

## **Serial skipper: Netflix, binge-watching and the role of paratexts in old and new ‘televisions’**

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### **Abstract:**

The rise of alternative distribution channels for TV has popularised the intensive consumption of TV series. The term *binge-watching* is now strongly associated with the reception of television shows available on streaming platforms, with Netflix representing the most notable provider. This particular service encourages ‘marathon viewing’ as standard user behaviour. It does so by an interface that represents a television series as one among countless others to be binged as soon and as fast as possible, presenting the user with a steady supply of new content to follow the last binge. Even more significantly, Netflix endorses marathon viewing through its playback mode, wherein various kinds of paratexts deriving from linear television are systematically omitted (like the episodic recap), minimised (like programming links in-between broadcasts), or rendered expendable (like opening credits by options such as the ‘skip intro’-button). These paratexts have long been an integral part of television and of the TV series itself. On Netflix, they are re-introduced and reshaped as part of an ongoing process of changing televisual protocols in the context of new technologies and industry developments. By the systematic reduction and skipping of those serial links and thresholds – which provide new kinds of televisual flow – Netflix implements specific guidelines and viewing instructions which, while not totally dissimilar from those associated with traditional television, help to transform the medium of television. My case study of Netflix Germany’s<sup>1</sup> interface and treatment of paratexts analyses how crucial textual elements of traditional television programming are reworked in order to re-educate the platform’s users to become media bingers and savvy ‘serial skippers.’

**Keywords:** binge-watching, media marathoning, ‘televisions,’ streaming platforms, Netflix, paratexts, recaps, opening credits, end credits

## Introduction

In the 2000s binge-watching, or ‘media marathoning,’<sup>2</sup> has become a fairly common if not a dominant mode of media consumption (Perks 2015, x) that is particularly tied to television series on the one hand and to streaming media on the other. The latter have made available a vast number of TV series, including those originally broadcast in an episodic, intervallic mode, for the continuous kinds of reception represented by bingeing. A major part of Netflix’s content consists of fictional series explicitly promoted to be binge-watched. This promotion applies not only to syndicated ‘traditional’ television series broadcast originally on a weekly basis with commercial breaks, but also to Netflix’s own original productions that are released in the ‘full-drop’ mode and hence can be binged immediately. The fact that streaming platforms are now producers of serial content, rather than mere distributors (Jenner 2016, 261), has reshaped the overall reception culture of television series. The increased tendency towards the marathon viewing of TV series is cultivated by so-called ‘convenience technologies’ as well as by specific ‘media engagement patterns,’ both enabling and demanding non-linear practices of media consumption (Perks 2015, xi). The en-bloc publication of serial content and the instant availability of complete seasons strongly contrast with traditional ideas of ‘flow,’ in which an episode of a TV series is but one part of a sequence of different programs. Instead of watching a series within a periodically and segmentally organised television schedule with commercial breaks and weekly intermissions, today’s media users are accustomed to self-scheduling marathon sessions through web-based content offerings (ibid, xxviii), most commonly streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon, and Hulu.

This shift in distribution practices and viewing behaviours concerning television series suggests that the medium of television itself has changed. According to Amanda Lotz, *television* has to be considered in a plural sense of the term, since, for several decades now, there have been multiple technologies, channels, and platforms offering TV content, thus diversifying uses of the medium (Lotz 2007, 78). Indeed, today’s ‘televisions’ (ibid) are heterogeneous, diverging from one another technologically, economically, and aesthetically, as well as in production, distribution, and reception strategies. As a medium, television seems to be in constant transition and transformation, evolving and adapting to new technological possibilities, distribution practices, and user demands (Mikos 2016, 159; Lotz 2018). Making this state-of-affairs additionally complex, old and new modes coexist and frequently contrast with one another. It might be hard, then, to see common ground between the countless possibilities of accessing and choosing TV content (linear programming versus non-linear programming via DVR, media libraries, and Video on Demand), the various business models that television content providers use to target specific audiences (broadcasting, narrowcasting, slivercasting), and the terminal devices for watching TV (stationary devices, e.g. traditional TV sets and Smart-TVs versus mobile devices like laptops, tablets, and smartphones). However, by focusing on a textual level, this essay argues that, despite appearances, old and new televisions shape viewing behaviour in

similar fashions – through specific uses of programming links and serial paratexts. The concept of serial paratexts, as I discuss it here, mainly refers to the recap, opening credits and end credits which reappear with every episode of a series originally broadcast on network, cable or premium TV channels. It is not meant to be exclusively associated with serialized narratives, but rather with any television series, including episodic shows (though the latter may not include recaps, it typically employs intros and outros). These paratexts gain their serial status through their common recurrence as features that define a series' presentation to viewers.

The phenomenon of 'binge-watching' – as a specific mode of consuming TV content, hence *using* television – will be the starting point for my discussion. Despite its frequent discussion as a distinguishing feature of non-linear streaming platforms that enhances the experience of serial narratives as compared to traditional linear television (Steiner 2017, 152), I argue that this continuous mode of reception is ultimately cultivated by both traditional and streaming televisions. Although mainly applied to intensive individual viewings of one specific serial program, binge-viewing, in a broader sense, is also relevant to broadcast situations wherein audiences consume several different sequential programs in one sitting. General definitions frame bingeing, originally derived from studies on addiction or eating disorders, as the continuous consumption of a large amount of media content in a relatively short time frame (Devasagayam 2014, 40). This behaviour is usually encouraged – either explicitly or indirectly – by media content providers themselves as they offer frequent stimuli for this type of viewing. Media users may feel 'compelled to watch hours of shows and movies' due to exposure to the stimuli (ibid) incessantly provided by televisions. Yet, despite their differences, new televisions – streaming platforms – and old televisions – traditional *linear* programming including broadcast, cable, and satellite channels<sup>3</sup> – both tend to prescribe continuous and persistent viewing behaviours through various serial paratexts or what we can consider as 'side phenomena' that encourage the viewer to 'stay tuned' or watch 'just one more episode.'

Lisa Gitelman's definition of media, as it helps to ground studies of media change, provides context for my discussion. As she writes, media are:

Socially realized structures of communication, where structures include both *technological forms* and their *associated protocols*, and where communication is a cultural practice, a ritualized collocation of *different people on the same mental map*, sharing or engaged with popular ontologies of representation' (2008, 7, emphasis mine).

Following this, I would like to argue that streaming platforms, particularly Netflix, although deviating from traditional broadcast television in their *technological form*, 'remediate' (Bolter and Grusin 2000) certain *protocols* – in this case, viewing instructions – to put their users on 'the same mental map,' that is, to train them as

‘media bingers’ (Devasagayam 2014, 40). This protocol remediation is achieved through:

- a) An interface that organises serial content as a seemingly individualized menu providing ‘entrance flow’ (Perks 2015, xxiv), that is, several potential starting points for a marathon viewing, and
- b) A specific treatment of paratexts that aims to create a homogeneous ‘insulated flow’ of serial content and to ‘naturalise’ binge-watching as a universal practice for watching TV series (Jenner 2018, 134, 267).

Through such methods, Netflix and other streaming services are ‘presenting themselves as refashioned and improved versions’ of television (Bolter and Grusin 2000, 15), whilst employing textual strategies to organise content and (pre-)structure viewing behaviours that recall broadcast TV. Thus, streaming platforms should be seen as part of an ongoing transformation – or ‘reinvention’ of television (Jenner 2018). With this in mind, each episode of a TV series is usually surrounded by a set of side phenomena (recap, opening and end titles, promo, intermissions, and so on) which make it recognisable as a televisual product outside of the context of traditional, linear television.

Taking the continuous nature of media change into consideration, I will focus on how Netflix shapes viewing experiences through its interface as well as through particular serial paratextual elements (programming links and the skipping of intro and outro). I consider its activities in this regard to both provide a continuum with and a deviation from traditional linear television. Streaming platforms introduce copious and apparently revolutionary instructions and viewing guidelines into the mediascape that are linked to television’s conventional programming practices and overall use of paratexts. In the following sections, I will explore how Netflix Germany’s interface on its TV app and website juxtapose TV series as a multitude of possible ‘flows,’ employing both linear television and non-linear web logics (Johnson 2019, 127). Furthermore, I want to discuss the methodical treatment of these side phenomena of television series as a means for Netflix to re-educate television audiences and to cultivate the viewership of media bingers or, as I refer to them, ‘serial skippers.’ By this term I refer to a key aspect of binge watching as suggested by streaming platforms. Netflix users become accustomed to a continuous, rapid viewing mode through deliberate interface functions: the rapid countdown in between episodes, the ‘skip recap’ and ‘skip intro’ buttons, and the automatic skipping of the outro. These functions omit, minimise or overlap with established recurring and thus serial elements that usually steer the viewer through the multi-part text of a TV series. As I argue in this essay, Netflix subscribers are taught to use these skipping options repeatedly, i.e. in a serial fashion, in order to proceed speedily from one episode to the next.

## **‘Televisions’ Prefer Bingers: Marathon Viewing as a Desirable Mode of Media Consumption**

‘Marathoning’ and ‘bingeing’ nowadays refer to a rapid mode of consumption wherein media users immerse themselves in a narrative text for a considerable amount of time (Perks 2015, ix). Displaying both commitment and endurance (ibid), readers deliberately seek out binge sessions to gain a possibly superior experience and deeper understanding of the media text (ibid, 186–188). Scholars have argued that television series with long-spanning narratives call for a different kind of viewing practice than non-serialized episodic texts. They debate further whether certain qualities of the serial text, for example, complex characters and storylines, slow-burning narration, and hidden motives, are optimized or foiled in the viewer’s experience by binge-watching (see Mittell 2010, McCormick 2016, Baker 2017). Djoyimi Baker contends that, from the outset, Netflix Originals adapted serial narrative strategies for their full-drop publication model (Baker 2017, 41). Therefore, the company’s initial strategy for its first original series, *House of Cards* (2013–2018), was to promote ‘the text’s suitability for the practice of binge-watching’ (Jenner, 2016, 263). While serial narration is certainly an important factor for cultivating marathon viewing, I will concentrate hereafter on how old and new televisions, and Netflix in particular, encourage binge-watching as a universally desirable, positively connoted mode of reception (Jenner 2015, 11) regardless of the actual qualities of one particular text or various texts. As I will argue below, the term *binge-watching* has become discursively conjoined with television series published on streaming platforms, with Netflix stressing their alleged ‘binge-watchability’ through the creation and optimisation of insulated flow.

However, according to Lisa Perks, media marathoning can be applied to any media text – for example, a book, a film trilogy, or a TV series (2015, ix). Similarly, Raj Devasagayam remarks that ‘media-bingeing’ more generally denotes the viewing of multiple hours of any media format by any technological means (2014, 40). Further, speaking from a historical perspective, binge-watching is not new to the reception of television series or television in general. Within this history, television bingeing is neither an invention of streaming nor of the DVD box set – both of which arguably served to inspire marathoning (Perks 2015, xvii; Steiner 2017, 145–147) – but rather of traditional television. In programming reruns, TV channels have frequently broadcast several episodes of a series in a row (sometimes even a whole season) and still do today with so-called ‘throwbacks,’ that is, older episodes of popular TV shows designated for rebroadcast on specific days or time slots. While these reruns<sup>4</sup> gave viewers the opportunity to binge one particular program, linear television’s scheduling strategies more broadly aim for marathon viewings of consecutive programs. As Raymond Williams’ original concept of *flow* suggests, broadcast schedules offer viewers ‘an evening’s viewing’ (2003, 93), a pre-scheduled sequence of a number of series meant to be continuously consumed. Here an episode of a particular TV series constitutes one part of the binge, with other parts created by surrounding programs on the same channel. In this context, series are an important form spread across the overall ‘television flow’ (Baker 2017,

40) or, as I would suggest, the ‘heterogeneous flow’ of traditional television. Because of their multi-part episodic structure, they fit perfectly into linear TV programming consisting of various periodically recurring broadcasts and segments.

Within this traditional sense of flow, serial programs are still telecast on a weekly basis and with routine intermissions, requiring the viewer to tune into a specific channel at a specific time. However, as numerous TV scholars have remarked, they are also increasingly received apart from their original environment – or, in the case of Netflix Originals, assigned a new original context. Streaming media have not only liberated television series from a particular TV channel, timetable, or specific apparatus, they have also omitted obstacles or inconveniences that could compromise the marathon viewing experience, as have, in different ways, preceding convenience technologies like the VCR, DVD or DVR (Perks 2015, xv–xvii; Steiner 2017, 145–146). In the streaming era, binge-watching is facilitated to the greatest extent, on the one hand, by video-on-demand platforms gathering an enormous amount of content, and, on the other hand, by smart-TV applications that group streaming platforms, TV channels, and media libraries together on a single device: ‘Marathons can thus be seen as a product of convenience and convergence – or of convenient convergence’ (Perks 2015, xvii).

With these seemingly unlimited possibilities of *self-scheduling* media marathons, new televisions, especially the ‘Netflix model,’ pro-actively endorse binge-viewing, framing it as a worthwhile mode of reception for *any* series (Baker 2017, 48). As Mareike Jenner has argued, the VOD industry ‘takes advantage of the autonomy and agency implied in binge-watching by using publication models and interfaces that encourage bingeing’ and, furthermore, ‘attempts to predict and manipulate viewer behaviour’ (2015, 14). Netflix especially encourages marathon viewing in order to tie users to its content(s) and platform, paralleling traditional broadcast television’s efforts to compel viewers to stick to the heterogeneous flow of a channel. The main difference here is that streaming platforms firmly direct users towards bingeing one program and its seasons, thus aiming for a ‘homogeneous flow.’ Binge-watching, then, is always in the interests of old and new televisions alike, since both aim for an ideal spectator, for, that is, a *serial* viewer. Whether applied to one multi-part text or various texts, marathon viewing, a ‘personal leisure-time event’ (Mikos 2016, 158), is also an instrument for TV content providers to *serialise* media consumption by offering convenient flows of audio-visual content. The following section therefore explores how Netflix designs and promotes these flows by the means of its interface(s).

### **Providing the Flows: Netflix’s Interface and Entrance Flow**

As James Webster writes, ‘media, both old and new, are increasingly available on demand via fully integrated digital networks’ (2014, 4). His statement suggests a significant feature of media change: the ever-increasing hybridisation and interlocking of media systems and technologies (see Bolter and Grusin 2000, Gitelman 2008). New media are never entirely revolutionary, but rather results of constant modernisation and adaption to social processes

of the production of meaning (Gitelman 2008, 6–8). Television, for instance, has always remediated aesthetics, narratives, and formal logics of preceding media like theatre or film, adjusting them to its respective technological and industrial forms. Today, television is being remediated through the (re-)distribution of TV content via digital technologies and online platforms. This includes reorganising television series into larger entities, that is, seasons or entire series, in an interface which, at first appearance, follows a very different logic than that of the linear TV programming schedule.

According to Daniel Chamberlain, media interfaces are scripted virtual spaces designed for concrete experiences and recommendations of specific user behaviour (2011, 232–6). As visual manifestations of web protocols pre-structuring user activities (Johnson 2019, 127), the interfaces of streaming platforms provide, first and foremost, a non-linear experience of media content that follows web logics rather than television logics. However, online TV interfaces are also part of the continuous remediation of television (Chamberlain 2011, 232). As Baker observes, '[T]he Netflix model . . . does not involve a radical departure from traditional television structuring devices, but rather their reapplication to continued streaming' (2017, 41). Following this argument, streaming platforms, particularly Netflix, reshape television using non-linear web logics to provide an enhanced experience of TV series, while maintaining significant linear television logics that preserve medium identity. In this way, streaming platforms can be considered as hypermedia as they display the organisational and structural principles of several media (Bolter and Grusin 2000, 6). As Catherine Johnson puts it, online TV integrates the linear logics of television (continuous flow, scheduling, 'temporal standardisation,' and 'immediacy') with the non-linear logics of the World Wide Web (fragmented data/files, databases, and 'lack of temporal constraints,' extended to unlimited access) (2019, 127–8). Within Netflix's interface on the website, the TV app, and the mobile apps alike, televisual and web-specific elements of structuring texts coexist and complement each other. Segments are the basic units of visual representation and segmentation is the organisational principle – as they are on regular television (see Ellis 2002). But, since streaming platforms are pre-set by the time-independent macro structure of the web, the interface intensifies this principle accordingly. The chronological schedule of programs is transformed into a virtual space of a seemingly inexhaustible digital warehouse which is no longer temporally structured, but rather alphabetically and generically inventoried.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, according to Lotz (2017), the central characteristics of Internet-distributed television are 'nonlinearity' and 'user specificity.' Indeed, Netflix's warehouse or database relies on its users' willingness to create their very own schedules from its abundance of content. The time-independent juxtaposition of uncountable possible line-ups promotes maximum individualisation of serial reception as streaming media's most striking advantage.

Still, Netflix operates to some extent with TV's scheduling logic, since it selects only a small section of the database to offer users on their personal profiles (Chamberlain 2011, 238). The supposed liberation of viewing possibilities via online TV is heavily navigated by the platform's algorithms and meta-data collection which aim to predict viewers'

programming choices and influence their reception strategies (Sim 2016, 189–93). Instead of programme planners, algorithms determine the individual supply structure of the interface –for example, when Netflix recommends TV series or films ‘because you watched’ certain similar content or changes the preview pictures of its originals according to the computerised genre preferences of a user. These strategies to influence viewing behaviour by premeditating some kind of schedule reflect the heritage informing streaming platforms: since television is always about ‘what’s next,’ Netflix, too, encourages its users to ‘see what’s next’<sup>6</sup> with its ‘future-oriented’ interface and playback mode (Perks 2015, xxv). Always pointing to possible follow-ups, it provides extensive ‘entrance flows’ for seemingly personalised marathon viewing (ibid, xxiv; **Figs. 1 and 2**).

This becomes most evident in Netflix’s latest update of the TV app (May 2019). Here, the interface recommends future schedules during the viewing of an episode. When paused, the playback mode shows several ‘similar’ programs on the bottom of the screen (Fig. 3) to be watched subsequently.<sup>7</sup> This strikingly reflects how new televisions translate the formerly stringent succession of broadcasts into an ever-present coexistence of successive data files, the periodically recurring programming units shaped into infinite, simultaneously available choices of programming blocks. The hypermediacy of Netflix and streaming platforms in general thus exceeds the traditional programming schedule by enabling a temporally unbounded, more individually controllable experience of television series as bingeable media content. Yet, its interface nevertheless adopts structuring principles of an artificial schedule (Jenner 2018, 134) by presenting its content as (programming) segments and by establishing entrance flow through a seemingly personalised recommendation system<sup>8</sup> [**Figs. 1-3**] that attempts to somewhat pre-determine what is watched and how it is watched (ibid, 135).



**Figs. 1 and 2:** Netflix’s interface visualising the database as programming segments and providing entrance flows (here: tablet app).



Fig. 3: Reminding the viewer of possible consecutive flows during an episode (here: TV app).

Perhaps the most important feature of Netflix's entrance flow is the function of autoplay, or post-play, which is employed by the website and the TV app. Whenever a program, meaning a series or film, is highlighted, either by the frame (TV app) or the cursor (website) simply resting on one of the segments, Netflix automatically starts playing a trailer or a short scene of the program<sup>9</sup> [Figs. 4 and 5]. Hence the entrance flow is significantly facilitated: a season one trailer functions as a tie-in to the series by introducing users to its premise, as well as to its narrative and generic features (if the program has not yet been watched). The latest season trailer (if several episodes or seasons have already been watched) reintroduces viewers to the narrative and recent story developments. The automatic playback of the trailer mimics television's ever-present 24/7 flow of programming as well as its promo clips which frequently remind us of upcoming broadcasts, revealing a continuum between old and new televisions. As Johnson argues,

Online TV services may be structured as fragmented databases unhampered by the temporal constraints of the linear schedule. Yet, at the same time, they deploy strategies like autoplay to encourage continuous viewing and continue to be shaped by the logics and temporality of broadcast schedules (2019, 128).

Rather than leaving the process of finding and starting a marathon entirely to the user (Perks 2015, xxii), Netflix pre-assembles entrance flow by reworking linear logics of traditional television within the web platform's non-linear organisation of media content. Representing these linear television logics, the autoplay function is not restricted to playing trailers or scenes as appetizers but is a major feature of Netflix's 'scripted space,' consistently shaping the overall user experience. Consequently, once a program is selected, the first or latest episode also immediately starts playing, depending on the user's viewing history. The same is true for every subsequent episode (or algorithmically lined-up program), unless it is actively paused or discontinued. This is especially vital to the insulated, homogeneous flow of the playback mode which I discuss in the next section.



**Figs. 4 and 5:** Enforcing entrance flow via autoplay of the trailer of Netflix Originals (left: TV app; right: website).

### Creating the Homogeneous Flow: The Minimisation of Programming Links

Throughout its marketing, Netflix brands binge-watching as a ‘deliberate, self-scheduled alternative to “watching TV”’ (Jenner 2015, 1), while being a joint cultural experience amongst the platform’s subscribers (McCormick 2016). From an economic perspective this favouritism towards media bingers makes perfect sense: Netflix’s users have to be encouraged to watch increasingly more content in less time because the streaming platform puts its own series as well as syndicated programmes in a highly competitive situation of simultaneous availability. A television series is presented on a lengthy menu amongst other series. For Netflix’s original series, this menu is the original media context in which they are published. In order to achieve maximum viewership, with emphasis on its original series, Netflix stresses that watching serial content, which is in itself a time-consuming, strenuous activity, can be accelerated by ceaseless consumption and by minimising any gaps between instalments. Internet-distributed television is open to various reception modes and viewers expect to have that very choice of how to watch the chosen content (Snider 2016, 127). However, by creating an insulated, homogeneous flow of successive episodes, Netflix encourages binge-watching as a universal viewing policy (Tryon 2015, 107), whether or not the narrative strategies of the series or viewers’ desires might call for it. Netflix’s autoplay feature and treatment of the interval between two episodes are designed to gloss over the spectator’s potential preferences, paralleling traditional television’s efforts to keep the viewer tethered to a particular channel. Although, as Perks states, users might actively choose this insulated flow as a media experience, ‘its automaticity makes it difficult for viewers to escape’ (2015, xxvi).

Interestingly, insulated flow is realised by incorporating several platform-specific paratexts which recall traditional television’s programming links or ‘interstitials,’ to quote John Ellis (2011). During the short countdown in between episodes of a syndicated show on Netflix, ranging from fifteen seconds on the website to twenty seconds within the TV app, the screen is split into various units [**Fig. 6**]: the background of all other segments is composed by a still image taken from the series; the closing credits or end credits of the current episode are shrunk and moved into the upper left corner; and the lower right segment presents a preview image taken from the next episode as well as two or three

buttons with options on how to proceed ('Back to Browse,' 'Leave full-screen mode' (website only), 'More Episodes'). Further, on the lower left side, there is a short synopsis of the upcoming episode which might just be readable within the short time frame of the countdown. The specific layout of the inter-episode countdown might be considered as a form of 'interflow' which usually involves multiple screens (so-called 'second screens' of smartphones or tablets, for example) dividing the attention of the viewer (Perks 2015, xxiv). Here, the screens are merged within one interface clearly designed to ensure attention by formally reminding the viewer that the next episode will follow instantaneously.



**Fig. 6:** Netflix's inter-episodic countdown of a syndicated series as it is presented on the website as well as on all apps (here: website).

Those inter-episodic phenomena can be compared to typical textual segments, frequently encountered on television. The background picture, for instance, recalls the channel-specific imageries used as backdrops for programming announcements. The reduction and particular framing of the end credits obviously draw inspiration from the so-called 'bumper,' a sort of chyron at the end of a programme which – on some TV channels, e.g. German commercial broadcasters – provides the frame for a short commercial rather than the credits (which are then moved into the chyron itself). On Netflix the image section is notably smaller allowing more attention to the other interstitials. The preview image adapts and expands television's usual notification of the next broadcast that, depending on the channel, appears in the upper right corner or in the lower half of the screen towards the end of a programme. Similarly, Netflix reuses the notification of the current program 'on air,' usually displayed after a commercial break when the playback is paused, with a text insert stating which series, season, and episode is 'now playing' (in German: 'Momentan läuft', see **Fig. 3**). While this premonitory segment is mostly a textual insert on TV, sometimes accompanied by an acoustic signal, on Netflix it becomes a graphic element with some additional textual information along with the above-mentioned buttons. Furthermore, the statement of *when* the subsequent programme will begin is much more precise than on linear television. Instead of relatively vague announcements like 'next,' 'shortly' or 'following,' the remaining seconds before the start of the new episode are counted down. The countdown itself might also be an adaption of the televisual bumper counting down the seconds of a commercial 'super spot.' Netflix's inter-episode split-screen thus incorporates and consolidates two

initially distinct programming links of linear television: the bumper and the what's-next-insert.

Meanwhile, the short synopsis is a reduced version of TV's episode promotions, a highly compressed trailer presenting the highlights of next week's instalment. This strategic element is, of course, meant to draw new audiences, while upholding the regular viewer's willingness to tune in again (Bleicher 2004, 250). On a subscription-based streaming platform, however, it seems obsolete since Netflix, Amazon, and others do not need to attract viewers from one episode to another on a weekly basis. The option to immediately start the new episode is always present during the countdown, but if the viewer chooses to wait for the countdown to pass, the synopsis merely bridges the remaining fifteen-second break between episodes. A promo, usually about twenty seconds long, only provides snippets of the episode to come and might even be misleading due to its speedy montage. Therefore, it is more of an appetizer, a promise of coming attractions (ibid, 255). Similarly, the synopsis on Netflix does not provide a complete resume, but rather a sketchy, selective outline of the episode's content. Nonetheless, it is a significant change of the episode promo, from a formerly self-contained audio-visual unit appearing repeatedly within the televisual flow to remind viewers not to miss an episode to a very short text which might not even catch the viewers' attention when so much else is going on within Netflix's screen arrangement. The temporal relation of this particular paratext to its reference text has also changed. On linear TV, the promo is presented as an 'epitext' (Genette and McLean 1991, 264) shown several times during one week's schedule, therefore maintaining a temporal distance from the episode. Meanwhile the synopsis on Netflix appears just once directly before the new instalment of a series, making it a 'peritext' (ibid) being more or less attached to its reference text. This minimisation of a promotional paratext furthers the universal conception of TV series as bingeable texts on Netflix, since the single episode is less acknowledged as a distinct event to await or to look forward to than it is within traditional television's heterogeneous flow.

However, overall, the streaming platform's programming links as well as its general split-screen aesthetic strikingly resemble the 'connective tissue of the television flow' (Jacobs 2011, 260) in terms of organisation and logic. These paratexts are essential to the televisual 'flow,' either heterogeneous or homogeneous, as they constantly remind us of the programme that is to follow either immediately or subsequently, ideally keeping viewers tied to the programme as well as to the respective TV provider. The interstitials are designed to maintain the spectators' willingness to watch the next broadcasts by promising upcoming attractions (Ellis 2011, 99). Furthermore, they are vital to our comprehension of television content and of television as a medium:

Interstitials have a key role for current viewers. They show how television regards itself (its brands); how it wants its programmes to be read (the trailers) . . . Interstitials, in short, are a series of distillations of television, and an internal meta-commentary on ordinary TV. In a world of multiple media

opportunities, interstitials are little instruction manuals on how to read TV (ibid, 90).

Even in their condensed or minimised form on Netflix, the intermission and the preview segments for the next episode remediate television's segmented structure as well as 'planned flow' (Williams 2003, 91) to a similar aim as broadcast television. The programming links are, to use Gitelman's (2008) expression, visual 'protocols' designed to eradicate vacancies or breaches between broadcasts (Bleicher 2004, 250) so as to encourage the bingeing of consecutive, heterogeneous programmes on linear TV. In comparison, Netflix's insulated flow intensifies the continued reception of one homogeneous programme, i.e. an entire season of a series. Here, the paratexts do not function to get the viewer to tune in for the next episode (after, as in linear TV, watching a sequence of various other broadcasts in the meantime) but, instead, to never exit the series in the first place. As such, these serial elements represent *traces* of these protocols of television still functioning as little 'instructions' (ibid) for how to consume television content: they specifically encourage serial reception, albeit now consisting of contiguous content rather than different programs within one viewing strip. Streaming media adopt the to-be-continued-protocol(s) of television to 'reprogramme' the viewer as a media binger and, furthermore, a 'serial skipper' who values the omission of interruptions between episodes and seeks to move on to the next instalment as soon as possible.

There is, however, one particular interstitial that does not fully fit into Netflix's 'let's- binge' objective: the automatic intertitle 'Are you still watching?' It appears randomly during an episode if the user has already watched several instalments in a row, providing two options of how to proceed: 'Continue watching' or 'Exit.' Presumably designed as another element to shape viewing behaviour, this intertitle has no equivalent in traditional television, which does not allow interruptions of broadcast, except technical ones. Changing the channel would be linear television's counterpart to the option 'Exit.' However, such alternatives are never suggested by a TV channel itself and could only result from a self-motivated act of the viewer. The same is true for turning the TV off altogether, an option which neither old nor new televisions point out, much less integrate into their interfaces. Conversely, the intertitle is an intentional interruption on Netflix's part – we can surmise – to prevent passive reception due to fatigue or other reasons for not being engaged. This suggests the ideal of a focused and dutiful audience that binges with the utmost attention (Tryon 2015, 112), an ideal that would help envision marathon viewing as a productive and rewarding mode of media consumption (Jenner 2015, 9; Perks 2015, 186–187; McCormick 2016, 104–12).

The remediated paratexts described above appear in relation to syndicated shows on Netflix. By contrast, Netflix's original series include only some of these elements due to their significantly shorter inter-episodic countdowns. Here, the interfaces of the website and the apps differ. For instance, the TV app shows the background picture, the series' title, including further information about it, and the synopsis of the next episode; the website

merely shows the background picture and the what's-next insert [see **Figs. 7 and 8**]. However, these displays of paratexts only emerge if the next episode is still loading, thus including the buffering icon (TV app) and/or if the outro has been watched in its entirety (website). Otherwise, the autoplay immediately proceeds to show the next episode without displaying any of the remediated textual tissue of television. Obviously, Netflix seeks to further strengthen its insulated flow when it comes to its original series by skipping the programming links altogether. In addition, the platform 'optimises' the media marathon by offering the user the opportunity of skipping the recap, the title sequence, and the end credits, or, as part of the autoplay function, by enabling skipping without the user having to take any action.



**Figs. 7 and 8:** The display of televisual paratexts differs significantly when a Netflix Original is played (left: TV app; right: website), minimising intermissions and programming links even further, thus reinforcing the insulated flow.

This section has focused on the reworking of paratexts which serve the overall televisual 'flow' by announcing their reference text (the series or episode). The next section discusses the paratexts that contribute to our specific comprehension and appreciation of a series' narrative or themes. I will examine how Netflix systematically passes over these serial elements, how its actions deviate from and/or continue traditional television logics, and how it further re-educates the viewer as a 'serial skipper.'

### **Optimising the Insulated Flow: The Serial Skipping of Recaps, Opening and End Credits**

The episode form has notable effects on the overall experience of seriality as it distinguishes one broadcast or instalment from the other. Simultaneously, the paratextual environment virtually ties those instalments together for the sake of continuous reception. All televisions – regular TV channels or streaming platforms – reshape this structural principle, albeit to different effects of reception. When streaming platforms (re-)modulate syndicated television shows and introduce their own serial formats, they stick to the highly segmented, multi-textual form while concurrently trying to reshape TV audience behaviour in favour of a more homogeneous form of binge-watching and insulated flow. For that purpose, they alter the fringes and frames of a television series.

The main text, meaning the consecutive episodes or seasons, is characterised through its beginning and end markers. As I have mentioned, recaps and opening and closing credits are serial elements that, like the text itself, address and guide the viewer. They fulfil significant narrative and discursive functions, supporting the impression of a series as a textual, yet dispersed unity. Taking into account the originally intended gaps in reception between various instalments of the series, they provide *thresholds* which serve to make contact with the new text segment by gradually reintroducing the audience to the fictional world of the series. Furthermore, they *enable* and *encourage* the long-term continuous reception of a discontinuous text. A television series, then, accomplishes coherence and familiarity through the recap and the credits, through elements that usually reappear with each episode in order to reconnect the audience with the narrative. They are thus *re-initiating modules* designed to renew and extend the communicative contract with the viewer. Determined by the original dispositif of their respective series recaps, opening and closing credits are integral elements of the televisual flow. As television series nowadays circulate in multiple media contexts at the same time, these paratexts remain consistent, meaning that they are not modified by streaming services in the exact same way that promos, text inserts or bumpers are. However, even though they are not minimised, their presence is otherwise altered: they are systematically skipped by the interface and autoplay features of Netflix. By glossing over significant paratexts, the platform further promotes marathon viewings and re-defines the viewer as a ‘serial skipper’ who ideally finishes all instalments of a series as quickly as possible. This is both a continuum with and a deviation from the textual practices of broadcast television. Analysing how old and new televisions handle recaps and opening and end titles offers crucial insight into the continuously adapting protocols in the constant modernisation processes of (televisual) media (Gitelman 2008, 8).

The blurring or omission of beginning and end markers of a programme is not particularly new, but rather a strategy originated by broadcast television itself. TV channels tend to avoid ‘vacancies,’ meaning uneventful or non-informative segments of a broadcast that might give the viewer an opportunity to switch to another programme or turn off the TV set. Therefore, credits are often cut short or eliminated altogether, while segments such as bumpers and text inserts are intertwined or overlap with one another. Linear television protocols frequently tell us what is to follow and to stay tuned. Consequently, streaming platforms, as part of television’s transformation, are adopting this treatment of vacancies, taking it even further. As I have argued, Netflix minimises the televisual programming links and intermissions between episodes, but it also interferes with the conventional structure of the episode itself, automatically skipping the re-initiating modules at the beginning or at least encouraging the viewer to do so.

The minimised breaks between two episodes and especially the platform’s efforts to facilitate binge-watching involve the initial recap. This short scene compilation of previous episodes is a decidedly televisual paratext created to compensate for memory gaps after a weekly intermission. Since streaming services offer whole seasons to be watched from start

to finish, the 'skip recap' button in syndicated series, as well as the lack of initial recaps in Netflix Originals, suggests that there is no more need for recaps, at least not for TV episodes. However, breaks in reception are still anticipated in between seasons which is why the platform often includes full season recaps. The omission or general lack of initial recaps supports marathon viewing as the norm of media consumption and engagement (Perks 2015, 185). As Devasagayam writes, 'creators eliminated the common flashbacks and recapping segments found at the beginning of following episodes. Instead, they assume that viewers are aware of the show's happenings at every point during the thirteen-episode release' (2014, 41). Indeed, as Perks' audience research suggests (2015, 187), many binge viewers prove to have developed a better diegetic memory, thus eliminating their need for initial recaps.

Additionally, Netflix's promotion demotes the recap to an allegedly obsolete and 'inelegant' measure: as the company reported, 'Binge viewing obviates the need for recaps and other *clunky* narrative devices' (Tryon 2015, 112, emphasis mine). The intended media bingers of Netflix are not to be bothered with 'annoying repetitions' (Baker 2017, 41) within the insulated flow, but are encouraged to finish all episodes in the shortest amount of time possible. Furthermore, Netflix and other streaming platforms can – to some extent – rely on their users to look for adequate substitutions of the recap elsewhere and thus to continue their reception of one series beyond the viewing of episodes on these platforms. Our digital media culture currently distributes innumerable paratexts from producers, inter-agencies,<sup>10</sup> and fans that offer similar benefits as the classic recap. Today, recipients can engage with a series at any time, in various ways and through numerous channels. Consequently, serial paratexts are somewhat scattered among streaming platforms, video portals, and other websites. While the representation of recaps on streaming platforms is dwindling, comparable recapping or reviewing paratexts accumulate outside of these new televisions. This does not mean that recaps will become insignificant anytime soon, but rather that they are currently being employed in a different fashion than traditional linear television originally suggested.

The intro, or title sequence, is arguably the most reliable constant throughout a television series' run. This particular re-initiating module is, at the same time, the most recurrent element of serial narration. As such, it is important in establishing the recognisability of a series. In the history of television series, the intro has always been an obligatory component, not only to give credit to the parties involved, but also to provide a starting signal to the viewer. At the very least, the title sequence serves the specific 'attention economy' of linear television (Picarelli 2013, 16). An intro aesthetically highlights a particular series within the televisual 'flow' (Hickethier 1997, 28) and thus is a significant and prominent paratext, a distinct media form existing between the poles of TV marketing and advertisement, art and narrative complexity, and overall media branding (Bleicher 2011, 304; Picarelli 2013, 1). It is a vital part of a TV show's narrative design and 'psychology.' Due to its familiar recurrence the title sequence is continuously involved in the series' process of sensemaking (Gray 2010, 42), promising further cognitive and emotional gratifications via

repetitive reception. TV channels thus use the intro as a brand ambassador and quality label. In this context it has developed a life of its own, thanks to its 'spreadability' across various media channels (Re 2016) and its discussion amongst fans, critics and academics. Circulating on video platforms and social media, the title sequence is a transmedia phenomenon which serves as an envoy for its series as well as a means for communication and community-building amongst the series' stakeholders.

Considering that long, 'artsy,' and immersive intros are frequently encountered in television series of both regular TV channels and streaming platforms, it may seem surprising that the self-same paratext is meant to be skipped by one mouse click or even automatically skipped. Yet, in order to strengthen the experience of an insulated flow, the title sequence is obviously considered to be dispensable following its first-time reception at the beginning of a binge where it serves the entrance flow by (re-)introducing the user to the series' story world and narrative. After that, its redundancy seemingly disrupts the marathoning experience. Even though the viewer can always access the intro – it is, after all, not omitted altogether – an algorithm decides on the (non-)presentation of a quintessential text segment. On the one hand, automatically skipping this key part of serial reception contradicts the supposedly liberating configuration of the streaming platform which maximises the user's control over his or her viewing practices (Sim 2016, 185–89). It also deviates considerably from regular television, where the intro might be shortened from time to time, but never skipped entirely. On the other hand, this particular treatment of the paratext pushes well-known protocols of television programming to the hilt: the minimization of alleged vacancies – which the intro is sometimes considered to be, even among dedicated viewers (Davison 2013, 11–15) – and the immediate introduction of the next broadcast or instalment. This, again, points to the continuum between old and new televisions. The commercial interest of both broadcast television and streaming platforms lies with a binge viewer following a smooth flow of content provided by an artificial schedule. On Netflix, however, it is also a viewer to whom the next episode, season or new series, are always already available and to whom all seemingly undesired intermissions are reduced to a bare minimum. Thus, the skipping of the intro intensifies the insulated flow by optimising the continuity of the media marathon, presumably to the effect that more (serial) content can be watched in a shorter time. Streaming platforms aim to 're-programme' the recipient to embrace serial skipping in order to serve their business model as (allegedly) inexhaustible providers of TV programmes and as abiding producers of new original content.

The recap, intro, and outro are serial paratexts that originally served an intervallic, episodic mode of reception. They are crucial elements of the *rite of passage* from the (weekly) intermission to the next episode. Even with TV shows now entirely available on Netflix, they mediate the transition from one episode to another, if the viewer wishes them to and/or chooses a discontinuous mode of reception. However, streaming originals seem to contradict the significance of these paratexts, for their initial release does aim for a season-based experience and understanding of seriality (Van Ede 2015, 36). Nonetheless,

the mere presence of the opening or closing credits in Netflix Originals still assumes the integrity of one single instalment, including the endurance of an episodic organisation of audio-visual series. Whereas the initial recap has vanished from new streaming series, each episode of a streaming original remains book-ended by title and end credits separating them from one another, thus allowing for binge-watching as well as discontinued, episodic viewing (and anything in-between). Even so, Netflix's insulated flow aspires to 'naturalise' binge-watching as the logical mode of reception for TV series (Jenner 2018, 267). This is most evident in its abrupt termination of the closing credits. While the final credits of a syndicated show roll for at least fifteen seconds, providing a short period of transition, the outros of all productions dubbed as Netflix Originals are discontinued after only five seconds, giving the viewers barely enough time to decide whether they want to watch this particular segment in its entirety. This process eliminates most of the above-mentioned paratexts integrated into syndicated shows. With this move on Netflix's part, the textual tissue bringing a series into being is crucially altered, serving the popular perception of television series as one long-ranging text best consumed via marathon viewing(s) (Perks 2015, xxx, 187).

The end credits have always had a tough standing within a series itself as well as within broadcast television. Concerning their significance for our understanding of the text, the end credits seem rudimentary – perhaps even dispensable. This is exactly how TV channels typically render the end credits of their programmes, including television series. The end credit sequence is either accelerated so that the credits are no longer readable (e.g. The CW, US), spoken over by a TV announcer (e.g. Channel 4, UK), or edited out altogether as is the case on several German TV channels.<sup>11</sup> For that reason, it may be the most marginalised serial paratext on TV. Within the traditional linear programming schedule, the end credits are considered to be an unnecessary vacancy and retarding element (Mengel 1995, 27), possibly causing the viewer to switch to another channel. Consequently, the closing credits are generally avoided and 'given the chop' (Mengel 1997, 245). Continuing this tradition, Netflix mimics television's editing practice and terminates every credit sequence prematurely if the user does not intervene or click on 'watch credits.' In contrast to many TV channels, this option is still there, since the closing credits are completely available, but the platform does not grant the viewer enough time to consider that very possibility. Based on this, streaming services are adopting a conventional practice passed on by their televisual predecessors.

Complicating the opportunity for the viewer to decide whether to watch the end credits might, again, seem contradictory to the platforms' claim to 'liberate' serial reception and to augment the freedom of choice in terms of availability, frequency and duration. However, to quote Gerald Sim, it is 'presumptive to equate the practice of binge-watching with consumer autonomy' (2016, 193). The automatised disruption of serial paratexts 'nudges' Netflix users towards this particular mode of reception (Jenner 2018, 135), thus mirroring TV channel's efforts to bind viewers to their programming schedule by reducing or omitting the end credits. Emphasising television's stay-tuned-protocol to the greatest

extent, the viewer is to be convinced to continuously watch 'one more episode' and to stay with the respective series for as long as possible. This might be Netflix's most distinctive feature and overall advantage over other televisions, creating the most consequential insulated flow for media marathoners, undisturbed by technological inconveniences, paratextual redundancies or disruptions:

Netflix's Post-Play function, which starts the next episode in a series automatically, makes stopping harder. While the function improves narrative immersion, it may lead to more compulsive viewing than traditional television or even DVDs where a viewer has to get up and insert a new disc (Steiner 2017, 155).

With the skipping of credits, the platform's audience conception becomes particularly evident. Whereas on regular television, the viewer has no choice other than to accept the absence of the credits, Netflix's preferred media bingers will most likely not intervene when the playback mode skips these crucial paratexts. Rather, they will move on to the next episode immediately, enjoying the smooth binge enabled by the insulated flow and not bothering with paratexts during the actual reception of episodes.<sup>12</sup> This re-educated 'serial skipper' can be understood as a product of television's ongoing efforts to tweak media consumption in favour of long-term audience commitment – by making specific use of serial side phenomena, including omitting, minimising, or skipping them.

## **Conclusion**

As I have argued in this essay, streaming platforms, most notably Netflix, are simultaneously deviations from and continuations of television, reshaping audience behaviour by adapting certain 'protocols' (Gitelman 2008, 7) of television through their interface and autoplay features. The above discussed interferences with serial paratexts and televisual side phenomena, facilitate a continuous mode of reception, or, more specifically, firmly reinforce marathon viewing as the 'new normal' (Perks 2015, 185), the standard mode of media consumption, particularly for television series. The practice of binge-watching is encouraged through the creation of a recommendation- and trailer-based entrance flow and a smoothed insulated flow which minimises intermissions and skips over seemingly redundant and retarding paratexts. Both entrance and insulated flow are characterised by the autoplay function to either immediately begin a program or seamlessly continue it. Most significantly, this includes the reworking of paratexts deriving from traditional TV, i.e. trailers, promos, text inserts and bumpers, as well as recaps and opening and closing credits. While broadcast television's flow includes heterogeneous programs, artificially adjoined by programming links and paratextual elements, the insulated flow of Netflix is a homogeneous one, consisting of (all) subsequent episodes of one series, merely discrete from one another via remediated, albeit reduced versions of the said paratexts.

By reworking television's textual tissue, omitting or bypassing distinct paratexts of a series, streaming platforms aim at the media binger and serial skipper, prescribing specific user and viewing strategies. The alleged freedom of creating one's own program is put into perspective when we consider the platform's disruptions of each series' paratextual environment. By selling binge-watching as a collective experience (Jenner 2018, 256, McCormick 2016), streaming media introduce new guidelines and requirements for the reception of their series:

Technology may have freed us from the restraints on our viewing schedules placed on us by television networks, but it turned out to be a zero sum game; at the same time as one hand offered us freedom, the other was ensuring that we'd have to keep up to date and fall under an equally artificial schedule created by our online communities (McMillan 2014, cited in Sim 2016, 193).

Like traditional television, streaming TV similarly aims to tie the viewer to the screen. This might be one reason why we call streaming services 'television(s),' despite their technological and economic differences as well as diverging production and distribution practices. That is, both old and new televisions, broadcast TV and streaming media, tend to cultivate continuous watching through paratexts and interstitials; whether those paratexts are included or excluded, the goal is to devise means of maintaining audience attention. Netflix's interface design and playback mode are geared towards serialising the reception of media, subtly redefining textual strategies and modes of reception.

As I have stated above, all televisions encourage marathon viewing of their programs through heterogeneous or homogeneous flow, in order to 'train' the viewer as a long-term media binger. Netflix may do so in the most systematic way, with the autoplay feature, frequent possibilities of skipping paratexts and, by extension, automatic skipping protocols, ubiquitously trying to put all of its users on the same 'mental map' as serial bingers and skippers. Particular guidelines and instructions for continuous reception, originally introduced by traditional television and now most effectively executed by Netflix, indicate the overall transformation of media consumption along with the ambivalent status of audio-visual series in recent digital media culture. On the one hand, the interface frames television or streaming series as artefacts, requiring media-savvy users to deliberately choose and, subsequently, attentively watch them. On the other hand, the interface also embeds them in an extensive, competitive and, most of all, pre-scripted environment which renders them as inexhaustible resources, designed for both mass consumption and consumption *en masse* through 'media marathoning' navigated by entrance flow and insulated flow. Netflix ratifies the latter by altering serial paratexts to the point where recaps, intros, and outros might be perceived as expendable to the reception of consecutive episodes, and, more specifically, as not suitable for marathon viewings. Thus, with its skipping practices, the streaming platform might simultaneously reinforce the migration and circulation of these serial paratexts elsewhere in digital culture. Their supplementary values for our understanding of the main

text are undeniable and welcomed by engaged fans, but ultimately demand a different platform than Netflix is disposed to provide. Consequently, these paratexts are being discovered, appreciated and discussed beyond the actual (marathon) viewing of the television series. As a specific adaptation of television protocols, Netflix's 'serial skipping' has a significant impact on our perception, processing, and appreciation of television and original streaming series as it modifies the overall framework of a multi-part text and its paratexts.

### **Biographical Note:**

Jana Zündel earned her B.A. degree from Bauhaus University in Weimar and an M.A. degree in Media Studies at the University of Bonn. She currently works as a research fellow at Bonn University. Her dissertation deals with side phenomena of TV series as symptoms of diversified television. Recent publications include: 'Der Wandel des Fernsehens im Spiegel des Serienintros' ('The Transformation of Television as reflected in Serial Intros'), *Montage AV* 27 (2), 2018: 13–28; and 'Netflix und die Remediatisierung des Fernsehens auf Streaming-Plattformen' ('Netflix and the Remediation of Television on Streaming Platforms'), *Montage AV* 26 (1), 2017: 29–43. Contact: [jana.zuendel@uni-bonn.de](mailto:jana.zuendel@uni-bonn.de).

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## Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> I am placing my research in a national context since Netflix US is not available in Germany. Therefore, all observations and statements concerning Netflix's interface within the TV app, the website, or the mobile apps – as well as all screenshots – refer to Netflix Germany.

<sup>2</sup> Both terms will be used synonymously as their different judgmental connotations are not part of my discussion in this essay.

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<sup>3</sup> I am aware that subsuming all broadcast, cable, and satellite TV channels under the term ‘old televisions’ or ‘traditional televisions’ is a definite simplification of this complex historical subject which cannot be thoroughly outlined and discussed here. However, as the main distinctions between regular TV channels and streaming platforms are the latter’s non-linearity and (supposedly) user-driven programming (see Lotz 2017) – which will serve as important points of discussion throughout this article – categorising old televisions through the aspects of linearity and relationship to viewers serves heuristic purposes here.

<sup>4</sup> For further exploration of the phenomenon of reruns on television, see Kompare 2006.

<sup>5</sup> This is not a radical deviation from broadcast television since TV channels also organise their programming as a series of recurring genres and formats (Jenner 2018, 135).

<sup>6</sup> ‘See what’s next’ is also the slogan of Netflix’s homepage.

<sup>7</sup> It is also possible that these recommendations are to be chosen as alternatives to the current program, thus mimicking traditional TV consumption practices like switching and zapping.

<sup>8</sup> For further exploration of Netflix’s recommendation system, see Alexander 2016.

<sup>9</sup> A trailer is played if the highlighted program is a Netflix Original, a short scene if it is a syndicated program.

<sup>10</sup> For example, web magazines such as *The AV Club*, YouTube-Channels like *WatchMojo* and so on.

<sup>11</sup> On German TV, only short end credits are shown within a bumper which appears during a commercial playing in place of the credits.

<sup>12</sup> They might, however, check them out later on video platforms or fan forums.