



The affective, cognitive, and behavioral echo of cumulative series reception aka binge-watching: A qualitative study[☆]

Sarah Eberhard-Bölz

Institute of Communication Science, Department of Media Use, University of Hohenheim, Fruwirthstraße 49, 70599 Stuttgart, Germany

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Binge-watching
TV series
TV show
Streaming
Post-exposure
Long-term effects
Semi-structured interviews
Qualitative content analysis

ABSTRACT

When analyzing the cumulative reception of TV series, often called *binge-watching* (i.e., watching several episodes of one TV series back-to-back), there has been a strong focus on potentially harmful consequences in the literature, such as insomnia, anxiety, depression symptoms, and particularly addiction. However, only a few extant studies have considered potential nonharmful or even beneficial consequences from binge-watching. The present study addresses this gap in the binge-watching literature and calls for future studies that address the gap between the two contrasting perspectives on binge-watching, i.e., whether it is a harmful or beneficial behavior. In the present study, 24 semi-structured, diary-based interviews were conducted with young adults, yielding a wide spectrum of thoughts, affects, and behaviors that outlasted the exposure situation. The qualitative content analysis revealed long-term effects, such as transferred positive and negative moods, delayed sleep, feelings of inspiration or motivation, and urges to research or communicate about the TV series. A key finding was that binge-watching also triggered affective states such as heightened arousal or grieving, which could last up to several hours or days. The described media effects' potential persistence demonstrates the importance of considering the time aspect in future research because the longer the effects last, the longer they potentially impact one's everyday live.

1. Introduction

In the first quarter of 2024, the number of Netflix subscribers increased by 9.3 million to almost 270 million worldwide (Netflix, 2024). This can be attributed partially to the stricter handling of password sharing and turning unauthorized viewers into official subscribers (Kennedy, 2024). However, based on the ongoing upward trend in the video streaming industry's financial performance, it also is clear that there is an "increasing appetite for digital streaming content" (Durrani, 2023). As streaming services such as Netflix have started publishing entire seasons of TV series in one release, binge-watching (i.e., watching several episodes of one series back-to-back) has become a popular practice among mainstream media users (Jurgensen, 2012; Stelter, 2013). *Binge-watching* can be defined scientifically as "viewing more than one episode of the same serialized video content in a single sitting with one's own pace and time" (Merikivi et al., 2020, p. 10). The first scientific paper that referred to TV series reception as binge-watching was published in 2015 by Pittman and Sheehan.

Since then, further research has analyzed the motives and predictors

of this special mode for watching a TV series. An often-discussed point in scientific talks about binge-watching is whether motives and media effects really differ from those observed with appointment viewing or other forms of watching. So far, this remains an ongoing discussion, with findings leading in both directions. Amid the literature on binge-watching's post-exposure outcomes, many contributions have focused on its potentially harmful consequences, such as insomnia, anxiety, or depression symptoms (Alimoradi et al., 2022). Based on concepts such as video gaming addiction, this intense watching behavior also often has been conceptualized as an addiction (Favieri et al., 2023; Flayelle et al., 2017; Forte, Favieri, Casagrande, & Tambelli, 2023; Forte, Favieri, Tambelli, & Casagrande, 2023; Riddle et al., 2018). However, as a consequence of rather conflicting findings regarding binge-watching's harmfulness, several researchers have started to examine binge-watching behavior as a continuum that ranges from binge-watching as a pleasurable activity that can improve well-being to a maladaptive behavior associated with addiction symptoms (Billaux et al., 2023; Forte, Favieri, Casagrande, & Tambelli, 2023; Forte, Favieri, Tambelli, & Casagrande, 2023).

[☆] This article is part of a Special issue entitled: 'Psychology of TV series watching' published in Acta Psychologica.

E-mail address: Sarah.Eberhard-Boelz@uni-hohenheim.de.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105369>

Received 30 August 2024; Received in revised form 18 June 2025; Accepted 29 July 2025

Available online 28 August 2025

0001-6918/© 2025 The Author. Published by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

The present study attempts to fill two gaps in the binge-watching literature. One important goal is to detect the previously strongly underrepresented variety of long-term consequences of binge-watching, which are located along the continuum between binge-watching as a harmful or a beneficial behavior. Second, aside from binge-watching research on addiction and depression, most relevant articles have concentrated on the experience while watching. Unlike previous studies, the present study concentrates exclusively on an extended time period after reception.

The author prioritized approaching the phenomenon in a terminologically unbiased way; therefore, associating binge-watching with negative connotations associated with *binge eating* and *binge drinking* shall be avoided. Following Czichon's (2019) example, the phenomenon of interest is termed *cumulative series reception* in the present study, but to avoid imposing the term post hoc on other authors, *binge-watching* still is used in the literature review.

By conducting diary-based, semi-structured interviews with additional biographical questions, this study examines which affective, cognitive, and behavioral consequences can be observed after cumulative series reception. In contrast to many extant studies that have examined relevant motives, media effects during exposure, or clinical correlates, the present study seeks to demonstrate the range of long-term outcomes that can be observed minutes, hours, and sometimes even days after cumulative series reception.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. The concept of binge-watching

In the past few years, the binge-watching phenomenon has emerged, in which multiple (mostly operationalized as more than two) episodes of the same TV series are watched in one sitting, i.e., back-to-back (Anghelcev et al., 2021; Billaux et al., 2023; De Keere et al., 2021; Favieri et al., 2023; Wirz et al., 2023; Yu & Alizadeh, 2024). This appears to be the baseline definition of what can be called a single binge-watching experience. Merrill Jr and Rubenking (2019, p. 10) defined *binge-watching* as “viewing more than one episode of the same serialized video content in a single sitting with one’s own pace and time”. As this was the vague consensus in 2020, this definition was used for the present study. Notably, this paper mostly discusses TV series that include many episodes and several seasons. Thus, this is a watching behavior that potentially is repeated many times in the span of a week.

Regarding the discussion on whether binge-watching is beneficial or deleterious, relatively new approaches have been taken in the literature to differentiate between types of this behavior. Flayelle, Canale, et al. (2019) and Flayelle, Maurage, et al. (2019) identified four types of viewers via cluster analysis: recreational viewers; regulated binge-watchers; avid binge-watchers; and unregulated binge-watchers. More recent studies have distinguished between trouble-free binge-watchers and problematic binge-watchers (Billaux et al., 2022; Flayelle et al., 2022). Nonproblematic binge-watching is a pleasurable activity, while problematic binge-watching is a maladaptive activity (Forte, Favieri, Casagrande, & Tambelli, 2023; Forte, Favieri, Tambelli, & Casagrande, 2023) that can cause long-term harm in terms of hampering one’s daily routine (Flayelle et al., 2022). Pittman and Steiner (2021) also conceptualized and analyzed two different subtypes of binge-watching: *feast-watching* and *cringe-watching*. Feast-watching is described as a planned, social, and attentive form of watching a TV series that is associated with a negative impact on health. Cringe-watching is defined as an automatic, solo, distracted behavior associated with a positive impact on health (Pittman & Steiner, 2021).

2.2. Theories on long-term media effects

Many theories that aim to explain media effects focus on the media exposure’s time frame, such as parasocial interaction (PSI; Horton &

Wohl, 1956), identification (Cohen, 2017), transportation (Green & Brock, 2000), and excitation transfer (Zillmann, 2008). Only a few existing theoretical concepts in media research have explained through which mechanisms media effects can outlast the exposure mode. Before diving into the state of research concerning binge-watching outcomes, two important theories that can explain the long-lasting effects from TV series are outlined below briefly. For both of these concepts, the factor of serial narration is important.

Within the spectrum of serial narration are two main categories: continuous TV series (e.g., soap operas) and episodic TV series (e.g., sitcoms). Popular sitcoms such as *Modern Family* and *How I Met Your Mother* have closed storylines within each episode and a lot of repetition. The narrative progresses rather slowly throughout the episodes and seasons. Also common is the episodic serial narration. Drama TV series such as *Grey’s Anatomy* feature developing narratives regarding the characters’ personal lives. Simultaneously, every episode ends with a different medical case solved (Wohlmann & Harrison, 2019).

To build a parasocial relationship, you need a repeated encounter with the same media character. If an attitude is to be established according to the cultivation hypothesis, you must face a similar narrative repeatedly. For the above reasons, the concepts of parasocial relationships and cultivation theory are well-suited to explaining serial narrated content’s long-lasting media effects.

2.2.1. Parasocial relationships

Although no actual interaction occurs with the media person, it often feels similar to a face-to-face interaction for the recipient. Horton and Wohl (1956) originally introduced the concept of parasocial interaction (PSI). Unlike PSI, the concept of parasocial relationships (PSR; Giles, 2002) focuses on a long-term relationship between the recipient and the media persona that outlasts media exposure (Schramm, 2015). When a liked character vanishes from the screen—such as the elimination of a character or a season or TV series finale—the PSR ends in a parasocial breakup. How much distress that breakup causes depends on various factors, such as perceived closeness or involvement with the character (Eyal & Cohen, 2006).

It is difficult to characterize PSRs’ dimensions, as there are many different operationalizations of parasocial phenomena that differ immensely (Liebers & Schramm, 2019). The first measurement tool that Rubin et al. (1985) established remains the most popular one and has been adapted to many different contexts. It includes facets such as “seeking guidance [...], seeing media personalities as friends, imagining being part of one’s favorite program’s social world, and desiring to meet media performers (p. 156).” Originally, these items referred to one’s favorite newscaster (Rubin et al., 1985), but have been adapted to many different types of media personas, including fictional characters. In their recap of extant research on parasocial interactions and relationships, Liebers and Schramm (2019) addressed how there remains no widely established definition or operationalization of PSR. The emergence and persistence of PSRs in the context of a TV series has a long tradition (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Hoffner & Cohen, 2012). More than 10 years ago, Hoffner and Cohen (2012) reported how a strong PSR associated with the famous TV series character *Monk*—a police detective with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)—correlated with less stereotypes about OCD. A more recent experimental study comparing binge and non-binge situations reported stronger PSRs for binge exposure (Erickson et al., 2019). The observation of PSRs in the context of intensive TV series on video-on-demand portals can be viewed as a natural development from years of PSR research.

2.2.2. Cultivation

Conversely, the cultivation hypothesis (Gerbner et al., 1986) describes a learning process in which increased TV consumption causes people’s worldviews to become more aligned with the dominant narratives conveyed by TV (Shrum, 2017). A parallel between the cultivation hypothesis and the binge-watching phenomenon can be seen in how

the amount of TV consumption also plays a major role in the cultivation context. Gerbner et al. (1986) differentiated between light and heavy viewers; therefore, this theory can be applied effectively to the cumulative reception of TV series via video-on-demand platforms. For example, Krongard and Tsay-Vogel (2020) reviewed the cultivation hypothesis in the binge-watching context. Those who binge-watched popular TV series containing violence or injustice exhibited more negative perceptions of the world. They also reported more fear and mistrust toward others. The present study examines binge-watching sessions' influence on everyday life, and cultivation theory can explain long-term changes in the interviewees' attitudes or mindsets.

2.3. Defining cognition, affect, and behavior

With the aim of making the coding decisions reported later comprehensible, the working definitions of the superordinate dimensions *cognition*, *affect* and *behavior* are discussed briefly. Forgas (2008) examined a large amount of extant research with the intent to better understand the interactive relationship between affect and cognition. Based on relevant empirical research, he concluded that "there are close neural links and a complex, multifaceted, and bidirectional relationship between affect and cognition" (Forgas, 2008, p. 99). Following Russell and Carroll (1999), the present study understands affect as a superordinate concept that includes emotions, moods, and different activation levels. Russell and Carroll (1999) differentiated between affective expressions that relate to one's own experience and expressions that relate to the emotional classification of external factors. Likewise, in this study, cognitions are differentiated from affect by assigning statements that make no direct reference to one's own affective experience with the cognition dimension. No consensus has been reached in modern psychology on how to define behavior (Henriques & Michalski, 2020), so this study uses a simplified definition and views behavior as an observable action.

2.4. State of research

To the author's knowledge, three systematic reviews have been published thus far that analyzed binge-watching (Alimoradi et al., 2022; Flayelle, Maurage, et al., 2020; Flayelle, Verbruggen, et al., 2020; Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020). Flayelle, Maurage, et al. (2020) and Flayelle, Verbruggen, et al. (2020) highlighted binge-watching motivations, outcomes, and mental health correlates. Their systematic analysis of 24 extant studies revealed that the binge-watching concept is vague and neither a homogeneously defined nor operationalized construct. As part of their analysis, they differentiated between mental health correlates and positive and negative outcomes. Among reported post-reception outcomes are variables such as PSRs, eating behavior, sleep quality, recovery, addiction, depression, and regret (Flayelle, Maurage, et al., 2020; Flayelle, Verbruggen, et al., 2020). Alimoradi et al. (2022) only focused on mental health concerns, such as depression symptoms, anxiety, addiction, or insomnia. Starosta and Izydorczyk (2020) examined definitions, motivations, personality traits, and the risks of excessive binge-watching. All of these reviews analyzed solely quantitative studies, indicating a clear focus on negative mental health outcomes. These systematic reviews revealed a complex reception phenomenon with many potential correlates. As seen in all three reviews and the author's own literature review, there is massive overlap among cross-sectional surveys and only a few experimental (Billard, 2019; Flayelle, Maurage, et al., 2020; Flayelle, Verbruggen, et al., 2020; Walter et al., 2018; Wirz et al., 2023) or longitudinal (Sigre-Leirós et al., 2023; Wirz et al., 2023) designs. Even rarer are qualitative approaches (Chang & Peng, 2022; Flayelle et al., 2017). The following sections examine current trends and foci in the binge-watching literature. There seem to be two overarching research directions: binge-watching as a potentially addictive behavior and a danger to mental health, or as a beneficial viewing experience, e.g., as a coping strategy that can reduce stress and

anxiety. In the same context, Starosta and Izydorczyk (2020) examined two different perspectives on how to comprehend binge-watching.

2.4.1. Negative associations

When new media technologies and behaviors are integrated into society, concerns about potentially negative impacts typically arise (Ferchaud, 2020). Even if binge-watching is no longer a novel phenomenon, there still is a trend toward analyzing potential risks. To date, most studies that have investigated binge-watching have focused on its potentially harmful consequences, such as decreased sleep quality (Exelmans & Van den Bulck, 2017), addiction symptoms (Favieri et al., 2023; Riddle et al., 2018), anxiety (Tefertiller & Maxwell, 2018), or depressive symptoms (Ahmed, 2019; Steins-Loeber et al., 2020).

Mental health and addiction. The body of extant research on mental health considers a large number of affective variables (e.g., anxiety or depression). Of course, cognitive variables, such as anticipation, or behavioral aspects, such as social avoidance, also play a role. Among the studies that have focused on potential health risks, a preponderance, as Billaux et al. (2023) also noted, have examined binge-watching in the context of addictive symptoms. Riddle et al. (2018) reported more addiction symptoms (adapted TV addiction scale; Horvath, 2004) for watching sessions (≥ 3) that were unintentional compared with intentional binge-watching sessions. Favieri et al. (2023) analyzed the importance of distinguishing between nonproblematic and problematic binge-watching (both >2) according to the binge-watching addiction questionnaire (BWAQ; Forte et al., 2021). They observed worse mental health states (anxiety, depression, alexithymia, impulsivity) among problematic watchers than among nonproblematic ones. Flayelle, Canale, et al. (2019) and Flayelle, Maurage, et al. (2019) developed a similar tool called the Binge-Watching Engagement and Symptoms Questionnaire (BWESQ). However, no reliable BWESQ cutoff scores for problematic vs. nonproblematic binge-watching exist from recently published scores (Billaux et al., 2023). Yu and Alizadeh (2024) found positive correlates between the BWAQ (Forte et al., 2021) and affective variables such as stronger feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. In Forte, Favieri, Casagrande, and Tambelli (2023) and Forte, Favieri, Tambelli, and Casagrande (2023), problematic binge-watchers reported poorer sleep quality and lower quality of life than moderate binge-watchers and non-binge-watchers.

2.4.2. Positive associations

Extant studies that also focused on beneficial outcomes (e.g., Gadino et al., 2023; Granow et al., 2018; Halfmann & Reinecke, 2021; Pittman & Steiner, 2021) have provided grounds to refrain from universally problematizing the phenomenon. As mentioned in the introduction, this perspective also is shared by Ort et al. (2020) and Flayelle, Maurage, et al. (2020) and Flayelle, Verbruggen, et al. (2020). Rewarding outcomes—such as higher usage satisfaction (Merikivi et al., 2018), higher transportation, and stronger PSRs (Erickson et al., 2019; Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018)—and greater levels of enjoyment (Merrill Jr & Rubenking, 2019) indicate healthy media usage and combine affective and cognitive aspects.

Granow et al. (2018) found that binge-watching is perceived as recreational when no goal conflicts or feelings of guilt are present. In line with these results, Halfmann and Reinecke (2021) discussed binge-watching as an escapist form of entertainment that can be a functional coping mechanism and can contribute to recovery. They particularly considered emotion-focused avoidance coping through binge-watching to be an effective way to reduce stress. Erdmann and Dienlin (2022) uncovered additional positive relationships between binge-watching and feelings of competence and relatedness. According to Favieri et al. (2023), individuals engaging in nonproblematic binge-watching exhibit better mental well-being than those who abstain from watching TV series.

Gadino et al. (2023) compared which mental health gratifications originally were sought and which actually were obtained. They reported

reduced anxiety due to binge-watching, but mixed results for depression. A qualitative study examined how binge-watchers evaluate their watching behavior's addictiveness. The interviewees reported no impacts on their health, but highlighted their enjoyment and prosocial outcomes (Chang & Peng, 2022).

The positive correlates and effects from binge-watching often focus on the reception phase. Regarding post-exposure outcomes, potentially stronger PSRs, reduced anxiety, and better psychological well-being appear to be consequences of a beneficial coping strategy.

2.4.3. Ambivalent associations

Arousal. Recent extant research also has demonstrated that watching thriller TV series that incorporate cliffhangers impact one's affective states by heightening physiological and cognitive arousal (Baselgia et al., 2023). The "pre-sleep arousal" phenomenon is characterized by cognitive arousal, higher cortisol levels, physiological arousal, and ruminative thinking. Physiological arousal pertains to activation of the sympathetic nervous system, which results in physical changes such as elevated heart rate and cortisol levels, whereas cognitive arousal is characterized by negative and intrusive thoughts, including worries and ruminative thinking (Baselgia et al., 2023).

Wirz et al. (2023) revealed a positive effect from binge-watching on arousal compared with watching one episode per day. However, an integrated field study did not reveal any differences between binge-watching sessions (> 2 episodes) and episodic sessions (1–2 episodes). All the described correlates are related to the concept of well-being and are of great importance in relation to binge-watching's "long-term" outcomes.

2.4.4. Limitations

Most studies examining this reception mode have been based on cross-sectional survey data, so the associated risks and benefits should be interpreted with caution. Statistically, cross-sectional data cannot answer the question of causality (Taris et al., 2021). Thus, it remains uncertain, for example, whether anxiety is a predictor or consequence of binge-watching experiences. In the sense of escapism and emotional coping, anxiety could be the motivation to engage in cumulative series reception. However, there are also indications of higher anxiety levels after a binge-watching session. The same discussion focuses on mental illnesses, such as depression. Being depressed could impact the need for distraction by watching a TV series, and simultaneously, long and exhausting watching sessions could reinforce depressive symptoms. It is also not possible to evaluate how long media effects last in a cross-sectional study design. Likewise, very few extant qualitative studies have analyzed the phenomenon in a holistic manner (Chang & Peng, 2022; Flayelle et al., 2017). Following Flayelle et al.'s (2017) example, this reception behavior should be addressed qualitatively once again without a priori assuming problematic behavior and without limiting observations to existing items. Particularly with a phenomenon such as binge-watching, in which the name already implies a negative framing, it is essential to reflect repeatedly whether its name and research focus do justice to the phenomenon in its complexity and different valence.

Regarding the objects of binge-watching research, few extant studies have analyzed and discussed binge-watching's potential positive long-term outcomes. Furthermore, the mainly confirmatory approaches leave no room for monitoring possibly new binge-watching characteristics. The author accordingly contends that it is necessary to investigate the users' binge-watching experiences thoroughly without narrowing potential outcomes from the start.

2.5. The present study

The ambiguous findings discussed in Subsection 1.3 from almost 10 years of researching cumulative series reception indicate the importance of reflecting on when this behavior was not yet viewed as problematic. Also, the findings so far are inconclusive in terms of potential differences

between the media effects of appointment viewing and cumulative series reception. The study's research interest basically is detached from the platform or medium from which the TV series is watched. The present study design could be applied to any context that allows for cumulative series reception.

One reason for choosing a qualitative approach is the conflicting findings that reveal both harmful and beneficial effects on well-being and mental health. A qualitative content analysis also enables the researcher to describe this intense watching behavior's effects in a phenomenological manner and also in a broad range. A qualitative interview gives the participants the opportunity to reflect on their experiences on their own terms and enables the interviewer to examine a complex phenomenon in depth (Tracy, 2024).

Another issue is the absence of questionnaires that uncover long-term outcomes aside from psychological diagnoses, such as anxiety or depression. Unique to this study is the observation of potential long-term post-reception outcomes aside from negative mental health correlates, such as depression or addiction. The explorative approach is intended to demonstrate the self-reported consequences of cumulative series reception in their many facets. In line with Flayelle et al.'s (2017) early phenomenological approach, this study also aimed to contribute to a balanced debate regarding the justification for pathologizing cumulative series reception, aka binge-watching, a priori.

The present qualitative study aims to provide a phenomenological overview of the possible post-exposure outcomes of cumulative series reception, with an emphasis on longer-lasting media effects. It attempts to answer the following exploratory research question:

What kinds of cognitions, affects, and behaviors stimulated by cumulative series reception spill over into everyday life?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The convenience sample generated for this study includes 24 young German adults. Inclusion criteria comprised those who used streaming services and were willing to watch a TV series during the study. The TV series should include recurring characters. This requisite was essential to be able to demonstrate media effects associated with PSRs. The test subjects chose their TV series themselves; therefore, they were responsible for the content they received. The diary and interview did not intervene with their daily lives, aside from documenting their typical media use behavior. All participants reported that they used streaming services, such as Netflix, on a regular basis ($M_{age} = 18\text{--}26$, $M_{age} = 21.42$, $SD_{age} = 2.30$, 66 % female, 34 % male, 75 % students, 100 % abitur). The study was part of a voluntary student seminar. Every student recruited two participants out of their peer group and selected them based on their viewing habits. Table 1 lists the main sociodemographic characteristics, as well as typical watching behavior per interviewee. The Ethics Committee of the University of Hohenheim reviewed the study and had no ethical concerns.

3.2. Procedure

On June 22, 2020, all participants received a video tutorial on diary management and a link to a brief online survey (covering sociodemographic information and TV series viewing habits). Subsequently, the interviewees kept a digital diary for four days about what they did, how they felt, and what and how many episodes they watched (categorized based on morning/afternoon/evening viewing times). On the first page of the online survey, they were informed that by participating, they gave consent that their data would be collected, stored, and analyzed. They also were informed about how their data would be managed. Before the interview, they were reminded that they were free to stop the interview at any time and end their participation. The interviewees were allowed to watch any TV series with recurring characters on an online streaming

Table 1
Sociodemographics & typical TV series watching behavior of all interviewees.

Participants ID	Gender	Age (years)	Highest level of education	Occupation	Most watched TV series during diary	Most intense TV series in the past	Frequency watching behavior: 2–3 episodes at once	Frequency watching behavior: 4–6 episodes at once
1	Female	21	A-Level	Student	Modern Family	Grey's Anatomy	4–6 days a week	1–3 days a month
2	Female	20	A-levels	Student	Prison Break	Outlander	4–6 days a week	1–3 days a week
3	Male	21	A-levels	Student	The Politician	Hollywood	1–3 days a week	never
4	Male	22	College	Job	Sons of Anarchy	Breaking Bad	1–3 days a week	1–3 days a month
5	Female	23	College	Student	Modern Family	Gilmore Girls	daily	never
6	Male	26	College	Job	Lost in Space	Game Of Thrones	1–3 days a week	1–3 days a month
7	Female	18	A-levels	Student	Narcos	Grey's Anatomy	1–3 days a week	1–3 days a month
8	Female	19	A-levels	Student	Vikings	Game of Thrones	1–3 days a week	never
9	Male	20	A-levels	Student	Vikings	Breaking Bad	1–3 days a week	1–3 days a week
10	Female	21	A-levels	Student	Dear White People	Madam Secretary	4–6 days a week	1–3 days a month
11	Male	22	College	Student	Avatar	The Institution	4–6 days a week	1–3 days a month
12	Male	24	A-levels	Student	Suits	Big Bang Theory	4–6 days a week	never
13	Female	19	A-levels	Student	13 Reasons Why	Prison Break	1–3 days a week	1–3 days a month
14	Female	19	A-levels	Job	Once Upon a Time	The Good Doctor	1–3 days a week	1–3 days a week
15	Male	20	A-levels	Student	Rick and Morty	Breaking Bad	1–3 days a week	1–3 days a month
16	Female	19	A-levels	Student	The Suite Life on Deck	Elite	1–3 days a week	1–3 days a week
17	Female	22	A-levels	Student	Avatar	One Day at a Time	4–6 days a week	1–3 days a month
18	Female	24	A-levels	Student	Berlin, Berlin	Turkish for Beginners	1–3 days a week	4–6 days a week
19	Female	22	A-levels	Job	Modern Family	Altered Carbon	1–3 days a month	1–3 days a month
20	Female	20	A-levels	Student	Dynasty	Vampire Diaries	1–3 days a week	1–3 days a month
21	Female	22	A-levels	Student	Dynasty	You	4–6 days a week	1–3 days a month
22	Female	19	A-levels	School	Kipo	She-Ra	4–6 days a week	4–6 days a week
23	Male	26	College	Job	Trigun	Brooklyn Nine-Nine	1–3 days a week	1–3 days a month
24	Female	25	A-levels	Student	Prison Break	The O.C.	4–6 days a week	1–3 days a week

platform (e.g., Prime Video, Netflix, YouTube, Disney, media libraries, etc.). The participants were asked to start the diary after they had watched at least two episodes of a TV series consecutively. As their typical TV-series-watching behavior was not to be influenced, they also were allowed to watch several TV series during that time frame. The study concluded with a semi-structured Zoom interview ($M = 28.42$ min, $SD = 8.60$ min, $Min = 15$ min, $Max = 43$ min). All interviews took place in June 2020 within one week and were conducted by the author ($n = 14$) and a colleague ($n = 10$).

The interview guide was developed and applied based on Helfferich's (2011) manual and comprised three columns (leading questions, checklist, and narrative flow phrases). The first and most important were the leading questions, which were divided into three sections. These were complemented using a checklist of specific topics for the follow-up in case the interviewee did not mention them spontaneously. To facilitate a seamless conversation, the third column contained general phrases designed to direct and maintain the narrative flow. Sections 1 and 2 of the leading questions referred to the TV series of which the interviewee had watched the most episodes during the preceding four days. The complete interview guidelines can be found in the appendix.

The author and her colleague who conducted the interviews were in close contact during the survey phase and discussed their interview protocols. At the beginning, they also listened to audio recordings of each other and adapted relevant differences in interview styles. In the unstructured part, the checklist ensured that the interviewees addressed all relevant topics. The interviews' varying lengths were due to different experiences and narrative styles.

Each interview started with the participant asked to discuss their TV series in general. Subsequently, they were asked to recount the most memorable storylines and characters. They also were asked how they felt about the respective characters and their actions. Before the second part of the interview, the interviewees quietly read their diaries to remember the preceding days more easily. Based on this, they reported about their daily lives, emotional states, and viewing behaviors. Subsequently, they were asked in which moments the TV series emerged in their daily lives in the form of specific thoughts, emotions, or moods. The time frame of interest was after or between watching sessions (post-

exposure). Participants referred to the day after the most intense watching session (i.e., the day when they watched the most cumulative episodes). In the third part, the interviewees reported on a TV series they were particularly engaged with in the past. There were no restrictions on how long ago they watched their most memorable TV series. The same points as in Sections 1 and 2 were addressed. Their attention also was directed toward what role this TV series played in their everyday life at that time. All interviews were video-recorded on Zoom, but only the audio file was used for transcription.

3.3. Data analysis

The interviews were transcribed manually and verbatim in accordance with Dresing and Pehl's (2020) guidelines. A qualitative content analysis was conducted using the software MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2024).

To do justice to the breadth and complexity of entertainment media correlates, the coding strategy combined deductive (concept-driven) and inductive (data-driven) approaches (Gläser & Laudel, 2010; Mayring & Fenzl, 2014) in which the theoretically derived category system still guides extraction, but can be changed and extended at any point if relevant information cannot be assigned to existing categories. For each coding decision, the author weighed which category best described the statement and prioritized single coding for the media effects. However, the superordinate categories of cognition, affect, and behavior are not clearly distinguishable from one another, so the option of co-coding was given. Based on this, the author makes no claim to a distinct category system. After the author reviewed and analyzed the material twice, a colleague examined the coding system for comprehensibility. Subsequently, the author made a final adjustment to the category system.

The category system (see Fig. 1) indicates the final categories and subcategories of the analysis. All self-reported outcomes related to TV series were classified into the categories of thoughts, affects, and actions, corresponding to the primary psychological domains of cognition, affect, and behavior.

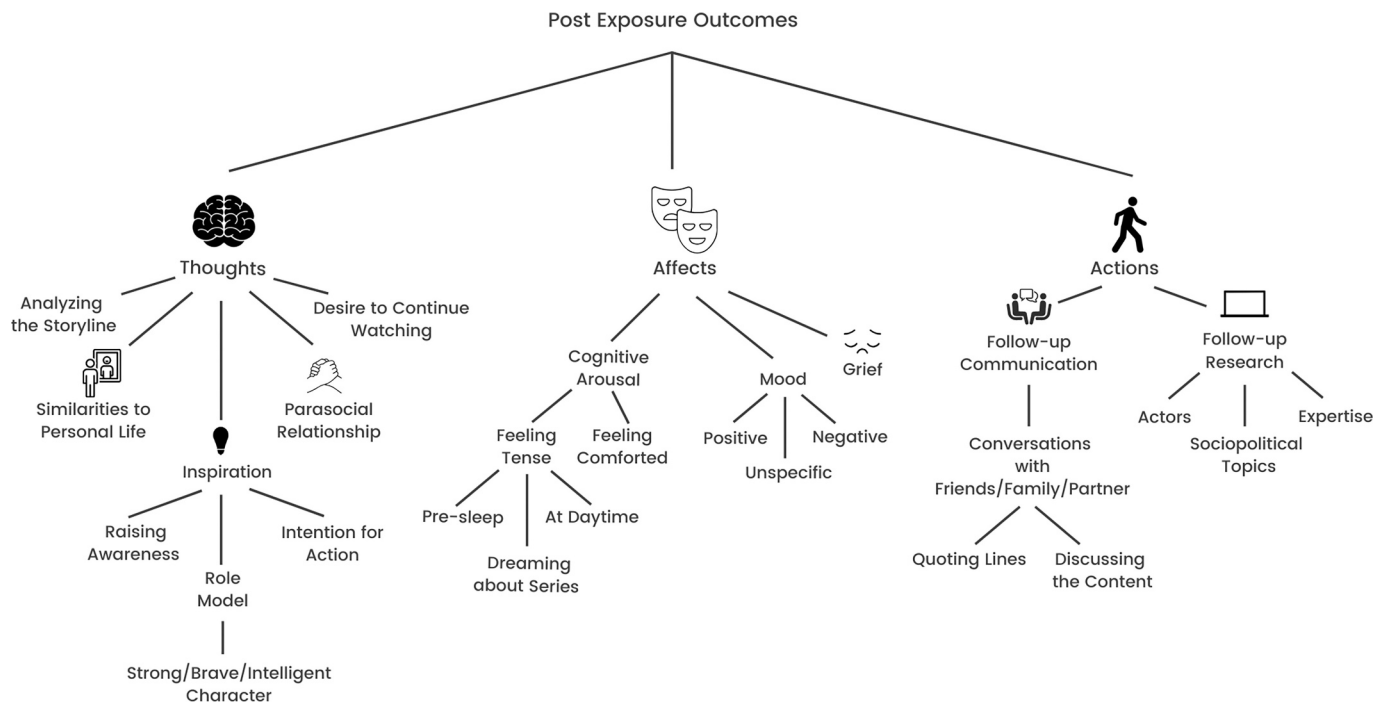


Fig. 1. Final category system.

4. Results

4.1. Thoughts

The results from the predominantly deductive content analysis are organized hierarchically based on superordinate themes and their sub-themes. All reported thoughts induced by cumulative series reception were categorized with reference to their specific content.

4.1.1. Analyzing the storyline

Participants varied intra- and interpersonally in terms of how detailed or concrete they were in their descriptions of their thoughts following their watching sessions. P08 (*Vikings*) and P13 (*Prison Break*) once reported that they were “still thinking about the storyline” for a significant period of time. In some cases, they focused on whether the TV series lived up to their expectations. For example, P16 (*13 Reasons Why*) described how the final episode left her with a “busy mind all day” because it somehow did not end the way she wanted it to end. P09 (*Vikings*) discussed how he always had conflicting thoughts after watching because he thought that the quality of the TV series decreased over time. The two participants also shared thoughts about what narratives they liked and what made sense. Furthermore, they anticipated what would transpire in the next few episodes. They also mentioned more concrete ways of processing the narrative, such as thoughts about specific actions, e.g., breakups, remarkable personality traits, or intriguing dialogue.

4.1.2. Similarities to personal life

Participants commonly reported reflecting on TV series because of perceived similarities to their own personal experiences. The most frequently reported phenomenon involved experiencing situations or environments that were similar to scenes in the TV series and thinking of the TV series as a consequence. Participants indicated varying levels of congruence between particular plotlines or character traits and their personal lives. P05 (*Grey's Anatomy*) thought about the medical TV series she watched whenever someone discussed their medical problems. Specific medical terms sounded familiar due to the TV series content. P07 watched the same medical TV series during an internship in a

hospital and noticed that romantic relationships between nurses and doctors do not occur solely on *Grey's Anatomy*. She also reevaluated certain actions of the main character when she experienced similar situations. While talking to her father at a family dinner, P20 recognized “that it’s exactly the same as in the TV series; our whole life is determined by the family business” (*Dynasty*). A few participants expressed concern for their friends who faced issues similar to those that the main characters faced in their TV series. For example, they viewed the TV series *Breaking Bad* as a disconcerting example of drug use when hanging out with friends who were taking or dealing drugs (P09, P15). A similar topic was mentioned after watching the heavily discussed TV series *13 Reasons Why*, in which a young girl commits suicide. It triggered P16 into thinking about people she knows who were dealing with depression. When she met with these friends, she also viewed the main character as an example of depression. P03 had a conversation with his friend about career paths and, thus, thought of a career-oriented character from the TV series *Hollywood*.

P19 described how she sometimes evaluates situations in her life differently after watching a TV series, explicitly attributing her thoughts and feelings in this context to her previous watching sessions. She recounted a time when she had watched many episodes of American crime TV series:

When I’m out on my own in the evening or when I’m sitting on the train and I think, “Ah, why is that strange guy sitting next to me?” Those are moments where, in retrospect or at the time, I somehow realized that I was developing prejudices based on what I’d seen last night. Or that I was imagining scenarios (P19, *The Mentalist*, *NCIS*).

4.1.3. Parasocial relationships

Sometimes participants explicitly spoke about their relationships with specific characters. P16 talked about wanting to meet one character in real life and befriend her. The interviewee described how she appreciated certain character traits, such as meeting people without prejudice or not letting other people get you down. P15 stated how much he liked the character Jesse on *Breaking Bad*. He characterized Jesse as a really good-hearted person for whom he had a lot of compassion and felt sorry for him. P09 also mentioned this character, noting his desire to get

to know the main characters and anticipate their next moves. P07 described how she appreciates the character of Meredith on *Grey's Anatomy* because she is a working mom and a good friend. She did not make it clear whether she views the character as a good friend to her or to other characters in the TV series. P05 explained how she has really grown to love the characters on *Gilmore Girls*. She also described how intense it feels to know them so well and that these feelings return whenever she hears the *Gilmore Girls* soundtrack.

4.1.4. *Desire to continue watching*

Several interviewees mentioned looking forward to watching episodes nightly and often reported thinking about the next free time slot when they could continue watching more episodes as soon as they finished a watching session. In most cases, they experienced anticipation and excitement when thinking about continuing a TV series and learning how the story would progress. Some even reported an urgent desire to finish a season by a certain date.

4.1.5. *Inspiration*

Role model. Regarding main characters' roles in viewers' lives, some participants used or indirectly explained the term *role model*. P08 watched *Game of Thrones* and felt inspired by Arya to act more strategically. P21 described a rather drastic relationship with a TV series she had watched repeatedly for several years:

I've been watching *Grey's Anatomy* for ages, probably since I was 16 or something, five or six years already. I can't live without it. We always compare a lot of things from our lives and somehow try to take that as a role model (P21).

P15 expressed a desire to adopt the cool and relaxed attitude of the main character on *Rick and Morty*. Others spoke about observing a character who struggles in life, but still persists. In these cases, the character functioned as a motivational role model in challenging life situations (P10, *Madam Secretary*; P24, *The O.C.*):

It shows that you can survive difficult situations in life (P24).

Strong/brave/intelligent character. When asking participants which plotlines or characters resonated with them, they often mentioned a "confident," "strong," "powerful," or "cool" character and their admiration for them. Immense overlap was found between the admired traits of female and male characters. P20 watched *Vampire Diaries* with her best friend, and both admired an exceptionally confident female character with a strong personality. The character also was quick-witted, mirroring how P20 would have liked to be herself at that time. Another participant admired her character's diversity (P16, *Elite*) and explicitly noted what she gained from another TV series:

As a woman, what it's like when a man makes a fool of you or maybe even gets a little too close or when you're reduced to your appearance. So, the TV series also gives you strength because you can see that a group of women is fighting back (P16, *13 Reasons Why*).

P08 also expressed admiration for the character of Arya Stark on *Game of Thrones* for "fighting her way through the world" and believed that she could potentially harness that mentality in her real everyday life.

As mentioned above, stereotypically strong features mainly were admired in both female and male characters. Aside from "admiration," words such as "impressive" or "fascinating" were used to describe characters. For example, in *Vikings*, the main character, Ragnar, inspired P08 to be a bit more forceful in life:

When you have a character like Ragnar in the back of your mind, who just takes whatever he wants, whatever he feels like, then you say to yourself: "OK, maybe I should be a little more motivated, maybe I should be a little more determined in the things or the tasks that are waiting for me now" (P08, *Vikings*).

P09 strove to adopt Ragnar's "coolness" for himself. P09 also admired this character for his composure and control. Other morally ambivalent characters or actions also inspired feelings of strength (P09, *Breaking Bad*; P13, *Prison Break*) or achievement (P07, *Narcos*) among participants.

Raising awareness. The author observed two themes in reports on participants becoming aware of new topics due to a TV series. One theme can be summed up as having witnessed TV series characters' morally questionable actions. As a consequence, participants reflected on their own previous behavior toward peers. Some even recognized themselves in certain behaviors. For example, P20 (*Dynasty*) emotionally prepared herself to engage in honest communication with her family after viewing the show. P24 (*OC California*) saw parallels with herself and characters' manners and questioned whether she also causes stress for her parents. P21 (*You*) was sensitized to the issue of stalking, and she became obsessed with the topic for at least a week:

We really need to switch Insta accounts to private, stop making them so public, and be a bit more aware of who's actually lurking out there (P21, *You*).

Another theme was learning from the TV series as an example of progressive behavior. P22 (*She—Ra*) devoted substantial time to fan forums, became more involved with LGBTQ spaces, and thought about what progressive aspects could be transferred to the real world. P18 (*Turkish for Beginners*) learned "to be more tolerant and open to new perspectives." The TV series *13 Reasons Why* made P16 aware of clinical depression, suicide, and mobbing. She described being "more concerned about peers who show similar behavior" as a result.

Intention for action. While fictional TV series frequently do not apply to people's everyday lives from a macro perspective, minute details often do. For example, participants reported feeling inspired to party (P21, *Dynasty*), smoke (P17, *Mad Men*), meet friends, or do sports (P11) after observing such activities on screen. P03 was a filmmaker in the past and was inspired to execute film projects again after watching the TV series *Hollywood* because the characters fought for their dreams.

4.2. *Affects*

Any statement that referred to a triggered emotion, mood, tension, or general state of arousal was categorized within the domain of affects. The author is aware that cognition and affect are not distinct concepts, but rather two modalities that can overlap and work together.

4.2.1. *Grief*

Grief occurred when a TV series ended or an important character died. Such instances commonly are referred to as parasocial breakups (Cohen, 2003). When an important character dies or disappears, it could cause post-reception melancholy, shock, or mourning on the viewer's end:

The season finale dragged me down all day. [...] and I was a bit sad that it's now over again. Especially her suicide made me sad because with some people, you wouldn't see that they are not doing well (P16, *13 Reasons Why*).

P09 (*Vikings*) mentioned being "generally in a kind of farewell mood" when a character leaves the TV series for whatever reason. Days after such a scene on *Grey's Anatomy*, P20 was still in shock and wondered, "How could they kill off this character? Why are you doing this to me?" Furthermore, breakups of romantic relationships on screen also could cause more sustained sadness (P16, *The Suite Life on Deck*).

4.2.2. *Arousal*

Statements that described some form of being agitated or restless were summarized under the category of arousal, though participants never used this term. Common themes regarding post-reception arousal include tension or rumination after watching several episodes of their

TV series. Also mentioned were feelings of mistrust (P19, *The Mentalist*) or irritability (P16, *13 Reasons Why*) afterward. Others described this state as restlessness (P08, *Vikings*) or as not finding peace easily (P13, *13 Reasons Why*). Most of the time, they explained, of their own volition, what had been causing these feelings. One of the primary factors was content. Episodes described as conflict-ridden, thrilling, upsetting, violent, and action-packed appeared to be essential for the transfer of some kind of arousal:

So, since these were two episodes that were very conflict-ridden, that was reflected in a kind of tension throughout the day (P09, *Vikings*).

I was rather agitated after watching several episodes of GOT, and if I've really watched a lot, and it's violent, then I find it draining (P08, *Game of Thrones*).

For P12, the famous comedy TV series *Big Bang Theory* had a "calming effect when it was extremely stressful [...] and then you could just switch off a bit."

4.2.3. Sleep

When participants reported that they had trouble falling asleep after a watching session, it was primarily a consequence of watching in the evening. This was predominantly reported in association with the afore-analyzed transferred arousal. One of the primary factors that contributed to delayed or unsettled sleep was always some type of tension or rumination. After watching many episodes of an action-packed TV series several times per week, one participant stated the following:

It was like that, that I lay there in the evening and couldn't fall asleep so well because you somehow still think about these actions and yes, because it's also rather, well, let's say action-packed and you somehow need a moment to calm down and then somehow think about other things (P13, *Prison Break*).

After watching four thrilling episodes—I was still tense afterward, so I had to force myself to sleep that day because it was already quite late (P23, *Trigun*).

A few interviewees explicitly referred to watching something close to bedtime as problematic, leading them to struggle with falling asleep, unable to calm down. At times, they criticized their behavior in the same sentence. As P17 (*Avatar*) expressed, "that wasn't necessary," and P16 (*The Suite Life on Deck*) wondered whether "watching TV just before going to bed isn't so good" in general. One person even dreamed about the suspenseful TV series *Game of Thrones* when she had watched it right before bedtime (P08).

4.2.4. Unspecific mood

P22 reported being influenced by episodes and remaining in corresponding moods for a long time. P15 (*Modern Family*) described watching a TV series as a way to switch off his mind. He described the state after finishing multiple episodes as follows:

Turning it off, well, I don't know. It's a bit like falling into a drug-induced void. You're out of it, and then the real world is back, and you somehow have to readjust. That's often how I feel when I watch five or four episodes in a row (P15, *Modern Family*).

Others retrospectively realized, sometimes without mentioning a specific TV series, that a show's mood could influence them for a long time afterward (P21, P17, P09). They used phrases such as "can influence my mood completely" (P21), "I really transport the atmosphere or mood" (P17), or "I just take the mood [...] with me" (P9).

4.2.5. Positive mood

Participants also emerged from some watching situations in a positive mood. The reasons provided for this varied. The most frequently cited reason was a connection to "happy" (P22, *She—Ra*; P11, *Avatar*; P12, *Suits*) or "positive" (P08, *Vikings*) events in the recently watched

episodes. However, dramatic content also can be a trigger for sustained improvement in mood:

In such TV series, a lot of suffering is inflicted, a lot of murder is committed, and these are problems that are much, much worse than the ones I have (P14, *Once Upon a Time*).

Through social downward comparison, one's own life is perceived more positively. Another function of a TV series can be to help viewers unwind.

4.2.6. Negative mood

The participants described different emotional states that can be summed up as a negative mood. Two self-attributed causes could be extracted. One was a content-related negative mood, and the other was watching "excessively" or "too much" in one sitting. Participants phrased it as "depressing" (P16, *13 Reasons Why*), "bad" (P15, *Breaking Bad*), or "dark" (P19, *Altered Carbon*). One participant framed it as a doomsday mood that "still echoed in my head":

It's a very light series, but it nevertheless somehow hits the mood afterwards if you've watched too much. If you watch so much or even on YouTube or all these things, they just have a very long-lasting effect on me (P15, *Modern Family*).

4.3. Actions

Any reported actions that followed a watching session appeared to be forms of communication or research to process the previously watched content.

4.3.1. Follow-up communication

Specific actions reported frequently were follow-up communications, most commonly with friends and family. This was also the most frequent and most common post-reception behavior among all 24 participants. Three types of conversation partners could be distinguished: co-watchers; peers who watched the same TV series; and peers who were not familiar with the TV series. The conversations were about when to continue watching, what they thought of certain storylines, what they liked or disliked, and sometimes what they would have liked to be different. One respondent described how often she and her friends quote lines from their mutually viewed TV series:

That's when one of us would say that the situations are very similar to ours. When we sit with the girls [...] we often quote a lot, which is always very funny and fits well (P21, *Sex and the City*).

Some simply recommended their current TV series to their peers (P02, P06, P03). Two participants used the watched content as a reference for their dialogue.

4.3.2. Follow-up research

Searching for information about actors, storylines, or other viewers' opinions is also a common practice. A few respondents inquired about political matters, such as the status of women in the US or discrimination and mobbing at schools (P10, P14). For another participant, *Grey's Anatomy* reinforced her decision to study medicine, and she took notes while watching and researched medical procedures following her watching sessions (P21). After finishing a TV series that focused on the LGBTQ community (*She—Ra*), P22 recalled deeply engaging with it for approximately one month.

4.4. No perceived effects

Only one participant (P04) did not recall any influences from the content he watched. Similarly, some individuals reported effects only in relation to the TV series they watched a long time ago. Furthermore, situational intrapersonal differences were found, and numerous

explanatory approaches were identified.

Irrelevant content. The characterization of unimportant content was made using phrases such as the following: “unrealistic” (P14, *Once Upon a Time*); “no similarities to own life” (P19, *Altered Carbon*); “no stirring topics” (P18, *Berlin, Berlin*); “light entertainment” (P19, unspecified); or “relatively unimportant” (P21, *Grey’s Anatomy*). The following statement is from the only interviewee who did not report any post-reception effects:

Which somehow didn’t really get me; it is pretty far removed from my reality and my life (P04, *Sons of Anarchy*).

No mood changes. A few participants explicitly commented on their unchanged mood directly after watching (P24, P14, P12). They argued that they are simply emotionally involved while watching.

Superficially watching. Some statements suggested that a specific personality trait determines whether one is impacted by TV series in general. For example, P15 indicated that he is usually not “that deep into series.” Similarly, P04 stated the following: “I just watch it casually. [...] I’m not the type to project that onto everyday life.”

Overshadowed by other experiences. Another aspect was that the real-life experiences of the same day overshadowed a potential echo of the TV series (P09, P13, P15):

We met our father’s girlfriend that evening, so I somehow had other things on my mind (P15, *Rick and Morty*).

Unspecific. Some generally commented that they could not think of any effects the TV series had on them. In some cases, this only applied for certain days, while in others, it applied for the entire duration of the study:

Don’t think it had much of an impact last week (P05, *Modern Family*).

I just didn’t think about the series at all that day (P03, *Politician*).

4.5. Timing of outcomes

One intriguing element was the potential persistence of effects. Several interviewees elaborated on approximately how long their reported “effects” lasted. The estimated persistence ranged from just a few minutes after a watching session to hours, days, or even weeks later. Table 2 presents the corresponding quotes assigned to the coding system and the respective TV series. This kind of display enables one to see potential associations between the type of outcome and their persistence. Affects such as a negative mood or grief could last or reappear hours after watching sessions. Raised awareness on a specific topic could provoke intellectual reflection or dialogue weeks later. A perceived tension could last just a few minutes or for hours. By attributing a suitable genre to each TV series, one can try to find associations between the type of content and the media effect’s persistence. However, most of the TV series mentioned can be categorized under the drama genre. Consequently, no systematic relationships can be identified at this level.

5. Discussion

This study’s objective was to demonstrate a nuanced set of possible long-term effects from cumulative series reception and to describe them in a phenomenological manner. Particularly regarding affective variables such as emotions or moods induced by TV series, not much extant research has examined their persistence or reappearance hours or days after media exposure. Conducting the interviews shortly after participants finished their diaries made it possible to gain as direct an insight as possible into the study participants’ everyday experiences without disturbing them. The additional use of a biographical question, which referred to their most intensive TV series-watching experiences to date, provided further insight into these watching experiences’ influence

Table 2
Quotes referring to the timing of effects.

ID	TV Series	Genre	Time	Themes - subthemes	Quotes
P19	Altered Carbon	Sci-Fi	Past	Action – post-communication	For two weeks
P20	Grey’s Anatomy	Drama	Past	Affect - grief	For several days
P16	Elite	Drama	Past	Affect - grief	Dragging me down all day
P22	Avatar	Sci-Fi	Past	Affect – unspecific mood	Can be in the mood for ages, 5 min to half a day
P21	Grey’s Anatomy	Drama	Past	Affect – negative mood	An hour later
P20	Vampire Diaries	Fantasy	Past	Affect – negative mood	For the next few hours
P17	Avatar	Sci-Fi	Present	Affect - sleep	It didn’t last long
P16	13 Reasons Why	Drama	Past	Affect - tension	Minutes after watching to an hour
P09	Vikings	Action	Present	Affect - tension	Throughout the day
P15	Modern Family	Comedy	Past	Affect – negative mood	It can really last all day
P22	She-Ra	Action	Past	Thoughts - sensitization	Was stuck in there for a good month
P21	You	Drama	Past	Thoughts - sensitization	For over a week
P19	The Mentalist	Crime	Past	Thoughts - sensitization	A few hours later, sometimes 3–4 days
P09	Breaking Bad	Drama	Past	Thoughts - similarities	The connection to the series only builds up about 2 weeks after finishing the series
P05	Scrubs, Grey’s Anatomy	Drama	Past	Thoughts - similarities	At some point, it lets go of you a little so that you don’t always think about it
P17	One Day at a Time	Comedy	Past	Thoughts - storyline	Right after I watched it
P14	The Good Doctor	Drama	Past	Thoughts - storyline	For a long time
P08	Vikings	Action	Present	Thoughts - storyline Affect -tension	For a relatively long time
P21	Dynasty	Drama	Present	Thoughts – intention for action	Only on the same day
P03	Hollywood	Drama	Past	Thoughts – intention for action	1–2 weeks
P22	Critical Role	Comedy	Present	Thoughts – similarity	The last few days

one’s thoughts and emotions away from screen time.

The explorative approach adds a broad spectrum of findings of any valence to cumulative series reception research, once again opening the discourse to future research that considers a beneficial and harmful impact, and anything in between. Aside from that, the results contribute to the line of work that asks the question: In which context can cumulative series reception make a positive or negative impact on one’s well-being? However, one of the most intriguing findings was how long content-related thoughts, emotions, and actions can linger with us.

Following a short recap of what we already know about post-reception correlates and effects from cumulative series reception, the results will be put into the context of previous theories and findings. A large amount of quantitative literature can be found on the mental health risks of cumulative series reception (Alimoradi et al., 2022).

Depending on the approach and conceptualization, some extant studies have found correlates with symptoms of depression (Ahmed, 2019), anxiety (Tefertiller & Maxwell, 2018), insomnia (Exelmans & Van den Bulck, 2017), heightened cognitive and physiological arousal (Baselgia et al., 2023), and addiction (Riddle et al., 2018). However, there are indications that cumulative series reception can be restorative—at least on a short-term basis (Granow et al., 2018)—and is used as an emotional coping strategy (Halfmann & Reinecke, 2021). Furthermore, positive and negative correlations with processes such as identification, transportation, and PSRs were reported (Anghelcev et al., 2021; Erickson et al., 2019; Wirz et al., 2023).

The main theoretical categories—namely cognition, affect, and behavior—were modified in alignment with the data into thoughts, affects, and actions.

Thoughts. The most diversified category encompassed concrete thoughts that revolve around the TV series. This is not surprising, as these are most likely easier to articulate than emotional states. The interviewees cognitively processed the episodes they watched by reviewing and evaluating plotlines or dialogues. Any form of overlap between the storyline and real life could be a trigger for remembering specific characters or scenes in their day-to-day lives. This could occur days or weeks after the exposure and was described by one person as a slowly subsiding state. As was to be expected, different facets of parasocial phenomena were described, as well as related concepts, such as identification. Statements close to items on the original PSI scale (Rubin et al., 1985)—such as “I would like to meet the character in person” or “My favorite character is like an old friend”—were scarce. However, overlaps with items from the PSI process scale (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008) were way more present. Contradictory studies supporting the notion of stronger PSR as a consequence of cumulative series reception (Erickson et al., 2019; Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018), Billard (2019) found cumulative series reception to be a moderator that weakens identification’s positive effect on entertainment education effects. In the present study, identification with TV series characters turned out to be an important factor as to whether and how a TV series impacts one’s everyday life.

It has been hypothesized that strong identification can intensify potential media effects during the post-exposure phase (Cohen, 2006). Although identification is conceptualized mostly as a media effect occurring during media exposure, it seems to impact recipients beyond strengthening PSRs. When asked about the impact of TV series on their personal lives, the most prevalent statement referred to some kind of inspiration through the characters’ traits and actions. In the context of communication studies, identification refers to the recipient’s desire to be similar to individuals on the screen (Bonfadelli & Friemel, 2017). Interviewees mostly felt motivated and inspired by strong, intelligent, and courageous characters who could function as role models to a certain extent. Some transferred that motivation into everyday situations, such as studying or handling personal relationships. Cohen and Klimmt (2021) explained that people typically identify themselves with media personas that have characteristics which differ from their own reality. Imagining oneself as a certain character and claiming their characteristics for oneself can even exert a positive effect on one’s psychological well-being (Cohen & Klimmt, 2021). However, extant research also has found stronger parasocial interactions when there are similarities in character traits, such as extraversion, as well as perceived overlaps with other character traits (Möri & Fahr, 2023).

Feeling motivated and inspired by a media character and transferring these feelings to real-life situations post-exposure also can be viewed as part of, or at least a consequence of, a PSR that motivates and inspires recipients as a friend would, with the notable difference that a TV series character, such as Ragnar from *Vikings* or Arya from *Game of Thrones*, exhibits more extreme displays of fearlessness or strategic thinking than one’s real-life friends.

Furthermore, engaging in fictional narratives via TV series enables someone to learn about social contexts or political issues while feeling

entertained (Nærland, 2020). Some interviewees becoming aware of actions such as stalking or other morally questionable behavior indicate a cognitive echo that could last for days. Billard (2019) reported less prosocial behavior as a consequence of cumulative series reception compared with viewing single episodes. Extant research comparing heavy and light viewers of reality TV shows observed stronger cultivation effects mediated by PSR with heavy viewers (Jahng, 2019).

What emerged is that the type of thoughts that participants described are in line with the corresponding research body. Processes such as identification (Manoliu, 2021), PSRs (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018), and inspiration (Chang, 2023) have been reported before as correlates of TV series reception. The finding that cumulative series reception can lead to longer-lasting engagement with a socially relevant topic, such as gender roles or sexuality, across different genres and content indicates the importance of representing different life realities. A further prominent positive takeaway from getting involved with a TV series intensely can be having a role model for challenging everyday situations. Thus, in terms of feeling inspired and educated, the phenomenon of cumulative series reception needs more research on entertainment education and prosocial behavior. A recent review of entertainment media’s medical education potential demonstrated that TV series and movies enhance students’ learning experiences, increase engagement with intricate topics, and promote development of essential skills (Piqué-Buisan et al., 2024). The compact and intense watching mode reflected in cumulative series reception potentially allows for faster or stronger changes in attitudes compared with appointment viewing.

Affect. The interviewees’ reports on persistence suggest that moods, emotions, and states of arousal can be passed on by the reception situation. Even if no consensus has been reached on how to distinguish emotions from moods, a frequent understanding is, for example, that moods last longer than emotions. Overall, emotions often are conceptualized as more specific and concrete in their cause, intentionality, and experience by both non-academics and academics (Beedie et al., 2005). A popular academic perception is that a mood can taint cognitions and perceptions, while emotions trigger behavior (Davidson et al., 1994). Theories such as excitation transfer (Zillmann, 2008) or mood management (Zillmann, 1988) only explain affectional short-term media effects, but few existing theories and concepts have tried to explain longer-lasting, media-induced affectional reactions. One participant described her cognitive processing as having crime TV series in the back of her mind and judging upcoming situations differently. This state could be viewed as what is called cognitive arousal (Baselgia et al., 2023). The observation of mainly cognitive pre-sleep arousal triggered by mostly suspenseful TV series is consistent with findings by Baselgia et al. (2023) and Exelmans and Van den Bulck (2017). However, by no means did the interviewees consistently rate this perceived cognitive or physiological arousal consistently as negative. Participants also mentioned intense watching sessions’ calming power, so they should be considered in future studies, leaning on Halfmann and Reinecke’s (2021) theoretical take.

Parasocial breakups could trigger a grieving process among participants. It is assumed that a PSR exerts cognitive and emotional effects on the recipient that resemble those induced by a real interpersonal relationship (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). Accordingly, the breakup of a PSR can be painful and trigger symptoms similar to those following a real-life breakup with a friend (Cohen, 2003). According to the present study, such emotions could last for hours after ending a watching session. The recipients rather describe it as a recurrence of sadness or shock in everyday situations. Learning about the persistence of that grieving process raises the question for further research, if the grieving is stronger the more exposure I had with the character in a relatively short amount of time or if frequency and timing is not of essence. So far, the corresponding research is ambivalent. Inconsistent with the findings of Erickson et al. (2019), Ferchaud et al. (2022) reported no influence of cumulative series reception on PSRs or breakups. However, greater breakups distress was a result of positive PSRs compared to negative

ones.

In the present study the transfer of a positive emotional state or mood was mostly content related and caused by positive events in the watched episodes. A positive mood could also be a result of a drama TV series that prompted a social downward comparison, whereas a negative mood could be a consequence of the specific content or the amount of time spent watching. This is in line with Rosa et al. (2019) who reported negative effects on mood (sadness and lack of motivation) after watching a drama TV series.

Also consistent with previous findings is the impact of watching a high volume of suspenseful content on one's affective state, which is often called feeling tense. For the interviewees, tension and ruminative thinking could cause problems falling asleep. An experimental study by Wirz et al. (2023) revealed that heightened arousal was a consequence of cumulative series reception. They measured arousal via self-reports directly after watching sessions and did not differ between cognitive and physiological arousal. In addition, the present study suggests that the media-induced arousal can last up to several hours and has a pronounced impact in the evening.

So, there are certainly affective states such as sadness, tension or inner calm that occur as a result of cumulative series reception and, according to the participants, last significantly longer than just a few minutes after ending screentime. This observation can be a valuable contribution to show how maybe the intensity or the mode of watching a TV series impacts the persistence of affective outcomes. There is longitudinal research needed to focus on the duration or reoccurrence of certain affective states following one or multiple cumulative series receptions.

Actions. That recipients enjoy discussing the TV series they have watched is nothing new. Surprisingly, no communication via social media platforms such as reddit (Unkel & Kümpel, 2020) or Instagram was mentioned. Only face-to-face conversations with family and friends were discussed by the interviewees. As also mentioned by Ferchaud (2020), recommending a TV series was common in social interactions post exposure. Of course, that is not only applicable to cumulative series reception. However, due to the prolonged and repeated exposure to a continuous narrative in a relatively short period of time, the follow-up communication can also be triggered more frequently in that time period. The combination of repeated cumulative watching sessions and follow-up research had the power to reinforce effects such as becoming aware of a political matter. This process could continue for weeks. Accordingly, the mental engagement with a topic triggered by a TV series can lead to long-term actions like researching which presumably is reinforced by repeated watching sessions.

Just nothing. It is also important to mention that not every person and not every watching experience that can be classified as "binge-watching" causes short or long-term effects on one's cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes. When the content was evaluated as irrelevant, the interviewees reported no impact at all. It appears to depend on how involved and engaged recipients are while watching. These findings highlight how different the outcome can be depending on the situation or the recipients character traits. Accordingly, an intense watching session doesn't have to be harmful or restorative. One person can be highly influenced sustainably one day and take away nothing from the reception the next day. This seems to be in line with the research body regarding addiction that proposes some kind of differentiating different kind of binge-watchers or binge-watching behaviors (Favieri et al., 2023; Flayelle et al., 2022; Forte et al., 2021).

5.1. Limitations

Alongside the much-discussed limits of qualitative research per se, such as not being representative or objective (Scholl, 2016), the present study contains further limitations. By including a biographical question referring to the past, the design simultaneously precluded and gleaned insights. While one had the opportunity to determine what effects can be

observed under particularly high involvement and engagement, two different time references were mixed. While some observations were reported after lengthy delays following the actual watching experience (interview guide, Section 3), others referred to diaries written merely days before the interview. However, the level of detail in the reports about former watching experiences was astonishing. Nevertheless, recall bias is substantially more likely when more time has passed. Another restriction is that the convenience sample resulted in a highly educated sample of young adults. Nowadays, video-on-demand (VOD) platforms are used among the broader population (Ewing, 2019). For this reason, an ideal sample should vary more in age and other sociodemographic variables.

6. Conclusion

Although qualitative research cannot uncover effects on a statistical level, it can delve both broadly and deeply into relations that remain underexamined. The results discussed above demonstrate that it is sometimes worthwhile to move away from established operationalizations and research trends. Consistent with the so-far-very-small research branch of positive psychology in connection with binge-watching, this study also demonstrates that the outcomes of cumulative series reception are by no means predominantly negative. Instead, a picture of many different media effects of any valence emerges. When done in an extreme manner, it can be deleterious to one's well-being. Delayed sleep or feeling anxious for a while can be a consequence of watching copious episodes consecutively. However, there are also mechanisms, such as becoming aware of socially relevant topics, that lead to prosocial behavior or feelings of strength triggered by a powerful character that yield beneficial outcomes.

The findings also indicate that at the very least, the types of effects triggered by cumulative series reception are not that different from other entertainment media effects. Depending on factors such as content, involvement, and session length, among many others, it can make a rather negative or even harmful impact one day and an empowering impact the next day. The phenomenon of cumulative series reception deserves a chance to exist as a potentially beneficial and also potentially exhausting form of media consumption. The potential outcomes seem to be as broad, regarding its type and valence, as any other less-intense form of TV series reception.

The reports included only very few statements relating to possible addiction symptoms. This finding may arise from various factors. First, it is plausible that individuals only disclose addiction symptoms when directly queried about them. Furthermore, topics such as addiction, depression, and anxiety often are associated with discomfort and stigma, leading individuals to avoid discussion. Furthermore, it is conceivable that addiction symptoms are just not prevalent within the current sample. Concerning the inquiry into the significance of explicitly discussing binge-watching again, the present findings suggest that the repeated, focused, and intensive engagement with a narrative or recurring characters can affect the degree and duration to which themes and emotions from the TV series resonate in an individual's everyday life.

This study did not aim to minimize potential negative effects, but rather to help uncover the diversity of potential effects from cumulative series reception. Furthermore, after many studies analyzing the motives and exposure mode, the potential spillover into one's live away from streaming time needed to be addressed. The reported duration of post-exposure effects definitely requires more attention in future research. For example, this could be investigated through a quantitative experience sampling study that analyzes the stability of effects such as heightened arousal, similar to Wirz et al. (2023). Finally, the range of consequences experienced due to intensive TV series reception observed in this study highlights the importance of distinguishing between different types of watching situations in light of their qualities, motives, and effects (Forte, Favieri, Tambelli, & Casagrande, 2023), as well as

different types of viewers, or so-called “binge-watchers” (Billaux et al., 2022; Flayelle et al., 2022).

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Sarah Eberhard-Böhlz: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Software, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix

Supplementary material to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105369>.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

References

- Ahmed, A. (2019). New era of TV-watching behavior: Binge watching and its psychological effects — Media Watch Journal. May 31 <https://www.mediawatchjournal.in/new-era-of-tv-watching-behavior-binge-watching-and-its-psychologica-l-effects-2/>.
- Alimoradi, Z., Jafari, E., Potenza, M. N., Chung-Ying, L., Chien-Yi, W., & Pakpour, A. H. (2022). Binge-watching and mental health problems: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(15). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19159707>
- Anghelcev, G., Sar, S., Martin, J. D., & Moultrie, J. L. (2021). Binge-watching serial video content: Exploring the subjective phenomenology of the binge-watching experience. *Mass Communication and Society*, 24(1), 130–154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2020.1811346>
- Baselgia, S., Combertaldi, S. L., Fahr, A., Wirz, D. S., Ort, A., & Rasch, B. (2023). Pre-sleep arousal induced by suspenseful series and cliffhangers have only minor effects on sleep: A sleep laboratory study. *Sleep Medicine*, 102, 186–198. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sleep.2023.01.005>
- Beedie, C., Terry, P., & Lane, A. (2005). Distinctions between emotion and mood. *Cognition and Emotion*, 19(6), 847–878. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699930541000057>
- Billard, T. J. (2019). Experimental evidence for differences in the prosocial effects of binge-watched versus appointment-viewed television programs. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 96(4), 1025–1051. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699019843856>
- Billaux, P., Billieux, J., Baggio, S., Mauraige, P., & Flayelle, M. (2023). Thinking beyond cut-off scores in the assessment of potentially addictive behaviors: A brief illustration in the context of binge-watching. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 12(2), 303–308. <https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.2023.00032>
- Billaux, P., Billieux, J., Gärtner, L., Mauraige, P., & Flayelle, M. (2022). Negative affect and problematic binge-watching: The mediating role of unconstructive ruminative thinking style. *Psychologica Belgica*, 62(1), 272–285. <https://doi.org/10.5334/pb.1163>
- Bonfadelli, H., & Friemel, T. N. (2017). *Medienwirkungsforschung* (6th ed.). UTB.
- Chang, C. (2023). Being inspired by media content: Psychological processes leading to inspiration. *Media Psychology*, 26(1), 72–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2022.2097927>
- Chang, Y.-J., & Peng, C.-Y. (2022). Exploring experiences of binge-watching and perceived addictiveness among binge-watchers: A qualitative study. *BMC Public Health*, 22(1), 2285. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-14789-z>
- Cohen, J. (2003). Parasocial breakups: Measuring individual differences in responses to the dissolution of Parasocial relationships. *Mass Communication and Society*, 6(2), 191–202. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0602_5
- Cohen, J. (2006). Audience identification with media characters. In *Psychology of Entertainment*. Routledge.
- Cohen, J. (2017). Defining identification: A theoretical look at the identification of audiences with media characters. In *Advances in foundational mass communication theories*. Routledge.
- Cohen, J., & Klimmt, C. (2021). In *The Oxford handbook of entertainment theory* (Ed.), *Stepping in and out of media characters—Identification and dynamic shifts in users' positioning toward entertainment messages* (pp. 267–284). Oxford University Press.
- Czichon, M. (2019). *Kumulierte Serienrezeption: Ein Modell zur Erklärung des Rezeptionsphänomens Binge Watching*. Springer-Verlag.
- Davidson, R. J., Ekman, P., Frijda, N. H., Goldsmith, H. H., Kagan, J., Lazarus, R., ... Clark, L. A. (1994). How are emotions distinguished from moods, temperament, and other related affective constructs. In R. J. Davidson, P. Ekman, N. H. Frijda, H. H. Goldsmith, J. Kagan, R. Lazarus, ... L. A. Clark (Eds.), *The nature of emotion: Fundamental questions* (pp. 49–96). Oxford University Press.
- De Keere, K., Thunissen, E., & Kuipers, G. (2021). Defusing moral panic: Legitimizing binge-watching as manageable, high-quality, middle-class hedonism. *Media, Culture & Society*, 43(4), 629–647. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443720972315>
- Dresing, T., & Pehl, T. (2020). Transkription. In G. Mey, & K. Mruck (Eds.), *Handbuch Qualitative Forschung in der Psychologie: Band 2: Designs und Verfahren* (pp. 835–854). Springer Fachmedien. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-26887-9_56.
- Durrani, A. (2023). *Top streaming statistics in 2024*. Forbes Home. March 27 <https://www.forbes.com/home-improvement/internet/streaming-stats/>.
- Erdmann, E., & Dienlin, T. (2022). Binge-watching, self-determination, and well-being. *Journal of Media Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000334>
- Erickson, S. E., Dal Cin, S., & Byl, H. (2019). An experimental examination of binge watching and narrative engagement. *Social Sciences*, 8(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8010019>
- Ewing, J. (2019). *New research highlights streaming demographic trends*. Forbes. February 12 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffewing/2019/02/12/new-research-highlights-streaming-demographic-trends/>.
- Exelmans, L., & Van den Bulck, J. (2017). Binge viewing, sleep, and the role of pre-sleep arousal. *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine: JCSM: Official Publication of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine*, 13(8), 1001–1008. <https://doi.org/10.5664/jcsm.6704>
- Eyal, K., & Cohen, J. (2006). When good friends say goodbye: A parasocial breakup study. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 50(3), 502–523. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem5003_9
- Favieri, F., Forte, G., Tambelli, R., Tomai, M., & Casagrande, M. (2023). I feel addicted to watching series: Association between binge-watching and mental health. *PeerJ*, 11, Article e15796. <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.15796>
- Ferchaud, A. (2020). *Binge and Bingeability: The antecedents and consequences of binge watching behavior*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Ferchaud, A., Yan, Z., & Daniel, E. S. (2022). Binging on the heartbreak: The effect of binge-watching on narrative engagement and parasocial breakups. *Psychology of Popular Media*, 11(4), 402–412. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000414>
- Flayelle, M., Canale, N., Vögele, C., Karila, L., Mauraige, P., & Billieux, J. (2019). Assessing binge-watching behaviors: Development and validation of the “watching series motives” and “binge-watching engagement and symptoms” questionnaires. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 90, 26–36. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.08.022>
- Flayelle, M., Elhai, J. D., Mauraige, P., Vögele, C., Breviers, D., Baggio, S., & Billieux, J. (2022). Identifying the psychological processes delineating non-harmful from problematic binge-watching: A machine learning analytical approach: Telematics and informatics. *Telematics and Informatics*, 74, Article 101880. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2022.101880>
- Flayelle, M., Mauraige, P., & Billieux, J. (2017). Toward a qualitative understanding of binge-watching behaviors: A focus group approach. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 6(4), 457–471. <https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.6.2017.060>
- Flayelle, M., Mauraige, P., Di Lorenzo, K. R., Vögele, C., Gainsbury, S. M., & Billieux, J. (2020). Binge-watching: What do we know so far? A first systematic review of the evidence. *Current Addiction Reports*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40429-020-00299-8>
- Flayelle, M., Mauraige, P., Karila, L., Vögele, C., & Billieux, J. (2019). Overcoming the unitary exploration of binge-watching: A cluster analytical approach. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 8(3), 586–602. <https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.8.2019.53>
- Flayelle, M., Verbruggen, F., Schiel, J., Vögele, C., Mauraige, P., & Billieux, J. (2020). Non-problematic and problematic binge-watchers do not differ on prepotent response inhibition: A preregistered pilot experimental study. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 2(3), 259–268. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.194>
- Forgas, J. P. (2008). Affect and cognition. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 3(2), 94–101. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6916.2008.00067.x>
- Forte, G., Favieri, F., Casagrande, M., & Tambelli, R. (2023). Personality and behavioral inhibition/activation systems in behavioral addiction: Analysis of binge-watching: International journal of environmental research and public health. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(2). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20021622>
- Forte, G., Favieri, F., Tambelli, R., & Casagrande, M. (2023). To binge watch series: How a leisure activity may affect sleep, mood and quality of life: Psychology research and behavior management. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 16, 2395–2405. <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S407854>
- Forte, G., Favieri, F., Tedeschi, D., & Casagrande, M. (2021). Binge-watching: Development and validation of the binge-watching addiction questionnaire. *Behavioral Sciences*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs11020027>
- Gadino, N., Ellithorpe, M. E., Ulusoy, E., Wirz, D. S., & Eden, A. (2023). Binge-watching to feel better: Mental health gratifications sought and obtained through binge-watching. *Psychology of Popular Media*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000485>
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1986). *Living with television: The dynamics of the cultivation process*.
- Giles, D. C. (2002). Parasocial interaction: A review of the literature and a model for future research. *Media Psychology*, 4(3), 279–305. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMP0403_04
- Gläser, J., & Laudel, G. (2010). *Experteninterviews und qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: Als Instrumente rekonstruierender Untersuchungen* (4th ed.). VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften <https://www.springer.com/de/book/9783531172385>.
- Granow, V. C., Reinecke, L., & Ziegele, M. (2018). Binge-watching and psychological well-being: Media use between lack of control and perceived autonomy.

- Communication Research Reports, 35(5), 392–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2018.1525347>
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(5), 701–721. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.5.701>
- Halfmann, A., & Reinecke, L. (2021). Binge-watching as case of escapist entertainment use. In *The Oxford handbook of entertainment theory*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190072216.013.11>. April 15.
- Helffferich, C. (2011). *Die Qualität qualitativer Daten: Manual für die Durchführung qualitativer Interviews* (4th ed.). VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Henriques, G., & Michalski, J. (2020). Defining behavior and its relationship to the science of psychology. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 54(2), 328–353. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-019-09504-4>
- Hoffner, C. A., & Cohen, E. L. (2012). Responses to obsessive compulsive disorder on *monk* among series fans: Parasocial relations, presumed media influence, and behavioral outcomes. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56(4), 650–668. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2012.732136>
- Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction. *Psychiatry*, 19(3), 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>
- Horvath, C. W. (2004). Measuring television addiction. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 48(3), 378–398. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4803_3
- Jahng, M. R. (2019). Watching the rich and famous: The cultivation effect of reality television shows and the mediating role of parasocial experiences. *Media Practice and Education*, 20(4), 319–333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741136.2018.1556544>
- Jurgensen, J. (2012). Binge viewing: TV's lost weekends. *Wall Street Journal*. <https://onlinewsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303740704577521300806686174.html>
- Kennedy, R. (2024). *Netflix profits soar as password sharing crackdown pays off* (April 22). The CFO. <https://the-cfo.io/2024/04/22/netflix-profits-soar-as-password-sharing-crackdown-pays-off/>.
- Krongard, S., & Tsay-Vogel, M. (2020). Online original series: Examining portrayals of violence in popular binge-watched programs and social reality perceptions. *Psychology of Popular Media*, 9(2), 155–164. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000224>
- Liebers, N., & Schramm, H. (2019). *Parasocial interactions and relationships with media characters—An inventory of 60 years of research*.
- Manoliu, A. (2021). Psychological reactions to house of cards: The role of transportation and identification. In J. D. Sinnott, & J. S. Rabin (Eds.), *The psychology of political behavior in a time of change* (pp. 539–556). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38270-4_23
- Mayring, P., & Fenzl, T. (2014). Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. In N. Baur, & J. Blasius (Eds.), *Handbuch Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung* (pp. 543–556). Springer Fachmedien. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-18939-0_38
- Merikivi, J., Bragge, J., Scornavacca, E., & Verhagen, T. (2020). Binge-watching serialized video content: A transdisciplinary review. *Television & New Media*, 21(7), 697–711. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476419848578>
- Merikivi, J., Salovaara, A., Mäntymäki, M., & Zhang, L. (2018). On the way to understanding binge watching behavior: The over-estimated role of involvement. *Electronic Markets*, 28(1), 111–122. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12525-017-0271-4>
- Merrill, K., Jr., & Rubenking, B. (2019). Go long or go often: Influences on binge watching frequency and duration among college students. *Social Sciences*, 8(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8010010>
- Möri, M., & Fahr, A. (2023). Parasocial interactions with media characters: The role of perceived and actual sociodemographic and psychological similarity. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1297687>
- Nærland, T. U. (2020). From pleasure to politics: Five functions of watching TV-series for public connection. *European Journal of Communication*, 35(2), 93–107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323119894481>
- Netflix. (2024). *First quarter earnings of Netflix, Inc. - Letter to shareholders*. https://s22.q4cdn.com/959853165/files/doc_financials/2024/q1/FINAL-Q1-24-Shareholder-Letter.pdf.
- Ort, A., Wirz, D. S., & Fahr, A. (2020). Is binge-watching addictive? Effects of motives for series use on the relationship between excessive media consumption and problematic viewing habits. *Addictive Behaviors Reports*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.abrep.2020.100325>
- Piqué-Buisan, J., Sorribes, E., & Cambra-Badii, I. (2024). Exploring the impact of using cinema and series in medical education: A systematic review. *Medicina Clínica Práctica*, 7(2), Article 100421. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mcpcsp.2023.100421>
- Pittman, M., & Sheehan, K. (2015). Sprinting a media marathon: Uses and gratifications of binge-watching television through Netflix. *First Monday*. <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v20i10.6138>
- Pittman, M., & Steiner, E. (2021). Distinguishing feast-watching from cringe-watching: Planned, social, and attentive binge-watching predicts increased well-being and decreased regret. *Convergence*. , Article 1354856521999183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856521999183>
- Riddle, K., Peebles, A., Davis, C., Xu, F., & Schroeder, E. (2018). The addictive potential of television binge watching: Comparing intentional and unintentional binges. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 7(4), 589–604. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000167>
- Rosa, G. S. D., Andrade, G. S., Caye, A., Hidalgo, M. P., Oliveira, M. A. B., & Pilz, L. K. (2019). Thirteen reasons why: The impact of suicide portrayal on adolescents' mental health. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 108, 2–6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsyres.2018.10.018>
- Rubin, A. M., Perse, E. M., & Powell, R. A. (1985). Loneliness, Parasocial interaction, and local television news viewing. *Human Communication Research*, 12(2), 155–180. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1985.tb00071.x>
- Russell, J. A., & Carroll, J. M. (1999). On the bipolarity of positive and negative affect. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125(1), 3–30. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.125.1.3>
- Scholl, A. (2016). Die Logik qualitativer Methoden in der Kommunikationswissenschaft. In S. Averbek-Lietz, & M. Meyen (Eds.), *Handbuch nicht standardisierte Methoden in der Kommunikationswissenschaft* (pp. 17–32). Springer Fachmedien. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-01656-2_2
- Schramm, H. (2015). Parasocial interactions and relationships. In *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecp006.pub2>
- Schramm, H., & Hartmann, T. (2008). The PSI-process scales. A new measure to assess the intensity and breadth of parasocial processes. 33(4), 385–401. <https://doi.org/10.1515/COMM.2008.025>
- Shrum, L. (2017). *Cultivation Theory: Effects and Underlying Processes*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783764.wbieme0040>
- Sigre-Leirós, V., Billieux, J., Mohr, C., Maurage, P., King, D. L., Schimmenti, A., & Flayelle, M. (2023). Binge-watching in times of COVID-19: A longitudinal examination of changes in affect and series consumption patterns during lockdown. *Psychology of Popular Media*, 12(2), 173–185. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000390>
- Starosta, J. A., & Izydorczyk, B. (2020). Understanding the phenomenon of binge-watching—A systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(12), 4469. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17124469>
- Steins-Loeber, S., Reiter, T., Averbek, H., Harbarth, L., & Brand, M. (2020). Binge-watching behaviour: The role of impulsivity and depressive symptoms. *European Addiction Research*, 26(3), 141–150. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000506307>
- Stelter, B. (2013). *New way to celiver a drama: All 13 episodes in one sitting*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/01/business/media/netflix-to-deliver-a-ll-13-episodes-of-house-of-cards-on-one-day.html>
- Taris, T. W., Kessler, S. R., & Kelloway, E. K. (2021). Strategies addressing the limitations of cross-sectional designs in occupational health psychology: What they are good for (and what not). *Work & Stress*, 35(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2021.1888561>
- Tefertiller, A. C., & Maxwell, L. C. (2018). Depression, emotional states, and the experience of binge-watching narrative television. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 26(5), 278–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15456870.2018.1517765>
- Tracy, S. J. (2024). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Tukachinsky, R., & Eyal, K. (2018). The psychology of Marathon television viewing: Antecedents and viewer involvement. *Mass Communication and Society*, 21(3), 275–295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2017.1422765>
- Unkel, J., & Kumpel, A. S. (2020). (a)synchronous communication about TV series on social media: A multi-method investigation of Reddit discussions. *Media and Communication*, 8(3), 180–190. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i3.3046>
- VERBI Software. (2024). *MAXQDA 2024 [computer software]*. Berlin, Germany: VERBI Software. Available from maxqda.com.
- Walter, N., Murphy, S. T., & Rosenthal, E. L. (2018). Narrative persuasion in a new media environment: The impact of binge-watching and second-screening. *Communication Research Reports*, 35(5), 402–412. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2018.1525348>
- Wirz, D. S., Möri, M., Ort, A., Cordeiro, J. A., Castro, D., & Fahr, A. (2023). The more you watch, the more you get?: Re-examining the effects of binge-watching on entertainment experiences. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 35(2), 99–108. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000355>
- Wohlmann, A., & Harrison, M. (2019). To be continued: Serial narration, chronic disease, and disability. *Literature and Medicine*, 37(1), 67–95. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lm.2019.0002>
- Yu, H., & Alizadeh, F. (2024). Online binge-watching among Chinese college students: Implications for loneliness, anxiety, and depression: Psychology research and behavior management. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 17, 295–303. <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S447311>
- Zillmann, D. (1988). Mood management through communication choices. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 31(3), 327–340. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000276488031003005>
- Zillmann, D. (2008). Excitation transfer theory. In *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecp049>.