

[Page de garde]



**HEC MONTRÉAL**  
École affiliée à l'Université de Montréal

**Binge-watching :  
more is the new normal**

**par  
Myriam Brouard**

Thèse présentée en vue de l'obtention du grade de Ph. D. en administration  
(option Marketing)

Août 2021

© Myriam Brouard, 2021



**HEC MONTRÉAL**  
École affiliée à l'Université de Montréal

Cette thèse intitulée :

**Binge-watching:  
more is the new normal**

Présentée par :

**Myriam Brouard**

a été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes :

Verena Gruber  
HEC Montréal  
Présidente-rapporteuse

Jean-Sébastien Marcoux  
HEC Montréal  
Directeur de recherche

Jonathan Deschênes  
HEC Montréal  
Membre du jury

Annamma Joy  
University of British Columbia  
Examinatrice externe

Renaud Legoux  
HEC Montréal  
Représentant du directeur de HEC Montréal



## Résumé

Le binge-watching consiste à : « Regarder plusieurs épisodes (d'un programme de télévision) en succession rapide, généralement au moyen de DVD ou de streaming numérique » (Oxford English Dictionary 2013). Selon des statistiques récentes, près de 30% de tous les téléspectateurs Américains ont regardé une saison entière d'une série télévisée en 24 heures, plus de 50% sont restés éveillés toute la nuit pour regarder une émission de télévision et près de 25% ont annulé leurs plans pour continuer le binge-watching (Feldman 2018). Cette pratique a été accentuée par la pandémie où plus de 65% de tous les adultes Américains ont admis avoir écouté encore plus d'émissions diffusées en continu (streaming) qu'auparavant (Watson 2020).

Le binge-watching, qui était autrefois considéré comme une activité marginale, est désormais indéniablement devenu un courant dominant. Pourtant, il existe actuellement très peu de recherches en marketing s'intéressant explicitement à ce que signifie ce nouveau mode de consommation pour les consommateurs et les producteurs culturels. Il est donc primordial de comprendre que les motivations de cette panoplie de téléspectateurs doivent être multiples et que les approches de recherche sur ce sujet doivent également être nombreuses et variées.

La numérisation et la capacité de diffusion en continu (streaming) ont changé l'écosystème médiatique (Lotz 2006; Marcus 2006). La télévision n'est plus limitée au câble ou au téléviseur du salon. Aujourd'hui, le foyer Américain moyen dispose de sept appareils compatibles avec le streaming (Spangler 2019) sur lesquels il peut accéder à des quantités presque illimitées de contenu télévisuel sur demande. Hormis les

contraintes d'horaires de diffusion et des limites liées à la disponibilité du matériel, on voit se développer une nouvelle forme de consommation qui engendre aussi un nouveau marché. Le consommateur, maintenant autonome dans ses décisions sur son horaire de consommation télé (Merikivi et al. 2020), a propulsé une demande croissante de contenus pouvant être visionnés de manière rapide et successive (binge-watch).

Cette thèse démontre que le binge-watching est distinct des autres formes de binging en général et qu'il peut être distingué des autres types de consommation excessive. Il n'y a pas que des enjeux de vitesse, d'accélération et d'optimisation du temps: le binge-watching améliore l'expérience de visionnement.

Cette thèse est composée de deux chapitres. Le premier chapitre se penche sur la littérature sur la consommation binge pour conceptualiser l'activité, étendre cette conceptualisation au binge-watching et faire des recommandations pour les producteurs culturels s'adaptant à un monde où la pratique du binge-watching est courante. Le deuxième chapitre utilise la phénoménologie du film comme lentille pour comprendre l'expérience de binge-watching et pour distiller l'essence de l'activité.

La conclusion de cette recherche a des conséquences importantes pour l'étude de la consommation excessive, de la consommation de télévision, de la consommation des médias numériques et de la consommation en général. Cela a aussi des implications importantes pour les chercheurs en consommation intéressés par de nouvelles formes d'expériences de consommation et pour les producteurs culturels qui doivent s'adapter à une nouvelle norme dans laquelle les consommateurs veulent toujours plus, toujours plus vite.



**Mots clés :** Binge-watching, consommation binge, consommation télévisuelle en rafale, télévision, sérialité, phénoménologie, industries culturelles

**Méthodes de recherche :** Phénoménologie, ethnographie, entretiens, analyse de données d'archive

## **Abstract**

To binge-watch is to: "Watch multiple episodes of (a television program) in rapid succession, typically by means of DVDs or digital streaming" (Oxford English Dictionary 2013). According to recent statistics, nearly 30% of all US TV viewers have watched an entire season of a TV serial in 24 hours, over 50% have stayed up all night to binge-watch a TV show, and nearly 25 % have cancelled social plans to binge-watch (Feldman 2018). These numbers have only been accentuated by the pandemic where more than 65% of all American adults have admitted to streaming even more shows than before (Watson 2020).

Digitization and streaming capability changed the televisual landscape (Lotz 2006; Marcus 2006). TV is no longer tethered to the cable or to the TV set in the living room. Instead, the average American household has seven streaming capable devices (Spangler 2019) on which they can tap into nearly unlimited amounts of televisual content on demand. Away from the constraints of broadcast schedules and limitations related to the availability of material, we see a new form of consumption developing that has bred with it a new market as well. This newfound consumer autonomy (Merikivi et al. 2020) has propelled a growing demand for content that can be binge-watched.

Binge-watching, which was once considered a fringe activity, has now become undeniably mainstream. Yet, there is currently very little research in marketing explicitly looking at what this new way of consuming means for the consumers and the cultural producers. Therefore, it is paramount to understand that the motivations of this panoply of viewers must be multifold and that the approaches to researching this topic must also be many and varied.

This dissertation is comprised of two chapters. The first chapter looks to the literature on binge consumption to conceptualize the activity, extend this conceptualization to binge-watching, and make recommendations for cultural producers adapting to a binge-watching audience. While the second chapter uses phenomenology of film as a lens to understand binge-watchers' viewing experience and distill the essence of the activity.

This dissertation shows that binge-watching is distinct from other forms of binging in general and that it can be set apart from other types of excessive consumption. There is more at play than issues of speed, acceleration, and time optimization: binge-watching improves the quality of the overall viewing experience. It makes TV better. Furthermore, it has far-reaching consequences for the study of Binge consumption, TV consumption, media consumption, and consumption in general. It has important implications for consumer researchers interested in new forms of consumption experiences and for cultural producers that must adapt to a new normal in which consumers want every episode before they start to consume.

**Keywords:** Binge-watching, binge consumption, TV serials, seriality, phenomenology, cultural industries,

**Research methods:** Phenomenology, ethnography, long interview, archival data analysis

## Table of contents

Résumé.....	iii
Abstract.....	vii
Table of contents.....	viii
Liste of tables and figures.....	ix
Acknowledgements.....	xii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 Binge-watching : A use case for understanding the particularities of the digital media binge.....	6
Abstract.....	6
1.1 Introduction.....	7
1.2 Binge – An Introduction.....	10
1.3 Binge-watching.....	21
1.4 Discussion.....	26
1.5 Conclusion.....	28
Chapter 2 The Phenomenology of Binge-Watching.....	31
Abstract.....	31
2.1 Introduction.....	32
2.2 Literature review.....	37
2.3 Methodology.....	46
2.4 Findings.....	53
2.5 Discussion.....	72
2.6 Implications.....	79
2.7 Conclusion.....	85
Conclusion.....	87
References.....	90

## List of tables and figures

Figure 1 .....	20
Table 1 .....	51



*To my family, the only thing that keeps me sane.*





## Acknowledgements

The PhD is a difficult endeavor even for the best and most organised of scholars. I am not this. This process was extremely difficult for me, and I was very glad to have much help along the way. Trying to name all the individuals who have had an impact on this journey is a fool's errand. I will forget many. But that does not mean they are less important.

I am thankful for my mentors and my colleagues in academia. To my supervisor, Jean-Sebastien Marcoux who has been there from the beginning. To my committee, Jonathan Deschênes, Zeynep Arsel, and Verena Gruber. To my workation friends and colleagues, members of the McCarthy society, Virpi Nasanen and Mikko Laamanen. To my support group, Daiane Scaraboto, Bernardo Figueiredo, Olivier Sibai, Marlon Dalmoro, Andrew Smith, Marcia Christina Ferreira, Meriam Belkhir, Katja Brunk, and Aimee Dinnin Huff. To my defacto mentor, David Crockett, who always answered when I called and gave a friendly read on this work early in the process. To Rob Kozinets, Eileen Fischer, Markus Giesler, Pierre-Yann Dolbec, A.J. Earley, And Ela Veresiu, who had much impact during and after my time at York. To Behnaz Saboonchi, Jessica Darveau, Pierre-Luc Fournier, Moustapha Cheikh Ammar, Renaud Legoux and all others from HEC Montreal. To Russel Belk and Richard Wilk who read over this work and provided comments and references that helped greatly. To William Milnes who was an important influence throughout the process. To Annamma Joy, an amazing individual who person and work has ignited my passion for research, I feel privileged to have your feedback on this work. And to so many more. Basically, all the people who have been a formative and constructive part of this path. I look forward to maintaining our interactions in the next phase of my journey.

I am thankful for my friends who are not in academia. You always asked questions about my work and showed genuine interest in what I was doing. My ability to bend your ears time and time again has helped me and given me so much perspective. I am blessed to have you all.

Additionally, I am thankful for my family, who has been by my side, and has listened to me and supported me through this whole process. Jeffrey Philipp, Deirdre Philipp, Holden Philipp, Henry Philipp, Magda Fredrik, Pierre-Michel Brouard, Reynald Brouard your support has been unwavering. Days where I could not go out to play, or weeks where I was not in the best of shape, you always accommodated me and made me feel like I was important and loved. For this, I am especially grateful.

And lastly, to myself, Myriam Brouard. There have been many struggles to make it to this point. Many times, where it seemed it would be easier to give up and walk away. But I kept telling myself to push forward. I believed that I could make it. And I never gave up on myself. When I needed to, I sought help and resources, and I did all I could to move forward in my path. It took longer than I wanted, but I don't care about that. Because in the end, I am here. I write this acknowledgement to myself, not as a pat on the back, but as a reminder that when I will be in the space to help a student through this process, I need to have grace and compassion. That I didn't make it through unscathed, but that I learned a lot. Being open to learn and to change is a part of this process. The Myriam Brouard that submits this in 2021, is very different than the one who started this journey in 2012. The same will be true of anyone I have the good fortune of working with in the future. I am grateful for my resilience through this process and hopeful that I have been armed with what it takes to have a positive impact on the lives of future scholars.

## Introduction

“Excess on occasion is exhilarating. It prevents moderation from acquiring the deadening effect of a habit.”

--W. Somerset Maugham

We have often considered excess as a steam valve to release the pressure exerted by the rigours and the monotony of everyday life (Wilk 2014). These indulgent moments are special and cherished because they are few and far between. If they move from occasional to habitual, the behaviours are then often classified as problematic (d’Astous 1990). The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the rise in popularity of a consumption behaviour that is considered to be excessive and immoderate: Binge-watching.

The editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary* shortlisted the verb “binge-watch” for “Word of the Year” in 2013 (the honor going to “selfie”), and it officially entered the dictionary in 2014. To binge-watch is to: “Watch multiple episodes of (a television program) in rapid succession, typically by means of DVDs or digital streaming.” The popularity of this form of consumption is commonly attributed to the rise of Netflix (Riccio 2013). But people have been binge-watching TV serials long before Netflix made it so convenient.

In the past, a consumer could purchase a VHS/DVD box set or record a show by use of a mechanical device (VHS/Betamax) or a digital device (PVR) (Marcus 2006). After accumulating or acquiring the viewing material, consumers could then watch them in a successive manner. However, this was a marginal practice mostly reserved for fans

who could expend the resources (monetary or technical) to collect the material to watch (Hills 2002).

Digitization and streaming capability changed the televisual landscape (Lotz 2006; Marcus 2006). It is no longer difficult, costly, or time-consuming to collect materials to watch. Streaming provides unparalleled convenience. Away from the constraints of broadcast schedules and limitations related to the availability of material, we see a new form of consumption developing that has bred with it a new market as well. This newfound consumer autonomy (Merikivi, Bragge, Scornavacca, and Verhagen 2020) has propelled a growing demand for content that can be binge-watched.

This demand was embraced early on by first movers like Netflix, who saw the potential and capitalized on the activity. In 2014, Reed Hastings, the CEO of Netflix claimed the following: “Netflix’s brand for TV shows is really about binge viewing,” he said. “It is to accommodate, to just get hooked, and watch episode after episode. It’s addictive, it’s exciting, it’s different.” During the same period, the topic of binge-watching became popular in the media (Choi 2011; Daum 2012; Elia 2013; Jurgensen 2012; McCracken 2013; Pagels 2012; Poniewozik 2012; Riccio 2013; Wilson 2013). Often there were debates over whether binge-watching was the best way to watch TV (Riccio 2013) or if it would ruin the TV viewing experience (Pagels 2012). But now, in 2021, it has become one of the most prominent ways viewers consume televisual content (Statista 2020). Despite this fact, there is a disturbing dearth of research focussing on the activity itself and what it means for cultural producers.

In the past, binge-watching or rather ‘marathons’ of television serials have been studied regarding fan activities and fan communities (Jenkins 2006). Henry Jenkins explicitly takes on the stereotypical view that popular media have of the “fan”: “the Trekkies, who love nothing more than to watch the same 79 episodes over and over” (Jenkins 2006, 38). In addition, he elaborates on the meaning of re-watching or “repeated rereading” (Jenkins 2006, 125) for fan culture. Furthermore, consecutive and repeated viewing of TV serials have also been studied in regard to cult viewing practices described as: “(...) not just the result of random, directionless entertainment seeking, but rather a combination of intense physical and emotional involvement” (Mendik and Harper from Sandvoss 2005, 41). These viewing practices play a central role in the fan-text relationship (Hills 2002; Jenkins 2006a,b; Sandvoss 2005). More recently, binge-watching has been addressed in the fan literature. However, fan and media scholars still prefer to use terms like media-marathoning (Perks 2015) to eschew negative connotations embedded in the word binge.

Outside of fan studies and media studies, Binge-watching has not been afforded much interest when it comes to mainstream television audiences. In a transdisciplinary review of binge-watching published by Merikivi et al. in 2020, the authors claim that since coming to the fore in 2014, only 29 articles have been published on binge-watching. Twenty of these were in media and communication, two were in psychology, and seven were in other disciplines. Of the 29, only one was in Marketing, and that is the paper published in 2016 in the Journal of Marketing by Schweidel and Moe. This paper looks at understanding how users of streaming platforms who binge respond to

advertisements. They start by defining binge behaviour as: “Binge behavior, in general, has been defined by psychological researchers as an “excessive amount in a short time,” such as binge eating or binge drinking” (Schweidel and Moe 2016, 3). This approach equating binge consumption with excessive consumption follows the standard definitions of the activity. Excessive consumption, a concept closely related to binge consumption, has often been looked at in consumer research literature through a pathological lens. Be it addiction (Hirschman 1992), compulsive consumption (Rook 1987), or a failure to self-regulate (Baumeister 2002), it has almost always been perceived as problematic and undesirable (Wilk 2011). This angle is necessary but not sufficient to understand the phenomenon at hand.

Firstly, it is essential to recognize that binge-watching is not a marginal activity. According to recent statistics, nearly 30% of all US TV viewers have watched an entire season of a TV serial in 24 hours, over 50% have stayed up all night to binge-watch a TV show, and nearly 25 % have cancelled social plans to binge-watch (Feldman 2018). These numbers have only been accentuated by the pandemic where more than 65% of all American adults have admitted to streaming even more shows (Statista 2020): “Binge-viewing no longer occurs only when consumers are invested in a certain show or have more time to relax with their favorite content. Partially fueled by U.S. consumers’ love of SVoD (and the ways such services release new shows and movies), binge-viewing has accelerated to the point where watching multiple episodes of television shows or film series in one sitting has become the norm for many.” Then it is paramount to understand the dimensions of binge consumption and confront them with those of the

binge-watching activity. The purpose of the exercise is to tease out the similarities and differences between both activities. The first chapter of this dissertation makes salient the most important conceptual differences between binge consumption and binge-watching: the embedded everydayness of the activity. The chapter then makes recommendations to cultural producers regarding the type of content preferred by this new incontrovertible binge-watching consumer. The second chapter of this dissertation delves more deeply into the experience of binge-watching using phenomenology to explore the activity in question. This dissertation has far-reaching consequences for the study of TV consumption, media consumption, and consumption in general.

# Chapter 1

## **Binge-watching: A use case for understanding the particularities of the digital media binge**

### **Abstract**

Digital media consumption is changing the landscape for cultural producers (Salvador, Simon, and Benghozi 2019). Many of which find it difficult to adjust to the new realities engendered by this change, which includes but is not limited to rethinking the entire production process, from conceptualising and writing, all the way to execution and distribution (Landau 2018). Understanding new ways that consumers interact with cultural content is of paramount importance when trying to adapt and stay relevant (Colbert and Dantas 2019). This paper seeks to provide cultural entrepreneurs with a solid grasp of binge consumption, which has emerged as one of the most dominant modes of consumption (Watson 2020) since the avail of digitization and streaming of cultural properties (Marcus 2006). This work will conceptualize binge consumption, extend this conceptualization to the use case of binge-watching, and provide some guidance for cultural entrepreneurs as move to meet the demands of this new market.

### *Keywords:*

binge-watching, binge consumption, cultural products, normalization of excess



## 1.1 Introduction

Digital access to arts and entertainment products has revolutionized how artistic output is consumed (Salvador, Simon, and Benghozi 2019). This is a truism that has forced cultural industries around the production and distribution of media products to readjust to stay relevant. The revolution is present for all cultural entrepreneurs, be they in the field of cinema (Salvador, Simon, and Benghozi 2019), the field of music (Perron-Brault, Dantas, and Legoux 2020), or more traditional fields like writing (Bourgeon-Renault, Derbaix, Jarrier, and Petr 2019).

It is especially true in the case of TV serials, where once viewers were tied metaphorically and practically to the broadcast TV schedules of local and cable broadcasters (Marcus 2006). Now the average American household has on average seven devices capable of streaming video content (Spangler 2019). People watch at their leisure in the comfort of their homes, on their commute, at their work, or even while camping. This new freedom, away from broadcast schedules, has led to the birth of what is now called TV on-demand, as explained by Neil Landau (2016) in his book *TV Outside the Box: Trailblazing in the Digital Television Revolution*. As the title of the book suggests, there is more to the television revolution than what is happening on the screen. Cultural entrepreneurs, who work in this domain, must understand how TV on-demand is affecting their consumers.

One of the most salient and disruptive trends for the industry is the very nature of how TV viewers consume televisual content in 2021. More and more, we find consumers to be engaged with digital media content for short but intensive bursts. In the

world of visual media, these instances have been termed binge-watching (Oxford Dictionaries 2013). According to Kleinman (2014), 668,000 American Netflix subscribers watched all 649 minutes (almost 11 hours) of the second season of the Netflix Original TV serial *House of Cards* during the 72 hours following its release. A survey by TiVo Research found that over 91% of the 15,000 respondents had previously binge-watched a TV serial, with 40% having done so during the previous week and 69%, during the previous month (TiVo Research 2014). The same survey revealed that three quarters of the respondents had “super-binged”; in other words, they had watched an entire season of a TV serial—and sometimes more than one entire season—in just a few days. In a more recent survey of 5, 500 respondents, 80% admitted to having lost sleep in order to continue watching a series, and almost 20% confessed to having called in sick to work to keep binge-watching (Ward 2019). This has only been exacerbated by the global pandemic, where a survey found Canadians watched on average 19 hours and 35 minutes of television content in a typical week, and 73% binge-watched (James 2021). Understanding this new way to consume is of paramount importance for cultural entrepreneurs who must be able to innovate in their content and distribution strategies to meet the demands of an evolving market. As so aptly put by Colbert and Dantas (2019, 4): “The search for new audiences and the adaptation of the cultural product to these new customers also relies on a profound understanding of their expectations and behaviours.” To do that, it would be important to understand binge consumption and how it manifests in the digital space.

A binge refers to a short period devoted to indulging in an activity to excess (New Oxford American Dictionary 2010). This definition makes clear that a binge involves consumption to a level that well exceeds what is necessary, but it does not make a value judgement on the activity. Conversely, excessive consumption, which is a concept closely related to binge consumption, has often been looked at in consumer research literature through a pathological lens. Be it an addiction (Hirschman 1992), compulsive consumption (Rook 1987), or a failure to self-regulate (Baumeister 2002), it has almost always been perceived as problematic and undesirable (Wilk 2011). Is there a conceptual difference between bingeing and binge-watching? What are the implications for consumers and cultural entrepreneurs of binge behaviour and how does understanding them help inform the decision making of cultural entrepreneurs in fields where binge consumption is becoming more prevalent? These are the questions that we will examine.

In this paper, we will explore the concept of bingeing and see how the conceptual differences between physical bingeing and the digital bingeing of media products influence the cultural production industry. We will start by delving into the relevant studies that help us understand binge consumption, follow with the use case of binge-watching, and finally discuss the particularities of a digital media binge and recommendations for content producers and distributors considering the findings from this work.

## 1.2 Binge – An Introduction

As mentioned above, binge is a common usage term that all significant dictionaries define, for example as "a short period devoted to indulging in an activity to excess, especially drinking alcohol or eating" (New Oxford American Dictionary 2013); other dictionaries like the Cambridge Dictionary define the term as: "an occasion when an activity is done in an extreme way, especially eating, drinking, or spending money," while others only refer to the nature of the event: "an occasion where someone does too much of something they enjoy, such as drinking" (Macmillan British Dictionary). What is clear is that the term conveys in most definitions the idea of excess, transgression, and indulgence. This is not surprising, as the etymology of the word stems from a dialectical use of the word "binge," which meant "to soak (a wooden vessel)" (Online Etymology Dictionary). At such time, it is said that the term was not used with a negative connotation: "By the early 20th century the word was being used for parties at which large amounts of drink were consumed, with no particular sense that there was anything to criticize: the Oxford English Dictionary has a quote from 1922: "this is only a binge... just a jolly old bachelor party" (Cornell 2008).

Aside from this notion of the binge as an activity that is described as extreme indulgence where one does or consumes too much of something that they enjoy, the most recent pervasive use of the term binge has been associated with self-compromising excessive behaviours involving drink and food (Treis, Wilbur, and Otnes 1999; Faber and Vohs 2012). Cornell (2008) traces the first uses of the term binge by psychiatrists to the 1930s where "eating binge" was used in *Psychiatric Quarterly*. In the literature review

which follows, we will explore the use of the term in various social science fields. In line with the characteristics found in the extant literature, we have conceptualised binge consumption as: problematic, indulgent, celebratory, temporary, and transgressive. These five characteristics will be expanded below to help guide our understanding of the binge as a consumption activity. We then look to see how this conceptualisation of binge can help us to comprehend binge-watching, the new consumption behaviour that has arisen with the available abundance of digital entertainment products. To better understand these new binge consumers, we will first need to do a deep dive into what bingeing is, and how it manifests in the digital cultural sphere. This is the conceptual gap that this paper hopes to bridge to better inform cultural producers and distributors on the shifting landscape due to this new form of rapid bulk consumption of digital iterations of their productions.

### **Problematic**

The specific concept of binge has been addressed in the consumer research and consumer psychology literature from the standpoint of a pathological problem. So far, it has only been explored as a function of addiction and compulsion. Binge behaviour is described as a relapse (Hirschman 1992) or a severe self-control failure (Faber, Christenson, Zwaan, and Mitchell 1995; O'Guinn and Faber 1989; Faber and Vohs 2012). In these works, to compulsively overconsume is a personal/social problem that needs a solution. Binge, which is characterized as a type of overconsumption behaviour, is also seen as being part of a greater nexus of co-morbid dysfunctions (Faber et al. 1995; Hirschman 1992: "(...) there can be a complete breakdown of self-regulation. In this case, a problem behaviour becomes chronic and uncontrollable and leads to severe

problems for the individual. Disorders such as bulimia, binge-eating behaviour, and compulsive buying represent examples of this type of problem" (Faber and Vohs 2012, 468). Thus, bringing forth the idea that the binge, when it relates to food, drink, or drugs, is a symptom of a more significant psychological problem or of a greater addiction. This is in line with the classification of pathologies like binge-eating disorder, which is included in the DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5<sup>th</sup> edition).

What constitutes a binge is a very mutable concept in the literature. Treis et al. (1999, 17) define the act of bingeing as: "Binge drinking behaviour — or the consumption of five or more drinks in a row on at least one occasion within a typical two-week period." They take this definition from the studies on substance abuse literature, but the term has evolved even in that field. Currently, the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs'* policy for the use of the word in their publication is defined as follows: "the term "binge" should only be used to describe an extended period of time (usually two or more days) during which a person repeatedly administers alcohol or another substance to the point of intoxication and gives up his/her usual activities and obligations in order to use the substance." They do not specify the number of drinks for the period, just the behaviour. The binge is never studied as a standalone concept, and thus there is a void of knowledge regarding this type of activity.

This problematic and comorbid facet of binge is one of the first that is evoked by the term. It is important to acknowledge this facet of the activity, and the potential for it to be anchored in deeper psychological issues. Although this is very important, it does not

capture the breadth of the activity, and so we move on to look at another facet in the next section on indulgence.

### **Indulgent**

The idea of control, or more precisely self-control, is found in much of the literature on compulsive consumption and addiction in consumer research (Baumeister 2002; Faber et al. 1995; Faber and Vohs 2012; Hirschman 1992; Hofmann, Baumeister, Förster and Vohs 2012; Hofmann, Vohs, and Baumeister 2012; O'Guinn and Faber 1989). The literature seems to dichotomize consumers into either 'normal' or compulsive (excessive) consumers (d'Astous 1990).

The works of Kivetz and Simonson (2002a; 2002b) link indulgence and short-term self-gratification together. This is further developed in articles on hyperopia (Kivetz and Keinan 2006), a short-sighted behaviour born out this inability to self-control this form of self-indulgence. Indulgence is also present in the work of Mick and Demoss (1990) on the self-gift. The concept of indulgence in consumer research is often couched in self-control literature, but it need not be perceived as a negative occurrence (Mick and Demoss 1990).

This is an important distinction, because binge is often framed as indulgent (New Oxford American Dictionary 2013). But again, these works on indulgence related to self-control provide a limited portrait of the activity, because as we will see in the next section, sometimes the goal is to lose control.

## **Celebratory**

Looking at the previous work in consumer research on the topics of binge behaviour and self-indulgence (Faber et al.1995; Kivetz and Simonson 2002a, b), it may seem almost nonsensical to argue that consumers would want to indulge in the overconsumption of TV serials willingly. By looking at work on binge consumption in anthropology, we can demonstrate that this is not a new tradition developed with the rapid proliferation of media technologies. The desire to indulge has been known to sustain periods in which consumers had to go through hardships and bouts of deprivation (Wilk 2014). The knowledge that one will let loose after specific tasks have been completed has been documented as a motivating force to pursue work in challenging environments (Wilk 2007, 2014). The same logic can be loosely applied to Mick and Demoss's (1990) conceptualization of self-gift, where indulgence can be seen as a personal reward for completing some arduous task and, by extension to the work of Hirschman (1992), where the consumers who would not abuse certain substances during their work or studies would schedule indulgence periods during which we could assume that they over-consumed to make up for the previous self-imposed bouts of deprivation. The main difference between these works and Wilk's (2007, 2014) is that he is looking at communities that binged together. As such, his work draws on the concepts of the carnival and the carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1968/1984), in which communally negotiated times and spaces are designated as "indulgence zones," with the collective understanding that what trespasses during such festivities is not reflective of everyday life, but rather an exception from it.



Wilk (2007; 2011; 2014) has been exploring binge consumption and binge economy concepts for over ten years through his work in Belize. The themes present in his work revolve around the carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1968/1984), which is heavily linked to the transgression of norms for short periods. Wilk (2014, 1) describes binge consumption as: "periods of excess where large quantities are consumed quickly and wastefully" and claims that this mode of consumption probably "goes far back into human prehistory – when large animals were killed, or during seasonal periods of abundance. Many agrarian societies have harvest and religious festivals of overconsumption, where there is a carnivalesque reversal of the usual logic of frugality and the social order" (Wilk 2007).

Wilk (2014) has looked at how the binge is adopted in societies/communities where the future is uncertain and living for the present is prized. In some cases, this was reflective of the dangerous nature of the work undertaken by the community members. The men who worked in remote logging installations were isolated from society and lived with the tremendous stress of performing dangerous work daily. This type of community would see value in the ethos of *carpe diem*, and this would translate in the ways in which they spent the money that they worked to earn during their breaks from performing the dangerous activities. The situation described by Wilk (2007, 2014) closely resembles the assessment of indulgence as consumer myopia seen in the consumer research literature (Baumeister 2002; Hirshman 1992; Kivetz and Simonson 2002a). But once again, in the case where the loggers know the time, place, and approximate duration of their future binge episode (the length of their leave or the

exhaustion of their resources), we could argue that the binge reflects a particular type of hyperopia on the part of the loggers, whose binge behaviour is the result of several months of anticipation.

In this case, the binge is not a failure to self-control, but a desire for it. And once again, although this literature is helpful in understanding what is happening in the digital media space, it does not provide a complete picture.

### **Temporary**

The theme of transgression is strong in Wilk's (2007, 2014) work. When on break from the rigours of their work in the logging installations, the men come to the towns and let loose with the spoils of their labour. It allowed them to live, for temporary periods of time, in ways that are customarily reserved for members of society with higher social status. This, in turn, was shocking to external observers: "These displays of sudden wealth were often overtly outrageous to polite society; Belize workers dressed in finery that the local elite found offensive, and then they ate and drank far 'above their station'" (Wilk 2014, 15).

This resonates with Bakhtin's (1968/1984) interpretation of Rabelais' oeuvre, *The Life of Gargantua and of Pantagruel*, in which he outlines the social value of the carnival. In his work, Bakhtin (1968/1984) makes a strong case for the utility of different forms of carnival in the maintenance of the current social order. These periods of transgression permitted during specific moments of the year served to liberate the populations from the chains that bound them during the rest of the year: "They were

freed from the oppression of such gloomy categories as "eternal," "immovable," "absolute," "unchangeable," and instead were exposed to the gay and free laughing aspect of the world (...)" (Bakhtin 1968/1984, 85). The carnival took over everything, abolishing the concept of social class for the duration: "While the carnival lasts, there is no other life outside of it. You have to give yourself over to it. This is a transgressive activity as it brings all of the social classes together, there is no social hierarchy that is maintained in the carnival. This is the spirit of transgression" (Bakhtin 1968/1984, 7).

We can see many similarities between Wilk's (2014) concept of the binge and Bakhtin's (1968/1984) concept of carnival. One of the main takeaways from both works is that these instances of overindulgence and transgression serve a distinct utilitarian purpose in the maintenance of the social order. Furthermore, the binge and the carnival are both concepts that are heavily rooted in the usage of time. In both cases, much like in the fairy tale Cinderella, when the clock strikes midnight (or whatever time limit is set), the ball ends, and everyone reverts to who they were and what they were doing before. In Hirschman (1992), she mentions the notion of a recovery/transitional period before returning to real/everyday life; she describes it as the need for her informant to "dry out." This notion is also found in Goulding et al. (2009), where the clubbers are seen as needing an in-between stage: "It is a time and space that prolongs feelings of pleasure and empathy (...) while also acting as an interstitial space between the world of the club and the world outside the club" (Goulding et al. 2009, 765). Due to the fact that the binge/excessive consumption episode must be contained, there is potentially added motivation for the people involved to live/consume as fast and hard as they can. To

gorge themselves before they need to return to the moderation and mundaneness of everyday life. This is evidenced in the works of Wilk (2007, 2014), Hirschman (1992), and Goulding et al. (2009), where the consumers set out to consume excessively to break free from the constraints of their daily routine. This reinforces the idea that the issue of time is fundamental to the structure of the binge event.

This propensity to waste or burn through resources draws a melancholic portrait of the binge consumption episode participants (Wilk 2014). One where the activity is lived only to reinforce their pre-established social status, the loggers and miners return to dangerous work after having exhausted their salaries (Wilk 2007, 2014), the carnival participants return to daily life after the festivities end (Bakhtin 1968/1984). The social elite remains on top as long as their resources allow them to (Veblen 1899/1979). The binge-watching of TV serials is an interesting case to study, as watching TV is considered by many to be a waste of time (Paskin 2013); but although it may be seen as an unproductive activity, we will demonstrate that this new way to consumer cultural products does not precisely fit into Wilk (2007, 2014), Bakhtin (1968/1984), Goulding et al. (2009), or Veblen's (1899/1979) theories on the utility of such activities for the maintenance of social order.

### **Transgressive**

How does one experience this escape from the limitations of everyday life, from the mundane, and move towards the irrational, the forbidden, and the debauch? In Goulding et al.'s (2009) paper on the marketplace management of illicit pleasures, they

chronicle the mechanisms through which club culture has provided a bounded environment for some consumers to indulge in certain activities that they would not undertake in their everyday lives (e.g., the consumption of ecstasy tablets). The club and the weekend provide a time and a space for this consumption. Although it is not the article's focus, these boundaries play a prominent role in attenuating the associated risks and facilitating the behaviours, which are considered highly desirable by the participants. But, these mechanisms are seen to be available only to the members of the club community. In Goulding et al.'s (2009) article, the clubbers are not people with substance abuse problems.

The idea of "calculated hedonism" presented in the article is interesting and, as they point out, reminiscent of the concept of the carnival (Goulding et al. 2009, 765). The clubbers transform during the weekend and become "someone else" (Goulding et al. 2009, 766). The party is contained, and the pleasure to be had is expected and experienced within the bounds of what is allowable for the club-goer. It is carnivalesque, but it is not a binge. In addition to the limit of time, we come to add the boundaries of space and quantity, for the clubbers consume the substances within the club's confines, and they are also cautious about the dosage of the drugs they chose to consume. The paper does not showcase any strong feelings of regret on the participants for their indulgent behaviour; this reinforces the previously argued proposition that the boundaries may constitute amnesty zones, where indulgent behaviour is expected and not to be criticized. It contradicts previous research where consumer indulgence is seen as often resulting in regret and anxiety (Baumeister 2002; Kivetz and Simonson 2002a).

The pursuit of pleasure is demonstrated as essential and sought out by these consumers, who later exhibit no signs of regret (Goulding et al. 2009).

We believe that bingeing on television serials can add dimensions to the discussion on binge in the social sciences and consumer research. The product, TV serials, is not perceived as being particularly harmful to the consumer and can be consumed at will in the privacy of their home. This characteristic is essential, as it distinguishes the TV binge from the activities studied by Wilk (2007, 2014), Bakhtin (1968/1984), and Goulding et al. (2009), which draw significant meaning from their social and communal natures and structures. Since limits to TV serial consumption are imposed solely at the consumer's discretion, the decision to push forward and watch one more episode becomes interesting and insightful.

In the previous sections of this paper, we have mapped out some of the most formative aspects of binge activity as defined in the extant literature. From that, we have produced the following model (figure 1) to help conceptualize the keystone factors that constitute the binge as it is understood so far:

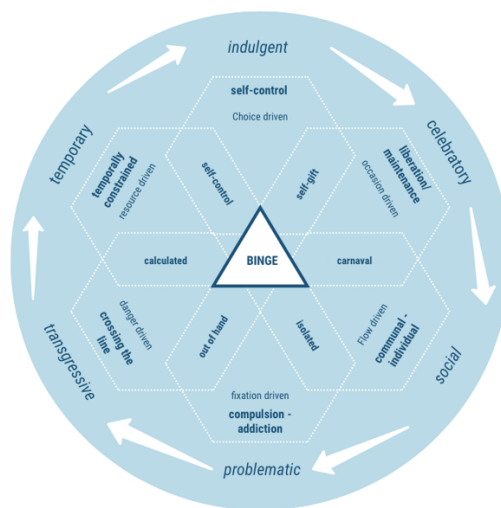


Figure 1

This alone does not allow us to understand bingeing on digital cultural productions, because extant literature does not take into consideration the abundance of resources that are available thanks to the digital revolution and how these have altered consumption behaviours. To have a more complete picture, we will delve into the most mainstream use case, which is the binge-watching of TV serial content. We will demonstrate the similarities and differences that animate the binge activity as defined above and the digital media binge through this use case.

### **1.3 Binge-watching**

We are now turning to a context away from physical bingeing on products and services, towards bingeing on digital product experiences. Enter the use case of binge-watching. Binge-watching is specific to bingeing on visual media products. To binge-watch is to: "Watch multiple episodes of (a television program) in rapid succession, typically by means of DVDs or digital streaming" (Oxford English Dictionary 2013).

In the past, binge-watching or rather 'marathons' of television serials have been studied in regard to fan activities and fan communities (Jenkins 2006b). Jenkins specifically takes on the stereotypical view that popular media have of the "fan": "the Trekkies, who love nothing more than to watch the same 79 episodes over and over" (Jenkins 2006b, 38). He elaborates on the meaning of re-watching or "repeated rereading" (Jenkins 2006b, 125) for fan culture. Furthermore, consecutive and repeated viewing of TV serials have also been studied in regard to cult viewing practices described as: "(...) not just the result of random, directionless entertainment seeking, but

rather a combination of intense physical and emotional involvement" (Mendik and Harper from Sandvoss 2005, 41). These viewing practices play a central role in the fan-text relationship (Hills 2002; Jenkins 2006b; Sandvoss 2005).

In a 2015 book called *Media Marathoning: Immersions in Morality*, Lisa Glebatis Perks seeks to provide more than a functional aspect to the activity. It is not just a memory boost or a productive activity, but it is an immersive ludic experience valuable in its own right (Perks 2015). This is also reflected in most of the 29 scientific articles that have been published on binge-watching from 2014 to 2018, which also seem to acknowledge the hedonic aspects of the activity (Merikivi, Bragge, Scornavacca, and Verhagen 2020).

Regardless of what we call it, binge-watching, as a use case, allows us to closely examine the similarities and differences surrounding binge consumption in a context where the boundaries are not defined. There is a new breed of viewers/consumers that have been born from the increased accessibility of television serials since their digitization (Lotz 2006; Newman 2009; Jenner 2017). This has led to a rise in consumption of cultural products through online streaming. This is non-negligible for producers and distributors of digital content and cultural entrepreneurs, as traditional channels are falling more and more out of favor with consumers (Statista 2020). It has also led to a renaissance of higher end cultural content in the TV format (Landau 2016), which if properly managed could represent a large opportunity for cultural producers.

The binge experience, as seen in the extant literature, is often bounded by physical or material limitations. To a large degree, these are inconsequential in the



binge-watching activity. The digitization of media materials has led to the wide availability of options and resources (Marcus 2006). Add to that the ready adoption of media streaming (Statista 2020), and you have the recipe for endless on-demand entertainment choices in the cultural sphere. Against this background, the on-demand nature of these digital cultural products seems to require a redefinition of some of the previously established characteristics of the binge consumption experience.

Based on a review of the above mentioned 29 papers (Merikivi et al. 2020), two main elements emerge that point towards a conceptual distinction between binge and binge-watching. In the following section, we will explore how the lack of limits incurred by the abundance of resources in the digital space engenders both a more routine and a more permanent and consistent binge activity.

#### From celebratory to routine

The first difference is that the binge activity passes from one that was often denoted as having a celebratory nature to one that is getting embedded in the consumers' daily lives. In an empirical study of this phenomenon, Brouard and Marcoux (2021) have observed that what once was used as a recompense for a specific reason (the end of exams, the end of the year, the weekend, the end of a project), binge-watching has now become more commonplace and something that some respondents experienced every day. It started to become part of their routine. This transformation is driven by the availability of content and the intrinsic change in the way people watch television. What was once an activity based on the broadcast schedule is now often based on the number

of available episodes of a series. People elect to watch series beginning to end, immersing themselves in the process.

TV was serialized due to the format structure of the broadcast schedules (Kelleter 2017), removing the need to follow these schedules are allowing for new formats of cultural products to emerge (Landau 2018). Writers and creative entrepreneurs now have more freedom to develop series that do not need to follow the pre-established broadcast formula (Landau 2016).

The fact that consumers can watch narrative content from the beginning through to the end has revitalized the TV genre (Landau 2016). We see many content producers, like Netflix, embrace this new format of production and distribution (Watson 2020). Netflix produced more than 1500 original titles in 2020, which accounted for roughly 25% of its catalogue (Moore 2021). It is clear that Netflix, which has more than 204 million monthly subscribers and has the largest share of the premium streaming subscription market (Wallach 2021), has understood the draw of novel content available for immediate consumption.

This new form of consumption has created a new creative space that is sustained by the demand generated by the binge-watching consumption activity becoming a routine occurrence. If this was not the case, companies like Netflix would not be quintupling their creation of original series in a matter of years (Luckerson 2016; Watson 2020). This change in consumption behavior is to be seen as an opportunity for the creative market.

From temporary to permanent

In line with the first, the second difference is the move from a temporally constrained binge activity to a permanent and pervasive one. Where the binge was once the culmination of a celebratory process, a feast for the ages (Bakhtin 1967/1984), a moment of where control is relinquished for good or bad (Hirschman 1992) and which was experienced in a limited span of time, this new form of binge activity does not face such restrictions.

Binge-watching is a form of binge activity that can be done anywhere and at any time. Due to streaming technology, the stability of high-speed internet infrastructure, and the development of ever-better diffusion apparatus, binge-watching is literally at the tip of most consumer's fingers. This removes the temporal constraint. The binge activity described in the first section of this article is one that is born of deprivation and depravation. The deprivation component is evident when we examine its links to scarcity. The carnival-goers typically lived a very austere life. During that particular period, the hierarchies were reversed, the expectations were turned on their head, and they could revel in abundance (Bakhtin 1968/1984). These periods were intense but short-lived. The same can be said of the miners and loggers who binged until they depleted their resources (Wilk 2014). And again, the same can be said of addicts in Hirschman's (1992) work. They binge drink or drug until they either pass out or run out of product. In either case, the binge activity is never shown to be sustainable in the long term.

With streaming access to digital media products, we once again move towards a more sustainable binge-watching activity. One that is not limited by scarce resources, and one where abundance of viewing material makes it so that creative content stands out and is more likely to be appreciated for its novel value.

In the next section, we will revisit the research questions and discuss the impact of binge-watching for both the consumer and the cultural producers.

## **1.4 Discussion**

As indicated by the growing number of streaming platform subscribers and the dwindling number of cable subscriptions, consumers have adopted the streaming model and are progressively abandoning the traditional broadcast model (Statista 2020). We speak of cord-cutting: “the practice of cancelling or forgoing a cable subscription or landline phone connection in favor of an alternative internet-based or wireless service” (Oxford Languages 2021). The digital transformation of the entertainment media market has been swift and undeniable. Cultural entrepreneurs have no choice but to adapt to the new ways that consumers are accessing their content and to innovate on their strategies.

One of the main differences between binge and binge-watching as explained in the previous section is the routine and permanent nature of the new activity. This leads to a need to rethink the way in which cultural entrepreneurs approach the production and distribution of televisual material in ways that will take into account the consumer desire for more content that is not only continuous, but that is also complete and consistent.

The passion for more is strongly related to pleonexia. Haughey (1997, 19) terms pleonexia as an "insatiability for more." It has to do with excess. Pleonexia has a connotation of greediness, which is consistent with the fact that the binge experience is often selfish and indulgent. The notion of pleonexia echoes Bakhtin's (1968/1984) idea that something needs to be too much, so much so that it be rendered obscene. It reminds Kozinets et al.'s (2017) conception of desire as energy. Above all, it calls to mind Belk et al.'s (2003) reflections on desire renewal.

More nuanced is the way ancient Greek authors used the term pleonexia. In the context of ancient Greek, the term was used to mean: "greediness" or "excess," but also "advantage" or "gain derived from a thing" (Liddell and Scott 1843/1996), which brings us to discuss if there is anything gained from this passion for more. In this case more episodes lead to faster completion. For binge-watchers, there is a logical direction to the activity. That is to reach the end of the series or the narrative. This directionality infuses this passion for more with a purpose—the purpose of completeness of understanding, the purpose of living an experience from beginning to end.

These observations on binge-watching, the renewal of desire, and the rise of expectations take a more significant importance in comparison to Wilk's reflection on binge consumption as a cultural phenomenon. For Wilk (2001), contemporary consumer culture is characterized by the continuing bulimic cycle of binge and purge. For him, restraint creates the need for release. In the case of digital media products, restraints and limits are constantly challenged. Just as much as Wilk considers the ebb and flow of binge consumption to be symptomatic of our era of consumerism, the insatiability for

more that characterizes binge-watching reveals significant transformations regarding consumption ideals. It testifies to a normalization of excess, a new routine steeped in always more content.

There has been a growing body of research concerned with the topics of viewer autonomy, continuity and completion, and addiction and immoderacy as they relate to binge-watching (Merikivi et al. 2020). There has also been some work on what this new form of consumption means for advertisers, whose reach is reduced in this instance as binge-watchers are less responsive to advertising during a binge episode (Schweidel and Moe 2016). Notably absent from the research surveyed is the impact of binge-watching on cultural producers. Now that consumers can tap into the binge activity at will, how do content producers deal with the advent of a consumption situation where expectations have surpassed their capacity to produce?

## **1.5 Conclusion**

Throughout this article, we have discussed the differences and similarities between binge consumption and binge-watching as a use case for bingeing digital media products. But aside from the differences in the activities, there are also inherent differences in the structure of the products. The objects binge consumed are, more often than not, physical and of limited availability. This is not the case for binge-watching, where content is plentiful, and content providers are vying for the undivided attention of this new category of binge consumers. In this way, the streaming providers and content distributors need to craft robust content strategies to attract and retain subscribers.

Although there is no need for the binge-watcher to put down the TV remote or step away from the content, some structural cues lead to natural breaks in the binge-watching experience. These have been more detailed in Brouard and Marcoux (2021), the empirical essay based on this study. Some of these breaks are developed into the content itself, breaks between episodes, breaks between seasons, and the end of the series. These impose stops in the consumption activity.

The content producer plays an important role when it comes to the overall satisfaction of the binge-watcher. As mentioned in Landau's (2018) latest book about writing for a binge-watching audience, there are many creative freedoms that can be taken. Research suggests that planning the end of a series is advisable. It is also advised to create shorter series, or seasons, that are more complete (Brouard and Marcoux, 2021). The fact that binge-watchers can watch a narrative from beginning to end is an advantage over other forms of content distribution where the watcher is interrupted, and much marketing and promotion need to be done to make sure that the viewer will tune in for a future instalment. This shorter, more complete format retains the audience with minimal promotional dollars spent in the interim and yields greater consumer satisfaction.

Another suggestion is to shorten the break between seasons of popular serial content. Due to abundant availability of digital content, the binge-watcher has a panoply of options. The more the wait between the series or seasons, the likelier she will move on to a different serial and forget about the one produced previously. Shortening breaks has been experimented with great success in the broadcast arena, with shows like The

Masked Singer doing two seasons per year instead of the standard one season (Fox Media 2021). Although it was expected that viewers would drop off with the seasons being held so close together, the broadcaster was surprised to find that the audience increased. The show has been catapulted into one of the most popular on television (Dominguez 2020).

The last suggestion we will make to content providers is to be bold and innovative, as much with content as with format. FOX's *The Masked Singer*, Netflix's *The Queen's Gambit*, and Disney+'s *Wandavision* have shown us that although the content space is saturated, there is always a way to make a splash, stand out, and shatter viewership records. All three series have been innovative in their format, novel, and bold in their approach. Originality is especially important for binge-watchers. In order to be drawn and hooked into the story, it has to be novel and exciting. One of the differences about the binge-watching activity is that this type of binger is curious and eager to experience what comes next. This is a dimension not often found in other forms of binge consumption. This pushes content producers to diversify the type of stories they tell and allows them to be more daring in their execution and distribution.

Lastly, this article used binge-watching as a use case for the binge consumption of digital media products. Future research should look to see how narrative versus non-narrative forms of digital media are consumed. With the advent of mobile gaming, esports, VR, NFT arts, social audio, and podcasts, it would be enlightening to have more work on the binge consumption of these digital media.



## Chapter 2

# The Phenomenology of Binge-Watching

### Abstract

Binge-watching is a form of excessive behavior in which TV viewers increase the pace of their media consumption by watching numerous episodes of TV serials one after another in rapid succession. Binge-watching is not an aimless spurt of entertainment bliss. It has a goal, reaching the end of the TV serial, which is an integral part of the consumers' viewing experience. Drawing on the phenomenology of film, and on ethnographic research on binge-watchers conducted between 2012 and 2020, this study focuses on binge-watching as a consumption activity that intensifies the TV viewing experience and increases media consumption expectations. It shows that the flow and the goal-directedness of binge-watching are fundamentally connected and determine the underlying phenomenological structure of the viewing experience. Goal-directedness is fundamental in binge-watching. It distinguishes it from other forms of binging in general, and it sets it apart from other types of excessive consumption. As such, binge-watching is an activity that makes it meaningful to push through TV serials—episode after episode, season after season—one where the consumer is engrossed in and engaged by complex televisual content.

*Keywords:*

binge-watching, TV serials, viewing experience, flow, phenomenology

## 2.1 Introduction

DOUG: Let's watch this!

CLAIRE: Ok, listen, one episode and then we go to dessert.

DOUG: Ok, we'll definitely make it. It's gonna be 40 minutes tops. This will be good; I heard really good things about it. It's not just regular science fiction; it's actually good.

CLAIRE: I love you.

DOUG: Ok, episode one.

(45 minutes later)

DOUG: Wow.

CLAIRE: Ok, it was good.

DOUG: That's so well done.

CLAIRE: Do we have time to watch one more do you think?

DOUG: I think so.

(45 minutes later)

CLAIRE: That is, c-r-a-z-y.

DOUG: That's amazing.

CLAIRE: I just texted Sarah "Happy birthday," so that's done. I have to get up early for work, so let's get in our PJs, and we'll watch one more.

DOUG: Ok, one more. . .

In a well-known *Portlandia* sketch called "One Moore Episode," first aired in 2012, a couple in their thirties named Doug and Claire start to watch the first episode of

Ronald D. Moore's 2004 reboot of *Battlestar Galactica* right before they are supposed to leave for a friend's birthday party. Rapidly drawn into the narrative arc of this science fiction TV serial, the couple decide to continue watching more episodes, and they miss the birthday party—and then every other social engagement and responsibility in their lives during the next several days—because they ended up viewing 75 episodes in a row, plowing through all four seasons of the TV serial in a binge-watching marathon that lasted well over a week.

The satirical sketch mostly consists of a chronologically-ordered sequence of brief 20-to-40 second scenes in which the audience has a frontal view of Doug and Claire seated on their living-room couch in front of an off-camera TV screen. Eventually, they are shown cheering as the last season of *Battlestar Galactica* ends. Then the audience sees their dismay gestures as they quickly realize with consternation that there are no more episodes to watch, but they still desperately need more episodes to fulfill their raging desire for more binge-watching.

Interestingly, the one thing that the audience rarely see in this *Portlandia* sketch about binge-watching is Doug and Claire actually watching *Battlestar Galactica*. Doug and Claire's viewing activity rarely appears on screen—this is the key to the sketch's humor. The focal image in the sketch is Doug and Claire sitting on a couch in the living room, in front of a more or less invisible TV screen which highlights the idiocy of what they are doing. It accentuates the impression that they are spellbound cretins who have abandoned themselves to excessive and meaningless media consumption activity that allows them to gorge on what amounts to nothing. Being seated there on a living-room couch throughout the sketch is fundamental to its interpretation—Doug and Claire are

supposed to epitomize contemporary TV consumption culture. They represent millions of binge-watchers who have taken the lazy inactivity of TV viewing to previously unknown heights of absurdity; they are the ultimate couch potatoes.

Describing binge-watchers as couch potatoes has become commonplace. Referring to the well-worn metaphor, television critic Willa Paskin (2013) even goes further to say, this supposedly unprecedented TV viewing behavior is not new at all: “There are binge-watchers inside of all of us; they just used to be called couch potatoes.” Feigning to take the moral and the esthetic high ground, Paskin (2013) basically argues that as long as we admit to ourselves that binge-watching is just a catchy term for what used to be called “watching too much TV,” and we do not attempt to construe it as some novel way of appreciating good television, we are welcome to sit back on the couch and enjoy doing it. Whether or not Paskin (2013) is right about binge-watching’s lack of novelty, the “couch potato” interpretation appears quite apt as a description of this media consumption behavior. What else are binge-watchers doing other than sitting in front of screens mindlessly ingurgitating hours and hours of TV?

The term “couch potato” suggests inactivity, passivity, or laziness. It suggests that media product consumers like Doug and Claire who spend hours on end watching TV are just zombies absorbing images and should be criticized for this slothful behavior—they are not actually doing anything. But, is it true that binge-watching is not an activity? How could it be possible to consume something without doing anything? This basic fact about binge-watching seems to be constantly overlooked. Up until now, consumer researchers seem to have assumed that the activity of spending hours on end watching excessive amounts of TV serial content is not a consumption activity or, if it is

one, that it does not deserve serious research. They seem to have assumed—just as everyone else has—that binge-watchers are nothing but couch potatoes. Now that binge-watching has become a mainstream media consumption activity practiced by millions of human beings, it is time for consumer researchers to take a closer look at this habit of watching TV to determine if it is actually a media consumption activity.

The present study is not a defense of binge-watching. Nor does it contest the fact that binge-watching is a form of excessive consumption. On the contrary, it makes clear that the experience of excess is a key aspect of this form of media product consumption. However, no attempt is made to address the psychological, the esthetic, the moral, and the marketing issues raised by binge-watching. All these issues are important, but none of them can be adequately addressed until we have a detailed and systematically accurate interpretation of what binge-watching is as a consumption practice—until we have a full understanding of the consumption experience of this form of watching TV. This is why the present study focuses solely on the question of what binge-watchers are doing and what they are experiencing when they engage in this excessive TV consumption activity.

Drawing on ethnographic research conducted between 2012 and 2020, the study explores binge-watching through a phenomenological interpretation of the TV viewing experience of the informants. This interpretation is based on close observations of the actual TV viewing behavior of these informants, accurate reports of their self-described TV consumption practices, and careful analyses of the accounts of what they experience while they are watching TV. Consumer researchers have looked at TV consumption in relation to identity construction, ideology, rituals, and fan practices (Hirschman 1988;

Kozinets 2001; Rose and Wood 2005; Russell, Schau, and Crockett 2013). They have also looked at TV serial and reality series consumption as brand relationships (Parmentier and Fischer 2015; Russell and Schau 2014). However, with few exceptions (Feiereisen et al. 2020; McCracken 2013; Schweidel and Moe 2016), they have neglected to examine binge-watching as a distinct form of media product consumption with unique characteristics that set it apart from other forms.

In line with the phenomenological tradition in consumer research (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989, 1990; Thompson, Pollio, and Locander 1994), and the phenomenology of film (Baracco 2017; Sobchack 1992, 2009), the goal of the present study is to examine binge-watching as a consumption activity that makes possible a specific type of consumption experience. This phenomenological interpretation shows that binge-watching involves a fundamental shift in the consumption practices shaping the experience of media products like TV serials and that a new way of pursuing excess has come to the fore in contemporary consumer culture. This has far-reaching consequences for the study of TV consumption, media consumption, and consumption in general.

The study is centered on three interrelated questions: 1) What is the viewing experience of binge-watchers? 2) Is binge-watching a new form of TV consumption? 3) If binge-watching is a new form of TV consumption, how does it affect the appreciation of TV viewing in general? The first section of the study reviews the literature on TV consumption and explores the concept of binge-watching. The second section describes the research context and the interpretative methodology used to examine the consumption experience of binge-watchers. The third section presents the findings on

the experience of binge-watchers. Lastly, the fourth section discusses these findings from an explicitly phenomenological perspective to expose the fundamental structure of the TV consumption experience of binge-watchers.

## **2.2 Literature Review**

### **TV Consumption in CCT Research**

The root of consumer research on TV consumption is found in the classic work of Holbrook and Grayson (1986) on *Out of Africa*. In a pioneering article, these authors drew on the European tradition of semiology to explore how symbolic consumer behavior may help to understand works of art. In doing so, they took consumer research into the realm of film and TV.

Consumer researchers had to wait until 2001 to observe the emergence of a steady stream of research on TV consumption. That year, Kozinets penned an article on *Star Trek* and the culture of consumption associated with its fans. He explored the role of film and TV serials in the consumption of subcultures.

Kozinets (2001) led the research on TV consumption from esthetics to the fans. He had a major influence in the field. The relationship between TV fans and media content that he exposed, and that he described at length, is also at the heart of Russell and Schau's (2014) and Parmentier and Fischer's (2015) work on TV serials like *Entourage* and *Outrageous Fortune*, and on reality shows like *America's Next Top Model*. Russell and Schau (2014) investigate how fan communities grieve when their favorite TV serials come to an end, whereas Parmentier and Fischer (2015) examine the ways that a once

loyal audience can contribute to the demise of the reality TV serials that they used to love. Both unveil the active role of the audience. Feiereisen et al. (2020) have taken the study of TV fans' active role further. In reminiscence of Roland Barthes' (1967/1977) *Death of the Author*, they present a typology of the navigation techniques used by consumers to appropriate narratives.

Since the publication of Kozinets' (2001) article, in CCT, most researchers interested in TV consumption have looked at fans. The few exceptions being Hirschman (1988), who examined the ideology of consumption in popular American television using a symbolic-structuralist analysis, Rose and Wood (2005), who provided a semiotic analysis of the consumption of reality television, and Russell et al. (2013), who explored the cultural diversity in television narratives. Another notable exception can be found in McCracken's (2013) opinion piece on binge-watching, reported in *Wired*. In a study funded by Netflix, the consumer anthropologist proposed a short but inspiring reflection on how individuals binge-watch TV. His piece highlights how a study of TV watching practices has been neglected in consumer research. Incidentally, it reminds us that researchers have mainly used TV as a context.

CCT researchers interested in TV consumption have largely drawn on semiology, semiotics, literary theory, narrative approaches, and audience studies. They have usually looked at TV consumption as the reading of a text. It is important to stress that CCT itself (Arnould and Thompson 2005) is intricately connected to the "textual revolution" (Howes 2003) in social sciences and the Humanities inspired by Clifford Geertz (1973), which is epitomized by the Geertzian's conception of the culture *as* a text. The pre-eminence of textual analysis in consumer research is obvious in Holbrook and



Grayson's (1986) early work that considers the movie as a text. It is also evident in Parmentier and Fischer's (2015) and Feiereisen et al.'s (2020) more recent publications on serial and narrative brands.

A textual perspective on TV consumption is useful when researchers want to grasp the fans' relationship with a TV serial brand, but it is limitative when the goal is to make sense of the experience of TV watching per se. In an attempt to better understand the binge-watching phenomenon, it is important to take into consideration the particularities of TV serial consumption. It is useful to look at the media studies literature on seriality.

### **Seriality, TV Serials, and Serial Narratives**

For scholars like Graham Law, who works on serialization, the rise of serial publication can be explained by speed and economy. For him, "Serial issue itself, and the more dispersed channels for the distribution of serials (canvassers, general stores, the postal service), offered the reader an immediacy of access to written information that traditional booksellers could not match" (Law 2009, 567). This allowed the costs to be spread across the period of issue and provided publishers, producers, and readers with the opportunity to stop supporting a publication if it came to be unpopular. These rationales persisted towards creating what we call TV serials.

The ease of production, distribution, and consumption that was germane to the serialized fictional texts were replicated in the televisual format. What was born of purpose, then took shape as the leading format for long-form narratives, especially in the television field. For instance, media studies authority Henry Jenkins differentiates the

TV serial from the episodic: “Part of what distinguishes an episodic series like *Star Trek* from a serial like *All My Children* is the degree to which each *Star Trek* story remains self-contained” (Jenkins 1992, 101). In this way, he claims that the episodic nature of *Star Trek* allows for occasional viewers to enjoy the show without needing to have followed it from the beginning. He maintains that fans can look at the same content and view it as a serial because they are privy to all of the storylines and the character development occurring outside of the episodic structure. They use the overarching serial narratives to weave stories together even across seasons and series.

Michael Z. Newman’s (2006) work also looks at serial narrative. He breaks the prime-time serial down to its narrative structure, comprised of micro, middle, and macro levels of storytelling. The micro-level beats—the most basic storytelling unit—is short and scene-based. The middle level is the episode. Lastly, at the macro-level, we find arcs which follow the lives of the characters and which demand that an order be observed for the developments to make sense over time. Arcs are devices that can span several episodes or can be a season long. His work is important for the study of binge-watching, for it unveils the mechanisms motivating an audience to tune in for new serial installments each week and create profit for the networks.

The work of Jason Mittell (2006, 2012, 2015) on American television takes the reflection on seriality and serial narratives further. Mittell is concerned with the formal aspects of media more than the issues of content or broader cultural forces. As opposed to questions of textual interpretation, for Mittell (2015), the guiding question is: “How does this text work?” The definition of a serial that he uses is in line with Jenkins (1992) and Newman’s (2006) but adds the issue of temporality. In his view, continuity and

seriality are key components of a TV serial's narrative. As he explains it, "The essential structure of serial form is a temporal system with story installments parcelled out over time with gaps between entries through a strictly regimented use of screen time" (Mittell 2015, 27). The gaps between installments (or episodes) help viewers to reflect on the unfolding narrative world of TV serials. Those gaps are particularly important to fans' consumption of TV serials (Jenkins 1992).

But slow and steady is not part and parcel of seriality. The pace was determined by distributors of content like publishers and broadcasters. Besides, many of the structures were designed to suit the commercial needs of these schedules (Landau 2016; Newman 2006). Now that streaming services like Netflix are releasing all of the episodes of a season or series at once, we can better study the value of seriality beyond its institutionally scheduled constraints. In an interview with Jenkins (2017), Kelleter brings forth that:

To study seriality means to study things in motion. . . So the study of seriality is often the study of specific temporalities. Rhythms, speeds, frequencies, the timing or non-timing of pauses, intermissions, and gaps, but also larger historical conditions like the timeliness or untimeliness of modes of production and reception—all these kinetic concerns are essential to make sense of how serial stories make sense.

Kelleter and his colleagues look at popular series through seriality (PSRU 2016). They take narrative studies to a new level, by looking at texts in motion. They are particularly interested in stories that never seem to end, but that simply disappear, when their popularity wanes. For them, reception and production have historically been born

of a relationship of mutual dependence, whereas the serial finds both reception and production intertwined in a feedback loop. The difference stems from the practice of watching an ongoing series, which opens the door for audience involvement in the narrative's progress, therefore extending "the sphere of storytelling onto the sphere of story consumption" (Kelleter 2017, np).

Scholars in media studies have shown that TV serials like *House of Cards*, *Game of Thrones*, and *Stranger Things*, which are characterized by their "narrative complexity" (Mittell 2006), are best served by ongoing seriality. Built into this structure, and pacing the rhythm, are gaps that are essential to the episodic format. In recent work, Mittell (2018) uses videographic essays to explore serialized memories. This work allows him to visually demonstrate the unwritten and unspoken cues that are translated to the screen by the directors, the actors, the soundtrack, and the aesthetics. The visual and aural dimensions of the exercise bring sensory qualities back into the very text focused study of multisensorial media products.

Mittell's (2018) recent reflection incorporates the sensory textures intrinsic to the television medium. For his part, Kelleter (2017) emphasizes the link between seriality and popularity. He examines how seriality adds to the consumption of media content. Both of these authors provide crucial contributions to the understanding of seriality as it manifests through TV serials. While they are working about the serial narrative as a text, neither addresses how the viewing shapes the experience of that text. They have laid the groundwork to develop a better understanding of binge-watching, but they have left unexplored the embodied act of watching TV serials. With seriality as a canvas, we will now look at the literature on binge-watching and media marathoning, both resultant

from the removal of the gaps between the installments. It will be interesting to push seriality beyond its structure, and into its lived experience.

### **Marathon Viewing and Binge-Watching**

The editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary* shortlisted the verb “binge-watch” for “Word of the Year” in 2013 (the honor going to “selfie”), and it officially entered the dictionary in 2014. To binge-watch is to: “Watch multiple episodes of (a television program) in rapid succession, typically by means of DVDs or digital streaming.”

As one of the first media scholars to use the term “binge” in reference to TV viewing practices, Newman (2009) emphasizes the sheer enjoyment that binge-watchers derive from their viewing experience and criticizes the use of the term “marathon viewing”: “‘Marathon’ suggests endurance rather than indulgence. . . It seems almost masochistic, whereas the binges I’m talking about are pleasure sprees.” In emphasizing the pleasures of binge-watching, Newman (2009) suggests that this media consumption behavior has a hedonistic dimension that does not have to be construed as pathological or mind-numbingly anti-cultural. It is true that binge-watching centers on obtaining pleasure by giving oneself over to a TV serial and that it is a form of abandonment or letting go marked by a complete lack of TV viewing restraint. By “pleasure spree,” we should understand a delightful bout of frenetic *binging* (in the general sense of the term), under whose hypnotic spell binge-watchers can quickly fall, becoming so caught up in the TV serials they are watching that they feel completely disconnected from the outside world.

Even though the term “binge-watching” has entered the popular culture vocabulary, fan and media studies scholars interested in TV consumption only rarely use it (Merikivi et al. 2020). Many of them do not consider binge-watching a distinctly new form of media consumption (Mittell 2015). They prefer to subsume it under a broader concept covering a wide range of media consumption practices involving non-stop viewing sessions of serials. Recently, fan and media scholars like Jenkins—who sometimes mentions it in his blog *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*—have paid some attention to binge-watching; however, it remains a polemical issue for them. When they refer to the practice of consuming TV serials and other media content in lengthy non-stop viewing sessions, they favour the term “marathon viewing” or “media marathoning” that Perks (2015, ix) describes as more holistic and complimentary, even suggesting that it “connotes a conjoined triumph of endurance and stamina.” Running a marathon requires hard work, discipline, thoughtful planning and preparation, but bingeing (no matter what the object consumed happens to be) appears easy, completely undisciplined, and thoughtless—a hedonistic indulgence teeming with frivolous pleasures. If their viewing practices are a form of binge consumption, this seems to imply that binge-watchers are mindless entertainment consumers obsessed with plowing through media content with no concern for its cultural significance. The link with Feiereisen et al.’s (2020) depiction of binge-watching is obvious. These authors analyze binge-watching through the lens of the self-control literature. They depict those who binge-watch TV as people who lack self-control and are plagued by regrets after the fact. They affirm the addictive, obsessive nature of binge-consumption.

It is important to say that in the last decades, fan, media, and CCT scholars have demonstrated that fans are not passive consumers but active participants. In other words, they have taken care to distance the fans from the vision of the “couch potato.” In this context, it is understandable that these scholars have generally eschewed the term “binge-watching” because they are cautious that it may stigmatize media fans. Describing the viewing practices of fans as a form of binge consumption suggests that these practices are rooted in laziness and that they have an essentially mind-numbing effect. In contrast, the term “marathon viewing” seems to have nothing but positive connotations. Indeed, the notions of endurance and achievement usually associated with long-distance running are highly valued by most (Perks 2015). The term “marathon viewing” therefore suggests that during their intense non-stop viewing sessions, viewers carefully watch and re-watch media content to pick out cultural cues and develop a deeper understanding of esthetic meanings (Hills 2002; Jenkins 2006a).

Both the “pleasure spree” and the “marathon” metaphors are helpful for understanding the viewing experience of binge-watching. From a phenomenological perspective, binge-watching implies a form of endurance that is akin to the marathon. It shares important similarities with marathon viewing and media marathoning. Still, the phenomenon is also a distinct type of TV serial consumption involving a viewing experience very different from the one enjoyed by media fans. It includes components of abandonment and pleasure.

In attempting better to understand binge-watching as a form of media consumption behaviour, we need to look at the phenomenon in practice. It should interest consumer researchers because it raises the question of TV consumption in this age of unlimited

access to digital media content. Binge-watching is now a mainstream consumption behavior in contemporary consumer culture.

## **2.3 Methodology**

### **Research Context**

Most commentators agree that binge-watching became a mainstream media consumption behavior because the digitization of TV serials led to their being widely available in DVD sets and online venues like Netflix and Amazon Prime. This increased availability of media content, coupled with ever-widening access to it on numerous viewing platforms spurred this change in the consumption behavior of TV viewers. Freed from the tyranny of intermittent broadcast schedules, they entered a new era that offered spectacular possibilities for 24/7 on-demand media consumption (Riccio 2013).

Millions of TV consumers now enjoy binge-watching. In a recent survey of 5,500 respondents, 80% admitted to having lost sleep, to continue watching a series, and about 20% confessed to having called in sick to work to keep binge-watching (Ward 2019). These numbers further escalated during the global pandemic in 2020. A study found that 75% of the respondents surveyed increased their TV viewing consumption in March when confinement protocols were enforced in North America (Anderer 2020). The response of streaming service providers such as Netflix to the increase in demand shows that the industry understands how popular binge-watching has become in contemporary consumer culture. Netflix mainly releases its Originals TV serials one season at a time instead of one episode at a time (Stelter 2013). This release strategy has been extremely



successful. Netflix has more than quintupled its original content output. In 2015, it produced roughly 304 hours of original content, nearly 1,500 hours of original content in 2018, and over 2,700 hours of content in 2019; nearly doubling the amount of the year prior (Statista 2020a).

Although Netflix is the most popular streaming service, it is not the only one. Indeed, with 150 million subscribers, Amazon Prime provides stiff competition (Katz 2020). Netflix and Amazon Prime are the two giants in the streaming service sector, but other companies are growing steadily. Disney+ which launched in 2019, reached 60.5 million subscribers in 2020 (Katz 2020), Hulu has 36.6 million subscribers, and HBO and HBO Max have 38 million subscribers (Statista 2020b). Streaming services are also being launched by traditional broadcasters such as CBS, which has created CBS All Access, and by traditional distributors such as the Dish Network, which has introduced Sling TV. The switch to streaming is not surprising considering that six million Americans have “cut the cord” in 2020 (Holzhauer 2020) and now have on average seven streaming devices in their households (Spangler 2019).

In capitalist society, there has been a multiplication of streaming platforms and an important increase in access to content (Kozinets, Patterson, and Ashman 2017), and this has made binge-watching a well-established part of TV culture. Mainstream media outlets have followed the trend. CNN has labeled its TV section on its website Binge, and *GQ* now provides a list of the best new TV serials for binge-watchers that specifies the time commitment that they have to make (Meslow 2016). *Wired* produces a weekly binge-watching guide that provides information such as the number of seasons a TV serial has and the streaming services that offer it. The guide also explains the best binge-

watching pace to adopt (given the length and the content of the serial), as well as the qualities that make it “binge-worthy” (Wood 2017).

With binge-watching now a mainstream consumption behavior, there is a proliferation of TV serials with narrative content that appeals to binge-watchers and a multiplication of streaming service providers that ensure these consumers have access to them 24/7. As a result, binge-watching has to be examined in terms of the specific consumption practices that make the intense viewing experience it offers so popular in contemporary consumer culture.

### **A Phenomenological Approach to the TV Viewing Experience**

From its unique characteristics and mode of coming into being to the way it is experienced, the film has been said to be a phenomenological art (Sobchack 2009). Vivian Sobchack, a seminal figure in the field of film phenomenology, uses Merleau-Ponty’s (1947/1964) description of the particularity of film to advance that, “A film is perceived not in its discrete cinematographic elements (visual, aural, and editorial) but in these elements’ meaningful totality as a temporal and sensual configuration,” one that speaks to all of our senses at once (Sobchack 2009, 439). Sobchack emphasizes that a film’s meaning emerges not only in narrative and dialogue but also, perhaps mostly, in our lived experience in the world. For her, the narrative constitutes only one of many elements that need to come together to create the film experience.

As a methodological approach to the study of socio-cultural practices that focus on the fundamental structures of experiential content, phenomenology is said to be a

philosophy of experience (Armstrong 2005). Developed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by thinkers such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Smith 2013), phenomenology as a discipline became linked to the study of film in the late 1940s (Merleau-Ponty 1947/1964; van den Berck 1948). However, its use slowly dissipated in the 1960s after film studies, which inspired by Roland Barthes, Christian Metz, and Jacques Lacan took a more semiotic, neopsychoanalytic and linguistic turn, criticized its grounding in the “direct,” “immediate,” and “subjective” experience (Sobchack 2009). It would take decades and new media technologies for the interest in the field of film phenomenology to be ignited once more.

Casebier (1991) and Sobchack (1992) took issue with the couching of film studies in these Barthesian, Metzian, and Lacanian approaches. According to Casebier (1991), these approaches suffer from an epistemic inability to look beyond the interdependence of the world’s concepts and its perception in the knowing mind. To better understand what motion pictures mean, Casebier argues for a realist framework, where one can look at the subject and the object at the same time, understanding that the object exists independently. For him, phenomenology, as described by Husserl, is the best tool for this exercise. Sobchack (1992, 9), on the other hand, leans into the subjectivities of the experience: “the film experience is a system of communication based on bodily perception as a vehicle of conscious expression.”

Film phenomenology today remains a valid and important form of inquiry for filmed content (Baracco 2017). As a field, it allows researchers to explore visceral embodied experiences and how entangled the senses are with this connection to living

the film (Ferencz-Flatz and Hanich 2016). Phenomenology has a rich history in CCT. Thompson et al. (1989) introduced existential-phenomenology into the field as a method of providing a first-person description of lived experience. Phenomenology has since been used as a mode of enquiry into various forms of consumer experiences (Mick and DeMoss 1990; Thompson et al. 1990; Thompson et al. 1994). In this article, we propose to draw on film phenomenology to explore the kind of consumer experience described as TV binge-watching. Despite the similarities between film and serialized TV, researchers in film phenomenology have left TV serials unexplored, while CCT researchers adopting a phenomenological approach have given little attention to TV consumption. Using film phenomenology as our main lens allows us to address the particularity of serialized TV content as a filmed medium while exploring this new form of media consumption. To this end, phenomenological description is used to gain access to the underlying structure of the viewing experience of binge-watchers. In the next section, we will explain the methods that we used to collect the data and interpret the findings.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The data for the present study was collected between 2012 and 2020 using phenomenological interviews (Thompson et al. 1989), auto-ethnographic introspective techniques (Gould 1995), and participant observation of collective binge-watching sessions. The data was also collected online using netnography (Kozinets, 2010). In addition, following Parmentier and Fischer (2015), archival data was gathered from

articles and blog posts on binge-watching as well as from comments posted by Internet users on Websites with content related to binge-watching. Where possible, the data collection was complemented by an analysis of the informants' Netflix logs and Google Play archives. This analysis revealed the nature and the number of TV series that participants watched and the time frame in which they did.

A total of 22 respondents aged between 24 and 60 were interviewed (Table 1). Many of the participants are university students while others work in cultural industries, education, healthcare, engineering firms, and NGOs or private-sector businesses. None of the informants said that they consider themselves “TV addicts” (Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi 2002). For the purposes of the present study, the only informants retained were those who defined themselves as binge-watchers or who self-reported incidents of their binge-watching behavior.

#### INFORMANTS

#	Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Family Status	Cable	Occupation	Series Watched
1	Meredith	26	F	Couple (unmarried)	Yes	Nurse	Breaking Bad, Grey's Anatomy, Brooklyn Nine Nine, Friends
2	Max	28	M	Married	No	Videographer	Breaking Bad, Banshee, Game of Thrones, Justified
3	Liam	28	M	Single	No	Student	Community
4	Delia	31	F	Couple (unmarried)	No	Project Coordinator	Vampire Diaries, Breaking Bad, Fringe, Lost Girl, Continuum, Defiance
5	Jake	31	M	Married	No	Programmer	Brooklyn Nine-Nine, Daredevil, Defenders, Game of Thrones, Jane the Virgin, Jessica Jones,
6	Peter	30	M	Single	No	Photographer	Breaking Bad, Battlestar Galactica, House of Cards
7	Mel	32	F	Couple (unmarried)	No	Consultant	Breaking Bad, The Good Wife, Damages, Boston Legal
8	Jason	32	M	Married	No	Strategist	Breaking Bad, The Wire
9	Charlotte	34	F	Single	No	Documentarian/NGO	Girls, Sex and The City, Broad City, Veep
10	Aaliyah	34	F	Single	Yes	Student	Girlfriends, Nashville, Supernatural, The L Word
11	Theo	38	M	Couple (unmarried)	No	Engineer	Breaking Bad, Murder One, Sherlock, Homeland
12	Robert	38	M	Married	No	Academia	The Wire, The West Wing, Six Feet Under
13	Xavier	39	M	Single	No	Banker	The Sopranos, The Walking Dead, The 4400, Hannibal
14	Macauley	41	M	Married	Yes	Entrepreneur	The Fall, Broadchurch, The Crown,
15	Malika	41	F	Married	No	Facilitator	Killing Eve, Grey's Anatomy, Outlander
16	Patrick	42	M	Married	No	Financial Consultant	Breaking Bad, Daredevil, The Wire
17	Gavin	44	M	Single	No	Finance	The Walking Dead, Six Feet Under
18	Clarisse	45	F	Married	Yes	Translation	Unité 9, Wentworth
19	Larry D.	46	M	Separated	No	Academia	Broadchurch, Prime Suspect, The Fall, Brooklyn Nine Nine, Rectify, Bloodlines, Luther
20	Stacy	48	F	Married	Yes	Philanthropy	Battlestar Galactica
21	Rodney	58	M	Married	Yes	Educator	Mad Men, The Sopranos,
22	Sandy	60	F	Married	Yes	Accountant	The Sopranos, 24, How to Make a Murderer, Game of Thrones

Table 1: List of informants

During the initial stages of the data collection, it became clear that it would be difficult to understand the viewing experience of the binge-watchers who participated in the study without experiencing binge-watching firsthand. Although one author had binge-watched TV series in the past, she decided to extend this experience by binge-watching several TV series and participating in collective binge-watching sessions. The other author became an avid binge-watcher during the research. To interpret the viewing experience of the binge-watchers who participated in the study, we made close observations of their TV viewing behavior, accurate accounts of their self-descriptions regarding their TV consumption practices, and careful analyses of their explanations of what they experience while they are binge-watching TV series.

The first step in this interpretative process was to identify any possible research biases that might influence the hermeneutic assessment of the viewing experience of the participants. After providing an empirical description, it was necessary to examine their experience at a deeper level using phenomenological bracketing (Ihde 2012) to isolate the viewing in its experiential purity. This involved faithfully transcribing and interpreting these participants' self-descriptions using an emic approach that remains on the same experiential level as the TV viewing experience described (Thompson et al. 1989). As the research proceeded, we collected many experiential descriptions that provided us with the "opportunity for phenomenological reflection" (van Manen 2019, 918). This data collection was an iterative, hermeneutic procedure (Thompson 1997) that led to the identification of three main themes: 1) Binge-watching in practice; 2) The pleasure of being caught up in a TV serial; and 3) The experience of watching all the way.

## 2.4 Findings

### Binge-Watching in Practice

Jake: I've stayed up too late on more than one occasion.

Researcher: So, what do you mean by "Staying up too late?"

Jake: Well, I should be going to bed. . . work in the morning or something. . .

I'll stay up for just one more episode.

Researcher: One more episode. And is it just one more?

Jake: Sometimes. Not always. . . I never went all the way through 'till the morning. At least not any time in recent years. . . *Breaking Bad* was one of the ones that kept me up the latest. . . If I was able to muster up the willpower, then it would be just one more episode and then what was supposed to be one, might turn into three.

Researcher: So, you would go over your desired limits?

Jake: Yes.

Researcher: Now, when you're watching *Jane the Virgin*, do you go over the limits?

Jake: No. My wife has much better self-control than I do. . .

Jake is a 31-year-old man who works in the gaming industry as a senior back-end developer. He is also the father of a one-year-old daughter.

The excerpt from Jake's interview raises many issues: the temptation to transgress limits, the importance of willpower (or lack of it), and the role that other persons like

friends and family members play when viewers watch TV serials together. Jake said that he often watches serials with his wife, who is not only a TV companion but also a safeguard against excess because of her greater self-control.

Jake used to read at least one book per week, but because of lack of time and his parental and professional obligations, his cultural interests have shifted from reading to TV watching. Nonetheless, during the interviews, he talked about the serials that he watches as if he were talking about books that he has read, referring to plot development, character consistency, and narrative coherence. Moreover, he used an expression from Shakespeare to describe the moment when he begins to feel unable to turn away from the screen, the brief interval of time when he first becomes aware that he is “getting hooked.” In reference to this experience, he said, “That’s the rub,” meaning by Hamlet’s famous phrase that the experience consists in having a strong urge to keep on watching and yet knowing at the very same time, that he should not only fight the temptation to do so but also that he lacks the necessary willpower.

The case of Jake recalls the *Portlandia* sketch mentioned above, although there are significant differences. Contrary to the characters Doug and Claire, Jake was reluctant to concede that he spends long hours watching TV serials. During one of the interviews, he stated that he *only* watches two or three episodes of his favorite show per day. However, his Netflix log and the receipts from the Google Play Store reveal that he is a far more avid consumer of TV serials than he admitted. Keeping track of how much one watches is sometimes detrimental to the viewer’s experience. Many, like Jake, are surprised when confronted with how much content they have consumed. Jake claims that it is not about the amount of time he watches, but rather about the desire to finish the story.



When I say, I don't watch as much as I would like, it's not so much a measure of time but a measure of content. Because now I'm just curious as to what happens next. I'd love to just to keep rolling.

*Juggling Abundance.* Jake uses the metaphor of a bucket to describe how he plans the next stories he is going to watch:

I wouldn't say we have like a hopper or anything, but we usually have a list. There will be something we've seen and thought maybe we'd like to watch at some point. So we'll do so. Maybe not a list, but there's sort of like a bucket of shows, and we'll reach into and start pulling things out of.

Jake explains that the priority of shows to be watched are often in line with when they entered the bucket. He and his wife cannot see things that are too far into the bucket, and every time a new show is added, it is placed at the top. He admits that there are many shows that he has forgotten that he even wanted to watch. To him, the bucket has many "holes:"

We wanted to watch *Killing Eve* season 3. That's another one that was in the bucket, but you know, I forgot about it for a while again. It's not on Netflix, so I can't use my list feature. It's a very hole-y bucket. There are a lot of ways for stuff to fall out because I'm not. . . keeping a formal list. I've been told one of my acquaintances actually has a spreadsheet full of shows that they want to watch. I don't want to take it that serious. I don't want it to be like a job. So, I keep it a lot looser.

Jake and his wife sometimes “outpace Netflix” and have to download new episodes and seasons of the TV serials illegally, because the content provider’s catalogue is not always complete or up to date. If there are no other episodes available or if it is just too complicated for them to access media content, binge-watchers like Jake commonly use “fillers.” They jump into other TV serials to “fill” the binge-watching gap and end up watching more than one at the same time.

During one of the interviews, Jake mentioned that he and his wife had worked their way through *Jane the Virgin* while waiting for the final seasons of *Game of Thrones* to be released. Other informants like Meredith, a 26-year-old nurse, also mentioned watching two or three TV serials simultaneously. However, Jake made it clear that he uses “fillers” to kill time while he waits to have access to the serial that is the focus of his binge-watching. In contrast, Meredith said that she makes a conscious effort to manage her TV serial consumption in such a way as to avoid causing friction in her relationship. She watches *Grey’s Anatomy* alone, but she has chosen to watch other serials such as *Breaking Bad* with her boyfriend. She feels that he would find *Grey’s Anatomy* boring and that he might even make fun of it:

Most dramas I wouldn’t binge-watch with him. . . Just because he will make silly comments about how stupid or unrealistic the show is, and it will just ruin it for me—so I’d rather just watch without him so I can enjoy it.

Like Jake and Meredith, our informants use many content providers like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Crave. Sometimes, they use illegal platforms—they have access to a vast amount of content. They also juggle the numerous new shows that are constantly released. While some people like Jake collect the shows that they are anticipating in a

bucket list, others like Misha, a 34-year-old woman, keep lists that detail the TV serials that they have successfully binge-watched. Those are experiential CVs (Keinan and Kivetz 2011). They contain a person's record of binge-watching and display their achievements. For example, one informant checked off the TV serials that she has binge-watched on her Facebook account: "*Prison break*✓, *Gossip girl*✓, *Greys*✓, *Arrow*✓, *Wentworth*✓, *OITNB*✓" (Courtney, Facebook, March 14, 2017).

Whether or not they keep a list of the shows they plan to watch or a list of the ones they have watched successfully, the binge-watchers surveyed in this study often actively collected viewing experiences. From more formal lists that are compiled in spreadsheets, to more haphazard lists that are kept in the binge-watchers' mind, these compilations help them manage the abundant resources they have access to. We have not come across informants who list unfinished serials as achievements. However, if they listed unfinished serial, it was to exemplify the type of shows that they did not like or that they wanted to avoid. The end of the serial was an important milestone in our binge-watchers' journey.

*Crossing the Line.* Resisting the temptation to watch a TV serial before all its seasons have been released is a theme that pervades the interviews with Jake and many of the other informants. Jake explained that at first, he had planned to wait for all the seasons of *Game of Thrones* to be available for viewing before starting to watch the popular serial. To his credit, he lasted five years, admitting in the interview that he finally gave up and started watching when the sixth season was released, even though he knew that two more seasons were coming. He explained that there was so much buzz

around the show that he could no longer resist. Jake also broke the “cardinal rule” that many of the binge-watchers interviewed advocate: If one has a TV companion with whom one watches a show, one must never watch ahead alone or with someone else. Jake watched five or six episodes of *Game of Thrones* alone without his wife before the sixth season was over. It seems that he did not want to tell her he had been unable to hold out.

To ensure that the viewing experience is worthwhile, many participants in the present study said that they usually wait until at least one full season or a significant number of episodes has been released before they begin watching a TV serial. Some informants said that they bank TV serials in advance, building up a ready stock of episodes or whole seasons that they will be able to binge-watch when the time is ripe. Often they stressed that they would rather wait and develop a strong yearning to watch a TV serial straight through in one extremely long viewing session—or over a few days in two or three extended viewing sessions—than obtain small doses of it intermittently by watching it once a week at some scheduled time. In other words, participants often delay gratification.

We have already seen that Jake is acutely aware of his binge-watching limits. For Meredith too, there is a danger of not being able to respect her limits. During an interview, she said that if a new TV serial grips her to the point where she finds it irresistible, she may end up binge-watching it even if she has important professional obligations that require her to be completely focused at work. Although Meredith talked about risks, she did so with a certain humor, stressing how fun and pleasurable it is to be so caught up in a show that she cannot stop watching it. She enjoys crossing the line—

reaching that point Jake referred to as “the rub”—when she binge-watches a new TV serial late in the evening, even though she knows that she should probably turn it off and go to bed. This contrasts findings by Feiereisen et al. (2020), whose participants expressed guilt and regret when crossing the line. For our informants, this heightened enjoyment seems to be connected to an experience of excess that involves more than simply exceeding the amount of time set aside for watching a series or the number of episodes that one had originally planned to watch. In their descriptions of this experience, informants stressed the thrill of feeling as if they have exceeded their mental and physical capacity for viewing. They are like long-distance runners whose forward momentum makes them feel good, not merely on account of how long and how far they have been running, but also because it involves the concrete lived experience of testing their limits.

*Pushing One's Limits.* Binge-watchers talk about exceeding their limits with exaggeration in ways that evoke Bakhtin's (1965/1984) analysis of carnival feasting and his frequent reference to the excessive consumption of food and drink. While feasting, carnival revelers freely transgressed bodily limits by eating and drinking up until and beyond what the human body can ingest, pushing these basic human consumption activities into the realm of the obscene by breaking them completely free of any real need for sustenance. Eating and drinking always involve bodily limits so that beyond a certain amount there is no “good reason” to pursue them unless, as Bakhtin (1965/1984, 281) suggests, the consumptive excess of voracious ingurgitation has the salutary effect of exposing the body's “open unfinished nature.”

In contrast to eating and drinking, binge-watching involves digital, immaterial products, yet the question of testing one's body limits is an important aspect of the phenomenon. Our informants described the experience of "going too far" or "crossing the line" in their TV serial consumption as an essential part of their binge-watching experience. Many said that it is when they start to become aware this is happening and feel driven to continue watching despite possible negative consequences, like going to bed late and being tired at work the next day, that they "know" they are binge-watching. They actively seek TV serials with the potential to give them this increased pleasure, ones that will entice them to disregard basic responsibilities for the sake of binge-watching further and losing themselves in the viewing experience. The experience of transgressing their limits—by watching "just one more episode"—heightens their enjoyment of the viewing experience. The next section follows on this.

### **The Pleasure of Being Caught Up in a TV Serial**

I started to watch *Switched at Birth*, don't laugh at me! But now that I finished the backlog of episodes, I find the show boring and *cliché*. The action is painfully slow in the episodes; I just can't watch it anymore—  
Misha

When asked why they binge-watch, informants sometimes claimed that they save time by focusing on one specific TV serial instead of watching TV aimlessly. Compared with traditionally watching TV serials—intermittently in weekly broadcast

installments—binge-watching is an extremely fast viewing technique that allows TV serial consumers to accelerate consumption exponentially. For example, the total amount of time required to watch *Switched at Birth*, from the beginning of the first episode to the final credits in the last episode, is a little more than 78 hours (IMDb 2017). TV viewers who watched this serial intermittently, following the original broadcast schedule, needed almost six years to complete the well-known TV serial. It ran for 104 episodes from June 6, 2011, to April 11, 2017 (IMDb 2017).

However, there is more at play than issues of speed, acceleration, and time optimization. When informants like Misha mentioned the “high speed” of the consumption process as one of their reasons for claiming that binge-watching is “the best way to watch TV,” they were not merely referring to the quantifiable amount of time it takes them to finish an entire serial, they were also raising the issue of the quality of their overall viewing experience.

*Pushing Through to the End.* Misha is a 34-year-old university student who stopped watching *Switched at Birth* after she discovered that she did not like it anymore when she turned to watching individual episodes in weekly broadcast installments.

Misha has binge-watched TV serials like *Supernatural*, *Nashville*, *Girlfriends*, *The L Word*, and *Switched at Birth*. She likes to binge-watch because she feels closer with the characters and the story; she believes binge-watching provides her with a more intense experience. During the interviews, she acknowledged that she thinks she watches too much TV. Once a week, she binge-watches until 5 to 6 a.m. She explained how she often finds herself going through until the early hours of the morning; how it

was in those moments when it was hard to continue that the viewing became the most enjoyable:

Everything hurts, and you are so tired, you don't know up from down, right from left. The only thing you know is that if you can, you want to go on, and that's when it gets good, that's when you have to push through.

Informants often suggested that there is a strong similarity between the intensity of their binge-watching experiences and that of a drug-fueled high or a drinking spree. For example, Misha talks about the feeling of not wanting “to come down” while she is binge-watching. During an on-air interview on the radio program, *On the Media*, Bob Garfield (2012) made comments along the same lines, drawing a parallel between his binge-watching experience with the TV serial *Breaking Bad* and the binge experiences of heavy drinkers and drug users:

I was a late adopter of [*Breaking Bad*], but I made up for the lost time by plowing through seasons one through three in a 33-episode bender lasting three days. Leaving all other life duties aside, I lost myself in the rush, not unlike the meth tweakers who inhabit the series. It was [whispering] glorious!

In the interviews, binge-watchers frequently used adjectives like “amazing,” “intense,” or “glorious” to describe this aspect of their viewing experience. The pleasure of losing oneself in a serial, which arises from Bob Garfield’s comment, is a common theme.

Delia, a 31-year-old woman, explained how binge-watching feels like floating in a “bubble” far above the world, completely disconnected from everything—except what is happening on the screen.



Coming up for air, everything seems different. It's like the bubble has burst and that's the worst. Once you get out of it, sometimes it's hard to get back in, so it's important to limit the distractions. That's why I don't watch anything with my boyfriend, it's like he can't sit still and it ruins the mood. Many of the participants spoke of the need to maintain their strength and their viewing momentum when they binge-watch. In the interviews, they referred to "cramming," "plowing," or "powering" through TV serials, and they exuded pride in their ability to "push through" to the end of a serial. These same informants usually prefer to be alone when they binge-watch. For instance, Misha said that she occasionally binge-watches with friends, but insisted that her enjoyment of a favorite show increases when she binge-watches it alone: "No one to stop me. I don't stop myself. I just let everything go. I fall into it. It's incredible. . ."

The need for isolation is commonly justified by informants for many different reasons. One of the main reasons often stated is the difficulties engendered when trying to lose oneself in the content if one is distracted by outside elements. People like Delia insisted that this total detachment from the outside world is a very pleasurable experience, and it is clear that they see it as intrinsically linked to the sheer enjoyment of being completely caught up in a TV serial while pushing through it—episode after episode, season after season—to reach the end. It is not a coincidence that almost all of them mentioned reaching the final scene in the very last episode as an end-goal, with one of them even calling it the "ultimate payoff" (Max, 28).

The hedonistic dimension of the binge-watcher's onward drive to the end of a TV serial is manifest in Misha, Bob Garfield, and Delia's comments. This hedonistic

dimension is clearly connected to the frequently mentioned desire to push through to the end of TV serials and on the fundamental importance of reaching the end of serials. Pushing through a TV serial combines accelerated viewing with intense concentration, allowing binge-watchers to enter into a state of abandon that they often compare to the excitement that readers feel while they are devouring a page-turner. Binge-watchers are propelled into the narrative arc of the TV serial by its aural and visual dimensions and have an intense and at the same time logically coherent experience of the actions and events that they are watching unfold on screen. Most of them described the experience of a moment where time and space became warped, and the desire to keep watching became so intense that they were willing to forgo comfort, sleep, food, productivity and other usual activities. They gave themselves over to the experience and were unconcerned with the repercussions of the activity. This is in stark contrast to the personal condemnation and regret that is seen as following indulgent behavior (Feiereisen et al. 2020; Keinan and Kivetz 2008; Kivetz and Simonson 2002a, 2002b). Binge-watchers find pleasure in being able to experience the desire for more, and in being able to voluntarily relinquish the reins and lose themselves in the worlds constructed by the serials.

*Going Solo, Going Hard.* Many participants stated that they find it very difficult to adjust their desired pace and attention span to match someone else's. They often reported on the tensions arising in the couple or with friends, when one partner wishes to push through a serial, while the other wants to take their time. This was particularly clear in the case of one informant who was watching *Battlestar Galactica*

simultaneously with her husband, but in a different room (field notes 17-05-2013). They both wanted to improve their viewing experience, even if that meant isolating themselves so that each of them could watch the serial at her or his own pace.

The people interviewed occasionally participated in organized binge-watching sessions that have a ritualistic group atmosphere (field notes 21-07-2012, 28-07-2012) similar to the ones at the fan-culture social events discussed by Russell and Schau (2014) and praised by McCracken (2013). That being said, informants never described collective viewing sessions as the ideal way to binge-watch TV serials. It was clear that they preferred solitary viewing because of the difficulty of remaining in sync with other binge-watchers during a viewing session. In some cases, it may be possible to interpret their preference to be alone when they push through a serial as antisocial or selfish; but, more often than not, it has to do with the desire to have as few distractions as possible so that they can concentrate fully on TV serial content. Binge-watchers usually prefer the experience to be personal—when alone, they can set their own pace. This does not need to mean as fast as possible, but as fast as they see fit. They do not have to compromise or worry about their partner and friends' level of commitment or their enjoyment. They have no responsibility. They can just enjoy the show selfishly. As a self-absorbing and self-indulgent activity, binge-watching possesses a masturbatory character.

Solitary viewing allows binge-watchers to have more control over the pace at which they push through hours and hours of TV serial episodes. As Choi (2011) puts it, “For quality binge-watching, you have to go solo and go hard. Getting strung out on the tension of a long-arc narrative is private.” However, watching alone is not always a “respectable” way of behaving. Expressions such as “stream cheating” (Ruiz 2013) or

“Netflix adultery” (O’Connor 2013) have entered the binge-watching vernacular. The issue of “cheating” on TV companions by breaking the “cardinal rule” comes up frequently in the interviews, as we saw with Jake. Binge-watchers often need time to get into the serial, to become engaged in the narrative, and once they are, they become committed to the continued thrill of watching compulsively. Breaking up the episodes, or being distracted, prevents them from entering into the world of the serial—it breaks the flow.

There is no denying that for the informants binge-watching is pleasurable and joyful. However, it is not simply an aimless form of self-gratification. Binge-watchers have a goal—reaching the end of the TV serial that they are watching—and this goal is an integral part of their viewing experience. This is the topic of the next section.

### **The Experience of Watching All the Way**

*The Paradox of the End.* Binge-watchers are constantly striving to get to the end of TV serials. Reaching that final episode and the ultimate scene is the goal of their activity. Throughout their viewing experience, the end of the TV serial stands as the horizon that binge-watchers are trying to attain by pushing through content on screen on their way there. Not surprisingly, the end of the journey comes with mixed feelings.

On the one hand, binge-watchers have very negative emotions when they finish watching a TV serial. Many participants in the present study spoke of the sadness, the uncertainty, and even the anxiety they experience. Wes Kayne, a commenter on

Newman's (2009) article published in *Flow*, describes his own experience of reaching the end of TV serials as follows:

We power through all the episodes until we reach the end. Watching one after another originally made the experience more fulfilling, but it sets us up for a huge downfall when the season ends. I think the word we all use when this comes up is "emptiness." We are so used to having more more more that we don't know what to do when we run out.

Pushing through TV serials—episode after episode, season after season—binge-watchers manifest a very high level of curiosity about how the story unfolds. Although their viewing experience is fundamentally oriented to reaching the end of TV serials, they rarely say that they look forward to the end of the viewing experience itself. Some informants even said that they deliberately hold off on watching the final episode in a season of a serial so that they can delay the end, a viewing strategy consistent with Russell and Schau's (2014) and Feiereisen et al. (2020) observations. For binge-watchers, finishing a TV serial means ending their intensely enjoyable viewing experience. The end of the final episode represents the finish line towards which they are racing, but watching it is like listening to the last song at a concert by your favorite band, or the final moments of a holiday before heading back to your real life. It is no wonder that binge-watchers have a certain apprehension about "getting there."

On the other hand, binge-watchers often have positive feelings about finishing a TV serial. Several informants talked about achievements, the need for closure, but also the desire to free themselves. One informant spoke about the pleasure of getting caught up in a TV serial and feeling compelled to constantly watch it, but added, somewhat

paradoxically, that she often feels relieved when she finally reaches the last episode. She said that losing herself in a TV serial is exhilarating, but that watching it through to the end can be very demanding. If there were no ending, she would probably exhaust herself in an infinitely long viewing experience that would just keep going on and on. In other words, her awareness that she is approaching ever closer to the final scene in a TV serial helps make the intense effort of her viewing experience bearable. Many other informants expressly stated that knowing TV serials eventually come to an end shapes their binge-watching experience in a positive way; they can see the end coming and feel like pushing through even harder to reach it.

The mere fact that TV serials have an ending can also play a role in the initial decision to begin watching one. Some informants like Mel, a 32-year-old consultant, are adamant about not starting TV serials that do not already have a definite ending. “I won’t start a show unless I know it’s ended. I don’t want to commit to 50 seasons of some unending drama; it’s just not my thing.” Mel’s refusal to embark on a viewing experience centered on an “unending drama” clearly references the need that binge-watchers have for closure. For them, the end of a TV serial is not merely an essential structural component of the story; it is also a pre-established limit to the viewing experience itself. As such, it stands as a fundamental requirement that determines in advance whether or not TV serials are suitable for viewing. This is not to say that binge-watchers have to impose such a requirement in an absolute sense. Many begin watching TV serials that do not yet have a definitive ending. However, informants said they are frustrated when the next season is not yet available and feel that they have been left in

the lurch, waiting for a TV serial to return. High levels of impatience are not surprising when one considers that their core binge-watching experience has been interrupted.

Whether or not binge-watchers decide to begin viewing TV serials that do not yet have a definitive ending, they always seem to be deeply conscious of the need for one. Independently of the question of which other aspects of narrative structure make some older types of TV serial less appropriate for binge-watching, they cannot imagine binge-watching a never-ending (or, at the very least, decades-long) soap opera like *General Hospital* or *Coronation Street*. This is precisely Mel's point about refusing to begin a show without an ending. Yet binge-watchers anticipate reaching the end of a TV serial as both a highly enjoyable viewing experience and an uneasy preliminary to a post-viewing period in their lives that may be tinged with a feeling of regretful emptiness.

Of course, some binge-watchers may have a tendency to feel distressed about coming to the end of TV serials, whereas others may have a tendency to feel relieved. Still, it seems to be the case that almost all binge-watchers have mixed feelings about reaching the end of TV serials. A certain anxiety—especially about what to watch next to overcome a feeling of emptiness—is accompanied by assuagement and often a sense of accomplishment: they have “finally” finished; they have “succeeded in getting through” this one. A positive emotional response to reaching the end is tempered by the question *But what do I watch next?* And by the impression that no other TV serial could ever make them feel as good by taking them to the same heights of binge-watching pleasure.

*Prolonging the Viewing Experience Indefinitely.* Beneath these variations and differences in emotional responses, there seems to be a common pattern. Early in the research, it became clear that after they had reached the end of a TV serial, almost all the informants refrained from binge-watching for a certain period. Their doing so appeared to be a type of fasting that allowed binge-watchers to complete a consumption cycle similar to the ones described by Wilk (2014), in his work on binge consumption in mining and logging communities. During such TV fasts, binge-watchers sought to find balance and peace of mind again after a period of intense TV watching in which they had pushed themselves to their viewing limits.

Many informants explicitly mentioned these periods of respite during which they relaxed and regained their focus by completely renouncing their pursuit of TV viewing excess. Allie, a 34-year-old beautician, explained that the length of these binge-watching “breaks” was variable: “Sometimes it can be a day or two. Sometimes I don’t turn the TV back on for a week or two.” Macaulay, a 41-year-old entrepreneur, indicated that TV abstinence was not the only strategy adopted by binge-watchers after they had finished a serial: “You can’t just hop from one 22-episode-per-season, seven-plus-seasons show to another. You need a mini-series buffer in-between, to cleanse the visual palate, a televisual sorbet if you will.” In other words, Macaulay resorted to a kind of purging after finishing a TV serial. In a similar vein, another informant said that after binge-watching two seasons of the serial killer drama *The Fall*, she needed to watch a light comedy to expunge all the murder from her mind.

Whether it is through complete TV viewing abstinence or through some metaphorical form of purging, many binge-watchers seemed to feel the need to take a



break after finishing a TV serial that had given them a particularly intense viewing experience. This period of respite appeared to be necessary before they could begin binge-watching another TV serial because it helped them prepare to make the switch to a totally different narrative universe. Interestingly, the length of these periods of respite seemed to change throughout the research. At first, it was observed that before starting a new TV serial, informants were “TV fasting” for relatively long periods, some saying that they abstained from binge-watching for several weeks. A few even said that they did so for months. However, as time went by, these periods of respite became progressively shorter. During the final two years of the research, some informants said they had stopped abstaining from binge-watching between TV serials—now they simply jumped into the next one and kept on binge-watching.

The diminishing length or the complete disappearance of these periods of respite is intriguing. It seems likely that it indicates an increasing tendency for binge-watchers to seek to prolong their viewing experience indefinitely. Instead of spending brief periods abstaining from binge-watching to allow themselves to recuperate by returning to “normal life,” they seem to be pushing through TV serials to the end—and beyond—in an effort to keep their intense, uninterrupted viewing experience alive.

## 2.5 Discussion

### The Best Way to Watch TV

The majority of the participants in the present study said that their most intense binge-watching experiences had occurred in specific circumstances. However, informants explained that it is not only during special times like vacations that they binge-watch TV serials but also during regular periods in their lives. Binge-watching has become a part of their routine, some doing it daily, others waiting until Friday night and the weekend. It is not only a way to escape from the humdrum of their day-to-day lives, but also a consumption behavior that has come to replace other worthwhile activities like reading.

All the informants acknowledged that they have been spending more time viewing TV serials since they started to binge-watch them. They mostly talked about the pleasure that this consumption behavior gives them. In addition, they all insisted that binge-watching has changed their appreciation of TV itself. During the interviews, they regularly declared that they had found it difficult to reintegrate the regular broadcast schedule once they had begun binge-watching TV serials. They said that watching them through weekly installments is “less exciting” or “not as intense,” and that the wait between episodes is frustrating because it reduces their ability to focus on content and appreciate a serial fully.

These observations challenge the idea that weekly gaps between episodes and longer breaks between seasons are important to the extent that they provide viewers with the possibility to reflect on the narrative and further engage with the show. Our

informants talked about the difficulty to watch TV serials intermittently, about the frustration that accompanies the wait for new episodes, they showed how they use fillers to fill in the gaps between TV serials' seasons, and they praised the intensity of uninterrupted watching. For binge-watchers, not being able to continue the viewing experience, because of the intermittency of traditional TV serial broadcasts, is more like trying to read a novel on Twitter. One of the participants used the word "torture" to describe watching *Alias* and *Fringe* on a week-to-week basis, adding that she was waiting for the production of *The Americans* to be completed and for the entire serial to be available on streaming before starting to watch it. Binge-watchers like her prefer not to return to the intermittent viewing dictated by broadcast TV schedules. Indeed, many informants said that once you have experienced binge-watching, "you can never go back."

In sum, the people interviewed commonly alleged that binge-watching makes TV better. They often maintained that it improves the experience of TV watching. They claimed that binge-watching is *the* best way to watch TV.

### **The Phenomenological Structure of the Viewing Experience of Binge-Watchers**

In his work on the phenomenology of enjoyment, Csikszentmihalyi (1990/2008) proposes an analysis of the flow experience. His research is particularly relevant when he compares and contrasts reading with TV watching. While he praises the former as one of the favorite flow activities, he contends that the latter is largely a waste of time as it is a passive activity that only rarely leads to a flow condition.

It is important to put Csikszentmihalyi's (1990/2008) reflection in its historical context. The uninterrupted TV experience made possible by the access to content that characterizes the current TV culture of abundance was unavailable to consumers when he published his work. This is important, for he considers that the interrupted experience of TV is a major obstacle to the flow experience. Another hurdle to understanding binge-watching as flow is the pegging of flow as the optimal state of experience, which is found in Csikszentmihalyi's (1990/2008) work and reverberated throughout the field of marketing (Hoffman and Novak 2009).

Csikszentmihalyi's (1990/2008) insistence that flow needs be optimal eschews its very roots in the average everydayness of the lived experience as explored by Heidegger (1927/1962) in *Being and Time*. Philosopher Hubert Dreyfus (1991) has scrutinized these concepts in his commentary on Heidegger's writings. This more mundane depiction of flow states is central in his analysis. Dreyfus's (1991) work on flow and background practices makes salient the many forms of flow experience and how they co-exist. In line with Heideggerian phenomenology, Dreyfus discusses how human beings may project themselves into activities without a near or long-term goal. He introduces flow activities during which an "activity can be purposive without the actor having in mind a purpose" (Dreyfus 1991, 93). This is an important distinction, as he describes skilled activities (such as playing piano), habitual activities (such as brushing one's teeth), unthinking activities (such as making gestures while one is speaking), and spontaneous activities (such as drumming one's fingers anxiously during a dull lecture), as activities that people can engage in without intellectualizing them.

The parallels between binge-watching and “background practices” (Dreyfus 1991) are important. We often encountered viewers who talked about being in a “bubble” while watching a serial that they liked and who realized, sometimes abruptly, that they were getting close to the end. Binge-watching exemplifies this tension between the lack of self-consciousness, which is constitutive of a flow state, and what is inherently conspicuous to the experience. Can binge-watching be experienced with “skills”? The question can be raised. The idea of viewing skills or competency is found in Mittell’s (2015) work, but his reflection does not extend to binge-watching. Feiereisen et al. (2020) also recognize that binge-watching requires cognitive attention, skills, and stamina, but they do not analyze how TV watching can have flow. For them, flow is nothing more than an afterthought.

There are basic skills, or “know-how” as Dreyfus (1991) would put it, that most viewers have acquired through years of watching TV and films. This know-how is transferable to binge-watching, making it an essential component of the experience. In the present study, some respondents have reported needing specific skills to interact with certain content, esthetics, subject matter, and narratives. What we observe in the data, and which is different than previous work on the topic, provides evidence that these skills can also be developed within the experience. One need not arrive at the activity skill in hand to engage in the activity. Flow assists in the development of skills. In binge-watching, this skill set is built on the linearity and the seriality that is inherent in following the filmed narrative from beginning to end. Through binge-watching, one can develop a familiarity with the visual cues and the cultural codes associated with the intensively consumed serial. Binge-watching is not a merely passive reception of screen

images and sounds. It is an activity that makes it meaningful to push through, one where the consumer is engrossed in and engaged by complex televisual content. This is why we argue that binge-watching is a background practice that makes TV better.

### **The Goal-Directedness of Binge-Watching**

In the literature, binge consumption is often characterized as a short-term self-indulgent behavior in which highly compulsive human beings completely disregard their long-term interests and real needs for the sake of obtaining immediate gratification (Baumeister 2002; Hirschman 1992; Kivetz and Simonson 2002a, 2002b). This is how Feiereisen et al. (2020) describe binge-watching when they say that TV viewers devour content. They stress the addictive nature of binge-watching. They emphasize the obsessive nature of the activity. They insist on the failure to control one's behavior, on the short-term rewards that this behavior may bring, and on the adverse consequences that it may produce. This general conception of binge consumption behavior highlights some important aspects of binge-watching. For example, it seems incontestable that it involves a high degree of self-indulgence (Kivetz and Simonson 2002a, 2002b), and it would probably be appropriate to describe the viewing experience of persons who engage in it as a "self-gift experience" (Mick and DeMoss 1990).

Yet there is one fundamental aspect of binge-watching that does not fit with this general conception of binge consumption. Although binge-watching consists of compulsively pushing through TV serial content, the intense viewing experience that results is structurally determined by *the goal of reaching the end of TV serials*. At any

given moment during their viewing experience, binge-watchers may be enjoying themselves immensely or not at all. In the data, some respondents acknowledged dull moments or passages that were harder to connect to. If these did not lead to a complete disconnection from the show, if the binge-watchers pushed through, these moments became complicit in deepening their commitment to the experience akin to a marathon runner pushing through a plateau to the finish line. Binge-watchers' sustained gratification, the pleasure in viewing, depends on a continuous non-stop watching directed toward reaching the end of a TV serial. This means that binge-watchers are in fact delaying gratification because, as intense as their immediate gratification may (or may not) be, it is founded on their continuously pushing through TV serial content to obtain even greater pleasure by getting closer and closer to the end.

We have seen that some participants in the present study have a strong awareness of going beyond their TV viewing limits when they feel irresistibly enticed by a narrative arc into continuing to watch a serial, but the limits in question have to do with the consequences of their consumption practice. If they keep on watching a TV serial, they may miss a social engagement (as in the *Portlandia* episode from the epigraph), or they may be tired in the morning when they go to work, yet this is completely different from eating or drinking (or shopping or gambling) too much, where the excessive consumption activity involves a transformation of a more moderate consumption activity or at least one that can be practiced with moderation.

Consumers who eat and drink too much or who have an addiction to shopping or gambling are forced to live with the negative consequences of their excessive consumption behavior. In their case, it may be a question of life-threatening

consequences. Still, their pursuit of excess is embedded in consumption activities subject to regulatory, social norms that they “choose” to transgress to obtain immediate gratification or quell urges. Binge-watchers are not like bulimics, alcoholics, compulsive shoppers, or gambling addicts who have little or no control over their ability to engage in a specific consumption activity with moderation. On the contrary, their preferred form of consumption is excessive *by definition*. Although some persons may be occasional binge-watchers (their binge-watching not in line with this consumption practice’s tendency to become increasingly excessive), there is no such thing as moderate binge-watching.

People who binge-watch TV serials choose their content. They organize their binge-watching: they wait for more episodes, they bank material, they have buckets, they make lists, they temporarily join a streaming service expressly for one show, they wait for the right time to engage. In other words, binge-watching is not an activity that pursues excess for its own sake, as in the case of alcohol or drug consumption (Hirschman 1992). It also differs from the excessive consumption of ever more transgressive images and content that Kozinets et al. (2017) associate with food porn and for which the consumers have no particular goals in mind. Binge-watchers are selective. They want to fall, but not down an endless rabbit hole. Their consumption is bounded by closure.

Binge-watching is continuous and increasingly intense non-stop watching that moves through the viewing time toward the end—both of the story on screen and of itself as experience. The goal-directedness is fundamental in binge-watching. It



distinguishes it from other forms of bingeing in general, and it sets it apart from other types of excessive consumption.

## 2.6 Implications

*Fan Consumption.* The evidence presented here has important implications for researchers interested in TV fans, in particular, and fans, in general.

The people who binge-watch are emotionally and passionately attached to a serial and its characters. They are ardent followers of their TV serials, *but* for a limited period only. Binge-watchers are almost entirely focused on the intense viewing experience they have for those few hours, days, or weeks during which the content of a TV serial constitutes the current object of their binge-watching. After that, they move on: they look for what they call “the next hit.”

The relationships that binge-watchers have with TV serials are characterized by excess, transience, and accrual. They are imbued with the pleasure of novelty and the aura of the first time. Binge-watchers rarely wish to re-watch a TV serial. They value the uniqueness of the initial state and experience and maintain that these cannot be duplicated on a second viewing. As long as there is riveting content, binge-watchers are monogamous. But the nature of release schedules, and the breaks between seasons, often lead them to having multiple commitments and allegiances. In contrast to the fans depicted by Russell and Schau (2014) who talk about the end of a serial as a relationship failure, binge-watchers often celebrate the end of a serial as a high point. They seek the end of a serial so that they can begin connecting with other content. Coincidentally, they

rarely expand or deepen their viewing experience by purchasing memorabilia, visiting museum exhibitions, or joining online communities like fans would.

The portrait of the binge-watcher that emerges here contrasts significantly with the TV fan. In CCT, binge-watchers are distinguished from and placed in opposition to fans. For CCT researchers, fans are loyal. They are ardent followers of *specific* TV serials. They love those serials so much that they commonly rewatch them. In line with Jenkins (1992) who criticized Barthes's (1975) assertion that rereading alters a narrative's experience, CCT researchers usually insist on how rewatching is an integral part of TV fans' activity. Feiereisen et al. (2020) even talk about how fans pick and choose what to reconsume.

The research on TV fans in CCT is in line with the development of fan studies (Ford 2014), which has evolved from Jenkins' (1992) influential work and has focused mainly on media fans and fan cultures. Jenkins contends that fans can be defined as having a passionate connection to media content. They assert their identity through their knowledge and mastery of the content. For him, as well as for other scholars like Hills (2002), Perks (2015) and Feiereisen et al. (2020), the excessive, self-indulgent TV consumption of binge-watchers might appear wasteful. It may even be an affront to the cultural practices of devoted fans. Apparently uninterested in contemplative bliss, pushing through the content at high speeds, binge-watchers seem to be irreverent TV viewing hedonists.

It is important not to essentialize the differences between binge-watchers and fans. It is also valuable to move beyond the dichotomy between the two. We met fans who binge-watched certain TV serials, as well as people who defined themselves as binge-

watchers but who watched and rewatched some serials with the same devotion as fans. Considering this, it would miss the point to say that binge-watchers are not as loyal, or as exclusive, as fans. They are just more flexible and open to other content. Just like fans, binge-watchers have a passionate connection to the content. Unlike fans, however, they rarely define themselves through that content. They rather do it through the watching experience. In a sense, binge-watchers can be characterized as temporary, passing by fans.

From a phenomenological perspective, the transient experience that binge-watching entails, which is characterized by goal-directedness, takes the study of TV consumption in new directions. It allows us to examine viewing experiences in the areas of sport and entertainment where similar “fannish” (Ford 2014) behavior is often characterized as fanatic (Dohrmann 2018). For instance, the fan studies literature only partially helps us understand watching experiences such as March Madness when basketball fans are given the opportunity to follow 68 NBA teams competing over one month; or the FIFA World Cup tournament that takes place once every four years, during which 32 teams compete over 64 matches. In both cases, viewers have access to abundant content. They may watch different games successively, almost uninterruptedly. They may switch from one game to the other, once one is completed. In comparison to the loyal fans of the Lakers, the Raptors, or the *Azzurri*, the Italian national football team, they can follow many teams at the same time. They may be fans of a particular team, but they are not tied to it. As in the case of binge-watchers, their loyalty is in the experience, not in an exclusive brand.

In an age of immeasurable digital abundance that constantly feeds the desire to transgress consumption boundaries, the binge-watcher embodies the figure of the passing by fan. In their intense pursuit of TV viewing excess, those fans may be the harbingers of what is to come in a society radically transformed by an exponential increase in new consumption possibilities.

*The Sacred and the Profane in Consumption.* The more the viewers liked the serials, the more quickly they watched them. Informants almost always described watching a serial rapidly as one of the most pleasurable aspects of pushing through hours and hours of episodes to reach the final scene in a TV serial. For them, the sensation of viewing a TV serial rapidly is closely tied to the experience of enjoying it so much that they feel as if they cannot stop watching and have to push through to the end.

There is a seductive quality to the experience of speed that makes it almost hypnotic, as with the state of flow, but it appears that beyond a certain limit this experience leads to a feeling of more or less complete motionlessness even though one is travelling extremely fast. This experience of speed as a sensation of rapidly pushing through TV serial content, while feeling completely disconnected from the outside world at the very same time, is one of the keys to understanding the viewing experience of binge-watchers. As much as it has flow, binge-watching allows people to develop an intimacy with the characters and a connection with the story.

These observations contrast with Feiereisen et al.'s (2020) discussion of speed and pace. These authors compare the slow, contemplative viewing practices of fans, which

are punctuated by pauses and times of respite, with the uninterrupted, high-speed watching that binge-watching epitomizes. They associate the former with the capacity to “taste” a TV serial, “digest” it, and “appreciate” it, while the latter is linked to “devouring” or “eating without digestion.” The fans they describe are able to attain a deeper experience than casual viewers and binge-watchers because they take the time to appreciate the content. Interestingly, Feiereisen et al. (2020) mobilize Husemann and Eckhardt (2019) who studied consumers who look to a pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago as a way to escape from the temporal logics of everyday life and get away from the speed culture. In short, for Feiereisen et al. (2020) slowing down enables greater appreciation. Slowness is intimately related to sacredness.

The opposition between the fans’ capacity to connect with the content and the binge-watcher’s incapacity to do so can be traced in the paradigm of the sacred and the profane (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989) and it rests on the assumption that sacred work is contemplative and, as a result, that it takes time. In this context, speed and sacredness are antithetical. But the normalization of the pursuit of TV viewing excess that accompanies the growing popularity of binge-watching sheds new light on the binge-watching experience, the consumers’ capacity to connect with content, and the idea that the consumers can only elevate themselves through contemplation. When one crosses the threshold into binge-watching, it produces a sense of detachment from the world, and a greater attachment to the serial. This is a moment of communion, where the intellectual and sensorial experiences of the serial merge to create a state of flow for the viewer. It only takes place, however, when the consumer is entrenched in excess.

Binge-watching may open new horizons for researchers in marketing, in psychology, and in philosophy who are interested in the flow experience and in seriality. It may also partially challenge consumer researchers' traditional conceptions of the sacred in consumption behavior and the role of contemplation. When looking at how binge-watchers are committed to the TV serials they fall into, it is worth questioning whether the pleasurable experience of feeling completely cut off from the outside world while speeding through TV serial content might be a new form of contemplative bliss? Does the viewing experience of binge-watchers involve a new form of ascetic detachment? Can't the sacred be experienced at high speed? These are questions that consumer researchers might need to explore.

*Consumption Beyond the Narrative.* In recent years we have observed the development of TV serials, films, podcasts, and videogames that are narratively driven. We have also witnessed the meteoric rise of eSports and Twitch streams (Chen 2020). The data shows that millions of viewers around the world watch other people engage in gaming competitions (*League of Legends*) and collaborative games (*Among Us*) (DeNisco Rayome 2020); they also watch influential content creators play games on platforms like Twitch, YouTube, and TikTok. Interestingly, consumers watch other people playing videogames as if it were a TV serial (Hamari and Sjöblom 2017). This new kind of watching experience is serial, but it is not narratively driven.

We have argued that CCT researchers interested in TV consumption have given a lot of attention to narratives. Indeed, the research on the topic has largely been dominated by researchers advocating literary, semiotic, or narrative perspectives that

treat TV serials as texts and reduce TV serials' consumption to the reading of a text. In line with film phenomenologists who have raised the limitations of research perspectives centered on the text, we call CCT researchers to give more attention to the watching experience of serial media products like competitive gaming, collaborative gaming, or gaming by proxy, where narrative is not central, but where goal-directedness is fundamental. We need to take the study of consumption beyond the narrative, and explore in more depth a range of polysensorial watching experiences in which consumers engage intensely, completely, phenomenologically, and where the feeling of discovery is constitutive of the drive to move forward.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

The present study conceptualizes binge-watching as an intense viewing experience structurally determined by the background practice of pushing through on-screen content to reach the end of TV serials. It shows that the viewing experience of binge-watchers involves a frenzied search for pleasure, which then creates a powerful desire to consume more and more. Flow and goal-directedness are fundamentally connected and determine the underlying phenomenological structure of the viewing experience of binge-watchers. Not seeing the intrinsic goal-directedness of the *entire* viewing experience of binge-watchers may lead researchers to misinterpret binge-watching by describing it as a typical binge consumption behavior, rather than a form of mainstream media consumption involving a fundamental change in how media content is consumed. Binge-watching has made the pursuit of TV viewing excess a viable entertainment option. The insatiable pursuit of excess that characterizes binge-watching is highly

significant at a time when access to media content has become seemingly limitless. It points towards a major shift in consumption practices that heralds not only a new era for TV and media consumption but also a radically new way of experiencing content that increases product and service expectations to levels that may make them impossible to meet. Binge-watching may be symptomatic of where contemporary consumer culture is headed



## Conclusion

This dissertation explores the normalization of excess. From the consumers' adoption of binge-watching as a regular and desired form of consumption (Statista 2020), to the streaming services capitalizing on this trend to have access to a market which was previously heavily gated by major broadcasters (Landau 2016), all stakeholders in this chain are finding value in the intensive consumption experience engendered by binge-watching.

Breaking from previous research which looked at the pathological and problematic side of bingeing (Hirschman 1992; Faber, Christenson, Zwaan, and Mitchell 1995; O'Guinn and Faber 1989; Faber and Vohs 2012) and current research which inherited these lenses (Schweidel and Moe 2016; Feiereisen et al. 2020), this dissertation explored the phenomenon from all angles. The starting point of this work was an unbiased dive into the heart of the phenomenon, as lived by the binge-watchers themselves. A phenomenological approach was essential to disentangle binge-watching from binge consumption. This process revealed the complexity of the activity and the drivers of its adoption and success. Respondents described the activity as “intensive”, “intense” or “glorious”. Most were not saddled with the guilt and shame that accompanies binge behaviours according to the literature (Hirschman 1992; Faber and Vohs 2012, Feiereisen et al. 2020). The binge-watchers were often confident and anticipant about their next binge-watching session.

Binge-watching is distinct from binge consumption, in that by the very nature of the product that consumers binged, the activity had direction and purpose. They went so

far as to say that binge-watching made the TV series that they were watching better. Thereby inducing some of them to consume more TV than they did before. This is novel in that none of the previous work has related any impact of the binge or binge-watching behaviour on the consumers' appreciation of the product itself, on their expectations from producers in line with their binge-watching appetites, and on their desire to be committed in the long-term with specific shows.

These insights from this dissertation are useful for marketers, for the television industry, and for cultural producers at large. It pushes the current state of the understanding of bingeing as it applies, and in fact in the number of ways that it does not apply, to the specific act of binge-watching. Using a novel approach on the topic, this dissertation describes the mindset of the new breed of television consumer during the act of binge-watching. What this dissertation shows is that this is in fact a distinctly different activity than simply watching television in the way that it has been done in the past, and it is these subtle but salient differences that have evolved the nature of television consumers today. It would obviously be of importance for creators and marketers to understand these consumers and their consumption behaviour to do their jobs more effectively. But above and beyond that, we can reflect on the needs of a new type of plugged-in consumer. One that has content delivered at the tip of their fingers. One that does not want to wait for the next episode. One that wants the consumption experience to be complete and contained in the immersive moment.

Learning more about the experience of the binge-watching activity, allows us to understand how they can more broadly be applied to digital media consumption. Binge-

watching is the perfect use case because it is the one with the most developed and delineated digital binge consumption component. There is a whole industry that is being built around binge-watching (Landau 2016; 2018). Lessons from this market will be of paramount importance to understand how this same consumer will interact with other forms of digital media products.

## References

- Anderer, John (2020), “Binge Nation: Average American Streams 8 Hours of Content per Day During Coronavirus Outbreak!” *Study Finds*, April 15,  
[www.studyfinds.org/binge-nation-average-american-streams-8-hours-of-content-per-day-during-coronavirus-outbreak/](http://www.studyfinds.org/binge-nation-average-american-streams-8-hours-of-content-per-day-during-coronavirus-outbreak/)
- Armstrong, Paul B. (2005), “Phenomenology,” in *The John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism (Second Edition)*, eds. Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman, Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 731–35.
- Arnould, Eric J. and Craig J. Thompson (2005), “Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (March), 868–82.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail (1965/1984), *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Baracco, Alberto (2017), “Phenomenology of Film,” in *Hermeneutics of the Film World: A Ricœurian Method for Film Interpretation*, Vol. 1, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 37–63.
- Bardhi, F., and Giana M. Eckhardt (2012), “Access-Based Consumption,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(December), 881-898.
- Barthes, Roland (1967/1977), “The Death of the Author,” in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, London: Fontana, 142–48.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1975), *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller, New-York, NY: Hill and Wang.

- Baumeister, Roy F. (2002), "Yielding to Temptation: Self-Control Failure, Impulsive Purchasing, and Consumer Behavior," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28 (March), 670–76.
- Belk, Russell (2010), "Sharing," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36(February), 715-734.
- Belk, Russell, Ger, Guliz, and Søren Askegaard (2003), "The Fire of Desire: A Multisited Inquiry into Consumer Passion," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30 (December), 326-351.
- Belk, Russell and Rose Llamas (2012), "The Nature and Effects of Sharing in Consumer Behavior". in *Transformative Consumer Research - For Personal and Collective Well-being* eds Mick, David G., Pettigrew, Simone, Pechmann, Cornelia, and Julie Ozanne, New York: Routledge, p.467-408.
- Belk, Russell W., Melanie Wallendorf, and John F. Sherry Jr. (1989), "The Sacred and the Profane in Consumer Behavior: Theodicy on the Odyssey," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16 (June), 1–38.
- Bourgeon-Renault, Dominique, Derbaix, Maud, Jarrier, Elodie, and Christine Petr (2019), "Narrative Transportation and Transmedia Consumption Experience in the Cultural Field," *International Journal of Arts Management*, 21(2), 27-42.
- Brouard, Myriam and Jean-Sébastien Marcoux (wp), "The Phenomenology of Binge-Watching," in preparation for resubmission for the *Journal of Consumer Research*.
- Cambridge Dictionary. Binge. *Cambridge Dictionary*.  
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/binge>

- Casebier, Allan (1991), *Film and Phenomenology: Toward a Realist Theory of Cinematic Representation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chen, Derek (2020), "The Astronomical Rise of eSports," *The Chronicle*, July 22, [www.dukechronicle.com/article/2020/07/the-astronomical-rise-of-esports](http://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2020/07/the-astronomical-rise-of-esports)
- Chen, Yu (2009), "Possession and Access: Consumer Desires and Value Perceptions Regarding Contemporary Art Collection and Exhibit Visits," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (April), 925-940.
- Choi, Mary H. K. (2011), "In Praise of Binge TV Consumption," *Wired*, December 27, [www.wired.com/magazine/2011/12/pl\\_column\\_tvseries/](http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/12/pl_column_tvseries/)
- Colbert, François and Danilo Dantas (2019), "Customer Relationships in Arts Marketing: A Review of Key Dimensions in Delivery by Artistic and Cultural Organizations," *International Journal of Arts Management*, 21(2), 4-14.
- Cornell, Martyn (2008) "Binge Drinking a Brief History," *Zythophile*, June 3, <https://zythophile.co.uk/2008/06/02/binge-drinking-a-brief-history/>
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (1990/2008), *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, New York, NY: Harper Perennial.
- d'Astous, Alain (1990), "An Inquiry into the Compulsive Side of 'Normal' Consumers," *Journal of Consumer Policy* 13, 15-31.
- Daum, M (2012), "Confessions of a TV couch potato," *LATimes*, entry July 19, <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-oe-0719-daum-binge-tv-pagels-20120719,0,1253043.column>
- DeNisco Rayome, Alison (2020), "Among Us: Here's How to Play Everyone's Game Obsession Online This Holiday Season," *CNET*, December 23,

www.cnet.com/how-to/among-us-heres-how-to-play-everyones-game-obsession-online-this-holiday-season/

Dohrmann, George (2018), *Superfans: Into the Heart of Obsessive Sports Fandom*, New York, NY: Ballantine Books.

Dominguez, Alessa (2020), "Why "The Masked Singer" Is the Most Bonkers Show on Television," *Buzzfeed News*, November 23,  
<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/alessadominguez/the-masked-singer-wendy-williams-huge-hit-nick-cannon>

Dreyfus, Hubert L. (1991), *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Elia, Eric (2013), "Binge programming: How Netflix's 'House of Cards' changes the game," PBS MediaShift, February 6,  
<http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2013/02/binge-programming-how-netflixs-house-of-cards-changes-the-game037.html>

Faber, Ronald J., Christenson, Gary A., de Zwaan, Martina, and James Mitchell (1995), "Two Forms of Compulsive Consumption: Comorbidity of Compulsive Buying and Binge Eating," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (December), 296-304.

Faber, Ronald J., O'Guinn, Thomas C., and Krych, Raymond (1987), "Compulsive Consumption," in *Advances in Consumer Research* 14, 132-135.

Faber, Ronald J., and O'Guinn, Thomas C (2008), "Compulsive Buying: Review and Reflection," in *Handbook of Consumer Psychology*, eds Haugtvedt, Curtis P., Herr, Paul M., and Kardes, Frank R, New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1039-1056.

- Faber, Ronald J. and Kathleen D. Vohs (2004), “To Buy or Not to Buy? Self-Control and Self-Regulatory Failure in Purchase Behavior,” in *Handbook of Self-Regulation: Research, Theory and Applications*, ed. Roy F. Baumeister and Kathleen D. Vohs, New York: Guilford, 509–24.
- Faber, Ronald J., and Kathleen D. Vohs (2012) “A Model of Self-regulation - Insights for Impulsive and Compulsive Problems with Eating and Buying,” in *Transformative Consumer Research - For Personal and Collective Well-being* eds Mick, David G., Pettigrew, Simone, Pechmann, Cornelia, and Julie Ozanne, New York: Routledge, 467-498.
- Feiereisen, Stephanie, Dina Rasolofoarison, Cristel Antonia Russell, and Hope Jensen Schau (2020), “One Brand, Many Trajectories: Narrative Navigation in Transmedia,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Online first: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucaa046>
- Feldman, Sarah (2018), “Young Adults Keep Pressing Play,” *Statista*, November 7, <https://www.statista.com/chart/16023/binge-watching-young-adults/>
- Ferencz-Flatz, Christian and Julian Hanich (2016), “Editors’ Introduction: What is Film Phenomenology?” *Studia Phænomenologica*, 16, 11–61.
- Ford, Sam (2014), “Fan Studies: Grappling with an ‘Undisciplined’ Discipline,” *Journal of Fandom Studies*, 2 (1), 53–71.
- Fox Media (2021), *The Masked Singer*, <https://www.fox.com/the-masked-singer/>
- Garfield, Bob (2012), “33 Episodes in 3 Days,” *On the Media*, July 13, [www.onthemedial.org/story/222700-33-episodes-3-days/](http://www.onthemedial.org/story/222700-33-episodes-3-days/)
- Geertz, Clifford (1973), *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, NY: Basic Books.



- Gould, Stephen J. (1995), "Researcher Introspection as a Method in Consumer Research: Applications, Issues, and Implications," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (March), 719–22.
- Goulding, Christina, Shankar, Avi, Elliott Richard, and Robin Canniford (2009), "The Marketplace Management of Illicit Pleasure," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (February), 759–771.
- Green, Melanie C., and Timothy C. Brock (2002), "In the Mind's Eye: Transportation-Imagery Model of Narrative Persuasion," in *Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations*, eds. Green, Melanie C., Strange, Jeffrey J. and Timothy C. Brock, Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 315-341.
- Hamari, Juho and Max Sjöblom (2017), "What is eSports and Why Do People Watch It?" *Internet Research*, 27 (2), 211–32.
- Haughey, John (1997), *Virtue and Affluence: The Challenge of Wealth*, Kansas City: Sheed and Ward.
- Heidegger, Martin (1927/1962), *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hills, Matt (2002), *Fan Cultures*, London: Routledge.
- Hirschman, Elizabeth C. (1988), "The Ideology of Consumption: A Structural-Syntactical Analysis of 'Dallas' and 'Dynasty'," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15 (December), 344–59.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1992), "The Consciousness of Addiction: Toward a General Theory of Compulsive Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19 (September), 155–79.

- Hoffman, Donna L. and Thomas P. Novak (2009), “Flow Online: Lessons Learned and Future Prospects,” *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 23 (1), 23–34.
- Hofmann, Wilhem, Baumeister, Roy F., Förster, Georg, and Kathleen D. Vohs (2012), “Everyday Temptations: An Experience Sampling Study of Desire, Conflict, and Control,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102 (6), 1318 - 1335.
- Hofmann, Wilhem, Vohs, Kathleen D., and Roy F. Baumeister (2012), “What People Desire, Feel Conflicted About, and Try to Resist in Everyday Life,” *Psychological Science* 23(6), 582-588.
- Holbrook, Morris B. and Mark W. Grayson (1986), “The Semiology of Cinematic Consumption: Symbolic Consumer Behavior in *Out of Africa*,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13 (December), 374–81.
- Holzhauser, Brett (2020), “Americans Are Cord Cutting in Record Numbers—And It’s Not Slowing Down Anytime Soon,” *Forbes*, November 2, [www.forbes.com/advisor/personal-finance/americans-are-cord-cutting-in-record-numbers-and-its-not-slowing-down-anytime-soon/](http://www.forbes.com/advisor/personal-finance/americans-are-cord-cutting-in-record-numbers-and-its-not-slowing-down-anytime-soon/)
- Howes, David (2003), *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory*, Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Husemann, Katharina C. and Giana M. Eckhardt (2019), “Consumer Deceleration,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 45 (April), 1142–63.
- Ihde, Don (2012), *Experimental Phenomenology: Multistabilities*, Albany, NY: State University of New York.

Internet Movie Database (IMDb)(2017), “Mad Men (TV Series 2007–2015),”

[www.imdb.com/title/tt0804503/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0804503/)

Jenkins, Henry (1992), *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*,

London and New York: Routledge.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2006a), *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, NY:  
New York University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2006b), *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*,  
New York, NY: New York University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2007a), “Afterword: The future of fandom,” in *Fandom: Identities and  
communities in a mediated world*, eds. Gray, Jonathan, Sandvoss, Cornell, and C.  
Lee Harrington, New York: New York University Press, 357-364.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2007b), “The Pleasure of Pirates and What It Tells Us About World  
Building in Branded Entertainment,” *Confessions of an Aca-fan*, June 13,  
[http://henryjenkins.org/2007/06/forced\\_simplicity\\_and\\_the\\_crit.html](http://henryjenkins.org/2007/06/forced_simplicity_and_the_crit.html)

\_\_\_\_\_ (2017), “All About Seriality: An Interview with Frank Kelleter (Part  
Three),” *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*, May 10,  
[www.henryjenkins.org/blog/2017/05/all-about-seriality-an-interview-with-frank-  
kelleter-part-three.html?rq=kelleter](http://www.henryjenkins.org/blog/2017/05/all-about-seriality-an-interview-with-frank-kelleter-part-three.html?rq=kelleter)

Jenner, Mareike (2017), “Binge-watching: Video-on-demand, Quality TV and  
Mainstreaming Fandom,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 20 (3), 304–  
20.

Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs (2012), “Guidance for authors on the policy of  
the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs regarding the appropriate use of the

term "binge,"" *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*,

<http://www.jsad.com/jsad/static/binge.html>

Jurgensen, J., (2012), "Binge viewing: TV's lost weekend," *The Wall Street Journal*,

July 13,

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303740704577521300806686174.html>

Katz, Brandon (2020), "Thanks to Quarantine, Amazon Is Gaining on Netflix's

Numbers," *Observer*, August 5, [www.observer.com/2020/08/netflix-subscribers-stock-amazon-prime-video-subscribers/](http://www.observer.com/2020/08/netflix-subscribers-stock-amazon-prime-video-subscribers/)

Keinan, Anat and Ran Kivetz (2008), "Remedying Hyperopia: The Effects of Self-

Control Regret on Consumer Behavior," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 45 (December), 676–89.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2011), "Productivity Orientation and the Consumption of Collectable Experiences," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37 (April), 935–50.

Kelleter, Frank (2017), "Five Ways of Looking at Popular Seriality," in *Media of Serial Narrative*, ed. Frank Kelleter, Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 7–34.

Kivetz, Ran and Anat Keinan (2006), "Repenting Hyperopia: An Analysis of Self-Control Regrets," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33 (September), 273–282.

Kivetz, Ran and Itamar Simonson (2002a), "Earning the Right to Indulge: Effort as a Determinant of Customer Preferences Toward Frequency Program Rewards," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39 (May), 155–70.

- \_\_\_\_\_ (2002b), “Self-Control for the Righteous: Toward a Theory of Precommitment to Indulgence,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29 (September), 199–217.
- Kleinman, Alexis (2014), “An Insane Number Of Americans Binge-Watched 'House Of Cards,’” *Huffington Post*, February 21, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/21/house-of-cards-binge\\_n\\_4831053.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/21/house-of-cards-binge_n_4831053.html)
- Kozinets, Robert V. (2001), “Utopian Enterprise: Articulating the Meanings of *Star Trek*’s Culture of Consumption,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28 (June), 67–88.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2010), *Netnography*, Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Kozinets, Robert, Anthony Patterson, and Rachel Ashman (2017), “Networks of Desire: How Technology Increases Our Passion to Consume,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 43 (February), 659–82.
- Kubey, Robert, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2002), “Television Addiction is no Mere Metaphor,” *Scientific American*, 286 (February), 74–80.
- Landau, Neil (2016), *TV Outside the Box: Trailblazing in the Digital Television Revolution*, New York, NY: Focal Press.
- Landau, Neil (2018), *TV Writing on Demand: Creating Great Content in the Digital Era*, New York, New York: Routledge.
- Law, Graham (2009), “Serials and the Nineteenth-Century Publishing Industry,” in *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*, eds. Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor, London: Academia Press, 567.

- Lidell, Henry G. and Robert Scott (1843/1996), “Πλεονεξία,” *A Greek-English Lexicon*,  
Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lotz, A. (2006), "Rethinking Meaning Making: Watching Serial TV on DVD," *FlowTV*,  
September 22, <http://flowtv.org/2006/09/rethinking-meaning-making-watching-serial-tv-on-dvd/>
- Luckerson, Victor (2016), “This Is How Much Netflix We’re All Watching Every Day,”  
*Time*, January 19, [www.time.com/4186137/netflix-hours-per-day/](http://www.time.com/4186137/netflix-hours-per-day/)
- Macmillan Dictionary, “Binge,” *Macmillan British Dictionary*. Retrieved January 2020,  
[https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/binge\\_1](https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/binge_1)
- Marcus, Daniel (2005), “Stripping (Part 1),” *Flow*, December 16,  
<http://flowtv.org/2005/12/stripping-part-1/>
- Marcus, Daniel (2006), “Stripping (Part 2),” *Flow*, February 24,  
[www.flowtv.org/2006/02/stripping-part-2/#](http://www.flowtv.org/2006/02/stripping-part-2/#)
- McCracken, Grant (2013), “From *Arrested Development* to *Dr. Who*, Binge Watching Is  
Changing Our Culture,” *Wired*, May 24, [www.wired.com/2013/05/beyond-arrested-development-how-binge-watching-is-changing-our-narrative-culture/](http://www.wired.com/2013/05/beyond-arrested-development-how-binge-watching-is-changing-our-narrative-culture/)
- Merikivi, Jani, Johanna Bragge, Eusebio Scornavacca, and Tibert Verhagen (2020),  
“Binge-Watching Serialized Video Content: A Transdisciplinary Review,”  
*Television & New Media*, 21 (7) 697–711.
- Mick, David G. and Michelle DeMoss (1990), “Self-Gifts: Phenomenological Insights  
from Four Contexts,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (December), 322-332.
- Mick, David G., Simone Pettigrew, Cornelia Pechmann, and Julie Ozanne (2012),  
“Origins, Qualities, and Envisionments of Transformative Consumer Research,” in

*Transformative Consumer Research - For Personal and Collective Well-being* eds

Mick, David G., Pettigrew, Simone, Pechmann, Cornelia, and Julie Ozanne, New

York: Routledge, 3-24.

Moore, Kasey (2021), "Netflix Library by The Numbers 2020," *What's On Netflix*,

January 1, <https://www.whats-on-netflix.com/news/netflix-library-by-the-numbers-2020/>

Newman, Micheal Z (2009), "TV Binge," *Flow*, January 23,

<http://flowtv.org/2009/01/tv-binge-michael-z-newman-university-of-wisconsin-milwaukee/>

New Oxford American Dictionary (2010), "Binge," *New Oxford American Dictionary*.

[https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195392883.001.0001/m\\_en\\_us1226518?rskey=GO750H&result=8001](https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195392883.001.0001/m_en_us1226518?rskey=GO750H&result=8001)

O'Guinn, Thomas C., and Ronald J. Faber (1989), "Compulsive Buying: A

Phenomenological Exploration," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16(2), 147-157.

Online Etymology Dictionary (2010), "Binge," Online Etymology Dictionary,

[https://www.etymonline.com/word/binge#etymonline\\_v\\_11167](https://www.etymonline.com/word/binge#etymonline_v_11167)

Oxford Dictionaries (2013), "Oxford Dictionaries word of the year 2013," *OxfordWord*

*Blogs*, November 19, <http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/press-releases/oxford-dictionaries-word-of-the-year-2013/>

Oxford Languages (2021), "Cord Cutting," Oxford English Dictionary.

Pagels, J. (2012), "Stop binge-watching TV," *Slate*, July,

[http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2012/07/09/binge\\_watching\\_tv\\_why\\_you\\_need\\_to\\_stop\\_.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2012/07/09/binge_watching_tv_why_you_need_to_stop_.html)

- Parmentier, Marie-Agnès and Eileen Fischer (2015), “Things Fall Apart: The Dynamics of Brand Audience Dissipation,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41 (February), 1228–51.
- Paskin, Willa (2013), “The Dirty Secret of Binge-Watching,” *Slate*, November 13, [www.slate.com/culture/2013/11/binge-watching-tv-is-just-another-name-for-being-a-couch-potato.html](http://www.slate.com/culture/2013/11/binge-watching-tv-is-just-another-name-for-being-a-couch-potato.html)
- Perks, Lisa Glebatis (2015), *Media Marathoning: Immersions in Morality*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Perron-Brault, Alexis, Dantas, Danilo C., and Renaud Legoux (2020), “Consumer Engagement and New Product Adoption in the Music Industry: The Importance of Fit Between Brand and New Product Innovativeness,” *International Journal of Arts Management*, 23(1), 44-60.
- Poniewozik, J. (2012), "Go ahead, binge-watch that TV show," *Time*, July 10, <http://entertainment.time.com/2012/07/10/go-ahead-binge-watch-that-tv-show/>
- Popular Seriality Research Unit (PSRU) (2016), “*Popular Seriality—Aesthetics and Practice*,” [www.popularseriality.de/en/projekte/aesthetik/index.html](http://www.popularseriality.de/en/projekte/aesthetik/index.html)
- Portlandia* (2012), “One Moore Episode,” Broadway Video Entertainment. Jonathan Krisel (director), Fred Amisen and Carrie Brownstein (writers).
- Riccio, Aaron (2013), “Binge-Watching Makes TV Better,” *CNN*, February 6, [www.cnn.com/2013/02/06/opinion/riccio-binge-tv-watching/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2013/02/06/opinion/riccio-binge-tv-watching/index.html)
- Rook, Dennis (1987), “The Buying Impulse,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 14(2), 189-199.



- Rose, Randall L. and Stacy L. Wood (2005), "Paradox and the Consumption of Authenticity through Reality Television," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (September), 284–96.
- Ruiz, Rebecca (2013), "Do you 'Netflix Cheat'? Survey Reveals Fans' TV Adultery," *Today*, May 16, [www.today.com/health/do-you-netflix-cheat-survey-reveals-fans-tv-adultery-1C9942978](http://www.today.com/health/do-you-netflix-cheat-survey-reveals-fans-tv-adultery-1C9942978)
- Russell, Cristel Antonia and Hope Jensen Schau (2014), "When Narrative Brands End: The Impact of Narrative Closure and Consumption Sociality on Loss Accommodation," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40 (April), 1039–62.
- Russell, Cristel Antonia, Hope Jensen Schau, and David Crockett (2013), "Cultural Diversity in Television Narratives: Homophilization, Appropriation, and Implications for Media Advocacy," *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 32 (1), 119–30.
- Salvador, Elisa, Simon, Jean-Paul, and Pierre-Jean Benghozi (2019), "Facing Disruption: The Cinema Value Chain in the Digital Age," *International Journal of Arts Management*, 22(1), 25-40.
- Sandvoss, Cornell (2005), *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Schweidel, David A. and Wendy W. Moe (2016), "Binge Watching and Advertising," *Journal of Marketing*, 80 (September), 1–19.
- Smith, David Woodruff (2013), "Phenomenology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Summer 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, [plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology/](http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology/)

- Sobchack, Vivian (1992), *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2009), "Phenomenology," in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*, eds. Paisley Livingston and Carl Plantinga, London: Routledge, 435–445.
- Spangler, Todd (2019), "U.S. Households Have an Average of 11 Connected Devices—And 5G Should Push That Even Higher," *Variety*, December 10, [www.variety.com/2019/digital/news/u-s-households-have-an-average-of-11-connected-devices-and-5g-should-push-that-even-higher-1203431225/](http://www.variety.com/2019/digital/news/u-s-households-have-an-average-of-11-connected-devices-and-5g-should-push-that-even-higher-1203431225/)
- Statista (2020a), *Subscription Video On Demand Market in the U.S.*, Retrieved January 8 2021, [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com).
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2020b), *Subscription Video On Demand Market Worldwide*, Retrieved January 12 2021, [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com).
- Stelter, Brian (2013), "Netflix Won't Release 'Turbo: FAST' for Binge Viewing," *CNN*, December 3, [www.money.cnn.com/2013/12/03/technology/netflix-turbo-fast/](http://www.money.cnn.com/2013/12/03/technology/netflix-turbo-fast/)
- Thompson, Craig J. (1997), "Interpreting Consumers: A Hermeneutical Framework for Deriving Marketing Insights from the Texts of Consumers' Consumption Stories," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34 (November), 438–55.
- Thompson, Craig J., William B. Locander, and Howard R. Pollio (1989), "Putting Consumer Experience Back into Consumer Research: The Philosophy and Method of Existential-Phenomenology," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16 (September), 133–46.

- \_\_\_\_\_ (1990), "The Lived Meaning of Free Choice: An Existential-Phenomenological Description of Everyday Consumer Experiences of Contemporary Married Women," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (December), 346–61.
- Thompson, Craig J., Howard R. Pollio, and William B. Locander (1994), "The Spoken and the Unspoken: A Hermeneutic Approach to Understanding the Cultural Viewpoints That Underlie Consumers' Expressed Meanings," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (December), 432–52.
- Tivo Research (2014), "Viewers' New TV Reality: A "Season" = One Day," 25 June, <http://pr.tivo.com/press-releases/viewers-new-tv-reality-a-season-one-day-nasdaq-tivo-1126609>
- Treis, Debbie, Joyce Wolburg, and Cele Otnes (1999), "Understanding the "Social Gifts" of Drinking Rituals: an Alternative Framework for PSA Developers," *Journal of Advertising*, 28(2), 17-31.
- van den Berck, Albert Michotte (1948), "Le caractère de 'réalité' des projections cinématographiques," *Revue internationale de filmologie*, 1 (Octobre), 249–61.
- van Manen, Max (2019), "Rebuttal: Doing Phenomenology on the Things," *Qualitative Health Research*, 29 (6), 908–25.
- Veblen, Thorstein (1899/1979), "*Theory of the Leisure Class*," New York: Penguin.
- Wallach, Omri (2021), "Which Streaming Service Has the Most Subscriptions?" *Visual Capitalist*, March 3, <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/which-streaming-service-has-the-most-subscriptions/>

- Ward, Victoria (2019), "Binge-Watching TV Viewers 'Spend More Than Eight Hours' Glued to Favourite Shows," *The Telegraph*, June 10,  
[www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/06/09/binge-watching-tv-viewers-spend-eight-hours-glued-favourite/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/06/09/binge-watching-tv-viewers-spend-eight-hours-glued-favourite/)
- Watson, Amy (2020), "Original Content Hours on Netflix Worldwide 2012-2019," *Statista*, [www.statista.com/statistics/882490/netflix-original-content-hours/](http://www.statista.com/statistics/882490/netflix-original-content-hours/)
- Wilk, Richard (2001), "Consuming Morality," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 1(2), 245-260
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2007), "Loggers, Miners, Cowboys, and Crab Fishermen: Masculine Work Cultures and Binge Consumption," Presented to Yale Agrarian Studies Program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2011), "Binge and Excess," in *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture*, ed. Dale Southerton, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 98-100.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2014), "Poverty and Excess in Binge Economies," *Economic Anthropology*, 1 (1), 66-79.
- Wilson, J. (2013), "Gorging on House of Cards: how Netflix has turned binge TV viewing mainstream," *The Telegraph*, February 7,  
<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/technology/jeremywilson2/100008793/gorging-on-house-of-cards-how-netflix-has-turned-binge-tv-viewing-mainstream/>
- Wood, Jennifer M. (2017), "WIRED Binge-Watching Guide: *Fargo*," *Wired*, February 8, [www.wired.com/2017/02/binge-guide-fargo/](http://www.wired.com/2017/02/binge-guide-fargo/)