

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

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Tinder says it no longer uses a ‘desirability’ score to rank people

[Ashley Carman](#)

Illustration by Alex Castro / The Verge

Tinder wants to set the record straight about how its platform ranks and shows people potential matches, so today it published [a blog post](#) on the subject — but still kept things fairly vague. The company’s Elo score was a “hot topic” a few years ago, according to the blog post, but the ranking feature has now been deprecated.

The idea behind the Elo score was that Tinder would rank people by attractiveness. Elo scores are used to rank chess players, too, but in the context of Tinder, the more people that swiped right (or Liked) a person’s profile, the higher their assigned score went up. Their card would then be served to other people with a similar score, thereby keeping the most desirable people interacting with one another. On Tinder, where profiles are relatively limited in scope, a person’s looks often fuel much of the desire to match, so people speculated that these scores kept hot people talking to one another and left undesirable people to wallow with a low ranking.

"Tinder has grown out of the Elo score"

Tinder, unlike other apps, only requires users to input their age, distance, and gender preferences. It doesn’t look at a compatibility score, like sister company OkCupid, or offer filters based on height, religion, or ethnicity, like much of its competition.

“Our algorithm is designed to be open,” the company says. “Today, we don’t rely on Elo — though it is still important to consider both parties who Like profiles to form a match.”

Tinder adjusts potential matches a user sees every time someone acts on his or her profile, it says. The company reorders this user’s possible match profiles within 24 hours of actions being taken. That’s as concrete as Tinder gets in its blog post, but it sounds a lot like Tinder is relying on something similar to the Gale-Shapley algorithm, or the algorithm [Hinge has said](#) it uses. This algorithm identifies patterns around likes. If I like one guy, and so does another woman on the platform, she and I might have the same matching taste. If she’s liked someone on the platform that I haven’t seen yet, Tinder could show me that profile in the hopes that I might like it, too.

"The new algorithm hasn't been fully explained"

Of course, Tinder is also Match Group’s greatest moneymaker, so it gives users the option to fully skip over any of these algorithm rankings with an in-app purchase. That can be in the form of a [Super Like](#), which automatically moves a card toward the top of a person’s profile stack (and visually indicates to him or her that they’ve been Super Liked), or a [profile boost](#), which Tinder says brings a profile closer to the top of many other users’ profile stacks for 30 minutes.

Tinder feels like a free-for-all app, where truly everyone exists, but as the platform grows, it needs to order profiles in a somewhat personalized way, or else finding a match would feel impossible. While Elo scores worried many users, it likely made hot people’s experiences better, and if they swiped until the bottom of Tinder, they likely would have seen people with lower scores. Tinder, and all dating apps, need to create matches and produce dates for

people to stay connected, so it has an incentive to show people other users they might actually like to date.