

Effects of a Subscription Service on Cultural Consumption According to Experience in Arts and Cultural Education

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Abstract:

This study aims to determine whether the impact of arts and cultural subscription services on cultural consumption differs by the experience of arts and cultural education. Arts and cultural subscription services were divided into movies and music, and cultural consumption was divided along three dimensions: taste, cultural consumption, and cultural consumption diversity, confirming the different influences of arts and cultural education experiences. The analysis found that consumers' tastes did not change even after using the subscription service, and the amount of cultural consumption did not increase when they had experienced cultural and arts education. There were differences in cultural consumption diversity by field, and in the case of movies, the consumption genre was expanded but music was reduced. The results of this study suggest that subscription services can alleviate inequality in cultural consumption.

Keywords:

Arts and cultural subscription service
Curation
Cultural consumption
Arts and cultural education
Cultural capital

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1. Introduction

The development of the internet has enabled consumers to selectively and unlimitedly consume various types of content without spatial or temporal constraints ^[1]. Content can now be accessed across multiple devices, including PCs, smartphones, and tablets, leading to significant changes in consumer behavior regarding content consumption ^[2]. Among these, over-the-top (OTT) services, epitomized by Netflix, have achieved

remarkable growth under the sudden environmental shift caused by COVID-19 through a subscription-based economic model.

A subscription economy refers to a model where consumers pay a fixed fee to access products or services for a specified period. This model aligns with the consumption habits of the Millennial and Generation Z cohorts (MZ generation), who prioritize experiences over ownership, thereby driving the expansion of

its scope. Subscription economy models leverage curation features that collect extensive consumer data to deliver personalized services based on customer preferences. This approach is favored as it reduces the burden of searching for new content while offering recommendations aligned with individual tastes.

Cultural content subscription services are particularly widespread among consumers, yet empirical research on this area remains scarce compared to the market's enthusiastic response. Most existing studies have focused on analyzing consumer behavior related to subscription services. For instance, some studies identify factors influencing the intention to use digital content subscription services^[3], while others investigate satisfaction and continued use intentions for OTT subscription services^[1]. Additional studies analyze factors influencing user expectations for Netflix's recommendation services^[4] or explore the impact of Netflix usage on user intention and engagement^[5].

While these studies are meaningful in highlighting factors that drive consumers to continue using subscription services by focusing on their functional aspects, research on the broader impact of subscription services on consumers remains limited. Unlike in the past, when cultural consumption was considered synonymous with on-site viewing, the post-COVID-19 era has normalized viewing cultural and artistic content through media as a form of cultural consumption. Analyzing the impact of subscription services on consumers' cultural capital under these circumstances is a meaningful endeavor.

Thus, this study analyzes the varying effects of cultural content subscription services on cultural consumption, considering whether individuals have experience with cultural and arts education. With music streaming services becoming routine and OTT users surpassing 30 million^[6], cultural consumption has become more active than ever. Nonetheless, differences in cultural consumption may arise depending on the cultural capital an individual possesses.

This study assumes that the outcomes of using subscription services will differ depending on whether individuals have received cultural and arts education throughout their lives beyond formal schooling. Cultural consumption is analyzed from three perspectives: cultural

preferences, the volume of cultural consumption, and the diversity of cultural consumption. Additionally, the study examines whether the effects vary by cultural and artistic field.

Cultural and arts education expands individual cultural preferences and encourages more active cultural consumption. However, previous studies have focused exclusively on on-site consumption. This study seeks to verify whether cultural and arts education experiences positively influence cultural consumption through media, in addition to on-site consumption.

To this end, hypotheses were tested using survey responses on film and music subscription services, the most widely utilized areas of cultural content subscription services. The findings suggest that cultural and arts education plays a significant role in shaping and expanding preferences. They also imply that cultural and art subscription services could alleviate cultural inequalities.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

2.1. Subscription services

Subscription services are experiencing rapid growth worldwide. Unlike the traditional model where payments were made for individual products or services, subscription services represent a new economic model where customers pay a fixed fee to access products and services for a set period^[7]. Traditionally used for newspapers and magazines, the scope of subscription services has recently expanded to include clothing, groceries, furniture, and cultural arts.

The growth of subscription services can be attributed to changes in consumer consumption patterns. While the focus used to be on owning products or services, it has shifted to valuing the experience itself. Consumers now prefer products tailored to their tastes and seek meaning in expanding their preferences through recommendation services^[8]. From the corporate perspective, subscription services have transformed from one-time sales models to those offering personalized services, with services evolving from one-directional to more interactive and relational. The vast amount of data generated through subscriptions allows for personalized

curation, fostering a customer-centric approach ^[8].

The classification of subscription service types has only recently emerged and varies among scholars and institutions. From the perspective of consumer motivation, the reasons for purchasing products or services can be divided into utilitarian and hedonic motivations ^[9]. Utilitarian products focus on functional value, while hedonic products emphasize consumer enjoyment and satisfaction ^[10]. Hedonic products seek sensory enjoyment through consumption, whereas utilitarian products are evaluated based on their functional benefits to consumers.

Among subscription services, newspapers and magazines exemplify strong utilitarian attributes, while cultural and artistic content such as art, movies, and music represent hedonic attributes. Cultural arts subscription services, which allow unlimited access to movies, dramas, and music without time or location constraints for a fixed fee, align with the consumption preferences of Millennials and Generation Z, who prioritize experience and convenience.

Notably, OTT services, exemplified by Netflix, are experiencing continuous market expansion alongside qualitative improvements in content. Users can actively select content based on their preferences, and advances in network technology enable access to content on various devices, including PCs, smartphones, and tablets. This has led to a consumer migration toward OTT subscription services ^[1]. AI-based curation services enhance this experience by recommending content that aligns with individual tastes, fulfilling consumers' desires for convenience and new experiences.

Consumers receive content tailored to their preferences, while companies recommend engaging content to stimulate consumption. The curation function encourages consumers to spend more time on the platform and visit more frequently, prompting companies to improve its accuracy ^[4]. Curation is actively utilized in the cultural content sector. For example, in the case of movies, recommendations are generated based on viewing history, considering factors such as actors, directors, and genres. As these criteria are relatively well-defined, recommendations often show high relevance ^[11].

Additionally, content recommendations sometimes diverge from consumers' established preferences but

spark interest and curiosity ^[4]. Through these functions, consumers can either reinforce their existing tastes or discover new preferences.

2.2. Cultural arts education

Unlike Western societies, where public cultural arts education is more widespread, in the Republic of Korea, the quantity and quality of cultural arts experiences are determined by parents' economic capacity and cultural capital ^[12]. For older generations, opportunities for cultural arts education were limited, and for subsequent generations, the cultural capital transmitted by parents was similarly constrained, making private education a common means of supplementation. From after-school special activities to neighborhood art or piano academies and cultural center courses, cultural arts education outside of formal schooling has been a significant factor in cultural reproduction, widely adopted by the middle class and above driven by the desire to acquire cultural capital.

Research analyzing the relationship between cultural arts education and cultural capital shows that informal cultural arts education positively impacts the consumption of high culture or promotes a balanced consumption of both high and popular culture ^[13]. Given that cultural arts education is a key variable in determining cultural consumption patterns, investment in children's education, particularly private education expenses, remains a priority expenditure across all socioeconomic classes and has been steadily increasing ^[12].

Cultural reproduction has traditionally centered on the intergenerational transmission of high culture. According to Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, cultural tastes are shaped by socioeconomic class. Preferences for genres categorized as either high or popular culture reflect social hierarchies and are reproduced through institutions such as schools and academies. Cultural arts education strengthens class-specific tastes, thereby contributing to class reproduction ^[14].

Individual cultural preferences are not formed suddenly but develop over a long period, particularly influenced by cultural arts education. Families and schools act as primary agents in reinforcing these cultural preferences. While the household is the main institution for transmitting cultural capital, Republic of Korean

parents have shown a strong tendency to provide their children with cultural arts education outside the school system to cultivate higher levels of cultural capital. Investments in piano lessons, art academies, and ballet classes enable children to acquire more refined cultural capital.

Previous studies indicate that adolescents who received cultural arts education outside of school exhibited significant impacts on music listening, movie viewing, and attendance at exhibitions and performances, demonstrating that cultural arts education plays an essential role in shaping cultural consumption patterns ^[12]. In the Republic of Korea, cultural arts private education is therefore a major determinant of cultural consumption activities, and the cultural preferences developed through such education are not easily altered. Consequently, even when using subscription services that provide access to diverse genres, existing preferences may remain unchanged or even intensify. Users are more likely to consume greater quantities of their preferred genres rather than expand their tastes.

This study measures cultural arts education experiences based on whether individuals have received cultural arts education outside of formal schooling, aiming to examine the influence of private cultural arts education on cultural preferences and the quantity of cultural consumption.

H1: Those with cultural arts education experience will not exhibit significant changes in preferences after using subscription services.

H2: Those with cultural arts education experience will show an increase in cultural consumption quantity after using subscription services.

While cultural arts education positively impacts in-person attendance at cultural arts events, its effects may vary across genres when accessed via online media. According to Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, the upper class traditionally invests significant time in cultivating cultural refinement, such as music and art, which cannot be acquired quickly. The middle class, driven by anxiety over a lack of cultural sophistication, also continues to invest in cultural pursuits. Parents frequently invest in music and art education for their children; in fact, one study found that music accounted for the largest proportion of cultural arts education

experiences outside of school during adolescence, followed by art and calligraphy ^[12].

Music, as a representative form of cultural education, can be pursued throughout life and is one of the most familiar cultural fields. Consequently, musical preferences tend to form early and solidify over time. When using subscription services, the curation features, which automatically provide playlists tailored to users' preferences, may lead to a narrowing of consumed genres. A study showed that 60% of people listen to music while performing other tasks, while only 40% listen consciously and attentively, suggesting that most people listen habitually rather than for the sake of enjoying the music itself ^[15]. Those with established preferences through cultural arts education may be more likely to listen habitually to their playlists or curated content, focusing on their preferred genres.

On the other hand, movies, as a form of popular culture, generally develop later in life without prior educational influence. Being outside the domain of high culture, parents rarely invest in movie education to cultivate cultural capital. Thus, movie preferences naturally evolve through experience and may easily change depending on exposure. If pre-existing movie preferences are supplemented by cultural arts education, there may be a tendency toward an omnivorous consumption pattern, embracing diverse genres ^[16]. This tendency is likely to be more pronounced with subscription services, which allow unlimited consumption for a fixed fee.

H3: The impact of subscription services on the diversity of consumption genres will differ based on cultural arts education experience.

H3-1: Those with cultural arts education experience will exhibit a narrowing of music consumption genres after using subscription services.

H3-2: Those with cultural arts education experience will exhibit an expansion of movie consumption genres after using subscription services.

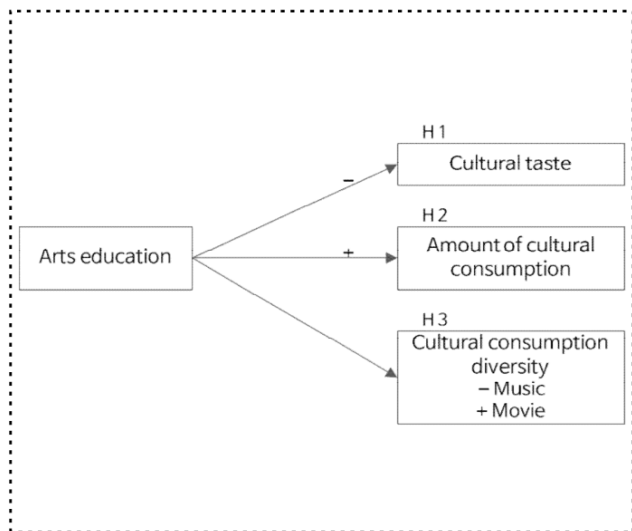


Figure 1. Research model

3. Empirical analysis

3.1. Data

To test the hypotheses, this study conducted a survey targeting 101 university students and graduate students enrolled in universities located in the Seoul and Gyeonggi regions. According to the 2023 Broadcasting Media Usage Behavior Survey, 77% of the population uses OTT services, and 33% pay for music streaming platforms such as Melon and Genie, indicating a rapid increase in consumers paying for video and audio content. Conversely, the use of traditional media content services, such as books, newspapers, and magazines, remains low, reflecting a consumer trend toward spending on video and audio content.

This study focused on two genres, film and music, and constructed two separate sets of questionnaires. Respondents were randomly assigned one of the questionnaires and provided their answers accordingly. The demographic characteristics of the participants revealed an average age of 27 years, with ages ranging from 21 to 51. The majority were female (83 participants, 82.2%), while males accounted for 18 participants (17.8%). Additionally, 78 participants (77.2%) were income earners, and 23 participants (22.8%) had no income.

3.2. Variables

The dependent variables used in this study are “preference

change,” “cultural consumption volume,” and “cultural consumption diversity.” According to Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, social class shapes cultural preferences^[17]. However, the homology hypothesis, which posits a correspondence between cultural preferences and class, has faced ongoing criticism. In this context, American scholar Peterson introduced the concept of the “omnivore,” revealing that those with highbrow tastes often display openness to other genres^[18]. This suggests a shift in cultural consumption patterns from exclusivity to tolerance.

Subsequent studies have continued to refine methods for measuring omnivorousness, with recent approaches considering three dimensions: preferences, the absolute quantity of consumption, and the diversity of cultural genres^[19]. Accordingly, this study analyzes cultural consumption in terms of three aspects: preference change, cultural consumption volume, and cultural consumption diversity.

The dependent variable “preference change” was measured using the question, “Has your preference changed due to the recommendation features of subscription services?” Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much). “Cultural consumption volume” was measured using the question, “Has the amount of content you consume increased since using subscription services?” with responses also recorded on a 5-point Likert scale. “Cultural consumption diversity” was calculated as the difference in the number of genres consumed before and after using subscription services.

For music, respondents were asked to check the genres they consumed before and after using subscription services across 14 categories: dance, ballad, international pop, R&B, hip-hop, trot, indie, jazz, classical, rock, folk/blues, traditional Korean music, acoustic, and new age. For films, respondents were selected from 13 genres: action, thriller, sci-fi/fantasy, melodrama/romance, comedy, animation, art/documentary, war/disaster, noir/crime, horror, music, documentary, and family. On average, the number of film genres consumed increased by 0.3, while music genres increased by 0.7 after using subscription services.

The independent variable, “cultural arts education experience,” was measured by asking, “Have you ever

received cultural arts education outside of school?” Responses were coded as “1” for yes and “0” for no.

Control variables expected to influence cultural consumption included overall satisfaction with subscription services, the importance of curation features in choosing a subscription service, and the frequency of cultural activities, all measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Additionally, age and whether the participant’s major or occupation was art-related was included as a continuous variable and a dummy variable, respectively.

Descriptive statistics for each variable are shown in **Table 1**. In the table, *N* represents the sample size, Min and Max indicate the minimum and maximum values, and Ave and SD represent the mean and standard deviation for each response. **Table 2** presents the correlation matrix. Due to multicollinearity concerns, film and music variables were excluded from the correlation analysis.

As shown in **Table 2**, the dependent variable preference change exhibited a significant positive (+) correlation with subscription service satisfaction and age, while showing a significant negative (-) correlation with cultural arts education. Cultural consumption volume was positively correlated with subscription service satisfaction but showed a negative (-) correlation with cultural arts education and art-related majors.

Table 1. Statistics

	N	Min	Max	Ave	SD
A change of taste	101	1	4	1.83	0.86
Amount of cultural consumption	101	1	5	4.08	0.98
Arts education	101	0	1	0.85	0.35
Movie	101	0	1	0.55	0.50
Music	101	0	1	0.45	0.50
Subscription service satisfaction	101	2	5	3.86	0.64
Curation function importance	101	1	5	3.06	1.15
Age	101	21	51	27	4.66
A major in the arts	101	0	1	0.28	0.45
Frequency of cultural activities	101	1	5	3.12	1.09

Table 2. Correlations

	1	2	3	4	6	7	8
1.	1						
2.	0.028	1					
3.	-0.277**	-0.193 ⁺	1				
4.	0.173 ⁺	0.252*	-0.003	1			
6.	0.231*	0.066	-0.003	0.131	1		
7.	0.014	-0.215*	0.088	-0.178 ⁺	0.041	1	
8.	-0.085	-0.118	0.259**	-0.073	-0.070	0.513**	1

Note: ⁺*P* < 0.10, **P* < 0.05, ***P* < 0.01. 1: A change of taste; 2: Amount of cultural consumption; 3: Arts education; 4: Subscription service satisfaction; 5: Curation function importance; 6: Age; 7: A major in the arts; 8: Frequency of cultural activities.

3.3. Results

The results of testing **Hypothesis 1**, which posits that individuals with cultural arts education experience will not exhibit preference changes due to curation features, are shown in Model 1 (M1) of **Table 3**. The analysis reveals that cultural arts education experience has a significant negative (-) effect on preference change, supporting **Hypothesis 1**.

Table 3. H1, H2 regression result

	M1	M2
Constant	0.546 (0.879)	3.930** (1.023)
Subscription service satisfaction	0.200 (0.129)	0.320* (0.150)
Curation function importance	0.143 ⁺ (0.073)	0.031 (0.085)
Age	0.018 (0.022)	-0.034 (0.025)
A major in the arts	-0.077 (0.223)	0.066 (0.259)
Frequency of cultural activities	0.066 (0.081)	0.070 (0.095)
Arts education	-0.711** (0.243)	-0.567* (0.283)
N		101
F		2.979*
R ²		0.106

Note: ⁺*P* < 0.10, **P* < 0.05, ***P* < 0.01.

According to Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, individual preferences are naturally internalized through family and school. When cultural capital is intentionally acquired through cultural arts education outside of school, preferences are similarly formed, and these established preferences are not easily altered. Even when subscription services introduce new genres through a variety of options, pre-existing cultural preferences tend to remain unchanged. This demonstrates that cultural arts education profoundly influences individual preferences, making them resistant to external changes.

To test **Hypothesis 2**, which asserts that individuals with cultural arts education experience will exhibit increased cultural consumption volume after using subscription services, regression analysis was conducted, with results shown in Model 2 (M2) of **Table 3**. The analysis indicates that cultural arts education experience has a significant negative (-) effect on cultural consumption volume. These findings suggest that individuals without cultural arts education experience consume quantitatively more content. Thus, **Hypothesis 2** is rejected.

Interestingly, individuals without cultural arts education experience consumed more cultural content. Since cultural consumption volume requires both time and financial resources, higher income and educational levels are associated with more frequent cultural consumption. Cultural consumption volume is closely linked to cultural capital, as supported by various previous studies^[20,21]. However, the contrasting results in this study make it difficult to definitively explain the cause. It is possible that individuals with lower cultural capital actively consumed more culture through subscription services to compensate for their deficiencies.

Previous studies also report that lower-class individuals with limited cultural capital demonstrate greater enthusiasm for their children's education to overcome feelings of inferiority, showing a negative (-) relationship between parental cultural capital and children's academic achievement^[22]. The finding that subscription services, accessible at the same cost for everyone, can provide opportunities to acquire cultural capital highlights their potential to mitigate cultural inequality.

Hypothesis 3, which posits that the effect of

subscription services on the diversity of consumed genres will differ depending on cultural arts education experience, was tested using t-tests for both film and music. As shown in **Table 4**, the results revealed statistically significant differences between those with and without cultural arts education experience.

Table 4. H3 t-test result

		N	AVE	df	t
Movie	Arts education O	86	0.325	99	0.169*
	Arts education X	15	0.200		
Music	Arts education O	86	0.558	99	-2.842**
	Arts education X	15	1.933		

Note: ⁺ $P < 0.10$, ^{*} $P < 0.05$, ^{**} $P < 0.01$.

For films, individuals with cultural arts education experience ($M = 0.325$) consumed a more diverse range of genres than those without such experience ($M = 0.200$). However, for music, those with cultural arts education experience ($M = 0.558$) consumed fewer genres compared to those without such experience ($M = 1.933$). These findings support **Hypothesis 3**.

The results for films align with prior research, indicating that cultural capital acquired through cultural arts education promotes the consumption of diverse genres, even when using subscription services. However, the opposite result emerged for music. Given that cultural arts education outside of school often focuses on music or visual arts, it is likely that strong pre-existing preferences for music limited cultural receptivity. Consequently, subscription services may have reduced the range of genres consumed compared to pre-subscription behavior.

This suggests that the unconscious and habitual nature of music consumption leads individuals to repeatedly listen to their preferred genres. Thus, subscription services may reinforce existing preferences rather than broaden them.

4. Conclusion

This study conducted an empirical analysis to determine whether the impact of subscription services on cultural consumption varies depending on cultural arts education

experience. In the context of limited research on the effects of cultural arts subscription services, this study holds significance by examining the influence of individual cultural capital on cultural preferences, the volume of consumption, and qualitative aspects from various perspectives.

However, this study has several limitations. First, it did not adequately measure the type of cultural arts education the respondents received. Specifically, it was not clear whether the education was theoretical or experiential, and the implications may vary depending on the nature of the experience. Additionally, different results might emerge depending on whether the respondents received music education or visual arts education. Future studies could investigate specific fields of education to discuss how differences in cultural arts

education fields relate to cultural consumption patterns influenced by subscription services.

Second, the average age of the respondents was in their twenties, but most were employed and some had postgraduate education, indicating a certain level of economic and cultural capital. While this study is meaningful in that it differentiated between fields within cultural arts subscription services and analyzed the varying effects of cultural arts education experience on cultural consumption, the specificity of the sample limits the generalizability of the findings and presents challenges in interpretation.

Future research could focus on young adults without income or further analyze differences by age group to verify whether the results align with this study's findings. Such work would provide valuable insights.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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