

Thematic Analysis of Medium and New Medium Theories on Popular Netflix Series'

Facebook Audience Engagement

by

Dr. Priyadarshini G. Roy

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Strategic Media

School of Communication & the Arts, Liberty University

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Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to find the recurring themes amidst Facebook audience engagement of the Netflix drama series. The series sampling size was collected from Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix's (2022) top ten charts for three consecutive months from 11/4/2022-1/29/2023. Netflix was the most-watched streaming platform, with 80% of viewership, with drama being the most prevalent genre. The theoretical frameworks were medium and new medium theories. The Craig's traditions were sociopsychological and sociocultural. The literature review expanded on the impact of the medium of streaming media, the binge-watching phenomenon, and genre studies. Five hundred ninety-one comments were manually scraped and coded from the five Facebook posts about both series, with the top 210 words analyzed and categorized into themes depicted through tables, word clouds, and pie charts. The overlapping thematic findings for the Facebook audience engagement from *The Recruit* and *Kaleidoscope* were narrative, audience emotion/opinions, and sub-thematic findings of binge-watching and anticipation for Season 2. Thematic findings for the Facebook audience engagement from *The Recruit* also included characters, genre, and sub-thematic findings of cliffhangers. Sub-thematic findings for *Kaleidoscope* also included a comparison to other series/films. The implications of this study on the entertainment industry, communication studies, and the relevance of streaming media were discussed in detail. Suggestions for future research involve replicating the methodology for participant studies on binge-watching.

Keywords: audience engagement, Facebook, Netflix, streaming series, thematic analysis

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, colleagues, and close friends who have supported my doctoral journey. Being a Doctor has been a lifelong dream of mine and required an insurmountable amount of patience, persistence, and perseverance. Numerous obstacles and hindrances have occurred during my lifelong academic career, including extenuating circumstances, international and domestic professional commitments, and personal responsibilities. Still, this culminating moment is one that I will cherish forever. My parents made me a Miss, and one day, a man may make me a Mrs., but the title of Dr. is an identity that I created for myself with the blessings of God.

Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge my family, friends, colleagues, peers, Liberty University Online professors, dissertation chair, and committee members. I want to give special thanks to Dr. Allison Brake for her warm spirit, unwavering support, and consistent communication during this dissertation phase and for stepping up from reader to becoming my dissertation chair after passing my proposal. I would also like to thank the current and previous dissertation committee members, Drs. Mott, Hartley, Hepburn, and Cassidy for their valuable feedback and for honing my research skills so that I can make a difference in media. Thank you, Committee, for the honor and opportunity.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Definitions
DSM	Digital Single Market
DVD	Digital Video Disc
IP	Intellectual Property
MRC	Media Rating Council
OTT	Over the Top
PPV	Pay-Per-View
POV	Point of View
SVOD	Subscription Video on Demand
TV	Television
VOD	Video on Demand
VHS	Video Home System

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Strategic media communication relies on the mutually symbiotic relationship between people and visual technology. Reliance on technology has changed society and shifted the social-behavioral paradigm (Postman, 1993). Streaming media is defined as media forms from “film, television (TV), gaming, music, podcasts, radio, e-books, and audiobooks” (Andersen & Lüders, 2021, p. 1). Although streaming media is not a recent concept, it has changed how people communicate since its creation and subsequent usage (Colbjørnsen, 2021). According to Foley (2018), “media convergence has allowed television to evolve into a streaming, digital-delivery, and instant-access medium for audiences worldwide” (p. 115). For instance, a shift in entertainment distribution throughout the COVID-19 pandemic-related closures increased virtual media (Sterritt, 2020). The comprehensive effects of streaming have caused domestic and international iterations to encourage content creation in multiple languages and even segue into independent streaming platforms altogether (Chatterjee & Pal, 2020).

Overview

Cable television networks are fighting for survival as streaming services grow in popularity. The Video Advertising Bureau (VAB), formerly known as the Cable Television Advertising Bureau (CAB), reported in 2015 that nearly 40% of television rating decreases are attributed to subscription online video services (Burroughs, 2018). The organizational structure of the entertainment industry reflects a change of power due to online streaming distribution (Burroughs, 2018). Officials at Sony Pictures Entertainment are concerned about the long-term impact of streaming on audiences (Burroughs, 2018). McLuhan’s (1964) medium theory is an applicable communication theory to this dissertation because it shows how technological mediums change social and behavioral constructs of society through social media interaction and

communication. Medium and new medium theories explain how viewers perceive streaming innovations, reducing time spent watching cable television (Burroughs, 2018). McLuhan (1964) predicted man's need for creativity as an indicative transition in communication. The necessity for creative adaptation of technological mediums became relevant to this dissertation due to the rise in streaming series consumption and subsequent conversation about the medium through Facebook audience engagement.

The medium of entertainment preference has shifted from film and TV to streaming media (Standage, 2014). Cable-cutting trends have indicated an evident change in streaming media due to its efficacy, viability, and vast options (Tefertiller, 2018). The effectiveness and popularity of the medium of technology persuade audiences to partake in the social paradigm shift and participate in online communications. Watching movies in theaters facilitates narrative involvement by allowing full submersion into the story without distractions from the outside world, which is perpetuated in the streaming environment (Tal-Or, 2019). Ellul (1964) argued that the medium enables escapism. Tal-Or (2016) stated that people are intrinsically able to connect with characters through emotional similarities without being persuaded. Tal-Or (2016) identified, "Unlike rhetorical communication, narrative persuasion is not perceived as a persuasion attempt and thus is less likely to stimulate counterarguments" (p. 4). The shift in audience engagement toward streaming media indicates a sociocultural shift, which is also evident through social media communications.

Television and films being available on streaming platforms have evolved the narrative world for more extended periods to create the term binge-watching (Warren, 2020). It is vital to understand binge-watching to comprehend the change in audience behavior toward the evolving streaming media medium. Binge-watching is distinct in terms of audience engagement because

of the increased focus, desire to finish the tale, and uninterrupted watching, which impact the medium of streaming services (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018). Additionally, Tukachinsky and Eyal (2018) found that marathon viewing can be enhanced due to “narrative and character-related involvement” (p. 279). Audiences become immersed in the story through character identification and “parasocial relationships” (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018, p. 279). Malone (2019) found that “streaming has meant shorter seasons for some broadcast and cable series, and cable networks at times stacking two new episodes or more in a nod to binge-watching” (p. 1). Additionally, increased binge-watching has occurred due to genre viewing (Rubenking et al., 2018). Rubenking et al. (2018) found that the four motivations contributing to increased genre-based binge-watching were anticipation, positive sentiment, narrative engagement, and social implications such as co-viewership, character identification, and supplementary conversations.

Peer-reviewed studies suggested that binge-watching is accelerated in streaming media due to the lack of distractions, such as the external environment and no commercial breaks, compared to its television iteration, marathon viewing (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018). This dissertation has examined the recurring themes due to the medium of streaming media through a thematic analysis of the Facebook audience engagement of two popular series extrapolated through rating data from Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix’s (2022) top ten charts. The primary goal of this study was to understand the recurring themes evident from the Netflix series’ Facebook audience engagement. Secondly, a thematic analysis of the two series running season episodes was conducted to corroborate the overlapping thematic findings from the social media focus. This dissertation is unique and beneficial to strategic media communication because it bridges the gap between popular series from rating data and recurring themes from Facebook

audience engagement. This dissertation identified recurring themes by triangulating the series' literature review and the Facebook thematic analyses from both Netflix series.

Background

Understanding the relevance of streaming media has become imperative to expand the academic and professional discourse on communication and media studies, particularly within film and television viewership. Globally, people turned to home entertainment to escape reality as the COVID-19 outbreak caused stress worldwide (Ippolito, 2021; Sterritt, 2020). Malone (2021) found that Netflix's *The Old Guard* reached 72 million viewers in its premiere week during the pandemic and predicted that films "on streaming platforms offer enormous availability; could be relied on for immediate viewing at home" (p. 28). Agirre (2021) found that in 2019, streaming video contributed to 60.6% of all internet traffic worldwide (p. 103). Furthermore, as summarized from the list of numbers one through six, streaming usage increased exponentially during the pandemic, with a 40% global traffic increase in the first quarter of 2020, with Netflix garnering over 11% of the total traffic volume (Cullen, 2021).

The focus of this study is not on transportation, but it is essential to understand how aspects such as narrative escape and persuasion fundamentally influence storytelling on audiences (Green & Brock, 2000). Green and Brock (2000) found that audience "attachment to characters may play a critical role in narrative-based belief change" (p. 702). The binge-watching phenomenon primarily drives the growing positive valence and attitude shift regarding streaming platforms because it provides an escape for viewers from the comfort of their homes (Warren, 2020). During the pandemic, there was a transformation in the perception of streaming media, which changed the attitude and affected the reduced demand for movie theaters (Ippolito, 2021). The more straightforward accessibility, cheaper cost, storytelling, and variety enhance

entertainment's ability to engage audiences (Ippolito, 2021). Audiences increased streaming consumption propelled the entertainment industry personnel to take note and make significant changes (Diemer, 2019; Wayne, 2021).

There has been an internal attitude change toward streaming platforms from within the entertainment industries globally, impacting organizational goals for Netflix (Wayne, 2021). Additionally, technological shifts altered audiences' social and behavioral modifications, instigating change in entertainment bureaucracy and content decisions (Chatterjee & Pal, 2020). The pandemic has accelerated the use of streaming media while boosting the effectiveness of both mainstream and independent or original content (Griffiths, 2021). Furthermore, the newer term for TV marathon viewing is streaming binge-watching, which has become the social-behavioral change in audiences to linger the effects of storytelling via extended hours of viewership (Warren, 2020). Changes in media technology impact social media (Ateşalp & Başlar, 2020). Rating data and social media audience engagement aided in the increased popularity and the commercial viability of streaming services (Martínez et al., 2021). It is essential to note that this dissertation does not study the reason for binge-watching but the recurring themes of Facebook audience engagement of popular streaming series. Understanding the predominant themes from Facebook audience engagement from the two series assisted in understanding the macroscopic effect that streaming media has on audiences.

Introduction to the Problem

Rating data has insinuated and measured the popularity of streaming viewership, but no studies examine the plausible relationship between the recurring themes of its Facebook audience engagement of popular Netflix series. While some studies attribute genre to streaming consumption, none attribute themes of Facebook audience engagement of popular Netflix series through rating data. McLuhan (1964) ascertained that the electric media submerged audiences' senses "all at once" (p. 64) through the medium theory. Furthermore, streaming media affects society and social media conversations by changing interpersonal relationships through technological disruption (McLuhan, 1964). Streaming media is defined as "a lineage of electrical technologies that promise connectivity at a distance" through online channels that "enable content delivery, distribution, and interaction" (Grandinetti & Ingraham, 2021, p. 92). The streaming media trend has altered the entertainment medium through multiple channels through digital options (Grandinetti & Ingraham, 2021). The conversations about technological disruptions and changes in audience consumption views are expressed through social media platforms.

While there are many options on streaming platforms through the streaming wars, audiences are demarcating their preference in content and platform (Pakula, 2021). Tefertiller (2017) found that "audiences are increasingly selective about the types of films they choose to view in the theater, favoring exciting, visually enticing films" (p. 1), which are staples of the drama genre. The preference for engaging storytelling through genre is prevalent across short series (Johnson, 2010). Binge-watching is more prevalent in streaming series than films; therefore, studying series was an apt instrument for this dissertation study. This research explored the most popular series from two rating data sources, which indicated that drama was

the predominant genre (Netflix, 2022; Nielsen Ratings, 2023). This dissertation analyzed the two popular dramatic Netflix series and conducted a thematic analysis through audience engagement on Facebook posts to determine the overlapping themes and implications on the medium of streaming media. The problem remains that popular series from rating data are not studied based on the themes of Facebook audience engagement. This study aimed to bridge the gap and build upon future participant studies by identifying recurring themes in Facebook audience engagement about popular streaming series.

Relevance

The popularity of streaming media has replaced the traditional entertainment experience and propelled the “streaming wars” (Pakula, 2021, p. 147). Popular series based on rating data have not been used to study recurring topics from Facebook audience involvement. For the reasons above, this dissertation’s relevance aims to advance academic study and professional practice within the entertainment sector and media communication studies to understand streaming media's impact on audiences. Even after the pandemic lockdowns have been largely eased, data analysis has helped corporate industry executives comprehend what motivates consumers toward dramatic series streaming content. This study found the importance of audience engagement conversations from Facebook to have recurring themes about their experience and opinions about the streaming platform and media.

Problem Statement

The problem is that popular streaming series extrapolated from rating data have not assessed recurring themes from Facebook audience engagement. While there have been case studies about trending series, there is a gap in current literature assessing the Facebook audience engagement of popular series from rating data. While other research has studied the effects of

trending series, the reasoning behind media selection has not been clarified or evidenced through rating data (Martínez et al., 2021). This dissertation aimed to fill the knowledge gaps about evolving streaming media and find the themes of popular streamed series audience engagement on Facebook. This-qualitative study used a thematic analysis of recurring themes in social media content. Chalaby and Plunkett (2021) reiterated the importance of streaming to strategic media due to its evolving relevance toward globalization. Streaming media has evolved from a distribution platform into original content creators and IP acquirers into networks that market “economy, technology, and power” (Colbjørnsen, 2021, p. 1264). Audience engagement and media consumption have evolved with the medium of technology (Postman, 1993). McLuhan (1964) ascertained that the medium conveyed the message evident through the evolution of streaming media. Kurz (2022) stated that “viewers change with the development of cinema” (p. 227). Cinema can be synonymous with other short storytelling formats because “a screenplay is a story told to be seen in scenes for the screen” (Johnson, 2010, p. 53). The stark competition and intrigue from the inception of streaming services propelled the streaming wars with the introduction of “plus” (p. 148) programming, which caters to the original definition of streaming: Over the Top (OTT) (Pakula, 2021).

Sterritt (2020) described the transition of virtual cinema during the COVID-19 lockdowns as another sudden shift in consumer preferences “in the lengthy erosion of movie theater hegemony” (p. 505) that has been witnessed before with the onset of precursors such as cable television, pay-per-view, or Blockbuster. Subsequently, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted all aspects of the entertainment industry, including film festivals, which transitioned to partial or completely virtual formats (Hanzlík & Mazierska, 2022). Furthermore, streaming series perpetuates binge-watching due to the narrative structure, where cliffhangers are synonymous

with suspenseful storytelling, encouraging viewers to click on the next episode (Burroughs, 2018). The qualitative dissertation aimed to fill the gaps by thematically analyzing two popular streaming series' Facebook audience engagement and identifying recurring themes. The study used rating data to collect the sample size of two popular series to answer research questions and identify recurring themes from their Facebook audience engagement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to analyze the recurring themes amidst Facebook audience engagement of Netflix drama series through medium and new medium theories through the social interaction and social integration approaches. This study triangulated the themes through the literature review, a thematic analysis of audience engagement from the Facebook posts, and running season episodes. This qualitative study aimed to understand the cause of the problem: to assess recurring themes from Facebook audience engagement of popular Netflix series. Rating data was utilized to collect the sample size of the popular series selection, but it cannot correlate binge-watching without participants, but it is depicted and referenced on social media (Netflix, 2022). Previously defined as marathon viewing, binge-watching streaming platforms enhance psychological factors (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018). Therefore, the study aimed to evaluate the recurring themes of popular streaming series as evidenced by rating data through its Facebook audience engagement.

Significance of Study

The significance of the comprehensive study was to bridge the gap between studies to identify critical factors and recurring themes on Facebook engagement for popular Netflix series from rating data. Entertainment industry executives use rating data to make financial decisions on whether the series will have a recurring season based on rank, duration, and the number of

minutes watched. However, this dissertation provides qualitative insight to understand how audiences resonate with the series and streaming media through Facebook post comments. Therefore, this dissertation could serve most of the entertainment industry, where qualitative scholarship is missing from executive decisions and communication scholarship better to understand the streaming medium as an emerging technological disruption. Rating data provided rank and viewership data, but no current studies assess themes evident in Facebook audience engagement about popular streaming series from rating data. This dissertation served as a basis for how future participants' studies would be conducted by determining the recurring themes of popular streaming series' Facebook audience engagement.

This dissertation is significant because it addresses the current gaps in the literature and practical implications of media communication to understand how themes impact Facebook audience engagement concerning streaming media and the medium itself. The discussion and results discussed the similarities and differences between streaming series' Facebook audience engagement. Understanding which themes were recurring through the subsequent thematic analysis has provided results that can be tested in future participant studies.

Rating data included the number of series viewed weekly, corresponding streaming media, and weekly watched minutes. Rating data provided audience metrics about the consumption rate, content choice, and frequency, while a qualitative thematic analysis provided a comprehensive method for resolving the research problem. This dissertation may interest the entertainment industry significantly in gleaning the reasoning behind popular streamed shows and platforms on Facebook audience engagement. Four research questions guided this study.

Research Questions

RQ 1: How can recurring themes from Facebook audience engagement propel genre viewing of streaming series?

RQ 3: What are the similarities and differences between the themes of both series' Facebook content?

RQ 2: What are the similarities and differences between the themes of both series' episodic content?

RQ 4: What recurring themes appear through audience engagement on Facebook and episodic content for both dramatic series?

Limitations

The limitation of this dissertation was analyzing only two Netflix series with 16 episodes through one social media channel, Facebook. Additionally, the limitations of rating data are discussed.

Established in 1950, Nielsen Ratings (2022) has had limitations and criticism, yet it remains the industry staple for rating data. The limitations of the study included the validity and reliability of source data. According to Nielsen Ratings (2022), the sources of data were retrieved from: “Amazon Prime Video, Disney +, HBO Max, Hulu, Netflix, and Apple TV +, Nielsen National TV Panel, and the U.S. Viewing through Television” (para. 5). As a researcher, it was vital to understand the skeptic’s point of view questioning the validity and reliability of the source information gained from the streaming platforms. Despite Nielsen Ratings (2022) being the industry standard for entertainment rating data for industry and outsider personnel, there was the limitation of whether other smaller-scaled or less-popular streaming services were included in the data, such as Peacock and Paramount +. Results from the rating data collected during the

three consecutive months of this study indicated that Peacock was not only included as an SVOD but was also highly viewed.

Nielsen Ratings (2022) did not require a paid subscription to acquire the open rating data and received its information from TV viewership. Still, they did not “include minutes watched on computers or mobile devices” (Porter, 2022, para. 6). Another limitation included the possibility that many people share subscriptions, causing more viewers than subscribers. Viewership on Nielsen Ratings (2022) may be more than what is collected as baseline data from TV viewership only. However, Netflix had updated their password-sharing rules where a single “account can only be used by members of one physical household, sharing one internet connection” (Kelly, 2023, para. 28).

Alternative Rating Data Sites

While researching alternatives to Nielsen Ratings (2023), the most relevant indexing media analytics for rating data are ComScore (2022) and Video Amp (2023). However, they only cater to commercial usage through a paid subscription model geared towards corporate media data ingestion and are not available for public access. While ComScore (2022) is defined as a “third-party source for reliable measurement of cross-platform audiences” (para. 1), it is geared as a marketing tool for entertainment industry personnel to understand consumer behavior instead of providing rating data for public records. Furthermore, ComScore’s (2022) TV ratings include cable and broadcast data, which skews the rank and does not provide streaming-specific data. Video Amp (2023) is a “measurement and optimization for data-driven advertising” (para. 1) site. Rating data provides marketing agencies and publishers with private solutions to understand “performance across linear TV, streaming, and digital media” (Video Amp, 2023, para. 2). Video Amp (2023) and ComScore (2022) are executive industry platforms and do not

allow public viewership of data, which also questions the reliability of data that may be monetized or monitored.

Rotten Tomatoes (2022) is an audience and critic-aggregated website with approval percentages to rate films and TV shows, but it does not provide streaming-specific rating data per week. Moreover, Rotten Tomatoes (2022) relies on audience voting for the top TV shows, which limits validity and increases the risk of participant inherent bias. IMDb (2022) is a public database about entertainment media, including ranks of the Top 250 TV Shows, but it does not allow filters to assess weekly outcomes. TVision (2022) partnered with iSpot.tv (2022) as a start-up company to be a competitor of Nielsen Rating (2022) but targets ad impressions for marketing purposes across industries and does not provide streaming-specific user rating data.

Industry Publications

Rating data and reports from Nielsen Rating (2022) are widely used among Hollywood industry executives to understand audience viewership and the usage of data-driven strategy to make business decisions about streaming series production and subsequent seasons (Maas, 2022). Furthermore, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Variety*, and *Deadline* have cited Nielsen Rating as their primary source to deduce series that have become popular based on rating data and have been confirmed for subsequent seasons (Hailu, 2023; Maas, 2022; Porter, 2022). Maas (2022) reiterated the importance of series rating data while speaking about the fandom rivalry between *House of Dragons* and *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power*: “Nielsen has released new findings about the habits of both shows’ streaming viewership throughout their respective first seasons that are sure to reignite the ratings ‘duel’” (para. 1).

Addressing Criticism

Established in 1963, the purpose of the non-profit industry association, Media Rating Council (MRC) (Media Rating Council, 2017) has been: “to secure for the media industry and related users measurement services that are valid, reliable, and effective” (para. 2). Due to technical issues during the pandemic, MRC suspended Nielsen Ratings based on undercounting views outside of TV viewership (Fletcher, 2022). The CEO of Nielsen, David Kenny, wrote an open letter informing the public that the MRC stated that reinstatement of accreditation included: “panel size and maintenance to return to target levels, stronger business continuity, and recovery processes along with testing” (Fletcher, 2022, para. 8) and specific change of methods. In an update from the MRC, Nielsen Ratings planned to address its criticisms and fix the system failures by launching “Nielsen One in December; it is a cross-platform solution” (Fletcher, 2022, para. 11). According to Fletcher (2022) David Gunzerath, the Senior Vice President and Associate Director of the MRC mentioned:

While it is true that the existing suspension of MRC accreditation remains in place at the current time, it is also true that we believe Nielsen has made significant progress on most of the issues that led to that suspension. MRC continues to actively work with Nielsen on a path to address the remaining issues so that a consideration of reinstatement of accreditation to the National TV service may occur relatively soon. (para. 5)

Nielsen Ratings (2023) has its fair share of criticism and limitations. Still, it acknowledged and addressed the flaws publicly and internally with its executives (Fletcher, 2022). Corroborating MRC’s cooperation in making changes increased its validity and reliability as a rating data instrument to collect the sampling size for this study. The alternative rating sites do not publicly provide rating data without industry accreditation, advertising monetary

incentives, or participant inherent bias (ComScore, 2022; IMDb, 2022; Rotten Tomatoes, 2022; TVision, 2022; The Boston Globe, 2022; Video Amp, 2023). Therefore, findings indicated that extrapolating rating data from two sources, Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix's (2022) top ten charts, were the best instruments to collect the sampling size for the qualitative dissertation study. Including two rating data sources increased the validity and overlap of streaming series while including other platforms such as Disney +, Amazon Prime TV, Hulu, Peacock, and Paramount +.

Delimitations

Over three months, the entire running series (i.e., 16 episodes) has been assessed through a thematic analysis of the recurring themes from popular series' Facebook audience engagement to triangulate findings. Furthermore, this study aimed to understand how the popular series' Facebook engagement evidenced recurring themes. Therefore, to validate and increase the reliability of this study, it was prudent to triangulate findings through the literature review and Facebook audience engagement of popular Netflix series.

Definitions

The evolving nature of strategic media communications has given rise to terminology with increased digital innovations. Understanding media, film, television, and streaming vocabulary significantly bridges the gap between theory and practical use of strategic media literature and application. The literature review expanded on the history, curation, and adoption of streaming media in daily life and its prevalence in the entertainment industry. The first aspect of this dissertation relied on rating data extrapolation to examine the highest-viewed streaming series. The second aspect of this dissertation focused on the thematic analysis portion, which assessed recurring themes from the series' Facebook audience engagement.

- **actionable characters** are the narrative development of the main character (protagonist) or other supporting characters that take action to continue the story (Reich, 2017).
Character is defined as the “dialogue + physical movement” where “the physical actions and the dialogue of the character change from the expositions and conflict as he or she goes through the rising and falling action of the” narrative structure (Reich, 2017, p. 31).
- **drama:** originated from the Greek word, dran or “to do”; “drama means someone strives” (Johnson, 2010, p. xvii). Drama is defined as the will of characters facing obstacles and increasing conflict through man vs. self, nature, or man (Johnson, 2010).
- **A filmmaker** is a director, writer, cinematographer, editor, actor, or any artist who creates visual media content for entertainment purposes through narrative persuasion (Malone, 2021).
- **genre:** the categorization of stories according to themes; “Story (Action) + Plot + Character + Setting = Genre” (Reich, 2017, p. 11).
- **intellectual property (IP):** content created based on formerly written, oral, or visual content; the revival of decades-old culture, comics, and books made into movies (Fagerjord & Kueng, 2019).
- **medium:** technological media facilitator; the old is replaced by the new format (McLuhan, 1964).
- **narrative structure:** the storytelling framework of the beginning, middle, and end of a plot for the three acts in a screenplay (Johnson, 2010; Reich, 2017).
- **pandemic:** referring to the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020-present (Horeck, 2021).

- **pay-per-view (PPV):** paying for a feature film on cable or streaming television for premiere access viewership before public distribution (Izquierdo-Castillo & Latorre-Lázaro, 2022).
- **rating:** estimated measurement of the audience size for media viewership (Netflix Ratings, 2022; Nielsen Rating, 2023).
- **streaming lore:** redefinition of industry narration through the media distribution on streaming platforms through quality, algorithmic audience, and cord-cutters and cord-servers (Burroughs, 2018).
- **streaming platform:** internet subscription-based entertainment platform (i.e., Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV, Hulu, Paramount +, Peacock, Disney +, ESPN +) (Grandinetti & Ingraham, 2021).
- **video on demand (VOD):** singular media content, including Paid Per View (PPV), streaming premiere access, or Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD) (Fagerjord & Kueng, 2019).

Summary

Despite discussing the methodology of the theory originators and current studies, gaps remain in the literature about recurring themes of streaming series. This dissertation considered the effects of storytelling narrative structure on viewers continuing to watch the series. The lingering effects of narrative persuasion are converted throughout mediums; the excitement of books being adapted into films further increases their value and impact. Conducting a qualitative thematic analysis of popular streaming series' Facebook audience engagement assessed recurring themes was apt to fill in the current literature gaps about the overlapping recurring themes on social media about streaming series. Assessing recurring themes from popular streaming series'

Facebook engagement aided in understanding strategic media communication research about the medium of streaming media. Chapter Two explored the literature from the theoretical framework, current studies, streaming media, the evolution of Netflix as a streaming giant, and genre-viewing.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this study was to analyze the themes within two popular dramatic streaming series' episodic content and subsequent audience engagement from Facebook posts through the medium and new medium theories. The problem is that popular streaming series extrapolated from rating data have not assessed recurring themes from Facebook audience engagement. The study's theoretical framework was the medium and new medium theories. By conducting a thematic analysis of popular series' Facebook audience engagement content, the narrative design was apt to understand how the recurring themes convey the audience's narrative about series and streaming media. This research examined how streaming mediums have affected social and behavioral norms, the ritual of series viewing, and perspectives of how audiences view and engage on Facebook with media entertainment. This dissertation has contributed to the existing body of communication scholarship by utilizing rating data to substantiate popular drama series' recurring themes and their correspondent Facebook audience engagement.

Situation to Communication Tradition

Communication traditions and theories address the thoughts that lead to words and actions through oral, written, and visual interaction (Ong & Hartley, 2012). Craig (1999) stated that "rhetorical, semiotic, phenomenological, cybernetic, sociopsychological, sociocultural, and critical traditions" (p. 119) define communication through patterns, problems, discourse, and challenges to ideologies. Craig's (1999) seven traditions exemplify communication parameters that incorporate various theories to understand the changing dynamic between people and their environment. Since communication was not considered a field due to its vastness, the seven

traditions provide an inclusive scientific categorization process to understand further, question, and develop communication theories. This dissertation discussed the proliferation of streaming media, which adhered to Craig's (1999) sociopsychological tradition.

The theoretical framework for this dissertation was based on medium and new medium theories; therefore, this study is situated within two communication traditions: sociocultural and sociopsychological. Craig's (1999) sociocultural tradition applies the new medium theory through social interaction and engagement of audience entertainment consumption toward streaming media and online communication. The sociocultural tradition applies to new medium theory because of the social interaction and integration approaches. Furthermore, Siebel and Rice (2019) described Web 2.0 as a communication cultural change toward collaborative user-generated mediums such as social media channels. Craig's (1999) sociopsychological applied to the theoretical framework because the medium of streaming media and the new medium of Facebook impacted the audience's social and psychological interactions.

Sociocultural

The sociocultural tradition applied to the dissertation through the new medium theory due to the audience engagement and interaction seen from the Facebook post comments from the two Netflix drama series. Craig (1999) defined the "discovery of communication" as represented in the socio-cultural tradition (p. 144). Communication under the sociocultural tradition symbolizes social and cultural patterns (Craig, 1999). Patterns of behavior are perpetuated, allowing improvised social interactions, but predominantly remain constant in society (Craig, 1999). Facebook audience interaction can be measured through the sociocultural tradition because "reality is socially constructed through micro-level interaction processes" (Maguire, 2006, p. 90).

The sociocultural tradition applied to this dissertation because audience engagement on Facebook was explored through the lens of medium theory and the new medium theory's social integration and interaction approach. The dissertation coded audience engagement from Facebook post comments to identify the most used words from each post and categorized them into themes through thematic analysis. Disturbances from societal changes from conflicts, human rights, or ideological differences comprise sociocultural tradition through many communication theories. Maguire (2006) stated that micro-level communication practices construct the present society's identity in the sociocultural tradition. Furthermore, Littlejohn et al. (2017) mentioned that "we can share pictures and exchange messages on Facebook. At the same time, this communication is still mediated because it goes through a device and encourages us to eschew face-to-face communication in favor of mediated communication" (p. 149). Therefore, Craig's (1999) sociocultural tradition applied to the dissertation thematic analysis of Facebook audience engagement because it studies audience interaction on a public forum and how streaming media affects social and cultural aspects of social media communication.

Sociopsychological

Craig's (1999) sociopsychological tradition applies to medium and new medium theories due to its interpretation, communication, and impact. According to Littlejohn et al. (2017), the sociopsychological tradition is branched into behavioral, where "people actually behave in communication situations. Centering on patterns of thought, the cognitive branch concentrates on how individuals acquire, store, and process information in a way that leads to behavioral outputs" (p. 42). The sociopsychological tradition applied to this study due to the behavioral changes depicted on Facebook audience engagement about popular streaming series. Craig (1999) defined sociopsychological tradition as a communication theorized through "expression,

interaction, and influence” (p. 143). Craig (1999) also stated that communication concerns individuals’ social and behavioral influence. The three branches of the sociopsychological tradition are behavioral, cognitive, and biological (Craig, 1999). Communication theories under the sociopsychological tradition focus on how people act, think, and react (Craig, 1999). Medium and new medium theories are related to the sociopsychological tradition because of the cause-and-effect relationship that streaming media has on social media interaction and communication (Maguire, 2006). The streaming medium has impacted social media engagement globally (Lu et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the medium theory applied to the sociopsychological tradition because Craig (1999) mentioned that “people in groups affect one another” (p. 133). Tefertiller and Maxwell (2018) found that binge-watching psychologically affected audiences. Nanda and Banerjee (2020) found that media research “often focuses on several social and psychological factors to understand media-consumption behavior” (p. 1214) on social media platforms. As streaming media is the prime medium that infiltrated digital media trends, international viral shows or films such as *Squid Game* (Dong-hyuk, 2021) or *Money Heist* (Pina, 2019) proliferate inter-cultural communication due to the global reach of streaming series. Additionally, audiences binge-watch on streaming mediums by choice, “on their schedules, not the network executives” (Warren, 2020, p. 91).

Theoretical Framework

The foundational theories for this dissertation were medium and new medium theories because this qualitative study applied the narrative design strategy to conduct a thematic analysis of recurring themes on the episodic and Facebook audience engagement from two streaming series. The medium and new medium theory applied to this dissertation due to the medium of

streaming media and the social integration and interaction approach applicable to Facebook audience engagement.

Medium Theory

McLuhan's (1964) medium theory asserted that creativity is essential to people. His premonition aptly pertains to future studies about increased streaming series consumption leading to the binge-watching phenomenon. McLuhan (1964) noted that artists live in the present, like saints, and project transitions in media communication. Due to the fragmented nature of visual media, it became subjective instead of objective (McLuhan, 1964). McLuhan (1964) described the changes from the printed manuscript era to modify the community entirely. Streaming platforms have altered the value of entertainment due to the ease of accessibility and variety of the medium. The electric transformations of entertainment have caused audiences to resist older visual culture in favor of new mediums (McLuhan, 1964).

Sensory reception alters media communication (McLuhan, 1964). Just as the radio had changed auditory communication, the telegraph changed written communication, and TV changed visual communication (Standage, 2014). The medium provides hyper-engaged sensory reactions due to increased storytelling tools of persuasion, narrative escape, visual stimulation, and auditory engagement (McLuhan, 1964). McLuhan (1964) claimed that technology translates speech, whereas TV expounds upon language communication.

McLuhan (1964) described that a work of art has not altered thoughts but actions toward individuals whose perspective becomes forever changed by its impact. He explained that media communication is complex (McLuhan, 1964). Before his time, McLuhan (1964) predicted that while science can perform at the speed of light, balance becomes collateral damage because media accelerates exponentially. He ascertained that electronic media compels people to verbal

communication due to the modern need for concurrent attention (McLuhan, 1964). Media overload creates a domino effect on society (McLuhan, 1964). Communication has become a global web with information moving and changing rapidly (Standage, 2014).

Components of the Theory

The medium has defined generations and eras based on human reliance on technology (McLuhan, 1964; Postman, 1993). The oral tradition began the foundational steps of storytelling; literacy followed through written and transcribed books (Ong & Hartley, 2012). The ensuing innovation from each era defines and identifies that generation (McLuhan, 1964). McLuhan (1964) stated that “language, like currency, acts as a store of perception and as a transmitter of the perceptions and experience of one person or of one generation to another” (p. 156). Postman (1993) ascertained that it is not possible to predict how new technology will change the social and technological landscape: “Unforeseen consequences stand in the way of all those who think they see clearly the direction in which a new technology will take us” (p. 15). Furthermore, Siebel and Rice (2019) discussed how the change in technology mediums required adaptation: “Companies that failed to take advantage of each new generation of technology ceased to be competitive” (p. 225). Sterritt (2020) further reiterated how disturbances fueled the change in entertainment media mediums:

One can see the abrupt changes forced by coronavirus closings as one more step in the lengthy erosion of movie theater hegemony that began with the sale of Hollywood film libraries to television networks, continued with the advent of cable TV and pay-per-view services, escalated with the rise of videocassettes, DVDs, and Blu-rays, and flourishes now via all of those technologies plus high-resolution streaming services and flat-screen monitors. (p. 505)

Furthermore, while people may have engaged in advanced technology, they still need to be enhanced. For example, a baby boomer may be able to use a smartphone but only utilize it based on their cognitive ability; the medium becomes merely a channel (McLuhan, 1964). Acquiring the medium does not equate to becoming or using it to its full potential or capacity. The media medium should not become a “commodity” but a tool (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009, p. 647).

Hot vs. Cold Media and Disruption

McLuhan (1964) stated that media impacts social forms through “acceleration and disruption” (p. 108). Disruption is a change in the socio-behavioral norms of people’s media usage, which “causes a change of organization.” Streaming media can disrupt the traditional cable TV viewing experience because people have chosen to disconnect their cable subscriptions toward streaming platform subscriptions (Tefertiller, 2018). McLuhan (1964) defined hot media as low in audience participation and cold media as high in audience participation. McLuhan (1964) termed TV as the “timid giant” (p. 340) and categorized it as cold media because it requires audience participation. Mediums of media have always caused disruptions toward their predecessors. Films disrupted plays and novels, radio disrupted newspapers, and TV disrupted radio (McLuhan, 1964).

New Medium Theory

Poster (1995) established the “second age of mass media” (p. 3) through the new mediums of media. Poster (1995) differentiated the second media age from the primary through changed audience power; media oligarchs were dictating audiences, but in the changed medium, they were active participants. Mediums such as radio, film, or television were through a single-

channel communication where the audience or receiver's feedback was not recorded (Poster, 1995). Poster (1995) further defined new media mediums as:

The integration of satellite technology with television, computers, and telephone, an alternative to the broadcast model with its severe technical constraints, will very likely enable a system of multiple producers/distributors/consumers and an entirely new configuration of communication relations in which the boundaries between those terms collapse. (p. 3)

Poster (1995) differentiated previous and new mediums of media from restricted and controlled to "mass" (p. 6) consumption. The medium theory focused on acquisition, while the new medium theory relied on integration (Littlejohn et al., 2017). Littlejohn et al. (2017) compared new media as "more interactive and creates a new sense of personalized communication" (p. 149). The new medium theory relied on the fact that attitudes shape communication because the "cultural level of reception" affects technology (Poster, 1995, p. 8).

Social Interaction and Integration Approach

Like Poster (1995), Holmes (2005) also stated that there were two media ages or forms; the first was centralized, single transmission, and fragmented. In contrast, the second media age was multi-lateral, decentralized, user-dependent, promoted individuality, and more universal (Holmes, 2005). Holmes (2005) defined the new medium or second media age as a "computer-mediated communication (CMC) perspective" (p. xii). Furthermore, the internet is a two-way highway with messenger and receiver mutual communication (Holmes, 2005). Holmes (2005) differentiated between the primary and new media age through the social interaction and social integration approaches because the virtual community is described as "through connecting individuals who have similar interests" (p. 103).

Holmes (2005) reiterates that new medium communication is an integrative interaction and not an “isolated” (p. xi) fragment. New media mediums are “more interactive and create a new sense of personalized communication” (Littlejohn et al., 2017, p. 149). Siebel and Rice (2019) stated: “In the early 2000s, the emergence of Web 2.0 brought usability improvement, user-generated data, web applications, and interaction through virtual communities, blogs, social networking, Wikipedia, YouTube, and other collaborative platforms” (p. 40). The domino-effect of Web 2.0 has propelled technology companies toward a “digital transformation path” (Siebel & Rice, 2019, p. 52). The new medium of cyberculture has allowed personalized user-generated communications about primary media sources (Lévy, 2001). Therefore, this study aimed to explore the themes found in the Facebook audience engagement of the two streaming series, seeking to understand the social interaction and integration that streaming media has on social media.

The COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns accelerated the streaming boom, enabling people to engage in online entertainment (Hanzlík & Mazierska, 2022; Ippolito, 2021). According to Nielsen Ratings (2022), “Americans streamed more than 15 million years’ worth of video content in 2021” (p.18). YouTube is a streaming competitor “as Americans streamed 177.3 billion minutes of video on the platform in 2022” (Nielsen Ratings, 2022, p. 7). Furthermore, the fast-paced nature of the streaming medium became the message itself due to the lack of time and the necessity for human interaction (McLuhan, 1964). Streaming platforms have provided that need for communication via co-viewing (Tal-Or, 2016). Medium and new media theories also exemplify how radio, television, and media communication influence people’s language, shared values, and beliefs. As the usage of streaming platforms has exponentially grown, the need for human connection has linearly increased.

Related Literature

Streaming media has become the central medium in entertainment by surpassing radio, cable television, and movie theaters while infiltrating social media. Streaming media exemplifies narrative escape due to engaging content that intrigues the audience with various options from the comfort of their home. Broadcast media allows the media distributors to hold communication power over audiences, but the medium of streaming and new social media allow audience feedback to be voiced. According to Andersen and Lüders (2021), “streaming denotes a way of transmitting and receiving digital data over the Internet; a process distinguished by the end-user being able to watch, listen, or reach content while the file is being transmitted” (p. 1). Additionally, through online distribution, the streaming medium “intervenes in the relationship between media producers and media users” (Andersen & Lüders, 2021, p. 1).

This study focuses on the impact of the streaming medium and not on transportation. However, it is critical to understand how narrative persuasion and structure are applied to this dissertation's focus. According to Liang and Tukachinsky (2017), narrative persuasion can sway audiences by “presenting connected events, characters within a given space and time, and conflict and problem resolution following a structure with an identifiable beginning and end” (p. 4). For example, suppose the protagonist is revealed to be an antagonist who perpetually continues negatively impacting those around him. In that case, audiences are less likely to hold the character’s belief unless the point of view shifts or shows repercussions for evil deeds—the storytelling theme of good versus bad increases audience perception (Cohen, 2001). Still, genres such as horror may change audiences’ minds during the storytelling process (Yang et al., 2015). For example, suppose the back story of an antagonist is traumatizing, which provides the basis of

their bad behavior. In that case, audiences still expect a firm resolution according to the story's theme (Johnson, 2010).

Christy (2017) found that narratives can be “intensely persuasive” (p. 1). Narrative persuasion refers to audiences' positive valence through media enjoyment (Quintero Johnson & Sangalang, 2016). Streaming platforms have increased marathon-viewing or binge-watching through the submersion of episodic series (Warren, 2020). Viral streaming series also perpetuate trends from international productions (Hidalgo-Marí et al., 2021).

Narrative Structure

The narrative structure has been the storytelling framework of the plot's beginning, middle, and end for the three acts in a screenplay (Reich, 2017). Reich (2017) compartmentalized the mechanics of the narrative structure of the story and plot into six overarching segments: “exposition, complication, rising action, climax, falling action, and the denouement” (p. 43). However, the nine attributes of the narrative structure and unit of analysis have been the setup, inciting incident, or catalyst, point of no return, rising action, midpoint, falling action, lowest point, climax, and resolution.

Reich (2017) further stated that the beginning of the story, or Act I, is formed by the exposition and the conflict. Act II, the story's middle, comprises the rising action and the climax (Reich, 2017). The final, Act III, includes the falling action and resolution to conclude the story (Reich, 2017). While there are iterations and expansions based on the narrative structures, the storytelling framework remains consistent in short and long screenplays (Johnson, 2010).

Furthermore, Reich (2017) defined narrative structure as:

The narrative structure is not only the framework of how a movie is told; it provides an avenue for the characters to grow. The narrative structure consists of the plot and story

being portrayed in chronological (linear) order or in a combination of flashbacks and present time (nonlinear). (p. 45)

According to Reich (2017), there are three acts in a narrative structure for storytelling. Respectively, acts one, two, and three are divided into the screenplay's beginning, middle, and end. Act one has three aspects: the setup, inciting incident, or catalyst, and point of no return. A setup is an opening act that puts up the crucial dramatic components, topics, and concerns addressed in the story but is not limited to a particular occurrence. The inciting incident and catalyst are events that may be a finding and, secondly, a realization that sets off the central action and immediately impacts the protagonist, motivating them to act. The point of no return is when the protagonist decides to pursue a goal. It entails settling to act. Although the choice is not shown on the screen, it is evident that there is no going back from this point on. The main character is dedicated to achieving his goals.

The middle part of the narrative structure is described as Act Two. Act two has four parts: the rising action, the midpoint, the falling action, and the lowest point. In the rising action, the protagonist tries to accomplish the goal by acting, but these efforts are hampered by obstacles that upset, impede, and keep the desired outcome out of range. The protagonist thinks victory has been attained at the midpoint, but things turn around, or their luck changes. The falling action is any action the protagonist fails, heightening the suspense. The lowest point is where all appears doomed. The protagonist is forced to face the central problem or topic. A significant choice must be made, followed by the climax.

The finale or end of the screenplay is represented in act three, which consists of two aspects: the climax and resolution. The climax is the peak emotional pinnacle, all or nothing. The resolution is where the issues in the narrative are addressed; anything that remains is questioned.

It is, therefore, essential to conduct the thematic analysis of the two dramatic Netflix series' Facebook audience engagement for the entire running season (i.e., all 16 episodes) to understand the similarities and differences in recurring themes.

Narrative structure and patterns are evident in short forms of media such as advertisements, where audiences must comprehend and connect with the story for the message to resonate (VODÿNALI & ÇOTOK, 2015). Due to media convergence, narrative programming was critical to television programming (Davi Médola & Frascareli Lelis, 2019). Narrative techniques propel the storytelling universe to persuade audiences of the environment (Flynn, 2022). The narrative sequence was evident to children viewing *Spider-Man* (Ajaq & Vaez, 2017). Furthermore, suspense is defined as an “information holdback of a certain narrative structure” (Bjørner et al., 2016, p. 5). Character obstacles engaged viewers with the resolution's potential outcomes (Bjørner et al., 2016). Appendix E outlines the narrative structure.

Narrative Based Studies

Quintero Johnson and Sangalang (2016) studied narrative involvement in communication and health courses by assessing the effects of narrative persuasion on students about reproductive health. Similarly, this study aimed to evaluate the narrative through the thematic analysis of series episodes (Quintero Johnson & Sangalang, 2016). Psychological factors such as “beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions” (pp. 153-154) were variables that affected persuasion owing to the topic's complexity (Quintero Johnson & Sangalang, 2016). Raats and Evens (2021) compared Belgian domestic streaming platforms to foreign ones. The study's methodology filled a gap in existing research by concentrating on diverse techniques employed in smaller markets (Raats & Evens, 2021). Wayne (2019) used a qualitative approach to determine how business leaders felt about foreign streaming services and Israeli native programming on broadcast TV.

To evaluate the “binge-watching rate” (p. 94), Warren (2020) applied a four-wave panel study where participants watched their favorite series from the list and completed a weekly survey for three weeks. Warren (2020) found that “binge-watching changes how the narrative is consumed” (p. 94). Bezdek and Gerrig (2016) found that narratives “capture the psychological process that occurs when people experience an engaging narrative” (p. 60). Yang et al. (2015) found that the narrative “experience does not necessarily have to happen in the positive narrative context since individuals are often drawn into” frightening stories (p. 317). While fear increases adrenaline in a scary movie, comparing that experience to real-life situations is irrational because audiences become aware of the nature of the medium.

Gaps or Obstacles in Research

Gaps exist in the current literature about how people rely on genre or thematic narrative immersion across media platforms. The role of communication in pop culture is predominantly visible through entertainment modes and social media, but obstacles remain in conducting ethical research. Visual media remains the epitome of communication and the driving force for leisure activities. Still, obstacles remain to conducting research remotely since many people are uncomfortable participating in in-person studies.

How Netflix Became Synonymous with Streaming Evolution

Understanding the evolution of Netflix as a streaming giant is essential because the “media convergence has allowed television to evolve into a streaming, digital-delivery, and instant-access medium for audiences worldwide” (Foley, 2018, p. 115). Furthermore, Netflix has “advanced the television industry and changed how audiences consume their media” (Foley, 2018, p. 115). According to Granow et al. (2018), Subscription Video-on-demand (SVOD) “services, such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, are becoming an increasingly important part of

users' media repertoire" (p. 392) because of the flexibility of visualization across smart devices as well as a variety of content (i.e., sports, films, live-television, series). McLuhan (1964) mentioned that "technical innovation in the human environment disturbs all levels of personal perceptual life and must find its resolution through the common measure of speech" (p. 125). Siebel and Rice (2019) predicted: "The current wave of digital transformation consultancies is helping clients use data to reinvent their business models" (p. 53). Additionally, the global economic impact of digital transformation is expected 2025 to increase by \$11.1 trillion, driven by the Internet of Things (Siebel & Rice, 2019, p. 53).

The Trajectory of Netflix

From its inception, Netflix has perpetuated the binge-watching phenomenon, which catapulted the audience's dependency on streaming content (Boca, 2019). Like its predecessor, Blockbuster, Netflix was once on the verge of bankruptcy (Siebel & Rice, 2019). However, Netflix recognized audience perception toward streaming media before being catapulted as an entertainment industry corporate house (Siebel & Rice, 2019). Streaming has forever altered the film and music industry and revolutionized how news, sports, and video games are experienced; "Today, we are repeatedly told that we are in the midst of a communications revolution" (Standage, 2014, p. 187). Netflix was the entertainment industry's underdog and was deemed only a distribution company; however, advertisement-free and with a wide variety of global content (Foley, 2018). Still, it has proved to be a dominant global leader in streaming communication and entertainment since its launch. When the entertainment industry assumed that the internet plus content equated to piracy, Netflix became the outlier and soon the dominant mogul in streaming media content (Foley, 2018).

Historical Development and Key Events

Identifying human behavior and communication shifts is crucial in predicting media technological adaptations, leading to increased absorption and behavioral changes (Ellul, 1964). The inception of Netflix came from the decline of Blockbuster, which was a popular commercial video renting business that “employed 60,000 people, earned \$5.9 billion in revenue, and boasted a \$5 billion market capitalization,” only to file bankruptcy six years later (Siebel & Rice, 2019, p. 209). While explaining the *Digital Enterprise*, Siebel and Rice (2019) mentioned, “In 2000, Netflix CEO Reed Hastings proposed a partnership with Blockbuster; Netflix wanted to run Blockbuster’s online presence as part of a \$50 million acquisitions-and Blockbuster declined” (p. 209). Siebel and Rice (2019) clarified that Netflix’s market capitalization exceeded \$160 billion, while Blockbuster became a distant memory. The differentiation between market competitors is that “Netflix saw the shift happening, discarded mail order, and transformed into a streaming video company” (Siebel & Rice, 2019, p. 209). In contrast, Blockbuster could not foresee the audience’s perception of media change but was adamant about a healthy acquisition.

Opposing Digital Channels

While the future of media transformation is undetermined, it is clear that streaming is flourishing and the future of media communications, whether that is Netflix or any other Video on Demand (VOD) platform (Agirre, 2021). Western streaming concepts drew stark competitors to Netflix from Amazon Prime Video, Disney +, and Hulu, sparking the “streaming wars” (Pakula, 2021, p. 148). International markets aimed to grow domestic platforms to reduce costs and increase home production (Chatterjee & Pal, 2020). Agirre (2021) studied how the streaming revolution impacted films in minority languages. Additionally, Agirre (2021) stated that Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) provided limited Basque-language content and many Spanish

streaming channels, “which added a new and virtually infinite range of internet content” (p. 104). Opposing digital media channels such as Spotify, Amazon, or Apple reach streaming audiences through music (Colbjørnsen, 2021).

Emerging Media Technology

Burroughs (2018) described that new media technology had overcome an “identity crisis” (p.1) to develop relationships with audience perception and subsequent interactions. In contrast, Burroughs (2018) mentioned that “Netflix has largely been neglected in the study of popular culture despite its emergence as a cultural force with the advent and rise of streaming technology” (p. 4). Netflix has created “the matrix era’ of television through original programming production, which discards linear modes of thinking about television” (Burroughs, 2018, p. 4). Rich (2021) criticized that the virtual aspects of digital media need further research and cannot be bound by the theoretical frameworks of previous communication theories due to the emerging and evolving nature of innovation. Rich (2021) mentioned regarding cinema and media studies, that “the profession continues apace, even in a time of academic constriction, but continues to be far too bound in homage to the theoretical constructs of its moment of emergence in the U.S. academy” (p. 6).

Fickle Nature of Consumer Wants and Needs

Hidalgo-Marí et al. (2021) investigated the audience’s needs and wants to determine what the audience chose or how the market tackled the complex process of selecting, absorbing, and offering suggestions on the enormous available audiovisual offer via streaming. Additionally, Hidalgo-Marí et al. (2021) mentioned:

If there is something that characterizes Netflix, the great commitment to its exclusive content has led to its consolidation at a global level. However, the shortage of local

content has been defined as a weak point, given that it allows for generating close links with viewers in consumer countries. (p. 4)

Netflix's Public Rating Data

Netflix (2021) officially started sharing their rating data on November 16, 2021, with data beginning from June 28, 2021 (para. 7). Netflix (2021) shared the “Top 10 on Netflix” (para. 2) based on weekly views from Monday-Sunday and posted the following Tuesday for original and licensed projects for more than 90 countries. The TV (English) list included global titles based on its first 28 days on Netflix (2021). Netflix (2021) measured its viewership by ranking “hours viewed per title (i.e., the total number of hours members spent watching a season of a series or film)” (para. 1). According to number five from Netflix’s (2021) top 10 things you need to know about their rating data collection is that each season of a series is ranked and evaluated individually; meaning that two or more seasons of the same series would have different measured metrics. Additionally, Netflix (2021) listed the following key points:

6. All titles, whatever the genre, are eligible for the list series and films, kids and family, Netflix, and licensed.
9. Weekly reporting is rounded to 10,000 to account for any fluctuations in Internet connectivity around the world.
10. We have engaged EY, an independent accounting firm, to review our new viewing metrics, and we will publish their report in 2022. (Numbers. 6, 9, 10)

The Cultural Influence and Switch to Streaming

Netflix has transformed, renewed, and forever changed the media sphere regarding films and series due to its artistic effect and audience influence (Foley, 2018). The trending hashtags and viral phenomenon of specific shows like *Stranger Things* (Duffer & Duffer, 2016) or

Bridgerton (Dusen, 2020) have become a strategic communication tool and a positive marketing strategy. The overall impact of Netflix may have garnered criticism from its competitor, Blockbuster, initially as a distribution company. However, positive word of mouth and capital invested in content production have surpassed negative connotations (Foley, 2018).

The overall impact of Netflix has surpassed American domestic markets and caught wind throughout world cinema on international levels to have foreign content available across markets that were not accessible before (Agirre, 2021). Audience streaming adoption became increasingly synonymous due to diminished cultural boundaries and smart device usage (Chatterjee & Pal, 2020). The trajectory of Netflix remains at an incline and is predicted to take over more media communication avenues beyond series, films, and television (Foley, 2018). Furthermore, Ippolito (2021) reiterated that “legacy film and TV companies also produce diverse content, but the shift to internet distribution allows for success outside of box office numbers, award season fanfare, and real-time viewership tracked by Nielsen ratings” (p.6).

Decreased Usage of Cable TV

McLuhan (1964) predicted that audiences would reject older visual media forms and culture for the new medium of media because consumer-driven choices drive the transformation of technology. Wayne (2021) defined Netflix as the most prominent global SVOD platform, spanning “200 million subscribers” in over “120 countries” (p. 193). Furthermore, Netflix’s inception has predicted that “Internet TV has replaced linear TV” (Wayne, 2021, p. 196). As streaming technology is adaptable on any smart device, the outdated cable TV model with commercials and a lack of options caused users to choose the former (Tefertiller, 2018). TV channels traditionally have the highest viewership from engaging games or awards ceremonies that have transitioned into bundling or creating their original streaming platform (Pakula, 2021).

Further research is required on whether transitioning from cable TV to streaming eradicates traditional television and forces consumers to engage in digital media through smart televisions only.

Martínez et al. (2021) found that multiplatform and fictional series found a home in streaming services to “resolve problems detected in traditional television” (p. 333). Additionally, content distribution and creation allowed streaming platforms to expand “fictional narratives” (p. 333) to their global audiences (Martínez et al., 2021). Series binge-watching is deemed a prime component of fandom during the viewer experience and subsequent conversations in-person and online (Martínez et al., 2021). Netflix’s strategy to release an entire season simultaneously increases the binge-watching phenomenon (Gilbert, 2019). Furthermore, to combat its streaming competitors, Netflix and Amazon Prime TV, Hulu focused on releasing both old and current streaming shows to appeal to a broader target audience (Gilbert, 2019). A limitation of television was its audience viewership, where shows depicting mature content such as violence, horror, or sex were reserved for the after-10 p.m. TV slot. Streaming can release a wide range of content listed as PG-R on the title card across its platform without any time restrictions. The slow eradication of cable TV has instigated “a trend toward network-and studio-owned streaming services” (p. 690) as indicative of platforms such as Peacock and Paramount Plus (Gilbert, 2019).

Factors that Influence Streaming Media

Establishing the point of view through narrative persuasion was crucial in inciting the story (Christy, 2017). A story’s persuasiveness can be told from first or third-person narratives (Christy, 2017). For example, the Academy Award-winning film *Joker* made audiences empathize with the protagonist and understand the trajectory of his character’s downfall instead

of the traditional negative portrayal (Malone, 2021). Point of view encouraged a psychological point of view from audiences because “full engagement in a story is conceptualized as a distinct mental process” (Bjørner et al., 2016, p. 2). Furthermore, “feelings of empathy and sympathy towards characters and their situations” are visible across narratives (Bjørner et al., 2016, p. 3).

Genre Studies

Genre is defined as the elements of “story, plot, setting, and character, “categorized according to themes (Reich, 2017, p. 11). Genres and sub-genres differ based on “fluctuations of the characters and the story” (Reich, 2017, p. 11). Genres can be drama, animation, comedy, romance, or horror (Reich, 2017). Originating from the Greek word *dran* or “to do,”; “drama means someone strives” (Johnson, 2010, p. xvii). Drama is defined as the will of characters facing obstacles and increasing internal and external conflict (Johnson, 2010). Drama sub-genres can include categories such as: “crime, war, Westerns, spy, adventure, science fiction, fantasy, biography, or mystery” (Reich, 2017, p. 11).

Recurring themes from popular series from rating data can be beneficial to the entertainment industry in identifying what content fuels audience engagement. Wayne (2021) critiqued the efficacy of Netflix’s methodology of binge-watching claims with little differentiation between viewership of popular yet contrasting genre shows such as *The Walking Dead* and *Mad Men*. Furthermore, genres affect storytelling through its “dynamic, strategic, and responsive” (p. 144) storytelling elements that instigate awareness and action from audiences (Flynn, 2022). Genre studies affect various trajectories that develop diverse traditions amongst several nationalities (Mehlenbacher, 2021).

Genre studies were relevant to this dissertation research because narrative aspects, character identification, and binge-watching instigated emotional and psychological reactions

from audiences, keeping them hooked on the story (Boca, 2019). Martínez et al. (2021) utilized rating data to study viral domestic and international Netflix series *Money Heist*, *Peaky Blinders*, *Elite*, and *Sex Education*. Martínez et al. (2021) examined the popularity of the shows through rating data on social media and conducted a content analysis. Ajaq and Vaez (2017) found that the children's animated *Spider-Man* series found that while the genre of heroic action films is appealing, cinematic storytelling techniques and visual effects are equally important. Children perceive heroic series content due to their perception of genre and media literacy (Ajaq & Vaez, 2017). Furthermore, a narrative structure such as conflict resolution, media language, and identifying the narrator contribute toward continued viewership.

Spoilers and Suspense

Stern (2000) stated that “tension underlies suspense. Plot, pacing, intrigants, cliffhangers, zigzags, partial disclosures of information, delicate situations, intimations of fear and hope-all are part of the orchestration of suspense” (p. 234). Johnson and Rosenbaum (2017) studied how the online distribution and ensuing conversations of trending series give rise to spoilers, which may dissipate the effects of genre viewing enjoyment. Contrarily, spoilers can also increase the anticipation of the visual storytelling of the plot to raise expectations (Ajaq & Vaez, 2017).

While studying suspenseful scenes of “genres of mystery, fantasy thriller, and comedy” (p. 588), Ajaq and Vaez (2017) found that the effects of spoilers did not differ in series or film content. The horror genre has standard shocks instigated by editing jump cuts and sound design to fuel suspense and increase viewership (Dancyger, 2019). Mixed genre storytelling, such as science-fiction and horror, amalgamates science and society's fear of the unknown to increase intrigue and answer the narrative questions (Flynn, 2022).

Bezdek and Gerrig (2016) found that narratives in suspenseful films alter audiences' attention through psychological factors. Violent or scary movies impact audiences regarding marketing and tourism of the story's location or setting (Yang et al., 2015). For example, people are more intrigued to visit Salem during Halloween due to its influence on pop culture or may be scared to go to the beach after watching *Jaws* (Halon, 2021; The Boston Globe, 2022). Flynn (2022) utilized the rhetorical genre studies (RGS) framework to assess how apocalyptic genres affect environmental awareness by studying the 2018 film *Annihilation*. Flynn (2022) stated that the film applies "a blend of aesthetic and narrative technique" (p. 145) to understand the environmental breakdown in a new context. Suspenseful storytelling makes audiences focus on their emotions microscopically by imbibing the character's sentiments (Bezdek & Gerrig, 2016). Cohesive storytelling increases audience attention: "Changes in viewers' attention are driven by narrative content" (Bezdek & Gerrig, 2016, p. 63).

The Drama Genre

Narrative frames distinguish the genre, and dramatic genre viewing engages audiences (Dancyger, 2019). Lüders et al. (2021) found that "viewers who predominantly watch full seasons of productions within a compressed timeframe would consequently watch fewer genres" (p. 50). Dramatic content has perpetuated binge-watching through acclaimed and popular drama series like *Breaking Bad* and *The Walking Dead* (Rubenking et al., 2018). Children understand the genre and are hooked on the *Spiderman* cartoon series due to the action element (Ajaq & Vaez, 2017).

Malone (2021) found that the top ten storytelling themes from 2010 to 2020 were drama, religion, Black cinema, women, imagination, superheroism, sensitivities, language, horror, and foreign films. Women-centered films across generations show robust characterization and

representation (Malone, 2021). Dramatic themes through crime thrillers, romance novels, or documentary mysteries are common themes that symbolize the human need to solve and understand every aspect of subconscious thoughts and emotions, such as what drives humans to love, harm, or doubt another person.

Netflix has created a foundation throughout world cinema by catering to acquiring rights and co-producing domestic productions while catering to an international audience (Malone, 2021). Netflix has become synonymous with streaming media and has a wide array of genre content (Foley, 2018). Foreign-language series from South Korea and India fuel trending shows and garner attention (Malone, 2021). The shift in showcasing different cultures, languages, and regions symbolizes a well-rounded society evolving and growing curious about others through stories (Malone, 2021).

Since the dramatic genre is pertinent to streaming series, as evidenced in the literature review and rating data, the data was accordingly categorized from both rating data channels. There are many gaps in the present literature about genre studies in streaming content because the reasoning behind the choice of the content being studied was unclear, raising questions about inherent bias. While the genre of each series is labeled in the description of the streaming service, what storytelling elements define that genre need to be studied to further streaming media research. Cinematic storytelling through enriched screenplays is utilized in all forms of content creation regardless of the story's duration, such as long or short format (i.e., film or series) (Johnson, 2010). Along with the storytelling elements, the characters' actions to propel the narrative assist in audience engagement (Reich, 2017).

The Binge-Watching Phenomenon

Binge-watching or marathon viewing is perpetuated exponentially through streaming media (Boca, 2019). Due to the evolving streaming medium, the former concept of marathon viewing television or Digital Video Disc (DVD) has escalated to Netflix and other SVOD platforms (Boca, 2019). The binge-watching phenomenon is evident in streaming services and is promoted via trends on social media (Ateşalp & Başlar, 2020). While studying the motivations for binge-watching, Sung et al. (2018) assessed variables such as “the number of episodes, the amount of time, frequency, and engagement in binge-watched programs to define the phenomenon. Nanda and Banerjee (2020) found that streaming media elongates the series’ lifespan past their television airdate to increase viewership. Furthermore, “more than 70% of Americans” (p. 1212) binge-watched on platforms such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime (Nanda & Banerjee, 2020). Tefertiller and Maxwell (2018) found from Google Trends that binge-watching became a cultural terminology after the success of their first internal production premiere: “The term binge-watching did not become a search term of interest until February 2013, coinciding with Netflix’s *House of Cards* release” (p. 278).

Tukachinsky and Eyal (2018) studied the psychology of the binge-watching phenomenon through viewer involvement “as well as the psychological experiences of marathon viewers” (p. 275). While the trend of marathon viewership is not new to media, streaming platforms have propagated extended periods of viewership, which increases attention and stimuli till the completion of the series, followed by feelings of withdrawal shortly afterward innovation (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018). Additionally, removing distractions such as commercials, more affordable smart televisions, surround sound, and various streaming content has propelled narrative escape from any smart device. Tukachinsky and Eyal (2018) found that “binge-

watching may be an active experience for viewers, one that involves greater control of both their viewing schedule and their emotional and cognitive experience with the content” (p. 276).

Attention is closely related to the storytelling environment (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018).

Furthermore, binge-watching is synonymous with streaming media because the medium provides complete online access to the entire season, “undermining the earlier TV process of serial narratives” (Nanda & Banerjee, 2020, p. 1225). Cognitive and emotional involvement in the story results in participants temporarily losing access to the real world (Christy, 2017). Boca (2019) established a correlation between genre-viewing, increased emotional response, and the binge-watching phenomenon. This dissertation aimed to find overlapping themes from two Netflix drama series’ episodes and triangulation from Facebook audience engagement.

Anticipation

Rubenking and Bracken (2018) found that suspenseful or dramatic content viewing increased audience anticipation and attention through the binge-watching phenomenon. According to Rubenking and Bracken (2018), “the experience of anticipation and engagement with suspenseful content is one common variable present in both popular discussions of binge-watching” (p. 384) through academic implications. Additionally, genre-viewing among audiences is related to “anticipation, suspense, and engagement with the exciting, suspenseful narratives most often binge-watched,” which have been studied through qualitative research (Rubenking & Bracken, 2018, p. 384). Nanda and Banerjee (2020) found that audiences engaged in repeat viewership of streaming content due to “new episodes, avoiding spoilers, and anticipation” (p. 1217). Rubenking et al. (2018) found that viewers were more engaged in suspenseful content and had higher anticipation for upcoming episodes due to the accessibility of binge-watching via streaming mediums instead of traditional TV. Anticipation is further fueled

by the series' content, binge-watching, co-identity with the characters, and the medium of streaming media, which can "automatically start new content with no viewer input" (Rubenking et al., 2018, p. 80). Furthermore, anticipation for the next episode may come from cliffhangers' suspense in episodic content on streaming platforms.

Cliffhangers and Flashbacks

The resolution in a traditional narrative structure occurs when audiences know if the character achieves their objective by the end of the story (Reich, 2017). Cliffhangers are the opposite of the resolution, where the ending is still a mystery; audiences have more questions than answers about the ending. Drama series increase audience curiosity by strategically using cliffhangers in various narrative structures (Salter, 2022). Narrative choices allow the story to be "told in parts" (Salter, 2022, p. 174). However, Burroughs (2018) suggested that "writing for streaming is not as reliant on these conventions and encourages a narrative not tethered to cliffhangers" (p. 7) because character development can be explored in greater depth.

Stern (2000) defined flashbacks as "a way of telling stories that happened before the story you are telling" (p. 133). Flashbacks give "history, depth, and texture" (p.134) with an insight into the character or plot's backstory (Stern, 2000). Flashbacks are instances where audiences are taken away from the present narrative and into a different part of the narrative timeline and sometimes through a different point of view (Stern, 2000). Flashbacks in nonsequential narratives vary in screenplays because some use entire episodes for a flashback, while other narratives place them in Act I or II while tying in the present or culminating in Act III (Reich, 2017). Screenplays vary in duration but remain the same in the narrative structure; each storytelling format has a beginning, middle, and end (Johnson, 2010). Ultimately, "sensory experiences" through narrative storytelling evoke audience emotions (Stern, 2000).

Emotion-Based Viewing

Positive and negative emotions are significant factors in narrative persuasion (Green & Brock, 2000). For example, the genre of Italian horror cinema entices U.K. audiences to continue watching due to online streaming distribution; genre-viewing transcends borders (Baschiera, 2017). Even “unpleasant emotions such as fear, sadness, and rage” (p. 315) can encourage narrative enjoyment (Green et al., 2004). Yang et al. (2015) studied the effects of fear in horror movies on tourism in the individual setting. Yang et al. (2015) found that the narrative world “experience does not necessarily have to happen in the positive narrative context, since individuals are often drawn into stories that are frightening” (p. 320). Through the study, the three consequences were losing access in return for submersion in the narrative world, strong emotional reactions, and the emotional experience irrevocably changing the viewer (Yang et al., 2015). Psychological factors such as emotions, identity, attention span, and binge-watching affect narrative persuasion and supply conflicts and critiques due to the negative social or behavioral consequences on audiences.

Attention

Attention is critical to narrative persuasion because audiences mentally distance themselves from the current physical environment and become encapsulated with “the psychological processes that occur when people experience an engaging narrative” (Bezdek & Gerrig, 2016, p. 60). According to Ajaq and Vaez (2017), “understanding the story” is synonymous with “understanding media language” (p. 12). Audiences’ attention is enhanced through storytelling techniques by “creating fluctuations of feeling to maintain a high degree of attention” (p. 254) (Stern, 2000). Stern (2000) ascertained that “a good story in some way changes the consciousness of its audience” (p. 51). Genres such as suspense instigate emotions

such as fear because audiences are aware of the negative consequences, further stimulating psychological thrill (Bezdek & Gerrig, 2016). Furthermore, Bezdek and Gerrig (2016) found that the narrative world focuses attention while audiences are engaged in suspenseful films. Attention is a crucial paradigm of the narrative world through suspense as audiences face possible adverse outcomes (Bezdek & Gerrig, 2016). Emotions and timing support increasing narrative engagement through the genre (Mateer, 2017).

The higher the emotional intensity, the more attention is given, and the more engaged the viewer becomes “with the narrative and characters” (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018, p. 279). Editing jump scares in horror films and indicative sound cues of silence juxtaposed with high-volume sound effects create an environment where the viewer feels engaged (Dancyger, 2019). Bezdek and Gerrig (2016) found that story “narratives include moments of heightened emotional tension” (hot spots) as well as “relative calm (cold spots)” where the audience’s attention can be assessed (p. 61). Cognitive involvement is another factor in binge-watching because the “uninterrupted immersive experience” (p. 279) enhances the attention span of audiences (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018). Binge-watching is unique in audience engagement due to the heightened level of focus, the urge to complete the story, and continuous, uninterrupted viewing all contribute to the efficacy of the medium of streaming platforms (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018).

Sense of Lost Time

Another side effect of narrative persuasion is the lost sense of time or binge-watching. Viewers lose track of time and ignore their surroundings while being preoccupied with vivid mental images of the story construct (Green et al., 2004). Recurring themes on top of the genre, relatability, and narrative submersion are crucial in quantifying narrative escape through streaming media. Due to shorter episodes that coincide with the many distractions people face,

they opt for convenient entertainment, which requires less time and attention but still fulfills their need for binge-watching (Warren, 2020). Warren (2020) mentions that the two variables impacting streaming platforms are increased watch times and reduced advertisements. Warren (2020) further stated that binge-watching multiple episodes of the same show engaged audiences because of the medium of streaming media and “because the viewer understands that the narrative and characters will continue where the just-watched episode ended” (p. 5).

Identifying with Characters

Tal-Or (2016) studied the effects of media co-viewership on identification with characters. Tal-Or (2016) concluded that character identification assists narrative persuasion due to the “significant impact on attitudes” (p. 19). The medium of the message affects psychological factors related to the character, such as identity, emotional involvement, and attention span. Tal-Or (2016) found that character identification factors such as gender, age, generation, or other demographics significantly impact attitudes because the audience feels like they are a part of the story and submerged instead of outsiders looking in through co-viewing experiences. Actionable characters are defined as the narrative development of the main character (protagonist) or other supporting characters that take action to continue the story (Reich, 2017).

Character is defined as the “dialogue + physical movement” where “the physical actions and the dialogue of the character change from the expositions and conflict as he or she goes through the rising and falling action of the” narrative structure (Reich, 2017, p. 31).

Identification with a character or situation allows narrative involvement; the character and their decisions or situational reactions persuade the audience because similar ideals converge (Green et al., 2004). At the same time, audiences view the story through the protagonist’s lens and view them from their perspective (Rubenking et al., 2018). Tal-Or (2016) argued that character

“identification refers to a more specific merging with a particular character portrayed in the narrative (pp. 384-385). Understanding the cognitive process that drives the audience between the real and reel world is imperative.

Psychological Impact

The impact of the changing media medium from film and television to social media requires further sociopsychological communication research to understand the potential relationship of increased engagement. Media exposure is a social pursuit where people communicate through verbal, written, and visual means (Tal-Or, 2016). Additionally, Tal-Or (2016) found that the psychological aspect “had an enormous impact on our understanding of the interaction between texts and audiences, the realization regarding the social nature of media exposure did not have much influence on experimental and correlational studies about media effects” (p. 382). According to Bezdek and Gerrig (2016), further research required an understanding of “converging behavioral, neurophysiological, and introspective paradigms” (p. 82). Tal-Or (2016) found that more studies are required on co-viewership and narrative identification factors with the viewers and co-viewers.

Co-Viewing

Tal-Or (2016) studied increased co-viewing conversations about collective media content. Co-viewing is essential to the study because Nielsen Ratings (2022) collected data based on two or more people viewing the content. The shared ritual of co-viewing affected attitudes and increased the combined sentiment of identification (Tal-Or, 2016). Co-viewing assisted in adult narrative absorption through participation (Tal-Or, 2016). Adult absorption into escapism was a conscious effort versus children whose experience varied based on who they viewed the content with (i.e., parent, older or younger sibling) (Tal-Or, 2016).

Point of View (POV)

Higher levels of narrative persuasion occur when viewers become submerged in first- and second-person POV rather than third-person narrative storytelling (Christy, 2017). Christy (2017) found that audiences are less likely to associate or be transported through POV with stigmatized protagonists for fear of judgment. Viewers have an associative stigma with protagonists who do not look like them (Christy, 2017). Contrarily, storytelling is becoming increasingly diverse in character portrayals of prevalent minorities (Igartua et al., 2014). Horror, sci-fi, and fiction narratives may not have characters that look like audiences, but that does not prevent them from engaging in the story. Thus, identity is not merely a visual concept but an emotional narrative when considering POV as a medium between streaming media and audiences.

They were breaking the Fourth Wall. Enjoyment has been the epitome of entertainment regardless of genre or medium consumed. Viewers' perception and amusement strengthen parasocial interaction, where cognitive fulfillment results from positive outcomes and the ability to communicate with others about the story—likewise, breaking the fourth wall through POV multiplies emotional engagement (Schlütz et al., 2020). Breaking the fourth wall submerges audiences into the narrative world from their seats (Schlütz et al., 2020). Empathy is built through the submergence of character perspective (Schlütz et al., 2020). Therefore, viewers can communicate and connect their emotions with the story and character through the narrative sequence (Schlütz et al., 2020).

Summary

This study explored the theoretical framework of the medium and new medium theories to understand the changing medium of streaming media and communication. Craig's (1999)

sociopsychological and sociocultural tradition applications were also discussed. This chapter also reviewed the relevant literature on streaming media, binge-watching, emotions, character identification, and co-viewing. Chapter Three expanded on the qualitative methodology and design strategy by comparing comparative studies and presenting the research questions.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The qualitative thematic analysis of the two series assessed the recurring themes from audience Facebook engagement from popular series from rating data. This study asked research questions about what recurring themes were evidenced in the Facebook audience engagement episodic. The data was collected for three consecutive months after approval from the committee.

The three-month data-collection duration was selected to remove short-term seasonal trends such as holidays and remove children's shows. Nielsen Ratings (2023) consecutively posted the rating data for the previous month, while Netflix (2022) updated the top ten list weekly. The duration of the study depicted a wide variety of genre-themed series, while drama was the most predominant. Furthermore, the study reduced bias by conducting the thematic analysis of the two popular series' Facebook audience engagement. The triangulation of the qualitative approach further increased the reliability and validity of the series selection by acquiring the sampling size from two rating data channels, Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix (2022), to reduce inherent bias. Facebook was the social media platform chosen to assess audience engagement from the official Netflix (2022) U.S. account because Facebook has an 8,000-character maximum for comments, which created the most extensive database for the categorization of themes versus 280 characters max for Twitter or 2,200 characters on Instagram (Chaires, 2021; Summa, 2022).

After selecting the sampling size of two series, the Facebook posts were collected, and out of the four posts from each series, the posts that were not the focus of the post, such as Netflix calendar line-ups, were removed from the study. Out of eight Facebook posts, five posts

and their comments were analyzed. The public comments were scraped manually, and online generators were used to find the top 30 words from the audience comments for each post. There were 591 scraped comments from the five Facebook posts, and an additional top 30 words per series of posts were generated. Of the 591 scraped comments, 210 most recurring words were generated, categorized, and coded into recurring themes. Additionally, the recurring themes were visualized through pie charts to understand the recurring themes of audience engagement for each post and series.

Research Method and Design

This qualitative dissertation utilized a narrative design strategy by conducting a thematic analysis. The thematic analysis was apt for the qualitative dissertation study because the rating data collection from Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix's (2022) top ten list provided the unbiased sampling size of two popular series over three months. Two sources of data collection increased the validation and reliability. The results were then connected and explained through the qualitative thematic analysis by assessing recurring themes for each series' Facebook audience engagement (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). I interpreted the rating data to extrapolate the two series episodic and Facebook posts as the instruments of the study and found the recurring themes. The narrative design approach triangulated the findings through the literature review with the recurring themes from the Facebook audience engagement and episodic content (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

This study assessed how themes reoccur in the Facebook and episodic content of popular streamed series. The top ten streaming series data was collected weekly for three consecutive months from the industry-standard rating resources, the Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix's (2022) top ten list. The qualitative method was apt for this dissertation study to find recurring

themes in the audience's Facebook post comments and episodic content through a thematic analysis. Furthermore, this dissertation research triangulated the results from the literature review, qualitative thematic analysis, and sampling rating data to address the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Thematic analysis is prudent for qualitative studies because it addresses the purpose of the study on themes of Facebook audience engagement about two Netflix series. Recurring themes reveal the story created through a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding is an essential aspect of thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). This dissertation coded the recurring themes from the top 30 words from each Facebook audience post engagement.

Martínez et al. (2021) used Qualitative data to study the social media conversations about four Netflix streaming shows: *Money Heist*, *Peaky Blinders*, *Elite*, and *Sex Education*. However, the reason for selecting the four Netflix series is unclear and assumed based on popularity alone. Utilizing rating data research provides more detailed information: “The technologically mediated environment prevents overusing research participants and often makes the interaction anonymous” (Garcia et al., 2009, para. 1). Similarly, this dissertation relied on rating data from two sources to provide the sampling size data which reduced inherent researcher bias because the data dictated the series popularity. The dissertation study has propelled strategic media communication studies by finding recurring themes from popular series Facebook audience engagement and relating the study's implications to the medium of streaming media.

Facebook Thematic Analysis

To better understand how Facebook audiences interacted with the series, only picture posts' comments from each series were extrapolated to remove the redundancy of the trailers or scenes from the show, which was also included on the Netflix platform. There were four

Facebook posts from each series, but posts that did not focus on the series were eliminated to reduce confusion. Out of the eight total Facebook posts, three were removed, and five posts underwent thematic analysis of the audience post comments. After the Facebook posts from each series were collected, 591 comments were manually scraped, and an online word generator was used to find the top 30 most recurring words from each of the five posts. The first series had 146 comments from two Facebook posts, and the second had 445 comments from three. The top 30 words from each of the five posts totaled 150 words. Moreover, the top 30 words summarizing each series' Facebook post comments were created to add 60 words. Five Facebook posts for both series indicated 210 recurring words, which were analyzed, coded, and categorized into themes.

Episodic Thematic Analysis

While the primary focus of this dissertation was on Netflix's Facebook audience engagement, each series' running season episodes also underwent a thematic analysis based on recurring themes found on social media. In addition to the narrative structure, such as inciting incidents or lack of resolution (i.e., cliffhangers and flashbacks), recurring themes, such as character, plot, and genre, were assessed to understand how narratives impact storytelling. The research design and approach described further reasoning for the importance of thematic analysis through the narrative structure. Furthermore, assessing the recurring themes such as narrative structure, genre, characters, plot, and sub-themes such as cliffhangers and flashbacks provided insight into episode themes that reoccurred in the Facebook audience engagement.

Narrative Design Strategy

The narrative design was appropriate for the thematic analysis of Facebook audience engagement because narratives identify themes that reflect a story. According to Saldaña (2021),

cultural behaviors and statements dictate themes. Through a thematic analysis, the overarching themes are weaved into a “storyline narrative” (Saldaña, 2021, p. 479). A thematic analysis was apt because social media research or netnography “should employ a blend of the analytic with the interpretive” (Saldaña, 2021, p. 479). Additionally, Saldaña (2021) mentioned that “almost half of all published research studies in netnography utilize thematic analysis (p. 479). Creswell and Poth (2018) mentioned that “the researcher identifies the themes” to analyze narrative stories (p. 150).

Additionally, Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that narrative analysis “can be made about what was said (thematically), the nature of the telling of the story (structural)” (p. 148). The thematic analysis aids in understanding commonalities through the reflection of text (Creswell, 2016). The interpretation and analysis of qualitative data play a fundamental aspect “in the development of themes” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 338). Additionally, data visualization can be created from the thematic narrative designs to provide data charts from qualitative research. According to Creswell (2016), “a thematic text analysis involves identifying segments of text that have meaning and assigning codes to those segments” (p. 365).

Research Questions

Four research questions guided this study.

RQ 1: How can recurring themes from Facebook audience engagement propel genre viewing of streaming series?

RQ 2: What are the similarities and differences between the themes of both series' Facebook content?

RQ 3: What are the similarities and differences between the themes of both series' episodic content?

RQ 4: What recurring themes appear through audience engagement on Facebook and episodic content for both dramatic series?

Participants

The participants for this dissertation study were the public audience comments from Netflix's (2022) Official U.S. Facebook page. The two Netflix drama series, *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023), Facebook audience engagement and episodic content were the instruments of this study.

Procedures

The methodology required weekly data collection because Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix's (2022) top ten charts because both open rating data channels provide archived data. Also, it was more prudent to compile the monthly table side by side to amalgamate the weekly results each week instead of waiting until the month's end, as indicated in Appendix A. Furthermore, Appendices B and C arranged the monthly tables according to rank due to the highest viewership in minutes (millions) by adding the weekly data into one chart. Additionally, Appendices A through C depicted how data was reorganized, restructured, or manipulated to create apt data visualization charts to reflect qualitative analysis of genre, themes, and which series reigns the highest viewed per month. It was essential to identify the streaming platform with its respective SVOD, which further assisted in finding commonalities between streaming shows over three months. Further discussion in subsequent chapters addressed the overlapping narrative structure that caused viewers to keep watching dramatic series on Netflix compared to other SVODs. The rating data from the codebook were extrapolated from the highest viewed shows from Netflix (2022) and Nielsen Ratings (2023) over three months through descriptive statistics.

Rating Data Sampling Size

This qualitative study focused on the thematic analysis of two streamed series' Facebook post comments and episodic content over three consecutive months. The calculation of the top series defined by Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix's (2022) top ten list were the instruments to collect the sampling size of streaming series. Rating data provided the numerical sample size data, including series, rank, and viewership, to provide a comprehensive and less biased approach to answering the research questions. The top ten streamed content was compiled weekly into a monthly sheet, combining the three-monthly sheets into qualitative tables. Data points included the series name, watch time (minutes per million), rank, the number of episodes, and SVOD provider (i.e., mentioned in Appendix A).

Weekly data compiling compared results from the previous week to highlight changes in the series rank. However, removing redundancies of series that reoccur the following week was imperative. At the end of each month, the first classification round included the series' summation with the highest watch time and percent average totaled, as depicted in Appendices A through C. At the end of the three-month study, the most watched streaming series were extrapolated through descriptive statistics along with the percent average, which provided the sampling size of the predominant three series from each month to be classified into a summary table. Appendices A through C indicated the complete data collection from the three months and the extrapolation of the two rating data channels.

Facebook

This study aimed to understand the themes of popular drama series' Facebook audience engagement. It was crucial to understand how Netflix (2023) aimed to grasp and increase audience attention for dramatic series on Facebook as an extension of their streaming medium.

After the popular series from two rating data channels were categorized, combined, and ranked, I collected the Facebook posts from Netflix's official U.S. page from the same data collection period, 11/4/2022-1/29/2023. Appendix F indicates the results from the top series and their subsequent number of posts.

The two finalized series had the same range of episodic and Facebook content and were chosen as the instruments for thematic analysis. The Facebook post comments were manually scraped, coded, and then placed in an online word generator to find the top 30 words from each of the five posts. A total of 210 words were accumulated from 591 comments. The top words from each post and series summary were coded and categorized into themes to represent audience engagement for further analysis and discussion.

Comparative Methodologies

Peer-reviewed literature and research have been conducted to relate rating data to thematic analysis through different parameters. I amalgamated portions and methodologies proven by prior research to triangulate findings about thematic content analyses and recurring themes. Comparative qualitative studies that did not utilize participants relied on rating data and social media sources, which are discussed further (Davi Médola & Frascareli Lelis, 2019; Prakash & Wenger, 2020). Like comparative methodologies, this qualitative dissertation utilized a thematic analysis of the series' episodes and Netflix's official U.S. Facebook account.

Prakash and Wenger (2020) studied "the relationship between engagement on Facebook and newscast rating" (para. 1) data to understand the correlation between engagement and viewership. Prakash and Wenger (2020) modeled "the relationship between newscast ratings and engagement on social media" by regressing "daily viewership for each station on daily Facebook engagement for that station" (p. 581). This study examined the potential relationship between

“data, social media, and TV ratings” (p. 578), similar to Prakash and Wenger (2020). I have used rating data collection dates to compare the recurring themes from the audience's comments on Facebook. Davi Médola and Frascareli Lelis (2019) studied Brazilian university TV and its correlation to Facebook promotions using EdgeRank to understand the scope and visibility of university TV versus posts. This study used that strategy to identify recurring themes in the Netflix series to increase Facebook engagement.

Researcher's Role

The study assessed the themes in streaming series' Facebook audience engagement and episodic content. My role was not to create a bias toward the study by choosing a streaming series. Therefore, two sources of rating data were utilized to extrapolate the streaming series for the sampling size. Furthermore, this dissertation triangulated results to create a study about the themes through thematic analysis of episodic and Facebook audience engagement.

Reflexivity

I utilized the knowledge from my professional and academic background in film and television through nearly 15 years in the field and from having a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Digital Cinema. This study assessed recurring themes in the Facebook audience engagement and episodes on two Netflix drama series. My role was not to create a bias toward the series selection.

Data Collection

Weekly data was collected and compiled for three consecutive months after approval from the committee from Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix's (2022) top ten list. The data included series observed, SVOD provider, and hours viewed. Out of the weekly most viewed streaming series, the three series with the highest watch time from each month (i.e., three from

each month, totaling two series) were extrapolated to assess the analytics from open rating data—the sampling size from the rating data assisted in answering the research questions.

Instrument

The instruments of the study were the two rating data sources, Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix's (2022) top ten list, which listed the series, SVOD, rank, and hours watched per week. Genre categorization, SVOD (i.e., streaming platform) preference, and rank determined how dramatic streaming series were collected weekly for three consecutive months and extrapolated. Five hundred and ninety-one Facebook post comments were scrapped manually, and Word Counter (2023) was used to identify the top 30 words from each post. The top 210 words were coded and categorized into themes manually. The research questions assessed the recurring themes of the streaming series' Facebook audience engagement through the post comments and top recurring words.

Definition and Reasoning

This study used qualitative data to depict audience engagement on Facebook and utilized a thematic analysis through a narrative design strategy to answer the research questions. The study assessed the audience engagement and conversation that translated to recurring themes about the Netflix series. One of the unique aspects of this dissertation study was its reliance on unbiased data collection procedures where the data dictated the content, genre, and SVOD instead of the researcher. Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix (2022) data are more reliable than generic audiences or top-rated suggestions due to personalized algorithms that change based on individual viewership, limiting the scope for bias and skewed results.

Reasoning. This study's structure, instrument, and approach do not rely on participant survey results due to limitations, response bias, and the possibility of lack of interest on behalf of

participants due to a lack of budget to provide monetary compensation for participant surveys. Relying on ratings from two sources, Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix (2022), for the series selection and researching Facebook audience engagement of two Netflix series limited selection bias. Additionally, obtaining rating data from two sources prevents demographics from hindering or skewing results. Furthermore, the data from Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix (2022) is tallied based on two or more people watching the series for over two minutes on a TV.

Data Analysis

This study determined popular streaming series by evaluating audience measurement. The top ten list from Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix (2022) as the instruments for collecting the rating data of the weekly shows and the subsequent streaming platform may indicate themes. The strategy was to create charts from Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix (2022) data and tables to find recurring themes of the most prevalent themes in Facebook audience engagement and episodic content. Furthermore, the research design validated and created reliability by triangulation through multiple sources, such as the literature review, data analysis, and two sources of open rating data across five Facebook posts. Furthermore, the charts identified overlapping themes and potential areas for future study.

Trustworthiness

Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 6). Braun and Clarke (2022) stated that thematic analysis assists in constructing themes through “meaningful knowledge production” (para. 1). Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that thematic analyses do not get enough credit compared to other research designs, but should be considered foundational to qualitative studies. It is the researcher's responsibility to establish “guidelines” (p. 5) for themes to create a

balance between flexibility and the reliable choice of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis findings are further validated through “participant quotes, credibility, member validation, and triangulation” when themes are recurring throughout data sets (Keyton, 2014, p. 339).

This dissertation aimed to find overlapping themes across five Facebook posts for both Netflix series to “consider the validity of individual themes concerning the data set, but also” assess whether the “thematic map ‘accurately’ reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 22). Thematic analysis establishes trustworthiness by repeating the microscopic data and overlaps and reoccurrences with the macroscopic qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, thematic analysis “needs to be embedded within an analytic narrative that compelling illustrates the story” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 24). Describing the data is not enough, but the thematic analysis must argue the themes regarding the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, this dissertation used a narrative design strategy to conduct the thematic analysis because the narratives tell the story of the themes through repetition and triangulation.

Nowell et al. (2017) stated that the trustworthiness of qualitative research is established through “credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (p. 3). As depicted in Table 1, verifying the trustworthiness of thematic analysis comes in six phases: data familiarity, code generation, identifying themes, reviewing themes, nomenclature of themes, and analysis (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 4). This dissertation fulfilled all six phases to establish the trustworthiness of the thematic analysis. The first through third phases of data familiarity occurred through conducting the literature review, triangulation of data collection, and deducing

codes. The themes were defined, assessed, and reviewed to validate findings with thematic analysis further to fulfill the fourth through sixth phases of establishing trustworthiness.

Credibility and Reliability

Nielsen Ratings (2023) provides valuable, reliable, and valid data because it “shapes the world’s media and content as a global leader in audience measurement, data, and analytics” (p. 30). Nielsen Ratings (2023) provides a system download approach to give the organization public access to data. Furthermore, Nielsen Ratings (2023) has been an asset and resource to the entertainment industry as executives utilize rating data to assess television series' production, functionality, outreach, and prospects. Nielsen Ratings (2023) stated, “Through our understanding of people and their behaviors across all channels and platforms, we empower our clients with independent and actionable intelligence so they can connect and engage with their audiences now and into the future” (p. 30). Trustworthiness increased by collecting data from a second rating data channel, Netflix (2022).

Dependability and Confirmability

The validity of the two rating data channels, Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix’s (2022) top ten charts were discussed while addressing its limitations in Chapter One. The validity was quantified through two open rating data sources and triangulated through a peer-reviewed literature review and qualitative assessment thematic analysis of the Facebook audience engagement and episodes. The triangulation provides additional checks and balances to ensure no biases in data interpretation and thematic reoccurrences across the qualitative findings.

Independent vs. Dependent Variables

The Netflix series and three-month data collection were independent variables, while the themes from the Facebook audience engagement were dependent variables.

Outliers

The evidence of an international series was predicted to be an outlier in the domestic rating data collection. Another outlier was finding children's shows among the most popular series by Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix (2022).

Unexpected Results

Unexpected results were from Netflix's competitors such as HBO Max, Peacock, Paramount, Apple TV, Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, or Disney+. Netflix's market value and influence over popular culture reflect the number of original series it produces; it was interesting to see outliers like Peacock and HBO Max trending among the top series' SVODs.

Transferability

This study's methodology is transferable for future participant studies due to the reliability and availability of the weekly open rating data from Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix's (2022) top ten charts, the recurrence of themes, and the narrative design thematic analysis approach. This dissertation study conducted a thematic analysis of each series' Facebook audience engagement. The narrative design was prudent for this qualitative study and the most appropriate to understand the recurring themes evidenced through the rating data and thematic analysis of Facebook audience engagement and episodes.

Summary

The current qualitative research strategy utilized a narrative study design through a thematic analysis to understand Facebook audience engagement. Rating data from Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix (2022) provided the sampling size of popular series. Next, Chapter Four detailed the thematic findings of the study's research questions through the two-drama series' social media content.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Overview

Table 1 indicated that Netflix held over 80% of viewership compared to its competitors; therefore, studying the Netflix series for this dissertation was prudent. Drama was the most prevalent genre from the series data set. The top drama series from Nielsen Ratings (2023) were *Wednesday*, *Ginny & Georgia*, *The Walking Dead*, *Dead to Me*, *The Crown*, *The Recruit*, *Kaleidoscope*, and *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*. The most viewed dramatic series from Netflix's (2022) top ten charts included *Wednesday*, *1899*, *The Recruit*, *Kaleidoscope*, and *Treason*. Table 2 indicates the nine dramatic series with their respective number of Facebook artifacts, where *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) had the same range and were approved by the dissertation committee as the final selection of the dramatic series to be studied. Appendices A-C includes the complete rating data collection from Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix (2023) top ten charts over three consecutive months.

Participant Descriptions

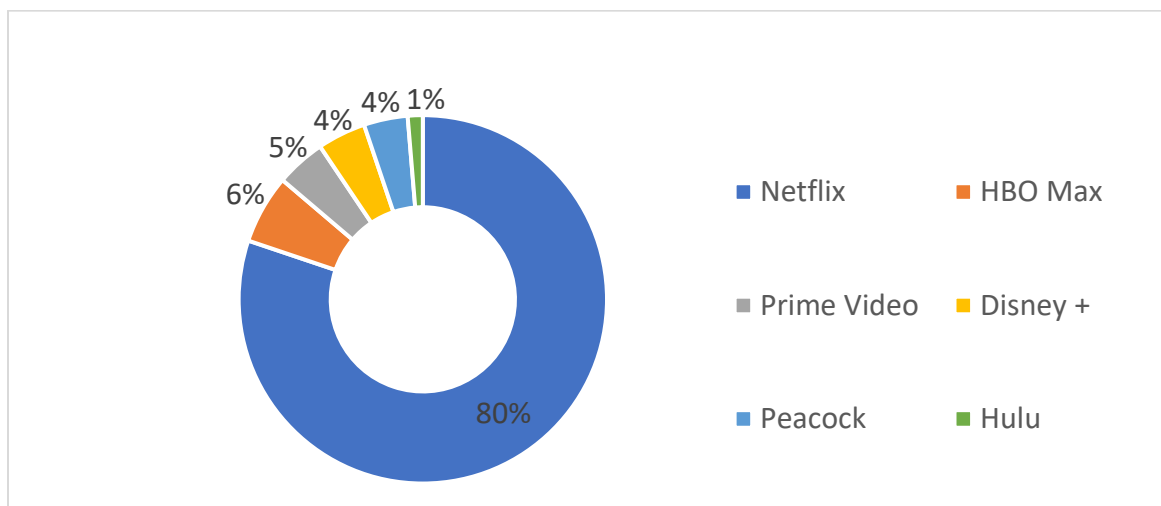
The Recruit (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) ranked high according to viewership and held the fourth and seventh ranks, respectively. Additionally, because both series had the same range of artifacts on Netflix's (2022) official U.S. Facebook page, they were approved as the final selection of dramatic series to conduct this dissertation study. *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) were original concept dramatic series in their premiere season, with eight episodes each and no previous IP from books, films, or video game content. A significant comparison between the two dramatic series was that *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) could be watched randomly or non-linearly, while *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) must be watched sequentially to understand the plot and reduce spoilers.

Both series underwent a thematic analysis of Netflix's (2022) official Facebook page to measure audience engagement through post comments. *The Recruit* had eight episodes and four Facebook posts (Hawley, 2022). *Kaleidoscope* had eight episodes and four Facebook posts (Garcia, 2023). Three of the eight total Facebook posts were removed because the series was not the post's focus but about Netflix's (2022) calendar lineup. Out of the five Facebook posts, there were 591 comments, which were manually scraped and coded. The top 30 words from each of the five posts were collected in Word Counter (2023), with an additional 30 words summarizing each series totaling 210 words. The 591 words were coded and categorized into themes to identify audience engagement through qualitative tables and visualization charts. Word clouds were created from the top 30 words for each of the five posts and the two summary posts indicated in Figure 7 (Word Clouds.com, 2023). Table 3 depicts the Facebook audience comments for each post for both series.

Table 1*Three-Month SVOD Viewership Data*

Rank	# of Series	SVOD Provider	Total # of Episodes	Total Minutes (Millions)	% Ave.
1	25	Netflix	4,545	81,055	80.17%
2	5	HBO Max	1,001	6,117	6.05%
3	2	Prime Video	72	4,417	4.37%
4	2	Disney +	384	4,293	4.25%
5	3	Peacock	193	3,897	3.85%
6	2	Hulu	658	1,331	1.32%
Totals	37	25:5:2:2:3:2	6,853	101,110	100.00%

Note. Data collection from Nielsen Ratings (2023) during 11/14/2022-01/29/2023.

Figure 1*Three-Month SVOD Viewership Data Percent Average*

Note. Data collection from Netflix (2022) and Nielsen Ratings (2023) from 11/14/2022-01/29/2023.

Table 2*Episodic and Facebook Artifact Collection Data*

Rank	Series	Genre	Episodes	Facebook Posts	Total Artifacts
1	<i>Wednesday: Season 1</i>	Drama	8	3	11
4	<i>The Recruit: Season 1</i>	Drama	8	4	12
7	<i>Kaleidoscope: Limited Series</i>	Drama	8	4	12
6	<i>Lockwood and Co: Season 1</i>	Drama	8	2	10
25	<i>1899: Season 1</i>	Drama	8	0	8
30	<i>From Scratch: Limited Series</i>	Drama	8	1	9
28	<i>Treason: Limited Series</i>	Drama	5	8	13
27	<i>MADOFF: The Monster of Wall Street: Limited Series</i>	Drama	4	2	6
16	<i>Crime Scene: The Texas Killing Fields: Limited Series</i>	Drama	4	2	6
Final Selection					
4	<i>The Recruit: Season 1</i>	Drama	8	4	12
7	<i>Kaleidoscope: Limited Series</i>	Drama	8	4	12

Note. Refer to Appendices A-C.

Table 3*Facebook Audience Engagement Summary*

Series	Facebook Post	Likes	Comments	Shares	Scraped Comments	Top 30 Words
<i>The Recruit</i>	Facebook Post 1	2,100	90	49	73	30
	Facebook Post 2	394	73	23	73	30
	Facebook Post 1	647	53	56	42	30
	Facebook Post 2	27,000	26,000	42,000	200	30
<i>Kaleidoscope</i>	Facebook Post 3	553	203	107	203	30
	<i>The Recruit Summary</i>				146	30
	<i>Kaleidoscope Summary</i>				445	30
	Total				591	210

Note. Data was collected from public comments on Netflix's (2023) official Facebook page from 11/14/2022-01/29/2023.

Table 3 indicates the Facebook audience engagement summary and breakdown.

Research Questions

Four research questions guided this study.

RQ 1: How can recurring themes from Facebook audience engagement propel genre viewing of streaming series?

RQ 2: What are the similarities and differences between the themes of both series' Facebook content?

RQ 3: What are the similarities and differences between the themes of both series' episodic content?

RQ 4: What recurring themes appear through audience engagement on Facebook and episodic content for both dramatic series?

Introduction to the Themes

The recurring themes found from the Facebook audience engagement for both Netflix series were audience emotion/opinion and narrative structure, with sub-themes of binge-watching and anticipation for Season 2/renewals. The recurring themes found in the episodic content were actionable characters, narrative structure, genre, and sub-themes such as cliffhangers and flashbacks. The purpose of the qualitative dissertation was to conduct a thematic analysis of the recurring themes to evaluate their “recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness” (p. 342) in Facebook audience engagement through triangulation (Keyton, 2014). Streaming media would be defined as hot media because the medium does not indicate audience participation. Facebook audience engagement would be considered cold media because of the social interaction and integration of two-way communication between users. Reich (2017) stated that themes of actionable characters, genre, and narrative structure are essential storytelling attributes but are specifically critical in the drama genre. Therefore, the coding and thematic analysis

assisted in categorizing overlapping themes “to enable later comparisons across cases as well as categories” (Jensen, 2021, p. 298). The interpretation of recurring themes through this dissertation was to triangulate findings from the literature review, Facebook audience engagement of two series, and episodes. According to Reich (2017), “themes give purpose” to the story, and the genre groups the story, which “indirectly shapes the characters and story, establishes the setting, and determines the plot” (p. 77). The narrative structure facilitates the story and plot through actionable characters (Reich, 2017).

***The Recruit* Thematic Findings**

Facebook Thematic Findings

After watching Netflix’s *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022), I compiled Netflix’s Official U.S. Facebook posts. Netflix’s (2022) official U.S. Facebook had two picture posts about *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022). The Facebook post audience comments for *The Recruit* indicated thematic findings of characters, audiences’ emotions/opinions, genre, and narrative. The sub-thematic findings were binge-watching and cliffhangers/anticipation for Season 2.

Thematic Finding #1: Audience Emotion/Opinion

The first thematic finding from the Facebook audience engagement was their emotions and opinions about the series. The Facebook user comments indicated majorly positive sentiments and enjoyment of the drama genre, humor, comedy, characterizations, and storyline. Many audience Facebook users posted comments that included positive emotions and opinions about *The Recruit*, mentioning that it was enjoyable due to its dramatic genre, character, and surprising humor. Additionally, sub-themes from the positive audience engagement included anticipation about the arrival of Season 2 due to the cliffhangers in the narrative. While most of the Facebook post comments were positive, some audiences were concerned about investing

time and energy into a brand-new show such as *The Recruit* due to Netflix's frequent cancellation pattern. As indicated by the top recurring words or frequency codes from Table 8, Netflix appeared across the two Facebook posts 19 times. One user mentioned, "I liked it: it's really good. But with Netflix's canceling track record, I'm hesitant to love it. You get all attached, and then they chop it off" (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022). Other users stated, "I really hate to start any new Netflix shows since they cancel them left and right. This one looked good, but not taking the risk of being invested then it is getting canceled" (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022). Table 4 indicates some of the highlighted Facebook audience's emotions or opinion comments. Appendices H and I include the categorized Facebook audience engagement comments. The audience's emotions and opinions also related to the second thematic finding: narrative, genre, and characters.

Table 4*The Recruit Thematic Finding #1: Audience Emotion/Opinion*

Theme	Codes	Highlighted Facebook Audience Comments
Audience Emotion/ Opinion	Good	1. This is really good and funny.
	Funny	
	Love	2. I'm actually halfway through episode one. Love it so far
	Good	3. I'm trying to watch this, but there's no hook for me. It all seems too familiar. He's good though. Right in that middle of the lane of relatable everyman and Teen Beat cover guy.
	Love	4. Love it!
	Love	5. Loving this series
	Canceled Netflix	6. aaaand it's canceled, Netflix-style
	Interesting	7. Interesting
	Cool	8. Cool
	Not Like	9. Did not like it at all
	Like	10. I liked it, it's really good. But with Netflix canceling track record I'm hesitant to love it. You get all attached and then they chop it off
	Good	
	Positive	11. Gonna start watching this today. I've seen nothing but positive comments so far.
	Glad	
	Good	12. Im just glad for any real good entertaining series
	Entertaining	
	Show	13. This is the show I was talking about last night.
	Dumb	14. I got through the first episode of this dumb series and then packed it in.
	Loved	15. Immediately loved the show.
	Like	16. I like this show
	Good	17. Buenicima
	Loving	18. Loving the series so far
	Good	19. Good series but too short to enjoy from it
	Terrible	20. Terrible
	Love	21. I'm watching this series and I love it!
	Good	22. Honestly, so good!

Note. Based on the findings from Netflix's (2022) official U.S. social media accounts

Thematic Finding #2: Narrative, Genre, and Characters

Facebook audience comments recurred and were categorized across thematic findings of narrative, genre, and characters. Many comments were categorized across these three aspects. For example, one user was not impressed with the ending, “Was really good until the last episode, then it got stupid - the whole ex-girlfriend tracking CIA lawyer is just lame (Netflix U.S., December 19, 2022). This user talked about their emotion, the characters, and the genre. A constant theme throughout the comments was the audience's interest in the character's growth and the story's genre. For example, one user stated, “Need him to be a little bit tougher considering he is in the CIA regardless of being a lawyer” (Netflix U.S., December 19, 2022). The user depicted their negative thought about how the main character did not progress to be tougher, which did not align with the dramatic genre and CIA premise.

Audiences resonated with the characters and series narrative with both positive and negative audience emotions or opinions about the character, narrative, and genre. For example, one user stated, “We liked it.. kinda quirky w/ enough action to make it good. We like the characters a lot, but seriously, those fellow co-workers” (Netflix U.S., December 19, 2022). Many users tagged their friends and family to encourage watching due to the genre and the addition of humor with action in the narrative. One user tagged their friend or family and commented, “Excellent show. Watch it if you can...” (Netflix U.S., December 19, 2022). While another user disagreed with the negative reviews, “It’s getting some bad reviews, but we thought it was fun” (Netflix U.S., December 19, 2022). Some users also expressed mixed reviews about the narrative and the character development. Table 5 depicts some of the highlighted comments coded for this thematic finding. Appendix H includes the categorized Facebook audience engagement comments.

Table 5*The Recruit Thematic Finding #2: Narrative, Genre, and Characters*

Theme	Codes	Highlighted Facebook Audience Comments
Narrative	Trailer	1. The trailer was all I needed to see on this one.
	Episodes	2. Just watched all episodes. Really enjoyed this. I hope they keep it going. I am really tired of watching new shows just to have Netflix cancel them.
	Shows	
	Netflix Canceled	3. Awesome show!!
	Show	
	Show	4. THIS SHOW IS AMAZING
	Series	5. This series is FUN!
	Series	6. Excellent Series! Top-notch everything
	Reviews	7. It's getting some bad reviews, but we thought it was fun.
Genre	Shows	8. I really hate to start any new Netflix shows since they cancel them left and right. This one looked good but not taking the risk of being invested then it getting canceled.
	Netflix Canceled	
	Action	1. I just started watching it and its good so far. I love the unexpected action and the humor
	Humor	2. It def pulled me in. I wonder how accurate the party about everyone being suspicious is each other at the CIA 🤔 Like, "I can't hear you, I can't hear you!" Lol. I don't trust them anyway.....
	CIA	
	Suspicious	3. We liked it.. kinda quirky w/ enough action to make it good. We like the characters A lot, but seriously, those fellow co-workers.
	Trust	
	Quirky	4. I would not, ID Pass, Spy versus Spy,
	Actions	
Actionable Characters	Characters	5. Was really good until the last episode, then it got stupid - the whole ex-girlfriend tracking CIA lawyer is just lame.
	Spy	
	CIA	6. Says I'm in ... @CIA, when you sending the black ops chopper to get me?
	Lawyer	
	CIA	1. Easy watch but a little annoying in parts. Need him to be a little bit tougher considering he is in the CIA regardless of being a lawyer. But did figure out the girl when she showed up. I'm sure y'all will cancel it since it ended on such a cliffhanger but hope you don't.
	Lawyer	
	Him	2. Netflix any role for me?
	Girl	
	CIA	3. I've been recruited
Actionable Characters	Role	4. Step aside kids. I've been recruited
	Me	
	Recruited	5. I can't take him seriously
	Recruited	
	Him	
	Seriously	

Note. Data was collected from public comments on Netflix's official Facebook page (2023) from 11/14/2022-01/29/2023.

Sub-Thematic Finding # 1: Anticipation for Season 2 and Cliffhangers

The sub-thematic finding was anticipation for Season 2 due to cliffhangers. The presence of cliffhangers throughout the season, especially in the finale episode, led to anticipation for Season 2. A user mentioned, "Great series! Hopefully, it will be renewed!" (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022). Many user comments conveyed enjoyment and anticipation for the second season through a series renewal because they want to see what happens next to the characters in the narrative. Audiences also liked the twists and turns of the narrative through surprising character reveals and action. Many comments indicated overlapping sub-themes of audience emotion or opinion regarding the narrative, genre, characters, cliffhangers, binge-watching, and anticipation for Season 2. One user expressed their excitement about finishing the first season and their anticipation for Season 2, "When will Season 2 air? Big cliffhanger - enjoyed season 1" (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022). Many users tagged their friends or family by sharing positive emotions about the narrative, especially the cliffhanger ending: "That cliffhanger was brutal" (Netflix U.S., December 19, 2022). One user stated their disapproval sentiment about Netflix closing Season 1 of *The Recruit* with a cliffhanger:

"Pretty good series. Why would you end it on a cliffhanger, though? You cancel most of your series after the first season. The least you could have done was give this one an ending. You know, just in case." (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022)

There were predominantly positive audience emotions and opinions about cliffhangers and the subsequent anticipation for Season 2, where users once shared their opinion, "such as great show; when is Season 2 coming?" (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022). Another user could

not hold back their curiosity about the cliffhanger from Season 1, “Soooo, Season 2?” (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022). Audiences resonated with the dramatic genre, which fused comedy and action to propel the narrative through the actionable characters and flashbacks. The cliffhangers in each episode further instigated audience intrigue and conversation on Facebook post comments. Audiences were hooked on the action, humor, characters, and plot until the final episode ended on a cliffhanger and captivated audiences. Table 6 depicts some of the highlighted comments coded for this thematic finding.

Table 6

The Recruit Sub-Thematic Finding # 1: Anticipation for Season 2 and Cliffhangers

Theme	Codes	Highlighted Facebook Audience Comments
Anticipation of Season 2 and Cliffhangers	Next Season	1. I loved it, more please...Don't leave us hanging on too long for next season. :)
	Season 2 Cliffhanger	2. When will Season 2 air? Big cliffhanger - enjoyed season 1
	Cliffhanger	3. That cliffhanger was brutal.
	Cliffhanger	4. I'm sure y'all will cancel it since it ended on such a cliffhanger, but hope you don't.
	Second Season	5. Just finished an im hoping for a second season!!
	Season 2	6. Such a great show when is season 2 coming
	Season 2	7. I loved it! Can't wait for season 2.
	2	8. Me encanto!!!! Ya quiero la 2!
	Season 2	9. Sooooo Season 2?
	Season 2	10. Great show, cannot wait for season 2!

Note. Data was collected from public comments on Netflix's official Facebook page (2023) from 11/14/2022-01/29/2023.

Sub-Thematic Finding # 2: Binge-watching

A sub-thematic finding for *The Recruit* was binge-watching, where audiences admitted to binging or watching the series in a day. One user stated, “Binged all eight episodes...was really good” (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022). Another user said, “He seems like a good enough

dude; enjoy him in *Black Adam*. Will binge this show later” (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022).

The second post stated, “Binged in one day. It was super cute, interesting, and funny. Enough action to keep the guys focused” (Netflix U.S., December 19, 2022). While popular shows cannot measure audience binge-watching, the Facebook audience engagement from the comments reflects that some audiences binged on *The Recruit*, an interesting finding with implications discussed in Chapter Five. Table 7 depicts some of the highlighted comments coded for this thematic finding.

Table 7

The Recruit Sub-Thematic Finding # 2: Binge-watching

Theme	Codes	Highlighted Facebook Audience Comments
Binge-watching	Binge	1. He seems like a good enough dude, enjoy him in Black Adam. Will binge this show later.
	Binged	2. Binged all 8 episodes...was really good
	Whole	3. Watched the whole season in 1 day. Now if only Netflix could
	Season in 1	put out a new season in less than a year instead of 2 years later
	Day	like all the other shows.
	Binged	4. Binged in one day. It was super cute, interesting, and funny.
	One Day	Enough action to keep the guys focused
	Started	5. Started this evening. It is ‘eh’ for me
	Start	6. So, when do I start?
	Watching	7. I’m watching it this weekend!
	Binged	8. Binged all 8 episodes...was really good

Note. Data was collected from public comments on Netflix’s official Facebook page (2023) from 11/14/2022-01/29/2023.

After coding the Facebook audience comments from *The Recruit*, the top recurring words for the series’ posts and their occurrences across data are depicted in Table 8. As indicated in Table 8, the top 11 words coded as the narrative theme were a watch, watching, series, Season, show, Netflix, episode, cliffhanger, renewed, finished, Season 2, and coming.

Table 8*The Recruit Frequency Codes Table from Observation Data*

Themes	Codes	Occurrences Across Data
Narrative	watch(ing)	41
	series	39
	Season	39
	Show	32
	Netflix	19
	episode	19
	cliffhanger	10
	renewed	8
	finished	4
	Season 2	4
	coming	4
Emotion/Opinion	good	38
	enjoy(ed)	26
	love	24
	great	18
	like	13
	need	11
	Funny	9
	awesome	4
	Positive	4
	top-notch	3
	excellent	3
Genre	action	11
	humor	5
	CIA	3
Characters	characters	16

Note. Based on the findings from Netflix's (2022) official U.S. social media accounts

Analysis of Facebook Posts

The initial Facebook post included the name of *The Recruit* on their “New on Netflix” grid as an upcoming series releasing on December 16, 2022 (Netflix U.S., November 22, 2022, para. 1) and was not included in the thematic analysis because other series were mentioned, and the post did not solely focus on the series. The first promotion was done a month before the release date but did not include any visuals of the show. The first Facebook post shared the Netflix article, “Noah Centineo enters his leading man era,” and introduced *The Recruit's* protagonist and executive producer, Noah Centineo (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022). The first Facebook post had 2,100 likes, 90 comments, and 49 shares. There were 73 main comments, which were scraped and categorized for the top 30 words, which indicated audience engagement themes such as characters, emotion/opinion, genre, narrative, sub-themes of binge-watching, cliffhangers, and anticipation for Season 2. Table 8 indicated 11 recurring words from Facebook posts for *The Recruit*, which indicated positive audience emotion or opinion. The most recurring words that indicated positive audience emotion or opinion were good, with 38 occurrences across the data. Enjoy or enjoyed had 26 occurrences across data. Love has 26 occurrences across data.

The comments were coded as audience enjoyment/opinion because they indicated they loved watching the Netflix series and showed positive emotions such as like, need, enjoy, and great. The post stated: “The star and executive producer of *The Recruit* is getting his hands dirty in the spy thriller” (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022, para. 1). The article was about how the actor has grown beyond his high-school heartthrob image from his previous Netflix show *To All the Boys* (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022). Netflix wanted to change the actor’s image from a high school boy to a CIA lawyer in *The Recruit* (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022). The post pictured a happy Noah standing before a billboard with a close-up of his eyes (Netflix U.S.,

December 17, 2022). The image portrayed the narrative and the dramatic sequence of emotions that resonated with audiences (Netflix U.S., December 17, 2022). Audiences engaged positively while relating to the article with Noah's character, the action, and the humor of the dramatic CIA genre.

The second Facebook post shared the Netflix article introducing Noah Centineo as a promising recruit through an interactive aptitude test with 394 likes, 73 comments, and 23 shares (Netflix U.S., December 19, 2022). All 73 comments were scraped and categorized by audience engagement themes such as characters, emotion/opinion, genre, narrative, sub-themes of cliffhangers, anticipation for Season 2, and binge-watching. Codes were generated through recurring words such as characters, love, action, comedy, spy, cliffhanger, renewed, and funny (Netflix U.S., December 19, 2022). The depiction of Owen dressed in a suit and tie in his office with confidential boxes of paperwork depicted the drama genre, the setting, and the actionable character, the protagonist, Owen (Netflix U.S., December 19, 2022).

Episodic Thematic Findings

The eight Netflix episodes of the preliminary season of *The Recruit* depicted the thematic findings of plot and actionable characters, genre, sequential narrative structure, and sub-themes of cliffhangers and flashbacks (Hawley, 2022). The plot was a common sub-theme for actionable characters and narrative structure because it asserts meaning for the characters and is the foundation for the narrative structure. Reich (2017) stated that the two parts of the narrative structure are the story and the plot, but the plot steers actionable characters to act or react to their environment. Therefore, each episode indicated overlapping thematic findings of actionable characters, genre, and narrative structure, while some episodes indicated sub-themes of cliffhangers and flashbacks (Hawley, 2022).

Episodic Thematic Finding #1: Plot and Actionable Characters

Plot. Netflix's *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) was a story about a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) attorney, Owen. His troubled past made him want to consistently prove his worthiness by entangling himself in danger when his father passed away on active duty in Afghanistan and his mother's inability to cope with the loss of her husband. His ex-girlfriend, Hannah, and best friend, Terrance, are his roommates working in political affiliations in Washington, DC. His co-workers, Violet and Lester, are also lawyers at the CIA. Still, they are very jealous of Owen being placed in a higher rank despite their experience because of his favorable impression of their boss, Nyland. Owen's task is to read the grey mail or the threatening letters that the CIA receives to decipher if there is any credibility from the sources and follow through with investigations. To Owen's misfortune, on his first day on the job, he reads Max Meldaze's letter, which claims to be a former CIA asset working as a double agent for Russian intelligence.

Being a novice to the code names and secrecy involved within the department, Owen makes rookie mistakes by trusting his colleagues and realizing that he is in over his head with real-life danger threatening national and international cooperation. Owen asks his office neighbor, Janus, who is constantly under perpetual stress; he warns him not to get involved. Each sequential episode unravels the drama as his friends become worried for his safety. Each action has an equal and opposite reaction as he befriends the dangerous ex-prisoner, Max, who helps him navigate the present while unveiling her past with special operations agent Dawn. Through the suspense and story that spans many countries, Owen learns valuable lessons on profession, governments, friendship, and loyalty as the recruit of the CIA.

Actionable Characters. The actionable characters in *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) were Owen, Max, Nyland, Hannah, Lester, Violet, Terrance, Dawn, and Xander because they all displayed “three-dimensionally” and realism due to their faults, making them relatable to audiences. Actionable characters have dialogue and physical movement and take actions that further the plot (Reich, 2017). Owen, Max, Nyland, Hannah, Lester, Violet, Terrance, Dawn, and Xander have character graphs that evolve along with the narrative. The character’s stories progressed equilaterally with the plot. Actionable characters affected the plot, narrative structure, and genre due to the clash between their internal and external struggles.

For example, when Owen is fighting his internal struggle for acceptance and can find peace in his personal life, he establishes himself as an actionable character. Max is the antagonist, but her story reveals her backstory and how she became a member of the mafia; her actions compel Owen to react and make her an actionable character. Nyland is Owen’s boss and tries his best to place Owen in positions where he has to prove his merit and develop the plot by being an actionable character. Hannah is an actionable character because she consistently communicates with Owen, her ex-boyfriend, about her concerns for his safety at work, but she also makes decisions to help him during dangerous missions. Lester and Violet are actionable characters because they present obstacles for the protagonist, Owen, and navigate the narrative. Terrance is an actionable character because he facilitates Owen on his missions through his network. Dawn and Xander are actionable characters because they have underlying motives that present further obstacles toward Owen’s goals. Actionable characters in *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) were depicted in social media posts so audiences could connect with the characters in the narrative.

Flashbacks and Cliffhangers

Cliffhangers were standard in all eight episodes of *The Recruit*, where resolutions defined were not definitive (Hawley, 2022). The streaming series kept audiences guessing the fate of each character at the end of each episode. For example, in episode four, the antagonist, Max, is released from prison, and it is uncertain if she is truly a friend or foe to the protagonist, Owen. Resolutions are defined as whether the character achieves their objective or resolves their internal or external conflict. However, drama streaming series provide the scope for binge-watching through unresolved resolutions or cliffhangers to keep audiences intrigued till the series is finished. *The Recruit* also exhibited cliffhangers in each of its eight episodes through the dramatic genre to fuel more action and conflict amidst characters to create more intrigue about their fate in the narrative.

Additionally, flashbacks were common in *The Recruit*, where internal conflict between actionable characters reveals their intentions. For example, in episode three, Max killed the man who was abusive toward her roommate. The narrative reveals that she justified killing him because of his cruelty, despite his daughter wanting Max to be punished. Another episode revealed how Owen and Hannah met in college and became friends. The series never depicted them in a relationship but insinuates that they had a bad breakup and remain friends and roommates in the present. The usage of flashbacks helped to clarify the plot in the present, but strategically placing flashbacks to identify character relationships.

Episodic Thematic Finding #2: Genre

The dramatic genre relies on actionable characters' internal and external conflicts progressing concerning each other and their environment to expand the narrative (Reich, 2017). Netflix's *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) was categorized as a dramatic genre because it has the four

fundamental elements: “serious, portray life, tell a story” (Reich, 2017, p. 38). The actionable characters from *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) have an internal and external conflict that conveys various emotions, further defining the genre. The eight episodic storytelling aspects of *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) used surprise, action, seriousness, and mystery. The three general dramatic stories of *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) included death, the pursuit of an objective, and a story throughline. Furthermore, sub-genres such as dark humor, crime, suspense, and action came under the umbrella of the generalized dramatic genre and were evident throughout each episode and social media post of *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022).

The Recruit (Hawley, 2022) had many instances where the dialogues facilitated irony and humor during grim circumstances for the protagonist and other actionable characters. *The Recruit* depicts the dramatic genre by showing the protagonist, Owen’s will to prove himself by facing conflict (Hawley, 2022). *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) evidences the dramatic genre through the presence of internal and external conflicts: “The basis of all drama is conflict” (Johnson, 2010, p. xviii). Each actionable character furthered the plot due to the conflict they face in *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022). Each of the eight episodes expanded the conflict through the multi-layered relationships among the characters. Johnson (2010) cautioned that external conflict is not the only indicator of drama, while Reich (2017) articulated that internal or emotional conflicts shape the character’s actions. For example, Owen’s relationship with his parents expands his internal conflict to prove himself and creates physical obstructions and dangers that prompt further action from him.

Additionally, dark humor, which brings comedy to the light of a grim, life-threatening situation, further defines the dramatic elements of the series. *The Recruit* revolved around the external crime of the antagonist, Max Meladze, and her threat to reveal CIA classified documents

(Hawley, 2022). However, the internal struggle was her imprisonment for murdering an abusive man. The internal conflict that Owen faced was proving his worthiness, while his external conflict was to solve Max's case. Each character had relationship issues with their job aspirations, co-workers, and overall place in the agency, further fueling inter-relationship problems. For example, Owen despised Max but felt sympathy for her after being released from prison and discovering her daughter had passed away.

Lester and Violet are partners in crime at work who constantly try to sabotage Owen but have unexpressed romantic feelings for each other. Audiences are aware that each character is linked to another in various ways, further fueling the drama and anticipation of what comes next for internal and external conflicts. The drama genre is intriguing because the audience knows what has happened before the characters do. For example, in episode three, when Owen and his partner Lester arrive in Lebanon to have one of their special operations soldiers sign child support paperwork, the audience knows that the soldier and his team are hiding and waiting in their hotel room in the dark before the characters do.

Episodic Thematic Finding #3: Narrative Structure

The narrative structure for *The Recruit* was in sequential order; each episode must be viewed from one to eight for audiences to understand the chain of events (Hawley, 2022). The narrative structure was an evident thematic finding for *The Recruit* because the expansion of characters occurred through repeated obstacles, which prompted actions according to the dramatic genre and furthered the narrative (Hawley, 2022). According to Reich (2017), establishing time is one of the most crucial aspects of narrative structure. *The Recruit* established time sequentially but also had flashbacks to explain the inter-character relationships and internal struggles (Hawley, 2022). For example, one of the flashbacks included how Owen and Hannah

met at the college library (Hawley, 2022). Audiences do not see any scenes of when they were in a relationship, but only the before (past) and after (present) (Hawley, 2022). Their failed relationships were insinuated through the actionable actors and choice of narrative structure (Hawley, 2022).

Furthermore, the flashbacks were included at pivotal moments where characters must make present decisions and gave audiences insight into their actions (Hawley, 2022). However, flashbacks of the antagonist, Max, were depicted through action sequences to provide audiences insight into her morals and what led her to be imprisoned despite being a skilled spy. The narrative structure and editing sequences kept audiences on the edge of their seat in anticipation as their internal questions about the drama unraveled. Therefore, the narrative structure of *The Recruit* was a prominent theme that furthered the dramatic genre, evoked characters toward action, and unfolded the narrative through an engaging sequential plot (Hawley, 2022).

Kaleidoscope Thematic Findings

Facebook Thematic Findings

Thematic Finding # 1: Narrative

The first thematic finding from the Facebook audience engagement was the narrative theme due to the recurrence and repetition of words such as series, episode, order, watch, show, and episode titles across the data in Table 9. In the comments, Facebook audiences spoke about the randomization, autonomy, variety, recommendations, and preferences about the narrative structure. Family members discussed the unique viewing experiences of watching the series in their preferred order versus watching with family or following the Netflix algorithmic suggestions. Additionally, Facebook audiences resonated with the actionable characters, their relationships, the protagonist, and the narrative elements such as the heist premise, the drama

genre, the plot twists, and the motivations of each heist crew member. Additionally, Facebook audiences had questions about particular character motivations and the resolution of each heist crew member. For example, one user stated: “Was pretty easy to follow along, but I do have a couple of questions!” (Netflix, November 23, 2022). Facebook audiences used colored emojis to symbolize the different titles of each episode named after the rainbow colors in a kaleidoscope.

Facebook audience engagement indicated that audiences found the series “surprisingly good” because of the heist premise and dramatic genre (Netflix, January 4, 2023). One user compared the varied narrative structure of the streaming series to non-sequential children's books: “Overall good watch, I appreciated what they were trying to do.. It is a twist on those choose your own adventure books we read as kids, except the outcome is the same either way” (Netflix, January 4, 2023). Many Facebook users indicated re-watching the series differently to compare their narrative experiences and outlook on the streaming series: “I thought this was a good show! I watched again in a different order” (Netflix, January 4, 2023).

Facebook audience engagement indicated conversations about alternative viewing strategies by tagging friends and family. One of the most interesting comments was from a Facebook user who directly compared *The Recruit* to *Kaleidoscope* because they were both launched on Netflix during the same three-month data collection period for this dissertation: “Sounds too complicated for this tired brain! On a good note, *The Recruit* was really good, and you watch it the order it plays” (Netflix, January 4, 2023). This user directly compared the two instruments of this study based on the same dramatic genre, meaning audiences relate genre-viewing to narrative structure.

While most of the comments were positive, there was some cynicism about confusion, “None, though I guess a gimmick has gotten some people to watch it. Not something that

interests me” (Netflix, January 4, 2023). Members of the same family had contrasting opinions despite the shared co-viewing ritual because they watched the timeline in descending order, with the heist first and the flashbacks later. One user stated: “This was my order, and while I enjoyed it, my daughter hated it” (Netflix, January 4, 2023). Other Facebook audience comments wanted family members to have different narrative orders so that they could discuss their viewership and experience. For example, one user shared, “I was disappointed that my mom started on the same episode I did. I did thoroughly enjoy it, though!” (Netflix, January 4, 2023). Regardless, there was an overall anticipation of the show and interest in viewership due to intrigue about the non-linear narrative structure (Netflix, January 4, 2023). Table 9 depicts some highlighted comments.

Table 9*Kaleidoscope Thematic Finding # 1: Narrative*

Theme	Codes	Highlighted Facebook Audience Comments
Narrative (Structure)	Episode Titles Order Mystery	1. G, Y,V,O,B,W,R,P I like a little mystery mix with a little background. I think 7 years before is a good start 👍, I liked having a choice of episodes. Out-of-chronicle order made it more interesting IMO.
	Complicated The Recruit Order	2. Sounds too complicated for this tired brain! On a good note, The Recruit was really good and you watch it the order it plays
	Order	3. I watched mine out of order; however, no matter what order the white one is to be last, it's the finale....
	Yellow	4. Mine started with yellow, then went to green?! Guess I'll just see where it leads me?!
	Green	5. Sarah already has found the order she wants to go but I'll make sure she sees these
	Order	
	Order Green Yellow Violet Orange Blue Red Pink White Chronological	6. Great series! I went with the order Netflix presented to me, which was green, yellow, and violet. Orange, blue, red, pink, white. Definitely want to check it out again in chronological order.

Note. Based on the findings from Netflix's (2022) official U.S. social media accounts.

Sub-Theme # 1: Binge-watching

Binge-watching was an interesting thematic finding through the Facebook audience conversations. While popular shows from rating data cannot measure audience binge-watching, the Facebook audience post comments indicated discussions about the different binge-watching experiences people could have based on the non-sequential narrative structure of *Kaleidoscope*. Audience comments from the second post indicated the sub-theme of binge-watching in different narrative structures, where one user stated, "Wow, this would have been helpful before I binged it in order" (Netflix, January 4, 2023). Another user stated, "Okay, so math people, how many different orders can you binge all the episodes in a row?" (Netflix, January 4, 2023). Table 10 depicts some of the highlighted Facebook audience comments coded and categorized as sub-thematic findings.

Table 10

Kaleidoscope Sub-Thematic Finding # 1: Binge-watching

Theme	Codes	Highlighted Facebook Audience Comments
Binge-watching	Binged	1. Wow this would've been helpful before I binged it in order 2. I've forgotten the order to watch it in already, but it worked.
	Binged	I binged while at the car dealership getting an oil change and brakes.
	Binged	3. Wow this would've been helpful before I binged it in order
	Binge	4. Okay so math people, how many different orders can you binge all the episodes in a row?
	All in one afternoon	5. I loved it I let Netflix choose my order I watched it all in one afternoon.
	Episodes in a row	6. Finished last night. Four episodes in a row. Good show folks.

Note. Based on the findings from Netflix's (2022) official U.S. social media accounts.

Some Facebook audiences were so hooked on the narrative aspects and genre of the heist drama that they binge-watched it on their phone while completing their daily errands, "I have forgotten the order to watch it in already, but it worked. I binged while at the car dealership getting an oil change and brakes" (Netflix, January 4, 2023). Binge-watching was discussed regarding the narrative structure and episode orders that audiences chose. Additionally, while binge-watching was predominantly assumed to have participated at home, audiences talked about how the story was so engaging that they binged while on the go through other smart devices. Audiences' opinions and emotions were related to the thematic and sub-thematic findings.

Thematic Finding # 2: Audience Emotion/Opinion

Facebook audience engagement related to the thematic finding of the narrative themes and their subsequent emotion or opinion due to the varied narrative structure, identification with the protagonist, similarities with other series or films, and their recommendations for their friends, family, and other viewers. Most Facebook audience comments were optimistic about their curiosity about the varied narrative structures that let people choose their viewing experience. The words good, love, great, interesting, and amazing were the most recurring codes categorized and indicated the theme of audience emotion/opinion. According to Table 13, the word good occurred 68 times, love 61 times, great 35 times, and interesting 19 times across the observation data. Audiences were intrigued about the resolution due to the various narrative structures that provided viewer autonomy: "Sounds interesting, but does it all conclude at the same place?" (Netflix, November 23, 2022). Table 11 depicts some highlighted Facebook audience comments, which are categorized and coded for the thematic finding.

Table 11*Kaleidoscope Thematic Finding # 2: Audience Emotion/Opinion*

Theme	Codes	Highlighted Facebook Audience Comments
Audience Emotion/Opinion	Entertaining	1. I just watched as they came up. The last episode was the most entertaining. I kinda hope there will be more series where there's no order.
	Hope	
	Love	2. I loved it! Best show!
	Best show	
	Liked	3. I liked the show, but I don't know why alternate episode orders are needed. They don't add a damned thing.
	Enjoyed	4. And none of these is the order I watched it in. I watched in the order Netflix gave me because I had no idea about the concept 😞 oh well enjoyed it regardless
	Perfect	5. I watched in the order Netflix played and it was perfect. I liked actually seeing the Heist last it allowed me to be surprised by some elements.
	Liked	
	Surprised	
	Disappointed	6. I was disappointed that my mom started on the same episode I did. I did thoroughly enjoy it, though!
	Enjoy	
	Gave up	7. Tried it, gave up and turned it off.

Note. Based on the findings from Netflix's (2022) official U.S. social media accounts.

Sub-Thematic Finding # 2: Spoilers and Anticipation for Season 2

Anticipation for Season 2 was a recurring sub-thematic finding for both *The Recruit* and *Kaleidoscope*. Users posted comments after completing the series with positive emotions about anticipation and asking Netflix about the season renewal: "Let Season 2 start." And "Season 2? Netflix" (Netflix, January 5, 2023). Other users expressed criticism of Netflix's habit of ending series after their first season, such as in *1899*. One user stated: "Is this a movie or series? Cause I need the second season confirmed before I commit... I am still cranky about *1899*" (Netflix,

January 4, 2023). Another Facebook user stated how the lingering questions about characters' resolutions made them want to see a renewal: "I did notice the end left some dangling characters, so I hope hope hope there will be MORE!" (Netflix, January 5, 2023). Audiences' emotions and opinions about the show concerned the narrative aspects such as the episode order, spoilers, and discussing their narrative structure through Facebook comments. For example, "I read somewhere you can enjoy them in any order. Is this accurate? Or will it confuse and give away spoilers?" (Netflix, January 4, 2023). One user was also concerned about spoilers and mentioned:

I enjoyed the show. I do, however, not understand how White is supposed to be last vs. Pink. Pink kind of gives away what happens in White. My order was Yellow, Green, Blue, Orange, Violet, Red, Pink, then White. Maybe it was because Pink came directly before White, but I felt let down by White because it was not an 'ending' like Pink had. (Netflix, January 4, 2023)

Sub-Theme # 3: Comparison to other series/films

Facebook audiences compared the non-sequential order of *Kaleidoscope* with other series and films, which also told the story in a non-linear format, such as *Star Wars* and *Ocean's Eleven* (Netflix, November 23, 2022). One user said, "I thought this was *Star Wars*" (Netflix, November 23, 2022). The non-linear narrative structure reminded users of the film *Ocean's Eleven*: "The very first sentence tells you where you are in the timeline. It was very much like '*Ocean's Eleven*' where they did things and then later showed you how!" (Netflix, January 5, 2023). Other users compared the series to the narrative structure *1899* (Netflix, November 23, 2022). Audiences were also intrigued by the actor playing the protagonist, Giancarlo Esposito, due to his involvement with other drama series, such as *Breaking Bad* (Netflix, November 23, 2022). Users were excited with Giancarlo Esposito as the most recognizable character and

protagonist: “If Giancarlo Esposito is involved, I am in. He is amazing. Giancarlo Esposito. Das’IT” (Netflix, November 23, 2022). Table 12 indicates the two sub-thematic findings.

Table 12

Kaleidoscope Sub-Thematic Findings # 2 and 3

Theme	Codes	Highlighted Facebook Audience Comments
Spoilers and Anticipation of Season 2	Season 2	1. Let season 2 start :)
	Season 2	2. Season 2? Netflix
	Pink	3. White and pink should be the last two!
	Spoiler	4. thanks for the spoiler alert.
	End	5. I did notice the end left some dangling characters so I hope there will me MORE!!!!
	Confusion	6. I read somewhere you can enjoy them in any order. Is this accurate? Or will it cause confusion and give away spoilers?
	Spoiler	
	Pink	7. they gave me pink first.... I'm like the end, y'all gave me the end first?
Comparison to other series/films	End	
		1. Sounds too complicated for this tired brain! On a good note,
	<i>The Recruit</i>	The Recruit was really good and you watch it the order it plays
	<i>Money Heist</i>	2. after watching Money Heist, I thought it was boring too. Don't think I'll get past the first episode
	<i>Money Heist</i>	3. I love Money Heist!
	<i>Ocean's Eleven'</i>	4. The very first sentence tells you where you are in the timeline. It reminded me of 'Ocean's Eleven' where they did things & then later showed you how!!
	<i>Star Wars</i>	5. I thought this was Star Wars.

Note. Based on the findings from Netflix's (2022) official U.S. social media accounts.

Table 13 indicated the most recurring themes and coded words from the series' Facebook posts and their occurrences across data.

Table 13*Kaleidoscope Frequency Codes Table from Observation Data*

Themes	Codes	Occurrences Across Data
Narrative	Series	125
	Episode	106
	Order	106
	Watch	102
	show	88
	Netflix	75
	Pink	73
	White	70
	Start	54
	Green	52
	Red	42
	Yellow	40
	Blue	38
	Season	33
	End	25
	Time	24
	Way	23
	Black	22
	Random	20
	Try	18
	See	16
	Know	16
	Choose	14
Emotion/Opinion	Good	68
	Love	61
	Great	35
	Interesting	19

Note. Based on the findings from Netflix's (2022) official U.S. social media accounts.

Analysis of Facebook Posts

Three Facebook picture posts for *Kaleidoscope* were on Netflix U.S.'s (2023) account and indicated thematic findings of narrative structure and audience emotion/opinion during the three months of data collection, 11/4/2022-1/29/2023. The first Facebook post shared an article that gave the first look at *Kaleidoscope* by introducing the primary cast, the genre, the heist theme, and the unique narrative structural experience (Netflix, November 23, 2022). The first post had 647 likes, 53 comments, and 56 shares (Netflix, November 23, 2022).

Netflix's (January 4, 2023) next Facebook post about *Kaleidoscope* was seven pictures of the various narrative structures based on the character's point of view in a single post. The second Facebook post focused on the narrative structure each actionable character would choose according to their story and included seven images in different episodic sequential order with pictures of the characters (Netflix, January 4, 2023). It had 27,000 likes, 26,000 comments, and 42,000 shares. A sample size of 200 Facebook comments was manually scraped and analyzed to indicate thematic findings of narrative and audience emotion/opinion.

Netflix's (January 5, 2023) next Facebook post was an image of a billboard that stated: "Every Kaleidoscope order is the right Kaleidoscope order" (para. 1). The post had 553 likes, 203 comments, and 107 shares (Netflix, January 4, 2023). All 203 Facebook comments were manually scraped, coded, and categorized to indicate the thematic findings of narrative and audience emotion/opinion.

For example, the first image showed Hannah's order of choice: if *Kaleidoscope* was "a Tarantino film" (Netflix, January 4, 2023, image 1). The tagline for the remaining six images included: "As the usual suspects, in what I think is the correct order, in the rainbow order, as a

classic detective story, as orange is the new black, in the chronological order, (Netflix, January 4, 2023, images 2-7). The purpose of the multi-imaged Facebook post was to give audiences viewing options to choose their narrative storytelling style based on the timeline structure they prefer (Netflix, January 4, 2023, images 1-7). The final Facebook post showed a billboard with the Netflix logo on the left corner and spelled out on the bottom right with the text: “Every *Kaleidoscope* order is the right *Kaleidoscope* order,” which further evidenced the thematic finding of the narrative structure being a prime theme of the social media strategy (Netflix, January 5, 2023).

Episodic Thematic Findings

The eight Netflix episodes of the primary season of *Kaleidoscope* depicted three thematic findings: plot and actionable characters, genre, and non-sequential narrative structure (Garcia, 2023). Because it established meaning for the characters and served as the basis for the narrative framework, the plot was a frequent sub-theme for actionable characters and narrative structure. The two components of the narrative structure were the story and the plot, although the plot also directed actionable characters to make choices or respond to their environment. Each episode of *Kaleidoscope* showed recurring thematic findings of actionable characters, genre, and narrative structure.

Episodic Thematic #1: Plot and Actionable Characters

Plot. Netflix’s *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) was a series that could be watched non-sequentially to understand each character’s point of view and back story separately. Each episode was named after a different color depicted in the children’s kaleidoscope toy and according to a different timeline before the heist. Therefore, understanding the complex plot of *Kaleidoscope* was fundamental to comprehending how the themes were prevalent in each episode and the

overall plot. The teaser was called “Black: Intro to Kaleidoscope,” explaining how the viewing experience for each viewer is different based on their choice of sequence (Garcia, 2023, 0:02). For example, episode one was called “Yellow: Six Weeks Before the Heist (Garcia, 2023, 0:02). Episode two was “Green: Seven Years Before the Heist” (Garcia, 2023, 0:02). Episode three was “Blue: Five Days Before the Heist” (Garcia, 2023, 0:02). Episode four was “Orange: Three Weeks Before the Heist” (Garcia, 2023, 0:02). Episode five was “Violet: 24 Years Before the Heist” (Garcia, 2023, 0:02). Episode six was “Red: The Morning After the Heist” (Garcia, 2023, 0:02). Episode seven was “Pink: Six Months After the Heist” (Garcia, 2023, 0:02). Episode eight was “White: The Heist” (Garcia, 2023, 0:02).

The story was about the serial robber Ray Vernon under the alias Leo Pap and his journey of revenge against his former friend and collaborator, Graham Davies, also known as Roger Salas (Garcia, 2023). Ray and Graham were co-conspirators in multiple burglaries where Graham would lure rich men into business conversations at their residences, and Ray would break into their vaults and steal their valuables (Garcia, 2023). After Ray almost accidentally dies by locking himself into a vault to avoid getting caught, he vows to change his line of work to stay alive and better protect and provide for his family. Ray and Graham lead different lives and have different motivations for stealing. Ray wants to provide for his wife and young daughter, while Graham wants to be rich and enjoy his single life. After the near-death robbery, Ray decided to leave the life of crime behind to buy a small hardware store with the help of his wife, Lily (Garcia, 2023). The series explores Ray’s path toward revenge through a heist with his teammates and their underlying intentions.

Actionable Characters. The actionable characters in *Kaleidoscope* were Leo, Ava, Hannah, Roger, Judy, Stan, Bob, RJ, Abassi, and the Triplets because of their characterization

despite the non-linear narrative style (Garcia, 2023). Characterization is the physiological and psychological composition (Johnson, 2010). The overlapping thematic findings of actionable characters, genre, plot, and narrative structure were evident in *Kaleidoscope* through each character's distinct choices during the unforeseen circumstances of the heist drama. For example, when Judy sees RJ and Bob fighting, she instinctively shoots him and feels guilty for killing him.

The actionable characters of *Kaleidoscope* did not just respond to their internal and external conflict, evidenced by the dramatic genre. They also reacted to dangerous circumstances that were unexpected. For example, when Leo finds out that his daughter, Hannah, double-crossed him and returned the bonds to the Triplets to protect him, he does not feel anger or revenge but sympathy. In comparison, when his former best friend and current enemy, Roger, betrayed him, his wife's accidental death sparked revenge. The thematic finding of actionable characters in *Kaleidoscope* was further evidenced through Reich's (2017) definition of a character: "dialogue + physical movement= character" (p. 31). Furthermore, the characters in *Kaleidoscope* were three-dimensional, as defined by Reich (2017) through physiology, psychology, and sociology, which defined them as actionable characters that furthered the plot.

Episodic Thematic Finding #2: Genre

Netflix's *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) was categorized as a drama genre on the streaming platform but also indicated the thematic finding of drama due to the show's premise being a heist. Furthermore, *Kaleidoscope* depicted the thematic finding of the dramatic genre. The eight episodic storytelling elements in *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) used unexpected shocks, action, urgency, and suspense to abide by Reich's (2017) dramatic genre. The three general dramatic stories of *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) included fear of death or being caught, a narrative objective, and character purpose. The broad dramatic genre of *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023)

evidenced subgenres, including sarcasm, criminality, mystery, and adventure. Audiences would have unique experiences through the individual sequential choice of the narrative, which all evidence drama through action, suspense, and actionable characters (Garcia, 2023, 0:25-30).

The thematic finding of the genre through drama was indicated in the episodes of *Kaleidoscope* through the editing and background music choices to create a soundscape that engaged the plot to increase suspense (Garcia, 2023). Additionally, *Kaleidoscope* indicated “a blend of aesthetic and narrative technique” (p. 145) to establish the multiple indoor and outdoor settings for the preparation and execution of the heist and each character’s back story (Garcia, 2023). For example, the character’s emotions were evidenced in the plot’s time-lapse and environmental changes, but each character’s intentions or objectives were unknown to audiences until the end of the season (Garcia, 2023). Despite the non-sequential narrative structure, each episode of *Kaleidoscope* exonerated the drama genre through actionable characters, soundscapes, and editing (Garcia, 2023).

Episodic Thematic Finding #4: Narrative Structure

The thematic finding of narrative structure for *Kaleidoscope* was evidenced in non-sequential order on the Netflix application (Garcia, 2023). The timeline of narrative structure is not essential because, according to Reich (2017), “the narrative structure can be either linear or nonlinear” (p. 26). The thematic finding of the narrative structure for *Kaleidoscope* was nonlinear, “where the story is told in flashbacks that proceed to the present day” (Reich, 2017, p. 26). However, because of the changing streaming medium, the Netflix interface allowed audiences to choose which episode they wanted to view first according to the timeline concerning the heist (Garcia, 2023). For example, each episode’s title had two portions: a color from the kaleidoscope and a subsequent time concerning the heist. For example, the Yellow

episode is labeled as “Six Weeks Before the Heist,” and the Violet episode is titled “24 Years Before the Heist” (Garcia, 2023). Each episode's title and plot evidenced the thematic finding of narrative structure. The narrative structure outline is described in Appendix E.

According to Reich (2017), “time is one of the most meaningful parts of the narrative structure” (p. 26). Every episode of *Kaleidoscope* indicated the essence and importance of time to the climax or heist episode (Garcia, 2023). Furthermore, the impact of time on the narrative structure implicated the actionable characters and the genre. For example, the protagonist, Leo’s Parkinson’s diagnosis progresses and impacts his physical actions in his surroundings and interactions with other characters. Furthermore, how his daughter, Hannah, grows from a novice employee to Vice President and pregnant woman is depicted in her hair, wardrobe, the juxtaposition of her home and office surroundings, and interactions with other actionable characters, including her boss and antagonist, Roger. The combination of flashbacks and the present time in a non-linear format indicated that narrative structure was a thematic finding for *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023).

Research Questions Findings

The purpose of this study was to thematically analyze Facebook audience engagement through post comments to find recurring themes of two Netflix drama series.

RQ 1: How can recurring themes from Facebook audience engagement propel genre viewing of streaming series?

While analyzing the thematic findings of this dissertation through the two Netflix drama series, *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023), the results from the Facebook audience engagement evidenced recurring themes of the genre, characters, narrative, and audience emotion/opinion and sub-thematic findings of binge-watching, cliffhangers, and

anticipation for Season 2. *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) created the secret agent universe with action-packed sequences, locations, and characters facing multiple obstacles to create suspense and intrigue in the drama genre. Audience engagement from the two Facebook post comments indicated the recurring genre theme through repeated usage of words such as action, comedy, CIA, and humor. Similarly, *Kaleidoscope* built upon previous Netflix money heist-related content to compare the story's premise and create tension through its first Facebook post, which introduced audiences to the characters, categorization of the drama as a heist series and the unique narrative viewing experience (Netflix, November 23, 2022). Audience engagement from the first Facebook post comments indicated the genre theme through repeated usage of words such as sounds, state, arts, and system, which created the heist environment.

Audiences also compared the drama genre of *Kaleidoscope* with other dramatic series and films such as *1899*, *Star Wars*, and *Ocean's Eleven* (Netflix, November 23, 2022). Additionally, the audience commented about other streaming platforms with similar genre-based shows on Amazon, Apple, and Hulu, referencing a perfume from Bath and Body Works, also named *Kaleidoscope* (Netflix, November 23, 2022). Both *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) Facebook audience engagement evidence thematic findings of genre, narrative structure, and actionable characters to propel viewing of the dramatic genre.

The most recurring words that categorized the genre theme from *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) audiences' Facebook post comments were action, humor, and CIA, which repeated 11, five, and three times, respectively. One user commented, "I just started watching it, and it's good so far. I love the unexpected action and the humor" (Netflix, December 17, 2022). Another user commented, "Binged in one day. It was super cute, interesting, and funny. Enough action to keep the guys focused" (Netflix, December 19, 2022). Another comment was categorized in the

characters and genre themes because the user mentioned their co-viewing experience: “We liked it... kinda quirky with enough action to make it good. We like the characters a lot, but seriously, those fellow co-workers” (Netflix, December 19, 2022).

The Netflix series sociopsychologically impacted audiences by identifying with the characters and expressing that on Facebook. Recurring Facebook audience engagement themes from the streaming medium of Netflix indicate that genre-viewership, narrative aspect, and characters result in audience emotions/opinions. Audiences were hooked on the drama genre's secret agent and CIA premise. A user commented about the genre: "It definitely pulled me in. I wonder how accurate the part about everyone being suspicious of each other at the CIA” (Netflix, December 17, 2022). Another user spoke from the character’s point of view and stated: “Says I am in ... @CIA when you are sending the black ops chopper to get me?” (Netflix, December 19, 2022). Therefore, words such as crime and FBI were categorized as the genre theme with user comments such as: “Why am I being involved in a crime?” (Netflix, November 23, 2022). Audiences were emotionally connected with the dramatic genre.

RQ 2: What are the similarities and differences between the themes of both series' Facebook content?

The similarities between the Facebook audience engagement thematic findings of *The Recruit* and *Kaleidoscope* were the common themes of narrative and audience emotion/opinion. Facebook audience engagement predominantly commented on the narrative aspects across the posts analyzed during this study and their subsequent emotions/opinions about the series. The differences between the Facebook audience engagement thematic findings of *The Recruit* and *Kaleidoscope* were the themes of genre, characters, and sub-theme of cliffhangers. The top 30 most recurring words from each of the five Facebook posts were coded and categorized as per

the significant themes: narrative, genre, characters, audience emotion/opinion, sub-themes of cliffhangers, anticipation for Season 2, comparison to other series/films, and binge-watching.

Appendix G depicts the color coding and categorizing of both series' 210 top recurring words.

Table 14 summarizes the similarities and differences between the Facebook audience engagement for *The Recruit* and *Kaleidoscope*. Table 14 shows the overlap between both series, where the Facebook post comments focused on the recurring themes of narrative and the audience's emotions/opinions and sub-themes of binge-watching.

Table 14

Research Findings of Facebook Content Themes

Facebook Themes	<i>The Recruit</i>	<i>Kaleidoscope</i>
Genre	X	
Actionable Characters	X	
Narrative (Structure)	X	X
Audience		
Emotion/Opinion	X	X
Sub-themes		
Binge-watching	X	X
Cliffhangers	X	
Anticipation of Season 2	X	X
Comparison to other series/films		X

Note. Based on the findings from Netflix's (2022) official U.S. social media accounts.

Figure 2*The Recruit Facebook Posts Top 30 Words Word Clouds***Post 1****Post 2**

Note. Data collection from Netflix's (2022) Official U.S. Facebook page from 11/14/2022-01/29/2023.

Figure 2 indicated word clouds for the first and second Facebook post comments based on the most recurring words or codes from the audience engagement for *The Recruit* (Word Clouds.com, 2023). The word cloud from Figure 2, Post 1 depicts the audience engagement recurring words or codes such as series, good, CIA, action, humor, Netflix, great, Season 2, and excellent (Word Clouds.com, 2023). The word cloud from Figure 2, Post 2 depicted the audience engagement recurring words or codes such as good, wait, love, enjoy, fun, like, need, and better, which were categorized as thematic findings of audience emotion/opinion (Word Clouds.com, 2023). Recurring words were categorized for genre, narrative, audience emotion/opinion, character, or sub-themes of cliffhangers, anticipation for Season 2, and binge-watching. As mentioned in the Facebook audience engagement thematic findings, the top recurring words

indicated that audiences had positive sentiments about the genre through words such as action, enjoyed, loved, and spoke about their excitement for Season 2, the series, and its characters.

Figure 3

Kaleidoscope Facebook Post 1 Top 30 Words Word Cloud



Note. Data from Netflix's (2022) Official U.S. Facebook page from 11/14/2022-1/29/2023.

The three posts for *Kaleidoscope* indicated that the top 30 words evidenced themes for 26 in the narrative theme and four in the audience emotion/opinion. The word cloud from Figure 3 indicated that the top 30 most recurring words from the Facebook audience comments were amazing, watch, interesting, character, and Netflix (Word Clouds.com, 2023). The word cloud from Figure 4 indicated that the Facebook audience's top 30 most recurring words comment as series, watch, episode, "White, Pink, Green, Blue, Red, Black," and random (Garcia, 2023; Word Clouds.com, 2023). Words such as the colors were titles of the episodes and coded as the narrative theme to indicate audience preferences for their first episode. Recurring words such as good, love, enjoy, great, like, and interesting were categorized in the audience's emotions/opinions category. The word cloud from Figure 5 indicated that the Facebook

audience's top 30 most recurring words are: order, watch, episode, “White, Pink, Green, Blue, Red, Black,” and random (Garcia, 2023; Word Clouds.com, 2023). Recurring words such as sound, love, great, and interesting were categorized in the audience's emotions/opinions category. The three Facebook post comments indicated that audience engagement was predominantly about the narrative, order, and positive emotions.

Figure 4

Kaleidoscope Facebook Post 2 Top 30 Words Word Cloud



Note. Data from Netflix's (2022) Official U.S. Facebook page from 11/14/2022-1/29/2023.

Figure 6 compared the top 30 words/codes from each series by compiling the two post comments from *The Recruit* and three post comments for *Kaleidoscope*. Figure 6 indicates that the most common words from the Facebook audience engagement were about the season, action, drama, funny, and humor, but also the sub-thematic finding from the episodic analysis, cliffhangers. Figure 6 found that the most common words from the Facebook audience engagement were about the episode titles named after the rainbow colors from a kaleidoscope: “Red, White, Pink, Yellow, Blue, Green, Yellow, and Black” (Garcia, 2023). Additionally, audience engagement indicated positive emotions/opinions like great good, like, enjoy, enjoyed, and interesting. The sub-theme of binge-watching and anticipation for Season 2 or renewals also appeared in audience comments three times for *The Recruit* and twice for *Kaleidoscope*.

According to Table 15, the most recurring word for both series from the Facebook engagement was series, which occurred 164 times across the data. The words show and Netflix occurred 120 and 94, respectively, across data. The repetition of data implies that audiences spoke not only about the recurring themes of emotions/opinion, characters, genre, narrative, and other sub-themes but also how they all relate to the medium of streaming series. Table 15 lists the top 30 words for both series for all five Facebook posts with 591 comments, with the number of times each word was repeated, coded, and categorized based on themes, depicted in a pie chart in Figure 7. For example, the 60 most recurring words for Facebook posts for *The Recruit* were put into Word Counter (2023) and tallied for the top 30 words. The resulting 30 words were coded and categorized according to themes where 11 of the words indicated audience emotion/opinion, 13 indicated words about the narrative, three were about the genre, and one was about character. Figure 7 depicts the table in a pie chart format to visually compare the series’ themes.

Table 15*Series Frequency Codes Table from Observation Data*

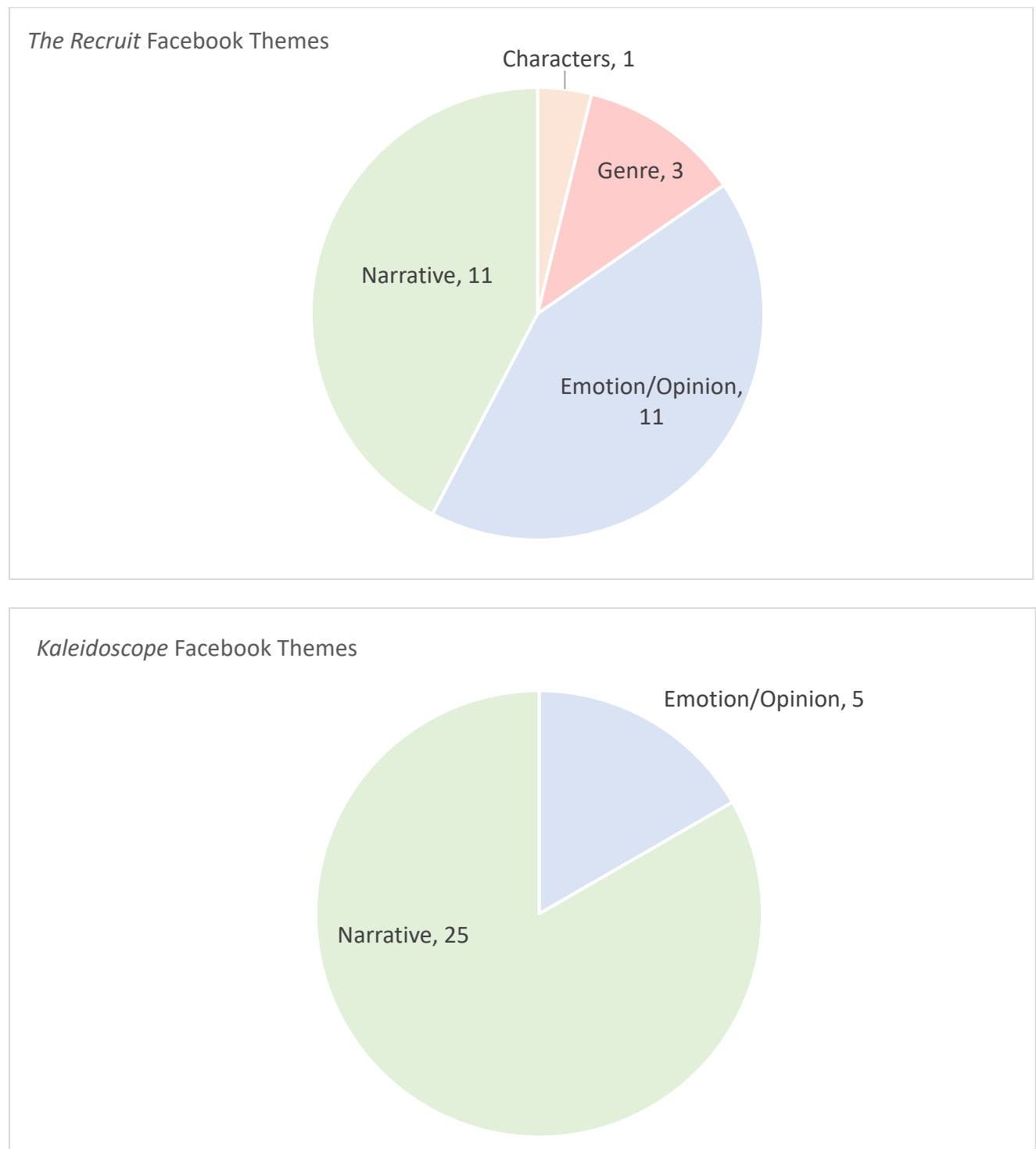
Themes	Codes	Occurrences Across Data
Narrative (29)	series	164
	watch(ing)	143
	Episode	125
	Show	120
	Order	101
	Netflix	94
	Pink	73
	Season	72
	White	70
	Start	54
	Green	52
	Red	42
	Yellow	40
	Blue	38
	End	25
	Time	24
	Way	23
	Black	22
	Random	20
	Try	18
	See	16
	Know	16
	Choose	14
	cliffhanger	10
	renewed	8
	finished	4
	Season 2	4

Themes	Codes	Occurrences Across Data
Emotion/Opinion (13)	Good	106
	Love	85
	Great	53
	enjoy(ed)	26
	Interesting	19
	Like	13
	Need	11
	Funny	9
	awesome	4
	Positive	4
	top-notch	3
	excellent	3
Genre (3)	Action	11
	Humor	5
	CIA	3
Characters (2)	characters	16
	Coming	4

Note. Data from Netflix's (2022) Official U.S. Facebook page from 11/14/2022-1/29/2023

Figure 7

Facebook Audience Engagement Thematic Occurrences Summary Pie Charts



Note. Data from Netflix's (2022) Official U.S. Facebook page from 11/14/2022-1/29/2023.

RQ 3: What are the similarities and differences between the themes of both series' episodic content?

Both *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) had similar themes of actionable characters, narrative structure, and genre in their episodic season and Facebook posts because Netflix was the distributor for both and curated a social media strategy to mimic and imbibe the dramatic genre on all platforms of publicity. However, Netflix promoted *Kaleidoscope* more than *The Recruit* due to increased audience excitement about the varied narrative structure. All 16 episodes from *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) evidenced the recurring themes of the genre, actionable characters, narrative structure, and sub-themes of the plot. *The Recruits* had additional sub-themes of cliffhangers and flashbacks.

The drama genre is defined by four elements: “serious, portray life, tell a story” (p. 38) and inner character conflicts that reoccur throughout the narrative structure during the external conflicts (Reich, 2017). Furthermore, *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) established an essential aspect of dramatic genre storytelling: internal versus external conflict of actionable characters. For example, the thematic analysis of *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) indicated that the protagonist, Owen, feels the void of his veteran father and, despite being an attorney, seeks external validation by putting himself in danger as a CIA officer. His personal and internal family conflict bleeds into his relationship with his boss, peers, friends, and girlfriend while trying to overcome the external obstacles of the drama. Moreover, the results from the thematic analysis of *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) found how the protagonist, Leo, seeks revenge and justice for the disarray his family went through. The external conflict is the act of revenge on his former best friend for framing a robbery, which sent him to prison and caused him to lose his family, but the internal conflict is justice.

Actionable characters from both dramatic series made decisions based on internal and external conflicts that furthered the narrative sequence of events, built suspense, and contributed to the genre. The soundscape, which is not limited to the music or background of the dramatic genre, includes sounds that “heighten the action” (p. 35) of the story to create anticipation of how the characters react (Reich, 2017). Famous dramatic films like *Jaws* used soundscapes to create the suspense of the shark on the hunt (Halon, 2021). Furthermore, ambient noise provides “realism to a scene” (p. 35), where characters seem relatable to audiences (Reich, 2017). *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) evidenced high-drama action sequences with accompanying cinematography, editing, and soundscape.

Both *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) used various shot compositions, but the overall cinematography related to the usage of wide and close-up shots to emphasize the time, place, and location, as the character’s emotions and objectives. Additionally, the narrative structures of the series included cliffhangers instead of resolutions at the end of each episode. Both *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) indicated that recurring themes were found in streaming series due to genre-themed content, suspenseful narrative structure, and actionable characters with internal and external conflicts that curated the storytelling world.

The drama series did not exhibit the same narrative structure. *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) had a sequential order in the eight episodes aligned with the timeline. *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) was marketed as a non-sequential series that can be watched in myriad episodic arrangements based on audience preference for narrative structure. For example, the final episode can be watched first for *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) instead of last, which will still not spoil the suspense, such as actionable character portrayal or genre, because the timeframe of the

narrative spans over 25 years. The nine narrative structure attributes (the setup, inciting incident, or catalyst, point of no return, rising action, midpoint, falling action, lowest point, climax, and resolution) remained constant in the 16 episodes.

However, each of the last episodes from both series includes a cliffhanger instead of a resolution. One critical difference in narrative structures between films and series may be the inclusion of cliffhangers or unresolved conflicts that pose new questions about the narrative instead of a resolution where the audience concludes whether or not the character succeeds in their objective. Streaming series encourages cliffhangers because it expounds upon the characters, storytelling world, and genre to further dramatic suspense in an episodic streaming format. Furthermore, “streaming provided more space to explore characters and develop their attributes in greater depth” (Burroughs, 2018, p. 7).

The resolution or denouement is the end of the story, where audiences gain clarity on the success or failure of the character achieving their goal (Reich, 2017). The last episode of *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) included a cliffhanger to tease the story for season two after the antagonist is killed by her daughter. The last episode of *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) left audiences curious about who got away with the money from the heist since the information was conveyed through the props in the background instead of through dialogue.

RQ 4: What recurring themes appear through audience engagement on Facebook and episodic content for both dramatic series?

Table 14 indicates the overlapping thematic and sub-thematic findings from the Facebook audience engagement series. The overlapping themes of both series' Facebook audience engagement were narrative and audience emotion/opinion. Netflix's official U.S. Facebook post audience comments evidenced themes such as character, genre, narrative audience

emotion/opinion, sub-themes of cliffhangers, anticipation for Season 2, and binge-watching for *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022). *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) was focused primarily on the chronological sequence (narrative framework) and the audience's positive emotions/opinions. Netflix's Official U.S. Facebook strategy focused more content posts for *Kaleidoscope* than *The Recruit* with a 3:2 ratio due to increased audience engagement about *Kaleidoscope*'s non-linear narrative structure. According to the Facebook thematic analysis, viewers were interested in the varied episodic order trending in the written Facebook posts and images. *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) had more pictures in a single post than *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022). Compared to *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022),

Summary

This study triangulated overlapping themes from two dramatic Netflix streaming series and conducted a thematic analysis of the Facebook audience engagement and episodes. The highest viewed streaming series (i.e., sampling size), as indicated by rating data from Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix (2023) top ten charts, were collected for three consecutive months from 11/4/2022-1/29/2023. The top streaming series and subsequent SVOD data were collected and extrapolated through descriptive statistics to filter the highest-viewed dramatic series and SVOD platform. Netflix held the highest viewership for the most popular SVOD, with 80.17% over the three-month study period. As a result of conducting the thematic analysis of the two dramatic Netflix (2022) series, *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023), narrative and audience emotion/opinion played a significant aspect in recurring themes in the Facebook audience engagement. Chapter Five furthers the discussion of the findings, the implications, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Overview

The problem is that popular streaming series extrapolated from rating data have not assessed recurring themes from Facebook audience engagement in current literature. This chapter discussed the importance of thematic analysis of popular streaming series from rating data and the recurring themes from Facebook audience engagement through post comments. While other research mentioned in previous chapters has studied the effects of trending series, the reasoning behind the selection of media has not been clarified or evidenced through rating data. Additionally, this dissertation based its qualitative methodology on the thematic analysis through the theoretical framework of medium and new medium theories to allow the themes to dictate the audience's narrative or perception of the streaming medium and series. Two rating data channels were utilized to find the sampling size of the streaming series, and Facebook audience engagement has been studied to triangulate findings through the narrative design strategy to understand the recurring themes. The four research questions related to the purpose were stated, addressed, and answered through critical thematic analysis.

The relevance of this dissertation is that the reasoning for popular series being approved by entertainment executives solely relies on social media trends and high ranks from rating data instead of qualitative findings from audiences on social media. Nielsen Ratings (2023) was established in 1950 and has been providing rating data for film and television but has since broadened its scaling into streaming media and video games. Other companies, such as ComScore (2022) and Video Amp (2023), provide marketing packages for corporate metric usage. The only other rating systems that utilize audience measurement are Rotten Tomatoes

(2022) and IMDb (2022), but they fail to provide streaming-related rating data on a consistent weekly basis compared to Nielsen Ratings (2023).

Furthermore, companies such as TVision (2022) and iSpot.tv (2022) aims to rival Nielsen Ratings (2023) but again are aimed toward the entertainment marketing corporate aspect for ad generation and fail to measure audience viewership. Despite its limitations and criticisms, Nielsen Ratings (2023) had planned to abide by the protocol and standards of viewership as guided by the Media Rating Council (MRC, 2017). Despite its limitations, Nielsen Ratings (2023) remains the industry staple in measuring audience popularity and viewership while making corporate decisions on which shows get renewed or canceled based on rating data alone. The significance of this study was that rating data provided metrics for viewership. However, this dissertation progressed theory, methodology, and practical implications by evidencing recurring themes from popular series' Facebook audience engagement, which provided qualitative insight into the streaming medium and series. While rating data was utilized to extrapolate popular series for the sampling size, understanding the importance of recurring themes from the series' Facebook audience engagement was crucial. Rating data dictates popular series' numerical ranks and viewership data, but the Facebook audience engagement from the post comments clarifies the recurring themes and the audience's perception of streaming media.

Summary of Findings

Saldaña (2021) stated that themes shape “a coherent, storyline narrative” (p. 479). Therefore, it was essential to understand the overlapping themes in the Netflix drama series' Facebook audience engagement content. Before discussing the findings in-depth, the research question findings from Chapter Four are reiterated.

RQ 1: How can recurring themes from Facebook audience engagement propel genre viewing of streaming series?

Recurring themes from the Facebook audience engagement propelled genre viewing because post comments for *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) indicated audiences' interest through comments about liking the characters, the drama, the CIA premise, crime, and FBI. The most recurring genre themes words from *The Recruit* were action, humor, and CIA, which repeat 11, five, and three times, respectively. Audience comments from *Kaleidoscope* about the crime, heist, and comparisons to other streaming platforms or shows/films such as *1899*, *Star Wars*, *Ocean's Eleven*, Amazon, Hulu, or Apple further emphasized how audiences resonated with the dramatic genre content and discussed it on Facebook.

RQ 2: What are the similarities and differences between the themes of both series' Facebook content?

The thematic analysis of the audience posts comments from Netflix's (2022) official U.S. Facebook account for *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) indicated overlapping themes of narrative structure and audience emotion/opinion. Table 15 depicted that *The Recruit's* (Hawley, 2022) Facebook audience engagement showed recurring themes: narrative, genre, characters, and audience emotions/opinions and sub-thematic findings about cliffhangers, binge-watching, and anticipation of Season 2 or renewals from the Facebook audience engagement. *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) evidenced thematic findings of narrative and audience emotion/opinion and sub-thematic findings of binge-watching, anticipation of Season 2 or renewals, and comparisons to other series/films from the Facebook audience engagement.

The Facebook audience engagement thematic findings for *The Recruit* were:

Thematic Finding # 1: Audience Emotion/Opinion

Thematic Finding # 2: Narrative, Genre, and Characters

Sub-Theme # 1: Cliffhangers and Anticipation for Season 2

Sub-Theme # 2: Binge-watching

The Facebook audience engagement thematic findings for *Kaleidoscope* were:

Thematic Finding # 1: Narrative

Sub-Theme # 1: Binge-watching

Thematic Finding # 2: Audience Emotion/Opinion

Sub-Theme # 2: Anticipation for Season 2

Sub-Theme # 3: Comparison to other series/films

RQ 3: What are the similarities and differences between the themes of both series' episodic content?

The thematic analysis of the two Netflix drama series, *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023), indicated overlapping themes of the genre, actionable characters, and narrative structure in the episodes. Both series were in their first season and had eight episodes. Episodic thematic findings indicated that *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) also had the recurring themes of flashbacks as a sub-theme, but only *The Recruit* had cliffhangers instead of resolutions in every episode. Both series actionable characters had internal and external conflicts to further the plot, which is definitive of the dramatic genre. *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) had a sequential narrative structure, while *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) had a nonsequential narrative structure. Furthermore, Facebook

audience engagement found recurring themes to understand the broader impact of the audience's perception of streaming media.

RQ 4: What recurring themes appear through audience engagement on Facebook for both dramatic series?

The recurring Facebook audience engagement themes for *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) were narrative structure, audience emotion/opinion, and sub-themes such as binge-watching and anticipation for Season 2 or renewals. Audience engagement for *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) indicated conversations about characters, genre, narrative, and audience emotion/opinion. Emotional words like good, enjoyed, love, great, like, need, awesome, positive, funny, and excellent repeatedly throughout the Facebook post comments. Words like love, good, and great were common in both series. Audience engagement was increased for *Kaleidoscope*'s three Facebook posts compared to *The Recruit*'s two posts. Despite the different narrative structures, audiences spoke about the narrative significantly for both series. Additionally, five audience comments from both series reflected audience binge-watching.

Discussion

This qualitative study found substantial evidence from the Facebook audience engagement of popular Netflix series about recurring themes. The four overarching thematic findings of audience emotion/opinion, narrative, characters, and genre from both series were examined in this chapter through a robust discussion. Additionally, the overarching themes' relevance to the sub-themes of binge-watching, anticipation for Season 2 or renewals, cliffhangers, and comparisons to other series/films were discussed to understand recurrences and significance toward streaming media. Because genre, narratives, and characters are intertwined,

they will be discussed holistically instead of separately regarding audience engagement on Facebook. The audience's emotions/opinions from the Facebook post comments are discussed separately.

Impact of the Streaming Medium

Streaming media has disrupted the medium of media consumption and content creation due to its reliance on online technology instead of the device. According to Nielsen Ratings (2023), “Americans streamed more than 15 million years’ worth of video content in 2021” (p.18). The gravitation toward streaming media consumption has caused audiences to cut the cord with traditional TV (Tefertiller, 2018). The binge-watching phenomenon of genre viewing increased due to narrative persuasion, group viewing, and subsequent online communication among audiences, leading to the streaming wars among streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney+, and Amazon Prime Video. This dissertation found that Netflix had the highest viewership from the three-month data collection period and emerged as the streaming giant for this study, which was corroborated by the literature review. *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) are examples of original Netflix series without former IP. Netflix has been pushing the parameters of television time with increased series production, which has caused a multitude of audiences to transition out of cable television and into streaming solely.

This study found that the impact of streaming media is prevalent through the thematic findings of popular Netflix series’ audience engagement on Facebook, where users discussed their views about the series and the platform through primarily positive comments but also critical opinion points. For example, audiences mentioned that they binge-watched a series while running errands, which implies that streaming media is not bound to a physical object but to online technology. The medium is not limited to an object but provides an array of options

through smart devices for audiences to engage in the storytelling atmosphere regardless of their physical location. Narrative persuasion was formerly limited to the medium of the story through books, journals, radio, film, or TV, but streaming media allows audiences to partake seamlessly across time through binge-watching or perpetual viewership across devices. Facebook audiences also shed light on the problem of this study, assessing the recurring themes from Facebook audience engagement of popular Netflix series to understand their perspective about streaming media.

Audience's Emotion/Opinion-Led Themes on Facebook Engagement

Audiences' emotions/opinions were a thematic finding across both series' Facebook engagement because they controlled viewership on streaming media. Specifically for the non-linear narrative structure of *Kaleidoscope*, audience autonomy and their personalized viewing experience remained the main point of Facebook comments. Audiences' emotions and opinions were prevalent in the Facebook engagement of this study because they talked about the dramatic genre, binge-watching across devices, sharing their narrative orders with friends and family, suspenseful cliffhangers, and their anticipation for Season 2 and renewals of both *The Recruit* and *Kaleidoscope* while also comparing them to other series or films. Audiences also co-identified with the characters according to the series' genre and expressed how they would conduct the heist from *Kaleidoscope* if they were on the team or were a CIA operative in *The Recruit*. Understanding the recurring themes of the audience's emotions/opinions on Facebook applied to the Netflix series was essential for academia, but also for how this study can impact how streaming series' decisions are made.

Each character from both series had internal and external struggles relatable for audiences beyond the medium of streaming viewership into a conversation on Facebook. Audiences

repeatedly mentioned characters in Facebook comments to reiterate their favorite because identities aligned. There were positive sentiments from audiences through the Facebook post comments where the top recurring words for *The Recruit* were good, enjoyed, love, great, like, need, awesome, positive, funny, top-notch, and excellent. The top recurring words for *Kaleidoscope* were love, good, great, and interesting. Users gave their opinions and emotional feedback after completing *The Recruit* instead of directly replying to the article on Facebook by users stating: “I liked it, it is really good,” “It is actually a really good series,” “I am halfway through episode one. Love it so far”, “Brilliant series, so many twists. Love it”, and “Loved it! Need another season or many more after that!” (Netflix, December 17, 2022).

Comparing Narrative Structures and Binge-watching

Discussing the nonsequential order of *Kaleidoscope* came with many emotions and opinions about which color episode people were watching first. Some users asked, “Sounds interesting, but does it all conclude at the same place?” (Netflix, November 23, 2022). Users further commented on how much they loved discussing the different orders among friends or people online: “I loved it! Best show!” “I loved it. I let Netflix choose my order. I watched it all in one afternoon.” (Netflix, December 17, 2022). The top recurring words coded and themed as narrative included order, episode, watch, show, episode names, Netflix, time, end, series, random, start, and choose. Audiences extensively discussed not only the narrative order but the genre, characters, and their subsequent emotions or opinions about them. Audiences also posted about which order they preferred to watch the nonsequential series *Kaleidoscope*: “I would love to know the order watched and why that order” (Netflix, January 5, 2023). The most recurring episode mentioned 73 times was the episode “Pink,” which takes place six months after the heist, with the actual heist episode, “White,” mentioned 70 times (Garcia, 2023). It was intriguing that

the term “Green” appeared 52 times because it was one of the flashback episodes (Garcia, 2023).

Facebook users discussed the narrative in the comments:

“Mine started with yellow, then went to green? Guess I will just see where it leads me?”

“Pink kind of gives away what happens in white. My order was yellow, green, blue, orange, violet, red, pink, then white.” “My first one is in pink.”, “Ok, so I will watch Pink last,” “I definitely think Yellow should always be first and white should be last.” (Netflix, January 4, 2023)

Episodes Cliffhangers and Anticipation for Season 2

Cliffhangers were a recurring theme in the episodic and Facebook audience engagement. The comments from users about cliffhangers were about the final episode of *The Recruit* and questions about when Season 2 will air: “When will Season 2 air? Big cliffhanger - enjoyed season 1”. Audiences enjoyed cliffhangers, which created anticipation. In contrast, others did state their frustration and intrigue for future seasons. One user mentioned, “Pretty good series. Why would you end it on a cliffhanger though?” (Netflix, December 19, 2022). Audiences liked how the characters facilitated the plot through unexpected actions or secret intentions being revealed later through cliffhangers: “That cliffhanger was brutal” (Netflix, December 19, 2022). Despite the nonsequential order of *Kaleidoscope*, audiences were engaged and kept guessing what the ending would be: “I watched in the order Netflix played, and it was perfect. I liked seeing the Heist last; it allowed me to be surprised by some elements. I love heist shows/movies, so I enjoyed this personally.” (Netflix, December 17, 2022). Users commented on *The Recruit*:

“I also enjoyed it. Good character-building. It is not too complicated to follow plots—some unexpected twists. I figured out one twist ahead of time (the main twist), but the

rest kept me on my toes. I enjoyed seeing some familiar faces appear in the show. Hoping for season 2.” (Netflix, December 19, 2022).

Implications

The most important implication of this dissertation study is that the entertainment industry can replicate and utilize the methodology to find prevalent themes in dramatic series’ recurring Facebook audience engagement. The findings will assist in future content creation based on measurable reoccurring themes and audience engagement on popular streaming series from rating data. Additionally, understanding how audience engagement in streaming media has led to increased online communication is critical. The theoretical implications discussed the theoretical framework, the shift from TV towards streaming, and Craig’s (1999) traditions. The methodological implications expanded upon the rationale for the qualitative thematic analysis to assess the Facebook audience engagement and how this study advanced research methods and could impact future studies. Additionally, the practical implications of this study could affect academic research through entertainment industry applications about streaming media.

Theoretical

This study expanded medium theory by finding that the medium of streaming media and the new medium of social media allowed global audience autonomy, independence, and a personalized viewing experience. The interactive storytelling format of *Kaleidoscope* allowed audiences to have a varied and repeat viewership, which would not have been possible on traditional TV viewership due to the wait time for broadcast re-runs. Additionally, audiences shared the ritual of co-viewing, and independent viewers were amplified by discussing their emotions and opinions about characters, the narrative structure, genre, and their experience with binge-watching, cliffhangers, anticipation for Season 2, and comparisons to other series/films

through Facebook comments about both series. The primary medium of consumption through streaming media led to secondary conversations on social media through the Facebook platform due to the social interaction and integration of the new medium theory.

Medium Theory

McLuhan's (1964) medium theory had pertinent implications for this dissertation because it is "not the machine, but what one does with the machine, that was its meaning or message" (p. 9). Technology supersedes the medium in which it is presented. Because the entire series of episodes for *The Recruit* and *Kaleidoscope* were presented simultaneously, audiences did not have to wait for upcoming episodes. They could immediately share their emotions or opinions about anticipation for Season 2, cliffhangers, and binge-watching on Facebook. Facebook audiences posted their review right after they completed binge-watching.

This study advanced the medium theory by evidencing recurring themes across both series about audience engagement on Facebook, where conversations about streaming media occurred. Additionally, the word series occurred 164 times across data sets for both series as the most repeated word, which means that audiences spoke about the medium significantly.

McLuhan's (1964) medium theory implied that machines alter interpersonal relationships and communication. The medium or machine of streaming series altered the interpersonal relationships and communications between audiences on Facebook.

This dissertation found that the theoretical implication applied because people were tagging their friends and family on Facebook by sharing the two Netflix drama series and engaging in dialogue about their preferred narrative structure for *Kaleidoscope*. Furthermore, streaming media would be defined as hot media because the medium does not indicate audience participation. However, Facebook audience engagement would be considered cold media

because of the social interaction and integration of two-way communication between users. The medium of viewership, or Netflix, was mentioned 94 times and signified that audiences did not view the series as independent artifacts but always linked to the streaming medium. The audience spoke about the themes concerning the Netflix platform and streaming series medium. This dissertation advanced the medium theory by providing thematic findings of audiences speaking about the medium or streaming platform, Netflix, the series format of the show, and their relation to the overarching themes and sub-themes.

New Medium Theory

This dissertation progressed the new medium theory due to the social interaction and integration approach evidenced by the Facebook audience comments. Poster (1995) defined the second media age where “speech penetrates everywhere replaces its content” (p. 6) where it can be implied that the speech of streaming and social media has infiltrated audience conversations. While former mediums of communication such as radio were defined as “one-way transmission” (p. 8) by Poster (1995), social media interactions about streaming media allow the creator and the consumer to engage in two-way communication channels. According to new medium theory, unlike traditional TV, streaming media is not an isolated fragment but rather an integrative interaction that bleeds into a secondary new medium of communication, such as social media (Holmes, 2005). Audiences viewed media through the primary medium of streaming series on Netflix and conversed about the series on a secondary channel, Facebook. This dissertation advanced new medium theory by bridging Facebook audience engagement about the two media ages: streaming series and social media.

Holmes’ (2005) social interaction and social integration of new medium theory applied to this study because it presents a possible relationship between audience consumption of

streaming media and subsequent engagement and interaction on Facebook. The second media age stage applied because the streaming series are multi-lateral in terms of the conversation that begins on the streaming platform but lingers into the social integration and interactions on Facebook post comments. Furthermore, the difference between the sequential and nonsequential nature of *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) allows the streaming service to be decentralized, user-dependent, and promote individuality, which are essential parts of the social interaction and social integration of new medium theory which were advanced through this study. New media mediums create interactive and personalized communication through Web 2.0 and social interaction (Siebel & Rice, 2019). The user-generated data from the series' audience Facebook post comments and provided recurring themes across the online conversations. Furthermore, understanding how netnography through cyberculture creates conversations about primary media sources is essential to understanding the potential relationship between secondary media communication (Lévy, 2001).

TV vs. Streaming

Streaming media has taken over traditional TV and become synonymous with binge-watching, which was evident from the literature review and thematic findings of the Facebook audience engagement of this study. Social media interactions and audience discussions show how the media landscape has changed from TV to streaming. Streaming media has emerged as the dominant force in the media entertainment industry by exceeding and infringing on radio, cable TV, and movie theaters. This dissertation found that the audience's emotions and opinions fuel their conversations about binge-watching, cliffhangers, or anticipation for Season 2. The Facebook audiences commented about binge-watching the Netflix series due to easy accessibility through any smart device, the genre, characters, and the availability of the entire season.

According to Table 7, the most recurring word for both series from the Facebook engagement was series, which occurred 164 times across the data. The words show and Netflix occurred 120 and 94, respectively, across data. This study found that audiences spoke about how they all related to the medium of streaming series instead of naming the series titles. Furthermore, audiences could engage in conversations online about their experience so that at-home streaming did not become an isolated event but a starting point of online communication. The medium shift from TV to streaming allowed audiences to have uninterrupted viewership and immediate conversation online through a virtual community with minimal downtime. Additionally, the binge-watching phenomenon evident through the Facebook audience engagement of this study may further encourage entertainment executives to invest in streaming content distribution rather than theatrical releases or TV series.

While the medium of streaming media addressed the theoretical implications, it was also critical to understand how both series' narrative structures were prevalent talking points among Facebook audiences. Both series did not exhibit the same narrative structure because *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) was promoted and released in sequential order, while *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023) was promoted as a non-sequential series, which piqued audience interest. Furthermore, the commonality between *The Recruit* episodes is that the resolution or last aspect of the narrative structure was all cliffhangers, which kept audiences interested in what would happen next and became a key discussion point in the Facebook comments. The Facebook audience engagement indicated that audiences had a predominantly positive reaction to the series' cliffhangers, which led to subsequent anticipation for Season 2. However, some were concerned that Netflix would cancel the new series and wanted to know that their time investment in the streaming series would not go to waste. This dissertation was essential to communication and media studies

because it found the recurring themes to understand the impact of streaming media and dramatic series on Facebook audience engagement and communication.

Impact on Craig's (1999) Traditions

Sociocultural Tradition. The sociocultural tradition applied to this dissertation because Facebook represents a sub-culture among social media networks and online communication. The demographics of Facebook audience engagement are vastly different than those of Instagram, Twitter, or TikTok users because of the audio-visual medium. The age range of Facebook users and its subsequent interface allow more conversational comments based on photos, videos, or articles. Audience communication between Instagram users is short and contains many emojis instead of conversation. Additionally, the thematic analysis was more conducive to assessing the Facebook audience conversations because there is an 8,000-character maximum for comments, which created the most extensive database for the categorization of themes versus 280 characters max for Twitter or 2,200 characters on Instagram (Chaires, 2021; Summa, 2022). Furthermore, because this dissertation focuses on the Facebook audience engagement in Netflix drama series, it is crucial to understand how the cultural impact of streaming media affects communication in social media pop culture.

Additionally, the sociocultural norm of traditional TV viewership has drastically shifted toward streaming media. Social media is the principal place where audience conversations about streaming media take place, and therefore, a cultural shift has occurred; people used to wait for written or verbal reviews about films or TV from film critics to now, directly reading from audiences' perspectives about the streaming media itself. The sociocultural impact of streaming media and subsequent audience engagement on Facebook implies audience autonomy and reliance on each other instead of the entertainment industry's validation of streaming content.

Audiences read the top Facebook comments about new shows or watch videos of audience reviews online to choose their media engagement and whether or not they participate in the individual or group viewing experience and global online communication about that specific Netflix series. The sociocultural tradition had significant implications for this dissertation because the conversations about Netflix series are happening online, where audiences take control of their opinions and rely on each other for validation, suggestions, and expression of their individual and group viewing experiences.

Sociopsychological Tradition. The sociopsychological tradition had implications for this dissertation because of the Facebook audience engagement through “expression, interaction, and influence” (Craig, 1999, p. 143). The sociopsychological tradition through Facebook audience engagement indicated that online communication about popular Netflix series did not require face-to-face interaction. However, the technological medium of streaming and subsequent online communication allowed audience interdependability and mediation through multiple communication channels, either “one-to-one, one-to-many or many-to-many” (Craig, 1999, p. 143). Furthermore, the recurring themes from both popular Netflix series evidenced audience emotion and opinions in both positive and negative comments where the audiences’ indicated their “psychological predispositions” (p. 143) about emotions, opinions, and anticipation through social interactions on Facebook (Craig, 1999).

The sociopsychological tradition implied the cause-and-effect nature of Facebook audience engagement in the Netflix drama series. The audience engagement through the recurring theme of emotion and opinion implied their personality, views, feelings, and verdicts based on the Netflix drama series. Furthermore, the audience's conversations about the recurring themes of narrative structure, characters, genre, binge-watching, cliffhangers, comparisons to

other series/films, and anticipation for Season 2 implied the group consensus about the Netflix series and streaming media overall. Additionally, the sociopsychological tradition had significant implications for this study and media communication scholarship because Facebook audiences spoke about how they binge-watched on their phone while running errands or re-watched different narrative structures of *Kaleidoscope* with family and friends (Netflix, January 4, 2023). The implications of streaming media indicated the multi-lateral usage due to the medium being the technology instead of a TV device. Furthermore, the global impact of streaming is perpetuated through the implication of social media, allowing global communication to happen about the same Netflix series. Sociopsychological tradition is implicated in this dissertation because “communication is short” (Craig, 1999, p. 143) on Facebook, and users can influence each other’s emotions and opinions about the series, streaming, narrative, characters, or genre.

How This Dissertation Progresses Theory

This dissertation progresses theory through the implications of understanding how audiences communicate online about the streaming medium. Medium and new medium theories relate to Craig’s (1999) sociopsychological tradition due to the cause-and-effect relationship between audiences engaging in Netflix drama series and their interaction and engagement on Facebook. This dissertation progresses theory through reflexivity because “communication there helps to create the phenomena that they purport to explain” (Craig, 1999, p. 125). The medium and new medium theories depicted the sociopsychological tradition through audiences’ “expression, interaction, and influence” (Craig, 1999, p. 133) in their Facebook comments about the Netflix drama series. This dissertation provided the recurring themes from the Facebook audience interactions about the Netflix series that provided implications for the medium of streaming media and its possible relationship with audiences.

Methodological

The implications of the qualitative narrative design study indicated that a thematic analysis was an apt methodology to assess recurring themes from Facebook audience engagement. This dissertation advanced methodology by utilizing a thematic analysis to understand the themes across Facebook audience engagement from popular series from rating data, which has not yet been done through peer review. Because the audience post comments were deemed the study participants, understanding the themes they were discussing helped address the significance of the study to find recurring themes amidst Facebook audience engagement on Netflix drama series. The dissertation advanced thematic analysis methodology in addressing the problem of finding the recurring themes through the most recurring words from the Facebook posts, which were categorized and coded for themes. The themes were identified through a thematic analysis to scrape the Facebook comments, code, and categorize as themes to answer the research question, but also further communication qualitative methodology to understand the overarching themes in online communication about streaming media. Understanding how audiences related to the themes of audience emotion/opinion, genre, characters, narrative, or sub-themes of binge-watching, anticipation for Season 2, cliffhangers, or comparison to other series/films was critical to understanding how they socially interacted with the medium of streaming media.

The qualitative methodology of the thematic analysis advanced research by identifying the most recurring words from the Facebook audience engagement to understand the recurring themes from the topic of conversation. Tags and common words were removed to understand the crux of the social media conversation clearly. The methodology furthered the qualitative process by scraping the Facebook post comments and identifying the top 30 words from each of the

series' posts to extrapolate the most recurring words. It was essential to conduct a thematic analysis to identify further the recurring themes about the Netflix series that resonated with audiences on Facebook. This dissertation furthered qualitative methodology by conducting a thematic analysis of Facebook audience engagement of popular Netflix drama series to identify recurring themes through potential relationships that could be studied with participants in the future. The social media conversations had important themes and sub-themes that can assist in understanding how audiences perceive the series and how they react to the content provided to them.

Understanding how audiences react and comment by comparing two dramatic Netflix series with different narrative structures was telling about how audiences engaged in more conversation about their autonomy and personalized viewing experience. The methodology aided in understanding that the point of conversation about the Netflix series became more personal and subjective due to the varied narrative structure of *Kaleidoscope* compared to *The Recruit*. The methodology found that the increased conversations occurred based on shared viewpoints on the Netflix platform, series format, and the sequence of episodes through co-viewing, but also critiques about not presenting an episodic order, which would spoil the dramatic climax of *Kaleidoscope*.

The methodology assessed the most recurring words to categorize and code them into themes. However, the microscopic analysis came from identifying the sub-themes of binge-watching, which was prevalent for both series, and understanding what aspects of the series' overarching theme, such as character identification, genre depiction, or narrative storytelling, encouraged continued Facebook engagement about viewership. This dissertation furthered methodology to thematically assess popular series from rating data by identifying recurring

themes in the audience's Facebook engagement. Furthermore, this dissertation validated findings through the recurrence and repetition of themes found from Facebook audience comments from both Netflix series to strengthen the qualitative research design. This dissertation was necessary from a methodological standpoint because significant gaps within the current literature do not address the prevalent themes of Facebook audience engagement from popular series from rating data. The methodology from this study aided in providing the framework for future studies to elaborate further.

This dissertation was inspired by other qualitative studies based on rating data and social media thematic analyses. However, it had increased efforts at validity through triangulation: extrapolating rating data from two sources, Nielsen Ratings (2023) and Netflix's (2022) top ten charts, and a thematic analysis of Facebook audience engagement and episodes. Other content analysis qualitative studies compared one rating data source with one or two social media channels. The most similar methodology would be Prakash and Wenger's (2020) study about newscast rating data and Facebook posts to find their correlations with viewership and engagement. While the methodology is similar, the studies have used a single rating data source to identify the possible relationship between the media source and audience engagement. This dissertation utilized the two rating data sources to extrapolate the highest-viewed streaming series to find the overlapping themes in Facebook audience engagement. The methodology from this study could be repeated and progressed through quantitative studies with participants in the future.

Practical

This dissertation's practical implication lies in the series streaming medium, which allows a unique personalized viewing experience. For example, viewers may choose to watch the

episodes of *Kaleidoscope* in various ways, unlike traditional TV, leading to secondary communication through Facebook post comments. This study found that audience choice in non-linear series leads to audience engagement and communication on social media platforms. The color-themed episode names from *Kaleidoscope* indicated the series's timeline and gave audiences the power to choose if they prefer dramatic narratives in an ascending, descending, or randomized order. The unique non-linear narrative structure is only possible due to the streaming medium instead of traditional cable TV or theatrical viewing. Although comparisons were made to *Star Wars* and *Ocean's Eleven* by Facebook audiences about *Kaleidoscope*, social media allowed quicker communication about various orders instead of simply waiting to watch films in a different order or for re-runs to be broadcast on TV. Internet availability, subscription, flexibility, and variety are available on streaming media only and place the viewers in control of the narrative instead of being led to a conclusion through the director's vision in the traditional theatrical or TV format.

Furthermore, audience empowerment on Netflix increased community interaction on Facebook, where *Kaleidoscope* was significantly more talked about in three posts than *The Recruit* was in two. The Facebook audience post comments discussed and debated the narrative structure of *Kaleidoscope* due to its non-linear format and various viewing experiences that allow the audience's preferences and perceptions of the characters, genre, and narrative to be subjective instead of objective. People talked about their favorite characters, how the genre kept them hooked through the binge-watching phenomenon and cliffhangers for both series, anticipation for Season 2, and their critiques about what could have been better. The social media implication for this dissertation implies that the conversation about the primary media, the

Netflix episodes, has become a subjective matter of opinion in the secondary mode of communication, Facebook, based on the individual viewer experience.

There were also comments about Netflix's algorithm suggestions, which differed in the randomized order for each user and shaped their unique viewing experience. While some audiences loved that *The Recruit* had cliffhangers throughout the series and in the finale, many were upset because they did not know if Netflix would renew a new show and felt like their time and energy might be wasted by investing in the narrative and characters' progression. Additionally, the global impact of Netflix as the dominant streaming platform engaged comments in Spanish from viewers about Season 2 and the engaging narrative across comments. Having international conversations on Facebook about Netflix series is significant because it indicates that the genre, characters, cliffhangers, binge-watching, and anticipation from Season 2 directly impact audience engagement through their emotions and opinions discussed online. The streaming medium is taking social media conversations towards global outreach.

This study's most significant practical implication remains that, compared to traditional TV, audiences control their narrative experience. The ability to choose the timeline in which the drama is revealed was deemed empowering and impactful to audiences beyond the traditional TV linear storytelling format. Additionally, the streaming medium allows the audience to binge-watch due to the lack of commercials, which disrupts the narrative engagement in traditional TV formats. The importance of streaming media is the ability to take an isolated event of watching a series at home without the traditional group or co-viewing experience of theatrical attendance into an interactive storytelling experience where the remote control can dictate the narrative instead of simply following it. The most important practical implication is that the medium of streaming media allows viewer empowerment through the autonomy of not only series but also

episode selection through non-linear narrative structures. Audiences can choose how and when to start or stop a show based on their reliability to the characters, genre, or plot, and they can pace themselves to either watch the series slowly or binge-watch to reduce the risk of spoilers online or in anticipation of Season 2 and discuss through the social integration and interaction approach through Facebook post conversations.

Understanding why the highest-ranked streaming series are viewed through a thematic analysis of Facebook audience engagement is crucial. Several practical implications emerged from the study, bridging the gap between media and scholarship. It was interesting that the audience's Facebook engagement evidenced sub-thematic findings of cliffhangers and anticipation for Season 2 because both series have been scheduled for upcoming seasons. The impact of online communication about Netflix series and high popularity from rating data may have a potential relationship. Netflix confirmed that *The Recruit* is set to be renewed for Season two based on the high ratings and social media popularity; creators were excited to see “how invested our audience became in the show’s adventurous take on the spy world” (Thao, 2023, para. 5). Additionally, according to Nelson (2023), *Kaleidoscope* is also set to have a season renewal. The Facebook audience post comments evidenced thematic findings of genre, characters, narrative, and audience emotion/opinions. Findings from this dissertation may be valuable to the creative team to find overlapping themes that continue to resonate with Facebook audiences and create content for season two.

Hollywood executives rely on rating data with the rank, the number of minutes watched, the highest viewed SVOD, and the series name to decide which shows are renewed or canceled. The communication theories have real-life entertainment industry implications through rating data. For example, the cable-tv show *S.W.A.T.* was canceled by executives after six seasons on

cable TV but renewed after the series became available on Netflix with 625 million minutes viewed from May 15-21, 2023 (Hailu, 2023, para. 1). While the methodology of rating data had limitations, its power to quantify audience viewership drives executive decisions based on creative media projects, especially series renewal. While Hollywood media publications such as *Hollywood Reporter*, *Variety*, and *Deadline* make assumptions based on rating data, social media trends, or “summer comfort watching as fewer new TV projects make their debuts” (para. 4), it is imperative to media scholarship and better due process of the entertainment industry to try to find the recurring themes across audience engagement online to create better content that resonates with audiences (Hailu, 2023).

Bridging the Gap Between Media and Scholarship

This dissertation aimed to bridge the knowledge gap to find recurring themes of popular streaming shows as indicated by rating data through their episodic and Facebook audience engagement. While other studies have assessed why certain shows are trending on social media or are famous, they do not address how rating data quantifies them. Nielsen Ratings is still the industry staple in validating media's popularity based on reports from *Hollywood Reporter*, *Variety*, and *Deadline* (Hailu, 2023; Maas, 2022; Porter, 2022). The significance of this dissertation provided the opportunity for media studies to apply to the broader range of media. This study aimed to contribute to the present scholarship and provide an incentive for future studies to address how rating data is utilized to make executive decisions based on a qualitative thematic analysis of Facebook audience engagement of two popular Netflix drama series, *The Recruit* (Hawley, 2022) and *Kaleidoscope* (Garcia, 2023).

Delimitations and Limitations

The limitations of this study are studying two Netflix series and looking at audience engagement from a single platform, Facebook. It also analyzed audience engagement from five Facebook posts. Analyzing more series and audience engagement across multiple social media platforms may provide further insights.

Future Research

Due to the interesting themes I discovered through this study, future recommendations would be to conduct a quantitative study with participants. Additionally, collecting more than two streaming series from the most popular series and more than one social media channel would provide a further scope of investigation. Further investigation into the netnography will uncover the recurring themes to understand if the binge-watching phenomenon and subsequent online exchange occur between generational preferences. Because binge-watching and anticipation for Season 2 were common sub-thematic findings from this study, it is prudent to assess with participants through a quantitative study.

Summary

This dissertation addressed the problem in entertainment and media scholarship: assessing recurring themes from Facebook audience engagement of popular Netflix series. Triangulation of the literature review and Facebook audience engagement thematic analysis found recurring themes in the audience post comments, which were narrative and audience emotions/opinions. Viewers were interested in the varied narrative structure. This study found the answers to the research questions and posed suggestions for future studies based on the participant studies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Nielsen Ratings (2023) Top 10 Series Data Collection

Nielsen Ratings (2023) Top 10 Series Data Collection					
Week	Rank	Series	SVOD Provider	# of Episodes	Minutes (Millions)
11/14-20/2022 (Collected on 12/19)	1	<i>The Crown</i>	Netflix	50	1,777
	2	<i>Dead to Me</i>	Netflix	30	1,390
	3	<i>Manifest</i>	Disney +	52	1,284
		<i>Where the Crawdads</i>			
	4	<i>Sing</i>	Netflix	1	1,092
	5	<i>1899 (2022)</i>	Netflix	8	925
	6	<i>Cocomelon</i>	Netflix	18	860
	7	<i>Slumberland (2022)</i>	Netflix	1	651
	8	<i>Yellowstone</i>	Peacock	37	643
	9	<i>NCIS</i>	Netflix	339	642
	10	<i>Greys Anatomy</i>	Netflix	396	639
11/21-27/2022 (Collected on 12/21)	1	<i>Wednesday (2022)</i>	Netflix	8	5,988
	2	<i>Dead to Me</i>	Netflix	30	1,464
	3	<i>1899 (2022)</i>	Netflix	8	1,109
	4	<i>The Crown</i>	Netflix	50	1,109
	5	<i>Slumberland (2022)</i>	Netflix	1	1,057
	6	<i>Manifest</i>	Netflix	52	988
	7	<i>NCIS</i>	Netflix	339	811
	8	<i>Yellowstone</i>	Peacock	38	736
	9	<i>The Noel Diary</i>	Netflix	1	707
	10	<i>Cocomelon</i>	Netflix	18	702
11/28-12/04/2022 (Collected on 1/4)	1	<i>Wednesday (2022)</i>	Netflix	8	5,326
	2	<i>Firefly Lane</i>	Netflix	19	967
	3	<i>Dead to Me</i>	Netflix	30	898
	4	<i>Troll (2022)</i>	Netflix	1	880
	5	<i>Cocomelon</i>	Netflix	18	873
	6	<i>The Crown</i>	Netflix	50	814
	7	<i>Crime Scene: The Texas Killing Fields</i>	Netflix	3	737
	8	<i>NCIS</i>	Disney +	339	705
	9	<i>Bullet Train (2022)</i>	Netflix	1	701
	10	<i>Manifest</i>	Netflix	52	680
	1	<i>Wednesday</i>	Netflix	8	3,335

Nielsen Ratings (2023) Top 10 Series Data Collection					
Week	Rank	Series	SVOD Provider	# of Episodes	Minutes (Millions)
12/05-11/2022 (Collected on 1/6/2023)	2	Firefly Lane	Netflix	19	1,361
	3	Bullet Train (2022)	Netflix	1	1,345
	4	Harry & Meghan (2022)	Netflix	3	1,265
	5	Cocomelon	Netflix	18	945
	6	NCIS	Netflix	339	885
	7	The White Lotus	HBO Max	13	752
	8	Friends	HBO Max	235	737
	9	Yellowstone	Peacock	40	726
	10	Gilmore Girls	Netflix	153	628
12/12-18/2022 (Collected on 1/13)	1	Wednesday	Netflix	8	2,157
	2	Harry & Meghan (2022)	Netflix	6	1,690
	3	Cocomelon	Netflix	18	959
	4	NCIS	Netflix	339	941
	5	The Recruit (2022)	Netflix	8	925
	6	The White Lotus	HBO Max	13	902
	7	Prisoners (2013)	Netflix	1	857
	8	Friends	HBO Max	235	723
	9	Criminal Minds	Hulu	328	672
	10	Firefly Lane	Netflix	19	672
12/19-25/2022 (Collected on 1/25)		Glass Onion: A Knives			
	1	Out Mystery	Netflix	1	2,225
	2	Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan	Prime Video	24	1,834
	3	Wednesday	Netflix	8	1,797
	4	The Recruit (2022)	Netflix	8	1,695
	5	Emily in Paris	Netflix	30	1,389
	6	Cocomelon	Netflix	18	991
	7	Home Alone	Disney+	1	926
		How the Grinch Stole			
	8	Christmas	HBO Max	1	864
12/26-01/01/2023 (Collected on 1/27)	9	Elf	HBO Max	1	836
	10	NCIS	Netflix	339	804
		Glass Onion: A Knives			
	1	Out Mystery	Netflix	1	2,886
	2	Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan	Prime Video	24	1,665
	3	Wednesday	Netflix	8	1,660
	4	Emily in Paris	Netflix	30	1,354

Nielsen Ratings (2023) Top 10 Series Data Collection					
Week	Rank	Series	SVOD Provider	# of Episodes	Minutes (Millions)
01/2-8/2023 (Collected on 02/02)	5	<i>Yellowstone</i>	Peacock	39	1,042
	6	<i>The Recruit (2022)</i>	Netflix	8	953
	7	<i>Cocomelon</i>	Netflix	18	932
	8	<i>The Witcher: Blood Origin</i>	Netflix	4	912
	9	<i>Matilda the Musical (2022)</i>	Netflix	4	839
	10	<i>Treason (2022)</i>	Netflix	5	790
	1	<i>Ginny & Georgia</i>	Netflix	20	2,520
	2	<i>Kaleidoscope</i>	Netflix	8	1,635
	3	<i>Wednesday (2022)</i>	Netflix	8	1,033
	4	<i>Cocomelon</i>	Netflix	18	960
	5	<i>Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery</i>	Netflix	4	935
	6	<i>Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan</i>	Prime Video	24	918
	7	<i>The Walking Dead</i>	Netflix	177	905
	8	<i>Yellowstone</i>	Peacock	39	750
	9	<i>The Pale Blue Eye</i>	Netflix	1	729
	10	<i>Emily in Paris</i>	Netflix	30	727
01/9-15/2023 (Collected on 02/9)	1	<i>Ginny & Georgia</i>	Netflix	20	2,730
	2	<i>The Walking Dead</i>	Netflix	177	1,429
	3	<i>Vikings: Valhalla</i>	Netflix	16	1,025
	4	<i>Cocomelon</i>	Netflix	18	919
	5	<i>Wednesday (2022)</i>	Netflix	8	810
	6	<i>NCIS</i>	Netflix	339	737
	7	<i>New Amsterdam</i>	Netflix/Peacock	64	673
	8	<i>Kaleidoscope</i>	Netflix	8	670
	9	<i>Friends</i>	HBO Max	235	648
	10	<i>Bluey</i>	Disney+	114	646
01/16-22/2023 (Collected on 02/17)	1	<i>Ginny & Georgia</i>	Netflix	20	1,804
	2	<i>That 90's Show</i>	Netflix	10	1,590
	3	<i>The Walking Dead</i>	Netflix	177	1,103
	4	<i>Vikings: Valhalla</i>	Netflix	16	975
	5	<i>Cocomelon</i>	Netflix	18	885
	6	<i>The Last of Us</i>	HBO Max	2	837
	7	<i>Wednesday (2022)</i>	Netflix	8	711

Nielsen Ratings (2023) Top 10 Series Data Collection						
Week	Rank	Series	SVOD Provider	# of Episodes	Minutes (Millions)	
	8	<i>Bluey</i>	Disney+	114	695	
	9	<i>NCIS</i>	Netflix	339	695	
	10	<i>Criminal Minds</i>	Various	330	659	
01/23-29/2023 (Collected on 02/25)	1	<i>You People (2023)</i>	Netflix	1	1,576	
	2	<i>Ginny & Georgia</i>	Netflix	20	1,299	
	3	<i>The Walking Dead</i>	Netflix	177	1,037	
	4	<i>That 90's Show</i>	Netflix	10	963	
	5	<i>Cocomelon</i>	Netflix	18	929	
	6	<i>The Last of Us</i>	HBO Max	3	877	
	7	<i>Shotgun Wedding</i>	Prime Video	1	872	
	8	<i>NCIS</i>	Netflix	339	760	
	9	<i>The Big Bang Theory</i>	HBO Max	265	641	
	10	<i>Grey's Anatomy</i>	Netflix	396	640	
Ratings-Films=Series	Total			7,960	126,973	
	Films (removed from the study)			17	19,249	
	Series			7,943	107,724	
	Total Number of Series			31		
Nielsen Ratings Total	1	<i>Wednesday (2022)</i>	Netflix	56	19,360	60.15% Comedy -Horror
	2	<i>Ginny & Georgia</i>	Netflix	80	8,353	25.95% Comedy -Drama
	3	<i>The Walking Dead</i>	Netflix	708	4,474	13.90% Drama
	4	<i>Dead to Me</i>	Netflix	90	3,752	11.66% Comedy
	5	<i>The Crown</i>	Netflix	150	3,700	11.50% Drama
	6	<i>The Recruit (2022)</i>	Netflix	24	3,573	11.10% Drama
	7	<i>Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan</i>	Prime Video	48	3,499	10.87% Drama
	Total		844	32,187	100.00%	

Appendix A. Data collection from Nielsen Ratings (2023) during 11/14/2022-01/29/2023.

Appendix B. Netflix (2022) Top 10 Series Data Collection**Netflix (2022) Top 10 Series Data Collection**

Week	Rank	Series	Hours Viewed
11/14-20/2022	1	<i>The Crown: Season 5</i>	84,310,000
	2	<i>1899: Season 1</i>	79,270,000
	3	<i>Manifest: Season 4</i>	35,730,000
	4	<i>Dead to Me: Season 3</i>	30,300,000
	5	<i>Warrior Nun: Season 2</i>	27,740,000
	6	<i>Manifest: Season 1</i>	25,940,000
	7	<i>Ancient Apocalypse: Season 1</i>	24,620,000
	8	<i>Warrior Nun: Season 1</i>	20,100,000
	9	<i>From Scratch: Limited Series</i>	19,880,000
	10	<i>Love is Blind: Season 3</i>	19,310,000
11/21-27/2022	1	<i>Wednesday: Season 1</i>	341,230,000
	2	<i>1899: Season 1</i>	87,890,000
	3	<i>The Crown: Season 5</i>	42,360,000
	4	<i>Dead to Me: Season 3</i>	33,330,000
	5	<i>Manifest: Season 4</i>	21,600,000
	6	<i>Manifest: Season 1</i>	15,010,000
	7	<i>Pepsi, Where's My Jet?: Limited Series</i>	14,160,000
	8	<i>Manifest: Season 3</i>	12,260,000
	9	<i>Warrior Nun: Season 2</i>	11,970,000
	10	<i>Dead to Me: Season 1</i>	11,940,000
11/28-12/04/2022	1	<i>Wednesday: Season 1</i>	411,290,000
	2	<i>1899: Season 1</i>	44,620,000
	3	<i>Firefly Lane: Season 2</i>	29,010,000
	4	<i>The Crown: Season 5</i>	27,790,000
	5	<i>Crime Scene: The Texas Killing Fields: Limited Series</i>	23,880,000
	6	<i>Dead to Me: Season 3</i>	19,540,000
	7	<i>Manifest: Season 4</i>	15,380,000
	8	<i>Blood & Water: Season 3</i>	12,690,000
	9	<i>Manifest: Season 1</i>	11,660,000
	10	<i>Little Angel: Volume 1</i>	11,180,000
12/05-11/2022	1	<i>Wednesday: Season 1</i>	269,670,000
	2	<i>Harry & Meghan: Limited Series</i>	81,550,000
	3	<i>Firefly Lane: Season 2</i>	50,350,000
	4	<i>1899: Season 1</i>	27,530,000
	5	<i>Firefly Lane: Season 1</i>	20,940,000
	6	<i>Too Hot to Handle: Season 4</i>	20,430,000
	7	<i>The Crown: Season 5</i>	18,900,000
	8	<i>Snack vs. Chef: Season 1</i>	13,870,000

Netflix (2022) Top 10 Series Data Collection

Week	Rank	Series	Hours Viewed
12/12-18/2022	9	<i>Dead to Me: Season 3</i>	11,900,000
	10	<i>Manifest: Season 4</i>	10,540,000
	1	<i>Wednesday: Season 1</i>	173,960,000
	2	<i>Harry & Meghan: Limited Series</i>	97,710,000
	3	<i>The Recruit: Season 1</i>	52,300,000
	4	<i>Too Hot to Handle: Season 4</i>	37,830,000
	5	<i>Sonic Prime: Season 1</i>	27,720,000
	6	<i>Firefly Lane: Season 2</i>	26,570,000
	7	<i>1899: Season 1</i>	17,850,000
	8	<i>The Crown: Season 5</i>	13,200,000
12/19-25/2022	9	<i>Don't Pick Up the Phone: Season 1</i>	10,780,000
	10	<i>Firefly Lane: Season 1</i>	10,660,000
	1	<i>Wednesday: Season 1</i>	118,540,000
	2	<i>Emily in Paris: Season 3</i>	117,610,000
	3	<i>The Recruit: Season 1</i>	95,590,000
	4	<i>Harry & Meghan: Limited Series</i>	39,740,000
	5	<i>Sonic Prime: Season 1</i>	26,410,000
	6	<i>Too Hot to Handle: Season 4</i>	16,640,000
	7	<i>The Witcher: Blood Origin: Limited Series</i>	15,870,000
	8	<i>I AM A KILLER: Season 4</i>	15,820,000
12/26-01/01/2023	9	<i>Firefly Lane: Season 2</i>	14,200,000
	10	<i>Emily in Paris: Season 1</i>	11,500,000
	1	<i>Wednesday: Season 1</i>	103,960,000
	2	<i>Emily in Paris: Season 3</i>	95,330,000
	3	<i>The Witcher: Blood Origin: Limited Series</i>	64,520,000
	4	<i>Treason: Limited Series</i>	56,060,000
	5	<i>The Recruit: Season 1</i>	43,360,000
	6	<i>Harry & Meghan: Limited Series</i>	22,530,000
	7	<i>Emily in Paris: Season 2</i>	15,210,000
	8	<i>Emily in Paris: Season 1</i>	14,550,000
01/2-8/2023	9	<i>Sonic Prime: Season 1</i>	13,400,000
	10	<i>Firefly Lane: Season 2</i>	12,770,000
	1	<i>Ginny & Georgia: Season 2</i>	180,470,000
	2	<i>Kaleidoscope: Limited Series</i>	112,320,000
	3	<i>Wednesday: Season 1</i>	81,340,000
	4	<i>Emily in Paris: Season 3</i>	47,780,000
	5	<i>Ginny & Georgia: Season 1</i>	44,370,000
	6	<i>The Recruit: Season 1</i>	23,580,000
	7	<i>MADOFF: The Monster of Wall Street: Limited Series</i>	23,030,000

Netflix (2022) Top 10 Series Data Collection

Week	Rank	Series	Hours Viewed
01/9-15/2023	8	<i>Treason: Limited Series</i>	18,460,000
	9	<i>The Witcher: Blood Origin: Limited Series</i>	17,610,000
	10	<i>New Amsterdam: Season 1</i>	14,800,000
	1	<i>Ginny & Georgia: Season 2</i>	162,720,000
	2	<i>Ginny & Georgia: Season 1</i>	63,230,000
	3	<i>Wednesday: Season 1</i>	57,820,000
	4	<i>Vikings: Valhalla: Season 2</i>	55,350,000
	5	<i>Kaleidoscope: Limited Series</i>	46,570,000
	6	<i>Vikings: Valhalla: Season 1</i>	25,500,000
	7	<i>Emily in Paris: Season 3</i>	25,040,000
01/16-22/2023	8	<i>New Amsterdam: Season 1</i>	18,160,000
	9	<i>The Walking Dead: Season 11</i>	17,940,000
	10	<i>The Recruit: Season 1</i>	13,430,000
	1	<i>Ginny & Georgia: Season 2</i>	87,400,000
	2	<i>Vikings: Valhalla: Season 2</i>	55,530,000
	3	<i>Wednesday: Season 1</i>	45,740,000
	4	<i>Ginny & Georgia: Season 1</i>	43,290,000
	5	<i>That '90s Show: Season 1</i>	41,080,000
	6	<i>Vikings: Valhalla: Season 1</i>	25,370,000
	7	<i>Kaleidoscope: Limited Series</i>	22,990,000
01/23-29/2023	8	<i>Emily in Paris: Season 3</i>	15,550,000
	9	<i>New Amsterdam: Season 1</i>	14,640,000
	10	<i>The Walking Dead: Season 11</i>	11,800,000
	1	<i>Ginny & Georgia: Season 2</i>	55,610,000
	2	<i>Wednesday: Season 1</i>	35,860,000
	3	<i>Ginny & Georgia: Season 1</i>	31,140,000
	4	<i>That '90s Show: Season 1</i>	26,250,000
	5	<i>Vikings: Valhalla: Season 2</i>	25,120,000
	6	<i>Lockwood & Co: Season 1</i>	25,120,000
	7	<i>New Amsterdam: Season 1</i>	14,320,000
Total	8	<i>Bling Empire: New York: Season 1</i>	14,280,000
	9	<i>Bake Squad: Season 2</i>	13,040,000
	10	<i>Kaleidoscope: Limited Series</i>	12,110,000
Total			5,139,620,000

Appendix B. Data collection from Netflix (2022) during 11/14/2022-01/29/2023.

Appendix C. Netflix (2022) Top 10 Series Summary**Netflix (2022) Top 10 Series Summary**

Rank	Series	Hours Viewed	% Ave.
1	<i>Wednesday: Season 1</i>	1,639,410,000	32.03%
2	<i>Ginny & Georgia: Season 2</i>	486,200,000	9.50%
3	<i>Emily in Paris: Season 3</i>	301,310,000	5.89%
4	<i>1899: Season 1</i>	257,160,000	5.02%
5	<i>Harry & Meghan: Limited Series</i>	241,530,000	4.72%
6	<i>The Recruit: Season 1</i>	228,260,000	4.46%
7	<i>Kaleidoscope: Limited Series</i>	193,990,000	3.79%
8	<i>The Crown: Season 5</i>	186,560,000	3.65%
9	<i>Ginny & Georgia: Season 1</i>	182,030,000	3.56%
10	<i>Vikings: Valhalla: Season 2</i>	136,000,000	2.66%
11	<i>Firefly Lane: Season 2</i>	132,900,000	2.60%
12	<i>The Witcher: Blood Origin: Limited Series</i>	98,000,000	1.91%
13	<i>Dead to Me: Season 3</i>	95,070,000	1.86%
14	<i>Manifest: Season 4</i>	83,250,000	1.63%
15	<i>Too Hot to Handle: Season 4</i>	74,900,000	1.46%
16	<i>Treason: Limited Series</i>	74,520,000	1.46%
17	<i>Sonic Prime: Season 1</i>	67,530,000	1.32%
18	<i>That '90s Show: Season 1</i>	67,330,000	1.32%
19	<i>New Amsterdam: Season 1</i>	61,920,000	1.21%
20	<i>Manifest: Season 1</i>	52,610,000	1.03%
21	<i>Warrior Nun: Season 2</i>	39,710,000	0.78%
22	<i>Vikings: Valhalla: Season 1</i>	50,870,000	0.99%
23	<i>Firefly Lane: Season 1</i>	31,600,000	0.62%
24	<i>Emily in Paris: Season 1</i>	26,050,000	0.51%
25	<i>Lockwood & Co: Season 1</i>	25,120,000	0.49%
26	<i>Ancient Apocalypse: Season 1</i>	24,620,000	0.48%

Netflix (2022) Top 10 Series Summary

Rank	Series	Hours Viewed	% Ave.
27	<i>Crime Scene: The Texas Killing Fields: Limited Series</i>	23,880,000	0.47%
28	<i>MADOFF: The Monster of Wall Street: Limited Series</i>	23,030,000	0.45%
29	<i>Warrior Nun: Season 1</i>	20,100,000	0.39%
30	<i>From Scratch: Limited Series</i>	19,880,000	0.39%
31	<i>Love is Blind: Season 3</i>	19,310,000	0.38%
32	<i>The Walking Dead: Season 11</i>	17,940,000	0.35%
33	<i>I AM A KILLER: Season 4</i>	15,820,000	0.31%
34	<i>Emily in Paris: Season 2</i>	15,210,000	0.30%
35	<i>Pepsi, Where's My Jet?: Limited Series</i>	14,160,000	0.28%
36	<i>Bling Empire: New York: Season 1</i>	14,280,000	0.28%
37	<i>Snack vs. Chef: Season 1</i>	13,870,000	0.27%
38	<i>Blood & Water: Season 3</i>	12,690,000	0.25%
39	<i>Bake Squad: Season 2</i>	13,040,000	0.25%
40	<i>Manifest: Season 3</i>	12,260,000	0.24%
41	<i>Dead to Me: Season 1</i>	11,940,000	0.23%
42	<i>The Walking Dead: Season 11</i>	11,800,000	0.23%
43	<i>Little Angel: Volume 1</i>	11,180,000	0.22%
44	<i>Don't Pick Up the Phone: Season 1</i>	10,780,000	0.21%
Total		5,117,660,000	100.00%

Appendix C. Data collection from Netflix (2022) during 11/14/2022-01/29/2023.

Appendix D. Viewership Chart

Series (Season):	<i>The Recruit</i> (Season 1)	
SVOD:	Netflix	
Date(s):	03/04/2023; 03/11/2023	03/05/2023; 03/12/2023
Episode(s) Watched:	1-4	5-8
Duration of each episode (minutes):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Episode 1: 51 minutes • Episode 5: 51 minutes • Episode 2: 58 minutes • Episode 6: 54 minutes • Episode 3: 54 minutes • Episode 7: 58 minutes • Episode 4: 57 minutes • Episode 8: 56 minutes 	
Total Duration (minutes):	220 minutes + 219 minutes = 439 x 2 = 878 minutes	
Series (Season):	<i>Kaleidoscope</i> (Season 1)	
SVOD:	Netflix	
Date(s):	03/31/2023; 4/08/2023	04/01/2023; 4/09/2023
Episode(s) Watched:	1-4	5-8
Duration of each episode (minutes):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yellow: 47 minutes • Violet: 47 minutes • Green: 44 minutes • Red: 35 minutes • Blue: 46 minutes • Pink: 55 minutes • Orange: 51 minutes • White: 46 minutes 	
Total Duration (minutes):	188 minutes + 183 minutes = 371 x 2 = 742 minutes = 12 hours and 22 minutes	

Appendix D. Data was collected from the Netflix platform (Garcia, 2023; Hawley, 2022).

Appendix E. Narrative Structure Outline**I. Act One:**

1. Set Up: The opening act puts up the crucial dramatic components, topics, and concerns addressed in the story but are not limited to a particular occurrence.
2. Inciting Incident and Catalyst: An event that may be a finding and, secondly, a realization that sets off the central action and has an immediate impact on the protagonist, motivating them to act.
3. Point of No Return: The protagonist decides to pursue a goal. It entails deciding to act. Although the choice is not shown on the screen, it is evident that there is no going back from this point on. The main character is dedicated to achieving his goals.

II. Act Two:

1. Rising Action: The protagonist tries to accomplish the goal by acting, but these efforts are hampered by obstacles that upset, impede, and keep the desired outcome out of range.
2. Midpoint: The protagonist thinks victory has been attained, but things turn around, or their luck changes.
3. Falling Action: Any action of the protagonist fails, heightening the suspense.
4. Lowest Point: All appears doomed. The protagonist is forced to face the central problem or topic. A significant choice must be made, followed by the climax.

III. Act Three:

1. Climax: Peak emotional pinnacle; all or nothing.
2. Resolution: Issues in the narrative are addressed; anything that remains is questioned.

Appendix E. Outline of narrative structure as defined by Reich (2017).

Appendix F. Facebook Audience Engagement Summary

Series	Facebook Post	Likes	Comments	Shares	Scraped Comments	Top 30 Words
<i>The Recruit</i>	Facebook Post 1	2,100	90	49	73	30
	Facebook Post 2	394	73	23	73	30
	Facebook Post 1	647	53	56	42	30
	Facebook Post 2	27,000	26,000	42,000	200	30
<i>Kaleidoscope</i>	Facebook Post 3	553	203	107	203	30
	<i>The Recruit Summary</i>				146	30
	<i>Kaleidoscope Summary</i>				445	30
	Total				591	210

Appendix F. Data collection from Netflix's (2022) official Facebook page from 11/14/2022-01/29/2023.

Appendix G. Facebook Audience Engagement Thematic Coding Sheet

Narrative	Characters	Emotion/Opinion	Genre			
Top 30 Recurring Words/Codes of Audience Engagement from Facebook						
The Recruit			Kaleidoscope			
Facebook Post 1	Facebook Post 2	Series Total	Facebook Post 1	Facebook Post 2	Facebook Post 3	Series Total
series - 24	season - 22	series - 39	involved - 4	series - 71	order- 47	series - 125
good - 20	show - 21	watch(ing) - 41	amazing - 2	watch - 60	episode- 57	order - 101
watch(ing) - 26	good - 18	good - 38	watch - 2	order - 54	watch- 40	episode – 106
season - 17	series - 15	season - 39	Gus - 2	episode - 49	show: 36	watch - 102
enjoy(ed) - 17	watch - 15	enjoy(ed) - 26	interesting - 2	Netflix - 48	Pink- 36	show - 88
love - 14	character(s) - 11	love - 24	sounds - 2	good - 44	start- 30	Netflix - 75
show - 11	wait - 11	show - 32	cousin - 2	White - 40	White- 30	Pink - 73
Netflix - 11	love - 10	Netflix - 19	character - 2	show - 38	Green - 27	White - 70
episode - 10	enjoy - 9	episode - 19	mind - 1	Pink - 37	Netflix - 26	love - 61
great - 9	episode - 9	great - 18	bent - 1	love - 35	good - 25	start - 54
started - 8	great - 9	started - 8	1899 - 1	season - 33	like - 22	Green - 52
really - 7	Netflix - 8	really - 7	IMDb - 1	enjoy - 27	Red - 19	good - 68
like - 7	start - 7	like - 13	jigsaw - 1	Green-25	end - 17	Red - 42
need - 6	fun - 7	need - 11	Netflix - 1	Blue - 25	Yellow - 16	Yellow - 40
far - 6	action - 6	far - 6	cancel - 1	Yellow - 24	time - 15	Blue - 38
action - 5	comedy - 6	action - 11	horrible - 1	Red - 23	way - 14	great - 35
humor - 5	like - 6	humor - 5	state - 1	great - 18	series - 14	season - 33
characters - 5	cliffhanger - 6	characters - 16	arts - 1	like - 17	Blue - 13	end - 25
renewed - 4	hope - 6	renewed - 8	sound - 1	start - 15	love - 12	time - 24
awesome - 4	story - 5	awesome - 4	system - 1	go - 12	Black - 11	way - 23

Narrative	Characters	Emotion/Opinion	Genre			
Top 30 Recurring Words/Codes of Audience Engagement from Facebook						
The Recruit			Kaleidoscope			
Facebook Post 1	Facebook Post 2	Series Total	Facebook Post 1	Facebook Post 2	Facebook Post 3	Series Total
top - 4	need - 5	top - 8	coworkers - 1	Black - 11	great - 10	Black - 22
positive - 4	spy - 5	positive - 4	center - 1	random - 10	random - 10	random - 20
finished - 4	funny - 5	finished - 4	channel - 1	time- 9	try - 10	interesting - 19
Season 2 - 4	better - 5	Season 2 - 4	caption - 1	way: 9	episode - 9	try - 18
coming - 4	annoying - 5	coming - 4	option - 1	end- 8	interesting - 9	know - 16
cliffhanger - 4	tough - 5	cliffhanger - 10	Amazon - 1	interesting - 8	know - 9	see - 16
funny - 4	ending - 5	funny - 9	Apple - 1	try- 8	see - 9	choose - 14
CIA - 3	bring - 4	CIA - 3	Hulu - 1	know- 7	start - 9	amazing - 2
top-notch - 3	short - 4	top-notch - 3	fragrance - 1	see- 7	go - 8	mind - 1
excellent - 3	renewed - 4	excellent - 3	BBW - 1	choose- 7	choose- 7	bent - 1
Totals						
1	1	1	5	0	0	0
11	11	11	3	6	5	4
3	5	3	6	0	0	0
13	12	13	9	0	0	26
2	1	2	7	24	25	0
30	30	30	30	30	30	30



Appendix G. Data collection from Netflix's (2022) official Facebook page from 11/14/2022-

01/29/2023.

Appendix H. *The Recruit Facebook Audience Comment Highlights*

Themes	<i>The Recruit Facebook Audience Comment Highlights</i>
Narrative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is actually a really good series 2. Just finished watching it 3. Just to started to watch this 4. The trailer was all I needed to see on this one. 5. Loved it! Need another season or many more after that! 6. Just another failed endeavor with Strike one, two, and three all rolled into one season! 7. I really hate to start any new Netflix shows since they cancel them left and right. This one looked good but not taking the risk of being invested then it getting canceled. 8. If only the Netflix app would work constantly on my TV. 9. Just watched all episodes. Really enjoyed this. I hope they keep it going. I am really tired of watching new shows just to have Netflix cancel them. 10. Awesome show!! 11. Watched e1,didn't go crazy over it. Though the acting and storyline was so-so.Not sure if I'm going to continue. 12. Excellent Series! Top-notch everything 13. Was so good 14. Great series! 15. Good show 16. This is a great series! 17. It's getting some bad reviews, but we thought it was fun. 18. What a silly show. 19. THIS SHOW IS AMAZING 20. Excellent show. Watch it if you can... 21. Couldn't even get through the first episode. 22. You can go ahead and set this on the Five-Year plan. Get the writers going now. Secure the main actors. Keep it coming. This is both a fun and intelligently written series. 23. It's good so far 24. This series is FUN!
Audience Emotion/Opinion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This is really good and funny. 2. I'm actually halfway through episode one. Love it so far 3. I'm trying to watch this, but there's no hook for me. It all seems too familiar. He's good though. Right in that middle of the lane of relatable everyman and Teen Beat cover guy.

Themes	<i>The Recruit</i> Facebook Audience Comment Highlights
Audience Emotion/Opinion	<hr/> 4. Love it! 5. Loving this series 6. aaaand it's canceled, Netflix-style 7. Interesting 8. Cool 9. Did not like it at all 10. I liked it, it's really good. But with Netflix canceling track record I'm hesitant to love it. You get all attached and then they chop it off 11. Gonna start watching this today. I've seen nothing but positive comments so far. 12. Im just glad for any real good entertaining series 13. This is the show I was talking about last night. 14. I got through the first episode of this dumb series and then packed it in. 15. Immediately loved the show. 16. I like this show 17. Buenicima 18. Loving the series so far 19. Good series but too short to enjoy from it 20. Terrible 21. I'm watching this series and I love it! 22. Honestly, so good! <hr/>
Genre	<hr/> 1. Brilliant series, so many twists. Love it 2. How about giving Lana Condor some good leading actor shows and movies and aren't rom-coms? 3. I just started watching it and its good so far. I love the unexpected action and the humor 4. It def pulled me in. I wonder how accurate the party about everyone being suspicious is each other at the CIA 🤔 Like, "I can't hear you, I can't hear you!" Lol. I don't trust them anyway..... 5. I would NOt ID Pass, Spy versus Spy, 6. Ah yes, propaganda for the naive kids. Stay classy, Netflix. 7. We liked it.. kinda quirky w/ enough action to make it good. We like the characters A lot, but seriously, those fellow co-workers. 8. And I took the aptitude test, but I'm afraid I can't divulge the results. 9. Was really good until the last episode, then it got stupid - the whole ex-girlfriend tracking CIA lawyer is just lame. 10. Started this last night; quirky and funny in parts - right up my alley! 11. Says I'm in ... @CIA, when you sending the black ops chopper to get me? <hr/>

Themes	<i>The Recruit</i> Facebook Audience Comment Highlights
Genre	<p>12. I also enjoyed it. Good character building. Not too complicated to follow plots. Some unexpected twists. I figured out one twist ahead of time (the main twist), but the rest kept me on my toes. Enjoyed seeing some familiar faces appear in the show. Hoping for season 2</p> <p>13. it gets better</p> <p>14. serious and comedy all in one! bring on season 2!</p> <p>15. There were a lot more questions when I applied.</p>
Actionable Characters	<p>1. It's hard to describe, but Def getting a play off of Suits "Mike Ross" vibe... Just not as good of a hook, but Def creative; just struggling to find it interesting enough atm.... Will see how it goes</p> <p>2. He's like if Mark Ruffalo had a kid.</p> <p>3. I just started watching it and its good so far. I love the unexpected action and the humor</p> <p>4. Step aside kids. I've been recruited</p> <p>5. We liked it kinda quirky w/ enough action to make it good. We like the characters A lot, but seriously those fellow co- workers.</p> <p>6. He's come a long way from his traumatic brain injury</p> <p>7. Who is this guy?</p> <p>8. I can't take him seriously</p> <p>9. he needs to learn fight and used a gun</p> <p>10. He came in Black Adam</p> <p>11. I've been recruited</p> <p>12. Easy watch but a little annoying in parts. Need him to be a little bit tougher considering he is in the CIA regardless of being a lawyer. But did figure out the girl when she showed up. I'm sure y'all will cancel it since it ended on such a cliffhanger but hope you don't.</p> <p>13. Netflix any role for me?</p>
<i>Sub-themes</i>	
Anticipation of Season 2 and Cliffhangers	<p>1. I loved it, more please...Don't leave us hanging on too long for next season. :)</p> <p>2. When will Season 2 air? Big cliffhanger - enjoyed season 1</p> <p>3. Just finished an im hoping for a second season!!</p> <p>4. Such a great show when is season 2 coming</p> <p>5. I loved it! Can't wait for season 2.</p> <p>6. Sooooo Season 2?</p> <p>7. Great show, cannot wait for season 2!</p> <p>8.  this needs a season 2!</p> <p>9.  Needs a season 2</p> <p>10. I'm ready for season 2.</p> <p>11. Redeemed itself at the end. I will watch season 2.</p>

Themes	<i>The Recruit</i> Facebook Audience Comment Highlights
Anticipation of Season 2 and Cliffhangers	<hr/> 12. Awesome series can't wait for season 2 13. Good show!!! Hope they do season 2 14. Me encanto!!!! Ya quiero la 2! 15. Finished today can't wait for season 2 16. I passed I can't wait for season 2 17. Was a good series will watch season 2 18. Great series! Hopefully it will be renewed! 19. I need season 2!!! 20. Pretty good series. Why would you end it on a cliffhanger though? You cancel most of your series after the 1st season. The least you could have done was actually give this one an ending. You know, just in case. 21. serious and comedy all in one! bring on season 2! 22. That cliffhanger was brutal. 23. Me gustó, ojalá saquen la segunda temporada 24. Season 2 ...PLEASE!!!! 25. One of the best shows !!! Bring on Season 2 <hr/>
Binge-watching	<hr/> 1. He seems like a good enough dude, enjoy him in Black Adam. Will binge this show later. 2. Binged all 8 episodes...was really good 3. Watched the whole season in 1 day. Now if only Netflix could put out a new season in less than a year instead of 2 years later like all the other shows. 4. Binged in one day. It was super cute, interesting, and funny. Enough action to keep the guys focused 5. Started this evening. It is 'eh' for me 6. So, when do I start? 7. I'm watching it this weekend! <hr/>

Note. Data was collected from public comments on Netflix's official Facebook page (2023) from 11/14/2022-01/29/2023. Out of 146 total comments, 106 were coded while eliminating comments that only tagged others, were irrelevant to the series, or were external links.

Appendix I. Kaleidoscope Facebook Audience Comment Highlights

Themes	<i>Kaleidoscope Facebook Audience Comment Highlights</i>
Narrative (Structure)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why am I being involved in a crime? 2. Sounds interesting. I will be checking it out 3. Sounds interesting, but does it all conclude at the same place? 4. IMDb says it's called Jigsaw. 5. And a day later, Netflix will cancel it. 6. this looks really good! 7. My cousin plays the FBI character. 8. How is that working out FOR YOU!? 9. I guess we can follow the 1st one since we started with Violet 10. I watched mine out of order; however, no matter what order the white one is to be last, it's the finale.... 11. we should watch this 12. here is that show you mentioned yesterday 13. take your pick 14. let's try this show next! 15. Mine started with yellow, then went to green?! Guess I'll just see where it leads me?! 16. This seems like a bunch of work, I'll pass 17. I thought there was an episode that's supposed to go last. 18. Sarah already has found the order she wants to go but I'll make sure she sees these 19. It's on my list..but if I have to participate in the movie, not doing that..I'll watch as is, and if I can't follow, I'll watch something else 20. I enjoyed the show. I do, however, not understand how white is supposed to be last vs. pink. Pink kind of gives away what happens in white. 21. My order was yellow, green, blue, orange, violet, red, pink, then white. 22. Maybe it was because pink came directly before white, but I felt let down by white because it wasn't an "ending" like pink had. 23. Based on what you watch, Netflix determines the order me, and a friend compared, and she had different order than I did. 24. Great series! I went with the order Netflix presented to me, which was green, yellow, and violet. Orange, blue, red, pink, white. Definitely want to check it out again in chronological order.

Themes	<i>Kaleidoscope</i> Facebook Audience Comment Highlights
Narrative (Structure)	25. This is making me intrigued to watch it now. Guess I'll watch in...
	Whatever order Netflix gives me, I'll gamble a bit
	26. I watched and HATED my order. Wish I saw this first
	27. So far... black, green, yellow... I'll make sure to save white and red for last lol... good show.
	28. I think yellow should be first. Gives you a little intro into who everyone is. Netflix gave me yellow first, and I'm glad
	29. I'm watching the order Netflix put them. It seems fine!
	30. Probably canceled already knowing Netflix
	31. If Netflix is giving different orders to everyone, is it just random, or is it based on your past viewing habits?
	32. Ok, I'm about to watch this. My 1st one is in pink.
	33. i been seeing this show for days now, and you can watch the episodes in any order, a lot of people were saying end it with white, but I guess it doesn't matter. I'm intrigued
	34. I'm too lazy to do this .. I'm just watching in default
	35. I'm watching the way it was intended. Decided at random by Netflix, but these are helpful.
	36. I thought there was an episode that's supposed to go last.
	37. I am totally intrigued by this. I wonder if there is a rhyme or reason to what order they are listed on specific Netflix accounts? I just pulled mine up, and they are listed as Green, yellow, orange, blue, violet, red, pink, and white.
	38. Does Netflix randomize it per user, or is it up to us to watch it and choose the randomness ?
	39. I went in order. Thought it was great. It references history and present in some episodes, so I wonder if changing the order would be confusing.
	40. I found what we can watch today! Which order should we pick?
	41. I watched from the heist backward all odd number episodes, then I watched all the even. Still makes sense
Audience Emotion/Opinion	1. I just watched as they came up. The last episode was the most entertaining. I kinda hope there will be more series where there's no order.
	2. I think you mentioned this one to me
	3. G, Y,V,O,B,W,R,P I like a little mystery mix with a little background. I think 7 years before is a good start 🇵🇭, I liked having

Themes	<i>Kaleidoscope</i> Facebook Audience Comment Highlights
Audience Emotion/Opinion	a choice of episodes. Out-of-chronicle order made it more interesting IMO.
	4. I loved it! Best show!
	5. this is the show I was telling you about
	6. I love lists
	7. Hard to get into
	8. Enjoying this very much.
	9. this was the show I was talking about.
	10. I liked the show, but I don't know why alternate episode orders are needed. They don't add a damned thing.
	11. the classic detective story order blew our minds a little bit
	12. Really glad I remembered R.O.Y. G. B.I.V. this long for this one particular instance.
	13. I didn't like this show at all and now seeing this post, it makes it all the worse. If I had seen this before the show, it would have so stopped me from watching it and would have def saved me my time.
	14. I watched it in the order it was listed and I am so glad I did. This was really good.
	15. You see this? Apparently, you can watch the show in weird order? doesn't make sense to me, but I didn't watch it so I figured I'd tag you.
	16. I was disappointed that my mom started on the same episode I did. I did thoroughly enjoy it, though!
	17. Finished the series the other day. I want my time back. I was robbed more than the triplets
	18. And none of these is the order I watched it in. I watched in the order Netflix gave me because I had no idea about the concept 🤔 oh well enjoyed it regardless
	19. I watched in the order Netflix played and it was perfect. I liked actually seeing the Heist last it allowed me to be surprised by some elements.
	20. I love Heist shows/movies so I enjoyed this personally. Is it something I'd watch again? Probably not but I enjoyed it still.
	21. Stupid gimmick.
	22. None though I guess a gimmick has gotten some people to watch it. Not something that interests me.

Themes	<i>Kaleidoscope</i> Facebook Audience Comment Highlights
	<p>23. I would love to know the order watched and why that order. We watched in this order B, ROY G BPV, W. Black is the intro, ROY G BIV just needed to replace the I so we watched pink there and then White at the end.</p> <p>24. Tried it, gave up and turned it off.</p>
<i>Sub-themes</i>	
Binge-watching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wow this would've been helpful before I binged it in order 2. I've forgotten the order to watches it in already, but it worked. I binged while at the car dealership getting an oil change and brakes. 3. Well dang! I'm on the last episode now lol 4. Wow this would've been helpful before I binged it in order 5. Okay so math people, how many different orders can you binge all the episodes in a row? 6. I loved it I let Netflix choose my order I watched it all in one afternoon. 7. Finished last night. Four episodes in a row. Good show folks. 8. when are we doing this?!?! Here's all the orders we can do! 9. Almost done watching. Got green, yellow, blue, violet, and currently on orange 10. Ours automatically started us at 6 weeks before 11. I thought this was a good show! I watched again in different order 12. I'm going reverse chronological because it seemed the most chaotic. 13. Information that would have been helpful YESTERDAY! 14. This would've been helpful last night bc I watched white immediately 15. Great show. I'm going to rewatch in chronological order. 16. it's gonna take forever to watch this!! I'm ready! 17. I have one episode left. I think I'm gonna have to rewatch in the correct order 18. I think it's a good idea I like it, started watching yesterday 19. OMG! Thank you ! Such a great idea ! Love this, I need to rewatch in order to see if it makes a difference in the story. 20. If mine started with purple I'd have never finished the first episode. It took me 4 times on as many different days to get through it. If I wasn't already invested I would not have finished it.

Themes	<i>Kaleidoscope</i> Facebook Audience Comment Highlights
Spoilers and Anticipation of Season 2 Spoilers and Anticipation of Season 2	21. But they have so many ways to watch it. Lol. How bout we watch in every way
	1. Is this a movie or series? Cause I need the second season confirmed before I commit ... I'm still cranky about 1899 2. Let season 2 start :) 3. Season 2? Netflix 4. White and pink should be the last two! 5. thanks for the spoiler alert. 6. I did notice the end left some dangling characters so I hope there will be MORE!!!! 7. We need more series like these! 8. I wish I ended with pink 9. I don't think red and pink should be before white, it ruins it. 10. I enjoyed the show. I do, however, not understand how white is supposed to be last vs. pink. Pink kind of gives away what happens in white. 11. My order was yellow, green, blue, orange, violet, red, pink, then white. 12. Maybe it was because pink came directly before white, but I felt let down by white because it wasn't an "ending" like pink had. 13. I read somewhere you can enjoy them in any order. Is this accurate? Or will it cause confusion and give away spoilers? 14. Yessss girl best way to watch it!!! I'm sorry if I saw pink anywhere else but last I'd be so mad! 15. Definitely Pink & White last.. the other order didn't really matter to us 16. Ehhh.. i cant imagine watching pink 1st.. glad i watched it last 17. Was pretty easy to follow along, but I do have a couple of questions! 18. exactly how i watched it except the end went white pink 19. they gave me pink first.... I'm like the end, y'all gave me the end first?d 20. I should have not watched pink first... 21. Yes! A lot is revealed imo. 22. This was my order and while I really enjoyed it, my daughter hated it.

Themes	<i>Kaleidoscope</i> Facebook Audience Comment Highlights
Comparison to other series/films	23. She was fine up until Red and Pink, but because we had seen what happens after the heist, and she realizes that not everything is tied up in a neat bow, she had no interest to watch the actual heist. Because she "knew how it ended". (And was pissed off).
	24. I like messy endings, so I thought it was very well done.
	1. Sounds too complicated for this tired brain! On a good note, The Recruit was really good and you watch it the order it plays
	2. after watching Money Heist, I thought it was boring too. Don't think I'll get past the first episode
	3. I love Money Heist!
	4. The very first sentence tells you where you are in the timeline. It reminded me of 'Ocean's Eleven' where they did things & then later showed you how!!
	5. If Giancarlo Esposito is involved, I'm in. He's amazing.
	6. We must all watch if Gus is involved!
	7. Giancarlo Esposito. Das'IT.
	8. My mind is still bent from 1899.
	9. This serie was amazing !!! I saw one similar in paramount and I love it !
	10. I thought this was Star Wars.
	11. Why is Netflix sound so horrible. I have a state of the arts sound system and it still sounds bad. I have now talked to 5 other coworkers who say the same thing. They say the center channel is so bad they have to turn on the caption option on to understand what's going on. This is not the same with any other app including Amazon, Apple, Hulu, etc.
	12. This totally reminds me of watching Pulp Fiction on Laserdisc and programming the chapters so the movie played out in linear time.
	13. It's a twist on those choose your own adventure books we read as kids, except the outcome is the same either way.

Note. Data was collected from public comments on Netflix's official Facebook page (2023) from 11/14/2022-01/29/2023. Out of 446 total comments, 123 were highlighted in the table while eliminating comments that only tagged others, were irrelevant to the series, or were external links.