

How Netflix finds your happy binging place

[Mike Snider](#), USA TODAY Published 3:31 p.m. ET Feb. 8, 2017 | Updated 11:50 a.m. ET Feb. 13, 2017



The Netflix menu showing the original series 'Stranger Things.' (Photo: Netflix)

When you finish binging *Stranger Things* you take for granted Netflix may recommend another scary TV show or movie.

But would you expect to find the *Pokémon* animated TV series or *That Seventies Show* in your "Because You Watched" list?

Netflix is finding some interesting intersections of viewing tastes among its massive, and growing, collection of subscriber viewing data. As the service has grown globally to more than 93 million subscribers — and as many as 300 million individual user profiles — Netflix has also evolved and improved its algorithms for recommending other content to watch.

"It's a whole new way of finding people's individual tastes (and) getting it in front of them," said Ted Sarandos, chief content officer at Netflix. "We are really focused on Netflix being the home of your favorite show, no matter what your taste is."

Sarandos and Todd Yellin, Netflix's vice president of product innovation, talked with USA TODAY in advance of the streaming video provider's Wednesday daylong preview of upcoming 2017 content.

What you watch on Netflix, as well as when and how, lands you in one or more of about 1,300 distinct taste communities, Yellin says. The reason you might be recommended *Pokémon* after *Stranger Things* is because many like-minded Netflix viewers have seen both.

Similarly, those who watch *13th*, a documentary about racial bias and incarceration, are likely to watch *The Get Down* and *Hip Hop Evolution*, but may also gravitate to food documentaries such as *Fat, Sick & Nearly Dead* and *Forks Over Knives*. "We just pay attention to certain clusters and groupings of movie and TV shows the same people tend to watch together," Yellin said. "When they watch *The Crown*, what do they watch before or after?"

Netflix is also finding that streaming TV viewers' tastes globally are more alike than expected. Before [expanding to more than 190 countries](#) in January 2016, Netflix created separate personalization algorithms for the U.S., Canada, Europe, Mexico and other countries.

When faced with doing that for so many more countries, Netflix decided to test a theory that taste mattered more than location. "In a test we did, people streamed more hours when we used the global algorithm and we started ignoring the stereotypical marketing attributes you look at like age, gender and geography," Yellin said.

"What we are finding out is people's tastes are diverse, for sure," Sarandos

said. But also, "people's taste are dictated a lot more by what they have access to watch than you would glean from ratings and box office."

The ability to hyper-personalize content suggestions to subscribers helps prevent them from being overwhelmed by Peak TV, the concept that there's so much TV content available today that it's impossible to watch it all. "The notion of too much television is ludicrous because the shows that I care about you may not care about," Sarandos said.

As Netflix has gained competitors such as Amazon Video, Hulu and other streaming subscription services "you may actually need more television," he said.

"We talk about producing 1,000 hours of new programming this year (2017)," Sarandos said. "It's exciting but we don't expect all of our 93 million people to watch all of them. Some shows are meant for very specific audiences."



Netflix announced premiere dates for its original shows in 2017, which includes new seasons of Orange Is The New Black and House of Cards. Time

More:

Follow USA TODAY reporter Mike Snider on Twitter: [@MikeSnider](https://twitter.com/MikeSnider).