Reading. Ejercicio de práctica

How Streaming Platforms Use Data to Keep You Watching

Streaming platforms have transformed the way we consume entertainment, and data plays a central role in this change. Every time I open a streaming app, my choices—what I watch, how long I stay, or when I stop—feed a complex system designed to keep me engaged for as long as possible. This process is not random; it is carefully built around data collection, analysis, and prediction.

To begin with, streaming platforms collect vast amounts of user data. This includes obvious information, such as the shows or films I watch, but also less visible details: the time of day I watch, whether I binge-watch episodes, or how often I abandon a series after one episode. Even pauses, rewinds, and skipped intros provide valuable clues about my preferences. Individually, these actions seem insignificant, but together they form a detailed viewing profile.

Once collected, this data is analysed using algorithms and machine learning models. These systems look for patterns across millions of users. If people with viewing habits similar to mine tend to enjoy a specific genre or storyline, the platform is likely to recommend that content to me. This is why recommendations often feel “surprisingly accurate”: they are not based solely on my tastes, but on the behaviour of entire user groups.

Another important element is personalisation. Streaming platforms rarely show the same homepage to two different users. Thumbnails, descriptions, and even the order in which titles appear can change depending on who is watching. For example, a film might be presented as a romantic drama to one user and as a comedy to another, simply by highlighting different images or keywords. This subtle adjustment increases the chances that I will click “play”.

Data is also used to shape content itself. Viewing statistics help platforms decide which series to renew, cancel, or even produce. If data shows that viewers tend to stop watching after slow first episodes, producers may be encouraged to create faster openings. In this way, data does not just recommend content—it actively influences how that content is made.

However, this data-driven approach raises some concerns. While personalisation improves user experience, it can also limit exposure to new or challenging content. By constantly reinforcing existing preferences, platforms may create “filter bubbles” where viewers only see what aligns with their past behaviour. Moreover, questions about data privacy and transparency remain central to public debate.

In short, streaming platforms rely on data at every stage of the viewing experience. From recommendations to content creation, data helps keep viewers engaged, often without them being fully aware of how it works. Understanding this process allows me to watch more consciously—and maybe even decide when it’s time to stop the next episode from auto-playing.

Ejercicio 1

Lea el texto anterior y responda si las siguientes preguntas son verdaderas o falsas.

1. The text suggests that individual viewing actions are meaningless unless they are combined with data from other users.
2. Recommendation algorithms rely more on collective behaviour patterns than on isolated personal choices.
3. According to the text, users consciously provide most of the data used by streaming platforms.
4. The feeling that recommendations are accurate is partly explained by comparisons with viewers who share similar habits.
5. Personalised thumbnails are described as a purely aesthetic choice with no real impact on user behaviour.
6. The author implies that data influences not only what content is shown but also how that content is designed.
7. The text presents binge-watching as a behaviour that platforms actively try to discourage.
8. Filter bubbles are mentioned as an unintended consequence of excessive personalisation.
9. The author clearly states that data-driven systems always improve the quality of content.
10. The final paragraph suggests that understanding data use can change the way viewers interact with streaming platforms.