

# **A Study on Use of Online Streaming Media by the undergraduates who study Humanities Subjects in University of Kelaniya.**

D. Randula Podduwage<sup>1</sup>, R.M.P.F. Rathnayake<sup>2</sup> and P.Manuratne<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1&2</sup> Drama & Theatre and Image Arts Unit, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

<sup>3</sup> Department of English, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

<sup>1</sup>2015\_podduwage@kln.ac.lk

## **Introduction**

As we are living in the ‘information age’ or ‘digital age’, the technology and the ways that people share information are changing and evolving rapidly ("Living in the Information,"2018). Streaming media is a result of this progression. It is a new source of media which is used to share the information and entertainment among people. Today, streaming can be recognised as the apex of technological advancement in sharing audio and video contents on the internet. Also it can be explained as the ‘contemporary approach’ of producing, consuming and distributing of media (Burroughs, 2015).

Enormous growth of digital technology and the explosion of the internet use have made the cyberspace the best place for everything. Online web spaces and concepts, namely, social media, online business, e-money and so forth, have virtually become indispensable features in the current society. According to the latest statistics, there are more than 4 billion internet users in the world and it grows in a continuous explosive speed ("Internet users in the world," 2018). At the moment Social media cyberspaces like *Facebook*, comprises ~~with~~ of more than 02 billion individual users where it simply exceeds the population of the world’s biggest countries ("Facebook bigger than," 2017). Usage of these social media platforms have formed a particular social entity called as *virtual community* where people from different societies, cultures, geographies get connected and share their experiences, feelings, moments of life through the social media websites as they are doing in their real world (Stolterman, 2000).

The contemporary society ~~have~~ has changed a lot with their newly adapted online habits. They are surfing through the internet to watch videos more than ever in the history before. People are getting used to watching videos on their laptops or Ss mart phones at any time. To fulfil their needs the internet is now filled with millions of on demand video files (Video on Demand – VOD), where people can watch whatever they want to explore. Moreover, the *Cisco Visual Networking Index* have forecasted that it would take an individual “more than 5 million years to watch the amount of video contents that will cross global each month in 2021 and in every second, a million minutes of video content will cross the network by 2021”("Cisco Visual Networking," 2016).

The streaming media is technologically referring to audio and/or video content that internet users consume without downloading to their hard drives (Burroughs, 2015). Basically all the audio and video contents that are available to watch online belong to this form of media. Most famous video content web spaces like YouTube, Netflix, Hulu and Vimeo all proceed under the streaming media category.

With increased network technologies (the speed of internet) streaming media has become an essential part of how people face and inhabit mediated culture (Burroughs, 2015). So, it has been empowered as the world's most powerful media source. This modern shape of the streaming media ~~was~~ is well-studied by the academics within the last decade. They have published various studies and articles about it. As recent publications have shown the streaming media as the way of next generation content delivery, the shifting is now underway from traditional methods like traditional over-the-air television (OTA) mediums (Siglin, 2018). Along with this background the streaming media field has been recognized as an emerging academic subject under the Mass Communication and Film and Television Studies as well.

Beyond that general identification on emerging streaming media, it is a timely ~~concerned~~ matter to find out more about its nature, characters, and insights to understand and determine its future. Many scholars and academic institutions are following various research to address the issue in many levels. Nevertheless, most studies and resources on the streaming media are reported from developed countries like United States, Australia, and United Kingdom. The reason behind this seems to be the higher number of computer literacy level or/and the amount of Internet users in developed countries than the developing countries. Therefore, the consumption and practice of using streaming media is comparatively higher and contrastive in developed countries than developing countries.

However, it does not mean that developing countries are not consuming streaming media or new digital sources. Considering the records of leading countries based on number of Facebook (social media web space) users as of 2021 show that developing countries like India, Thailand, Vietnam hold more members than any other developed countries (Statista, 2021). Internet (especially social media) ~~have~~ has been playing a vital role in every country without any boundary. But the nature of usage and practice of streaming media can be varied according to the social and geographical distinctions same as the different use of social media platforms (Jacobs, 2017). In fact, the nature of use of streaming media has been poorly studied in developing countries than the developed countries.

As a developing Asian country, Sri Lanka is also lacking a broad study on how this new media wave proceeds in the country. In 2019, Sri Lanka is recorded to have 30.1% of computer literacy rate while exceeding more than 10.9 million internet users (34.1% of population). Among them, 7.9 million of Sri Lankans have registered with social media

platforms. Considering these facts, the contrast is quite clear as Sri Lanka shows a lower percentage of internet users compared to the total population. But the fact does not mean that Sri Lankans are not effectively consuming/using internet resources. Sri Lankan society has been drastically sensible with the internet contents since the beginning of this decade. The best real-life example was the last presidential election of the country. As for the 2008 presidential election of the country, two participants ~~have~~ contested with the support of country's two leading political parties. One (Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse) used predominantly the traditional media and the other (Mr. Maithreepala Sirisena) used majorly new media platforms like social media. Finally the traditional media campaign was defeated by Mr. Maithreepala's new media campaign and he got elected as the new president of the country. This case was analysed and shown as the first cyber election of the country by several publications as well (Gunawardene, 2015).

Accordingly, Sri Lankan society has been greatly influenced by the new media. The usage of traditional media resources are being fading out. Along with this transition, the streaming media could be the next generation mainstream platform for all television, video and film-based mediums in Sri Lanka as same as other countries. In this transitional period, it is important to understand the nature and behaviour of country's modern streaming media usage and practice. However, the use of streaming media within the Sri Lankan context have not yet been studied ~~as well~~. Therefore, the effect of streaming media towards the Sri Lankan society or individuals is not revealed accurately. Studying about the streaming media with various viewpoints is a timely needed exertion.

### **Use of Streaming Media by the University Students (Undergraduates)**

To understand the use of streaming media in national level, the best way is to start by studying a specific *social group* of the country. According to the theories of social science, "two or more persons in interaction constitute a social group. It has common aim. Further, it is a collection of people interacting together in an orderly way on the basis of shared expectations about each other's behaviour. As a result of this interaction, the members of a group, feel a common sense of belonging" (Mundal, 2020). In Sri Lanka, students / undergraduates of state universities represent a specific social group of its society. As all of them ~~are getting~~ selected to the state universities based on their final results (Z Score) of the secondary education (GCE Advanced Level Examination), they are considered as an intellectual social group within the country (University Grants Commission, 2019).

As recent studies have shown that a high percentage of these university students of Sri Lanka do use internet for their study purposes (Madhavika and Kodithuwakku, 2019). Probably university students represent the highest "*internet literate*" social group of the country. The term *Internet literacy* is defined as; "the ability to seek out information when necessary with the use of internet" (Sedivy, 2016). As most degree courses required to engage with digital

medium and internet, nowadays the undergraduates are more competent with the digital medium and internet than ever in the history.

Further, most of the Sri Lankan governmental universities provide free *unlimited* internet access within the university premises to their undergraduates and academic members to facilitate their studies. To enable this facility, the data cost of internet usage has been borne by the government and universities where the students are privileged with unlimited internet access without any hesitation on the data cost on their own.

Considering these facts, studying the use of streaming media by university undergraduates will be a fine approach and an effective indicator to understand the use of streaming media in the country.

## **Scope of the Study**

There are 15 state universities managed by the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka. More than 80,000 undergraduates are currently enrolled in these universities for their first degree and 31,881 students have been selected only for the academic year 2017/2018 (University Grants Commission, 2019).

The scope of this research is narrowed to study only a particular student cluster within a selected faculty of a university instead of unnecessary effort to cover-up all the state universities and faculties. This particular cluster will consist of randomly selected individuals (Students representing all levels of BA and BA Honors degree programs) that represent the Faculty of Humanities in the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

Moreover, this study will concentrate on their (students of the selected clusters) use of streaming media in day-to-day life.

## **Research problem**

As discussed earlier the lack of studies on use of streaming media in Sri Lanka have ~~caused~~ ~~for~~ created many gaps in the field of new media (digital medium) within the country. This study is focussed on streaming media and its use within Sri Lanka. As an approach to that, the study will attempt to find out answers and responses to the following question,

How does the students of the university use streaming media in their day to day life?

In its strict sense, this question can be elaborated as; how does the students of Faculty of Humanities in University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka use streaming media in their day to day life?

## **Methodology**

The study carried out within a duration of 2 months from July 2020 to September 2020. The research is proceeded using both qualitative and quantitative methods. To collect quantitative data the research has used a questionnaire and gave 06 closed questions, 04 Open questions in the questionnaire and an interview method is used to collect qualitative data.

Used two methods:

1. Questionnaire – (Both qualitative and quantitative)
2. Interview – (Qualitative)

### **Sampling**

The group of students that have been subjected to the research are from the Faculty of Humanities of University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. 20 undergraduates were randomly selected from the faculty who follow different subjects offered under the Humanities subject stream. All of them represent the youth age of 21 – 25 years and both genders have sampled without any filtration.

## **Research design**

The primary stage of the research was to explore all available literature specially published on the streaming media and new media relevant to the Sri Lankan context. In the next stage randomly selected students at the university premises were selected and they were given a prepared questionnaire to obtain answers. After obtaining the answers (Questionnaire sheet), the student was interviewed for around 10 minutes. 04 - 05 students participated for the research per day. This was carried out 05 continuous days within a week (03<sup>rd</sup> August – 09<sup>th</sup> August 2019).

## **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire ~~is consisted~~ consisted of 10 questions as follows,

01. Following Degree of the University and Subjects following for the degree.  
The year of the student studying at the university, age and gender. (Closed Question)
02. What are the most often used video viewing websites by the student?  
(Closed Question)
03. How much time does the student spend on video viewing websites? (per day)  
(Closed Question)

04. What are the purposes of using video viewing websites? (Open Question)
05. Different video viewing websites that the student prefers to use for each purpose.  
(Open Question)
06. What is the most following / interesting video channel / person / genre?  
(Open Question)
07. How many videos does the student view per day/ per week using these websites?  
(Closed Question)
08. What are the devices used by the student to view the videos online?  
(Closed Question)
09. Does the student have any idea about how much data or monetary value / cost per a day for their video viewing consumption? Do they generally prefer to watch online videos using the free internet facility provided by the university or not?  
(Closed Question)
10. Do they use online videos as a method of learning? If so, what are the subjects and videos that they use for it.  
(Open Question)

## **Interview**

Interview was focussed to find out following information from students. They were interviewed in a friendly manner by taking about 10 – 15 minutes for each participant.

- A. To understand the student's awareness about the streaming media.
- B. To understand the student's genuine attitude towards streaming media (Including their attitudes about different streaming platforms)
- C. To understand their video watching behaviours.
- D. To understand how they use online video contents to develop their knowledge, skills and education.

## **Results**

Closed Question Questionnaire

All participants represented 21 – 25 years. Most of the participants were females, which is exactly 80% of percentage and only 04 participants (20%) were males - (**Fig. 01**). There were 09 participants (45%) from the 4<sup>th</sup> year, 06 participants (30%) from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, and 04

participants (20%) from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Year and only 01 participants (05%) from the 1<sup>st</sup> year - (**Fig. 02**). Many participants represented the Bachelor of Film and Television degree program which is 50% from the total participants and other participants represented Image Arts (20%), Languages (20%), Drama (05%) and Western Classical Culture (05%) - (**Fig. 03**).

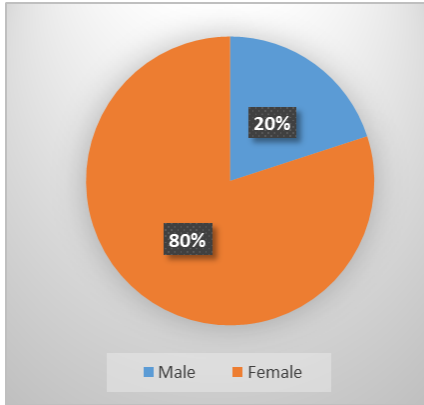


Figure 01

Gender Analysis

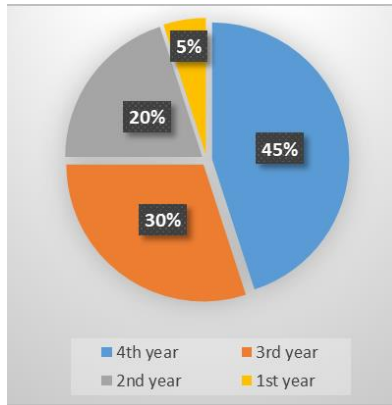


Figure 02

Study group (Years) Analysis

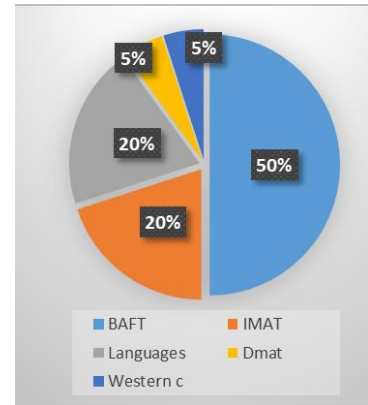


Figure 03

Study group (Subjects) Analysis

All participants (100%) have mentioned that they use *Youtube* and 95% have mentioned about *Facebook*. 08 participants (40%) have mentioned *Instagram*, 04 participants (20%) have mentioned *Tiktok* and another 04 (20%) have mentioned *Netflix*. *Vimeo*, *Dialog*, *ifix*, *myasianTV*, *Drama nice*, *Einthusan* platforms got less than 15% of attention. *Metacafe* and *Hulu* have not been mentioned as a using platform to watch videos by any participant – (**Fig 04**).

04 students (20%) have mentioned that they spend only 10 - 15 minutes per day to watch videos. 07 students (35%) have mentioned that they spend around 30 – 60 minutes per day. Others, 03 students (15%) mentioned 1-2 hours, 04 students (20%) have mentioned 3 – 5 hours and 02 students (10%) have mentioned that they spend more than 05 hours per day on watching videos.

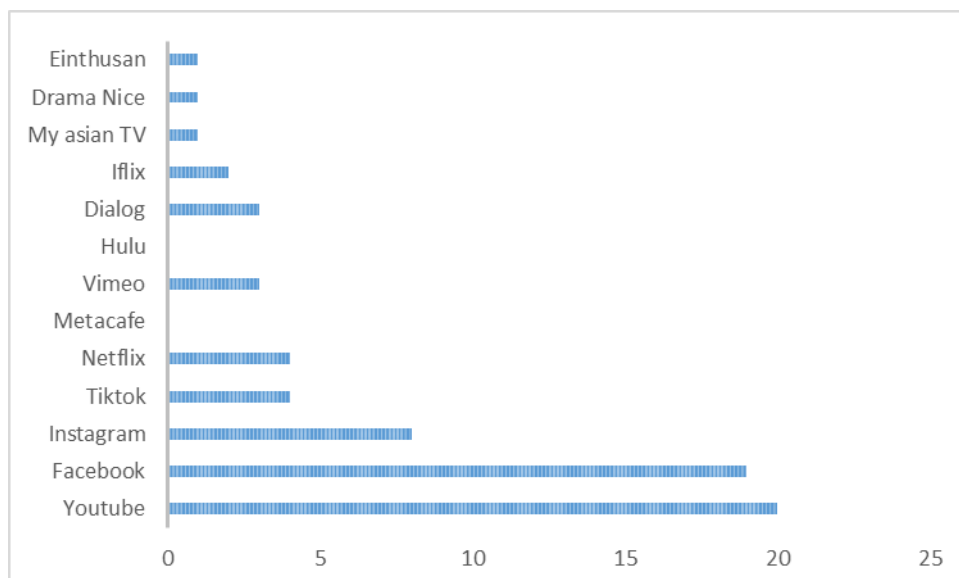


Figure 04

#### Preferred Streaming Media Platforms Analysis

As responded by the participants about their video watching behaviours, 07 of them (35%) have revealed that they are used to watch 10 – 20 videos per day. 05 (25%) have mentioned that they watch more than 50 videos per day and 04 participants (20%) mentioned that they are used to watch 20 – 50 videos and other 03 have mentioned they are watching less than 10 videos per day.

Most of them are interested in watching videos for entertainment purposes (a total of 232 videos ~~are used to watch~~ were watched by these 20 participants for entertainment purposes). Around 130 videos are watched for their educational and learning purposes while 259 videos are watched for purposes like for pleasure, inspiration, relaxation and stress release.

All participants use their own smart phone device to watch videos (100% of them), 12 have mentioned (60%) that they use their laptops as well. Only 01 (05%) has mentioned about using a Desktop or a Smart TV to watch videos online.

14 students (70%) had an idea about their data usage and only 06 participants (30%) had no idea about their internet usage status. Out of those 14 participants 09 have mentioned that they use around 1 – 5 GB per week and 05 have mentioned that they use more than 5 GB per week.

Only 10 participants (50%) have mentioned that they use the free wifi facility given by the university to watch videos. 10 (50%) have mentioned that they only use their personal data packages and bear the data cost by themselves.

### **Open-ended Questionnaire and Interview**

With the use of 04 given closed type questions in the questionnaire and short discussion type interviews, the study has revealed following facts.

All participants are being well aware about the streaming media and most of them have a sound knowledge about how to use, search what they wanted and to select and filter their desired video contents from the streaming platforms. Information collected about their awareness was analysed and categorised them in to four groups accordingly. Students who had a sound knowledge on streaming media in both technical and practice were categorised as *HighlyAware* group. Students who had a sound knowledge on using streaming media were categorized as *Very Attentive* group. Students who had an understanding on how to find and watch the video contents according to their needs were categorized as *Essentially Attentive* group. Students who had a basic understanding about streaming media and only known to



search and find the desired video contents were categorized as *Standard Level Attentive* group and others who were not able to use the streaming media as they wanted were categorized as *Below the Standard* group.

Accordingly, none of the participants were able to categorize under the *Highly Aware* group or to the *Below the Standard* group. Only 04 participants (20%) have shown their sound knowledge on using streaming media and they were categorized in to the *Very Attentive* group. 11 participants (55%) were classified in to the *Essentially Attentive* group. 05 participants (25%) were classified under the *Standard Level Attentive* group.

Students have revealed both positive attitudes and ~~negatives~~ negative attitudes towards the use of streaming media. Total *Positive* keywords revealed in the interview was 62 times and total negative keywords revealed was only 23. Most repeated keyword (*Positive*) when revealing about their attitude was “*Personal Entertainment*” and it was used by every participant when expressing their thoughts about their usage of streaming media. The most expressed negative thoughts were that it “*wastes time*” and “*Addictive*”. However, all participants for the study have accepted the streaming media as a positive arrangement of information / contents where they can reach at any time and benefit them in various ways (100% of acceptance rate).

Participants have revealed some various desires and different reasons caused to watch online videos. Their video watching behaviours were also distinctive and diverse. Many of them (12 participants) ~~are used to~~ watch videos at home/ hostels/ boarding places where they spend time after leaving the university premises. Their major desire of watching videos was to entertain themselves and NOT Learning. 75% (15 participants) have mentioned that they do use streaming media to gain knowledge as well. But their first priority was the entertainment. Moreover, only 35% (07 Participants) have specified about their use of streaming media for the educational purposes and only 05 of them (25%) mentioned about watching tutorials or subject specified video programs.

## **Discussion**

As elaborated in the introduction, state university students are recognized and known as the next generation intellectuals of the country. They represent a social group that has a *high digital literacy* and *internet literacy* level ~~of~~ in the country. Therefore, we can assume that the selected cluster for the study (state university students) are been more exposed to the streaming media than other social groups of the country.

The studied group consisted with 20 individuals is a minute fraction from that specific social group of state university students. They only represented the Faculty of humanities, University of Kelaniya. Considering this limitation, it is clear that the study could proceed further expanding to other faculties and universities to advance the precision of results.

However, the lack of studies ~~that has happened~~ conducted about the streaming media and its usage within Sri Lanka was a knowledge gap until present day. Therefore, this study would be a starting pinpoint of streaming media studies in the country, especially about its use and practice.

The studied group consisted young adults aged 21 – 25 only. The total 20 randomly selected participants represented a percentage of 20% males and 80% females. This percentage was much similarly illustrated the gender percentages of the students of the faculty, as the faculty consists more than 1500 students that breaks down 74% of female students and 26% of male students. Though there are 10 departments comprise more than 30 degree programs in the faculty, the studied group represented only 05 departments and 07 degree programs. Most of the participants were from Drama & Theatre and Image Arts Unit. This unit considered as the most related department of the faculty with new media studies and it's the only department that teaches *Video* and *movies* related subjects in the university. Therefore, this studied cluster can be introducing as a group which consist with many students who have known about the streaming media than other students from various departments of the faculty.

Considering this background, it is not a wonder to find out student's high percentage (100%) of engagement with streaming media. Nevertheless, it's a good fact to prove the use of streaming media among university students is been certainly high. Further, the *Youtube* is their most preferred platform to watch videos along with the *Facebook*. In this case, utilization of *Facebook* (95%) and *Instagram* (40%) is probably different than the utilization of *Youtube* as both *Facebook* and *Instagram* are using for many other social media needs than objective of watch streaming media. The trending *tiktok* platform has been shown 20% of direct engagement by the participants. The popularity of short form mobile video content creation brought up with the *tiktok* platform and now it has been regarded as a novel way of sharing day to day life of digital age people. Therefore, this 20% of engagement is a good sign of its growing popularity and utilization. Whether the Alexa rankings depicts video content sites like Netflix, Vimeo, Hulu, Dailymotion in the world's top trending lists, none of them got more than 15% of interest. Many participants even had not known about those sites. Briefly their usage of streaming media is quite limited to 04 platforms, *YouTube*, *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *Tikok*.

According to the findings, 45% of the participants spends more than an hour on video watching in a day. Another interesting fact is that 30% of the participants have mentioned that they spend more than 03 hours per day on watching videos.

In the interview process, we explored about this further and revealed that total time spend on video watching is slight higher than the participants have mentioned in the questionnaire. More than 50% of the participants (10) have affirmed that they spend more than an hour on video watching and 07 of them 35% accepted that they spend more than 03 hours per day on

streaming videos. 45% (09 participants) have told that they spend more than 04 hours on streaming videos at the weekends and holidays of the university (Saturdays Sundays and other holidays like Poya-days). This reveals online video watching is a significant habit / practice in day today life of many university students. Only 15% (03 participants) ~~are used to~~ watch less than 10 videos per day using streaming media. All others (85%) used to watch more than 10 videos per day.

Along with these stats, at the discussion process we have noticed that how important the video watching practice has been to their day to day life. Most of them used positive keywords as a respond to their video watching practice. These positive ~~responds~~ responses confirm that university students ~~are believing on~~ believe streaming media ~~as a~~ to be a close companion and ~~it's~~ it is likely to ~~be growing~~ day by day. Their companionship is mostly based on “personal Entertainment” factor. 19 participants (95%) have described that they are daily engaging with the streaming media to entertain themselves. Most of them believed that they can skip from the stress and busyness of their study practices at the university by this companionship.

As they are relying on streaming media majorly for entertainment, they are less concerned about learning using these streaming platforms. In questionnaire 75% of the participants have mentioned about using streaming media for knowledge gaining purpose. At the interview, we found that only 20% of them are utilizing streaming media as a tool to support their studies along with the entertainment desires.

In further discussion process with the participants, we found that none of them were at a stage of utilizing video streaming platforms to earn. Technical knowledge about the streaming media was very low. However, they had a sound knowledge about how to use, search what they wanted and to select and filter their desired video contents from the streaming platforms.

There were only 04 participants (20%) who have crated video contents and had a sound knowledge on streaming media. They have been categorized in to *VeryAttentive group*. 55% were the people who are engaged with the streaming media only ~~to~~ for “*watching*” purposes and they have considered as the *Essentially Attentive*group. But they were keen about videos and trends. Most of them had an idea about trending videos, they had specific selection of video contents and creators (channels and followers). We have categorized only 05 participants (25%) as *Standard level attentive*group members as they are not aware about trending videos, or any specific selection of video watching but do used to watch videos online, spending a little time.

All of them preferred to watch videos with the smart phone and 60% have mentioned that they are using laptops as well. Spending time by watching videos on a small screen (smart phone) is a different experience than watching on a laptop or bigger screen. This indicates

that students don't concern about the video details (its quality) but they are interested in the content and how it's been delivered. This is a good point of streaming media where content creators concern much on their content creativity and not on the quality (video quality and composition). This would cause a negative effect in minds of university students as they could lead towards the quality deficient creations instead of high quality creative works.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Today streaming media is being using as a highly effective tool for learning and education. Though the study has revealed the students of the faculty have chosen the streaming media as a way of getting rid of their stress and busyness. Therefore, we cannot recommend to push students to utilize streaming media for their educational purposes straight. But the academic staff and the relevant responsible people should take actions to guide students to use the streaming media affectively. As entertainment is a much needed requirement for the students, students must be guided on how to select the quality and creative video contents instead of watching rubbish. A new study to find out how students entertain the mselves with a small screen is probably an interesting research area which should be ~~study~~ studied further.

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