


# The Evolution of Business Models in Digital Movie Streaming Platforms


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## ABSTRACT

**Research background:** The rapid development of digital technologies and the expansion of internet infrastructure have significantly transformed the media and entertainment industry, particularly movie distribution. Digital movie streaming platforms have emerged as dominant actors, displacing traditional distribution channels and reshaping value creation in the audiovisual sector. This transformation is driven by technological innovation, changing consumer behaviour, and intensifying competition, which together have prompted the continual evolution of streaming business models.

**Purpose of the article:** This paper analyses the evolution of business models in digital movie streaming platforms. It focuses on examining the relationships among market growth, digital infrastructure, consumer behaviour, and platform competition.

**Methods:** The study adopts a quantitative design based on secondary statistical data drawn primarily from international databases (mainly Statista). The analysis uses data covering 2018–2027 for global digital media trends and 2024 for country-level and consumer-behaviour indicators. The methodology combines descriptive statistics, graphical trend analysis, and regression analysis. Global market development is examined using time-series data on digital media users and streaming adoption, while selected country-level indicators are used to assess the relationship between economic and digital market conditions and video-on-demand revenue. Consumer behaviour is analysed through a comparative evaluation of subscription and cancellation motives. Model assumptions are assessed using diagnostic tests, including the Durbin–Watson and Shapiro–Wilk tests.

**Findings & Value added:** The results show that the growth of digital movie streaming platforms is closely associated with the expansion of internet use and digital media consumption. Economic development and digital market maturity significantly influence streaming revenues. Consumer decisions are driven primarily by content quality, price, and perceived value, highlighting the importance of retention strategies. Platforms increasingly adopt hybrid business models that combine subscription-based revenue with alternative monetisation approaches. Cross-country differences indicate variation in monetisation efficiency, and strong brand positioning appears to support premium pricing. Overall, the findings underscore the roles of digital infrastructure and competitive market conditions and provide practical insights for platform strategy, including pricing, content differentiation, retention, and investment in digital infrastructure. The results may inform decision-making on platform positioning, monetisation strategy, and long-term business model development.

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed how audiovisual content is produced, distributed, and consumed. Among the most consequential developments is the rise of digital movie streaming

platforms, which have disrupted traditional film distribution models such as theatrical releases, DVDs, and broadcast television. Platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ have not only altered viewing habits but have also reconfigured the economic logic of the film industry by creating platform-based ecosystems built on digital distribution, data analytics, con-

tent curation, and direct relationships with users (Budzinski et al., 2021; Chalaby, 2023; Lobato & Lotz, 2021).

Initially, streaming services relied primarily on subscription-based models, offering unlimited access to content for a fixed monthly fee. However, intensifying competition, market saturation, escalating content costs, and evolving consumer expectations have pushed platforms to innovate and diversify their business models. The industry is now characterised by a range of approaches, including ad-supported tiers, hybrid monetisation strategies, investments in exclusive content, algorithmic personalisation, and data-driven retention practices (McKenzie et al., 2024; Palomba, 2020; Tang & Wei, 2023). Recent studies also suggest that users increasingly combine multiple platforms based on content availability, price, convenience, and perceived complementarity, which heightens competitive pressure and strengthens the need for differentiated value propositions (Chan-Olmsted & Luo, 2024; Zabel et al., 2025).

Despite growing scholarly attention, the evolution of streaming business models remains a dynamic and complex research area. Existing work often focuses on specific dimensions—such as platform competition, catalogue strategy, personalisation, regulation, or consumer behaviour—while fewer studies examine these factors jointly in relation to market growth, digital infrastructure, and monetisation patterns. Understanding business model evolution in digital movie streaming is therefore relevant for both research and practice, as it clarifies how firms respond to technological change, competitive intensity, audience fragmentation, and the growing need to balance growth with profitability (Doyle, 2023; Lobato et al., 2024; Moraes et al., 2023).

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the evolution of business models in digital movie streaming platforms by examining the relationships between market growth, user adoption, digital infrastructure, consumer behaviour, and platform competition. The study draws on global digital media trends, selected country-level market indicators, and consumer motives for subscribing to and cancelling streaming services. By combining descriptive statistics, trend analysis, and selected quantitative procedures, the paper contributes to understanding how streaming platforms create, deliver, and capture value in an increasingly competitive digital media environment.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The evolution of business models in digital movie streaming platforms is best understood as part of a broader shift from linear media distribution to platform-based, internet-delivered audiovisual services. Streaming platforms have reconfigured the traditional film and television value chain by combining distribution, curation, recommendation, data extraction, and—increasingly—production within a single digital environment (Chalaby, 2023; Lobato & Lotz, 2021; Nicholson et al., 2021). Rather than functioning solely as content libraries, these services operate as platform ecosystems that connect viewers,

advertisers, rights holders, producers, and regulators through scalable digital infrastructures (Pentek et al., 2025; Fitzgerald, 2019). This “platformisation” has intensified interest in digital business models, particularly in how streaming firms create, deliver, and capture value under conditions of intense competition, low marginal distribution costs, and global reach (Moraes et al., 2023; Tang & Wei, 2023).

A central theme in the literature is the transformation of revenue logic. Early streaming growth was driven largely by subscription video-on-demand models, which reduced transactional friction and generated predictable recurring revenues. Over time, however, increasing market saturation, rising content costs, and subscription fatigue have encouraged platforms to adopt more differentiated monetisation strategies, including ad-supported video-on-demand (AVOD), hybrid pricing, and tiered offerings (Palomba, 2020; McKenzie et al., 2024; Tang & Wei, 2023). Research further suggests that users do not simply select one “best” service; instead, they assemble repertoires of platforms based on content breadth, price, convenience, and perceived complementarity (Chan-Olmsted & Luo, 2024; Clímaco & Larginho, 2023; Zabel et al., 2025). Recent U.S. evidence also indicates that platforms may benefit more from a consistently attractive catalogue than from a small number of “superstar” titles, underscoring the strategic importance of catalogue design in business model development (Palomba & Fleskes, 2025).

Another major strand of research emphasises the role of data, interface design, and algorithmic personalisation. Platforms such as Netflix use audience data not only to recommend content but also to shape interface architecture, determine catalogue visibility, support retention efforts, and guide investment decisions (Fernández-Manzano et al., 2016; Ladeira, 2019; Khoo, 2022). Studies of technological affordances show that navigability, interactivity, and personalised recommendations are among the main reasons audiences prefer streaming over traditional television (Evens et al., 2023; Mikos, 2016). At the same time, catalogue and interface scholarship argues that platform power increasingly lies in how content is organised, surfaced, and made discoverable, not only in what content is available (Lobato et al., 2024; Lordache et al., 2023; Česálková, 2023). This implies that business model evolution in streaming is inseparable from algorithmic curation and interface governance.

Consumer behaviour research complements this perspective by documenting how streaming has transformed viewing practices. On-demand access, portability, and interface-driven continuity have normalised binge-watching and individualised consumption rhythms (Jenner, 2020; Pilipets, 2019; Ortega, 2022). Younger audiences, in particular, display a strong preference for mobile, streaming-first consumption, while still retaining some attachment to the social dimensions of traditional television (Podara et al., 2021). These shifts matter for business models because engagement, loyalty, and time-on-platform have become central performance metrics. Accor-

dingly, the literature links business model success not only to content acquisition, but also to the design of user journeys, recommendation loops, and habit formation.

A further body of work highlights original content and portfolio strategy as key sources of competitive advantage. Streaming services increasingly invest in originals to reduce dependence on external rights holders, differentiate catalogues, and strengthen subscriber retention (Afilipoaie et al., 2021; lordache, 2021; Gómez & Muñoz Larroa, 2022). Genre and portfolio studies show that leading SVOD firms strategically combine differentiation with imitation: they expand into underrepresented genres while increasing investment in critically valued or audience-proven categories (Noh, 2020; Moraes et al., 2023). Research on open business models similarly suggests that local and regional platforms often respond to the dominance of global streamers through partnerships, co-production, licensing, and strategic alliances rather than direct scale-based competition (Huang & Ho, 2023). This supports the view that the streaming economy is not defined by a single universal business model, but by multiple evolving combinations of subscription logic, content ownership, partnership structures, and platform positioning (Figura & Vevere, 2025).

The internationalisation of streaming has also generated an important literature on localisation, cultural diversity, and regional asymmetries. While global platforms can broaden access to transnational content, they may also reproduce uneven power relations between large and small markets (Lobato, 2018; Chalaby, 2021; Paunksnis, 2023). Research on Basque-language cinema, Canadian French-language originals, and translation highlights both the opportunities and constraints of streaming-led circulation: international exposure may increase, but discoverability and long-term visibility remain uneven (Agirre, 2021; Boisvert, 2024; Choi et al., 2023). Diversity research further shows that inclusion is shaped not only by production decisions, but also by searchability, categorisation, and interface prominence, as demonstrated in studies of queer content, screen diversity, and minority-targeted niche SVODs (Monaghan, 2023; Monaghan, 2024; Edmond et al., 2024). These findings complicate the assumption that streaming automatically democratises access or representation.

Finally, scholarship increasingly examines the policy and institutional consequences of streaming business models. Regulatory studies argue that governments have begun to treat global streamers as powerful market actors whose operations affect local production, cultural visibility, and competition policy (Lobato et al., 2023; Idiz et al., 2021; Doyle, 2023). Research on broadcaster video-on-demand (BVOD), children's content, and public-service ecosystems suggests that legacy broadcasters remain important because they often support local production and public-value content that global subscription platforms do not consistently provide (Scarlata & Lobato, 2023; Potter, 2018; Balanzategui et al., 2024). Overall, the literature indicates that streaming business model evolution is driven by the interaction of subscription eco-

nomics, data-based personalisation, content ownership strategies, global–local tensions, and regulatory change.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The aim of this paper is to analyse the evolution of business models in digital movie streaming platforms by examining the relationships between market growth, user adoption, streaming penetration, country-level digital infrastructure, and consumer behaviour. The study seeks to explain how streaming platforms have moved from relatively simple subscription-based models toward more diversified, data-driven, and competitive business models.

The empirical objective is threefold. First, the paper evaluates the long-term growth of the streaming market using global indicators such as user numbers and revenue growth. Second, it examines whether country-level streaming development is associated with digital market conditions, especially internet user scale and digital media revenue. Third, it assesses whether consumer motives for subscribing and cancelling, together with pricing and brand awareness, reflect broader changes in platform monetization and competitive strategy.

Accordingly, the title of the paper is fully consistent with its objective and content, since the analysis directly concerns the transformation of value creation and revenue generation mechanisms in digital movie streaming platforms.

### Research hypotheses

To achieve the objective of the study, three research hypotheses are proposed.

- H1: The global video streaming market demonstrates a positive growth pattern in user numbers and market adoption over time, reflecting the continuing expansion of digital movie streaming platforms within the broader digital media ecosystem.
- H2: Consumer subscription and cancellation motives indicate that streaming business models are evolving from simple access-based subscription models toward models based on content differentiation, perceived value, pricing flexibility, and retention management.
- H3: Countries with a larger number of internet users tend to record higher streaming usage and higher video-on-demand revenue.

### Research methodology

The study applies a quantitative research design based on secondary statistical data. The methodological approach combines descriptive statistics with advanced statistical methods, which is appropriate for analysing the multidimensional nature of streaming platform business models.

The methodology consists of three analytical levels: (1) global time-series analysis, (2) cross-country comparative analysis, and (3) consumer-market analysis.

At the first level, the study analyses the long-term development of the streaming market using worldwide datasets on digital media users, digital media revenue growth, and OTT video penetration. For these variables, descriptive measures such as absolute change, growth rates, mean values, and compound annual growth rate are applied. In addition, the study uses trend analysis based on linear regression model.

To verify H1, the study compares the development of user numbers, revenue growth, and OTT penetration over time and tests whether their trends are positive and consistent. Correlation analysis may also be applied to examine whether these global variables move together.

At the second level, the study examines differences between countries. The relevant variables are the number of internet users by country, the share of users watching content via streaming services, video-on-demand revenue, and digital media revenue.

At the third level, the study uses a structured comparison of the most important motives for subscribing and cancelling services. In this part, descriptive analysis is complemented by interpretation of how demand-side preferences relate to platform business model evolution. If the dominant motives for subscribing are related to content quality, convenience, exclusivity, or bundled value, while cancellation is mainly related to price, lack of content, or low usage, this would support the view that business models are increasingly centred on retention, segmentation, and flexible value propositions.

The main statistical tools proposed in the paper are therefore: descriptive statistics, time trend analysis, growth dynamics analysis, Pearson and Spearman correlation, and simple regression analysis.

These methods are sufficiently robust and sophisticated for the purpose of the paper, while also remaining appropriate for the available datasets.

### Data used in the research

The analysis is based on secondary statistical data drawn from the attached datasets. These datasets cover global, country-level, and consumer-level indicators relevant to the evolution of digital movie streaming platform business models. The first group includes global time-series data, namely:

- digital media users worldwide from 2018 to 2027 by segment,
- digital media revenue growth worldwide from 2018 to 2027 by category.

These variables are used to assess market expansion and long-term industry dynamics. The second group includes country-level market data, namely:

- countries with the highest number of internet users in 2024,
- digital media revenue in selected countries in 2024,

- video-on-demand revenue in selected countries in 2024.

These variables allow the study to compare streaming development across different national markets and test the role of digital scale and market maturity. The third group includes consumer- and platform-level data, namely:

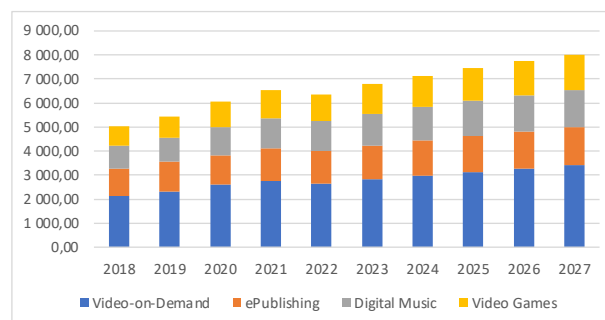
- reasons for subscribing to video streaming services in the United States in 2024,
- reasons for cancelling video streaming service subscriptions worldwide in 2024.

A limitation of the data is that the datasets do not always share the same geographical coverage, year range, or unit of observation. Therefore, the paper separates the analysis into global trends, cross-country relationships, and consumer-platform comparisons. This improves methodological consistency and avoids invalid direct comparisons between non-matching datasets.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Figure 1 presents the development of digital media users across different segments over time. The data show a strong and consistent increase in the number of users, particularly in the video-on-demand segment. This trend confirms the growing importance of streaming services within the broader digital media landscape. The results suggest that streaming platforms benefit from both technological diffusion and changing consumer preferences toward on-demand consumption. The observed growth supports hypothesis H1 and indicates that the streaming market is still in an expansion phase, although the rate of growth may gradually stabilize in more mature markets.

Figure 1: Users of digital media users worldwide from 2018 to 2027, by segment (in million)

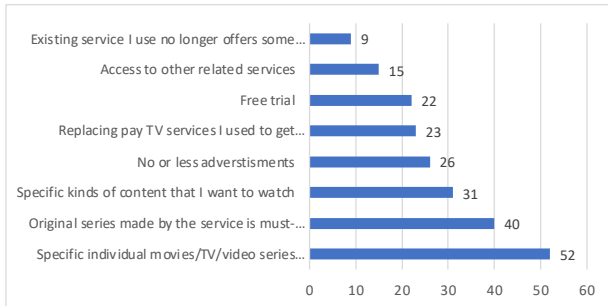


Source: Statista (2025)

Figure 2 shows the main reasons why consumers subscribe to video streaming services. The results indicate that content-related factors, such as access to exclusive or high-quality content, are the primary drivers of subscription decisions. Additional factors, including convenience, ease of use, and price, also play a significant role. These findings highlight that modern streaming business models are strongly content-driven and rely on continuous investment in attractive and differentiated content portfolios. The results support hypothesis H3,

suggesting that business models are evolving toward value-based and content-centric strategies.

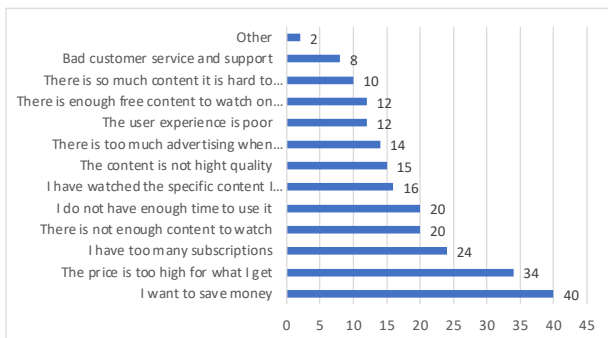
Figure 2: Main reasons for subscribing video streaming services (2024).



Source: Statista (2025)

Figure 3 presents the main reasons for cancelling video streaming subscriptions. The results show that price sensitivity, lack of attractive content, and low usage are the most important factors influencing cancellation decisions. This indicates that customer retention is a critical challenge for streaming platforms and that maintaining perceived value is essential for long-term profitability. The findings further support hypothesis H3, confirming that streaming business models are increasingly focused on retention strategies, pricing flexibility, and continuous content innovation.

Figure 3: Main reasons for cancelling video streaming subscriptions (2024).



Source: Statista (2025)

The Durbin–Watson statistic ( $DW = 1.99$ ) indicates no significant autocorrelation in the residuals (Tab.1). This suggests that the regression model satisfies the assumption of independence of errors. The corresponding p-value ( $p = 0.110$ ) further confirms that autocorrelation is not statistically significant. Therefore, the model can be considered reliable from the perspective of this diagnostic test.

Table 1: Durbin–Watson Test for Autocorrelation

Autocorrelation	DW Statistic	p
-0.288	1.99	0.110

Source: own calculations according to Statista (2025)

The Shapiro–Wilk test results ( $p = 0.759$ ) indicate that the residuals of the regression model are normally distributed (Tab. 2). This suggests that the normality assumption

required for regression analysis is satisfied. However, given the very small sample size, the power of the test is limited, and the results should be interpreted with caution.

Table 2: Shapiro–Wilk Test Results

Statistic	p
0.957	0.759

own calculations according to Statista (2025)

The regression results in Table 1 show that both GDP and digital media revenue (Rev\_M) have a positive and statistically significant effect on video-on-demand revenue. Specifically, an increase in GDP is associated with an increase in streaming revenue, indicating that wealthier economies tend to generate higher revenues from streaming services. Similarly, the positive coefficient for digital media revenue suggests strong interdependence between overall digital media markets and the streaming segment.

The magnitude of the coefficients indicates that digital media revenue has a slightly stronger effect on streaming revenue than GDP, highlighting the importance of digital ecosystem development. These results provide support for hypothesis H2, suggesting that country-level economic and digital factors are key drivers of streaming platform performance.

Table 3: Results of Regression Analysis

Overall Model Test						
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	df1	df2	p
1	1.000	1.00	5044	2	1	0.010

Note. Models estimated using sample size of N=4

Model Coefficients - Rev_V				
Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	-16130.212	547.903	-29.4	0.022
GDP_c	0.316	0.01040	30.4	0.021
Rev_M	0.338	0.0044	76.8	0.008

Source: own calculations according to Statista (2025)

The results of the empirical analysis provide important insights into the evolving business models of digital movie streaming platforms. First, the observed growth in global internet users and digital media consumption confirms that streaming platforms operate within a rapidly expanding digital ecosystem. This finding is consistent with prior research emphasising the role of digital infrastructure and technological diffusion as key drivers of platform-based business models (Chalaby, 2023; Lobato & Lotz, 2021). The confirmation of Hypothesis H1 suggests that continued expansion in connectivity and user adoption remains a fundamental condition for the growth of streaming services.

Second, the cross-country analysis demonstrates a strong relationship between market size, economic development, and streaming revenue. Countries with larger internet-user populations and higher levels of digital media revenue tend to generate significantly higher video-on-demand revenues. This supports Hypothesis H2 and aligns with studies highlighting the importance of scale and digital maturity in platform economies (Moraes et al., 2023; Tang & Wei, 2023). However, the comparison between countries such as the United States and China also reveals structural differences: although China has a substantially larger user base, its streaming revenue per user is lower, suggesting differences in monetisation strategies, pricing models, and consumer purchasing power.

Third, the analysis of consumer behaviour strongly supports Hypothesis H3. The results show that users primarily subscribe to access high-quality and exclusive content, whereas cancellations are driven mainly by price concerns, lack of relevant content, and reduced usage. This highlights the growing importance of retention strategies and customer lifetime value in streaming business models. These findings are consistent with prior research emphasising the shift from simple subscription models toward more complex, data-driven, and user-centric approaches (Fernández-Manzano et al., 2016; Jenner, 2020).

Overall, the results indicate that streaming platforms are evolving toward hybrid and adaptive business models that combine subscription revenue, advertising, content investment, and data analytics. This transformation reflects intensifying competition in the industry—often described as the “streaming wars”—in which platforms compete not only on price, but also on content, user experience, and ecosystem integration. At the same time, the findings underscore the need to balance growth and profitability, as high content production costs and user acquisition expenses continue to challenge the long-term sustainability of streaming platforms (Doyle, 2023).

Despite these contributions, the results should be interpreted with caution. The small sample size in the cross-country regression analysis limits the generalisability of the findings, and some datasets are not fully comparable across countries. Accordingly, the results should be viewed as exploratory rather than definitive. Future research could expand the dataset, include more countries and time periods, and apply more advanced econometric techniques to provide deeper insight into the dynamics of streaming platform business models.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to analyse the evolution of business models in digital movie streaming platforms by examining the relationships among market growth, digital infrastructure, consumer behaviour, pricing strategies, and platform competition. Based on the empirical results, this aim can be considered achieved. The study provides an integrated overview of how streaming platforms have

evolved from simple subscription-based services into complex, data-driven ecosystems characterised by diversified monetisation strategies and intense competition.

The main findings confirm that the growth of digital movie streaming platforms is closely associated with the expansion of internet users and global digital media consumption. The results show a clear upward trend in user adoption, revenue generation, and OTT penetration, supporting the hypothesis that streaming platforms benefit from continued digitalisation. Moreover, the cross-country analysis suggests that economic development and the scale of the digital population are key determinants of streaming revenue, with more developed and digitally mature countries generating higher market value.

Another important finding is that business model evolution is strongly shaped by consumer behaviour. Users are primarily motivated to subscribe by content quality and exclusivity, whereas cancellations are driven by price sensitivity and insufficient perceived value. This indicates that streaming platforms must continuously adapt their content strategies and pricing models to maintain engagement and retention. In addition, the relationship between subscription prices and brand awareness suggests that leading platforms may sustain premium pricing through strong positioning and perceived value.

The study has several limitations. First, the empirical analysis relies on a relatively small sample of countries, which restricts the generalisability of the findings. Second, some datasets contain missing values and measurement differences that may affect cross-country comparability. Third, the use of relatively simple statistical models—necessitated by data constraints—means that the results should be interpreted as exploratory. These limitations indicate that caution is warranted when drawing broader conclusions.

Future research should address these limitations by incorporating larger and more comprehensive datasets, including additional countries and longer time series. Applying more advanced econometric approaches (e.g., panel-data methods or structural modelling) could also provide stronger evidence on causal relationships. Further studies might examine platform-level strategies, including the role of advertising-based models, the efficiency of content investment, and the effects of artificial intelligence on personalisation and user retention.

In conclusion, the evolution of business models in digital movie streaming platforms reflects a broader shift in the media industry toward platform-based, consumer-oriented, and data-driven systems. As competition intensifies and markets mature, streaming platforms' ability to innovate, differentiate content, and adapt pricing strategies will be critical to long-term sustainability and competitive advantage.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Conceptualization, M.B. and I.G.; methodology, M.B. and I.G.; software, M.B.; validation, M.B. and I. G.; formal analysis, N.H.; investigation, M.B., I. G. and N.H.; resources, K.F.-M. and K.Z.; data curation, M.B.; writing-original draft preparation, M.B.; writing-review and editing, N.H.; visualization, M.B; supervision, I.G. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

## AI DISCLOSURE

The authors did not use artificial intelligence in preparing this article.

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