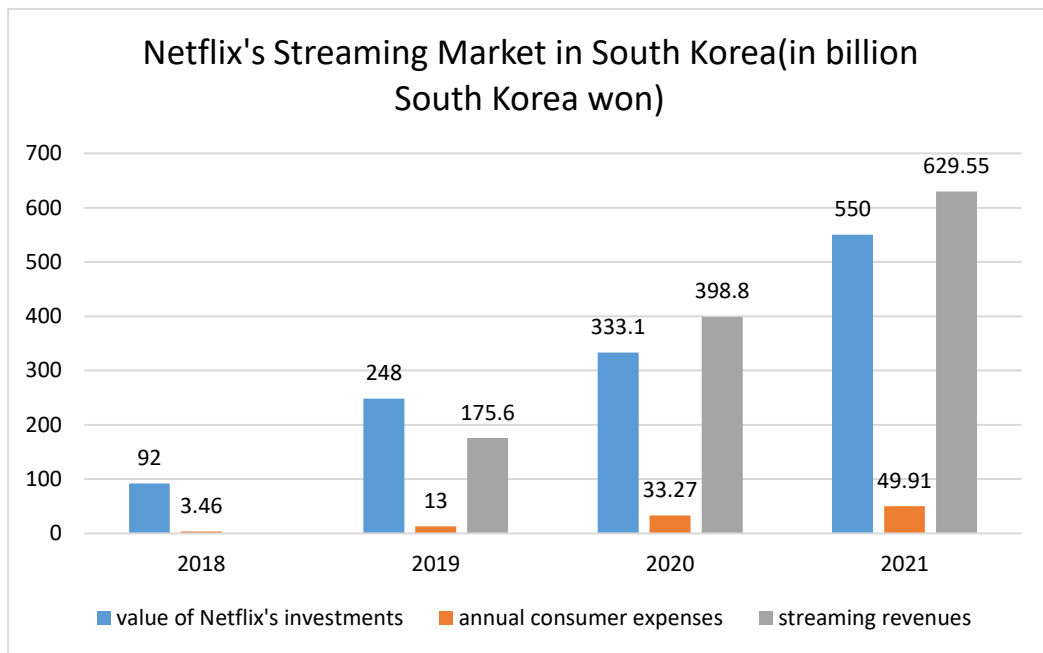


**Figure 4. Content spent of Netflix 2018-2022 (in billion U.S. dollars)<sup>9</sup>**

In 2022, Netflix's content expenditure is about \$16.84 billion (Figure 4), creating the second decline of spending since 2018. In South Korea, Netflix invested 550 billion South Korea won (SKw) (Figure 5) (data for Netflix's streaming revenues in 2018 was not provided by the source) into the content marketing in 2021 and streaming revenue is up to 629.55 SKw. The return rate is 114.46% in 2021, while in 2019 and 2020 they were respectively 70.80% and 119.72%. This shows that Netflix's market in South Korea has a booming growth at 2020, at when most people were prevented from going outside due to the pandemic.

<sup>9</sup> Adopted from  
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/964789/netflix-content-spend-worldwide/?locale=en>

To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?



**Figure 5. Netflix's Streaming Market in South Korea (in billion South Korea won)<sup>10</sup>**

11 12

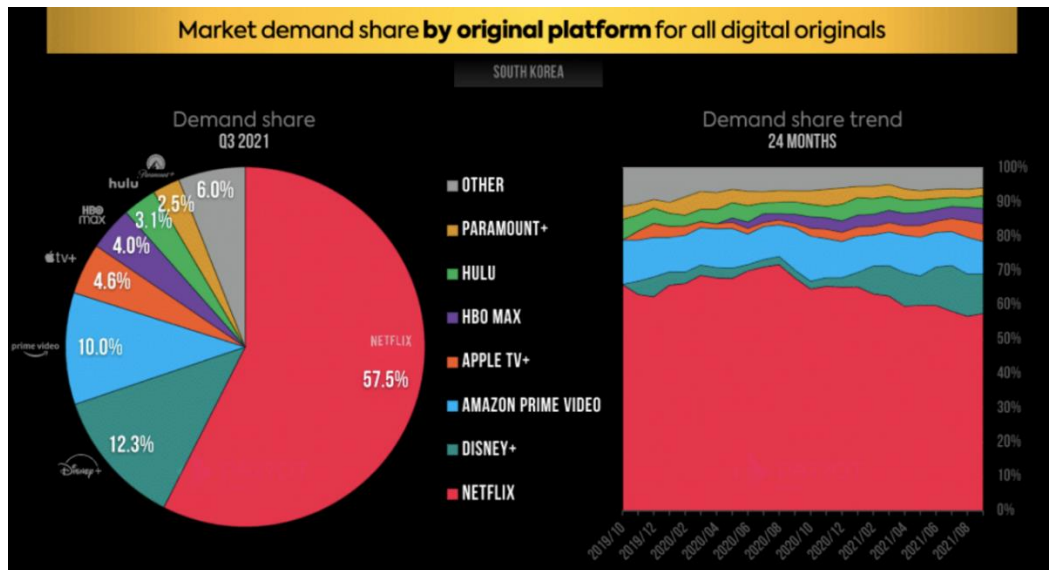
Presented in Figure 6 (South Korea Streaming Television Market Share Q3 2021 for Netflix, Disney+, Hulu, Amazon Prime Video, HBO Max, Apple TV+ and More, n.d.), as of Q3 in 2021, 57.5% of total original demand share in South Korea belongs to Netflix. That is even more than the addition share of the other streaming platforms, such as Disney+ and HBO. Those two are also included Google searching trends, but both of them have much lower searching trends than Netflix. Even though the searching data is collected globally, it can be inferred that as searching trend growing demand share grows as well. Therefore, conclusion can be made that Netflix's investment on products is necessary and successful.

<sup>10</sup> Adopted from  
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1247953/south-korea-netflix-investment-value-korean-content/?locale=en>

<sup>11</sup> Adopted from  
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1329347/south-korea-netflix-annual-consumer-expenses/?locale=en>

<sup>12</sup> Adopted from  
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/612283/netflix-streaming-revenues-korea/?locale=en>

To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?



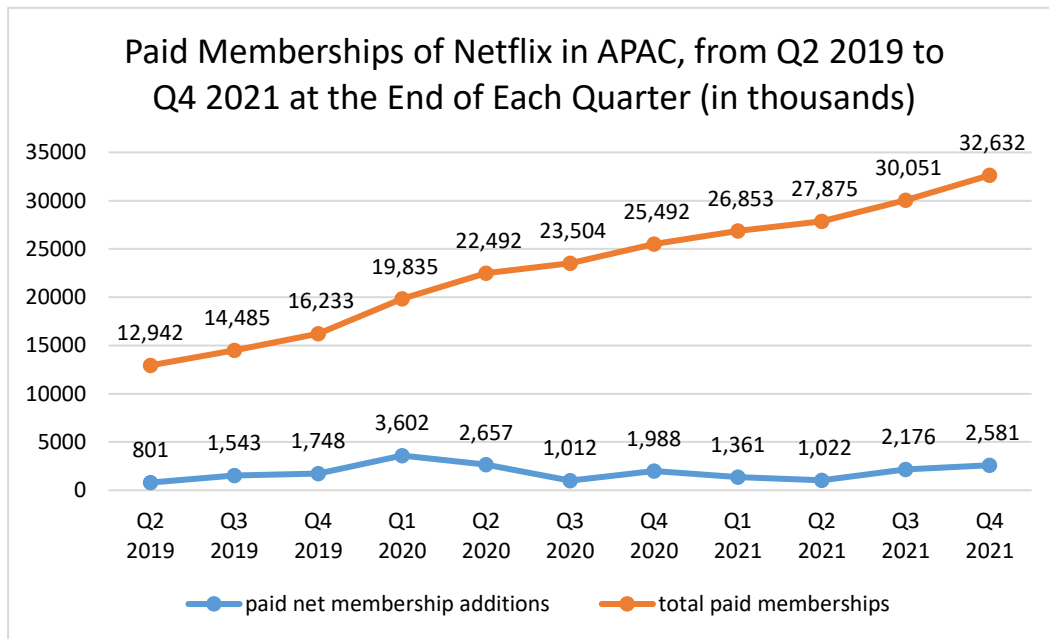
**Figure 6. Market demand share by original platform for all digital originals**

### 3.1.3 Price

This is the amount of money required to be paid for a consumer to purchase a service (Hoang, 2014, p408). Netflix offers a variety of subscription plans in different countries. Subscription plans will also change based on Netflix's evaluation on the situation of the market and country.

Starting from July 2019 (Netflix - Financials – 2019 Q3 Quarterly Earnings, n.d.), Netflix continued to provide a lower-priced mobile-screen plan in India and in December 2021, all four plans available in India had lower prices. Figure 7 showed both the total number and addition of the paid memberships in APAC. The number continued growing from Q3 2019 to Q4 2021 after the announcement of price-lowering. The growth rate for paid memberships within this time range is 152.14%, which means it's nearly a triple. India is a member of APAC, therefore we can contribute partially this successful increase in paid memberships to Netflix's release of lower-price mobile plan and take it as an impressive step of its deeper expansion in India.

To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?



**Figure 7. Paid Memberships of Netflix in APAC, from Q2 2019 to Q4 2021 at the End of Each Quarter (in thousands)<sup>13</sup>**

		mobile	basic with ads	Basic	Standard	Premium
India	₹/month	149	N/A	199	499	649
	\$/month	1.8	N/A	2.41	6.03	7.84
Kenya	KES/month	200	N/A	300	700	1100
	\$/month	16	N/A	24	56	88
Singapore	S\$/month	N/A	N/A	12.98	17.48	21.98
	\$/month	N/A	N/A	9.69	13.31	16.4
British	£/month	N/A	4.99	6.99	10.99	15.99
	\$/month	N/A	6.01	8.42	13.24	19.27
US	\$/month	N/A	6.99	9.99	15.49	19.99

**Table 2. Payment methods in India<sup>14</sup>, Kenya<sup>15</sup>, Singapore<sup>16</sup>, British<sup>17</sup> and US<sup>18</sup> (data in dash area are calculated by candidate, using the exchange rate from X-Rates and FX Exchange Rate both on 12/31/2022)**

<sup>13</sup> Adopted from <https://ir.netflix.net/financials/financial-statements/default.aspx>

<sup>14</sup> Adopted from <https://help.netflix.com/en/node/24926/in>

<sup>15</sup> Adopted from <https://help.netflix.com/en/node/24926/ke>

<sup>16</sup> Adopted from <https://help.netflix.com/en/node/24926/sg>

<sup>17</sup> Adopted from <https://help.netflix.com/en/node/24926/gb>

<sup>18</sup> Adopted from <https://help.netflix.com/en/node/24926/us>



## To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

Table 2 contains subscription plans in India, Kenya, Singapore, British, and US. Consumers can check for different subscription plan on Netflix's website. Among these countries, only three plans are available in Singapore while for the others there are four. Although all of them contain Basic, Standard and Premium, services provided do not have obvious differences. For those provide four plans, the first two columns' services are different from each other. It is defined as Mobile in India and Kenya, Basic with adverts in British and Basic with ads in US. When Netflix released this plan as a try-out, it loses subscribers in other markets more or less. Areas like India and Kenya are not being considered for Netflix's new subscription plans with adverts, revealing these markets are not mature enough for Netflix. It first needs to attract as many subscribers as possible, and then think about imposing plans with adverts. This is a proper strategy when seeking growth in less mature markets.

Based on exchange rate on 12/31/2022 (USD Historical Exchange Rates (US Dollar) - X-Rates, 2022; United States Dollar(USD) to Kenyan Shilling(KES) on 31 Dec 2022 (31/12/2022) Exchange Rates - FX Exchange Rate, n.d.), we can express the value of a certain plan in one currency through calculation. Take Basic plan as an example, as shown above, people in India pay the least USD (\$2.41) while people Kenya pay the most (\$24). The value in other three countries are close to each other. When people in different countries pay different prices for entertainment at Netflix, price discrimination occurs. Price discrimination can never cause failure only to a company. After the releasing of *House of Cards* in 2013, Netflix is getting mature and growing its market share. Within the 10-year development, Netflix now has certain power. It's unlikely for subscribers in US or Singapore to stop the plans when they found out they can pay less for the same service in India.

## To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

During the second quarter in 2020, Netflix found that a certain amount of its subscribers watched nothing in the past two years. They did not stop their subscription despite the easiness for canceling. Netflix “decided to stop billing them and will do so for members meeting the same criteria going forward” (Netflix - Financials – Q2 2020 Quarterly Earnings, n.d.). This kind of pro-consumer policy will negatively impact its short-term revenue; however, it will bring positive impact for Netflix in the long-term. Consumers' personal finance can be saved, and help them build a considerate and generous image of Netflix. Extension of consumer loyalty can occur. This is another proof that subscribers are prior to any other aspects to be considered when Netflix is making decisions.

Netflix has entered the market in more than 190 countries worldwide. Aiming to expand deeply in more countries, Netflix must set suitable prices to maintain its subscription pool and attract more subscribers. From this perspective, it is reasonable for different prices to occur. When dealing with price, Netflix comes with adaptable and proper solutions.

### 3.1.4 Promotion

This is the method of communicating and interacting with the market with the purpose of selling the product (Hoang, 2014, p415). Being a service provider, Netflix takes the most use of the internet, interacting frequently with its follower on social media platforms e.g Instagram and Twitter. During the spread of the thought that it's better to entertain on Netflix, word-of-mouth plays an important role as well. No physical advertisement such as posters or screens appeared in promotion for Netflix. Its own pattern of advertisements is low-cost. “Effective promotion can certainly improve the financial health and sustainability of a business.” (Hoang, 2014, p445)

## To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

### 3.1.4.1 Social Media Marketing

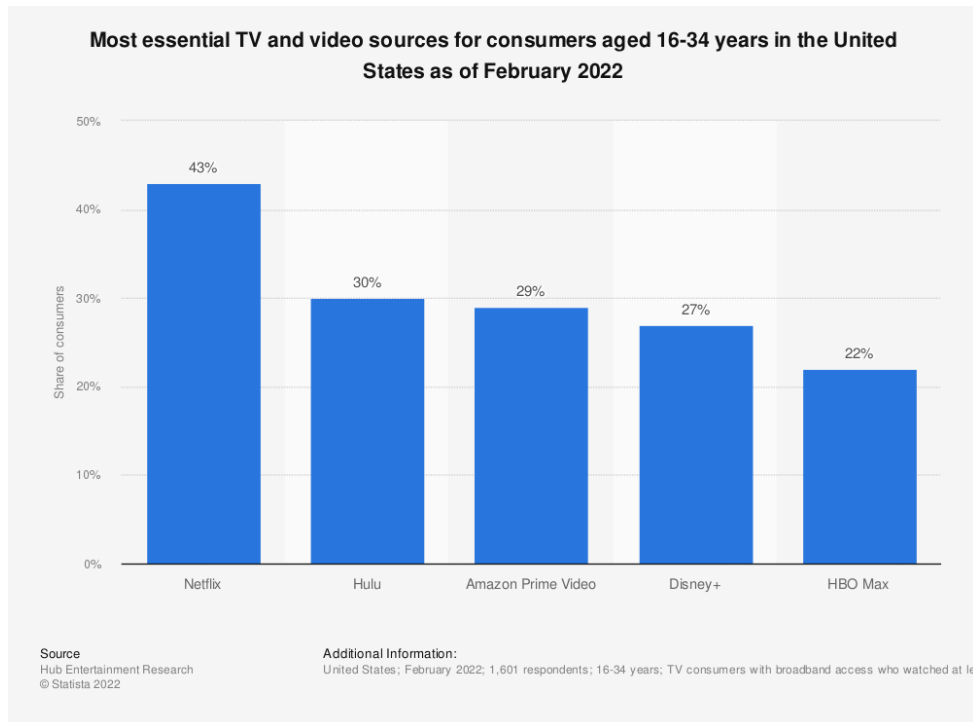
Netflix communicates with its followers on social media frequently, whether there will be a new season released or not. As of October 21, 2021, Netflix has more than 163.3 million followers on all the social media accounts. These followers are aged from 18-54 (Whateley, 2021), with all range of educational backgrounds and that means only modelling of posts cannot attract most of its followers to watch the new season. Thus, Netflix's posts are more lively than other streaming accounts and even Reed Hastings and other managers of Netflix will help to advertise and interact with followers with their personal accounts. Social media is also an ideal path to share and gather the ideas of improvements. By this way, Netflix can keep the newly released seasons on hot discussion and continuously improve its service.

### 3.1.4.2 Word of Mouth

This way of advertisement does not require much money invested to achieve a certain level of success. It's effective as the information can quickly spread through a person's social network, and therefore causing a phenomenon like the chain reaction in Chemistry. Another factor that can cause an effective spread is known as peer influence. The decision of whether to purchase a product or service, for Netflix that is whether to subscribe a plan, is highly related to "the number of friends who have purchased prior to him" (Zhu et al., 2016). Furthermore, although the user's level of influence did not directly encourage their friends to make purchases, it was observed that in closely-knit social circles, individuals were more sensitive to peer pressure and were more likely to follow suit. It was found that approximately 80% of adoption cascades were limited to two or fewer individuals, indicating that most peer-influenced purchases occurred within small, interconnected groups. And from Figure 8, we can see that in US Netflix has the most share of consumers aged between 16-34, about 43%. It's almost as twice as that of HBO Max's share of 22%. Therefore, it's wise for

To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

Netflix to include word of mouth as one of its promotion methods since it can both attract potential subscribers to boom its revenue and lower the cost, leading to an increase of Netflix's profit.



**Figure 8. Most essential TV and video sources for consumers aged 16-34 years in the United States as of February 2022<sup>19</sup>**

## 4 Conclusion

Netflix provides a variety of subscription plans and payment methods to satisfy its international market. Both strategies brought positive impact on Netflix's international marketing. When making a decision, local markets' maturity is an important aspect to consider. Price discrimination will not lead to potential damage. However, its distinct releasing pattern has caused some problems in both viewing and producing experiences, especially in Japan. After unexpected result occurred in the market, Netflix slightly changed the releasing pattern, preventing larger failure happening. Despite the stepping in gaming market, content streaming is still an important part of

<sup>19</sup> Adopted from  
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1301569/most-essential-tv-sources-us-young-adults/?locale=en>

## To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

its business. It uses mostly digital advertisement and word-of-mouth to help its information spread both widely and speedily in the promotion process. Peer influence plays an indispensable role in word-of-mouth. Its managers contributed a lot in reminding the public about the latest season by sharing information on their personal media accounts. All these four parts in marketing mix collaborate effectively, making Netflix a leading streaming platform in such a competitive market. They all play important roles when Netflix managed to survive in the market.

Limitations for analysis exist in this paper. When discussing the pricing, the conclusion drawn can be more validated if subscription plans at different time within the same country are included. What's more, Netflix is strong in the social-media marketing, but discussion in this paper is to some extent limited and superficial. Despite all limitations (no matter listed or not), the answer to the research question remains the same.

To adapt to the local market better, Netflix not only provides subtitles in different languages, but also started to produce contents that are tightly linked to local culture. Whether these efforts benefit Netflix's international marketing can be evaluated in future discussion.

To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

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## To what extent did the Netflix's marketing strategies help it survive in the international streaming market competition?

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1